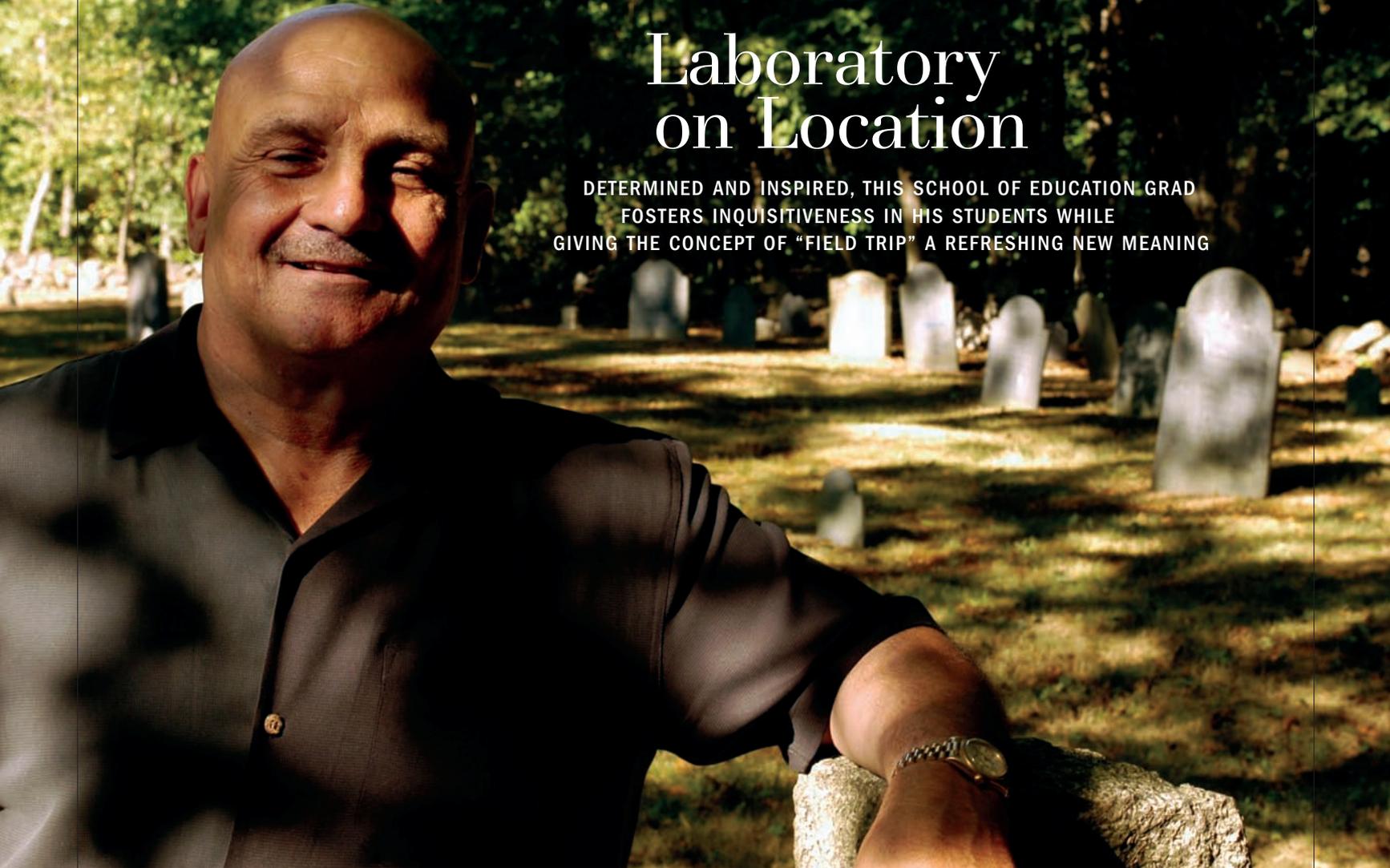


Laboratory on Location

DETERMINED AND INSPIRED, THIS SCHOOL OF EDUCATION GRAD FOSTERS INQUISITIVENESS IN HIS STUDENTS WHILE GIVING THE CONCEPT OF “FIELD TRIP” A REFRESHING NEW MEANING



FLASHLIGHTS SCAN THE TOPS OF TOMBSTONES as W. Dean Eastman’s high school students troll the graveyard in Beverly, MA. It’s nearly dawn on a school day and this is a scheduled field trip to compare lichens found on stone walls to dates etched on the monuments.

“They don’t get extra credit and I don’t take attendance, but still everyone shows up,” says Eastman, ED’70, who teaches history and social studies. “It’s research they’re in control of and because of that, it’s important to them.”

A HISTORY PRACTITIONER is what Eastman calls himself, rather than a teacher. Winner of the prestigious Disney American Teacher Award and a Preserve America Massachusetts History Teacher of the Year, Eastman’s work takes students through cemeteries and dusty

record halls in search of scientific clues. He isn’t afraid to be unorthodox as he develops projects blending every discipline from English and social studies. On a recent project, Eastman used New England’s historic stone walls along with the poetry of Robert Frost to help students understand the importance of regional attitudes regarding the changing landscape including agricultural, manufacturing and urban development.

EASTMAN USES THE ENTIRE COMMUNITY AS A LABORATORY. “All history is layers. There’s only so much to memorize from a book. I’m a research cheerleader. Through primary research, students become involved in their own lives and their community.” His boundless curiosity is contagious. After a field trip

covering African American culture, student inquisitiveness spawned a two-year, student-led research project about the abolitionist movement and the Underground Railroad. The collaboration included research visits to local museums and libraries. “We did graduate level research. I truly believe anytime you tell students ‘you can do this,’ they will.”

A former Drake track star, college track coach and surf cast fisherman, Eastman challenges all teachers to be “intellectual decathletes.” His lesson plan is a fluid document based on research discoveries and he never reuses tests. “In the pursuit of critical thinking, it’s our job to connect the dots, sure, but I learn from my students’ questions. They test me, and that’s why I don’t burn out. They feed my enthusiasm.”

—Tracey L. Kelley