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Dr. Howard Kurtz Wins Bernhardt Award at SWOSU



Dr. Howard Kurtz, professor of sociology and criminal justice at Southwestern Oklahoma State University in Weatherford, is the winner of the Bernhardt Academic Excellence Award for 2021 at SWOSU.

Kurtz was presented the prestigious award at the annual Bernhardt Award ceremony held virtually this year. He received a \$5,000 cash award, clock, pen and medallion.

SWOSU alumni Dr. William and Theta Juan Bernhardt of Midwest City are sponsors of the annual award that goes to an outstanding faculty member who exhibits exceptional achievement in teaching, scholarship and service.

Kurtz, a third-generation European immigrant, was born in Pennsylvania and worked his way through college as a musician. He received his doctorate in sociology and psychology from the University of North Texas and completed two post-doctoral studies at Rice University.

He came to SWOSU six years ago after being at Oklahoma City University, where he was chair of graduate and undergraduate programs in sociology and criminal justice for 20 years.

In addition to his university duties at SWOSU, he is asked by the Justice Department, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Homeland Security and the National Institute of Justice to consult on national evaluation projects and to serve as an expert evaluator for federal grants. He also does consulting work for the American Council on Education, National Social Sciences Association, National Science Foundation, U.S. Department of Education and numerous government agencies.

Kurtz developed one of the country's first university courses on victimology, which he still teaches. His dissertation research was published as a book on the effects of violence titled "The Beaten Victim" and in the Journal of Victimology. He has developed graduate and undergraduate course materials on crime for national and international learning companies that are used by countless colleges here and abroad.

Kurtz has received funding from the State of Oklahoma to study electronic monitoring, criminal justice flow-charting, prison escapes and victims' services. He has been actively involved in research and scholarly activity throughout his career and continues to do so at SWOSU.

He was one of the founders of the state's Oklahoma Criminal Justice Research Consortium. The consortium funded statewide program evaluations and research projects in criminal justice. The John F Kennedy School for Government at Harvard University chose this program as a national finalist in the Innovations in Government competition.

"Throughout my career, two things have guided me—compassion for others and the pursuit of excellence," Kurtz said. "I try to instill both of those qualities in all of my students through teaching and mentoring."

At SWOSU, he has rewritten the criminal justice curriculum, authored annual and five-year reviews, and developed educational materials online and in the classroom. He reestablished the criminal justice student organization and has taken students to academic conferences to present their original research for the first time in 10 years.

He and his wife are longtime residents of Yukon. They have seven children.

Previous winners of the Bernhardt Award are (in order by year): Dr. Vilas Prabhu, Dr. Stuart Burchett, Dr. Gary Wolgamott, Dr. Terry Segress, Dr. James Hunsicker, Dr. Jill Jones, Dr. James Breckenridge, Dr. John Ludrick, Dr. W. Steven Pray, Dr. Les Crall, Dr. Peter Grant, Dr. John Hayden, Dr. Virgil Van Dusen, Steve Strickler, Dr. Mary Aspedon, Dr. John Woods, Dr. Scott Long, Dr. Charles Rogers, Dr. Tim Hubin, Dr. Brian Campbell, Dr. Patsy Parker, Dr. Tom Davis, Dr. Kevin Collins, Dr. Trisha Wald, Landry Brewer, Dr. Amanda Evert and Dr. Hardeep Singh Saluja.

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