

Dear Forum Colleagues,

Early in the morning of April 4th I was presented with the Forum's 2008 Peter A. Wollitzer Advocacy Award. Those who were present at the presentation heard me ramble for a couple of minutes, say "thank you", and then descend from the stage. There was a lot that I wanted to say but the words didn't come in any coherent way, the session was already running late, and an appointment was waiting for me in the lobby. I'd like to share a few thoughts from that morning with you here.

I'll begin by saying that the entire Boston conference was astonishing to me. Never in the wildest dreams of the twenty folks gathered at Beaver College in July of 2001 did anyone dare to imagine a gathering of seven hundred education abroad professionals and others under the Forum banner. No, back when the organization began we simply wanted an opportunity to move forward our serious agenda – data collection, curriculum, quality standards, research and advocacy – for education abroad in the United States. We knew that each of these items would pose challenges, but we believed that the results would be worth the effort.

Back at the beginning of this decade, we knew that there would be a need for the organization that's called the Forum and for the products of its labors in each of its agenda areas. But none of us imagined how extremely fortunate we would be to have a structure in place and work under way to formulate a code of ethics for the profession in 2007-2008 – precisely the time when such a code would be demanded of us. Many of our early discussions focused on ways that we might defend the decision to create the Forum; there's no need for that conversation any longer.

Earlier in the April 4th session we had heard two outstanding presentations from other Forum honorees – the students whose undergraduate research in international settings was selected for distinction. We in education abroad should hope for no more eloquent reminder of why we work at these jobs and of what constitutes the truly valuable outcomes of our labors. We are blessed, indeed, to be involved with bright and highly motivated young men and young women on campuses throughout this country and in programs literally all around the world.

Finally, I had the honor to serve with Peter Wollitzer on the Forum's Board of Directors for a couple of years. The opportunity to work with an individual of such intellect, insight, compassion and focus was a privilege I will always treasure. During our work together, Peter began as a respected colleague; he became a close and valued friend. Now to possess an award on which Peter's name and mine appear together is both immensely satisfying and deeply humbling – at the same time.

I thank the Forum for being what it is; I look forward to seeing what the Forum will become; and I deeply appreciate receiving this award.

With best wishes,

David Larsen