

Dr. Neil Purdie Oklahoma Scientist of the Year

Reading a summary of Dr. Neal Purdie's accomplishments during the past 15 years makes one wonder why he had not received the OAS Scientist of the Year award before now. At the annual technical meeting of the academy hosted by Oral Roberts University this fall, that situation changed. Space is much too limited here to record all that he has accomplished as well as the many glowing tributes from his colleagues and peers. Thus we select a few illustrations of what exemplifies the distinguished career of this scientist.

Dr. Purdie began his professional career as a physical chemist, became an inorganic chemist and then an analytical chemist, and finally specialized in forensic, clinical, food, and pharmaceutical chemistry. In each of these stages, he has been most productive as a scholar, researcher, and especially as a teacher. He has published his research in almost every important chemistry journal, has produced a long succession of reviews and book chapters, been invited to submit material to key encyclopedias, and has found time to co-edit a chemistry text.

Not content "to rest on his laurels" and previous accomplishments, he is now hard at work investigating methods of determining serum cholesterol and developing quality control analytical methods for validating the chiral properties of protein-based pharmaceuticals. Journal articles and patents, both in the United States and European Economic Community, are the products of his cholesterol research. In his second area of current research, he is modeling structure-activity relationships that are capable of predicting protein receptors for new drug substances.

Dr. Purdie has received numerous awards for his activities including the Merrin Award from the Medical School at the University of Cape Town, South Africa, in 1999.



Other awards include several for outstanding teaching from the AMOCO Foundation, the College of Arts and Sciences and the Alumni-Blue Key Society at Oklahoma State University. In 1995, he was the first recipient of the Oklahoma Medal for Excellence for Teaching at the College/University Level.

As these teaching awards suggest, Dr. Purdie is a dedicated teacher. While it is common for professors who receive million dollar grants for research to shun undergraduate teaching, he regularly teaches basic courses in chemistry at OSU. Because he also is head of the department—his third term—it would be easy for him to take a less strenuous teaching load, but he chooses to excite the interests of first- and second-year students for chemistry. Perhaps the highest praise for him as a teacher comes from one of the nominators who wrote, "The lectures are well attended by students on a *volunteer basis* because they are replete with humor and ex-

amples which have an impact on the students' lives" (emphasis added).

As might be expected from one who cares so much about science, learning, and research, Dr. Purdie is a strong department head, ". . . demonstrating sensitivity to the needs of his faculty," in the words of one nominator. He has transformed his department into one of national and international recognition that attracts students from all over the world.

One of the letters recommending Dr. Purdie for the award closes with this fitting tribute: ". . . Professor Purdie is a quintessential academician, pursuing excellence in the generation of new and valuable science. He balances this by exemplary transmission of his love for the pursuit of scientific endeavor to his students, who number in the tens of thousands." We congratulate him on his numerous achievements and recognition as the Oklahoma Scientist of the Year.