OU honors faculty for excellence in research

OSU has selected eight outstanding faculty researchers as this year's Regents Distinguished Research Award winners. These faculty members maintain records of past and continuing excellence in research and are recognized nationally and internationally for achievements in their respective fields of study. Winners will be honored at an event during the fall semester.

Charles L. Abramson
Regents Professor of Psychology
College of Arts and Sciences

Dr. Abramson’s basic research involves the development of automated apparatus to study the behavior of animals. One of his methodologies, the “Primer of invertebrate learning,” became a best-seller and teaches scientists how to conduct behavioral experiments. Dr. Abramson has worked with projects in Brazil, Venezuela and Slovenia; and many of his books can be found in research libraries around the world. In his applied research, Dr. Abramson has studied the effects of agrochemicals and alcoholism on honey bees, the world’s primary pollinators. He is also working to eradicate Chagas disease in Latin America and Central America by studying triatomines, such as the assassin bug, which transmit the disease to humans. Chagas is the fourth leading cause of death in Latin America.

Tom L. Brown
Arbiter Professor of Business Administration and Professor of Marketing
William S. Spears School of Business

Dr. Brown is a widely published marketing researcher who addresses corporate identity, reputation and key services marketing issues. His initial article on corporate associations appeared in the Journal of Marketing in 1997. Since then, the article has been cited more than 300 times and has become a definitive piece in that area of marketing research. Another of his articles on corporate identity won the Sixth Foundation Best Paper Award in 2005. In addition to publishing success, Dr. Brown co-founded the Corporate Identity/Associations Research Group, a collection of the world’s leading thinkers on identity, reputation and image. The group held its fifth conference in May.

Kashryn Castle
Professor and Graduate Coordinator
College of Education

Dr. Castle has been involved with research in the areas of education and social psychology since she was an undergraduate. Her work has appeared in numerous highly respected international journals, and she has authored or co-authored four books based on her discoveries about children’s learning, teaching and pedagogical research. Her article, Autonomy through Pedagogical Research, had a national and international impact becoming the focus of a study for the National Writing Project’s Teacher Inquiry Communities. Because of her strong commitment to furthering education on teacher research, Dr. Castle created a series of graduate courses within the College of Education, which she also teaches.

Michael S. Davis
Associate Professor
College of Veterinary Health Sciences

Dr. Davis focuses his research on problems common to both human and veterinary species. His initial research, which is still ongoing, studies the adverse effects of cold air on intrapulmonary airways. With grants from the United States Department of Agriculture and the National Institutes of Health, Dr. Davis developed an equine model of cold-air induced asthma to study the mechanisms by which the phenomenon might cause chronic airway disease. This study led to his current work, which uses Alaskan sled dogs as a model for investigating the effects of strenuous exercise. This project has not only garnered significant media attention but also significant recognition among researchers for its scientific value. Dr. Davis’ racing sled dog model is revolutionary in its impact on mammalian exercise studies. The Department of Defense is especially interested in this work and continues to provide funding.

Byoung Jin
Professor
Human Environmental Sciences

Dr. Jin’s unique contribution to research centers on the study of globalization in international apparel merchandising. Her studies, which are based on diverse theories and frameworks, provide solutions for retailers and apparel manufacturers by addressing emerging issues. More than 48 refereed journal papers, 42 refereed presentations, 4 invited presentations, one textbook, two book chapters and 54 trade articles are the result of Dr. Jin’s enthusiasm toward research. Because her area of research is considered a young applied discipline, Dr. Jin is also committed to outreach efforts. She has developed education modules, which have been implemented into three undergraduate and one graduate course at OSU. Her video lecture, “Doing Business with China,” will appear as part of a series on the Oklahoma Department of Commerce Web site.

Hengbing Lu
Professor
College of Engineering, Architecture and Technology

Dr. Lu studies the mechanics of solids and structures. Through his work in nanomechanics, he developed methods to measure linear viscoelastic functions. This allows the direct measurement of viscoelastic functions of small amounts of materials such as the small ligaments in the human ear or the polymer coatings used as the leads in pacemakers. Dr. Lu has also characterized the behavior of a new class of porous nanostructured materials. These new materials have dramatically higher levels of strength and energy absorption, and can be used in landing space modules in outer space or in automobile crash protection.

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Martin Wallen
Professor
College of Arts and Sciences

Dr. Wallen’s research examines the impact of Enlightenment and Romantic thinkers during the 18th and 19th centuries in England. He studies the connection between science and the humanities by analyzing the era’s art, literature and philosophy to determine how they may have shaped the views of the natural world. He has authored three books on these subjects, and has presented his findings at 14 professional conferences, workshops or lectures. His book City of Health, Fields of Disease, Revolutions in the Poetry, Medicine, and Philosophy of Romanticism along with his essay “Schilling’s Dialogue of Health” helped to attract new attention to the German alternative to English Romanticism.

Haolin Zhang
Santelmann/Warth Distinguished Professor
Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources

Dr. Zhang is recognized as a leader in lab analytical method development, soil nutrient management, animal waste utilization and water quality protection. His improved lab methods have been adapted worldwide because they are both more efficient and more cost effective. Dr. Zhang has published more than 60 technical papers, 25 conference proceedings, five popular press articles and seven books/book chapters. In addition to publishing findings within his field, Dr. Zhang produces information for extension publications, and has created five popular Web sites and three interactive computer programs. Because of his creative research effort, Dr. Zhang also successfully acquires grant funding. More than $2 million has been awarded to him and his research teams over the past 10 years.
OSU research spans disciplines to make a meaningful impact

Research has always been one of the three fundamental missions of land-grant institutions. OSU’s new tagline – create/innovate/educate/Go STATE – provides a reminder of how intertwined our missions really are. At OSU, research and other sponsored program activities not only advance knowledge in a number of fields but they also serve as an important complement to the university’s other core missions of education and outreach. Although we often think of research just in terms of scientists conducting experiments in laboratories, research also includes the work conducted by scholars in all disciplines in venues ranging from public schools to the great archives around the world.

Although federal funding for academic research has gone down for the past two years, according to an August 29, 2008, issue of Science, OSU faculty have been able to attract funding from federal, state and private sponsors at steadily increasing levels. Funding awarded to OSU allows us to better equip our laboratories, to involve students at both the undergraduate and graduate level in meaningful research experiences, to attract outstanding post-doctoral candidates to form important interdisciplinary collaborations with researchers around the state, the nation and the world.

It should come as no surprise that OSU researchers in a variety of disciplines are working to help solve today’s energy crisis. The university is actively involved in a variety of alternative energy projects including creating fuel from switchgrass and the use of wind power to generate electricity. These projects involve not only researchers from several colleges at OSU but also include scientists, engineers, geographers and others from the University of Oklahoma and the Noble Research Foundation.

Sustainability also remains a focus at OSU. Our sustainability task force has been at work since 2003 developing information about sustainability courses offered on campus and the nature of sustainability research being conducted throughout the university. With energy resources dwindling, sustainability will be a concept infused in our teaching and research. Sustainability also includes the work conducted by scholars in all disciplines to make a meaningful impact.

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