

Feature

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**Distinguished
 Faculty: Kim creates
 family atmosphere
 with her teaching**

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Kyung Hee Kim's destiny was changed when her elementary school teacher took a special interest in making sure she continued her education, regardless of cultural pressures in Korea. Today, Kim channels that guidance to her students in a way that most professors wouldn't consider.

She makes herself available 24/7 to her students, providing them with her cell phone number and encouraging them to visit her home if they need extra assistance. Kim's open-door policy reaches beyond the typical professor/student relationship.

The personal interest she takes in each student is evident by the number of nominations and letters of support she received for the Ronald W. Collins Distinguished Faculty Research I Award. This award is given to faculty with less than five years at EMU. Kim, an assistant professor of teacher education, received a plaque and a \$3,500 honorarium.



HELPING FROM HOME: Kyung Hee Kim, an Eastern Michigan University assistant professor of teacher education, works with Richard Russell, one of her graduate students, at her home. She helped the Milan resident with his final proposal for an online course he is taking. Kim, who won this year's Ronald W. Collins Distinguished Research I Award, often opens up her home to students to be available for their academic needs.

"This award is really cool because my colleagues nominated me and I had no idea," said Kim, who came to EMU in 2005. "They were watching me teach the students — in the classroom, in my kitchen, everywhere. I feel loved by my students and colleagues here at EMU."

For the awards presentation, recipients of the seven Distinguished Faculty Awards were asked to list their family members who planned to accompany them. Although her son is her only family member living in the U.S., Kim listed 34 family members.

"Once students take my class, they become family," she said.

After a year of adjusting to the cultural differences that influence student learning, Kim found a family in the professors and students within the educational psychology program, which is part of the teacher education department.

The support Kim received from her elementary school teacher, Mr. Cho, motivated her desire to become a teacher. In Asian countries, after middle

school, girls either attend occupational schools or begin working in sweatshops. Cho envisioned a different path for Kim. In a society where teachers are highly regarded and parents often purchase gifts for them, Cho did something very unusual.

"He brought a watermelon this big to my house," she said as she emphasized the giant size with her arms.

After Cho visited Kim's parents several times, they allowed her to attend high school. Kim received a doctorate in educational psychology from Korea University and the University of Athens in Georgia; a master's degree in counseling psychology from Korea University in Seoul, Korea; and a bachelor's degree from Kyngpook National University in Daegu, Korea.

After working as a statistician for two years in Georgia, Kim decided to teach at EMU where she could honor Cho by making a difference in the lives of students.

"The value placed on instruction at EMU is highly consistent with my professional values and my Asian cultural background, which highly respects the teaching profession," she said. "I realized, while conducting my job search, that Ann Arbor is one of several cities in the U.S. that prides itself on ethnic and cultural diversity."

"Kim is well established among her colleagues for her scholarly rigor and productivity," said Vernon Polite, dean of the College of Business. "To date, the number of scholarly publications completed and in press, as well as her national and international presentations since her arrival at EMU in 2005, is unfathomable."

Kim's research interests include understanding, assessing and nurturing creativity through investigating comparisons with intelligence and achievement; characteristics and problems of creative/gifted students; environmental and cultural interactions with creativity; reliability and validity studies of instruments; and cross-cultural studies.

"As her credentials attest, Dr. Kim is a very intelligent and accomplished individual who has an impressive list of publications," said Bonnie Cramond, director of the Torrence Center for Creativity and Talent Development at the University of Georgia. "She will definitely be an important force in the field of creativity. She is really moving the investigations of creativity assessment further and her cross-cultural work on the east-west differences in creativity are profound."

Although it could be said that research defines Kim as a professional, she describes her research as an instrument that guides and supports her teaching.

"Teaching is my goal. Being the best teacher is most important to me," she said.

Currently, Kim is researching the correlation between underachievers, high school dropouts and creativity. She will present the results in August at the American Psychological Association Convention in Boston.

"Simply put, Dr. Kim is a rising star and is (one) to build a department around," said James Kaufman, director of the Learning Research Institute at California State University.

Since Kim and her son live alone, she enjoys having students at her home, teaching in her kitchen, while her son cooks traditional Korean food. Athletes, especially, appreciate her availability because, when they miss class, they can call her at midnight to catch up.

"Students always tell me that I've changed their lives. I think it's because they think only smart people can conduct research and I convince them

that they are capable," Kim said.