

## College of the Consistory

*written by David E. Amstutz, 32°, KCCH*

**Photo: Guthrie Scottish Rite Masonic Center (Photo by Bozarth Photography, Guthrie, Oklahoma)**

Learning has always been held in high regard by Scottish Rite Masons. It could be said that the desire for more Light in Masonry is the most important reason the Scottish Rite exists. Whether a brother takes the degrees in a single day or in a multi-day reunion, there is much more to the Rite than can be learned and remembered in that one experience. We need time to reflect and think, to see relationships in the information presented, to learn about the degrees we did not witness, and to let the intellectual dust settle a little. When we get home from the reunion experience, we are usually left with only some reading resources. The typical student of Masonry can use some direction in responding to and understanding of Rite; but, lacking the direct encouragement of another Brother—a Masonic mentor, in-depth reading and study are seldom undertaken.

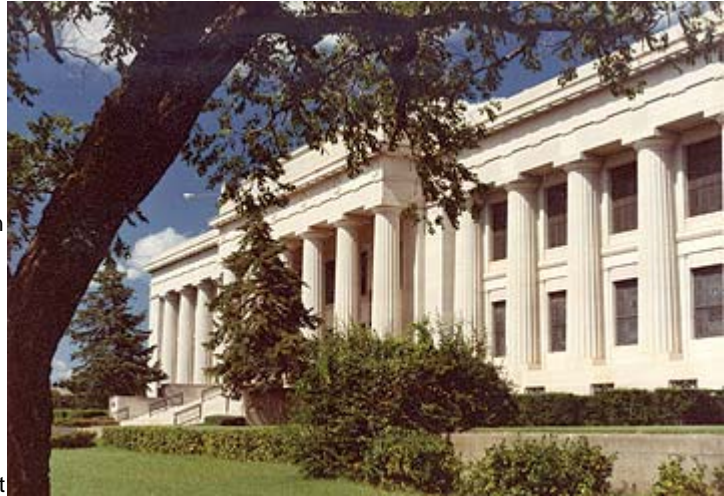
To address this, in 2003 brothers in the Valley of Guthrie, Oklahoma, established the “College of the Consistory” to assist in the advancement of Masonic learning. The objective of the College is to support the Rite’s missions of educating and enlightening and to enhance its fundamental purpose as an advanced course in Masonic teaching. The College of the Consistory has a current student body of 542, representing 39 states and 8 foreign countries.

The Guthrie program is available to any 32° Mason who’s supreme council is in amity with the Mother Supreme Council. The curriculum offers the brother the opportunity to study the major ideas and themes outlined in the degrees of the Rite at his leisure and in the comfort of his own home. The course provides multiple-choice exams over the four bodies of the Rite, a written synopsis of each degree, and a syllabus of questions from which the student can write an essay or research paper about the degree.

All essays and research papers are reviewed by the College’s Board of Adepts. The “adepts” are Masters of the Royal Secret who have already completed the College of the Consistory’s process of self-education for themselves. A selection of papers written by the students is published on a secure web site available to the student body. Further, the Valley of Guthrie is in the process of recording a series of audio CDs of some thirty essays written by Masonic scholars on subjects that provide foundational material essential for understanding the themes, quests, and meanings of the degrees. These CDs will be available soon to students enrolled in the College. Students can then build their own file of knowledge about the degrees by benefiting from their own studies and the shared work of others.

Students’ papers are valued as a product they have created and are expected to add something of value to Masonic studies. A system of encouragement replaces traditional grading. Sometimes a student is advised to take a deeper look, to sharpen his focus, or to consider another topic for investigation. A goal, in addition to adding to the literature, is to demonstrate progress in analysis and presentation while advancing through the degrees. The most successful students since the school’s founding in 2003 have reached degrees in the Chapter of Rose Croix, about mid-way in the curriculum.

A college degree or writing experience is not expected or necessary for work in the College of the Consistory. As a matter of fact, students represent the same breadth of training and formal education as does the membership of their valleys. Self motivation, a willingness to read, and the confidence to express oneself in writing are personal characteristics needed to continue through the College’s program of studies. The level of difficulty increases with each degree as does the students’ desire to do better. All who enter will not graduate, but none will regret their experience. Any Brother interested in improving himself in Masonry through his own effort can enroll in the College at <http://www.guthriescottishrite.org>. There is no charge for the course. I heartily recommend it!



The College, and its widely dispersed student body, has become a dynamic where men are encouraged to learn and become teachers of Masonry themselves—a place where the Scottish Rite adds to our understanding of things important to our own sense of being in the world.

David E. Amstutz is an Endowed Member and past Wise Master of the Valley of Richmond, Orient of Virginia; and, a student and newly named Adept of the College of the Consistory. David is an ocean scientist with SAIC. He and his wife, Mary Ann, live on a farm where they raise hay and beef cattle.

