

Bala Dharan's acceptance talk for Teaching Excellence Award, May 13, 2005 Jones School Investiture

Thank you Judy [Allen] for that gracious introduction. And congratulations, class of 2005! In fact, let's congratulate you like the way Paula Abdul would do in American Idol -- clapping with our hands over head. If Paula Abdul were judging you, she would have said "You know who you are, and America loves you for that!" Also, thanks, David [Van Horn], representing the alumni association as its incoming president, and a big thank you to my alumni students who chose me this year for this wonderful award. This is indeed an incredible honor, and I am still pinching myself. If I can paraphrase what Sally Field said when she won an Oscar some years ago, "You like accounting, You REALLY like accounting!" I also want to thank my faculty colleagues for their support, and want to say I am really glad that I got this award just in the nick of time before the amazing group of young star faculty that we have recruited in the past several years start getting recognized by their alumni going forward.

Also like they do in those award shows, I should probably thank a lot of others, starting with maybe WorldCom, Enron, even Martha Stewart! Seriously, I do want to thank from my heart my wife of 27 years, Vidya, for her love, support and kindness, though I must say that in recent days she has been a tad less obsessed with taking care of me and our son Anand ever since she discovered the pleasures of Google and iPod.

I am sure it does not come as a surprise to you if I say that accounting is an exciting area – if you don't believe it, just open the Wall Street Journal every morning and you will see that there is always something new and exciting involving accounting. Keeping up with all the new developments is the fun part of our work. The challenging part is to make it rewarding for students to learn about them – both in an entertaining way and in a way that makes the lessons stay with them for the long-term.

Luckily, I keep in mind that teaching is only a small part of student learning. There is an old Sanskrit saying – of course all Sanskrit sayings are old – "A student gets one fourth of his learning from his teacher; one fourth through his own intellect; another quarter from his classmates, and the last quarter over the course of time." In other words, it takes a village and a lifetime.

Still, teaching is undoubtedly an important and critical part of learning, and I am grateful for the teaching opportunity I have at Rice.

Finally, you may have noticed that I got a plaque for the award but no envelope with check. I am pleased to say that it's because I have asked the Dean to contribute the monetary portion of my award on my behalf to the Jones School Student Scholarship Fund. Thank you all, again.