

Tina Collison's metaphor for teaching:

"Witness Protection Program"

In a novel called "Straight Man" by Richard Russo, a professor named William Henry Devereaux Jr. remarks that, *"it is the vain hope of middle class parents that their children will go off to college and later be returned to them economically viable but otherwise unchanged."*

Russo explains that, *"the professor understands what many parents never quite seem to grasp—that sending their kids off to college is a lot like putting them in the witness protection program. If the person who comes out is easily recognizable as the same person who went in, something has gone terribly, dangerously wrong."*

This witness protection program effect is exactly how I feel about my students coming into my organic chemistry classroom. Everyone coming into organic chemistry has preconceived notions about the rigor and difficulty of the course without even knowing at all what the material is really about. Thus, after a student has gone through our organic sequence, I hope that their way of thinking not only about organic chemistry but of chemistry as a whole has been completely changed. If they have not changed the way they think about chemistry after going through my course then something has certainly gone terribly wrong in the classroom. Their way of thinking about chemistry should be unrecognizable to the way they thought coming into the course!