The Mead Endowment

Encouraging faculty-student engagement at the University of Virginia.

DREAM IDEAS.

Each year, a group of professors are handpicked by their deans, including ten from the College and one each from McIntire, Engineering, and Darden. At a Rotunda dinner they are inspired to “Walk in the footsteps of Boots” with a film about beloved professor Ernest “Boots” Mead. Each faculty member submits a “Dream Idea” that allows them to engage closely with a small group of students. The Mead Endowment funds the projects. The faculty then return to the dinner the following year and report on their efforts, thus inspiring the incoming faculty. Since 2002, over 150 professors have participated, creating special experiences for thousands of students.

A seminar called “Bee School” held weekly meetings to tend bees, explore the math of bee behavior, and prepare meals using honey. A study of historical texts exploring the nature of religious pilgrimage was conducted while hiking the Appalachian Trail.

GOAL Currently the program covers only four schools. To include Nursing, Education, Batten and Architecture, the endowment must grow by $400,000.

MEAD MONEY.

Each September, faculty receive debit cards they can use to treat students to meals, inspiring thousands of student-faculty conversations. The most popular spot is the Garden Room, the faculty club on the West Range.

GOAL Currently the program covers only the College, McIntire, SEAS and Darden. To extend it University-wide, the endowment must grow by $400,000.
WELCOME DINNERS FOR NEW FACULTY.

The College of Arts & Sciences is experiencing a tidal wave of retirements, with a 50% turnover in faculty positions over a five-year period. The Mead Endowment sponsors welcome dinners for incoming faculty, at which they are encouraged and inspired to engage with students. To get them started, we give each professor a budget of $200 to host social gatherings with students.

- The professor of a course called Arabic Delights took her students to a Middle Eastern restaurant, where they analyzed the origins of the dishes in relation to 10thC cookbooks they studied in class.
- A professor of religious ethics had a “Fair Trade Food Fest,” in which students helped shop for an ethically-sourced meal they prepared at the professor’s home.

GOAL Currently the program covers only the College. To make it University-wide, the endowment must grow by $300,000.

JOIN US!

Donations of any size are deeply appreciated, tax deductible and count toward class reunion giving goals. Gifts may be made here. For more info, contact: Tom Darbyshire, Chairman, darbyshire.tom@gmail.com or Molly Bass, UVA Alumni Association, mcb7k@virginia.edu

THE MEAD ADVISORY BOARD.

Over sixty alumni have demonstrated their commitment to the program with membership-level gifts of $10,000 or more, typically pledged over a five-year period. Members enjoy regular email updates from faculty about their projects with students and many return each September for the Rotunda dinners.

See what they say about us:

Ernest “Boots” Mead was a beloved professor, mentor and friend of students. In 2002, a group UVA alumni created the Mead Endowment to encourage more faculty to engage with students outside the classroom as Boots so often did. Check out the film Ernest Mead: This is Boots on YouTube.

Walk in the footsteps of Boots.