

SWOSU's James Breckenridge Wins Prestigious University Award

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Southwestern Oklahoma State University Department of Music Professor James Breckenridge of Weatherford is being honored by The Oklahoma Foundation for Excellence as this year's winner of the Medal for Excellence in Teaching Award in the university division.

Breckenridge will be honored at a May 19 awards banquet at the Cox Convention Center in Oklahoma City, where five of the state's top educators and programs will be recognized.

Winners in the other categories are: Eileta Faye Creekpau, Robert E. Lee Elementary School in Tulsa, (elementary level); Kathleen A. Blake, Edmond Memorial High School (secondary); Bobby D. Russell, superintendent of Pauls Valley Public Schools, (administration); and Oklahoma City's Emerson High School (alternative education).

The state's top academic prizes will be presented at the Foundation's 21st annual Academic Awards Banquet. Each of the five winners will receive a \$7,500 cash award with an additional \$1,000 cash award going to the schools of the winning teachers and administrator. The recipients also will receive glass "Roots and Wings" sculptures, created by Oklahoma artist Ron Roberts and produced by Jim Triffo of Oklahoma City.

Medals are awarded annually to outstanding Oklahoma teachers, one each at the elementary, secondary, and college/university levels, and an administrator from the elementary or secondary level. An exemplary alternative education program also receives medallion honors.

"We know that education is the best investment Oklahoma can make in its future," said David L. Boren, founder and chairman of the Oklahoma Foundation for Excellence, a non-profit organization that recognizes and encourages academic excellence in the state's public schools. "By honoring these exceptional educators and alternative education program, we are sending a message that Oklahomans deeply value excellence in public schools and the professionals who have given so much of themselves to enrich the lives of our children."

Breckenridge has served nearly 40 years as professor of piano at SWOSU. When Breckenridge was a young man, he recalls reading a quote that had a profound impact on him as a student: "The greatest good that we can do for others is not just to share our riches with them, but to reveal their riches to themselves."

At the time, the statement reminded Breckenridge of his own piano teacher and the gifts she had revealed in him as a budding musician. He vowed to one day do the same for his own students. An authority on Suzuki teaching methods and recent president of the Oklahoma Music Educators Association, Breckenridge has helped bring national attention to SWOSU's piano program, producing many successful college and university professors, private instructors, conductors and professional musicians.

“Professor Breckenridge is a tremendous motivator and exceptional manager and monitor of his student’s learning,” said Dr. Terry Segress, chair of the SWOSU Music Department.

In addition to presenting the Medal for Excellence awards, the Oklahoma Foundation for Excellence will honor 100 of Oklahoma’s top public high school seniors as Academic All-Staters at its May 19 banquet. The Academic Awards Banquet is open to the public with admission prices at \$50. The awards ceremony will be televised statewide by the Oklahoma Educational Television Authority at 8 p.m. on May 26. For more information, call the Foundation for Excellence office at (405) 236-0006 or visit its web site at www.ofe.org.

Founded in 1985, the Oklahoma Foundation for Excellence is a statewide, non-profit organization dedicated to recognizing and encouraging academic excellence in Oklahoma’s public schools. Through its Academic Awards Program, the foundation provides more than \$190,000 in scholarships and cash awards annually to honor outstanding graduating seniors as Academic All-Staters and exceptional educators as Medal for Excellence winners.