
Eugene P. Odum Award

James Porter

University of Georgia

The **Eugene P. Odum Award for Excellence in Ecology Education** recognizes an ecologist for outstanding teaching, research, and mentoring activities, and for demonstrated ability in relating basic ecological principles to human affairs.

This year's recipient of the Odum Award is Dr. James Porter of the University of Georgia. Jim Porter seems to be a natural fit for this award. He spearheaded

an effort requiring environmental literacy at the University of Georgia. After this component was added to the curriculum, Dr. Porter set about teaching one of the most important portions of that effort, a nonmajors course with over 400 students per semester. His evaluations from colleagues to students are uniformly glowing. People endeavor not only to get into the class as enrolled students, but also to get a seat in the room as visitors, so that they can hear the lectures. His lectures are variously described as "... like an Aztec sacrifice. He rips your heart out with the information he presents"; "a multimedia tour de force"; and "a life-changing experience." One student writes how he did not want to take the course, and how the *Wall Street Journal* said that global warming was baloney. "After Dr. Porter's lecture on this subject, I canceled my subscription to *The Wall Street Journal*." Other students tell how they changed careers based on Dr. Porter's classes, becoming environmental attorneys, scientists, and educators themselves. One colleague further describes Jim as "a teacher who lives his life teaching as if that were all that matters."

Dr. Porter's teaching influence is felt beyond the walls of his classroom. His graduate and undergraduate students have gone on to populate academia, particularly in marine ecology. In addition, his efforts at education have been formally recognized by at least one member of Congress, who was impressed by his many visits to "the Hill" and how much he learned from those interactions.

Jim takes a genuine personal interest in all of his students, and they sense that his concern is real. His intense and passionate style is changing lives. Those lives can, in turn, change the world.

