

### Schmidly Announces Aggressive Diversity Initiatives

On the same day it recognized Nancy Randolph Davis as its first African-American student, Oklahoma State University announced an aggressive initiative to improve the diversity of faculty, students and all areas of the university.

"As we honor the historic and heroic efforts of Nancy Randolph Davis, it is only fitting that we embark on a number of measures that will create a more diverse environment, which will improve the value of an OSU education," said OSU System CEO and President David Schmidly.

Davis was the first African American admitted to Oklahoma A&M College, enrolling in 1949 as a home economics graduate student. She attended a ceremony Wednesday in the OSU Student Union honoring her accomplishments. Thanks to the efforts of the OSU Student Government Association, Feb. 1 has been designated as "Nancy Randolph Davis Day" at OSU.

"In recognition of Nancy Randolph Davis and all other minorities who have pursued an education at OSU, it is time we do more than just talk about diversity," Schmidly said. "The one weak spot in the Higher Learning Commission's extensive accreditation review of our institution last fall was diversity. We are committed to improving our record in that crucial area."

Schmidly continued, "We are making organizational changes, assessing our operations, addressing budget needs and reaching out across the campus and beyond to do a better job of creating a diverse learning experience for all those who want to work or learn at Oklahoma State University."

To advance its efforts to improve diversity, OSU immediately will:

- Expand the effectiveness and outreach of OSU's institutional diversity division with organizational changes.
- Conduct a self analysis among all vice president groups, working with institutional diversity to develop a diversity plan.
- Allocate budget dollars to address needs.
- Strengthen OSU's Affirmative Action office and efforts.
- Create a community support committee.
- Continue dialog with new Langston President JoAnn Haysbert to strengthen communications and ties between the neighboring schools.
- Utilize the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges report on diversity to facilitate a campus-wide assessment and conversation about diversity.
- Develop a campus diversity report card to track progress and increase accountability.
- Create a faculty recruiting fund to attract diverse faculty.
- Draw from Faculty Council studies and initiatives.

"We have much to do, but with these changes and initiatives I am confident in our ability to make real change," Schmidly said. "I am excited about the opportunity we have to work together to make OSU a more diverse university."

One of the first steps in OSU's diversity initiative is the reorganization of the Multicultural Student Center (MSC), which now reports to Cornell Thomas, vice president of institutional diversity. The center will continue to be led by Phil Birdine, assistant vice president for institutional diversity and director of the MSC, and will continue to be comprised of four student groups – African American, Hispanic, Native American and Asian American/Vietnamese.

In another reporting change, RISE – the Retention Initiative for Student Excellence – also now reports to institutional diversity under Thomas. The RISE staff is focused on providing the support and resources to help OSU minority students succeed.

"Student organizations play such an important role in supporting campus diversity," said Schmidly. "My entire administration remains committed to promoting diversity through creative programs and endeavors and this organizational change will improve our ability to do just that."

This past November the OSU African-American Student Association recognized Schmidly for his "exceptional leadership and commitment to diversity" at OSU.

In honoring Schmidly, Corey Q. Cox, president of Afro-Am, said, "We're excited to have a president who has really gotten behind building diversity at this university. It's really exciting to us to see things happen, such as the hiring of Dr. Thomas and Dr. Birdine, and not just hear talk."

The changes in reporting structure were effective Feb. 1.

### Looking back: Will Rogers in Stillwater

Will Rogers' visit to the OSU (Oklahoma A&M) campus 75 years ago this week drew plenty of attention and good reviews from the local press.

One student, whose letter home was featured in a college magazine following Rogers' February 5, 1931, visit, put it like this: "Rogers' wisecracks are spread from coast to coast, and when I say 'wisecracks' I mean 'wisecracks.' He ridicules everyone from 'king' to 'field mouse,' and gets away with it. . . well! Just to prove his power, the receipts for the performance totaled \$2,507.52. Bring on another individual who could extract two hundred and fifty thousand pennies from these seemingly penniless students."

Rogers came to Stillwater to raise money for families that had been hit hard by drought during the Great Depression. According to published accounts in The Daily O'Collegian and The Stillwater Gazette, the stop here was one of many Rogers made during a lengthy fundraising tour, and his popularity at the time was obvious.

The Gazette reporter wrote, ". . . for two hours, Oklahoma's favorite son rambled through a happy monologue that had the nearly 2,000 persons alternately rocking with laughter, nudging each other understandingly or sitting alert, faces wreathed in smiles, ready to burst out again in gales of mirth or hand-clapping, or both."

What made Rogers so special? The Gazette reporter confirmed the A&M student's comment on "kings to field mice" writing, "Will's ready wit harpooned a sacred cow or two, polished off Governor Murray and pricked any bubble of self-importance that might be in the process of blowing by the thirteenth Oklahoma legislature. He handed a few warm ones to those present, and the homefolks yelled for more. . ."

Rogers, one of Hollywood's biggest stars at the time, had a tenth-grade education, and his

Stillwater visit allowed him to "serve up" plenty to his degree-bound audience.

"You know when a class graduates here, the smart ones go out and coach somewhere, and the dumb ones, they go to the legislature.

"All your speakers bring a message to the youth of Oklahoma. I'm not going to hand you any of that hooley. They generally say the future of the state depends on you. You know, we've got too many of you now. You are a pretty hard looking group. I don't see anybody I'd like to take back to Hollywood."

The day after his appearance in Stillwater, Rogers wrote in his nationally syndicated, daily newspaper column, "Played this morning at the best agricultural school in America, Oklahoma A&M. Their cattle win all the shows, and their boys win all the judging contests. It's not a raccoon coat college."



### Perspective



### The best of the best...

Excerpts from Nancy Randolph Davis' Feb. 1 address at OSU

Martin Luther King had a dream. Do you have a dream? Are you on track to accomplish your dream?

Years ago, when I was 15 years old, I developed the dream to attend Oklahoma A&M College (now OSU.) This dream was placed inside me by my father, the son of a slave and man with just a sixth-grade education. My father, Ed Napoleon Randolph, told me that OSU was one day going to be the finest technical college in the United States and that it was his desire that I – his youngest child – attend school there. Well, OSU is, in fact, the finest technical university in America and I did, in fact, attend school here!

...This institution played a vital role in allowing me and many other to gain pride and improve our confidence and position in life. It was in May 1949, 57 years ago when I boldly marched into the OSU registrar's office and asked to be admitted to this institution. They told me to go and talk to the head of the Home Economics department. I was seeking a master's degree.

The department head told me that I should go to school in another state like Illinois, Kansas, Colorado or Ohio because the white students here would not want to sit beside me. She said, "negroes (that's what they called us back then) are just trying to go too fast." Basically, I was told that I was not welcome here.

I informed the head of the Home Economics department that Oklahoma is my state and I want to go to school here. I informed her that I will be admitted here. . .

You see, I was aware of the U.S. Supreme Court victories in 1948 and 1949 that allowed a former schoolmate of mine at Langston University, Ada Lois Sipeul, to enroll in the University of Oklahoma's law school. And the other case that allowed G.W. McLaurin to enroll in OU's graduate school. Both of these individuals were African Americans. I believed that OSU would do the right thing without having to be dragged into court.

Well, I went back home, and with the influence of Roscoe Dungee, president of the state NAACP, and their attorney, Amos T. Hall, I received a call three days later informing me

that I had been admitted to OSU.

In 1949, OSU made a monumental decision that resounds loudly in the annals of history. Without the Supreme Court forcing them, OSU admitted this ambitious young black woman, granddaughter of a slave, daughter of sixth- and eighth-grade graduates, and a Sapulpa, Oklahoma, native into these halls of education.

And today, I say "thank you" to the Board of Regents of OSU on behalf of every African American and every person of color who earned admission into this great university because of the content of their character and the strength of their academic record. . .

. . . To the students of OSU, you have a legacy and a history of fairness, social justice and equality. Keep that tradition alive. Also students, particularly the African American students, understand that you have an additional legacy of greatness and an added responsibility to achieve. You see, many African Americans who came before you experienced broken dreams because they were denied the opportunity to enroll.

I was fortunate and blessed. I am not suggesting that everything after my admission went smoothly for me and for other African Americans. However, it has consistently been the students who have shown amazing character in making things better.

I am counting on you students to continue to make a positive difference and to strive to be the best that you can be regardless of whether you are black, white, brown or yellow. Remember who you are. Say to yourself, "I am somebody." Believe in yourself.

First, we are all children of God, and, next, we are OSU Cowboys and Cowgirls. . . the best of the best. And the best you will always be. Always remember that.

*Nancy Randolph Davis in 1949 became the first African American to enroll at Oklahoma A&M College. The 1999 OSU Distinguished Alumni Award recipient spoke during a ceremony Wednesday inaugurating Feb. 1 as "Nancy Randolph Davis Day" at OSU.*



*Fred Smith, chairman of the Donald W. Reynolds Foundation board of trustees, speaks with OSU architecture students during a reception Tuesday in the OSU Alumni Center. The School of Architecture hosted the event to thank the foundation for its gift of \$14.8 million, the largest ever given to OSU by a private foundation, that will fund the new Donald W. Reynolds Architecture Building. Foundation representatives visited campus to discuss the renovation and expansion project with architecture students and faculty and tour the construction site.*

### Briefly Speaking...

#### "Millennial Generation" expert to speak Monday

Pop culture analyst Dr. Roger Casey, dean of the faculty at Rollins College in Florida, will speak on "Minding the Millennials" Monday at 9 a.m. in the Student Union Theater. A question and answer session will follow, and three separate breakout sessions are scheduled in the Helmerich Browsing Room of the OSU Library focusing on implications of the Millennial Generation on enrollment management (at 10:30 a.m.), student services (at 1:30 p.m.), and academic programs and services (at 3 p.m.).

#### AT&T Foundation awards grant to OSU-CHS

The OSU Center for Health Sciences will move closer to its goal of establishing 55 telemedicine sites in eastern Oklahoma with an \$8,000 AT&T Excelsior grant from the AT&T Foundation. The award will fund video and computer equipment at the OSU Physicians Clinic in a low-income housing community in north Tulsa, the 27th site in the OSU-CHS telemedicine network.

In addition to the grant, Dr. Dean Fullingim was named the AT&T endowed professor of telemedicine at the OSU College of Osteopathic Medicine. Fullingim will oversee OSU's telemedicine programs in 24 Oklahoma counties.

#### Survey on campus master plan available online

In addition to the public forums, OSU and its consultant on the campus master plan, the Benham Companies, are seeking input on the plan via an online survey. A link to the questionnaire is available on the campus master plan homepage at <http://osu.okstate.edu/cmp/>

#### OSU Research Week scheduled Feb. 20-24

World renowned speakers will converge on campus for the 2006 Research Week at OSU. Now in its third year, the event will feature dozens of symposiums and presentations exploring the latest trends in research and related current events, and the contributions of OSU researchers. Visit [www.researchweek.okstate.edu](http://www.researchweek.okstate.edu) for more information.