2008 Recipients of Outstanding Alumnus of Kentucky Awards

Harry B. Gray – Western Kentucky University

Dr. Harry B. Gray is the Arnold O. Beckman Professor of Chemistry at the California Institute of Technology and a founding director of The Beckman Institute, a multi-disciplinary research center for chemical and biological sciences. A native of Warren County, Kentucky, Gray's expertise in the field of inorganic photo chemistry has placed him among the nation's leaders in his discipline for more than 40 years. Adding to his pioneering work in biochemistry, he currently serves as the principal investigator on a National Science Foundation Chemical Bonding Center project which looks at the efficient and economical storage of solar energy in the form of chemical bonds, offering the potential to make a considerable contribution toward solving the energy crisis of the 21st century.

Gray earned his bachelor's of science degree in chemistry from Western Kentucky University. After earning his doctorate from Northwestern University, he spent a year as a National Science Foundation Postdoctoral Fellow at the University of Copenhagen. He served on the faculty at Columbia University before taking his current faculty position at the California Institute of Technology. Dr. Gray has published his research in more than 730 papers and 17 books and has delivered more than 100 named lectures all over the world. He has received many major awards, including the National Medal of Science from President Ronald Reagan; the Frontiers Award in Biological Chemistry from the Max Planck Institute for Bioinorganic Chemistry in Mulheim, Germany; the Wolf Foundation Prize in Chemistry; the Benjamin Franklin Medal in Chemistry; six national awards from the American Chemical Society, including the Priestley Medal, and 16 honorary doctorates.

James C. Klotter – University of Kentucky

Dr. Jim Klotter is the Kentucky State Historian and professor of history at Georgetown College. A Lexington resident, Klotter has published more than 18 scholarly historical works about Kentucky history, including the award-winning textbook*, Faces of Kentucky*, that is now studied by Kentucky fourth graders and *The New History of Kentucky*, the standard college text. His most recent work, *A Concise History of Kentucky*, is acclaimed for making history accessible to adults as well. Klotter teaches all over the state and nation as a guest lecturer and has given over 700 public talks ranging from national professional groups such as the American Historical Association, to state groups such as Leadership Kentucky. He has appeared on the History Channel, A&E Network, NPR and KET as an historical expert and has received multiple awards in recognition of his work, including the Thomas D. Clark Award for Excellence in Kentucky History, the Award of Merit from the American Association for State and Local History, and the Governor's Outstanding Kentucky Award. In 2008, he was the first Kentuckian to receive the President's Award from the Midwest Archives Conference. Klotter has served as president of the Kentucky Association of Teachers of History, chair of the Collaborative for Teaching and Learning, chair of the Kentucky Council on Archives, and president of the University of Kentucky Library Associates. He received his bachelor's and master's degrees in education and history from the University of Kentucky, where he also earned his doctorate.

Dr. Klotter is also known as a dedicated educator, advisor and mentor to his students. In five out of the past eight years his students have won the statewide Thomas D. Clark Undergraduate Writing Award at the Kentucky Association of Teachers of History Conference. One of his students said of him, “Dr. Klotter serves all Kentuckians by conducting lectures and seminars which allow individuals to see and experience history in a personal, tangible manner. In his well-researched and engaging fashion, the past becomes as familiar as the present and as fascinating as the future.”

Johny B. Russell – Murray State University
A retired nuclear physicist and senior engineer for the Boeing Company, Johny B. Russell engineered and developed components for major milestones in American air and space.

After earning his undergraduate degree in physics, mathematics and chemistry and master’s degree in education from Murray State University, Russell was recruited as one of the first engineers at the Union Carbide Atomic Plant in Paducah, where he developed and patented the Electrical Load Anticipator and Recorder to reduce the amount of electrical power used by the plant, saving approximately $100,000 each year. Soon after, he began work for the Bourne Instrument Design Co., where he worked with the U.S. Navy developing computer systems designed to recover information from side winder missiles. Most of Russell’s professional career was spent with Boeing Company, where he was one of the pioneer computer system developers for the B-1 Lancer Bomber project and helped to repair and reconstruct components of the Saturn V Launch Vehicle that had cracked on a previous mission. He is most celebrated for his work with NASA’s Lunar Roving Vehicle, which was completed just 14 months after the contract with NASA was signed. The Moon Buggy, as it is better known, was an engineering marvel and gave astronauts the ability to do three times the amount of work done on earlier voyages. It was first launched July 26, 1971, and then again with the Apollo 15, 16 and 17 missions.

Since returning to Murray in 2006, Russell has been an avid supporter of the university and has taken an active role with the MSU Moon Buggy Team comprised of engineering physics students competing in the NASA Great Moon Buggy Competition. Russell has established several endowed scholarships totaling more than $1.2 million and has pledged additional estate assets to Murray State. At age 83, Russell enrolled in a Laser Physics class, sending a positive message to MSU students about the importance of lifelong learning. At the end of the fall 2007 semester, Murray State presented him with an honorary doctorate in honor of his life and career that is, literally, out of this world.

2008 Recipients of Acorn Awards

Marlisa R. Austin – Jefferson Community and Technical College
Marlisa Austin, Professor of English at Jefferson Community and Technical College, is a committed teacher and engaged faculty member at the Jefferson downtown campus. After graduating from Southeast Community College, Austin transferred to University of Kentucky to earn her bachelor’s degree in English education. After earning her master’s in English at Union College, she returned to Southeast to teach full time in developmental English and work in the college’s GED and adult literacy programs. She

took leadership roles in several areas, including service as a co-sponsor of the Black Student Union and Phi Theta Kappa.

In 2003, she moved to the Jefferson Community and Technical College, where she continues to be highly engaged in the campus community, serving as secretary of the Faculty Council, currently as chair of the English program, and chair of the Developmental Writing program. At JCTC, Austin has instituted several new initiatives, including an annual professional development day for English faculty, and a joint collaboration with all English departments to review competencies and assessment of key courses. She serves on the Black Affairs Advisory Committee, is active in the Women's Information Network, and volunteers time in writing projects with local elementary and middle school students. Austin has also taken active leadership roles at state and national levels, serving as secretary, president-elect and president of the Kentucky Association for Developmental Education, presenting at the National Association for Developmental Education conference, and presenting at the KCTCS New Horizons Professional Development Conference for the last four years. Most recently, Austin served as co-chair of the 2008 Two Year College English Association-Southeast Region Conference. In 2006, she was awarded the KCTCS New Horizons System Award of Excellence, the single highest honor the system gives a faculty member.

Austin considers teaching to be one of the noblest professions, stating "the process of teaching and learning is the very foundation for any educational, professional, or personal endeavor." She describes her classroom as a learning environment where she encourages her students to not only work collaboratively but also to take responsibility and be accountable for their own learning experience.

Jerry D. Cook – Eastern Kentucky University

A native of Knott County, Kentucky, and a 30-year veteran of teaching, Dr. Jerry D. Cook is a professor of physics and astronomy at Eastern Kentucky University. He earned his bachelor's degree from Berea College and his master's and doctorate from the University of Kentucky.

Cook has spent the last 25 years at EKU, where he led the physics department in developing a new format for physics teaching called the "studio concept," where students are seated at large round tables to facilitate active, hands-on learning. This new format encourages the students to do physics as opposed to listen about physics, and has resulted in better retention, course assessment and growth in physics majors. Cook's passion for physics education also reaches into the K-12 community, where he is known for the summer workshops for science teachers he organizes and leads, in addition to multiple grants he manages aimed at improving science education in the public schools. Cook's work both in the classroom and in the research lab is widely recognized. He is a six-time NASA/ASEE Summer Faculty Fellow and the 1993 honoree of the College of NMS Research Award. In 2003, he was inducted as an Eastern Kentucky University Foundation Professor by his colleagues, the university's highest recognition for teaching excellence.

Dr. Cook maintains the philosophy that "good teachers are good learners and good communicators are good listeners" and this philosophy is reflected in every aspect of his

teaching. He encourages small group interaction, peer learning and inquiry techniques in his classroom, and strives to be responsive to his students' different learning styles.