



**Richard L. Apperson Award**  
**Presented to Dr. Michael Carter**  
**54th Annual Conference – College Park, MD**  
**May 2, 2019**

*By James W. Jump, PCACAC Past President*

The Richard L. Apperson Award is the oldest and highest honor presented by the Potomac and Chesapeake Association for College Admission Counseling. It is named for the first President of PCACAC, and it is presented annually to a member whose career embodies the ideals of this association and who has provided exemplary service to students, to PCACAC, and to our profession.

The only honor greater than winning the Apperson Award is being able to present it. This is the fourth time I've had that privilege. My fondest PCACAC memory is travelling to Suffolk, Virginia to present the Apperson Award in person to Ann Powell a couple of weeks before her death. I remember thinking I had successfully hidden the giant Jefferson Cup from her sight, but when I informed her that I was there on official PCACAC business to present her with the award, she first protested that she was not worthy, then remarked, "I wondered why you were carrying that big bowl."

Like Ann, this year's recipient doesn't think of themselves as deserving, and like Ann, they are the only one who believes that. It is therefore both a pleasure and an honor for me to present the 2019 Apperson Award to someone whom I respect and admire.

There used to be an art form to making the Apperson presentation. The recipient didn't know they were being recognized, and, like an Agatha Christie mystery or an episode of NCIS, clues were dropped sparingly and gradually until it became clear who the recipient was. I remember being at the conference luncheon in Williamsburg in 2004 scarfing down dessert when I realized that Evelyn White's description of the Apperson recipient sounded a lot like me. It is possible, perhaps even likely, that I accepted the award with pie filling or crust on the corners of my mouth.

Today the process is less secretive and more humane, allowing the recipient the opportunity to appreciate the moment and prepare remarks. I believe this year's recipient knows, although earlier this week they were guessing who the winner might be. In case our recipient hasn't yet been told or figured it out, it is not a coincidence that your spouse showed up for dinner.

I first met the person we are honoring tonight nearly 15 years ago when I served as a member of an accreditation visiting team at his school. Serving on a visiting team is an interesting experience. You learn a lot about a school and its culture in a very short time, but there is also a danger that you will add 2 and 2 and get 5. I remember an accreditation visit to my school where some procedure was listed as an area for improvement. Five years later the interim visiting team commended the same procedure as a strength. Nothing had changed.

When I first met him our Apperson recipient was new to college counseling after having been a respected faculty member at the school. I remember two things from that visit. The first was that from our first conversation it was clear how thoughtful and perceptive he is and that he had an exceptional understanding of the culture of the school. It was clear that he grasped the big picture, both with regard to his school and about what good college counseling entails. The second was that on our last morning, when the team was writing its report in a room supposedly off-limits to anyone from the school, the Head of School suddenly stormed into the conference room as if there was a crisis of some kind, rushed over to me, and asked the score of my daughter's field hockey game the previous afternoon so she knew who would be playing in the state semifinals.

Today his colleagues at school revere him for those same qualities I observed. Here are some of their comments:

- He provides essential counsel, not just to anxious seniors, but to his colleagues and his administrators.
- Patient, generous, witty, and kind
- His vast knowledge of our school culture, his understanding of the pressures students and parents face in the "college process," his wonderful perspective as a trained historian, and his uncompromising integrity all serve to foster wise advice.
- A wonderful mentor and sage guide

- The calm in a storm, the steady hand that rights a boat, with the perfect personality for getting a family through their child's college application journey
- A great storyteller
- He made even the agony of my two-year sojourn into college counseling tolerable. He's someone I trust wholeheartedly, and when I need advice, I go to him.
- He is patient, thoughtful, and forward-thinking. I have learned so much from him, and I feel lucky every day to have the opportunity to work with him.

We are fortunate that he has shared his gifts with those of us in the profession as well. As a leader within PCACAC, where he served in the presidential cycle with distinction, and NACAC, where he has served on two national committees, those who have worked with him admire his ability to listen, to organize, to cut to the heart of an issue, and his willingness to look at things from a fresh perspective and ask why we have chosen to do something in a particular way. Several members of the PCACAC Board have pointed to his efforts to develop an endowment for the organization as one of his legacies.

Here are some other things that are distinctive about this year's Apperson recipient. He prepared for his career as a college counselor by serving as an Army officer and by getting a Ph.D. in history. He is an avid outdoorsman who is active in Ducks Unlimited, and he is married to an opera singer.

In addition to his service with PCACAC, he served as chair of the Conference Planning Committee for the Virginia Association of Independent Schools, one of five different college counselors to head that committee over a span of 15 years, including Arlene Ingram, Brian Leipheimer, and Mike Kaplan.

The Director of Professional Development for VAIS asked if she could contribute her thoughts:

"He is one of the most thoughtful, generous, and kind colleagues with whom I have worked in my 25 years with the association. He is a servant-leader who was always generous with his time and wisdom. He is that rare breed of calm, clarity, and focus that elevates anything he touches to a higher plane."

He is also known by some as the Fred Astaire of PCACAC, admired for his moves on the dance floor and sought-after as a dance partner. I learned this first hand several years ago at a NACAC party when I realized that the person I was dancing with was no longer dancing with me but with him, bringing back memories of junior high school.

I am proud to know this year's Apperson Award recipient and grateful for his leadership and friendship. I hope I may have played a small role in his journey to this evening. This is a story that President Talmage advised me not to share, but showing the same questionable judgment that has always served me so well, I'll share it anyway.

Several years ago at a NACAC Conference social I had a conversation with a leader within PCACAC. At the time PCACAC had a tradition that the Presidential role alternated between someone from the college side and someone from the high school side. It was a college year, but the nominating committee was having a hard time finding someone able to run that year. As the person whose election broke the alternating tradition at NACAC, I expressed my view that while there should always be one college and one high school person in the three-year Presidential cycle, the nominating committee should not be constrained by having to find a college candidate.

In the same conversation the PCACAC leader expressed an interest in serving on the NACAC Government Relations committee, for which she was ideally suited. Unfortunately, NACAC only allows one person from any affiliate to serve on a committee at any one time, and there was already a PCACAC member serving on that committee. If only, I mused, the person on the committee had to step down because they had been tapped as PCACAC President-elect, that would create a vacancy on the committee.

I don't know how things transpired following that conversation, but both NACAC and PCACAC are better for how things played out. Earlier this evening you heard from the person with whom I had the conversation, for she is about to be the next President of NACAC. And you are about to hear from the person who ended up being elected as PCACAC President-elect, for he is the 2019 Apperson Award winner. Please join me in congratulating this year's Richard L Apperson Award recipient, Mike Carter from St. Stephen's and St. Agnes School.