

OU Energy Management Celebrates 50:

Unique Majors Mentoring Program ensures years of success to come

By Chuck Lundeen

In collaboration with the AAPL, the University of Oklahoma established the nation's first petroleum land management program in 1958. The program was modified and expanded its focus to energy management in 1999. This year, the program turns 50 and offers a diversified curriculum that draws from OU's business, geosciences, engineering and law colleges.

The star in the crown of energy management at the University of Oklahoma is the William M. Majors Mentoring Program.

Placing students in direct contact with an industry professional, the program was the brainchild of PLM alumnae and former OCAPL President Kim Swyden, currently a pastor at Henderson Hills Baptist Church in Edmond, Okla.

"In 2000, the OU petroleum land management 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," recalled Ted Jacobs, former OU energy management director who now heads up the University of Tulsa's program.

During the bus ride, Swyden asked the students if they had any questions. The floodgates had been opened, and the students peppered Swyden and Jacobs 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 spoke with Ted about how pairing a professional landman 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 shared vision with Jacobs evolved into a formal proposal to the Oklahoma City



2007-2008 William M. Majors Mentoring Program participants.



From left are Chuck Lundeen, William M. Majors III, Ted Jacobs and Kim Swyden.



Serena Branch, Bhavin Naik, Jessica Jennings and Christian Kanady



Lauren Powell and Jack Sweeney



Larry Patrick and Chuck Lundeen

Association of Petroleum Landmen executive committee (where Swyden was president) and creation of the program in 2001. The program was named for William “Bill” M. Majors Jr., who was 92 at the time. Majors graduated from OU in 1931 and from OU Law School in 1934. He served with the FBI as a special agent during World War II. He later established Cal Ray Petroleum and served as its president beginning in 1956. He also participated in the founding of the Oklahoma City Landman’s Association, the group that later met in 1954 to discuss and ultimately form AAPL, of which he was also a charter member, a lifetime achievement award winner and a member of its original education committee.

Majors chaired the first Petroleum Landman’s Institute at OU, where the concept of a degree in petroleum land management was born. The classes began in 1958, and he was presented with a citation from AAPL recognizing his efforts in establishing the first curriculum in the PLM program at OU and for establishing a scholarship fund. In 1959, he helped

The University of Texas establish a curriculum for its PLM program. Majors received the AAPL Lifetime Achievement Award in 2003.

“At 92 years young, Bill Majors was just as much the lightning rod as he was 43 years ago when he helped found this program,” said Jacobs.

Majors passed away in 2005 and his son, 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.” The mentoring program is now in its eighth year of industry-student pairings and has grown in popularity and prestige under the leadership of Chuck Lundeen, who succeeded Swyden and assumed the mantle as chair of the Majors



From left are Chuck Lundeen, mentoring chair, Steve Long, OU EM director, William M. Majors III, Lane Gibbs, OU EM Mentoring Chair and Katie Chisholm, OU EM Mentoring Chair.

Mentoring program in late 2001. After seven years of service, Lundeen will turn the reins over to Larry Patrick for the 2008-2009 program. In the early years, the program searched each month for a regular venue and funds to support the monthly luncheons with guest speakers. The OCAPL and Oklahoma Energy Resources Board have since become joint sponsors in support of the monthly luncheons, now held at the Petroleum Club in Oklahoma City. Guest speakers such as Devon Energy President John Richels, Chesapeake VP Henry Hood Sr., Don Key, Jack Mildren, landmen, geologists, oil and gas historians, law professors and other professionals have given their time to speak at the monthly luncheons. Not only do the students get one-on-one time with their mentors each month, they get to meet other industry professionals and hear educational presentations.

There were about 20 students originally involved in the mentoring program, and this number has grown each year. In the 2008-2009 program, at least 50 students are expected to be involved along with 50 industry professionals from the OCAPL and OERB serving as their mentors. In addition to the monthly luncheons, several industry companies have donated tickets and funded evening socials, dinners, bowling events, Red Hawks baseball games, OKC Hornets basketball games and other events to let the mentor and student get to know each other in a fun and comfortable setting.

Participation in the Majors Mentoring program is highly sought after by both the industry mentor and the student mentees. Students are admitted to the mentoring program by application only and must meet stringent requirements set by Steve Long, director of energy management at OU. There is currently a waiting list for mentors desiring to be a part of the program. Once mentors are chosen, they fill out a brief biography describing their job, hobbies, family, interests, experience,

favorite books and movies, etc. Students do the same once admitted to the program. Long meets with the mentoring chair the summer before school starts to try to best match mentors and mentees who have similar interests and goals. An icebreaker dinner is always held at the beginning of school to let the mentors and mentees meet and get information on what is expected from them to make the program successful.

The relationships between the mentors and students can become close, and over a short time lasting friendships and trust are developed for a lifetime. Through the years a number of life-changing situations have occurred directly attributable to the nurturing relationships established in the William M. Majors Mentoring Program. The students have someone in



2002-2003 William M. Majors Mentoring Program participants.

the industry they can call for help, advice and direction. Lundeen said that he and other mentors have developed a close bond with the students they have mentored over the years, and they continue to keep in contact on a professional and personal basis. Since mentored students are regarded as the “cream of the crop” in the EM program, most have job offers, internships and experience before they graduate.

One of the special mentoring luncheons occurred last year when Don Key, landman for Hanna Oil Co., gave a very moving and encouraging speech to the students and mentors. Key was a lineman for OU in the early '80s and was diagnosed with cancer that he eventually survived. Since then, the prestigious Don Key Award has been given to an outstanding OU football lineman each year. At the luncheon, Key's testimony of faith, family and work ethic left all in attendance with a new perspective on life and what really matters most. Key graduated from OU with a PLM degree in 1983 and currently works for Hanna Oil & Gas Co. in Fort Smith, Ark. At the luncheon, Hanna surprised Key and everyone with the presentation of the Don Key Leadership Scholarship, established to honor Key both personally and professionally. This scholarship will be given annually to an energy management student participating in the William M. Majors Mentoring Program who demonstrates merit through hard work, attitude and academic achievement — virtues possessed by Don Key, who has excelled in his field as a landman. 