

Bender  
of  
Twigs

# Mark Arrasmith

As Mark is both a colleague and a close friend, it is a sincere honor and privilege that I get to comment on Mark's teaching and service as he's inducted into this unique group.

Although this achievement marks 25 years with the university, Mark has been a member of this prestigious community for even longer. Transferring from Tabor, Mark started his journey at Wichita State in 1992, finishing his undergraduate in 1994 by majoring in mathematics and minoring in physics. He went on to complete a graduate degree in mathematics in 1996. It was during this time that Mark proved himself to be an invaluable member of the mathematics faculty through his quality teaching and excellent departmental service. Thus began his career in higher education.

Over the years that followed, Mark's curious nature, raw intelligence, and innovative spirit have left an indelible characteristic on how the mathematics and statistics department operates both in and outside of the classroom. He has worked tirelessly to foster an environment that promotes creative instruction by providing the faculty technological tools to transform their classrooms, many of these endeavors being spearheaded by Mark himself. Concurrently, he ensured faculty had the technology they needed to facilitate their research, keeping the department at the forefront of technological changes. This framework that Mark created over these many years still exists today and is continuing to expand as more people bring their ideas to this open environment. However, as fantastic as these accomplishments are, Mark's true passion is in his teaching, and it is this passion that ultimately changed the direction of my life.

I first met Mark in the summer of 2010, and I can say without hyperbole that it changed my entire life. You see, I was Mark's student in a Calculus I class that I naively took over the summer for "fun". The first day was intense. I have since learned that the intense first day is his tradition so that the students understand they are expected to do work, ESPECIALLY during the summer. I fortunately do not scare easily, and I remained enrolled in his class. Over the course of that summer, Mark changed the way I looked at the world. He opened my eyes to an entire field of study that I had never considered, and he did something no other mathematics teacher had ever done: He made it interesting. He didn't just list definitions, state theorems, and do proofs, he spent time explaining the "why" and the "how." His passion for his subject inundated every lesson, day after day. Ultimately, he gave us all the keys to a new reality and left it up to us to walk through that door. I was hooked and couldn't resist the urge to keep going. His class started my journey which led me into my current career as an educator and a mathematician. I am certain that if it hadn't been for Mark, his passion for his subject, and his compassion for his students, I wouldn't be where I am today. Luckily as his colleague, I still get to learn from him daily.

Now, my story might seem unique, but the reality is that when it comes to Mark Arrasmith, I am but one of many people whose lives he has changed, particularly through the art of teaching. You see, even though Mark has countless responsibilities for both the department and the university, his primary responsibility in his mind, and the one he and I talk about the most, is his responsibility to be an exceptional educator for his students. He has a motto for excellence in teaching: "If you want to be a good teacher, you need to love your subject and love your students." As a previous student of his, the first part of that motto is what stuck out to me, his passion for mathematics. As his colleague I get to see the second part both directly and indirectly. Mark takes the time to listen to his students and connect with them. He encourages them when they need it and steps out of their way when it is time for them to succeed on their own. Even counterintuitive as it might seem, and as difficult as it can be as an educator, he cares enough to let them struggle, make mistakes, and even fail because he knows that most learning takes place in those instances. If you talk to any of the previous students of Mark, you will hear the type of reverence he has earned within them. Furthermore, his passion for quality instruction doesn't just stop at his own classes. He wants every educator within the department to do their best when it comes to teaching and he leaves little room for slacking. He understands that it is essential for great teachers to keep changing, growing, and evolving. That is why he encourages us to be critical of our own teaching so that we all know where, when, and how to improve. I am convinced that if there is a high-water mark for excellence in teaching at Wichita State University, it was set by Mark Arrasmith.

In concluding, I cannot think of a more appropriate title for Mark than a Bender of Twigs. He has dedicated his life to leading students in their search for knowledge and I know he will continue that endeavor well into the future along with continuing to inspire myself and the next generation of educators to love our subject and love our students.

Mark, it has been and always will be an honor my friend, congratulations!

