

Keeping up with Pat Kelly

Patricia Proudfoot Kelly earned emeritus status in 2003, a title that typically heralds the beginning of retirement. Not so for Professor Kelly. She continued teaching (even served as chair of the Department of Learning Sciences and Technologies in the School of Education until 2013), and traveling with various research and service-learning projects around the world.

Although her vita sports collaborations in 14 countries, Kelly has a particular fascination with Malawi, complet-

ing her 33rd trip to this southern African nation over the summer.

As a partner on a \$2.3 million USAID grant from 2001-2006, Kelly helped to develop, teach, and evaluate a project whereby Malawian students earned master's and doctoral degrees from Virginia Tech, with the goal of developing an undergraduate program in their own country.

Since 2006, more than 100 students have traveled with Kelly to “the warm heart of Africa” in a study abroad/service-learning adventure where they teach in Malawi schools for a month while learning about the history, culture, and politics of the area.

“It’s just in your soul—a deep-seated kinship to the land,” Kelly says. “Plus, the needs of women and children there are so great, and that’s a passion for me and always has been.”

Kelly’s students have helped to improve the lives of adolescent girls, who often drop out at puberty. A feeding program was started at one primary school; and at another, a chicken coop was refurbished to provide an ongoing source of protein. They also provided scholarships for secondary school.

Used to challenging conditions, Kelly has taught in rural West Virginia, Kentucky, and Florida, including a town with a state prison where 50 percent of the students had fathers in the penitentiary. She also taught in Roanoke at Cave Spring and chuckles that most of “my flower children from there are now grandparents.”

At Virginia Tech, she served as director of teacher education for five years, handling student teacher placements. She assisted with national accreditation and supervised clinical faculty members.

Patricia Kelly and Absalom Phiri, a Malawian who earned his Ph.D. from Virginia Tech thanks to a USAID partnership with the School of Education, tour Tikondwe Freedom Gardens.

Little-known fact:

Pat Kelly raced at Talladega for two years in the pre-races. “I didn’t want to tear up my car, so I didn’t win.” Upon examining her life, she decided to go to graduate school – a winning decision for Kelly, hundreds of undergraduates, and 44 doctoral students whom she has advised.



Dale Wimberley: Advocating for global justice

Dale Wimberley was in the audience when a Nicaraguan sweatshop worker spoke to a Blacksburg group in 1996 about labor conditions in his homeland. This talk inspired Wimberley, an associate professor of sociology, to visit Nicaragua and learn about these conditions firsthand. Soon he had become an activist for fair trade, workers’ rights, and living wages.

In the years since, he has led half a dozen groups of Virginia Tech students on study abroad trips to the Dominican Republic and Nicaragua, and he was instrumental in the Virginia Tech bookstores’ adoption of a Dominican-made line of clothing. The items are made in the Alta Gracia factory, which pays workers more than triple the typical Dominican garment worker’s wage.



For his global outreach and his commitment to social justice, Wimberley received the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences’ 2014 Excellence in International Initiatives Award.

“My teaching, my research, and my activism all build on each other,” Wimberley said. “Things I learned by being an

“It’s just in your soul—a deep-seated kinship to the land.”

Among her many kudos, Kelly was recognized with the W.E. Wine award for teaching in 1984 and the university’s Alumni Award for Excellence in International Education in 2012. “Those awards were bookends for who I was,” she says, “and rarely are you recognized for what you love to do.”

Kelly, now 75, but still so energetic that undergraduates have a hard time keeping up with her, plans to focus her attention on Puerto Rico, where she recently bought a home, and wants to learn salsa dancing, the cha-cha, and rumba so she can “dance in the street at the festivals.” She says she could also teach English but affirms with a knowing shrug, “Something will find me.”

Patricia Kelly has taken more than 100 students to Africa over the years to study history, culture, and politics, as well as assist with teaching in primary and secondary schools.



Giving back

“Virginia Tech has been a fantastic place for me,” says Kelly. “I remember when I got the job thinking how lucky I was to be on such a beautiful campus. I loved walking across the Drillfield and hearing the carillon play atop Burruss. It kept getting better and better ... and it changed a lot, but it was great to be a part of that.”

With retirement, Kelly wanted to find a way to continue her connection with the School of Education. “I love the term ‘legacy,’” she says. “Giving back is so important—the university wins and the person wins.”

During her career, Kelly developed a global portfolio, but she did not personally embark on her first international trip until she was 33 years old. “It was such a life-changing experience,” she says. “I want students in education to have a chance to do this before they are 33!”

Through a generous donation, she established the Patricia P. Kelly Teaching and Learning Graduate Fellowship in the Department of Teaching and Learning to help graduate students participate in international travel for educational purposes. In recognition of her unusually generous philanthropic support of the university where she has had a storied career, Kelly is a member of the Ut Prosim Society and the Legacy Society.

To learn more about either of those societies, and the impact of giving on Virginia Tech, visit www.givingto.vt.edu.



activist made me a more effective and knowledgeable teacher and provided me with richer research questions.”

In a project typical of Wimberley’s service trips, he helped lead Virginia Tech students in 2011 and 2014 to San José de Bocay, Nicaragua, where they built fuel-efficient wood-burning stoves with local residents in that deforested area. He is a member of the Blacksburg Sister City Committee, which sponsors these trips and raises money for teacher scholarships and school improvements in Nicaragua.

(Above) Dale Wimberley (back row, red shirt) with students, a farmer, and Dominican Republic hosts on a fair trade cacao (chocolate) farm.