

The Stater

A Magazine for the Alumni and Friends of Southern Arkansas University



A new home for
MULERIDER[®]
ATHLETICS

STORY ON PAGE 18

Back in the Saddle

It is truly great to be back in the saddle here in Mulerider Country at Southern Arkansas University. I am pleased that I can be of help during this period as we are searching for our next president.

When Toni and I arrived in Magnolia in the fall of 1968, it was truly the start of an exciting and rewarding experience. Southern State College was located exactly where I wanted to be. At the time it was the land of oil wells and pine trees, and now I would add bromine and lithium. There was a family feeling to the campus just as there is today.

This University is such a place of opportunity for our students, and it has been a great place to raise a family. We tend to think that our children will grow up and move away but all three of my children are residents of Magnolia and all attended SAU.

In a recent survey of our alumni I was gratified to see the extremely high level of satisfaction and support for the University. All you have to do is come to Mulegate at one of the football games to see how many of our alumni come back for both athletics and fellowship. It is the most successful event of its type in all of the Great American Conference.

SAU has been successful in academics, athletics, and recognition in general. The dramatic expansion in infrastructure provides a modern and dynamic appeal to the whole campus community. If a student visits our campus, there is a great chance they will become a Mulerider. The President's Ambassadors who give the tours, the faculty and staff who interact with our visitors, and the appearance of the campus are strong attractions.

The vibrant accredited programs in science and engineering, business, education, and liberal and performing arts offer quality degrees that make our students extremely marketable. The quality is here, and the opportunity is here. Students can also pursue a variety of master's degree programs and even a doctorate in education.

I am proud of this University, and I know you are too.



David F. Rankin, Ph.D.
President Emeritus

UPCOMING EVENTS

May 9

Distinguished Alumni Awards Dinner

May 10 & 11

Spring Commencement

May 29

First Summer Session Begins

June 21

Rip Powell Invitational

June 24-27

Mulerider Kids College

June 27

First Summer Session Ends

July 2

Second Summer Session Begins

August 1

Second Summer Session Ends

August 2

Summer Commencement

August 20

Blue & Gold Day

August 21

Fall Semester Begins

October 5

Homecoming

October 22

Topgolf Little Rock Alumni Event

Scan the QR code below to view the complete Mulerider Athletics calendar.



*Dates are subject to change, please see SAU website for updated information.



LOOKING TOWARD THE FUTURE

The search for SAU's next System President

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The Stater

The Stater is published twice a year through the partnership of the University Communications and Marketing Office and the Division of Advancement as a service to the alumni and friends of Southern Arkansas University.

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TRADITIONS

— SAU HONORS J COURSON

BY MEGAN HARRIS

PHOTOS BY THOMAS TURNER

The legacy of one man's leadership, initiative, and love for students is being remembered. J Courson has left an indelible mark on the SAU campus and community through his unwavering dedication and establishment of enduring traditions.

Courson began his time at SAU in 1981 as assistant dean of students, whereafter he transitioned to serve in various positions including associate dean of students, dean of students, and associate dean for housing and special projects. However important these roles were to the campus's success, it was Dean Courson's, as he is more fondly known, creativity in crafting meaningful experiences for his students that carries the most weight for generations of Muleriders.

Courson was responsible for the creation and significant contributions to a number of cherished campus traditions including Family Day, Residence Hall Association Bed Races, Great Greek Canoe Race, Freshman Steak Dinner, and many of the homecoming week activities that are now staples of the SAU experience. These traditions not only reflect the spirit of the University but also serve as examples of how Courson left his mark on SAU.

Celebration of Lights started in 1984 simply as an idea to commemorate the 75th year of the University. Courson decided to put a lighted tree in front of Overstreet. This one-day project, with much initiative from Courson and his students, grew into the illuminating of the campus that is recognizable today.

While Courson is recognized for the establishment of many facets of the vibrant SAU culture, he is most importantly remembered for his love of being involved, his love of people, and his love of students. He is not merely celebrated by SAU out of respect for the titles he has held but truly because of the person he is. His accomplishments at SAU stemmed from his determination not only to get things done but also to serve others in a true Mulerider fashion.

Courson arrived at SAU not knowing how long his stay would be but said that it was truly the people that got him excited. He was and is student-centered, always spending time with and getting to know students for who they were and helping them achieve their greatest potential. Though he loved everybody he worked with at SAU over the years, Courson quickly noted, "Students are the more fun people."

His influence permeates the traditions of the SAU community, the spirit of the events he planned, and the individuals he touched and continues to touch. Courson carries on as a beloved member of the Mulerider family.



1. Dr. Donna Allen and Dr. David Rankin present J Courson with an award honoring his accomplishments. 2. Celebration of Lights festive display. 3. RHA Bed Races. 4. Freshman Steak Dinner. Main photo - Great Greek Canoe Race.

MULERIDER LOUNGE



In an exciting move to accommodate students, Southern Arkansas University opened a new space for students to unwind and socialize. The area, called the Mulerider Lounge, is located on the bottom floor of the Bruce Center.

As requested by the Student Government Association, the concept became one of the University's summer projects to provide students with an additional place on campus to congregate. Brad Stout, director of Student Affairs Facilities, noted, "We are very excited to revitalize an area of campus that was underutilized and turn it into a hub for fun, relaxation, and campus engagement."

The Mulerider Lounge hosts several activities, including ping pong, foosball, shuffleboard, air hockey, and billiards. In addition, the lounge has TouchTunes, a jukebox system through which students can play their favorite music. The welcoming and dynamic environment also provides comfortable seating areas for lounging and tables where students can enjoy their favorite Chick-fil-A, Subway, or Tacos 4 Life meals.

SAU strives to help students feel at home on campus while being committed to student excellence. "Our goal was to create a space that not only fosters academic success but also encourages social and community interaction," said Dr. Donna Allen, vice president for student affairs. "The Mulerider Lounge embodies our commitment to providing an enriched campus experience for our students."





SAU officially welcomes Tacos 4 Life

Southern Arkansas University was honored to officially welcome Tacos 4 Life to campus with a grand opening celebration. Tacos 4 Life is well-known for its amazing tacos and unwavering commitment to fighting world hunger.

For every taco sold, Tacos 4 Life donates a meal to a child in need through its partnership with Feed My Starving Children. SAU is excited to further enrich the dining options available to students and the local community. This partnership aligns with SAU's dedication to fostering community engagement and mission of service to others.

The grand opening event featured various exciting activities and giveaways for students and community members. Representatives from SAU, Tacos 4 Life, and the Magnolia community welcomed guests and hosted an official ribbon-cutting ceremony. Attendees enjoyed samplings of Tacos 4 Life food items, entered to win prizes, and helped celebrate the latest dining addition to SAU's campus.



Freshmen Muleriders make global impact *in their first week!*

BY SHELLY WHALEY
PHOTOS BY THOMAS TURNER

Southern Arkansas University's genuine culture of caring and service was on display with its most recent partnership with Tacos 4 Life and Feed My Starving Children (FMSC). The MobilePack event was organized by SAU's Volunteer Coordinator, Katie Heese. Heese brought together the entirety of the freshmen class, other students, alumni, administration, and staff across various departments at the Mulerider Activity Center to pack thousands of meals for children worldwide.

This event was part of freshman orientation, known as Mulerider Round-Up, which took on a new look this year by facilitating the large volunteer effort for every first-year student. Over 730 volunteers were able to experience and participate in the University's spirit of giving. Students were able to serve alongside University personnel and exceeded expectations by packing a total of 116,640 meals. These meals will feed 320 children for an entire year.

Volunteering during freshman orientation introduces incoming students to the SAU mission of developing essential qualities for being effective citizens in society while fostering an environment of service. This was the first of many opportunities for the freshman class to impact global communities positively.

This successful event was made possible in conjunction with Tacos 4 Life and FMSC. FMSC is a nonprofit organization that works to provide nutritious meals to malnourished children in underserved regions. Tacos 4 Life subscribes to a "Meal 4 Meal" philosophy: for each meal sold, one is donated. Tacos 4 Life has funded 31,236,300 meals to date, per their website. FMSC sends packed meals to over 90 countries and distributes them to children in need through feeding centers, CarePoints, orphanages, schools, and refugee camps across the Middle East, Asia, North America, Central America, South America, Europe, Africa, and the Caribbean. The donated meals, packed by Muleriders, will be sent across the world and be used to make a life-saving impact in a child's life.

SAU takes great pride in our Mulerider volunteer efforts that empower students to give back to their communities and make a positive impact on a large scale. It is clear that Tacos 4 Life and SAU both have a heart for service, and this event is the perfect way to kick off this partnership.





SOUTHERN ARKANSAS UNIVERSITY COLLEGE NEWS BRIEFS

College of Education and Human Performance

- Southern Arkansas University has been ranked #12 in the nation as the Best Online Master’s Degree in Kinesiology by University HQ. Congratulations to HPSS Department Chair Steve Dingman and his amazing faculty and staff!
- The Human Performance and Sports Sciences Department dedicated their new Human Performance Lab in October. Students from the Exercise Prescription & Fitness Program class provided information and demonstrations of how advanced equipment, such as the VO2master, InBody 570, Kaatsu C3 BFR cuffs, Push Band and Watt Bike, will play a pivotal role in shaping their future careers. The event was an informative and exciting opportunity for students to share their insights with members of the University.
- SAU paid 50 student-teachers working in southwest Arkansas during the fall, double the number of residents since the launch of their paid residency partnerships in the spring. The education department graduates more than 10% of all first-year university-prepared public school teachers in the state.
- Casey Henry was recently named Teacher of the Month for November at Grimsley Junior High School. Casey is a candidate in the SAU Master of Arts in Teaching program.



Dr. Jessica Samples

- Dr. Jessica Samples, SPED M.Ed. program director and counseling and professional studies department chair, presented at the Council for Exceptional Children TED Conference in Long Beach, California, in November. The presentation “Seas the Day!” Transforming Teacher Prep to Include SPED Training was a collaboration between Dr. Samples, Dr. Neelie Dobbins and Dr. Lynze Greathouse.



Dr. Megan Quebedeaux

- Dr. Megan Quebedeaux, assistant professor of education, was accepted to speak at the International AICMSE 2024 Harvard University Conference on Multidisciplinary Studies and Education in Spring 2024. She will be presenting on Self-Efficacy in the Writing Classroom: Goldfish in the Wild.

Dempsey College of Liberal and Performing Arts



Oliver Band Hall

- Drew Leder, a senior instrumental music education major from Stuttgart, AR, composed *Who is He?* Leder served as student conductor of the ensemble for the premiere at the Fall Wind Ensemble concert in October. Drew is a member of the Mulerider Marching Band, Jazz Band, and the Chamber Singers.
- Dr. Shannin Schroeder, a professor in the Department of Modern Languages, is serving the second of two years as President of Sigma Tau Delta, the international English Honor Society. She has served as the Executive Board’s Secretary/Treasurer and Vice President/President-elect. Dr. Schroeder is especially delighted to fill this role through 2024, which marks the Society’s 100th anniversary. She is the advisor for SAU’s Sigma Tau Delta chapter and has traveled with SAU student participants to every convention since 2000.
- Shannon Evans, Dr. Elizabeth Gloyd, and Dr. Deborah Wilson had a poster presentation titled “Stranger Danger”: Perceptions of Safety from College Students at the Southwestern Association of Criminal Justice (SWACJ) in Little Rock in October.



- In October, students in World War II: The Pacific class and Honors College students took a trip to the Japanese-American Internment Museum in McGehee, AR, followed by a stop at the Rohwer Memorial Heritage Site where more than 8,000 first-generation Japanese immigrants and second-generation Japanese-American citizens were forcibly interned during World War II. The trip was sponsored jointly by the History, Political Science, and Geography department and the Honors school.

- SAU hosted the third Arkansas Indie Fest in October, where Indie developers attended workshops and showcased their video games, tabletop games, animation shorts, short films and zines. Keynote speakers Ahmed and Khalil Abdullah, cofounders of Decoy Games, kicked off the event.

Rankin College of Business

- Students and faculty traveled to Houston in September. Alums arranged company visits related to their majors. Some of the stops included PwC, Frito Lay, HCA Healthcare Gulf Coast Supply Chain, HCA Houston Healthcare, an Astros game, and dinner with area alumni.



Dara Duguay

- Financial literacy expert, CEO, author, and educator Dara Duguay presented financial fitness tips to over 300 students as the Peoples Bank Speaker in September.
- Backpack to Briefcase was held on September 25-29. Highlights of the week included visits from alumni sharing career opportunities with first and second-year students, a networking event, and mock interviews.

Rip Powell

14th Annual Invitational Golf Tournament

SAVE THE DATE

Friday, June 21,
2024

Magnolia Country
Club



- Curtis Malone '96 of MegaSack served as Entrepreneur in Residence in November, talking with classes and presenting to the students and faculty. In the evening, the in-person finals for the Entrepreneur Pitch & Idea Competition (EPIC) took place in Foundation Hall. Ten student projects were selected from the virtual round to compete in a live presentation judged by local business professionals.
- A Master of Science in Business Analytics was added to the Rankin College of Business graduate offerings. With a STEM designation, this program is expected to attract many students.
- The Finance program was reconfigured to offer an emphasis in risk management and insurance, which will prepare the large number of students entering that field.



The SOAR conference is focused on increasing awareness, collaborations, and actions to build a sustainable future and a better tomorrow for South Arkansas.

- The SOAR sustainability committee led a campus book drive, recycling or rehoming over 1800 books.

College of Science and Engineering

- The Department of Biology and the College of Science and Engineering hosted a weeklong Summer Health Professions Education Camp in June for high school students interested in health care careers. Organized by Dr. Antoinette Odendaal and Ms. Stacey Hickson of the College of Science and Engineering, the camp was part of a collaborative grant from the Arkansas Department of Health and the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention. Laboratory and other camp activities were facilitated by SAU faculty and SAU Pre-Health majors.
- Dr. Hayder Zghair, assistant professor of industrial engineering in the College of Science and Engineering, was presented the Industry 4.0 Award in June during the Industrial Engineering and Operation Management (IEOM) International Society conference in Houston, Texas. Dr. Zghair was recognized for his contributions to Industry 4.0 education and lab development as well as promoting the Industry 4.0 initiative.
- Hannah Harcrow, Andrew Wood, and Jackson Roberson traveled to the University of Arkansas at Little Rock to participate in a cyber security challenge event hosted by JOLT in October. The team was guided by Dr. Rami Alroobi and Dr. Bruhadashwar Bezawada. The trip was made possible by SAU Foundation.

- SAU Engineering Department partnered with Southern Aluminum for an experiential learning opportunity. Fifteen students began work-study projects on lean manufacturing and production system quality. The collaboration was made possible by a \$31,200 grant.
- Dr. Hayder Zghair was elected to the Board of Officers and Directors of the Environmental and Engineering Division at the American Society of Engineering Education (ASEE).



Dr. Andrian Showalter

- Dr. Adrian Showalter, assistant professor of biology and cancer biologist, received a \$50,000 instrumentation grant from the NIH-funded Arkansas INBRE (Arkansas IDeA Network of Biomedical Research Excellence). The funds will provide an inverted microscope, used to provide high-resolution, three-dimensional images of biological specimens, including breast cancer cells that Dr. Showalter uses to study the chemotherapeutic efficacy of metal-bound nanoparticles and will be housed in the Science Building at SAU.
- Dr. James Hyde, associate professor of biology and neuroscientist, presented his research on the connection between brain structure and mental health at a meeting of the Magnolia Rotary Club in November.



- Biology professors Jesse Filbrun and Abe Tucker led a Biology Club trip to the Ouachita Mountains Biological Station, near Mena, AR, where students explored the unique biodiversity of the Ouachita Mountains region, including crayfish, salamanders, frogs, zooplankton, birds, insects, fungi and plants.
- In November, Dr. Md. Hasanuzzaman, associate professor of computer science, presented his research entitled "Evaluate Effectiveness of NAO Robot to Train with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)" at the IEEE International Conference on Cognitive and Machine Intelligence (IEEE Cog MI) in Atlanta, Georgia.
- Dr. Tara Almand, associate professor of nursing, was named the 2022-2023 Golisano Health Leadership Award honoree for her commitment to supporting the athletes of Special Olympics Arkansas.

Faculty and Staff Spotlight



Dr. Jesse Filbrun - Faculty
Associate Professor of Biology

Dr. Jesse Filbrun is an associate professor of biology and the advisor for SAU's Marine Biology degree option. He is a broadly trained freshwater and marine ecologist. He earned his B.S. in Biology from Bowling Green State University, Ohio, and his Ph.D. in Evolution, Ecology, and Organismal Biology from the Ohio State University. He served as a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Southern Mississippi's Gulf Coast Research Laboratory and as their summer field program marine biology instructor since 2019. He served SAU (2014-2017) and Eastern New Mexico University (2017-2021) as an assistant professor of biology before returning to SAU in fall 2021. Dr. Filbrun teaches Ecology, Biostatistics, and a variety of "watery" courses, including Ichthyology (study of fishes), Marine Biology, and Oceanography. Dr. Filbrun has completed diverse research projects to explore how early-life feeding, development, and growth of fishes

impacts recruitment to adult populations. He has worked to improve production efficiency of catfishes in aquaculture ponds, mitigate water quality issues in ponds and reservoirs, understand how larval Red Snapper in the northern Gulf of Mexico responded to the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, and quantify drifting fish egg and larval assemblages in the Pecos River, New Mexico. Dr. Filbrun has a steadily busy lab of talented undergraduate students who are trained in the field and laboratory to quantify ecological interactions among early life stages of fishes, their zooplankton prey, and their physical environments. Currently, Dr. Filbrun's lab is focused on conducting experiments to test the effects of predators, competitors, and environmental conditions on the success of the local invasive planktonic crustacean *Daphnia lumholtzi*.



Mr. Cledis Stuart - Staff
Associate Dean of Multicultural Affairs and Diversity

Mr. Cledis Stuart is the associate dean of Multicultural Affairs and Diversity at Southern Arkansas University in Magnolia. He has worked in higher education for thirty years (twenty-eight with SAU) primarily with students of color in all facets of student development. Stuart has developed and implemented programs for the retention and graduation of students, including but not limited to, Brother-To-Brother, Sister-To-Sister, the Project Pal Peer Mentoring Program and most recently the Southern Arkansas University Diversity Initiative. He has helped to establish two of the living/learning communities (Leadership College and Residential College), while also advising the National Pan-Hellenic Council groups, the Black Students Association, the Genesis Ministry Choir, and Latinos Unidos. He has conducted diversity workshops in public school, university, and corporate settings for almost 30 years.

Additionally, Stuart has served as an adjunct instructor at Southern Arkansas University in the Student Affairs graduate program, Behavioral and Social Sciences, and Freshman Seminar. He has served on numerous University committees including the University Strategic Planning Committee and the Presidential Search Committee. He served as President of the Arkansas College Personnel Association (ArCPA). Also, with ArCPA, he has served as the newsletter editor, the State Minority Affairs Coordinator, and as a faculty member for The New Professionals Institute.

Stuart and his wife Ebonee have seven children. He holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Marketing from Grambling State University and a masters in Agency Counseling from Southern Arkansas University. Most of all, he is a servant!

David F. Rankin College of Business



HALL *of* FAME

The Rankin College of Business Hall of Fame was established in 2019 by the Business Advisory Council. Each year, the council selects alumni who have distinguished themselves in business, leadership, and service. On October 27, 2023, Gary Sewell, class of 1971, and Dr. Gayle White, class of 1963, were recognized as Southern Arkansas University's newest inductees.

Gary Sewell, a 1971 BBA graduate from SAU, formerly Southern State College, spent his career working in and serving south Arkansas. In 1984, he became director of First Federal Savings and Loan, a small bank in El Dorado, which is now First Financial Bank. That same year, he started Sewell Operating Company, Inc., an exploration and production company. In 1990, he took ownership of Hammond Oil Company, renaming it Sewell Oil Company, and established Sewell Drilling Company, LLC.



Gary Sewell

Sewell has served as Chairman of the Arkansas Economic Development Commission since his appointment by Governor Asa Hutchinson in 2016. He also serves on the Rankin College of Business Advisory Council. However, nothing gives him greater pleasure than working on his 800-acre ranch near El Dorado and spending time with his wife Kristi, their two sons, and four grandchildren.

Dr. Gayle White graduated from Southern State College in 1963. She earned an MBE in 1966 and an EdD in 1972, both from the University of Mississippi.

Dr. White went on to pursue postgraduate studies at the University of Illinois in 1984 and Harvard University in 1989. Turner Professor of Management and SAU Distinguished Professor Dr. White taught for 43 years in the Rankin College of Business at SAU and served as dean of the School of Business from 1980-1994. Among her many achievements, Dr. White was selected by the Arkansas Business Education Association as the 1980 Arkansas Business Educator of the Year, was named the 1997-1998 SAU Honor Professor, and received the SAU Faculty Excellence Award for Research in 2003.

Since her retirement, Dr. White has enjoyed spending time with her husband, daughter, and two grandchildren in North Carolina.



Dr. Gayle White



Engineering students attend 2023

BAJA SAE

competition



Contributed Photo

Left to right: Cassandra Bunnell, Jiri Semrad, Kameron Williams, Jeffrey Sumner, Logan Pamplin, Hayder Zghair, Oreoluma Onifade, Brandon Ravenscraft, and Colin Julian

Southern Arkansas University engineering students traveled to Nashport, Ohio, for the annual Baja SAE 2023 Competition in September. Nine engineering students represented SAU ahead of their first competition, scheduled for 2024. The Muleriders attended technical sessions to learn from more than 70 universities from across the globe.

Organized by the Society of Automotive Engineers International (SAE International), Baja SAE challenges engineering students to design and build an off-road vehicle that can navigate rough terrain and, in some competitions, water. Tasked with designing and building a single-seat, all-terrain sporting vehicle, the Muleriders presented a proof of concept of their vehicle to and received valuable feedback from major engineering employers, such as Ford, Honda, Kohler, NCEES, Polaris, SolidWorks, Ansys, Autodesk, Mastercam, and many others.

“Educators like me must invest in off-campus opportunities where students can learn about communication, time management, leadership, and more things that better engineers and do not come from a textbook,” said Dr. Hayder Zghair, the SAE Student Chapter’s faculty supervisor.

SAU’s Baja SAE team is eager to apply what they have learned and return in 2024. The project will involve introducing a new product to the consumer industrial market. Students will compete to have their design accepted for manufacture by a fictitious firm and must work as a team to not only design, build, test, promote, and race their vehicle, but also to generate financial support for their project while managing their educational priorities.

“I appreciate Dr. Hayder Zghair preparing our engineering students for this high-caliber competition. Many thanks to the SAU Foundation for funding this excellent opportunity for our students, enabling them to further foster team building, and develop essential engineering skills,” said Dr. Abdel Bachri, dean of the College of Science and Engineering.



LOOKING TOWARD THE FUTURE

The search for SAU's next System President

On November 1, 2023, Dr. Trey Berry announced his resignation as president of Southern Arkansas University. SAU expresses deep gratitude for Dr. Berry's dedicated time and service over the past eight years. Driven by a strong family legacy, his decision to return to Arkadelphia is rooted in personal considerations. SAU extends its heartfelt best wishes to the Berry family as they pursue their chosen path.

The SAU System Board of Trustees named Dr. David F. Rankin interim president of SAU, effective November 27, 2023. Dr. Rankin retired as president of SAU on June 30, 2015, and was named President Emeritus. He served SAU for 46 years, including 13 as president. He also served as the dean of the College of Business and professor of finance and economics.

Dr. Rankin's extensive and substantial experience at SAU uniquely qualifies him to serve the campus and community while bringing a wealth of institutional knowledge, expertise, and leadership to this position.

The search committee, comprised of leaders from the SAU system and supporting boards, was named on February 8, 2024, and will play a pivotal role in the national search for the next president of SAU. The decision to form the presidential search committee underscores SAU's commitment to ensuring a thorough and inclusive search process to identify a visionary leader capable of guiding the University into its next chapter of growth and success.

The search committee will solicit nominations, review applications, and conduct interviews with potential candidates. Input from various stakeholders, including faculty, staff, students, alumni, and community members, will be sought throughout the process to ensure a comprehensive search is conducted.

As the search process progresses, updates and announcements will be shared with the SAU community and public to ensure transparency and inclusivity. The University encourages all stakeholders to stay engaged and participate in the search process by providing feedback and support.

Search Committee Members

Monty Harrington, Chair of Search Committee | **Dr. Donna Allen**, Vice President for Student Affairs | **Shawana Reed**, Vice President for Finance | **Dr. Jennifer Rowsam**, Dean, Dempsey College of Liberal and Performing Arts | **Dr. Robin Sronce**, Dean, Rankin College of Business | **Dr. Abraham Tucker**, SAU Faculty Senate President | **Margarita Norment**, SAU Staff Senate President | **Dr. Mahbub Ahmed**, Associate Professor, Chair of Engineering & Physics Department | **Dr. Neelie Dobbins**, Professor of Education, Chair of Teacher Education Department | **Sarah Jennings**, Associate Vice President for Enrollment Services | **Cledis Stuart**, Associate Dean of Multiculturalism and Diversity | **Steve Browning**, Director of Athletics | **Bailey Cole**, Student Government Association President | **Dr. Valarie Wilson**, SAU Tech Vice Chancellor for Academics/CAO | **Jennifer Pearce**, Chair of Foundation Board | **Ledly Jennings**, Chair of Alumni Association Board





Photo by Thomas Turner

Two bus loads of Muleriders celebrated the new year in Winter Park, CO, on SAU's annual ski trip!



Photo by Thomas Turner

Fans in the stands! The Blue Crew supported Mulerider Football this season at every home game and even a few away games.

around campus



Photo by Thomas Turner

Street painting on the farm road during Homecoming week never disappoints!





Photo by Thomas Turner

Each October, the Rankin College of Business hosts Light for the Fight, honoring Breast Cancer Awareness. All proceeds raised from the luminares go towards the Steel Magnolias Breast Cancer Support Group.



Photo by Thomas Turner

Graham Barham and the Josh Abbott Band rocked SAU's annual free fall concert, filling Story Arena with incredible energy.



Photo by Thomas Turner

Mulerider Madness is the absolute best way to kick off basketball season in Mulerider Country. Students cheered on the Muleriders and participated in games and contests for prizes.



Photo by Thomas Turner

SAU Alumni Association had a blast celebrating SAU's newest alumni this past December.



Photo by Thomas Turner

This year's Homecoming King and Queen were Tano Tatum and Essence Thomas!



Photo by Thomas Turner

The best way to warm up each fall is by eating delicious and free student-made chili at the annual cook-off!



ATHLETIC

Highlights

A FEW OF THE RECENT ATHLETIC ACHIEVEMENTS AND CHANGES AT SAU

Back on Track

A pair of programs enjoyed successful turn-around seasons this past fall.

Mulerider Volleyball, under the direction of second-year head coach Alli O'Banion, who was honored as the Great American Conference's Coach of the Year, produced the program's first winning season since 2015, its first conference tournament berth in eight seasons, its overall wins in eight years, and its most home victories since 2012. That success came in large part as a result of several statistical improvements. SAU produced over 650 more attacks, over 250 more kills, and 32.0 more blocks than in 2022 and saw improvements in aces per set, digs per set, total digs, and opponent hitting percentage. Senior setter Morgan Schuster (HM), junior outside hitter Kayte DeLong (Second Team), and junior middle hitter Lauryn Moultrie (HM) were named All-GAC, while Schuster and DeLong were joined on the league's distinguished scholar-athlete list by juniors Landry Rogers, Ava Tanner, and Carlin Whaley.



Mulerider Football produced a historic campaign behind the leadership of second-year head coach Brad Smiley. For the first time since 1952, Southern Arkansas reached ten wins in a season with a 43-27 win over (RV) Missouri Western in the tenth playing of the Farmers Bank & Trust Live United Bowl. The victory gave the Muleriders the program's first postseason win in its NCAA Era (1995-96), its first postseason win since 1990 (Aztec Bowl), and its first postseason win on U.S. soil since 1948 (Papoose Bowl). Southern Arkansas finished the season ranked inside the top 15 nationally in first downs, defensive



touchdowns, tackles for loss allowed, turnovers lost, turnover margin, rushing offense, and total offense. Nine players were named All-GAC. Juniors Colton Grier (OL), Jariq Scales (RB), and Melvin Smith Jr. (CB) were honored as first-team recipients, while junior Matthew Whitten (TE) earned second-team honors. Freshman Connor Hagerty (OL) was one of four freshmen named all-conference as he earned honorable mention. Juniors Cole Williams (UTL), Dawson Scott (DE), Elvin Calhoun (DT), and Hosea Singleton (SAF) were also named honorable mentions.

Muleriders in Magnolia

In what has become a staple of the department, "Muleriders in Magnolia" enjoyed one of its most successful semesters to date. Mulerider student-athletes saw over ninety percent of the department participate in community service initiatives on campus and around the community of Magnolia. The 400+ Muleriders that participated logged over 5,200 hours

across 68 different opportunities which supported 16 organizations with a total economic impact of \$166,377. The fall statistics in hours, opportunities, organizations and impact are all semester highs for the department since partnering with Helper Helper.

"I have been extremely proud of the willingness of our student-athletes to serve Magnolia and to give back to our community," noted head men's basketball coach and "Muleriders in Magnolia" director Logan

Quinn. "As a result of their hard work we have seen an incredible amount of growth in our community service goals. When you have student athletes, as well as coaches, that understand the importance of serving, then it makes giving back very easy. It has been a joy to be able to help coordinate different events throughout the summer and the fall, and we will continue to reach new heights as we head into the spring semester!"



Jariq Scales



Matthew Whitten



Cole Williams



Hayden Nitz



Jacob Berry



Damon LeGrande



Tre'von Letts



Gavin Roe



Morgan Schuster



Lauryn Moultrie



Landry Rogers



Isla Olivas

CSC Academic Honors + Academic Success

A dozen Mulerider student-athletes were named College Sports Communicators (CSC) Academic All-District honorees this past fall. Mulerider Football placed eight players on the list, while Mulerider Volleyball saw four players honored. Half of the eight football student-athletes recognized advanced to the national academic All-American ballot. Juniors Jariq Scales (3.63 GPA – Kinesiology-Coaching (Grad), Matthew Whitten (3.91 GPA – K-12 Physical Education & Health) and Cole Williams (4.0 GPA – Business Administration: Management), and redshirt freshman Hayden Nitz (3.84 GPA – Exercise Science: Strength & Conditioning) moved to All-America voting, while senior Jacob Berry (3.63 GPA – Criminal Justice) and juniors Damon LeGrande (3.59 GPA – Agricultural Business), Tre'von Letts (3.66 GPA – K-12 Physical Education & Health), and Gavin Roe (3.54 GPA – Business Administration: Management) were CSC Academic All-District honorees. SAU Volleyball outgoing senior Morgan Schuster (3.95 GPA – Biology/Pre-Health) advanced to the national ballot and was joined as an Academic All-District selection by juniors Lauryn Moultrie (3.77 GPA – Psychology), Isla Olivas (4.0 GPA – Business Administration: International Business), and Landry Rogers (3.94 GPA – Elementary Education STEM).

As a department, the Muleriders enjoyed a successful semester in the classroom. Together, SAU student-athletes combined for a department-wide GPA of 3.19. Over half of the department's student-athletes posted a 3.0 GPA or better with 82 registering a perfect report card with a 4.0 GPA. Two-thirds of the athletic programs recorded a cumulative semester GPA of 3.0 or better with no team posting less than a 2.9 GPA. Mulerider Football led with 61 3.0 GPAs or better with Mulerider Track & Field/Cross Country following with 55. SAU Men's Tennis posted the highest team GPA of the fall semester at 3.84.

A Night of Champions



Women's Tennis

Mulerider Women's Tennis, under the leadership of fifth-year head coach Greg Owen, earned a share of its second Great American Conference regular season title. The Muleriders won 11 matches last spring, including four in league play. Southern Arkansas won its last four GAC matches, three of which were decided 4-3, in a span of just five days in mid-April. True freshman Annika Berrendorf was named the Great American Conference Women's Tennis Freshman of the Year, and she was joined on the All-GAC First Team by unanimous selections Lena Milosevic and Sarah Roy. Greta Wallin received all-league plaudits as she was tabbed to the second team in addition to being joined by Kalley Smith as GAC Distinguished Scholar Athletes.



Baseball

Southern Arkansas Baseball claimed the Great American Conference regular season championship outright, the program's seventh as a league member and then carried the top seed into the GAC Tournament where it took two of three from (8) Southeastern Oklahoma State in the opening round. SAU then went on to win three-straight games from inside Arvest Ballpark in Springdale to earn its seventh league tournament title and claim the GAC's automatic bid to the NCAA postseason for the 15th time overall and for the third-consecutive season under head coach Justin Pettigrew.



Men's Golf

Third-year head coach Neriah Brown's Mulerider Men's Golf team never blinked over the course of the final two and a half months of the season. Six shots back of the advancement line to the NCAA DII National Championship, the Muleriders shot 291 in its final regional round of golf to force a three-team playoff and a two-under sent the program to its first-ever National Tournament in its NCAA Era. That performance followed a program-best finish of second place at the GAC Championships and was made possible by superb play from several Muleriders over the course of the final round of action as SAU entered round three seven strokes back of second place.



A new home for **MULERIDER**® **ATHLETICS**

BY JACOB PUMPHREY
PHOTOS BY THOMAS TURNER



The Norm DeBriyn Athletics Operations Facility and Murphy USA Student-Athlete Academic Success Center

Construction of the Norm DeBriyn Athletics Operations Facility and Murphy USA Student-Athlete Academic Success Center is in its final stage following a September 23 groundbreaking. The soon-to-be completed facility is a gamechanger for the future of Mulerider Athletics as the department has once again been positively transformed by the Willard and Pat Walker Charitable Foundation and Murphy USA.

The Walker Charitable Foundation Chairman Johnny Mike Walker, Executive Director Mandy Macke, Norm DeBriyn, Caroline DeBriyn, Carrie Jo Bingham, and Paul Bingham, and Murphy USA Chief Executive Officer and President Andrew Clyde all joined together with SAU officials for the groundbreaking on SAU Family Day 2023.

Construction began on October 2, 2023, on the project site which sits directly south of the Dawson Athletic Complex. The project has a completion date of July 2024, just in time for the beginning of the new athletic year.

The 9,000-square foot facility, which will serve as the central hub for Mulerider Athletics' 16 athletic programs, is designed to address the academic, nutritional, personal, and professional development of more than 450 student-athletes. Components will include multiple learning environments, including a large classroom also serving as a team meeting room, a computer lab, tutoring rooms, administration, academic advisor and coaches' offices, a nutrition center, and locker rooms for men's and women's Track and Field/Cross Country programs.

The impacts and generosity of the Willard and Pat Walker Foundation can be seen across all of Mulerider Athletics and SAU. Since 2005, the Walker Foundation has partnered with SAU by providing grants totaling over \$2.5 million to benefit Mulerider Baseball, Dawson Athletic Complex, Story Arena, and the University's Engineering program. The Foundation directed a leadership gift of \$1.2 million to the Norm DeBriyn Athletics Operations Facility and Murphy USA Student-Athlete Academic Success Center.

"A legend in this state, Coach DeBriyn has been coming with us to Magnolia for baseball games for more than 15 years," remarked Willard and Pat Walker Charitable Foundation Executive Director, Mandy Macke. "The impact Norm has had on young student-athletes and young adults, from both his decades of coaching and over a decade of ministry, is unparalleled. His name is synonymous with achievement, success, and virtue. We know that having his name affiliated with this building here on campus will be a source of pride and inspiration for student-athletes and staff at SAU for years to come. We are honored to once again partner with SAU in the naming of the Norm DeBriyn Athletic Operations Facility."

Since 1986, the Willard and Pat Walker Charitable Foundation has supported charitable, religious, scientific, literary and educational endeavors directly or through contributions to

qualifying organizations in Arkansas, Oklahoma, Missouri and Kansas.

Murphy USA's commitment to Southern Arkansas University, specifically Mulerider Athletics, has been tremendous. In recent years, Murphy USA through its charitable foundation has generously partnered on several aforementioned facility enhancement projects at SAU that have helped enhance athletic facilities on campus into some of the best around the region. The organization serves as the title sponsor of the department's scholar-athlete of the year awards and Mulerider Football appeared in the Murphy USA Classic for the 12th time last October. With a growing network of more than 1,700 retail stores in 27 states, Murphy USA serves more than two million customers each day.

The catalyst behind making all communities in Southwest Arkansas better, Murphy USA is a dominant force in their industry and completely committed to supporting the Muleriders. Since 2014, Murphy USA has partnered with SAU to provide just over \$1,000,000 to Wilkins Stadium

“ We cannot say thank you enough to everyone who has had a part in making this dream become a reality. ”

Steve Browning
SAU Director of Athletics

at Rip Powell Field, the Dr. Margaret Downing Softball Complex, and the David F. Rankin College of Business.

"Murphy USA is proud to continue its partnership with Southern Arkansas University. In supporting the new Academic Success Center, we honor student-athletes who display values we strongly share: a winning spirit; commitment to excellence; strong work ethic; and personal character. We look forward to seeing them flourish on and off the field and the opportunity for them to join fellow Mulerider alums at Murphy USA," said Andrew Clyde.

On June 15, 2022, Murphy USA announced their lead commitment of \$750,000 targeting the academic success of our student-athletes in the new facility.

"We continue to be blessed by our partnership with the Walker Foundation and Murphy USA," stated SAU Director of Athletics Steve Browning. "They are both in the business of transforming lives and this newest commitment is another testimony to that. The Norm DeBriyn Athletics Operations Facility and Murphy USA Student-Athlete Academic Success Center will provide our athletes with the resources necessary to not only be champions on the court/field, but most importantly in the classroom. We are proud to have Coach Norm DeBriyn's name forever linked to Mulerider Athletics because of his transformational impact on the lives of thousands of student-athletes. We cannot say thank you enough to everyone who has had a part in making this dream become a reality."

SAU Sports Hall of Fame



Photo by Thomas Turner

Bill Burson, SAU Sports Hall of Fame Class of 2016, greets a fellow hall of famer prior to Friday night's induction ceremony.



Photo by Thomas Turner

2023 inductee Jerry Chandler (right) and his brother Arthur M. Chandler pose for a photo amid a proud celebration following Friday night's induction ceremony.

BY JACOB PUMPHREY

The 20th class of the Southern Arkansas University Sports Hall of Fame was officially inducted on Friday, October 7, 2023, during a special ceremony inside the Grand Hall of the Donald W. Reynolds Campus and Community Center. Eight former student-athletes of which one also coached at the University took center stage during halftime of the Muleriders' Homecoming game the following day.

Five former student-athletes represented the Hall's Modern Era including three whose careers began within the past fifteen years. All-American softball player Maddie Dow Ray, professional baseball standout Aharon Eggleston, record-setting volleyball player Maggie Ross Glover, highly-decorated baseball player Trevor Rucker, and program-changing quarterback Tyler Sykora were among the inductees whose careers took place within the past 30 years. All-American Track & Field standout Jerry Chandler and two-sport All-AIC star Charles Jones represented the Golden Era, while former baseball standout and Natural State coaching great Allen Gum entered the Hall as both a coach and Golden Era member. To learn more about this year's induction class, visit www.MuleriderAthletics.com.



Murphy USA Mulerider Club Invitational



Photo by Thomas Turner

Team 1 - (Left to Right) Jonathan Orr, Kyle Slayton, Robert Poole, and Gavan McCauley



Photo by Thomas Turner

Team 2 - (Left to Right) Jeff Baker, Ronnie Baker, Ronnie Williams, and Rick Baker



Photo by Thomas Turner

Team 3 - (Left to Right) Nathan Westmoreland, Chet Green, Aaron Ezell, and Colton Lindsey



Photo by Thomas Turner

Team 4 - (Left to Right) Sid Moore, Bill Talbot, Jim Black, and Andrew Meadows



Photo by Thomas Turner

Check Presentation - (Left to Right) Vice President for Advancement, Josh Kee; Former SAU President, Dr. Trey Berry; Philanthropy, Community Relations & Administrative Services for Murphy USA, Don Miller; and Director of Athletics, Steve Browning

For the fourth consecutive year, sponsors and participants came together to support Mulerider Athletics at the Murphy USA Mulerider Club Invitational held at Mystic Creek Golf Club in El Dorado, AR, on October 20, 2023.

Highlighted by the continued support of generosity of Murphy USA, as the presenting sponsor for a third straight year, the tournament had a total of 27 teams which helped raise over \$38,000 to support the Mulerider Club, the fundraising arm for Mulerider Athletics that provides additional support for all 16 programs and over 400 student-athletes.

In four years, the tournament has raised over \$120,000 for the Mulerider Club and Mulerider Athletics.

Major Sponsors from this year's tournament included:

Presenting Sponsor
Murphy USA

Lunch Sponsor
Four R Marketing

Official Food & Beverage Cart Sponsor
Mk Distributors, Inc.

Hole in One Sponsor
Campbell & Company

Prize Money Sponsor
Dixie Maintenance, Inc.

Golf Cart Sponsor
H&E Equipment

Gold Sponsors
South Ark Orthopaedic's & Sports Medicine

Blue Sponsor
FASTSIGNS



TIM TEBOW



Tim Tebow motivates sold-out crowd as Farmers Bank & Trust Distinguished Speaker

By Rachel Jenkins | Photos by Thomas Turner and Jacob Lewis

Two-time national champion, first-round NFL draft pick and Heisman Trophy winner Tim Tebow addressed a sold-out audience at Southern Arkansas University on October 10 as the 2023 Farmers Bank & Trust Distinguished Speaker in the W.T. Watson Athletic Center. This year's event raised more than \$92,000 to benefit scholarships for future generations of SAU students.

Dr. Trey Berry, former SAU president, welcomed the community to what was the largest indoor banquet in the history of Magnolia, AR. "Just by being here tonight, you are changing the lives of our students," he said, thanking Farmers Bank & Trust in particular for their contributions of gifts, facilities, leadership, and service. Since the beginning of the Distinguished Speaker Lecture Series, over \$850,000 in scholarships has been raised.

During the event, two deserving students, Karli Rabb and Heath Heikes, were recognized as recipients of the prestigious Farmers Bank & Trust/Dr. Bob Burns Distinguished Speaker Scholarship Endowment. The University community celebrated their achievements and dedication in their respective fields.

Fifth generation banker and Magnolia native Elizabeth Burns Anderson, senior vice president of Farmers Bank & Trust, shared her experience as executive director of the FB&T Foundation, noting the importance of community service as well

as the long-standing relationship between FB&T and SAU.

Prior to Tebow taking the stage, Dr. Berry surprised the NFL titan and New York Times bestselling author by naming him an honorary Mulerider. "You can't come to Magnolia, Arkansas, without becoming a Mulerider," Dr. Berry said.

Tebow shared inspirational stories of professional athletes, war heroes, and resilient families, reminding attendees of the impact that hope, belief, and faith have on those who are struggling. "There's a lot that's being thrown at young people today," he said. "But you get the chance to throw hope right back at them."

Tim Tebow was born in Makati, the Philippines, to missionary parents. A former professional football player and baseball player, five-time New York Times bestselling author, international speaker, and ESPN broadcaster, Tebow also founded the Tim Tebow Foundation in 2010. With a mission to fight for the world's most vulnerable, Tebow's foundation focuses on anti-human trafficking and child exploitation, orphan care and prevention, profound medical needs, and special needs ministry.

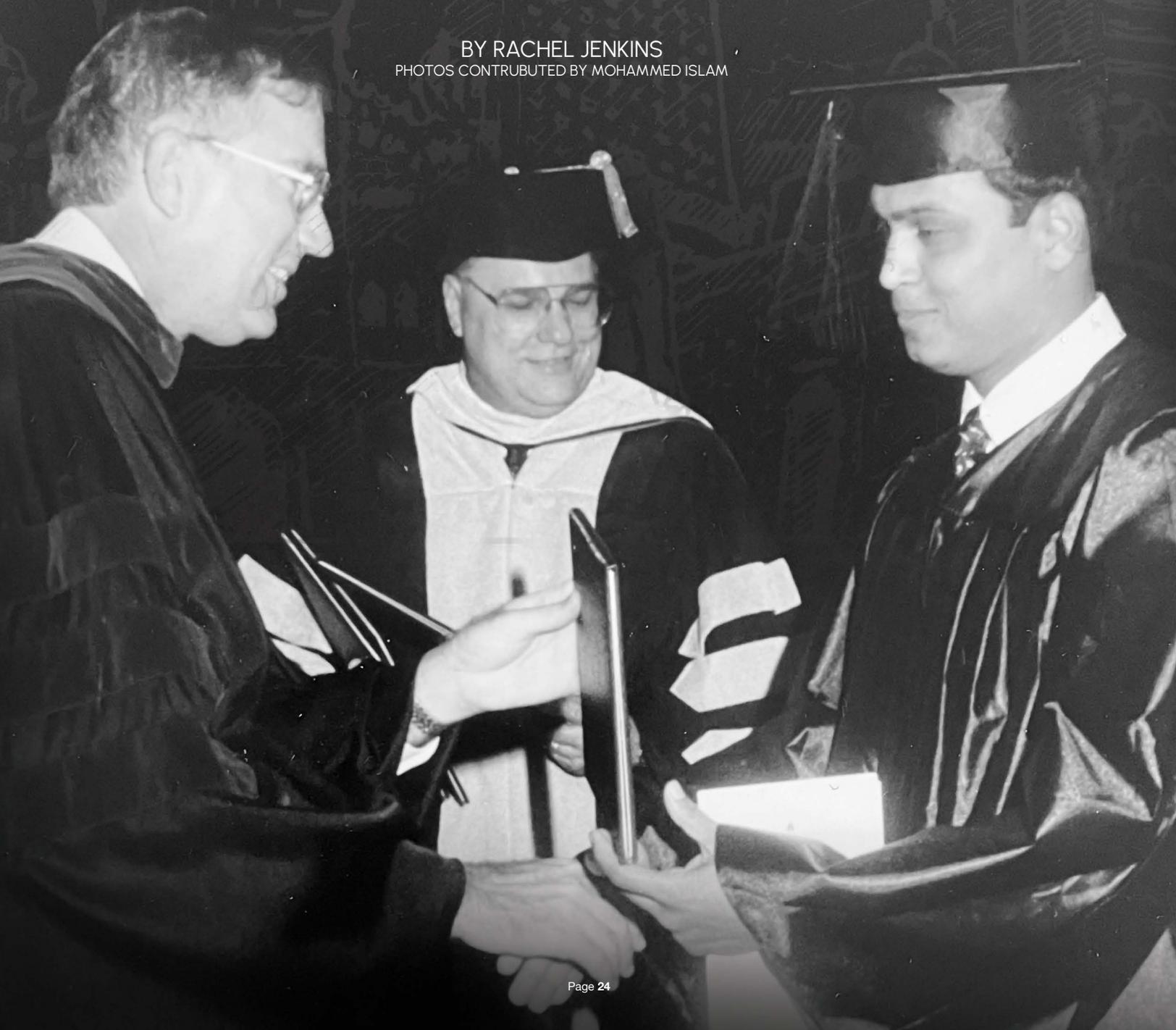
Tebow encouraged the audience to continue helping those in need beyond the evening's dinner. Quoting a story of Mother Theresa, he said, "True love takes true sacrifice and many times true love actually does hurt."



(Left) Pictured left to right are Tara and Dr. Jason Franks, Kathy and Larry Burrow '57, Jay and Lisa Elliott '85, Steve '81 and Julia Whitehead '93, and Tommy and Nicole McWilliams. **(Center)** Pictured are Karli Rabb and Heath Heikes recipients of the Farmers Bank & Trust /Dr. Bob Burns Distinguished Speaker Scholarship. **(Right)** Pictured left to right are Leslie and Thomas Boyd, Patrick '15 and Sarah Dodd '11, Kory and Jessica Martin '06, Barbie Bailey, Marquita Harden-Jones, Tracy Jones, and David Bailey.

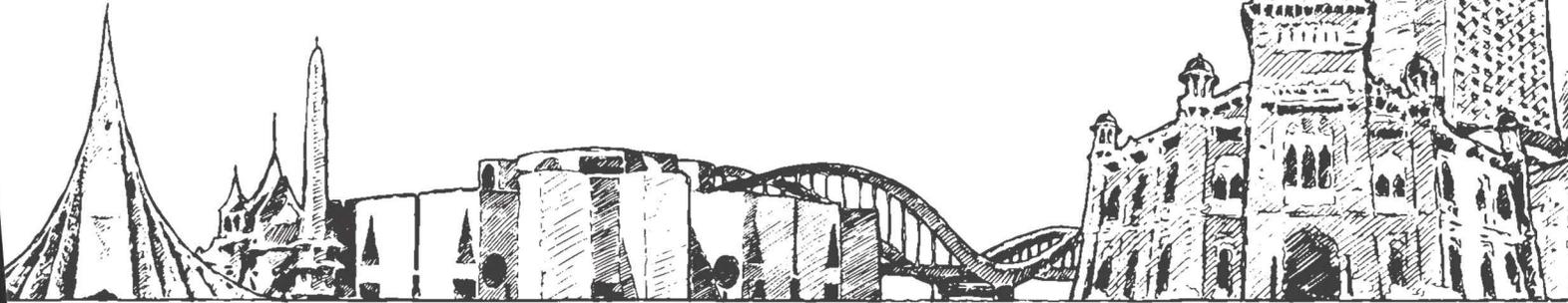
The Journey and Generosity of
MOHAMMED
— ISLAM —

BY RACHEL JENKINS
PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED BY MOHAMMED ISLAM



“ My immersion into U.S. culture was accelerated because I was at SAU. If I look back, it was at SAU where I got that grit because I was accepted as who I am. Not only at the school, but throughout the city. ”

Mohammed Islam '95



Mohammed Islam is a senior manager at PepsiCo with over 25 years of global experience in the consumer goods industry. Holding numerous positions with increasing responsibility across supply chain, logistics, finance, and field and global operations, Islam has also played an integral role in Frito-Lay's Manufacturing Center of Excellence team. When he isn't improving processes and profits, Islam can be found giving back. Whether he is providing finance and tax advice to low-income families through the IRS's VITA program, mentoring students, or establishing a scholarship endowment, Islam is always looking for ways to pay it forward.

Islam grew up in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Raised in a middle-class, single-parent household, his search for the perfect U.S. college included not only exceptional quality but also affordability.

“SAU provides an affordable choice for a great education that's nestled within a great community,” he said.

While Islam was the first person in his family to attend a U.S. college, he didn't travel alone. Three of his friends were also accepted to SAU and traveled from one of the most densely populated cities in the world to Magnolia, AR.

“It was transformational for me as a young international student,” Islam said. “My immersion into U.S. culture was accelerated because I was at SAU. If I look back, it was at SAU where I got that grit because I was accepted as who I am. Not only at

the school, but throughout the city.”

Islam credits exceptional faculty, such as Mr. Louis Blanchard, Dr. David Rankin and Dr. Kathleen Mallory, for helping him build skills that sharpened him professionally. Though he loved his classes and campus life, Islam was determined to graduate early. He worked multiple jobs, including on-campus positions supporting his peers as a tutor and a supplemental instruction leader. He succeeded in 1995, obtaining his B.S. in Accounting in 3.5 years.

Since his graduation, Islam earned an MBA from the University of North Texas and began giving back to SAU. Not only has he mentored students through the Rankin College of Business Backpack to Briefcase program, but he also serves on the Business Advisory Council and the Foundation Board of Governors. Additionally, he and his wife Farhana Islam are in the process of funding the Islam Family College of Business Scholarship Endowment.

While Islam and his wife feel strongly about supporting students financially, he also noted

that there are many ways for alumni to give back that don't cost a dime.

“Students are looking for mentors. I've done that for a lot of students, and it's very fulfilling to watch them graduate and get a job and change their resumes. I would encourage people to do that.”

If you are interested in opportunities to become more engaged with SAU, visit www.salumni.com or contact the Alumni Association at 870-235-4079.



New Benefits for the

SAU

ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

Exciting advancements are happening in the Southern Arkansas University Alumni Association, Inc. (SAUAA). Over the past year, the SAUAA Board of Directors collaborated with alumni to develop and launch new membership benefits for the Alumni Association. Memberships will be effective January 1 through December 31 and are determined by the previous calendar year's giving or lifetime giving to any area(s) of the University. Membership levels are updated annually in January.

For more information, visit www.saualumni.com/membership, email haleybell@saumag.edu, or call the Office of Alumni Relations at (870) 235- 4094.

SAU Alumni Association Membership

www.saualumni.com/membership

- Memberships will be effective January 1 through December 31.
- Membership levels are determined by the previous calendar year's giving or lifetime giving to any area(s) of the University.
- Membership levels are updated annually in January.
- New members receive immediate benefits at time of gift.

SAUAA New Benefits

- Hotel Discounts in El Dorado, AR
- Special Mulegating Spots for Alumni
- SPUR program - to learn more, please see the back cover of *The Stater*
- Speaking Opportunities - to learn more, visit www.saualumni.com/speak



**SAU Alumni Association
Board of Directors:**

Ledly Jennings '12 (Chair)

Little Rock, AR

Justin Morris '08 (Vice-Chair)

Alexander, AR

Karlene (Coleman) Hooker '78

(Secretary/Treasurer)

Mena, AR

Dr. Valerie (Brown) Arnold '11

Little Rock, AR

Sorronto Aubrey '01

Little Rock, AR

Linda (Harris) Barnes '72

Little Rock, AR

Travis Buchanan '78

Norman, OK

Chelsa (King) Carr '14

Georgetown, TX

Beth (Elliott) Galway '84

Frisco, TX

Alan Garrett '08

Magnolia, AR

Dr. John Allen Hendricks '92

Nacogdoches, TX

Antonio Hoof '04

Shreveport, LA

Steve Joplin '95

Rogers, AR

Dr. Genese Lavalais '04

Hampton, VA

Dr. Elizabeth Myrick '10

Hot Springs, AR

Deborah (Wylie) Nipper '75

Magnolia, AR

Parker Ribble '21

Texarkana, TX

Norma (Aranda) Smith '16

Magnolia, AR

Hilton Stewart '62

Magnolia, AR

Roxane Stewart '85

Magnolia, AR

Dr. Jerry Thomas '93 '97

Camden, AR

Alumni

EVENTS

Mulerider Mentor Hour

October 17, 2023 - The SAU Alumni Association partnered with the SAU Career Services to host the first Mentor Networking Hour. During this event, current Muleriders were able to connect with local business leaders to make connections and build interpersonal communication skills.



Photo by Morgan Brazzel

Muleriders were given the opportunity to update their professional headshot.



Photo by Morgan Brazzel

Business leaders from numerous businesses in the community came out to build connections with Muleriders.

Albemarle Alumni Event

November 8, 2023 - Albemarle Mulerider Alumni gathered for lunch at The Smokin' Bull in Emerson, AR, and enjoyed lunch while hearing a University update from Josh Kee, vice president for advancement.



Photo by Morgan Brazzel

David '14 '17 and Haley Bell '13



Photo by Morgan Brazzel

Albemarle employees enjoying lunch.

1970- 1979



Al Flanigan '72 was announced as a 2024 Arkansas Sports Hall of Fame inductee.



Benny Harris '77 was honored with the dedication of the Bradley High School gymnasium in his name.

1980-1989



Bruce Maloch '80 was appointed to the Jurisprudence and Law Reform Committee of the Arkansas Bar Association.



Marcus McDonald '81 was inducted into the NATAS Mid-America EMMY Chapter Silver Circle. He is the KATV chief photojournalist in Little Rock.

Gaye Bradshaw Manning '84 received the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Arkansas Association of College and University Business Officers (AACUBO).



Anwar Karim '87 was appointed as the vice president of information technology at the American College of Financial Services.

1990-1999



Jeffrey Bissell '90 celebrated his 25th anniversary as operations manager at Vision HR, Inc., a human resources/ payroll outsourcing company located in Daytona Beach, Fl. Jeff is certified by the American Payroll Association, the Human Resources Certification Institute, and the Society for Human Resource Management.



Jenny Sanders '99 began serving as the vice president of student services at South Arkansas Community College.

2000-2009



Jamie Pogue '00 entered his second year as an assistant major league coach/bullpen coach and his 13th season with the St. Louis Cardinals.



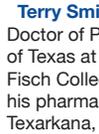
Ellie Baker '02 was named the 2023 Arkansas Outstanding Economic Developer of the Year.



Chris Coble '02 started a new position as the curriculum analyst, project one at the University of Arkansas System.



Matt Hubbard '02 became the new missions and executive pastor of First Baptist Church in Benton, AR.



Terry Smith '02 graduated with his Doctor of Pharmacy from the University of Texas at Tyler Ben and Maytee Fisch College of Pharmacy. He began his pharmacy residency program in Texarkana, TX.



Nic Dougan '03 was promoted to CFO at First Financial Bank.



Ryan Phillips '03 was appointed as district judge for the 39th Judicial District.



Erica Clayton Brown '04 '18 was promoted to director of TRIO Educational Talent Search and associate director of TRIO programs at Ouachita Baptist University.



Tony Hartsfield '04 accepted the position of Lafayette County High School principal beginning the 2023-2024 school year.



Caleb Plyler '04 was appointed to the Cattlemen's Beef Promotion and Research Board.



Jessica Barr '05 celebrated 15 years of owning her daycare/ preschool center.



Todd Foreman '05 started a new position as SIOF director, central division at CMC.



Candi Bailey '06 '12 started a new position as a benefits advisor at Aflac.



Tyronza Bibby '06 '09 '17 became the concurrent campus principal at Virtual Arkansas.



Greg Edwards '06 started a new position as a working capital strategist at Asure Software.



Brigitte Haney '06 became the mentoring program specialist at the South Central Educational Cooperative.



Jessica Lawson '06 was appointed as the director of pharmacy of the Arkansas market at CareSource PASSE.



Haley Burrow '08 '12 began a new role as a customer service executive at Cisco.



Whitney Hall '08 '10 became the associate director of development – major gifts for the SAU Advancement team.



Carol Petit House '08 was featured in the *Four States Living Magazine Fabulous 40 & Under*. She is a practice manager at Christus Trinity Clinic Surgery Associates.



Daniel Clark '09 became the director of choral activities for the Smackover-Norphlet School District.



Cedrick Powell '09 was promoted to the rank of master sergeant in the U.S. Air Force. He also received his master's degree in human relations from the University of Oklahoma.

2010-2019



Juanita Harris '10 '13 was featured in the *Four States Living Magazine Fabulous 40 & Under*. She is a teacher at Harmony Leadership Academy and is the founder and CEO of Teachers Support Teachers.



Jeremy Langley '10 earned his Doctor of Ministry from Liberty University.



Leslie Sharp '10 was featured in *Banner News*, detailing her banking career and volunteer efforts within the Magnolia community.



Staci Stafford '10 '11 became the special education director and 504 coordinator at Smackover-Norphlet School District.



William Harris '12 was featured in the *Four States Living Magazine Fabulous 40 & Under*. He is the principal at Red Lick Middle School and serves on the Leadership Texarkana board of directors.



Ledly Jennings '12 was appointed to the Jurisprudence and Law Reform Committee of the Arkansas Bar Association.



Carley Morrison '12 was promoted to associate professor with tenure in the School of Human Sciences at Mississippi State University.



Kashandra Murphy '12 was named the 2023 Texarkana Arkansas School District Teacher of the Year. She is the 5th-grade literacy teacher at Harmony Leadership Academy.



Tyler Watson '13 joined Steve Kincaid to establish the CPA firm Watson & Kincaid, PLLC in Magnolia.



Cody Burkhram '14 started a new position as the district director for Congressman Bruce Westerman (AR-04) at the US Congress.



Emily Markle '14 was featured in the *Four States Living Magazine Fabulous 40 & Under*. She is a dentist at Lippian Family Dentistry in Texarkana.



Haleigh Alexander '15 was featured in the *Four States Living Magazine Fabulous 40 & Under*. She was on the SAU rodeo team as a barrel racer and works at HealthCARE Express in Texarkana.



Lindsey Baker '15 passed the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing.



Everett Green '15 '20 became the head football and basketball coach at Keithville Elementary/ Middle School in Caddo Parish.

Rachel Joe '15 was promoted to director of public relations and communications at SAU Tech.



Janae Capshaw '16 became the assistant principal at Leadersip Academy at Forest Oak Middle School.



Trevel Young '16 was promoted to associate procurement at Tyson Foods.



Cameron Bradshaw Leach '17 graduated from Arkansas State University with her Master of Science in nursing. She is currently working at Washington Regional as a registered nurse.



Victoria Young '17 received the Certified Exit Planning Advisor (CEPA) designation through the Exit Planning Institute. She is a financial advisor at Edward Jones.



Amanda Chewning '18 '21 became the career and professional development coordinator at Texas A&M University-Central Texas.



Colby Geisson '18 started a new position as a distributor sales representative at Ben E. Keith Company.

Robert Sann '18 graduated from Interamerican University School of Optometry with his Doctor of Optometry. He also accepted a residency position in ocular disease in Manchester, NH.



Tajjee Bunch '19 '23 began his new journey to earn his Master of Fine Arts in Performance and a certificate in African American Theatre from the University of Louisville,

the first and only theatre program in the country with an African American Theatre Program.



Jonna Biggs Lawyer '19 became the head volleyball coach at Pea Ridge School District.



2020-2023

Ali Brumley '20 '21 became an accountant at Snap-On Equipment in Conway, AR.



Chelsea Cook '20 became a farm bill wildlife biologist with Pheasants and Quails Forever. She will be helping landowners in NE Louisiana manage their land.



Erica Fuller '20 started a new position as a forensic chemist for the Arkansas State Crime Lab.



Blair Lloyd '20 joined the Heritage Home Health & Hospice Team as a hospice registered nurse.



Je'Len Berry '21 '23 received his master's in business leadership from SAU.



De'Andre Burton '21 started a new position as a financial examiner at the Texas Department of Insurance.



Justice Glenn '21 became a math and science teacher at Lafayette County Elementary School.



Joanna Graham '21 became the capital finance team lead at Raytheon.



Macey Harp '21 '22 joined the Texas Department of Transportation as a planner in Atlanta, TX.



Malik McBride '21 started a new position as assistant dean for multicultural student services at Arkansas Tech.



Kayla Ratcliff '21 became commercial lines account manager with Offenhauser & Co. Insurance.



Chloe Riddley '21 was inducted into the Phi Alpha Delta Law Fraternity.



Tamija Robertson '21 started a new position as an operations support specialist at ATI Physical Therapy.



Chelsea Smith '21 started a new position as a mental health professional at Creative Counseling, LLC.



Hannah Wilson '21 graduated with a master's degree in Agricultural and Applied Economics at the University of Wyoming. She accepted a position as an assistant lecturer in the same department.



Elexys Gilbert '22 started her second year of veterinary school at LSU.



Macy Lamkin '22 started a new position as an agricultural teacher at Magnolia High School.



Kaitlyn Lancaster '22 graduated from UAMS with a degree in medical laboratory sciences. She accepted a position in the lab at the Magnolia Regional Medical Center.



Daizia Lee '22 started a new position as the health educator in the University of Arkansas Medical Sciences stroke program.

Eidisel Padron '22 became a registered nurse at Arkansas Children's Hospital.



Niya Box '23 became a manufacturing engineer for Armtec Defense Technologies in Camden.



Garrett Clark '23 was promoted to general manager at Club Pilates.



Drake Givens '23 is the agriculture teacher at Blevins High School.



Victor Gordon '23 joined the audit staff at Frost, PLLC.



Shelby Lemley '23 accepted a position as a neonatal assessment nurse in the Well Baby Nursery at Christus St. Michael.

Weddings



Ivan and Molly (Scriber) Buenrostro '22 were married on November 4, 2023.



Hayden '22 and Alexis (Kennedy) Fanning '23 were married on May 22, 2023.



Jason '20 and Blair (McMahan) Lloyd '20 were married on June 3, 2023.



Trevor '22 and Bailey (Reed) Matheson '22 were married on November 4, 2023.



Jordan and Kaitlyn (Reiner) McGinley '17 were married on June 16, 2023.



Jason '02 and Jennifer (New) Porter were married on June 24, 2023.

Little Muleriders®



Warren '18 and Sarah (Moore) Gerral '18 announce the birth of their daughter, Delaney Kate Gerral, born on August 3, 2023. She weighed 7 lbs. 8 oz. and was 19 ½ inches long.



Zane '17 and Chelsea (Melton) Harger '17 announce the birth of their daughter, Addisyn Perry Harger, born on August 31, 2023. She weighed 8 lbs. 8 oz. and was 21 ¼ inches long.



Lane '17 and Kelsey (Key) Hughes '17 announce the birth of their daughter, Halle Kay Hughes, born on June 9, 2023. She weighed 7 lbs. 5 oz. and was 20 ½ inches long.



Cameron '16 and Tristen (Guerrero) Imler '16 announce the birth of their daughter, Emmy Lou Imler, born on April 21, 2023. She weighed 5 lbs and was 17 inches long.



Chase '19 and Lauren (Riemar) Morgan '11 announce the birth of their son, Cohen Zeland Morgan, born on August 22, 2023. He weighed 6 lbs. 14 oz. and was 20 1/4 inches long.



Mason '16 and Jessica (Arnold) Powers '15 announce the birth of their son, Deacon Reid Powers, born on April 25, 2023. He weighed 7 lbs. 8 oz. and was 21 inches long.



Coe '16 and Caleigh (Moyer) Watlington '17 '19 announce the birth of their daughter, Collins Elaine Watlington, born on July 12, 2024. She weighed 7 lbs. 3 oz. and was 19 1/4 inches long.



Michael '14 and Marissa (Aranda) Youngblood '14 announce the birth of their daughter, Merritt Javier Youngblood, born on April 8, 2023. She weighed 7 lbs. 9 oz. and was 20 1/2 inches long.

In Memory of

1940-1949

Alvarene Peace '40
January 4, 2024

Dorothy Adell Evans '47
August 27, 2023

Kenneth Ross Crain '48
November 18, 2023

1950-1959

Charles Carl Adams '51
October 7, 2023

Ella Dee Garrett '54
September 22, 2023

Cora Sue Triplett '54
August 19, 2023

James Roy Peachey '55
June 14, 2023

Betty J. Roberts '55
August 5, 2023

Richard "Jack" Barnes '56
May 20, 2023

Bonnie Arrington Henderson '56
October 10, 2023

Thomas Oren Howell '56
July 11, 2023

Comrade W. Knauts '56
January 23, 2023

George W. Branch, Jr. '57
July 20, 2023

James Wilf '58
October 19, 2023

1960-1969

Roy Gene Forester '63
September 2, 2023

Nancy Gale Langley '63
August 11, 2023

Bynam Alonzo DeWoody '66
August 30, 2023

Horace Green '66
October 26, 2023

Charles "Chuck" Beggs '67
October 10, 2023

Ronald "Ron" Lee Oliver '68
October 11, 2023

Charles Marion Camp '69
August 5, 2023

Mary Jane Speer '69
June 8, 2023

1970-1979

Charles L Daniels '70
July 9, 2023

Kenneth Wayne Eddy '70
November 23, 2023

Richard Britt '72
November 27, 2023

Donna Gaston '76
June 11, 2023

1980-1989

James Paul Brewer '80
July 10, 2023

Ronnie D. Coker '87
June 5, 2023

Gregory Allen Sled '88
December 17, 2023

1990-1999

Diane Sweeney '94
February 5, 2023

Jay Trawick '96
May 8, 2023

2000-2009

Guy Martial Njewel Ndega '06
July 28, 2023

2010-2019

Jeffery "JT" Franklin Teague II '16
August 18, 2023

**Staff, Faculty,
Students & Friends**

Sunny Evans
October 13, 2023

Charles Eugene Tadlock
August 14, 2023

Peggy Walters
August 25, 2023

Lula Mae "Lu" Waters
December 25, 2023

Dee Webb
August 30, 2023



Denise Sweat '00
McCaskill, AR



Chris Walker '91
McKinney, TX



Ethan White '17
Glenwood, AR



Gregg Harrison '08
El Dorado, AR



Mohammed Isam '95
Sugar Land, TX



Ken Carroll '80
Fayetteville, AR



Mike Dumas '79
Houston, TX

SAU BOARD PROFILE



The SAU Foundation welcomed seven new Board of Governors at their annual meeting in August, increasing the total membership of the board to twenty-five members. These experienced leaders dedicate their time and talents to secure a strong future for SAU. The Board of Governors come from a variety of backgrounds, with one common thread: sincere dedication to the success of SAU. Members meet quarterly and are led by four officers and six committees, which include Audit, Donor Relations, Governance, Investment, Membership, and Scholarship.

SAUF Mission

Southern Arkansas University Foundation inspires and stewards philanthropic gifts that unite donor passions with University priorities to elevate excellence and achievement of all Muleriders.

SAUF Vision

Prepared, resourceful, and trusted, the Foundation enhances the future of SAUF and all Muleriders.

SAUF Core Values:

Excellence | Integrity | Transparent | Collaborative | Innovative

DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI AWARDS DINNER

MAY 9, 2024

Reynolds Center, Grand Hall
6:30 p.m.

Distinguished Young Alumni Award



**Tyler
Brown**
2012



**Shelby
Blair**
2014

Distinguished Alumni Award



**Rickey L.
Jasper**
1984



**Dr. Bob
Martin**
1985

Distinguished Golden Mulerider Award



**Victoria
Williams**
2003



**Robert
Buckmaster**
1966

Lifetime Achievement Award



**James Paul
Brewer**
1980



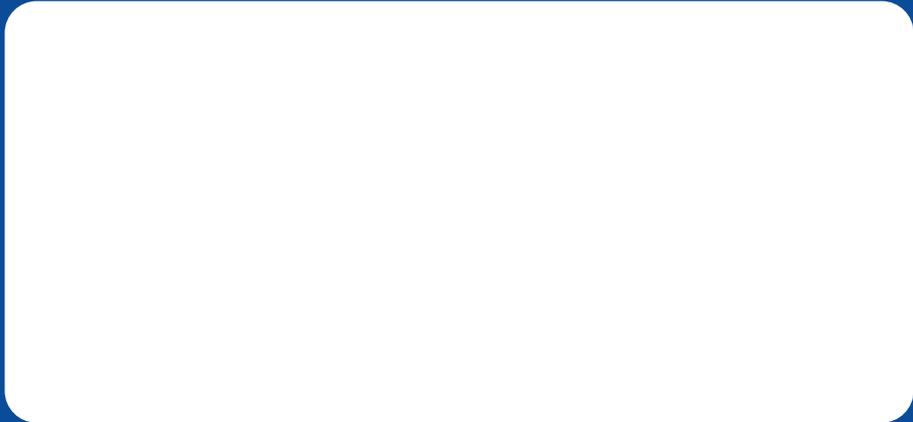
For ticket information, visit
www.sau alumni.com/alumnidinner.



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SAU Alumni Promotional Undergraduate Referral Program

Effective Fall 2024, the SAU Alumni Association is launching the SPUR Program. This new alumni connections benefit allows SAU alumni to help reduce the cost of attendance for one new out-of-state undergraduate student. Alumni can request one waiver code per household, provide the code to one incoming out-of-state-student, and the out-of-state portion of tuition will be waived for the student for up to 8 fall/spring semesters, or until a bachelor's degree is complete. For more information, visit www.saualumni.com/waiver.

