A way to pay tribute

As leaders of one of Hope’s most beloved programs, they have influenced thousands.

That impact is commemorated daily in the lives led by their former students. With the construction of the Martha Miller Center for Global Communication, it will also find lasting celebration on campus.

Dr. Paul G. Fried ’46 and Dr. Stephen I. Hemenway are the only two faculty members to have led the Vienna Summer School since the program’s inception in 1956. Dr. Fried, professor emeritus of history, founded the program and led the trips until Dr. Hemenway, professor of English, took over in 1976.

Some 2,400 students have attended from 185 colleges and universities. For many, the program has offered a first international experience—and the deeper perspective that such encounters can yield.

Dr. Fried is recognized as chief architect of the college’s international education program, and was honored in 1990 through the naming of the “Paul G. Fried International Center.” The designation will continue when international education moves to its wing in the Martha Miller Center.

In addition, however, the new building’s main auditorium will be named for both Dr. Fried and Dr. Hemenway as an enduring tribute to their leadership of the Vienna Summer School. Alumni of the program have already been asked directly to support the effort, but it is open to all who appreciate the contributions made by Dr. Fried and Dr. Hemenway.

The six-week Vienna Summer School offers students a choice of work in art history, communication, economics, Austrian history, music history, German and Austrian literature, Eastern European literature and a Senior Seminar, all taught in English, as well as courses in the German language, taught in German. Students are housed with Austrian families, and take weekend excursions to places like Salzburg, Venice, Budapest, Prague and the Austrian Alps.

Some of the particulars have changed through the years (for one, the students now fly rather than sail to Europe), but, regardless of when they attended, alumni are universal in their praise of both the experience and their faculty mentor.

1956: “Participating in the Vienna Summer School program was one of the fine experiences of my life as it pointed to the fact that we cannot be isolationists, but rather internationalists,” said Dr. Ev Nienhous ’38 of Carlsbad, Calif., and Ellsworth, Mich. “And this revelation came decades ahead of the time that ‘Global Awareness,’ ‘Global Society,’ and ‘Global Economy’ would ever be introduced into our everyday vocabulary.”

“Further, I was a chem major, which limited my electives,” he said. “I never took a history course because my sked was so loaded with labs and the like. Participation in the Vienna Summer School program provided an additional, unforgettable depth to my Hope College experience.”

1956 and 1957: “The thing I remember about Paul: he made living history,” said Dr. Bill Waggoner ’58 of Lebanon, N.J. “I remember walking with him down the Danube River one day, and he looked up at the castle and he said, ‘See that castle right there? That’s where Richard the Lion-Hearted had been held. Had Richard the Lion-Hearted not been captive in that castle, we may not have had the Magna Carta.’ He made history jump into the present by visiting these places.”

1980: “I was very interested in the art and architecture of Europe, and had an urban planning orientation, so it was finally being able to see close-up masterpieces and cities that I had studied for years beforehand,” said Greg Holcombe ’80 of Holland, Mich., who attended the program just weeks before beginning graduate work in urban planning. “I had taken seminars in both Chicago and Philadelphia, and to have the European experience, especially in Vienna, was really a kind of rounding out before I headed off to grad school.”

“There was definitely a serious academic opportunity, yet there were always opportunities for enjoying social entertainment, arts and cultural opportunities, hiking in the Alps, visiting other places—and [Dr. Hemenway’s] ability to manage that, and to creatively manage it, was really special and it really was the glue that held the program together for me and my colleagues,” he said. “A very thoughtful and considerate approach.”

2003: “The Vienna program forever changed the way I looked at the world as a whole,” said senior Karen Schuen of Portage, Mich. “Taking Doc’s Senior Seminar class on values in transit brought up many lifestyle and awareness issues that were continually brought to my attention while I lived in Vienna... It was refreshing to see first-hand that different parts of the world do things quite differently than we do, but their people still live happy, healthy lives.”

“After spending two months with Doc in Vienna, I will forever respect and admire him for his patience, energy, and optimism,” she said. “The program would truly not be the same without his direction, organization and support.”

Today’s director of international education is Dr. Neal Sobania ’68, who attended the Vienna program as a student in 1966. He is pleased that the college is making a point of expressing appreciation for the contributions made by Dr. Fried and Dr. Hemenway while the two can be a part of the experience. It fits, he believes, the campus’s role as a place where people work together to build the future.

“We have a wonderful tradition here at Hope that I hope the college never loses, and when we dedicated this building [the Fried International Center] we were all reminded of it, which is that we name buildings after people who are living,” he said. “Our buildings are living buildings.”

“We have an opportunity to commemorate what Paul has done for this college and for Vienna Summer School and what Stephen has done for the college and Vienna Summer School while they can be present,” Dr. Sobania said. “I know that can be enormously embarrassing to those being honored because they don’t feel they’re doing anything special, but there on the other hand are hundreds of people who do think they have done something special.”