

Earl F. Morris Award

The Earl F. Morris award goes to a Trustee of an OFIC college or university who has demonstrated exceptional service and commitment. Frankly, the bar of even becoming a trustee at many of our member colleges is high enough. At Hiram, for example, we have what we call the 5, 6, 7 fundraising guideline (briefly explain).

In Betsy's case, she has willingly met these high philanthropic expectations by annually supporting...quite heavily, I might add...our unrestricted Hiram Fund.

Over the last four years, she has committed to a number of additional projects as well. One of the most rewarding ones is the scholarship program she has funded to support academically prepared but financially needy students who wish to attend Hiram.

In addition to supporting prospective students at large, Betsy has also supported (in an open and gentle way) the college decision-making process of a wonderfully impressive out-of-state student, Taylor Yamamoto. Four years ago, Taylor ultimately and voluntarily chose to enroll at Hiram; and she is graduating in three weeks. Taylor is with us tonight!

Grateful though we are for Betsy's financial generosity, that is not the primary reason my team and I nominated her for this award. We nominated Betsy for this award because of the deep and genuine humanity and kindness she adds to a highly driven Board of Trustees and a campus that is smack dab in the middle of exciting but extensive...literally systemic...change.

Betsy is always the first trustee to remind us and support us in celebrating faculty and staff successes...the big and small wins that bind us together and give us the confidence to continue our productive yet demanding forward movement.

It is Betsy who plans and personally sponsors the small group dinners, the brunches, the recognitions, and the thank-you gifts. The things that in my first couple years I thought were the "extra" soft touches: nice but not necessary.

I couldn't have been more wrong.

We are all sharing a moment in our country's and our world's history when large numbers of us have become increasingly busy, increasingly immune to injustices big and small, and increasingly accustomed to leaders who put personal and political aspirations ahead of others' needs.

Now more than ever, we need the type of pause and recognition that Betsy brings to Hiram...almost on a monthly basis. A time when a small group of people settle down to a table brimming with scrumptious food and well-chosen wine. A time when we gather to talk about our personal lives and the things that matter most to us as human beings. A time when we focus on our shared interests rather than the conflicts we have just overcome.

I am embarrassed to admit that, for a short period of my presidency, I thought these types of gatherings and recognitions were the extras of college life. (I blame my decade and a half at large state systems for that misperception.) These are the fundamental or the quintessential differentiators that make colleges like Hiram and most of the other OFIC institutions stand apart...far apart...from other colleges and universities.

And I am so personally appreciative that it has been Betsy Juliano who has modeled the enactment of those values at Hiram College. We are a stronger, more coherent, more united community...even as we move quickly to our next level of excellence...thanks to the celebrations, the recognitions, and the mindful meals that Betsy has woven into our culture of change.

For these reasons and so many more, I can not think of a more deserving recipient of this prestigious award.