

*Bender  
of  
Twigs*



## Brien Bolin

Twenty-five years ago, I met Dr. Brien Bolin at a professional conference to talk with him about an opportunity to join the faculty of the School of Social Work at Wichita State University. Much to our good fortune, Brien joined the faculty in 1999. Although many years have passed, Brien is very much the same person I met in that brief encounter. He had a youthful energy that was engaging, thoughtful, considerate, and witty. I thought then that he would be an excellent member of the faculty. His twenty-five years of service have proven again and again that he is, in fact, an invaluable member of the faculty, a champion for students, and a leader in every way. Throughout his progression from faculty member to School Director to Associate Dean, Brien has shown that hard work, collegiality, creativity, and a sly sense of humor are the steps on the stairway to a successful and highly productive career.

Working hard and following through with commitments and responsibilities are key to Brien's success. Brien has been willing and able when it comes to doing the work, whether that work involves administration, accreditation, teaching, or research. Brien is the man to count on, often at times when no one else is willing or able to do the work. Knowing that Brien is there to put things together when everything is falling to pieces is a relief and a joy. In times of great stress and unforeseen burdens, Brien has always been there as a constant and steady helping hand. Further, he provided the leadership and direction that led to successful reaccreditations and progress for the School of Social Work. In his role as Associate Dean of Fairmount College, Brien has handled a portfolio of responsibilities that often seem innumerable. His recent work to develop and obtain approval for the Associate of Science degree is just one example of his commitment to getting things done.

Collegiality is core to Brien's personality and approach to leadership. Brien is a consummate team builder, and teamwork is a defining ingredient of his success and, by extension, the success of his colleagues. He has been proactive in building a highly productive team approach to publication and research. In doing so, he has facilitated growth and development for his faculty and for his students. Brien's approach is one of inclusion, meaning that he does his share and often more than his share.

One of Brien's greatest strengths, but one that may sometimes be overlooked, is his creativity. Brien may be the perfect combination of right and left brain thinking, perhaps illustrated by his MSW degree along with his doctorate in sociology. Brien is an idea person who can also follow through with a concrete plan of how to achieve those ideas. He seems to have an inexhaustible list of teaching tricks and pedagogical playlists. Using everything from scavenger hunts to webpage development, Brien innovates in the classroom to address research anxiety and encourage participation. He's not above the occasional googly glasses and dad jokes, but in the end, students know that he cares deeply about them and about their learning and professional preparation.

It is very challenging to compose a one-page narrative and do justice to Brien's contributions over twenty-five years. Suffice to say, he is a joy to work with and a privilege to know. He is a delight and an inspiration. One cannot help but see the best of humanity in Dr. Brien Bolin.