Dr. Tim Hepner and his wife Patricia (Patsy) have established the HEPNER FAMILY SCHOLARSHIP ENDOWMENT. Dr. Hepner wants to “give back” to his alma mater and especially to the students who are interested in pursuing the profession of medicine in one of the three majors in the department. The Hepner Family scholarship is intended for those students dedicated to attending medical school and who qualify based on performance and financial need. Dr. Hepner and Patsy hope that the burden of educational costs for a qualified OSU student will not create an insurmountable barrier to pursuing their dream.

Tim Hepner, M.D. was born in Woodward, Oklahoma and raised in the Oklahoma panhandle, living in Guymon, Oklahoma and graduating from Guymon High School Oklahoma in 1981. He became a 3rd generation OSU Cowboy in 1981 and received his bachelor's degree in physiology/pharmacology from OSU in 1985. From there he went to the University of Oklahoma College of Medicine and received his M.D. degree in 1989. He then started his post-graduate training as a resident in general surgery at the OU Health Sciences Center in Oklahoma City from 1989-1994. He has been in private practice as a general surgeon at St. John Hospital in Tulsa, Oklahoma since 1994 and has had a successful practice there for 20 years. He and Patsy have been married for nearly 25 years; they have 3 children: Maggie Cates (currently living in Midland, TX), Eliza (currently a sophomore at OSU), and Lane (a fifth grader in Tulsa).

Greetings from the Department Head

Since our last issue there have been many changes in the department. The Biological Science degree major which did not have a departmental home has now been solely assigned to our department. Students in this major had expressed the concern that they did not feel they had a departmental home. This has likely led to some retention issues among these biological science students. Therefore, there are now three majors in the department at the undergraduate level ‘Zoology’, ‘Physiology’ and ‘Biological Science’. Following this change and a broadening of research areas in the department, the name of the department has been changed to Integrative Biology (degree major names will remain as is) to be more inclusive of our students and scholarly interests. In addition, a new scholarship endowment has been added (see above) and we have also hired a new faculty member Dr. Daniel Moen (he will join us fall 2015). We also have a search underway for an additional faculty member who will join us next year. Numerous other faculty and student achievements are highlighted in the newsletter. We wish you all the best over the holiday season!

Loren Smith
loren.smith@okstate.edu
Department Head
Integrative Biology
Vicki Rhodey (left) joined the Department of Integrative Biology as Senior Academic Counselor in July 2014 after 20 years as a high school English teacher. While working as a teacher, Vicki served as a Student Council sponsor, Yearbook/Journalism advisor, technology trainer, and department chairperson. A two-time alumna of OSU, Vicki earned her B.S. in Secondary Education in 1991 and her M.S. in Teaching, Learning, and Leadership in 2011. After starting her teaching career in Oklahoma, Vicki moved to Texas where she taught for 12 years before returning home to Oklahoma in 2007. Most recently, she taught English at Perry High School.

Dan Leifield (right) joined the Department of Integrative Biology in November 2014 also as a Senior Academic Counselor. Dan attended the University of Pittsburgh and earned his B.A. in English, and his M.A. in College Student Personnel from Michigan State University. Dan brings over 30 years of experience primarily in Student Affairs, Admissions, Student Activities, and Orientation programs. He has taught foundation courses and leadership development workshops at several institutions, and is adjusting to life in Oklahoma after relocating from Philadelphia with his wife and five rescued cats.

Dr Shawn Wilder received his M.S. in 2003 and Ph.D. in 2007 from Miami University in Ohio. Prior to joining the faculty at Oklahoma State University, he was a postdoctoral fellow at Texas A&M University (2007-2010) and The University of Sydney (2010-2014). Shawn’s research program focuses on carnivores and nutrition. His earlier work examined sexual cannibalism in spiders and the role of mutualisms in the invasion of red imported fire ants. More recently, he has been examining how diet choice decisions of carnivores affect their growth and lifespan, including the implications of this work for marsupial carnivores in captivity. Shawn is co-advising one Ph.D. student at the University of Sydney, Lizzy Lowe, and has two new Ph.D. students that started this fall at Oklahoma State, Will Wiggins and Cody Barnes.
Karen L. Smith Undergraduate Research Symposium

On 5 December 2014 the Department of Integrative Biology held the 5th Karen L. Smith Undergraduate Research Symposium. Karen, who passed away on 2 November 2012 was the senior academic counselor in the Department of Integrative Biology. The symposium was established in November 2012 in recognition of Karen’s tireless efforts to enhance the undergraduate experience - especially those in the Department of Integrative Biology. The symposium provides professional development opportunities for undergraduates in the department. For the Fall symposium there were 19 poster presentations by undergraduates from the department. Erin Reynolds (right- senior zoology major) is the recipient of the Karen L. Smith Undergraduate Research Excellence Award for her research with Dr. Jennifer Grindstaff and graduate student Medhavi Ambardar on parental care indicators in the eastern bluebird. The award given for the best student presentation at the symposium includes $250 and is made possible by the Karen L. Smith Undergraduate Research Symposium Fund.

Cameron W. Hodges (left) presented his work on snake activity in relation to flooding. His collaborators on the project were Dr. Karen McBee and Rachel Eguren, who graduated in May 2014 with her M.S. degree from the Department of Integrative Biology.

Abbigail Randle (right) presented the results of her work with Dr. Kristen Baum that investigated the effects of milkweed density on the parasitism rates of Cycnia inopinatus.
Recent staff and faculty awards and honors

Gertie Mulder (shown at left with Bret Danilowicz, Arts and Sciences Dean) was recently awarded the College of Arts and Sciences Staff Award. Gertie has been the Administrative Assistant for our department since 2001. She supervises all of the departmental staff, assists over 65 graduate students with their initial employment paperwork and travel requests, plus handles the needs of 20 full-time faculty and 4 visiting-assistant faculty members. We would be lost without her.

Dr. Kristen Baum, Associate Professor, was one of eight faculty chosen to receive the 2014 Regents Distinguished Teaching Award. This award is given to tenure-track faculty who hold the rank of Assistant Professor or above and have devoted a significant amount of assigned duties to teaching for the past four years. Award winners must demonstrate unusual effort to ensuring the quality of the students’ classroom learning experience and possess high scholarly standards for both the rigor and currency of course content. Kristen has been a member of the Department of Integrative Biology since 2005.

Dr. Scott McMurry, Full Professor, was recently named as a Regents Professor. Regents Professor is the most prestigious position attainable by faculty at Oklahoma State University in recognition of scholarly accomplishments. Faculty selected for this position must demonstrate a distinguished record of nationally recognized excellence and scholarship in his/her discipline. Scott came to Oklahoma State in 2007.

Undergraduate Highlights

Each year the Oklahoma State University Alumni Association presents the Seniors of Significance Award to students who have excelled in scholarship, leadership, and service to campus and the community. This year 44 students were recognized and they represent the top one percent of the Class of 2015. Included in this years' awardees are four Department of Integrative Biology undergraduates: Lauren Foley (Major: Zoology and Biological Science); Brandon Hubbard (Major: Physiology and Psychlogy), Clara Telford (Major: Physiology), and Leah Underwood (Major: Physiology).

Caitlin Way, a 2014 graduate in Physiology, was selected as one of the two Big 12 Conference finalists for 2014 NCAA Woman of the Year award. The NCAA Woman of the Year Award recognizes senior student-athletes that have demonstrated not only athletic excellence but also academic excellence as well as service and leadership through their collegiate careers. Caitlin was also selected as a 2014 OSU Outstanding Senior, an honor given to seniors in the top 0.5 percentile, and as a Top Ten Senior for the OSU college of Arts & Sciences. During her four years at Oklahoma State, Caitlin maintained a 4.0 GPA while competing on the OSU indoor and outdoor track and field teams. She competed in the weight throw and hammer throw events and was twice named an All-Big 12 Athlete for each event. She was also a four-time member of the Academic All-Big 12 First Team.

Mark your calendars: The 2015 Zoology Awards Banquet will be held on 16 April 2015, 6 to 9 pm. The venue is once again Click Hall in the Conoco Phillips Alumni Center. We will send out additional information as the date approaches. Hope to see you there.
The OSU Interdisciplinary Toxicology program, now in its second year, has awarded its first fellowships to five doctoral students (pictured above in black T-shirts along with their advisors). Dr. Carey Pope, Regents Professor and Sitlington Chair in Toxicology at OSU’s Center for Veterinary Health Sciences, Dr. Loren Smith, Regents Professor and Head of Integrative Biology, and Dr. David Wallace, Assistant Dean for Research, Center for Health Sciences are co-directors of the Program. Students enrolled in the program are exposed to the principles and concepts of toxicology and are required to take 12 credit hours in specified courses to receive their Certificate. Students who complete the program gain experience in dealing with environmental and public health issues surrounding chemical toxicity. Each student will receive an annual stipend of $2,500 for research projects in toxicology.

Shane Morrison (third from the left, above), a PhD candidate in the Department of Integrative Biology, received the inaugural Paracelsus Award in Interdisciplinary Toxicology. This award will be given annually by the Interdisciplinary Toxicology program in recognition of academic excellence in the Certificate Program. Shane, under the guidance of Dr. Jason Belden, is currently pursuing his PhD investigating the methods and technologies needed to measure pulse doses of contaminants in aquatic systems. Morrison was also recently recognized at a national diversity conference in Los Angeles when he was honored for his outstanding oral presentation by the Society for the Advancement of Chicanos and Native Americans in Science. Congratulations Shane!

**Fikirte Gebresenbet Erda receives fellowship**

Ph.D. student **Fikirte Gebresenbet Erda**, advised by Dr. Monica Papeş, received a 2014-2015 Faculty for the Future Fellowship from the Schlumberger Foundation. The goal of the fellowship program is to increase the number of women in developing countries pursuing academic careers in science, engineering, and technology. The program supports outstanding women enrolled in graduate programs abroad. Since its launch in 2004, the program has supported 405 talented women from 68 countries. Fikirte is from Ethiopia, where she received an undergraduate degree in biology from Jimma University and a M.S. degree in dryland biodiversity from Addis Ababa University. For her doctoral dissertation, Fikirte is investigating changes in carnivore distribution in Ethiopia and prioritizing conservation areas, as well exploring the socio-economic aspects of carnivore conservations, including local people’s attitudes towards carnivores and human-wildlife conflicts.
Keep in Touch and Help Us Grow Stronger

We hope you enjoy The Alumnidae, and we hope to hear from you about future issues. To be sure that you continue to receive the newsletter, please update address and email information with the OSU Alumni Association at:

http://www.orangeconnection.org

If you have comments, questions, or contributions for The Alumnidae send them directly to meredith.hamilton@okstate.edu

YES! I want to support the INTEGRATIVE BIOLOGY DEPARTMENT at Oklahoma State University!

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- Herbert and Betty Bruneau Zoology Seminar Fund (229873)
- Dr. Michael Steelman Scholarship (229830)
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