



Interdisciplinary Fund for Complex Systems Studies

Through this agreement Brad Flaughter '09, Jerrod Howlett '09, Trevor Jones '09, Elliot Paquette '09 and Griffin Drutchas '09 honor Kalamazoo College and its future generations of students by establishing the *Interdisciplinary Fund for Complex Systems Studies*. This endowment is being established through outright and estate gifts in support of *Advancing Kalamazoo College: A Strategic Vision for 2023*.

The *Interdisciplinary Fund for Complex Systems Studies* was created to honor their professor, mentor and friend, Dr. Peter Erdi.

Dr. Peter Erdi, Ph.D., is a distinguished figure in the academic community, particularly known for his exceptional contributions as the Henry R. Luce Professor of Complex Systems Studies at Kalamazoo College. With a tenure spanning over twenty years, Dr. Erdi has left an indelible mark on the institution, enriching the academic experience for countless students.

Dr. Erdi's teaching style is characterized by his dynamism and unwavering dedication to his students' intellectual growth. His genuine passion for education is palpable, earning him the esteemed Florence J. Lucasse Distinguished Lectureship in 2018, a testament to his unwavering commitment to excellence in education.

Many fortunate individuals mentored by Dr. Erdi, including Brad Flaughter, Jerrod Howlett, Trevor Jones, Elliot Paquette and Griffin Drutchas, stand as living testaments to his transformative influence. Under Dr. Erdi's guidance, they not only acquired invaluable knowledge in Complex Systems Studies but were also inspired to delve deeper into their academic pursuits. Dr. Erdi's mentorship extended beyond the confines of the classroom, proving instrumental in their academic journeys.

In his capacity as an advisor, Dr. Erdi exhibited exceptional care and effort in ensuring that his students' potential was fully realized. This personalized approach has played a pivotal role in their ongoing growth and achievements.

The enduring connection between Dr. Erdi and his mentees is a testament to the profound impact he has had on their lives. Even after their time at Kalamazoo College, they continue to seek Dr. Erdi's guidance, underscoring the lasting impression of this exceptional educator. After discussions around the fund's purpose and his impact on their future, there were several iterations of the fund's name, including "The Kibernetika Endowed Fund." Ultimately, they

collectively determined that he would likely prefer “Interdisciplinary Fund for Complex Systems Studies” to support Dr. Peter Erdi’s life’s work in perpetuity.

Complex systems are systems composed of many diverse components which interact with each other in nonlinear ways, leading to emergent behaviors that cannot be explained by simply analyzing the individual parts. Complex systems appear across many fields, including physics, biology, computer science, economics, psychology and more. The interdisciplinary study of complex systems draws contributions from all these domains to understand how collective behaviors arise from relationships between parts of a system. Examples of complex systems include the brain, ecosystems, financial markets, and social networks.

The interdisciplinary nature of complex systems aligns well with the ethos of liberal arts education. The liberal arts encourage students to draw connections between diverse fields of study and develop integrative thinking abilities. Complex systems provides a unifying framework to synthesize knowledge across disciplines. Studying complex systems requires integrating concepts from math, physics, computer science, biology and social sciences—many of the subjects encompassed by the liberal arts. Analyzing emergent properties of complex systems involves critical thinking skills that liberal arts education cultivates. Allowing students to study complex systems as part of their liberal arts curriculum will enhance their ability to think critically about interconnected systems from a holistic perspective. Establishing a dedicated fund to support complex systems research and coursework will enrich the experiences of Kalamazoo College students for generations to come.

Dr. Peter Erdi's legacy is one marked by inspiration, education, and unwavering support. His influence continues to resonate through the lives of those fortunate enough to have experienced his mentorship, leaving an indelible mark on the academic community and beyond.

Awarding Guidelines:

The principal of the Fund shall be held as a permanently restricted endowment and the income will be awarded according to the following guidelines:

The fund will be administered by the Provost's Office, in consultation with other relevant faculty in physics, computer science, psychology or other departments doing work with complex systems (or suitable equivalent departments should they evolve over time).

The annual distribution of this fund is to support interdisciplinary studies and complex systems research and coursework. This could include funding student research projects related to complex systems across multiple disciplines, sponsoring conferences, seminars, or guest lecturers to expose students to complex systems topics, enabling interdisciplinary study abroad opportunities centered on complex systems, providing student tutors or mentors to assist with complex systems coursework, supporting student immersive capstone projects (SIPs, etc.) involving complex systems research, purchasing technologies, datasets, or materials to enrich complex systems courses, and stipends for those pursuing complex systems research.

While allowing flexibility for the Provost’s Office, in consultation with the chairs of the Departments of Physics, Computer Science, and Psychology (or equivalent departments), to

respond to evolving needs over time, the fund distribution shall remain focused on enabling interdisciplinary learning experiences and research related to complex systems.

The College is authorized to continue investment of this Fund with the assets received as contributions to the Fund. The benefactors, or any other person, may at any time make contributions to the Fund by outright gift, bequest, or otherwise.

The Fund will be invested in accordance with the policies set forth by the Board of Trustees for the College's endowment funds, and its value will be calculated to reflect the College's pooled investment performance. The Board of Trustees determines the annual spending rate from endowed funds to meet current program needs and long-term investment objectives.


In the event that the College determines at some future time that it is no longer possible for the Fund to be used as specified herein, then the College may devote the net income from the fund to the improvement of quality education at Kalamazoo College. Any such alternate application of income shall be as close as possible to the endowment's original purpose and will serve to honor the benefactors in an appropriate way. In such an instance, the funding shall be clearly identified as provided by Brad Flaughner, Jerrod Howlett, Trevor Jones, Elliot Paquette and Griffin Drutchas.

The foregoing is agreed upon and ratified by the Donor and Kalamazoo College, as follows:

Signed on the 9th day of November, 2023

By: ,
Brad J. Flaughner, Benefactor

And for Kalamazoo College on the 17th day of November, 2023

By: 
Jorge G. Gonzalez, President