



KAPPA TAU ALPHA NEWSLETTER

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Mellinger book wins Mott Award

Gwyneth Mellinger's rigorous analysis of the American Society of Newspaper Editor's failed 1978 newsroom diversity initiative has won the Frank Luther Mott / Kappa Tau Alpha Research Award for the best book published in 2013 on journalism and mass communication based on original research

Chasing Newsroom Diversity: From Jim Crow to Affirmative Action "explores one of the most revered and influential associations of journalists and the forces that created and later undercut the association's Goal 2000 initiative, a 1978 vow to have the demographic distribution of newsrooms match that of the general society by 2000" (finalist judge Peter Gade, University of Oklahoma).

ASNE's efforts were at first belated moral reactions to the 1960s civil rights movement and later became an unwanted albatross for editors who believed the diversity goals were unrealis-

tic. As it became apparent that the goal would not be reached, Mellinger suggests that the organization developed "diversity fatigue" and began to focus on other initiatives.

The author argues that ASNE's organizational structure and white male culture undercut the well-intentioned diversity effort.

Mellinger "seamlessly blends historical materials with contemporary interviews to make a lively and dramatic narrative," (finalist judge Andrew Mendelson, Temple University).

Mellinger is associate professor and chair of the Department of Communication Arts at Xavier University. The book is published by the University of Illinois Press.

Other finalists included Kevin Arceneaux and Martin Johnson, *Changing Minds: Partisan News in an Age of Choice*; Jinx Coleman Broussard, *African American Foreign Correspondents* (A

History); Dan Kennedy, *The Wired City: Reimagining Journalism and Civic Life in the Post-Newspaper age*; Robert W. McChesney, *Digital Disconnect: How Capitalism is Turning the Internet Against Democracy*; and Doug Underwood, *The Undeclared War Between Journalism and Fiction: Journalists as Genre Benders in Literary History*.

The award is in honor of Mott, Pulitzer Prize winner, educator and long-time leader of Kappa Tau Alpha, the national college honor society for journalism and mass communication. The competition has been held annually since 1944. The \$1000 prize will be presented Aug. 7 in Montreal during the annual convention of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication.

Judges are KTA chapter advisers and officers. The deadline for books with a 2014 copyright is Dec. 9. See www.KappaTauAlpha.org/mott/html for information and a list of previous winners.

Atkins named adviser of year

Jeanni Atkins, University of Mississippi, is the 2014 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. 7 in Montreal.

"Dr. Atkins has been the intellectual anchor of the Journalism Department for more than two decades," writes Will Norton, Jr., dean of the Meek School of Journalism and New Media. An expert on freedom of information issues, Prof. Atkins has for many years monitored and reported on access issues in Mississippi and other states. Norton notes that her work included collaboration during state legislative sessions to get timely alerts on pending information regarding information access legislation and alert the Advisory Board of the Mississippi Center for Freedom of Information about what actions needed to be taken. A protege of Paul Fisher, founder of the Freedom of Information Center at the University of Missouri, Atkins also studied under Taft while earning her doctoral degree. For 18 years she has served as adviser of the Ole Miss chapter, which annually boasts one of the highest KTA acceptance rates in the nation. She was initiated into KTA in 1973.

She is the 30th recipient of the award. Previous winners, most recent first, include: Jeff Fruit (Kent State), 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 Abney (Georgia) and Marion Marzolf (Michigan).

Why Kappa Tau Alpha matters

There is a lot higher education can learn from the experience of legacy media over the past 15 years.

Like media, we in higher education suddenly have a lot of competition. We no longer control the creation and delivery of educational materials. Degree programs are no longer geographically defined, entry barriers into our profession are not as clear, and the business model that defined higher education for more than a century is on life-support.

It is a time for assessing what we do, how and why we do it, and how we can

do it better. Values that guide work can easily become pressured; traditions are questioned. A look at the news industry makes a good case study of the challenges of adapting to factors that redefine your environment.

I hope we in education do better than media in shaping our future. A good start is identifying our core values.

Honor societies are important because they embody the most revered value of higher education: superior scholarly achievement. Consider the types of students our programs induct into Kappa

Tau Alpha: they are intellectually curious, driven, capable, disciplined and consistent. They are the students we all want to teach.

To induct these students into our honor society is important. We teach them that academic curiosity, effort, and achievement are rewarded – even celebrated – in our programs. Visibly rewarding their achievement provides an incentive to all our students to aspire.

Celebrating our top students by inducting them into Kappa Tau Alpha is also a way our programs make a statement to university administrators and stakeholders about what we – professional educators – believe is important.

Through this column during my term as president, I've begun discussions about how to demonstrate the value of our honor society. We have exchanged ideas about how to improve the acceptance rates of those students whom we invite to join KTA. We've shared ways that we induct and celebrate our new members on our campuses. At the 2013 annual meeting, we discussed these ideas in relation to making KTA a more visible presence in our departments.

These discussions are all aimed at making the value of our honor society more apparent to our students, colleagues and stakeholders. During this time of change and uncertainty, making clear what our honor society values, and how our values fit with the mission of the university, is essential to securing the relevance of our honor society well into the future.

Peter Gade is president of Kappa Tau Alpha. He is Gaylord Family Professor in the Gaylord College of Journalism and Mass Communication 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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Some AEJMC presidents "double" in KTA roles

Five presidents of AEJMC (and its former forerunner organizations) also have served as president of Kappa Tau Alpha. Since AEJ changed its name to AEJMC in 1983, eight of its presidents have served as KTA chapter advisers. One, Judy VanSlyke Turk, was named Chapter Adviser of the Year.