Commencement ceremonies to be held for over 1,800 students

Kansas State University will award more than 1,350 bachelor's degrees, nearly 400 master's degrees, nearly 60 doctorates and 12 associate degrees during commencement ceremonies on December 12-13, 2014. More than 200 students are earning their degree through K-State Global Campus distance education programs.

Distinguished alumni and student leaders are speaking as a part of the ceremonies. Regent Shane Bangerter will represent the Kansas Board of Regents at the Graduate School ceremony, and Wayne Freeman, one of the leaders of the Green Revolution, will receive an honorary Doctor of Philosophy from the university.

The awarding of the honorary doctorate follows the approval by the Kansas Board of Regents. It is one of the highest honors the university awards.

"Wayne Freeman is one of our nation's foremost agricultural leaders and we are honoring him for his distinguished career," said Kirk Schulz, K-State president. "His work as a seed breeder and scientist has helped to feed people across the globe and improved lives. It is through the leadership of such distinguished alumni that we will become a Top 50 public research university by 2025."

Freeman received his bachelor's degree in agronomy from Kansas State University in 1938. He is recognized in the international agriculture research community as one of the unsung heroes of the Green Revolution, which dramatically improved the lives of hundreds of millions of poor people around the world.

Two K-State researchers named AAAS fellows

Two Kansas State University faculty members have been named 2014 fellows of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, or AAAS, the world's largest scientific society.

The following K-State faculty members were selected as fellows:

- C. Michael Smith, professor of entomology, for distinguished contributions to entomological sciences, particularly in the fields of plant-insect interactions and plant resistance to insects.

- Christopher Sorensen, Cortelyou-Rust university distinguished professor of physics and university distinguished teaching scholar, for pioneering contributions in soft matter physics, disperse particulate systems and light scattering; teaching curriculum development and outreach; and service to the scientific
The professors will be recognized at a certificate and pinning ceremony at the association's annual meeting in February. Their selection follows a vote by their peers in the association, who looked at potential fellow’s distinguished efforts to advance science.

2014 Sunflower Showdown

The K-State and KU football teams faced off on November 29, 2014 in Manhattan at Bill Snyder Family Stadium for the 112th Sunflower Showdown game. President Kirk Schulz and Chancellor Bernadette Gray-Little hosted the annual pre-game legislative reception for over 220 Congressional representatives, statewide officials, Kansas legislators and Board of Regents members to thank them for the support they have demonstrated for higher education, Kansas State University and the University of Kansas.

President Schulz and Chancellor Gray-Little spoke of the successful collaboration between the universities in their commitment to research and finding solutions to the issues that affect the state of Kansas, and the rest of the country, every day. In addition, President Schulz highlighted K-State’s three nationally ranked programs in the College of Architecture, Planning and Design, the nationally acclaimed research in animal health and the legislature’s commitment to the state university’s engineering schools. Governor Sam Brownback was in attendance and spoke to the group about the strengths of the two universities.

The Wildcats emerged victorious with a final score of 51-13 over the Jayhawks to retain possession of the Governor's Cup. This was K-State’s 6th straight Sunflower Showdown win over KU.

8th Annual Pizza & Politics

The 8th annual Pizza & Politics event, hosted by the K-State Office of Governmental Relations, Student Governing Association and the K-State Alumni Association, was held on November 13, 2014. This event gives members of the Kansas State community an opportunity to learn about important aspects of the legislative process, in particular, those that pertain to higher education. The event is also intended to raise awareness about the advocacy efforts occurring throughout campus and provides information to attendees on how they can become involved. Our panel of state leaders provided insight about their role within the government of Kansas and how K-State’s students, faculty, and staff are affected everyday by decisions made on the state level.

This year’s panelists included Raney Gilliland, director of the Kansas Legislative Research Department; Dan Murray, interim director of governmental relations for the Kansas Board of Regents and Senator Michael O’Donnell of District 25 in Wichita. Discussion pertained to items in the upcoming legislative session, techniques to best advocate for higher education and what is the overall perception of higher education in our state capitol. Members of the Student Governing Association, Faculty Staff, University Support Staff, student leadership groups and others in the K-State community were present at the event to learn more about state government and indulge in pizza.

University's Stephen Higgs named tropical medicine society president-elect, honored for vaccine research

One of Kansas State University’s leading figures in research was recently recognized for his contributions to the field of insect virology.
Konza Prairie partners with NSF for long-term research

Long-term ecological research at Kansas State University's Konza Prairie Biological Station will continue for another six years with a $6.76 million grant renewal from the National Science Foundation.

Konza Prairie, an 8,600-acre native tallgrass prairie research station, is jointly owned by Kansas State University and the Nature Conservancy and managed by the university's Division of Biology in the College of Arts & Sciences.

The NSF Long-Term Ecological research, or LTER, program is an interdisciplinary research and education program focused on the tallgrass prairie, one of the most endangered ecosystems in the world, according to John Blair, the research program's director and university distinguished professor of biology.

This is the seventh consecutive renewal for the Konza site bringing the total LTER funding to over $29 million.

The Konza Prairie Biological Station has also been named among the 106 sites that are part of the NSF-funded National Ecological Observatory Network, or NEON. The network will gather data to better understand the causes and consequences of climate change, land use change and invasive species. The project will officially begin in 2017 and will take place over a 30-year period at monitoring sites across the U.S.

"NEON will provide state-of-the-art instrumentation for measuring ecological processes and environmental change, and will complement more than 30 years of experiences and measurements being done at Konza as part of the NSF LTER program," said Blair.

Stephen Higgs, director of the Biosecurity Research Institute, associate vice president for research, university distinguished professor and Virginia and Perry Peine biosecurity chair, was was named the president-elect of the American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene at the society's 63rd annual meeting.

Founded in 1903, the American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene is a worldwide organization of scientists, clinicians and program professionals. Its more than 300 members work to prevent and control infectious and other diseases that disproportionately affect lower-income populations throughout the world.

Higgs was honored with a Sanofi Pasteur Award for his outstanding contribution to research and development of the Sanofi Pasteur dengue vaccine.

"This was a totally unexpected honor," Higgs said. "It is based on some of the molecular virology work that Sanofi Pasteur has supported at the Biosecurity Research Institute."

DID YOU KNOW?

The K-State Crops Team recently took first place in the Australian Universities Crops Competition hosted by the Australian Grain Growers organization in Temora, New South Wales.