

## **Dennis Knapczyk**

*Professor of Special Education*

Dennis Knapczyk is retiring after serving Indiana University for 36 years. Dennis will be remembered as an excellent teacher and mentor, and as an innovator with regard to preparing teachers to work with students with special needs in their classrooms.

Dennis was born in 1945 in Chicago, Illinois. He received his B.A. from St. Benedict's College in 1966 with a major in psychology, then completed a master's degree in special education from California State University, Fullerton, in 1969, while he was teaching at Anaheim High School in Anaheim, California. Dennis then moved on to Lawrence, Kansas, where he received his Ph.D. in special education from the University of Kansas in 1972. Since that time he has been on the faculty in the special education department at Indiana University, having served as the co-director of both the undergraduate and graduate teacher training program for teachers of students with severe handicaps, the director of the graduate teacher certification program in special education, and the assistant department chair in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction.

Dennis' most innovative work has focused on using distance education technologies to provide training opportunities to teachers across the state of Indiana. Beginning in 1987, Dennis received funding from the U.S. Department of Education and AT&T to design and implement an innovative field-based program to prepare practicing teachers to work with students with special needs in their classrooms. Using the cutting-edge (at that time, at least) telecommunications technology known as audiographics, Dennis developed one of the first graduate certification programs offered by the School of Education and delivered at a distance. Teachers located in Tell City, Austin, Scottsburg, Bedford, Paoli, and a host of other rural communities were able to obtain master's degrees and teaching licenses without having to come to the Bloomington campus. Then-governor Evan Bayh even participated in one of Dennis's distance classes. As access to more advanced distance technologies became available, Dennis incorporated them into the delivery of his program. He was one of the first users of both SITEScape Forum and OnCourse to facilitate the delivery of graduate courses.

Dennis also has numerous interests outside of academia. He is a skilled carpenter and woodworker. In fact, Dennis literally built his own house in Bloomington, including cutting down and milling all of the lumber for the house from his own property! He also enjoys tree farming. The Knapczyk Christmas tree farm was a favorite place for Bloomington residents to pick up their Christmas tree each holiday season for many years. Dennis's graduate students have many fond memories of his annual holiday dinner, where each December he would invite his

students to try some of his interesting home-made creations (the dandelion wine was a taste to remember), then go and pick out a Christmas tree to take home with them.

In the near future, Dennis and his wife, Susan, plan to spend time traveling and visiting their five children and five grandchildren scattered across the globe. His daughter Betsy is a lawyer in Arizona, his daughter Joanna is a speech pathologist in Florida, his daughter Frances is a plant biologist in California, his son Peter is completing his Ph.D. in South Asian studies and conducting research in India, and his daughter Emily is an extended day care supervisor in Bloomington. In terms of future plans, Dennis didn't think that he needed to come up with any definite plans since he's retired! He will continue to work on his farm, and hopes to start making more furniture and completing some stained glass projects. We wish him all the best!

*~Tom Brush*