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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DIRECTOR OF OU HUMAN RELATIONS CENTER NAMED

NORMAN, OK – Kathleen Wong(Lau), previously on the faculty of the School of Communication at Western Michigan University and consultant to the dean of the College of Veterinary Medicine at Michigan State University, has been named director of the University of Oklahoma’s Southwest Center for Human Relations Studies.

Wong(Lau) joins the center, a program of the University of Oklahoma Outreach, on June 1. She will focus on funding development, project management and program growth, including the highly successful National Conference on Race and Ethnicity in American Higher Education (NCORE).

Established in 1961, the Southwest Center for Human Relations Studies was designed to extend the resources of the university to Southwest communities faced with civic conflict and controversy. The center’s earliest programs included workshops for public school personnel attempting to comply with mandated school integration. Later, the center's programs extended to intergroup relations training for elected officials, American Indians, journalists and editors, clergy and counselors, law enforcement agencies and others concerned with human rights.
“We are very excited Dr. Wong(Lau) is coming to Oklahoma to lead the Southwest Center. The center has a rich history dating back to the Civil Rights Movement, and the executive committee and I recognize that Kathleen has the expertise and experience to lead innovative social justice work both now and in the future,” said Dr. Belinda Biscoe, Associate Vice President of Outreach at the University of Oklahoma. “We look forward with great anticipation to this new beginning.”

At Michigan State Wong(Lau) collaborated with administrators to design a model for intercultural education, diversity and inclusion for faculty, staff and students.

In addition, her extensive experience includes consulting and training in diversity and inclusion in the corporate sector serving as a lead qualitative researcher and facilitator trainer for the University of Michigan Multiversity Intergroup Dialogue Project, under the leadership of Patricia Gurin, the Nancy Cantor Distinguished University Professor Emerita of Psychology and Women's Studies at the University of Michigan. She currently serves on the board of Campus Women Lead, a multicultural women’s leadership initiative started by the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U). In this role, she develops curriculum and facilitates training for women’s multicultural leadership with a focus on women of color and women in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) disciplines. Wong(Lau) also has published research and opinion pieces on structural inequality within higher education and best practices for addressing multicultural leadership for social change within institutions.

Wong(Lau) received her bachelor’s degree at California State University in intercultural communication and her doctorate in communication from Arizona State University. As a graduate student, she worked with the associate provost to develop the Asian Pacific American Studies department at ASU, as well as developed and taught a co-curricular intergroup practicum
course for undergraduates working with underserved Yaqui Indian youth. In addition, Wong(Lau) served full-time as program staff under the Provost in the Intergroup Relations Center working with diversity initiatives for faculty, staff and students; and received a Ford Foundation research grant on Women of Color faculty in higher education.

“Dating back to the days of public school integration, the Southwest Center for Human Relations Studies served a vital role in promoting equity and multicultural issues,” said James Pappas, Vice President for Outreach at the University of Oklahoma. “We are delighted to welcome Dr. Wong(Lau) as director. She will lead new initiatives in advancing human rights and social justice, in addition to hosting an extremely popular and respected annual National Conference on Race and Ethnicity in American higher education (NCORE).”