

On May 10, 2008, Dr. Stephen J. Kopp of Marshall University recognized 10 individual graduates during the 171<sup>st</sup> Commencement Exercises held at the Big Sandy Superstore Arena in Huntington, WV. Owston was the only doctoral graduate so honored.

Kopp introduced this portion of the ceremony:

Before we address our most important duty here today, which is the conferring of degrees, I will take just a few minutes to introduce some very special graduates. Their stories are engaging testimonies of personal triumph, perseverance, and dedication – often despite great odds.

Jim Owston was ninth of the ten students so recognized by President Kopp:

Will Jim Owston please stand.

Each year the American Association of University Administrators recognizes two outstanding dissertations in the field of higher education or higher education administration. One of these honors is the Goodman-Malamuth Dissertation Award, which this year was won by Jim Owston. Jim is here today to receive his doctorate in education from Marshall University. His dissertation titled, *Survival of the Fittest? The Rebranding of West Virginia Higher Education*, looked at the eleven institutions that went or are transitioning from college to university status over the past thirty years. Jim set out to discover if there were factors unique to West Virginia that could explain the proliferation of college to university restructuring. Jim is the Senior Academic Officer for Instructional Technology at a sister university here in West Virginia. In fact, he will be leaving here and heading back to Beckley this afternoon to participate in another commencement. He will receive his dissertation award in June at the AAUA conference in Salt Lake City. Congratulations Jim.