

ALUMNI ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Jean Leppen Kinsey '63

Roseville, Minnesota | Professor of Applied Economics and Director of the Food Industry Center, University of Minnesota

PHOTOGRAPHED BY STEVE WOIT

Jean Leppen Kinsey plays an influential role at the intersection of consumer economics, agriculture, and public policy. As a professor

of applied economics at the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities, a researcher, and a leader in her field, Kinsey uses economic theory to evaluate how public policy affects consumers in many areas, from food safety and debt to consumer well being.

After graduating from St. Olaf and teaching high school, Kinsey earned a Ph.D. in agricultural economics from the University of California-Davis. She joined the faculty of the University of Minnesota in 1977 and soon

became a powerful voice for consumers, helping industry understand consumers' decision-making regarding housing, credit, and food-buying. In 1995, Kinsey helped bring the Food Industry Center, a part of the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, to the university and was named its director, a position she still holds. The multidisciplinary center integrates diverse academic research and applies it to issues affecting the entire food industry.

During her career, Kinsey has secured more than \$8 million in research grants and written widely on a swath of topics including credit card use, food consumption patterns, consumer confidence and buying behavior, food safety, and the role of food and nutrition in consumer health. Kinsey's work has received many awards and shaped the thinking of her profession; simultaneously, she has influenced future economists by advising 200 undergraduates and nearly 100 master's degree and Ph.D. candidates.

“My time at St. Olaf defined who I am, the way I think about the world, and the importance of interactions between people. I know that my ability to think critically and evaluate and appreciate other cultures started at St. Olaf.”

At a time when applied economics had few women in leadership positions, Kinsey received a prestigious fellowship from the National Center for Food and Agricultural Policy in Washington, D.C. in 1986. In 2000 she was named a fellow of the American Agricultural Economics Association and served as its president in 2002. She is also a fellow of the American Council on Consumer Interests. Providing a voice for consumers and influencing U.S. monetary policy, Kinsey served as a director of the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis from 1991 to 1997. For two years she chaired the board — the first woman to fill that role.

Kinsey offers her expertise to government agencies and nonprofits, serving as a consultant to the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Agency for International Development, and on the board of the International Food Policy Research Institute, a nonprofit working to reduce global hunger. She has consulted on projects in Rwanda, Barbados, and Senegal involving women in development and food storage. 🦋

