THE ENERGY MANAGEMENT PROGRAM (formerly called Petroleum Land Management) started in 1958 as the first major of its kind. The curriculum is designed to educate students in the business and commercial disciplines of the energy industry and offers a diversified curriculum that draws from OU’s business, engineering, geosciences, geography, meteorology and law disciplines.

A star in the crown of the Energy Management Program is the William M. Majors Mentoring Program. Placing students in direct contact with an industry professional, the program was the brainchild of PLM alumnus and former Oklahoma City Association of Professional Landmen President Kim Swyden, currently a pastor at Henderson Hills Baptist Church in Edmond, Okla.

“In 2000, the students were invited by Robert Hefner and Kim Swyden (Hefner’s land manager at the time) on a field trip to visit a drilling rig location in eastern Oklahoma. During the bus ride, Swyden asked the students if they had any questions. The floodgates were opened, and the students peppered him with inquiries about every aspect of the industry. “I was actively preparing for the ministry at this time and was paired with another pastor as a mentor,” Swyden said. “I thought about the concept of pairing an industry professional with a student might be as beneficial for these students, in converting the theoretical to the practical, just as my mentor had helped me.”

The program was created in 2001 and named for William “Bill” M. Majors Jr., who was 92 at the time. Bill Majors graduated with a bachelor of arts degree from OU in 1931 and from OU law school in 1934. He worked closely with OU President George Lynn Cross in 1958 in designing and creating the original PLM curriculum. Majors passed away in 2005.

The mentoring program is now in its 10th year of industry-student pairings and has grown in popularity and prestige under the leadership of Larry Patrick, a senior landman at Devon Energy. Mentees number from 40 to 50 a semester, and it’s an honor and a privilege to be accepted into the program. Students are selected based upon a point system regarding active participation in the Energy Management Student Association. Steve Long, director of the Energy Management Program, and Patrick meet with the student mentoring co-chairs the summer before school starts to try to best match mentors and mentees who have similar interests and goals.

“As the energy management major continues to grow, Price College wants to send a clear signal to prospective students and to the industry we serve. We want students with a genuine interest in this country’s energy future, excellent academic credentials, and, most important, the work ethic and integrity to become industry and community leaders.”

—Nim Razook, Price College Associate Dean of Undergraduate Programs
informal events to let the mentors and mentees get to know each other in a fun and comfortable setting.

The relationships between the mentors and students can become close and generate friendships of a lifetime. Through the years, a number of life-changing situations have occurred that are directly attributable to the nurturing relationships established in the William M. Majors Mentoring Program. The students have someone in the industry they can call for help, advice and direction.

Mentors and mentees often see each other for more than the scheduled events. “It’s all about the relationship,” says Julie Woodard, 2005 energy management graduate, who serves as a mentor. “I love giving back to the students and to the program. I love helping one student, then another. Quite frankly, it’s addictive. The mentoring program jump-started my career at Chesapeake Energy. I hope to do the same for others.”

Mentee Dianna Endicott, landman with Williams Production Co., spoke highly of her mentoring experience with Woodard before graduating last spring. “One of the highlights for me this past semester was when I made a trip to Chesapeake during the work week to meet with Julie. We ate in the company cafeteria and she took me on a tour of Chesapeake’s campus. I enjoyed the time that she gave me in answering questions about her job and other professional activities. Because of this mentoring relationship, I can call her in the future if the need arises.”

William Majors III continues to be a part of the mentoring program and regularly attends the luncheons. “Dad is up in heaven beaming,” said Bill Majors III. “I know he was really proud about having his name on the program, but also kind of embarrassed. He just did what he did because he enjoyed doing it. He always said he really got more than he gave.”