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DR. DAVID ALLEN SHAPIRO 2016 OLIVER MAX GARDNER AWARD RECIPIENT CITATION

Widely acknowledged as one of the nation's top speech-language pathologists, Dr. David Shapiro is the Robert Lee Madison Distinguished Professor of Communication Sciences and Disorders at Western Carolina University. A WCU faculty member since 1984, Dr. Shapiro teaches undergraduate and graduate courses in communication sciences and disorders, provides clinical service and instruction to people who stutter and their families, engages in research related to stuttering and professional preparation, and provides outreach locally, statewide, nationally, and internationally.

Now completing the fourth decade in his profession, Dr. Shapiro regularly presents at national and international conferences, and he has taught, conducted research, and provided clinical service on six continents. A prolific researcher, he has published 75 works (in seven languages), made 200 professional presentations, and attracted approximately \$1 million in grant funding. He has won numerous awards for his instructional expertise, including the 1997 UNC Board of Governors Award for Excellence in Teaching.

Named a fellow of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association in 2003, Dr. Shapiro is author of the acclaimed book *Stuttering Intervention: A Collaborative Journey to Fluency Freedom*, which provides a fresh approach to fluency intervention based in the field's literature and in his nearly 40 years of experience with people of all ages who stutter. The book, now in its second edition, is a primary resource for countless communication sciences and disorders programs worldwide.

In recent years, Dr. Shapiro has expanded his work to a global level. He launched international advocacy efforts similar to Doctors Without Borders to assist people with fluency disorders in developed and developing nations, including countries where reaction to stuttering may lead to discrimination, injury, or even death. Through his international outreach, Dr. Shapiro has positively affected the lives of people who stutter in more than 30 countries, ranging from the Czech Republic to several sub-Saharan Africa nations, and from Japan to Norway.

Dr. Shapiro was elected president of the International Fluency Association in 2012. In that role, expanded the organization's membership from consisting only of individuals from the United States and United Kingdom to include representatives from six continents.

One of the most compelling aspects of Dr. Shapiro's work is something he prefers not to emphasize -- he is a person who stutters. As a youngster, he stuttered miserably, and could talk without stuttering only to his beloved dog. He worked with numerous speech therapists over the years, with little success, until he found a therapist who took a more individualized approach to his treatment and helped him overcome his condition after nearly a quarter of a century. Dr. Shapiro is now paying it forward.

In recognition of his ability to bring together people of diverse cultures from nations spanning the globe to work on the common goal of improving the lives of people who stutter, the UNC Board of Governors takes great pride in presenting the 2016 Oliver Max Gardner Award to Dr. David Shapiro, the Robert Lee Madison Distinguished Professor of Communication Sciences and Disorders at Western Carolina University.

*Presented by the Board of Governors
May 27, 2016*

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2016 Oliver Max Gardner Award Acceptance Speech May 27, 2016

**David A. Shapiro, Ph.D., CCC-SLP
Robert Lee Madison Distinguished Professor
ASHA Fellow, Speech-Language Pathologist
Communication Sciences and Disorders
Western Carolina University**

President Spellings, members of the Board of Governors, members of the Gardner family, distinguished friends, and family –

Good morning. I am thrilled beyond words to be a recipient of the 2016 Oliver Max Gardner Award and, particularly, to be a part of bringing this honor to the university I love – Western Carolina University.

Sincerely I express my gratitude to the selection committee for your endorsement from the University of North Carolina. Thanks also to UNC-TV for assembling the footage we just viewed.

In these few minutes, I want to address:

- What is stuttering?,
- My personal story,
- My professional activities, and
- The story that is Western Carolina University.

What is Stuttering?

Stuttering is a universal disorder of speech fluency. Stuttering interferes with the most human element of all – being able to tell one’s story, using the words one wants when one wants. In the USA alone, there are over 3 million people who stutter. In the world, there are over 70 million.

James Earl Jones was quoted as saying, “One of the hardest things in life is having words in your heart that you can’t utter.”

My Personal Story

There was a time, nearly my first 20 years, when stuttering consumed me. Stuttering was the basis on which I defined myself. Stuttering affected my relationships, my sense of my abilities, and what I thought I could become.

My dog, Buddy, was the only living thing to which I could communicate. Oddly, people who stutter can speak fluently with a pet or when alone, just as they can sing without stuttering.

I swore an oath that if I could find a way to talk, I would do my best to help others find their voice.

I am now completing my 39th year as a Speech-Language Pathologist, a Specialist in Fluency Disorders, and a Professor. I continue to be thrilled and thankful for the opportunities to serve and to learn from others – near and far.

My Professional Involvement

Over these years, I have worked with many people. A man who never ordered a meal at a restaurant for his wife in their 40-year marriage now does so and communicates independently. A young woman who

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looked away and spoke little so that her boyfriend would not see her stutter now looks him in the eye and says, “He’s going to hear what I have to say whether he wants to or not.” A child who stuttered severely and was bullied now speaks without hesitation and is an advocate for others.

I have traveled to interesting places. With a colleague from France, I worked with people who stutter from 20 different African nations. I have met indigenous healers in huts with smoke and herbs and bones and learned about diviners and herbalists. Most importantly, I learned that our own view of the world is not necessarily shared; it represents A view, not THE view.

Over the last few years, I served as the President of the International Fluency Association. Heeding the advice of people who stutter for professionals to talk “with us” rather than “about us,” we coordinated a World Congress on Fluency Disorders where people who stutter and professionals gathered from six continents to share and to learn. We also brought current information and clinical service to countries where it had not existed previously.

Indeed it is the universal birthright of every person to be able to use speech and language freely and to experience communication freedom.

The Story that is Western Carolina University

It is difficult to capture nearly four decades of excitement into a few minutes. Indeed I have had guiding lights. One such light is WCU, where dreams are visualized and realized.

The students, the best and the brightest, some of whom may not have competitive dossiers, some of whom represent the first in their family to go to college, come to a place that is inspired. With the able support of faculty and staff, they leave campus among the world’s best leaders.

Faculty have similar advantage. At WCU, there is a degree of freedom to thrive and to become.

For me, WCU represents the American Dream: You come as raw material, you work hard, you serve your community, you commit to learning and growing, and you prosper.

Closing

To every dreamer, there is someone with a heart nearby. The day that changed my life was meeting Kay, my wife of 32 years, who gives every day, every moment, meaning and joy. Our two children, Sarah and Aaron, are among my best teachers and sources of pride.

Others who traveled here to share this moment all have nurtured me and guided me to make the right decisions. I can only offer my thanks.

To receive this Award is a dream beyond my imagination. Throughout my life and my work, I hope I have been successful in bringing honor and pride to my university, to my professional community, to people with fluency disorders worldwide, and to my family. I believe I would have brought pride to my grandfather, Joseph Lyman, who was an immigrant from Russia. He and all of you have encouraged me to dream, to work, and to serve.

I will continue to do my best to bring pride to the legacy and to the family of Oliver Max Gardner – and always to give a voice to those who are silent.

Thank you.