

In Memory of Andrew Boldt

Dear family and friends of Drew,

My heart is overwhelmed with grief as I write these words in memory of one of my brightest/best students in recent history, who was also one of my most dependable and trustworthy undergraduate teaching assistants.

Perhaps one of the reasons I thoroughly enjoyed having Drew as a student in multiple courses, supervising him multiple semesters as an Undergraduate Teaching Assistant (UTA), and relating to him on a personal level is that he reminded me so much of my own sons (also students at Purdue). Drew's zany penchant for wearing shorts all the time (independent of weather conditions) as well as his love for hands-on engineering/mechanical work was virtually identical to the unique characteristics of my older son, Corben. The senior design project completed by Drew's team – a semi-autonomous quad copter – was also consistent with my own son's love for building and flying RC aircraft. Drew's love for working on go-carts for the Cary Quad Racing Team brought back memories of the make-shift one created by Corben and his friends, which was somewhat illegally raced around the neighborhood until its wheels (literally) fell off.

Drew's innate dedication to helping and serving others (his "other-centeredness"), his involvement in numerous extracurricular activities and volunteer work, and his deep desire to serve God by always doing the right thing were characteristics that constantly evoked an image of my younger son, Connor. Further, Drew and I shared the same "educational mission statement": *to help students learn, and to have fun in the process*. We also shared a focus on encouraging students to strive for professionalism – Drew was zealous in his promotion of academic honesty and integrity. My last conversation with Drew was minutes before the incident that took his life – he called my office to check about the references allowable on the lab quiz that was underway. Classic Drew: attention to detail, stickler for integrity, always wanting to do things the right way.

These are some of the reasons Drew's passing has affected me so deeply on a personal level. We collectively mourn the shocking end to the life of a young man with so much ability and promise, but it is comforting to consider another viewpoint. Drew completed an *extraordinary* number of good works in an *unusually* short period of time – just like with his senior project, an extremely challenging design that he along with his teammates completed early, after which they *voluntarily* set out to help *other* teams complete *their* projects. Incredible...but Classic Drew.

Even outside his role as a teaching assistant, Drew was willing to share his intellect with others. He was always willing to help his contemporaries understand difficult concepts covered in class, and was known to attend help sessions with the homework *already completed* just to be able to assist others – even those he did not know. Incredible...but Classic Drew.

Drew clearly exemplified Ephesians 2:10, where the Apostle Paul writes that "We are God's workmanship ['masterpiece' or 'work of art'], created in Christ Jesus to *do good works*, which God prepared in advance for us to do." Drew finished the good works he was assigned by his Creator to do with distinction, and was therefore allowed to "graduate" from this life early.

Drew was full of life – he enjoyed life and loved to have fun. Perhaps the best word to describe this attribute is *zest*. Drew’s *zest* for life was infectious – he always made me smile. He would be so pleased to learn of the outpouring of volunteer support extended in his honor to help relocate the two digital systems labs affected, as well as former UTAs who offered to work for free to fill the lab staff vacancies.

To help memorialize Drew’s zest for life, his zany “make learning fun” personality, and his zealous promotion of professionalism, I am hereby instituting a new award exclusively for outstanding Undergraduate Teaching Assistants – students for which no formal means of recognition had previously been established. This annual award, to be given to the UTA that best exemplifies Drew’s unique character, will be named the “Andrew Boldt ‘3-Z’ Teaching Award”. Awardees will receive a plaque along with a replica of the gynomous #2 pencil Drew used to fill out his quiz bubble sheets in senior design class. Its namesake will be the 2014 recipient.

I’m sure Drew would be disappointed, however, if I were remiss to tie in something related to digital systems in my memorial to him...so what follows is an attempt to honor his memory in this regard. As many who are reading this may be aware, Drew loved taking courses on digital systems and working in the labs I supervise. He spent two semesters working for me as a UTA in the introductory digital systems lab, after which I promoted him to work in the junior-level embedded microcontroller lab. I was so pleased with the work he had done for me during his first three semesters of employment that I had a new task for him in mind this semester: helping coordinate the relatively new honors contract section of the course.

But back to the digital systems analogy, a topic common to both courses for which Drew served as a UTA is computer organization. The experiment in progress at the time of Drew’s passing was focused on helping students understand the wide variety of addressing modes used by microprocessors. Simply put, an addressing mode is what a processor uses to *get to the location it wants to go*. An addressing mode common to virtually “every processor worth its silicon” (as we like to whimsically say in class) is *extended* addressing, where the absolute (or *final*) address of the *location it wants to go* is part of the instruction.

I believe Drew would like me to ask everyone reading this memorial written in his honor the following question (and being a good professor, I will oblige): Do you know *your* “extended address” – your address when life on this earth ends...your eternal destination? I know Drew would want you to choose the same eternal address as his: Heaven, where he is at home, at rest, at peace – eternally, with his Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. “For God so loved the world that He gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.” (John 3:16)

“Dr. Dave” Meyer
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