

## PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

The first matter of business that I want to take care of in my inaugural newsletter President's Column is to thank the organization for their confidence in me to serve as the president for 2012-2013 calendar years. I came to truly love not only OAS as an organization when I came to Oklahoma in 1985 but to enjoy the members' help and friendships that ensued. The organization allowed me to see and understand Oklahoma better as I endeavored to become familiar with the diversity that Oklahoma contains in its landscapes and peoples. The members proved to be a source of support, encouragement and collegiality. I still count among my friends people that I met 26 years ago at Boiling Springs State Park in western Oklahoma. Having served once before as the president of OAS I accepted this recent election with an awareness of what was to come. But as I sit down to write this column I realized that during my first term and now in this one, the most challenging item to deal with is what to write in my President's Column. Sure, I taught lots of classes and students over the years. I'm proud of the research that I have been a part of. I have published a few papers, a book section and even a lab manual. Most recently I have been involved in endangered species research and monitoring. And I am a coauthor of a software site for anatomy and physiology instruction. But those were easy because I know what to put in a software site for A&P – anatomy and physiology, what else. The content comes with the title. But what content comes with "President's Column?" One thing that does come to my mind is the soapbox. I find that in class it is very easy to climb on that soapbox and expound on the topic or pet peeve of the day. I know I have to avoid the political scene, and religion. But that still leaves a lot of territory as fair game. As a senior faculty member in my department and college, certain privileges can be taken. Still we all need to be aware of today's limits and sensibilities.

The soapbox that I have chosen is the need for all of us to be a part of the entire educational enterprise. OAS is a unique organization. We have professional scientists, mathematicians, geologists, geographers, computer scientists, sociologists, librarians, and faceless bureaucrats. I added the last one because that is how someone years ago introduced themselves to me at a field meeting. We have high school and community college members. We have members from the large schools and the small schools. Friends of members might be someone who likes the outdoors or someone who likes the indoors. Hobbyist, amateurs, professionals, and aficionados are all welcome. OAS thus covers a large portion of the educational enterprise. This is not the soapbox part yet. Here it comes.

Over my 26 year career at NSU, I have had the opportunity to wear a few different hats. Faculty member, department chair, dean, preprofessional health advisor, faculty council president, graduation speaker, etc. But one of the more interesting and rewarding ones

is when I participated in workshops for teachers from high school and elementary school. I have worked with several programs over the years where I was simply one of a larger team or I was the lead presenter. But the part that I think has helped me the most is the interactions with those teachers who devote their lives to educating the precollege students. They are an impressive group. They work against increasingly difficult odds. We raise our tuition when we need greater funding. They can't. They even get their stipends cut when the state finds itself having difficulty meeting its commitments and obligations. In smaller districts, some of them even drive a school bus or coach a team in addition to teaching. We all know they spend some of their own salaries to make their classrooms more pleasant and productive. This last Tuesday I attended the State Department of Education Math and Science Partnership Day at the Capitol. This was a ceremony that allowed several school districts that had partnered with a higher education faculty member(s) to offer a two week workshop with 4 days of follow-up for teachers in their area. This is the sort of activity that I am talking about where all levels of the educational enterprise get together to share, develop, and grow in our understanding of each other. The content that is delivered and the lesson plans developed are important, but there are things that are more important. The friendships, the understanding, and the partnerships are much more important.

I encourage us all to be a part of some activity whether it be grant funded or through a support organization to enhance the understanding of each of our roles in the education enterprise. Invite a teacher to a field meeting or seminar. Entertain a group of visiting students and their teacher in your lab. Take your show on the road and visit a local school. Even if don't we teach at a university or college, we are recruiters for science, engineering, mathematics, information technology and all the other disciplines that are under the umbrella of the Oklahoma Academy of Science.

Check out the rest of the information in this newsletter and you will see opportunities to do just what I am talking about. The OJAS meeting in Ada is coming up where judges are always needed. The Spring Field meeting at Sequoyah State Park near Wagoner is in the middle of April. The annual Technical Meeting will be here before we know it. Get involved with the Academy. Get involved with the educational enterprise.

Craig Clifford, OAS President