

the

WEST TEXAN

A Publication of the West Texas A&M University Alumni Association // Spring 2021



FROM A BUZZER BEATER
TO HISTORIC TRACK SUCCESS,

WT ATHLETICS IS THRIVING

PAGE 22

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EDITORIAL TEAM // Director for Alumni Relations and Executive Editor Ronnie Hall **Editor** Chip Chandler **Publisher** Kelly Carper **Polden Art Director** Caitlin Doyle **Writers** Jon Mark Beilue, Brittany Castillo, Chip Chandler, Tyson Jex **Photography** Rik Andersen, Jordyn Ballard, Trevor Fleeman, Darcy Lively

WEBSITE wtamu.edu
EMAIL alumni@wtamu.edu
TO SUPPORT WT wtamu.edu/giving
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EXECUTIVE TEAM LETTER



Ronnie Hall has had the opportunity to meet thousands of students and alumni in his 26 years of employment at West Texas A&M University. Ronnie is living his dream job of working with people who believe in the vision and mission of an incredible university. He began his career with WT in 1995, and through the years, he has been fortunate to meet faculty and staff who modeled servant leadership, creating in him a desire to do the same for students and alumni.



Brittny Lee graduated from West Texas A&M University in 2014. Immediately following graduation, she started her career with the university and has since discovered her passion for university engagement, community building and event planning. Brittny loves getting to meet and work with WT Alumni. She hopes to engage and connect alumni to keep their WT pride stronger than ever, no matter where they live now or when they graduated.

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Dear Buffs,
Coming out of the pandemic, we have all realized that there is something very special about being able to gather. One of our top priorities is to engage and connect our alumni with WT and its colleges. We work with the WT Alumni Board of Directors who are committed to establishing the various strategies to provide opportunities for the alumni to give back to the University that gave so much to them as students.

The WT Alumni Association creates volunteer opportunities, professional networking opportunities and alumni social events to help the alumni stay connected to WT and to one another. We have set short-term and long-term goals to strengthen our relations and support of our alumni, including communication with and engagement of alumni, increasing WT Alumni Association membership, and developing additional chapters.

We love meeting new people from all walks of life, we love engaging people in our University, and we love the opportunity to invest in WT Alumni and students' lives to help them grow and succeed. Please reach out to us to learn how you can be a part of the WT Alumni community.

Ronnie & Brittny

Ronnie Hall
Brittny Lee



Activate your Alumni Association membership online at BuffAlum.com.

Follow us:



@WTalumni



WT Alumni Association

faculty and staff accomplishments

WT faculty and staff members have received awards, published works and been elected to serve in various capacities.

Dr. Jeffrey Babb was named the Stan Sigman Endowed Professor of Business beginning in Fall 2022. Babb teaches computer programming, software development, game development, web development and networking.

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A trio of WT faculty members were named Jenny Lind Porter Professors following the announcement of a major gift from the Dr. Jenny Lind Porter estate: **Dr. Pat Tyrer from English, Dr. Marty Kuhlman from History and Dr. Mary Liz Brooks from Communication.** Porter was an assistant professor of English at then-West Texas State College from 1959 to 1961 and was named Poet Laureate of Texas for 1964 and 1965. The author of several published books and poems, she died in 2020 at 92.

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Dr. Beth Garcia will serve as WT's first Sylvia Nugent Professor of Education. The professorship was established in January in Nugent's honor, recognizing her years of service in Texas politics, including political consulting, fundraising and other jobs for key political leaders, including former U.S. Rep. Mac Thornberry and Texas state Rep. Four Price. Garcia, who has taught full time at WT since 2012, is director of teacher preparation, certification, advising and PACE. The professorship will "provide new and exciting opportunities for WT's educator preparation program," she said.

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Dr. Vinu Unnikrishnan, an assistant professor of civil engineering in the College of Engineering, recently was awarded his third and fourth patents on an artificial material that can revolutionize the development of prostheses, traumatic brain injury studies and more. The patents are for simulated tissue that acts in the same way as human tissues but is made from silicone. One patent expands on the material's capabilities through the embedding of short carbon fibers, making the material conductive to electrical signals – much as the brain and nervous system are in bodies.

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Carol Lovelady retired May 31 as director of the Panhandle Plains Historical Museum. Dr. Jessica Mallard was named interim director. Lovelady joined the museum as interim director in May 2016 and was hired as the full-time director the following January. An Amarillo native, she also served for many years on the museum's board of directors, founded the PPHM Unveiled fundraiser and oversaw the integration of the museum with the Center for the Study of the American West.

The Paul and Virginia Engler College of Business appointed four new endowed professorship positions for Fall 2020. Appointed professors are **Dr. Neil Terry** as the Engler Professor of Economics, **Dr. John Francois** as the Donald W. Hodges Professor of Business, **Dr. Liang Chen** as the McCray Professor of Business Analytics and **Dr. Ashley Morgan** as the Macy Professor of Business.

.....

Dr. Harry and Maryann Hueston were named 2020 WT Family of the Year. Dr. Hueston taught in WT's department of criminal justice for 20 years before retiring in December. Shortly thereafter, he was named program ambassador for the WT Athletic Department, assisting coaches and administrators with recruiting, alumni and community relations, and more.

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Georganna Ecker, a WT graduate with 20 years of investigatory experience, was promoted to director of Civil Rights and Title IX Compliance department. In her position, Ecker is responsible for ensuring that WT complies with Title IX, including responding to and investigating all complaints of sexual misconduct and discrimination at WT.

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Dr. Naruki Hiranuma, assistant professor of environmental sciences, was awarded the highly-coveted CAREER Award from the National Science Foundation (NSF). The \$500,000 grant will support a five-year project to boost research efforts in the University's environmental science program, as well as research expenses and teaching activities. A significant component of the award will support educational outreach and the training of future scientists in the Texas Panhandle region.

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Dr. Bruce Brasington was named the Twanna Caddell Powell Professor of History, the first endowed professorship ever in the University's Department of History. A Stillwater, Okla., native, Brasington began his career at WT in 1990 and has taught a variety of courses, from introductory American history to graduate seminars in medieval and early-modern history. He is a Regents Professor for The Texas A&M University System and a Piper Foundation Professor. The Powell Professorship was established in January by Don and Twanna Powell to enhance the student learning experience by supporting an exceptional faculty member in the history department.

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Dr. Yvette Castillo, an associate professor in the College of Education and Social Sciences, was named 2020-21 Magister Optimus, the highest honor for a WT faculty member, and Jon Davis, assistant vice president for student enrollment, engagement and success, was honored with the Clarence E. Thompson Staff Excellence Award, the University's highest staff honor, during a virtual convocation ceremony in August. Also honored were Employee of the Year Steve Sellars, internship coordinator, and Staff Excellence Award winners Susan Allen, assistant vice president of academic affairs, and Shawn Burns, University police chief.

Kelly Carper Polden, a communications expert with significant higher education experience, now leads the University's Office of Communication and Marketing. Polden formerly worked as the assistant director of external relations for the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. The University undertook a national search to fill the position after the resignation of Ann Underwood, who led the team for many years before leaving to pursue new paths in education and graphic design.

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Tana Miller, assistant vice president for Student Enrollment, Engagement and Success, is one of 43 people internationally to earn the Strategic Enrollment Management Endorsement from the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admission Officers. She is only the fifth Texan to earn the endorsement. Her name will appear in the national registry.

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A research team headed by **Dr. Paul Morley**, professor and director of research for Texas A&M University and WT's VERO (Veterinary Education, Research, and Outreach) program, won a \$500,000 grant from the Food and Drug Administration to research ways to prevent antimicrobial drug resistance in feedlot cattle. Morley will work with researchers from Iowa State University, Michigan State University and Colorado State University, along with industry leaders Cactus Feeders, Friona Industries, Five Rivers Cattle Feeding and the Texas Cattle Feeders Association, to find ways to reduce the amount of tylosin phosphate given to cattle. Other WT faculty members on the research team are **Dr. Ty Lawrence, Dr. John Richeson and Dr. Loni Lucherk.**

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Dr. Jenna Funk and Dr. Benjamin Newcomer joined the faculty as clinical assistant and associate professors, respectively, at the Texas A&M College of Veterinary Medicine & Biomedical Sciences' (CVMBBS) Veterinary Education, Research, & Outreach (VERO) program. Funk will teach CVMBBS students at VERO on the WT campus about beef cattle production, while Newcomer will focus on dairy cattle instruction.

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Dr. Amy Von Lintel, the Doris Alexander Endowed Professor of Fine Arts, published "Georgia O'Keeffe's Wartime Texas Letters" (Texas A&M University Press, www.tamupress.com, 248 pages), which explores the artist's years in the growing shadow of World War I, when she was first in Amarillo from 1912 to 1914 and then her tenure at WT from 1916 to 1918. Von Lintel previously published "Georgia O'Keeffe: Watercolors."

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Dr. Alex Hunt was named one of 22 Regents Professors and Regents Fellows for 2019-20 during The Texas A&M University System Board of Regents' Nov. 12 meeting. Hunt is a professor of English, the Vincent/Haley Endowed Professor of Western American Studies and director of the Center for the Study of the American West.

One healthy program

The West Texas A&M University College of Nursing and Health Sciences has racked up several honors over the past year. In April, Intelligent.com ranked the college's bachelor's program in health sciences as the best in the country. Also in April, WT's nurse practitioner program was named the best in Texas by Nursing Process. WT's family nurse practitioner program was ranked No. 4 in the country by RegisteredNursing.org in August. Also that month, College Choice recently ranked the online RN to BSN program as the third best in the country, and Online-Bachelor-Degrees.com named WT one of the 10 best online nursing schools in the country in July.

A rocking installation

The cofounder of Sonic Youth and his artist partner presented an immersive art installation in West Texas A&M University's Dord Fitz Formal Gallery in April. Leah Singer, a multidisciplinary artist and magazine editor, and Lee Ranaldo, who cofounded the indie rock band in 1981, created "Yesterday Was a Year Ago (I Don't Want a Future, I Want a Present)" as a visual and audio survey of 2020. The installation attracted the attention of such prestigious arts outlets as Glasstire.

Growing the herd

WT Alumni are now empowered to find scholars for the WT Alumni Scholars program. WTAS is meant to identify prospective students who may benefit from the recognition of someone they know and trust, who need encouragement down the path of higher education, or who possess potential that may have not yet been recognized in a traditional admissions process. Alumni may choose five students annually. Call the Alumni Office for more details.

Pioneering a new future

In March, the University released a five-year strategic plan designed to guide the University to becoming a pioneering Regional Research University. The strategic plan – The Pioneering Spirit: Pursuit of WT 125 – emphasizes WT's distinctive focus on the people and places of the Panhandle region and will help enact the mission laid out in 2019 in the University's long-term plan, WT 125: From the Panhandle to the World. "WT 125 is a comprehensive plan that serves as a compendium for guiding the University's path forward," said University President Dr. Walter Wendler. "Our strategic plan details the very steps we are taking to attain our goals." By 2035, when WT reaches its 125th anniversary, the University plans to attain doctoral-granting institutional status in the Carnegie classifications of universities.



WT's Ag Development Association a Model for Alumni Relations

BY CHIP CHANDLER
PHOTO: RIK ANDERSEN



2018 ADA Board of Directors at the first Ag Day in the new Happy State Bank Academic and Research Building

Legend has it, the top-dollar items – heck, maybe the only items – at the first Ag Day auction were two gimme caps found in the floorboard of someone's pickup.

Like most tall tales, there's at least a kernel of truth in there. But here's the real story: However modestly Ag Day began, the auction now regularly features an array of big-ticket items, and in the past two decades has raised more than \$1 million for West Texas A&M University's Department of Agriculture.

That's a testament to the success of the Ag Development Association, currently the largest department-affiliated chapter for WT's Alumni Association.

ADA's Ag Day success is broader than raising eyepopping amounts of money every year, said Dr. Lance

Keith, head of WT's Department of Agriculture in the Paul Engler College of Agriculture and Natural Sciences.

"The ADA is the wind beneath our wings," Kieth said. "Their support allows us to get the word out about our department, and now we're attracting students from all over the country."

"Our ultimate goal is to grow the department," said ADA president Brandon Conrad '99. "We are all about doing whatever we need to do to help the department grow and continue to be one of the best in the world."

The Ag Development Association originally formed in the early 1970s, the vision of former Dean Dr. Charles Smallwood, said Dr. Bob Robinson '70. But when the ag department went through some rocky times after Smallwood's retirement later that decade, ADA folded.

But after the Department of Ag's importance to the University was reconfirmed with the merger with The Texas A&M University System in 1990, Smallwood and a core group of his former students realized the time was right for ADA's rebirth.

"A handful of them met that first year and had some beers on the tailgate

"Their support allows us to get the word out about our department, and now we're attracting students from all over the country."

Dr. Lance Keith
Department of Agriculture

of a pickup," Kieth said. "The next year, they made it into a fundraising dinner and made about \$1,500."

Soon, the alumni realized they could have a greater impact on the school they loved by doing more than just an annual reunion, said Robinson, who worked for decades with Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and now is the ag department's internship coordinator and a part-time professor.

"We figured out that the biggest job we need to do was to help the department recruit students," he said.

In fact, that's now set in stone. ADA requires that any money raised at Ag Day be used for recruitment. That's every single dollar, every single year. Other than that, there are no restrictions.

"That will keep us aggressive in raising money every year," Robinson said.

The first step: Raising awareness. Kieth had the idea to start flooding the region with WT Ag caps.

"We had no name recognition," he said. "So we started handing out caps

at every opportunity. We went to ag competitions – when we weren't even invited, but just showed up to help – and handed them out there. Just wherever we could."

“We try to individualize all of our potential students and put a lot of effort into getting them here”

Whitney Mount
Graduate Student Recruitment Coordinators

"Today at the Houston Livestock Show," Robinson said, "you'll see more WT caps than A&M or Texas Tech."

ADA's annual gift also pays for additional recruitment materials, scholarships designed to attract the most promising ag students around, and a pair of graduate students to

travel throughout the state and region to spread the good word about WT's enviable program, as well as to conduct campus tours.

"We try to individualize all of our potential students and put a lot of effort into getting them here," said Whitney Mount, one of the graduate student recruitment coordinators. "There's a lot of hours on our part. We spend a lot of time traveling, plus all of the time we spend on doing tours and setting up meetings with faculty in the areas the potential students are interested in majoring. It's lots and lots of hours, but it's definitely worthwhile."

The effort is paying off. Since 2005, Ag Day has raised \$1,145,060, and enrollment in the department has risen from about 200 students to more than 1,000.

"The more students we have, the more money we get from the state," Robinson said. "We continue to work hard on that."

Recruitment pays off in other ways, too.

"We would not be in the new ag complex if not for the ADA," Robinson said. "They didn't raise the money for it directly, but we wouldn't have gotten state funding, System funding, industry funding or private funding if we didn't enjoy the excellent reputation that we have. You get that by the product you put out – excellent graduates. And that starts with recruiting."

Ag Day is no small feat. The annual event – this year set for Sept. 11 – takes about six months to plan. Items including cruises, exclusive hunting trips, seed and other significant donations from agriculture industry leaders are solicited and sold in a combination of live and silent auctions.

"It's a big community event now," Kieth said. "We have food, and our beverage committee takes pride in the fact that they always have enough beer."

"Ag Day is really awesome," Mount said. "It's cool to see a group of people working together for a common goal. There's a lot of planning and dedication prior to the event, but it's amazing to see it come to fruition and to see all of the support from within the ag industry."

"But we wouldn't be here without ADA," Mount continued.

ADA's current leadership generally ranges from ages 30 to 40.

"What I am most pleased with is that the young graduates have taken it over," Robinson said. "It's not us old men any more. We'll still go to meetings, but the leadership is among people who graduated 15 to 20 years ago."

The WT Alumni Association now hopes to use the ADA model in other colleges, schools and departments across campus, said Executive Director Ronnie Hall.

"The passion that the ADA displays for the Department of Agriculture is exactly what we hope to see among professional networks across the Alumni Association," Hall said.

To do so, Robinson suggests current and future professional networks decide on one common agenda.

“The passion that the ADA displays for the Department of Agriculture is exactly what we hope to see among professional networks across the Alumni Association,”

Ronnie Hall
Executive Director for Alumni Relations

"Everybody has to agree to it to move the organization and the department it represents forward," Robinson said.

Mount and three of her fellow students have launched a student chapter of ADA to foster the next generation of leadership; plans are in the works for an annual event for students in the spring to complement Ag Day in the fall.

This year's Ag Day will feature more activities geared to engage alumni from all walks of life, though the auction will still be the centerpiece.

To folks like Conrad, staying involved with the University is vitally important – both to alumni and to the institution itself.

"When you're a student, some of the best times you have are at the University. You develop your closest friends there," Conrad said. "Then you graduate and move away, have a family. So having a connection back to the university is having a connection to something larger. You can't weigh how important that is."

"Staying involved through things like ADA helps foster connections. It helps encourage donations and the ability to provide assistance to future students so that they can experience some of the same, or even better, experiences that you had."

"At the end of the day," Kieth said, "you've got to have vision. ADA has that vision."

"The ag community is a show-me community," he continued. "If you don't show them, they'll move on. We've been able to show them that proof. We have been blessed to have had this growth."

Below: WT fixture inside the Happy State Bank Academic and Research Building
Right: Paul Engler and Ed Wright bidding on auction items at Ag Day



Dr. Neil Terry, Paul Engler, and Dr. Dean Hawkins pictured at Ag Day at the Nance Ranch

Save the Date

Join Ag Development Association and WT Alumni Association at the
2021 Ag Day

11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.
Saturday, Sept. 11

Paul Engler College of Agriculture and Natural Sciences complex

UNPRECEDENTED CHALLENGES, UNPRECEDENTED GROWTH.

GLOBAL PANDEMIC LEAVES ITS MARK ON WT, BUT OPPORTUNITIES FOR EVOLUTION ABOUND

BY CHIP CHANDLER

For some, it was the spring break that almost never ended. For others, it was an immediate call to action to tackle unparalleled tests.

Now, as a return to some semblance of normal begins to finally feel possible, Buff Nation can look back on a year like no other and take stock.

"I hope we will never again see another year like this past 12 months, but I take heart in seeing how forcefully and immediately we were able to respond as the crisis unfolded," said University President Dr. Walter V. Wendler.

When the COVID-19 pandemic rapidly began spreading across America, West Texas A&M University students, faculty and staff were in the middle of a traditionally busy spring semester. But as the seriousness of the medical crisis became clear, in-person events began to be canceled.

And as students prepared to head home for spring break, they were told they would not be returning any time soon.

Decisions were made rapidly but with much care.

"I take my responsibility to this school extremely seriously, and the health and safety of our students, faculty and staff is first priority," President Wendler said at the time.

Classes were on pause for a few days, allowing Informational Technology and faculty leaders to shift nearly 100 percent of classes online – a smooth transition thanks to the fact that WT's push into virtual classrooms began in 1997.

"WT students are not getting hastily developed online courses taught by first-timers," said Dr. Neil Terry, provost and executive vice president. "WT online degrees are solid investments, and the University has proven ready to serve online students at an affordable cost and with a high-quality education."

Students' educational needs weren't all that the Buff family attended to, though. The International Students office teamed with several organizations to provide a food bank for students who couldn't return home.

Faculty and staff members across campus set up food delivery trees for students who lost jobs when restaurants and other businesses temporarily laid off employees.

"WT online degrees are solid investments, and the University has proven ready to serve online students at an affordable cost and with a high-quality education."

Dr. Neil Terry
provost and executive vice president.

And Buffs across the region, country and world stepped up in their own ways, from brilliant students and faculty in the College of Engineering who pioneered Copper Clean technology, to countless frontline workers – including nurses, peace officers and more – who got their education at WT.

The May 2020 commencement ceremonies and both summer sessions were held almost completely virtually, but even as COVID numbers continued to rise throughout the region, officials at WT and The Texas A&M University System made plans for a safe resumption of operations by the start of the Fall 2020 semester.

In addition to mandated wearing of facial coverings, social distancing requirements

were put in place, including smaller classes, longer class days to reduce congestion between classes, adjustments to the academic calendar, and a phased-in arrival on campus in August and again in January. The football season got off to a delayed start and many teams played to significantly reduced in-person audiences, but Buff Nation continued to roll on.

Efforts were made to treat students fairly and remove as much risk as possible: Registration fees were waived; the Buff Guarantee offered a 100 percent refund if students withdrew before classes began; free COVID-19 tests and, eventually, vaccines were offered; and CARES Act funding was given to hundreds of students.

Life on campus began to feel somewhat normal again by Spring 2021, though masks were still being worn and many classes were held with a combination of virtual and in-person instruction.

"Due to the continued impact of COVID-19 on our day-to-day operating protocols, we can expect Fall 2021 to be very different from what we experienced in Fall 2020 and more closely akin to what we are accustomed," Wendler said. "But COVID-19 impacts will create differences in how we conduct our affairs for the foreseeable future. It is safe to say we will provide more flexible options than we have in the past."





CONGRATS *grads*



Around 1,300 students crossed the stage during three outdoor commencement ceremonies May 8 at West Texas A&M University.

The newly minted Buff Class of 2021 were celebrated at Buffalo Stadium in a trio of events: students from the Paul Engler College of Agriculture and Natural Science and the Sybil B. Harrington College of Fine Arts and Humanities first, followed by students from the Paul and Virginia Engler College of Business and the College of Engineering, then concluding with students from the College of Education and Social Sciences and the College of Nursing and Health Sciences.

The ceremonies also included about 300 graduates from May and December 2020 who chose to participate in this year's in-person event after last year's virtual graduations.

WT HONORS ITS 2020 Distinguished Alumni



BY BRITTANY CASTILLO

Four former Buffalos have been selected for the 2020 Distinguished Alumni Award (DAA) at West Texas A&M University.

The annual award began in 1963 to commend alumni members' successes, but often, recipients also have a history of significant contribution to the Texas Panhandle and its students.

Dr. Sally Carmen '75, '83, Scott Doores '74, Rickey Harman '68, '71, and David Schaeffer '79 are the newest members to receive distinction for their achievement and legacy of WT excellence.

Their growing impact in the fields of nursing, business, education and philanthropy share a strong foundation in Canyon and has enriched the lives of many.



SCAN HERE TO WATCH VIDEOS OF THE WINNERS

"IT TAUGHT ME HOW TO LEAD, TO HAVE DIALOGUE WITH PROFESSIONALS AND MAKE CHANGES."

DR. SALLY CARMEN
'75, '83

ONE OF TEXAS'S GREATEST NURSES AND EDUCATORS



Dr. Carmen earned both bachelor's and master's degrees in nursing from WT before obtaining a Doctor of Nursing degree from Texas Christian University in 2011. Later that year, she was named DFW's Great 100 Nurses.

"I met Dr. Carmen recently in Fort Worth, and it is notable that she wears her WT nursing pin even now in her current job. She has contributed greatly to WT's strong nursing reputation as a student, alumna and faculty member," Heidi Taylor '82, dean of the School of

Health Professions at Texas Wesleyan University, said.

Dr. Carmen helped earn more than \$4 million in grant funds to promote health to communities in the Texas Panhandle and develop the Children's Medical Center. As a registered nurse, she earned certifications such as Nurse Executive Advanced, Clinical Nurse Leader, Advanced Practice Registered Nurse and Clinical Nurse Specialist.

Dr. Carmen serves as an adjunct educator, researcher and strategist for the Texas Organization of Nurse Executives. She is the current System Director of Clinical Excellence at Texas Health Resources.

"Having the WT setting with those faculty members exposed me to a broader way of thinking. It taught me how to lead, to have dialogue with professionals and make changes. To be recognized by the institution that has always held my heart, it can't get any better than that," Dr. Carmen said.



SCOTT DOORES '75, '83

FOUNDER OF AUDIOTEL CORPORATION AND REAL ESTATE DEVELOPER

Texas building homes for people who work there is remarkable," Dr. Steve Urban, professor of internal medicine at Texas Tech University Health Science Center, said.

"WT is where I like to make an investment because I can both pay it back and pay it forward. I can't wait to see what the future will bring," Doores said. "Hearing my name in a sentence with distinguished is hard to reconcile. I don't know if I've ever had a better year."

Doores earned a bachelor's degree in education and English from WT, where he also played on the football and basketball teams.

After graduation, he toured internationally as a professional basketball player before returning to the Texas Panhandle as a businessman, real estate developer and key member of the WTAMU Foundation Board of Directors.

In 1984, he founded AudioTel Corporation, a banking software company that has grown into a multi-million-dollar business named Best of the Best from Independent Bankers Association of Texas. Soon after, Doores was the driving force in revitalizing

his hometown, Farnsworth, Texas. He demolished 20 dilapidated buildings and a two-acre junk yard to develop valuable properties including new homes.

"Lots of people are successful but not everybody is philanthropic about it. Scott has been helpful not only to WT, but he's generous to people that you wouldn't know about. His project in Farnsworth,

"WT IS WHERE I LIKE TO MAKE AN INVESTMENT BECAUSE I CAN BOTH PAY IT BACK AND PAY IT FORWARD."

DAVID SCHAEFFER '68, '71

CPA AND UNIVERSITY PHILANTHROPIST



Harman, earned a bachelor's and master's degree in mathematics from WT and a Doctor of Education from Texas Tech University in 1982. Shortly after, Harman became a well-regarded leader in the Texas Panhandle for education. He was instrumental in the establishment of Weatherford Christian School in 2001, a private K-12 school with now more than 300 students.

"I have known Rickey since he was a young boy and had the pleasure of watching him evolve into the very successful individual he is today. Rickey has always been proud of his WT heritage and attributes his education base and core WT values to be the true basis for his personal and professional

RICKEY HARMAN '68, '71

CO-FOUNDER OF EBANK AND WEATHERFORD CHRISTIAN SCHOOL



success," Stanley Schaeffer, distinguished alumnus and supporter of WT, said.

Harman also is co-founder of ebank, one of the first banks to transition to image bank statements in 1982, which now serves approximately 25 banks. He authored a book of his life titled "Happy Days in Happy, Texas" and recently released his second

book about girls' basketball in the Texas Panhandle.

"There are so many deserving people that are graduates of West Texas A&M University, so I'm really honored to be one of them this year. I want to thank everyone involved. This University has been such a blessing to my family," Harman said.

Schaeffer earned a degree in accounting from WT leading to a successful career as a CPA and cherished philanthropist for the University.

A native of the Texas Panhandle, Schaeffer began his career in Dimmitt and became highly involved in the surrounding communities through the Board of Directors at First United Bank, Opportunity School and Amarillo Little Theatre.

"David has always been a focused individual even as a child because he'd set his sights on accomplishing a goal and follow through. David is unique in that he

operates with the highest amount of ethics and integrity, and he always puts others ahead of his wants or needs. I'll have to attribute all this to his mother," Stanley Schaeffer, father and WT distinguished alumnus, said Schaeffer was a key partner for the developments of WT scholarships, athletics, Old Main Society and renovation of the J.A. Hill Chapel. The Shawn David Schaeffer Memorial President's Honor Scholarship was established in 2008 in memory of his son.

"When I came to WT, it was an environment where personal relationships existed between the students and professors, who wanted you to succeed. I loved my time at

WT, even though most of it was spent in a classroom and the second floor of the Cornette Library. I also need to give credit to my mother and father who laid such a legacy of service on each of us as their children," David Schaeffer said.

Traditionally honored at the Phoenix Banquet, this year's 57th ceremony toasting the four DAA recipients has been rescheduled for fall 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The 2020 awardees will be invited to celebrate a legacy of excellence at WT with friends and family as well as University supporters.

5 of a kind



Photo: The living link to a family with five graduates under the five name changes of West Texas A&M that has spanned nearly 100 years: (top left), Austin Dunham (2012), Dr. Rick Dunham (1986), Richard Dunham (1960) and seated, Carol Dunham (1961).

Five generations, five WT graduates, five different names

NOTE: This article originally appeared in a special Amarillo Globe-News publication celebrating West Texas A&M University's 30th anniversary as part of The Texas A&M University System.

BY JON MARK BEILUE

Emma Bettis could not have had even the slightest notion the unique legacy she started when she enrolled at this new college in Canyon more than 100 years ago. She wanted to be a teacher, and a degree from fledgling West Texas State Normal College seemed the best way to do just that.

About 25 years later, Fannie Griffiths, her daughter, would do the same thing with a slightly different twist. She would earn her degree from same school, different name – West Texas State Teachers College in 1942.

"My grandmother and mother were determined to get out there and make something of themselves," said Carol Dunham, Fannie's daughter. "I never met my grandmother, so most of what I picked up was hearsay. She was big on voting rights for women, and didn't necessarily believe a woman's place was always in the home."

And so it would go for almost a century – great-great grandmother, great-grandmother, grandmother, father and son. That's five family generations with five degrees from the Canyon university.

But it gets better. West Texas A&M University has had five official names in its 110-year history, and the current Dunham lineage has had one graduate under each different name. There's likely not another family that can claim that unusual link.

"I really didn't know about the lineage until I graduated and my grandmother talked about it," said Austin Dunham, a 2012 graduate and the youngest of the link. "I always knew WT was where I wanted to go."

If you're scoring at home, it goes something like this:

- **Emma Bettis**, believed to be approximately 1916, education degree, West Texas State Normal College (1910-1923).
- **Fannie Bettis Griffiths**, daughter, 1942, education degree, West Texas State Teachers College (1923-1949).
- **Carol Griffiths**, granddaughter, 1961, art and English degrees, West Texas State College (1949-1963). **Richard Dunham**, Pampa High School sweetheart and future husband, degree in education with a social studies emphasis, 1960.
- **Rick Dunham**, great-grandson, 1986, degree in biology and chemistry, West Texas State University (1963-1990).
- **Austin Dunham**, great-great grandson, 2012, degree in general studies with emphasis in sports and exercise education, West Texas A&M University (1990-present).

"Each person, it seems, went to WT for different reasons," said Dr. Rick Dunham, a dentist in Dalhart. "I can't speak for my grandmother and great-grandmother, but I'm sure they would say what we all think now and that WT was just a good fit for us."

Emma Bettis and Fannie Griffiths were somewhat educational pioneers.

West Texas State Normal College was only five years old when Bettis arrived. Old Main burned in 1914, but that didn't dissuade her. Bettis taught in Arkansas and in the mining town of Silver Plume, Colo. Her husband was the school superintendent.

Fannie, one of Bettis' two daughters, married in the 1930s to a farmer who had land just across the Texas state line in New

Mexico. It was about 70 years too soon for online classes, so Fannie took 2-year-old Carol with her to Canyon as she went to the teachers college there.

Her husband would come to Canyon on the weekends to see them. Fannie Griffiths would eventually teach second grade in Olton and Shamrock.

Carol, her daughter, graduated from Pampa High School in 1957. She initially wanted to go to college elsewhere.

"It never occurred to me not to go to college," she said, "and at one point, I thought I was going to Baylor. My mother was one of those go-getters and she wanted me to go to Baylor. She thought it would be a wonderful school to go to, but I couldn't afford it even then. I'm glad I didn't because I loved WT."

It didn't hurt that Richard Dunham, her boyfriend, had left Pampa for WT the year before. Carol took mild exception to Richard's story that she just followed him there, but there might have been a measure of truth in that.

"When he went to WT, we weren't dating much," she said, "because he wanted to be free to date in college and he wanted me to be free to date my senior year in high school. That didn't last long. Once he came home to visit, we ended up, as you say in those days, 'going steady.'" Dunham chose WT because of 75-mile proximity, and because he'd been on campus a few times during his high school days. He thought he would teach and coach, but he was also in ROTC. That would lead to a 21-year military career before retirement in 1982 with the rank of major.

Following retirement, he returned to his hometown. He coached and taught at Pampa Junior High, then was junior high athletic director. When Dennis Cavalier, Pampa football coach and athletic director, suddenly died in 2003, Dunham filled in for a time as athletic director. Meanwhile, Carol taught sixth grade English and art.

If the WT chain looked like it would break, it was with their son, Rick. With Richard's last military stop at Fort Sill in Lawton, Okla., Rick graduated from Lawton Eisenhower High School in 1982. He wanted to pursue a medical or dental field of study, and with a girlfriend at the University of Oklahoma, Norman was believed to be his destination.

But a high school counselor, a WT alumnus, gave the university Rick's name. He soon received a letter from WT about the Don and Sybil Harrington scholarship that waived out-of-state tuition.

"My dad said don't fill out that application because you'll be taking scholarship money from someone who's actually going to WT," Dunham said.

Dunham also found out about the acceptance rate into health care professional programs after graduation. At Oklahoma, it was only 17 percent. At WT, it was above 85 percent. The reason, he was told later, is a group of professors would together recommend only the top students to medical or dental schools, and their recommendation reputation was stellar.

Though the campus was mostly empty, he got a good feel of what the future would hold should he decide to head to Canyon.

"We finish the tour, and my dad is retired military, so he's pretty disciplined," he said. "He doesn't say much to me on the drive home, but we get to around Altus (Okla.), and he said, 'So what do you think?' I told him I think I want to go to WT. I thought he was literally going to drive off the road."

"Each person, it seems, went to WT for different reasons. I can't speak for my grandmother and great-grandmother, but I'm sure they would say what we all think now and that WT was just a good fit for us."

For Dunham, who said he didn't need the big university experience, WT fit like a well-worn work glove. Small classes meant easier comprehension. While working as a counselor his sophomore year at Buff Branding, a freshman orientation, he would meet his future wife, Debbi.

Dunham was accepted to three dental schools and chose the University of Texas Health San Antonio School of Dentistry, graduating in 1990.

After a year of a hospital residency, Dunham was an associate with another dentist in Pampa before purchasing a practice in Dalhart. He's been there since 1994. Three daughters have gone to Texas A&M, WT's mothership for the last 30 years, but Austin, the oldest, kept the Buff streak going.

Unlike his dad, he was quite familiar with WT growing up. He had been to football and basketball games, been to sports camps.

He became a student assistant with the Buff basketball program in 2010-2012 and immersed himself in intramural sports, even working in the intramural sports program his senior year.

"I wasn't the guy that went to Midnight Rodeo. I found a group of guys and we were all about intramurals," he said. "We'd go to the gym every night until they turned out the lights. Everyone else could party and hurt their grades. We stayed in the gym and it may have hurt my grades – same effect."

Still, Dunham graduated in 2012, and is beginning his fifth year as a teacher and coach at Motley County. He is head boys basketball and golf coach and assistant football coach.

Austin and wife Jessica have two daughters – Landree and Emoree. Could there be a sixth generation at WT? Possibly. But will that match a sixth name change? West Texas A&M and Texas A&M would say that's not too likely.

WTAMU CONSTRUCTION PROJECT SUMMARY

BY BRITTANY CASTILLO

It's been an accomplished year for renovation at West Texas A&M University. With the help of dedicated staff and community, here are a few of the completed projects this year.

NEW BUILDINGS

The **Veterinary Education, Research and Outreach (1)** facility was completed in September to round out the Agricultural Sciences Complex with ample accommodation. The 36,000-square-foot building houses classrooms conducive to livestock training and is located east of the Happy State Bank Academic & Research Building. This year is the first opportunity Texas A&M University veterinary students in the VERO program will get to utilize the building fully alongside researchers in collaborative projects contributing to the Texas Panhandle.

The **Texas A&M Veterinary Medical Diagnostic Laboratory (2)** was competed at the start of the academic year as part of the Agricultural Sciences Complex. The facility serves as the first of two locations for Texas A&M University veterinary students in their four-year curriculum under the Veterinary Education, Research and Outreach (VERO) program. The \$17.6-million facility contains climate-controlled specimen lockers and the latest technology for diagnostic services in bacteriology, pathology, serology and virology. The TVMDL is one of the latest state-of-the-art facilities to be added to WT's growing campus.

A NEW ROUTE

The **Russell Long Pedestrian Walkway**, stretching from the new Buffalo Football Stadium to the First United Bank Center, is ready for foot traffic on a 10-foot-wide concrete walk with lighting, landscape and nodes including benches and trash receptacles. A project that started in 2018, faculty, staff and students have been anticipating a safe route to get across campus that invites mobility and makes it easier to utilize the WT shuttle bus system.

REFRESHED SPACES

The **Main Entry Lobby (3)** on Old Main's second floor was renovated with paint, new lighting, signage and furniture including built-ins. This area now serves as the meeting place for campus tours by the Admissions Office as well as a communal study area for students, faculty and staff.

Shirley Residence Hall (4) also received updates with added railings, toe boards and a new lobby in the exterior second floor walkway. The Hall received new flooring in the corridors, rebuilt community showers and a refreshed hall director's apartment.

The **Recording Studio** in the **Mary Moody Music Northern Hall (5)** was refreshed with new paint and other cosmetic touches.

Where the Learning Continues (6), a higher education experience for students with intellectual disabilities, is now housed in Old Main after many years in Old Sub. The classrooms now include a kitchen, smartboards and more, designed to teach students life skills, mathematics, science, writing and more.

INCREASED EFFICIENCY

The **Cornette Library (7)** received renovations to the restrooms. Likewise, Guenther Residence Hall had improvements made to the water systems to increase efficiency and help conserve water consumption.

WT's thriving campus is continually growing. Here are the exciting developments to look for next year.

UPDATED FACILITIES

New elevators will be installed around campus to promote better mobility and efficiency. This includes two in **Old Main**, one in the **Cornette Library**, one at the **First United Bank Center**, one in **Mary Moody Northern Hall**, and another at the **Virgil Henson Activities Center**.

The **Bain Athletic Center (8)** is one of the central spaces for WT's award-winning athletic teams. The facility contains a 6,700-square-foot locker room, equipment storage space and a video screen for studying game-film review. Construction for the three-phase renovation continues with a 24,000 square foot athletic training center equipped with a hydrotherapy facility, taping tables and ice bath tubs, as well as a Championship Atrium for trophy displays and memorabilia and an Academic Success Center for study hall and meetings for student-athletes.

In 2019, WT established the **Harrington Academic Hall WTAMU Amarillo Center (9)** in the Commerce Building at Eighth Avenue and South Tyler Street in downtown Amarillo. Harrington Hall offers upper-level and graduate courses a home base in a flourishing community. The next phase of renovations will include a computer testing facility, laboratory facilities for simulation and acute care training for nursing students, as well as study spaces, and offices on the second floor. Renovations began in November.

The **Natural Sciences Building** is home to the Department of Life Earth and Environmental Sciences. The three-story building has 13 classrooms, 41 labs, 47 faculty offices, and is centered on an atrium favored by students for socializing. In 2007, renovations included new smart classrooms and new laboratory equipment. Construction for a new roof began in November.

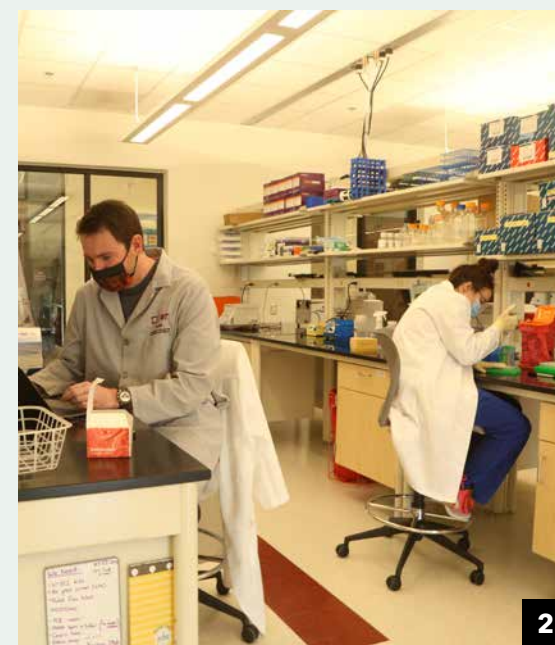
The **Panhandle-Plains Historical Museum** is getting a new **STEAM Lab** dedicated to the learning of Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics. This permanent installation will serve as a space to incorporate PPHM artifacts with the discovery of advancing innovation for all ages. Partnerships with Canyon ISD, Amarillo ISD, Region 16 and WTAMU have been established to ensure learning objectives are cohesive for an advancing Texas Panhandle.



1



5



2



6



3



7



4



8

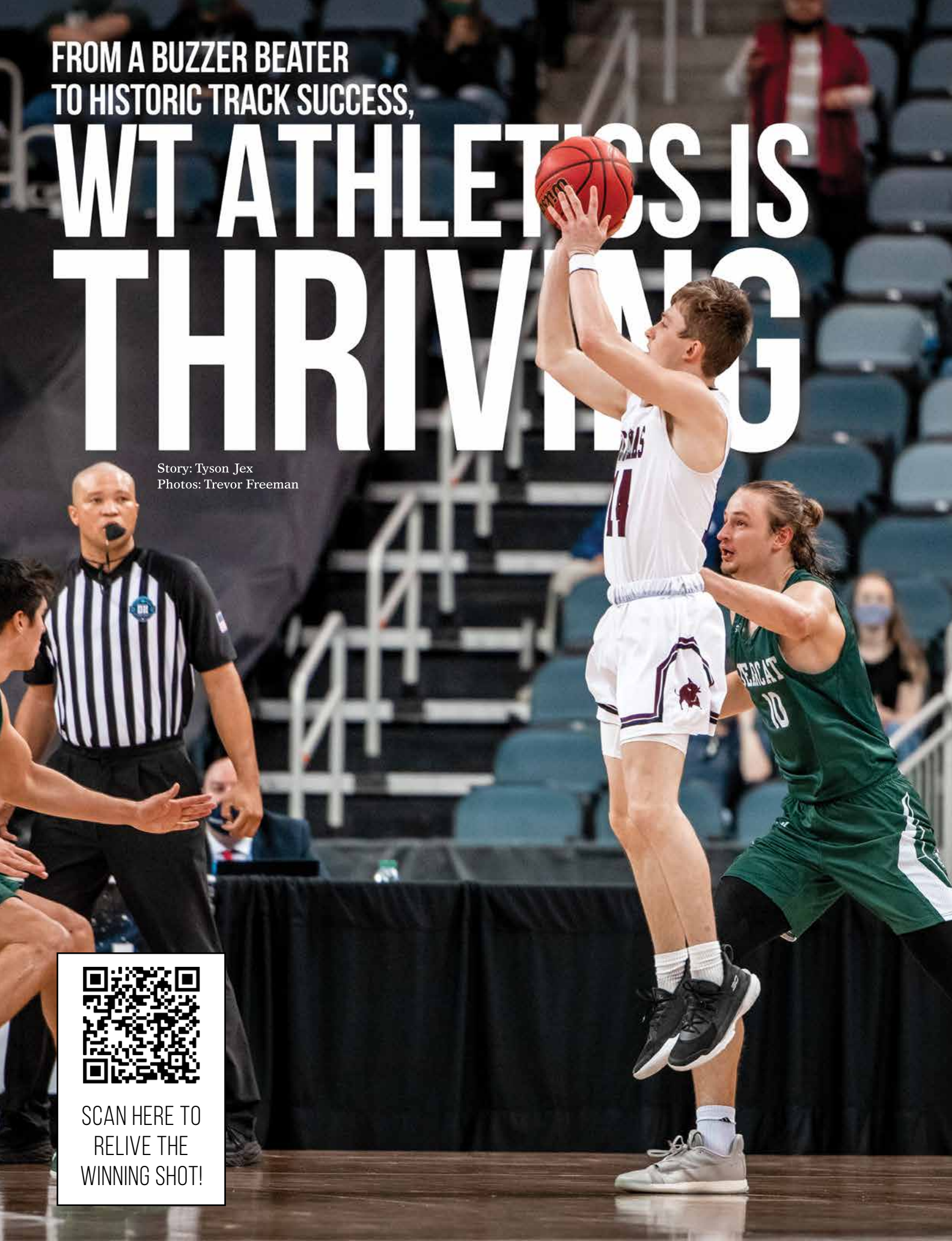


9

FROM A BUZZER BEATER
TO HISTORIC TRACK SUCCESS,

WT ATHLETICS IS THRIVING

Story: Tyson Jex
Photos: Trevor Freeman



**“THAT’S FOR
THE WIN....
HE GOT IT!
HE HIT IT!
TOUSSAINT!”**

Every kid dreams of making the game-winning shot to send their team to the National Championship. West Texas A&M University’s Zach Toussaint got to live it.

The sophomore guard from Johnsburg, Ill., made his only shot of the game – a 3-pointer at the buzzer – to send WT to the NCAA Division II National Championship with a 87-86 win over Lincoln Memorial.

WT overcame a 16-point first half deficit to defeat the Railsplitters and become the second team in Lone Star Conference history to reach the title game and first since 2003. They would fall 80-54 to Northwest Missouri State in the championship game, but it’s Toussaint’s game-winning shot – which has more than 750,000 views on Twitter and was named Sportscenter’s Top Play – that will always be remembered by Buff Nation.

It was another banner year for the Buffs under head coach Tom Brown as they finished the season 19-3 winning their third



SCAN HERE TO
RELIVE THE
WINNING SHOT!

A LOOK AT WT ATHLETICS IN 2021

1 REGIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP

3 NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS

8 LONE STAR CONFERENCE CHAMPIONSHIPS

straight NCAA Division South Central Regional Championship with Qua Grant and Joel Murray earning All-American honors. They also became the first team in Lone Star Conference history to win four straight tournament titles.

Women's basketball made it through the entire season without a cancellation or postponement due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Lady Buffs went 15-6 with Lexy Hightower being named the league's Player of the Year after averaging 17.3 points per game.

The men's and women's track & field programs both finished on the podium at the indoor championships with a pair of third-place finishes. Benjamin Azamati became the Buffs first individual national champion on the track with his victory in the 60-meter dash while also finishing third in the 200-meters.

Zada Swoopes and Taylor Nelloms had historic performances for the Lady Buffs to help them finish on the podium for a second time. Nelloms won the triple jump with a mark of 43-6.5 (13.27m), making her the second-best performer in NCAA DII history. Swoopes won the shot put crown for the second time in her career with the fifth-best mark in NCAA DII history, 57-4.25 (17.48m). WT swept the team titles at the LSC Outdoor Championships in Canyon where Benjamin Azamati broke the DII record in the 200-meters. His 4x100 relay team for his home country of Ghana qualified in May for the 2021 Olympics in Tokyo. Zada Swoopes also won the shot put with a throw that qualifies her for this summer's Olympic Trials.



Zada Swoopes launches a shot put at the Jo Meaker Multi & Classic. The Whitewright native currently ranks first in the nation in the event.



Florance Uwajeneza had arguably one of the greatest cross-country seasons in school history as the St. Paul, Minn., native won all three races she competed in including winning the LSC title by more than a minute. That form translated to a strong indoor track season where she won four events at the LSC Championships en route to being named the LSC Track Athlete of the Year.

In his 30th season as head coach, Butch Lauffer led the Buff soccer program to the LSC regular season and tournament championships. He was named the Co-Coach of the Year after helping the Buffs 8-2-0 including a 1-0 victory over Midwestern State in the final.

Hannah Kelley-Lusk was named the LSC Forward of the Year as the Farmington, N.M., native scored a team-high nine goals for a Lady Buff squad that finished 6-4-0, including a trip to the LSC semifinals.

In Kendra Potts' second season at the helm, Lady Buff volleyball finished 10-4 overall and a perfect 6-0 at The Box including two wins over No. 2 Angelo State. Chandler Vogel was named the league's top libero for the third straight year while Torrey Miller was tabbed as the Offensive Player of the Year.



Top: Florance Uwajeneza finishes first at the D2 National Invite to cap off her season where she was named the LSC Runner of the Year.
Middle: Hannah Kelley-Lusk was named the LSC Forward of the Year for a second time after scoring a team-high nine goals
Bottom: Torrey Miller was named the LSC Offensive Player of the Year after leading the Lady Buffs to a 10-4 record in their spring schedule.



Jordan Johnson rushes for a first down. The Buffs played a Division II best six games in the fall.

Hunter Hughes and the Buff football team played six of their nine schedule games in the fall, the most of any NCAA Division II in the nation.

The softball and baseball teams are currently ranked in the Top 10 as they prepare for postseason play. Kyra Lair and Emilee Wilson threw back-to-back perfect games as the season drew to a close with a sweep of Eastern New Mexico; the games also provided Coach Michael Mook his 199th and 200th career wins.

Donor Spotlight



Susan Coleman, J.D. '72, '73

There wasn't even a philanthropy database when Susan Coleman made her first gift to WT. The entry is dated Nov. 1, 1969, which predates her graduation with a bachelor's degree in 1972 and a master's in 1973. And the impact of her giving will last forever as she has designated WT as a beneficiary in her will.

A retiree from the University's Department of Political Science and Criminal Justice, Susan is responsible for scholarship funds in memory of her parents, grandparents, cousins and colleagues. She was even known to make contributions to keep the eternal flame on the campus gates burning when those included an actual gas flame.

"I believe in students," Susan said. "That's why I've continued to support WT. And I'd like for my colleagues to be remembered for the work they did in helping students achieve their goals. I can think of no better way to do that than to have a scholarship presented in their name."

The majority of Susan's gifts have been small amounts given over many years. In a list that would span multiple pages, less than 15 of those are for more than \$500, and the largest share of the contributions are less than \$100. That, however, hasn't precluded Susan from recognition in the Old Main Society (gifts totaling more than \$50,000) and the Eternal Flame Society (acknowledging her estate gift intent).

"Ms. Coleman's annual gifts to WT represents an important philanthropic behavior that is important to institutions of higher education across the country," Dr. Todd Rasberry, Vice President for Philanthropy and External Relations, said. "Annual gifts over a period of time and legacy gifts made through estate planning have a significant impact on the institution both now and in the future."



Generous philanthropists make lasting impact on WT

Several major gifts will help transform both the Canyon and Amarillo campuses of West Texas A&M University for generations to come.

WT continues to benefit greatly from the 2017 agreement by Paul Engler and the Paul F. and Virginia J. Engler Foundation to donate at least \$1 million a year for at least 80 years to the University's Paul Engler College of Agriculture and Natural Sciences and the Paul and Virginia Engler College of Business.

"Paul Engler's true grit and entrepreneurial spirit completely reshaped the cattle industry, and his legacy will continue to mold West Texas A&M for the foreseeable future," University President Dr. Walter Wendler said.

The unprecedented gift benefits students and faculty through scholarships and professorships. And it sets an example to encourage others to invest in both colleges via a strategy of offering matching funds to donors establishing new scholarship, professorship and program innovation endowments, said Dr. Todd Rasberry, vice president of philanthropy and external relations and executive director of the WTAMU Foundation.

A \$2.8 million estate donation from the late Dr. Jenny Lind Porter will endow three professorships and a scholarship fund, as well as significantly expand holdings and programs of Cornette Library's Texas Poets' Corner. The Texas Poets' Corner was dedicated in 2003 and is home to the rare book, art and antique furnishings collection of Porter and her husband, Lawrence E. Scott. At the core of the collections are approximately 1,800 rare books, numerous pieces of furniture, artwork, photographs, and manuscripts. The endowment will provide a permanent acquisition fund to expand the Poets' Corner collection and will fund scholarships and programming efforts. The new Porter professors will be Dr. Pat Tyrer from English, Dr. Marty Kuhlman from History and Dr. Mary Liz Brooks from Communication.

Former AT&T colleagues of the late Stan Sigman raised more than \$200,000 in Sigman's memory. Those donations were matched by funds from the Engler Foundation's historic gift to the Paul and Virginia Engler College of Business. The combined gift of \$425,000 has established the Stan Sigman Scholarship Endowment and the Stan Sigman Endowed Professor of Business, to be filled by Dr. Jeffrey Babb.

Beginning in Fall 2021, multiple annual scholarship awards between \$4,000 and \$8,000 are expected to be granted, one of the largest scholarship amounts available to business students.

In December, the WTAMU Foundation announced that a cornerstone donation from Bob and Lanna Hatton is one of the first gifts in a recently launched capital fundraising campaign for the University.

The Bob and Lanna Hatton Education Endowment Fund will be used for the improvement of the quality of educators and educational programs that impact as many students as possible, said Lesly Annen, assistant vice president for leadership gifts and development. It will provide opportunities for pre-service teachers, in-service teachers and other educators to acquire knowledge and gain access to programs that will result in higher educational attainment for students.

The Amarillo couple already funds the Lanna Hatton Professor of Learning Disabilities, a position currently filled by Dr. Michelle Simmons.

The Joe Bob McCartt Memorial Scholarship was established earlier this year following the death of the leading Amarillo commercial real estate broker in December 2020 due to COVID-related complications.

McCartt's family and friends established the scholarship fund, and matching funds from the Engler Foundation's historic gift to the Engler College of Business brought the endowment to \$100,000.

The scholarship will grant support to undergraduate and graduate students in the Engler College of Business who have a GPA of 3.0 or greater. Preference will be given to students demonstrating need and to returning or first-generation students. A minimum of \$1,000 will be awarded annually to one or more students.

Other new endowed professorships have been established, as well: Dr. Beth Garcia is the first Sylvia Nugent Professor of Education and Dr. Bruce Brasington is the Twanna Caddell Powell Professor of History. (See *Faculty and Staff Accomplishments on Pages 4-5 and 29 for more details.*)

"These transformational gifts allow us to change the trajectory of the University and how we can ultimately impact our students and our community," Rasberry said. "Through these generous donations, we have strengthened our scholarship opportunities, created professorships, supported impactful initiatives and provided support for program enhancement that will provide benefits for years and decades to come."

Become a contributing member and continue the Legacy

The Alumni Association is the common thread that pulls us together and strengthens the ties between generations of WT alumni. Help us preserve the legacy that is as proud as the buffalo and as big as West Texas.

General membership keeps you connected. Contributing membership helps us connect with you. Your annual gift helps to grow your Alumni Association, provide scholarships to students, host activities for alumni around the country, support University initiatives and more!

WT Alumni Association
WEST TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY™

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\$100

PHOENIX CLUB

\$200

WHITE BUFFALO SOCIETY

\$600

WEST TEXAS LEGACY

\$1,000

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FOR BUFFS OF A DIFFERENT ERA

WTSU TRADITIONS LINE



WT Notes

More than business as usual

The Paul and Virginia Engler College of Business continues to reap national acclaim. The online MBA program is in the Top 25 of the prestigious Princeton Review. In January, U.S. News & World Report ranked the college's online bachelor's programs as the best in Texas. In February, TFE Times ranked the master of science in finance and economics program at No. 2 for the fourth year in a row and in the Top 10 for the seventh consecutive year. And in April, Business Degree Central ranked WT No. 3 in best value around the country.

A wise investment

Education Credit Union made a significant donation to WT's Student Success Center to support what is now known as the Education Credit Union Buff \$mart Program. The program helps students improve their understanding of financial literacy and empowers them to make informed choices to improve their financial well-being. Buff \$mart offers one-on-one coaching sessions with trained peer financial coaches; classroom and organizational presentations on money management, budgeting, planning to pay for college and more; and outreach programs and money management workshops on credit cards, credit scores, identity theft, budgeting and more.

A new frontier

WT partnered with Mid-Plains Rural Cooperative to build out a high-speed wifi network throughout the Pioneer Amphitheatre for the "Texas" outdoor musical. Live panoramic and 360 web cameras will be added to the new and enhanced website to connect the beautiful views of the park with visitors around the world. The Pioneer Amphitheatre will also serve as home base for the University's network infrastructure and enable the Wi-Fi network to be expanded to other locations throughout the park, including the Mack Dick Pavilion and other visitor areas where high speed Wi-Fi is needed.

WEST TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

faculty and staff accomplishments

WT faculty and staff members have received awards, published works and been elected to serve in various capacities. *Continued from page 2.*

Zeth Collom, a speech-language pathologist who has taught at WT since 2017, recently was given American Speech-Language-Hearing Association's Award for Continuing Education. He previously was awarded the prize in February and November 2019. The award is "a formal recognition of professionals who have demonstrated their commitment to lifelong learning," according to ASHA's website.

Dr. Peter A. Scott, assistant professor of wildlife biology, is the lead author of a study of the DNA of Mojave desert tortoises that appeared as the cover story of the Nov. 27 issue of Science. Scott and his fellow researcher at UCLA, where he did postdoctoral studies, collaborated with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to study the DNA of desert tortoises that had been placed in its Large Scale Translocation Site in the Ivanpah Valley southeast of Las Vegas.

Dr. Adam Weiss, an assistant professor of education, is one of six grantees chosen by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board in its Open Educational Resources (OER) Grant Program. Weiss won a \$25,000 grant to develop free, high-quality educational material for students. Weiss plans to develop a textbook that can be used in community colleges and universities to better develop learning frameworks.

Susan Allen retired in January as assistant vice president of academic affairs and was replaced by Melissa Reyher White. Allen served for 21 years at WT as director for Panhandle Alternative Certification for Educators (PACE) in the Department of Education before joining the provost's office. White previously worked as community outreach and event coordinator in the Sybil B. Harrington College of Fine Arts and Humanities and as senior coordinator of undergraduate business programs in the Paul and Virginia Engler College of Business.

Taylor Fairweather-Leitch, a scholarly communications librarian at WT's Cornette Library, was recently named a Texas Digital Library OER Ambassador. She joins librarians from around the state who will help faculty research OER, or Open Educational Resources – course materials and textbooks that have open licenses from Creative Commons or are in the public domain.

Dr. Holly Jeffreys, a prominent Amarillo nurse practitioner and owner of several family care clinics, was named head of WT's Department of Nursing in July. She is a nationally certified rural health clinic professional and the owner and provider for the Family Care Clinic of Panhandle, Family Care Clinic of Boys Ranch, Family Care Clinic of Claude and Family Care Clinic of Bushland. Jeffreys completed her bachelor and master of science in nursing at WT, and she completed her doctorate in nursing practice at the University of Texas.

Dr. Trudy Hanson retired in January as head of the Department of Communication after 31 years of service to the University. During Hanson's time at WT, the Department of Communication became a standalone department in 2007. In 2010, the department was accredited through the American Communication Association, which has been reaffirmed twice in the years since. Hanson founded the WT Storytelling Festival in 1991 and helped found, in 2013, the department's Communication Hall of Fame, which has recognized 27 alumni who excel around the country. Dr. Emily Kinsky, associate professor of media communication, assumed the department head position following Hanson's retirement. Kinsky joined WT in 2011, teaches media design, new media and qualitative research methods, and helped establish 1910 PR, the student-run PR firm.

Dr. Shanna Peebles, the 2015 National Teacher of the Year, returned to her alma mater as WT's new Dr. John G. O'Brien Distinguished Chair in Education. The O'Brien Distinguished Chair in Education was set up in 2008 by members of the O'Brien family to attract a nationally recruited instructor who possesses a strong theoretical and applied background in educational research. As the Distinguished Chair, Peebles will collaborate with area school administration, faculty and community members to identify problems of educational practice in rural schools. She also will facilitate scholarly research by WT faculty members and doctoral candidates designed to produce regionally responsive, research-based solutions to the challenges facing rural schools and communities.

Dr. Craig Bednarz began May 1 as director of the Semi-Arid Agricultural Systems Institute in a joint appointment by West Texas A&M University and Texas A&M AgriLife Research. Bednarz also serves as an associate professor of plant, soil and environmental sciences at WT and will lead and expand the research, instruction and service programs of the Institute addressing issues faced by semi-arid agriculture systems in the Texas Panhandle and surrounding area. The Semi-Arid Agricultural Systems Institute, formerly known as the Dryland Agriculture Institute, was led by Dr. Bob Stewart until his retirement in 2017.

class notes

WHERE THE BUFFALO ROAM

'70's

Tom McDonald '70 was appointed chairman of the new Farm, Ranch, and Rural Communities Federal Advisory Committee within the Environmental Protection Agency. Andrew Wheeler appointed Tom to lead this committee to provide independent policy advice, background information and recommendations on matters that impact agriculture and rural communities.

John L. Hasse '73, '74, who was employed at WT for 41 years, retired as a member of WT Athletic Hall of Champions. He assisted



and counseled many students throughout the years, and he is a longtime Canyon community service volunteer.

John was recognized as the "Most Knowledgeable of WT History and Heritage."

Cindy (Pearce) Barnes '78, '79 continues to actively research and support historical WT women athletes. A 21-year employee of WT, she retired as WT director of advising and retention after a career of assisting WT students. As a student, she was a trainer for WT women's intercollegiate athletic teams and a member of WT women's rifle and softball teams.

Kay Lynn Hagar '79, '94 retired as WT assistant vice president of student life and student judicial affairs. In her 41-year career at the University, she assisted many students with their WT college careers.

'80's

Mike Meister '87 was named the 2020 Silver Medal award winner by the Lubbock Chapter of the American Advertising Federation. This award is presented to those who have made outstanding contributions to advertising. He has more than 30 years' experience in the field.

'90's

Sandy (Callahan) Cardoza '92 was a member of the two-time WT Volleyball national championship team and a WT Volleyball All-American. A member of the WT Athletic Hall of Champions, she is now employed at Stanford Healthcare Transcatheter Heart Valve Program as a nurse coordinator. She continues to be loyal to WT and to WT Volleyball.

Janet Bilyeu '93 now works as a nurse practitioner at Siloam Springs Family Medicine in Northwest Arkansas. She previously practiced medicine at the Hemphill County Hospital District in Pampa.



Stacy Gjerde '95, '05 was named Amarillo ISD elementary district Teacher of the Year for 2019-2020 and Region 16 2021 Teacher of the Year finalist. She currently teaches second grade in AISD and has been teaching elementary school for 25 years.

Steven Denny '96 was named as the chair of the State Bar of Texas Jury Service Committee in 2020. He also was inducted into the WTAMU Communication Hall of Fame in 2018.

Brenda Schroer '98 recently was named as one of Hart Energy's 25 Influential Women in Energy.

'00's

Amy Henderson '00 is a commercial loan officer with a focus on small businesses with Amarillo National Bank. She served honorably in the United States Air Force as an information management specialist from 1989 to 1993 and supported Operation Desert Shield/Storm. Amy was selected as the 2010 Business Woman of the Year by the Amarillo Chamber Women's Council, and she was recently one of 15 to be appointed to the Governor's Commission for Women.

Seth McClellan '06 now works as a mechanical engineer at Brown Consulting Engineers Inc. in Amarillo. He became a licensed professional engineer in Texas in 2010 and has since become licensed in four other states. Seth is a part time instructor in the College of Engineering at WT.

Anthony Holmes '07 formerly worked in the Office of the Secretary of Defense in Washington, D.C., and was the special adviser for North Korea beginning in January 2017. He was one of two people from the Department of Defense to attend the US-North Korea summit in Singapore between President Donald J. Trump and Kim Jong Un.

Johnny Story '09 was awarded a Lone Star Emmy by the National Academy of Television Arts & Sciences in 2016 for a documentary called "Blood & Steel". He produced and edited this project, which followed the 3rd Cavalry Regiment out of Fort Hood at the National Training Center.

'10's

Sulema Salazar '10 was awarded two National Capital Chesapeake Bay Regional Emmys in 2019 for outstanding community affairs segment and for outstanding continuing coverage within 24 hours. During continuing-coverage event, she reported live and ad-libbed with co-anchors for more than an hour while reporting on the celebration of the Washington Nationals' World Series title. Sulema has worked as a news anchor for the local Telemundo newscast in Washington, D.C., for eight years. In that time, she has won 10 regionals Emmys, including one as outstanding anchor in 2018.

Keegan Neill '10 now works as the maintenance engineering team lead at the Phillips 66 Borger Refinery after holding other mechanical engineering positions at the refinery since starting in 2011.

Lacey Roberts '13 was the recipient of the Texas A&M University Association of Former Students 2020 distinguished graduate student award for teaching.

Yancy Bell '16 is Elkhart ISD's new director of technology. Bell is already making an impact by coordinating a district-wide transition from Microsoft 365 Office systems to Google Suites to improve instruction.

Martin Birkenfeld '17 was named chief of police for the Amarillo Police Department in 2020. He is a 30-year veteran of the department, most recently serving as assistant chief of the operations



Emily Hurst '18 now works as a Prosthetist Resident at the Shirley Ryan AbilityLab in Chicago – the No. 1 rehabilitation hospital in the United States for the past 30 years. She works to fabricate, fit and provide prosthetic limbs for amputees in addition to conducting prosthetics research for the Center for Bionic Medicine at the Shirley Ryan AbilityLab.

Take Note

Let your Buff family know about your major accomplishments! Submit your Class Notes update at alumni@wtamu.edu for our fall issue.

All hail the mighty state

A new organization that will combine the missions of two longstanding Panhandle institutions officially was announced Feb. 8. The Cultural Foundation of the Texas Panhandle is an advisory body that will place Panhandle-Plains Historical Museum and the Texas Panhandle Heritage Foundation, producers of the outdoor musical drama "Texas," under the same umbrella. The Cultural Foundation will be led by an advisory board made up of prominent Texans with a history of service to the state who will be devoted to advancing CFTP's mission.

Safety first

WT was named the safest campus in Texas and among the Top 10 safest across the country by Your Local Security. The company examined data from the U.S. Department of Education's Campus Safety and Security and the FBI's 2018 Uniform Crime Report to determine its 2020 rankings. WT is the only school in Texas to make the list.

The copper age

The West Texas A&M University College of Engineering developed a key weapon to battle viruses and bacteria. Copper Clean adhesives, developed by Engineering Dean Dr. Emily Hunt and graduate engineering students, are copper-alloy foils with adhesive backing that were deployed on high-touch surfaces around campus. Copper is one of the oldest-known antimicrobials, and Hunt and her students found that the technology has been proven to kill 99.9 of harmful pathogens, like MSRA, Staph. auerus and E. coli, within two hours.

Waxing poetic

The Department of English, Philosophy and Modern Languages launched the new Dorothy Patterson Poetry Series in October. Dr. Eric Meljac, assistant professor of English and director of creative writing, started a series of poetry readings several years ago and formalized them in honor of Patterson, a longtime supporter. The first readings featured Canyon author Seth Wieck '03 and professor emeritus Claudia Stewart.

WT Alumni Association
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