

# Aspedon Wins Bernhardt Academic Excellence Award at SWOSU

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Dr. Mary Aspedon has a surprised reaction when being named the winner of the Bernhardt Academic Excellence Award at Southwestern Oklahoma State University in Weatherford. The award for exceptional achievement in teaching, scholarship and service is made possible by Dr. William and Theta Juan Bernhardt. Next to Aspedon is her husband, Arden.

Bernhardt family members and SWOSU President John Hays (left) congratulate Dr. Mary Aspedon (middle) for winning the Bernhardt Academic Excellence Award at SWOSU. Bernhardt family members are (second from left) Dr. William and Theta Juan Bernhardt and Valerie Bernhardt Lorenz.

Dr. Mary Aspedon won the Bernhardt Academic Excellence Award Thursday night (March 27) at Southwestern Oklahoma State University in Weatherford.

Aspedon, associate professor in the SWOSU Department of Education, won the prestigious award at a banquet held in the Memorial Student Center Union on the SWOSU campus. For winning the award, Aspedon received a \$2,500 cash award, Waterford crystal clock and engraved pen set.

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.

Guest speaker for the banquet was state senator Tom Ivester of Sayre.

**Dr. Mary Aspedon** has been in the field of education for 44 years.

In 1963, Aspedon graduated summa cum laude from the University of Kansas and immediately took her first teaching position in a kindergarten classroom with 36 students in the morning, 38 in the afternoon, and no teaching assistant. Just seven years later, Aspedon was selected as Kansas' Outstanding Teacher of the Year.

She earned her master's degree in special education from the University of Kansas in 1971 and then served the next few years as special education administrator for school districts in Kansas, Iowa and Nebraska. In 1976, she became director of special education for the Wyoming Department of Education. In 1978, she returned to the Midwest to develop an innovative, award-winning early childhood program.

Following additional graduate coursework, she became elementary principal for the Millard (NE) Public Schools. In 1987, Aspedon was appointed director of special services in Kearney (NE). While there, she met and married her husband, Arden, who now directs the Clinical Laboratory Science Program at SWOSU. The Aspedons have one daughter, Crista DePinto, who lives in Sanford (FL).

While serving as special education administrator for the Lincoln (NE) Public Schools, Aspedon received her doctorate from the University of Nebraska in 1990. She then

served in the highest ranks of public school administration in suburban St. Louis as associate superintendent for the Francis Howell School District and as assistant superintendent for the Ladue School District.

She came to SWOSU with Arden in 2000 and took an educational administration position in the SWOSU School of Education. She was granted tenure and promoted to associate professor in 2005. One of her most notable achievements at SWOSU is the redesign of the master's degree in educational administration. Since implementation of the revised program in the summer of 2004, the program has experienced a 1000% increase in program completers. Current students participate through distance learning sites throughout Oklahoma, Texas and Kansas.

In addition to teaching at SWOSU, she has served the university through the Graduate Council, Panorama Committee, Protection of Human Subjects Committee, Intellectual Property Committee, General Education Committee, Strategic Planning Committee, Interdisciplinary Studies Degree Program Committee and sponsorship of Kappa Delta Pi, an international honor society.

Aspedon had a textbook published in 2006. She is a frequent presenter at conferences and recently completed a large-scale research study that surveyed over 600 Oklahoma school principals to determine attitudes toward special education issues.

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 and Steve Strickler.