

Message from the President



Gayle Kearns-Buie
EFA President

Greetings, all!

I hope you are faring well as we experience “Corona fatigue.” As we all know, this has been a very unique, unusual past few months of learning how to maneuver with the “new normal” of social distancing. I know that I am ready to return to a different kind of normal but still feel safe. The Executive Committee and Board of Directors of the Emeritus Faculty group have had lengthy discussions concerning the return to our EFA activities. As a retired population, we will be very cautious as we move forward in this decision-making process. We will follow the guidelines of the CDC, the State of Oklahoma, the City of Edmond, and most importantly, the University of Central Oklahoma concerning when to resume our activities such as Kaffeeklatsch and our outings as a group. Stay tuned for emails from Jan Tuepker about when we will resume some of our summer activities. I know that I am ready to visit with my EFA colleagues and catch up.

The Emeritus Faculty Association provided \$2,500 to the COVID-19 UCO student relief fund in March. We had discussed many times the need to assist students (other than scholarships), and this was a great way to help students in need during this pandemic. The Foundation was very grateful for our donation which helped 10 students with rent, utilities and groceries. The students applied for the money, and the Student Government Association formed a committee to determine those in the greatest need.

I want to express a deep appreciation and thanks to Dr. Sue Lynn Sasser and Jan Tuepker for the emails of funny stories, great memes and links to great entertainment. I thoroughly enjoy receiving these emails and experienced some laughter and enjoyment with each one. Thank you so very much for thinking of the membership during these most different times and brightening our day.

I also look forward to welcoming our new retirees into the Emeritus Faculty Association and greeting you at our next Kaffeeklatsch as soon as we reconvene. You will find this a great way to stay connected with former colleagues and the university events (with a discount to all events).

As you know, the annual Spring Luncheon and Business Meeting scheduled for Wednesday, April 15, was cancelled. We will move forward to planning our Fall Brunch as soon as possible. Our bylaws state that we have to hold two business meetings annually so we will conduct a “Zoom” meeting to share the EFA business with the general membership. We will alert the membership to the “Zoom” meeting soon.

I want to extend a sincere word of appreciation and thanks for allowing me to serve as your president this year and thank my dedicated Board and Executive Committee for their commitment to ensuring our organization meets the needs of retired faculty, staff and administrators. If you haven’t renewed your dues, please reach out to Dr. Fred Grosz to do so. Thank you for being part of EFA, and I look forward to seeing you at future EFA events! Don’t miss out on the fun when our fun resumes!

Gayle A. Kearns-Buie

UCO Colleges Respond to COVID-19 and the Temporary Closure of Campus

Due to the spread of COVID-19 in Oklahoma, in mid-March UCO made the decision to close the campus until the first of June for most staff and through the summer semester for classes. This meant that faculty taught and staff worked remotely. Richard Bernard, member of the EFA Publicity/ Association History Committee, asked the deans to submit information about how UCO colleges responded to this unusual situation. In addition to the use of interactive technology such as Zoom by faculty, staff, and students, deans reported the following information.

College of Business, Jeremy Oller – Faculty and staff in the College of Business have worked tirelessly to transition to alternative delivery methods for course instruction and remote work, while maintaining the quality learning, expertise and customer service the college is known for in the heart of the “wild west.” . . . Though the past several months have been challenging and uncertain, our dedicated faculty, staff and students have gone above and beyond to persevere and accomplish remarkable things.

Our Student Success Center staff continue to forge new pathways to reach students, utilizing CIVITAS to outreach to students regarding enrollment and student success resources, exploring digital recruitment opportunities with the local community colleges and high schools, transitioning workshops to virtual formats, creating new career development options for students to learn how to develop their professional brand and increasing our social media presence. Our business advisors—our heroes on the front lines—continue to meet virtually with students to plan enrollment, troubleshoot every question imaginable and make trips to campus for additional printer ink. Our business career consultant also has been meeting virtually with students and has launched a weekly “Career Chats” event on Thursdays from 3-4:30 p.m. that is open to all students, alumni and the local community to obtain career assistance.

During COVID-19, we awarded students nearly \$120,000 in scholarships, interviewed and admitted our next 2BLeaders class, cheered on our students at the annual American Marketing Association Competition and the Love’s Entrepreneur’s Cup and continue to recruit the next class of Bronchos into our programs such as our new 100 percent online MBA . . . While we certainly have a long road ahead, we are thankful for the dedication and hard work of all involved, and regardless of the delivery format, we will continue striving to provide the best education possible to serve our students.

College of Education and Professional Studies, Donna Cobb – Members of the UCO College of Education and Professional Studies have found ways to maintain course learning requirements and stay connected through a variety of measures during this time. Zoom has become the most popular form of communication for classes, program preview recruitment events, meetings, and even trivia nights with students and faculty in some departments! . . . While this time has been full of uncertainty, it has also been full of resiliency and compassion. Faculty members from the Department of Educational Sciences, Foundations and Research sewed masks to donate to local hospitals, faculty in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction set up a tab at Flatire Burgers to provide free meals for education majors experiencing financial difficulties, and students in Dr. Sunshine Cowan’s community/public health capstone class stepped up to assist with metro COVID-19 response efforts by creating daily COVID-19 briefings to send to the OKC Metro Homeless Shelter Directors Response Team. Dr. Robin Lacy and members of the occupational safety program also donated medical supplies to local hospitals. In addition, our spring class of student teachers still managed to complete their required hours and assignments digitally, and many other programs with required internships have finished strong in a virtual format. Thanks to the dedication and diligent work by our faculty and staff, we have wrapped up an unprecedented spring semester by continuing to serve our students and provide high-quality learning in an alternative delivery format.

College of Fine Arts and Design, Steve Hansen – I am proud of the myriad ways our faculty and students found to work, teach and learn via alternative and remote delivery conditions. We found ways to continue our essential functions. However, the COVID-19 pandemic devastated CFAD. We concentrated our efforts on staying healthy and discovering ways to creatively mentor our students through the final five weeks of the semester. The inimitable experiences we lost included all performances in Theatre, Musical Theatre, Opera, Dance, Jazz, Vocal Performance, Orchestra, Symphony and Band. Many of our students patiently waited four years for their opportunity to perform lead roles. Others had prepared all year for senior recitals or exhibitions. As a college, we live for, and with, our audience. The energy and feedback students receive while performing is irreplaceable through alternative formats of delivery. So, while we adjusted to remote work and found

exceptional, and creative ways to finish the semester, there is much we lost. It is my hope that when you are able to attend performances again, you will take the time to watch our incredible students perform.

College of Liberal Arts, Catherine Webster – The College of Liberal Arts has soldiered on during this time of physical distancing. Necessity ever the mother of invention, the CLA faculty learned or found or made use of various technologies, and in a hurry; they modified their courses so that students might access all materials from their computers (or even their phones).

In spite of the separation, we managed to hold a College-wide event to celebrate the faculty and staff award recipients, which involved a huge group of us assembling virtually on WebEx. As per usual, I started off with a song parody; this time, Bette Midler's "From a Distance" seemed most appropriate.

On the admin front, CLA's "Team Quaranteam" meets weekly, and we even had t-shirts made to inspire a bit of spirit. We are looking forward to the virtual commencement activities, but even more so to the time, when it's right, to be together in person.

College of Mathematics and Science, Wei Chen – "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom," COVID-19 ushered in the best and the worst of times in the College of Mathematics and Science (CMS). It caused the single most devastating interruption to our academic, professional, and personal lives in everyone's memory. It also brought out the best in every faculty and staff member and student in CMS. COVID-19 is a crisis. However, in Chinese, "crisis" is composed of two characters: "danger" and "opportunity." Facing the crisis, people in CMS took the opportunity to adjust, adapt, and innovate in order to complete our mission: help students learn . . . Even though we couldn't have an awards and scholarship banquet, CMS scholarship committees worked hard to make sure that students receive scholarships for the 2020-2021 academic year. With so many generous donors, CMS students will receive a record distribution of more than \$270,000 to help them with their tuition and fees and to overcome the hardships due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

With all the efforts of our faculty, staff, and students, we have smoothly operated and successfully completed the semester. We have already started preparations for the summer and fall semesters. Some faculty have decided to tape their lectures for future use, even when we return to in-person instruction, so that students can use the taped lectures to catch up what they might miss in the classroom. Knowing the crisis is not quite over, CMS will take the continued danger in stride and keep the best times rolling. The fighting spirit of CMS lives forever!

Jackson College of Graduate Studies, Jeanetta Sims – Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, the Jackson College of Graduate Studies (JCGS) has remained open to serve graduate students and the university community with graduate enrollment numbers still trending ahead of last year's counts. Prior to leaving for Spring Break, 100% of JCGS staff were prepared to work remotely in anticipation of not being able to have a physical presence in the Nigh University Center. Post Spring Break, JCGS staff have had "touchbase" virtual staff meetings every morning at 8:15. The JCGS shifted to virtual thesis defenses with 22 virtual thesis defenses scheduled in the Spring 2020 and more than 220 virtual thesis defense attendees thus far. The Graduate College provided a COVID-19 Graduate Thesis Completion Waiver opportunity to assist graduate students who were detrimentally impacted and delayed in completing their thesis amid the pandemic. The JCGS went paperless with all forms, including the thesis signature page, available on the website. The JCGS launched a coronavirus updates website that is regularly refreshed with information for prospective and current graduate students; this site provides a Spring P/NP grading policy Q&A for graduate students and graduate program advisors.

Despite the pandemic and while teleworking, the Graduate College team persisted with the following: held a virtual meeting with the 19-20 inaugural Graduate Student Advisory Board, announced the selection of the 20-21 Graduate Student Advisory Board, and released a significant CRM enhancement (with OIT collaboration) as evidence of our broader aims. Also, the Graduate College continues its transition to a University College as part of UCO's Higher Learning Commission Quality Initiative. The University College will house the Jackson College of Graduate Studies, a new Office of Undergraduate Studies, and the Broncho Education and Learning Lab (BELL); the Office of Undergraduate Studies is preparing to launch a Fall 2020 pilot of the new first-year experience called Broncho Blueprint with FSI and CFAD academic partners. All of this has been accomplished through the wonderful work of many individuals, and especially the JCGS team.

Congratulations

Dr. Myron Pope, former VP for Student Services at UCO, has been named VP for Student Life at the University of Alabama-Tuscaloosa. Pope, a native Alabamian and alum and former football player for the Crimson Tide, will be going home. We thank him for all of his great work here and wish him well.

In Memoriam

Stuart Donald Howard (Nov. 19, 1950-March 4, 2020) was born in Okla. City. He taught history at UCO. **Tiffany Wise** (1976-March 6, 2020) was born in El Reno, OK. She joined the Department of Kinesiology and Health Studies as an adjunct instructor in 2013, then became a lecturer in the Community/Public Health program in 2014. **Larry Williams** (June 9, 1945-March 22, 2020) was born in Cushing, OK. Larry began his career as a custodian at Central State University. He went on to work in the comptroller's office and was eventually promoted to executive vice president. **James Smithson Soulsby** (Sept. 22, 1946-March 22, 2020) was born in Pawnee, OK. He taught math at UCO. **Howard Doyle Leftwich** (Jan. 29, 1932-April 13, 2020) was born in Burden, KS. He was an adjunct instructor in the College of Business. **Dennie Hall** (Sept. 14, 1934-April 17, 2020) was a journalism professor at UCO. Dennie also was a long-time faculty advisor for *The Vista* and co-founded the Oklahoma Journalism Hall of Fame and served as its director. **John Douglas Osburn** (Sept. 27, 1931-April 25, 2020) was born in Paris, TX. John taught British and European history classes at UCO for 41 years. **Veta Annette Ryan** (June 25, 1941-April 27, 2020) was born in Mena, AR. She worked in the UCO photo archives office and was married to Dudley Ryan, former vice president of student services. **Charley Pursifull** (Jan. 5, 1930-May 2, 2020) was born in Maude, OK. Charley started as an adjunct in the Accounting Department in 1991 and moved to full-time in 1995. Also Shirley Dearborn, wife of Randy Jones.

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