

## **MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT: REFLECTING ON THE SEVEN DECADES OF THE OKLAHOMA POLITICAL SCIENCE ASSOCIATION**

Very few statewide political science associations in the United States have such an enduring presence in the study of politics as the Oklahoma Political Science Association. For over seventy years, OPSA members have met and networked with each other to discuss and analyze the politics of the day. The annual statewide OPSA conference has been a mainstay of our profession in Oklahoma. This extraordinary scholarly ritual combines academics, practitioners, policy professionals, interested citizens, and elected leaders to create an enviable synergy of political thought.

I have had the privilege of participating in OPSA for over three of those seven decades. People who know me well have heard that I first decided to go for my Ph.D. to satisfy the requirements of a maniacal administrator who proclaimed one day that to get promoted in my division, you would need a doctorate. I did not come from an academic family, so I naively thought that simply continuing my masters-level studies to the next level would be no big deal. I never dreamed of becoming a professor.

One of my faculty mentors at the University of Oklahoma was Ambassador Edwin G. Corr. He asked me to present a paper at the 1993 OPSA conference being held at Northeastern State University in Tahlequah on behalf of one of his scholar-athletes. Michael Fields was being considered for the Best Political Science Undergraduate Paper Award. But he was playing for the OU football team against OSU that very day. So, I volunteered to present his paper and serve as a discussant on that panel. It was while walking around that beautiful campus on that crisp autumn day that I first thought that being a professor might actually be a nice lifestyle. I have rarely missed an OPSA conference from that day forward.

Publishing a journal every year since 1993 has been an under-appreciated feat. We welcome Dr. David Searcy as the newest editor of *Oklahoma Politics*. He continues the longstanding tradition of publishing our renowned journal. *Oklahoma Politics* has become the standard chronicle for those observing politics in this state. David and I are joined by a wonderful and enthusiastic Executive Board including Connor Alford, Rick Farmer, Aaron Mason, Shanna Padgham, Christine Pappas, Emily Stacey, and John Wood.

One of my great privileges is to hand off the leadership of OPSA to my very first doctoral student, Dr. Emily Stacey. She has planned an incredible conference at her home institution of Rose State College and will thereafter assume service as President of OPSA.

Finally, I would like to extend my condolences to the friends and family of Dr. Randall Jones who has been a committed member of OPSA for decades. He died of pneumonia on September 11. He served as a professor at the University of Central Oklahoma for his entire career. Randy briefly chaired the UCO Political Science Department but was known mostly for his nationally recognized work in election forecasting. He is greatly missed by his colleagues. Donations can be made to the UCO Foundation in his name at [centralconnection.org/jones](http://centralconnection.org/jones).

Thank you for participating in OPSA! Your support makes this organization such a valuable resource. Please encourage your colleagues and students to take advantage of this professional association as well. With such involvement, we can look forward to many more decades of OPSA serving the political and civic needs of this state.

Brett S. Sharp  
President of OPSA, 2023-2024