



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**ACHIEVEMENTS ON THE COURT, IN THE CLASSROOM AND IN THE COMMUNITY EARN OKLAHOMA CENTER COURTNEY PARIS THE HONOR OF 2008-09 LOWE'S SENIOR CLASS AWARD FOR NCAA WOMEN'S BASKETBALL**

**Award Presentation Made to Four-Time All-American by Lowe's Today during NCAA® Women's Final Four® Festivities in St. Louis**

(St. Louis, MO): Four-time All-American center **Courtney Paris** of the University of Oklahoma, who will graduate with academic honors and has thrived in community service projects, is the 2008-09 winner of the Lowe's Senior CLASS Award for NCAA women's basketball. The award, selected by a nationwide vote of coaches, media and fans, is presented annually to college basketball's top NCAA Division I senior student-athlete.

The announcement and trophy presentation to Paris was made today during festivities surrounding the NCAA Women's Final Four in St. Louis, MO. Sportscaster **Dick Enberg**, Honorary Chairman of the Lowe's Senior CLASS Award, first conceived the idea of an award for seniors in 2001.

Lowe's, an official corporate partner of the NCAA, expanded the Senior CLASS Award program in 2007 to include NCAA Division I men's and women's soccer, men's hockey, men's lacrosse, baseball and softball in addition to men's and women's basketball. With the addition of football (Bowl Subdivision) in 2008, the award is now presented in nine NCAA sports.

An acronym for *Celebrating Loyalty and Achievement for Staying in School*, the Lowe's Senior CLASS Award has grown into the nation's premier tribute to college seniors. The award identifies personal qualities that define a complete student-athlete, with criteria including excellence in the "4 C's" of **classroom, community, character** and **competition**.

"Courtney Paris has proven to be one of the greatest women's college basketball players of all-time, yet she worked equally as hard in the classroom and gave her time to the local community," said **Bob Gfeller**, senior vice president of marketing and advertising at Lowe's. "Her overall college experience was one of tremendous impact both on and off the court. The Lowe's Senior CLASS Award has developed into a wonderful tribute for college student-athletes and, on behalf of the 225,000 associates at Lowe's, we salute Courtney for a tremendous collegiate career at Oklahoma."

Paris is the eighth winner of the Lowe's Senior CLASS Award for women's basketball. Past recipients of the women's award include **Sue Bird** of Connecticut (2002), **LaToya Thomas** of Mississippi State (2003), **Alana Beard** of Duke (2004), **Kendra Wecker** of Kansas State (2005), **Seimone Augustus** of LSU (2006), **Alison Bales** of Duke (2007) and **Candice Wiggins** of Stanford.

As a senior, Paris has led the Sooners to their second Final Four in school history and, in the process, has carved her name among the legends of women's basketball. She has become the first player ever to be

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named Associate Press All-American all four years of college. A three-time Big 12 Player of the Year, Paris has set 18 NCAA records and is the top rebounder in women's basketball history.

Her unselfish mentality has spurred her commitment to the local community. Although her favorites are working with the Special Olympics and Sooner Big Sis' program—where she visits an elementary school class weekly throughout the year—Paris is involved with countless others. Since arriving at OU, she has volunteered for Big Brothers/Big Sisters, Habitat for Humanity, OU Children's Hospital, Special Spectators and Meals on Wheels. Paris and her teammates have served as child advocates at the Mary Abbott Children's House, the area's child abuse response center. Paris and her sister, Ashley, are also regular speakers at their local church and Fellowship of Christian Athletes meetings.

In the classroom, Paris has been recognized as an Academic All-Big 12 selection for maintaining a 3.0 or higher GPA. She will graduate with honors this spring with a degree in journalism.

"I'm truly honored to receive this award and, more so, to be even mentioned with such a great group of candidates and past recipients," Paris said. "Getting my degree was always my ultimate goal when I first stepped on campus. I know I've set a bunch of records and done a lot of things with a basketball, but I've always been a journalism student first and I'm very proud to be a graduate."

"Courtney Paris is very deserving of this prestigious honor," declared Oklahoma women's basketball coach, **Sherri Coale**. "It is humbling as a coach to have one of my student-athletes attain such success off the court as much as she has on it. Courtney's commitment to excellence in every task at hand has been remarkable and one of the most joyful aspects of being her coach for the past four years."

The Lowe's Senior CLASS Award also names an All-Senior All-America Team based on voting results of the finalists. Joining Paris on the 2008-09 First Team is: **Shalee Lehning**, Kansas State University; **Renee Montgomery**, University of Connecticut; **Kristi Toliver**, University of Maryland; and **Christina Wirth**, Vanderbilt University. The Second Team consists of **Jada Frazier**, University of New Orleans; **Rachel Galligan**, Eastern Illinois University; **Koren Schram**, Dartmouth College; **Takia Starks**, Texas A&M University; and **Abby Waner**, Duke University.

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#### **ABOUT THE AWARD**

An acronym for *Celebrating Loyalty and Achievement for Staying in School*, the Lowe's Senior CLASS Award honors the attributes of senior student-athletes in four areas: classroom, community, character and competition. The award program is designed exclusively for college seniors who are utilizing their complete athletic eligibility, remaining committed to their university and pursuing the many rewards that a senior season can bring. For more information, visit [www.seniorclassaward.com](http://www.seniorclassaward.com).

#### **ABOUT LOWE'S**

With fiscal year 2008 sales of \$48.2 billion, Lowe's Companies, Inc. is a FORTUNE® 50 company that serves approximately 14 million customers a week at more than 1,650 home improvement stores in the United States and Canada. Founded in 1946 and based in Mooresville, N.C., Lowe's is the second-largest home improvement retailer in the world. For more information, visit [Lowe.com](http://Lowe.com).

#### **ABOUT THE NCAA**

The NCAA is a membership-led nonprofit association of colleges and universities committed to supporting academic and athletic opportunities for more than 400,000 student-athletes at more than 1,000 member colleges and universities. Each year, more than 54,000 student-athletes compete in NCAA championships in Divisions I, II and III sports. Visit [www.ncaa.org](http://www.ncaa.org) and [www.ncaa.com](http://www.ncaa.com) for more details about the Association.

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The Nation's Premier Award for

NCAA® Senior Student-Athletes

## All-Senior All-America Teams

*As selected in balloting for the Lowe's Senior CLASS Award by cumulative results of NCAA® Division I Coaches, National Media and Fan Balloting*

### ***First Team***

<b>Name</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>School</b>
Shalee Lehning	Guard	Kansas State University
Renee Montgomery	Guard	University of Connecticut
Courtney Paris	Center	University of Oklahoma
Kristi Toliver	Guard	University of Maryland
Christina Wirth	Forward	Vanderbilt University

### ***Second Team***

<b>Name</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>School</b>
Jada Frazier	Guard	University of New Orleans
Rachel Galligan	Forward	Eastern Illinois University
Koren Schram	Guard	Dartmouth College
Takia Starks	Guard	Texas A&M University
Abby Waner	Guard	Duke University