‘Big Event’ Expands to Serve Area Residents

UCO’s upcoming Big Event community service day will start a new tradition this year, adding Edmond and Oklahoma City residents to the list of nonprofit organizations they will serve. The university expects to send more than 500 students, faculty and staff into service on March 9, when they’ll help clean, paint, rake leaves and assist with other projects that a resident or non-profit organization needs help completing. “We want to thank the community members that have to deal with things like the traffic jam on Second Street or waiting in line at Starbucks,” Rachel Winters, assistant director of the Volunteer and Service Learning Center, said. “For Central students, it is no longer just a day of service, but a ‘big’ day of thanks.”

President Betz Outlines New Challenges

“We must tie our success to the metro, the state and the nation,” UCO President Don Betz told faculty and staff members gathered for the university’s recent Spring Forum. Speaking to a standing-room-only crowd, he urged all to look for ways that Central can become the “education hub for Oklahoma City … a center of rich collaborative enterprise.” As an example of university service, he said that Central can help the metro area answer the question, “Will she be ready to read at age 8?” Mobilizing to answer such community questions must become the norm. “We are in service to this community,” he said, later adding, “It’s not going to get easier, but it’s going to get more interesting. I promise you.”

Student Engagement Results Reported

A 2012 report from the National Survey of Student Engagement shows that 85% of UCO seniors would choose Central again if they were starting over in pursuit of a college degree. Of those surveyed, 73% said Central provides substantial support for their academic success. When asked whether faculty members are accessible and supportive, 76% of first-year students and 80% of seniors said yes. Of the seniors surveyed, 70% said they at least occasionally discuss career plans with faculty. An impressive 52% said they spend time with faculty members on activities other than coursework. More than half of seniors — 58% — said they have serious conversations with students who are different from themselves in terms of their religious, political or personal beliefs.
UCO Ambassador to Embark on World Tour

UCO’s Ambassador in Residence Kyle Dillingham and his band, Horseshoe Road, leave in March 11 for a 35-day musical tour to Taiwan, Burma, Korea and Russia. The U.S. State Department selected the group from more than 300 applications for the 2013 American Music Abroad program. Dillingham has taken his music to more than 30 countries, making him not only a valuable asset to UCO’s overseas partnership efforts, but also earning him the title of “Oklahoma’s Musical Ambassador.” The violinist has performed for the king of Malaysia, the princess of Thailand, Singapore’s National Day Celebration and ambassadors from Japan, Thailand and Saudi Arabia, among others. At UCO, his talents help develop and strengthen new overseas relationships.

UCO, Korean University Sign New Agreement

Officials of Korea’s Busan National University of Education were on the Central campus Jan. 31 to sign a partnership agreement allowing students and faculty of the two universities to apply for educational and work exchanges. UCO now has six such exchange agreements in Korea. Last year the university opened a Korean office with a full-time coordinator, Oklahoma native Weldon Rice, a UCO graduate who studied in Korea while at Central. UCO has similar partnerships with five other universities in Korea, two of them also being in Busan, Korea’s No. 1 coastal city. Fall 2012 statistics show Central had 145 Korean students, comprising 11 percent of the international student body. That’s almost double the 80 enrolled in 2008.

UCO, Preparing for Disaster Challenges

Central staff and faculty participated in a full-scale January disaster drill in cooperation with area fire, police and medical emergency responders. The successful mock event was a culmination of disaster training previously undertaken by Central, one of only 27 in the country in 2004 to receive a FEMA grant for disaster management. “We were the first in the region to hire a full-time disaster management director (2007),” Jeff Harp, executive director of UCO’s Safety and Transportation, said. “Other campuses are now looking at what we have done.” Work includes the formation of a UCO crisis team that undergoes regular training. In 2011, the university became National Incident Management System compliant. Last year, Central was designated a “Storm Ready University.”

Top Military Leader Shares Middle East View

Col. Lawrence Wilkerson, who served as chief of staff to former Secretary of State Colin Powell from 2002-05, made a special presentation — “We Need Not Be Enemies: Iran and the U.S. in the 21st Century” — Feb. 5 at UCO. The retired military leader spoke to students, faculty, staff and community friends, giving them his unique insights into America’s relationships with the Middle East. Speaking from his first-hand experience in the region, he also addressed ways to improve U.S. relations with countries such as Iran. Wilkerson is currently the Distinguished Visiting Professor of Government and Public Policy at the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, Va., and a frequent national commentator and speaker.