Gordon Kraft

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For most engineers, their brief time in school is a blur of busy studying, learning, and new experiences. For every one, however, there are fond memories of individual teachers who went the extra step to provide students with skills, insights, and sometimes even new ways to view and appreciate the world.

“These are the teachers whom students often find themselves thinking of at many stages in their careers, remembering their guidance in tough times and at moments of success as well,” recalls John Canfield ’95, an electrical engineer and UNH graduate. “Professor Kraft is one of those teachers.”

For 34 years, Kraft has been the kind of professor with whom students would eagerly sign up for any class he taught, knowing ahead of time that it would be a valuable learning experience regardless of the specific topic.

The author of more than 40 articles and book chapters and winner of multiple, large grants from the National Science Foundation, Kraft possesses the rare talent for making challenging subjects like neural networks and optimal control systems accessible and rewarding to the average student. “He has an amazing ability to deliver not just the textbook math, but also a true intuitive understanding and motivation for the subject,” Canfield avers.

Kraft is a quintessential hands-on educator who co-directed his department’s Robotics Laboratory for six years and avidly supports student projects—even helping out to secure parts and funding to ensure their success. With student Jake Aho ’11, Kraft organized the 2009 and 2010 energy conferences at UNH that drew students and professionals from around New Hampshire to explore alternate energy sources.

The proud father and grandfather of three daughters and two grandchildren has won his department’s teaching award so often it would be understandable if they simply named it after him.

A true student advocate—whether helping a struggling student or sharing wisdom that helps in making career decisions—Kraft is one control systems expert for whom there simply can’t be too much positive feedback. He deserves every bit.

—Dave Moore