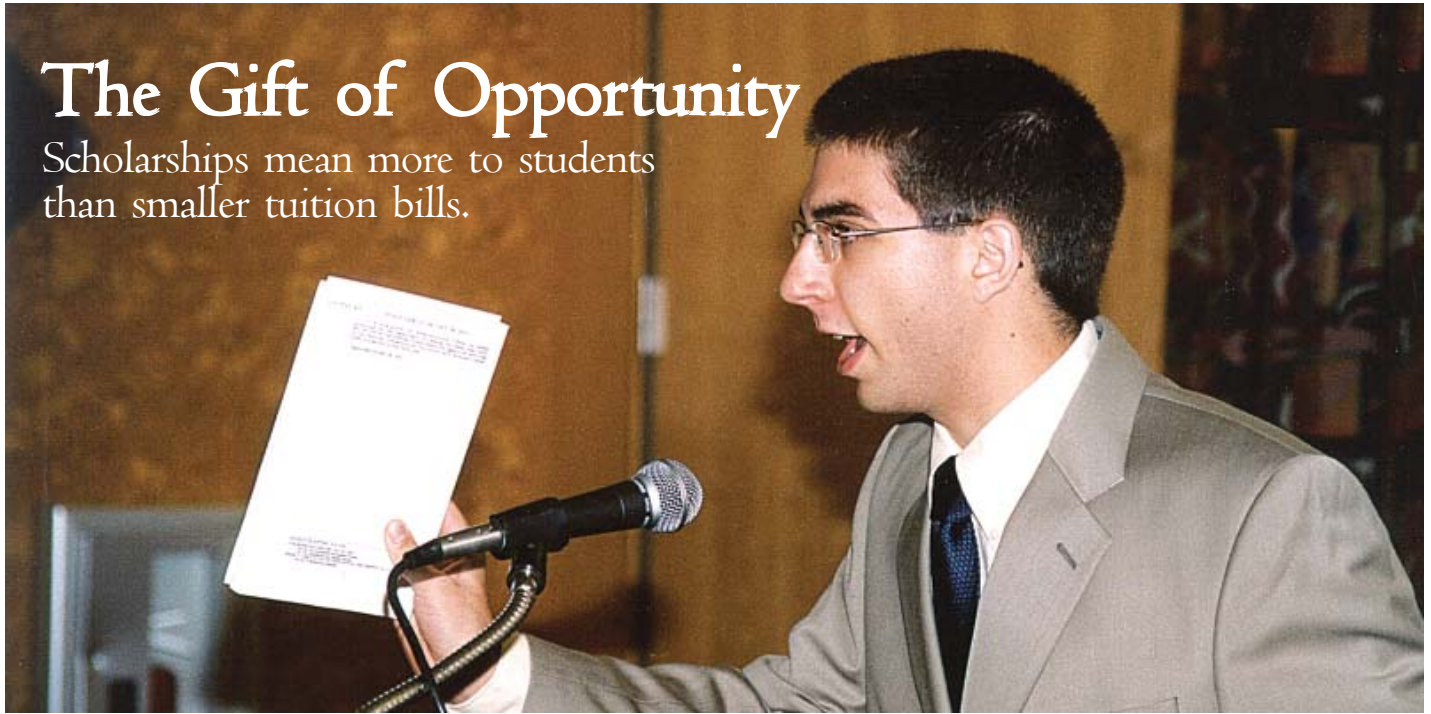


The Gift of Opportunity

Scholarships mean more to students than smaller tuition bills.



No matter the intent behind the gifts that make scholarships possible, the outcomes tend to be the same. Relationships are built between donors and students or individuals and communities, for example, and students are imparted opportunities they may not have otherwise had. For some, scholarships make paying for college possible, plain and simple. For others, they make it more affordable. Sometimes, scholarships change students' lives.

Brian Sterling '06, a senior political science major, is one such student. A recipient of the Gene and Mary Sarazen Scholarship, Brian spoke at the 14th Annual Scholarship Appreciation Dinner on April 6, 2005, and expressed genuine thanks to scholarship contributors. "I have come to the realization that it is not necessarily honoring you that we, the students, do tonight," he said. "We are here instead to offer our heartfelt thanks because you have honored us."

Brian, a junior at the time, continued, "Without the scholarships I received, I would not be here. I would not have had the option of taking advantage of all that Siena offers," he said. "And considering all I've done since coming to the College, I believe there is no better place to be."

Brian used his recent experience studying for a semester at American University in Washington, D.C., as an example. He said Siena's "embrace of this unique experiential learning opportunity" allowed him to work on Capitol Hill for the United States House of Representatives and to "share a glass of champagne with the Japanese Ambassador at his compound on Embassy Row."

An Honors Fellow about to embark upon his final year, Brian also related a story about how, while preparing his

Brian Sterling thanks the alumni whose scholarship gifts made his Siena education possible.

thesis proposal on the USA PATRIOT ACT, Siena "threw another surprise my way." That surprise: The Symposium on Living Philosophers, a yearlong program featuring Richard Rorty, one of today's most preeminent philosophers.

"When I found out about this, I decided to meld my political science review of the USA PATRIOT ACT with Rorty's philosophical take on civil liberties and the citizen," he said. "I do not know of a place where I could have such a great academic opportunity at the undergraduate level."

Today, Brian has begun participating in the Symposium on Living Philosophers program and is hard at work on his honors thesis. He holds his time at Siena and the "Christian charity" of scholarship donors close to his heart, and eagerly awaits the day when he too can give back.

"The generosity of others has guaranteed the opportunity for my success, and my success will guarantee my future generosity," he said.

So it seems Siena scholarships are always about something more than money. The people who make them possible do so for different reasons, least of which is financial. Many endow scholarships to memorialize or honor a family member or friend, or because of a commitment to higher education; others offer scholarships as a simple gesture of thanks, a way to give back to their alma mater. Others never say why. But whatever inspires donors' generosity, that generosity inspires students—and that's a gift that never stops giving.