



the **WEST TEXAN**

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

Value Added

HILL INSTITUTE TO FOCUS WT ON TEXAS PANHANDLE STANDARDS

P. 8 DISTINGUISHED ALUMS

P. 12 HOMECOMING 2023

P. 26 CORNETTE LIBRARY 50TH ANNIVERSARY

the WEST TEXAN

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The West Texan is the official publication of the WT Alumni Association. The West Texas A&M University Alumni Association is a nonprofit corporation organized for the benefit of WT, a member of The Texas A&M University System. The WT Alumni Association is located in Buffalo Courts on the WT campus in Canyon, Texas.

Postage is paid at Amarillo, Texas. Postmaster: Send address changes to The West Texan, WT Alumni Association, WTAMU Box 60753, Canyon, Texas 79016 or visit BuffAlum.com to update contact information.

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EXECUTIVE TEAM LETTER



Ronnie Hall has had the opportunity to meet thousands of students and alumni in his 28 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,

We are excited about the future of WT, and this issue of The West Texan shows you why.

In the following pages, you will see stories of encouragement, success and philanthropy of our students, alumni and friends, which we know you will enjoy.

Our goal is to connect you as a WT Alum to your alma mater, and we have several opportunities for you to do so.

The WT Alumni Scholars program continues to empower WT Alumni to recruit potential WT students. We all know that WT can have an immense impact on anyone's life—changing the trajectory of their own life, as well as their families. The alumni scholars program allows WT Alumni to recommend up to five potential students from any high school or community college for admittance to WT through the WTAS program.

As our WT Alumni population continues to grow, so do our Buff Owned Businesses. In order to help fellow Buffs and Buff supporters know where WT Alumni businesses are, we are creating a Buff Owned Business Directory that will launch soon at BuffAlum.com. If you would like your business to be included or know WT Alumni who own a business, contact our office.

Feel free to give us a call or visit BuffAlum.com for more details about these opportunities.

And remember, whether you graduated or only spent a few semesters at WT, once a Buff, always a Buff!

Have a blessed day & Go Buffs!

Ronnie Hall Abby Waters



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WT Alumni Association

WT Among Best in the West

WT once again is one of the **top schools in the West**, according to newly released rankings from U.S. News & World Report. WT ranked at No. 20 among Best Value Schools among schools in the West. The University rose to No. 56 in the magazine's Regional Universities (West) list, up one from 2022-23, and WT also placed at No. 27 in the list of Top Public Universities in the West. WT also ranked among Best Undergraduate Engineering Programs, Best Bachelor of Science in Nursing Programs and Top Performers on Social Mobility.

One West Sets New \$175 Million Goal

WT recently announced an ambitious new goal for its **One West comprehensive fundraising** campaign, already the largest in Texas Panhandle history. Almost exactly two years after the campaign was publicly launched and just four months after its first goal was reached, One West leaders announced that they aim to raise a staggering \$175 million by the time the campaign ends in 2025. About \$39 million raised in the last fiscal year, the fourth year in a row in which WT has enjoyed record fundraising totals.

Nursing Professorship, Scholarships Established

A \$250,000 gift from an Amarillo family will fund a professorship and three scholarship funds for West Texas A&M University. John and Nancy Kritser's gift has established the Kritser Professor in Nursing, held by Dr. Collette Loftin in the Department of Nursing in WT's College of Nursing and Health Sciences. The gift also provides scholarships for students in nursing, in agriculture through the Paul Engler College of Agriculture and Natural Sciences, and in business through the Paul and Virginia Engler College of Business. John Kritser is the president and owner of Yellowhouse Machinery Co., a John Deere construction equipment dealer with 11 dealerships in West Texas and Oklahoma. He also is a fourth-generation rancher in Potter County. Nancy Kritser is a retired registered nurse who worked for Physicians Surgical Hospital, part of the BSA Healthcare System in Amarillo, for 19 years. Her daughter, Suzanne Belcher Mascenik '06, is now a surgical nurse with Corporate Centura Hospital Group in Denver.

WT Students, Scientists Researching Lake Meredith

A WT-led study is examining variations in the microbiology and water quality of the lake, a key source of drinking, recreational and agricultural water sources in the region. With funding from several Killgore research grants, students are hoping to provide a better understanding of the diversity, composition and function of microscopic organisms present at Lake Meredith. Students also are examining levels of microbial contamination variations across the lake over the course of several months. **Dr. Maitreyee Mukherjee**, assistant professor of biology, and **Dr. Erik Crosman**, assistant professor of environmental sciences, both in the Department of Life, Earth and Environmental Sciences, plan to incorporate the data collected into a proposal to the National Science Foundation.

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.

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A professor with a magic touch for explaining complicated scientific theories and a staff member whose work provides vital support for the entire University were honored Aug. 14 as the academic year began at West Texas A&M University. During

WT's convocation ceremonies, **Dr. David Craig**, associate professor of physics, was named 2023-24 Magister Optimus, the highest honor for a WT faculty member, and **Diane Brice**, the University registrar, was given the Clarence E. Thompson Staff Excellence Award, the University's highest staff honor. **Richard Smith**, assistant vice president for risk management and director of Academic and Research Environmental Health and Safety, and **Candice Copelin**, assistant director of advising services, received staff excellence awards.

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Dr. Mona Ozmaian, WT assistant professor of engineering in the College of Engineering, and Dr. Dmitrii Makarov, a University of Texas professor of chemistry, published "Long-lived metastable knots in polyampholyte chains" in PLOS ONE, an international scientific research journal. Ozmaian and Makarov are researching knots that can form in strands of DNA or protein, similar to the tangled wires of headphones.

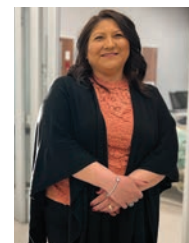
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The first director of West Texas A&M University's School of Music is passing the baton to new leadership.

Dr. Robert Hansen, WT's Regents Professor of Music, stepped down Aug. 1 as director of WT's school, and **Dr. B.J. Brooks**, professor of music theory and composition, stepped into the position. Hansen, who also teaches voice, voice science and related courses, will officially retire following the 2023-24 academic year, completing 37 years of service to WT. Hansen began his WT career in 1987 as director of the opera program and a voice professor, then was named coordinator of vocal music. He was named interim head of the Department of Art, Theatre and Dance for three years beginning in 2010 and was named director of the School of Music when it officially was formed in 2012, serving simultaneously in both positions for one year. Brooks joined the WT faculty in 2008 and teaches music theory and composition. As a School of Music faculty member, he has earned awards for outstanding contributions to instructional responsibilities in 2011, for intellectual contributions in 2012 and for professional service in 2021. He was named the director of the Buffalo Marching Band in 2021 and will continue in that position with assistant director **Dr. Guglielmo Manfredi**, professor of music.

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Dr. Priscella Correa, WT's Baptist Community Services Professor of Nursing, is one of 50 leaders from around the country chosen to be part of the fifth cohort of the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities' Leadership Academy / La Academia de Liderazgo. Correa took part in a HACU's 37th annual conference Oct. 28 to 30 in Chicago.



"First-Gen Stories for Success," available now in hardback and ebook formats from Kendall Hunt Publishing, features 12 chapters written by **Dr. George Pacheco Jr.**, WT associate professor of communication in WT's Sybil B. Harrington College of Fine Arts and Humanities, and several WT colleagues, as well as scholars from around the country. The new book

speaks directly to students facing fears about being the first in their family to attend college. Pacheco said he hopes first-generation students "get a sense of self" from reading the essays. Other WT authors included are **Dr. Shanna Peeples '97**, WT's John G. O'Brien Distinguished Chair in Education; **Dr. Nancy Garcia**, assistant professor of media communication; **Dr. Lisa Garza '85, '87**, associate professor of sociology; and **Jonathan Cordova '18, '22**, program coordinator for Study Abroad and Nationally Competitive Scholarships.

• • • • •

Four distinguished former West Texas A&M University faculty members recently were awarded emeritus status by The Texas A&M University System Board of Regents. **Dr. Trudy Hanson** retired in 2021 as a professor of communication and head of the Department of Communication. **Dr. Jim Owens** retired in 2022 as professor of finance and WT's Hodges Professor of Corporate Government in the Paul and Virginia Engler College of Business. **Dr. Jean Stuntz** retired in 2022 as Regents Professor of History in the Harrington College of Fine Arts and Humanities and founder of the Gender Studies Program. And Dr. Keith Price retired in 2022 as a professor of criminal justice and sociology in the Terry B. Rogers College of Education and Social Sciences.

• • • • •



Two new professorships named for legends of agricultural education have been established at West Texas A&M University. **Dr. Lance Kieth**, associate dean of external relations and recruiting for the Paul Engler College of Agriculture and Natural Sciences, will serve as the

Couch Family Professor of Extension Education, named for John and Lennis Couch and daughters Annette and Dr. Martha Couch, who spent 36 years working for Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service. **Michael Semler**, animal sciences instructor and livestock judging coach, will serve as the **Dr. Bob and Cleo Robinson** Professor of Livestock Judging, named for a legendary extension agent and longtime WT professor and internship coordinator and his wife.

• • • • •



Texas A&M University's Office of Military and Veterans Services was one of 21 Texas public institutions of higher education honored with the 2023 Veteran Education Excellence Recognition Award by the Texas Veterans Commission. WT's office was

one of 19 institutions receiving a gold award, which was accepted Oct. 23 in San Antonio by **James Thompson**, WT's military and veteran services community coordinator.

• • • • •



Christina Cahillane '09, '10 is WT's new executive director of communications for Enrollment Management. Cahillane, who previously was a marketer for the academic departments, returned to WT after more than a decade in sales and marketing. In her new role, Cahillane will focus on elevating marketing and communication efforts in support of new student recruitment.

WT Ranks in Top 5 Percent

WT is in the **top 5 percent of higher education institutions in Texas**, according to new national rankings released this fall. WT landed at No. 12 out of 268 colleges and universities in the state on Stack's 25 Best Colleges in Texas ranking. Thirteen Texas public institutions made the top 25 list. Only five of these—including Texas A&M University and the University of Texas at Austin—ranked higher than WT.

Ranch Horse Team Named National Champions

The **WT ranch horse team** won its first-ever world championship at the 2023 Stock Horse of Texas World Championship show Oct. 25 to 28 in Abilene. The WT riders came out on top of 12 competitors, including Texas Tech University, Texas A&M University and Tarleton State University. Collegiate ranch horse team members compete in riding and working classes on their own horses. Division 1 teams include two riders in each of three divisions — nonprofessional, limited nonprofessional and novice. Several of the 16 WT team members also took home individual awards.

Meat Judging Team Sets Record

WT's meat judging team took home a major national victory at the American Royal Meat Judging contest in October. The team's score of 4,237 is the highest in WT history and was 30 points higher than the team's closest competitor, Oklahoma State University. Texas Tech University, Kansas State University and Texas A&M University rounded out the Top 5. WT's score has only been reached eight other times by three universities in the history of meat judging, said Dr. Loni Lucher, Gordon W. Davis Endowed Chair in Meat Judging and team coach. The team ranked first in beef grading, lamb judging, total beef and placings; second in beef judging; and third in reasons and specifications.

WT Ag Major Named Student Regent

Annie Valicek, a senior agribusiness and economics major from Houston, was appointed by Texas Gov. Greg Abbott on June 1 as a student regent for The Texas A&M University System. Valicek is only the second WT student to serve as regent, following **Cassie Daniel Howell '08** in 2007-08. Valicek also is a founding member of WT's Collegiate Farm Bureau and is chair of career and personal development for Chi Omega sorority. In 2005, the 79th Texas Legislature authorized the governor to appoint non-voting student regents to each university system's board of regents. The chancellor of each university system recommends at least two students to the governor from applications submitted by participating universities. The Texas A&M System's Board of Regents meets quarterly with special meetings arranged as needed.

Meat Judging Team Wins National Championship in Decisive Fashion

WT's **meat judging team** secured its first-ever national championship in the Tyson International Contest on Nov. 12 in Dakota City, Nebraska. The team took first in beef grading, pork judging, reasons and total beef; second in specifications; and fourth in lamb judging and total placings. Its score of 4,230 is the second-highest score ever recorded by a WT meat judging team. WT topped its closest competitor, Texas Tech University, by 32 points. Other competitors included Oklahoma State University, Texas A&M University and Kansas State University. The team won its first national contest in October at the prestigious American Royal Meat Judging contest, where it set a school record. That preliminary contest and six other competitions over the year were in preparation for the Tyson International.

LEAVING A Legacy

BY KEITH BROWN

What began with a date at Wienerschnitzel because **Bill Farnum '69** forgot to take steaks out of the freezer resulted in his marriage to **Debbie Dodson Farnum '71, '94** that lasted almost 50 years. Prior to Bill's death in January 2021, he and Debbie discussed making a major gift to their alma mater.

The Farnums are long-time members of the West Texas A&M University Alumni Association and have supported the University in a variety of ways since their days on campus. Both have been involved with Greek life and in efforts to engage WT alumni in the Panhandle and Austin areas; Debbie currently serves as president of the Association's board of directors. She felt it appropriate to carry through with her and Bill's discussion by making a gift during the One West campaign, for which she sits on the steering committee.

“Providing this legacy gift insures I am able to continue living comfortably and still have the opportunity to support something that means so much to us both.”

-Debbie Dodson Farnum

A legacy gift from the Farnums' estate will benefit the Terry B. Rogers College of Education and Social Sciences at WT by creating a distinguished professorship in educational leadership and a scholarship fund for students pursuing degrees in that college.

"I know Bill would be pleased with this gift," Debbie said. "We both believe in the importance of education, and providing this legacy gift insures I am able to continue living comfortably and still have the opportunity to support something that means so much to us both."

Legacy gifts in the form of wills, beneficiary designations, IRA charitable rollovers, charitable trusts and other avenues are an excellent way to support WT and magnify a donor's philanthropic investments. This type of gift is the foundation of the I Am WT Leaving a Legacy initiative.

"Many of our most loyal supporters give annual gifts to WT but need to protect their resources to secure their future which can make a major gift seem unreachable," said Lesly Bosch Annen, assistant vice president for development and leadership gifts. "Legacy gifts are a perfect avenue for those folks, and the WT Foundation serves as a strategic partner in fulfilling those donors' desire to secure their legacy."



Bill Farnum graduated from Pecos High School and completed his WT degree in commercial art with a minor in chemistry. He was a Distinguished Military Graduate and member of Alpha Tau Omega. After graduation, he served in the U.S. Army. Bill was successful in the metal building and construction industry primarily in Texas but on jobs across the world and was an active consultant in the industry until his death.

Debbie received her degrees in education and she was active in Chi Omega. Following a successful teaching career, Debbie joined the meeting planning industry where she worked with the Texas Association of School Boards for almost 10 years, retiring in 2015.

"We laughed about our first date at Wienerschnitzel for years," Debbie said. "But it lasted almost eight hours as we talked a lot about Bill's impending tour in Vietnam. He was in town for his ATO little brother's (Larry May, who is honored with a street on the WT campus named for him) funeral, who had been killed in Vietnam on May 23, 1970, so he was understandably shaken as he was scheduled to leave for Vietnam on June 7."

Bill left the Panhandle the next day and did go to Vietnam within the week. He and Debbie corresponded by letter for a year while she continued with classes at WT.

"The day before I graduated from WT—May 9, 1971—Bill proposed to me in a letter. I wrote him back two days later and said 'yes.' Only one date and I said 'YES!' We were married on July 10, 1971, four weeks after he returned from Vietnam. It was also the day he was promoted to Captain in the U.S. Army."

Bill and Debbie are the parents of Katharyn and Daniel and grandparents to 10.

Family, commitment, service—all descriptors of the legacy the Farnums have created during their lives. Their gift continues that legacy and ensures that faculty and students will be impacted for perpetuity.

For information about leaving a legacy gift to WT, Contact Annen by calling the WTAMU Foundation office at 806-651-2070.

M. Keith Brown '91, '19 is a major gift officer at WT and coordinator of the I Am WT Leaving a Legacy program.

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MANUFACTURING NEW ENGINEERS

WT's Engineering PUP identifies, recruits Canyon student

BY CHIP CHANDLER

West Texas A&M University's College of Engineering is constructing a different kind of pipeline.

In collaboration with Canyon Independent School District, the College has built a Pre-University Program that's bringing CISD students directly to the WT campus to study engineering and computer science—ultimately paving the way for many of those students to enroll at WT after high school graduation.

Think of PUP as a dual-credit program on steroids.

"The goal of a dual-credit program is to prepare students for any university, any program," said Dr. Emily Hunt, dean of the WT College of Engineering. "With PUP, they get the feeling specifically for our engineering and computer science programs and see what it means to study them on a college campus."

Students accepted into the program—about 40 in all for 2023-24—take classes on the WT campus, right alongside WT students, earning credits both toward their high school graduation requirements and their eventual college degrees.

"The students who qualify for PUP are in the top of their classes," Hunt said.

The idea to expand PUP into Canyon ISD came directly from CISD administrators.

"We started talking about it three years ago," said Marc Hamil, CISD director of secondary leadership. "We've had a hard time finding teachers who can teach at an advanced level in engineering and computer science classes. We started talking to Dr. Hunt, and they took it from there."

Students accepted into the engineering program take two courses per year as juniors and seniors, earning 12 hours of college credit. The computer science program is now in its first year, and students eventually also will earn 12 hours.

"Unlike dual credit, they are on the WT campus, taking classes side by side with college students. That's where the power of this

program is," Hamil said. "We can't offer the level of engineering and computer science instruction that Dr. Hunt and her team can."

Our hope is that these high school students will continue to pursue degrees at WT because of the relationships they build and the experiences they have there.

-Dr. Darryl Flusche, CISD superintendent

PUP is a remarkable opportunity for CISD students, Superintendent Dr. Darryl Flusche said.

"They're getting to experience college life and getting their feet in the door," Flusche said.

That will benefit both WT and the Panhandle region in the long run, the CISD officials said.

"Our hope is that these high school students will continue to pursue degrees at WT because of the relationships they build and the experiences they have there," Flusche said.

"Employers in this area really put a premium on homegrown talent," Hamil said. "They can recruit people from outside, but will they stay? There's a value in finding that talent here. It's a win-win."

Overall, about 50 percent of students in WT's College of Engineering are from the Panhandle area, and about 80 percent of them stick around after graduation, Hunt said. The first cohort of PUP engineering students contained 20 students, 10 of whom came to WT after graduating high school. The University helps make the decision to continue at WT as easy as possible, Hunt said. "We're offering these students enhanced merit scholarships—offers so large that it's difficult for the students and their parents to say no," Hunt said.

PUP also allows WT to identify potential students early.

"Dr Hunt was visionary in this process,

knowing that if students were showing talent and aptitude even before they are seniors, it is a good bet that they will continue to be outstanding when they are ready for college," said Mike Knox, vice president for enrollment management. "With that in mind, Dr. Hunt and the Scholarship Office collaborated to make scholarship offers to PUP students before they even completed their junior year of high school. These scholarships were guaranteed, and as seniors, they had the opportunity to increase them.

"We think that getting students to think seriously and early about WT as a great option takes a lot of stress out of the college decision-making process," Knox continued. "Our goal is for these outstanding students to know that WT is a place where they can get an outstanding education, and they can do it without the financial stress of paying for college."

Such offers made WT hard to deny for students like Rhett Patterson, a freshman mechanical engineering major from Canyon.

"I always had the idea of wanting to be an engineer, and when my counselor gathered those of us who qualified for PUP, I thought it would be a great way to see if this was something I'd want to do," Patterson said. "One of the first classes is Introduction to Engineering, and we went through every type of engineering there is. It was super useful in terms of honing in on what I wanted to do."



Rhett Patterson

PUP was "definitely a big reason why I chose WT," said Patterson, who had been considering applying to the Colorado School of Mines or Kansas State University.

"Going through PUP and getting an inside look at how the College of Engineering operates, how it was smaller but equal to those bigger schools, was huge," he said. "WT offered more professor interactions and a smaller class size. They're happy here for me to succeed."

For the Buffs at Heart

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WT Honors Distinguished Alumni

BY CHIP CHANDLER

Former WT Vice President of Finance and Business **Gary Barnes '78** and late WT Professor Emeritus **William E. "Bill" Semmelbeck '69** were honored in October at the Phoenix, a highlight of WT Homecoming Week.

"Our Distinguished Alumni embody values which identify and define us. They embody Panhandle values, many of the same values people think of when they think of the West and West Texas," said Dr. Todd Rasberry, vice president for philanthropy and external relations. "All our Distinguished Alumni, but in particular Bill and Gary, are examples of WT's distinctiveness. Moreover, you are an inspiration for us, and you bring pride to WT."



The Phoenix event on Oct. 12 celebrated West Texas A&M University's 2023 Distinguished Alumni, Gary Barnes and the late William E. "Bill" Semmelbeck. Pictured are Roc'C and Mark Semmelbeck, from left, and Gary Barnes.

Gary Barnes and family.



“I just feel really blessed to be part of this excitement tonight and the history for this institution.”

-Gary Barnes

Barnes said the evening was a wonderful way “to reflect back on this institution and all the great things that so many people have been a part of that we have been able to accomplish.”

“I just feel really blessed to be part of this excitement tonight and the history for this institution,” Barnes said.

Semmelbeck was represented by his son Mark and other family members.

“This was really special for WT to do for him at this time,” Mark Semmelbeck said. “Dad loved this University. He really did. He cared a lot about this University, and it’s great to see the University cared so much about him.”

Barnes, a Plainview native, graduated from WT in 1978 with his bachelor of business administration degree and was hired by the University immediately as a staff accountant. He rose through the ranks and ultimately served as vice president for business and finance and chief financial officer during a time when the University was on shaky ground. Later, he worked at both Texas A&M University and the Texas Tech University System, where he retired in April 2022.

Semmelbeck Family



He and wife **Cindy ‘78** live in Lubbock.

Semmelbeck, an Oklahoma City native, earned his MBA at WT and was hired as a professor in the then-School of Business, where he taught for 18 years. Before leading his own classrooms, though, Semmelbeck already was a proven business leader in Amarillo, where he founded Buck’s Sporting Goods and J&B Builders after moving to the city in 1953.

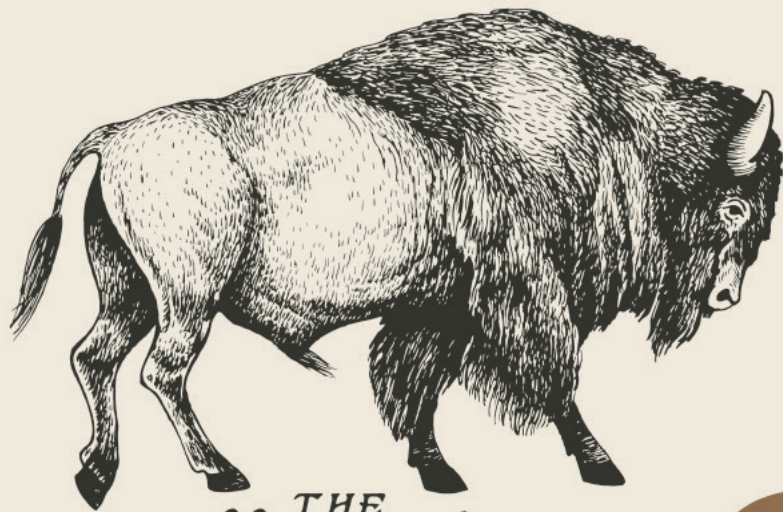
“He cared a lot about this University, and it’s great to see the University cared so much about him.”

-Mark Semmelbeck

While teaching at WT, he entered into a partnership with Ron Watts, one of his former students, and Ron Edmondson to found what would become known as Officewise, the largest office supply/furniture business in West Texas and one of the largest in the state.

Semmelbeck retired from WT in 1988 and was named Professor Emeritus by The Texas A&M University System in 1992. He lived with wife Betty in Houston until his Aug. 20 death at age 96.

Thank you to our Phoenix Premier Table Hosts:
Semmelbeck Family, Canyon Economic Development Corp,
WT College of Engineering, WTAMU Foundation.



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NOW STREAMING: THE BUFF PLAYLIST

HOMECOMING 2023

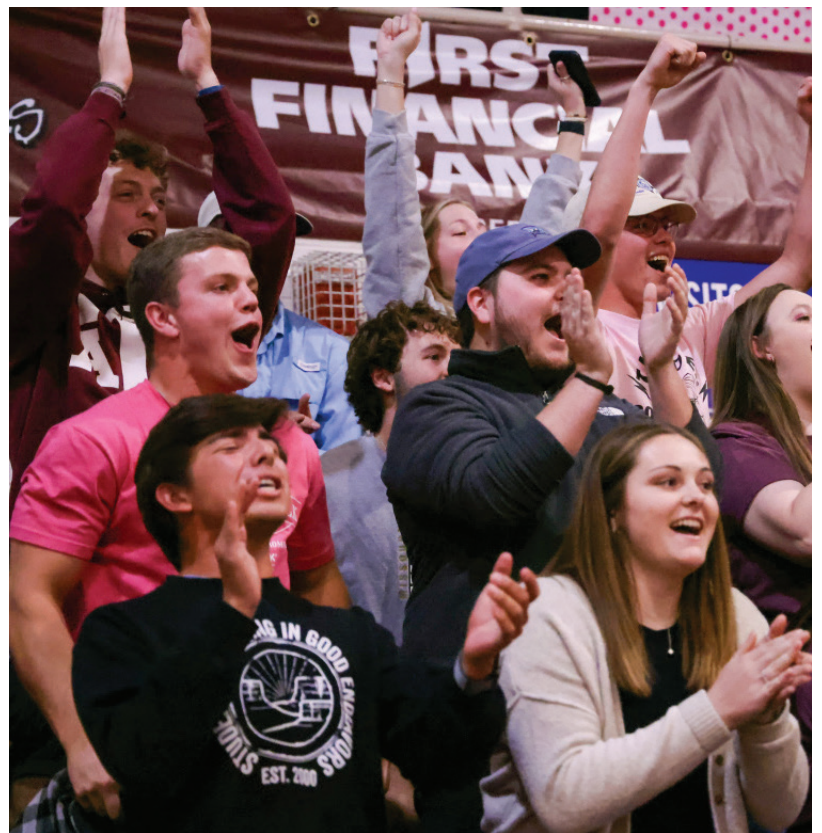
The WT community hit play for a rocking good time at Homecoming 2023.

Themed “The Buff Playlist,” Homecoming highlights included the Phoenix (see related story, Pg. 8), the 5K Run with the Herd, the Homecoming parade, and several student activities, including the always popular Pigskin Revue.

During the Homecoming week Celebration of Color, honorees included **Elisha Demerson '76, '91**; educator and comedian **Milton Smith '80**; and nurse and educator **Dolores Neal Thompson '94**. Also honored were former star WT athlete **Victor McGee**, community volunteer **Lilia Escajeda**, and philanthropists **David '79** and Sherry Schaeffer.

Rylee Finley, a junior agricultural media and communication major from Amarillo, and Amon Fredinand, a sophomore dance major from Amarillo, were crowned at halftime of WT's victorious game against Western New Mexico University. (Photo, bottom left)

Students Assisting in Good Endeavors' country music-themed float also was named winner of the Homecoming parade by both the judges and by viewers on the route and at home. (Photo, top on second row)







WT'S HILL INSTITUTE TO PROMOTE

REGIONAL VALUES

BY BRAD NEWMAN

It's not just any university. It's a distinctly West Texas university.

And so the values of the West Texas region should be foundational to how the University forms students into engaged citizens.

That's the impetus behind West Texas A&M University's Hill Institute, a new initiative that highlights and seeks to instill 10 key values of the Texas Panhandle throughout the academic landscape.

"As a regional university, we serve the region first," said WT President Walter V. Wendler, "and reflecting the values of this region, I think, is extremely important.

"We want to display these values and suggest to students that we're here to reinforce these in you and shape who you are."





The Hill Institute has selected a slate of 10 of those values to emphasize:

- Trust
- Family and Economic Prosperity
- Hard Work
- Regard for Others
- Personal Responsibility
- Compatriotism and Patriotism
- Private and Civic Virtue
- Faith
- Loyalty
- Rugged Individualism

“The Hill Institute specifically fits within WT’s vision for the future by taking seriously what makes this region of the country and world so important – its people,” said Dr. Todd W. Rasberry, WT’s vice president for philanthropy and external affairs and executive director for the WTAMU Foundation.

“People” is one of three priorities of WT’s One West campaign, the university’s comprehensive fundraising campaign that supports WT’s long-range plan, **WT 125: From the Panhandle to the World**.

“It’s important, as a regional university, that we serve the region first, and remember that it’s the people of this region, and their values, that we need to pay attention to,” Wendler said.

WT officials had been planning a project like the Hill Institute for several years. The Texas A&M Board of Regents approved the creation of the Institute in February 2022.

But a \$20 million gift from WT alumni Alex ‘85 and Cheryl ‘84 Fairly provided WT the funds necessary to announce the project’s launch in October 2023.

“We have a chance to do something special that we believe is a once-in-a-generation opportunity,” Alex Fairly said.

The Fairlys’ gift currently is the single largest family gift in the history of WT and in the One West campaign. Since September 2021, the One West campaign has raised more than \$150 million. An updated goal of raising \$175 million by 2025 has been set.

The Fairlys, both WT alumni, are prominent supporters of WT and both serve as members of the leadership committee for WT’s One West campaign.

“The focus on the region WT serves that Dr. Wendler has brought has become an incredible gamechanger,” Alex Fairly said. “We wanted to support the Hill Institute because of the opportunity to help WT become a beacon that champions the values we believe in, and which we know the Panhandle and so much of the country believe in.”

The Fairlys were instrumental in choosing and fine-tuning the values of the Hill Institute, Wendler said.

“We’ve been working together, diligently coordinating a project that highlights the values and the value systems of the Texas Panhandle,” Wendler said.

Each of the 10 values is reflected in West Texas people, the president said — from rugged individualism (“the people here have a certain grit that would be asset anywhere”) to compatriotism (“Panhandle people know they belong to something bigger than themselves and work together”). It’s those regional characteristics that can enhance the quality of WT students, Wendler said.

“**The Hill Institute specifically fits within WT’s vision for the future by taking seriously what makes this region of the country and world so important – its people.**

— Dr. Todd Rasberry

"WT has embraced regionalism as a defining, not limiting, characteristic," Rasberry said. "WT has a responsibility to be the Panhandle's university."

Increasingly in institutions of higher education, commonly held societal values are not at the forefront, Alex Fairly said. But the 10 values of the Hill Institute are essential to developing citizens of a constitutional republic, regardless of their field of study, he added.

The Hill Institute will endow faculty positions in all six of WT's colleges, funding research and scholarship related to the values. Hill Scholars will be selected – students who receive scholarships for exemplifying one of the values, or whose studies especially reinforce one of the values.

The Hill Institute also will underwrite premier speakers and lecturers at WT, as well as create publications related to the 10 values and the importance of promulgating personal values in society.

“

WT has a responsibility to be the Panhandle's university.

— Dr. Todd Rasberry

”

"The Hill Institute will make the role of values an essential part of the teaching, research, and service mission of WT," Rasberry said. "This makes WT unique in many ways in the state and nation."

Alex and Cheryl Fairly



Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick

“

Others will look to us to see how our success flows from an emphasis on the basic characteristics who we are.

— President Walter V. Wendler

”

The Hill Institute's namesake is Joseph Abner Hill, the second and longest serving president of WT (then, West Texas Normal College).

"Joseph Hill was very inspirational. He never lost his focus or fortitude," Wendler said. "He is a stunning example to me of someone who worked to create good citizens."

Hill served from 1918 until 1948—through 30 years of significant challenge and growth for WT—and came to exemplify in ways the 10 values of the Hill Institute.

As WT leads its students and faculty to reflect on and emulate the values of the Hill Institute, these characteristics will solidify WT's positive influence in the region and in the broader U.S., Wendler said.

"A long-term effort like the Hill Institute elevates the prestige of the University," the president said. "Others will look to us to see how our success flows from an emphasis on the basic characteristics who we are."



ALUMNI COUPLE PROVIDE INSTITUTE-LAUNCHING DONATION

BY BRAD NEWMAN

Alex '85 and Cheryl '84 Fairly are Buff enthusiasts through and through.

The couple met at the then-West Texas State University, graduated from WT and have continued to be prominent supporters of WT for decades.

"We think WT is an amazing place—we're huge fans," Alex Fairly said. "And there has never been a more exciting time than right now in WT's history."

It's that enthusiasm that led them to make what is, to date, the single largest family gift in the history of WT.

The couple's latest gift, a \$20 million contribution, will launch the Hill Institute at WT, an initiative designed to highlight 10 key values of the Texas Panhandle and incorporate them throughout WT's academic landscape.

"The Fairlys are alumni who have a true passion for the Panhandle and for WT," WT President Walter V. Wendler said. "Remarkable human beings."

Alex, from Alamogordo, New Mexico, and Cheryl, from Fort Worth, met at WT as students in the 1980s. The years they were students had a profound impact on their lives, the couple said.

"For us both, WT was the place where we found the direction we'd eventually take in life professionally," Alex Fairly said, who studied business administration at WT and now is president of the Amarillo-based risk consulting firm, the Fairly Group.

The Fairlys also noted the impact of WT on their personal faith and in forming them as engaged citizens.

"We both grew tremendously during our time at WT," Alex said. The Fairlys have remained engaged supporters of their alma mater, providing one of the first gifts

The couple provided one of the first gifts toward WT's Bain-Schaeffer Buffalo Stadium, which opened in 2019. The Fairly Group Club, a premium event space at Buffalo Stadium, is named in their honor.

The Fairlys currently serve as members of the leadership committee for WT's One West campaign, the university's comprehensive fundraising campaign that supports WT's long-range plan, **WT 125: From the Panhandle to the World**.

“For us both, WT was the place where we found the direction we'd eventually take in life professionally.”
—Alex Fairly

Alex was named a WT Distinguished Alumnus in 2017, and Cheryl and Alex were presented with the 2020 Pinnacle Award from WT, which recognizes outstanding donors who support the University.

"Panhandle people are generous; they want to invest in things that make a difference; they want to be part of something larger than themselves; they want to do what they can to help the families and communities across the region," said Dr. Todd W. Rasberry, WT's vice president for philanthropy and external affairs and executive director for the WTAMU Foundation. "Investing in WT is a way to help address the issues and opportunities across our region."

The philanthropic couple also has supported local nonprofits, including Cal Farley's Boys Ranch and San Jacinto Christian Academy, as well as community initiatives. The Fairly Group was instrumental in negotiations for a Minor League baseball team—the Sod Poodles—to play in Amarillo, for instance.

The Fairlys have been involved in the vision for the Hill Institute "since the very beginning," Wendler said.

"They have been central to this project," he said. "As we've fine-tuned the Institute, it has been very important to have insight from alumni who cherish what opportunities WT has provided them."

The Hill Institute's emphasis on Texas Panhandle values resonated with the Fairlys, they said. They wanted to support an enterprise that would advance the same regional principles that were impressed upon them as students at WT.

"The focus on the region WT serves that Dr. Wendler has brought has become an incredible game-changer," Alex Fairly said. "WT is thriving and achieving and being so relevant to the Panhandle, Texas and the world."

New Leaders

Named in Prominent WT Colleges



BY CHIP CHANDLER

Two of West Texas A&M University's impactful Colleges are under new leadership.

Dr. Holly Jeffreys '97 and '02 and Dr. Gary Bigham each began their duties Aug. 1 as the dean of the College of Nursing and Health Sciences and the dean of the Terry B. Rogers College of Education and Social Sciences, respectively.

Jeffreys, who also is WT's High Plains Christian Ministries Foundation Professor in Nursing Leadership, stepped into the role following the departure of Dr. J. Dirk Nelson.

"Dr. Jeffreys is an innovative and entrepreneurial leader," said WT President Walter V. Wendler. "Not only has she established healthcare practices across the Panhandle to serve communities, but she has been instrumental in growing the WT Department of Nursing through strategic partnerships. As dean, she will have the opportunity to use her innovative approach for the whole College."

Jeffreys was chosen based largely on her significant leadership experience in higher education and the private sector, said Dr. Neil Terry, executive vice president and provost.

"I value the commitment she has to the College and the regional community," Terry said. "She has a lot of hard work in her future, but I know she is anxious to do her best to support and advance the interest of the College and all of its stakeholders."

Jeffreys was hired following an internal search process that included nominations from multiple faculty members in the College. She said she is "truly honored" to be named dean.

"I do not take the responsibility lightly," Jeffreys said. "I know the graduates from our college play a critical role in the overall health and success of the people in and around the Texas Panhandle. I am thankful for the opportunity to work alongside a strong administrative team and look forward to leading our college forward in accomplishing the mission and realizing the vision of WT 125: From the Panhandle to the World."

Jeffreys, in addition to her work at WT, is a prominent Panhandle-area nurse practitioner and a WT graduate whose love of nursing developed while watching her father, a pastor and volunteer hospital chaplain, visit patients weekly.

Jeffreys earned her Bachelor and Master of Science in nursing at WT, and she earned her doctorate in nursing practice at the University of Texas. She previously served as head of WT's Department of Nursing beginning in August 2020.

Bigham, a 15-year veteran of WT, spent 20 years in teaching and administration in the public school system.

"I am honored and humbled by the trust that WT's top administration has placed in me," Bigham said. "I take the responsibilities associated with my selection most seriously."

Bigham was selected from a field of three finalists and 23 applicants. A 14-person search committee of administrators, staff, faculty and community representatives was formed to conduct the search.

Bigham fills a position made open following the decision of the College's longtime dean, Dr. Eddie Henderson, to return to the classroom.

"The experience that Dr. Bigham brings with him from his time in rural school districts will significantly impact our students and service to the region," Wendler said. "I am confident that the disciplines in the College will flourish under Dr. Bigham's leadership."

"Dr. Bigham has a proven ability to collaborate with area school districts and has risen through the academic ranks at WT, particularly playing a critical role in the success of our educational doctoral program," Terry said. "The task ahead will be a challenge, as is the case with all new deans, but I know he is committed to a positive path for the future of the College."

Bigham said he hopes to build on the long legacy of the Rogers College of Education and Social Sciences.

"At the core, I want this college to be the place where anybody seeking a degree in any of our fields — whether it's education, psychology, criminal justice, political science, public administration, emergency management or the like — that we're their first choice," Bigham said. "I want us to have an active presence in the field, not only the place schools turn to for guidance and assistance, but for any of the social-science disciplines that fall within our fields of study."

Bigham, a Lockney native, was inspired to enter education by his admiration of a high school agriculture teacher. After beginning his degree at WT, Bigham completed his bachelor's in agricultural education at Texas Tech University.

At WT, he served as director of the University's educational leadership doctorate program and superintendent certification.

Bigham has presented his research at local, regional, state, national and international conferences, events, and workshops. He has also presented professional development workshops for teachers, administrators and school board members. He coordinates the annual school board workshop for Texas Panhandle school board members and superintendents, a collaborative effort involving WT, the Texas Association of School Boards and the Region 16 Education Service Center.

TERRY FUNK

LOVED BEING TERRY FUNK

Wrestler, showman, big heart: Funk was Texas Panhandle to his core

BY JON MARK BEILUE

My youngest son and I were in our rental car, heading south on Highway 41 out of Green Bay, Wisconsin, on a late Sunday afternoon in mid-September 2018. It was the first of two bucket-list sports-trip weekends with each son.

We had just finished watching the Packers and the Vikings on the hallowed ground of Lambeau Field. We got to Oshkosh, and it seemed like a good place to stop to watch the Cowboys that night before getting to Chicago the next day. I looked for a decent motel, and this Red Roof Inn looked like it would do.

“Amarillo, Texas? Man, I love Terry Funk.”

— Jimmy Lackey.

The kid at the desk looked bored because there wasn't much hotel traffic at that hour. Rooms were available, and the price was fine. I filled out the necessary registration. Ryan was his name. He looked at my driver's license.

“Amarillo, Texas? Man, I love Terry Funk.”

Oh-kay. Now this, I did not expect, some 20-year-old in the middle of Wisconsin talking about Terry Funk. The boredom was gone. He went on about him as his favorite wrestler and character, never mind that Terry's heyday was long past. Ryan sounded like his biographer.

When I told him that I knew Funk, I became a quasi-celebrity. It was as if I told a Beatles fan I used to pick up Paul McCartney's mail when he was on tour. Finally, I said, “Hold on.”

I stepped away from the desk and called Funk from my contacts. It had been a while since we talked. It was Sunday afternoon. He likely didn't have his phone with him or knew who this was based off the number and this wasn't going to work, so –

“Hello?”
“Terry?”

I quickly told him who this was, where I was and why I was calling before he thought it a crank call and hung up.

“This sounds crazy...”

Those words have always been too tempting for Funk. The crazier, the better. Sure, he said, let me talk to him.

“Here, Ryan, someone wants to talk to you.”

I gave the phone to Ryan and thought his knees were going to buckle. It looked like he was having a religious experience. It was maybe two minutes, and I'm sure Funk was playing Terry Funk to the hilt. When Ryan gave the phone back, I thought his life would forever be marked as Before the Phone Call and After the Phone Call.



That was Terry Funk, master entertainer. Big man with a bigger heart. In many ways, bigger than life to those who knew him and knew of him. That life, lived on his terms, ended Aug. 23 at age 79. His life—his body—just exhausted from his unique way of living in the fast lane.

He and his brother, Dory Jr., spent much of their youth at Boys Ranch. It was not because of any wayward home life. It was because their father, Dory Sr., took Cal Farley up on his offer to be the Ranch's disciplinarian and busted a few tails with tough love.

From that beginning, Terry would go on to be an international star in professional wrestling. His father and brother did the same, but Terry took it to several different levels.

Funk was a legend in Japan. He told stories about Japanese tour busses stopping at his ranch home near Canyon where tourists would get out just to take pictures of Funk's home. Most of the time Funk would look through a window with a bemused grin and shake his head. On occasion, he would jump into character and come outside to give them something to talk about.

Funk may have been known in several continents, but he never forgot where it began. He was Texas Panhandle to his core. This part of the world ran through his veins. Privately and professionally, he didn't run from that – he embraced it.

As a kid in the 1960s and early 1970s, I remember he was always introduced as being from "Umbarger, Texas." Even though it was only about 75 miles from where I lived, I'd never been to Umbarger, but it sounded like just the place Funk should call home.

“Terry just wanted WT to thrive. I think he would be very pleased with the course the University is on now.”

“Terry always loved WT,” said Jimmy Lackey, former executive director for the WT Alumni Association and currently president and CEO of Kids, Incorporated. “He didn't always love certain things that went on at the university, but he always loved WT. I credit (former president) Dr. Russell

In the years before Marvel Comics characters in theaters, Funk was a superhero to many. He was the good guy taking on the scary Pak Song and his paralyzing stomach claw, The Shiek, and the Infernos managed by the sinister and cheating J.C. Dykes.

The Funks all had their signature move—The Spinning Toe Hold. If Terry got that on a wrestler, the poor guy was begging for mercy. It was over. I mean, it was over. Kids all over the Panhandle jumped up and down at the sight of The Spinning Toe Hold on some deserving villain.

Not really knowing how the pro-wrestling industry worked, it was a shock to my young system to be on vacation one summer out west when my family stopped for gas. Inside was a magazine rack. I went to the pro wrestling magazines and couldn't believe what I was seeing on the cover: “DASTARDLY Terry Funk! Funk the Punk!”

Where am I? Get me out of this God-forsaken part of the world.

Funk played some football for West Texas State and Joe Kerbel back in the 1960s. Records say he “attended” WT, and that charitably fit the description of his academic pursuits as his wrestling career was also getting started.

Funk was inducted into the WT Hall of Champions in 1997, a few years before his brother. Funk's support for WT grew stronger over the last 20 years.

Long for bringing Terry back in the fold.

“They became very good friends and Terry told me on several occasions how much Dr. Long's friendship meant to him and how it made him feel part of the University again. He was also a big fan of Coach (Don) Carthel. Terry just wanted WT to thrive. I think he would be very pleased with the course the University is on now.”

No doubt, the many friends of Funk are remembering stories now—nearly all funny and nearly all about the giving nature of this showman and outsized personality.

Terry Funk loved being Terry Funk and people loved him for it, be it in an arena in Tokyo, having an adult beverage with his buddies or even on the phone on a Sunday afternoon with a stranger in an Oshkosh motel.



WT alumna leads volleyball team to **SUCCESS**

BY BRAD NEWMAN

Five years into her role as head volleyball coach, **Kendra Potts '04, '07** is as passionate about being at WT as when she was named to the post. And why shouldn't she be?

In 2022, Potts led WT's volleyball team to win the NCAA Division II National Championship—a first for the sport since 1997. But it's not just her stellar record on the court that makes Potts glad to be a Buff.

It's because WT is home.

"I'm a Panhandle gal through and through," Potts said. "I always knew this place was special."

Potts played volleyball as a student at Amarillo High School and continued her career at WT for four years. Her success in The Box led Potts to be inducted into the WT Hall of Champions in 2014.

**"I'M A PANHANDLE GAL
THROUGH AND THROUGH."**

— Kendra Potts

Potts earned a bachelor's degree in marketing and an MBA from WT. While at WT, Potts met her husband, Jim; the couple now have three children, Ella, Easton and Elizabeth.

Potts was an assistant volleyball coach for the Lady Buffs from 2005-2008, until moving away to Corpus Christi for the next decade.

She spent six seasons as the top assistant volleyball coach and recruiting coordinator at Texas A&M-Corpus Christi under former WT head coach Tony Graystone. Then, starting in 2015, Potts served as the club director and recruiting coordinator for the Corpus Christi Force.

In 2019, though, her alma mater called.

"To be away for 10 years, so much at WT had changed. It was even more impressive," Potts said. "I love what's going on now and the vision that WT has for its future."



Potts was named the 15th head coach in WT volleyball history in December 2018; her first season in The Box was fall 2019.

"From that first year through today, we've had continual improvements in the team," she said. "It's been a steady growth season after season."

Potts's legacy was sealed after the 2022 season. She coached the Lady Buffs to a 33-4 overall record, completing a 26-game winning streak on the way to taking the national championship, WT's first in 25 years.

"I'm still pinching myself about that," she said.

Potts also was named the American Volleyball Coaches Association National Coach of the Year for NCAA Division II for the 2022 season—a well-deserved honor, her colleagues said.

"I've seen Kendra firsthand as a student-athlete, an assistant coach and now our head coach," said Michael McBroom, WT director of intercollegiate athletics. "What makes Kendra special is that she is laser-focused on making sure her players have a positive, meaningful and purpose-driven experience while at WT.

She knows first-hand that the experience players have as a Lady Buff will shape lifelong friendships, ethics and decision-making that makes 'Lady Buff for life' very real and very impactful.

"She's a champion in everything she does. Always has been and always will be."

"Kendra is highly competitive, and that's contagious to the squad," said Casey Shingler, who worked as an assistant coach with Potts from 2019 to 2022. "But she builds relationships with her athletes; she takes the time to understand them as people.

And that's such an important part of the way she coaches."

The national championship garnered the Lady Buffs much attention and enthusiasm, from current students and alumni alike.

"I love the love we have from our alumni," Potts said. "It was so special the way the team brought so many people back together."

I LOVE THAT I GET TO SERVE THIS PROGRAM AND THIS COMMUNITY THAT MEANS SO MUCH TO ME.

— Kendra Potts

That reconnection was due, in large part, to Potts's own career at WT.

"Being a proud alumna of WT, Kendra worked hard to re-engage with the alumni, near and far," said Shingler, who currently is the volleyball associate head coach at the University of Texas at San Antonio.

"She re-connected with the boosters and donors of the past and present, which helped reignite the community and the connection we had with them."

The team entered the 2023 season as national champions, which has brought both momentum and a challenge. WT's volleyball team is now "the target," Potts said.

"But I'm proud of their maturity. They've persevered through this new spotlight that's on them," she said.

Stepping into The Box each day to lead the team is nonstop exhilarating, Potts said. The constant movement of the sport. The chemistry and trust of the athletes. The speedy communication that's required. It's all a rush.

"Every single day is new," she said.

And to coach volleyball at WT makes it just all the more special.

"I'm so thankful for this place," Potts said. "I love that I get to serve this program and this community that means so much to me."

She credits WT's longstanding and strong athletic department for its commitment to excellence.

"All of this is possible because of the foundation that was laid long before I arrived. There is such a rich history and tradition here of grit and belief that we can excel," Potts said. "That's a source of great confidence to me."





WT'S CORNETTE LIBRARY MARKS

50-year anniversary

BY BRAD NEWMAN

Throughout the sprawling ground floor, students unfold laptops at study tables, or sink into cushy chairs to read.

Upstairs, a history class has gathered in a corner reading room, diligently working on a group project.

In quiet nooks, splayed-open book bags, piles of periodicals, and scrawled-in notebooks provide evidence of ongoing research. For 50 years, the James and Mary Elizabeth Cornette Library has anchored West Texas A&M University's campus, a sanctum for studying, learning and exploring for students and community members alike.

The library celebrates its half-century milestone this year. A series of special events, exhibits, and a reception to mark the anniversary are planned.

"An academic library is the heart of a university," said Shawna Kennedy-Witthar, director of information and library resources. "And here, we strive to be that place, where everyone can find what they need and have a place."

As part of the 50th anniversary celebration, a year-long exhibit on the library's first level showcases the evolution of WT's library history.

WT has had a library space since it opened in 1910. The institution's first library, from 1910 to 1914, was in the school's Administration Building, which was destroyed in 1914 by fire.

An academic library is the heart of a university.

— Shawna Kennedy-Witthar, Cornette Library

From 1916 until 1952, the library was housed in Old Main. And for the next 22 years, the library was located adjacent to the Panhandle-Plains Historical Museum. (The building was annexed to the museum in 1986.)

Artifacts from those previous locations are on display in the first-floor exhibit, including original bookcases, archived catalogue materials, and a section of a stained-glass window. The current library opened in 1974—a 88,900-square-foot facility in the center of WT's campus.



The library is named for James and Mary Elizabeth Cornette; James Cornette was WT's third president, serving from 1948 until 1973, a year before the new library opened.

Cornette's 25-year tenure at WT was marked by significant expansion, both in enrollment and, subsequently, in campus construction. The Cornette Library was among one of those additions.

Jim Cornette '55, son of the late James and Mary Elizabeth Cornette, graduated from WT in 1955. He continues to stay connected to the University, and his visits to the campus frequently include a browse through the library which bears his family name.

"WT has maintained the vitality of that library," Dr. Jim Cornette said. "It's still such a viable place for students."

Emanuel and Maritza Muguria, siblings from Amarillo and freshmen at WT, gather to study with other friends in the library almost daily.

"This is the spot we do all our homework," Emanuel said, while studying on the second floor of the library on a recent Thursday afternoon. "It's an environment with all we need and no distractions."

The library currently houses more than 304,000 print book titles and nearly 15,000 print serial titles, primarily journals and newspapers.

One of the library's most prestigious – and yet, lesser-known – features is the Texas Poets' Corner, an impressive collection of rare books, artwork, and furniture on the library's second floor.

"The Texas Poets' Corner is a hidden gem," said Dr. Emily S. Kinsky, the Jenny Lind Porter Professor of Communication in WT's Department of Communication. "It's a treasure trove."

The space was established in 2003 with a \$2.8 million estate gift by the late Dr. Jenny Lind Porter Scott, a former Texas Poet Laureate

and WT assistant professor of English. Among the items on display is the original handwritten manuscript of O. Henry's short story, "A Fog in Santone," a grand piano dating to the 1870s, and a lithograph portrait of William Shakespeare displayed at the World's Fair in 1853.

The library also boasts extensive electronic resources.

"Technology has changed so much," said Kennedy-Witthar, who has served as the library's director since 2010, but first joined the library staff in 1993. "I remember when we got the Internet."

A state-of-the-art digital hub—the recently renamed Marmaduke Internet Innovation Center—occupies the library basement, connecting visitors to near-limitless resources.

To manage the vast collection, the library typically employs 27 full-time staff members, plus student workers.

The library's purpose extends beyond providing materials, though. "When you hear 'library,' you think books," said Kelly Hoppe, the library's head of outreach and instruction. "But the services that the library provides is so much more than that."

From movie nights and poetry slams to cookie decorating and gaming contests, the library offers a variety of events aimed at supporting students throughout the year.

"It's opportunities to be in a safe place and de-stress," Hoppe said. "They can connect with others."

For its 50th anniversary celebration, the library is planning a reception and dance on Feb. 13, themed "I ♥ Cornette Library."

Then, in late March, the Texas Poets' Corner will host a poetry reading and award ceremony for its essay contest winners. The event also will spotlight the library's 50-year history.

"There is more to the library than many people realize," Hoppe said. "There's a place for everyone here."



3101 4th Ave. Canyon, TX 79015
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Alumni Association
WEST TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

WT Alumni Scholars Programs

WT Alumni are our best recruiters!

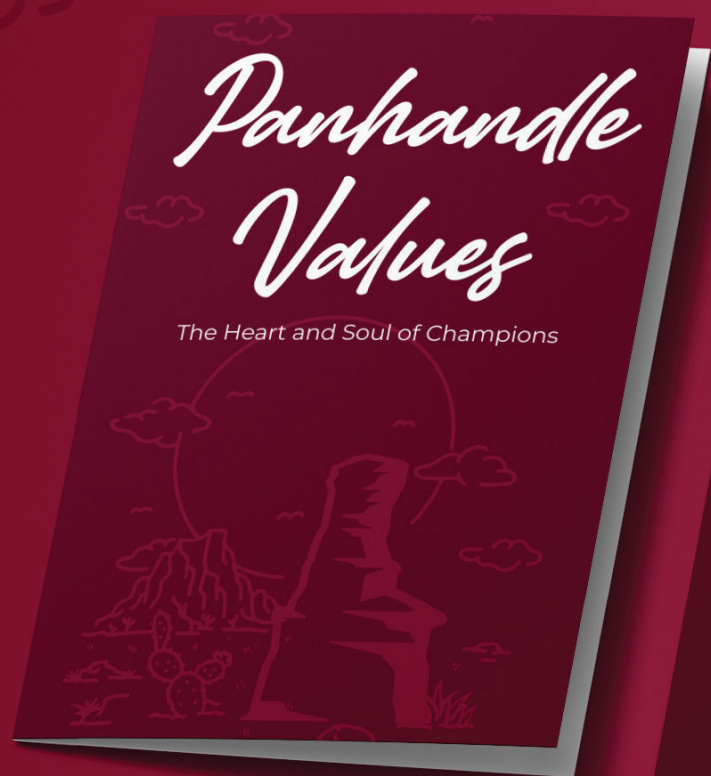
That's why we've empowered you to recommend students for our WT Alumni Scholars program and our WT Alumni Scholars-Graduate School program.

Help make their dreams come true!

Fill out recommendation forms at BuffAlum.com or call us at 806-651-2311. We'll contact these potential students and let them know of your confidence in them.

Help us make our Buffalo herd grow!





Happy Holidays!

SCAN THE QR CODE TO VIEW THE
2023 CHRISTMAS CARD



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:

BAIN ATHLETIC CENTER PHASE II

The center will be expanded by approximately 14,180 square feet in a project that is estimated to cost approximately \$8.98 million. It is projected to be substantially completed by July 2024.

The expansion will provide modern office space for administrators and coaches; academic and meeting room spaces for teams; track & field locker rooms; and support a culture of collaboration and support that are critical to most successful organizations.

GENEVA SCHAEFFER EDUCATION BUILDING RENOVATION

This \$30 million project is funded by the State of Texas Capital Construction Assistance Program and is projected to start construction in January 2024. The building, commonly known as “Old Ed,” is the second oldest building on the campus. Originally, the building was designed as a kindergarten-through-12th-grade school that supported hands-on learning for those seeking education degrees. 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

JOSEPH A. HILL MEMORIAL CHAPEL

Following a donation from the High Plains Christian Ministries Foundation, the chapel is undergoing a \$1.2 million renovation. The project includes update in finishes, mechanical systems and ADA/TAS compliance. It is expected to be finished in May 2024.

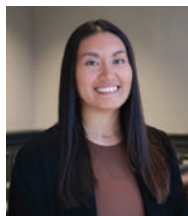
TEXAS A&M AGRI-LIFE FACILITY

In an estimated \$30 million project, a new building on the WT campus will be constructed to house AgriLife Research and AgriLife Extension agencies. The multi-purpose facility will provide office space for faculty and staff, training space to support educational outreach to the greater community, and research lab spaces to support faculty through open lab space and appropriate lab support. The proposed location will consolidate AgriLife Research state agencies in the region to a district on the WT campus.

MARMADUKE INTERNET INNOVATION CENTER

The former Hastings Electronic Learning Center has a new name. The center officially was renamed in September in a reception celebrating WT’s status as a leader in online education since 1997. The space is located in the basement of Cornette Library and named for the iconic entertainment store empire that was headquartered in Amarillo and founded by Sam Marmaduke.

*Faculty and Staff Accomplishments,
continued from pg. 3*



Lizette Calzada recently started as a major gift officer in WT’s Office for Philanthropy and External Relations. Calzada, who previously worked in WT Athletics as assistant athletic director for ticket operations, was raised in Plainview and earned a bachelor’s in business administration from Wayland Baptist University in 2017 followed by a master’s in sports management from Texas Tech in 2020.

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Kyleah Frazier ’22 recently began as the communication and community outreach specialist in the Office of the President. Frazier, previously a reporter for NewsChannel 10, is no stranger to the Panhandle, growing up just down the road in Lubbock. In her position, she will provide the overall organization and administrative support of the communication and community outreach initiative within the President’s Office including projects, social media management, and communication production.



Carlo Vazquez-Hernandez recently began his duties as unit director for SSC at WT.

Vazquez previously served as assistant director for research support and operations at the University of Texas at El Paso. Previously, he was facilities services general manager at the Universidad de Monterrey in Nuevo León, Mexico. Vazquez has served as the plant engineer for ACEREX, a joint venture with Worthington Industries, Inc., and Hylsamex, Mexico’s second- largest

steel manufacturer. Vazquez also has served in various leadership positions at the maintenance and operations departments for several private companies. Vazquez earned his bachelor of science in electronics and automation engineering from the Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León, a master’s degree in business administration from UTEP, and a graduate certificate in quality and innovation in services from UDEM. Additionally, he holds a certified energy manager license from the Association of Energy Engineers. SSC Services for Education is a third-party contract facility services provider for the Texas A&M University System. Since 2013, SSC has provided all maintenance, custodial and grounds work at WT and have assisted with campus construction project management.

Dr. Lisa Garza is associate dean for the Rogers College of Education and Social Sciences, with **Dr. Betty Coneway**, the Geneva Schaeffer Professor of Education and Social Sciences, serving as head of the Department of Education. **Dr. Reed Welch** is head of both the Department of Political Science and Criminal Justice and the Department of Psychology, Sociology and Social Work. **Dr. Angela Phillips**, the Mike Wartes Professor of Nursing and Health Sciences, is serving as interim associate dean for nursing, and **Dr. Colette Loftin**, the Nancy and John Kritser Professor of Nursing, is interim head for the Department of Nursing. **Dr. Mark Bartley**, the Lilith Brainard Professor of Music, now serves as associate dean for the Harrington College of Fine Arts and Humanities. **Dr. David Lust** is the new head of the Department of Agricultural Sciences. **Dr. Jason Yarbrough** is head of both the Department of Life, Earth and Environmental Sciences and the Department of Chemistry and Physics.

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WT earned an honor award in the University and College Grounds—Large (500+ acres) category by the Professional Grounds Management Society's Green Star Awards at its annual conference in Louisville, Kentucky. This awards program brings national recognition to grounds maintained with a high degree of excellence. Duke University in Durham, North Carolina, took the grand award in WT's category. Utah State University also was presented an honor award. WT's **SSC Services for Education** grounds team manages approximately 350 acres on the main campus, including eight synthetic turf fields and a 70-acre cross-country course.

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Dr. Ray Matlack, who joined WT in 2002, recently was appointed the new James A. "Buddy" Davidson Professor of Wildlife Biology in the Department of Life, Earth and Environmental Sciences in WT's Paul Engler College of Agriculture and Natural Sciences. The Davidson professorship was established in 2012 by the James A. "Buddy" Davidson Charitable Foundation as part of WT's Share the Pride campaign. The professorship supports the teaching activities and research of a hands-on faculty members utilizing a variety of environments and outdoor learning experiences. Matlack frequently takes graduate and undergraduate students on camping trips to observe birds, bats and mammals in the wild, including visits to the Texas Gulf Coast, the Rocky Mountains in New Mexico and Colorado, and southeast Arizona.

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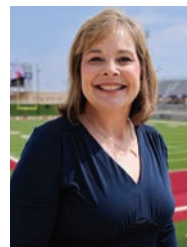


Amanda Lawson '13, '15, formerly assistant director for new student and transfer orientation, recently was named senior director for orientation and academic success. In her new role, Lawson, who has worked at WT since 2010, provides leadership and strategic planning for Orientation Programs, Buff Branding, Start Strong Programs, Family Weekend, Tutoring, Supplemental Instruction, and Testing.



Eleven nurses educated at WT—including current WT Department of Nursing faculty members **Dr. Colette Loftin**, the interim head of WT's Department of Nursing and the Kritser Professor of Nursing, and **Teresa Smoot**, instructor of nursing—were honored among the Panhandle Great 25 Nurses

for 2023. The list was chosen by a committee in collaboration with Texas Nurses Association District 2 and the Panhandle Great 25 Nurses committee. Criteria include leadership qualities, service to the community, compassionate caregiving and significant contributions to the profession of nursing. Also named to this year's list were **Kati Alley '13; Sonja Clark '95, '00; Sahala Gaillard '00; Denise Gouldy '08; Angela Looten '78; Colleen Robinson '81; Kendra Smith '09; Gary Tabor '07; and Kristen Yoder '09.**



Dr. Lorna Strong, assistant professor and head of the Department of Sports and Exercise Science, recently was inducted into the Texas State Athletic Training Association Hall of Honor and received the Eddie Wojcecki Award from the Southwest Athletic Trainers Association. Strong, who joined the WT faculty in 2000 and also serves as the director of the athletic training program, has been instrumental in the progression of WT's Sports and Exercise Sciences department, including the formation of an athletic training major. She also expanded WT's athletic training program to encompass dance students from the Sybil B. Harrington College of Fine Arts and Humanities. Both awards were presented at SWATA's 69th annual Symposium & Billy Pickard Expo in July. Strong previously was named to the SWATA Hall of Fame in 2016. She is one of a handful of double-honorees for the Wojcecki Award, previously winning in 2015.

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Dr. Elizabeth Rogers, assistant professor of counseling in the Terry B. Rogers College of Education and Social Sciences, was presented the 2023 John Shirley Advocacy Award from the Texas Counseling Association at the association's Nov. 1-3 Professional Growth Conference in Houston. The John Shirley Advocacy Award recognizes an individual or community organization for excellence in legislative advocacy efforts. Rogers has served as president of the West Texas Counseling Association and is president-elect of the Texas School Counseling Association. She serves as the TCA's policy liaison to the State Board of Educator Certification.

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Dr. Shawn Fouts is WT's new director of residential living, in addition to continuing as senior director of campus community. Fouts, who previously served as associate director of the Jack B. Kelley Student Center, returned to WT in October 2022 as the senior director of campus community and after having worked at Amarillo College and in private coaching/consulting practice. Returning to WT, Fouts oversaw the JBK, Military and Veteran Services, ThunderVision, and Kids Kollege. Fouts earned a bachelor's in religion in 1994 from MidAmerica Nazarene University and an Ed.D. in higher education administration in 2005 from Texas Tech University.

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Brenda Keith recently was named executive director of the Office of College Access and Academic Enrichment Programs in the Office of Student Affairs. Keith previously served as director of WT's Upward Bound programs and has served in various roles at WT for more than 20 years. Keith earned her bachelor's in organizational management and a master's in organizational leadership from Lubbock Christian University. In her new role, Keith provides leadership in strategic planning and direction for the Upward Bound, Upward Bound Math and Science, College Talent Search, and College Assistance Migrant Program.

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Steven McLean is WT's new director of Sponsored Research Services. McLean, who previously worked at WT for more than a decade in the office, has spent the last two years doing grant proposal administration for the University of Massachusetts Amherst. He is a Certified Research Administrator. SRS supports WT faculty as they seek external funding for research projects, providing guidance in proposal development and submission, and further assistance in project management. McLean earned his bachelor's in speech communication in 1984 and his master's in communication studies in 1986 from Texas Tech University.

Student Chapter Earns National Honor

WT's chapter of the **Society for Human Resource Management** was given a merit award for providing superior growth and development opportunities to its student members. The WT chapter is comprised of students in the Paul and Virginia Engler College of Business.

Oklahoma Historian Wins CSAW Award

"Born of Lakes and Plains: Mixed-Descent Peoples and the Making of the American West," the latest from historian and University of Oklahoma professor Dr. Anne F. Hyde is the **2023 Outstanding Western Book** from WT's Center for the Study of the American West. Hyde, a Pulitzer Prize finalist, explores generations of intermarriage between whites and Indigenous populations and how and why those relationships were celebrated, then hidden. Hyde will give a reading and accept her award at a Jan. 23 event in the Hazlewood Lecture Hall in Panhandle- Plains Historical Museum. CSAW has given the Bonney McDonald Outstanding Western Book Award annually since 2019.

WT Wins \$6 Million in State Funding for Food Science

As part of a record \$1.19 billion in new spending approved by Gov. Greg Abbott for The Texas A&M University System, WT will receive \$6 million to continue establishing the **Center for Advancing Food Animal Production in the Panhandle**—\$3 million per year over the next two years. CAFAP enables WT students to specialize in animal health, animal care, animal nutrition and pre- and post-harvest food science/food safety. The annual economic impact of beef and dairy cattle in the Texas Panhandle exceeds \$20 billion. With the gift, WT is cementing itself as the primary resource for ensuring the resiliency of the global food supply chain, thanks to recently announced state funding.

Horse Judging Team Wins Nationals

WT's horse judging team won the National Reining Championship and took third in the American Quarter Horse Association World Championships in contests held in November. The five-member team came out on top of 13 teams in reining, outranking such competitors as Texas A&M University, Middle Tennessee State University and the University of Arkansas. WT students took four of the top five rankings in individual placings. The team also took third overall at the AQHA championship in tight competition with Texas A&M, Oklahoma State University and others. In addition to the third-place overall team showing, the team also placed third in each of the separate categories—halter, performance and reasons.

'50s



Since 2006, **Tommie Thornburg '57, '63** has been a favorite in the WT Homecoming parade, highlighting the WT Buffs' football

championship teams from the Sun Bowl in 1950 and the Tangerine Bowl in 1956. Tommie has brought smiles and Buffalo pride to thousands of fans.

'70s

Claudia Stuart '72, '85 was named the 2023 Girl Scouts Woman of Distinction. Claudia has served on various boards and commissions and consults social service and law enforcement agencies, and is active in her church and WT. She has spoken at Oxford University in England, is a WT Professor Emeritus of Criminal Justice and Sociology, and was named as a 2021 WT Distinguished Alumni. Claudia and her husband, Harold '72, live in Amarillo.



Linda Calhoun '78 has been the mayor of Red River, New Mexico, for 18 years. She moved to Red River two weeks after her WT graduation and has

been living there since. Linda stays involved in the community and is the president of the New Mexico Municipal League, was appointed to Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham's transition team, and was the Chamber of Commerce Red River Business Woman of the Year. She was nominated for 2018 American Mother of the Year, and she had the privilege of being invited to attend the Women Mayors of America conference at the White House in 2018 and the Women Municipal Leaders conference at the White House in 2019.

Wayne MaGouirk '79 is the founder of Savior's Tear, a non-profit organization in Managua, Nicaragua. The ministry is dedicated to aid and assist in the formation of schools, orphanages and other types of physical, spiritual, and humanitarian aid for the underprivileged. He works with Oasis de Esperanza students who live in and near a dump ground, providing them with an education that could lead them to college while providing food for them and their families. The school has grown from 80 students to 350 students in 18 years. Wayne lives in Canyon but is still involved and travels to Managua often. Wayne has worked with five WT Study Abroad groups, bringing them to the school and helping WT students studying Spanish with real-time language education and multi-cultural experiences.

class

WHERE THE BU

'80s



Chris Black '81 is organizing a Herdsman reunion. Chris was one of the WT Herdsmen's founders and was elected as the first president in 1977. He, along with two

others, found a donor for the University's first live mascot in decades, a yearling buffalo named Lollipop. Chris is married to Barbara '81, and they live in Amarillo. Former Herdsmen can contact the Alumni Association to connect with Chris about the reunion.

Shelly Lanners '88, '94 recently retired from the city of Mansfield where she served 25 years as a public servant, ending her career as deputy city manager. Mansfield was named by Money Magazine as one of the Top 40 best cities to live in in the U.S. City officials recently named the Shelly D. Lanners Administrative Offices after her in respect for her long career.



Dr. Keri Rogers Mize '88, '90 recently retired after 34 years working in higher education administration in student affairs and academic affairs at WT, the

University of North Texas, Sam Houston State University, and Lone Star College System. She completed 13 years of service as a board member and officer of Education Reach for Texans and was awarded the Dr. Kathleen Christensen Award for "unending support and guidance that empowered students with experience in foster care to enroll and graduate from institutions of higher education." She also completed seven years of board service with CASA of Walker, San Jacinto and Trinity Counties where she served as vice president, president, and past president. She now serves as a consultant and has opened her artisan market, etcetera by Keri.

notes

JFFALO ROOM

'90s



Sonja Clark '95, '00 recently was elected to the WTAMU Foundation Board of Directors. Clark is Amarillo site leader at Bell's Amarillo Assembly and Delivery Center and has been with the company for 17 years, serving in multiple leadership roles throughout the organization. Prior to joining Bell, Clark was an administrative director for Northwest Texas Healthcare System, a part of Universal Health Services. Clark also is active in the Amarillo community and serves with various organizations.

Dirk Fowler '92 teaches graphic design at Texas Tech University and is an active member and supporter of the Lubbock arts community. Dirk is known primarily for his hand-printed letterpress concert posters for clients like Willie Nelson and Loretta Lynn, and he has been highlighted in numerous art and design books like *The Art of Modern Rock* and *New Masters of Poster Design*. His work is known globally, including recent poster biennials in China and Bolivia.

Wayne Freeman '94 is a foundational architect for Canyon Rim Consulting, which does business computer systems and cybersecurity. He and his wife, Kayla, are very active with WT. They attend many of the WT events, both in Athletics and Fine Arts. Both their son Jordan '15 and daughter-in-law Channing '15 have Master of Fine Arts degrees from WT.

'00s

Larry Hutton '00 was recognized as one of America's Top Real Estate Professionals for 2022. While at WT, Larry was involved with KWTS and was named WT's Man of the Year. He is the vice president and managing broker for LIV Sotheby's International Realty in Breckenridge, Colorado. Larry has a record of sales for several Fortune 500 companies, and he formerly served as a successful skier services manager at Keystone Resort.



Cassie Daniel Howell '08 has always been passionate about public service. She was the first WT student to be appointed to serve as Student Regent to the Texas A&M University System. She is now the chief of staff for Texas Rep. Candy Noble and was honored as one of the 40 Under 40 in her field.

'10s



Joel Enriquez '10 has been awarded the Texas Bankers Foundation Emerging Leader and Independent Community Bankers of America 40 Under 40.

Joel is one of eight bankers across Texas selected for Emerging Leader award. He currently serves as a planning and zoning commissioner for the City of Canyon, is a member of the Canyon Lions Club, and was chairman for the Kylie Hiner Memorial Playground. Joel was named the 2021 Canyon Man of the Year by the Canyon Chamber of Commerce. His wife, Lauren '07, is a school counselor for Reeves-Hinger Elementary School, and they live in Canyon with their three boys.

Joseph Peterson '10 was recognized as Amarillo's Black Man of the Year for 2023-24. He plays an active role in Amarillo by volunteering with local nonprofits and serving throughout the community, such as the board of directors at Cal Farley's Boys Ranch, the Amarillo Firemen's Relief and Retirement Fund and the North Heights Advisory Association. In 2019, he received the Volunteer of the Year award from the Amarillo Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. Joseph is married to Angela '11, and they have two children.



Natalia Molina Weatherly '17 earned her Real Estate license in August 2020 and in September 2021 received her GRI designation. In 2023, she was in the Top 3

for Best Real Estate Agent in Amarillo. She was also chosen to be one of Dillard's influencers. She recently married Ryan Weatherly, and she is active in the Canyon-Amarillo WT Alumni Chapter, helping to revitalize the group.

The following WT Alumni were named to the 2023 Amarillo Chamber of Commerce Top 20 Under 40 Young Professional Award: **Ashley Ashley '09, Emma Eickhoff '16, Ryan Francis '18, Brock Hall '06, Leah Housler-Thornton '06, Matthew Loftin '09, Kayla Mendez '18, Kiersten Newton '18, '21, and Megan Rowland '16.** This award is given to outstanding young professionals in the Amarillo area.

'20s



Vanessa Hayes Schutt '22 earned business and finance degrees and returned to her home country of Bolivia, where she is now a Bolivian model and beauty queen. Vanessa

won the title Miss International Bolivia 2023, then placed fourth runner-up at Miss International in Oct. 2023 in Tokyo.

First United Bank Field

WT Athletics and First United Bank announced a field naming rights agreement at the University's on-campus football stadium. Under the terms of the agreement, all events at Bain-Schaeffer Buffalo Stadium over the next 10 years will be played on **First United Field.**

Soil Judging Team Heading Back to Nationals

For a second consecutive year, WT's **soil judging team** has qualified for nationals. The WT team placed second in the Region IV Collegiate Soil Judging competition in October, outranking No. 3 Texas A&M University and just behind the winner, the University of Arkansas. The WT team also placed second in the team pit competition, where the team works together to characterize a soil pit. The team will compete in nationals in April in Ames, Iowa. WT's first trip to nationals took place in April. The team was formed in 2020.

Intern of the Year Announced

Kylee Henneberry, a junior agricultural business and economics major from Slinger, Wisconsin, was selected from a field of 13 nominees across the University as the Intern of the Year for 2023. Henneberry worked as a government affairs intern for CHS Inc., a Fortune 100 company owned by farmers, ranchers and co-ops from across the country. As Intern of the Year, Henneberry will receive a \$1,000 scholarship and will be submitted for the national Cooperative Education & Internship Association Academic Intern of the Year award. Intern of the Year applications are reviewed by a selection committee comprised of faculty and staff representing all six Colleges.

Prominent Donors Recognized

WT President Emeritus **Russell C. Long and wife Natrelle Hedrick Long** and the **Mary E. Bivins Foundation** were presented the Pinnacle Award during WT's Celebration of Donors, held in September. Additionally, **Lilia Escajeda**, a longtime WT supporter and community leader, was named the recipient of the President's Panhandle Pioneer Award by WT President Walter V. Wendler. The Longs made a \$2.1 million planned gift in December to establish a new companion animal science program for students planning on a career in veterinary medicine or in a host of other pet-related careers. The Bivins Foundation's legacy of giving to WT dates back to 1994, with the establishment of the Mary E. Bivins Memorial Scholarship for nursing students—reflecting the foundation's long-time support of healthcare in the Panhandle. Escajeda was lauded decades of work with Amarillo National Bank, for her tireless devotion to the Amarillo community and for her significant volunteer contributions to WT.

ONCE A BUFF *Always a Buff*

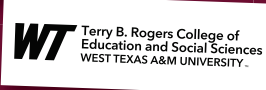
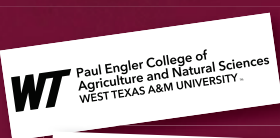
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