

The Southern Arkansas University STATER

SPRING 2025



nextstep
GUARANTEE

PAGES 2-3

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Spring greetings to Southern Arkansas University’s alums, donors, and friends! Linda and I continue to be inspired by the dedication of our faculty, staff, and the incredible support from Magnolia and beyond. We are proud to share that SAU has been recognized by NICHE as the Best Small Public Comprehensive University in Arkansas—a testament to our entire community’s hard work.

Exciting things are happening at SAU! As we prepare to welcome our class of 2029 in the fall of 2025, we are thrilled to introduce two groundbreaking programs that exemplify the strong return on investment of an SAU education: the SAU Difference and the Mulerider Next Step Guarantee. These two pioneering initiatives, unique to SAU, are designed to ensure affordability, ignite passion, and empower students from their very first day through graduation as they embark on their journey to professional success. We believe SAU must be committed to student success in the classroom and their next step – their career or graduate studies.

The SAU Difference is a last-dollar gap scholarship covering tuition and fees for Pell-eligible students who receive the Arkansas Challenge Scholarship. This program helps eliminate financial barriers so students can focus on their studies.

The Mulerider Next Step Guarantee is a career readiness program that integrates skill development, academics, and internships to ensure students are job- or grad-school-ready within six months of graduation. If not, SAU will cover the tuition and fees for up to nine additional credit hours. This one-of-a-kind initiative in Arkansas reinforces our commitment to student success.

We would love to welcome you back to campus to see our progress! This spring, we celebrate a significant milestone—graduating our first class of Doctoral students in Rural Educational Leadership. Additionally, we have virtual alumni meetups planned and invite you to join us. Your support is more valuable than ever as we continue shaping SAU’s future.

Thank you for being part of the SAU legacy!

Bruno Hicks

Dr. Bruno Hicks
President

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.

Submissions: Please send any story ideas and/or photographs to stater@saumag.edu.

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Scan the QR code to view the SAU events calendar.



Ashley Vickers
Resident Physician

NEW YORK INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
College of Osteopathic Medicine
at Arkansas State University

Ashley Vickers '19 took the next step after earning her Bachelor of Science in Nursing from SAU and is set to graduate in May from the New York Institute of Technology College of Osteopathic Medicine at Arkansas State University.

// Photo by **Thomas Turner**

nextstep GUARANTEE

"The Mulerider Next Step Guarantee reinforces our belief that an SAU degree opens doors to achieving professional dreams."

Dr. Bruno Hicks / SAU President

SAU'S COMMITMENT TO CAREER SUCCESS

Southern Arkansas University is proud to introduce the Mulerider Next Step Guarantee program, launching with the freshman class of 2025. This groundbreaking initiative underscores SAU's dedication to preparing students for professional success after graduation. The program is unique in Arkansas, offering a bold promise: graduates who meet program requirements will secure a full-time job in their field or gain admission to graduate or professional school within six months of graduation.

EMPOWERING STUDENTS FOR THE FUTURE

The Mulerider Next Step Guarantee is more than a promise; it's a comprehensive approach to career readiness. From their first day on campus, students participate in workshops, internships, and personalized career coaching designed to build their skills and experiences to excel. The program ensures students are fully equipped to navigate the modern job market or pursue advanced education by focusing on essential competencies such as communication, teamwork, and critical thinking.

SUPPORT BEYOND GRADUATION

The program doesn't stop at graduation. If eligible students don't achieve their career goals within six months, SAU steps in with additional resources to enhance their readiness. Options include tuition-free enrollment in up to nine additional undergraduate credit hours or a combination of six credits and a paid internship. These measures provide practical experience and targeted skill development to help graduates succeed.

BUILT ON A STRONG FOUNDATION

The Mulerider Next Step Guarantee builds on the robust support SAU Career Services provides. With a proven track record of guiding students toward successful careers, Career Services is central to implementing this initiative. Anne Sands, director of Career Services, emphasized the program's impact: "This initiative is a powerful message to our students, parents, and community that we are dedicated to their success. I'm thrilled that more students will take advantage of our incredible resources." By combining education with actionable career strategies, SAU sets a new standard for student support and post-graduation success.



Scan the QR code for additional information on the Next Step Guarantee.

Around CAMPUS

From exciting traditions to spirited competitions, SAU is always alive with energy and community. Whether celebrating milestones, cheering on teams, or coming together for unforgettable events, Muleriders make every moment count.



MULERIDER MADNESS

SAU kicked off basketball season with Mulerider Madness, a night of high-energy competitions and school spirit. Student organizations battled for prizes and the coveted Spirit Award, setting the stage for an exciting season ahead.



GREEK FEST

Students gathered at the Alumni Center for Greek Fest, a night of live music, great food, and friendly competition. Greeks and non-Greeks came together to celebrate community, tradition, and school spirit.



FALL FRESHMAN GROUP PHOTO

SAU's newest Muleriders came together on the football field to form "SAU", marking the start of their college journey.



RODEO

The Fall 2024 Intercollegiate Rodeo brought excitement and skill to Story Arena as top rodeo athletes competed in thrilling events.



FALL JAZZ CONCERT

SAU's talented musicians took the stage for the Fall Jazz Concert, filling the venue with smooth melodies and vibrant rhythms.



HOMECOMING KING AND QUEEN

Congratulations to Oreoluwa Onifade and Madison Johnson, SAU's 2025 Homecoming King and Queen!



BIG MONEY BINGO

Students packed the mall area for this year's Big Money Bingo, one of SAU's most anticipated events. With exciting prizes on the line, the competition was fierce, and the energy was high as winners claimed their rewards.



SORORITY BID DAY

Excitement filled the air as students gathered to witness Sorority Bid Day, where new members found their Greek life home. Cheers, hugs, and happy tears marked the start of lifelong sisterhoods.



MULERIDER ROUND-UP

Freshmen kicked off their SAU journey at Mulerider Round-Up, a fun-filled event where they met new friends, connected with campus resources, and prepared for their first day of classes.



SENIOR DINNER

Graduating seniors came together for Senior Dinner, hosted by Graduate Studies and the SAU Alumni Association. With a shared meal, exciting prizes, and reflections on their journey, students marked the beginning of their next chapter.



SAU Achieves National Recognition for Excellence

"These rankings are a testament to the hard work of our faculty, staff, and students. We are proud to foster an environment where students grow academically, socially, and personally."

Dr. Bruno Hicks / SAU President

Southern Arkansas University has earned national acclaim, ranking as the #1 Best Small Public College in Arkansas and the #2 Top Public University in the state according to *Niche*. These honors reflect SAU's dedication to academic excellence, affordability, and creating a transformative student experience.

Niche's rankings are determined through an in-depth analysis of data from the U.S. Department of Education, the National Science Foundation, and student surveys. SAU's recognition as a top institution highlights its strong academic programs, vibrant campus life, and focus on personalized student support.

With these prestigious rankings placing SAU in the top 10% of nearly 1,000 small public colleges nationwide, alumni can take pride in their alma mater's growing reputation and enduring commitment to student success. SAU continues to stand out as a University where students and graduates are equipped to thrive in their careers and communities.

The Benches at **BERGER CIRCLE**

The Benches at Berger Circle honor Eric "Berger" Engelberger, whose vibrant spirit and dedication to others left a lasting legacy at SAU. This space invites students to connect, laugh, and enjoy the kind of camaraderie Eric cherished.





// Photo by Thomas Turner

Career Services offers free support to students, alumni, and employers, helping individuals build career readiness skills and navigate their job search.

From College to Career

BY MARK TROUT

It's not often a student graduates from college and lands the "dream job." However, that's exactly what happened to Brenna Warrick.

Warrick walked across the stage in December 2024 with a BBA in Marketing, and kept right on walking into her first job with Merck Pharmaceuticals in January of 2025. It wasn't luck that helped her earn that first job. Instead, it was her hard work along with some help from the Career Services at SAU.

"They put me in contact with the right people at the right time," said Warrick, who started as a Chronic Care Sales Representative out of Tulsa, Okla., for Merck Pharmaceuticals. She is currently visiting clinics and hospitals about a drug that helps patients with worsening chronic heart failure.

"I learned early on in my college career that no one was going to advocate for me," said Warrick, who began learning all she could from Career

Services after helping with an Etiquette Dinner during her freshman year. "I knew I had to be willing to ask for help."

The Etiquette Dinner is just one of the opportunities offered by Career Services, which is located in the Bruce Center on the SAU campus. Other events include career fairs in the fall and spring, guidance with writing resumes and cover letters, mock interviews, and the Mentorship Program, called AIM – Alumni Inspiring Muleriders. The program, which started in the fall of 2023, matches students and recent graduates with SAU alumni in the same career field. It is open to current students as well as those who graduated within the previous five years.

"The response from students has been great," said Anne Sands, director of Career Services. The program currently has 21 alumni serving as mentors to students and recent graduates.

Warrick, a 2021 graduate of Emerson High School, took advantage

of AIM, and that helped her on her current career path. She was matched with Melinda Henry, a 2001 graduate of SAU and associate director of sales at Merck. Henry is no longer just Warrick's mentor, she is also Warrick's boss.

"The mentorship program is a valuable experience for our students," said Sands. "It allows them to see someone who was where they are now."

Another valuable resource offered to students is the Career Closet, which provides professional attire for students interviewing for jobs and internships. Students can choose two full outfits per year at no cost. The Career Closet is 100 percent donor-based, and both alumni and members of the community are encouraged to donate.

Career Services helps students not only land jobs, but also helps them learn about and apply for internships in their career field.

Kaylie Tipton, who graduated in December with degrees in Computer

Science – Gaming Science and in art with Game Animation and Design, took advantage of the internship opportunity. She applied for an internship with Murphy USA for the summer of 2023. After failing to land that job, Tipton visited Sands at the Career Services office.

“I did a lot of mock interviews. I think that helped me get the internship,” said Tipton, a 2019 graduate of Arkansas High in Texarkana. After receiving help with interviews and her resume, she again applied for and received that same internship. That summer and fall part time job with Murphy USA has now turned into her first full time job with the company.

She only wishes she had started using Career Services sooner. As part of a recent class, she was asked is she could go back in time, what would she tell herself as a freshman.

“I said I would tell myself about Career Services and the Career Closet,” said Tipton.

“SAU does everything they can to prepare you for your career...”

Brenna Warrick / 2024 SAU Graduate

Career Services is always looking for new ways to help SAU students. However, the programs there are also available to anyone who graduated from SAU.

“Everything we do for students is available to alumni. It doesn’t matter if you graduated last year or 10 years ago,” said Sands.

Warrick encourages others to follow her path and utilize the opportunities offered through Career Services and other programs at SAU.

“There are people there who can help you. SAU does everything they can to prepare you for your career,” said Warrick, who is now enjoying the career she always dreamed of.

Brenna Warrick '24

// Photo by Thomas Turner



REDEFINING HER FUTURE:

Rhiannon Olguin's Journey to the Classroom

BY MARK TROUT

Rhiannon Olguin knew it was time. In 2020, she was balancing family, work, and bills when she realized her strained marriage was heading for divorce. Working in an insurance office in Magnolia, she knew she needed a career change to support herself and her youngest son, Logan. The question was—how?

Olguin knew the best way to increase her earnings was to complete her college degree, but she had to find a way to fit school into her busy life. Facing an uncertain future, she decided to take the plunge and return to college in the spring of 2021.

“Going back to school was always something I knew I would do eventually, but the timing was always the thing,” Olguin said.

A graduate of Camden Harmony Grove, she had started as an education major at SAU Tech in 2007 before switching to nursing. However, after having Logan, she put her education on hold. By 2021, determined to finish her degree despite the challenges of divorce, she enrolled at SAU.

“With the challenge of going through a divorce, there were times when I wasn’t sure I could do this,” she admitted. “But when I set my mind to something, I’m going to accomplish that goal.”

A major difference this time was



// Photo by Thomas Turner

SAU's online program, which allowed Olguin to complete her coursework on her own schedule. SAU's elementary and middle school education programs are fully online, with field experience taken in the classroom.

Dr. Neelie Dobbins, chair of SAU's Teacher Education Program, said the program is designed for working adults and career changers.

"It's our largest program," Dobbins said. "This program allows those in other fields and paraprofessionals to move into a different career."

While online learning gave Olguin flexibility, balancing school, work, and parenting was still challenging.

"When life happened, it could be hard. Work didn't stop just because life was happening," she said. "I had to develop a schedule and stick with it."

When unexpected challenges arose, Olguin relied on her professors for support.

"The professors were very supportive. If I needed anything, they were there for me."

In fall 2022, Olguin completed her student teaching at Eastside Elementary in Magnolia. After graduating that December, she began teaching science at Camden Fairview in spring 2023. Now, she has her own classroom at Central Elementary in Magnolia, teaching reading, writing, and English.

"I love children, and I want to create a safe, learning environment where all my students feel accepted and know they are loved and valued," she said. "In the end, this is where I want to be, and this is where I'm supposed to be."

Olguin is one of many success stories from SAU's education program, Dobbins said.

"One of our biggest strengths is helping students achieve their goals and become what they want to be."

Olguin encourages others to return to school despite doubts or fears.

"Don't let your age or thinking you're not smart enough discourage you," she said. "Going back to school is possible with the support of family, friends, and your professors."

She was named to the President's List each semester at SAU. Her four children—Logan, now in ninth grade in Magnolia; Anna, a Magnolia graduate; Brittany, who lives in Texas; and Jacob, who lives in Camden—are all proud of their mom.

Now, Olguin is ready to give back.

"I feel like my place was to be in the classroom. This is where God wants me to be. I have so much to contribute."

Olguin can now smile at how far she's come. But she saves her biggest smiles for her students, knowing she's making a difference in their lives every day.



SOUTHERN ARKANSAS UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE of EDUCATION
and **HUMAN PERFORMANCE**

The SAU College of Education is committed to preparing skilled, passionate educators ready to make a difference in the classroom and beyond. With a strong emphasis on hands-on learning, research, and leadership development, the college offers a range of programs that equip students with the knowledge and experience needed for success in the ever-evolving field of education. A key highlight this year is the launch of the new Lead Teacher Pathway, designed to provide aspiring educators with a structured route to leadership roles in the classroom. Faculty members continue to impact beyond the University, with Dr. Jennifer Loudon and Dr. Stacey Stanberry presenting their research on the relationship between dyslexia and dyscalculia at SAU's first Faculty Research Colloquium. Additionally, the Educators Rising Club had a productive fall semester, strengthening its presence on campus by participating in the SAU Family Day Organization Fair, designing a banner for Homecoming 2024, and actively recruiting new members. Under the guidance of advisors Dr. LaShonda Ivory and Dr. Megan Quebedeaux, the club continues to inspire and support students pursuing careers in education. The SAU College of Education continues to provide students with valuable opportunities to grow as educators, researchers, and leaders, fostering a dynamic and supportive environment that shapes the future of education both locally and beyond.



SOUTHERN ARKANSAS UNIVERSITY
**DEMPSEY COLLEGE of
LIBERAL and PERFORMING ARTS**

The Dempsey College of Liberal and Performing Arts at Southern Arkansas University continues to make an impact, carrying forward the legacy of excellence that alumni helped build. From media to the performing arts, the college prepares students for success while earning recognition on regional and national stages.

Dr. James E. Reppert, associate professor of mass communication, was recently selected for a prestigious seminar at NBCUniversal in New York City, reflecting the strength of SAU's media programs in keeping pace with an evolving industry. Meanwhile, SAU Theatre's Songs for a New World production earned high praise from Broadway World, demonstrating the caliber of talent cultivated in the performing arts.

As alumni, your support continues to shape the future of Dempsey College, ensuring that today's students have the same transformative experiences that made your time at SAU unforgettable. Whether through mentorship, attending performances, or staying connected, you remain a vital part of this thriving community of thinkers, creators, and innovators.



SAU Student Turns Passion for Design into Thriving Business

BY MARK TROUT

"SAU is a great school for graphic design. The teachers will help you along the way."

Mike Jones

Mike Jones doesn't have to worry about looking for a job after he graduates this spring. He already knows which business he'll be working for – his own.

Jones, a senior graphic design major from Waldo, began Shiner Apparel business in 2022 while still in school at SAU. Located in Waldo, the store offers shirts, jerseys, crew necks, hoodies, jeans, and more. It's Jones who creates all the designs for the clothes.

The dream of becoming an artist began for Jones when he was 12.

"As a kid, I liked to draw," said Jones. "Once I heard about graphic design, I knew what I wanted to do for my career."

The initiative displayed by Jones was one of the first things that stood out to Kurt Coppersmith, chair of the Department of Art and Design at SAU.

"One of the big things about Mike is his drive to succeed," said Coppersmith. "One thing we stress with all our students is getting real world experience. Mike has that. He has definitely excelled since he's been at SAU."

Originally from Delhi, La., Jones and his family moved to Waldo in 2008. Along with his artistic knack, Jones also excelled in sports. He participated in both football and track, and received scholarship offers in both sports at SAU. Jones ran track for the Muleriders until tearing his MCL in his junior year.

Now Jones is focused solely on graduation in May and on his growing business.

"I've always had a thing for fashion. I just love coming up with designs. I try to stay up on current designs and fashion trends," said Jones of his growing business. Shiner Apparel ships clothes around the U.S. and the world. "You get excited when people ask you 'where can I get that,' and 'who made it?' and stuff like that. I love

meeting new people when they come into the store and them being excited."

Nathan Lambert, assistant professor of art and design at SAU, saw Jones' talent early on.

"Mike has a lot of irons in the fire, but you wouldn't know it because he doesn't brag about it," said Lambert. "He started his own company. He's kind of this under-spoken creator.

"Mike has been a great student," added Lambert.

Starting a business can be overwhelming for anyone, but it can be especially difficult while juggling the coursework as a fulltime student. Jones enlisted the help of his parents, Mike, Sr. and Kei.

"There's a lot more to it than just waking up, designing shirts, and selling them," said Jones. "My parents helped me a lot. I go over ideas with them."

Following graduation, Jones hopes to expand his business to five-to-ten stores in the Ark-La-Tex area, including a store in Magnolia, and he also hopes to add a warehouse.

Currently, customers can shop either in the store located in Waldo or online at www.shinerapparel.com.

Jones combined his natural talent for design with hours of hard work over the years, and he also credits his SAU teachers for helping him succeed in the field. Jones said the professors at SAU helped him learn and improve his craft over his four years in college.

"I've had a lot of wonderful professors who have really taught me a lot," said Jones, who would recommend SAU to anyone considering a career in art or graphic design.

"SAU is a great school for graphic design. The teachers will help you along the way."

Mike has not only impressed those around him during his college career, he has already created his job for the future.

Grant Provides Unique Research Opportunity for Two SAU Students



// Photo by Thomas Turner

Ranessa Ricker, a sophomore biology major, and Lynn Enzor, a senior public health major.

"It's a great opportunity for these two students to learn about research. They'll also be working with some graduate students, so they'll get an idea of what graduate school will be like."

Dr. Daniel McDermott / Associate Professor of Biology

BY MARK TROUT

Two students in the College of Science at SAU will gain career experience as the result of a grant extension of \$500,000.

The two students are Lynn Enzor, a senior public health major, and Ranessa Ricker, a sophomore biology major.

The extension builds on the previous \$1 million dollar grant for the "Building a Diverse Workforce to Advance Health Equity." Through this extension, SAU will partner with the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences and the University of Arkansas to conduct a comprehensive population health survey of 3,000 adults residing in 17 counties in southwest Arkansas. The survey is designed to provide a detailed picture of the social determinants of health disparities.

The two SAU students will be working with Dr. Micheal Nino at University of Arkansas to administer the survey and analyze the results from the survey. This will provide the students with hands-on experience carrying out Public Health research, while also contributing towards an important project that provides vital health information in our community.

Enzor earned her B.A. in English from SAU in 1998. She is now back at SAU in pursuit of her degree in Public Health. She hopes working on the survey team will give her experience in her chosen career field.

"It's going to give me an opportunity to take book learning and apply it to real-life situations," said Enzor. "It was very

flattering to be asked to apply for this and to be chosen for this project."

Dr. Daniel McDermott, associate professor of biology, is one of several members of the faculty in the College of Science who are helping with the project. He said the survey will allow the two SAU students to gain invaluable experience.

"It's a great opportunity for these two students to learn about research," said McDermott. "They'll also be working with some graduate students, so they'll get an idea of what graduate school will be like."

Ricker, a 2023 graduate of Mena High School, is considering attending medical school after she completes her undergraduate degree at SAU. Like

Enzor, Ricker also hopes the experience she gains working on the survey will help her in her career in the medical field.

“Dr. McDermott told me about the survey,” said Ricker. “He told me how the research side would be helpful to me. I thought it would be really fascinating.”

The study team is comprised of twelve donors from five state institutions in Arkansas. The team, which is led by Dr. Michael Nino of the University of Arkansas, has extensive experience in survey design and administration,

public health, and advanced quantitative methods.

This additional half million dollars in grant funding will allow the above project to complete its final data collection, along with fund workforce training activities including shadowing healthcare professionals, while continuing to strengthen partnerships with healthcare providers in the region.

The SAU students, along with other members of the team, will be conducting the survey this spring.



SOUTHERN ARKANSAS UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE of SCIENCE
and ENGINEERING

The College of Science and Engineering at Southern Arkansas University continues to build on its legacy of preparing students for careers in high-demand STEM fields. With engineering, biology, chemistry, physics, and computer science programs, the college blends hands-on learning with cutting-edge research, ensuring graduates are ready to meet the challenges of today's industries.

SAU's commitment to innovation and workforce development recently earned \$2.75 million from the Higher Industry Readiness through Educational Development (HIRED), expanding student opportunities through internships, research, and specialized training. The college is also strengthening industry partnerships, such as a recent collaboration with Albemarle Corporation, which provided a \$100,000 grant for advanced training and equipment in engineering and chemistry. These investments reinforce SAU's dedication to preparing career-ready graduates who make an impact in their fields.

With top-tier facilities, dedicated faculty, and a growing emphasis on real-world experience, the SAU College of Science and Engineering continues to equip students with the knowledge and skills to succeed—just as it has for generations of Mulerider alumni.



SOUTHERN ARKANSAS UNIVERSITY
DAVID F. RANKIN
COLLEGE of BUSINESS

The Rankin College of Business at Southern Arkansas University is dedicated to preparing students for successful careers through high-quality education, hands-on learning, and global experiences. Recently, the college earned reaffirmation of its prestigious AACSB International accreditation, a distinction held by fewer than 6% of business schools worldwide. This recognition underscores RCB's commitment to academic excellence and continuous improvement.

RCB students also excel on the national stage, as demonstrated by their top honors at the National Collegiate FBLA Conference, where they competed against the best business students in the country. Beyond competition success, RCB provides unique opportunities, including international study trips and real-world business partnerships, ensuring graduates are well-equipped for the workforce.

With a faculty dedicated to mentorship and innovation, the Rankin College of Business continues to be a leader in shaping the next generation of business professionals.

Beyond the Classroom

SAU Business Students Expand Their Perspectives Through International Travel

BY MARK TROUT

For many students, commuting to class is routine. However, for some business students at Southern Arkansas University (SAU), one course has taken them halfway around the world.

The Rankin College of Business (RCB) offers International Studies and Field Experience as an alternative to International Business. This unique course has taken students and faculty to Italy, Kenya, and Greece, with upcoming trips planned for Costa Rica and a return to Italy in 2025.

"I think it changed their lives. Many students have never left South Arkansas, and traveling abroad is a life-altering experience for them. Honestly, it changed my life, too."

Dr. Christie Hough / Professor of Management





// Contributed Photo

Dr. Gerald Plumlee, interim dean of RCB, emphasizes the confidence gained through international travel. “We’ve found that international travel helps students build confidence in themselves when navigating the world around them.”

The initiative was spearheaded by Dr. Robin Sronce, former RCB dean and current vice president and provost of academic affairs. Students spend the spring semester preparing for their trip and later present their experiences to various groups upon returning.

Dr. Christie Hough, professor of management, has participated in both RCB trips to Greece, most recently in 2024 with Ronnie Watson, assistant professor of management. She has witnessed firsthand the impact of international exposure on students.

“I think it changed their lives,” said Hough. “Many students have never left South Arkansas, and traveling abroad is a life-altering experience for them. Honestly, it changed my life, too.”

The 2024 Greece trip featured immersive business experiences, including olive oil tasting, winery visits, and meetings with local producers. Students also explored the Hellenikon Project, a “15-minute city” designed for efficiency and sustainability.

“The students were super impressed,” said Hough. “They saw generational businesses and how they are passed down within families.”

Beyond business, cultural experiences were central to the trip. Students visited the Acropolis Museum, the National Archeological Museum, the Temple of Poseidon at Cape Sounion, the Corinth Canal, and the Museum of Ancient Greek Technology.

During her Kenya trip, Katie Tejada, an MBA student, recalls its lasting impact. “It was amazing. We saw the country’s economic contrasts—rich, poor, middle class. It shaped my world lens.” SAU’s volunteer coordinator, Tejada, now appreciates

RCB’s efforts to secure donors to make these trips accessible.

Mr. Brian Logan, assistant professor of economics, traveled to Kenya with his wife, Dr. Jeni Logan, professor of economics, and Dr. Stephen Juma, assistant professor of marketing. He noted the stark cultural contrasts, from cows roaming main roads to businesses operating in unique ways. The trip included visits to a coffee plantation, a bead factory, a Maasai village, and safaris.

Through these experiences, students witness global business operations and connect with the people behind them. “You see that people around the world are not so different,” Hough reflected. “There are differences, but also many similarities.”

RCB’s international trips provide more than just business education—they expand perspectives, build confidence, and create unforgettable experiences that last a lifetime.



Breaking Records, Building Legacy:

Jariq Scales' Mulerider Journey



"My time at SAU was great and filled with amazing, supportive people in every aspect..."

Jariq Scales

// Photo by Thomas Turner

BY JONATHAN BRIGGS

Some athletes leave a mark, but others redefine what is possible. Jariq Scales belongs to the latter. The Osceola, Arkansas, native has cemented his place in Mulerider Football history as one of the greatest ever to wear the blue and gold. Over four seasons, he built a legacy of excellence, shattering records, thrilling fans, and proving that success isn't limited to the gridiron—it also extends to the classroom.

Few players can claim the title of "record-breaker," but for Scales, it's almost an understatement. His name is etched in multiple categories across Mulerider history: all-time leader in rushing yards (4,475), all-purpose yards (5,557), and rushing touchdowns (48). His single-season rushing yards record (1,475) was set in his very first season, setting the stage for a legendary career. While he narrowly missed the record for most rushing yards in a single game (falling just 19 yards short of the 264-yard mark) and career rushing attempts (just 26 carries behind the all-time leader), his impact on the field was undeniable. Every snap, every carry, and every touchdown painted a picture of a player who wasn't just good but exceptional.

From the moment he stepped onto the field as a freshman in 2021, it was clear that Scales was something special. That year, he took home the Great American Conference Freshman of the Year award and earned All-GAC Second Team honors. But that was just the beginning. As a sophomore, he didn't just maintain his success—he elevated it. His 1,043 rushing yards and 12 touchdowns earned him All-GAC First Team honors for the first time. The following season, he outdid himself yet again, improving his rushing total to 1,189 yards, recording a career-high 15 touchdowns, and averaging an impressive 6.39 yards per carry. By the end of the year, he had secured another First Team All-GAC selection and was named the Live United Bowl's Most Valuable Player. His senior season was another testament to his consistency and dominance, with 768 rushing yards and 12 more touchdowns, making him a three-time All-GAC First-Team selection.

Scales wasn't just a star on the field—he was an exemplary student-athlete. In 2022, he earned a spot on the College Sports Communicators Academic All-District team, balancing his athletic achievements with academic excellence. The following year, he raised the bar again, being named to the CSC Academic All-American team, a recognition reserved for the nation's most accomplished student-athletes.

His gratitude is evident as Jariq Scales reflects on his time at SAU. "My time at SAU was great and filled with amazing, supportive people in every aspect," he shares. But his journey is far from over. With his talent, drive, and versatility, he has his sights set on the professional level. "I feel I am one to watch at the professional level because of my versatility and desire to win." One thing is certain: the Mulerider community will be watching, waiting, and cheering for one of their greatest to take the next step.



ATHLETICS

WILSON STATE COLLEGE



// Photo by Jessica Greaves

Athletic Highlights

Fall 2024 Season

Academic Successes

Southern Arkansas University student-athletes excelled both on and off the field in Fall 2024, achieving a department-wide GPA of 3.27—the highest in four semesters. A total of 279 student-athletes recorded a 3.0 or better, with 78 earning perfect 4.0s. Nearly every sport posted a 3.0+ GPA. Fall sports competing in the Great American Conference (GAC), including M/W cross country, volleyball, and football, earned 34 GAC Honor Roll spots. Additionally, three student-athletes—Isla Olivas (Volleyball), Cole Williams (Football), and Bennett Castleberry (Football)—were named GAC Elite Scholar Athletes for maintaining a perfect 4.0 GPA.

Mulerider Football

Under third-year Head Coach Brad Smiley, SAU Football posted back-to-back nine-win seasons (2023: 10-2 | 2024: 9-2) for the first time since joining the NCAA in 1996-97. The team swept all six Oklahoma programs and three of five in-state rivals for the second straight year. SAU dominated GAC postseason honors with 17 All-GAC selections, led by quarterback Judd Barton, who was named GAC Offensive Player of the Year—the first in program history. Barton led the conference in points responsible for (180 | 12th nationally) and ranked among the league's top passers in efficiency (152.2 | 30th nationally), passing yards (2,350 | 25th nationally), and touchdowns (16). He was also a dual-threat, rushing for 589 yards and 13 touchdowns. First Team All-GAC selections included running backs Jariq Scales and Kadyn Roach, offensive lineman Thomas Bowman, and linebacker Colton Grier.

Mulerider Volleyball

In her third year at the helm, Head Coach Alli (O'Banion) Harrell led SAU Volleyball to a 12-12 overall record (6-10 GAC), finishing just three set wins short of back-to-back GAC Tournament appearances. The Muleriders leaned on 10 returning seniors, including 2023 All-GAC honorees Kayte DeLong and Lauryn Moultrie. DeLong earned another All-GAC Honorable Mention alongside

newcomer libero Sadie Kabisch, who ranked second in Division II for digs per set (6.42) and sixth in the GAC for total digs (533). Middle hitter Isla Olivas was a dominant defensive presence, ranking seventh in the league in blocks per set (0.90). With 10 seniors graduating, Harrell looks to reload the roster for 2025.

Mulerider Men's Golf

SAU Men's Golf had an up-and-down Fall, opening strong with a 3rd-place finish at the Northeastern State Men's Classic, led by Blane Burk (-2). The team rebounded from a tough showing at the MSSU Fall Invite to place 2nd at the Battle of the Belt, where Alex Gerrard shot 213 (-3). The Muleriders followed up with another 2nd-place finish at the Super Regional Preview, where Logan McDonald posted a team-best 206 (-7) to tie for fourth. The team closed out Fall with a 15th-place finish at the Tulsa Cup and will return to action Feb. 10-11 at the Houston Classic.

Mulerider Women's Golf

SAU Women's Golf saw significant improvement, finishing top ten in three of five Fall tournaments. The team placed 10th at the Regional Preview, where Emma Hester shot 150 (+6) to finish 18th. Freshman Brianna Chamoun led SAU to a 7th-place finish at the NSU Classic, placing 9th in a 107-golfer field with a score of 144 (+2). She also

led the team at the Central Oklahoma Regional Preview, where SAU tied for 11th out of 24 teams. The Muleriders' strongest showing came at the Battle for the Belt (5th/12), where junior Aubrey Marx posted a team-best 224 (+8). The team will open Spring play at the Rattler Invitational on Feb. 24-25.

Mulerider Tennis

SAU Tennis capped off its Fall season at the GAC Individual Championships, adding four titles as Amelie Gindl, Josie Holderbach, Mathys Pinoit, and Maria Fiacan won their singles flights. The women's team posted a stellar 60-24 singles record, with Gindl (16-2) leading the way, followed by Fiacan (10-2) and Roksana Kokocha (10-3). The men finished 39-34 in singles, highlighted by Tim Fischer (10-4) and Jinsei Tajima (8-3). In doubles, SAU had four runner-up finishes, including pairs Neumann/Pasqual and Fischer/Pinoit. Gindl made history as the first Mulerider woman to compete at the prestigious ITA Cup, finishing 1-2 against the top Division II talent.

Mulerider Cross Country

SAU Cross Country concluded its season at the GAC Championships, where the women finished 7th in the 5k (1:41:01, 184 points) and the men finished 6th in the 8k (2:17:38, 172 points). Wesley Maxwell led the men, placing 27th with a time of 26:56.3.



// Photo by Thomas Turner

Dr. Connie Wilson

SAU's Newest Vice President for Advancement

"I talk to a variety of stakeholders every single day, and it is just wonderful to be a resource to them and work with the extremely talented Advancement team."

Dr. Connie Wilson / Vice President for Advancement

BY RACHEL JENKINS

After a comprehensive search process, Southern Arkansas University proudly announced the appointment of Dr. Connie Wilson as the University's vice president for advancement. As of December 2, 2024, Dr. Wilson has worked with the entire division of Advancement, including Alumni, Development, and the Foundation.

No two days have been the same as Dr. Wilson has met with countless alumni, current students, and community members. And she wouldn't have it any other way.

"I absolutely love my new role," Dr. Wilson gushed.

In her new role, Dr. Wilson leads the University's advancement team in efforts to foster stronger relationships with alumni, friends, and community partners as well as develop innovative fundraising strategies to ensure SAU remains a vibrant and accessible institution for future generations of Muleriders. Her leadership is already playing a critical role in the University's ongoing efforts to expand scholarships, support academic excellence, and create new student opportunities, paving the way for prospective students to become future alumni.

"Dr. Wilson is a true embodiment of the spirit of Southern Arkansas University," said Dr. Bruno Hicks, President of Southern Arkansas University. "Her dedication and passion to SAU is unparalleled. Her extensive experience in education, leadership, and community engagement will be instrumental as we continue to grow and build a strong future for our students,

faculty, and alumni."

If the vice president for advancement's job is to connect, Dr. Wilson's experience makes her the perfect glue. Raised in Bossier City, Louisiana, Dr. Wilson has always called the Ark-La-Tex home. Her career in higher education began at SAU in 1999, when she was hired as the student success coordinator, working on special projects, recruitment reporting, and various areas pertaining to student success. Later, as assistant dean of students in student activities, she managed myriad programs related to student life, including Mulerider Roundup, co-curricular transcripts, student organizations, Leadership Academy, and more. When she became the first director of the Reynolds Center, Dr. Wilson established policies, procedures, and guidelines for opening and maintaining a brand new facility that continues to thrive today.

In 2006, Dr. Wilson returned to Bossier City to teach middle school English and later became the assistant principal at a local middle school.

A decade later, Dr. Wilson returned to SAU as an associate professor and director of the Educational Leadership in Administration and Supervision (EDAS) program. Dr. Wilson not only expanded the EDAS program and redesigned it to align with new standards, she also helped develop the EdD program.

Most recently, Dr. Wilson has served as dean for the School of Graduate Studies. Since 2022, she has coordinated SAU's four colleges, offering professional development, streamlining processes, and assisting students and

program directors.

Not only has Dr. Wilson served the University for decades, but she has received multiple awards for leadership and excellence, including the prestigious SAU Auburn P. Smith Service Award in 2020, the Spirit of SAU Award in 2018, and several faculty and community service honors. She has also been active in various organizations, including the Arkansas Council for Women in Higher Education and Magnolia Arts.

"Dr. Wilson has hit the ground running, listening, and learning. She has a tremendous passion for SAU, and we are excited to see the University and Division of Advancement grow under her leadership," said Jackson McCurdy, executive director of development.

Dr. Wilson looks forward to working collaboratively with teams and stakeholders, pouring back into the University that she says changed her life.

"I'm here to support SAU alumni, to connect with them and be a resource," Dr. Wilson stated. "We appreciate their support. What we do as an institution and the multiple ways that they support us is essential to our mission and vision. I'm grateful for all of them."

Dr. Wilson graduated from SAU with a bachelor's degree in English education in 1997 and a master's degree in secondary education in 2001. In 2018, she earned her EdD in educational leadership from Louisiana Tech.

When she isn't connecting with stakeholders, Dr. Wilson loves traveling and spending time with her husband of 27 years and their two daughters, Sammie and Lauren.



// Photo by Thomas Turner

Breaking Barriers:

Rickey Jasper's Path from SAU to the CIA

BY RACHEL JENKINS

Before Senior Intelligence Service Officer Rickey Jasper retired from the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) with the distinction of being the highest-ranking African American to serve, he was a student in Parkdale, Arkansas, who believed his only option after high school was the military.

A grandson of sharecroppers, Jasper began working in the cotton fields alongside his family when he was nine years old. He experienced integration firsthand and graduated from Parkdale High School as valedictorian of the largest class the school had seen. It was at Parkdale High School that a Southern Arkansas University recruiter encouraged Jasper to attend college, planting a seed that college was possible.

"The school was the right size," said Jasper. "Not too big to get lost, but not so small that you couldn't meet people and get different perspectives and cultures."

During his time at SAU, Jasper was on the debate team, served as treasurer for the Student Government Association, was a member of the Black Student Association, participated as student representative on the University's Scholarship Committee, and worked as a Resident Assistant. Significantly, Jasper accepted his calling to the ministry during his freshman year and began preaching at the local churches and leading Bible studies on campus.

"SAU provided me the opportunity to walk the talk—to integrate my spiritual journey into my campus life," Jasper shared.

Jasper graduated from SAU in 1984 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Political Science with a minor in Accounting. He credits professors like Dr. Willis and Professor Noland for their belief and investment in his future, as well as the kind librarian, Mrs. Irene Brannon, who allocated him a quiet study space in the basement – an area he

fondly referred to as his "office."

Jasper went on to earn a Master of Business Administration in Management from Louisiana Tech University and a Master of Science in Accounting from Strayer University.

Jasper's academic pursuits did not end there. He continued studying at the University of Virginia, George Mason University, the University of Southern California, the University of Maryland, and Northwestern University's Kellogg School of Management. Additionally, he completed postgraduate studies in theology at the Singapore Bible College and the John Leland Center for Theological Studies, where he serves as a member of the Institute for Justice Foundation.

Following his tenure at Louisiana Tech University and employment with IBM in Dallas, TX, Jasper embarked on a career with the CIA in 1987, serving domestically and abroad across Latin America, Europe, and East Asia. Jasper

"SAU provided me the opportunity to walk the talk—to integrate my spiritual journey into my campus life..."

Rickey Jasper

ascended to the highest ranks within the CIA, serving as the special assistant to CIA Directors Porter J. Goss and Michael V. Hayden (the final director under President George W. Bush) and as agency executive secretary under Michael V. Hayden and the beginning of Leon Panetta's tenure under President Barack Obama.

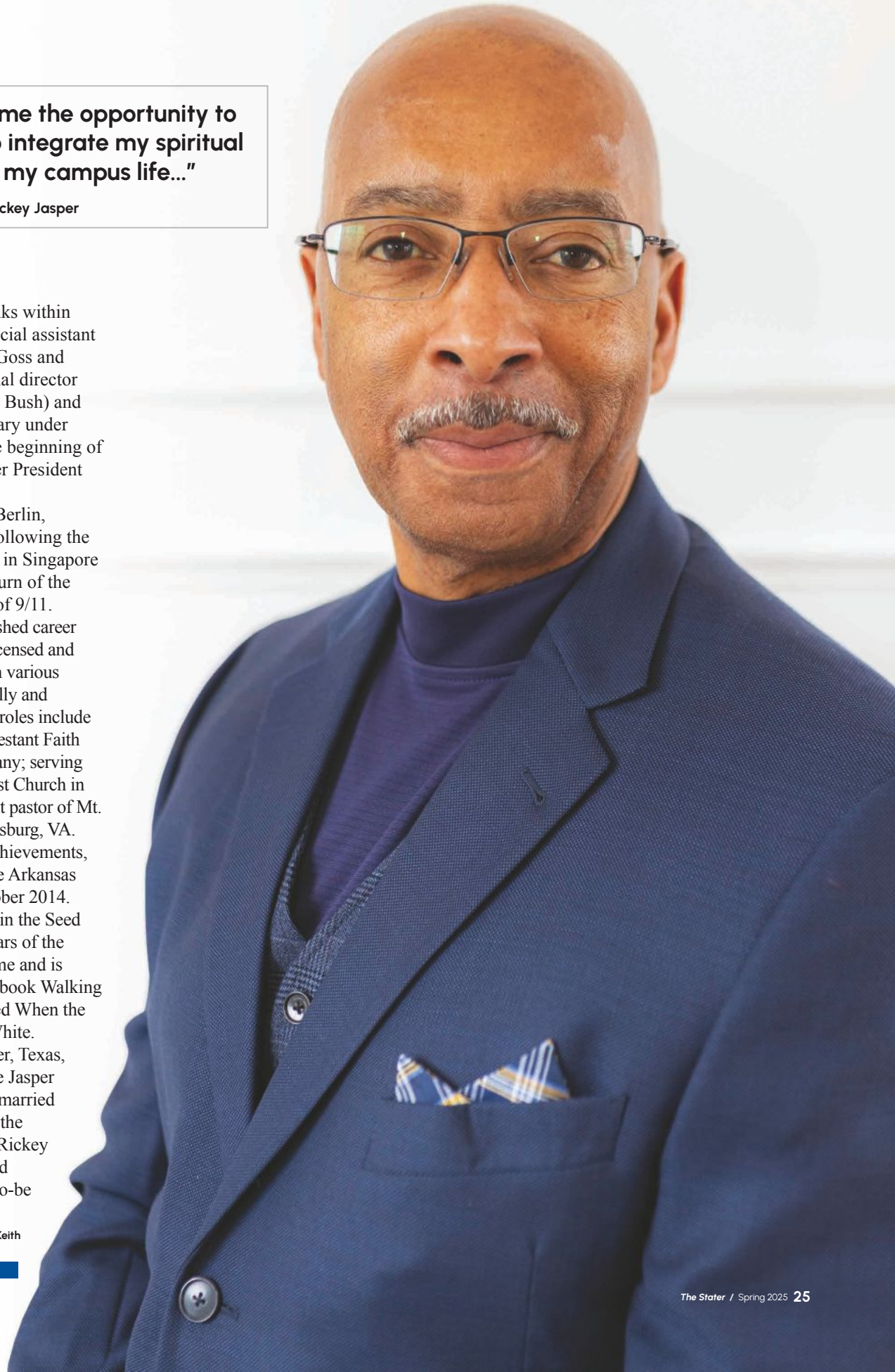
Notably, he served in Berlin, Germany, for three years following the fall of the Berlin Wall, and in Singapore for three years during the turn of the century and the aftermath of 9/11.

Alongside his distinguished career in intelligence, Jasper is a licensed and ordained minister, serving in various church capacities domestically and internationally. His pastoral roles include serving as pastor of the Protestant Faith Fellowship in Berlin, Germany; serving as pastor of Mt. Olive Baptist Church in Lincoln, VA; and as assistant pastor of Mt. Olive Baptist Church in Leesburg, VA.

In recognition of his achievements, Jasper was inducted into the Arkansas Black Hall of Fame in October 2014. He is prominently featured in the Seed of Genius: Twenty-Five Years of the Arkansas Black Hall of Fame and is currently revising his 2020 book *Walking in the Gray: How to Succeed When the Rules Are Not Black and White*.

Jasper resides in Prosper, Texas, with his wife, Sheila Denise Jasper ('84) and has been happily married for over 38 years. They are the proud parents of two sons, Rickey Lane Jasper II and Desmond Tyler Jasper, and are soon-to-be grandparents.

// Photo by Katie Keith



Rooted in **Blue & Gold**



"I want to be a liaison between students and alumni to show that school pride and being involved continues well after graduation."

Elizabeth Myrick



// Contributed Photos

BY RACHEL JENKINS

Dr. Elizabeth Myrick, of Hot Springs, is serving her final year on the SAU Alumni Association Board of Directors, a position she has held since 2019.

But she wants past, present, and future Muleriders to know that she isn't planning to stop talking about Southern Arkansas University any time soon.

Dr. Myrick's SAU journey began in 2006 when she and best friend Kayla Pipkins-Moury were awarded cheerleading scholarships. They moved into Bussey Hall determined to take advantage of everything SAU had to offer.

"What you put into it is what you get out of it," Myrick said, quoting the advice she took to heart from her beloved Phi Mu sisters.

And Dr. Myrick put in a lot. In addition to cheerleading for four years, two of which she served as captain, Dr. Myrick was a member of Phi Mu, Student Government Association, Residence Hall Association, Lambda Alpha Beta, and Tri Beta. She was also selected as a President's Ambassador and Resident Assistant.

As a President's Ambassador, Dr. Myrick reminisced about driving the golf cart around campus with prospective families, sharing her love for SAU. But those connections didn't end with the tour.

"Once those high schoolers became Muleriders, they knew someone already, and I could help mentor them when they got to campus as an RA," Myrick said.

As an RA for Honors Hall and Fincher Hall, formerly East Hall, Dr. Myrick continued supporting new students and encouraging them to get involved. She credited "Daddy Dean" J. Courson, who was associate dean of housing and special projects at the time, for seeing her leadership potential. Courson's personalized approach to teaching and mentoring students provided Dr. Myrick with lessons and skills she utilizes today.

"He taught me how to handle conflict, be a leader among my peers, and do the right thing in hard situations," Myrick said

of Dean Courson. "All of those lessons have carried over into my career, and I'm thankful for that."

Cheerleading Sponsor Ceil Bridges displayed a level of trust and unwavering support in Dr. Myrick's cheer team that afforded them once-in-a-lifetime opportunities. It was during her tenure that the team debuted at the National Cheerleaders Association (NCA) College Nationals and placed fourth in Division Two. From Extreme Makeover: Home Edition to MTV to American Idol, the cheer squad sought opportunities to publicize the University and shine a light on SAU's culture of belonging and caring.

Dr. Myrick graduated from SAU with her BS in biological science in 2010 and noted the dedicated faculty who helped her pursue her goal of continuing her studies in biology. One such professor was Dr. Claude Baker. It was his ecology classes that stirred Dr. Myrick's love of science and cemented her decision to pursue a postgraduate degree.

"Dr. Baker's passion for science was contagious," she recalled. "He made you believe your dreams were achievable."

Dr. Myrick also earned a BS in medical technology from the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences in 2011 and a doctorate of physical therapy from the University of Central Arkansas in 2017.

As a member of the Alumni Association Board of Directors, Dr. Myrick enjoys connecting older alumni with new graduates. To alumni who have been away from the University, she wants to remind you that you can always return home.

"SAU is home no matter where you are in the world," Myrick said. "Come back, find your brick, and see all the good that's happening on campus."

Dr. Myrick resides in Hot Springs, working as a physical therapist at National Park Medical Center and CHI St. Vincent Encompass Rehabilitation Hospital. She enjoys travelling, tennis, mission trips, shopping with her sisters, playing with her two nieces, and worshiping and spreading God's word with New Life Church Hot Springs.



CLASS NEWS

1970-1979



• **Jerry Mayfield '70** was inducted into the Rankin College of Business (RCB) Hall of Fame.



• **Wondrous McHenry Roach '74** published a book titled "Peach Tree Switches: The Village That Raised Me," which is available on Amazon and Barnes and Noble. She is a retired educator from the Magnolia School District.



• **David Ashby '77** was inducted into the Rankin College of Business (RCB) Hall of Fame.



• **Margaret Molleston '78** was inducted into the Rankin College of Business (RCB) Hall of Fame.

1980-1989



• **Phillip Lansdell '82 '05** received the 2024 Distinguished Service Award from the National Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Association and the Arkansas High School Athletic Administrators Association. He has been the athletic administrator at El Dorado School District for fifteen years.



• **Penny Waddle '83 '13** retired after 40 years in education and was an employee of Magnolia School District. She taught English for 29 years at Magnolia Junior High and served as a district curriculum coordinator for 11 years.



• **Michael George '85** was inducted into the SAU Sports Hall of Fame.



• **Kevin Russell '86** became an accountant for Production Services Inc.



• **Melissa Jerry '88** was inducted into the Rankin College of Business (RCB) Hall of Fame.

1990-1999



• **Harry Dickens '90** became a new member of the East Initiative Board of Directors.



• **Sherman Evans '93** was inducted into the SAU Sports Hall of Fame.



• **Erica Woods '93** graduated from Arkansas State University with a master's in nursing education.



• **Chris Pennington '95** was honored at the Texas State Basketball Championship in San Antonio for 600 career victories. He is the head basketball coach at Barbers Hill High School.



• **Valentino Morris '96** was inducted into the SAU Sports Hall of Fame. He was a wide receiver for Mulerider football and played for the Shreveport-Bossier Battlewings in the Arena Football League for two years.



• **Chris Coker '98 '03** is the Camden Fairview School District science facilitator and was one of 14 regional finalists for 2025 Arkansas Teacher of the Year.

2000-2009



• **Angela Bradford '01** obtained her doctorate in business administration with a concentration in human resources.



• **Katrena Castleman Roach '01** has been employed with Harte Hanks Response Management for 16 years and has been the contact center supervisor for 12 years. She and her husband are also approaching their 3rd year of marriage.



• **Vanessa Williams '01 '04** earned her Doctor of Public Administration degree from Walden University. She is the owner of Empowered with Vanessa PLC, a private practice offering mental health counseling and life coaching services.



• **Chris Coble '02** became the athletic director and associate vice chancellor for student services at SAU Tech in Camden.



• **Brittany Wright Manley '03** was inducted into the SAU Sports Hall of Fame. She played volleyball and was named the 2003 Gulf South Conference (GSC) West Division Player of the Year.



• **Stephen Hrcncir '04 '06** was named the athletic director and head football coach at Calhoun High School in Port Lavaca, Texas.



• **Staci Miller '04** was named the director of development for the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette Community Journalism Project.



• **Jimmie Tucker '05 '10** became a National Board-Certified Teacher.



• **Sarah Pulliam-Carroll '06 '12** was promoted to manager of housing and community development for Aurora, Colorado.



• **Cheyenne Kirkpatrick '08** was elected president of the Texas Health Occupations Association.



• **Skyler Stromsmoe '08** was inducted into the SAU Sports Hall of Fame. He played baseball and represented his home country of Canada at the Pan Am Games in 2011 and 2015.



• **Zach Fowler '09** became the principal at Red Lick Middle School.

2010-2019



• **Cordara Newsom '10 '17** started a new position at Campus as the student success coach, assisting students in reaching their academic and professional goals.



• **Cedric Thornton '10** was inducted into the SAU Sports Hall of Fame. After playing defensive end for Mulerider football, he appeared in 89 NFL games with the Eagles, Cowboys, Bills, and 49ers.



• **Lindsay Givens '12 '14** graduated from the University of South Alabama with a Ph.D. in business analytics.



• **Quincey Lawrence '13** began a new role as the AMS FA discretionary trading support at Raymond James.



• **Micah McCartney '13** was named the Photographer of the Year by the North and East Texas Press Association in April. He is the sports editor for the Wise County Messenger newspaper.



• **Melissa Ward '13** graduated with a master's in nursing from Northwestern State University and began working as a psychiatric mental health nurse practitioner at Springhill Medical Center's Doctors Clinic in Springhill, La.



• **Kaylee Wise '13** became the marketing director at Arkansas State University – Mountain Home.



• **Matthew Wise '13** became the drama and oral communications teacher at Mountain Home High School.



• **Megan McCurdy '14 '17** started a new position as the bakeware merchant at Walmart.



• **Jacob Pumphrey '14 '17** began a new job as director of communications with the University of North Dakota Athletic Department, serving as the primary media contact for UND volleyball, men's basketball, and softball.



• **Justin Burns '17** earned his master's degree in music education from Kent State University. He is currently the assistant band and jazz director at Camden Fairview School District.



• **Brooke Goad '17 '19** was inducted into the SAU Sports Hall of Fame. She played softball and is tabbed as the most decorated female athlete in the history of Mulerider sports.



• **Dalton Johnson '17** became the director of sports information at the University of Texas at Tyler.



• **Michael Dexter '18** was awarded a "Best Learning Leader" Gold Medal by the Brandon Hall Group for its 2024 HCM Excellence Awards in the Learning and Development area. He is the Board of Certification for Emergency Nursing (BCEN) director of professional development.



• **Golder Theresa Hill '18** became the director of education programming at Scripps Research Translational Institute.



• **Joann Kaar '18** became the assistant professor of theatre at SAU.



• **Jordan Wiley Brumley '19** became an occupational therapist at UAMS. She recently received her doctorate in occupational therapy from the University of Central Arkansas.



• **Tajjee Bunch '19 '23** became the new director/instructor of theatre at the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff, working to rebuild the Theatre Department. Through this

opportunity, he is a doctoral candidate for his Ed.D. in educational leadership, with his project being focused on theatre education.



• **Natalie Harrell '19** is the director of marketing and communications and a professor of communications at Crowley's Ridge College.



• **Ka'Ronce Higgins '19** was inducted into the SAU Sports Hall of Fame. He played wide receiver for the football team and ran track, earning numerous accolades in both sports. Since his time at SAU, he has played multiple seasons of professional football, both indoors and outdoors.

2020-2024



• **Moriah Gauntt '20** became a senior quality engineer at Lockheed Martin.



• **Sydney Hultberg '20** passed the Arkansas Bar Exam.



• **Micheala Roden '20** graduated from the Harding University College of Pharmacy and is now a staff pharmacist at Walmart in Berryville, Arkansas.



• **Ravishangar Viswanathan '20** is a data engineer for Lumel Technologies Inc.



• **Anna Grace Braswell '21** graduated from Family Nurse Practitioner and began working at Claiborne Family Medical Center and Butler Abshire Medical Clinic as an FNP.



• **Sarah Fincher '21** graduated from Texas Tech University with a doctorate in occupational therapy and is now an occupational therapist at UT Health East Texas in Tyler, Tx.



• **Tristen Jones '21** started a new position as the training coordinator at Centennial Bank.



• **Malik McBride '21 '24** became the associate director of Greek life at the University of Arkansas Fayetteville. He oversees NPHC/D9 organizations.



• **Oluwole Sunday Oniha '21** became a data analyst at Suretech Laboratory.



• **Eric Perez '21** became the assistant principal at Nashville High School. He received the 2023 Teacher Impact Award from the Arkansas School for Mathematics, Sciences, and the Arts for being selected as a distinguished educator who has positively impacted students' lives.



• **Laiken Newton '22** became a regional admissions counselor/recruiter in the Texarkana area for SAU.



• **Hannah Norman '23** became a quality behavioral health provider (QBHP) for Cornerstone Counseling Clinic at Ashdown Elementary School.



• **Jackson Heflin '24** became the assistant band director at Magnolia School District.



• **Kevin Jones '24** accepted a position as a DoS technical help desk professional at General Dynamics Information Technology.



• **Chris Lyles '24** became a credit analyst at Farmers Bank & Trust in Texarkana.

Little Muleriders[®]



• **Dedrick '14 and Shavonica (Wilson) Box** announce the birth of their son, DeSohn Tyree Box, born on August 19, 2024.



• **Daniel and Morgan (Jolly) Brazzel '20 '22** announce the birth of their daughter, Annie Dale Brazzel, born on December 30, 2024.



• **Lance '09 '18 and Halee (Campbell) Colvin '16 '20** announce the birth of their son, Wesley Edwin Colvin, born on August 11, 2024. He weighed 7 lbs. 7 oz. and was 20.5 inches long.



• **Tim '20 and Lexie (Nowlin) Crumpler '21** announce the birth of their son, Grayson Maverick Crumpler, born on December 7, 2024. He weighed 7 lbs. 12 oz. and was 20.5 inches long.



• **Jeremy '12 and Violet (Braswell) Glass '24** announce the birth of their son, Gordon Braswell Glass, born on May 16, 2024. He weighed 2lbs. 8 oz.



• **Talia '20 and Reyson Jett '20** announce the birth of their daughter, Elinicia Rose Jett, born on August 22, 2024. She weighed 7 lbs. 5 oz. and was 20 inches long.



• **Dillion and Ashley (Roden) Reed '17 '19** announce the birth of their daughter, Margaret Ruth Reed, born on July 1, 2024. She weighed 9 lbs. 4.8 oz. and was 19 inches long.



• **Billy and Amber (Wiggins) Treadway '08 '12** announce the birth of their son, Turk Treadway, born on November 22, 2023.



• **Zachary '22 and Angela (Ramsey) Wake '21** announce the birth of their son, Tucker Alan Wake, born on May 8, 2024. He weighed 7 lbs. 5 oz. and was 19.5 inches long.



• **Trevel '16 and Rachel (Phillips) Young** announce the birth of their son, Amari Zyaire Young, born on September 26, 2024. He weighed 5 lbs. 5 oz. and was 19 inches long.

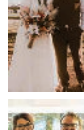
Weddings



• **Keith '00 '02 and Erin (Shields) Dale '24** were married on September 11, 2024.



• **Patrick and LaSonya (Whyte) Gladney '11** were married on March 10, 2023.



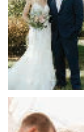
• **Caleb and Sydney (Parham) Hultberg '20** were married on November 18, 2023.



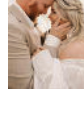
• **Joey '20 '23 and Joann (Shaver) Kaar '18** were married on December 18, 2023.



• **Kalon '21 '23 and Ashanti (Harvey) Noble '20** were married on November 9, 2024.



• **Jacob '14 '17 and Brook (Conley) Pumphrey** were married on July 6, 2024.



• **Dylan and Lindsey (O'Neal) Spikes '21 '23** were married on November 2, 2024.

Obituaries

1940-1949

- **Frances Tyndall Clardy '48**
January 15, 2025
- **Eloise Landgren '48**
October 24, 2024

1950-1959

- **Norma DeLoach '51**
July 18, 2024
- **Orville Gayner Olsen '53**
June 4, 2024
- **Rosemary Steely '54**
November 28, 2024
- **Kenneth Dixon '55**
September 3, 2024
- **Donald R. Impson '55**
November 2, 2024
- **Edgar Breland '56**
July 26, 2024
- **Ned Ray Purtle '56**
September 1, 2024
- **Jimmy Haywood Culp '58**
October 27, 2024
- **Norman N. Huneycutt '58**
June 19, 2024
- **William "Billy" Walker Cheatham '59**
January 22, 2025
- **Janette Sherman '59**
January 10, 2025

1960-1969

- **Billy Hughes '60**
September 17, 2024
- **Olen Winfield Taylor '60**
November 7, 2024
- **Lawrence Bearden '61**
February 3, 2025
- **Robert Joseph Greene '61**
January 20, 2025
- **Dr. Leslie "Bud" Turk '61**
September 16, 2024
- **Arvia Askew '62**
August 20, 2024
- **Lynwood Dean Cathey '63**
January 8, 2025
- **Dona Frances Furr '63**
November 3, 2024
- **Barbara Jo Bentz Bacon '65**
February 12, 2025
- **Barbara Kay Packard Cathey '65**
September 25, 2024
- **Lawrence "Larry" E. Creel '65**
August 4, 2024
- **Mary Jane "Janie" Naylor '65**
October 5, 2024
- **Lena Patricia Pickler '65**
December 31, 2024
- **Judy Lynn (Carroll) Borchert '68**
October 3, 2024
- **Linda K. Creel '68**
August 19, 2024
- **James "James" Wesley Dale '69**
July 9, 2024

1970-1979

- **Robert "Bob" James Aguiar '71**
August 14, 2024
- **Larry Talley '71**
November 21, 2024
- **Johnny D. Hicks '72**
November 22, 2024
- **Barney "Buck" Clemons '74**
January 12, 2025
- **Tommie Doris Neill '74**
September 7, 2024

1980-1989

- **Patricia Ann Traywick Scott '80**
February 1, 2025
- **Dorothy "Babe" Knowles '83**
August 20, 2024
- **Laura Ann Bridges '86**
November 23, 2024

1990-1999

- **Terry Lynn Williams '91**
August 12, 2024
- **Dr. Lisa Williams '95**
November 14, 2024

2000-2009

- **Corey Shantez Hunter '02**
November 6, 2024

2010-2019

- **Collin "Clark Kent" Fordham '19**
August 20, 2024



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