



Dr. John Wasacz
Distinguished Lasallian-Educator
2011-2012

This year's recipient of the Lasallian Educator Award is Prof. John Wasacz of the Department of Biochemistry and Chemistry. John was an undergraduate chemistry major at St. Johns University and earned his Ph.D. Degree under the direction of Prof. Madeleine Joullie at the University of Pennsylvania in Organic Chemistry.

John's specialty is Organic Synthesis, and if Organic Synthesis, with its strategies, mechanisms, reagents, techniques and glassware, is like a huge chess game, then John is definitely a Grand Master.

This is the second day in our De La Salle Week celebration. One of the points on our five-pointed Lasallian star denotes "a commitment to a quality education" – and that's why we are honoring John Wasacz today: for the commitment that he has made and continues to make to our students delivering to them a quality education. (A quick estimate? John has probably taught more than 18,000 students.)

Commitment to Quality, Part One: Chemistry is changing rapidly. Student abilities and preparation vary. How to keep up? Chemistry is NOT a spectator sport. John instituted an additional contact hour of class in Organic Chemistry – the Problem Period. During this particularly interactive time, students can continue to ask questions on homework problems and lecture material, and then they have the opportunity to learn as a real chemist solves real problems in real time. While on his last sabbatical, John completed writing his Organic Chemistry Study Guide – a true *vade mecum* for science and engineering students enrolled in his course. Then to assess student progress and encourage good study habits, there's ... "the Friday Quiz." This has already attained the status of the Oxford weekly tutorial essay. Simply put, John is a master in the classroom. I could go on, but I'd like to turn to

Commitment to Quality, Part Two: John has served as Chairperson of the Department for over twenty years, and also served as Interim Dean of the School of Science for one year. This service is so much more than tangential to insuring that our students receive the quality education in Biochemistry and Chemistry that they deserve; that they expect. It takes talent; it takes leadership to get the maximum out of a Department's resources and personnel. John's ability in this regard is phenomenal. And for a new challenge, John has been elected to the College Curriculum Committee, where he will continue to distinguish himself and hold fast and true to our Lasallian tradition.

John's lovely wife Mary is also here today. So please, do join us in congratulating John Wasacz on receiving this year's Lasallian educator award. Congratulations, John!

Joseph Capitani '78, Ph.D.
Department of Chemistry