

**Globe-trotting OU professors
serve higher education consumers
on military bases at home and abroad.**

BY ROBERT FERRIER



Reaching Out to the World

Thurman White's dream lives on.

The University of Oklahoma's first vice president for Continuing Education established Advanced Programs in 1964, offering graduate courses to military personnel around the world. Thirty-five years later, 4,000 military, civil service employees and other civilians receive annual instruction through more than 700 classes taught at 37 sites by OU faculty and adjuncts from other universities. The program has awarded more than 8,600 degrees.

Students prepare by reading advance assignments. Then they meet—usually on military bases—for an intense one-week or two-weekend class each semester for two hours graduate level credit, plus an optional one-hour “Companion Directed Reading.” Most students receive degrees in 24 to 36

months. In all aspects except duration, Advanced Programs courses are identical to those taught at the Norman campus.

Advanced Programs offers master's degrees in adult and higher education; communication; economics; educational administration, curriculum and supervision; human relations; instructional psychology and technology; international relations; political science; public administration; social work; and teacher education. The program also offers a Ph.D. in organizational leadership. The fully accredited graduate degrees are designed to provide mid-career training.

Currently OU offers courses at SHAPE headquarters, Belgium; and at military installations in Hanau, Heidelberg, Hohenfels, Mannheim,

Ramstein, Rhein-Main, Spangdahlem, Stuttgart, Vilseck and Wurzburg, Germany; AFCENT, Netherlands; Lakenheath and Mildenhall, United Kingdom; Hickam AFB, Hawaii; Yokosuka, Japan; Corozal, Panama; Aviano and Naples, Italy; Sigonella, Sicily; Kadena, Okinawa; Anderson, Guam; Hong Kong; Keflavik, Iceland; Osan and Yongsan, Korea; Lajes, Azores; and Rota, Spain. Continental U. S. locales are in Mountain Home AFB, Idaho; Nellis AFB, Nevada; Offutt AFB, Nebraska; Quantico Marine Base, Virginia; and Washington, D.C. Oklahoma sites are located at Fort Sill and Cameron University in Lawton; Tinker AFB, Midwest City; OU Health Sciences Center, Oklahoma City; and OCCE on the Norman campus.

"OU enjoys competitive advantages over other institutions providing distance learning," says Jim Pappas, vice provost for Outreach and Distance Education and dean of the College of Continuing Education. "Through Thurman White's vision and leadership, OU pioneered the concept of off-campus adult education. Faculty who shared that dream and helped start the program included Walt Scheiffer in political science, Alex Kondonassis in economics and George Henderson in human relations. OU College of Continuing Education staff members Roy Trout and Jess Burkett provided early leadership.

"For the last 35 years, we have consistently built from that foundation, rather than just jumping in for short-term enrollment gains," Pappas says. "In addition, OU uses experienced faculty who are performing cutting-edge research and scholarship in their discipline. We supplement the faculty with outstanding adjunct teachers from institutions such as Harvard. Some institutions use itinerant faculty who lack teaching experience in military-base programs. Our teaching helps many graduates advance their careers soon after graduation."

OU academic units choose Advanced Programs faculty. Many apply, Pappas says, since candidates have the opportunity to conduct comparative research abroad. They benefit both from studying their discipline in other cultures and from interacting with outstanding students—many of whom are professionals willing to share experience with the class. Instructors, who arrange for others to teach their on-campus courses while they are away, bring this academic enrichment back to their courses in Norman.

"OU gains the right to teach at military installations through competi-

tive contracts offered every five years by the Department of Defense," Pappas explains. "Contract funds and student tuition support departments, an added incentive in these times of tight budgets."

Richard Little, assistant vice provost in the College of Continuing Education, administratively oversees Advanced Programs, while day-to-day responsibilities fall to Director Clint Miner.

"Instructors must prepare for intense contact with highly motivated

week exam and a final. The directed reading—a research paper or project—is due 30 days after the course. Counting advance preparation, a typical student will spend 3 to 3½ months on a course."

Little contends that compressing course material without sacrificing content challenges faculty. Students cover several chapters each class. Faculty assign verbal and written reports, and classes are limited to 20 to 25 students. Ironically, because of advance reading, Little may cover more material in an Advanced Programs class than in a traditional setting.

"Not every discipline lends itself to this format," Little says. "For example, we don't offer engineering courses because it's difficult to teach technical material at that rate. However, the arts and sciences, education and administration courses have proven very effective."

Little sees rewards for Advanced Programs faculty. Students communicate by E-mail with instructors after the course, asking academic or professional advice. Faculty enjoy watching graduation ceremonies attended by family who have sacrificed for students. Also, they appreciate the opportunity to follow the

careers of graduates as they progress in the military or transition to civilian jobs.

David Kimmel, at 43, typifies Advanced Programs students. He enrolled in 1996 while serving in the U.S. Army in Heidelberg, Germany. Kimmel expects to receive a Ph.D. in organizational leadership in May 2000. He received an undergraduate degree from Penn State University and a master's in public administration from James Madison University. "I was approaching retirement from the Army after 21 years, and I wanted to prepare myself to teach at the college level," Kimmel explains. *continued*



Advanced Programs Director Clint Miner, left, Vice Provost Jim Pappas and Assistant Vice Provost Richard Little form the administrative team that delivers distance learning opportunities to military installations around the world.

students," Little says. "Under our Department of Defense contract, students can receive their degree in two years; thus, they expect instruction delivered at a constant pace with consistent, intellectual interaction."

Little says faculty deliver a semester of course content in one week. They leave Norman on Sunday and arrive on base Monday. A typical class meets six days, from 6 to 10 p.m. Tuesday through Friday, then all day Saturday and Sunday.

"I teach courses in 'Organizational Behavior' and 'Human Resources Management,'" Little says. "I give a mid-



Kimmel retired in 1998 and joined the OU Advanced Programs staff as senior program development specialist. After completing course work and preparing to defend his dissertation, Kimmel cites a major challenge over the past three years: time management.

"I've struggled," he recalls. "I'm married, and like virtually all Advanced Programs students, I held a full-time job. Studying intense academic courses proved difficult. I'm lucky that my wife, Susan, is pursuing the same degree. We encourage each other. On the positive side, I rate the faculty very high. OU sent deans and department chairs along with regular faculty. We've learned from people like Dan O'Hair in communications, George

perspective to assess Advanced Programs' strengths and weaknesses. He offered advice about the second cohort program. "First, we want to make the general examination process more like the exam for on-campus doctoral students," he says. "We will make the doctoral committee *for each student* responsible for developing questions and grading answers from that student, rather than having class instructors handle that process. Second, we will assign two academic advisors immediately to each student to help pick their dissertation chair and committee. Finally, we plan to smooth the information flow, using devices like

organizational management from the University of Phoenix," Little recalls. "Then I realized I needed more education in economics and finance. OU's Advanced Programs degree in economics fit my goal."

The future OU graduate says his wife and two children agreed that the hard work has been worth the result. "It took discipline to spend time on the computer preparing for class when I would have preferred to be with my family," he says. "However, I recognized that these courses would prepare me for the future. Instructors such as Alex Kondonassis, Robert Reed, Will Clark and James Horrell focused on analyzing current economic events and policies worldwide while balancing them with established theory and history. As a result, this degree is 'in the now.' Our studies of the Euro dollar, the Asian currency crisis, the Japan banking situation, the Brazilian economy, national monetary and fiscal policy and 'Reganomics' prepared the class to develop policy in a global environment."

While students face the greatest time challenge, rigorous planning, preparation and effort test faculty as well. Bonnie Konopak, chair and professor of instructional leadership and academic curriculum in the College of Education, has taught "Introduction to Education" at bases in Mannheim and Hanau, Germany. She accepted the mission of developing an advanced program in teacher education for transitioning military personnel and their spouses—in effect, turning "troops into teachers."

"This endeavor offers something that others do not—a well-developed teacher education program."

Henderson, dean of liberal studies, Ronald Peters in political science. Joe Rodgers in psychology impressed us by his ability to teach statistics—one of the most difficult courses because it's quantitative. He used the Internet to create list servers and to update us on basic concepts before the first session."

Kimmel studied with a cohort, a group of students moving through the curriculum together. As a result, families bonded, often forming life-long friendships. If one person considered dropping out, others offered encouragement.

In Kimmel's dual role as student and administrator, he enjoys a unique

Internet list servers to communicate with students."

Todd Little, 31, has good reason to be familiar with Advanced Programs. He is Richard Little's son. He received a bachelor's degree in management from the United States Military Academy in 1992 and enrolled in Advanced Programs last year while stationed at Fort Sill in Lawton. He expects to receive an M.A. in economics this summer. A captain in Army Aviation, he plans to leave the Army soon to pursue a business career.

"While I was a first lieutenant, I completed a master's program in or-

"This endeavor offers something that others do not—a well-developed teacher education program," Konopak explains. "At the same time that 'Baby Boomers' retire, over one million teaching positions will open over the next five years. We're training persons leaving the military to help fill those positions. I have been impressed with the professionalism and commitment of these students. I look forward to teaching two more courses: 'Literacy' and 'Theory and Research in Education.'"

Konopak would like to see the courses lengthened—to 10 days or two weeks—to relieve pressure on both students and instructors. "However, that takes even more time from our on-campus students," she admits. "You have to strike a balance."

The OU educator praised the Advanced Programs staff, especially Director Miner. "The personnel and infrastructure Jim Pappas has established set the program apart," she says. "Miner and his assistant, Mike Goodman, always ask if we need anything to make our jobs easier. These are proactive people who follow through. That bodes well for the future."

Bob Swisher, director of OU's Instructional Technology Program and professor of library and information services, teaches "Electronic Access to Research Resources" in Advanced Programs. Taught completely over the Internet, the course uses electronic mail and a web browser for class communication.

"Through Internet communications tools, along with free browser plugins and helper applications, students pick up lessons, readings and demonstrations," Swisher explains. "They participate in a worldwide virtual class discussion with other Advanced Programs students taking the course, which covers online research resources.

Today's graduate students must be comfortable with Internet-based information and communication technologies. They must grasp the structure and process of knowledge domains (literatures) and their parallel helping systems (bibliography)."

Swisher's students are scattered across sites in the United States, Japan, Okinawa, Korea, Germany and the Azores. They offer no complaints about not attending classes with an on-site instructor, since Swisher sends

a web site," he says. "We could do that now, but some of the students lack the hardware. That's a future goal—encourage the military installations to update the students' computers."

Steve Sloan, professor of political science, once became concerned about another kind of hardware: guns.

While in Panama teaching a course on terrorism, a revolution started. "We heard gunfire outside," Sloan recalls. "No one in class seemed concerned, so I just kept talking."

Sloan's teaching duties over the last 33 years have taken him to locales such as Ethiopia; a World War II Quonset hut in Saipan; Goose Bay, Labrador; Hawaii; Japan; Germany; and Korea. "I've interacted with military personnel ranging from newly commissioned officers and NCOs to colonels," he says. "Teaching courses on international terrorism, U.S. intelligence community, low-intensity conflict and crisis management offers a two-way street. I've learned operations from professionals, and they've learned theory from me. I'm gratified that they remember me. At the Army War College last year a young colonel remembered taking my intelligence course while he was a second lieutenant in Hawaii."

An international expert in his field, Sloan believes that evolving communications technology must not undercut face-to-face contact between teacher and student. In addition to diluting

the learning experience in a subject like crisis management, the instructor would miss out on too much fun.

Fun for faculty is an unintended consequence of Thurman White's distance learning objectives. What he did intend was to reach advanced education consumers where they live and work. Toward that goal, the outgrowth of the program has succeeded beyond his dreams.



One of OU's most distinguished professors, economist Alex Kondonassis, left, with Advanced Programs participants Todd Little and David Kimmel, has played a vital role in the distance learning project since its inception 35 years ago.

lessons to their web pages.

"This course allows students to access the OU library from outlying areas lacking adequate library sources," Swisher says. "Upon request, the OU library electronically scans a needed document and sends it by E-mail."

Swisher says advances such as streaming audio/video will further improve distance learning. "I'll be able to deliver a presentation with voice-over on