

Ken and Sandy Waltzer Teaching Excellence Endowment for James Madison College

The Ken and Sandy Waltzer Teaching Excellence Endowment in James Madison College is named for Professor Ken Waltzer and his wife Sandy and has been established to support annual teaching excellence awards in the college. James Madison College has emphasized excellence in teaching as a criterion for faculty success and has become known for its tradition of excellent teachers. But the college has not to date had its own annual awards to honor special teaching excellence or highlight teaching excellence as a key element in the collegiate culture. This endowment is established to fund annual awards highlighting special teaching achievement, significant impact on students, substantial contribution to curriculum, and successful mentoring of colleagues.

Ken Waltzer came to Michigan State University from Harvard University in 1971 to help participate in building a new residential college that would harness teaching excellence and the idea of community to serve the ends of liberal undergraduate student learning. He was chair of the Urban field for many years and, with Katie See, developed the Social Relations field. He wrote the working paper that created the Freshman Writing Program, and, when the College was threatened to be closed during the fiscal crisis of the early 1980s, he was the faculty spokesman in defense of the college. Later, he served as associate dean and interim dean during the transition to semesters overseeing faculty curriculum efforts. Above all, Ken was a deeply committed and successful teacher, whose passions for teaching, for his subject matter, and for student development had special impact on hundreds of James Madison graduates. A former student comments, "For me, Ken Waltzer epitomized the James Madison way: big ideas brought into the context of real-world execution; the importance of understanding and even owning the past when solving the problems of the present; and love and support for learning and learners at every step along the way!"

Ken taught several generations of students in the college. He maintained the highest standards in all his courses but did all possible to help students achieve those standards. He was interested in urban, immigrant, and minority history in America and in comparative perspective, and in key aspects of modern Jewish history. During the last generation, as he helped build and lead a new Jewish Studies Program at MSU, his course on Jews and Anti-Semitism became an all-college course attracting great interest. During his career, Professor Waltzer's teaching was recognized by several awards, including the State of Michigan Teaching Excellence Award, the MSU Mid-Michigan Alumni Association Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching Award, and several others. "As a student, Professor Waltzer easily drew you into the material because you could tell he was passionate about what he was teaching. In turn, that passion kindled a desire to learn and engage the subject matter. Thirty years later I am honored to consider him a friend and am still eager to hear his thoughts on issues."

Sandy Waltzer, who taught public school in the South Bronx and did graduate study at the Elliot Pearson School at Tufts University, accompanied Ken to Michigan and had her own career as educational director of the Headstart Program in Lansing. She created and ran a demonstration school at the Maple Hill Headstart Center, helped train and certify scores of pre-school teachers in and outside of Headstart, and later directed a before- and after-school children's center. A ruptured brain aneurysm in 1996 ended her career but Sandy recovered sufficiently to volunteer working with families and children and assisting at Haven House, an East Lansing shelter.

Early in his career, Ken published essays on American social and political history and on American immigrant communities. Later, he co-authored (with Kathleen Geissler) *The American Identity Explorer: Immigration and Migration CD-Rom* (1999, 2002), a study of immigrants and minorities in six American cities during the Ellis Island era. Most recently, he has made an international reputation doing social history in the Nazi camps, exploring the rescue of children and youths, and also patterns of human life and response under extreme conditions. The U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum picked him as part of a delegation of 15 international scholars to open up the Red Cross International Tracing Service Archives in 2008. He was historical consultant in making a feature length film, *Kinderblock 66: Return to Buchenwald* (2012), which was shown this year at the UN and 20 sites around the world on International Holocaust Remembrance Day.

In the spirit of Ken and Sandy's shared dedication to excellent teaching and for student growth and development, this endowment will support annual awards for special excellence in teaching in James Madison College. The Dean and/or Associate Dean, working with members of the Faculty Affairs Committee, will select from among faculty and student nominations the deserving faculty to receive the award(s). Awardees will be recognized at the James Madison College honors awards convocation.

This endowment is being established through contributions from former students, friends and family of Ken and Sandy. We invite you to join us in establishing this legacy for Professor Ken and Sandy Waltzer highlighting and recognizing dedicated and excellent teaching at James Madison College. Please consider making your most generous gift in support of this Endowment, which will fund annual teaching excellence awards called the Waltzer Award for Excellence in Teaching. We encourage you to make a multi-year pledge to maximize your giving and help us reach our goals. For further information, contact Rocky Beckett at the JMC Development Office.

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