

Sooner Shorts



NSKNEUSTADT PRIZE IN LITERATURE

Muscogee writer Cynthia Leitich Smith has won the 2021 NSK Neustadt Prize for Children's & Young Adult Literature. The prize is administered by *World Literature Today*, an international literature and culture magazine published at OU since 1927. Smith is a *New York Times* and *Publishers Weekly* best-selling YA author of the *Tantelize* series and *Feral* trilogy, along with her award-winning works, *Rain Is Not My Indian Name* and *Hearts Unbroken*. Smith lives in Austin, Texas.



Venkatesan named to National Academy of Inventors

The director of OU's Center for Quantum Research and Technology has been named a Fellow of the National Academy of Inventors, the highest professional distinction accorded solely to academic inventors. Thirumalai (Venky) Venkatesan, an internationally noted researcher in advanced technology innovation, is the inventor of the pulsed laser deposition process and has been awarded 33 patents for his innovations. He joined the OU faculty in 2021.



OU students connect with Nearpeer

Many students, especially freshmen, have experienced loneliness at college due to the social restrictions of COVID-19. After looking at other schools, the OU Division of Student Affairs and the Student Government Association launched the *Nearpeer app*, which connects students with others who have similar interests, backgrounds and experiences. Higher education experts agree that feeling connected improves the educational experience and retention rates. Students can log on with their OU email and start connecting.

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OU Pharmacy Researcher receives grant to thwart viruses

Anthony Burgett, a researcher in the OU College of Pharmacy, recently received a \$2 million grant from the National Institutes of Health to investigate ways to prevent a virus from hijacking the human protein it needs to replicate—a new approach for antiviral drug development. Burgett says that, if successful, the therapeutic strategy could work not just for one virus, but for many different kinds. Take that, coronavirus!



OU Partnering with NPS to launch Aviation Academy

OU's School of Aviation Studies and Gallogly College of Engineering are partnering with Norman Public Schools to help position high school students for successful careers in Oklahoma's growing aviation industry. The academy, aided by OU instructors and facilities, will offer STEM-based curriculum covering a variety of related fields including aviation, computer science, engineering, atmospheric sciences, robotics and more. The first academy is slated for fall 2022.

OU professor makes documentary on Sequoyah



Joshua Nelson, chair of the OU Film and Media Studies Department (at right), has recently received accolades as narrator, co-writer and co-producer of the PBS documentary, "Searching for Sequoyah." Nelson, a citizen of the Cherokee Nation and President's Associates Presidential Professor, goes deeper than crediting Sequoyah, aka George Guess, with his best-known accomplishment—creating the Cherokee writing system—and explores his life, his final quest and the mystery surrounding his death. Available on demand on PBS.