

# Why I teach

What does it mean to teach? According to Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary to teach means: 1- to cause to know something, 2 - to guide the studies of, 3 - to impart the knowledge of and 4 - to instruct by precept, example, or experience.

What does it mean to be a teacher? It means accepting the responsibility of being knowledgeable, a good communicator, motivated, enthusiastic and committed to giving a great deal of time, effort and energy to shaping and changing lives of students. The shoulders of every teacher carry the responsibility for filling the minds of those seeking knowledge.

The rewards? Seeing a bewildered freshman transformed into a mature, confident senior who has the ability to seek and obtain a responsible position in a promising career, and self-satisfaction in knowing students' lives have forever been changed.

With that in mind, we asked a few professors to tell us not only why they teach, but also why they chose Kentucky Wesleyan College. Their response was inspiring and insightful, allowing us to learn something about each of them and ourselves – demonstrating their love of learning.

## Realizing a dream

By Dr. Buxton Johnson

*Associate professor of physics. Joined Kentucky Wesleyan in 1995.*

Kentucky Wesleyan College has always been a very special place to me. I was brought up in Owensboro. I went to KWC basketball games. I went to school with the sons and daughters of the college faculty. I took my first higher education English course at Kentucky Wesleyan while in high school. I was especially drawn to KWC during my middle twenties. As a new Christian, I was eager to study the life and teachings of John Wesley. Naturally enough, I often came to the KWC library to study works by Wesley, including his original works in the Heritage Room.

During my study I discovered that John Wesley was highly educated and yet he was deeply committed to the Savior. Wesley's life was an inspiration for me to pursue a high level of education as a Christian. From that time until now, I have always associated Kentucky Wesleyan

with John Wesley. It was this association that drew me back to this college many years later.

When I first entered graduate school I was anxious about the long program ahead. My wife, knowing my feelings about Kentucky Wesleyan and believing that all things are possible with God, encouraged me that when I finished my Ph.D. I might teach at the college. Incredible enough, after six years, I finally saw a dream come true – I was hired by Kentucky Wesleyan to teach physics and mathematics. I

found KWC warm and caring. In fact, several faculty and staff members helped my family and I during a very difficult time when my wife and four children were involved in a five-car collision. I also found the faculty to be highly dedicated and very concerned with student learning. They encouraged me to challenge students, to not be afraid of expecting students to work hard at mastering classroom material, and to help students succeed academically. With the exception of one year spent at the Vanderbilt Medical Center doing cancer related research, I have been here teaching physics, math, and computer science since 1995.

Students are still quite impressionable when they come to Kentucky Wesleyan College. During their years here, students make some very important decisions as to who they are and what they will do with their lives. However, many things about college life distract students from their purpose and cause them to lose interest. The most rewarding thing about teaching is the opportunity to spark the interest of students in a course of study and to encourage them to pursue their dreams. When a student finishes his or her program at KWC and graduates or transfers to engineering school to finish their engineering degree, I share in their accomplishment. It is especially satisfying when students come back several years later and offer a word of thanks to me for teaching and encouraging them.

The academic freedom afforded faculty at Kentucky Wesleyan is very important. For instance, while giving a series of leadership studies lectures on the life of Michael Faraday, I had the freedom to share Faraday's life both as a brilliant scientist and as a dedicated Christian man. Many students appreciated this.

Times are very exciting, yet anxious at this college as we stand at the crossroads of the new millennium. We have tremendous challenges and obstacles to overcome as we face the future. Nehemiah, a Jewish leader whose story is described in the Old Testament book of the Bible bearing his name, faced similar challenges. He spent time in prayer and then with great courage set out on an incredibly successful building program and economic reform. However, at the heart of his success lay his deep reliance on God. Part of what I like about Kentucky Wesleyan is its Christian heritage. As we rebuild and reorganize for the future, I hope we will also rededicate ourselves to the Savior and thus fulfill our greater mission on this campus to future generations.

