



# The faculty 'tool shed'

## The John S. Kendall Center for Engaged Learning

**A**t Gustavus, students perform *The Four Seasons*, titrate solutions, and analyze *King Lear*. They perform plays, write lab reports and critical essays, research history and think through ethical dilemmas, communicate in foreign and computer languages, and decipher video art and the human body. Students experience the world as their classroom, and in their classrooms, they come to understand that the global begins at home. And the goal of this education is simple: to help students attain their full human potential and to develop in them a passion for learning throughout their lives.

Their best models and mentors are Gustavus faculty, who themselves perform Vivaldi, consider the intricacies of words and structures, and create aesthetic theories of the human form. Gustavus faculty are engaged in the world as their classroom, and in their classrooms, they integrate the community, both large and small. And the goal for faculty is equally simple: to fulfill their potential as teachers, scholars, and artists and to continually learn in order to be more thoughtfully engaged in and responsible for their students' learning.

In order to foster faculty and student learning, Gustavus Adolphus College has announced the formation of the John S. Kendall Center for Engaged Learning, named in honor of the longtime psychology professor and 12th president of the College. "John Kendall was at his core a teacher, a real teacher who cared about the students," President James Peterson '64 remembers, "but, importantly, he cared about teachers too. He cared about how the faculty was to grow and continue learning." For Peterson, John Kendall was a valued professor and faculty adviser during his student years at Gustavus. "And many years later," Peterson continues, "he was the individual most responsible for convincing me to consider this presidency. So, I'm very honored to be a part of creating this Kendall Center—this legacy of engaged learning at Gustavus."

According to Joanne Kendall, his widow, "John was interested in dynamic learning and he learned best through experience." The time they lived on a farm while at Gustavus, she re-

by Laura Behling

## The legacy of a respected leader

The Kendall Center for Engaged Learning is named in honor of **John S. Kendall '49**, longtime psychology professor at



Gustavus and the College's 12th president. "Gustavus has been a most important part of my life," he once reflected. "In each of my roles, I saw how Gustavus supported and en-

couraged the development and growth of its students. Each of us who is a graduate of the college owes Gustavus a significant debt."

Kendall taught at the College for 30 years, from 1958 to 1965 and from 1968 to 1991, and also served several terms as chair of the Department of Psychology (1959–1960, 1962–1965, and 1968–1975). In 1973 he received Gustavus's highest teaching honor, the Edgar M. Carlson Award for Distinguished Teaching. The award citation stated, "John Kendall has an infectious interest in ideas; he likes stories; he likes his students; he has a zest for life. . . ." Students flocked to his classes.

He was named the College's 12th president in 1981 and served until 1991. During his presidency, Gustavus became a Phi Beta Kappa institution and received a prestigious grant from the F.W. Olin Foundation that funded the building of a new science hall and additional science initiatives and also greatly increased the College's reputation for high quality science education.

members, "was a learning opportunity for us," and also for some of John's students who would meet for class in the barn. In their Minnesota cabin, Joanne recalls John saying that his "head worked better when he was using his hands," and as a result "he had a tool shed that was the envy of our neighbors and local handymen."

The Kendall Center is, then, a kind of faculty "tool shed," a resource center that provides opportunities and programs for faculty to fully engage in their professional work and in their teaching. Its presence on campus signals a commitment to support faculty in achieving their potential as scholars and teachers, which, in turn, is a commitment to help Gustavus students develop their capacity and passion for lifelong learning, and to prepare them for fulfilling lives of leadership and service in society. The Center "enables Gustavus to be more intentional about faculty development in areas of scholarship and creativity and pedagogy," Provost Mary Morton explains. "Although this is an area in which we have many strengths, the Center allows a structure of peer support and leadership."

Such support for faculty members' development as teachers and scholars is a central expression of the College's commitment to a liberal arts education of recognized excellence provided by faculty who embody the highest standards of scholarship and teaching. Gustavus is a "learning community," Peterson says. "We believe that strongly, and we know that in addition to student learning, that means faculty learning, too. Faculty need support for their own engaged learning, within their professional disciplines, within the realm of teaching techniques and technology, and within the company of their Gustavus colleagues. That's what the Kendall Center does."

*'I firmly believe that staying abreast in one's field promotes intellectual excitement, and that this translates into more effective teaching.' \**

**T**he Kendall Center's mission is focused to assist faculty in two specific areas: disciplinary expertise and pedagogical proficiency. These two areas are, of course, interrelated and mutually interdependent. Teachers who are active scholars, engaged in and aware of the ongoing expansion of knowledge within their academic fields, bring

enthusiasm for their disciplines into the classroom. Scholars who actively teach and reflect upon their teaching will bring into their research and scholarly and creative endeavors the curiosity and insights that arise within the classroom. By meeting the needs of both these areas of a faculty member's profession, the Kendall Center nurtures excellence among teacher-scholars. "I feel a greater sense of purpose in what we are doing collaboratively for our students," one faculty member comments. "There are tangible outcomes to be had from all of these programs, but a forum for conversation and intellectual development with peers is primary."

Faculty specialize in a particular academic discipline and develop a deep understanding of a subdiscipline through graduate study. But academic fields continually develop and change, new ideas emerge, new texts surface, connections among theories are forged. To stay engaged, faculty research and create, converse with other scholars in their field to share discoveries, and then join in the chorus of thought through the presentation and publication of their ideas. Faculty recognize the value of the assistance provided by the Center. One indicates how it "helps to advance my collaborative research with students, enhances my connections with colleagues, and allows me to present my scholarly findings at professional meetings." Another notes how such support is vital in "creating and presenting new works in performing arts."

The Kendall Center assists this exchange of ideas by funding faculty who travel to present their research and creative work, disbursing internal grants to support faculty's intellectual projects, including grants to support faculty-student collaborative research, providing on-campus conversational space for faculty to share their scholarly work with their colleagues, and alerting faculty to opportunities in their fields that will allow them to continue to learn and experience the "intellectual excitement" of their disciplinary fields.

\* All quotes from faculty members come from a recent survey conducted as part of the continuing assessment of faculty development programming.

*I'm better educated about students and about teaching through these programs, and I have become convinced that learning to be a good teacher is a lifelong pursuit.'*

**A**ctive scholarly work is not simply for the faculty's own erudition. They are committed to maintaining professional expertise to bring new ideas back to their classes. They share with their students the best of scholarly thought, and model for students what it means to be an active and present student of sociology or geology or music,

and an engaged learner in the world. Such opportunities "have kept me engaged and vitalized as a teacher," a member of the faculty says. "I am continually challenged to think about what I include (and exclude) in my course content and what methods I use as a teacher. So both content and pedagogy are challenged and revitalized."

Gustavus faculty are committed to developing teaching methods and strategies that consider how students' varying learning styles influence their educational success. One faculty member explains that "I have a better sense of how to evaluate my students because I now know how to develop and articulate specific criteria for assignments." Working across disciplinary boundaries, faculty learn from each other that there may be common elements in teaching Roman history and marketing, and likewise, that empires and corporations are far different entities that require specific pedagogies. Faculty also learn, through reflection, curious inquiry, and the courage to teach differently, that different teaching styles affect students differently, and that the mark of good teaching, like the mark of a good scholar, requires active responsibility and commitment to their own and to their students' learning. "One of the best outcomes" of the faculty development programs run by the Kendall Center, Academic Dean Mariangela Maguire offers, "is that it is changing the culture of teaching at Gustavus. It has opened up the conversation about teaching and we are now a far more reflective community of teachers who are willing to admit mistakes, try new strategies, learn from others, and share experiences."

## The John S. Kendall Center for Engaged Learning has seven major components:

### 1. Support for Faculty Research, Scholarship, and Creativity

Ongoing research, scholarship, and creativity are vital elements of each faculty member's professional activity and contribute significantly to the learning of students and the intellectual culture of the College. The Center offers financial support for these activities through travel grants to professional conferences and Research, Scholarship, and Creativity grants.

### 2. Support for Teaching and Learning

Teaching is central to the mission of the College, student learning, and the scholarly vitality of the faculty. The Center supports critical reflection upon pedagogical issues and methods through summer workshops and several academic-year discussion series.

### 3. Support for Innovation in the Curriculum

The curriculum is shaped by what faculty teach and how they teach it; the Center

supports curriculum development through financial support for redesigning existing courses, majors, and programs and creating new areas of study.

### 4. Collaborative Student/Faculty Research

Students learn best from faculty mentors who create a hands-on learning experience. The Center provides funding support for such collaborative work, and also provides support for students to travel to professional conferences to present their accomplished academic work.

### 5. New Faculty Mentoring and Orientation

Establishing a mentoring relationship is an important first step in shaping a new faculty member's experiences. The Center fosters this faculty development opportunity through its Mentoring Partners Program, designed to provide an institutional and personal commitment to new tenure-track or continuing-appointment faculty mem-

bers as they transition to participation in the culture of the College. Orientation throughout the academic year allows new faculty to focus on pedagogical issues, learn about opportunities at the College, and develop camaraderie among peers.

### 6. College Community Professional Support

Faculty, staff, and students of the College form a community of learners who share an interest in academic inquiry. The Center sponsors a variety of programs and resources that increase dialogue and foster the growth of the intellectual community—faculty, staff, and students.

### 7. Support for Ongoing Assessment

Resources must be used wisely; thus the Center works to continually evaluate the impact of faculty development programming on faculty and student learning.

## Moes' gift builds momentum for Kendall Center



Gustavus parents **Karin and Robert Moe** believe in the power of focused philanthropy. They direct much of their giving toward liberal arts education, where they feel that individuals and society will reap the greatest benefit from their efforts.

Recently, the Moes made a \$1 million commitment to the John S. Kendall Center for Engaged Learning. This leadership gift brings the College closer to its goal of fully endowing the center. When fully funded, the endowment will generate funds to support two main areas: faculty development and student-faculty research.

"We are grateful to the Moes for their continued support of Gustavus," says Gustavus Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs Mary E. Morton. "Student-faculty research and faculty development are two key components of the College's developing strategic plan and this endowment gift has energized our community to move forward in that aspect of the planning more quickly than we had anticipated. The generosity of the Moes will enable us to double the number of annual student and faculty

awards provided through the Kendall Center. This will have a significant impact on our ability to strengthen and foster the work of generations of students and faculty."

The Moes have made major gifts to several leading colleges and universities. In 1996, a gift to Gustavus launched the Moe Lectures series, which brings internationally-known speakers to the College each year in service to students and also the wider regional community.

The robust, engaged, interactive, and interdisciplinary "Kendall" approach to learning


resonated with the Moes, whose daughter, Kris '84, attended Gustavus during John Kendall's tenure as Gustavus president. They know Gustavus to be a place where student-faculty work flourishes and relationships are warm and inspiring.

Robert and Karin Moe feel that faculty who give so much to students need the opportunity to grow and develop themselves. "One of the great things about Gustavus is that it fosters strong faculty and student relationships," Karin notes. "Those great individuals who make a difference in the lives of young people need the resources and time to develop their own work. We support the Kendall Center because it is our opportunity to ensure this tradition remains strong."

The Center sponsors teaching and learning workshops, creates forums for faculty to talk together about teaching challenges and successes, supports faculty interested in developing new or enhancing existing areas of teaching expertise, and engages in conversation with experts in various fields who can offer Gustavus faculty new ideas and ways of teaching students. The Center also works with new faculty throughout the year in two important ways. First, it provides an institutional orientation to all new faculty, focusing on broad perspectives of a liberal arts education to more focused topics during the year, such as enhancing active learning and creating assignments to stimulate critical thinking. Second, the Kendall Center plans and administers a mentoring program that connects first-year tenure-track faculty with experienced Gustavus faculty as a way to assist new faculty members in their transition to participation in the culture of the College.

And in turn, Gustavus faculty become experts for each other. One department chair observes, "I am much better equipped to mentor young colleagues who often come from major universities where pedagogy is entirely lecture and assessment is testing. I have shared strategies and techniques with my young colleagues and I know this is helping them create project-based learning opportunities in their classrooms." Provost Morton concurs, articulating that "professional development is part of our responsibility as faculty; for us to challenge and support each other as peers is to acknowledge our commitment to be engaged learners throughout our vocation as teacher-scholars."

Responsive to the professional needs and interests of each faculty member, the Kendall Center fosters the pursuit of teaching and scholarly excellence throughout all stages of each faculty member's career, a realization of the continuous nature of learning to which John and Joanne Kendall also came. "We started thinking about life as being a research laboratory," Joanne Kendall says, and the various people they met as being "mentors and models of good teaching and good learning."

Gustavus faculty are themselves mentors and models of good teaching and good learning, and the opportunities available in the Kendall Center "tool shed" help to challenge, support, and encourage them in their work. "The interchange of pedagogical ideas has been phenomenal," a faculty member comments. "I have learned a ton from my colleagues . . . I know collectively we care about our teaching and do interesting things both inside and out of the classroom, and that we are very devoted to help our students succeed." This is a sentiment Provost Morton echoes: "Anytime Gustavus faculty members have an opportunity to reflect on their own creative scholarship and teaching, one's engagement in our learning and mentoring community is strengthened. And our students are the ultimate beneficiaries of faculty development." 

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