

the

WEST TEXAN

A Publication of the West Texas A&M University Alumni Association // Summer 2023



— WT OPENS —

NEW PATHWAYS

for teaching

P.4 ONE WEST MAKES HISTORY

P.6 INTER-COLLEGIATE COLLABORATION

P.24 WT ATHLETICS RECAP

the WEST TEXAN

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EXECUTIVE TEAM LETTER



Ronnie Hall has had the opportunity to meet thousands of students and alumni in his 27 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.



Abby Waters graduated from WT with her undergraduate degree in 2017 and master's in 2019. Throughout college, she worked for the University and, upon graduating, continued in a full-time capacity. In her various roles, she continually felt called to serve the students of WT and has loved the new adventure of serving the alumni. She is eager to continue finding ways to connect and engage alumni and find new and exciting ways to involve them in the ever-growing Buff family.

Dear Buffs,

Thank you for your support of the WT Alumni Association. Our primary mission is to work with our wonderful alumni, but we also think it's vitally important to engage with the current student body. After all, they'll be alumni soon, too, and we want their strong connection to us to begin while they're still on campus. Through your membership in the WT Alumni Association, you are investing with us in those students' lives.

Here's how.

We have the delightful task of awarding scholarships to numerous students, but it's never easy. There are so many strong applicants for each of the scholarships we award. And it's thanks to alumni members, alumni chapters and their fundraising efforts that we are able to bless students financially during their time at WT.

In December, WT alumni stepped up and made our food drive for WT students a huge success. We collected more than 500 items for the GRAZE Food Pantry. We plan to continue this endeavor for years to come.

In April, the Alumni Association Board joined President Walter V. Wendler in taking part in the annual presentation of class rings, a time-honored tradition where we share the traditions and history of the ring while presenting them to seniors.

Throughout the year, your support to the WT Alumni Association also impacts students through the WT Alumni Mentor Program and the ECU Buff\$mart Advanced Money Management Boot Camp. The mentorship provides professional development, and the boot camp provides students financial education—both topics that are of great importance to students as they prepare for life after college.

Many great things are happening with West Texas A&M University and the WT Alumni Association.

Please feel free to reach out to us for ways to be involved.

Have a blessed day, & Go Buffs!
Ronnie and Abby

Ronnie Hall *Abby Waters*



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WT Alumni Association

Professorship Established

The Barbara Petty Professorship of Business Communication – a newly established professorship that honors a beloved former WT administrator – was announced March 29. Petty was a longtime WT employee who retired in 2016 after serving 11 years as assistant vice president for academic affairs. The position, located in the Paul and Virginia Engler College of Business, will be held by Dr. Mary Liz Brooks.

WT Students Take Charge

WT students have taken over the reins at the Buff\$mart Education Credit Union branch in Canyon. Students make up much of the workforce at the newly redesigned branch at 2100 Fourth Ave., which officially opened March 20. Remodeling of the downtown Canyon branch location began after the new ECU Canyon branch opened at 1900 Farm-to-Market Road 2590 in October.

Amarillo-area Business Awarded

Five Amarillo-area businesses were awarded a total of a half-million dollars in business capital funding during the 26th annual Amarillo EnterPrize Challenge award ceremony. This is a program of the WT Enterprise Center and funded by the Amarillo Economic Development Corp. to assist entrepreneurs in expanding an existing primary business in Potter and Randall counties. This year's winners, announced March 2, are Creek House Honey Farm in Canyon, and iDocket, Haven Aero, Awesome Water Solutions and Pro Chem Sales, all in Amarillo. A team of independent judges reviewed the recipients' investor fact sheets and business plans to decide who would be awarded up to \$100,000 for expansion of their businesses. According to recipients' business plans, all five companies will be hiring a total of 200 employees over the course of the loan cycle, which can be forgiven as expectations are met. The banking partners that will disburse funds for this year's recipients are Amarillo National Bank, Happy State Bank, and First United Bank.

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.

• • • • •

Dr. Mikyung Shin, assistant professor of education in WT's Terry B. Rogers College of Education and Social Sciences, earned an individual award from the Texas A&M University System Chancellor's Academy of Teacher Educators for the 2022-23 academic year. Shin was nominated by her WT colleagues for her "exemplary work in preparing special education teachers." Shin serves on the committee that reviews applicants to WT's educator preparation program and is research coordinator for WT's Center for Learning Disabilities.

• • • • •

Dr. Naruki Hiranuma, associate professor of environmental science in the Department of Life, Earth and Environmental Sciences in WT's Paul Engler College of Agriculture and Natural Sciences, now serves on the user executive committee for the U.S. Department of Energy's Environmental Molecular Sciences Laboratory. Located in Richland, Washington, EMSL is the DOE Office of Science's premiere molecular sciences laboratory. Scientists in various research disciplines from around the world partner with EMSL to use world-class laboratory space, expertise and equipment for free if their research proposal is accepted through its peer-review process. In his role on the advisory committee, Hiranuma will provide recommendations about EMSL operating policies and needs and recommend participants for proposal review panels, among other duties.

• • • • •

Two WT professors have led a new study of how to promote learning for multilingual students through a research partnership with Eastridge Elementary School in Amarillo. **Dr. Sang Hwang**, professor of education, and **Dr. Janet Hindman**, associate professor of educational leadership, along with two student research assistants closely observed fifth grade students at Eastridge for a 10-week period starting in January to see where enhancements in curriculum instruction can be made. The study was made possible through a \$5,000 award from the Richard and Mary West Traylor Research Grant from WT's Center for Learning Disabilities.

• • • • •

WT's University Police Department announced the promotions of two officers and a civilian employee. Plus, the University's Office of Civil Rights and Title IX has a new leader. **Kyle Hawbaker**, who joined UPD in 2003, has been named assistant chief following the retirement of former **Asst. Chief Robert Byrd**. Hawbaker, a full-time law enforcement officer since 1996, began his WT career as a patrol officer, then was promoted to corporal, sergeant and lieutenant. He holds his master peace officer license from the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement. **Brandon Johnson**, a full-time law enforcement officer since 2009, has been promoted to lieutenant at UPD. He began his career at WT in 2012. He earned his bachelor's in political science at WT in 2018 and holds his master peace officer license from TCOLE. Additionally, **Krystal Czesnowski** has joined UPD as its Clery Compliance Officer, responsible for reporting information about crime on and near the University in accordance with the Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security and Campus Crime Statistics Act. Czesnowski joined WT's Office of Accounting and Business in 2021. Prior to moving to the area, she owned and operated a business for more than 10 years in Seattle.

Nancy Hampton has been named director of the University’s Office of Civil Rights and Title IX. Hampton served in WT’s Department of Human Resources since 2008, and for one year, concurrently served as director of Title IX compliance during the 2017-2018 academic year. Hampton earned her bachelor of business administration degree in 1988 and her master’s degree in counseling in 2013, both at WT.

• • • • •

WT’s chief diversity and inclusion officer was the recipient of a prestigious national award from the Not Alone Foundation. **Angela Allen**, who has headed WT’s diversity efforts since 2014, was presented the Atlanta-based foundation’s Diamond Awards’ Excellence in Education Leadership, Diversity | Equity | Inclusion, Humanitarian & Community Engagement for 2023. She and other winners were honored Jan. 21 at a gala in Atlanta.

• • • • •

Nine West Texas A&M University faculty members earned more than \$18,000 in grants through the University’s Office of Academic Affairs. The development grants will finance travel and professional development for the faculty members. Faculty members earning grants include **Bradley Behrmann**, assistant professor of musical theatre; **Dr. Paul Clark**, professor of history; **Zeth Collom**, instructor of communication disorders; **Dr. Jeff Hatala**, assistant professor of health sciences and program director at the RELLIS Campus; **Dr. Jeremy Lewis**, associate professor of low brass; **Emmanuel Lopez**, Permian Distinguished Artist and Harrington Lecturer in Cello; **Darla Marcear**, clinical coordinator and instructor of communication disorders; **Dr. Maitreyee Mukherjee**, assistant professor of biology; and **Dr. Rebecca VanderLeest**, assistant professor of geology.

• • • • •

WT launched two new podcasts this spring. The “**I Am WT**” podcast is a student-run production featuring stories about how attending or working at WT changed the lives of the guests, and how they’re paying it forward by making a difference in their community. “**Advisers Ask**,” produced by WT Advising Services and hosted by professional advisers **Candice Copelin** and **Hershel Neal**, offers listeners—including current and future students—a direct line into Advising Services, one of WT’s most important offerings.

• • • • •

Faculty and students in WT’s National Electronic Media Association chapter won four national grand prizes at the 60th annual National Undergraduate Student Electronic Media Competition. Adviser **Dr. Michael McFarland**, assistant professor of media communication, won a grand prize in Commercial/Promo/PSA for a promotional video for WT’s Dining Services. **Randy Ray**, director of broadcast engineering and associate lecturer of media communication, and **Dane Glenn**, broadcast engineer, won a grand prize for producing President Walter V. Wendler’s podcast, “Reflections from WT.” WT won a total of 12 awards at the conference.

• • • • •

Four faculty members in West Texas A&M University’s acclaimed College of Nursing and Health Sciences have been elevated to named professorships through the continuing ramifications of a historic gift. As part of High Plains Christian Ministries Foundation’s \$3 million gift to WT in 2021, the largest in the foundation’s history, four new professorships have been established and filled: the Baptist Community Services Professorship in Health Sciences, held by **Dr. Gene Farren**; the High Plains Christian Ministries Foundation Professorship in Nursing Leadership, held by **Dr. Holly Jeffreys**, also head of WT’s Department of Nursing; the High Plains Christian Ministries Foundation Professorship in Psychiatric Mental Health, held by **Shaina Neely**; and the Baptist Community Services Professorship in Rural Health, held by **Laura Reyher**.

Among the Best

WT’s education graduate programs are among the best in the nation, according to newly released rankings from a national analyst. OnlineMastersDegrees.org ranked WT at No. 35 in its recent rankings of online master’s degrees in education. WT is in the Top 10 of schools in Texas included in the rankings. Since 1997, WT has been a pioneer in online learning, fundamentally because it offers students in the Panhandle region and beyond easier access to higher education.

Beat Any Offer

WT will aggressively try to counter any offer potential students get from other schools, under the terms of a new program announced Feb. 12 by WT President Walter V. Wendler. Through WT’s Beat Any Offer deal, prospective students can submit their admission offers for another institution of higher education to WT, and “WT will do everything in our power to beat the offer,” Wendler said. “Give us a chance to help make your education affordable. We will go to work on your behalf to help you save money based on the net out-of-pocket costs for your education.” Full details are available at wtamu.edu/BeatAnyOffer. Wendler emphasized that this offer is made not because of WT’s enrollment rates, which once again are on the rise, but instead is “an act of intense pride.”

Best Teachers

Teachers from Amarillo, Canyon and Groom were celebrated in early February as the region’s best multilingual instructors by West Texas A&M University and the Panhandle Language Teachers Association. Recipients of the 2023 Excellence in Teaching Award include **Adriana Alderete**, a high school Spanish teacher at San Jacinto Christian Academy in Amarillo; **Karissa Huffman**, a Spanish teacher at Groom High School; **Abbie Reyes**, a Spanish teacher at West Plains High School in Canyon Independent School District; and **Sylvia Weis**, a Spanish teacher at Bonham Middle School in Amarillo ISD.

WT's One West Campaign

REACHES HISTORIC \$125 MILLION GOAL

Fundraising to Continue

By Chip Chandler

In less than 600 days since its public launch, West Texas A&M University's historic One West campaign reached its \$125 million goal, officials announced May 11.

"Today, just 1 ½ years into the public phase of the campaign, we are pleased to announce West Texas A&M University has raised \$125,283,169," campaign co-chair Sherry Schaeffer said at the press conference.

The five-year One West Campaign is the largest and most ambitious fundraising effort ever undertaken across the Texas Panhandle region.

"When we began planning the campaign, there were doubts whether WT could achieve such an ambitious goal," campaign co-chair David Schaeffer said at the press conference. "We have because of the generosity of donors across the Panhandle region; because of the bold vision cast for the university in the long-range plan; and because of the thoughtful and innovative leadership of President Wendler, the administration, faculty, staff and students of this great University."

Thus far, 7,298 donors have given 58,621 gifts as part of the One West campaign.

"I want to thank every donor who has made a gift as part of the One West campaign," said WT President Walter V. Wendler. "You, our donors, deserve the lion's share of the credit for getting us to the \$125 million goal in 1 ½ years."

The campaign will continue through 2025, Wendler emphasized.

"We will continue to build on the momentum of the campaign and raise more money," Wendler said. "To all of those here today or who will hear these words, thank you for considering your campaign gift to WT. There is still time to be part of propelling WT boldly into a bright and exciting future."

The campaign fuels the University's long-range plan, *WT 125: From the Panhandle to the World*. Its three priorities: people, through scholarships and professorships; programs, enhancing academic offerings and research; and places, improving existing buildings and constructing new spaces.

The campaign began with the \$80 million gift from Paul Engler, the 17th largest gift that year in America to an institution of higher education.

"President Wendler began the strategic initiatives necessary for a comprehensive fundraising campaign. A long-range plan was developed. Staff and infrastructure were put in place. Lead gifts were raised. And volunteer leadership was recruited," said Dr. Todd Rasberry, vice president for philanthropy and external relations.

Though the campaign, more than \$14 million in new scholarship funding has been raised, and nearly 60 new professorships and chairs have been endowed—an increase of more than 200 percent during the campaign. WT will soon boast nearly 90 professorships, offering each additional funding for research, travel and more.

More than \$34 million has been given to name buildings, rooms and more. Those gifts provide funding for construction and renovation, as well as providing new educational, gathering and recreational spaces.

More than \$39 million has been raised to support academic programs, enhancing instructional offerings and research.

During the campaign, WT has received more than \$107 million in major gifts of \$25,000 or more.

Other gifts received thus far in the One West campaign are planned gifts—legacy gifts that will benefit the University as part of donors' estates. Nearly \$18 million has been pledged by donors.

I Am WT, the University's annual fund campaign, has raised more than \$18 million since the One West campaign launch. Annual fund gifts are below \$25,000.

Among the giving opportunities: Endowed scholarships for students; named professorships and chairs for faculty members; endowed programs and research funds; and naming rights for two of the University's Colleges and its Graduate School, as well as various campus buildings, classrooms and other spaces.

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Common Ground

WT researchers finding solutions through collaboration By Chip Chandler

When Dr. Swastika Bithi walked into Cornette Library in the spring of 2022, she expected to be dazzled by her West Texas A&M University colleagues' research prowess.

She didn't expect to find a way to meld her own work with that of a faculty member in another College.

Bithi, assistant professor of engineering in WT's College of Engineering, holds three patents on devices that can hold nanoliter-size droplets of water on a thin piece of plastic smaller than a penny. The devices can mimic different natural processes, such as cancer cell flow in blood, and traditional lab analysis can be done on the device.

But when Bithi saw research presented by Dr. Hiranuma, associate professor of environmental science in WT's Paul Engler College of Agriculture and Natural Sciences, she realized her devices could also be used to study water crystallization in clouds—the primary focus of Hiranuma's work around the world.

The resulting partnership earned the professors, as well as Dr. Sanjoy Bhattacharia, assistant professor of mechanical engineering, a \$150,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Energy.

Bithi's contributions make a significant impact in the development of an affordable and efficient way to measure these particles, Hiranuma said.

"If we know the properties and compositions, we can correlate how certain particles affect cloud formation positively or negatively," Bhattacharia said.

Such cross-College research opportunities abound at WT. Dr. Mikyung Shin, WT's Bill Piehl Professor of Education and assistant professor of special education, is leading a project

offering area high school STEM teachers additional training in cybersecurity and will extend the modules to high school students with and without disabilities.

The project—funded, in part, by a grant from the U.S. Department of Defense—began as a collaboration between Shin, of WT's Terry B. Rogers College of Education and Social Sciences, and Dr. Gahangir Hossain, a former professor in WT's Paul and Virginia Engler College of Business.

A quintet of professors from the Engler College of Agriculture and Natural Sciences and the College of Engineering also earned a \$140,000 grant to investigate how cotton gin waste might be recycled and significantly reduce the water required to grow cotton in the Panhandle and elsewhere.

The project involves the expertise of Dr. Nathan Howell, WT's Bell Helicopter Professor of Engineering; Dr. Craig Bednarz, WT's Stan and Gerry Sigman Professor of Water Resources; Dr. Bridget Guerrero, associate professor of agricultural business and economics; Dr. Joshua Partheepan, assistant professor of engineering and power systems; and Bhattacharia.

“It takes people from different disciplines to find solutions like this.”

Not only will the professors refine ways to reduce the cotton gin trash into powdery residue, or biochar, by burning it at extraordinarily high temperatures, they'll also look at the economics of increasing yields and reducing water usage.

"It takes people from different disciplines to find solutions like this," Bednarz said.

These cross-College collaborations are prime examples of the importance of WT's work as a Regional Research University, said Dr. Angela Spaulding, vice president for research and compliance and dean of the graduate school.

"By transcending the boundaries of their respective Colleges, these professors are helping WT pursue its intensified research agenda and finding solutions to problems in the Panhandle's rural and urban areas," Spaulding said. "Those solutions will have applications to similar regions around the globe, living up to the WT 125 mission of 'from the Panhandle to the world.'"



Biochar researchers include, from left, Dr. Craig Bednarz, Dr. Bridget Guerrero, Dr. Nathan Howell, Dr. Sanjoy Bhattacharia and Dr. Joshua Partheepan.

FOR WT FANS & FASHION



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Start Strong, Finishing Stronger

Student Affairs finding new ways to encourage retention

By Chip Chandler



Attracting Buffaloes is only one piece of the puzzle when it comes to enrollment at West Texas A&M University.

How you keep them part of the herd is one of the primary goals of WT's restructured Division for Student Affairs, now led by Dr. Chris Thomas, who joined WT in December following the elevation of enrollment management to the vice-presidential level. Mike Knox was named vice president for enrollment management Aug. 1 and assumed that role full time in the fall.

"When I first met with President (Walter V.) Wendler he shared with me his commitment to our WT students and this region and having a comprehensive retention plan honors that commitment," Thomas said. "We have an obligation to help our students persist despite the obstacles they may face."

The numbers of returning students started to especially be concerning following the Covid-era lockdowns, prompting a concerted reexamination of how WT tries to make the University a home for its students.

In 2021, the University launched the Start Strong initiative, offering both new and returning students multiple ways to make new friends and develop a sense of belonging at WT.

“

We have an obligation to help our students persist despite the obstacles they may face.

”

In addition to time-honored traditions like Move-In Day and Buff Branding, Start Strong activities include welcome-back parties, organization fairs, free meals, movie screenings and more.

"The various offices and areas across WT continue to focus on those crucial first few weeks and month of each semester," Thomas said. "We want to ensure that students are connected to each other, their coursework and campus resources."

Building on the successful launch of Start Strong, Student Affairs rolled out two major new retention efforts in spring 2023.



The first, an umbrella plan called "Journey of the Buffalo," was established following the granting of \$300,000 from the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

Partnering with Advising Services and the Office for Diversity and Inclusion, Student Affairs leaders developed a three-pronged program that launched this spring that will offer actionable steps for students to improve their personal well-being, find healthy relationships and community, and cultivate practical skills in addition to those learned in the classroom.

"We want to make sure our Buffs understand the hard work and dedication required to find success, not only in the classroom but in the real world," said Amber Black, assistant vice president for student success and wellbeing. "This step-by-step journey will help us better assess how students are improving through their interactions with departments and divisions all across campus."

Ultimately, Journey of the Buffalo will spotlight the meaning and purpose of activities facilitated by Student Affairs, Black said.

"We're often considered to be in charge of the fun stuff, and having fun certainly is an important part of the college experience," Black said. "But this journey really emphasizes the intentionality with which we plan our activities, such as orientation programs, Supplemental Instruction sessions, career fairs and others."

The program—inspired by "The Curricular Approach to Student Affairs: A Revolutionary Shift for Learning Beyond the Classroom" by Kathleen G. Kerr, Keith E. Edwards, James Tweedy, Hilary L. Lichterman and Amanda R. Knerr—was first brought to the Division of Student Affairs' attention by the Office of Residential Living, said Chance Haugen, assistant vice president for campus community and engagement.

To improve their personal well-being, students will work on discerning the impact of societal influences on their own beliefs and values, developing a healthy lifestyle, evaluating setbacks as temporary events, and formulating a plan for financial stability.

In an effort to encourage deeper campus interactions as a way to build healthy relationships and community, students will use tools to form, strengthen and end relationships; interact with a diverse population; engage in student organizations; and take part in impactful civic engagement.

And to build their reserve of practical skills, students will learn ways to be self-sufficient; become engaged learners; pursue personal, professional and/or career goals; and develop authentic leadership proficiencies.

Later in the spring, Student Affairs announced the new Meta Majors program, which will cluster incoming freshmen in residence halls with students from the same general courses of study to promote social and academic networks that enhance the learning experience.

Studies show that participation in learning communities can enhance academic performance, increase student gains, provide easier social transitions, and strengthen students' connections to the institution, said Chance Haugen, assistant vice president of campus community and engagement.

Only incoming freshmen will be part of the Meta Majors program upon its launch. They will get to choose their room at their New Student Orientation.

If freshmen find a roommate at their NSO or already have one picked out otherwise who would not be part of their cluster, Residential Living will work to place the students together within the Meta Majors community of either student.

Designated rooms have been set aside for returning students, who currently are applying for housing.

"Cultivating a strong sense of belonging among our students is a critical way we can help ensure they have the best-possible university experience," Thomas said. "We are making these changes to help students find their 'people,' so to speak, early on in their educational journey."

The numbers indicate that efforts are paying off. In fall 2022, the retention rates for sophomores soared back to 70 percent. From fall 2022 to spring 2023, retention was higher than 90 percent.

Cultivating a strong sense of belonging among our students is a critical way we can help ensure they have the best-possible university experience.

"This is a new way of thinking for WT, but we have faith that we ultimately are creating an environment in which students will benefit greatly by connecting with others academically and socially," Thomas said.





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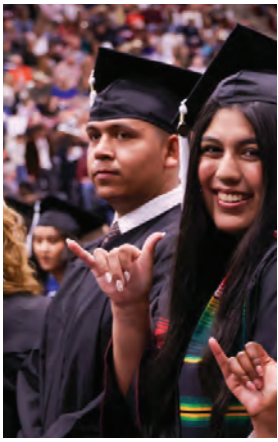
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West Texas A&M University awarded 828 baccalaureate degrees, 289 master's degrees and one doctoral degree to spring graduates at the May 13 commencement ceremonies in the First United Bank Center.

The oldest graduate was 66, and the youngest were 18. The graduating class includes 108 with a perfect 4.0 GPA and 81 veterans; 45 percent of the undergraduates are the first in their family to earn a college degree. Students from 37 states in the nation and 26 different countries graduated.

Additionally, 193 potential August graduates walked the stage at the May commencement ceremonies.







Drew Williams



I Have
Lette

WT opens **NEW** **PATHWAYS** for Teaching

BY BRAD NEWMAN

Drew Williams once built houses for a living. It was his first job after college, and a good one.

But a lifelong passion for history, political science, and other related fields led Williams to consider another career path: Teaching.

"I really wanted to find fulfillment and purpose with my work. That desire to make an impact and engage in my passions led me to teach," said Williams, who just finished his first year as a U.S. history teacher at West Plains High School in the Canyon Independent School District.

It was West Texas A&M University's Panhandle Alternative Certification for Educators (or PACE) program that provided Williams the quickest, most affordable and most accommodating option for becoming as a qualified teacher.

The program provides individuals who already have a bachelor's degree with online, self-paced teacher training, a classroom internship, and coaching, all of which prepares them for acquiring a teaching certificate.



Williams, who has a bachelor's degree in government and European studies, was an ideal candidate for PACE. He quit his job in construction operations and enrolled.

"PACE made the most sense with my desire to get certified as soon as possible," he said. "I wouldn't trade my experience for anything."

The PACE program is now just one of multiple pathways that WT offers for people who want to be educators.

We are creating individualized pathways to becoming an educator, to reach wherever our students are.

Students interested in teaching can pursue a traditional bachelor's degree in education at the University, culminating in clinical teaching and a teaching certificate. PACE is WT's long-standing alternative teaching certification program. And this year, WT has launched two new innovative programs, One2Teach and ParaPath.

"We are creating individualized pathways to becoming an educator, to reach wherever our students are," said Dr. Beth Garcia, assistant dean of graduate programs and professional certifications and the Sylvia Nugent Professor of Education in WT's Terry B. Rogers College of Education and Social Sciences. "At WT, we want to get them the proper training that makes them highly qualified, and then send them back into their communities to teach."

One2Teach and ParaPath are the products of grant-sponsored research at WT from the Branch Alliance for Educator Diversity. The University, alongside its local school and community partners, began exploring opportunities to improve and expand its offerings for would-be educators.

"We determined that there are two primary pipelines—high school students and paraprofessionals—that we could specifically help," Garcia said.

One2Teach allows high school students who want to teach a direct track to a degree and certification.

"The philosophy of One2Teach is to prepare teachers in less time and for less expense," said Dr. Russell Miller, WT's executive director of educator preparation and the Lanna and Bob Hatton Professor of Education. "The coursework is not altered, just completed early."

High school students who enroll in the program can take up to 30 semester credit hours of basics between their sophomore and senior years from Amarillo College. AC covers all tuition costs for high school students who qualify for free and reduced lunches. After graduating high school, students in One2Teach enroll in a second year of coursework at AC before transferring immediately to WT to complete the program.

The philosophy of One2Teach is to prepare teachers in less time and for less expense.

“They are an excellent source, and ParaPath is for those who want to advance their careers as teachers.”

Students in the One2Teach program can earn a degree and teaching certificate one full year earlier than a traditional student, Miller said. And, for those who qualify, the cost is reduced by one-third.

ParaPath allows paraprofessionals an individualized plan toward obtaining their teaching degree and certification.

“Paraprofessionals have been in the classroom and seen teaching first-hand and worked directly with students, often in specialized settings,” Garcia said. “They are an excellent source, and ParaPath is for those who want to advance their careers as teachers.”

ParaPath provides paraprofessionals a “workable program,” she said, which includes online coursework and the option to use their paraprofessional position as a teaching internship.

Enrollment for One2Teach and ParaPath is underway now, with the first students in the program set to begin this fall.

Like the PACE program, both One2Teach and ParaPath are geared toward fast-tracking future teachers into area schools. “For many, a starting teacher salary and benefits can be life-changing,” said Garcia, who herself is a product of the PACE program.

But WT’s goals are not just “getting a warm body in the classroom,” Garcia said. All of WT’s teaching programs provide quality training and professional support even after graduation and job placement.

Hayleigh Green



Hayleigh Green '22 vouches for WT’s excellence.

“The community that you form in the WT education program is unlike anything else I’ve experienced,” said Green, who just finished her first year as a first-grade teacher in the Hereford Independent School District.

Green earned her degree and teaching certificate from WT through the traditional pathway, which now also includes an intensive coaching model.

“The teaching profession can be challenging,” Green said “but at WT, you lock arms and go into it together.”

“Our goal is that our educators are day-one ready when they begin, and that they have the support to become career educators—teachers who stay in education,” Miller said.

For people like Williams, WT’s innovative and flexible options, plus its commitment to continued teacher development, has given him the smooth transition into the teaching profession that he wanted, plus the confidence that he can succeed.

Now having completed his first year teaching U.S. history and advanced U.S. history classes to high schoolers, Williams said he has already experienced the benefits of pursuing his passion.

“There is a lot to enjoy when it comes to teaching, but seeing a student ‘get it’ or have an ‘aha!’ moment is the best,” he said. “It makes the tough days worth it when you know you’ve imparted an important lesson to even just one student.”



Journey of a Lifetime

World-traveling alum wins prestigious Payne Fellowship

By Brad Newman

When Lindsey O'Neal '18 arrived at West Texas A&M University, the world was in her sights.

"I was always very interested in international culture and working among those communities, to help strengthen their institutional systems," she said.

As a student and since her graduation, O'Neal has served in rural impoverished areas in Mexico and as a Peace Corps volunteer in Botswana, Africa.



Now, she'll continue to pursue that passion as a fellow with the prestigious Payne International Development Fellowship, which provides a direct pathway to working as an officer with the U.S. Agency for International Development.

USAID provides humanitarian assistance and socioeconomic development throughout the world.

The Payne Fellowship will provide O'Neal with an internship in a congressional office in Washington D.C., full funding for graduate school, and employment with the USAID.

O'Neal, with a degree in political science plus a double minor in Spanish and communications, will continue her education at American University in Washington D.C. She will study in the School of International Studies, pursuing a Master of Arts degree in global environmental policy.

Upon completion in 2025, O'Neal will be a USAID Foreign Service Environmental Officer, assigned to a developing country.

Her particular interest is in providing support to women in developing countries as it relates to environmental concerns.



As a Peace Corps volunteer in Botswana for almost a year, O'Neal served with an organization promoting sexual health in an orphanage with children diagnosed with HIV and AIDS. While there, she also lived among a community of women farmers, which "sparked my interest in agriculture and environmental issues," including the impact of climate change on women, she said.

"It's exciting to me to be able to dive deep into these issues that I feel are very important," O'Neal said. "I can't solve the world's problems, but I can seek to make a tangible impact."

O'Neal was abruptly evacuated from Africa in 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic, but her experiences in Africa only increased her desire to serve internationally. She began working with other government agencies in Washington, D.C., that promote international development.

O'Neal was awarded the Payne Fellowship earlier this year. The internship is this summer, with coursework at American College set to begin this fall.

O'Neal's assignment as a USAID Foreign Service Environmental Officer will be determined when she completes her graduate degree.

"I'm open to go anywhere in the world," she said. Originally from Palmetto, Florida, O'Neal moved to Canyon to attend WT as a first-generation college student.

"I wanted to go somewhere new, on my own, and I really liked WT," she said. "It was a good fit, with so many good opportunities to study international relations and to give back."

WT alum excels through CAMP

By Brad Newman

Mireya Jacuinde '15, '19 personally knows the impact of WT's College Assistant Migrant Program.

So when she was asked to speak to 2022-23 CAMP cohort earlier this year, Jacuinde agreed wholeheartedly.

"CAMP has shaped me into the person I have become," she said. "It pushed me beyond what I thought I could do. To share with CAMP students now was an absolute honor."

Jacuinde was a CAMP scholar, entering the program in 2012, and she credits the program with preparing her for her career. She currently is the Executive Director of Student Learning Resources at Odessa College.

It served as a backbone for those of us who needed some stability and guidance

"CAMP provided me with all I needed to grow and evolve into the professional I am today," she said.

CAMP offers specified academic advising, financial assistance, professional workshops, and other resources to students from migrant and seasonal farmworker backgrounds. The federally funded one-year program accepts about 30 students each year at WT.

Her father was a migrant worker, and the family moved—from California to Idaho and eventually to Hereford—during her childhood.

In Hereford, Jacuinde and her family received support from the Texas Migrant Education Program.

"It served as a backbone for those of us who needed some stability and guidance," she said. "We relied on those services to know what we needed to do to succeed."

And WT's CAMP provided Jacuinde and her family "the perfect handoff" from high school to college, she said. The program solidified her decision to attend WT.



Mireya Jacuinde '15, '19 talks with CAMP math tutor Paola Alonzo at the program's spring banquet.

During her first year at WT, CAMP provided Jacuinde with tailored advising and tutoring, a scholarship and monthly stipend, and a cohort of friends with whom she could navigate the college experience.

"CAMP gave us the life skills you need as a college student and as a young adult," she said.

CAMP also urged its scholars to challenge themselves both academically and personally.

"I learned that involved students are successful students," she said. "We learned so much through all of the extra things we were able to be a part of."

Jacuinde earned her bachelor's degree in social work in 2015 and traveled to teach in Madrid as part of the Fulbright U.S. Student Program.

She returned to WT to work as a recruiter for CAMP for three years, earning a master's degree at WT, before beginning a career at Odessa College in 2019.

"Higher education felt like a good fit for me," she said. "I wanted to help other students like CAMP had helped me."

After advising students at Odessa College for three years, Jacuinde was named to her current role as executive director of student learning resources in March 2022.

Jacuinde said the most rewarding part of her work now is seeing the next generation of students succeed.

"When our students graduate, it's the most special moment," she said. "I love to see them beam in joy and pride at their accomplishments."

Jacuinde's message to current CAMP scholars at WT centered on opportunities, responsibility, and success, she said.

"Just as doors of opportunities have been opened for them, now they have the responsibility to open doors for other people, to continue to support others as they pursue success, too."

WT's new football coach aims to

BUILD A WINNING CULTURE

By Brad Newman

Josh Lynn doesn't remember a time in his life when he wasn't around football.

Lynn, now 45, spent evenings as a young kid at the fieldhouse of a small-town high school while his father, a lifelong high school football coach, led practice in the stadium. Lynn later would play on that field for his father and as a two-time team captain in college, before beginning a career in coaching himself.

"We're a football coaching family," Lynn said. "That's the culture I was always surrounded by, and I'm so grateful for that."

Lynn brings that legacy of football coaching to West Texas A&M University this year as the university's new head football coach. Named to the position in December, Lynn is the 29th head coach in the program's history.

Lynn comes to WT after six seasons as head coach at the University of Nebraska–Kearney, but he's a product of this region: "This whole area of Eastern New Mexico and West Texas, I consider this home."

Lynn graduated high school from Eunice, New Mexico, and attended Eastern New Mexico University in Portales, where, in addition to playing tight end for the Greyhounds, he earned a bachelor's degree in physical education and a master's degree in sports administration.

"What we needed was a head coach who understands Division II football, who can build a quality team, and who has some experience in this region," said Michael McBroom, WT director of athletics. "As we went through the search process, Josh was one of the first we contacted."

**"WE'RE A FOOTBALL COACHING FAMILY,"
LYNN SAID. "THAT'S THE CULTURE I WAS
ALWAYS SURROUNDED BY, AND I'M SO
GRATEFUL FOR THAT."**

"We're blessed that he was willing to make this move."

In his coaching tenure at the University of Nebraska–Kearney, Lynn turned the team into a national contender.

Under Lynn's direction, the Lopers, an NCAA Division II team in the Mid-America Intercollegiate Athletics Association, had an overall record of 35-25. His success with the team led Lynn to be named MIAA Coach of the Year in 2021.

Lynn's coaching career also includes stints at ENMU, Delta State University in Cleveland, Mississippi, and the New Mexico Military Institute.

Since being announced as WT's new coach, Lynn has put his focus on "building a winning culture," he said.



For Lynn, that means recruiting and training student athletes to succeed on the field, in the classroom, and personally. It requires setting a high standard of excellence, he said.

"That's something that has stuck with me from my dad," Lynn said. "You have to make sure you form a team where everyone is going in the same direction."

A slate of new assistant coaches for the team, including four who have previously worked with Lynn, will bolster that effort.

"It brings some stability to the program, to have coaches who you've been together with and know well," he said.

A winning culture, Lynn said, can lead to a winning record. "The expectation is to win more games than we lose next season," the head coach said. "We want to put a foundation together where we can get this program rolling again."

Lynn recalled the University's stretch of winning seasons in the mid- to late 2000s, an era many WT football fans recollect with fond nostalgia.

"There's a standard here that people remember, and I'd like to get back to that high quality standard," he said.

Lynn's presence on the WT campus has already helped create a sense of that winning culture, McBroom said.

"The foundation for the football program here is good," McBroom said. "Everything is in place for success, and now

with Josh's arrival there's a new level of energy and excitement and enthusiasm."

Lynn's family (wife Pam, and kids Bryson, Carly and Levi) will join him in Canyon this summer. The family is eager to make West Texas their new home, he said, meeting neighbors, putting their kids in local schools and finding a church to attend.

"We're excited to be a part of this entire community," Lynn said. "We're going to be all about Buff football and the community that supports it."

The Buffs open the 2023 season on Sept. 2, traveling to Gunnison, Colorado, to take on the Western Colorado University Mountaineers. The first game in WT's Bain-Schaeffer Buffalo Stadium is on Sept. 9 against the Adams State University Grizzlies.

"Under the leadership of Josh Lynn, our fans can expect to see a team that has worked hard, but is also having a good time," McBroom said. "A lot of people are looking forward to September."

Lynn is certainly one of them. Stepping onto the Bain-Schaeffer Buffalo Stadium will be a much-anticipated highlight for the new coach, he said.

"I'm most excited about being on the field," Lynn said. "We're getting a team ready to go, ready to match the support that this program has been given. I believe we could be a Top 10 team, if we do it right."



Ruby Salzman was named the LSC Player of the Year.



Adam Becker was named Lone Star Conference Player of the Year.

home of CHAMPIONS

The rich athletic history of West Texas A&M University continued this winter and spring as seven different programs qualified for the NCAA Division II postseason. The Buffs and Lady Buffs combined for 68 All-Lone Star Conference selections as well as eight LSC All-Academic honorees.

In the classroom, the Buffs and Lady Buffs combined for a 3.107 grade point average—the highest in school history. Thirteen of 14 programs earned at least a 3.0 GPA, led by women's golf with a 3.852.

WT led the Lone Star Conference with a total of 401 LSC Commissioner's Honor Roll selections during the 2022-23 school year. WT finished second in the LEARFIELD Director's Cup standings, released in early June.



Julius Brown was named the LSC Player of the Year.



Karley Motschenbacher, Nyalam Thabach, Lauren Taylor and Hollie Stalder were honored by the league for their efforts on the hardwood.

The Lady Buffs volleyball team took home the NCAA Division II national championship in December, the first national title earned by the team in 25 years. The team was invited to the White House in June to celebrate College Athlete Day.

Lady Buff Basketball qualified for the program's 28th NCAA tournament as they finished the season with an overall record of 21-11. Second-year head coach Josh Prock guided the Lady Buffs to a 12-1 record inside of the First United Bank Center as Karley Motschenbacher, Nyalam Thabach, Lauren Taylor and Hollie Stalder were honored by the league for their efforts on the hardwood.

The Buffs continued their dominance on the court as they claimed the LSC regular season and tournament championships to earn the top seed and hosting duties for the NCAA South Central Regional Championships. WT's Tom Brown earned LSC Coach of the Year honors for the fourth time, with six Buffs being honored by the league. Julius Brown was named the LSC Player of the Year as the senior guard also earned D2CCA All-American accolades while participating in the NABC All-Star Game.

Tom Brown earned LSC Coach of the Year honors for the fourth time.



Matt Stewart was named the LSC Outdoor Coach of the Year.

Meredith Jameson was named the LSC Coach of the Year.





Freshman Luis Palomo was an All-LSC selection.

WT Men's Golf registered another successful season as the Buffs finished ninth at the Lone Star Conference Championships to earn their second straight selection to the NCAA Division II postseason, marking the first time in school history that the program has made the NCAA Championships in consecutive seasons. Freshman Luis Palomo was an All-LSC selection as WT finished tied for seventh at the South Central/West Regionals in California.

Women's Golf put together one of the best seasons in program history during the 2022-23 school year, winning six different tournaments including the Lone Star Conference Championship in Thackerville, Oklahoma. The Lady Buffs tied eventual National Champion Dallas Baptist University in the regional championships, followed by a fifth-place finish at the Division II national tournament. Meredith Jameson was named the LSC Coach of the Year while senior Alyssa Campbell was named a first-team WGCA All-American.

Lady Buff Softball made another deep run in the NCAA Postseason, finishing 50-8 overall as they



Alyssa Campbell was named a first-team WGCA All-American.

advanced to the Super Regionals for the fourth time in program history. Ruby Salzman was named the LSC Player of the Year as the Northridge, California, product concluded a storied career sitting near the top of most offensive categories in the WT record book. Salzman, Kyra Lair and Emilee Boyer were named All-Americans for their efforts on the diamond.

Adam Becker of WT Baseball capped off a historic career in maroon and white as the infielder from Midland was named the Lone Star Conference Player of the Year for the second consecutive campaign while also being named the Regional Player of the Year by D2CCA and the NCBWA. The first-team All-American is just the fourth student-athlete in LSC history to claim Player of the Year accolades multiple times.

Track & Field continued to dominate this spring as they claimed the men's and women's Lone Star Conference Outdoor Championships on their way to qualifying 29 student-athletes for the NCAA DII National Championships in Pueblo, Colorado. WT's Matt Stewart was named the LSC Outdoor Coach of the Year.



Quinton Sansing was a part of the relay that claimed a national championship with a mark of 3:05.08 to break a 43-year-old school record.



Eleonora Curtabbi picked up a victory in the Steeplechase for a second consecutive season, holding the top time in the event in Division II history.

The Lady Buffs finished third overall with 49 total points as they claimed 21 different All-American accolades during the three-day event to lead all Division II institutions. Eleonora Curtabbi picked up a victory in the Steeplechase for a second consecutive season, holding the top time in the event in Division II history.

On the men's side, the Buffs finished as national runner-up for the second straight season as they picked up 47 total points and 16 All-American honorees. WT's relay teams shined in Pueblo as the 4x100 team of Joseph Manu, Jerry Jakpa, Jalen Purcell and Isaac Botsio ran the fastest time in DII history in the finals (38.70) to win the national title. The 4x400 relay team of Ohdel James, Jamarkus Birks, Brien Pittman and Quinton Sansing also claimed a national championship with mark of 3:05.80 to break a 43-year-old school record.

The Lady Buffs finished third overall with 49 total points as they claimed 21 different All-American accolades during the three-day event to lead all Division II institutions.



The Buffs finished as national runner-up for the second straight season as they picked up 47 total points and 16 All-American honorees.







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LOWE EVERYTHING TO CANYON

The life and legacy of Dr. Charles 'Bud' Townsend

By Kendal Powell



Editor's Note: This article originally appeared in the Spring 2023 issue of The Brand, a magazine published by students in WT's Department of Agriculture.

Jesus said in the book of John, "I have come that you may have life and may have it abundantly." Dr. Charles 'Bud' Townsend believed this wholeheartedly and lived it. In his 93 years, Bud lived an abundant life—announcing countless rodeos, teaching history to thousands of students, raising a beautiful family and leaving a touching impact on all he encountered.

If you ask anyone who knew him, they could probably tell you the story of how his 50-year career in rodeo announcing began. His son, Dr. Bill Townsend '74, recalled, "Papa was going to ride this bull, and my Uncle Bill was there and had heard this bull was famous for killing people. Uncle Bill told my papa, 'I am not going to let you ride this bull.' Well, that night, the rodeo announcer didn't show up."

Bill continued, "Now my father would sit there and mimic the rodeo announcers, and everyone would laugh; so, the cowboys that knew him said, 'Bud, why don't you go up there and announce this rodeo?'"

So, Bud took the microphone, and the crowd loved him. From that point forward, his career as a rodeo announcer took off. Bud was not your average rodeo announcer. Caleb Baker, a student at West Texas A&M University and a friend of Bud's, recalled an evening when Bud started imitating the way he used to announce rodeos.

"It was crazy, because you hear announcers now, and they all have this similar voice," said Baker. "He would carry tones, and he would go up and down, like he was following how somebody was riding a bull. It was just captivating." Bud's announcing voice was not like others, but had unique aspects.

"He was an artist, more so than an announcer. He could paint the picture in words rather than with a paintbrush," said Baker. While rodeo was a huge passion of Bud's, he had many other interests, including history and WTAMU.

During the rodeo off-season, he taught in the Department of History at WTAMU. Many people, whether they took a course with Bud or not, said that he was known to be a challenging professor.

"A lot of people took his class just as a challenge to their intellectual ability to write and to perform—that included me and my sister," said Bill. "Why did we do that? Because we believed anybody else teaching history would be boring."

Bud used to say that if you can keep people awake, that's three fourths of the battle when you're lecturing.

“He was a true, pure, role model that you know you can never fill the shoes of but want to get as close as possible.”

"I learned to make people laugh, and to involve people, which is really a great way to teach. I learned that from him," said Bill. Bud loved his students at WTAMU. He loved announcing, and he loved his family—that was the best way to describe it. He truly loved each person he met, but above all, he loved God.

"I think that his love for God and the values and beliefs he found as a student of the Bible tremendously impacted the way that he dealt with other people and the way he influenced other people to live out their lives," Bill said.

Bud believed in and lived his life according to Solo Christo, which is Latin for "Only Christ." He believed that God's hand was in everything, and that anything he was able to accomplish was because of Him.

"That was the greatest lesson he ever taught me," said Bill. Bud's love for God allowed him to love all those he crossed paths with, especially his family, and the people of Canyon.

"He just glowed when he talked about his wife," Gary Peterson '69, a good friend of Bud's and a fellow member of the Canyon Lions Club, said. "He loved her, and he loved his kids and grandkids, but it didn't stop there. When you were around him a while, you could tell he cared about you, and he loved you. He had learned enough about you that he knew how to love you."

Over his lifetime, Bud earned a hefty sum of awards and honors, including a Grammy Award, the Trustees Western Heritage Wrangler Award in 1975 and induction into the Texas Cowboy Hall of Fame in 2022. The honor he held closest to his heart was being named the Canyon Citizen of the Year in 2019.

In his acceptance speech for the award, Bud said, "What makes an honor like this is that the people you have lived around for 50 years had to have something to do with it, and they saw fit to give me that award. It really means more than a distant award."

Bud meant a lot to the Canyon community.

"When I think of him, I think of somebody that I look up to. I want to be this old guy that everybody knows for the right reasons," said Baker.

"He was a true, pure, role model that you know you can never fill the shoes of but want to get as close as possible."

In his closing remarks of his Citizen of the Year speech, Bud said, "I owe everything to Canyon, Texas, and its institutions. Canyon, Texas, owes me nothing."

Although Bud is gone, he is never forgotten, and his legacy will live on in the spirit of Canyon.

CAMPUS UPDATES

West Texas A&M University continues to grow all across campus with remodeling and new additions taking place. Take a look at the latest updates:



GENEVA SCHAEFFER EDUCATION BUILDING RENOVATION

Located in the heart of campus, Old Ed is the second-oldest building on the campus. To renovate this building and bring it within code compliance, replacement of all major systems will need to be done on the building's mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems, as well as complete renovation of interior space. Revitalization of this building will save a significant asset of the University and transform the building into a place that will be a destination to support and expand the already robust online learning programs. This \$45 million project is largely funded by the State of Texas Capital Construction Assistance Program; construction is expected to begin in January 2024.

UNIVERSITY DINING HALL

Major renovations in the east dining hall—costing an estimated \$4 million—include the replacement of six air handling units that provide heat and cooling to the Cafe, kitchen, Alumni Banquet Hall and Buffalo Room (to be completed by January), as well as the addition of two new pot scrubber and dishwashing machines (completed this summer).

BUFFALO SPORTS PARK

The 12-year-old artificial turf in the northeast intramural fields will be replaced to provide safer playing conditions for intramural softball, flag football and other team activities. Estimated cost is \$600,000; completion date is in June.



BAIN ATHLETIC CENTER PHASE II

An approximately 14,180-square-foot expansion of the center is estimated to cost approximately \$8.98 million. The project, expected to be substantially completed by July 2024, is critical to maintain the level of success expected of WT Athletics. The expansion will provide modern office space for administrators and coaches, academic and meeting room spaces for teams, track & field locker rooms.

JOSEPH A. HILL MEMORIAL CHAPEL

The historic chapel will undergo a \$1.2 million renovation, its first major overhaul in its history. Named for the University's second president, the chapel's first cornerstone was laid on June 9, 1950. One of few chapels on the campus of a public university in Texas, the Hill Chapel serves students, faculty, staff, alumni and the community at large. Renovations are expected to be completed in September.

OLD MAIN

The University's oldest building is undergoing important construction projects. In a \$710,000 project, the aged roof is being replaced and new insulation is being added to aid in energy conservation. Additionally, the combined departments of Financial Aid and Scholarship Services are getting remodeled office space—an approximately \$550,000 project—to accommodate staffing and to provide additional spaces for one-on-one meetings with students and families. Both are expected to be completed this summer.

SIDEWALKS AND ASPHALT

Various summer projects will repair areas of sidewalk and walkways that are cracking, crumbling and becoming trip hazards, as well as potholes and paving failures in campus parking lots. Additionally, the project will progressively improve access to buildings and spaces. This summer work includes upgrading the north and east portion of the walking trail at the Buff Sports Complex, adding a safer crossing at WTAMU Drive in coordination with the City of Canyon, and adding a sidewalk on the north side of Russell Long from Jeep Trail to 23rd Street in coordination with Randall County. Total costs are almost \$500,000; projects are expected to be completed in August.

PALO DURO RESEARCH CENTER

Underused space in the center will be converted into a new laboratory for the College of Engineering, which will provide multi-use capabilities for engineering graduate student research. The project, which will cost an estimated \$1.1 million, should be completed in July.

NANCE RANCH/FEED LOT WATER STORAGE TANK

An estimated \$231,030 project will provide for the installation of an underground storage tank to increase dependable water storage for livestock at the feed lot. Work includes automated pumps and controls. The project should be completed in October.

Faculty and Staff Accomplishments,
continued from pg. 3

WT Office of Academic Affairs honored several faculty members at the end of the 2022-23 academic year for their impact on WT students and stakeholders through excellence in instructional responsibilities, intellectual contributions, professional service, and the advancement of graduate programs. Honorees included the **Department of Life, Earth and Environmental Sciences** and its 15 faculty members, Assessment and Assurance of Learning Award; **Dr. Collette Loftin**, professor of nursing, Instructional Responsibilities Excellence Award; **Dr. Dave Rausch**, Teel Bivins Professor of Political Science, Professional Service Excellence Award; **Dr. Anne-Christine Barthel**, Hodges Professor of Business, Intellectual Contributions Excellence Award; **Dr. Monica Hart**, associate professor of English, Distinguished Innovation in Teaching Award; **Dr. Nathan Howell**, Bell Helicopter Professor of Engineering, Distinguished Graduate Faculty Award; **Dr. Naruki Hiranuma**, associate professor of environmental science, Distinction in Sponsored Research Award.

• • • • •

Matthew Loftin '09, the Miller Professor of Entrepreneurship and adviser for the WT Enactus team, has been selected as the Enactus Sam Walton Fellow Hall of Fame Inductee for 2023. He was recognized in April at the Enactus Nationals Exposition at the University of Texas at Dallas. This honor recognizes Loftin's outstanding contributions to the Enactus program, which empowers students to create positive social and economic impact through entrepreneurial action, according to the Enactus website.

High Rankings

Several undergraduate and graduate programs also rank highly state- and nationwide in the new standings, with 11 total programs earning the magazine's coveted Best Program status: online bachelor's programs, online bachelor's programs for veterans, online undergraduate business programs, online MBA, online MBA for veterans, and graduate programs in computer information technology, criminal justice, education, engineering, business (non-MBA) and nursing. WT's online undergraduate program ranks behind only Texas A&M University in the state and is tied with the likes of University of Massachusetts–Lowell and University of Missouri across the nation. WT's online bachelor's program for veterans also ranked No. 1 in Texas and tied for No. 16 in the country.

Journey of the Buffalo

When WT students began classes this past January for the spring semester, many took part in a pilot program designed to better help them reach their full potential. The WT Division for Student Affairs won a \$300,000 grant in October from the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board to plan and implement the new "Journey of the Buffalo" initiative. Partnering with Advising Services and the Office for Diversity and Inclusion, Student Affairs leaders developed a three-pronged program launching this spring that will offer actionable steps for students to improve their personal well-being, find healthy relationships and community, and cultivate practical skills in addition to those learned in the classroom.

New Housing Program

WT's 2023-24 freshmen will be part of an innovative new housing program that will establish learning communities across campus. Through the Meta Majors program, incoming freshmen will be clustered with students from the same general courses of study in an effort to promote social and academic networks that enhance the learning experience. Studies show that participation in learning communities can enhance academic performance, increase student gains, provide easier social transitions, and strengthen students' connections to the institution.

WT Performs in Scotland

About a dozen WT students and faculty members will perform this summer in the acclaimed Edinburgh International Festival. In “Still Life: A Gallery in Motion,” performers bring classical and contemporary paintings to life through dance, abstract movement and a combination of pre-recorded and live music. Students and faculty have created every aspect of “Still Life” in collaboration with each other during a weekly, three-hour class. The Edinburgh International Festival, founded in 1947, is a celebration of the performing arts that presents some of the finest performers and ensembles from the worlds of dance, opera, music and theater in August. The WT contingent will leave Aug. 1 and return Aug. 13. While in Scotland, they will perform four times in front of international audiences and see a wide range of theater, dance and performance art. The trip is made possible through a collaboration with the International Collegiate Theatre Festival, a Virginia group that helps high schools and universities bring their work to the festival.

Club of the Year

WT’s Agronomy Club entered 2023 as the top club in the country. The club was named National Club of the Year after entering the President’s Trophy competition at the Students of Agronomy, Soils and Environmental Sciences national meeting in Baltimore, thanks in large part to its inclusivity efforts. The WT club’s triumph is the first time a Division II school has won the title in the 16-year history of the contest, said Lauren Selph, instructor of plant, soil and environmental sciences in the Department of Agricultural Sciences.

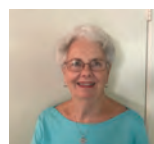
\$3 Million Dollar Gift

For the first time in more than 10 years, WT has a newly established school, following a \$3 million gift from Amarillo National Bank—the largest gift in the bank’s history. With the gift and its Feb. 9 approval by The Texas A&M University System Board of Regents, the Department of Accounting, Economics and Finance in the Paul & Virginia Engler College of Business has been elevated to a school. The newly named Amarillo National Bank School of Accounting, Economics and Finance makes the program a larger and more distinctive unit within the Engler College of Business. A request for approval of the naming and restructuring has been submitted to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. A director for the ANB School of Accounting, Economics and Finance will be announced soon.

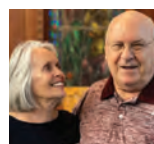
’50s

Louise Childress Hidalgo ’51 has accomplished many great things, including establishing a cattle ranch, developing the first plant nursery and rock shop in Granbury, teaching for more than 25 years, and most recently, at 92, publishing her first children’s book, “Roscoe The Rascally Rooster.” She earned her bachelor’s and master’s degree from West Texas Normal College. Her mother saved money from the grocery and household budget for many years and came to WT with Louise to pursue her own degree in education. They rented a house in Canyon and were able to attend many of the same classes together.

’60s



Ellie McDougal ’60 now lives in Walnut Creek, California. She grew up in Claude, and during her time at WT was very involved on campus: joining Delta Zeta, working at Panhandle-Plains Historical Museum and getting crowned Homecoming Queen. After graduating from WT, she moved to Colorado to teach and then to California. After teaching, she went on to be a librarian and then a storyteller. Upon retiring, she worked on a cruise ship for 20 years over holidays and summers. She has travelled all over the world, including Antarctica and most recently New Zealand. Ellie returned to WT’s Homecoming in 2022, 63 years after she was honored as Homecoming Queen.



David Sims ’65 attended WT on a football scholarship for Coach Joe Kerbel, starting in 1962 with his wife Suzy. During his freshman year, he made varsity and WT won the Sun Bowl 15 to 14 over Ohio University. After working in Texas and New Mexico, David and Suzy lived and worked in nine different countries—Venezuela, Angola, Trinidad, France, Iran, Argentina, the United Arab Emirates, Indonesia and England. Upon returning to the U.S., David worked his way up to region manager for the Middle East, based in Dubai. He also served on the WT Alumni Association Board of Directors from 2014 to 2018. He and Suzy have two daughters, seven grandchildren and two great-grandsons.

class

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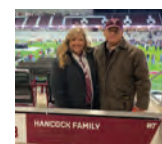
’70s

John Burkhart ’74 was a Texas educator for 36 years. During that time, he received Teacher of the Year at Sanger High School, Texas Association of Secondary School Programs Region VII Assistant Principal of the Year at Athens High School and Texas ASSP Region VII Principal at Malakoff High School. He retired to the Cedar Creek area in East Texas.

’80s

Paul Allan ’82 recently retired from Minnesota State Athletics after 37 years. During his years overseeing MSU athletic communications, the Mavericks won four national team championships. Paul has publicized hundreds of conference champions, NCAA postseason qualifiers (teams and individuals), as well as academic award honors at the university, conference, regional and national levels. His positions at MSU included sports information director, assistant ad/communications, associate director of athletics and senior deputy director/external operations.

Scott Jimenez ’82 DM in, BCC (Ret), US Navy chaplain (Ret), VA chaplain (Ret), has written “PTSD: A Theological Approach” for those who work with or care for those living with PTSD or those who have post-traumatic stress disorder themselves. He has performed extensive research interviewing combat veterans.



Danna ’88 and Phillip Hancock ’87 live in Turkey. Danna is science teacher at Valley High School, and Phillip is a farmer and rancher. Their three kids are WT Alumni as well: Jacob ’14, a coach at Colleyville Heritage High School; Colleen ’17, a Texas A&M AgriLife Extension programs assistant in Potter County; and Rachel ’20, an admissions recruiter at WT.

’90s

Chris Koetting ’92 Chris was named to the Texas Panhandle Sports Hall of Fame in 2023. He started his football coaching journey in Perryton and ended it in Canadian, where he had 165 wins and 24 losses and 3 state championships. After 31 years as an educator and coach, the Panhandle native is acknowledged as one of the biggest legends in the history of the Texas Panhandle.



Moe Hobson '92 is a human resource training specialist at Harris County Juvenile Probation Department. Moe has 20-plus years of experience as a coach, a community servant, radio personality, entrepreneur, motivational speaker and PTO president. He was recently a guest on the "Success Chronicles," a podcast for inspiration and motivation for people in all walks of life, and is a frequent speaker on juvenile justice topics. He is happily married to his wife Cuca and proud father to Margarita, Maurice III and McKenzie, who currently attends WT. He also has a grandchild, Kai.

John Shelton '96 spent 2000 to 2005 overseas with wife Linda and their three children. He graduated from Southwestern Seminary in Fort Worth with a master's in divinity and earned his doctorate in pastoral counseling in 2021. In 2020, he started The More 3:20 Haven, a nonprofit to help ministry leaders and their spouses by offering encouragement and a listening ear.

Marcus Smith '97 was named the president and CEO of Education Credit Union in Amarillo and Canyon. Marcus has been with ECU since 2014 and previously served as the CFO. Smith and his wife have been married for 24 years and have raised twin 17-year-old daughters and a 15-year-old son, all of whom attend Canyon Independent School District schools.

Brenda Schroer '98 is the chief financial officer of Endeavor and is responsible for the company's finance, accounting and information technology teams. She is a senior global financial executive with more than 20 years of energy experience, predominately in upstream and midstream sectors. Her broad experience includes multi-billion-dollar acquisitions and divestitures; debt and equity transactions; deep technical knowledge of financial, accounting and SEC requirements; and oversight experience of ESG reporting, digital transformation and cybersecurity. In 2020, she was recognized as one of Hart Energy's 25 Influential Women in Energy and one of the Energy Council's Global Female Influencer 275.

'00s



Erika Baeza-Wisdom '06 is the deputy vice president of the National Nuclear Security Administration's plutonium programs and operations. Erika provides leadership and strategic management of the stand up of plutonium pit production capabilities at the Savannah River Plutonium Processing Facility to support the nation's nuclear deterrent. She has extensive experience in the nuclear weapons enterprise.



Jackie Kingston '09, '23 was the 2022 winner of the Bess Whitehead Scott Scribes Scholarship. The award gives preference to a nontraditional student with at least 10 years of professional work experience in journalism, nonfiction writing or a related field. Kingston anchors three daily newscasts on KAMR Local 4 News in Amarillo and, as executive producer, is responsible for daily news content.

'10s

Skylar Gallop '10 is the Raise Your Hand Texas regional advocacy director for the Panhandle. Skylar works to inform voters in the Texas Panhandle of critical issues facing the more than 5 million students in our state's public schools.

Kaylee Morrison '12 is director of the Amarillo High School Sandie Steppers dance teams. The varsity team won the 2023 national championships for the varsity extra-small jazz and open categories. The team also won first runner-up in the varsity extra-small pom category, and the junior varsity team was second runner-up for pom. Kaylee is married to alum J.D. Morrison '09.

Tess Millhollon '15 is the founder of HerHouse, an app that makes travel easier, safer and cheaper for women all over the world. Tess and the app recently were featured on "Good Morning America."

\$1.5 Million Endowment

A \$1.5 million endowment will cover tuition costs for four years at West Texas A&M University for Pampa and White Deer students, thanks to a recent gift by a Pampa man in memory of his late wife. The Donna Carol Germany Cofer Endowed Scholarship will provide a minimum of \$10,000 per academic year to selected students from Pampa and White Deer, thanks to a gift from Bill Cofer, a retired purchasing agent for Cabot Corp. in Pampa. Neither Bill nor Carol Cofer attended WT, but they wanted to support students who wished to stay in the region.

New Ag Communications Minor Available

A new minor at West Texas A&M University will help train students to be the voice behind the industry that feeds the world. Beginning in Fall 2023, the Department of Agricultural Sciences in the Paul Engler College of Agricultural and Natural Sciences will offer a new minor in agricultural media and communication. This minor will be available to all students regardless of College and major. The minor includes 18 hours of course work in video production, digital media, professional growth, photography, ag technology and more.

WT Named one of the best Business Schools

The Paul and Virginia Engler College of Business at West Texas A&M University is one of the best business schools in the nation, according to rankings from The Princeton Review. The education services company recently named WT's online MBA program at No. 20 on its list of Top 50 Online MBA Programs for 2023. This is the fifth consecutive year WT's program has earned a Top 25 ranking and second consecutive year that it is in the Top 20. Additionally, AACSB International has reaffirmed its accreditation of the College. AACSB accreditation is the most rigorous global standard for business schools and recognizes institutions that meet the highest standards of quality and continuous improvement. WT is one of 36 business schools that have extended their global accreditation this year. A total of 981 institutions across 60 countries and territories have earned AACSB accreditation in business.

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FROM THE PANHANDLE TO THE WORLD



Photo: Brooke Alverson

Congratulations Lady Buffs Volleyball Team!

—THE WT ALUMNI ASSOCIATION