

UMass Amherst fit goals of Westfield native Keith Wright

Keith Wright says he traveled around the country for about a dozen years, but on a particularly beautiful weekend came back to the area and decided to stay: “There were beautiful, puffy white clouds in the sky and everything was a vibrant green... I knew it was time to return home.”

The Westfield native began his college education at Holyoke Community College and transferred to the University of Massachusetts Amherst. “The Commonwealth Compact with H.C.C. allowed me to transfer to a school with a great reputation and library”, Keith said. “I love that the biggest building on campus is the library; it makes such a great statement!”

Keith continued at UMass Amherst to pursue his MS and become a wetland scientist: “It seemed like a logical choice”, he said. “The school of Natural Resources and the Environment at UMass Amherst has a strong program in this, under the department of Natural Resource Conservation.” While working on his MS, Keith worked for the Army Corps of Engineers and served on the Greenfield Conservation Commission.

Then, Keith went on to pursue his M.Ed. at UMass Amherst also. “UMass Amherst has good connections with the Springfield Public Schools, where I was then working,” he said. “And I already had had two very positive experiences with the university.” Keith wanted to pursue this second Masters degree because he has an interest in seeing that society changes how schools function, especially in urban education. “I’m deeply concerned about our low graduation rates and low literacy skills,” he said. “The Springfield Renaissance School, where I’m currently employed, is dedicated to work in these issues - it has been a good match for me.”

Keith said his school also has a great relationship with UMass Amherst. “This is the second year that I have been a sponsoring teacher for the 180 Days in Springfield program. It’s like boot camp for teachers: they come and work with me in my classroom, while pursuing their master’s degree.” He added, “Having another adult in the room is great for the students, and helps me to be more intentional about my own teaching, knowing that I’m a mentor to someone else.”

In his spare time, Keith has begun to get involved in Springfield’s political process. “Getting involved helps me to stay connected to the broader community”, he said. “I’ve thought about running for office one day.” Keep your eyes open: this UMass Amherst grad and native son is here to stay.



Keith Wright