

# The 2019 Herb Gross Presidential Awardees

by Jim Ham, Past President

At the 2019 Annual AMATYC Conference, Karen Gaines and John Pazdar received the Herb Gross Presidential Award. This award recognizes exceptional service to AMATYC and to the mathematics education profession.



**Karen Gaines** began her career as an electrical engineer in 1986 with McDonnell Douglas. After four years in industry, she felt a calling for education, earned a master's degree and began her teaching career in the community college. She has worked at her current college, St. Louis CC – Meramec, for 23 years and has been recognized by her college and peers with state-wide and national awards for excellence.

Throughout her career Karen has been an advocate for STEM

education. At St. Louis CC, she created a mathematics course on crime solving and forensic science, and collaborated with colleagues to develop interdisciplinary activities in physics, anthropology, and other science disciplines. Karen is currently on an AMATYC team developing curricular resources for an emerging AMATYC initiative, *AMATYC's Journey to Mars*.

Karen has worked extensively on grants. She created classroom resources for two NASA-AMATYC collaborative grants (1996-2001), and for *The Dimensions Program* (NSF, 2009-2011), and played a leadership role in *Math Works* (NSF, 2001-2003). Recently, Karen and a team of AMATYC members submitted a \$3,000,000 NSF grant proposal titled *Teaching for PROWESS*.

Karen helped to develop the Project ACCESS program, and became AMATYC's first Project ACCESS Coordinator after the initial ACCESS grant from ExxonMobil expired. She continues to serve as a mentor for new ACCESS Fellows.

Karen has provided valuable leadership and service to AMATYC *IMPACT*, serving on the project's steering committee, and also as a writer for the Ownership chapter and a principal editor of the entire document. Currently, Karen serves on the *IMPACT Live!* website design team, helping to set guidelines for the discussion boards, content, and other features of the site.

In 2017, Karen helped create the AMATYC Student Research League, AMATYC's second student mathematics competition. As the first coordinator of the Student Research League, Karen oversees all aspects of the competition.

Karen continues to provide exceptional service and leadership to her college, her colleagues, and to AMATYC.



**John Pazdar** was there when AMATYC began as an organization in 1974. He is a charter member of AMATYC, and also a charter member of his AMATYC affiliate, MATYCONN.

John began his teaching career as a high school teacher in 1964, and began teaching at the community college in 1967. John taught at Capital CC in Connecticut for about 35 years, including several years as department chair. After retiring in 2002, he continued to teach part-time until 2011. John was a pioneer for distance

education in the early years. One of his innovations at Capital CC was the creation and production of a televised basic algebra course in which students at a remote location could interact with the professor and students located in an on-campus classroom.

John's service to his profession included significant work beyond his college. John was AMATYC's Grants Coordinator from 1994-1999 and then again from 2013-2016. He has given numerous conference presentations related to grants, helped others write grants, and collaborated on several AMATYC grants. Grants led by John include: *A National Center for Developmental Mathematics* (ExxonMobil Education Foundation, 1988-1994), three NSF grants in which AMATYC collaborated with NASA to create math modules, activities, and other classroom resources (1996-2001), *The Math Works* (NSF, 2001-2003), and *The Dimensions Program* (NSF, 2009-2011). These grants resulted in several books that are still valuable resources for mathematics faculty.

John's recent activities include envisioning and creating the new AMATYC Student Research League in 2017. He served as the competition's Development Coordinator. Currently, John has once again assembled a group of AMATYC members, to write modules for *AMATYC's Journey to Mars*, a proposed collaboration with NASA. John is serving as Project Leader for this new program. Over his long and distinguished career, John has provided exceptional leadership to his college, his students, his colleagues, the research community, and AMATYC.