

Scholarship Opens the World to Students



Professor Emerita of Landscape Architecture Annaliese Bischoff has seen both sides of higher education. As an undergraduate, she attended Brown University, where she felt well supported as she explored academics. “My family was not wealthy, but Brown gave me a generous financial aid package. As a student there I had many personal interactions with faculty and administrators, which I really valued.” As a graduate student, Bischoff earned her M.L.A. from the College of Environmental Science and Forestry at the State

University of New York in Syracuse. After graduate school, she accepted a one year position at Kansas State University and then was recruited for the Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning department at UMass Amherst, where she taught for 35 years. One thing that stood out for Bischoff immediately at the state schools was the students. “Here they were, often the first people in their families to attend college, working hard on their academics while holding down part-time jobs. They were learning important lessons about how to navigate in bureaucratic systems and establishing their independence,” she recalls.

Bischoff became involved with Honors while it was still a program, not a college, in the 1980’s and 1990’s. Her many roles in honors through the years have included associate director, faculty advisor, and teacher of seminar courses. In her role as faculty advisor, she gained a “new perspective on who comes to this university and why. Meeting with students across the disciplines and learning their stories, learning about their ambitions and dreams impressed me. These were not self-absorbed individuals merely wanting to collect A’s. These were people who were interested in service, who were kind, generous, and inquisitive...I was hooked.” Multitudes of interactions like these over the years inspired Bischoff to establish an endowed scholarship for Commonwealth Honors College students. She asserts that honors students “deserve to have the world opened up to them.”

In her retirement, Bischoff chose to fund this scholarship “instead of buying myself a new car.” She credits both the generosity of her husband, an emeritus faculty member in psychology, as well as a 1:1 matching program of all faculty and staff donations with making her scholarship dream a reality. She emphasizes the “vision of Chancellor Subbaswamy in offering the matching funds. It has made it possible for us to make a difference in less time that we thought possible.”

Bischoff has requested that her scholarship fund be used for students with a demonstrated interest in the arts, and is broad enough to appeal to a range of fields. As an artist herself, she is fully aware that “there are not many opportunities to have creative work recognized. We can’t have enough support for work that comes from inside of a student...other types of scholarship enjoy far more opportunities for recognition.” It is her hope to pass on the feeling that she was so fortunate to have as an undergraduate, “you’re worthy of this support and deserve it.” Along the way, she also hopes that the Annaliese Bischoff Honors Scholarship will inspire recipients to give back to UMass Amherst when they are able.