COMMERCE, Texas -- Micheal Kessner, a 2008 curriculum and instruction doctoral graduate of Texas A&M University-Commerce, has won a Recognition of Merit in the 2008-09 Phi Delta Kappa International Outstanding Doctoral Dissertation Award Program.

An elementary science specialist at Lovejoy Independent School District in Allen, Kessner received the award for her research on the impact of hands-on, inquiry-based science curriculum on teaching and learning.

"This is an extremely prestigious award for Dr. Kessner and

the College of Education and Human Services at Texas A&M

University-Commerce and we congratulate her," A&M-Commerce Dean Brent

Mangus said.

"By receiving such a high level of distinction, we are

demonstrating the high quality of our students and the expertise of

our faculty in mentoring our students we attract from undergraduate

to our doctoral programs," Mangus said.

PDK is a global association of education professionals. The

PDK Outstanding Doctoral Dissertation Award is designed to further

research in education. Fifty dissertations were received and reviewed

by a panel of education researchers.

"Research-discovering new and better ways for teachers to

teach and students to learn-is central to PDK's longstanding

mission," PDK Executive Director William Bushaw said. "We are

thrilled to honor Dr. Kessner's important work."

Kessner said the dissertation process was "long and rigorous,

but very fulfilling. I am deeply honored and privileged to be

recognized."

Information about Kessner's dissertation is included in the

June 2009 issue of the Phi Delta Kappan.

Her dissertation is titled, "How Does Implementation of

Inquiry-Based Science Instruction in a High-Stakes Testing

Environment Affect Fifth-Grade Student Science Achievement?"

In her research, Kessner studied three groups of fifth

graders to see how hands-on, inquiry-based curriculum impacted

students' achievement on the science portion of the Texas Assessment

of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) exam.

She found students who used the hands-on science curriculum

had higher mean scores on the science portion of the TAKS exam.

Information about Kessner's dissertation is included in the

June 2009 issue of the Phi Delta Kappan, journal on education policy

and practice.