

POSITIVE INFLUENCE

Former students honor Professor Goodwin's legacy



Jamie Andrews, center, receives the Dr. John W. Goodwin Endowed Agricultural Economics Scholarship. From left are Jim Plaxico, Phoebe Goodwin, Andrews, Dennis Slagell and Scott Sewell.

John W. Goodwin was a teacher and adviser in the agricultural economics department for nearly 20 years, and he had an immeasurable impact on students and faculty. His favorite part of the job was teaching and advising students. He impressed them with his excitement for the material and his capability to personally relate to them.

Alumni Scott Sewell, Paul Schulte, Dennis Slagell and former department head James Plaxico led an effort to raise \$200,000 to create the Dr. John W. Goodwin Endowed Agricultural Economics Scholarship Fund in Goodwin's honor.

The idea for the scholarship originated at Goodwin's memorial service in November 2008 and became a reality as the small group encouraged nearly 60 former students and professors to give in his memory. With the Pickens Legacy Scholarship Match, the fund will have an impact of \$537,540.

"Dr. Goodwin wore many different hats in his lifetime," says Slagell, a 1979 agricultural economics graduate.

"Although his duty was to be a professor, he was a man of amazing patience to give so much of himself to others as a mentor, instructor, adviser and unique professor."

The scholarship honors Goodwin's legacy as a supporter of student achievement, says Sewell, a 1979 agricultural economics and accounting alumnus.

"Students who receive this scholarship will be designated as Dr. John W. Goodwin Scholars in recognition of their excellence as leaders and exemplary students."

His former students say the endowment honors Goodwin's impact on their lives and the extraordinary connections he made with his students.

"I look back and realize he was a man of incredible patience, giving so much of himself to others," Plaxico says.

Goodwin taught the required introductory course in agricultural economics, which introduced him to undergraduates early in their studies. He had an impeccable memory, which he used to

retain hundreds of students' names and backgrounds.

"That kind of connection with students is unique and made him that much better as an instructor," says Schulte, a 1979 agricultural economics, marketing and business alumnus. "He set an example that is unparalleled."

Goodwin cracked jokes and pulled pranks in class. In one well-known stunt, he told his introductory class there would be no cheating as he placed a realistic-looking toy gun on the lectern. He carried himself in such a serious manner students thought he meant it.

"He also helped build a national reputation for OSU's agricultural economics department through perseverance,

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leadership and unselfish devotion to his students," Schulte says.

After class, a line of people would form outside Goodwin's office at 413 Ag Hall during the '60s and '70s. The line would extend down the hallway and in some cases to the stairway as students waited to see him. Some needed to speak to him as their academic adviser while others wanted his valuable insight and advice on careers and life in general.

"Many departmental graduates credit Dr. Goodwin with instilling in them a love and interest for economics," says Mike Woods, agricultural economics department head, professor and extension economist. "He gave students an appreciation for the contributions to agriculture and society that agricultural economists can offer."

Goodwin, an adviser to Alpha Gamma Rho fraternity for 17 years, rarely missed chapter meetings. He provided guidance and stability to the fraternity after the tragic October 1977 homecoming accident in which three fraternity members died working on their homecoming house decoration.

Schulte was president of the fraternity at the time and called Goodwin immediately.

"I remember thinking if anyone could make any order out of the chaos going on, it would be him," Schulte says.

He was also unselfish. When Goodwin produced an agricultural economics textbook that became the national standard for land-grant institutions, he donated the royalties to OSU's agricultural scholarship program.


"It's that kind of commitment that inspires others to give back," says Plaxico. "We should all step back and look at how we can be of service to others through donating."

Goodwin worked in the areas of price analysis and forecasting, but his main focus was livestock marketing. He received numerous college, university and national awards for his teaching efforts, but he was proudest of the Outstanding Teacher Award given by students.

"He was brilliant and demanding as a teacher, but on the flip side as interested and caring about each student as any professor could be," Slagell says.

"He truly could see the world through our eyes, and I can say, as a former student, he did his best to enable us to achieve the success he knew we could."

Goodwin's family, friends and former students cherish his memory and the life lessons he taught. They are proud this scholarship will give even more people an idea of Goodwin's impact on OSU.

"Because of the positive influence Dr. Goodwin has made in so many students' lives while he was on the OSU faculty, our prayer is that this scholarship will continue his legacy and enable students to be the best they can be for many years to come," Sewell says. 

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