

**Distinguished Faculty Award**  
*Reflections From Alumni, Alumnae, Colleagues and Friends*  
**June 2, 2017**

Maureen Flynn touched the lives of so many of my peers. I only met her a few times, though simply being in her presence made one realize what an intelligent and giving person she was. She gave so much in service to HWS and always went above-and-beyond for her students and friends. That is truly a legacy that should be honored.

- Merrill Amos '11, Brighton, Mass.

Maureen Flynn had a genuine interest in helping the student as an individual. Her approach was to make sure you made the connections yourself in order to understand the material. She understood that it is different in how each student relates to the material. Her offers of helping with one on one sessions to go over concepts were well used and her attitude made her approachable and better understood. I will forever remember her class because of her method of teaching, not because of the material itself.

- Ashley Lee '11, Portland, Ore.

Maureen Flynn was an integral part of my experience at William Smith. As my major adviser, she provided guidance in my academic choices, always steering me towards those classes that would best suit my future goal of being a history teacher. Because of her passion, my own concentration echoed her professional interest: medieval and early modern history. Today, I teach world history to high schoolers. It pains me that Maureen passed on before I could share with her the joy of passing on the knowledge that she once taught me. Maureen went far beyond simply being my academic adviser, however. As I entered my MAT year at HWS, missing my undergraduate experience and lonely for my friends, she opened her home to me. I spent more evenings than I can count relaxing on her deck, watching a gorgeous sunset over the Geneva farmland, or nestled in her living room with her cats watching the Nightly News with her family. In my time of loneliness, she took me in and treated me as her own child. As I struggled with an eating disorder, she helped me maintain the courage to recover, clicking over me like one of her hens and plying me with homemade food. And, in my moments of greatest pride, her face was always there beaming at me. Maureen Flynn met me after my final Koshare concert with a bouquet of roses, sat beaming at my MAT defense, and leaped from her chair to hug me as I crossed the stage for the second time in 2012 with my Master's degree. She exemplified living a life of consequence, and absolutely deserves this honor.

- Ashley Yang '11, Pittsford, N.Y.

I never knew Prof Flynn personally, but I saw the way that she impacted one of my best friends at the colleges. Ashley always spoke highly of Prof Flynn, and Flynn was always there for her through her troubles, whether that be academic advice or needing someone to talk to about more personal problems. I wish that I had had the chance to know Professor Flynn as I know she was a wonderful asset to HWS, and I know that she is greatly missed.

- Stephanie DiPonzio Newton '13, Rochester, N.Y.

Maureen Flynn was one of the most amazing teachers I had, not only at HWS, but in my whole life. Her Medieval Popular Culture course didn't just teach me about what life was like in the past, it changed my perspective on life and gave me insight into human nature and how today's society has evolved from its primitive origins. Maureen was a truly inspirational person, who taught with passion and moral conviction and who revealed a more nuanced and unique view of the world. Above all Maureen was sweet, kind individual who sought to make the world a better place. I was truly sad to hear of her passing this spring, and I think that no one could be a better candidate for this honor than Maureen.

- Sophie Bober '14, Washington, DC

Professor Flynn is a true asset to the colleges and is very much deserving of this award. She sparked my interest in history and guided me throughout my time at HWS even going the extra mile whenever possible to help me and my fellow students. Even when she took sick leave due to breast cancer she made sure I was well taken care of with an interim advisor.

- Christopher John Lansing '14, Glenmont, N.Y.

Maureen was deeply committed to our department, to the Colleges, and to the discipline and promises of history. She had an incredible capacity to remain understanding and optimistic in the face of major decisions, no matter how dire or daunting; she was, as one of her colleagues put it, the perfect combination of reason and compassion that defines "wisdom." Nothing ever seemed to diminish the buoyancy of her personality, which made being around her fun and she herself one of the most beloved people on campus. She was, as those who watched her defy her prognosis for so long know, a force of nature.

- Colleagues from the HWS History department

I write to express my deep appreciation for this fabulous woman, this superb teacher, this fine scholar, this wise Feminist, and this friend to so, so many people. Maureen Flynn was simultaneously gentle, warm, and fierce. I have never met anyone like her; no one can fill the void she left. I miss her, and I will forever honor her legacy at HWS.

- HWS Professor of Dance Donna Davenport

As friends for several years, Maureen and I shared a love of nature both of the earth and of humans and the pondering of why we even exist. She once shared with me her favorite poem, *The Ninth Duino Elegy*, of the poet we both loved, Rainer Maria Rilke. It summarized so eloquently Maureen's beliefs about life, and this poem and her life is a source of continued inspiration to me. Since the poem is long, I will share the parts I believe speak most clearly about Maureen:

“...But to have been this once, completely, even if only once:  
to have been at one with the earth, seems beyond undoing...  
Here is the time for the sayable, here is its homeland.  
Speak and bear witness...

Earth...

you no longer need your spring times to win me over –  
one of them, ah, even one, is already too much for my blood.  
Unspeakably I have belonged to you, from the first.  
Superabundant being wells up in my heart.”

- Peg Kennedy, friend

## **Distinguished Faculty Award Presentation Remarks**

### **By Andrew Donovan '12**

I have to start with a regret I have about my time at HWS, because it has to do with Maureen Flynn. I took her Evolution of Human Emotion class in the spring of 2012 - senior year spring. My last chance at any class was the first chance I had with Professor Flynn. I waited three and a half years.

But I learned that Professor Flynn works fast. Because of her unparalleled connection with students and her genuine interest in other people, all I needed was one semester to find one of HWS' most talented professors and one of my biggest supporters. All she needed was that short time for her to leave an impression on me for life.

Professor Flynn was a distinguished scholar known around the world. Her colleagues at Henry House remind us her first published works about religious and social life in medieval Europe continues to be cited in footnotes and bibliographies.

She was a history professor like I'd never had before. Her class "the evolution of Human emotion" was like nothing I'd ever taken before. We studied how emotions were interpreted and expressed in different chapters throughout history.

How anger led to the Boston Tea Party. How loyalty led to the American and French Revolutions. How jealousy led to the beheading or dethroning of monarchs. How pride fueled emancipation and women's suffrage in the United States and joy... felt in the streets in many countries after allied troops came home from World War Two.

She taught us how basic human emotions are what drive people to change the world.

She showed us the story in history.

It's no surprise that there was a waitlist for her classes. How about that...WAS a waitlist.

Me using the past tense to talk about Professor Flynn shouldn't happen ~ me, an alum of only five years, coming back for my first milestone reunion having to mourn the loss of a BELOVED professor. A woman with such charm and talent was taken from her family and her HWS family way too soon.

We are very lucky to have such great professors here at HWS. But Maureen Flynn took "great" to a whole new standard, a level you see recognized here at the Distinguished Faculty Awards, a level that very few achieve. She upped the standard.

I reached out to another history professor who I had, a friend of Professor Flynn's, Matt Kadane. I think he articulated what made Maureen special so well. He wrote...

"She had an incredible capacity to remain understanding and optimistic in the face of major decisions, no matter how dire or daunting; she was, as one of her colleagues put it, "the perfect combination of reason and compassion that defines 'wisdom.'"

I COULDN'T AGREE MORE and her students had the honor of witnessing that wisdom first hand for 22 years.

Education has such a unique effect on our lives because years after we've graduated, it's easy for those who crafted our education, that taught us, to still affect us. Years after we lose them in person, they are with us in spirit. Through their published writings, through emails, through lessons they taught us in class, both about the subject at hand and about life.

This is especially true for Professor Flynn. Even though I only had one semester with her, she had a significant, forever effect on my life.

Even though the world has only a short 60 years with her, she had significant, forever effect on all of our lives.

She taught me that while some of our time may be short, if you spend it wisely, it can change the lives around you.

Her time was short. She spent it wisely. She changed all of us and we're forever grateful.