

Dog Graduates from University With Honors

A Labrador Retriever named Ross was granted honorary alumnus status at Susquehanna University.

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On Sunday, May 11, a 5-year-old yellow Labrador Retriever, Ross, did exactly what he's done almost everyday the past four years: walked faithfully beside his owner, Christina Fegley. But Sunday's walk had a special significance because it was in the commencement ceremony at Susquehanna University, a national liberal arts college in Selinsgrove, Pa.

"He has been through all that I have in college, so I think he deserves to walk with me for commencement," says Fegley, a business administration major from Milton, Pa., who has muscular dystrophy.

That was exactly what Catherine Hastings, faculty marshal and associate professor of communications, thought when she proposed giving Ross, a trained service dog, special recognition at the annual luncheon for graduates held on May 9. Ross has gone to classes, lived in dorms, stood in dinner lines, and attended social events with Fegley throughout her time at Susquehanna.

During their freshmen year, Ross carried his own key on his collar, so he could jump up next to the security box in their dorm and open the door for Fegley. Since then, he has become the mascot of Fegley's sorority and even served as a gentle reminder for faculty to spice up their lectures. "There were occasions when professors knew they were getting a little boring because Ross started to snore in class," Fegley says. He's even done his fair share of rabble rousing, chasing the occasional ball through the hallways of a dorm or two.

So it was with great amusement that Susquehanna University President L. Jay Lemons declared Ross an honorary alumnus of the Class of 2008, with all the rights and privileges that go along with it: a permanent library card, a lifetime pass to athletics events in the shape of a dog bone, and a dog collar with a tag that reads "Ross '08, SU Alum."