

Joshua Boyce '81

Outstanding Service Award



A leading researcher on the immune basis of asthma and other allergic diseases, physician/scientist Joshua Boyce, MD, is the Albert L. Sheffer Professor of Medicine at Harvard Medical School. He leads one of the largest and most successful asthma and allergy research and training programs in the country as the chief of allergy and clinical immunology at the Brigham and Women's Hospital. He also served as chair of a National Institutes of Health Expert Panel on the Diagnosis and Management of Food Allergy.

At Skidmore, the biology-chemistry major was “carefully mentored” by faculty who inspired his pursuit of a career in science. For over 20 years, Josh has been “paying it forward” by offering full-time research assistant positions to Skidmore graduates (26 to date), as well as laboratory internships to scores of additional Skidmore students. Many have gone on to launch medical careers.

As a former alumnus trustee, Josh was among the most passionate advocates of the Center for Integrated Sciences. He celebrates his 40th as a reunion volunteer.

There was a time when Josh could have scarcely imagined the professional life he enjoys today. The shy freshman was not quite sure which discipline to pursue. He knocked about the Theater Department for a while before gravitating to the sciences. There, he connected with faculty who would have a profound impact on his life.

“My career path was shaped by professors who were both nurturing and rigorous. They gave me my first taste of being able to accomplish something I wasn’t sure I was capable of; in this case, succeeding in the sciences I came to love. I was carefully mentored at every step — and some of these relationships endured long past graduation. Without the guidance of my professors, I am certain that the outcome would have been very different.”

In addition to learning from exceptional science faculty, Josh calls the freshman English class he took with Ralph Ciancio a “transformative” experience. “Ralph was a stickler for details and demanded attention to organization, flow and grammar as tools to support a thesis. By the end of the class, I had internalized the principals of expository writing.” Today, a significant amount of Josh’s time is devoted to composing and reviewing grants and manuscripts and editing for journals. He thinks of Ciancio often.

As he built a complex and demanding career, Josh found a way to offer a similar kind of mentorship to many Skidmore students and young alumni through internships and paid positions in his lab.

“As a result of my Skidmore experience, I’ve been able to contribute significantly to medical science, to improve the lives of my patients, to mentor generations of young physicians and scientists, to participate rigorously and extensively in the peer review process and to help shape public health policy through my work with the National Institutes of Health.”

Josh observes, “I could not have asked for a better career path, but none of this was even remotely on my radar screen when I arrived at Skidmore. Everything began there.”