

An Educator with a Passion for Service

by Matt Thomas '00



KEVIN MATUSESKI '10

One of the advantages of attending a residential liberal arts college like Gustavus is the fact that when one door closes, another door opens. Just ask recent alumnus Kevin Matuseski '10. Matuseski came to Gustavus in 2006 with the intention of making basketball a large part of his four-year college experience. When that dream faded, the Rosemount, Minn., native discovered a new path and now has a bright future in education ahead of him.

"I ended up tearing my ACL in the first 15 minutes of basketball tryouts during my freshman year, so I decided to get involved in other things at Gustavus," Matuseski says. "The environment at Gustavus is such that meeting people and getting involved in clubs and activities is really effortless."

Throughout his four years, he was extremely involved with the Community Service Center, now known as the Center for Servant Leadership (CSL). While there, he started as a work-study student and became the volunteer and program coordinator as an upperclassman. He participated in the Big Partner Little Partner Program, went on Habitat for Humanity spring break service trips, and became the program coordinator for the Trips and Activities Group (TAG) — an after-school program for St. Peter youth that supplies healthy lifestyle education, character development, and a positive living environment.

One advantage of becoming involved in community service programs at Gustavus for Matuseski was the opportunity to be mentored by the staff in the CSL. Matuseski says that Dave

Newell, assistant director for community-based service and learning, became an important mentor for him during his four years on the hill.

"Dave was the person who really empowered me to get so involved in the CSL and guided me along the way," Matuseski says. "The staff, coordinators, and volunteers in the CSL gave me another sense of purpose at Gustavus aside from my academic studies. I learned a lot about program development, strategic planning, reflection, and other life skills from Dave."

With a strong passion for literature and writing, Matuseski says he was confident that he wanted to become an English teacher by the second semester of his freshman year. He settled on a major

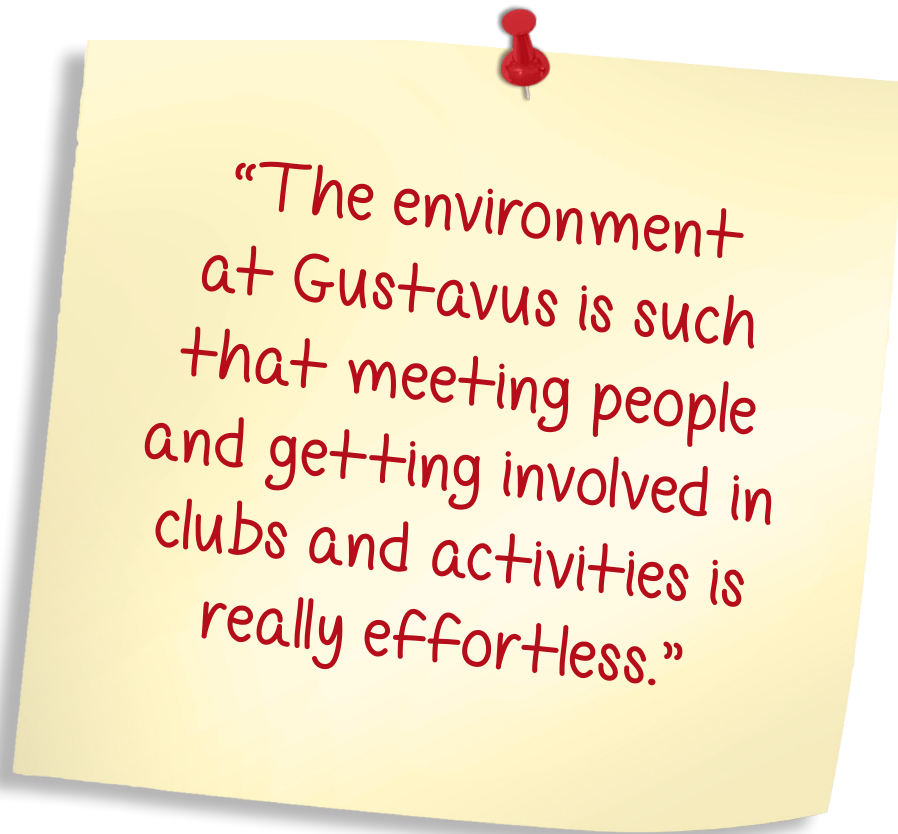
in communication arts and literature teaching, which licensed him to teach language arts in grades 5–12.

"The communication arts and literature teaching major was perfect because it allowed me to study what I loved most, writing and reading literature, while at the same time gaining practical experience for getting a teaching job after college," says Matuseski.

Currently, Matuseski is teaching sixth grade English and life science at a private bilingual international school in Barranquilla, Colombia. He

credits the faculty in the Education Department at Gustavus for helping him get to where he is today, including Professor Deb Pitton and now retired professor John Clementson.

"All of my education professors influenced me greatly. Dr. Pitton organized a January Term trip to Peru to teach English, which was a huge influence on me deciding to come to Colombia to teach," Matuseski says. "John Clementson was the one who actually gave me the idea to go to an international teaching fair and he also accompanied me on a trip to South Africa and Namibia during January of my junior year."





When he isn't teaching at his full-time job, Matuseski still finds a way to help others learn—drawing on his community service-related experiences at Gustavus. During his free time, he volunteers as an English teacher for an adult class at Colegio Pies Descalzos Public School in Colombia.

“We just started a new semester and more than 150 adults showed up to take the placement test on the first day. I was pumped about the turnout,” he says.

He is also working with a group of 11th graders on Friday afternoons to help them complete a service project in their community. Matuseski also serves as a private tutor for people who can't afford to take English classes.

“It is definitely a major advantage professionally and career-wise here if you know English. It just seems like such an injustice that only those who can afford to go to an expensive private school are the ones who learn English and are afforded those opportunities,” Matuseski said. “That’s mainly why I volunteer my time to the English teaching cause.”

Matuseski is on track to earn his master's degree in May in

educational supervision with an international concentration from Western Carolina University. As for the future, Matuseski says he is contemplating getting his doctorate degree in applied linguistics and wouldn't rule out the possibility of someday coming back to his alma mater to teach.

“I'll most likely be teaching, writing, and studying like I am doing now,” he says. “I am very happy and super grateful for where I am right now. Teaching sixth grade is an awesome gig.”

Matt Thomas is the director of media relations and internal communication at Gustavus Adolphus College. After graduating from Gustavus in 2000 with degrees in communication studies and history, Thomas worked as a sports journalist in the western suburbs of Minneapolis before returning to Gustavus in 2007.

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