

From the Desk of the President.....

We do make a difference!

I had the opportunity recently to reconnect with a former student of mine from long ago, before I came to Northeastern State in 1985. I had the opportunity as a graduate student to become a full-time instructor at Louisiana State for three years during my graduate studies. I don't need to tell you that this greatly lengthened my graduate school duration but, I feel, it enhanced my ability to teach when the time came for that "real job". This student, Kevin Ward, and I hit it off. We studied together, I tutored him, and I taught him. We even worked out together. I got to know his family and really enjoyed our association. Time went on, he entered medical school at Tulane, I left LSU for NSU and the rest is history. Till I see Dr. Kevin Ward featured in the latest edition of the LSU Alumni Magazine as an outstanding alumnus. This meant I had to reconnect with Kevin as he was at a new institution and I wanted to hear what had happened in the 10 or so years since we had last talked. Calling the University of Michigan Hospital Emergency Medical Department was an interesting experience but I was able to talk to several very cordial individuals. I left my contact information and hoped to hear from Kevin. Two days later he called, apologizing for his tardiness in replying saying that he just had returned from a conference in Norway. We talked and exchanged news about each other's families and our common acquaintances. We shared good times and remembrances. And then he said these golden words, "You don't realize what an impact and difference you made in my life." And the thing is I enjoyed doing it.

We do make a difference! Even the students who may not be the best students can surprise us with what we do for them. And we do make a difference in the world we live in. Every student we teach every graduate student we mentor and every person we interact with professionally takes something away. Admittedly these interactions may not always be positive but still we have an impact. As I write my last President's Column of my term as president of the Oklahoma Academy of Science, if this piece is viewed as a pat-on-the-back, feel-good essay, then so be it. In these lean and challenging times we can look at what we do and why we do it. I got into the business of education and promotion of science and scientific thought because I felt I was pretty good at it (based on my graduate teaching opportunities). I got into science education because it does make a difference and opens the mind to new and broader possibilities. So as we collectively approach the renewal that comes with the start of a new academic year, let's all remind ourselves of the valuable service that we provide for the students in each of our classes and labs toward their long term productivity and benefit to society as a whole.

Craig Clifford, OAS President