Celebration of Academics Arrives Apr. 5-6

The annual Celebration of Academics will take place April 5 and 6 and will include the Drinko Symposium, the Elizabeth Drinko Honors Convocation, and the unveiling of a portrait of Wade and Nan Gilley. In addition, a dedication of the Ashland, Inc. Commons is also scheduled.

Wednesday’s events will feature Dr. Robert P. Alexander, 1999-2000 Drinko Fellow, giving a presentation on his research topic, “Timber: The Times and The Life at Cass, WV,” at 2 p.m. in the Joan C. Edwards Playhouse. A public reception will follow at 3 p.m. in the lobby of the Fine and Performing Arts Center.

The unveiling of the Wade and Nan Gilley Portrait, honoring the former Marshall University president and his wife, will take place Thursday at 9 a.m. in the first floor lobby of the Drinko Library. The Elizabeth Gibson Drinko Honors Convocation will follow at 11 a.m. in the Joan C. Edwards Playhouse with Dr. J. Wade Gilley speaking on “The Merit of Excellence.” A public reception will follow at 12:30 p.m. in the lobby of the Fine and Performing Arts Center.

At 2 p.m. the dedication of the Ashland, Inc. Commons will be held. Ashland, Inc. is being recognized for its longstanding support of Marshall University academics through scholarships, the Yeager Scholars program, and the Drinko Library.

All events are free and are open to the public.

Honors Convocation Set for Apr. 6

Former Marshall president Dr. J. Wade Gilley will be the featured speaker for the Elizabeth Gibson Drinko Honors Convocation on April 6 at 11 a.m. in the Joan C. Edwards Playhouse. The topic of Dr. Gilley’s address will be “The Merit of Excellence.”

Prior to the convocation, a portrait of Gilley and his wife Nan, by artist John Martin, will be unveiled at 9 a.m. on the first floor lobby of the Drinko Library.

Student awards to be given at the convocation include the A. Mervin Tyson Award, which is given annually to the most outstanding honors student, and the University Honors Book Awards. In addition, twelve students will be recognized for graduating with University Honors, the largest group to graduate with honors to date.

Several faculty members will also be recognized at the awards ceremony. Awards to be given include the Marshall and Shirley Reynolds Award for Excellence in Teaching, the Charles E. Hedrick Outstanding Faculty Award, presented for excellence in teaching and research, and The Pickens/Queen Award for teaching excellence for faculty members with fewer than six years teaching experience at Marshall.

“The Honors Convocation is the one chance all year that the campus comes together to celebrate excellence in teaching and academics. The Honors Council oversees the Honors Program and they have done an incredible amount of work to keep up with the excellent students we’re attracting,” said Dr. Richard Badenhausen, chair of the Honors Council. “One of the best

Alexander to Present Research on Cass Area Apr. 5

Their voices are mostly still now, but thanks to a decades-long interest of Dr. Robert P. Alexander, their legacy lives on. Alexander, Drinko Fellow, will give a multi-media presentation of “Timber: The Times and The Life at Cass, WV” at the Drinko Symposium on April 5, at 2 p.m. in the Joan C. Edwards Playhouse. His talk will combine years of research along with photographs and taped interviews with many of the workers who toiled in the timbering industry from the turn of the century to about 1940.

Celebration Events At a Glance

**Wednesday, April 5, 2000**

2 p.m. Drinko Fellow Lecture by Dr. Robert Alexander.

**Thursday, April 6, 2000**

9 a.m. Unveiling of portrait of J. Wade and Nan Gilley. Drinko Library.

11 a.m. Elizabeth Gibson Drinko Honors Convocation in Joan C. Edwards Playhouse. Reception following.

2 p.m. Dedication of Ashland, Inc. Commons between Drinko Library and Memorial Student Center.
A long-time Marshall faculty member, Alexander, who is distinguished professor of management and marketing, first became interested in the Cass area and its related industry in 1959 when, as a recent MU graduate who had just been hired as an administrator, he was sent to the eastern panhandle on a recruiting trip.

“Marshall wasn’t recruiting in that area very much because it was thought to be too far for students to come to Huntington. But I went to several eastern panhandle counties and while I was there I just stumbled upon the old town of Cass and its railroad. I found that a number of books, including five historical fictional novels by W.E. Blackhurst who was from Cass, and two non-fiction books by Dr. Roy Clarkson, had been written and I looked the place over but I couldn’t find where anyone who had talked with the old timers who worked the woods when Cass started,” he said.

So a research interest was born. His interest in Cass never lessened, but the next few years were exceptionally busy ones for Alexander as he completed his doctoral degree in 1969, joined the MU faculty, and spent over 16 years as a member of the Huntington City Council and served one term as mayor. Academic matters consumed his time as he became chair of his department, and later dean of the College of Business, forcing him to put his interest in Cass aside. He went back to Cass as much as he could, and in 1975 he did manage to spend the summer there, tape recording workers and photographing them, creating a living history of both the town and the timbering industry.

“I made a discovery of some papers which I will talk about in my address, that haven’t been seen by the human eye for 60 years,” he says. “I found interviewing these people very fascinating. There are voices who talk about what life was like working in the woods and living in Cass at the turn of the century. I had been gathering materials for years but I had academic commitments here so I just packed the materials away and carefully preserved them.”

His appointment as a Drinko Fellow has allowed him to get the materials out of storage and to continue his research, which he is now sharing with others.

Word of his work has spread. Recently he received a call from a national forest historian who had heard of the interviews. Planning an exposition marking the 100th anniversary of the national forest service Richwood Watershed next year, officials were eager to hear about the tapes because no one else they knew of had recordings of the long-ago workers, and asked if he would serve on one of their committees. Alexander was asked to serve on the centennial commission and he plans to be on hand for the festivities.

His presentation at the Drinko Symposium will feature enhanced tapes which have been dubbed into the narrative in the interactive video.

And as a researcher, he’s found his faith in the tapes justified. “I’ve found that as I go through the literature, the facts in my interviews are being verified, they are proving to be historically accurate and not just interesting narratives.”

Drinko Academy Spotlights MU Faculty

The John Deaver Drinko Academy was established in 1994 as an outgrowth of the John and Elizabeth Drinko Distinguished Professorship program which had for several years been bringing distinguished visiting faculty to the campus, according to Dr. Alan Gould, Executive Director of the Drinko Academy. The academy was named for Dr. Drinko, a 1942 Marshall graduate and currently senior managing partner of Baker & Hostetler, who, along with his wife Elizabeth, have been long-time significant supporters of academic programs at Marshall.

Reporting directly to the Office of the President, the Drinko Academy is structured to foster teaching and intellectual dialogue across disciplines. Along with the Distinguished Visiting Professors, faculty from various university departments are appointed on a rotating basis as Drinko Academy Fellows, receiving reduced teaching loads for an academic year. They are encouraged to undertake original research or curriculum development.

“The John Deaver Drinko Academy was dedicated in 1994 and we continue to bring in distinguished professors. It was the first million dollar chair at Marshall. We support a nimber of other activities as well and a principal aim is to recognize our own faculty,” Gould said.

“Every year as part of the Celebration of Academics we have a Drinko Fellow make a presentation of his or her research,” he noted. Dr. Robert Alexander’s research has focused on a long-time interest of his, timbering in the Cass, West Virginia area.

Current Drinko Fellows are Dr. Simon D. Perry, political science; Dr. Mack Gillenwater, geography; Dr. William N. Denman, communication studies; Dr. Kenneth P. Ambrose, sociology/anthropology; Dr. Shirley Lumpkin, English; and Dr. Montserrat M. Miller, history.