



English professor Blasingame hailed for passion, effort

by Daniel Newhauser
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Hailed by his students and peers as enthusiastic, passionate, innovative and humble, English education professor James Blasingame became the latest recipient of the ASU Parents Association's Professor of the Year Award on Monday.

Blasingame, a 20-year veteran of the public education system and ASU professor for eight years, was chosen from among 30 other professors, all nominated for this year's award by their colleagues, students and staff.

"At first, I thought, 'No, you didn't hear that,'" Blasingame said about hearing the announcement of his victory at the annual ASU Celebration of Teaching and Learning Excellence held in Old Main.

"Then I looked up, and it was my picture on the big screen," he said. "I've just been really lucky."

But Seth Tendler, who is taking Methods of Teaching English with the award winner this semester, said luck had nothing to do with it.

"He never has an off-moment or an off-day. He's always there 100 percent," the English senior said. "You can't leave his class unhappy or unexcited."

Tendler added that, in and out of the classroom, Blasingame is engaging and supportive, and he invigorates his students to better grasp the subject material.

"Even though he has a million things to do, he's always there to help you," he said.

In fact, said ASU English department chair Neil Lester, Blasingame's overloaded schedule is the only concern he has of the professor.

In addition to his Methods of Teaching and Young Adult Literature classes at ASU, Blasingame is co-editor of The ALAN Review, a journal devoted to young adult literature; president of the Arizona English Teachers' Association; contributor to the Journal of Adult and Adolescent Literacy; and a member of the English department personnel committee. He is also a published author and engages in numerous outreach activities with local kindergarten through 12th-grade school children.

"I don't want him to burn out," said Lester.

He added that apart from his positive impact on students, Blasingame's excellence in research, commitment to teamwork within his department and devotion to community service qualifies him for this award.

"He seems to be the embodiment of the best that is the teacher, the best that is the scholar, and the best that is the citizen," said Lester, the 2003 recipient of the award. "Jim is what every good chair wants in a faculty member."

The professor of the year is chosen by the last three award winners, members of the ASU Parents Association and select students.

Blasingame said getting students involved beyond the classroom is important to him. For instance, upon receiving the ASU College of Liberal Arts and Sciences Distinguished Teaching Award for the Humanities last year, he used the prize money to fly students attending his summer class to Brigham Young University to attend a lecture by a popular children's author.

Students attending his classes next semester may have similar opportunities in store for them — the Professor of the Year Award comes with a \$20,000 endowment — half for the professor and half to pay for an undergraduate student research assistant for two years.

Reach the reporter at: daniel.newhauser@asu.edu.

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CELEBRATION IN ORDER: English professor Jim "B" Blasingame, who recently won the Professor of the Year Award, holds a congratulatory cake with his Methods of Teaching and Writing students.



Jeffrey Lowman / THE STATE PRESS

B IS THE NEW A: English professor Jim "B" Blasingame laughs with his Methods of Teaching and Writing students Thursday in the Business Administration building during a presentation on English literature.