**Daniel Pastan**

***Knox Prize Research Trip***

**What was the name of your research project? What was the purpose of your research experience?**

My research project didn’t have a name! I fell in love with David Foster Wallace at some point over the course of my (then) 3 years at Amherst. Upon falling in love, I decided that I wanted to scour his archives at some point in time, and realized that his archives were in Austin, TX at some point in time--the perfect combination of Atlantan high school conservatism and W. Massean collegiate liberalism. I was sold.

**Why did you choose to apply for the Knox Prize?**

I wanted to consider DFW fully and extensively, and I knew Amherst had the money to provide such an opportunity.

**Did your experience with the Knox Prize influence your thesis work, either directly or indirectly? If so, how?**

It did! I decided to pursue a thesis in the wake of my Knox work, and then I decided I didn’t want to pursue it any further. They were equally important decisions to have made.

**What were the most challenging aspects of the research you conducted?**

I was very much independent. No supervision or assistance. I did it live.

**What were the most rewarding aspects of your research experience?**

I was very much independent. No supervision or assistance. I did it live.

**What did you learn from the process (of applying for funded research, of doing the research, of figuring out what the heck to research, etc.)?**

I learned how to articulate my intentions as straightforwardly as possible. I how identify and pursue my interests. I learned how to conduct myself in archives. I learned how to be self-sufficient, independent, confident, and interested in something.

**What do you know now (about the Knox Prize, about your specific research, about the research process in general, etc.) that you wish you’d known before you began your Knox Prize-related research?**

I couldn’t possibly articulate what I know, but I’ll tell you this: a lot. I learned more about DFW than the average Jane does. I spent 1 month reading letters and unpublications and journal entries. It was wild.

**What do you know now that you’re glad you didn’t know before you began your research?**

I’m smart enough to do “worthwhile” research.

**If you could give rising seniors advice about the Knox Prize, what would it be?**

Apply if you care about a literary something.