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Sons of OU pioneers endow science lecture series

The adult children of two leaders in Oakland University's science community have endowed a lecture series that is designed to help students become more aware of scientific research topics.

The Clifford V. and Drusilla R. Harding Eye Research and Biology Endowed Lecture Series, which kicks off at **noon Friday, Sept. 11 in Banquet Room A of the Oakland Center**, builds on the reputation and recognition that the Hardings brought to the University.

Giving the first lecture of the series is Frank Giblin, Ph.D., professor of Biomedical Sciences and director of Oakland's **Eye Research Institute**. In his lecture, Dr. Giblin will discuss the structure and function of the ocular lens, while mentioning a few of the many contributions Dr. Clifford Harding Jr. had to lens research.

Dr. Giblin said he knew Dr. Harding as a lens research colleague "and have fond memories of him as a soft-spoken, kind gentleman of science. I'm very honored to give the first lecture."

Clifford Harding Jr., Ph.D., founding chair of the **Department of Biological Sciences**, recruited the first faculty for the Biology Department in 1964 and guided its design. He also worked closely with then-Chancellor Woody Varner to plan and develop the University's Eye Research Institute. In these and other roles, Dr. Harding played a pivotal leadership role in the sciences in the early days of Oakland.

Drusilla Harding, Ph.D., a pioneering and accomplished research scientist who stepped back from her career to raise the couple's two sons while the family lived in Rochester, was an adjunct faculty member in the Biology Department.

"Our late parents were very successful scientists who spent their careers at a number of prominent institutions, but we felt that they probably made the greatest impact at OU. That's why we selected this institution over any others," says Clifford Harding III, the couple's older son.

"We also felt that establishing this program at OU could have more of an impact on students there than it would somewhere else. It's an opportunity for our parents to have a more lasting legacy at a school where they already made a difference."

While the Hardings taught at OU, their family lived in the nearby faculty and staff subdivision, described by son Richard as "a unique neighborhood" that enhanced their educations by exposing them to thought leaders who helped shape their futures.

"Because our next door neighbor was a language professor, I was allowed to participate in a summer trip to Russia and Poland when I was only 16 and still in high school. Not many of my classmates had that kind of opportunity," says Richard Harding, an internal medicine physician in Connecticut.

"We had many opportunities to make friends with people who were intellectually and culturally active at a level that was unusual for their age. It was a good group of people to grow up with," echoes Clifford, a medical doctor and professor at Case Western Reserve University.

Future speakers will come from outside OU as a way "to provide something important that doesn't exist at OU," says Clifford Harding.



(Left) Clifford Harding Jr., Ph.D., made his way to OU from the University of Pennsylvania and founded Oakland's Biology Department in 1964 with Professor of Biology Walt Wilson, Ph.D. The pair were technically the first two biology professors at Oakland. Four years later, Dr. Harding also assisted in the inception of what is now known as the Eye Research Institute.

“Our goal is to honor my parents’ accomplishments at OU with an annual event that enriches the academic experience by bringing in

someone who is working in a research area that is relevant to both the Biology Department and the Eye Research Institute, our parents' legacies," says Clifford.

Both brothers are looking forward to attending the first lecture. That one, and all subsequent lectures, are free and open to the public. For more information on the first lecture, visit the website, view the **event listing**.

-By Sandra Beckwith