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# Honorary Degree Award Citation for Elizabeth Tusten Forter

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## Honorary Degree Awarded to Retiring Faculty

### Elizabeth Tusten Forter, Edwards-Alexander Professor of English

"Elizabeth Tusten Forter, your presence on this campus for thirty-five years continues two great traditions of women professors of English literature, those of the University of Wisconsin and those of Lawrence. From Bascom Hill to Main Hall, you have brought great enthusiasm, good cheer, and high standards, all tempered by the Red Queen's advice to Alice: 'Always speak the truth--think before you speak--and write it down afterwards.' Whether editing Shaw's plays or students' papers, serving as chair of the English Department or director of the London Study Center, your meticulous memory and sharp wit have illuminated for us all those rooms of the novel, especially Jane Austen's and Virginia Woolf's, which you have made your own--and the gardens as well, both real and imaginary, of poetry in the twentieth century.

In theory and practice, you demonstrate the vital truth of Susanne Langer's definition of comedy. If, as she says, comedy 'an art form that arises naturally wherever people are gathered to celebrate life, in spring festivals, triumphs, birthdays'--and, not least, in commencements--then your generous entertainment of students and colleagues has carried well beyond the classroom that 'essential comic feeling, which is the sentient aspect of organic unity, growth, and self-preservation.'

May good hope sustain you, and weariness not overwhelm you as you reach the Eighth Square at last, where, as the Queen assures Alice, 'It's all feasting and fun.'

By the authority vested in me, I now confer upon you the degree of Master of Arts, *ad eundem*, and admit you to its rights, its privileges, and its obligations."

*Citation read by President Richard Warch at Commencement, 1988*