

NATALIE SHIRLEY  
PRESIDENT



900 N. Portland Avenue  
Oklahoma City, OK 73107

Dear Arts & Sciences Students, Faculty, and Staff:

Jason Stone, the Division Head of Arts & Sciences at OSU-OKC has asked me to continue our conversation about your future. I am delighted that you chose to invest in yourself and attend to the next video in our series about the Habits of the Mind. The Habit that we are stressing in this video is Remaining Open to Continuous Learning.

For millennia, learning was seen as the age-based and designed for a specific purpose, that is, it was intended to prepare children and adolescents to become adults, begin a career and take their place in society. However, in recent years, that idea has been turned on its head.

New research from the University of Washington in Seattle suggests that babies began to absorb language when they are inside the womb during the last 10 weeks of pregnancy -- which is earlier than previously thought. Newborns can actually tell the difference between their mother's native tongue and foreign languages just hours after they are born.

On the other end of life, studies have shown that enriched learning environments are important for older adults to improve memory function, socialization and emotional balance.

We now understand that humans function best with cradle to grave education or, as it has been popularly termed, life-long learning. However, life-long learning can seem daunting, particularly if you are like most people and think you can't possibly stuff one more thing that is supposed to be good for you into an already over-burdened life. So let me reframe the conversation into a more exciting prospect.

It is often said in education circles that up to the 4<sup>th</sup> grade you learn to read and after the 4<sup>th</sup> grade you read to learn. Life-long learning is a corollary to this truism. You spend your formal learning years discovering your passion and thereafter, your passion discovers learning.

Webster's defines "passion" as an object of deep desire or interest. Passion is that thing that gets us up in the morning, propels us through our day and permeates our dreams. It is the difference between HAVING to do something and GETTING to do something. While passion is often associated with a person we love, if we dig deeper, we will often find that most of us are also passionate about an idea, a cause or a pursuit. Just as our passion for another person results in us wanting to know more about him or her, that same type of passion pushes us to learn and explore the inner most depths of knowledge about a topic – whether it is the Civil War, early scientific instruments or the newest theories in crowd control.

NATALIE SHIRLEY  
PRESIDENT



900 N. Portland Avenue  
Oklahoma City, OK 73107

Attempting to engage in life-long learning without passion is like eating food without flavor. It can be done, but it is unpleasant and will soon fall away to the bare minimum. Life-long learning and passion must be inextricably linked for sustainability. Anthony Dangelo said, “Develop a passion for learning. If you do, you will never cease to grow.”

Life-long learning enriches our lives at every stage, particularly when it is combined with passion. Remaining open to continuous learning will keep us young and engaged in our lives and the world around us. All of us are seeking to understand ourselves and our world; doing so with passion will make the journey more enjoyable and rewarding.

Thank you for attending to this video and the others in the series. Each offering in the Habits of the Mind series have offered nuggets of wisdom and thoughts to ponder as we move forward. As Jason has said in earlier videos, invest in yourself and your future; attend to your thinking habits as they will determine how far you go.

Thank you for your time and attention. Have a great day and Go Pokes!

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Natalie Shirley'.

Natalie Shirley