

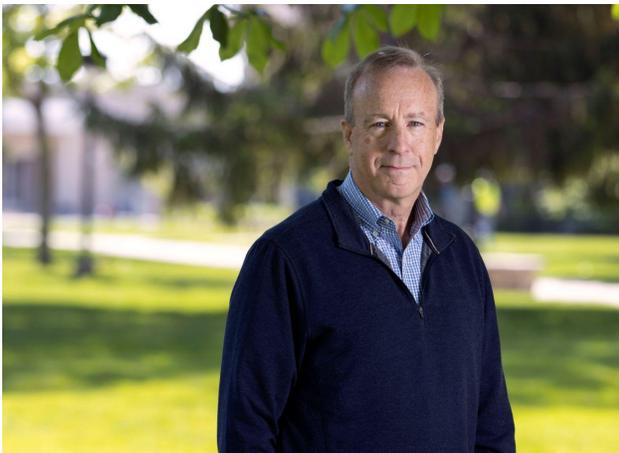
On Main Hall Green With ... Gary Vaughan: Skills in business, innovation

About the series: On Main Hall Green With ... is an opportunity to connect with faculty on things in and out of the classroom. We're featuring a different Lawrence faculty member each time — same questions, different answers.

Story by **Ed Berthiaume** / Communications

Gary Vaughan, coordinator of Lawrence's [Innovation and Entrepreneurship Program](#) and lecturer of economics, lives the words "innovation" and "entrepreneurship."

They are part of almost every conversation he has with his students, whether teaching business and economics classes or guiding students through their business models and presentations in preparation for the annual The Pitch competition.



A member of the Lawrence faculty since 2009, Vaughan also has lived those words in his own business pursuits. He's the founder of the Kimberly, Wisconsin-based Guident Business Solutions LLC, providing business consulting in areas ranging from company culture to human resources to strategic planning.

He's helped build Lawrence's growing Innovation and Entrepreneurship Program, which brings together faculty expertise from various parts of the curriculum, most notably economics and the Conservatory of Music. It allows students to enhance their major with an I&E interdisciplinary focus, prep for master's programs in business, economics, public policy, and international development, or prepare to launch careers in the business world.

Vaughan calls the I-E courses an ideal complement to any major a student is pursuing. They are elective courses open to all students.

"We spend time talking about career goals and life after Lawrence, and how to apply the lessons learned in I&E to that end," Vaughan said. "Many I&E alumni stay in touch with me, asking for advice and sharing their career achievements along the way."

Vaughan's students [finished in the money the first three years of The Pitch](#), a regional *Shark Tank*-type competition featuring students from northeast Wisconsin colleges pitching business start-up ideas.

Vaughan and his wife, Sharon, also have been active volunteers in Lawrence's [Friendship Family Program](#), providing guidance and outreach to international students.

Vaughan earned a bachelor's degree from the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh and a master's degree from Silver Lake College and previously taught business courses at Concordia University and Fox Valley Technical College.

We caught up with him to talk about his interests in and out of the classroom.

IN THE CLASSROOM

Inside info: *What's one thing you want every student coming into your classes to know about you?*

I have been a teacher throughout my career. If not in the classroom as I do today, in the businesses I consult with and in the businesses I ran. I have viewed every co-worker as a student of business and have tried to pass along any experiences I have had that would benefit them. One of my goals for my students at Lawrence is for them to be much smarter than I am when they get to be my age and achieve a similar position in life.

Getting energized: *What work have you done or will you be doing at Lawrence that gets you the most excited?*

The Pitch competition and the Rabbit Gallery practicum excite me the most. The Rabbit Gallery, a pop-up art gallery on College Avenue run by I&E students, didn't happen during the pandemic, but we are intending to pick it up as usual for this next Spring Term. We have approximately 600 community members tour the Rabbit Gallery each spring. It is one of our more popular practicums for students in the I&E program, with an average of 20 students participating each year. Watching our students excel outside the "Lawrence bubble" is exciting to watch. Our students have proven they can compete and represent themselves in a professional manner in academics as well as on the field or on the court. By the way, we also have a lot of fun as we learn together.

Going places: *Is there an example of somewhere your career has taken you (either a physical space or something more intellectual, emotional or spiritual) that took you by surprise?*

To be honest, I never aspired to teach at a university in a formal way. Like many of our Lawrence alumni, when the opportunity arose, I said yes. This is an “entrepreneurial mindset” we try to instill in our students. To have the courage and self-confidence to say yes when opportunities present themselves. As we discuss in class, our careers are most likely not going to develop as a straight line; they are made up of many crooked lines that are moving us forward in our careers in interesting and exciting ways.

OUT OF THE CLASSROOM

This or that: *If you weren't teaching for a living, what would you be doing?*

My dream job would be to work in the National Park System taking care of the grounds and talking with the visitors. Hiking trails and taking in the sights when I'm not emptying the trash containers.

Right at home: *Whether for work, relaxation or reflection, what's your favorite spot on campus?*

I enjoy walking on campus at dusk in the summertime. It is peaceful and quiet as the moon shines on Main Hall, and 10th week is far away.

One book, one recording, one film: *Name one of each that speaks to your soul? Or you would recommend to a friend? Or both?*

Many may not know that I enjoy reading about the Civil War and have either read or listened to many books on that era. I enjoy the strategies that worked and didn't work during that time in our country's history. I am currently listening to *The Man Who Would Not Be Washington: Robert E. Lee's Civil War and His Decision That Changed American History*, by Jonathan Horn.

As my students do know, I am also a *Star Wars* enthusiast. I have several *Star Wars* articles in my office and have seen all the episodes several—OK, more than several—times, including *Solo* and *Rogue One*, and have enjoyed the story line for many years. May the force be with you.