

To My Students:

As I am putting together this writing assignment, I am considering how you all recently did your best on our latest assessment. You studied hard, worked on all of the assigned homework problems, completed the required labs, and then it all came down to this assessment that measures just how much you've retained on this topic. I know (and I think you would agree) that if I were to give you this same quiz in about a month with no warning, scores would go down. Is it that you've not learned the material? Not at all. It just is not as fresh in your mind and you've not prepared yourself for the assessment. The results would show exactly what I would expect. As much as I try to get you to learn physics, most of you will forget all of this in just a short time.

This does not surprise or offend me in any way. We each have our own individual passion-that one thing that we really enjoy working on or learning about, and for many of you...that won't be physics. Even though you may not be able to remember all of the bold terms in the book readings, or the exact formulas for how to calculate a quantity...you will have learned how to work hard and not give up when a topic seems out of reach. These are valuable lessons that will guide you through the rest of your life, and they are the lessons that I most hope you remember from my course. Not the physics, but the "life lessons" that will help you every day.

We are all currently living in a very turbulent time. If you watch anything on national news, you are no doubt quite familiar with what our country is currently facing. If you did not vote in this last election, you will be voting in the next election. It's now time to "pass the torch" on to you. As a citizen of the United States of America, you have the privilege to help guide future governmental policy on a myriad of topics. It may seem ridiculous that our elected officials look to you for this guidance, but that's exactly why our country was formed-so that every individual can have a say in what direction our government will follow.

Your writing project for this semester will be to read selected chapters from a book titled *Physics for Future Presidents: The Science Behind the Headlines* by Richard A. Muller (Copyright 2008). The book was written by a professor at the University of California-Berkeley to try to inform students about the physics of terrorism, energy, nuclear weapons, space, and global warming. The book is written as if YOU are the current President of the United States, and this is a "crash course" on the physics you need to know to make decisions.

To cover all of those topics in our course would be madness, so we will be focusing primarily on energy. It will be your task to learn everything that you can about the energies that are proposed (the pros and cons of each type) and then to decide, for yourself, what our country should do. You will be writing your findings to an elected official, and we will be mailing your letters to this individual. It is important that you understand that this elected official does want to hear what you have to say-after all, you will be either reelecting them or selecting their opponent in the next election. I promise you that they will take you seriously.

It is important to note that we may disagree. You and I may not feel the same way about particular energies, and that is absolutely fine. You and your classmates might see things differently, and that is absolutely fine too. This is about policy, not politics. The United States of America is about different opinions coming together to decide what is best for the 'common good'. I will not tell you what to write or what energies to support-those decisions will be up to you. I will, however, provide guidance to you as you formulate your own views.

I am extremely excited for this project to begin, and excited to watch you start to take on your part in our government. This is YOUR country and YOUR world-and it's time for all of us to hear YOUR opinions.

Sincerely,
Ms. XXXXXXXXXX