

The Strangest Ways Students Pay Tribute to Their Favorite Professors

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In showing respect for their favorite professors, today's college students have ventured well beyond the proverbial apple.

An Indiana University at Bloomington instructor was once given chicken livers ... five pounds of them, from an adoring student whose father was a butcher. He gladly accepted and enjoyed the tasty treat. One Southern Methodist University instructor was presented with "a limited-edition Snickers bar" that said "goofball" on it. Apparently the student saw it and thought of her. For now, the candy bar remains in her office, she said, at least until she "gets hangry."

Such gestures aren't all edible. Other professors have seen their names or quotes permanently inked on students' skin, or had students try to set them up on dates with their single parents.

Those examples and many other funny, strange, and downright bizarre instances of students' expressing their appreciation for instructors were submitted to *The Chronicle* through [an online form](#). The form, which posed the question "What is the oddest thing a student has done out of admiration for you?," was inspired by a student's [query](#)

published in Slate last month, asking whether she should cover up tattoos in her professor's image during advising meetings with said professor. (To be sure, students can take their adoration over the line. This lighthearted examination is not meant to ignore that reality, only to entertain.)

The Slate case is far from unique. Tattoos appear to be a common form of reverence. A former Greensboro College instructor, Jennifer B., once had a student get a finger tattoo saying "WWJBD." While at first she was freaked out, Jennifer said, it grew on her.

Another instructor recalled four students' getting tattoos of a phrase she often uttered while on a study-abroad trip. In that case, the instructor, Danielle at Grand Valley State University, thought the tattoo was less about her and more about commemorating the trip.

Less-permanent methods of expression were far more common. "I had a student start to dress just like me," one instructor wrote. "Same kind of jeans, shoes, and shirts. He even went so far (he told me later) as to spy me on the way to an earlier class, note my shirt, and go home and change into a similar one."

Dean, an instructor at the University of California at Davis, said that one Halloween he entered a classroom to find a pupil in his place. The student was dressed as him, "right down to the beard and glasses," and upon his entrance she began delivering a fake lecture that imitated his teaching style and mannerisms. She nailed it "right down to the smallest details," he wrote.

And even though the class was obviously anxious about how he would react, Dean said, he broke into a fit of laughter, and his students followed suit. "The only downside is that when she finished, and it was my turn to deliver the planned lecture, I was so self-conscious that it was hard to begin," he wrote. "By the way, my Halloween tormentor later got an A in the class, so I took her performance as a form of admiration for my teaching."

Other responses stand alone:

- "Knowing of my love for *Moby-Dick*, a student (anonymously) made a clay white whale, then put it in a fishbowl filled with blue Jello, then left it on a desk in a room where I teach. She didn't confess to it until graduation."
- "I once had a student purchase me an age-defying makeup kit. I was 29 at the time and often mistaken for an undergrad. Riddle me that."
- "I had two students get T-shirts airbrushed with my first name — huge, across the front of the shirt."
- "A student once made a 14-inch-tall ceramic Chia bust of me."
- One instructor recalled students' naming their cars after him, while another noted that students who met in his class named their firstborn child after him. The latter said he was honored by the gesture, but also felt "a heavy responsibility."

And to return to the food theme, one student presented her instructor with deer sausage that she had made herself from an animal she had shot. It sure beats an apple. Maybe.

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