



K A P P A T A U A L P H A NEWSLETTER

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AEJMC Convention Issue

Beasley captures Mott Award

"There was a golden moment when every network bureau chief in Washington was a woman--at ABC, NBC, CBS, Fox, and CNN--plus a goodly number of those directing the print media, too." writes Sandy Johnson in the foreword to Maurine Beasley's award-winning book.

How that came to be is part of the story of Beasley's *Women of The Washington Press: Politics, Prejudice and Persistence*, the winner of the Frank Luther Mott-Kappa Tau Alpha Research Award for the best research-based book on journalism/mass communication published in 2012.

The book recounts the women's contributions to journalism and politics, "but more important their determination, struggle, craftiness and indefatigable spirit," according to Peter J. Gade, University of Oklahoma and KTA president. "Beasley illustrates how these driven and talented

journalists carved out a place in the nation's center of power, and how journalism and the nation are the better for it."

"Beasley demonstrates the institutional discrimination against which women reporters had to fight, putting journalism's glass ceiling into greater historical context," notes Andrew Mendelson, Temple University and a finalist judge.

The gender evolution of the D.C. press corps has been slow, but it is a comfort to note, former AP Washington Bureau Chief Johnson concludes, "that the sun still rises in the east and sets in the west--even with women in the room."

Women of the Washington Press is published by Northwestern University Press and is part of the Medill Visions of the American Press series.

Other finalists were Brooke

Kroeger for *Undercover Reporting: the Truth about Deception* (Northwestern University Press), Jonathan M. Ladd for *Why Americans Hate the Media and How it Matters* (Princeton University Press), and Tom Mascaro for *Into the Fray: How NBC's Washington Documentary Unit Reinvented the News* (Potomac Books).

The award is in honor of Mott, Pulitzer Prize winner, educator and long-time leader of Kappa Tau Alpha. The competition has been held annually since 1944. The \$1000 prize will be presented Aug. 9 in Washington, D.C. during the annual convention of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication.

Judges are KTA chapter advisers and officers. The 2013 deadline is Dec. 9. See www.KappaTauAlpha.org/mott.html for information and list of previous winners.

Fruit named outstanding adviser

Jeff Fruit, Kent State University, has been named the 2013 William H. Taft Chapter Adviser of the Year.

The award, named after the late executive director who served the Society for 30 years before retiring in 1991, will be presented at the KTA/AEJMC Awards Luncheon Aug. 9 in Washington, D.C.

Prof. Fruit, associate professor of journalism, has revitalized the Kent State chapter, boosting acceptance rates by nearly double. "He is everything we look for in a good chapter adviser," notes KTA Executive Director Keith Sanders. Fruit served as director of the Kent State School of Journalism and Mass Communications from 2002-2012 and was interim dean of the College of Communication and Information in 2009. In 15 years of professional publication experience, he has been everything from reporter to publisher. He joined the Kent State faculty in 1998 and previously taught six years at Ohio Wesleyan University. He is co-author of *The Training and Hiring of Journalists* (with Lee B. Becker and Susan L. Caudill). He was initiated into KTA in 1978 at Ohio State University. He also holds a degree from Ohio Wesleyan University. He has been adviser of the Kent State chapter for nine years.

He is the 29th recipient of the award. Previous winners, most recent first, include: Judy VanSlyke Turk (Virginia Commonwealth), Andrew Mendelson (Temple), Peter Gade (Oklahoma), W. Joseph Campbell (American), Margaret Patterson (Duquesne), Al Stavitsky (Oregon), Mark Popovich (Ball State), Jane Singer (Iowa), William Click (Winthrop), Karen List (Massachusetts), James Whitfield (LA-Monroe), Tony Rimmer (Cal State-Fullerton), Sam Riley (Virginia Tech), Thomas Schwartz (Ohio State), Emmanuel Onyedike (Hampton), Gil Fowler (Arkansas State), Milt Hollstein (Utah), Luther Sanders (Arkansas at Little Rock), George Abne (with Leey (Georgia) and Marion Marzolf (Michigan).

How to increase acceptance rates?

If your Kappa Tau Alpha advising experience is anything like mine, some excellent students are slow to respond to the invitation to become KTA members. And a few don't respond at all.

I've always found this baffling: students who excel in the classroom – those whose academic achievements deserve reward – become nonresponsive when given opportunity for the recognition they've earned as KTA inductees.

What can advisers do to enhance acceptance rates among students we invite to become KTA members? The sub-text to

this question is more complicated, asking advisers to consider how much we should reach out to students worthy of KTA membership and increase the visibility of KTA within our schools.

We all are aware of some of the challenges: a number of honor societies (some legitimate, others not) actively recruiting, a low awareness of KTA among our students, the timing of our invitations comes near the end of the semester or school year when students are consumed by other work and activities. These hurdles have existed for years. In the past few

years, I've noticed a new one: using email as the initial contact to invite students isn't as effective as it used to be.

I've had an increasing number of KTA-eligible students tell me that they haven't received my email invitations and follow-ups. Many students keep multiple email addresses, and following their campus email is not the priority it once was, generally because they don't use email for social purposes and their university instructors use web-based educational portals (e.g., Desire 2 Learn) to communicate. A few students said that they found the KTA invitation in their spam boxes.

Improving acceptance rates is not a new topic. Several years ago, a discussion at the annual KTA business meeting (the advisers' breakfast at the AEJMC convention) produced a list of 17 suggestions. Several themes emerged: make the initial invitation face-to-face; provide invitees information about KTA and the Association of College Honor Societies; raise the visibility of KTA in your school throughout the year; allow initiates to invite guests (parents, family, significant others) to the induction ceremony and/or a special event (e.g., luncheon) that recognizes new members.

I find myself becoming more proactive to reach students and get their attention. My guess is that I'm not alone.

At our business meeting this summer, I will ask advisers to share "best practices" for increasing acceptance rates. I will also provide copies of the 17 suggestions that some of you contributed to some years ago. I anticipate a lively (albeit brief) discussion as a starting point. If you can't attend the business meeting or have ideas or practices that aren't raised at the business meeting, I hope you'll send them to me at pgade@ou.edu.

I'll compile ideas and share them with advisers in the fall. A practical goal is to revise, update and distribute the best practices to our chapter advisers. The point is not to standardize practices; it is, rather, to provide advisers with effective tools to attract our top students to KTA.

Peter J. Gade is KTA President and associate professor at the University of Oklahoma.

Honor societies recognize, promote excellence in scholarship

Honor societies have existed in the United States since the founding of Phi Beta Kappa in 1776. They exist primarily to recognize the attainment of scholarship and leadership of a superior quality. To the degree that they make such recognition a thing to be coveted, they encourage students to strive toward meeting high standards.

Kappa Tau Alpha, founded in 1910 at the University of Missouri, is the seventh oldest national college honor society.

Membership is by invitation only by one of the Society's 95 campus chapters and is based solely on scholarship and character.

Journalism/mass communication juniors, seniors and graduate students must rank in the upper 10 percent of their class (based on overall GPA). Outstanding doctoral students also may be eligible. Chapters may set higher standards for membership.

Chapters are located at four-year degree-granting institutions accredited by the appropriate regional agency (e.g., New England Association of Colleges) that offer a major in journalism or mass communication.

The Association of College Honor Societies (ACHS) is the coordinating agency for collegiate honor societies. Membership in the ACHS is a certification that an honor society has met high standards. On its web site, ACHS (www.achsnatl.org) provides a list of criteria on "How to Judge the Credibility of an Honor Society." ACHS was founded in 1925 and has 67 member societies.



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