



PHI BETA KAPPA

NEWS

Fall 2019

“Love of wisdom, the guide of life”

From the President

It has been my privilege to serve as the Alpha of Oklahoma chapter president for this past year. This year we approved the honorary membership of Interim Dean Jill Irvine, and are looking forward to her participation in our chapter. In December we sponsored Prof. Emeritus David Levy for our Founders' Day lecture. Dr. Levy gave a riveting lecture entitled *Twenty-one Months of Hell: The Practice of Jim Crow at OU*. I was pleased to be the special guest of the Phi Beta Kappa Association of Oklahoma City at their annual meeting on March 28. We have renewed our relationship with our sister organization in OKC and hope to enjoy more such exchanges with them. This year we have a truly splendid group of initiates: we thank the Members-in-Course Committee for their tireless scrutiny of hundreds of transcripts to select only the very few who will become our PBK colleagues. Special thanks to the Scholarship Committee, again for poring over the submitted essays to select the very best of the best. KG Anderson will retire from his position as liaison for the Visiting Scholars program. Since I will finish my term in a few weeks, I have volunteered, and been accepted, as your new liaison for the next few years for this important program. Thank you all for your support for Phi Beta Kappa this year. Please give that same cooperation to our incoming president, Dr. Ronald Halterman.

Marcia Haag

2019 PBK Honorary Member

Dr. Jill Irvine is President's Associates Presidential Professor of International and Area Studies at the University of Oklahoma, the founding director of the Center for Social Justice, and currently the Director of Community Engagement in the Office of the Senior Vice President and Provost. She received her BA in History from the University of Michigan and her PhD in Government from Harvard University. Dr. Irvine joined the University of Oklahoma as a faculty member in 1992. Dr. Irvine was honored at the spring 2019 PBK initiation ceremony. We are pleased to have her as the newest honorary member of the Alpha of Oklahoma Chapter of Phi Beta Kappa.

Roland Lehr Memorial Scholarship

The Roland Lehr Memorial Scholarship is given in memory of the late Roland Lehr, who was for many years a distinguished member of the Chemistry faculty, twice the interim dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, and an active member of this Phi Beta Kappa chapter, serving for several years as its Executive Secretary. Dr. Lehr was a remarkable educator, scientist, and friend. This award is granted to graduating seniors who plan to pursue academic studies in the natural sciences, the physical sciences, or in medicine.

This year the Lehr Scholarship goes to Brian Schibler from Chesterfield, Missouri, who is completing his degree in Spanish, but also is studying both Arabic and American Sign Language. An All-American on pommel horse at OU, Brian will go on to attend medical school at Columbia University, focusing on research.

We are pleased to award the Roland Lehr Memorial Scholarship in the amount of \$1000 to Brian Schibler.



Phi Beta Kappa Founders' Day Event

Since its founding on December 5, 1776, the Phi Beta Kappa Society has celebrated excellence in the liberal arts and sciences and championed freedom of thought. As America's most prestigious academic honor society, PBK is uniquely equipped to advocate for the value and benefits of liberal arts and sciences education. The elected members of this chapter do this because we believe the curiosity and creativity cultivated by a liberal arts and sciences education are essential to making the most of life's experiences, and that knowledge and learning frees us from the shackles of prejudice and ignorance.

The Chapter commemorated Founder's Day on December 6, 2018. The lecture, "Twenty-one Months of Hell: Jim Crow at OU," was given by David Levy, retired professor of American history, who is writing the history of the University of Oklahoma. The talk described the period between the arrival of the first African American student (sixty-one-year-old George W. McLaurin) in October 1948 and the verdict in the Supreme Court case of *McLaurin v. Oklahoma State Regents* on June 5, 1950. McLaurin, a former professor at the all-black Langston University, wished to pursue a doctorate in Education. There was no such program available to African Americans in the state of Oklahoma, and he attempted, unsuccessfully, to enroll at the all-white University in Norman. Despite the resistance of state political leaders, a federal court eventually ordered his enrollment, and on October 14, 1948, he be-

came the first black student in the history of the school.

At the same time, however, state law required that he be segregated from the white students. President George Lynn Cross, and other officials at the University, had no sympathy with the Jim Crow laws of Oklahoma, which they considered undemocratic, needlessly humiliating, and completely unnecessary. But faced with huge penalties for violating these laws, they were compelled to manufacture arrangements that satisfied McLaurin's legitimate constitutional rights to an education and the state laws separating the races. Soon McLaurin was joined on the campus by other black students and the difficulties of accommodating the contradictions between fairness to the dozens of black students and obedience to the state requirements doubled.

The bulk of the talk was a consideration of how the University had to negotiate the innumerable problems of walking this impossible line. Cross and his fellow administrators had to deal with such questions as classroom seating, use of laboratories and the library, eating at the student Union, providing on-campus housing, creating separate toilet facilities, erecting a plywood wall in the stadium so that black students could go to football games and yet remain "separated," bringing distinguished African American speakers to campus, providing and placing dozens of "Colored Only" signs, etc. It was an intolerable and disgraceful situation,

requiring awkward and embarrassing contortions, and it was not always possible to fix every newly arising dilemma. The student who wanted to join the marching band, and who was in every way superbly qualified, could not be accommodated under state requirements of separated instruction and had to be refused solely on account of the color of his skin. Throughout the ordeal, black students protested as best they could. They were warmly supported by a majority of their white fellow students (especially World War II veterans, graduate students, and juniors and seniors). The overwhelming majority of the faculty also opposed segregation.

The nightmare was ended with the Supreme Court decision in June 1950, in a landmark case brought on McLaurin's behalf by the NAACP and directed by the brilliant Thurgood Marshall, eventually to become a member of the Court himself. In a unanimous verdict the nine justices ruled that once a student has been accepted to a school, it was unlawful to treat that student differently from any other student solely on account of race. The decision was an important stepping stone to the famous case of *Brown v. Board of Education*, which, in May 1954, declared segregation in education to be unconstitutional.

David Levy, is a David Ross Boyd Professor of History, Emeritus at the University of Oklahoma and OU Historian.

Report from Phi Beta Kappa Triennial Council - Summer 2018

Chapter President-Elect Ron Halterman attended the PBK triennial conference in Boston on August 2-4, 2018. Delegates from chapters and associations met to approve routine business and bylaw amendments and to discuss topics of interest to the scholarly community.

Chapters were encouraged to nominate alumni or honorary

members to PBK. Such members have the same rights and privileges as students selected as "members in course." One rationale put forward was that we can actually much better assess the value of contributions of established scholars and we should move to include more of them as active members in PBK.

Discussions regarding freedom of

expression on campus were also a highlight of the sessions. While ideas are valued and need to be presented and discussed, we must be mindful about having ideas presented in ways that marginalize or shut down meaningful conversations. PBK CEO and Secretary Fred Lawrence is a recognized scholar on this topic and we are working to have him visit Norman in Fa19.

PHI BETA KAPPA 2019-2020 Contributions

Name: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

An annual contribution of \$50, \$75 or \$100 is suggested; however, any support is gratefully accepted.

Contributions to the general fund also defray initiation costs for students with financial need. A contribution of \$115 fully supports one Phi Beta Kappa initiate.

Contribution: \$115 _____ \$100 _____ \$75 _____ \$50 _____ Other _____

You may mail a financial contribution to the Alpha of Oklahoma chapter of Phi Beta Kappa using the attached form, along with your check made out to the OU Foundation (note Phi Beta Kappa #0032000). Online contributions may be made at giving.oufoundation.org; find "Phi Beta Kappa" in the "Search for a fund" field. You may also direct your gift to the Roland Lehr Memorial Fund #0042002.

For member contact updates return this form to:

**Phi Beta Kappa
Attention: Craig Hayes
University of Oklahoma
1000 Asp Avenue
Norman, OK 73019**



Contributions Matter

The mission of the Alpha of Oklahoma chapter of Phi Beta Kappa is to promote education in the liberal arts and sciences. Through the national Phi Beta Kappa visiting scholars program, we invite distinguished scholars from all over the world to share their work with us. We annually celebrate our Founders' Day with public lectures and discussions on a variety of timely and important topics. Perhaps most importantly, we recognize academic excellence in undergraduate students through our scholarships and annual initiation of new members.

The Alpha of Oklahoma cannot provide these events and activities without your support. Please contribute to the continued support of the liberal arts at the University of Oklahoma.

Calendar of Upcoming Activities - www.ou.edu/pbk/calendar.htm

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| October 2019 | TBA | Fall Business Meeting |
| Fall 2019 | TBA | Founders' Day Event |
| May 8, 2020 | Friday 3:30-5:00pm | Initiation Ceremony Oklahoma Memorial Union Meacham Auditorium |
| | Immediately Following | Reception for New Initiates Oklahoma Memorial Union Beaird Lounge |

News from Spring 2019 Chapter Business Meeting

News and Notes from the Spring Chapter Meeting

On Thursday April 4, thirteen chapter members were present for the spring business meeting of the Alpha of Oklahoma. Some of the business items included the following:

Consideration of Members in Course.

Dr. Thompson, presented the slate of new members under consideration for initiation into PBK. The chapter approved the list of members in course as presented. The list consisted of 238 students including 223 seniors and 15 juniors. Please personally congratulate the students you know and encourage them to join Phi Beta Kappa. Invitations to PBK membership are extended for life. Lists of former invitees can be found on the PBK website: <http://www.ou.edu/pbk/members.htm>

Election of New Officers for 2019-2020.

Officers for 2019-2020 academic year were elected and are as follows:

Ron Halterman - President
Sherry Cox - President-Elect 2020
Julia Ehrhardt- Vice President
Amy Davenport - Treasurer
Craig Hayes - Secretary

Business Discussion.

There also was discussion of the chapter's OU Foundation accounts, specifically, for the Roland Lehr fund. The fund was created by the chapter some years ago to award a cash prize to top Phi Beta Kappa graduates who will pursue graduate work in the natural sciences, the physical scienc-

es, or in medicine. The chapter would like to continue building the principal in the fund so that at least one annual award of \$1,000 can be offered. Until that time, the general fund will supplement the prize to ensure \$1,000 is available for awarding. Going forward, any savings from the initiation ceremony will go toward the fund's principal balance. Please consider donating to the Lehr fund as we continue to build the principal.

Call for Honorary Members.

Calls were made for Honorary and/or Alumni members for consideration at the Fall 2019 business meeting. Honorary elections may be made from time to time, but they shall be limited in number and confined to persons of distinction. Additionally, alumni of any division of the University from classes of more than ten years' standing may be considered. Such graduates must be persons who have won distinction in letters, science, education, or other intellectual pursuits, or who have rendered to the nation or the region in which they live signal public service of such a nature as to manifest the possession of high intellectual attainments and scholarly interests. Nominations, including a letter of nomination and CV must be received by September 15th. If you have a worthy candidate, please contact Dr. Sherry Cox, scox@ou.edu for more information on nominations.

Thank you to all who attended and participated in our spring business meeting. The chapter meets twice annually – once in the fall (usually October) and once in the spring (usually early April). We hope to see you at a future meeting. Join our listserv to get notifications of meeting details (info in "Alpha of Oklahoma Chapter Updates").

Undergraduate Research Day

The Honors College hosted the 31st annual Undergraduate Research Day on Saturday, April 6, 2019 at the Lissa & Cy Wagner Hall, 1005 Asp Avenue, University of Oklahoma. At this annual conference, the Honors College hosts students who were funded in their research or creative activities from the Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program and students in general who want to show what they have discovered in their fields. This year, Undergraduate Research Day featured 95 presentations across 18 different sessions in as many different disciplines, including engineering, chemistry, architecture, linguistics, anthropology and more.

Each year, the Alpha of Oklahoma Chapter of Phi Beta Kappa sponsors the Ronald Lehr Phi Beta Kappa Award for the Grand Prize at Undergraduate Research Day. Virginia "Katy" Felkner earned the distinguished "Lehr" award for her presentation titled "Servius: An Object-Oriented Approach" which entailed automatically encoding a digital critical edition of a complicated Latin text. Her faculty guide for this project was Dr. Samuel Huskey, a Phi Beta Kappan. Katy was recognized on Thursday, April 18th, at the annual Honors College Awards Ceremony by our Chapter's President, Dr. Marcia Haag, and Vice President Elect, Dr. Julia Ehrhardt.



Alpha of Oklahoma 147-7404
Phi Beta Kappa
c/o Craig Hayes
Phi Beta Kappa
1000 Asp Avenue
Norman, OK 73019
www.ou.edu/pbk

Chapter Officers 2018-2019 www.ou.edu/pbk/officers.htm

President

Ronald L. Halterman
Professor, Chemistry
& Biochemistry
rhalterman@ou.edu
405-325-4836

President Elect

Sherry Cox, Ph.D.
Assistant Dean, Jean-
nine Rainbolt College
of Education
scox@ou.edu
405-325-5377

Vice President

Julia Ehrhardt, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of
American Studies
juliea@ou.edu
405-325-5258

Secretary

Craig Hayes
Director, International
Admissions &
Recruitment
Buchanan Hall
1000 Asp Avenue
Norman, OK 73019
rchayes@ou.edu
405-325-1221

Treasurer

Amy Davenport, Ph.D.
Director, Fit & Rec and
1401 Asp Ave., 170
Norman, OK 73019
amydavenport@ou.edu
405-325-3053

Standing Committees

Members-in-Course

James Thompson,
Ph.D., Chair
Peggy Chambers
Lynne Levy, Ph.D.
Julia Ehrhardt, Ph.D.

Scholarship

Ron Schleifer, Ph.D.,
Chair
Nanette Hathaway
David Levy, Ph.D.
Laurie Scrivener

Chapter Listserv

If you would like to be added to the chapter's listserv to receive intermittent email updates of chapter activities, send your request to pbk-l@lists.ou.edu. Update your mailing address with the chapter by emailing Craig Hayes at rchayes@ou.edu.

Check out our new Twitter Account

PBK ALPHA of OK
[@OU_PBK](https://twitter.com/OU_PBK)

Honorary and Alumni Membership

Sherry Cox, Ph.D.,
Chair

Communications

Paula Baker
Sherry Cox, Ph.D.
Amy Davenport, Ph.D.
Susannah Livingood

Visiting Scholars Program

Marcia Haag, Ph.D.

Website Editor

Amy Davenport, Ph.D.

Newsletter

Sherry Cox, Ph.D.
Amy Davenport, Ph.D.
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