

The Southern Arkansas University

STATER

SUMMER 2025



Ed.D.
in Rural & Diverse
Educational Leadership

SOUTHERN ARKANSAS UNIVERSITY

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It was a beautiful summer here in Magnolia, Arkansas, and our campus has been buzzing with activity—from youth camps to Becoming a Mulerider (BAM) orientation sessions for our incoming class. As I wrap up my first year and look ahead to the next, I am energized by the momentum at Southern Arkansas University. With the launch of our Next Step Guarantee and The SAU Difference, we are already seeing the positive impact these programs are having on our students.

Reflecting on this past year, I’ve come to understand firsthand why NICHE **ranked SAU the Best Small Public College in Arkansas**. I’m deeply grateful for the dedication and heart our campus community brings to making SAU such a special place.

There is much to celebrate: the first graduates of our Ed.D. program in Rural and Diverse Educational Leadership, the implementation of our \$2.7 million HIRED grant, the expansion of our small animal facility, the launch of our new strategic plan, and The Mulerider Trail to 2030. These milestones reflect a shared commitment to stewardship of our people, our campus, and our resources.

Nelson Mandela once said, “Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.” His words echo the mission of SAU. As a comprehensive University, we are shaping lives and strengthening communities across Arkansas and beyond. Our Next Step Guarantee embodies this vision, ensuring students are prepared to make an immediate impact in their careers.

Providing our students with a strong return on their investment remains a top priority. That is why applied and experiential learning, including internships with industry and community partners, is embedded throughout our programs. We are grateful to the many businesses, organizations, alumni, and donors who make this possible.

Our greatest strength lies in our people: the talented faculty and staff as well as a community that shares a deep commitment to student success. When our students thrive, we all succeed.

If you’re ever on campus, I invite you to stop by my office, visit with our faculty and staff, or take a walk to see the many improvements across SAU. Thank you to everyone on campus and in the City of Magnolia for making my first year so warm and welcoming.

To all of SAU’s family, thank you, and go Muleriders!

Warmly,

Dr. Bruno Hicks

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.



Dr. Angela Stanford hoods Ed.D. graduate Ashley Creighton of Maine during the spring's commencement ceremony.

// Photo by **Thomas Turner**

History in the Making

SAU Confers First Doctoral Degree

"The doctorate program at SAU has opened doors for me both professionally and personally."

Dr. Aaron Duvall

BY JESSICA GREAVES

Southern Arkansas University marked a powerful new chapter in its academic legacy this spring by conferring its first ever doctoral degrees. During the first graduate commencement ceremony on Saturday, May 10, eleven members of the inaugural Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) cohort in Rural and Diverse Educational Leadership crossed the stage. Their achievement officially established SAU as a doctoral-granting institution and affirmed its growing role in shaping the future of education in Arkansas and beyond.

The launch of the Ed.D. program in 2021 was a response to the state's growing need for leaders who understand the complexities of rural education and the power of community-rooted leadership. Designed for working professionals, the program offers a fully online format with a cohort model that fosters collaboration and connection across backgrounds, disciplines, and geographic regions. Coursework emphasizes transformational leadership, research-informed practice, and a deep understanding of how to serve students in rural and underserved areas.

Completing a doctoral degree is a rigorous and deeply personal journey. For this first group of graduates, it also

carried the responsibility of setting the tone for future cohorts and paving the way for what SAU's advanced degrees can mean, not just for the University, but for the communities its alumni serve.

Among the historic first graduates is Dr. Aaron Duvall of Conway, Arkansas. As Career and Technical Education Director at Responsive Education Solutions, Dr. Duvall led career-focused programming across eight campuses and cultivated strong partnerships with industry and workforce leaders. His leadership has always been rooted in real-world application and strategic vision, which made the Ed.D. program a natural fit for his next professional chapter.

In April 2025, shortly before graduation, Dr. Duvall accepted a new role as Executive Director of Workforce Development at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock. In this capacity, he now oversees a broad portfolio that includes workforce initiatives, career services, concurrent enrollment, study abroad, and extended education.

"The doctorate program at SAU has opened doors for me both professionally and personally. Professionally, the program's rigor and its emphasis on rural and diverse issues in Arkansas challenged me to

reconsider the educational challenges our state faces," said Dr. Duvall. "Personally, the relationships I built with the SAU faculty have become lasting connections. The professors not only supported me throughout the doctoral journey but continue to serve as mentors today. I am deeply appreciative of the program and confident that it has significantly advanced my career in education."

Dr. Duvall's story reflects the spirit of the Ed.D. program—where academic growth is tightly connected to practical impact and a commitment to community. His path, along with those of his fellow graduates, exemplifies the leadership, resilience, and forward-thinking that SAU seeks to instill in its students at every level.

As the University looks toward the future, the success of this first doctoral cohort represents more than a milestone; it represents a promise fulfilled. A promise to grow, to lead, and to educate in ways that meet the moment while preparing for what comes next.



SCAN TO WATCH

Scan the QR code with your smartphone to watch Dr. Aaron Duvall's full story.

Meet SAU's new Provost

"Education changes lives, and rural universities like SAU make that possible for people who might not have had the chance otherwise."

Dr. Robin Sronce / Vice President for Academic Affairs

BY RACHEL JENKINS

After serving as Interim Provost since June 2024, Dr. Robin Sronce was named Southern Arkansas University's Vice President of Academic Affairs in January 2025.

Dr. Sronce grew up in a small farming community outside of St. Louis, MO, surrounded by extended family. She received her BA from Drury University, majoring in business administration and sociology, minoring in economics. After marrying her husband Alan, Dr. Sronce moved to Carbondale, IL, and enrolled at Southern Illinois University, where she earned her MBA and PhD in business administration while working and raising their three children.

"I wouldn't have been able to pursue my advanced degrees if I had not lived so close to Southern Illinois University," she recalled, highlighting the significant impact of rural colleges on her life as well as the students she's taught.

Dr. Sronce's journey to SAU was inspired by her family. When her daughter moved to Little Rock, AR, Dr. Sronce was working as dean of the business school at her alma mater Drury University. She began researching universities in the Natural State, desiring to live closer to family. When she saw the posting for a dean position at SAU's David F. Rankin College of Business, the campus reminded her of home.

"Everyone was so welcoming at SAU," Dr. Sronce said, recalling her first visit to Magnolia. "I could see not only the beautiful campus but the dedication of the faculty and students. It seemed like a good fit for me, and turned out to

be a perfect way to make a difference helping students."

Dr. Sronce accepted the position of dean of the David F. Rankin College of Business in 2017. Under her leadership, the RCB implemented numerous projects, such as the SOAR Sustainability Conference, the Entrepreneur Pitch and Idea Competition, and initiatives like Backpack to Briefcase, Leaders Conference, and RCB on the Road. Furthermore, the college added multiple new degree plans, including undergraduate degrees in international business and healthcare administration and a new graduate program in business analytics.

As provost, Dr. Sronce has collaborated with faculty and staff on several successful projects, including: securing the HIRED Grant; establishing a new Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning that will launch this fall; planning more international student trips for areas outside of business, including Japan, Ireland, and Europe; and adding recognition programs and time for team building and leadership development for faculty and staff.

"We have so many talented colleagues. My goal is to help them find how they can be actively involved in their passions in ways that strengthen and support the SAU community," Dr. Sronce says. "I'm honored to fill this role and excited for the future."

Dr. Sronce lives in Magnolia, AR, with her husband Alan, with whom she enjoys traveling, baking, and spending time with her grandchildren.



DR. ROBIN SRONCE
Vice President for Academic Affairs

Meet SAU's new Dean of the School of Graduate Studies

"Graduate school is a place where aspirations are nurtured, careers are accelerated and dreams can become realities."

Dr. Angela Stanford / Dean of the School of Graduate Studies

BY RACHEL JENKINS

Southern Arkansas University is proud to announce the appointment of Dr. Angela Stanford as the new dean of the School of Graduate Studies.

"Dr. Stanford's thoughtful leadership and commitment to graduate education make her the right choice to guide the School of Graduate Studies into its next chapter," says SAU President Dr. Bruno Hicks. "I am confident in her ability to strengthen and expand our graduate offerings."

While Dr. Stanford certainly aims to grow and develop the graduate programs at SAU, she is even more determined to grow capacity in graduate students—in their professions and communities.

"We want to show students that education is about more than collecting degrees. It's an investment that works both ways," Dr. Stanford says. "We want to get to know our students and open doors for them that help them find and fulfill their purpose. It all comes back to SAU's culture of care."

After graduating from Taylor High School, Dr. Stanford chose SAU after being awarded an academic scholarship. Torn between studying veterinary medicine and horticulture, Dr. Stanford chose science education to enjoy the best of both worlds. She earned both her BSE and MEd in education from SAU and completed her EdS and EdD in educational leadership at Liberty University. Dr. Stanford holds a National Board Certification in Teaching. Her career in education spans 34 years, including 23 years in K–12 education before returning to SAU as a faculty member.

Prior to her dean appointment, Dr. Stanford served as chair of the department of Doctoral Studies and director of the EdD program in rural and diverse educational leadership. An associate professor, Dr. Stanford has also held key roles within SAU's College of Education and Human Performance, including director of Middle and Secondary Education and MAT internship coordinator. She remains active in professional organizations, including a two-year term as elementary science director for the Arkansas Science Teachers Association.

Dr. Stanford lives in Magnolia, Arkansas, with her husband Danny. When she is not working on campus, she enjoys running the Farm Road, working in her garden, and hiking in America's national parks.



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.



GRADUATION

A new SAU alumn celebrates a milestone moment during one of the five Spring 2025 Commencement ceremonies.



(LEFT) SENIOR DINNER

Graduating seniors gather for one last evening of fun and reflection during the 2025 Senior Dinner.



MISS SAU

Madelyn Garcia takes her first walk on stage shortly after being crowned Miss SAU 2025.

(LEFT) OOZEBALL

SAU students dive into the mud for a friendly competition during the annual Oozeball tournament.



BECOMING A MULERIDER

If you know, you know! Our beloved mule kick tradition continues at BAM as our class of 2029 prepares for their first semester of college.



SPRING CONCERT

Ty Myers and deFrance delivers an unforgettable show from start to finish at SAU's annual spring concert.



GREEK WEEK

Sigma Alpha, among all of SAU's sororities and fraternities, bring the energy during Greek Week, uniting for a series of spirited competitions.

SAU Celebrates Educational Leadership Excellence

BY JESSICA GREAVES

Southern Arkansas University proudly honored a distinguished group of alumni and educators at the 2025 Educational Leadership Hall of Fame banquet, held Monday, March 17. Hosted by the College of Education and Human Performance, the annual ceremony celebrates individuals who exemplify leadership, service, and a commitment to education across Arkansas and beyond.

Originally established to recognize principals and superintendents, the Hall of Fame has grown in recent years to reflect the expanding impact of SAU's graduate programs. Today, honorees may also include graduates working in school counseling, special education, library media, and other critical areas of educational leadership.

"The Educational Leadership Hall of Fame is an opportunity to recognize some outstanding educational leaders," said Dr. Clinton Petty, assistant professor of Education and program director of Educational Leadership in Administration and Supervision. "This year's inductees were very proud and honored to represent SAU. It was a really good group of leaders."

Each year's inductees are selected by a committee from SAU's College of Education and Human Performance. While many honorees are based in Arkansas, nominations are accepted from across the country—wherever SAU graduates are making a difference.



// Photos by Jessica Greaves

(Above) Pictured left to right: Marilyn Marks, Curtis Black, Monty Harrington, Kelly Ribble, Christy Canfield, Javana McCall, Zebulon Prothro. (Right) Dr. Bruno Hicks speaks to the audience at the 2025 Educational Leadership Hall of Fame banquet.



2025 Inductees

Building-Level Administrator Honorees



MARILYN MARKS - Hope, AR

A 1990s graduate of SAU with multiple degrees and licensure endorsements, Marilyn Marks leads Hope Academy of Public Service, a school recognized for top-tier academic growth and a Highly Effective Schools Accreditation. She also completed Hope's Aspiring Leaders Program and participates in Leadership Hempstead County. Marks credits her success to her desire to serve and empower both students and staff.



CURTIS BLACK - Horatio, AR

Curtis Black, principal of Horatio High School, has led his campus to receive recognition from the Arkansas School Recognition Program for high student performance and graduation rates. Black has long been a servant-leader in his community, including time as a city councilman and advocate for early childhood literacy. A proud Mulerider, he earned his master's in Curriculum and Instruction and administrator licensure through SAU.

District-Level Administrator Honorees



JAVANA MCCALL - Camden, AR

Javana McCall recently retired after more than 30 years in public education, including nine years with the Camden-Fairview School District, where she served in key district-level roles such as assistant superintendent and special programs coordinator. An alumna of SAU's graduate programs, McCall is known for her dedication to student success, mentorship, and professional integrity.



ZEBULON PROTHRO - Mount Vernon, AR

One of the youngest superintendents in the state, Zebulon Prothro has quickly made a name for himself as a visionary leader. Under his guidance, the Mount Vernon Enola School District earned national recognition from U.S. News & World Report. Prothro holds multiple degrees, including a master's in educational leadership from SAU, and is currently pursuing his doctorate in Rural and Diverse Educational Leadership at the university.

Community Leadership Award Honorees

This award honors SAU graduate program alumni who demonstrate outstanding leadership outside traditional administrative roles.



CHRISTY CANFIELD - Emerson, AR

An Emerson High School Special Education teacher and cheer sponsor, Christy Canfield brings energy and compassion to her work every day. She holds three degrees, including two from SAU, and was named Teacher of the Year in 2018–2019. With a heart for advocacy, she is committed to helping students realize their full potential.



KELLY RIBBLE - Magnolia, AR

With more than three decades in public education, Magnolia Middle School counselor Kelly Ribble has made an indelible mark on generations of students. An alumna of SAU's bachelor's and master's programs, Ribble is also deeply involved in the Magnolia community through civic and charitable work, earning recognition from the Chamber of Commerce in 2025 as Educator of the Year.

Dr. Kenneth C. Booth Educational Leadership in Excellence Award



MONTY HARRINGTON - Magnolia, AR

This year's highest honor went to Monty Harrington, Magnolia native and longtime community leader. A 1993 finance graduate of SAU, Harrington serves as Magnolia Market President for Farmers Bank & Trust. His extensive civic involvement includes roles on the SAU Board of Trustees, Magnolia Housing Authority, Mulerider Club, and more. Known for his servant leadership, Harrington exemplifies the spirit of this distinguished award.

Each honoree represents the best of what SAU strives to instill in its students—vision, integrity, and a heart for service. As Muleriders, they continue to impact lives through education, advocacy, and community leadership. The Educational Leadership Hall of Fame banquet not only honors individual achievement but also affirms SAU's enduring commitment to building strong leaders for a stronger Arkansas.



SCAN TO WATCH

Scan the QR code with your smartphone to watch the spotlight videos.



SOUTHERN ARKANSAS UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE of EDUCATION
and HUMAN PERFORMANCE

Shaping the Future of Education

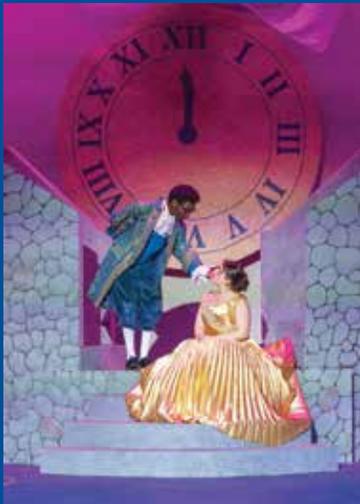
Southern Arkansas University's College of Education and Human Performance continues to lead in preparing passionate, high-quality educators through its Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) program. This fully online program is designed for individuals who already hold a bachelor's degree and want to earn their teaching license while balancing work and life responsibilities.

The MAT program is more than a pathway to the classroom. It's a meaningful investment in the future of our schools and communities. SAU alumni can take pride in knowing their university is producing educators who are not only knowledgeable in their subject areas, but also deeply committed to student growth and success.

As the need for qualified teachers continues to grow, SAU's MAT graduates are stepping in to meet that need with excellence, integrity, and a heart for service. The Mulerider legacy lives on through every classroom they enter and every student they inspire.



SOUTHERN ARKANSAS UNIVERSITY
 DEMPSEY COLLEGE of
 LIBERAL and PERFORMING ARTS



// Photo by Jessica Greaves

Spotlight on Cinderella

The SAU Theatre department performed *Cinderella* in its final performance of the 2024–25 academic year. With 29 total performers, *Cinderella* featured one of the biggest casts in SAU history.

"It was a really good experience for the students," said Joann Kaar, assistant professor of theater and the director of *Cinderella*. "The show was huge, the cast was huge, the costumes were huge, and we had a really great audience turnout."

The Theatre department will perform its first play of the fall semester with *Man in the Ceiling* at the end of September.

HONORS AMPLIFIED

BY MARK TROUT



/ Photo by Thomas Turner

What began as a block of wood ended with a rock concert—complete with Southern Arkansas University President Dr. Bruno Hicks on lead guitar. It was the finale of a new Honors Program course, Electric Guitar Building, offered for the first time in the spring 2025 semester.

Students in the course started with a raw guitar kit—just a block of wood, two feet long, one and a half feet wide, and two inches thick, plus a pre-cut neck joint. By semester's end, each student had created a fully functional electric guitar from scratch and shared their work in a public showcase and concert held in the Brinson Fine Arts Gallery.

The course was the brainchild of Nathan Lambert, assistant professor of art and design. A lifelong woodworker and musician, Lambert said the idea

brought together two of his biggest passions. "My dad was a really good carpenter," he said. "I took woodshop in high school and really loved it." Over the years, he built five guitars of his own and saw an opportunity to create a course that combined woodworking, design, and music.

"SAU was looking for a new class idea for the Honors Program, and I wrote up a proposal," said Lambert. "I didn't think the class would make. We had 10 slots originally, but then there was a waiting list of students wanting to take it."

Honors students from across a variety of majors signed up, bringing different perspectives and skillsets to the course. Early in the semester, students learned about the history of the electric guitar and studied famous guitar designs before beginning work on their own.



/ Photo by Thomas Turner

SAU President Dr. Bruno Hicks joined in on the concert and played lead guitar for one of the songs.

Lambert emphasized the importance of design thinking, encouraging students to “begin with the end in mind.” Each student sketched thumbnail concepts, then enlarged their designs to full size on paper. These patterns were transferred to the wood blocks to begin the cutting and shaping process.

For that part, Lambert enlisted the help of Jeff Sumner, machinist and laboratory technician in SAU’s Department of Engineering and Physics. “Jeff was extremely helpful,” said Lambert. “He walked the students through each part of the woodworking process and helped bring their visions to life.”

Throughout the course, students embraced the creative side of the project. Many named their guitars; one student chose the name Icarus, referencing the mythological figure who flew too close to the sun. Her design featured gold trim and feathers.

In the final weeks of the semester, students installed electronics into their guitars, including basic soldering—an entirely new skill for most. “It was the first time for many of them to work with soldering,” Lambert said.

The course culminated on the



/ Photo by Thomas Turner

SAU students were proud to showcase their semester’s worth of hard work and dedication.

Monday of finals week with a public concert and gallery show. Each student shared the story behind their guitar’s design before a local group of musicians—including Brian Logan, assistant professor of economics—performed using the student-built guitars. The evening’s highlight came

when Dr. Hicks joined the group and played lead guitar for one of the songs.

Lambert hopes the class will become a recurring opportunity in the Honors Program. “It was a really cool blending of design and woodworking,” he said. “The students really enjoyed the course.”

Sizzling Success

Muleriders Smoke the Competition at Blossom Festival



// Contributed Photo

BY MARK TROUT

For Sherman Glass, an agriculture education instructor at Southern Arkansas University, this year's Magnolia Blossom Festival marked just his third time cooking steaks competitively—and his best yet. Glass and his team, Muleriders Smoke Show, took home first place at the 2025 World Championship Steak Cook-Off.

Glass first got involved in the cook-off while teaching at Magnolia High School, where he and his students built a grill. His team placed 32nd in 2023 and 16th in 2024. "I had a feeling I could make it into the top 10 this year, but I was really surprised when we won first place," he said.

He pitched the idea of competing to Dr. Copie Moore, chair of SAU's

Agriculture department and associate professor of agriculture, in fall 2024. "Sherman started having this crazy idea," laughed Moore. "He said, 'Copie, we should cook in the festival this year.'" Joining them were Emma Cook, a May 2025 SAU agriculture education graduate; Hannay Boyte, a former SAU grad and Columbia County Extension Agent; and Sadie Moore, Copie's daughter and a high school student earning concurrent credit at SAU.

It was Moore's first time cooking competitively. "I had no idea what it was going to entail. I cook steaks for my family, but that's not a big deal," she said. She even rescheduled a family vacation to take part.

In the week leading up to the

event, Glass brought steaks to campus daily to experiment with different seasonings and cook styles. "He's got a recipe that he has perfected," said Moore. "I mixed my own seasoning," added Glass. "It's something I've been working on over the last three years. I just change it up a little bit." But seasoning isn't everything. "You've got to get the grill marks right; it's got to look right. And you've got to get the doneness right. Those things take some practice."

Glass and Moore agreed it was a great day for the SAU Ag Department. "It was a good, fun, hot day," said Glass. When their number was called at the award ceremony, the team was ecstatic. "We jumped up," said Moore. "We were both a little bit surprised."



// Contributed Photo

Lift-off

Building Rockets, Inspiring Futures at SAU

The sky was the limit for nearly 30 aspiring scientists and engineers who participated in the second annual Arkansas High-Powered Rocket Workshop, held June 9–12 at Southern Arkansas University. The week-long event ended with the successful launch of nine student-built high-powered rockets at SAU’s Laney Farm.

Sponsored by a \$30,000 grant from the Arkansas Space Grant Consortium (ASGC), the workshop was led by Dr. Abdel Bachri, dean of SAU’s College of Science and Engineering. The event brought together high school students, college undergraduates, teachers, and professors from across the state for an intensive, hands-on aerospace experience.

Working in interdisciplinary teams, participants progressed through the full engineering design cycle. Using OpenRocket software, they simulated their rocket designs before moving into fabrication—machining parts in SAU’s engineering

shop, cutting fins with CNC and laser tools, and 3D-printing custom components. Each team built a parachute recovery system, installed rocket motors, and integrated onboard video cameras and flight recorders equipped with altimeters. Students also studied rocket propulsion and safety principles and worked toward Level 1 certification.

“This workshop represents the very best of STEM education,” said Dr. Bachri. “Thanks to ASGC and NASA, we’re not just inspiring future engineers—we’re launching them.”

The final launch day was a thrilling capstone. For many students, it was their first time witnessing—and engineering—a rocket launch. Teams took their rockets home after successful deployment and safe return.

Special thanks go to SAU engineering machinist Jeff Sumner and to Frankum Royce of Frankum Performance Rocketry, who provided mentorship and ensured all rockets met safety standards.



// Contributed Photo



SOUTHERN ARKANSAS UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE of SCIENCE
and ENGINEERING

SAU Engineering program recredited by ABET

Southern Arkansas University’s Engineering program has officially been recredited by the Engineering Accreditation Commission of ABET, reaffirming its place among top-tier engineering programs worldwide.

This continued accreditation highlights SAU’s ongoing commitment to excellence in engineering education and ensures that the program meets the global standards necessary to prepare graduates for success in critical technical fields. From curriculum to faculty to facilities, the ABET reaccreditation process is a rigorous review of quality and relevance—and SAU’s program once again rose to the challenge.

The reaccreditation marks another proud moment for the University and reinforces its mission to serve the evolving needs of students, industry partners, and the south Arkansas region.



SOUTHERN ARKANSAS UNIVERSITY
DAVID F. RANKIN
COLLEGE of BUSINESS

SAU MBA Student Named to Arkansas Business' 2025 "20 in Their Twenties"



Southern Arkansas University MBA student and ASBTDC business consultant Ben King of Little Rock has been named one of *Arkansas Business'* 2025 New

Influentials: 20 in Their Twenties.

King, who earned his BBA in management from SAU in May 2024, was drawn to the University's small-town charm and the distinguished Rankin College of Business. He began working with the Arkansas Small Business and Technology Development Center (ASBTDC) as a graduate assistant and was hired full-time as a business consultant in February 2025.

"Ben exemplifies the Mulerider spirit," said Janell Reeves, ASBTDC director. "He gets the job done with professionalism, earns high praise, and represents SAU with excellence."

In his role, King provides one-on-one business consulting, market research, and training to entrepreneurs across 11 counties. He also travels the region sharing ASBTDC's free resources with students and businesses.

"I'm honored to represent my family, SAU, and ASBTDC," said King. "To be recognized for making a positive impact is something I'll never forget."

Down to Business

SAU Names Dr. Gerald Plumlee
Dean of Rankin College of Business

BY MARK TROUT

Southern Arkansas University is pleased to announce that Dr. Gerald Plumlee has been named Dean of the Rankin College of Business. He has served as interim dean since June 2024 and now officially assumes the permanent role, following a period of impactful leadership and dedication.

Dr. Plumlee began his career at SAU in 1999 as an instructor of computer information systems and currently holds the rank of associate professor of management. Over his 25-year tenure, he has earned a reputation as a student-centered educator, known for fostering learning beyond the classroom. He holds an Ed.D. in Higher Education from the University of Arkansas at Little Rock and both a BBA and MBA from the University of Central Arkansas.

A hallmark of Plumlee's career is his dedication to experiential learning. He has served as an advisor to nationally recognized student organizations, including FBLA-Collegiate and Enactus, and previously coordinated the College's study abroad programs, leading student trips to Costa Rica and Mexico. This summer, faculty and over 20 students are traveling to Italy and Costa Rica—a testament to the College's growing investment in global experiences.

"We provide a top-notch education, but these experiences outside the classroom make a difference," Plumlee said. "I'm proud of what we've built and excited about what's ahead."

As interim dean, Plumlee successfully led the College through its AACSB Continuous Improvement Review, reaffirming its accreditation for another six years. He has been

involved in AACSB efforts since 2003 and became director of accreditation in 2018. From 2020–2024, he served as associate dean and now continues to contribute to University-wide initiatives as a member of SAU's Quality Leadership Team.

"AACSB accreditation is a mark of excellence," he said. "I'm proud to work alongside a talented group of faculty and staff who make a difference every day."

Looking ahead, Plumlee said the College will begin developing a new strategic plan to guide priorities over the next three to six years. "This process has helped us build successful initiatives in the past, from incorporating new technology to expanding study abroad and career readiness. I'm looking forward to shaping the next chapter."

The Rankin College of Business offers a range of undergraduate and graduate degrees in areas such as accounting, finance, marketing, supply chain management, and information systems. Accredited by AACSB International, the College emphasizes experiential learning, career preparation, and community impact.

"Dr. Plumlee brings a deep understanding of the Rankin College of Business, a strong commitment to student success, and a clear vision for the future," said Dr. Robin Sronce, vice president for academic affairs. "His dedication makes him the right choice to lead the College forward."

"Dr. Plumlee has served SAU with distinction for many years," added SAU President Dr. Bruno Hicks. "His steady guidance as interim dean and commitment to student success make him the clear choice to lead RCB into its next chapter."

"We provide a top-notch education, but these experiences outside the classroom make a difference. I'm proud of what we've built and excited about what's ahead."

Dr. Gerald Plumlee / Dean of Rankin College of Business



A Season to Remember

Mulerider Softball Dominates in 2025

BY JONATHAN BRIGGS

The 2025 Mulerider Softball team delivered one of the most top-tier seasons in program history, finishing with an impressive 43–10 overall record and a stellar 28–4 mark in Great American Conference (GAC) play. Under the leadership of Head Coach Jason Anderson, now entering his 11th year at the helm, Southern Arkansas combined elite-level pitching, timely offense, and disciplined defense to not only capture the GAC Regular Season and Tournament Championships but also earn a berth as a host for the NCAA Central Regional Tournament.

Team 27 made its mark early and often. With a powerful offensive presence, the Muleriders posted a .296 batting average on the year, compiling 424 hits, 45 home runs, and 274 runs scored. Junior outfielder Regan Dillon (.351 AVG, 12 HR, 38 RBIs) and graduate catcher Sophia Stoddard (.350 AVG, .910 OPS) played key roles in driving the team's offensive engine. Their leadership at the plate fueled several big wins throughout the season, including a remarkable 15-run outburst against Southwestern Oklahoma State.

While the offense consistently delivered, it was the Muleriders' dominance in the circle that truly set them apart. Led by senior ace Brinson Rogers, the pitching staff compiled a 1.60 team ERA and allowed just 97 runs across 53 games. Rogers alone accounted for 30 wins, 309 strikeouts, and an astonishing 0.93 ERA over 233.1 innings, recording 18 shutouts and asserting herself as one of the best pitchers in the nation. She was supported by fellow standout Kassie Rhodes, who brought depth and consistency to the rotation, helping suppress opposing offenses all season long.





"Stepping into a program with this much history and legacy is intimidating. I knew from the first day of practice that I had big shoes to fill. In nine short months, I became a better teammate, student, athlete, friend, and daughter. I learned that being a Southern Arkansas Mulerider is more than just the wins; it's the grind, the resilience, the growth, the selflessness. It's about embracing the moment, chasing greatness, and memories to last a lifetime. Many states and miles away from my family, friends, and support systems, I found a place that felt equally like home. Wearing SAU on my chest has been a privilege, and I hope to have left the program even better than I found it."

Sophia Stoddard

Southern Arkansas also spent significant time in the national spotlight. Ranked in the National Fastpitch Coaches Association's (NFCA) Division II Top 25 for the final five weeks of the season, the Muleriders climbed as high as ninth and finished the regular season ranked 12th.

Among the many highlights of the season was a 27-game winning streak—the longest active streak in all divisions of college softball at the time. Though the streak ended in the opener of the final home series against Southeastern Oklahoma State, SAU bounced back to win the final two games, clinching its fifth regular-season conference title and its first outright GAC championship since 2019.

With momentum on their side, the Muleriders entered the GAC Tournament in Bentonville, Arkansas, as the top seed and emerged victorious, claiming

their third tournament title in program history after making a fourth-straight appearance in the championship game.

At the heart of the team's success was the dynamic battery of Brinson Rogers and Sophia Stoddard, whose on-field chemistry and leadership shaped the season's outcome. Rogers' dominance was recognized with a cascade of honors: GAC Pitcher of the Year, NFCA and D2CCA First Team All-Region, D2CCA and NFCA DII National Pitcher of the Year, and First Team All-American. She was also named the Dr. Margaret Downing Female Athlete of the Year and GAC Female Athlete of the Year. Rogers additionally racked up ten GAC Pitcher of the Week nods and four NFCA DII national weekly honors, capping one of the most decorated seasons by a Mulerider pitcher in history.

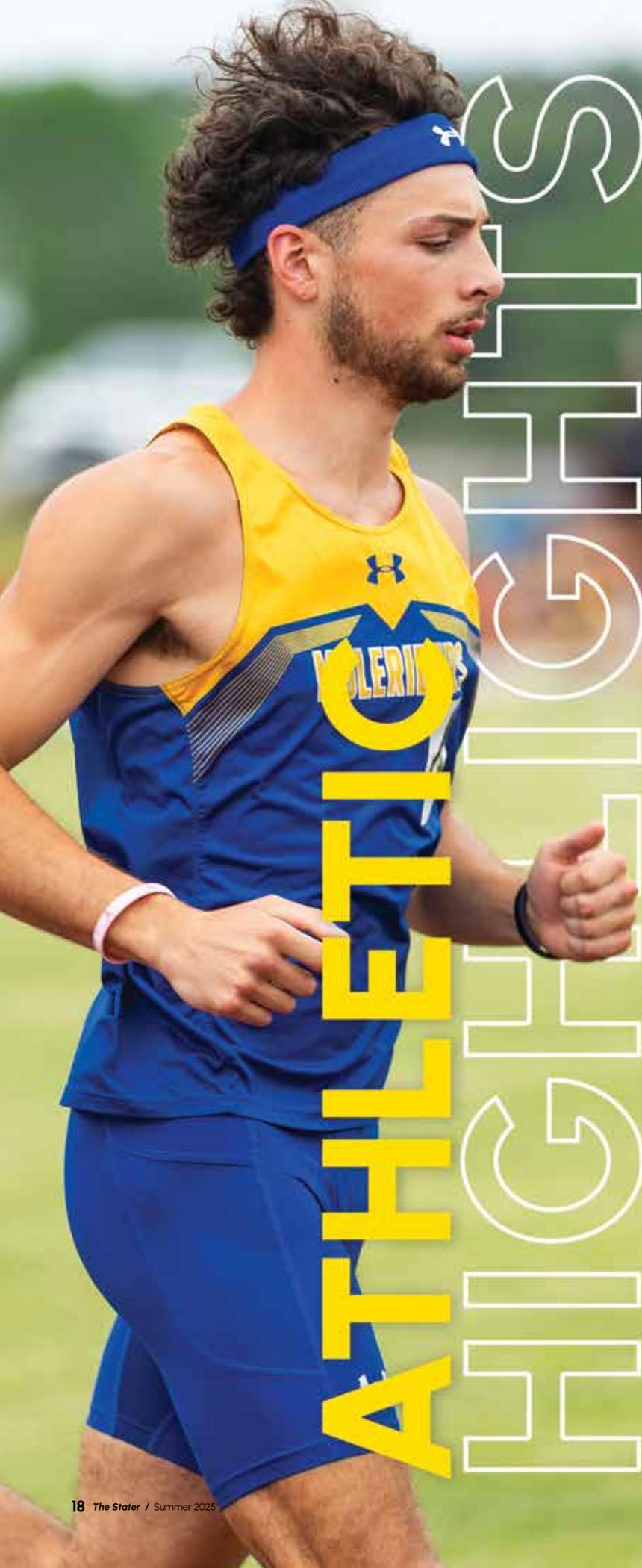
Equally impactful was Stoddard, who had a breakout year behind the plate and in the batter's box. She served as the team's on-field leader, managing the pitching staff with elite instincts, blocking and framing with precision, and making clutch plays in critical moments. Her performance earned her All-GAC Second Team honors, the 2024–25 Mulerider Athletics Female Newcomer of the Year award, and recognition as an NFCA DII Golden Glove recipient.

Together, Rogers and Stoddard anchored one of the most successful Mulerider Softball teams to date. Their excellence set new standards for future teams and etched their names into the program's proud legacy. The 2025 season will be remembered not only for its historic wins and accolades but also for the heart, hustle, and leadership that defined Team 27.

"My time at SAU shaped me into who I am today—on and off the field—and for that, I'll always be grateful. It taught me to be where my feet are, to embrace every moment, and no matter where life takes me, SAU will always feel like home."

Brinson Rogers





Men's Track & Field (Left)

Isaac Gass competes in a long-distance event at the Dan Veach Invitational, showcasing endurance and focus against regional competition.



Women's Track & Field

Diamond Brunn soars through the air during the long jump at the GAC Championships, where she earned All-GAC First Team honors. Brunn went on to finish as a First-Team All-American in the event.



Baseball

Carter Claerhout (#35) celebrates after hitting a home run during a big win over fourth-ranked UT-Tyler, helping lead the Muleriders to a statement victory.



Men's Basketball

Christian Caldwell (#10) throws down a powerful dunk during Senior Day against Ouachita Baptist, igniting the home crowd in a high-energy showdown.

Women's Center for Athletics



Southern Arkansas University has unveiled a mockup of the new Center for Women's Athletics. Demolition of the former Aquatic Center began in February to begin preparing the site for construction. SAU is excited to see this transformative facility come to life as a major step forward in supporting women's athletics on campus.



Women's Basketball

Marlee Bright (#22) threads a pass to senior Te'Quaza Chambers (#1) in a key moment during their victory over Arkansas Tech.



Women's Golf

Brianna Chamoun lines up a putt on the green at Mystic Creek Golf Club during competition at the Arkansas Collegiate.



Women's Tennis

Honoka Yoshimura celebrates after clinching the regular season GAC Championship with a decisive victory over Southeastern Oklahoma State.



Men's Golf

Collin Spangler follows through on a shot during a practice round as he prepares for the Arkansas Collegiate at Mystic Creek Golf Club in El Dorado.



Men's Tennis

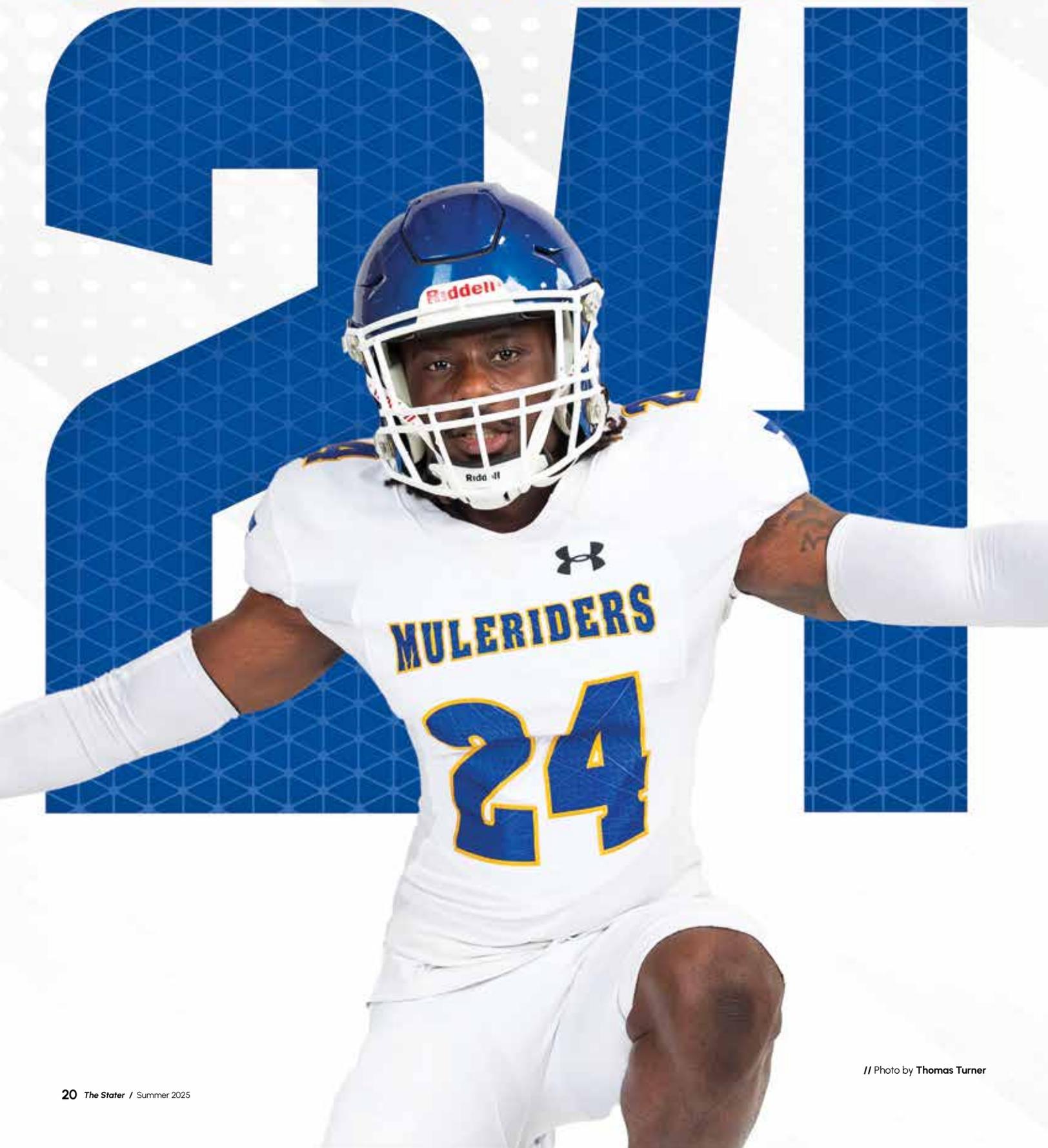
Frode Neumann lines up a backhand shot during a dominant performance in the Muleriders' sweep over Southeastern Oklahoma State.



Volleyball

Mulerider Volleyball earned the AVCA Team Academic Award and was named to the AVCA Team Academic Honor Roll, representing the top 20% of GPAs nationally by division.

THE LEGACY OF NUMBER





Melvin Smith Jr.'s Journey from Wilkins Stadium to the Chiefs

BY JONATHAN BRIGGS

When the Muleriders stepped out onto Rip Powell Field, fans at Wilkins Stadium knew to keep their eyes on No. 24 - Melvin Smith Jr. A standout defensive back for the Muleriders, Smith built a reputation as one of the most consistent and feared defenders in the Great American Conference during his time at SAU.

Smith's career stats speak for themselves. Over the course of his collegiate career, he recorded over 168 total tackles, 9 interceptions, and 46 passes defended.

One of Smith's most memorable seasons came in his junior year, when he tallied 42 total tackles, 4 interceptions, and 24 passes defended

- earning him First Team All-GAC honors. In that same season, Smith's performance tabbed him an All-American, a First Team All-American for the American Football Coaches' Association (AFCA), and he was also named the 2023-24 Auburn Smith Male Athlete of the Year award winner.

Smith was a two-time All-Great American Conference selection and received SAU Defensive Player of the Week honors multiple times throughout his career. The Bossier City, LA native was also tabbed an All-American twice. He also finished in the top five in the GAC for passes defended during both his junior and senior seasons. His durability and consistency were unmatched - starting in over 30

consecutive games and rarely missing a snap.

Now the Bayou State native is working to play at the next level, as Smith was signed to the National Football League's (NFL) Kansas City Chiefs as an undrafted free agent. As of now, Melvin remains with the Chiefs on the team's practice squad.

Melvin Smith Jr. left a lasting legacy at SAU as one of the most productive defensive backs of his era. His combination of athleticism, football IQ, and competitiveness helped define the standard for SAU's secondary during his tenure. For Mulerider fans and alumni, Smith's name remains synonymous with excellence on the defensive side of the ball.

New Digital Display

The newest addition to campus is a vibrant new digital display in front of Greene Hall. This display will serve as a central hub for keeping our campus community informed, engaged, and up to date on important announcements, upcoming events, and campus highlights.

// Photo by **Jessica Greaves**



// Photo by **Thomas Turner**

SAU held a ribbon-cutting ceremony on July 16, 2025, alongside representatives from Farmers Bank & Trust to celebrate this new display on campus. Thank you to Farmers Bank & Trust for making this exciting upgrade possible!



Rooted in Legacy

A reunion of agricultural alumni, tradition, and progress



// Photo by Thomas Turner

"We're always excited to welcome our alumni back home to Southern Arkansas University."

Dr. Connie Wilson / Vice President for Advancement

BY JESSICA GREAVES

On a bright spring day, Southern Arkansas University's Alumni Center came alive with the energy and camaraderie of the inaugural Ag Alumni Day - a special reunion bringing together agriculture alumni from across generations to reconnect with each other and their alma mater.

This first-ever event offered more than just a gathering; it was a celebration of shared passion and progress. Alumni arrived eager to catch up, exchange stories, and reflect on how their experiences at SAU had shaped their personal and professional journeys.

Speakers from both the faculty and agriculture industry shared insights into the latest trends and innovations transforming the field. From advancements in sustainable farming to cutting-edge technology in crop and livestock management, the presentations highlighted how SAU continues to prepare students for success in a rapidly evolving industry.

"The SAU Ag Alumni Day was an opportunity for alumni to reconnect

and reflect on the impact of SAU Agriculture. Muleriders have a strong foundation in hard work, leadership, and sense of community like none other," noted Dr. Copie Moore, chair of SAU's Agriculture department and associate professor of agriculture. "I sincerely appreciated the help of the Ag Alumni Day planning committee, as well as the leadership portrayed by current SAU students and faculty members, in making this event a reality. We are always stronger together, and I hope this is something that we will continue to do."

A key feature of the day was a tour of SAU's agriculture facilities, where alumni witnessed firsthand the University's investment in modern classrooms, research labs, and experimental farms. Demonstrations of new equipment and sustainable practices sparked lively discussions and a sense of pride in how far the program has grown since many of the attendees graduated.

Beyond the formal events, the day was filled with warm conversations and renewed connections - from tales of family farms and agribusiness

ventures to shared hopes for the future of agriculture in Arkansas and beyond. The event underscored the strong, enduring bond between SAU and its agricultural alumni community.

"We're always excited to welcome our alumni back home to Southern Arkansas University," said Dr. Connie Wilson, vice president for Advancement. "The Ag Alumni Day was a wonderful event filled with stories, laughter, and reminiscing. It was a great opportunity to celebrate the rich agricultural heritage that continues to thrive at SAU."

As the first Ag Alumni Day concluded, excitement was already building for what promises to become a cherished tradition. A time to celebrate roots, nurture growth, and come home to the University that helped cultivate it all.



SCAN TO WATCH

Scan the QR code with your smartphone to watch a short video of the event.

A Familiar Face, A New Role

Welcoming Makenzi Hamilton
to Alumni Relations

BY ALLISON COPPERSMITH

The Southern Arkansas University Alumni Association is thrilled to welcome Makenzi Hamilton as the new executive director of Alumni Relations.

A proud two-time graduate of SAU, Hamilton has dedicated more than a decade to serving the University in both academic and administrative roles. From the classroom to the admissions office, her passion for supporting students and building meaningful connections has left a lasting mark on campus.

Hamilton earned her Bachelor of Science in Psychology with a minor in Criminal Justice in 2014, followed by a Master of Education in College Counseling and Student Affairs in 2016. Since then, her journey at SAU has been defined by service and leadership. Most recently, she spent seven years as director of recruitment in the Office of Admissions, where she co-led the President's Ambassadors and helped welcome new generations of Muleriders to campus. She has also served as an academic advisor, admissions counselor, and instructor for key student success courses.

Now, as executive director of Alumni Relations, Hamilton will lead efforts to strengthen engagement between alumni and the University, working closely with the SAUAA Board of Directors and reporting to Dr. Connie Wilson, vice president for Advancement.

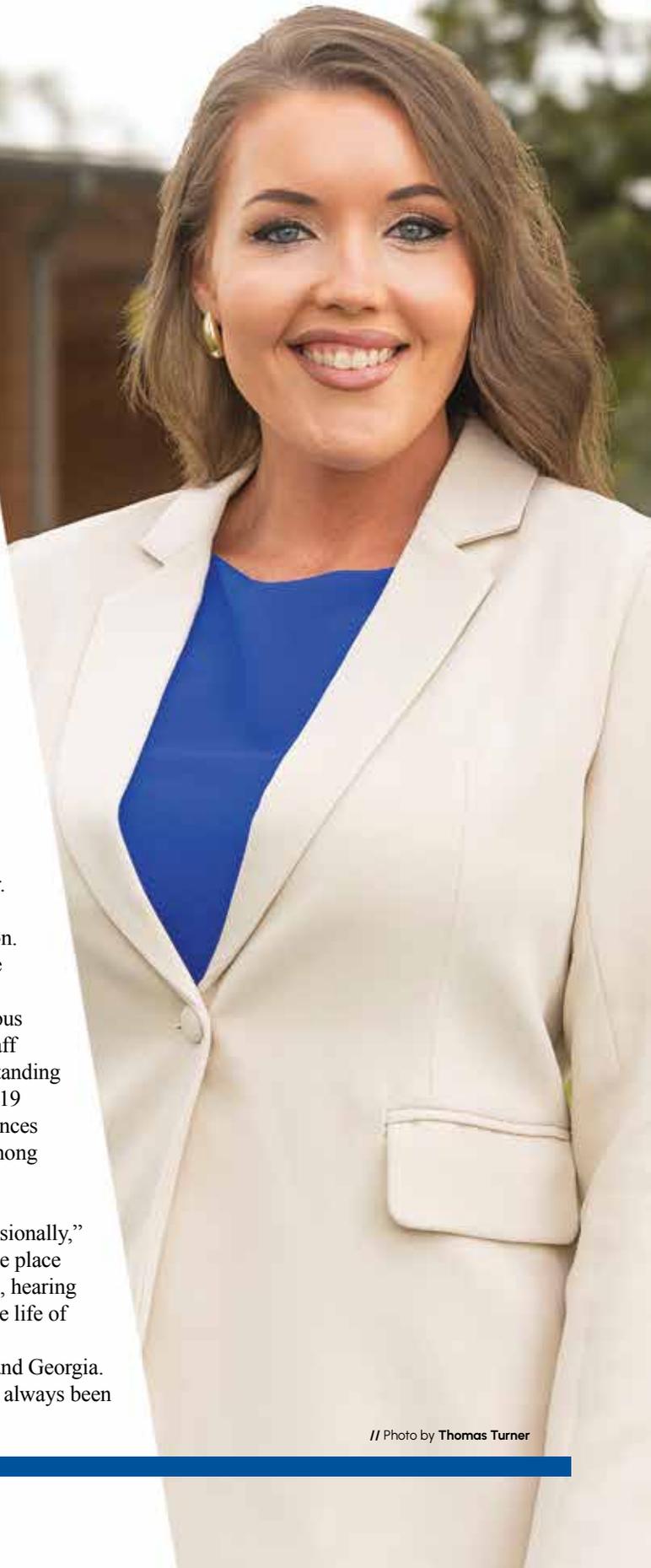
"I'm excited to welcome Makenzi into this new role," said Dr. Wilson. "Her deep love for SAU and her incredible ability to connect with people make her a perfect fit to lead our alumni efforts."

Throughout her time at SAU, Hamilton has been involved in numerous campus initiatives and committees. She has served as president of the Staff Senate, a co-coordinator for the Mulerider mascot program, and a long-standing member of the Miss SAU Board of Directors. A graduate of the 2018–2019 Mulerider L.E.A.D. class, she is also a frequent presenter at state conferences and a proud recipient of the Mary Anna King Staff Excellence Award, among other honors.

For Hamilton, stepping into this new role is a full-circle moment.

"SAU has shaped so much of who I am—both personally and professionally," she shared. "I'm incredibly grateful for the opportunity to give back to the place that has given me so much. I look forward to connecting with our alumni, hearing their stories, and finding meaningful ways for them to stay involved in the life of the University."

Hamilton lives in Magnolia with her two Goldendoodles, Penelope and Georgia. And while her title may be new, her heart for SAU—and its people—has always been a guiding force.



// Photo by Thomas Turner



// Photo by Thomas Turner

Those honored include top row (left to right) Darius Strickland, John Sinclair, Dr. John Alexander, Bill Anderson, and Steven Wiley; Bottom row (left to right) Shanna Singleton-Deitsch, Ashley Talley, and Dr. Donika Kelly.

Distinguished Alumni 2025

The Southern Arkansas University Alumni Association, Inc. honored nine outstanding graduates during its annual Distinguished Alumni Awards Dinner, held May 8, 2025, on the SAU campus. The evening served as a celebration of excellence, bringing together alumni, faculty, students, and community members to recognize the accomplishments of Muleriders who have made significant impacts in their professions and communities.

Honorees were celebrated in four categories. Leland Tollett '56, former Tyson Foods CEO and longtime supporter of agricultural and educational initiatives, received the prestigious Lifetime Achievement Award. Dr. John Alexander '74 and John Sinclair '71 were recognized as Distinguished Golden Muleriders for their enduring commitment to excellence and their contributions over 50 years

since graduating from SAU. The Distinguished Alumni Award was presented to Bill Anderson '81, Shanna Singleton-Deitsch '18, and Dr. Donika Kelly '01, each of whom has demonstrated remarkable leadership and success in their respective fields. Darius Strickland '14 '16, Ashley Talley '09, and Steven Wiley '08 '16 were named Distinguished Young Alumni in recognition of their professional achievements and service to others early in their careers.

The annual dinner continues to be one of the University's signature alumni events, honoring the legacy of Muleriders who exemplify the values of SAU.

Although unable to attend the dinner in person, Leland Tollett shared a video message that was played during the program, offering his gratitude and encouragement to fellow alumni.

// Video by Jessica Greaves



// Photo by Thomas Turner

Dr. Connie Wilson, vice president for Advancement, congratulates the distinguished alumni at the pre-dinner to kick off the special evening.



SCAN TO WATCH

Scan the QR code with your smartphone to watch Leland Tollett's message.

Walk-on FAITH



"I've always said, 'God, family,
and vocation—in that order.'"

Terry "Bo" Ray



// Photo by Jessica Greaves

Terry "Bo" Ray is pictured with his family on Southern Arkansas University's campus. From left, top row: Kristopher, Peter (Mary Katherine's husband), Mary Katherine, Terry "Bo" Ray, Lucy, Elizabeth, and Tommy (Elizabeth's husband). Bottom row: Sofia and Isabella, Bo Ray's granddaughters.

BY RACHEL JENKINS

Terry "Bo" Ray, of Magnolia, AR, understands the impact a scholarship can have on a student's life.

Ray's own life was changed by an athletic scholarship that brought him to Southern Arkansas University, formerly Southern State College, in 1968, where he played football for the Muleriders, was voted captain by his team twice, and helped reclaim the conference title after 20 years.

"I wouldn't be where I am today if it weren't for that scholarship," Ray said, excited to pay it forward to the next generation.

The Terry "Bo" Ray Walk-on Faith Scholarship is designated for a male, football student-athlete with an education-focused degree plan in need of financial assistance.

"I hope the recipient will be proud," said Ray, "and that he'll represent his family, himself, and the high standards of being a Mulerider."

For Ray, family and SAU go hand in hand. His journey to college football began in Marshall, TX, playing sports and shadowing his father Coach J.T. Ray. A World War II veteran, award-winning basketball coach, and former athlete, Ray's father inspired in his son a life-long passion for sports and

coaching.

After graduating from Marshall High School, Ray was encouraged by friends to enroll at Southern State College. The red-shirt scholarship he received in the fall and the football scholarship he was awarded the following spring helped pay his tuition and allowed him to play for the Muleriders. Off of the field, Ray served in the student senate, performed in a production of *South Pacific*, and met his future wife Lucy Martel.

Ray graduated with a BSE with a history minor in 1973 and a MED in 1975. He went on to teach history and health education across the state while coaching football, basketball, baseball, and track. He was offered a principal position for the Magnolia School District, where he stayed for 18 years. Ray also served as a superintendent for rural school districts, including Stephens, McNeil, and Dierks.

After 35 years as a teacher, coach, and administrator, Ray returned to SAU as an assistant professor in the Educational Leadership program.

Everyone in the Ray family is proud of their SAU ties. His wife, Lucy Martel Ray, is also an SAU alum, along with their three children—Kristopher and twin daughters

Elizabeth and Mary Katherine. In fact, it was Ray's family who established the Terry "Bo" Ray Walk-on Faith Scholarship in his honor and revealed it for his 70th birthday.

"It was a tremendous gift," Ray said. "I got pretty emotional."

To alumni interested in giving back, Ray encourages them to take the step: "It's one of the best things you can do—to give back to the University that's given so much to you."

Ray is a member of the Arkansas Association of Educational Administrators, a lifetime member of the Arkansas Activities Association, an SAU Mulerider Club Advisory Board member and former president, a two-term member of the SAU Foundation, Superintendent Emeritus of Arkansas Public Schools, and a Paul Harris member of the Magnolia Rotary Club. He was a member of the Columbia County SAU Tech Literacy Council Board and always a proud sponsor of Fellowship of Christian Athletes.

Ray recently celebrated his 50th wedding anniversary with wife Lucy. The couple are enjoying their retirement in Magnolia, AR, and spend as much time as they can with their grandchildren.

CLASS NEWS

1970-1979



• **Jamie Bridges '79** was inducted into the Arkansas High School Coaches Association Hall of Fame. He was a teacher and basketball, swimming, and tennis coach at Lake Hamilton from 1988 to 2015.

1980-1989



• **Quazi Anwar Karim '87** became the vice president of information technology at the American College of Financial Services.

1990-1999



• **Angela Elliott '90** earned certification in early childhood special education and elementary education. She is an early childhood special education teacher at the Raymore-Peculiar School District.



• **Eric Sixbey '92** celebrated 10 years of employment as the director of tennis at the Pleasant Valley Country Club in Little Rock. He played tennis during his time at SAU.



• **Erica Woods '93** became an adjunct clinical instructor at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock (UALR) and Harding University. She teaches and mentors students in their clinical rotations at two Little Rock hospitals.



• **John Launius '94** accepted a position as the offensive coordinator/quarterback coach at Lamar Consolidated High School near Houston.



• **Jason Lynn '95** started a new position as brand marketing manager at Hosa Technology, Inc.



• **Dana Howell-Perkins '97** is the oncology wellness coordinator at the Lindig Family Cancer Resource Center at Memorial Hermann Memorial City Medical Center in Houston.



• **Chris Coker '98, '03** became a trendsetter in Vernier software and technology education, was elected to the Arkansas Science Teachers Association Executive Board, and was invited to serve as the early table leader and reader for the College Board's AP Chemistry exam scoring.



• **Tracy L. Campbell '99** was recently named Minden Man of the Year during the 83rd Annual Greater Minden Chamber Membership Awards Gala held in Minden, La. He was recognized for his professional accomplishments, leadership, and community service.

2000-2009



• **Joy Higdon '00** obtained her doctorate in educational leadership, superintendent cognate from Texas A&M University – Texarkana. She became the principal at Mountain Pine High School.



• **Jonathan Baird '01** celebrated 20 years of dedicated service at Peoples Bank. He is the chief financial officer.



• **William Trey LaValle '01 '03** led the Bentonville West High School boys and girls powerlifting teams to state championships. The boys' team has won back-to-back championships, and the girls' team won the championship in the first year of competition.



• **Haley Beavert '04** became the director of special programs at the Cabot School District. She has been in education for 27 years.



• **Jessica Yarbrough '04 '21** was named a Julius Riley and presidential scholar in the Doctor of Ministry program at Nazarene Theological Seminary for academic achievement and ministry contributions.



• **Mary Green '06** opened All Things Local, a retail store focusing on handmade goods from local crafters and artisans around the Magnolia area.



• **Emily Jester '07 '11** became the associate director of development – annual giving at SAU.



• **Sara Landaverde '07** earned her Ph.D. in English from Texas A&M University – Commerce, now East Texas A&M University.



• **Jeremy Whittaker '09** was selected as a 2025 Fellow for the prestigious Historically Black Colleges and Universities Executive Leadership Institute (HBCU ELI) at Clark Atlanta University.

2010-2019



• **Michael Flanagan '10 '12** became the head coach of cheer and dance at Texas A&M University – Texarkana.



• **Matt Sandifer '11 '24** was named the head coach of the 2025 West All-Star baseball team by the Arkansas High School Coaches Association (AHSCA).



• **Caylie Lambert '12** opened her business, Caylie Lambert Styling. She is also a realtor for Southern Realty Group.



• **Micah McCartney '13** won first place in the Texas Press Association's Better Newspaper Contest for Sports Coverage. He is the sports editor for the Wise County Messenger in Decatur, Tx.



• **Breanne Chambers '14 '18** was promoted as a partner with Evers, Cox, and Gober PLLC.



• **Makenzi Hamilton '14 '16** was named the executive director of Alumni Relations at SAU.



• **Jaela Talley '14 '17** was promoted to vice president of innovation and branch management at Peoples Bank.



• **Florence Meadors '15 '24** was named the program manager of the Lithium Regional Innovation Cluster (LRIC). In this role, she leads efforts to drive clean energy innovation and economic growth across the region. She is also an adjunct professor at the Rankin College of Business at SAU.



• **Robert Ellis '16** received his Ed.D. in Adult and Lifelong Learning from the University of Arkansas.



• **Mason Powers '16** started a new position as an insurance company analyst at the Iowa Insurance Division.



• **Emanuel Dixon '17 '20** was featured in the *Southwest Arkansas Top 40 Under 50* article. He is an academic advisor at the University of Arkansas at Hope–Texarkana.



• **Chika Idodo '17** earned her medical degree from the New York Institute of Technology College of Osteopathic Medicine (NYITCOM) at Arkansas State University.



• **Ashley Vickers '17** earned her medical degree from the New York Institute of Technology College of Osteopathic Medicine (NYITCOM) at Arkansas State University.



• **Amanda Chewing '18 '21** received the 2024 Staff Excellence Award at Texas A&M University – Central Texas. She is the senior coordinator for career and professional development.



• **Chioma Akolam '19** is a financial analyst for Goldman Sachs in Dallas.



• **Katy Matamoros '19** was selected as the 2024-2025 Teacher of the Year at Theron Jones Early Literacy Center in Texarkana.



• **Austen Wood '19** started a new position as the senior reliability engineer at Domtar.

2020-2025



• **Kylande Stewart '20** was honored as the 2025 Teacher of the Year by the Hope Rotary Club Teacher Appreciation Banquet. She is a teacher at Clinton Primary School in Hope, Ar.



• **Joanna Graham '21** was promoted to FP&A manager at RTX – Collins Aerospace.



• **Karlee Carmony-Davis '22** graduated from the University of Tennessee Health Science Center in Memphis with her M.S. in pharmacology. She was accepted into the inaugural class of the very first dental school in the state of Arkansas, Lyon College School of Dental Medicine, where she will attend to obtain her Ph.D. in dental medicine.



• **Cameron Gonzaque '22** started a new position as the operations manager L6 at Amazon.



• **Drew Henry '22 '24** was selected to serve as a Summer Education Policy Fellow for the Office of State Representative Ana-Maria Rodriguez Ramos in Austin, Tx. He also completed his two-year commitment with Teach For America, was officially inducted into the alumni hood, and received a community impact award for my service and commitment to anti-racist teacher leadership here in Dallas.



• **Kendall Reid '22 '24** became a software engineer at Oracle in Austin, Tx.



• **Madelynn West '22** was named one of twelve Emerging Creatives through United States Institute of Theatre Technology (USITT), awarded 1st Place in Graduate Lighting Design and 3rd Place in Sustainability in Production at Southeastern Theatre Conference (SETC) for their design of Reefer Madness at Indiana University, and was a part of Hemsley Lighting Portfolio Review in NYC where they received feedback from Broadway professionals.



• **Candis Caddenhead '23** is the assistant band director at Redwater ISD in Redwater, Tx.



• **Mariah Kelly '23 '24** became an academic advisor at South Arkansas Community College.



• **Lisbeth Bello '24** became the talent search student development specialist for TRIO at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock. She was also accepted into the doctoral program for rural and diverse educational leadership at SAU.



• **Wyatt Fain '24** became the senior associate quality engineer at Aerojet Rocketdyne and L3Harris subsidiary in Camden. He will assist in the production and sale of missile motors.



• **Madison Martin '24** became the director of gifts and records management at UAMS.



• **Harley Warren '25** accepted a position as the forage program technician with the University of Arkansas Extension Forages.

Weddings



• **Keith '09 and Melissa (Lambert) Beason '11 '13** were married on July 13, 2024.



• **Jarrett '25 and Lacey (McCoy) Bell '23** were married on October 26, 2024.



• **Grant '21 and Jordan (Wylie) Brumley '19** were married on October 5, 2024.



• **Peyton '24 and Karlee (Carmony) Davis '22** were married on October 12, 2024.



• **Michael and Mara Beth (Moore) Sibille '20** were married on March 9, 2025.



• **Ethan and Mercedes (Parrish) Slider '16** were married on October 5, 2024.

Little Muleriders®



• **Freddie and Brittany (Carr) Barnett '10** announce the birth of their daughter, Kayleigh Brionne Barnett, born on May 25, 2025. She weighed 6 lbs. 14 oz. and was 20 inches long.



• **Keith '09 and Melissa (Lambert) Beason '11 '13** announce the birth of their son, Miles Thomas Otto Beason, born on April 14, 2025. He weighed 8 lbs. 7 oz. and was 19 ¼ inches long.



• **Colton '23 and Avery (Goff) Cowart '23** announce the birth of their son, Casen Lane Cowart, born on January 1, 2025. He weighed 7 lbs. 5 oz. and was 19.5 inches long.



• **Skip and Autumn (Collins) Crawford '15 '17** announce the birth of their daughter, Azriel Crawford, born on October 24, 2024.



• **Timothy '22 and Sarah (Campbell) Dudley '21 '24** announce the birth of their daughter, Susanna Jo Dudley, born on May 21, 2025. She weighed 7 lbs. 2 oz. and was 20 ¼ inches long.

• **Michael '10 '12 and Lindsey Flanagan** announce the birth of their son, Camden James Flanagan, born on March 19, 2025.



• **Jordan and Kaitlyn (Reiner) McGinley '17** announce the birth of their daughter, Harper Wren McGinley, born on March 25, 2025. She weighed 7 lbs. 7 oz. and was 20 ½ inches long.



• **Mason '16 and Jessica (Arnold) Powers '15** announce the birth of their daughter, Briar Renee Powers, born on November 25, 2024. She weighed 8 lbs. 7 oz.



• **Briston '23 and Carley (Hale) Rains '21 '23** announce the birth of their daughter, Bryleigh Marie Rains, born on October 1, 2024. She weighed 10 lbs.



• **Braydon '21 and Victoria (Taylor) Todd '20 '22** announce the birth of their son, Ryker Lewis Todd, born on September 6, 2024. He weighed 7 lbs. 12 oz. and was 20 ¾ inches long.

Obituaries

1940-1949

• **Thomas Howard "Speedy" Bradley '42**
May 1, 2025

1950-1959

• **Mary Fallin '50**
February 16, 2025
• **Ruth Lowdermilk '53**
April 10, 2025
• **Charles Ainsworth '55**
April 10, 2025
• **Dee Chaffin Gunnels '55**
March 10, 2025

• **James L. Reddell '55**
May 20, 2025
• **Elizabeth Baker Cheatham '57**
July 8, 2025
• **Cecil Yates Jr. '57**
March 25, 2025

1960-1969

• **Bobbie Rea Powell '60**
May 16, 2025
• **Patsy Lou Sullivan '60**
May 1, 2025
• **Jerry Wayne Camp '61**
February 28, 2025
• **Barbara Allen Scroggs '62**
April 1, 2025
• **Patsy Ann Stevens '63**
February 15, 2025
• **Douglas Peace '64**
April 5, 2025
• **Larry Earl Cottrell '65**
February 5, 2025
• **Margaret Hinson Nelson '66**
May 9, 2025
• **Barbara Dean Wilson White '67**
July 14, 2025
• **Carol Lea Fincher '68**
April 11, 2025

• **Deronda Clements Goodman '68**
March 11, 2025
• **Perry L. Toombs '68**
May 24, 2025
• **Paul H. Whitley '68**
February 27, 2025
• **Mavis Watson Housley '69**
February 8, 2025

1970-1979

• **Linda Gayle Baremore '70**
March 14, 2025

• **Graden Earl Hall '71**
April 28, 2025
• **Robert "Bobby" Allen Jackson '71**
March 31, 2025
• **Eddie Corbett '73**
February 26, 2025
• **Jerry Wayne Walker '74**
June 25, 2025
• **David Bost '75**
November 24, 2024
• **Jo Lynn Stoker '76**
March 14, 2025
• **Willie Lee Pree, Jr. '77**
April 3, 2025

• **Harold Green '78**
March 19, 2025

1980-1989

• **Melinda Jo Palmer '83**
May 22, 2025
• **Randal Lee Maness '86**
March 27, 2025
• **Rebecca "Becky" Lynn Strange '87**
April 4, 2025
• **Shirley Barbaree Cherry '89**
May 2, 2025
• **Kimberly Wilson Wyrick '89**
May 25, 2025

1990-1999

• **Thomas Russell '94**
April 27, 2025
• **Shepard Jerome Green '95**
February 9, 2025
• **James David Hearnberger '95**
May 23, 2025
• **Lisa Priscilla Cook '96**
April 4, 2025
• **Sylvia Henley '96**
June 1, 2025
• **Laurie Russell '97**
April 29, 2025
• **Virginia Sue Watson Terry '99**
June 1, 2025

2000-2009

• **Holly B. Attaway '06**
May 28, 2025

2010-2019

• **Mark David Evans '11**
January 20, 2025
• **Staff, Faculty, Students & Friends**
• **Bettie Clark**
February 11, 2025
• **Nancy Anne Moore**
March 29, 2025





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