A change in direction to the same destination

When she was in seventh grade, Susanne Mitko (B.A. ’85) wanted to be a lawyer and change the world. She held on to that plan while attending UMKC and was even accepted into the School of Law. Tuition costs, speaking engagements and a trip to Ireland prompted her to change her career path, but one might say she stayed true to her goal of saving the world: Mitko became a teacher. Today, she’s one of the best: the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education named Mitko the Missouri Teacher of the Year.

Now in her sixth year teaching social studies at Bernard Campbell Middle School in the Lee’s Summit, Mo., R-7 school district, Mitko said she was surprised to win the honor in her district, let alone the state.

“The most surprising moment was actually receiving my district’s Teacher of the Year Award,” she says. “Lee’s Summit School District is a remarkably strong district and there were 20 finalists interviewed for Teacher of the Year. They are all such incredible educators that I truly believed I would never be chosen.”

Chosen she was, and now she’s Missouri’s representative for the National Teacher of the Year. But Mitko is modest about what the honor represents.

“Being named Missouri Teacher of the Year does not mean you’re the best,” she says. “That honor goes to the one who was fortunate enough to be in the right place and right time to represent all the other teachers. There are so many, many amazing teachers in Missouri.”

Susanne Mitko’s Advice for Future Teachers:

• Remember to be patient with yourself. Teaching is an art and it’s not something you perfect right away.

• Know your subject matter well and share your enthusiasm with your students. But don’t let that stop you from learning in all directions.

• Be a lifelong learner. Take advantage of professional development opportunities any time you can.

• Most importantly, put your students first. If you care and you know your subject matter, you’ll be a good teacher. Be part salesman, part thespian and part cheerleader!”

Help us honor a legend: Jim Falls

He was called the College’s “one-man recruitment and retention center.” Since 1967, Dr. Jim Falls has brought much more than mere instruction to his classes. His passion and spirit brought the material to life, giving students a deeper understanding and appreciation of the subject matter — and having a great time in the process.

Falls recently announced his upcoming retirement, and to honor his years of passion and service, a scholarship has been established in his name. Your gift can help make the scholarship a reality.

To donate, visit www.umkc.edu/give/jimfalls, or contact Karen English at 816-235-1139, or email englishk@umkc.edu.

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College of Arts and Sciences
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2009-10 Missouri Teacher of the Year Susanne Mitko (B.A. ’85)

A career of helping people

Even as a teenager, Stacey Daniels-Young (M.A. ’79, Ph.D. ’86) knew that her life’s work would be devoted to helping people, and she knew that she wanted to help people sooner rather than later. She began her undergraduate studies while at Kansas State High School and graduated early. And when she was told she had to wait a year to begin medical school because she was too young, Daniels-Young researched her options and decided to come to Kansas City to earn an M.A. in social psychology and a Ph.D. in community psychology at UMKC.

While working on her post-secondary degrees, Daniels-Young found herself heavily involved with research projects investigating important issues, and she quickly developed an affinity and passion for research, especially research that made immediate connections to current social issues and challenges within a specific community.

“UMKC has become a terrific urban university because it offers classes for working students,” she says. “The College is a terrific place to be a working student. It’s flexible enough to accommodate almost any schedule.”

This research became a part of the answer to a question she says she’s always asked herself: “How can I impact society in broad swaths?”

Not surprisingly, her career history consists of positions directly involved with improving her community. She spent 15 years conducting program research and evaluation at the Kaiser Foundation, where she researched topics such as child care, education and health. She held a government-appointed position with the Kansas City Board of Police Commissioners for eight years, focusing a great deal of her attention on the police department’s hiring practices of minorities and women.

Her community action-oriented personality also resulted in a career move with the Black Health Care Coalition. After leaving the Kaiser Foundation, Daniels-Young offered to volunteer her social psychology expertise and research skills to the Coalition. Instead of taking her on as a volunteer, they asked if she would be their president and CEO.

Daniels-Young has served the community as a consultant for the Ad Hoc Group Against Crime, the Kansas City, Missouri School District, the Missouri Department of Education, the Maternal and Child Health Coalition, the Kansas City Human Relations Commission, the UMKC Institute for Human Development and the Black Community Fund to just name a few.

She is currently serving as Director of COMBAT, Jackson County, Missouri’s community backed anti-drug sales tax. While the best-known COMBAT programs are anti-drug law enforcement and drug court, the organization also sponsors prevention programs such as an inner-city Girl Scout troop and partnership programs with domestic violence shelters.

Daniels-Young says that UMKC played a pivotal role in laying a strong foundation for her to build her career.

“UMKC has become a terrific urban university because it offers classes for working students,” she says. “The College provided time to develop the much needed research skills that I continue to use every day. If you’re doing research or evaluating programs, you’re making knowledge.”

While the College strives to equip its students with skills and abilities that will allow them to serve individuals via a vocation, the greater mission of the College is to enable its alumni to assist “large swaths” of society. Daniels-Young is one of many alumni transforming their local community and passing along knowledge capable of improving society.
Dean’s corner

One of the goals of UMKC and the College of Arts of Sciences is to provide our students with the best education possible. Our faculty are constantly revising and updating our courses, developing new ones and teaching with the best and latest technology. Even our general education courses are continually revised and updated to ensure they remain relevant and give our students the best educational experience possible. We are also offering more online courses. While we still firmly believe in in-classroom instruction, we know that many of our students benefit from having more flexible options in order to earn their degrees. Affordability is always on the minds of students and parents, especially during these recent difficult economic times. While other universities have had to increase tuition significantly, some by double-digit amounts, UMKC has held tuition rates steady for the past two years, and we expect to hold the line for the coming academic year.

This means that our tuition is very competitive with other four-year public institutions in the region. And given that the College is essentially a small liberal arts college within a bigger university, our tuition is very attractive when compared to private liberal arts colleges nationwide. Numerous scholarships are available to help cover the cost of tuition, but people don’t know where to look for them. That’s why we work very closely with our Financial Aid office to provide a series of automatic scholarships to students who qualify based upon ACT scores, class rank, etc. Almost 90% of UMKC students receive financial aid or scholarship support.

We continue to be successful in raising funds for scholarships in the community. We have raised the number of scholarships available to Arts and Sciences students to 142 last year (up from 74 in 06-07) with a dollar value of $292,000. When you contribute, you know that your dollars are being put to good use directly supporting our students.

One particular scholarship that I would like to draw your attention to is in honor of one of our most beloved and inspiring professors, Jim Falls, who is retiring from UMKC at the end of this year. We will miss him, his wisdom and guidance. If you would like to contribute to this scholarship, we welcome any amount, large or small. Please contact Karen English, the A&S Advancement Director, to contribute. It is a great way to honor Jim, his teaching and an A&S student in perpetuity.

In many regards, Stephen L. Danner (B.A. ’77) represents a typical college alumnus. A first-generation college student, he majored in history, attending classes full-time while working 40 or more hours a week to pay for school and living expenses not covered by his G.I. Bill. Also not unusual for many college alumni, Danner continued his studies after graduation, attending law school at the University of Missouri-Columbia.

What makes his story unique is the position to which he rose and the path of service he took to get there. Once a history major at UMKC, Danner is now a Brigadier General in the Missouri National Guard. Appointed adjutant general by Missouri Governor Jay Nixon, Danner oversees the state’s army and air National Guard units. In his first week on the job, Danner logged more than 100 hours helping the state respond to an ice storm.

Danner brought to the position a well-documented history of public service. His military career has spanned four decades, including serving as Command Judge Advocate for the 35th Area Support Group in Balad, Iraq, from May 2005-January 2007. Danner comes from a prominent political family; his great grandmother, grandmother, and mother all had extensive elected offices. His own political career began long before he finished law school. He served as campaign manager for his mother, Pat Danner, in the 1976 Congressional primary. In 1978, he took a semester off of law school to work as Missouri State Senator Phil Snowden’s campaign manager.

“In every position you’re in, you’re either learning or teaching.” - Stephen Danner

Upon graduating law school in 1980, Danner started his own law firm. He served as Chillicothe’s city attorney and as the chief legal council for the Missouri House of Representatives. He has now practiced law for more than 30 years, and he has been actively involved in Missouri politics the entire time. Danner served in the House of Representatives from 1982 to 1987, where he earned the Legislator of the Year award in 1985, and he served in the State Senate from 1990 to 1994.

Some may ask what one does with a history degree besides teach? To them, Danner replies, “Anything and everything. In every position you’re in, you’re either learning or teaching.”

Over the next few years, the College’s Philosophy department will bid adieu to over 110 years of teaching experience, as professors George Gale, Bruce Bubacz and Hank Frankel retire. Before they go, however, they need your help creating an endowed scholarship for the Philosophy department – and they’re going to make it worth your while.

Gale has promised everyone who contributes $250 or more will receive “a genuine, worn-in-the-classroom ‘Doc Logic’ aloha shirt, totally cleaned and ironed, with a Certificate of Authenticity.” And every gift of $500 or more will receive one of Gale’s custom-made Aloha shirts. For more information on how you can make a donation of any amount, contact Karen English at 816-235-1139, or email englishk@umkc.edu.

Philosophy department faculty (left to right): Jim Sheppard, Henry Frankel, Wayna Vaught, Dana Furd delimko, Bruce Bubacz, George Gale, Clancy Martin.

Steve Danner: continuing a family tradition of public service

Adjudant General of the Missouri National Guard
Brigadier General Stephen L. Danner (B.A. ’77)