

## **Thomas Garrity Wins Haimo Award for Distinguished Teaching**

(I asked Colin Adams, who had nominated him, to comment on the awarding of the Haimo Award to Thomas Garrity of Williams College. This is what he sent me. –Editor)

When Tom Garrity arrived at Williams in 1989, there were 11 senior math majors. This year, 52 sophomores signed on to be majors. Much of the success of the department can be traced to Tom Garrity. He brings an overwhelming enthusiasm, a love of everything mathematical and an ability to reach students at every level.

Tom Garrity is one of those teachers that students never forget, the kind that will come up in discussions at the students' 50th reunion. He is completely uninhibited. There was the time Tom taught an entire class hopping on one foot. Another time, Tom decided to teach the rest of a class period without saying a word, entirely by writing on the board and hand signals. Approaching a key point, he has been known to raise his voice dramatically, and say "And now I am raising my voice dramatically to create an artificial sense of excitement as we reach the key point".

Why does he do these things? First and foremost, because he knows that students will remember the math, not just the antics. And secondly, he is just being himself. This is how he behaves in and out of the classroom.

Students adore him. Comments include: "HYPER CAFFEINE TRIP!!!", "He is sooooooo smart, such a great teacher, and he is hilarious. You will fall in love with him trust me!!!",

"Anyone who can make an 8:30 AM calc class one of the best classes I've taken at Williams deserves large amounts of praise. His self proclaimed "cheap pedagogical tricks" to make material fun, funny, and attention-grabbing, are always successful. Garrity WILL make you crack up in class. He is a tough prof though. Expect to work a lot, and to work hard."

Garrity's classes are notorious for being some of the most difficult on campus. There is a certain cachet in having survived them. And yet students flock to them.

Whereas most members of the Mathematics Department at Williams will have zero or one thesis student in a given year, it is not unusual for Tom to have three thesis students, often working in three different areas. His far reaching mathematical interests make him an exceptional advisor.

His book, "All the mathematics You Missed(But Need to Know for Graduate School)" , has extended his impact well beyond Williams. It provides an inspirational overview of the important topics every incoming graduate student should know.

Tom Garrity's catchphrase is "Functions Describe the World". The students have picked it up. It appears chalked on the sidewalk, it appears on posters, and it appears in innumerable student talks. Tom stands out as an exceptional teacher, as someone who can take math phobic students and turn them into mathematicians. He draws them into his world, where thinking about mathematics is as natural as breathing, and in the process, he instills in them a lifelong love of all that is mathematical.