

Honors program name change recognizes founder Bill Edgar



PHOTO BY CHRISTINE CUSANO

President Christopher C. Dahl celebrates the renaming of the Honors Program to the Edgar Fellows program at the program's fall picnic with Distinguished Teaching Professor of Philosophy Emeritus Bill Edgar.

Senior **Anna Hope** has built and launched her own rocket in class and is now researching author J.D. Salinger's ties to Eastern philosophy — topics she normally wouldn't study in traditional Geneseo curriculum.

As an Honors student, she says, faculty members and students have more freedom to experiment and she can develop her interests. She created her own topic for the capstone project of the Honors Program and has two full semesters to examine Salinger.

That innovation is key to Geneseo's Honors program, created by Distinguished Teaching Professor Emeritus of philosophy **Bill Edgar**. Edgar and his wife, Professor **Stacey Edgar**, built the program and "devoted their lives to their students," said President **Christopher C. Dahl**.

Now, the College is honoring Bill Edgar's lifelong commitment by renaming the program after him. Students selected for the program are now known as Edgar Fellows.

"It recognizes the absolutely unique and absolutely irreplaceable work and example and teaching and caring of founder Bill Edgar," said Dahl at the program's fall picnic, where he presented Edgar with a framed certificate that recognizes the name change.

Students and faculty gathered in the president's backyard, where Dahl made the official announcement to a round of applause. The Edgars were the special guests. Dahl said there is no one he would compare to the great Socrates — except Bill. He then held up the certificate and praised the program: "Long may it continue to thrive."



PHOTO BY CHRISTINE CUSANO

A student in the Edgar Fellows program visits with Bill Edgar at the picnic.

Program co-director **Olympia Nicodemi**, professor of mathematics, also thanked Stacey for her contributions and helping her to grow as a teacher. "They served as a role model for so many things," she said of the Edgars.

Edgar humbly didn't take much credit for the program's success. He said he had a lot of good students to work with, "and I'm lucky, I think." Smiling, he said "It isn't bad," to have the program named after him.

There are 103 Edgar Fellows on campus. Students must demonstrate a high level of motivation and academic accomplishment to be admitted to the program, which entails honors courses, research opportunities and close work with advisors. The Edgar Fellows name change became official last spring.

"Our role is really to mentor the students and be available and break down the wall between faculty and students," said **Joe Cope**, interim program co-director and associate professor of history.

That interaction with faculty and small class sizes is part of what inspired freshman physics major **Jacob Deshaies** to want to become an Edgar Fellow. "It's a privilege really," he said.

Edgar began teaching philosophy at Geneseo in 1969 and served as chair of the philosophy department from 1978 until he retired in 2005. He earned the Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Teaching in 1974 and 1976. In 1979, SUNY named him a Distinguished Teaching Professor. In 2003, the Edgars received the Geneseo Medal for Philanthropy in recognition of their support and service to the College.