

# Faculty benefits

## Norton Fund promotes excellence by funding research, travel, publishing

The alumni of Kansas Wesleyan University are its living history. Through their memories, the university's greatest moments are kept alive.

For example, there aren't many who can say they were on campus the day KWU received national accreditation in 1958, but Jerry Norton '59 recalls that moment with clarity.

"When we received word of the national accreditation, a number of students jumped in cars and drove up and down Santa Fe, honking their horns and waving out the windows," he recalled. "We really puzzled citizens of Salina with that one."

Norton was only in his second year at the time and had yet to fully realize what Kansas Wesleyan University would mean to him in the coming years. His wife, Margaret (Williams) Norton '61, would make that same discovery just two years later.

Ironically, despite their mutual affection for their alma mater and shared time at the university, they wouldn't meet and marry until both had graduated and were in Topeka.

They both list some of the same faculty as defining members of the university

that inspired them. Said list ranges all the way from Dr. Charles Kreager in the Physics Department to Dr. Felix Wasserman in the humanities.

"The love of learning, I really have to point to the Wesleyan faculty," Jerry said. "I think they instilled it, they were models of it, they were mentors of it. It was an intellectual awakening."

In turn, both Nortons became professors themselves. After a short stint practicing law, Jerry went on to teach it for 48 years and achieved faculty emeriti status at Loyola University Chicago School of Law, while Margaret taught art history at Triton Community College for 35 years, both institutions in Illinois.

"When I came here [KWU], I thought I'd be a teacher," said Margaret. Her history major and English minor from KWU paired nicely with her master's in Art History, which she was inspired to pursue by professor Charles Durken after multiple visits to local and regional art museums.

Though she is the only person in her family to attend KWU, she came to the university with four others from her graduating class of 14 in her hometown of Scandia, after being encouraged by



**Jerry Norton '59 and Margaret Williams Norton '61**

Richard Wilke, then pastor of her local Methodist church.

Before Jerry, his mother, Helen, moved to Salina and attended the KWU business college, which later became Brown Mackie College. His older brother, Frank Norton '54 was also an alum and a member of the Board of Trustees, which Jerry himself has served since 2014.

It's that sort of "people connection," they said, that enhanced their experience at Kansas Wesleyan and gave them opportunities to enrich their worldview.

"At that time, we had a lot of foreign students, because a lot of Methodist movements were still in a 'mission mode,'" Margaret recalled, "which was a great asset for people like us, who were almost all from central Kansas."

Jerry noted, too, that he admired the university's refusal to segregate races in either academics or activities, especially once he continued his academic journey and found many colleges did.

Their stories and observations help us understand the history of KWU, but the Nortons themselves have made history through their gifts, even when money was tight.

"I was a librarian in Topeka my first job, not making much money, so I would give \$5 or \$10, and later it became more," Margaret said. "We love Kansas Wesleyan, and this is where we want to give our gift."

Over the years, the Nortons have contributed funds to the Nursing Education Center and other special projects, but their main gifts have gone to the Norton Faculty Excellence Fund, which they established in 2018.

The fund provides for faculty when opportunities arise with unexpected expenditures and grants are not readily available.

"We hoped, through this faculty enrichment fund, that we could encourage faculty to go to conferences, to get their works published and, potentially, to do research with students," Jerry said, "projects that could advance faculty members, but also their students."

Just in the last year, three faculty members have utilized the funds, including assistant professor of Social Work Bridget Goodness.

"Senior students were given the opportunity to attend the two-day WSU Power Conference that provides continuing education regarding social work practice issues," Goodness said. "This allowed our students to see how a professional level conference is facilitated and provided continuing education for students and faculty."

For the Nortons, each donation and its results are a testament to the lasting love they share for Kansas Wesleyan and their dreams for its future.