

Scientific consultant for 'Breaking Bad' selected to give annual Scholes Lecture

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The Sixteenth Annual Scholes Lecture in Chemistry at Alfred University (AU) will be delivered on Tuesday, April 29 at 8 p.m. by Dr. Donna Nelson, professor of chemistry at the University of Oklahoma, in Nevins Theater, Powell Campus Center. The event is open to the public free of charge.

Nelson, a proponent of scientific accuracy in television, film, and other moving media, as well as a promoter of the intersections of scientific communities and the public, will speak on “Breaking Good: Correcting Bad Science.” Her discussion stems from her work with the popular television show.

After a plea for scientific help from creator of the show “Breaking Bad,” Vince Gilligan, Nelson volunteered to offer her advice in regards to organic chemistry. She assisted “Breaking Bad” writers, directors, and actors from the end of Season 1 through Season 5 by checking scripts, providing dialogue for the show, drawing chemical structures, and writing chemical equations for use as props.

Nelson has written more than 100 publications and has been the recipient of many honors, including the Oklahoma Chemist Award 2012, the American Chemical Society (ACS) Stan Israel Award for Diversifying the Chemical Sciences, ACS E. Ann Nalley Volunteerism Award, the Guggenheim Award, the Sigma Xi Faculty Research Award, and the NOW Woman of Courage National Award.

She earned a bachelor of science degree in chemistry from the University of Oklahoma and a Ph.D. in chemistry at the University of Texas-Austin, after which she completed post-doctorate work at Purdue University and joined the University of Oklahoma.

The Samuel Scholes, Jr. Lecture was established in 1999 with a donation from Joshua Fierer, AU class of 1959, to honor his mentor and longtime friend Samuel Scholes Jr. This lecture also traditionally serves as a meeting for the Corning Division of the American Ceramic Society.

A 1937 alumnus of AU, Scholes, Jr. came to Alfred in 1932 when his father joined the faculty of the College of Ceramics. After graduating from AU, he went on to earn a Ph.D. from Yale University. He then served as a faculty member in the Chemistry Department at Alfred University from 1946 until his retirement in 1980. Scholes, Jr. passed away on May 24, 2012 at the age of 97.

