



SPECIAL ED

by Heidi Wicks



▲ Dr. Dale Kirby

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DR. DALE KIRBY EDUCATES PEOPLE ON... well, education. His job is to look at why some groups in Canada run into barriers when it comes to learning. That’s why this Faculty of Education professor has been chosen by The Canadian Council of Learning as a Minerva Scholar for 2007, a travelling, national forum through which the work of six prominent Canadian learning researchers can be celebrated each year and shared with Canadians from all walks of life.

“I think it’s important for academics to bridge the ivory tower/real world divide and reach out to people outside of the immediate academic community,” said Dr. Kirby, “Certainly if you look at the CURA [Community-University Research Alliance] research, it’s an embodiment of the whole Wisconsin idea of bringing academic research and the work of academics to the general public.”

Though today he is an acclaimed scholar, Dr. Kirby doesn’t forget his days as a student activist, where he enthusiastically (he’s a self-professed former rebel) argued that financial blockades were the main deterrent from gaining post-secondary education. He recognizes more than just a green obstruction in today’s educational barriers.

“The institutional, situational, dispositional and academic barriers, what they are and why they are barriers for certain groups in Canadian society,” he identified as some of the areas he is interested in, adding, “What we can do to encourage more people to participate in post-secondary education is another important part of my research. I hope my research will help spread the word about the importance of lifelong learning, especially to the people who hold the reigns of power. I hope they’ll be encouraged to step up and help provide these solutions that we need so desperately for many reasons.”

The Minerva Scholar lecture series is a unique opportunity to understand how research can inform and affect learning for all Canadians. The tremendous acclaim sent Dr. Kirby across the country in February and March to deliver lectures on his research. ■