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Defiance College Receives \$1 Million Endowed Gift

The Charles K. and Esther C. Krieger Foundation has awarded Defiance College with a \$1 million endowed gift. The gift's main purpose is to create a visiting scholar program to bring religious specialists to the Defiance College campus each academic year.

"This is a transformational gift for Defiance College. We are so very grateful for the generosity of the Charles K. and Esther C. Krieger Foundation," says President Richanne C. Mankey. She continues that, "through this partnership the College will be able to engage scholarship for important student learning that opens the door to increased understanding of our highly complex world."

The Charles K. and Esther C. Krieger Visiting Scholar will bring in a different religious academician each year. While at the College, the visiting scholar will be an active part of the DC community. Religious specialists will teach courses based on their respective area of expertise, lead seminars, speak at community events, and collaborate with students on research topics.

"The impact of this gift on Defiance College's academics will be profound. A gift of this magnitude will attract world-class academicians and provide our community access to leaders in the fields of Judaism, Christianity or Islam. I look forward to welcoming this scholar into the midst of our great faculty," says Dr. Agnes Caldwell, Vice President and Dean for Academic Affairs.

The gift will fund the annual expenses of the visiting scholar who will be provided campus housing and other amenities. The endowed gift will be self-sustaining and continue to bring in visiting religious specialists for years to come.

Defiance College alumnus and former board chair, Stuart Sakosits, was helpful in facilitating the \$1 million gift. It is

designed to aid students to study and better understand the connections between the three Abrahamic religious traditions: Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. Through such understanding, students will be encouraged to expand spiritual exploration, be prepared to confront ethical and religious conflicts, and to find their own call to servant leadership through service.

Dr. Marian Plant, Faculty Chair and Chair of the Religion Department at the college notes, "In part, the mission of the Charles K. and Esther C. Krieger Foundation is to promote education, religious, and cultural needs through qualified charities. Thus, we believe that the informed conversations ensuing from this generous and transformational gift allow us to place students within the broader context of a religiously pluralistic society, where diversity of faith is not indicative of division, but a unifying source through common experiences. In addition we prepare graduates to continue on a life-long journey of learning, leadership, and productivity. These values derive from our mission and are important to promoting peace and understanding."

As a United Church of Christ related college, DC appreciates inclusion and emphasizes learning based on its four pillars of education: to know, to understand, to lead, and to serve. "We are most grateful to the Krieger Foundation and for the efforts of Stuart Sakosits in securing this gift that will help students better understand both the differences and similarities between Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. Such experiences should better prepare them for life after Defiance College," said Board Chair Steve VanDemark. ♦

Pictured above from left: Board Chair Steve VanDemark, President Mankey, Stuart Sakosits '68, and Dr. Marian Plant

Dr. Wendy F. Soltz Named as First Visiting Scholar

Dr. Wendy F. Soltz has been named the inaugural Charles K. and Esther C. Krieger Visiting Scholar at Defiance College.

Endowed by the Charles K. and Esther C. Krieger Foundation, the Visiting Scholar Program will bring religious specialists to the DC campus each year in the fields of Judaism, Christianity or Islam.

Dr. Soltz began her Visiting Scholar position with the spring semester. She is teaching courses in her area of interest as well as the first-year seminar Global Issues. She will also coordinate a series on interfaith dialogue and understanding as well as engage in research benefiting students and society.

“We should all congratulate the DC community on being awarded the Krieger Foundation gift,” said Dr. Soltz. “It is truly a distinction to have such an opportunity here in Northwest Ohio and a reflection of the hard work and creative ideas of the administration, board and faculty.

“I’m honored to serve as the inaugural Krieger Visiting Scholar. Upon stepping onto campus, I felt the energy and excitement that an infusion of new perspectives brings. I’m thrilled to work with students, faculty and staff to foster a better understanding of the region’s religious diversity.”

In making the announcement of Dr. Soltz’s appointment, Defiance College president Dr. Richanne C. Mankey noted her extensive training and experience, making her an excellent fit for the Visiting Scholar program. “The program reinforces the four pillars of the college’s mission – to Know, to Understand, to Lead, to Serve,” she said. “We believe that this will foster transformative learning experiences and is also a nice match with the foundation’s mission which was established to, in part, ‘promote ... educational, religious and cultural needs through such qualified charities.’”

Dr. Soltz holds a Ph.D. in Modern Jewish History from The Ohio State University. She earned a master of arts in Near Eastern and Judaic Studies from Brandeis University, a master of arts in Anthropology and Museum Studies from George Washington University, and a bachelor of arts in Anthropology from Indiana University. She was a graduate student in the Hebrew program at Hebrew University of Jerusalem and earned a certificate in Jewish Studies and Biblical Studies from Neve Yerushalayim in Israel.

She has presented numerous conference papers, participated in roundtable presentations, and published journal articles, manuscripts and other publications. She received many grants, fellowships and awards during her academic studies and research.

Dr. Soltz has taught at The Ohio State University, Purdue University North Central, Indiana University East, Columbus State Community College, George Washington University, and most recently at Indiana University Purdue University Fort Wayne.

She is executive director of the Indiana Jewish Historical Society. She is a member of Achduth VeSholom Synagogue in Fort Wayne, as well as Association for Jewish Studies, American Jewish Historical Society and the Council of American Jewish Museums. ◆



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