

# The Stater

A Magazine for the Alumni and Friends of Southern Arkansas University



CELEBRATING **SUCCESS**

Story on page 7

## It takes all of us, all the time!

Shortly after I became SAU president in 2015, Dr. Katherine Berry came home one day after a busy and productive day and astutely proclaimed that she realized that to keep our University healthy, “It takes all of us, all the time.”

She was so correct!

Her quote stuck with me, each and every day, these past eight years. Each day, as SAU moves forward with strength and innovation, we do so because “all of us” are working together in a shared mission. That mission is to continue building a nurturing learning environment and a vibrant and strong campus community.

Of course, the “all of us” includes our faculty, staff, alumni and friends who provide their ideas, resources, time, and talents to make this campus so very special and unique. In other words – the broader Mulerider Family.

That shared mission of working hard and smart together has produced a milestone for SAU this past academic year – a record 1,956 graduates. There cannot be a more significant symbol of success on a university campus than watching almost two thousand Muleriders achieve their dreams and aspirations.

As we strive to improve our University, let us never lose sight of the fact that it will always take “all of us, all the time.”

Thank you for being a part of the Mulerider Family – we treasure you!

Sincerely,



Trey Berry, Ph.D.  
President

## UPCOMING EVENTS

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**August 22**

Blue and Gold Day

**August 31**

SAU vs. Southeastern Oklahoma  
State Univ., Home Football Game

**September 21**

Giving Day

**September 23**

Family Day, SAU vs. Arkansas Tech  
Univ., Home Football Game

**October 6**

Athletic Hall of Fame

**October 7**

Homecoming, SAU vs. Oklahoma  
Baptist Univ., Home Football Game

**October 12-13**

Fall Break

**October 21**

SAU vs. Harding Univ., Murphy USA  
Classic in El Dorado, AR

**October 27**

RCB Hall of Fame Induction

**October 28**

SAU vs. Southwestern Oklahoma  
State Univ., Home Football Game

**November 2-4**

SAU Rodeo

**November 11**

SAU vs. Univ. of Arkansas at  
Monticello., Home Football Game

**November 16-19**

SAU Theatre's production of  
*Dogfight*

**November 30**

Celebration of Lights

**December 15**

Fall Commencement

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



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## The Stater

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

**Submissions:** Please send any story ideas and/or photographs to [stater@saumag.edu](mailto:stater@saumag.edu).

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# IT'S TIME FOR TACOS!

Southern Arkansas University is welcoming the highly anticipated arrival of Tacos 4 Life, the first Tacos 4 Life establishment to grace a public college campus in our great nation. This culinary gem will leave taco enthusiasts at SAU and the Magnolia community craving more.

Founded by the passionate duo Ashton and Austin Samuelson of Conway, Tacos 4 Life was born out of a noble mission to combat hunger. Their remarkable vision aligns harmoniously with SAU's commitment to service, making this partnership a natural fit.

At the heart of Tacos 4 Life lies a simple yet impactful philosophy - for each meal sold, one is donated. Each taco, quesadilla, salad, and rice bowl on the menu translates to \$0.29 in donations to Feed My Starving Children, according to the Tacos 4 Life website. Feed My Starving Children uses the money to distribute rice packs to children in need.

With heartfelt gratitude, SAU President Dr. Trey Berry expressed his appreciation for the fruitful negotiations that commenced in November of 2022, now culminating in an exciting opportunity for SAU students and the wider community. "This partnership not only expands dining options but also allows students to make a meaningful difference in the lives of children worldwide, empowering them to become agents of positive change," Berry noted.

To introduce Tacos 4 Life to the campus, Tacos 4 Life hosted a Kick-Off Party in front of the Reynolds Center and gave everyone a taste of what is to come. On the first day alone, SAU and the Magnolia community fed over 400 meals to starving children in need through the Tacos 4 Life Meal 4 Meal program. To say the celebration was a success is an understatement!

Aramark Food Services and SAU have been working diligently to enhance the culinary landscape on campus, and the addition of Tacos 4 Life is a remarkable achievement. This new establishment will offer fresh and award-winning meal options in the Bruce Center's food court.



# "It takes all of us, all the time!"

- Dr. Katherine Berry

At Southern Arkansas University, it takes all of us, all the time to ensure our students get the best experience possible. Therefore, it is important to take a moment to honor and recognize the dedicated individuals who work tirelessly behind the scenes at SAU, contributing to the seamless functioning of our University and enriching the lives of our students. From maintaining our campus' beautiful buildings and greenery to ensuring student success in the library, and crafting delicious meals to serve our students, their commitment, hard work, and attention to detail do not go unnoticed, and their daily impact is invaluable.

## SAU Physical Plant

SAU's Physical Plant works diligently to keep our campus looking pristine and functioning smoothly. These unsung heroes work tirelessly to ensure that our buildings are well-maintained, our grounds are beautifully landscaped, and our classrooms are clean and ready for learning. Their dedication to creating a safe and inviting environment for our students, faculty, and staff is truly commendable.

## Magale Library

Magale Library's staff also plays a vital role in supporting student success and academic excellence. They work diligently to curate a vast collection of resources, both physical and digital, to meet the diverse needs of our students. From helping students navigate research databases to organizing informative workshops and events, these individuals go above and beyond to ensure that our students have access to the knowledge and tools necessary for their intellectual growth and development.

## Administrative Support Staff

The administrative and support staff keep the University running like a well-oiled machine. From managing finances and budgets to coordinating events and providing administrative support, these individuals are the backbone of our institution. Their organizational skills, attention to detail, and unwavering commitment to excellence help create a seamless experience for everyone at SAU.

## SAU Dining Services

Day in and day out, SAU Dining Services works tirelessly to provide delicious and nutritious meals for our students. From creating diverse menus to accommodate various dietary needs to maintaining high standards of food quality and safety, these individuals play a crucial role in ensuring that our students are well-nourished and satisfied.





# Celebrating SUCCESS

**SAU Celebrates Record-Breaking Graduation Year:**  
1,956 Graduates Emerge as Leaders

by Jessica Greaves

Southern Arkansas University has reached new heights in the 2022-2023 academic year, proudly celebrating the graduation of 1,956 talented individuals. This remarkable milestone stands as a testament to SAU's unwavering commitment to academic excellence, innovative programs, and the nurturing environment it provides to its students. As these graduates receive their hard-earned diplomas, they signify the culmination of years of dedication, perseverance, and growth within the SAU community. SAU's diverse and dynamic campus has attracted students from across the nation and around the globe, creating a vibrant multicultural community that fosters creativity, collaboration, and intellectual exploration. This record-breaking graduation year reflects the University's continued dedication to providing an exceptional education and preparing graduates to excel in their chosen fields. As they embark on their future endeavors, the SAU community takes immense pride in their achievements and eagerly anticipates the positive impact they will make on the world, carrying the spirit and values of SAU wherever they go.



Photo by Thomas Turner  
2023 Spring Graduation



## College of Education and Human Performance



Dr. John R. Jones

- Dr. John R. Jones was named Dean of the College of Education and Human Performance.
- The SAU Department of Teacher Education partnered with two school districts in spring 2023 to pilot fully-paid teacher residencies. Of the 18 residents who participated in the launch, 16 were hired in the district where they completed a residency or a district closer to where they live.



Juanita Harris '10 '13

- SAU alumna Juanita Harris '10 '13 was named the 2022-2023 Arkansas Education Association Teacher of the Year. Harris is a candidate for the National Education Association Foundation Award for Teaching Excellence in 2024.
- The SAU Educator Rising Club participated in the Educator Rising State Conference at Arkansas State University. Our Teacher Education students presented on the college panel and served as judges for high school competitions.
- Wyatt Forthman, Zach Mauldin, Chloe Wilbanks, Cailynn Simms, and Dawson Hurford earned their Exercise Oncology Instructor certification through SAU's partnership with Maple Tree Cancer Alliance in Dr. Keith Pfannenstiel's Exercise Prescription class.

- Two CEHP faculty received doctoral degrees. Dr. Arien Faucett completed her Ph.D. in Kinesiology with an emphasis in Sport Pedagogy from the University of Southern Mississippi. Dr. Stacey Stanberry completed her Ed.D. in Curriculum and Instruction from Liberty University.
- Ben Stein was named Department of Human Performance and Sport Sciences Outstanding Student and awarded the Outstanding Student Award for the College of Education and Human Performance.
- Dr. Jessica Samples '04 '06 presented a poster session titled "Understanding Administrator Perceptions of Transition Education for Students with Disabilities" at the National Council for Exceptional Children Convention in Louisville, Kentucky.
- Two SAU students will join physical therapy programs. Ty Bowring '21 was accepted into the UT-Southwestern Physical Therapy program. Hannah Waller was accepted into the University of Louisiana Monroe Physical Therapy program.



Jan Kiilsgaard

- Jan Kiilsgaard was inducted into the Arkansas Athletic Trainers' Association 2023 Hall of Fame on April 22, 2023. The Arkansas Athletic Trainers' Association Hall of Fame exists to recognize the very best of the athletic training profession in Arkansas.

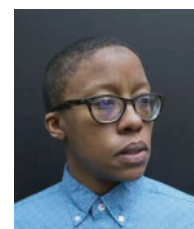
## Dempsey College of Liberal and Performing Arts

- SAU psychology students Nohelia Garcia and Brianna Schulz raised over \$4,000 for Compassions, Inc.
- SAU student Grace Walker was accepted to the Spotlight on Opera summer program held in Shreveport, Louisiana.
- Dr. James Ulmer published his short story "Tucker's Story" in *The Saturday Evening Post*.



Two faculty and twenty-seven SAU students traveled to the Arkansas State Capitol.

- SAU social work students attended Lobby Day at the Arkansas General Assembly in February. Students toured the General Assembly, attended legislative meetings, interacted with social workers from across the state and witnessed the voting process.



Dr. Donika Kelly

- Award-winning author Dr. Donika Kelly spoke at the Dr. Kathleen Mallory Distinguished Lecture series in February. Dr. Kelly is the author of "The Renunciations," winner of the Anisfield-Wolf book award in poetry. Annual resources for the lecture are provided through the Mallory Lectureship Endowment.



Matt Birbeck

- Matt Birbeck, award-winning investigative journalist, bestselling author and executive producer of the hit Netflix film *Girl in the Picture*, gave the Emerson-Thomas-Crone lecture in March. The Emerson-Thomas-Crone Lecture in Humanities is funded through an SAU Foundation Endowment.





Dr. Jennifer Rowsam '03

- Dr. Jennifer Rowsam '03 was appointed Dean of the Dempsey College of Liberal and Performing Arts.



Dr. Svetlana Paulson in Russia

- Dr. Svetlana Paulson published "Face to Face with the Tsars' Capital: American Diplomats and Urban Spectatorship in Imperial St. Petersburg" in the prestigious *Journal of Russian-American Studies*.



Governor Sarah Huckabee Sanders signed the Seizure Safe School Act into law.

- MPA student Dominique Brown made Arkansas schools safer for students with epilepsy through the passage of the Seizure Safe School Act, Bill 1325, on March 16, 2023. Arkansas is the 20th state in the country to pass the bill and the first in the nation to include a student education component.



Dimettera Nicole Frazier '10

- SAU alumna Dimettera Nicole Frazier '10 made history as the first woman and the first woman of color to be elected mayor pro tempore in Springhill, LA.

## Rankin College of Business



Meg Molleston, President and CEO of GeoSouthern Energy Partners GP, LLC speaks with business students.

- SAU hosted the RCB Leaders Conference in February, inviting alumni and community business professionals in executive positions "home" to share their path to success with students. The theme of the conference was "People, Purpose, and Passion: The Pathway to Success."



- SAU students attended the FBLA Collegiate State Leadership Conference in Little Rock, AR. They won 24 awards, more than any other FBLA-Collegiate chapter in the state. Of the 31 SAU students who competed, 19 won awards and are eligible to represent Arkansas at the FBLA-Collegiate National Leadership Conference in Atlanta, GA, in June.



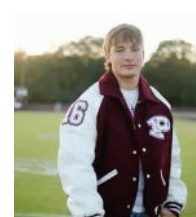
- RCB hosted the second annual SOAR Sustainability Conference in April. Keynote speaker Hallie Shoffner, a sixth-generation row crop farmer in Jackson County, AR, spoke about the effects of climate change on food supply and steps citizens can take to help.
- Under the supervision of NaTashia Riley, SAU's Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Program (VITA) students assisted over 120 community members with filing their taxes for free. Not only did SAU students save community members hundreds of dollars in fees, but they helped them secure \$121,525 in tax refunds.

## College of Science and Engineering

- Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board approved the stand-alone degree for mechanical engineering. Dr. David Lanoue said, "Our industry partners in engineering have urged us to offer a pure mechanical engineering program because they are in desperate need of mechanical engineers."



- The Cinda Hallman scholarship was awarded to four incoming freshmen women in the college of science and engineering: Sophy Tyson of Hope, AR; Emily Leyden of Lewisville, TX; Julia DeSalvo of Center Ridge, AR; and Kelli Minge of Cabot, AR.



- The NORCO SAU Dean E.E. Graham scholarship was awarded to incoming engineering major freshman Carston Poole of Prescott, AR. Along with studying engineering, Poole has committed to joining the Mulerider baseball team. The scholarship is funded through the Edna Cook Norvell estate to honor the memory of Dean E.E. Graham.



Scholarship recipient Ashlei Johnson with Joey Baker in front of the SAU Nursing building.

- Nursing major Ashlei Johnson received the Joey Baker-Emerson, Arkansas Scholarship. Johnson aims to further her education post-graduation by enrolling in a masters of nursing program. She hopes to work on the medical-surgical floor of a hospital as well as pursue travel nursing.



- Arkansas Space Grant Consortium board voted to fund Dr. Gija Geme, Dr. Tim Schroeder and Dr. Copie Moore on a joint venture to explore the feasibility of growing crops in a Mars soil simulant. The team received NASA funding of \$50,000 to measure heavy metal uptake by plants using Inductively Coupled Plasma (ICP) Spectroscopy analysis.



# SAU's NEW DEANS



“ The Education and Human Performance programs at SAU have a rich history, and the strength of its faculty must be leveraged in the pursuit of national recognition which can bring notoriety and additional sources of funding. ”

## Dr. John Jones

Dean of the College of Education and Human Performance

Dr. John R. Jones has been appointed to serve as Dean of the College of Education and Human Performance, effective July 1, 2023.

A seasoned academic administrator, Dr. Jones has held many positions in higher education. Most recently, he was professor and Director of Master of Arts in Teaching at Southern Nazarene University. He has served as Dean of the College of Education at the University of Arkansas, Fort Smith, and as a Clinical Professor of Educational Leadership and Program Area Coordinator at the University of Oklahoma. From 1999-2004, Dr. Jones supported Muleriders as Professor and Dean of Graduate Studies at SAU.

“I am super excited to return to SAU because the people are great to work with. Out of the six universities where I’ve

been employed, SAU is the best place I have ever worked,” said Jones.

Dr. Jones has published numerous articles on effective leadership, teacher evaluation, and students’ assessment of teacher quality. In 2020 Dr. Jones and his student assistant Misty Henry published *Redefining Instructional Leadership: The Skills and Energy Required of an Instructional Leader*, a book which argues that successful leaders’ first responsibility is to build relationships with their staff.

Dr. Jones is eager to bring faculty together to advance the University’s mission.

Dr. Jones holds a B.S. in Music Education from East Central University, an M.M.Ed. in Music Education from the University of Oklahoma, and an Ed.D. in Educational Leadership from Oklahoma State University.



“ The faculty are dedicated to an excellent student learning experience and are energetic and passionate about the liberal arts. ”

## Dr. Jennifer Rowsam '03, '06

Dean of the Dempsey College of Liberal and Performing Arts

Dr. Jennifer Rowsam '03, '06 has been named Dean of the Dempsey College of Liberal and Performing Arts, effective July 1, 2023.

As Associate Provost for Institutional Effectiveness and Strategic Planning, Dr. Rowsam has coordinated continuous quality improvement, accreditation, assessment, program review, strategic planning, and registration processes at the University. She played a key role in the reaccreditation of SAU’s Social Work, Nursing, and Teacher Education programs. Dr. Rowsam has provided oversight for institutional research, concurrent education, professional advising in the academic colleges, and the University’s stop-out program. She has also assisted with compliance, catalog revisions, and retention/completion initiatives.

As an Assistant Professor of Psychology, Dr. Rowsam

has a reputation for being a highly effective and popular teacher, frequently bringing her students into the research process. She is also a certified Quality Matters peer reviewer.

“The future looks excellent for the Dempsey College of Liberal and Performing Arts!” Dr. Rowsam said. “The faculty are dedicated to an excellent student learning experience and are energetic and passionate about the liberal arts. They are known for being creative and have pursued innovative programs to meet the needs of our students.”

Dr. Rowsam holds a B.S. in Psychology and a M.Ed. in College Student Affairs from SAU and a Ph.D. in Psychology from Northcentral University. She has published numerous articles and reports and is an active participant at professional conferences.



# FACULTY AND STAFF SPOTLIGHT



“ Dr. Schroeder has represented the best of the SAU faculty for decades, and he continues to have an active impact upon the academic structure and function of this campus. ”

- Fellow Chemistry Colleague

## Dr. Tim Schroeder - Faculty

Associate Professor and Department Chair - Department of Biochemistry and Chemistry

Tim Schroeder earned his PhD in analytical chemistry in 1999 and began his career at SAU in 2000 as the Director of Institutional Research while also teaching chemistry lecture courses as an adjunct instructor.

In 2003, Dr. Schroeder was hired as a faculty member in the Department of Biochemistry and Chemistry where he currently serves as associate professor and department chair. At SAU, he has taught a variety of chemistry courses. Students strongly desire the instructional experience provided by his classroom. His ability to effectively teach analytical, organic, and other chemistry courses is well-respected by students, faculty, and area medical and industrial employers.

Dr. Schroeder's campus impact is also evident in the science facilities at SAU. His work with the administration,

architects, and contractors was critical in the construction of the Science Center and the Natural Resources Research Center (NRRC). He served as the first NRRC director from 2010-2012 and has continued to serve as Senior Analyst since 2012, working with the director to train undergraduate researchers on all aspects of instrumentation at the facility.

Beyond the classroom and laboratory, Dr. Schroeder has served the campus community in many ways. He has been elected to the Faculty Senate for 12 years, including two terms as its president. He has been the faculty advisor for the Chemistry Club for many years, organizing overnight trips and activities to help chemistry majors form lasting relationships. He has also delivered memorable moments for campus visitors through his fun and exciting chemistry demonstration shows.



“ It was a lot of work, but it's instant gratification. You can see the difference you've made immediately. ”

## Carmen "Corky" Fantini - Staff

Restaurateur (Retired) and SAU Physical Plant

Carmen "Corky" Fantini is a man of many talents, but slowing down hasn't been one of them.

Born and raised in Tyler, Texas, Fantini moved to Plano when he was young. He worked under Ross Perot, Sr., at Electronic Data Systems for 10 years before taking a sales manager position at The Graphics Group. After another decade in the booming Dallas area, Fantini and his family agreed that they were ready for a change of pace.

They moved to Magnolia, AR.

With experience in the restaurant business, Fantini bought Miller's Cafeteria. Located on North Vine Street, Miller's had become an institution, and Fantini viewed ownership as a "semi-retirement plan." Eighteen years later, Fantini announced his retirement when he sold the restaurant in 2011.

Six weeks later, however, Fantini began working for Southern Arkansas University.

"I just couldn't sit," he said, and SAU was better for it.

Aramark hired Fantini before transitioning to the physical plant, where he maintained 90 acres of lawn for over a decade.

"It was a lot of work, but it's instant gratification," Fantini said of managing the grounds. "You can see the difference you've made immediately."

"SAU offers wonderful things. It's home to a lot of the kids," he said. And he would know; Fantini's children, Mandy and James, attended SAU.

Whether or not Corky Fantini can sit still has yet to be seen. As of June 2023, Fantini has retired from SAU and lives with his wife, Nancy, in Magnolia. They have four grandchildren.



# Muleriders go GLOBAL

## SAU Business Students Travel Abroad

Story by Rachel Jenkins

Southern Arkansas University business students traveled the world in May 2023 for immersive learning experiences in Kenya and Italy. Muleriders visited a variety of businesses and culturally significant sites, gaining a global perspective that will serve them beyond graduation.

In Italy, students were introduced to multiple family-owned businesses, such as a sheep farm, an organic farm, wineries, and a multi-generational stonework business. Perhaps the most impactful family-owned business SAU students encountered was the Castello delle Serre, a Tuscan castle turned bed and breakfast, located in Serre di Rapolano. Its proprietors, the Gangale family, which includes SAU MBA alumna Kaci Matthews '10, '12, hosted the Muleriders for seven days.

"I learned the art of asking questions in international business," said Heath Heikes, senior accounting major from Pottsville, AR. "I want to thank our guides Kaci, Salvatore, and Antonio, who have honed in on helping us students to ask the right questions."

When they weren't walking the Roman Road, exploring the Colosseum, or climbing the steps of the oldest bank in the world, the Muleriders attended a medieval festival, stopped by the Italian Stock Exchange, and enjoyed the sulfuric thermal spas.

Over 5,000 miles away, in Kenya, SAU business students maintained an equally busy schedule. They toured the Mbuni Coffee Estates, took game drives through the Masai Mara National Reserve and Amboseli National Park, visited a traditional Masai village, and hiked around Mount Longonot.

At Nyumbani Children's Home, a nonprofit providing life-saving medical care, nutrition, education, and shelter to over 100 HIV-positive children, Muleriders learned about the organization's history and met some of the children who live there.

The final day included touring two bead-making factories in Nairobi and exploring an open Masai market, where students put their negotiation skills to the test. This was a great experience for the faculty and students alike and a great opportunity to compare various market structures and exchange.

Dr. Stephen Juma, assistant professor of marketing, said, "Trips like this are important for SAU business students to apply the skills they've learned in the classroom to real-world needs."

Thanks to the generous support of SAU alumni, students like Bryant, Arkansas, native and senior Hannah Henderson were able to leave the United States for the first time:

"I experienced many firsts that I would not have been able to do on my own. I saw the ocean for the first time while walking on one of the whitest sand beaches in the world in Diani."

Traveling internationally certainly left an impression on SAU Muleriders, but Muleriders left an impression as well. According to Megan Whitehead '05, '12 instructor of finance, people often stopped the group, who were all wearing matching SAU T-shirts, to ask, "What's a Mulerider?" Her students responded with enthusiasm from London to Italy.

SAU volunteer coordinator and MBA student, Katie Heese said, "Studying abroad made me proud and thankful to be a Mulerider—proud to share with natives of Kenya and others I met on the international plane rides about our University and what great opportunities we've been given."

Travel experiences like these are made possible by the support of Alumni and friends through the SAU Foundation. For more information on providing these life-changing experiences to our students, visit [www.SAUDevelopment.com](http://www.SAUDevelopment.com).

Contributed Photos





## In Loving Memory of Dr. Claude "Buddy"



It is with great sadness that we share the passing of Dr. Claude "Buddy" Baker, retired faculty and Department of Biology Chair. Dr. Baker was a passionate educator, researcher, and his contributions to SAU will always be remembered.

It's rare to find someone with the ability to seamlessly blend a career and personal passions with service, but Dr. Baker did it beautifully. Everything he did was with a heart of service beating behind it.

His excitement in teaching and his heart of service was contagious. Students responded and learned, and that is why he was recognized by students as Advisor of the Year in 2012. Baker learned by the example of his parents, who devoted their lives in volunteer service to their south Arkansas community. For him, giving back came as naturally as breathing.

Before coming to SAU, Dr. Baker was a professor at Indiana University where he was awarded both the distinguished teaching and distinguished research awards. He also received the all-university teaching award over all professors on the eight Indiana University campuses. In 2006, Baker received the Presidents Volunteer Service lifetime award for his over 5,000 hours of

volunteer service.

He was a lifetime member of the Alumni Association and was a member of the SAU Foundation Board of Governors. He was a member of First Baptist Church, Magnolia, and a member of the Columbia County Republican Committee, serving on the state committee.

Dr. Baker helped establish three endowed scholarships: Claude D. Baker -- Call to Service by Steve Moberly at IUS, William and Dorothy Craig Music Endowment, and the Claude and Skeet Baker Endowed Scholarship in marine biology at SAU.

To honor his legacy, we have established the Dr. Claude Baker Award to fund undergraduate research and education in the field that he loved the most. You can join with other alumni and friends in supporting this fund with a donation in memory of Dr. Baker at [www.saufoundation.org/make-a-gift](http://www.saufoundation.org/make-a-gift) or by mail to the SAU Foundation at 100 East University MSC 9174, Magnolia, AR 71753. Your contribution, no matter the size, will honor the legacy of Dr. Baker while also making a difference in the lives of future generations of students and researchers.





Photo by Thomas Turner

**SAU Herpetology Class** - A few students enrolled in Herpetology gathered research by wading through a few ponds on SAU's Farm.



Photo by Jessica Greaves

**Senior Celebration** - One final send-off for SAU's seniors! The SAU Alumni Association treated seniors to a fun evening full of games and great food.

# around campus



Photo by Thomas Turner

**BAM** - BAM, SAU's Freshman Orientation, was in full swing this summer!





Photo by Thomas Turner

**Oozeball Tournament** - One of the messiest traditions was revived this spring - Oozeball! Student organizations got down and dirty in a mud volleyball pit competing for the trophy.



Photo by Thomas Turner

**Career Fair** - Many students attended SAU's annual Career Fair to network and meet professionals in their desired industry.



Photo by Morgan Brazzel

**Farm Road 5K** - SAU Advancement teamed up with Outlaw Racing to host the first Farm Road 5K Challenge supporting an athletic scholarship aimed at overcoming adversity.



Photo by Thomas Turner

**MLK Day March and Ceremony** - Students gathered for the annual MLK Day March - marching over a mile and ending with a ceremony.



Photo by Thomas Turner

**Miss SAU** - Hope Hesterly was named Miss Southern Arkansas University during the Miss SAU Scholarship Competition.



Photo by Thomas Turner

**Golf and Tennis Club Houses** - SAU's Golf and Tennis teams have new homes on campus!





## A FEW OF THE RECENT ATHLETIC ACHIEVEMENTS AND CHANGES AT SAU

### Academic Successes

During the 2022-23 academic year, the Muleriders took care of business in the classroom. The department's 419 student-athletes produced a collective all-sports GPA of 3.16 with 67% (228) of those individuals recording a 3.0 GPA or higher. The average pass/fail rate among all sports was 97% and ten of the 16 sports held a team GPA of 3.0 or better. The top three team GPAs for the 2022-23 season belonged to Mulerider Women's Tennis (3.72), Mulerider Softball (3.66) and Mulerider Volleyball (3.59).

### Mulerider Men's Golf

Third-year head coach Neriah Brown's Mulerider Men's Golf squad put together a historic campaign in 2022-23. Through mid-March, SAU had logged just one top five finish: a third-place showing at its own Arkansas Collegiate on October 10-11. But it's all about how you finish. Brown's squad scorched a plethora of in-region foes at the DBU Men's Classic (4th of 14; 1st of 7 in-region), the Natural State Classic (2nd of 10), a program-best finish at the GAC Championship (2nd of 9) and a program-best finish at the NCAA DII Central/Midwest Regional (T5 of 20; T2 of 10 in-region). SAU entered the final round of play at the regional tournament six shots back of the advancement line and proceeded to equal its round two performance with a 291 over its final 18 holes to force a three-team playoff with league foes Henderson State and Harding for the final two berths into the national tournament. SAU posted a two-under in the



Contributed Photo

### 2023 Mulerider Baseball

sudden death playoff to punch the program's first-ever ticket to the NCAA DII National Championship. Caleb Miller, Logan McDonald, Connor Harrington, Luke Cote and Brendan Little became the program's first to tee off in the national championship. The Muleriders produced one all-region selection, three all-league performers including a first team selection and one distinguished scholar-athlete.

### SAU Baseball

It was another successful season for Mulerider Baseball. The Muleriders concluded the 2023 campaign at 40-18; the 13th 40-win season in the program's NCAA history. Southern Arkansas won its seventh regular season Great American

Conference Championship (24-9) and its seventh league tournament title to claim a berth in the NCAA postseason for the 15th time. Seventh-year head coach Justin Pettigrew was named GAC Coach of the Year for the third time in his career and for the second-consecutive season, seven players earned All-GAC honors, five of which were named all-region, three were named the league's best defenders at their positions, and three others garnered GAC Distinguished Scholar Athlete honors.

### SAU Softball

The 25th team in the history of the Mulerider Softball program produced yet another memorable campaign under ninth-year head coach Jason



Anderson. SAU finished a single game shy of punching its ticket to a third NCAA DII World Series appearance as the Muleriders finished as NCAA DII Central Region runner-up and Great American Conference runner-up following a 45-15 season with 25 of those wins coming in league play. The 40-win season is the fifth for the Muleriders under Anderson and the program's first since 2019. The Muleriders advanced into the NCAA postseason for the seventh-consecutive season and for the eighth time overall. SAU appeared in its third super regional and first since 2018. The Muleriders saw eight members of the 2023 squad garner all-conference honors, one become an all-region performer and six claim academic honors.

## Mulerider Track and Field

Both Mulerider Track and Field programs recorded third-place finishes at the Great American Conference Championships in early May. The SAU Women earned a top three finish for the seventh-consecutive season behind "High Point" champion Kailyn Thomas' 26 points and individual title wins by Kamrin Hooks in the 400M and Irieyanna Wilson in the Shot Put. The Mulerider Women produced 32 point-scoring results with a dozen podium placements. The Mulerider Men also earned its seventh-consecutive top three finish at the league championship as a result of 36 point-scoring finishes which included eight podium placements. Ja'Kamron Zackery totaled 20 points with a trio of top three finishes, while Connor White broke the decathlon record and Carter Cheek posted an NCAA provisional qualifying time in the 110H.

## Women's Tennis

One season after winning just five matches, the Mulerider Women's tennis team bounced back in 2023 to win 11 contests and capture a share of the Great American Conference regular season title, its second since the 2018-19 season. Sixth-year head coach Greg Owen's squad won four of its five GAC matches. One player earned a superlative honor from the league, two were named distinguished scholar athletes and four received All-GAC honors, three of which were first team selections with two unanimous honorees.

## Mulerider Men's Basketball

Southern Arkansas Men's Basketball is the only Great American Conference team to appear in every championship tournament since the league's first season of 2011-12. That streak improved during the 2022-23 season, but first-year head coach Logan Quinn's Muleriders took their appearance a step further and did something the program had never done: won the whole thing. SAU finished its '23 campaign with the most total wins (22) in the program's NCAA Era, the most conference wins (15) in the same span, the highest regular season finish in its GAC membership despite being picked preseason No. 9 and as the Great American Conference Tournament Champions. The Muleriders earned the program's second NCAA Tournament berth of the past three seasons. A 32-game slate saw



Contributed Photo

2022-23 Mulerider Men's Golf



Photo by Thomas Turner

2023 Mulerider Women's Tennis

the Muleriders set single season program records in points scored (2,478), field goals made (902), three-pointers made (297) and assists (403). SAU saw two players earn All-GAC honors including a superlative award winner and a first team selection, four named GAC All-Tournament, and two named distinguished scholar athletes.

## Muleriders in Magnolia

Regardless of how the season's go for each of SAU's 16 athletic programs, one thing that is for certain is that the Muleriders will be active in the community. The department finished ninth in Helper Helper's Division II Top 25 Community Service rankings for the 2022-23 season. Four women's programs finished inside the top 10 in community service hours for their

respective sports: Mulerider Women's Track & Field (5th), Mulerider Women's Golf (10th), Mulerider Women's Tennis (8th) and Mulerider Softball (6th). For the Mulerider Men, six programs placed inside its respective top ten and were led by Mulerider Men's Track & Field's department-high ranking of fourth. Mulerider Men's Basketball (10th), Mulerider Football (8th), Mulerider Men's Golf (9th), Mulerider Men's Tennis (6th) and Mulerider Baseball (7th) were all among the top programs in community service. In all, the Muleriders, from July 1, 2022 through May 31, 2023, recorded 3,412 hours of community service in and around Southern Arkansas University and the Magnolia Community attending 38 different service opportunities with 96% participation among the department's 419 student-athletes and an economic impact of \$108,509.





# SAU hosts the sixth annual Mulespy Awards

Story by Jacob Pumphrey

Southern Arkansas University and the Mulerider Athletics family once again gathered together to celebrate its student-athletes, coaches and programs as part of the Sixth Annual Mulespy Awards which took place on April 26 inside the W.T. Watson Center.

The show served as a fitting end to another successful year for the Muleriders in competition, in the classroom and in the community. Seventeen outstanding student-athletes, representing each of the program's 16 sports and cheerleading, were honored while 63 senior student-athletes were recognized and given a special wrist watch to commemorate their time as a Mulerider.

Garnering the department's top two athletic honors were Mulerider Baseball senior catcher Brett McGee, who was named the Auburn Smith Male Athlete of the Year, and Mulerider Tennis senior Lena Milosevic, who claimed the Dr. Margaret Downing Female Athlete of the Year award. The player of the year awards are given to the top Male and Female Athlete in a given year at SAU regardless of classification and that possesses conduct that has been a positive influence for good and exemplifies the ideals of Auburn Smith and Dr. Margaret Downing, each an SAU Sports Hall of Famer that left an indelible mark on Mulerider Athletics during their storied tenures at the University.

For their outstanding academic achievement, extracurricular involvement and athletic ability, the Murphy USA Male and Female Scholar-Athlete of the Year awards were presented to Mulerider Men's Cross Country and Track & Field senior Briston Rains and Mulerider Women's Track & Field graduate sprinter Kamrin Hooks. In continual recognition of Murphy USA's strong partnership with Southern Arkansas University and Mulerider Athletics, Murphy USA's Donna Lambis '09, Director of Retail Merchandise Accounting, was on hand to present remarks on behalf of the organization and help present both scholar honors which were first awarded in 2017.

Rains was also honored alongside 24 other student-athletes that made up the third induction class of the SAU Chapter of Chi Alpha Sigma, the first, and only, national scholar-athlete society to honor four-year collegiate student-athletes who have excelled in both the classroom and in athletic competition. The ceremony was conducted by SAU Faculty Athletic Representative Dr. Scott White and Associate Director of Athletics for Internal Operations Sage Fowler. With three classes now



Photo by Thomas Turner

**(Above)** Pictured left to right: Logan McDonald (Male Comeback Player of the Year), Kamrin Hooks (Murphy USA Female Scholar-Athlete of the Year), Brett McGee (Auburn Smith Male Athlete of the Year), Lena Milosevic (Dr. Margaret Downing Female Athlete of the Year), Briston Rains (Murphy USA Male Scholar-Athlete of the Year), Jacob Berry (Male Newcomer of the Year), Annika Berrendorf (Female Newcomer of the Year), Greta Wallin (Female Comeback Player of the Year). **(Right)** SAU President Dr. Trey Berry delivered a special address and led a small graduation ceremony for 14 student-athletes, including Mulerider Baseball's Chris Sutton, who graduated in May that were not able to attend the ceremonies due to participation in their respective conference tournaments.

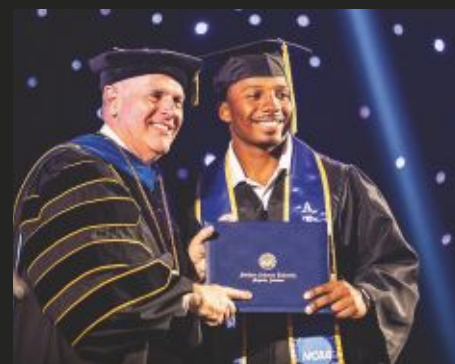


Photo by Jessica Greaves

inducted following the 2021 inaugural ceremony, the chapter roll now stands at 70 outstanding Mulerider scholar-athletes.

SAU President Dr. Trey Berry delivered a special address and was also present to lead a small graduation ceremony for 14 student-athletes who graduated in May, but were unable to attend the May 5-6 graduation dates due to participation in their respective conference tournaments. Max Dyson, '79, '82 briefly spoke on the Mulerider Club and of its impact, past, present, and future, on Mulerider Athletics after serving as the club chair this past year.

In 2018, through feedback from the SAU Student-Athlete Advisory Committee, two new award categories were established with the Male and Female Newcomer of the Year Awards, and the Male and Female Comeback Player of the Year Awards with both now being presented annually. Capturing the honors in the comeback category were Mulerider Women's Tennis junior Greta Wallin and Mulerider Men's Golf sophomore Logan McDonald. For the Newcomer of the Year award, SAU Women's Tennis freshman Annika Berrendorf and Mulerider Football junior Jacob Berry claimed the hardware.



Photo by Thomas Turner

Mulerider Women's Track & Field graduate student-athlete Kamrin Hooks (middle) is presented the Murphy USA Female Scholar-Athlete of the Year award. Pictured with Hooks are (L to R) SAU Professor and Faculty Athletic Representative Dr. Scott White, Murphy USA Director of Retail Merchandise Accounting Donna Lambis '09, SAU President Dr. Trey Berry and SAU Director of Athletics Steve Browning.



Photo by Jessica Greaves

**(Above)** Mulerider Women's Tennis senior student-athlete Kalley Smith looks on after being presented a special wrist watch to commemorate her time as a Mulerider. **(Right)** Mulerider Men's Cross Country and Track & Field student-athlete Briston Rains is presented with his diploma by SAU President Dr. Trey Berry during a graduation ceremony. Rains, who would go on to be named the Murphy USA Male Scholar-Athlete of the Year later in the evening, was one of 14 graduating Mulerider student-athletes honored after not being able to attend May commencement ceremonies due to championship competition.



Photo by Thomas Turner





Southern Arkansas University receives ANCRC grant for renovation of Talley Hall and relocation and restoration of Mt. Prospect Church.

Southern Arkansas University has received its largest grant to date from the Arkansas Natural and Cultural Resources Council (ANCRC) to benefit two restoration projects: Talley Hall and Mt. Prospect Church. The grant amounts to a total of \$2.013 million.

“We treasure our partnership with ANCRC. What they have done for the SAU campus, and indeed the entire state, has been truly transformational,” said SAU President Dr. Trey Berry. “Once again, with the precious resources provided by the ANCRC, we will be able to preserve historic structures on the SAU campus that will benefit our students and educate future generations about our region’s unique history.”

The restoration of Talley Hall will ensure continued viability for future Muleriders. Beginning this summer, renovations to the bathrooms, reinforcement of the porch structure, and removal and replacement of the concrete porch and treads will be underway. In summer 2024, the approximately 120 single-pane windows in Talley’s rooms and walkways will be replaced with energy efficient, double-pane glass, completing the renovation.

Opened in 1964, Talley Hall is a co-ed “pod-style” dormitory with three three-story wings. It was named in honor of Milton B. Talley, a beloved Dean of Students, teacher of science, and Director of Student Employment. The 37,329 square foot residence hall boasts a modernistic design on the western side of campus with most of its 190 residents participating in the Agriculture Living Learning Community. On March 13, 2023, Talley, Talbot, and Greene Halls were added to the National Register of Historic Places, which made this grant possible.



Photo by Thomas Turner

Talley Hall

Phase one of the Mt. Prospect project will include restoration as well as relocation from its existing location on Columbia County Road 66 to a prepared site adjacent to the Alexander House within the historic farmstead on Washington Street. Renovations include replacing the existing roof, windows, doors and steps; repairing beams, framing and siding; and connecting existing fencing and sidewalks. Phase one is scheduled to begin immediately with a completion date of summer 2024. Phase two will prioritize interior restoration.

Mt. Prospect Church was built in 1886 in the Greek Revival style and has remained virtually unchanged for over 100 years. It was added to the National Register of Historic Places on March 30, 1990.

Once relocated to the Alexander-Ozmer Historic Farmstead and Learning Center, the facility will be managed and maintained by the University. It will become part of a vibrant center that regularly hosts students, faculty/staff, and community members for events, meetings, and classes.





Photo by Thomas Turner

**Top Row L to R:** Allen Loe, Eric Cowling, Joey Baker, Isaac Woods, Dr. John Cotton, Rickey Burnell  
**Bottom Row L to R:** Rhonda Rhynes, Esq., Janet Poppleton, Lisa Strong (on behalf of Dr. Mallory)

# DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI *Awards Dinner*

On May 4, the Southern Arkansas University Alumni Association hosted the 2023 Distinguished Alumni Awards Dinner. This event celebrates the outstanding accomplishments of Mulerider former students and their experiences, achievements, and services that have had an impact across the globe. The criteria for these awards include outstanding service to SAU, the community, state, and/or nation. The individual must be a person of such integrity, stature, and demonstrated ability that the faculty, staff, students, and alumni of Southern Arkansas University will take pride in, and be inspired by, their recognition. Nominations are open on the SAU Alumni Association website ([www.saualumni.com](http://www.saualumni.com)) each year from June 1 – July 31, and the SAU Alumni Association Board of Directors selects honorees. This year's awards were presented by SAU President Dr. Trey Berry and 2022-23 SAU Alumni Association Board Vice-Chair Ledly Jennings '12.



Photo by Thomas Turner

This year's Distinguished Alumni were also honored the morning after the Distinguished Alumni Awards Dinner by being presented at the first Commencement Ceremony of the day.



Photo by Thomas Turner

Justin Morris '08, SAU Alumni Association Board Member, enjoys the private pre-dinner reception.



Photo by Morgan Brazzel

Recipients were joined by SAU student body representatives for a networking lunch following commencement. Student Body Representatives selected were: Hannah Henderson, Jalyann Allen, Darcy Stewart, Christian Young, Savannah Pierce, Brenna Warrick, and Grace McLelland.

Recipients of the  
 2023 Distinguished Alumni Awards:

## **Distinguished Young Alumni Award**

Isaac Woods '04 - Racine, WI  
 Rickey Burnell '09 '20 - Daphne, AL

## **Distinguished Alumni Award**

Rhonda Rhynes, Esq. '76 - Joppa, MD  
 Allen Loe '78 - Columbia, LA  
 Eric Cowling '88 - Collierville, TN  
 Joey Baker '77 - Little Rock, AR

## **Distinguished Golden Rider Award**

Dr. John Cotton '69 - McAlester, OK  
 Janet Poppleton '72 - Laytonsville, MD

## **Lifetime Achievement Award**

Dr. Kathleen Mallory - Posthumous



# THE GREAT MULERIDER SOIRÉE

## «HONOR SOCIETIES DINNER»

On April 22, 2023, Southern Arkansas University Foundation hosted the 37th Annual Honor Societies Dinner. The theme, The Great Mulerider Soiree, took guests back to the 1920s with jazz, costumes, and a roaring good time. The evening honored donors' generosity and all that is made possible through philanthropy at Southern Arkansas University.

**Right** - Guests enjoying drinks at the pre-dinner Speakeasy. Pictured is Dr. Lisa Childs.



Photo by Thomas Turner



Photo by Thomas Turner

Erica '93 and Mark Woods



Photo by Thomas Turner

CEO of Magnolia Regional Medical Center, Brett Kinman and wife, Leslie.



Photo by Thomas Turner

Bill '81 and Monica Anderson



# Rip Powell

## 13<sup>th</sup> Annual Invitational Golf Tournament

Celebrating the 13th Annual Rip Powell Invitational, sponsors and participants came together to raise \$40,000 at the Magnolia Country Club on June 23, 2023.

Highlighted by the continued generosity of Mustard Seed Wealth Management as the presenting sponsor for the 11th consecutive year, the tournament featured 30 teams to support the Mulerider Football Program.



Photo by Thomas Turner

### Morning Flight First Place Winners

Farmer's Bank & Trust Team  
Jeff Whitener, Chase Hardy, Tyler Watson, Will Hegi



Photo by Thomas Turner

### Afternoon Flight First Place Winners

Will Vance, Robert Johnson, Denny Parker, Ronny Neeley



(L to R) Josh Kee, Vice President for Advancement; Steve Browning, Director of Athletics; Jonathan Baird, Mustard Seed Partner and CFO of People's Bank; Brad Smiley, Head Football Coach

Presented by

**MustardSeed**  
WEALTH MANAGEMENT



**Chris Coker  
Selected as Finalist for**


# **PRESIDENTIAL**

**Award for Excellence  
in Mathematics  
and Science Teaching**

Story by Rachel Jenkins







***“ I want our kids and parents to know that we have teachers who should be recognized. I want communities to be proud of what they have here. ”***

***Chris Coker '98, '03, '21***

Despite his certifications to teach science, Chris Coker '98, '03, '21 never thought that he would teach chemistry. In fact, while working in housing for Southern Arkansas University and completing his masters in secondary education in the '90s, Coker received a call about an open teaching position:

“Camden Fairview called and said, ‘We heard you teach chemistry.’ And I said, ‘You heard wrong!’”

Luckily for Coker and the Camden Fairview School District, he accepted the position and hasn't looked back. More than two decades later, he has earned his principal licensure through SAU's educational leadership in administration and supervision program and is a College Board AP reader for chemistry, a T3 (Texas Instruments) regional instructor, and a finalist for the Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching.

According to the PAEMST website, the awards are “the highest honors bestowed by the United States government specifically for K-12 science, technology, engineering, and mathematics teaching.” Coker is one of seven Arkansas teachers selected as finalists.

“I didn't do it for me,” Coker said about the PAEMST application process. “There's a stigma of South Arkansas schools. I want our kids and parents to know that we have teachers who should be recognized. I want communities to be proud of what they have here.”

The high school football player from Cross Roads, Texas, and Longhorn fan (don't hold it against him), moved to Arkansas in 1991 after being recruited by SAU Coach John Rich. Coker was a wide receiver and tight end for the Muleriders for three years while taking science and education courses as well as obtaining his coaching endorsement.

Coker found a home away from home in Magnolia, forming friendships he maintains today. He pledged Sigma Tau Gamma and built a brotherhood with his football team. Under the former housing director Dean J Courson, Coker was hired as a resident assistant, a hall director, and ultimately promoted to area coordinator for men's housing. During this time, Coker met his wife, Kimberly, who obtained her masters in clinical and mental health counseling from SAU. Two of their four daughters, Isabella Curbelo and Kennedy Coker, also boast degrees from SAU.

Coker credits SAU with laying a strong foundation for his teaching as he continues to see the influence of former professors in his own classroom. For example, instructors Dr. Leo Carson Davis and Dr. Henry Robison from the biology department provided memorable hands-on experiences and field trips which reflected their dedication to teaching as well as a genuine interest in their students.

Dr. Connie Wilson, dean of the school of graduate studies, said, “Chris is an outstanding educator and leader, demonstrating great capacity for collaboration and encouraging others. Congratulations, Chris!”

Coker juggles a heavy teaching load of AP chemistry, AP physics, accelerated chemistry, and introduction to education. As a football coach, cross country coach, and head senior boys track coach, he's committed to supporting students outside of the classroom as well.

The PAEMST award “recognizes those teachers who have both deep content knowledge of the subjects they teach and the ability to motivate and enable students to be successful in those areas.” Coker's students graduate to excel in many areas, from local dentists and principals to Emmy-award winning meteorologists.

Chris and Kimberly live in Ouachita County and have nine grandchildren in Arkansas and Texas who they try to spend as much time with as possible.



## **2023 MULEGATING SCHEDULE**

### **August 31, 2023**

#### **SAU vs. SEOSU**

Mulegating: 3:00 p.m.  
Kick-off: 6:00 p.m.  
Mulegating sponsored by  
Farmers Bank and Trust

### **September 23, 2023**

#### **SAU vs. ATU**

##### **FAMILY DAY**

Mulegating: 3:00 p.m.  
Kick-off: 6:00 p.m.  
Mulegating sponsored by MuleKick

### **October 7, 2023**

#### **SAU vs. OKBU**

##### **HOMECOMING**

Mulegating: 11:00 a.m.  
Kick-off: 2:30 p.m.  
Mulegating sponsored by Cadence Bank

### **October 21, 2023**

#### **SAU vs. HU**

##### **MURPHY USA CLASSIC**

El Dorado, AR.  
Mulegating: 11:00 a.m.  
Kick-off: 2:00 p.m.

### **October 28, 2023**

#### **SAU vs. SWOSU**

Mulegating: 11:00 a.m.  
Kick-off: 2:00 p.m.  
Mulegating sponsored by CMC

### **November 11, 2023**

#### **SAU vs. UAM**

##### **BATTLE OF THE TIMBERLANDS**

Mulegating: 11:00 a.m.  
Kick-off: 2:00 p.m.  
Mulegating sponsored by Peoples Bank







# LET'S RIDE

**HOMECOMING**  
**10/7/23**



### 1960-1969

**Lamar Smith '64** was honored with the Lifetime Achievement Award at the Springhill-North Webster Chamber of Commerce Banquet.

### 1970- 1979



**Donald Brock '72** began serving his first term as mayor of Smackover.

**Joyce Elliott '73** was mentioned in the Government and Policy category in the *Arkansas 250 Most Influential Leaders* 2022.

### 1980-1989



**Lepaine Sharp-McHenry '81** has been named the next dean of the UNMC College of Nursing. She is currently dean of the College of Natural, Behavioral, and Health Sciences at Simmons University in Boston.



**Gwen Carter '82** retired after 39 years in education, 32 of those years in the Magnolia School District. She retired from the position of principal on the middle school campus.



**Jerry "Bo" Hicks '82** led the Taylor High School girls' basketball team to become the 1A-7 District Tournament champions.



**Dan Galway '84** retired from Fiserv and now enjoys lots of golf, fishing, and traveling.



**Jim Andrews '86** was appointed to serve as Circuit Court Judge in the Arkansas Thirteenth Judicial District.



**Ted Huneycutt '86** and his family were named the 2022 Arkansas Farm Family of the Year.



**Iverson Jackson '86** was named Executive Director of the Arkansas Fair Housing Commission.



**Jacquelyn Briggs '89** was named the 2023 Teacher of the Year at Walker Pre-Kindergarten Center in Magnolia, AR.

### 1990-1999



**Steve Hardy '90** received the Certified Financial Planner certification. He is a Financial Advisor at Edward Jones in Magnolia.



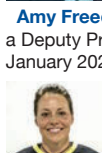
**Jerry Thomas '93 '97** was selected as a participant in the 2023-24 Aspen Rising Presidents Fellowship program. Thomas is the Vice President for Academic Affairs at National Park College in Hot Springs.



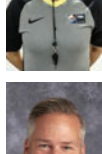
**Erica Woods '93** was named Board Chair of the SAU Board of Trustees.



**Bobby Mullins '94 '15** became the new head basketball coach for the El Dorado High School boys' basketball team.



**Amy Freedman '95** began serving as a Deputy Prosecutor in Miller County in January 2023.



**Gina Cross '97** officiated in the 2022 NCAA Women's Final Four.



**Chris Coker '98 '03 '21** was selected as a finalist for the 2023 Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching.

### 2000-2009



**Denise Sweat '00** was mentioned in the Banking and Finance category of *Arkansas 250 Most Influential Leaders* 2022.



**Eric Griffis '01** was promoted to Chair of the Department of Theatre and Dance at Georgia College & State University.



**Jamie Daniel '02** was named the 2023 Ag Woman of the Year at the 17th annual Arkansas Women in Agriculture Conference in Hot Springs.



**Denelle Edington '02** was selected as Magnolia Central Elementary School Teacher of the Year 2023.



**Chuck Flurry '02** was promoted to Chief Innovation Officer and Senior Vice President at First Financial Bank.



**Natalie Gosdin '02** was announced as the Director of Special Services for the Searcy School District.



**Jonathan Gosdin '03** was announced as the principal at Ahlf Junior High School in Searcy, AR.



**Renee Metcalf '03** became a senior associate at Kuiper Law Firm, PLLC.



**Megan Whitehead '05 '12** became the Vice President of Wealth Management at Farmers Bank and Trust.



**Kevin Berneathy '06** was named a Top 40 Under 40 Football Coach in the state of Texas by *Texas Football Magazine*. He is currently the Assistant Athletics Director and Head Football Coach at LaPorte High School.



**Matthew J. Hamilton '06** became the General Manager of Allied Universal Security Services.



**Ginger Mulholland '07** opened Beautiful You Magnolia Medical Aesthetics and Salon, LLC.



**Omar Alaoui '08** joined Truist Financial as a Business Change Executive for Internal Audit.

### 2010-2019



**Adam Tinsley '10** was promoted to AVP and Ag Loan Officer at First Financial Bank in El Dorado.



**Karen Townsend '10** was named Educator of the Year by the Hope-Hempstead County Chamber of Commerce. Karen is a special education teacher for Hope Public Schools.



**Magan McDaniel Squires '12** graduated from UAMS with a bachelor's degree in nuclear medicine imaging sciences.



**Haley Lambert Rowan '13 '15** was promoted to Manager at Evers, Cox, & Gober, PLLC.



**Jodi Waters '13** was announced as part of the 2022-23 ArACTE Leadership Fellows Program Novice Class.



**Heather Graves '14** opened Junction City Medical Clinic in Junction City, AR.



**Haley Quintana '14** began working at UAMS South Regional Campus as a Family Nurse Practitioner.



**Nick Vaughn '14** was named *Camden News* Readers Choice's best football program. He is the head football coach at Camden Fairview High School.



**Ashlyn Spruell '15** graduated from UAMS with a Doctor of Nursing Practice Nurse Anesthesia degree.



**Gabrielle Davis '16** was the featured speaker at the Columbia County United Committee Organization's 2023 African Heritage Extravaganza.



**Holly Hockaday '16** joined the Gastroenterology department at Collom & Carney Clinic Associates.





**Ashley Reed '16** was recognized as Magnolia Middle School's Teacher of the Year 2022-2023.



**Lexi Rivera '16** started a new position as a Pediatric Nurse Practitioner at Dr. Ray's Pediatric Clinic in El Dorado, AR.



**Trevel Young '16** started a new job as the Procurement Assistant at Tyson Foods.



**Mattie Keaster '17** graduated from UAMS with a Master of Science in Nursing.



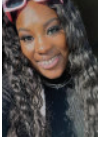
**Kara O'Neal '17** graduated from UAMS with a Doctor of Philosophy in Interdisciplinary Biomedical Sciences.



**Wade Andrews '18** was elected to the Arkansas House of Representatives, representing District 98.



**Jansen McCurdy '19** started a new position as Account Executive at UPS in Houston.



**Kelly Parrish '19** received the DAISY Award for Extraordinary Nurses. She is an RN in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit at Arkansas Children's Hospital in Little Rock.



**Madeline Reed '19** graduated from UAMS with a Doctor of Nursing Practice Psychiatric Mental Health degree.



**Taylor Stricklin '19** recently graduated with a Doctorate in Occupational Therapy from Texas Woman's University.

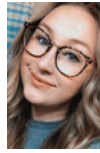


**Elanena White '19** began teaching 7th grade Social Studies at Barton Junior High School in El Dorado, AR. She plans to continue her education by enrolling in the MAT program.

## 2020-2023



**Tyler Linton '20** graduated with a master's in Education from Henderson State University.



**Maeci May '20** is the Head Athletic Trainer and a Biology Teacher at North Webster High School.



**Caleb Payton '20** was awarded the New Teacher of the Year by Arkansas Farm Bureau. He teaches agriculture at Concord School District.



**Alexis Ankney-Ryan '20** is an Elementary Music Teacher in the Little Rock School District.



**Ashlyn Telford '20** was promoted to Lab Operations Manager for Infinity Care Solutions.



**David TerBurgh '20** is now a Mathematics Teacher at Clarendon School District.



**Delaney Fogle '21** graduated from UAMS with a bachelor's degree in dental hygiene.



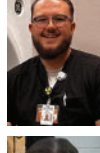
**Salvatore Guli '21** became the throws coach for Greenhill High School in Addison, Tx.



**Rachel Holt '21** became the College and Career Coach at Hope High School.



**Megan Humphrey '21** was accepted into the Renewable Natural Resources master's program at LSU.



**Brian Jeans '21** graduated from UAMS and accepted the Nuclear Medicine Technologist position at Wadley Regional Medical Center in Texarkana, Tx.



**Katie Terral '21** was honored with the DAISY Award for Extraordinary Nurses at Drew Memorial Health System.



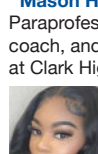
**Simon Tursky '21** was promoted to Lead Audio Technician and is now starting his second season with Alabama Shakespeare Festival, setting up and mixing sound for the company.



**Ryan Whitehead '21** was accepted into Logan University's Doctor of Chiropractic program.

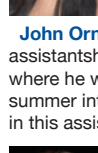


**Serena Gill '22 '23** became the Alumni Operations Coordinator at SAU.



**Mason Harding '22** is a Special Ed Paraprofessional, boys' basketball coach, and football offensive line coach at Clark High School in Plano, TX.

**Ka'Daisha Hopkins '22** became the new Forensics Interviewer at the Children's Advocacy Center.



**John Orndorff '22** received a full-ride assistantship at Villanova University where he will get his MA in theatre. A summer internship in Ireland is included in this assistantship.



**Austin Patricia '22** became a staff engineer at Schaumburg & Polk, Inc.



**Garrett Roberts '22** started a new job at Performance Contractors as the Project Services Coordinator.



**Taylor Waters '22** was accepted into the LSU Health Shreveport Physician Assistant Program.



**Chelsea Chow '23** started a new position as Design Engineer at Dynamic Engineering Consultants, PC.



**Colton Cowart '23** started a new position as Wealth Management Assistant at Farmers Bank & Trust.

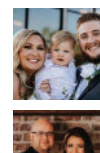


**Robert Sann '23** accepted a residency position in Manchester, NH.

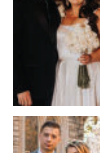
## Weddings



**Carey '96 and Beth Anne (Rankin) Baker '13** were married on April 1, 2023.



**Logan '13 and Kaley (Harbour) Bennett '17** were married on March 26, 2023.



**Klint and Randee Jo (Langley) Connor '17** were married on October 29, 2022.



**Mitchell and Sabrina (Yeasky) Crawford '18** were married on November 10, 2022.



**Andrew and Macey (Barker) Harp '21 '22** were married on January 21, 2023.



**Landry '22 and Glenna (Langford) Henson '22** were married on December 30, 2022.



**Aldan and Kristin (Smith) Lewis '22** were married on March 25, 2023.



**Charlie and Samone (Washington) Mallory '15** were married on April 1, 2023.



**Zachary '22 and Angela (Ramsey) Wake '21** were married on July 30, 2022.



**Peyton and Chance (Winn) Williams '22** were married on December 17, 2022.



**Marcus '18 and Autumn (Suydam) Wyatt '18** were married on May 21, 2021.





**Trevel '16 and Rachel (Phillips) Young** were married on October 15, 2022.

## Little Muleriders®



**Noah Banks '17 '19 and Katra Shelton '14** announce the birth of their son, Eli Noah Banks, born on April 25, 2023. He weighed 7 lbs. 15 oz. and was 21 inches long.



**Joshua '12 and Hannah (Adams) Burns '13** announce the birth of their daughter, Addison Mae Burns, born on December 3, 2022. She weighed 6 lbs. 3 oz. and was 17.5 inches long.



**Tyler and Kristen (Pickett) Cribb '16 '18** announce the birth of their son, Rhett Everett Cribb, born on January 10, 2023. He weighed 7 lbs. 3 oz. and was 19.5 inches long.



**Jesse '16 and Katrina Estall** announce the birth of their daughter, Anya Anavai Estall, born on November 22, 2022. She weighed 7.25 pounds and was 21 inches long.



**Calum '20 '22 and Olivia (Faught) Graham '20** announce the birth of their daughter, Skye Blaire Graham, born on November 17, 2022. She weighed 8 lbs. 10 oz. and was 20.5 inches long.



**Reagan and Kendall (Thomas) Knight '13 '14** announce the birth of their son, Reagan Alan Knight III, born on July 2, 2022. He weighed 7 lbs. 14 oz. and was 20 inches long.



**Chris and Chelsea (Lewis) Lash '12** announce the birth of their son, Christopher Paul Lash, born on July 9, 2022. He weighed 6 lbs. 8 oz. and was 18 inches long.



**Jackson '15 '17 and Megan (Maye) McCurdy '14 '17** announce the birth of their daughter, Kate Marie McCurdy, born on January 12, 2023. She weighed 7 lbs. 8 oz. and was 19 inches long.



**Micheal '17 '19 and Ashley (Roden) Reed '16** announce the birth of their son, Jefferson Asa Reed, born on May 26, 2022. He weighed 8 lbs. 2.5 oz. and was 19 inches long.

**Mason Harding '22 and Alexis Thompson '23** announce the birth of their son, Oliver Charles Harding, born on September 13, 2022. He weighed 8 lbs. 6 oz. and was 21.5 inches long.



**Warren and Mason (Nutt) West '20** announce the birth of their daughter, Blaine Elizabeth West, born on December 20, 2022. She weighed 7 lbs 12.8 oz and was 19.75 inches long.

## In Memory of

1930-1939

**Daisy Murphy Elakovich '35**  
March 24, 2022

1940-1949

**Dorothy Bess Waddell '40**  
February 9, 2023  
**Bobbie Gladney Bradley '47**  
December 31, 2022  
**Leo McGoogan '47**  
March 21, 2022  
**William "Bill" Grady Ainsworth '48**  
January 10, 2022  
**W. Carroll Blewster Sr. '48**  
December 5, 2022  
**Grady P. Bolding, Jr. '49**  
October 17, 2022

1950-1959

**Roy Ledbetter '52**  
November 19, 2022  
**Lena Rucknagel '53**  
November 19, 2022  
**Jerry Thompson '53**  
December 7, 2022  
**Carolyn Loraine Bahm '54**  
June 5, 2022  
**James Thomas Ayres '55**  
December 18, 2022  
**Bobbie Jo Horton '55**  
March 9, 2023  
**Dr. Donald Burrough '56**  
January 21, 2023  
**Doyle Howard Wallace '56**  
January 27, 2023  
**John Lewis Clary '57**  
October 22, 2022  
**Freed Hutto Duncan Jr. '57**  
January 1, 2023  
**James Edward Erskine '57**  
February 26, 2023  
**Don R. Johnson '57**  
January 2, 2023

**Odie Frank Vaughan '58**  
December 24, 2022  
**John Robertson Anthony '59**  
January 23, 2023  
**Mark Smith '59**  
February 28, 2023

1960-1969

**Don Alfred Hightower '60**  
November 13, 2022  
**James Franklin Parker, Sr. '60**  
July 30, 2022  
**Milam "Mike" Michael Kinard '61**  
November 19, 2022  
**Lance Lamar Larey '61**  
December 10, 2022  
**John Brock Moore '61**  
January 6, 2023  
**Larry Nicholson '61**  
January 24, 2023  
**Richard Alexander McLeon III '62**  
May 28, 2023  
**Janet Marie Fortner Self '62**  
November 9, 2022  
**Margaret Looney '63**  
December 1, 2022  
**George William Jernigan '64**  
December 2, 2022  
**William Lamar "Billy" Neal '66**  
March 20, 2023  
**Robert Thomas Bailey '67**  
December 12, 2022  
**Charles Elwood Murphy '68**  
January 7, 2023  
**Martha Barnes '69**  
January 27, 2023  
**John Stanley Cross '69**  
December 4, 2022  
**William "Bill" Edward Fullenwider, Jr. '69**  
March 2, 2023

1970-1979

**Robert Harold Lindsey '70**  
April 24, 2023  
**Wallace Waits, Jr. '70**  
April 9, 2023  
**Judy Ann Wise '70 '76**  
April 29, 2023  
**James "Stephen" Elliott, Jr. '72 '93**  
April 23, 2023  
**Bobby Lloyd Hudgens '72**  
March 21, 2023  
**Denny McConathy '73**  
May 15, 2023  
**David Kinard '74**  
March 17, 2023  
**Susan Wilhite '75**  
December 22, 2022  
**Robert Charles McMenis '76**  
April 13, 2023  
**Karen Garrett Pierce '76**  
February 18, 2023  
**Robert "Bob" Prince '76**  
April 7, 2023

**Robert "Bob" Tutt '77**  
January 11, 2023  
**Patricia Diane Hayes '78**  
May 19, 2023

1980-1989

**Glenda Pate '80**  
November 27, 2022  
**Nancy Elmore Cook '81**  
January 27, 2023  
**Mike Poff '81**  
May 20, 2023  
**Anita Rose McClendon-Toney '82**  
April 15, 2023  
**Gary Chris Hurley '84**  
February 23, 2023  
**Mary Octavia Evans '84**  
December 22, 2022  
**Mark Smith '84**  
February 28, 2023

1990-1999

**Thelma "Sissy" McWilliams Thompson '90**  
May 20, 2023  
**Clinton Marvin Fincher '92**  
November 6, 2022  
**Lois "Jeanie" Jean Rowe '94**  
March 19, 2023  
**Robert Nipper '95**  
December 10, 2022  
**Detta Rahye Flores '96**  
August 22, 2022  
**David McClellan '96**  
December 27, 2022  
**Thana "Jody" Schoen '97**  
January 14, 2023  
**Kristi McAuliffe '98**  
May 6, 2023  
**Brian Eric Tribble '98**  
April 30, 2023  
**Earsaline Witcher '99**  
February 19, 2023

2000-2009

**Hershel Hiatt '01**  
October 19, 2022  
**Reginald Derel Ellis '09**  
February 4, 2023

## Staff, Faculty, Students & Friends

**Dr. Claude Baker**  
March 5, 2023  
**Dr. Margaret Downing**  
January 17, 2023  
**Martha Hoyle**  
February 13, 2023  
**Mary Meyer**  
May 15, 2023  
**Wayne Newton**  
February 20, 2023





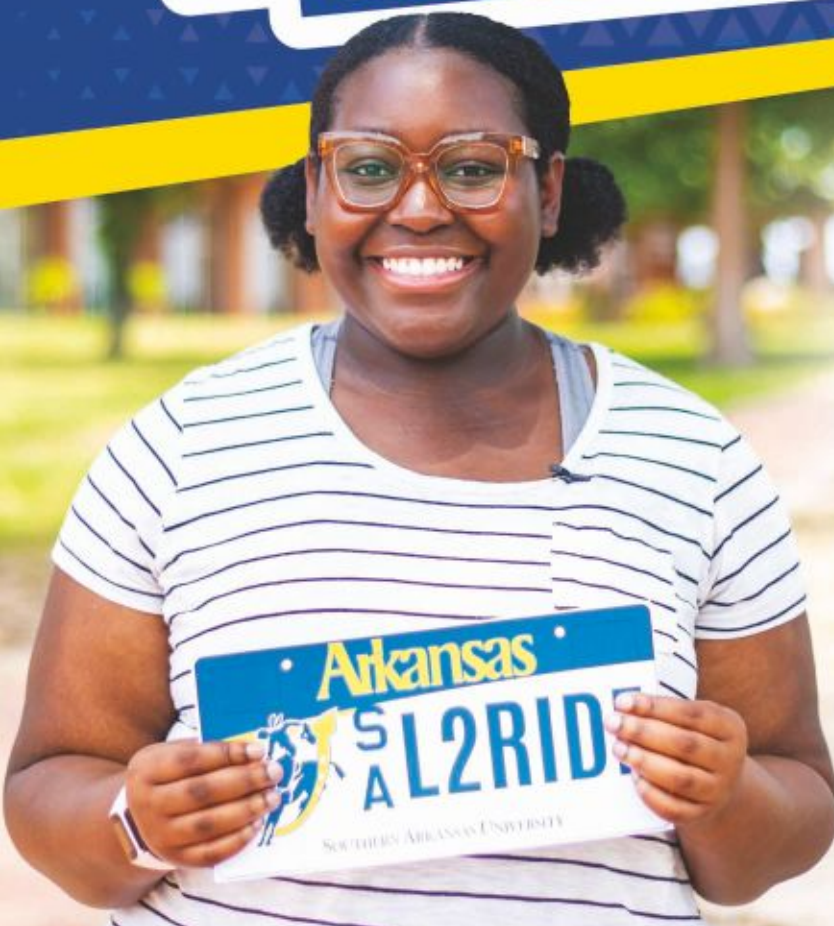
# Show your Mulerider PRIDE ON YOUR RIDE!



Meet one of our Mulerider License Plate Scholarship Recipients, Soraya Iverson! Soraya is a Sophomore Pre-Art Therapy major from Magnolia, Arkansas. She is an aspiring Art Therapist and hopes to own her own art therapy practice and gallery one day.

**“ This scholarship means more to me than just financial assistance; it represents your belief in me and my abilities, which has motivated me to work harder towards achieving my goals. I truly appreciate this scholarship and the opportunity it has given me. ”**

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