



# THE BOND THAT ENDURES: MEET DR. JOHN PINTO

By Jan Dehner

**F**or the whole of his professional career, Dr. John Pinto has called Morningside College his home. In that span of time, the psychology professor has seen a multitude of changes at the college – from lean times of budget deficits and staff and faculty cutbacks to periods of budget surpluses, growth in enrollment, and the recent expansion of facilities.

Through it all, Pinto says, a cultural bond has endured.

“The consistent vein through all of these years and through all of the changes has been Morningside’s core values. It’s why I came here in the first place,” he said.

According to Pinto, those values include the respect that Morningside gives its students, faculty, and staff, as well as the collegiality among faculty members. Another of Morningside’s important assets, he said, is the quality of faculty and student scholarship.

## COLLABORATING WITH STUDENTS

Demonstrating this high level of scholarship was the collaboration between Pinto and Morningside alumnus **John Steele 2005** that resulted in a paper that was published in the spring 2006 issue of the *Psi Chi Journal of Undergraduate Research*, a professionally reviewed journal of the national honor society in psychology. The paper, “Influence of Leader Trust on Policy Agreement,” was based on research conducted while Steele was an undergraduate at Morningside and a student of Pinto. Steele presented the research in 2005 at the 20th Annual Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology Conference held in Los Angeles, Calif.

This close collaboration between professor and student is indicative of the change that has taken place in Pinto’s personal teaching style—from

one that, early in his teaching career, was predominantly lecture-based to one centered on student engagement, experiential learning, and mentorship.

It's also reflective of the "active learning" that is taking place all across campus.

"One of the great things about smaller colleges is that we have the flexibility to move toward this active learning," Pinto said. "We're almost at a point now where that's what students expect."

## ENCOURAGING STUDENT RESEARCH

Pinto said the number of students who are actively involved in research today compared with just a few years ago is on the rise, thanks in part to college programs such as the Palmer Student Research Symposium, established in 2004, and the Maud Adams Nursing Research Day, now in its 25th year. These programs open up opportunities for students to begin the research process and to present, in a professional setting, the research they complete in class, through an independent project, or through other faculty-guided research. Pinto served as co-director for this year's Palmer Student Research Symposium.

"Another reason for the increase in student research is the dramatic increase of space and improvement in our science facilities, which were renovated in 2001," he noted.

In 2006, Morningside psychology students presented more than 30 research presentations locally, regionally, and nationally. As recently as May, six students presented their research at the Midwestern Psychological Association's annual meeting in Chicago.

"One of the characteristics of our department is the research endeavor. It's what gives us our identity," Pinto said. "And the number of students doing research often translates into the numbers of students who eventually go on to graduate or professional schools."

## CONTINUING THEIR EDUCATION

Over the past 20 years, roughly one-third of Morningside graduates who majored in psychology have gone directly into graduate school, with another one-half entering graduate or professional school five years after graduation, Pinto reported.

"Psychology is a science, and part of the role of science is to discover, to ask why.



That mode of discovery and critical thinking serves all of our students, no matter what their endeavor," he said.

In addition to his responsibilities at Morningside, Pinto frequently serves as a consultant for the Sioux City Police Department, assisting it in conducting psychological testing for new recruits and selecting, evaluating, and training personnel. Other local employers—including Gateway, Tyson Foods, Mercy Medical Center-Sioux City, and others—have called on Pinto's expertise in organizational psychology to assist with personnel selection and training issues. When possible, Morningside students assist Pinto in his work with these groups.

## SETTING THE BAR HIGH

Even with all the years Pinto has been at Morningside, he said it is this moment in the college's history that holds the most promise.

"We're sort of at a crossroads now. We finally have the resources to do almost anything we want," Pinto said. "We just can't do everything."

In that vein, Pinto was asked to serve on the High Expectations Task Force, one of five Strategic Directions Task Forces established by the college in August 2006. He said the role of the High Expectations Task Force is to recommend policies and actions that will help move the college from a culture of survival to one where the bar is set high for students, faculty, staff, and the entire Morningside community.

He said, "Now we have to decide what kind of institution we want to be, and we have the opportunity to move in several directions. It's the most exciting time for me since I've been here."

**Dr. John Pinto**, professor of psychology, pictured above with his colleague, Dr. Larry Sensenig, serves as Morningside's faculty parliamentarian and is responsible for advising faculty on issues of parliamentary procedure and rules. He is Morningside's representative for the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA) and serves on the executive committee of the Great Plains Athletic Conference (GPAC).

Pinto was awarded the **Lucille and Charles Wert Faculty Award** in 1998. The award recognizes the faculty member judged by his or her peers to best exemplify the ideas of the academic profession at Morningside.

## HE HOLDS THE FOLLOWING DEGREES:

- Bachelor of Science degree in psychology, Lamar University, Beaumont, Texas, 1975
- Master of Science degree in industrial psychology, Lamar University, Beaumont, Texas, 1979
- Doctor of Philosophy in industrial and organizational psychology, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Okla., 1987

## HIS PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS INCLUDE:

- Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology
- American Psychological Society
- Midwestern Psychological Association
- Psi Chi, the National Honor Society in Psychology
- Society for Psychology and Law