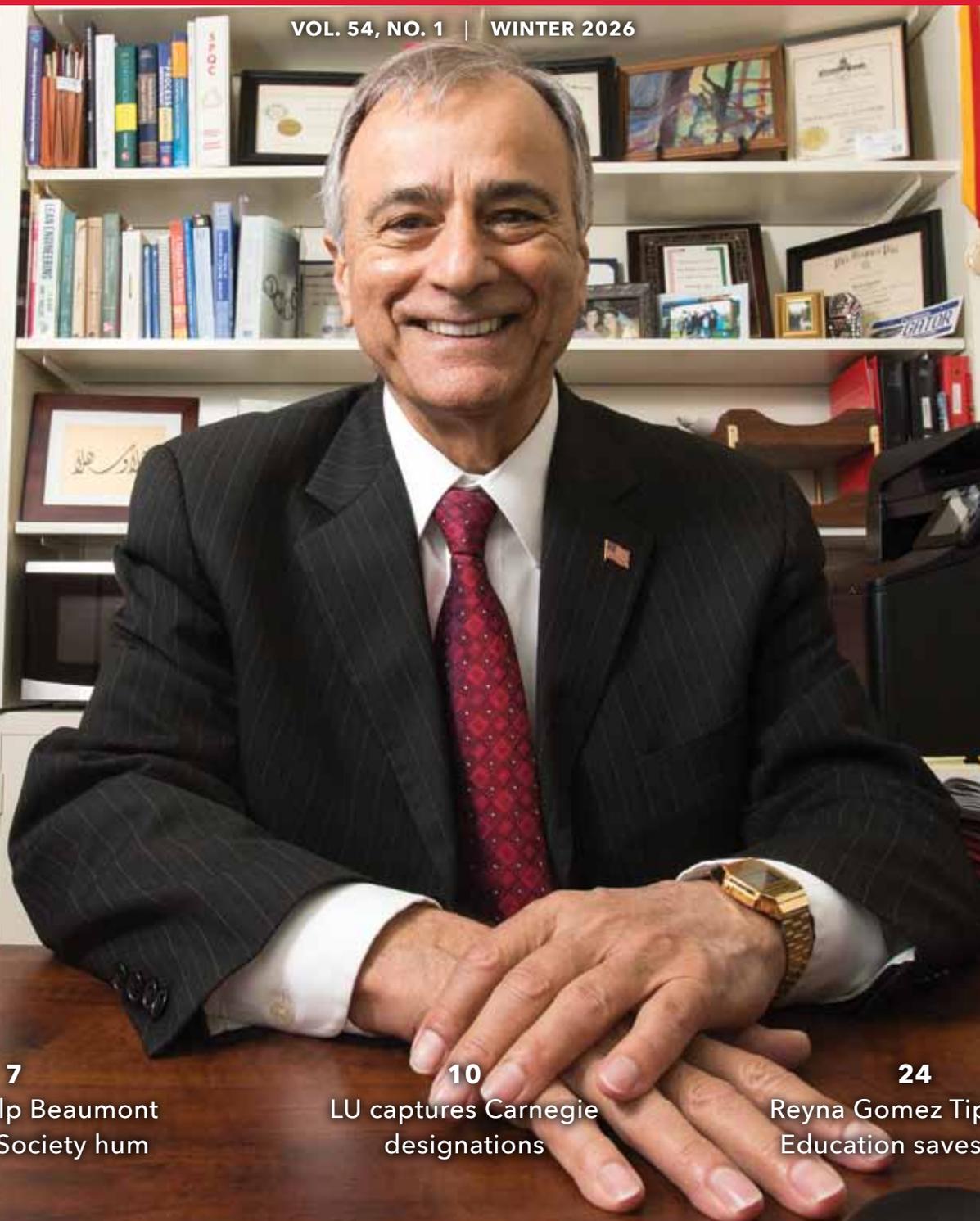


CARDINAL CADENCE

THE MAGAZINE OF LAMAR UNIVERSITY

VOL. 54, NO. 1 | WINTER 2026



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Alumni help Beaumont
Heritage Society hum

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Reyna Gomez Tippetts:
Education saves a life

| FROM THE **PRESIDENT** |



Juan Zabala, Vic Zaloom and Jaime Taylor

In engineering, we know that the most impressive structures are defined not by how high they reach, but by the integrity of their foundations. At Lamar University, our current upward growth is only possible because of the visionaries who spent decades reinforcing our core.

In this issue of *Cadence*, we are proud to feature a cover story on one such visionary: Dr. Victor A. Zaloom. In recognition of his incredible generosity, we have officially renamed the department he helped build the Dr. Victor A. Zaloom Department of Industrial and Systems Engineering.

For over four decades, Vic has been an architect of this institution. Whether serving as department chair for 30 years or in several roles in upper administration, he didn't just keep the lights on—he made significant, lasting improvements to everything he touched. He engineered programs for growth and transformed a small department into a national powerhouse. Through his leadership, he ensured that a Lamar University degree remains a powerful engine for social mobility and changed the life trajectories of thousands of our graduates.

What I find most inspiring is that Vic's commitment didn't stop with his teaching or his leadership. As the most generous faculty member and retiree in university history, he has shown that those who know LU best are the ones who believe most deeply in its future. By naming the department in his honor, we are making sure his standard of excellence stays at the heart of our work for generations to come.

This same spirit of internal strength is also being recognized in other facets of the university. I am very proud to tell you that Lamar University has been named a 2025 Great College to Work For by *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. We earned top honors in categories that reflect our core values: Confidence in Senior Leadership; Professional Development; and Inclusion, Belonging & Community. This recognition means so much because it is driven by our own faculty and staff. It confirms that when our foundation is healthy and our people feel valued, our students are the ones who truly win.

Lamar University is in elite company, and we are just getting started. I invite you to read our cover story on Dr. Zaloom's incredible legacy and join me in celebrating the people who make this university a place where we all truly belong.

With Cardinal Pride,


Jaime R. Taylor, President



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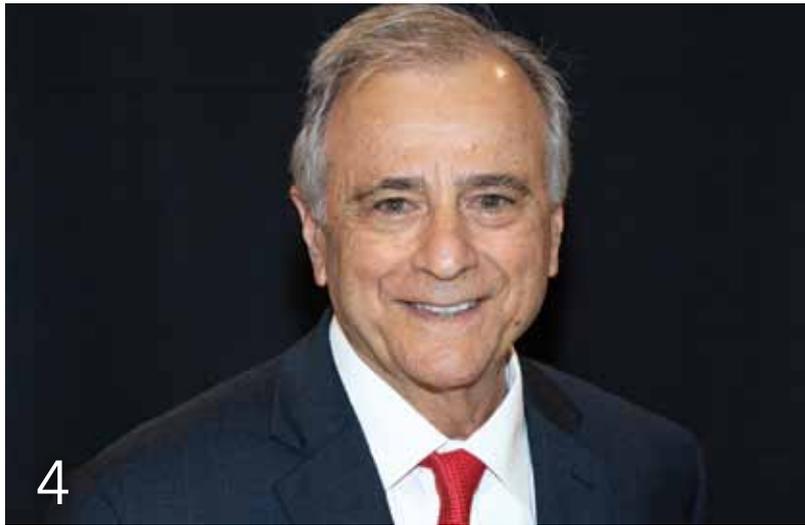


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Photo courtesy of **Kristen Baker '24**

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President Jaime Taylor, left, with Vic Zaloom

A lasting Legacy

by SARAH PARKER

For the past 44 years, Victor Zaloom has been a pivotal force in Lamar University's College of Engineering, pouring his time, talents, treasure, heart and soul into every facet of his work. He has served in every administrative role in the college and helped shape the minds and futures of scores of students and faculty members who have gone on to achieve extraordinary success around the country and world. His latest service to LU is his membership in the Spindletop Society, counting him among the most generous philanthropic supporters of the College of Engineering and of Lamar University.

With his robust engineering background—a Ph.D. in industrial and systems engineering from the University of Houston and master's and bachelor's degrees in industrial engineering from the University of Florida—alongside a lengthy career in higher education, one might assume Zaloom was a budding engineer or academic from a young age. However, Zaloom's childhood career dreams drifted in a surprisingly different direction.

"If I could have been anything I wanted to be, I would have been a pitcher for the Brooklyn Dodgers," Zaloom said. "For most of my early life, I was only interested in sports, and I was not a good student at all. Then about junior year in high school, I started to realize I'm not going to be able to make a living in sports, and I started getting interested in studying. Math was my main thing."

After earning his bachelor's and master's degrees, Zaloom initially started out working as an engineer for a company that is now Lockheed in Fort Worth, Texas. While there, fate

threw him a curve ball that changed everything.

"I was a happy engineer, just doing my job," Zaloom said, "I got a call out of the blue from Texas Christian University in Fort Worth, and they asked me if I would teach a night class. My first reaction was, 'I've never taught a course in my life. Why are you calling me?' I talked to the guy a bit more and more or less got convinced [teaching] might be something interesting. A couple of weeks in, I thought this is really something I want to do."

Realizing his true passion was for teaching, particularly at the university level, Zaloom set out to gain the education and skills necessary to pursue a career in higher education, earning his Ph.D. and landing his first job as assistant professor at Auburn University. He was later promoted to associate professor.

From Auburn, Zaloom took a position as professor and chair of the Industrial Engineering Department at North Carolina A&T State University (UCA&T), a historically black university (HBU). Under his leadership, NCA&T's industrial engineering program became the first at an HBU to be professionally accredited by the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (now ABET)—his primary goal during his three-year tenure there and one of the "capstones" of his career.

After that landmark achievement at NCA&T, Zaloom began looking at options for his next move and became a finalist for positions at both Lamar University and the University of Arizona.

"I decided to come [to Lamar] because it was a very welcoming environment. The students had signs, 'Welcome Dr. Zaloom,' when I came for an interview. Lamar's

"I would encourage anyone about philanthropy, giving back, whatever the cause that you're passionate about. Lamar is certainly one of the causes I'm passionate about."



engineering department had a good reputation locally, and that impressed me. Coming here was definitely one of the best decisions I've ever made."

Zaloom arrived at Lamar in 1981 as professor and chair of the Department of Industrial Engineering and director of engineering graduate programs, serving in his role as chair for

more than 30 years. In 1995, he established the Lamar University Center for Ports and Waterways as a division of the Texas Transportation Institute and served as its director until 2011. He has held a number of other key administrative roles at Lamar, including both associate dean and interim dean of the College of Engineering for multiple years and interim dean of the College of Graduate Studies for three years.

"Department chair was my favorite job. Most department chairs will burn out pretty quickly, but it was an ideal job for me when I was younger. I liked the combination of teaching and administrative works."

During his three decades serving as chair, Zaloom saw the Industrial Engineering Department grow into a powerhouse with student enrollment increasing by 300% and the number of faculty increasing by 100%.

"When I hired faculty, I wanted the department to be broad-based so that students who graduated could go into any industry and be successful. I think it's helped our undergraduate students. When they go out, they have a broad perspective. We have graduates from our Bachelor of Science in Industrial Engineering Program that are lawyers, judges, medical doctors and heads of Fortune 500 corporations. We've had a lot of very successful graduates in a very broad spectrum of fields. The thing that gives me positive vibes is the feedback of seeing my effect or my influence on someone that improved their lives. I always thought, if this person didn't come here and get an engineering degree or other degree, if they had gone to work, they would probably be flipping hamburgers at McDonald's. Now I've seen students go from that [to] making six-figure incomes, becoming very successful in their career even up to the point of being a CEO. That's the rewarding part . . . that you have a small part in that transition. It could be undergraduate students, but it also could be graduate students [or] faculty."

Juan Zabala, vice president for university advancement and chief executive officer of the Lamar University Foundation, says the University is lucky to have a long history of faculty and staff

who support students in "remarkable" ways, and Zaloom is the "very definition of that commitment."

"Generations of students have put their academic and professional goals in [Zaloom's] hands and have been rewarded with unparalleled academic and experiential expertise," Zabala said. "For more than four decades, he has put LU students at the

forefront of his professional and personal lives. The College of Engineering has become a powerhouse in the industry due in large part to his vision and dedicated efforts."

While maintaining continuous accreditation for the Bachelor of Science in Industrial Engineering Program as department chair, Zaloom also made great strides in expanding graduate programs to provide more opportunities for students and faculty to advance their skills. Before he had even accepted the position as chair, Zaloom secured an agreement from University administration to support an additional graduate program in engineering management that has since grown to become one of the largest in the College of Engineering.

"When I came here, we were very small, but by having faculty in each subdiscipline of industrial engineering, we were able to mentor students at the undergraduate level to give them a very broad-based engineering education. To stay current in the fast-changing engineering environment in industry, you have to be on the cutting edge. And that's where the graduate program comes in. The students and the faculty must work together to make sure they're dealing with the latest technologies."

In addition to his efforts to enhance the quality of education offered to industrial and systems engineering students, Zaloom has been a champion of fundraising efforts to build scholarships within the department, both professionally and through generous personal support. Zaloom has been instrumental in increasing scholarship offerings in the Industrial and Systems Engineering Department from \$0 when he started at Lamar in 1981 to more than \$1.6 million today, and he has personally been responsible for three endowed scholarships at Lamar—two in the Industrial and Systems Engineering Department and one in the College of Business.

In recognition of his unparalleled service and commitment to the University and his most recent gift establishing a significant endowment, the department will be renamed in his honor to the Dr. Victor A. Zaloom Department of Industrial and Systems Engineering, cementing a legacy that will endure for generations to come.

Zabala said, "Very few people have the level of impact that Vic has achieved in their lifetimes. Vic put LU at the top of his philanthropic support, becoming the University's most generous faculty member and most generous retiree."

"It's been a long, long career, and I feel so lucky [that] my health is good, and I'm able to still be here and to be contributing," Zaloom said. "I would encourage anyone about philanthropy, giving back, whatever the cause that you're passionate about. Lamar is certainly one of the causes I'm passionate about."



LEARNING FROM HISTORY:

Alumni bring past to life

by MARILYN TENNISSEN



Like many kids in grammar school, Matt Fischer '11, '14, wasn't all that interested in history class. But now the Lamar University graduate has found himself participating in a local group dedicated to preserving and promoting the rich history of Beaumont. He is among several Lamar alums from a variety of educational backgrounds who have recently served on the board of directors of the Beaumont Heritage Society or are currently on staff.

"When I was in grade school, I didn't care about history very much," Fischer, a realtor, said. "But now as an adult, I'm humbled by my life's experiences, and now I find other people's stories fascinating."

The Beaumont Heritage Society is a non-profit organized to educate and engage the community through preservation of Beaumont's history and heritage. The group acquired the John J. French House, the home of a prosperous Texas pioneer family, and the Chambers House, a 1907 home from Beaumont's oil and timber heyday. Both are fully restored historical house museums.

Fischer joined the BHS board when friend Pat Griffin was serving as treasurer for the society and invited Fischer to one of the group's events.

"I enjoyed the historical events and the happy hours. And it's great networking," he said. "But I have fallen in love with history and I love Beaumont, so when a vacancy opened up on the board I was asked to join. And it's been one of the best decisions I've made."

Fischer, a successful realtor by trade with multiple business degrees, said he loves to imagine the struggles that people went through and how much life has changed.

"My mom's parents were immigrants. They came here at 21 years old. Can you imagine? Moving to a totally new country. It's fascinating to see the strength and perseverance it took then," he said.

Sandra Ford Castille, a 1977 bachelor of science graduate of Lamar, is another board member drawn to the heritage society and the stories of Beaumont's early residents.

In about 2023, the retired school counselor attended a program about the black service industry and the domestic help who worked for the Chambers family. She continued to go to events, soon struck up a friendship with executive director Shelby Brannan and was asked to join the board.

"I love the energy of the young people," she said. "They have different viewpoints. And I'm happy to be able to bring an African-American viewpoint to the board."

Like Fischer, Castille says history is not just about dates, it's about stories of real people.

"We can learn so much from the past," she said.

She said BHS events like last fall's program on the life of formerly enslaved woman Agatha Babino do so much to bring history to life.

"At the cemetery you see a date of birth, a dash and a date of death. It's not the dates that matter, it's the stories that are in that dash. That's what history is about."

One board member whose love of history has a family connection is

Kate Hambright.

A 1984 graduate of finance, Hambright is a descendant of Lt. Col. Frederick Hambright, who served during the Revolutionary War.

"I have an uncle and a second cousin who were both avid genealogists, each providing a wealth of valuable information on multiple branches of my family, back to the 1700s and in some cases even earlier," she said.

Her dad's service in the U.S. Navy in World War II prompted an interest in military history.

"In fact, he loved to group our family around the television set to watch such stirring films as *Tora! Tora! Tora!* and *The Bridge on the River Kwai!*"

Hambright began doing her own research and uncovered a relative who fought in the Mexican-American War and helped establish the city of Waco.

"From there the next logical step was to join the Hill County Historical Commission before later turning my sights closer to home where I joined the Jefferson County Historical Commission in 2018," she said.

Hambright is a board member of the Beaumont Heritage Society, president of the Tyrrell Historical Library Association and treasurer of the Big Thicket Association.

"There is nothing more fascinating than the study of history, and of data collection; there is also nothing more rewarding than the preservation of our historical assets, through which we gain a deeper connection with our heritage and a better understanding of ourselves moving forward."

As for the team that runs the day-to-day

at the BHS, there's a flock of Cardinals there too.

Brintney Van Houton, site development manager, had nothing but praise for her university experience, especially the History Department. "They molded me into the historian I am today and I do not know where I would be without their support."

Van Houton was battling stage 4 melanoma while she was finishing her degree. Instructors and mentors, including Jeff Forett, Miguel Chavez, Jimmy Bryan, Mark Mengerink and Rebecca Boone, made sure Van Houton made it to graduation.

"When I graduated, I was the student speaker at commencement, and I laid my heart out in front of my fellow graduates," she said.

After her speech, Van Houton was overwhelmed with a standing ovation.

"Dr. Rebecca Boone prayed with me, encouraged me, spoke life into my abilities as the first woman in my family to graduate college, and ensured that I made

it to the finish line."

Museum educator Karli Stansbury graduated from Lamar with a bachelor's degree in history and minor in anthropology in 2018.

The history bug bit Stansbury in middle school when she took an elective course in living history.

From there she started volunteering to teach the summer camps at the John Jay French Museum.

"When I started at Lamar, I wasn't sure a history degree would even be feasible, so I actually began pursuing a degree in biology, she said.

One professor in particular that made an impact was Joshua Howard, who taught public history.

"His course showed me how as historians we can help others connect to history through our own experiences. After I graduated, I eventually landed a job at the same museum that helped inspire my love of history."

Shelby Brannan came to a career in the history field in what she says was a

"non-traditional" way having first earned a degree in theater and dance.

From contacts and friends at the local community theater group, Brannan started as a docent at the John Jay French House Museum in 2016.

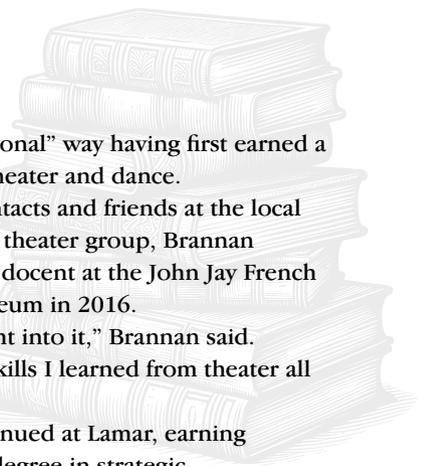
"I fell right into it," Brannan said. "I use the skills I learned from theater all the time!"

She continued at Lamar, earning a master's degree in strategic communication, and is currently working on a master's in business administration.

At BHS, Brannan said she loves "untold stories" in history.

"There's so much we don't get in the classroom, the museum helps us learn about other viewpoints," she said.

Brannan said historical preservation of old homes is always a challenge. But she said the society tries to stay "community centric" and has listened to the public's input into planning activities, which lead to the very successful Downtown Walking Tours last fall.



Shelby Brannan '18, executive director of BHS, and board members Matt Fischer '11, '14, Kate Hambricht '84, JoAnna Truncali '11, Carol Rienstra '10, Gordon Williams '98 and Sandra Castille '77. Not pictured: Karli Stansbury '18, BHS education director; Brintney Van Houton '19, site development coordinator; Emma Wood '23, docent for John J. French Museum, and Abi Hughes '25, part-time docent for Chambers House Museum.

Two Carnegie designations add *feathers* to LU's cap

LU is one of only 27 institutions nationwide to receive both



President Jaime Taylor, left, with Brett Welch, provost and vice president for academic affairs, and Gene Theodori, associate provost for academic and research administration, at the podium

by SHERRI SMITH AND APRIL THOMPSON

Lamar University has earned the prestigious Research 2 (R2) designation, a classification for institutions with high research activity, as recognized by the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education.

For the first time in history, the designation places LU among an elite group of universities.

To qualify for R2 status, universities must award at least 20 research doctorates and spend at least \$5 million on research and development in a given year.

Lamar exceeded both benchmarks, reporting \$8.2 million in research expenditures in 2024 and awarding 64 research doctorates in the previous fiscal year.

President Jaime Taylor called the achievement a testament to the University's commitment to expanding its research

capabilities. "Achieving R2 classification is a direct result of our work to increase externally funded research," Taylor said. "This has been a priority since I became president, and this recognition affirms that effort."

Taylor credited state and institutional support for making the milestone possible.

"I want to thank the Texas State Legislature for their strong financial support during the last two legislative sessions, the Texas State University System, and our alumni and supporters who believe so strongly in Lamar's potential," he said. "R2 status isn't just a pat on the back for what we've done—it opens up huge opportunities for the future. This designation allows us to invest in research infrastructure, attract talented faculty, and provide students with hands-on research experiences that will prepare them for their careers."

Lamar has significantly increased its research activity in recent years, growing expenditures by 93.7% and managing \$19 million in active research funding from a range of partners.

“Our funders span federal agencies such as the Department of Energy, the National Science Foundation and the Environmental Protection Agency; state agencies like the Texas General Land Office and the Texas Department of Transportation; and private foundations such as the Gates Foundation and the Welch Foundation,” Gene Theodori, associate provost for academic and research administration, said.

Theodori said the R2 classification highlights Lamar’s expanding research footprint. “This designation reflects Lamar’s rising reputation for research excellence,” he said. “The basic and applied research conducted by our faculty and students not only advances scientific knowledge but also contributes to real-world solutions.”

The R2 classification is expected to strengthen Lamar’s impact in key fields such as port management, midstream operations and community resiliency. Brett Welch, provost and vice president for academic affairs, said the designation will create new opportunities for both students and faculty.

“This goes beyond acknowledging our research activity,” Welch said. “It’s a testament to the results we’ve achieved in expanding externally funded research. It opens new pathways for faculty research while also broadening students’ learning and internship experiences.”

Lamar University’s research partnerships will also expand. The University currently collaborates with institutions such as Texas A&M University, the University of Texas at Arlington and the University of Houston, as well as major industry leaders like AMD, Texas Instruments and BASF.

With its new classification, leaders say the University is well-positioned for continued growth, enhancing its role as a research hub while ensuring students gain real-world experience.

OPPORTUNITY COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY DISTINCTION

Lamar University received a second national recognition in the 2025 Carnegie Classifications, earning the newly introduced Opportunity College & University (OCU) designation.

The Carnegie Classifications, announced April 24 by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and the American Council on Education (ACE), represent a fundamental shift in how U.S. colleges and universities are understood. Moving beyond traditional metrics, this revised framework prioritizes student success, economic mobility and institutional mission as key indicators of impact.

Timothy Knowles, president of the Carnegie Foundation, highlighted the University’s unique standing in a release. “Lamar University is one of just 27 remarkable institutions nationwide that earned both R2 and OCU designations,” he said. “Lamar University is rare in so clearly advancing both opportunity and innovation.”

“This dual recognition, especially our classification as an OCU truly reflects our faculty and staff’s outstanding work,” President

Jaime Taylor said. “It speaks to our commitment to both equal opportunity and academic excellence for all our students. That’s how we ensure that a Lamar education delivers lasting value.

The new OCU designation identifies institutions that are radically expanding access to success for historically underserved student populations while also boosting their graduates’ earning power. Lamar University excels in this regard by strategically serving local and regional communities, particularly low-income and first-generation students, and shaping strong career trajectories for its graduates.

“This new approach recognizes that there’s no one-size-fits-all in higher education,” Katrina Brent, vice president for enrollment management and marketing, said. “It highlights Lamar University’s unique strengths, where access, student success and workforce impact are central to our mission.”

Brent added that commitment is reflected in the University’s approach to meeting students where they are. “We’re intentional about creating pathways that support not only degree completion but also meaningful, long-term outcomes. It’s encouraging to see a national framework that reflects the depth and complexity of what Lamar University is doing every day,” she said.

Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs Brett Welch said the effort reflects the real-world needs of students.

“A college education represents a significant financial, time and personal commitment,” Welch said. “Our recent Carnegie Classification as an OCU affirms that we’re preparing graduates not only to succeed but to earn a return on their investment.”

The University’s R2 designation underscores its growing capacity for applied research. This is especially significant for an institution equally dedicated to broad access and opportunity. Lamar University is positioned to drive technological advancements and generate new knowledge that directly enhances regional prosperity in Southeast Texas. By providing invaluable experiential learning and clear career pathways, LU significantly advances the economic mobility of its diverse graduates.

“We are incredibly proud to be recognized as a national leader in both research advancement and in creating pathways to success for the diverse communities we serve in Southeast Texas and beyond,” Taylor said.

“Lamar University is one of just 27 remarkable institutions nationwide that earned both R2 and OCU designations. Lamar University is rare in so clearly advancing both opportunity and innovation.”

—TIMOTHY KNOWLES, *president of the Carnegie Foundation*

A new tradition

Inaugural ring ceremony

by APRIL THOMPSON



James Lucia and Kerry Jones

The road to LU's inaugural ring ceremony began in June 2024 when Emily Robinson '22, then assistant director of service and leadership, met with the University's official ring partner, Balfour. LU had averaged about eight ring sales a year, so Robinson set a modest goal: if she could get at least 10 students to attend, the ceremony would be considered a success.

To her surprise and delight, the turnout for Lamar's first-ever ring ceremony was remarkable, with 81 students committing to the event, signaling the beginning of a new tradition. The ceremony, held last March in the Neches Federal Credit Union Arena at the Montagne Center, drew 330 guests—family members, friends and faculty—who came together to celebrate the students' achievements and the new tradition being forged.

Robinson reflected on the year-long process of creating the ceremony. "We wanted to make sure the ceremony felt like a true celebration—something students could look back on with pride." The goal was clear: to create an event where students could celebrate their achievements not only with their families but with the entire Lamar community. "Behind every achievement is a foundation—your families, your friends and your perseverance," President Jaime Taylor said as he recognized the families and guests in attendance. "Today is a celebration of not just your academic accomplishments but of all the people who helped you get here."

Freddie Titus '83, '86, vice president of student affairs and strategic initiatives, also spoke about the significance of the class rings. "This ring represents your resilience, your journey and your connection to the LU community," Titus said. "It's a bond that spans generations of Cardinals." He explained the tradition of wearing the ring on the right hand with the LU logo facing inward, toward the heart, until graduation. Afterward, students turn the ring outward, a symbol of their readiness to face the world. "Wherever life takes you, you will always have a community and a home here," Titus added.

Campbell Fuller, vice president of the Student Government Association, also addressed the attendees, reflecting on the meaning of the ceremony. "This ceremony celebrates your hard work and the spirit that makes you a Cardinal," Fuller said. He also spoke about the football bell, a symbol of Lamar University's athletic history. "The bell first appeared in 1967 and returned



Colt Ryan '21; Emily Robinson '22; Big Red; Angela Burke; Elizabeth De La Rosa, dean of students



Rhonda Thomas '25

in 2018 when football came back to our campus,” Fuller explained. “It rings to signify an achievement on the field, and today, it rings to signify your achievement in receiving your class ring. This ring represents your connection to each other and to Lamar University’s legacy.” With that, Fuller rang a miniature version of the football bell, its sound echoing through the ballroom, marking the official conclusion of the ceremony.

As the ceremony came to an end, the students, now proudly wearing their rings, returned to the stage for a group photo. They joined Peyton Meeks, the Voice of Lamar, in singing the Alma Mater. Afterward, the students received their commemorative T-shirts and took part in Ring Day photos, posing for pictures around the room—capturing both their graduation moments and the new milestone they had just reached.



Ausby “Teddy” Gilbert, Mitchell Junioo '16, '25, and Margaret Harris-Junioos



Ana Palacios and Andrew Flores



Catherine Drago, Lawrence Drago '87, Elizabeth Drago, Tania (Freeman) Drago '97, C.J. Drago

MAULDIN

Dream Makers

We express our deep gratitude to the alumni and friends of Lamar University who have recently established endowments or made plans to endow gifts through estate plans. These gifts encourage students to pursue a college education and support faculty in creating innovative learning environments. An endowment creates a legacy that becomes a permanent part of Lamar's history. To learn more about how you can endow a gift to Lamar, we invite you to visit our website at lamar.edu/development or to start planning a gift through your estate, visit legacy.lamar.edu. In this issue of *Cardinal Cadence*, we are honored to recognize these Dream Makers.

by Jasmin Landry

Mary Crittenden attended Lamar University and graduated in 1993 with her associate's degree in nursing. She passed her state board examination and became a registered nurse. Her husband Noel attended Lamar and graduated with his nursing degree in 2000. They each took turns supporting each other through school. One of the things they realized after the experience was that it was hard, at times, to be able to get all the books that they needed for classes, along with uniforms and other necessities. They endowed the **Mary Pam and Noel Crittenden Scholarship in Nursing** to give students a way to get a quality education and establish a career to earn a living wage, help others and be able to take care of their families. They believe nursing is a very rewarding occupation and hope this scholarship will be of help to students who choose to follow this career path by aiding them with unforeseen expenses.

Enrique (Henry) R. Venta's 20-year tenure at LU included serving as professor of management and dean of the College of Business from 2002 until 2018. His teaching and research activities focus on strategic issues in operations, managing the service sector and clinical decision-making. He holds Ph.D. and M.S. degrees in management science and economics from Northwestern University and a B.S.I.E. degree from the University of Puerto Rico. Venta has published or presented more than 60 articles, chapters and monographs. He has served as an independent consultant for various government agencies and national and international corporations and serves on the board of directors of the Southeast Texas Economic Development District and the boards of several civic and service organizations. Dan W. French, a native of Beaumont, Texas, graduated from Lamar University in 1973 with a Bachelor of Arts in economics. While attending Lamar he was a member of Delta Tau Delta fraternity. He later earned his doctorate from Louisiana Tech University in 1979. In July 2018, he succeeded Venta as the dean of LU's College of Business. Prior to returning to his alma mater French had nearly 40 years of teaching, research and

service, making him a seasoned academic leader with a passion for collaboration and growth. French is a descendant of the historic pioneer family patriarch John Jay French, a tanner and merchant who settled in the Beaumont area in the early 1830s. Dan French attended French High School (named for the family) before attending Lamar. Venta and French established the **Former Deans' Endowment for Excellence in Business** to acknowledge their appreciation of the College of Business and Lamar University and to serve as a model for other deans to help grow the scholarship endowment in the future.

As executor of the estate of Beverly Stewart, Larry Begnaud '72 directed a gift of \$1,000,000 to endow the **Beverly Stewart Memorial Regents Scholarship for Education**. Beverly Jean Olson Stewart '71 earned a Master of Education in counseling and development from Lamar University. She was born in Lebanon, Penn., and married James Stewart in 1969. They were married 41 years until his death in 2010. James also attended Lamar University, taking classes while he earned his Doctor of Engineering. Beverly taught school in Little Cypress but left to follow James in his career with Mobil Oil Corp. She passed away in 2024.

Glen '75 and Teri Morgan '85 met at a Lamar University baseball game in 1983. Glen graduated in 1975 with a Bachelor of Business Administration degree. Teri graduated in 1985 with a Bachelor of Science in communication disorders, focusing on speech pathology and audiology. Glen served on the Lamar University Foundation Board of Trustees from 1987 to 1997, as well as on the College of Education and Human Development Advisory Council. He was honored as an LU Distinguished Alumnus in 2016 and served as the head of the NIL Collective that supports Lamar University Athletics. As an undergraduate, Teri received a music scholarship and participated in the LU marching and concert bands. They both attended Lamar because it was local, affordable and had a great reputation for education. Athletics and involvement with Lamar

have long been a priority for the Morgan family. They endowed the **Teri and Glen Morgan Fund for Lamar University Baseball** with the hope that by giving they can change the course of someone's life, allowing them to get a degree and go on to do great things to make this world a better place.

Jim Love '66 was born on August 5, 1945, in Timpson, Texas, to James and Margaret Love, and was raised by his mother and stepfather, the Honorable John Anderson. Educated at Beaumont High School, Lamar University (Bachelor of Arts in government) and The University of Texas, where he earned a law degree, Love's knowledge and dedication were evident not only in the classroom but also in his everyday life. He pursued a fulfilling career that saw him retire from Lamar University after teaching criminal justice for an impressive 44 years. Prior to his tenure at Lamar, he served as a police officer in Austin and worked in the district attorney's office. He found joy in tinkering in his garage, serving on the local Crime Stoppers Board, hunting with friends, and watching sports and car racing. Love had three loves in his life: his wife Judy and their boys; his career as a teacher, police officer and officer of the court; and his faith. Love was a devout Christian as well as member and deacon of Calder Baptist Church. His wife Judy endowed the **Dr. James J. "Jim" Love Memorial Scholarship in Criminal Justice** to carry on her husband's legacy.

Arkema Inc. is part of Arkema Group, comprising many of the company's businesses in North America. Arkema Group is a global leader in specialty materials, building on its unique set of expertise in materials science to design materials that meet key needs. Arkema has over 40 manufacturing sites in the U.S., including major plants in Beaumont, Pasadena, Houston and Clear Lake, Texas. These sites rely on the availability of top talent in the region, and it is for this reason that Arkema is funding the **Arkema Endowed Scholarship in Chemical and Mechanical Engineering at Lamar University**.

A big vision in Big Bend:

Jessi Milam expands
education in South Texas

by BROOKE BARNETT

Of the more than 1,100 independent school districts in Texas, San Vicente stands out for many reasons. Some recognize it as the smallest school district in the state, but Superintendent Jessi (Ramirez) Milam '07, '11, '22, says its impact goes far beyond size.

In 2025, San Vicente became the only educational establishment in the National Park System with both an on-site prekindergarten through 12th grade school and a licensed day care facility.

Big Bend National Park, located in southwest Texas near Mexico, spans 880,000 acres and encompasses the largest protected areas of the Chihuahuan Desert in the United States. Its diverse habitats are home to thousands of plant species, hundreds of birds and a wide variety of mammals and reptiles. The park attracts tens of thousands of visitors annually, so recruiting and retaining quality employees is key to its success. Milam says San Vicente's educational developments are vital to that effort.

"The desert area is vast and beautiful, but rural and remote," Milam explained. "Many employees would be forced to leave Big Bend if they had children and both parents worked, as childcare in the area was previously nonexistent."

Though the need was clear, the task of starting a day care facility in the park proved a tremendous challenge. The school district and the National Park Service had tried—and failed—to create such a program

for 20 years. With the support of the San Vicente school board, Milam led the effort for more than two years. The biggest challenge was planning for the facility's daily operations and long-term sustainability. Milam's efforts proved fruitful, when, in January 2025, San Vicente opened an Early Childhood Center and licensed day care center. The facility was designed specifically to help prepare students for early education.

"This achievement highlights why Big Bend is a family-friendly destination for potential employees," Milam said. "Our day care provides a high-quality instructional foundation while preparing children for formal education. I'm incredibly thankful to our board for supporting all students."

With the day care established, Milam focused on expanding San Vicente's educational options.

"Students at the far end of the district would have to travel almost two hours one way, to attend high school daily in Terlingua," she said. "Our school board tasked the district with establishing a high school in an effort to provide our students with a quality education that allowed for high academic standards and extracurricular activities to meet the holistic needs of all students."

Drawing on her experience as a teacher, counselor and principal, Milam helped develop a high school program allowing San Vicente to serve older students living in the park, and serve students through 12th grade. The program officially opened in Fall 2025 and will celebrate its first graduates in 2027. She says the partnership between the district and the National Park Service has greatly improved the well-being of families living and working in the park.

"Our students have many of the same opportunities as those in other Texas public schools, along with an education tailored to meet their individual personal and academic goals," she explained. "Living and learning in a National Park, our students have opportunities for some amazing field trips. Our larger Big Bend

community supports the school in many activities throughout the year."

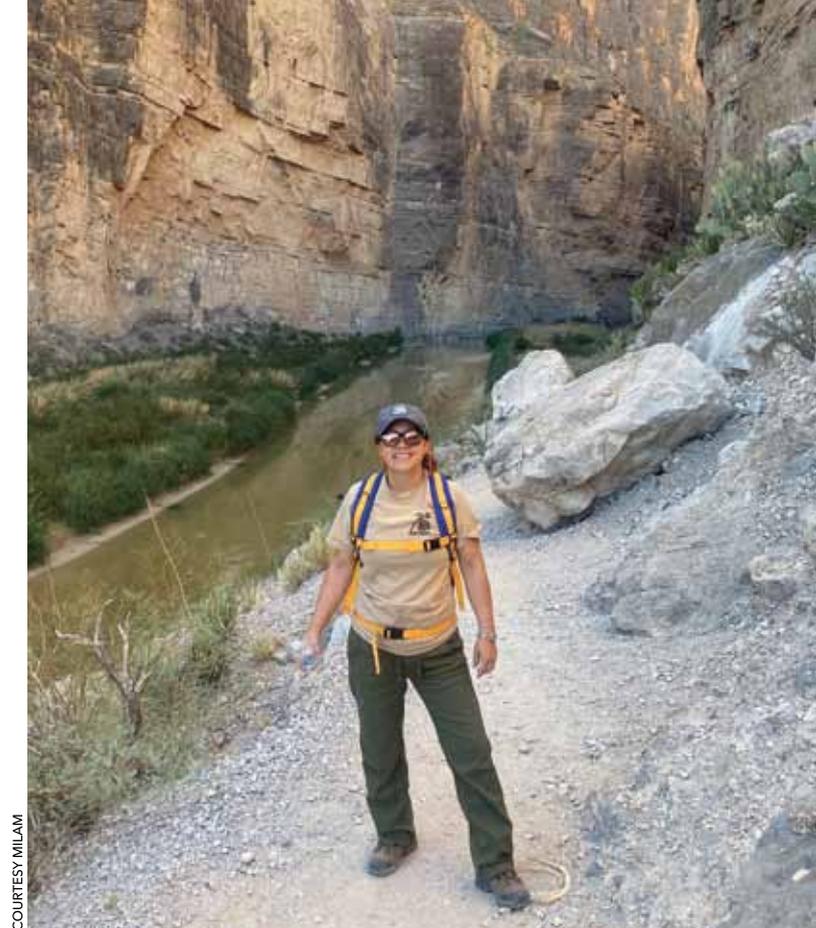
Milam says these two major developments enable the district to better support families of national park employees, Border Patrol agents and concession workers. In addition, it can now serve as a model for other national parks considering educational opportunities available for families and help open discussions on how to offer facilities and services to meet the needs of their communities.

Milam views these accomplishments as both personal and professional milestones and credits Lamar University for helping her build the skills and confidence to serve as an educational leader.

"I had considered going to Lamar while in high school, but it was a long way from home," she said. "I moved to Port Arthur in the summer of 2005 and was working for a local refinery. Now that I was in the area, I wanted to gain the full Cardinal experience."

Milam had previously earned her Bachelor of Arts degree from Hawaii Pacific University, and she was interested in pursuing certification as a professional counselor. At Lamar, Milam earned a Master of Science in applied criminology and a Master of Education in counseling and development in 2011. She has worked for the Port Arthur, Cypress-Fairbanks, Uvalde and Utopia school districts, developing foundational skills while serving as a teacher, counselor, principal and superintendent.

She has now served in education for 16 years and considers herself a true lifelong learner. In 2022, she completed her Doctor of Education in educational leadership at Lamar—an achievement she



COURTESY MILAM

considers one of her proudest.

Armed with a doctorate and the success of San Vicente, Milam continues to seek new challenges and opportunities to shape education in South Texas.

"Starting a Texas public high school from scratch ranks high on my list of professional goals, and I want to see our school district thriving for the success of our students," she said. "I hope to mentor other educational leaders and future superintendents and provide them with tools for leading through challenging times. We expect our students to be resilient, but we must also be resilient ourselves to give them our best every day."

Reflecting on her success, Milam credits the faculty and staff at Lamar University with preparing her for success. "They have a passion for their students and the University. The staff takes time to foster relationships, guide you through the rigorous curriculum and prepare you with relevance in your field," she concluded. "After graduation, I was ready for success as an educational leader. I had tools in my tool bag that I could readily use to develop and drive success in my school district. I see the results of that every day."





Tri-City Corvette Club *powers* scholarships and community in Southeast Texas

by STEPHAN MALICK

The roar of a Corvette engine has long been a familiar sound across Southeast Texas. But beyond their gleaming chrome and powerful engines, the Tri-City Corvette Club has built something even more enduring—a legacy of community support and educational opportunity at Lamar University.

Founded in 1976, the club began as a gathering place for car enthusiasts. Over time, it evolved into a cornerstone of philanthropy in the region, supporting local charities and establishing an endowed scholarship fund at Lamar University. According to longtime club member and current president Mike White, the idea of giving back to students began more than two decades ago.

“We wanted to help students who might be struggling to finish their degree,” White said. “So many scholarships are available for freshmen, but when you get to your junior or senior year, sometimes financial help is harder to find. That’s when we felt we could make the biggest difference.”

The partnership with Lamar traces back to 2013, when members of the club formalized their commitment by creating an endowed scholarship fund White said. What began as an effort to award small scholarships to area high school students evolved into a sustainable program designed to help Lamar students who are already well into their college careers.

Through this endowment, the Tri-City Corvette Club ensures that Lamar students, many of whom juggle jobs, family responsibilities and tuition, can persist through the final stretch of their education. The scholarship is open to all majors, reflecting the club’s commitment to support the broader student body

rather than just a narrow field of study.

The scholarship is only one piece of the club’s outreach. The Tri-City Corvette Club supports several charities every year, from the Southeast Texas Food Bank and Humane Society to veterans’ organizations like OATH (Outdoor Association for True Heroes). Recent “show and shine” events have raised tens of thousands of dollars, including \$30,000 for the Giving Field community garden, which provides fresh produce to local food pantries.

“When Lamar calls, we show up,” White said. “We’ve driven in homecoming parades, carried faculty in Corvettes and supported campus events. This is our community, and we’re proud to be part of it.”

The impact extends well beyond individual students. By strengthening Lamar University, the Corvette Club reinforces the fabric of the Southeast Texas community. Many of the club’s

members are Lamar alumni, parents of alumni or longtime supporters of the University’s programs. They understand that helping students graduate not only changes individual lives but also sustains the region’s economy and civic vitality.

At nearly 79, White himself has served as president of the club multiple times. He laughs about dressing up like racing legend Richard Petty at car shows, but his passion for service is serious.

“We’re proud of the cars, but more than that, we’re proud of what the club stands for,” White said. “Supporting Lamar means supporting our own community’s future.”

For students, that means more than financial aid—it’s a reminder that local alumni and neighbors are invested in their future. And for the Corvette club, it’s proof that a love of cars can fuel something even more powerful: opportunity, connection and lasting community impact.



From left, Mike White, Tri-City Corvette Club; Kelly Dougharty, 2025 recipient; Ted Harp '90; Roger Ross

MILLER

LAMAR HOUSTONIANS:

Cardinal ties sustain

by ALLISON LENNARTZ



COURTESY MCBEE

Brody McBee '20, B.S. biology; Justice Peveto, B.S. biology '20, M.S. biology '21; Haya Alani '20, B.A. chemistry; Hannah (Abdullah) Khalifa '21, B.A. chemistry; Valen (Ross) Elliott '21, B.S. biology; Keaton Moore '21, biology-pre-dental major; and Chase Gordon '21, biology

What's that line the Beatles sang back in the 1960s—something about getting by with a little help from one's friends? Well, there is a group of seven young and promising dentists who would agree. All natives of Southeast Texas, Brody McBee (Bridge City), Chase Gordon (Groves), Hannah Abdullah (Nederland), Haya Alani (Nederland), Justice Peveto (Orange), Keaton Moore (Vidor) and Valen Ross (Orange) became friends while enrolled in prerequisite courses at Lamar University on their way to pursuing their careers in dentistry. Although they all met in college, they shared some of the common values that Southeast Texas is known for: a close-knit community, a family-centered culture and a deep appreciation for good humor and good food. A few of them even returned to the area after graduating from the UT Houston dental program in May of this year. Dr. Ross, who

now practices in her hometown of Orange, describes it as “a true blessing” to be able to serve “the community that shaped (her)” and expresses gratitude for the trust that she receives from her local patients.

Proximity to family, affordability and a quality education attracted each of them to attend Lamar for their undergraduate degrees. Several of them also chose LU because of the scholarships they received and the academic advantages they felt were offered by easier access to their professors and small class sizes. Dr. Abdullah, a recipient of the Presidential Scholarship, knew that attending Lamar was a financially wise decision but was also drawn to the school for its strong reputation of providing graduates with “endless opportunities... toward (their) post-graduate studies.” Dr. Moore was the only member of the group who earned his bachelor's degree elsewhere, graduating

from BYU with a degree in finance prior to becoming a Cardinal. But he decided to make a career change after working in finance for several years and knew that Lamar was close to home and provided the pre-requisite courses he needed to take before applying to dental school. When asked to reflect on how his time at Lamar has influenced his life, he says some of his favorite memories came from the time he spent with the group of friends that would become its own cohort of LU alumni when they began the dentistry program at UT Houston. “It has been amazing having an LU family to lean on throughout this journey,” he said.

When reflecting on their collegiate lives, they all gave similar accounts as to how they became acquainted with each other. Their friendships began to form when they were working their way through the many science courses that were required for their degrees and to qualify for dental school. Additionally, they were all members of Lamar’s Pre-Dental Society, which provided them more opportunities to network with each other. They were acquainted with each other prior to starting the dentistry program at UT Houston, but several of them recall that their friendships and connection as a group grew stronger once their studies in the dental program began.

Dr. Abdullah says that their group chat (which they have named the “Lamar Houstonians”) started as a place where they could share information or course resources but that it also became “an outlet for rants, support and inside jokes.” Several of the members mentioned on how this group chat is still active and remains an important part of how they stay connected in their everyday lives. Dr. Gordon reflected on these relationships by adding, “We have been there for each other for years and helped each other get to where we are today.”

A collective sentiment that each person expressed is how they consider these friendships to be invaluable and how crucial of a role the group played in helping them navigate and complete their journeys through dental school. Dr. Gordon even shared that being part of this friend group was why he chose to attend dental school at the Houston campus instead of the one in San Antonio. Now that the group members have finished their doctoral programs in dentistry and have launched their careers or post-graduate residencies, they have some wisdom they were willing to impart to current and future Cardinals who hope to achieve academic and professional success. Dr. Ross advises to “stay focused on your goals but enjoy the journey along the way.” Dr. Peveto offers a similar insight: “don’t forget to have fun.” Several of the doctors recalled how some of their favorite memories from their time at Lamar consisted of hanging out with their fellow students, involvement in the plethora of activities or student organizations that a school like LU is able to offer, and even watching some friends play and swim in questionable water that resulted from flooding under the MLK overpass once after a tropical storm blew through town. Dr. Abdullah and Dr. Gordon both referred to advice they were given by their professors while they were participating in honors courses:

“never hesitate to reach out for help” and “don’t be afraid to ask questions because your answer is already ‘no’ if you never ask.”

They said these words have stuck with them through the years and helped them to realize how important it is to seek advice from the people around you who are there to help. Most of them also named at least one or two professors who significantly influenced their lives while they were studying at Lamar and strongly recommended that students seek out advice and mentorship from the excellent faculty members who are available for them to consult.

Dr. McBee encouraged involvement with student organizations, pursuit of the many research opportunities that are available at Lamar and making connections with LU alumni members who are further along in one’s field of study or work as this may afford more opportunities for success. He also offered a very practical recommendation: “stay healthy” by finding some form of exercise that you can regularly engage in to help you feel better and to lessen stress. He noted that even something as simple as walking can be a great way to keep your mind and body well.

As it turns out, each of the “Lamar Houstonians” acknowledged the important role that their friendships with one another played in their overall success at both Lamar and in the UT dentistry program. Perhaps that’s why Dr. Moore said his advice for success would be “to make really good friends who push you to succeed.” He reflected on the reality that you become like the company you keep: if you surround yourself with other people who are highly motivated and set high standards for themselves, you will be challenged to emulate that same level of motivation and achievement. He said, “I got through Lamar and dental school and am now attending orthodontic residency all thanks to the amazing friends who helped me along the way. I can’t stress enough how impactful it is to find the right friends and help each other through school.” Maybe that’s advice we can use no matter what stage of life we find ourselves in—that we can all get by with a little help from our friends.

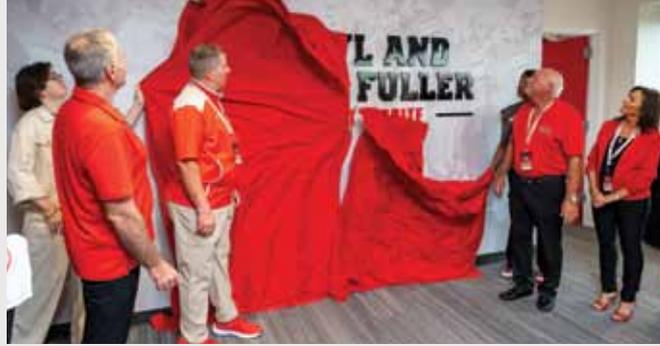


Newly named Cheryl '82 and Phillip Fuller '81 President's Suite unveiled

REMARKS SHARED BY PHILLIP FULLER | Cheryl and I are honored to welcome you to this beautiful new facility that we believe will be an asset to Lamar both in athletics and in the important business of educating the young men and women of Southeast Texas and beyond. We are so excited, and overwhelmed, to have our name on the door and wall. We are diehard Cardinal fans and we have made it part of our lives to be unofficial ambassadors for Lamar. What a great time it is to open this room as our athletic programs are reaching new levels of success.

We want to take this opportunity to thank and mention the hard work and dedication of Dr. Taylor, Juan Zabala and Jeff O'Malley and their respective staffs and their respective spouses. They decided we were going to be better, and they made it happen. They get things done. The renovation of this suite is just part of a bigger plan to make us the best! They understand that the most important work of this University is educating kids like Cheryl and I were in 1977—just two Mid-County kids not sure about the future that needed some molding and direction. They know successful athletics programs are an asset to academics because they draw attention that helps with enrollment and fundraising. People are attracted to a winner. Again we are honored beyond belief and all our thanks go to Dr. Taylor and his administration—and those spouses!

We also want to take this opportunity to honor all the people who have supported Lamar University all these years with us and before us. I won't use names but you know who you are! Our name is on the door, but this is truly a Lamar family working together that has turned this thing around and brought optimism and success. Family members include people who have supported Lamar by buying advertising in programs, buying naming rights, making outright donations, providing free services (even) pro bono construction), creating scholarships, supporting our art and music programs, serving on advisory boards, buying season tickets that they know they can't use and on and on and on. I want to specifically mention those that put up the money to get football started again and those that have purchased the other football suites in this building year after year, even through the challenging, hard-to-watch seasons. If you want to know more about how you might be able to participate, please contact Juan Zabala or anyone on his staff. So, I will wrap this up with three simple words: **Go Big Red!!!**



Charles (Butch) Harrell, Patricia Adams '70, Juan '07 and Peggy Zabala



Johnnie (Criton) Durden '00, Peggy Zabala, Cheryl Fuller '82, Melissa Fuller



Phillip '81 and Cheryl (Spencer) Fuller '82 toss coin



Pres. Jaime Taylor, left, and Jeff O'Malley, right, with the Fullers and referees



Pres. Jaime Taylor, Jason Duplant '03, Charlee (Chelette) Fitzgerald '18, '19, Megan (Ogden) Hanks '15, Katherine Hanks, Cameron Duplant



Mary Wernig, Maddy Wernig, First Lady Stacy Taylor, Nikki Welch



Phillip Fuller '81, Sandra (French) Clark '76



Phillip Fuller '81, Glen Morgan '75



Pres. Jaime Taylor, Jeff O'Malley, Regent Stephen Lee '89, Phillip Fuller '81, Cheryl (Spencer) Fuller '82, Melissa Fuller



Lu, Cheryl (Spencer) Fuller '82, Phillip Fuller '81, Peggy Zabala, Big Red, Juan Zabala



Aron Arceneaux '09, Mandy (Dowden) Arceneaux '10



Pres. Jaime Taylor and Cheryl (Spencer) Fuller '82



Fuller family on the field



Pres. Jaime Taylor, Teri (Tammen) Morgan '85, Mike Hamrick



Uliana Trylowsky and Grayson Meek '10, '17



Garth Heitshusen '60, Patricia Adams '70, Charles (Butch) Harrell



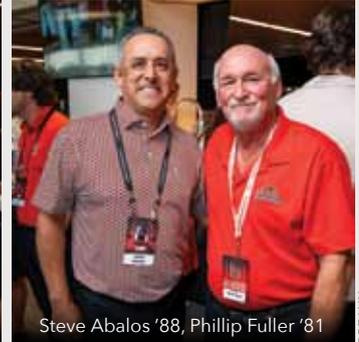
Lennon Brent, left, and First Lady Stacy Taylor



Melissa Fuller, Cheryl Fuller '82, Mary Wickland '92



Richelle Brooks, Coach Alvin Brooks '82, Trey Clark '93, '95



Steve Abalos '88, Phillip Fuller '81

BREAUX

REYNA GOMEZ TIPPETTS:

Leading with empathy, advocating for *growth*

by BROOKE BARNETT

Before starting her M.B.A program with Lamar University, Reyna (Gomez) Tippetts '17 wasn't sure that she belonged in higher education. What she found at Lamar ended up being more than just a business education—it became a life-changing journey that transformed her purpose, confidence and future.

Growing up in Veracruz, Mexico, Tippetts lived in a small shack with cardboard walls and a leaking ceiling, often going to bed hungry. School became her sanctuary—a place where she felt seen and supported.

“Education saved my life,” Tippetts reflected. “As a child, growing up in poverty and in a dysfunctional home, it was the one place where I felt seen and valued. My teachers believed in me and told me I was smart. I remember my third-grade teacher buying me my first new school uniform. My high school professors gave me work so I could afford to eat.”

After junior high, Tippetts attended a technical high school in Tampico, Tamaulipas, where she walked miles each day to attend classes. She graduated at the top of her class and saved money to attend university—but her plans were derailed when her mother became ill. She moved to Ebano, Mexico, and feared her educational dreams were slipping away.

In 1997, Tippetts met and married her husband, Roscoe, and immigrated to the United States the following spring. Roscoe was a widower with two young children, and Tippetts, who didn't speak English, suddenly found herself adapting to a new country and adjusting to motherhood. In 1999, she gave birth to a baby girl who completed their family. Now a mother of three, she still longed for an education and a professional career.

In 2001, she began working part-time as a housekeeper at North Harris College (now Lone Star College–North Harris).

The language barrier limited her job options, but cleaning classrooms gave her a glimpse of what might be possible. Despite motherhood, a full-time job, and limited English, she began taking classes. “Watching students and professors interact at Lone Star rekindled my hope,” she explained. “It wasn't easy, but I took it one class at a time.”

She worked her way up to lead custodian and later held staff positions at several Lone Star campuses. In 2010, she earned an Associate of Applied Science in professional office studies. That experience gave her insights into navigating the higher education system, which became key in shaping her path forward. “I wanted to understand higher education better so I could help my own children. Earning that first degree helped me realize the only limit on my future was me,” she explained.

Tippetts earned a Bachelor of Business Administration in accounting from Our Lady of the Lake University in 2016 and began considering graduate school. While she felt uncertain about pursuing a master's degree, she knew it was a crucial next step in her journey. Lamar's reputation and affordable tuition made it feel like the right fit for her.

“This became a deeply personal challenge, something I committed to doing because no one in my family had done it before. In fact, many of them didn't even know what an MBA was,” she laughed. “When I found out I could waive the GMAT by submitting a letter about my experience, I hesitated. I thought, ‘Who am I to apply for an MBA?’ After all, my background included years of work as a housekeeper. Writing that letter made me question whether I belonged.”

Tippetts was accepted to LU's online MBA program in 2016. Overwhelmed by doubt, she withdrew that same summer. She re-enrolled that fall, completed the program in just one year, and graduated in 2017. Though her coursework was online, being close to LU's presence on the Lone Star campus helped her build



an in-person community of support.

“This program was transformative in every sense. Academically, it stretched my understanding of higher education. Personally, it shifted my perspective on my own potential,” she said. “In the MGMT 5312 course with Dr. Jeff Dyson, I learned to plan with ‘the end in mind,’ I realized that I had only ever planned for survival, not for growth. I had been reacting to life instead of intentionally designing it. That class helped me start thinking long-term—and that shift in mindset changed everything.”

Tippetts was selected to give the commencement speech at her graduation, a moment she describes as one of her most cherished. “Earning my MBA from Lamar transformed my future. For so long, I was overlooked for jobs I was already doing because I lacked credentials. With my MBA, doors opened that I never thought possible.”

After graduation, she began applying for advising and admissions roles at Lone Star, seeking meaningful work that would allow her to use her personal journey and leadership experience to support others. In 2018, she joined Lone Star’s advising department as an academic advisor. She became lead advisor in 2020 and was named director of advising in 2022. Today, she serves as dean at Lone Star’s East Aldine Center, which offers both college transfer courses and workforce training.

“Earning my MBA reshaped the direction of my life. It gave me clarity and purpose. I realized I wanted to help others find their way in higher education, just like I had,” she said. “Throughout my MBA program, there were moments I thought about going back to housekeeping. It paid the same and didn’t require constant stretching. But if I had, I wouldn’t be where I am today. Growth is uncomfortable, but necessary. Without change, there is no growth.”

Now, as dean, Tippetts strives to show others that education is a powerful investment. She knows firsthand the challenges of working, raising a family and going to school—and also how life changing it can be.

“At Lamar, I finally felt like I belonged in higher education,” she said. “Every institution I attended played a role, and every step—right or wrong—taught me something vital. All those experiences taught me not just who I want to be, but who I don’t want to be. Now, I lead with empathy, advocate for students who feel invisible and encourage others to keep going, no matter how hard the path may seem.

“Every part of my journey shaped who I am today,” she concluded. “To anyone considering this journey, you are more capable than you realize. Your background does not define your future. If you’re willing to work hard, ask for help and keep showing up, you will grow in ways you never imagined.”

“To anyone considering this journey, you are more capable than you realize. Your background does not define your future. If you’re willing to work hard, ask for help and keep showing up, you will grow in ways you never imagined.”

—REYNA (GOMEZ) TIPPETTS ’17



India's next generation perfumer taking industry to new heights

by SARAH PARKER

Dubbed “the next generation perfumer of India,” Rachit Mehrotra '09 was born with the perfume industry in his blood.

In 1914, his family began “laying the foundations of a fragrant future” in the perfume industry by formulating natural fragrances in Kannauj, an ancient city in northern India known today as the country’s “perfume capital.”

Over the next four decades, the family’s passion for perfumery continued to flourish. In the 1950s, during a time of change and new competition in the industry, Mehrotra’s grandfather, Ram Nath Mehrotra Ji (Jhallan Bhaiya) and his four brothers set up a small-scale perfume factory called Lalji Kedar Nath Khattri Perfumers that became known for selling quality, innovative products.

“Growing up in a family business of generations itself is a blessing,” Mehrotra said. “I have been blessed to see all the ups and downs from the stories of the past, struggle of the present and forecast for the future. It helped me immensely in developing the nose for every aromatic molecule.”

Despite having a “nose” for the family business, Mehrotra didn’t initially aspire to follow in his forebears’ footsteps.

“I was not sure [I wanted] to join [in the family business], as I was looking for something more fascinating,” Mehrotra said. “I was looking for something even more technologically advanced. Also, it’s in my bones to go for a deep research and do something revolutionary for humanity. At least before leaving this world!”

In 2007, Mehrotra earned his bachelor’s degree in chemical

engineering from Savitribai Phule Pune University, a prestigious and highly regarded university in India that consistently ranks among the top universities in the country. He received scholarship offers for graduate programs at several universities and selected Lamar University as his choice to continue his education.

“I got admission from four other universities with scholarship [offers], but a lot of alumni told me the chemical engineering department at Lamar is the best. So, I opted for it!” Mehrotra said. “My experience on campus was fabulous. My professors were among the best, [and] I am blessed to be nurtured by professors of their caliber.”

After earning his master’s degree in chemical engineering from Lamar in 2009, Mehrotra felt ready to take India’s perfume industry to groundbreaking new heights, empowered by skills and expertise, particularly in research, that were enhanced by his education at Lamar.

“[Lamar] gave a boost to my technical skills. My research-oriented mind is the seed that was planted by Lamar University.”

Mehrotra said his corporate journey began the day he graduated from Lamar and started practicing formulations and developing the nose for aromatics.

In 2011, he planted his own seed in the perfume industry, “blending modernity, technology and tradition” to found and formally launch the next-generation perfume company KONIKA.

“KONIKA is my own initiative, [as] my forefathers used to run the business with a different name. So, we can say it’s an old wine in a new bottle with all the ethics and new technologies. I have started KONIKA with a completely innovative vision. I have



not copied any concept, name, formula, technology or idea. It's all truly novel and revolutionary," he said.

Thanks to Mehrotra's unique vision and impressive skillset, KONIKA has blossomed into an industry powerhouse with branches including KONIKA INTERNATIONAL LLP (the international business), KONIKA INDUSTRIES P LTD. (the manufacturing units), KONIKA AROMAS INDIA (the India-based company) and Global Nano Aromatic Research & Development (the research wing). He serves as chairman and managing director of the company, managing almost every department from finances to labs to sampling to client relations.

Mehrotra has made a name for himself in the industry and is known for creating an innovative blend of fragrances and flavors for a wide variety of top line cosmetics, toiletries and beverage brands and for setting new benchmarks in the foods and beverages industry with game-changing fragrances and flavors. He is also the founder of Homey Industries, a Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) firm still in the early stages of development.

"Running a family business is awesome. But I have always dreamt of an independent venture, something that I have discovered. Essentially, I am living my dream with all the responsibilities in place. We have a huge family of clients, vendors, researchers and society. We strongly believe in 'World is

one Family!' At the end, we all are brothers and sisters."

Despite his many duties as chairman, Mehrotra considers himself first and foremost a principal scientist with the core duty of research and development. KONIKA has made great strides in research and is associated with major perfumers, scientists and researchers worldwide.

"The fragrances and flavors field is all about deep research," he said. "Today, we perfumers are not just developers for spirit-based personal perfumes. We develop core products for FMCG majors with the organic and well-being [based] approach, 'for the society, by the society.' Technological advancement, research and evidence-based products are our frontline duty."

Inspired by an introduction to nanotechnology, a field of science and engineering that focuses on the study and manipulation of materials on the molecular, atomic or even subatomic scale, that he received from Professor Yaws at LU, Mehrotra began to incorporate nanotechnology into KONIKA with remarkable results.

"My enthusiasm for research made me go [into] nanotechnology in aromatics, and it worked beautifully. I took help from major industries, researchers and product developers in India and a few of my friends in the U.S., Sweden and Germany in helping me develop and incorporate nanotechnology in aromatics. Their part was to test the samples in even more sophisticated labs for the best results possible."

His new developments include Nano Esters, Nano Aldehydes and Nano Ketones.

"These [products] are first of [their] kind on this planet. We are the first to introduce nanotechnology in aromatics. We were first to use AI (artificial intelligence) in developing formulations. We are also making advancements in biotechnology for aromatics. At last, with nanotechnology in aromatics, one can also cure certain cancers and immunological disorders, but it's all in research stage, so I cannot comment more on it. I am trying to take this aromatic science from a perfume focus to become an essential part for curing disease."

With the new frontiers of nanotechnology, there seem to be no limits to where Mehrotra can take KONIKA and the perfume industry.

"Nobody can predict the future, but I believe in karma as my tool. My job is to do karma which is beneficial for humanity. At last, people have started adopting things which were [once] like a dream [such as] AI, nanotechnology and nano-aromatics. So, the future is bright for a technical revolution that is the need of the hour."

Reflecting on his tremendous success and looking forward to the endless opportunities on the horizon, Mehrotra has a bit of advice for students and young professionals.

"Don't join universities for remuneration. Join for knowledge, wisdom and humanity. If we will adopt this path, we are sure to succeed in life. To date, I don't know to what extent my ventures will be successful, but I will be the happiest man before I die, as I have tried to live a life which is full of inspirations, innovations and ideologies. I will be happy that I have kept close the words of my teachers and professors, encouragement to help others and be a good human being first."



Lamar University joins elite company: 2025 Great College to Work For

Lamar University has been nationally recognized as one of the best colleges to work for, according to the Great Colleges to Work

For program.

The results were released on GreatCollegesList.com and via a special insert of "The Chronicle of Higher Education," with a total of 76 institutions achieving "Great College to Work For" status and recognition for the quality of workplace experience and best practices regarding policies and benefits.

"At Lamar University, everyone understands the role they play in supporting our students - and they take pride in it," Lamar University President Jaime Taylor said. "Our shared purpose, and the trust it builds, fosters a culture of caring where our decisions and efforts are guided by a single question: 'How will this help our students?'"

Results are reported for small, medium and large institutions, with Lamar University included among the large universities with 10,000 or more students. Lamar University won honors in the following four categories: Confidence in Senior Leadership, Professional Development, Compensation & Benefits, Inclusion, Belonging & Community.

The survey results are based on a two-part assessment process: an institution questionnaire that captures employment data and workplace policies from each institution, and a survey administered to faculty, administration, and professional support staff. The primary factor in deciding whether an institution received recognition was based on employee feedback.

"People here feel valued, inspired and confident in the work we do together," Taylor said. "This is how a real community is formed, which makes Lamar not just a great place to work but a great place to belong."

The Great Colleges to Work For program is one of the largest and most respected workplace-recognition programs in the country. ModernThink, a strategic human capital consulting firm, administered the survey and analyzed the results.

Mechanical engineering professor honored

Associate professor of mechanical engineering Chun-Wei Yao received the Artemis Student Challenge Educator Award from the NASA Student Launch Competition.



Yao, who joined Lamar University in 2015, was recognized for his work mentoring student teams participating in the national rocket launch competition. The award highlights his efforts to integrate hands-on learning into Lamar's mechanical engineering curriculum and to support students pursuing careers in aerospace and STEM fields. "The true impact of

academia lies not only in research output but in how we shape the next generation of innovators. This award affirms that belief," he said. Under Yao's guidance, Lamar's 2025 rocket launch team, in only its second year of competition, placed 16th nationally out of 52 universities. The project is integrated into the university's senior capstone engineering courses and provides students with practical experience in applying theory, developing technical skills, and building confidence.

Smithsonian features Proksch's work

Bryan Proksch, professor of music history and a leading scholar of American band history, has authored a new essay for the Smithsonian Institution exploring how concert bands in the U.S. have long served as models for democratic participation. Titled "How American Bands Modeled Democracy," the piece was published in June as part of the Smithsonian's Civic Month celebration. Proksch first connected with the

Smithsonian during a faculty development leave in the fall of that year. At the time, he was conducting research for what would become his third book, "The Golden Age of American Bands: A History in Source Documents" (1835-1935), published in 2022.



Proksch is well known in musicological circles for his work on American band traditions, Viennese Classicism, and the history of the trumpet. His four books— "Bands in American Musical History: Inflection Points and Reappraisals" (2024), "The Golden Age of American Bands" (2022), "A Sousa Reader" (2017), and "Reviving Haydn" (2015)—reflect a career focused on both

American and European music history. The full Smithsonian essay, "How American Bands Modeled Democracy," is available online at: americanhistory.si.edu/explore/stories/american-bands-modeled-democracy.

Doranga awarded National Science Foundation grant

The National Science Foundation's Engineering Research Initiation grant program has awarded nearly \$200,000 to mechanical engineering professor Sushil Doranga for his innovative research, which focuses on structural dynamics modeling and testing. His project aims to enhance the reliability modeling techniques for structures, specifically in chip packaging. He will be developing a novel nonlinear dynamic modeling framework that uses base excitation as an input. "While working at General Electric, I've observed a growing interest among manufacturers for lightweight yet reliable structures. The outcomes of this project empower manufacturers to create innovative, lightweight solutions that do not sacrifice reliability," Doranga said. Graduate and undergraduate students will be involved in this project, receiving training aimed at developing a new generation of engineers and scientists skilled in advanced nonlinear dynamic modeling and testing.



O'Connor named dean of College of Education and Human Development

Johnny O'Connor has been appointed dean of the College of Education and Human Development (COEHD), following his service as interim dean since 2024. He brings more than a decade of higher education

leadership within COEHD and over 16 years of experience in K-12 education, where he has held teaching, faculty and executive-level leadership roles throughout his career. O'Connor holds Texas principal and superintendent certifications, is a licensed speech-language pathologist and is a trained mediator through the University of Texas School of Law.

He said his foremost priority is to keep students at the center of everything the COEHD does, supporting their success and overall development, while ensuring that the college's programs uphold the highest standards of quality practice and offerings to meet student needs. "I am focused on strengthening educational partnerships, encouraging research that informs practice and policy, investing in faculty development, and pursuing optimization in how we operate," O'Connor said. "At its core, this role is about people - students, educators, and communities. I want our college to be a place where ideas are elevated, where collaboration fosters innovation, and where every graduate is prepared to leave a lasting mark on the world."

Boone will steer College of Arts and Sciences as dean

Rebecca Boone has been appointed dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. She brings nearly three decades of higher education work experience to the role. A cerebral and cultural historian, she has been a professor of history at LU for the last 23 years, as well as chair of the history and university studies departments. Boone has worked in

various administrative capacities within the College of Arts and Sciences, most recently serving as interim dean since 2024.

Boone said her main priorities center around student experiences and highlighting the educational impact of the college. "I have two goals," she said. "The first is to create experiences for our students that are truly magical. The second is to make Lamar a powerhouse among Texas universities in terms of knowledge creation." Looking ahead, Boone plans to remain focused on investing in the faculty, staff and students who make up the College of Arts and Sciences. "What excites me most about this role is helping people maximize their potential, however they define it," she said. "Our faculty are so passionate about their fields. I want to harness that energy to move this college forward."



Gray named dean of College of Graduate Studies



With over 30 years of career experience as an educator and administrator in K-12 and higher education, Jon Gray has been appointed dean of the College of Graduate Studies. He served as associate dean of educator preparation and accreditation since 2023, where he oversaw 34 undergraduate and 18 graduate educator certification programs and nearly 7,000

students within the College of Education and Human Development.

As dean, he will lead key initiatives to support one of the largest graduate education programs in the state and the nation. "The framework for the College of Graduate Studies initiatives will be to further strengthen Lamar's relationships with industry and educational partners across Southeast Texas," he said. Gray looks to place student success at the forefront by continuing to invest in academic and professional development. "It is crucial for Lamar to promote student success through mentorship, internship opportunities, and preparation for post-graduate careers or further academic pursuits."

LU faculty recognized worldwide

Lamar University faculty and former faculty members have been named among the world's top 2% of scientists in their academic disciplines, according to rankings released by Stanford University and Elsevier. The



8th edition of the *World's Top 2% of Scientists List*, published Sept. 19, 2025, identifies researchers whose work ranks in the top two percent globally based on citations and scholarly impact. For career-long impact, the following Lamar University faculty were recognized:

- David L. Cocke (retired, chemical engineering)
- Che Jen Lin (civil and environmental engineering)
- Xuejun Fan (mechanical engineering)
- Marjan Goodarzi (formerly a mechanical engineering student at LU, not currently affiliated)
- Suying Wei (chemistry)
- Carl L. Yaws (retired, chemical engineering)
- Abdelnasser Eldek (electrical engineering)
- Gene L. Theodori (sociology)

LU ranked among best online accounting programs

Lamar University has been recognized as one of the nation's top institutions for online accounting degrees, earning a place on Best Colleges' 2025 list of "Best Online Accounting Degrees." The annual rankings, compiled by Best Colleges and evaluated by more than



40 higher education experts, analyzed data from over 3,700 institutions nationwide. Lamar's online Bachelor of Science in Accounting program stood out for its affordability, academic rigor and career preparation, placing it at No. 10 on the list.

Athletics secures second straight Commissioner's Cup

LU celebrated its coaching staff and athletes last June for capturing the Southland Conference Commissioner's Cup for the second consecutive year. This landmark achievement marks the first time in Lamar University's history that the Cardinals have successfully defended both the Commissioner's Cup and the Men's All-Sports Trophy in back-to-back seasons.



Lamar University earned 147.5 points to win the Southland Conference Commissioner's Cup, narrowly edging out Stephen F. Austin. The win capped a dominant stretch for LU Athletics, which has now claimed five of the league's top nine trophies over the past three years. The men's teams contributed 73.5 points, topping the University of the Incarnate Word by just one point, while the women's teams posted 74 points, placing third overall. Among the highlights were championship wins by the women's cross-country team, standout finishes in football, men's and women's basketball, baseball and men's golf, as well as a breakthrough season for the softball squad. Volleyball also made significant strides, qualifying for its first conference tournament since 2011.

Vice president and director of athletics Jeff O'Malley emphasized the collective effort behind the program's success. "This victory belongs to every member of the Lamar community," he said. "From coaches to support staff to student-athletes, everyone played a role in reaching this goal. When I arrived at LU in 2022, winning the Commissioner's Cup was a key objective, and achieving it this quickly speaks volumes about our commitment."

Southland Conference Commissioner Chris Grant praised Lamar University not just for winning, but for elevating the standard across the league. "You all are showing what alignment looks like, from student-athletes to coaches to university leadership," Grant said. "That's how you build something sustainable. And Lamar has become a model for how to do that while lifting others around you."

Midstream Center expands industry training

The Center for Midstream Management and Science (CMMS) is launching a new partnership with the Houston-based Gas Certification Institute (GCI) to deliver specialized training in natural gas and liquid measurement, aimed at bolstering workforce development in Southeast Texas.

Under the agreement, LU hosts GCI's industry-recognized courses on its Beaumont campus, which beginning with the first session last November. The initiative offers students, faculty and industry professionals access to hands-on certification programs taught by GCI instructors and original equipment manufacturer (OEM) representatives.

"This collaboration with the Gas Certification Institute will focus on workforce development in the midstream sector," Philip Cole, executive director for the CMMS said. "This is a great step toward establishing partnerships between Lamar and midstream industries, including liquefied natural gas (LNG). Our goal is to develop many opportunities for educating future engineers and scientists at Lamar so that they can become major players in the industry, especially in the Golden Triangle region."

"This collaboration allows us to reach more professionals and students with the critical natural gas and liquid measurement training they need to ensure system reliability, regulatory compliance, and financial accountability," Adedeji Tejuoso, president and CEO of GCI said. "Together with Lamar University, we're helping close the skills gap in key industrial sectors."



We hope you enjoy reading about former classmates. If you have news to share—a position announcement, milestone, achievement, wedding, baby—or know the whereabouts of a lost alumnus, we want to hear from you.

SEND US YOUR NEWS:

Cardinal Cadence
P.O. Box 10011
Beaumont, TX 77710
lamar.edu/alumni-update
e-mail alumni@lamar.edu
or call (409) 880-8921

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50s

Ben Woodhead '54, B.S. business administration, retired as senior vice president and trust officer for Capital One. He and his wife, **Sharon (Compton)** '76, M.A. history, retired as a teacher at All Saints Episcopal School. They live in San Antonio.

60s

James Foyle '66, B.S. civil engineering, served as director of public works for the city of Orange. He is retired. He and his wife, Lisa, live in Orange.

James Purdy '67, B.S. physics, is professor and vice chairman of the Department of Radiation Oncology at the University of California Davis Medical Center. His illustrious and pioneering career in radiation oncology has included developing improvements in quality assurance and training professionals for the field. He and his wife, Marilyn, live in Davis, Calif.

70s

A photographer for 30 years, **Amanda Smith** '71, B.B.A. accounting, is founder and co-director of A Smith Gallery. Her body of work, "LuLu's Dreams," recently received a Julia Margaret Cameron honorable mention in the storytelling category. She lives in Johnson City.

Kevin Hill '72, B.S. electrical engineering, worked for IBM–Austin Plant and is retired. He and his wife, Vicki, live in Austin.

Dr. Thomas Jones '73, electrical engineering, earned his medical degree in 1978 and is retired. He and his wife, Doris, live in Urbandale, Iowa.

Distinguished Alumnus **Charles Breithaupt** '75, B.S. health and physical education, '79, M.S. health and physical education, retired in 2025 as executive director of University Scholastic League after 50 years in public education. He and his wife, Deborah, live in Georgetown.

Clint Lacy '75, B.S. chemical engineering, retired from Dow Chemical Co. He lives in Conroe.

Bruce Karr '76, civil engineering, retired as associate director of engineering after serving 25 years with the Texas A&M University System. He and his wife, Marina, live in Bryan.

George Bowden '77, B.S. communication, retired from Freese and Nichols last April and began pursuit of a master's degree in theology and ministry at Brite Divinity School in September 2025. He and his wife, Kim, live in Granbury.

80s

Dr. Elizabeth Palmarozzi '81, B.S. biology, is founding dean of Tarleton State University's College of Osteopathic Medicine. She lives in Stephenville.

Robert Fong '82 retired after a multi-faceted career, the last five of which he spent preserving and curating the stories of Southeast Texas for the Museum of the Gulf Coast. He and his wife, **Donna (Dungan)** '02, M.Ed. administration, '13, Ed.D. educational leadership, live in Pflugerville.

Terence Welch '82, B.S. electrical engineering, is CEO of Sinclair Belgrade Energy. He serves on the Alabama Higher Education Commission, and he and his wife, Janelle, live in Fair Oaks Ranch.

Scott Campbell '83, B.A. English, '87, M.Ed. administration, retired as superintendent of East Chambers school district. He and his wife, **Gena (Golding)** '90, B.S. elementary education, who is a librarian for East Chambers Elementary School, live in Winnie.

Paul Davidson '83, B.B.A. marketing, is chief banking officer with Texas Partners Bank. He and his wife, Stephanie, live in Fulshear.

Laura (Smith) '83, B.S. elementary education, '87, M.Ed. elementary education, married Randy Hoffman. She teaches third grade at China Elementary in Hardin-Jefferson school district. They live in Beaumont.

The Daisy Foundation, which honors nurses internationally, recognized **Berta (Beadel) Kaemmerling** '83, B.S. nursing, for her more than 50 years of dedicated service in nursing and compassionate care of others. She is director of nursing for Healdsburg Hospital with Providence and lives in San Jose, Calif.

Jo Rita (Busceme) Lyle '83, B.A. English, retired as an administrative assistant, from St. Anne's Parish in the Diocese of Beaumont. She and her husband, Steve, live in Beaumont.

C.L. Ross '83, B.S. mechanical engineering, retired last August as chief of business management, Mission Assurance Directorate, of NASA Johnson Space Center after 41 years of service as an SMA Vehicle System engineer, branch chief and division chief, among other roles. He and his partner, **Annette Beard** '84, B.S. criminal justice, who is a national account manager with SmartStart Inc., live in Pearland.

The Martin Luther King Jr. Support Group of Southeast Texas honored **Freddie Titus** '83, B.S. mathematics, '86, B.S. industrial engineering, as 2025 Man of the Year. He is vice president for student affairs at Lamar University and lives in Beaumont.

Connie (Collins) Applebach '84, B.B.A. accounting, is a senior IT auditor with the Texas State University System. She and her husband, **Gary** '84, B.S. chemical engineering, who is manager of facilities engineering for McDermott International, live in Houston.

Judy (Wilson) Collier '84, A.A.A. nursing, '07, B.S. nursing, is a nurse with Baptist Hospitals of Southeast Texas. She received the 2025 Baptist Way award for her work ethic and dedication. She and her husband, Randy, live in Port Neches.

Lisa (Guidry) Crockett '84, B.S.W. social work, retired as principal of Tyrrell Elementary School in Port Arthur school district after 31 years as an educator. She lives in Beaumont.

Jay Hanson '85, A.A.S. refrigeration and air conditioning technology, is maintenance and transportation director for Nederland school district. He lives in Nederland.

Reagan Busbee '86, retired as CEO after 15 years with Universal Plant Services and New State Capital Partners. He and his wife, Lezli, live in Coldspring.

Leander school district board approved naming the Denise Geiger Compass Center after **Geiger** '87, M.S. deaf education, in recognition of her 32 years as an educator, of her as founder of transition services for the district, of the more than 18 services she helped create and as a champion of self-determination and independence. She and her husband, Brent, live in Cedar Park.

Larry Haynes '87, B.S. elementary education, '89, M.Ed. elementary education, '11, Ed.D. educational leadership, is chief of operations and student services for West Orange-Cove school district. He and his wife, **Aliceson (Faulk)** '00, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, who teaches theatre arts at Bridge City High School, live in Port Arthur.



Carter named Citizen of the Year

The City of Lumberton named Nick Carter '75, B.B.A. accounting, its Citizen of the Year last April in recognition of his community involvement and leadership as well as his lasting impact on the business world as a transformative leader. He and his wife, Judy '79, B.B.A. accounting, live in Lumberton.



Ambassadors Taylor Bui and Dennis Tran



Ambassadors Peyton McLaurin '25, Ashton Burch '25 and Jada Thrash



First Lady Stacy Taylor and Dimples (Chavis) Jones '10, '13, director of graduate ACP/MAT certification, College of Education and Human Development

LU Student Ambassadors President's Picnic
President and Mrs. Taylor hosted a dinner last May to welcome new Lamar University Ambassadors and to recognize graduating senior Ambassadors.



Rima Shaaban '25 and President Jaime Taylor



Senior ambassadors, front row from left, Estrella Balderas '25, Rima Shaaban '25, Waverlee Cooper '25, Ashton Burch '25, Pamela "Grace" Roy '25, Kevve Onakpoya '25 and Michelle Lane '25; back row from left, Sara Barboza Pereira '25, Daisy Calero Estrella '25, Hannah Thrash '25, Ryan Shugart '25, Peyton McLaurin '25, Bryce Sheffield '25, Miguel Arevalo '25, DeAnna Gildmore '25, Folasade (Asoro) Martinez '25, Alyson Vu '25



Ambassadors Mohamed Irhabi, Waverlee Cooper '25, Logan Morris and Bilal Alani



Ambassadors Brianna Brottem, Alyvia Ott and Madison McGuire



Ambassadors Elizabeth Drago, Taylor Bui, Peyton Jones and Mallary Warner



Mark Nelson and Melinda (Morrison) Nelson '14, '16, '24, instructor of management information systems



Carsen Barrett and Mari Cardenas



Ambassadors Ryan Shugart '25, Clara Schreck, Jasmine Guillory and Alyssa Harper with Julia Barton '20, '21, digital marketing specialist



Juan Zabala '07, vice president for university advancement and CEO, Lamar University Foundation Inc.; Ambassadors Jordan Nelson, Calvin Ncube, Pamela "Grace" Roy '25, Alyvia Ott, Madison McGuire, Hannah Thrash '25, Faith Cheng, Brianna Brottem and Maddie Wernig; former ambassador Kristin (Hebert) Robinson '24; and Gregg Robinson



President Jaime Taylor, Mandy (Dowden) Arceneaux '10 and Aron Arceneaux '09, annual giving officer



Former ambassador Kristin (Hebert) Robinson '24 with Ambassadors Pamela "Grace" Roy '25, Hannah Thrash '25 and Madison McGuire



Ambassador Alyvia Ott, President Jaime Taylor, Ambassador Bryce Sheffield '25 and Mark Nelson and Melinda (Morrison) Nelson '14, '16, '24



Ambassadors Saad Mohammed, Jordan Nelson, Mari Cardenas and Hannah Thrash '25

CLASS NOTES

Alumni Homecoming Pre-Game Party

LU alumni and friends gathered in the Neches Federal Credit Union Arena at the Montagne Center Oct. 18, 2025, to celebrate homecoming and cheer on the Cardinals as they took on the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley Vaqueros.



Cards and Techsans and Lambda Tau Reunion Group: seated, Patrick Bardwell '92, Karen Wheeler, Mike Wheeler '77 and Craig Stelly '78; standing, Sarah (Atwood) Bardwell '79, Amy (Gauthier) Walla '76, Lee Anne Nabors '78 and Richard Valley '70



Seated, Benny Brocato '77, Vickie (Tingen) Sauerwein, Becky (Manchaca) Brocato '80, Bill Withers '76, '79; standing, Sheryl (Wrinkle) Brocato '80, Lee (Corley) Withers '79, '91, Frank Brocato '78



Kellan Bell '19, Hetty (Green) Brown '79, Makenzie (Taylor) Thompson, First Lady Stacy Taylor and President Dr. Jaime Taylor



Chris Ingram '93 and future Cardinal Parker Ingram



Delores (Wilbur) Rollo '78 and Lee Anne Nabors '78



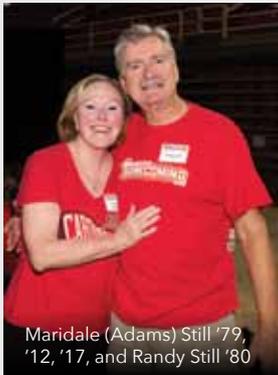
Bailey Broussard '20 and Juan Zabala '07, vice president for university advancement and CEO of the Lamar University Foundation Inc.



Zoey Glenn; Ashley (Yentzen) Glenn '08, '24, senior academic advisor, Digital Learning; and Cody Glenn '03, '24



Cole Guidry, Julie (Mooneyham) Guidry '07 and future Cardinals Parker Guidry, Andrew Guidry



Maridale (Adams) Still '79, '12, '17, and Randy Still '80



Olivia Malick '21, and Stephan Malick '95, '18, instructor of communication



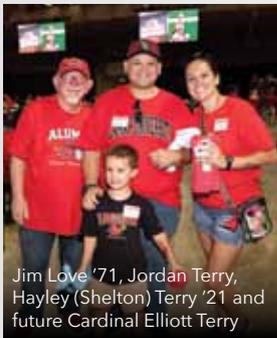
Meg (Baertl) Brown '15 Jarrod Brown



Shawn Webb '03, '12, and Yolanda (Johnson) Avery '86, '91



J Bienvenu '11; Taryn (Robinson) Bienvenu and Future Cardinal Harper Bienvenu



Jim Love '71, Jordan Terry, Hayley (Shelton) Terry '21 and future Cardinal Elliott Terry



James Warner '64, '71, and Linda (Solly) Warner '67, '75



Butch Henderson '88



Denalerie Duriso-Segura '09 and Octavia Brown-Reed '90, '97



Future Cardinal Clark Adams, Tanner Adams '15, Kayla (Clifton) Adams '20 and Evie Clifton, coordinator of alumni affairs



Big Red, Shawna (Powell) Gaines '03 and Lu



Raju Srirama '93, Debi (Wiles) Mougia '92, Wayne Mougia and Regan (Mougia) Burkey '03



President Jaime Taylor, Lady Stacy Taylor and Makenzie (Taylor) Thompson



Brandi (Spoonmore) Wulf '97, '13, and Brian Wulf



Jeremy Flowers and Celena (Champagne) Green '99



Crystal Jordan, Makenzie (Taylor) Thompson, First Lady Stacy Taylor and Charlee (Chelette) Fitzgerald '18, '19



Jessica Worthy, Greg Bonds '08,



Seated, Ida Pereira, Victor Barboza, Andres Barboza and, standing, Eric Charon, Sara Barboza Pereira '25, and Kalan Bonnette '23



Karen Nichols '83, CFO of the Lamar University Foundation; Uliana Trylowsky, associate vice president for university advancement; Cheryl (Spencer) Fuller '82 and Phillip Fuller '81



Seated, future Cardinal Ryan Hadnot and Alexander Reed '17 with, standing, Channing Hadnot, Rayven Jefferson '15 and Alexia Reeder



Future Cardinal Jack Beckman and Sonja Beckman '23



Tristen Anding '19 and Victoria LaFleur '19



Larry Zikes, Becky (Stephens) Zikes '70 and Judy Hammond '72, '82



Kenny Grimes and Laura (Scott) Grimes '02, '15



Charlie Cox and Karen Nichols '83, CFO of the Lamar University Foundation Inc.



Randy Becker, Elise Becker '05, '12, and Penny Becker



John Rollins '12, associate director, community relations and public affairs, and Christi Grudier '10, instructor of communication and media



Baby Rouly, Alex Rouly and Callie (Sterling) Rouly '22



Billy Grogan '16 and Connie (Martinez) Grogan '09, '17



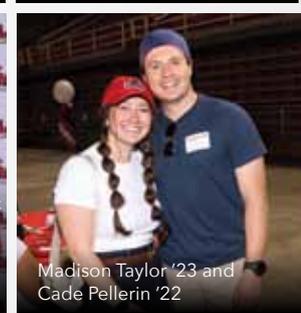
Linda (Seay) Allen '02 and Jeff Allen



Josh Davis '11, '15, '19, Elise Becker '05, '12, and Thomas (Tran) Davis '15



Sharlene Hatch '00, academic advisor, Sr., College of Education and Human Development, and Barbara Hatch



Madison Taylor '23 and Cade Pellerin '22



Maridale (Adams) Still '79, '12, '17, Randy Still '80, Kristen (Still) Davidson '11, Drew Davidson '11 and future Cardinals Mojo Sill and Roman Davidson



Evie Clifton, coordinator of LU Alumni Affairs and Antoinette (Espritt) Mays '07, '12, '16



Huey King, Anna Sigur '18, '22, and Tristen Anding '19



Big Red, Shawn Webb '03, '12, and Lu



Vanlam Nguyen '01, '03, and Jordon Stanley '11



Chris Johnsen, President Jaime Taylor, Michelle Wier '07 and Shawna (Powell) Gaines '03



LU Alumni Advisory Board president Chris Graham '90, Amy Graham, Caralee (McDonald) Thompson '95 and David Thompson '0



Benny Brocato '77, Frank Brocato '78, and Bill Withers '76, '79

Coach and science teacher **Brent Stark** '87, B.S. kinesiology, received the Nederland school district Nederland High School Teacher of the Year Award for 2025. He lives in Nederland.

Lee Brown '88, B.S. criminal justice, owns Brown Insurance. He and his wife, Melissa, live in Beaumont.

Jay Givens Jr. '89, B.S. computer science, is the Ben and Bertha Mieth International Commission Professor of Missions and institutional accreditation liaison at Wayland Baptist University. He and his wife, Lucy, live in Plainview.

Staci (Milligan) Ishee '89, B.S. elementary education, teaches first grade at Veritas Classical Academy. She and her husband, **John** '91, B.S. criminal justice, who retired from the Beaumont Police Department, live in Beaumont.

Mark Wales '89, B.S. mechanical engineering, is a CAD drafter for GBA Ships. He and his wife, Ruth, live in Florence, S.C.

90s

Janna (Tiner) Carter '90, interdisciplinary studies, is coordinator of secondary campuses for Bob Hope Schools. She and her husband, **Chad** '91, B.S. kinesiology, who is athletic coordinator for Hampshire-Fannett Middle School, live in Beaumont.

Sheree (Broussard) Downs '90, B.S. kinesiology, '11, M.Ed. administration, teaches physical education at Marshall Middle School in Beaumont school district. She and her husband, Troy, live in Beaumont.

Julie (Green) Motomura '90, B.S. elementary education, '10, M.Ed. counseling and development, '18, Ed.D. educational leadership, is superintendent of Buna school district. She and her husband, **Masaru Motomura** '99, B.S. kinesiology, live in Buna.

James Roach III '90, A.A.S. industrial electricity/electronics, '01, B.S. industrial technology, was an energy specialist in utilities services and is retired. He lives in Dayton.

Rachael (Slott) DuBois '90, B.S. speech, retired after 31 years of teaching. She and her husband, Rob, live in Port Neches.

The high council of Sigma Nu Fraternity gave its 2025 Regent's Medallion of Merit Award to **Chris Graham** '90, B.S. computer science. He is a systems engineer with ExxonMobil Corp., and he and his wife, Amy, live in Huffman.

Steve Adamson '91, B.S. kinesiology, is chief operations officer for Needville school district. He and his wife, **Deborah (Jones)** '90, B.S. elementary education, who teaches in Needville, live there.

Edeska Barnes Jr. '91, B.S. criminal justice, is director of the First Judicial District Juvenile Probation Department. He lives in Jasper.

Irving Brown '91, chemical engineering, is a learning consultant and skills manager with Siemens Digital Industries. He and his wife, Valerie, live in Olmsted Falls, Ohio.

Michael Kiefer '91, B.B.A. accounting, is senior vice president and trust manager with First Financial Trust and Asset Management Company. He and his wife, **Cynthia (Sokol)** '97, B.A.A.S. applied arts and sciences, who teaches fifth grade at Legacy Christian Academy live in Beaumont.

Stuart Kieschnick '91, B.S. kinesiology, '99, M.Ed. administration, '12, Ed.D. educational leadership, retired as superintendent of Nederland school district. He and his wife, Jody, live in Nederland.

Christina (Whiting) O'Rear '92, A.S. law enforcement, '93, B.A. criminal justice, retired in 2025 as a Master Peace Officer after 30 years of distinguished service in law enforcement. She is co-regional director of the Texas Crisis Intervention Association and regional director of the Texas Law Enforcement Peer Network. She and her husband, **David** '93, B.B.A. marketing, who is an auto damage supervisor with Geico, live in Grapevine.

Brandy (Adams) Roccaforte '92, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, and **Ashley (Adams) Whitehead** '07, B.A.A.S. applied arts and sciences, co-own Sorella's Restaurant. Brandy and her husband, **Charles** '94, B.S. biology, live in Nederland. Ashley, who teaches at C.O. Wilson Middle School in Nederland school district, and her husband, Paul, live in Nederland.

Bill Decker '93, completed the National Senior Games in Barebow Recurve (70-74), finishing in sixth place after two days of competition in Des Moines, Iowa. He retired from teaching math at C.O. Wilson Middle School in Nederland school district. He and his wife, **Nannette (Thomas)** '91, B.S. elementary education, live in Port Neches.

Samuel Beaumont '94, M.S. biology, earned his doctorate in organizational leadership in 2021 and is vice president of Magellan Learning Solutions. He and his wife, Carrie, live in Forest, Va.

Dr. Manda (Waldrep) Hall '96, biology, earned her medical degree in 2002 and serves as deputy commissioner of the Community Health Improvement Division at the Texas Department of State Health Services. She lives in Austin with her husband and children.

Lance Broussard '97, B.S. chemical engineering, is vice president of business development for Refined Technologies. He and his wife, **Dr. Crystal (Ray) Broussard** '97, B.S. biology, B.S. chemistry, is medical director of Wellness Revolution Texas.

Edwards recalls roots

Deja (Williams) Edwards '19, B.G.S. general studies, is owner and lead designer of Sanded Treasure, a faith-filled handmade retail brand creating home décor, personalized gifts and interactive art experiences. She also is an assistant teacher at Cooperative Children's Center. She and her husband, Kyle '17, B.S. civil engineering, B.S. mathematics, '18, M.E.S. civil engineering science, who is a civil design engineer-in-training with KPFF Consulting Engineers, live in Marysville, Wash. "LU is where I discovered the type of person I wanted to be. It's where I met my husband and best friends, made incredible memories and experienced lots of joy. It's home."

They co-own Harmony Aesthetics and live in Spring.

Billie (Gavrelos) Cisneros '97, interdisciplinary studies, '14, M.Ed. administration, is principal of Sallie Curtis Elementary School in Beaumont school district. She and her husband, Octavio, live in Beaumont.

Molly Villarreal '97, B.S. civil engineering, is public works director for the City of Beaumont. She lives in Port Arthur.

Brandi (Spoonemore) Wulf '97, B.S. communication, '13, M.Ed. school counseling, is student activities director at West Brook High School in Beaumont school district, where she and her husband, Brian, live.

Emily (Everett) Allen '98, B.S. political science, '04, M.Ed. supervision, is assistant principal of Marshall Middle School in Beaumont school district. She and her husband, Chris, live in Sour Lake.

Eric Lawson '98, B.S. general studies, is superintendent of Carbon Cliff-Barstow school district. He and his wife live in Taylor Ridge, Ill.

Monil Malhotra '98, M.E.S. engineering science, is president, North America, of Kempower. He and his wife, **Deepa (Balundgi)** '98, M.E.S. engineering science, who is director of commercial operations for Emerson Electric Co., live in Gibsonia, Penn.

Regina (Land) Snell '98, B.S. kinesiology, retired from Hardin school district May 31, 2025. She and her husband, **Randy** '97, B.S. kinesiology, who retired from Hardin school district Dec. 31, 2024, live in Hardin.

Michelle Templain-Kuehn '98, B.S.W. social work, '01, M.Ed. educational leadership, is a licensed professional counselor and owns Professional Counseling Associates, which offers in-person and telehealth via several platforms. She and her husband, **Adam** '98, B.S. environmental science, who is an environmental specialist at Motiva Enterprises. They live in Beaumont.

Sister Melissa Cessac '99, B.B.A. marketing, made her profession of perpetual vows with the Congregation of Divine Providence in San Antonio Aug. 9, 2025, her final step in becoming a Catholic nun. She is director of campus ministry and administration for

San Antonio-Providence Catholic School and lives in San Antonio.

00s

Karol Allen '00, B.S. criminal justice, '08, M.Ed. educational technology leadership, worked 24 years in education and is an adjunct instructor at Lamar Institute of Technology and an instructional technologist for Beaumont school district. She owns KLA Photography and lives in Port Arthur.

Former tennis professional **Brady Mazzola** '00, B.S. criminal justice, produced the documentary Mr. Inspiration: The Bob Wieland Story. Brady is CEO of Mazzola Management and founder and CEO of Watering Seeds Organization Inc., a nonprofit group that provides sports rehabilitation and wellness opportunities for people with disabilities. He lives in Humble.

Janet (LaFleur) Morris '00, B.S. communication disorders, '02, M.S. speech-language pathology, teaches at Hillcrest Elementary School in Nederland school district. She and her husband, James, lives in Port Neches.

Nichole (Morris) Wienstroer '00, B.B.A. management, is regional business director for Tribal Diagnostics. She and her husband, Patrick, live in Missouri City.

Haley (Hill) Dean '01, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, is principal of Hillcrest PDS Elementary School in Waco school district. She lives in Waco.

Max Dunlap '01, M.B.A. business administration, is principal accountant with Doeren Mayhew. He and his wife, Younghea, live in Houston.

Kenyon Spears '01, is athletics director of Newman University. He and his wife, **Anne** '00, B.S. psychology, who is senior manager of campaigns at Creative Fundraising Advisors, live in Wichita, Kan.

Michelle (Williams) Snodgrass '02, B.B.A. human resources management, is assistant principal of Memorial 9th Grade Academy in Port Arthur school district. She and her husband, **James** '14, B.S. nursing, who earned a family practitioner doctorate in 2020 and is fire captain of the City of Port Arthur, live in Beaumont.

Regan (Mougia) Burkey '03, B.S. communication, is licensed practitioner of the healing arts clinical supervisor with Integral Care. She and her husband, Todd, live in Austin.

Daisy (Middlebrook) Marino '03, B.G.S. general studies, '15, M.Ed. education technology leadership, is principal of China Elementary in Hardin-Jefferson school district. She and her husband, **Frank** '06, B.A.A.S. applied arts and sciences, live in Beaumont.

Charisma (Walker) Popillion '03, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, '07, M.Ed. administration, is assistant superintendent of school leadership with Port Arthur school district. She and her husband, Byron, live in Beaumont.

Austin Williams '03, B.B.A. finance, is vice president of commercial lending and business development for Jefferson County with Commercial Bank of Texas. He and his wife, **Nicole (Lajudes)** '13, B.S. communication disorders, '15, M.S. speech-language pathology, live in Beaumont.

Tiffany (Richard) Brown '04, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, is deputy superintendent of teaching, learning and innovation for West Orange Cover Consolidated school district. She lives in Orange.

Victoria (Adams) Landry '04, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, '10, M.Ed. administration, is principal of Dr. Mae

E. Jones-Clark Elementary School in Beaumont school district. She and her husband, William, live in Beaumont.

Jennifer Ravey '04, B.A. English, '07, M.A. English, is manager of social media at EducationDynamics. She and her husband, **Caleb** '14, B.M. music, live in Beaumont.

Jeremy Robison '04, B.B.A. management information systems, earned his master's degree in management information systems in 2025 and is director of information technology for South East Texas Regional Planning Commission. He and his wife, **Visa (Ratnarajah)** '00, B.B.A. marketing, who is an investment advisor representative with BBVA Wealth Solutions, live in Lumberton.

Max Windham '04, B.G.S. general studies, is director of leadership development for Granite Construction. He lives in Spring.

Jonathan Haskett Jr. '05, B.B.A. accounting, B.B.A. marketing, is executive vice president of Education First Federal Credit Union. He and his wife, Carrie, live in Beaumont.

Lori Latino-Morgan '05, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, '20, M.Ed. administration, is assistant principal at Lumberton Intermediate School. She and her husband, Adam, live in Kountze.

Nkem Nwaobi '05, B.S. nursing, is a family and psychiatric mental health

nurse practitioner and owns Ukanti Healthcare Services. She earned a doctorate in nursing science in 2023 and lives in Beaumont.

Holly (Simmons) Reames '05, B.S. nursing, '15, M.S. nursing administration, is a medical science liaison at Deciphera Pharmaceuticals. She and her husband, Ryan, live in Humble.

Jeremy Simmons '05, B.S. kinesiology, is a teacher and coach at Nederland High School. He and his wife, **Stacie (Chaddrick)** '01, B.B.A. human resource management, who teaches business at Little Cypress-Mauriceville High School, live in Orange.

Valencia Aplon '06, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, received the Member of the Year Award from Alpha Omega Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority. She lives in Beaumont.

Tabitha (Nash) Herrera '06, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, is an intervention specialist and fourth grade teacher with Katy school district. She and her husband, Mario-Antonio, live in Katy.

Lorelei (Stinnett) Jackson '06, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, '09, M.Ed. administration, is assistant principal of Vidor Elementary School and the first educator in Region 5 National Board Certified Teacher Cohort to earn NBCT certification. She and her husband, **Austin** '07, B.B.A. accounting, who is

controller for Broussard's Mortuary, live in Vidor.

Carrie Katseres '06, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, teaches history at Vidor High School. She lives in Beaumont.

Elle (Barnard) '07, B.S. psychology, married Steven Bui last June. She is a conference planner with Gartner C-level Communities and lives in Dallas.

Derek Graffagnino '07, B.S. civil engineering, earned his professional engineer certification. He is an engineer with Arceneaux Wilson & Cole and lives in Port Arthur.

Brandy (Fregia) Roy '07, B.S. biology, '19, M.Ed. administration, is assistant principal of Port Neches Intermediate School. She and her husband, **Jason** '03, B.S. communication, who is a marketing representative for HealthSouth Diagnostic Center, live in Port Neches.

Constance (Johns) White '07, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, '14, M.Ed. administration, is principal of Glenn York Elementary School in Alvin school district. She and her husband, Carnell, live in Rosharon.

Katie (Whitney) Celli '08, B.G.S. general studies, is chief communications and development officer at Industrial Safety Training Council. She and her husband, Frank, own Flagship Mailroom, and live in Beaumont.



Mary Alice Baker and Vic Miller '93, '02

Communication alumni honor Baker

Communication alumni organized a gathering of former students of Mary Alice Baker, retired professor of communication, at Carrabba's last May to honor and thank Baker for the impact she had on their lives.



Marla (Jordan) Broussard '97, Mary Alice Baker and Caralee (McDonald) Thompspon '95



Jessica Wooley '06, Jessica (Jordan) Richardson '06, Mary Alice Baker and Cherrye Moore '98



Caralee (McDonald) Thompspon '95 and Josh Yawn '07, '25



Jenny Hamilton '04, '21, and Jessica (Jordan) Richardson '06



Shandale Eaglin '98, Lisa (Bryant) McDonald '90, Yolanda Eaglin and Heather (Griffin) Kilgore '93

Dakota Doman '08, B.A.A.S. applied arts and sciences, '11, M.B.A. business administration, is managing director of ZRG Partners. He lives in Houston.

Clyde Steelman Jr. '08, Ed.D. educational leadership, retired in January 2026 as executive director of the Education Service Center Region 11 after four decades in public education. He and his wife, Julie, live in Blum.

Congratulations to **Wafa (Hammad)** '08, B.G.S. general studies, and **Fred Vernon II** '12, B.B.A. accounting, '13, M.B.A. business administration, M.S. accounting, on the birth of their daughter last June. Wafa is a realtor and a registered nurse with Christus St. Elizabeth Hospital, and Fred is founder and CEO of KLV Ventures Inc. They live in Port Arthur.

Lucille Biebel '09, B.A. English, is a sales consultant for Bolton-Doge Chrysler Jeep Ram. She lives in Port Neches.

Michael Brady '09, B.B.A. marketing, is fire and safety inspector at TotalEnergies. He and his wife, Megan, live in Nederland.

Audrey (Bowser) Collins '09, M.Ed. administration, '25, Ed.D. education technology innovation, is Beaumont school district's special education BU feeder pattern director. She and her husband, James, live in Beaumont.

Cody Day '09, B.G.S. general studies, is head coach and athletics director at Coldspring-Oakhurst High School. He and his wife, Kayla, live in Elkhart.

Chad Dubois '09, B.S. nursing, is a certified registered nurse anesthetist with Essential Anesthesia Management. He lives in Orange.

Pinkee (Patel) Harley '09, B.B.A. finance, '10, M.B.A. business administration, is a financial advisor and co-owns a branch office of Edward Jones Investments in Port Neches along with her husband, **Devin** '10, B.S. industrial engineering, '11, M.B.A. business administration, also a financial advisor. They live in Port Neches.

Chris Jarmon '09, B.A. political science, is the economic development director for the City of Dayton. He and his wife, **Autumn (Norris)** '11, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, '15, M.Ed. school counseling, who is an educational diagnostician with Beaumont school district, live in Beaumont.

Twana Jones-Wilson '09, B.G.S. general studies, '13, M.S. health promotion, is a Texas Agrilife Extension Services agent for family and consumer health. She and her husband, Kenya, B.G.S. general studies, who works for the U.S. Postal Service, live in Beaumont.

Patrick Monaghan '09, M.Ed. administration, is executive director of special programs for Dickinson school district. He and his wife, **Heather**

(Connell) '15, M.Ed. administration, who is a fundamental skills teacher for Alvin school district, live in Rosharon.

Lana (Gauthier) Richards '09, B.B.A. marketing, owns Lana Richards State Farm. She and her husband, **Jonithan** '96, B.B.A. marketing, who owns Park Avenue Cleaners, live in Bridge City.

Leslie (Myers) Sonnier '09, B.S. exercise science and fitness management, teaches fifth grade at Highland Park Elementary School in Nederland school district. She and her husband, Jacob, live in Nederland.

10s

Amanda Allen '10, M.Ed. education technology leadership, '17, Ed.D. educational leadership, is president of Wharton County Junior College. She and her husband, Scott Honea, live in El Campo.

Dalana (Joseph) Bennett '10, B.A.A.S. applied arts and sciences, '18, M.Ed. administration, is assistant principal of Abraham Lincoln Fine Arts Academy in Port Arthur school district. She lives in Beaumont.

Desmond Bertrand-Pitts '10, B.A.A.S. applied arts and sciences, '14, M.Ed. education technology leadership, is executive director of Buffalo Soldiers National Museum. He and his spouse, Justin, live in Houston.

Sandra (Juarez) '10, B.S. family and consumer sciences-nutrition, '19, M.S. nutrition, and **Steven Frederick** '13, B.S. geology, welcomed a son to their family last July. Sandra is a nutritionist, and Steven is a manufacturing engineer with Helena Laboratories. They live in Sour Lake.

Congratulations to **Lauren (Holdorff) Kriesien** '10, B.B.A. general business, and her husband, Lance, on the birth of their daughter last June. Lauren is director of human resources and talent acquisition for Hilltop Residential Management, and they live in Rosharon.

Amanda (Taylor) Richard '10, B.A.A.S. applied arts and sciences, retired after 27 years of service from West Orange-Cove school district. She lives in Orange.

Jimmy Sellers '10, M.Ed. administration, is principal of North Kitsap High School. He and his wife, Ami, live in Lake Stevens, Wash.

Torrian Tucker '10, B.S. communication, is assistant principal at Jasper Junior High School. He earned his doctorate in educational leadership in 2024 and lives in Houston.

Jeriah (Johnson) Banks '11, M.B.A. business administration, is director of federal programs for Beaumont school district. She lives in Beaumont.

Caleb Bell '11, M.Ed. administration, is chief facilities and construction officer

for Aledo school district. He and his wife, Jessica, live in Aubrey.

Amber (Alexander) Clark '11, B.A.A.S. general studies, is chief of staff for the Lamar Institute of Technology. She earned a doctorate in higher education leadership in 2025, and she and her husband, Gregory, live in Beaumont.

Carley Cox '11, B.G.S. general studies, is vice president of operations for 5Point Credit Union. She and her husband, Travis, live in Groves.

The Southeast Texas Nonprofit Development Center named **Josh Davis** '11, B.S. criminal justice, B.S. sociology, '19, M.P.H. public health, its 2025-2026 Community Impact Award recipient. He is vice president of development for Legacy Community Health. He and his husband, **Thomas** '15, B.B.A. advertising communication, B.B.A. marketing, who owns Kings Bakehouse By Thomas and is a marketing and communications associate for Better Business Bureau Serving Southeast Texas, live in Beaumont.

Miranda (Nunez) Looney '11, B.B.A. human resource management, is a commercial loan officer with Education First Federal Credit Union. She and her husband, James, live in Beaumont.

Samantha Myers '11, B.S.W. social work, is manager of behavioral health care coordination for Texas Children's Health Plan. She lives in Houston.

Congratulations to **Jasmine (Cade) Nelson** '11, B.S. communication disorders, and her husband, Darius, on the birth of their daughter last June. She is a speech-language pathologist with Let's Talk About It Speech Therapy, and they live in Cypress.

Zachary Skinner '11, B.S. kinesiology, is athletics director and head football coach for West Hardin County school district. He and his wife, Kara, live in Silsbee.

Jessica (Brown) '11, B.B.A. management, '12, M.B.A. business administration, and **John Sutton** '12, B.S. exercise science and fitness management, celebrated the birth of their son last July. Jessica is recruitment operations manager for Outsource, and they live in Houston.

Brieann (Fiorenza) '12, B.S. nursing, and **Randy Edwards Jr.** '08, B.B.A. marketing, welcomed a daughter to the family last July. Brieann is a registered nurse with Christus Health Foundation of Southeast Texas, and they co-own The Avenue Coffee & Café. They live in Beaumont.

Sarah (Maraffa) Falgout '12, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, teaches fourth grade math and science at All Saints Episcopal School. She and her husband, **Andrew** '10, B.S. kinesiology, who is athletic director and teacher at All Saints Episcopal School, live in Beaumont.

Matthew McGuinness '12, B.B.A. management information systems,

earned his master's degree in analytics in 2021 and is manager of consumer and patient analytics at Wellstar Health System. He and his wife, Jessica, live in Katy.

Madison (Davis) Morrison '12, B.A. political science, B.A. history, and her husband, Lane, welcomed a son to their family last June. Madison is a staff attorney with the Court of Appeals First District of Texas. They live in Kingwood.

Damara (Goff) Paris '12, Ed.D. deaf studies and deaf education, is a professor in counseling at Gallaudet University. She lives in Salem, Ore.

Blake Peveto '12, B.S. kinesiology, '23, M.Ed. administration, is assistant principal of Vidor High School. He and his wife, **Katy** '12, B.S. kinesiology, '21, M.Ed. administration, live in Orange.

Nga (Tran) Pham '12, B.S. nursing, and her husband, Hai, opened Claw Madness last August in Port Neches. She is a neonatal nurse practitioner at UT Health in Houston. They live in Port Neches.

Nhi Pham '12, B.S. forensic chemistry, and her husband, Vu Nguyen, welcomed their daughter to the family last July. She co-owns Nothing Bundt Cakes, and they live in Nederland.

Lisa (Roche) Thrasher '12, B.A.A.S. applied arts and sciences, is a behavioral specialist at Sour Lake Elementary School. She and her husband, **Toby** '04, B.S. kinesiology, '11, M.Ed. administration, who is a teacher and coach in Hardin-Jefferson school district, live in Sour Lake.

The Texas Education Agency named **Amber Valcin** '12, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, '16, M.Ed. teacher leadership, an exemplary teacher. She teaches fifth grade at Stanley Elementary School in Katy school district, where she lives.

Jay Ashby '13, M.Ed. administration, is executive director for innovation and program development for Abilene school district. He and his wife, Kate, live in Abilene.

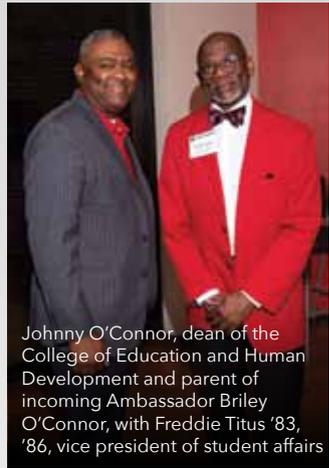
Ryan Barnett '13, B.S. mechanical engineering, is mine manager at Mitsubishi Cement Corp. He and his wife, Traci, live in Sugarloaf, Calif.

Garet Duhon '13, B.S. civil engineering, earned his master's degree in engineering management in 2020 and is senior project manager with Pape-Dawson. He and his wife, **Candice (Montgomery)** '13, B.S. industrial engineering, '14, B.B.A. business administration, who is commercial manager for Freeport LNG, live in Houston.

Shelby Ibarra '13, B.S. graphic design, '19, M.Ed. administration, '23, M.Ed. school counseling, is a mental health counselor at Kountze High School. She and her husband, **Phillip** '15, B.S. industrial technology, who is lead operating technician for ARLANXEO, live in Lumberton.



Incoming ambassadors pose with their new red blazers: front row from left, Alyvia Ott, Campbell Spell, Faith Cheng, Taylor Bui, Shelby Johnson, Briley O'Connor, Emma Grace Nelson, Mari Cardenas; back row from left, Calvin Ncube, Brian Jackson Jr., Brianna Brottem, Maddy Wernig, Madison McGuire, Elizabeth Diaz Arreola, Mariah Priestly, Jasmine Guillory, Mario Miguel, Mohammed Irhabi



Johnny O'Connor, dean of the College of Education and Human Development and parent of incoming Ambassador Briley O'Connor, with Freddie Titus '83, '86, vice president of student affairs

Ambassadors Blazer Ceremony

New Lamar University Ambassadors were presented with their red blazers Aug. 22, 2025, at a special ceremony in the Dr. Richard L. Price I Auditorium in the Herman Iles Building where they recited the ambassador oath. The evening also featured welcome remarks by Freddie Titus '83, '86, vice president of student affairs, and scholarship presentations to inaugural recipient Jada Thrash by Temple Emanuel representative Norma (Roddy) Sampson '75 and the family of late Ambassador Margaret Kay-Alana Calhoun Turner '24, Rosa and Robby Calhoun.



Ambassadors Jacob Smith and Bryce Sheffield



Ambassadors Peyton Jones, Logan Morris and Drake Rothenberger



Ambassador Kadence Garlington with Rosa and Robby Calhoun, representatives of the Margaret Kay-Alana Calhoun Turner Scholarship for Ambassadors



Bryan Spell '99, '09, Campbell Spell and Haley (Lowrance) Spell '01



Alyson Vu, Grace Roy and Daisy Calero Estrella



Kristi Giblin, Mary Wernig, Maddy Wernig and The Honorable Keith Giblin '86



Norma (Roddy) Sampson '75 and Alan Sampson '68



Ashton Rainey, Riley Trent, Ryan Servantes



Carsen Barrett, Logan Morris, Mohammed Irhabi and Bilal Alani



Mary Wernig, Mallary Warner, Grace Gause



Ambassadors Carsen Barrett, Grace Gause, Mallary Warner and Elizabeth Drago



Jennifer (McMullen) East '01 and Brianna Brottem



Norma (Roddy) Sampson '75 presents the Temple Emanuel Love Thy Neighbor Scholarship to Ambassador Jada Thrash



Freddie Titus '83, '86, presents red blazer to incoming Ambassador Mohammed Irhabi



Rosa and Robby Calhoun present the Margaret "Kay-Alana" Calhoun Turner Scholarship for Ambassadors to Jada Thrash

GOUTHIER

| CLASS NOTES |

LU Ambassador Elizabeth Drago, Big Red and Jutalia Edwards

Alumni Baseball Pre-Game Party

Alumni and friends gathered last May before the Lamar University v. Houston Christian University Baseball game to cheer on the Cardinals to victory at Vincent-Beck Stadium.



Juan Zabala '07, vice president for university advancement and CEO Lamar University Foundation Inc.; Amy Graham; Shannon (Copeland) Figueroa '02, '03, '07, director of alumni affairs and advancement services; Chris Graham '90; and LU Alumni Advisory Board president Emily (Everett) Allen '98, '04



Future Cardinal Jaxson Jones, Big Red and Elise Becker '05, '12



John Sanchez, Kaylie (Smith) Sanchez '18, Hayden Griggs and James Smith



Betty (Bryan) Richey '80 and Bill Richey '87



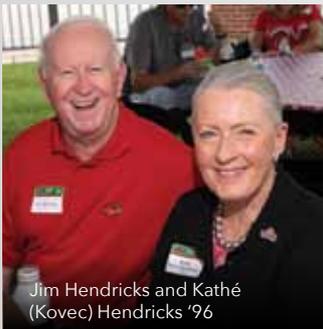
Gerard Celestine '91, '96, and Tieraney Celestine



Lee Anne Nabors '78, Delores (Wilber) Rollo '78 and Amy Gauthier Walla '76



Back row from left, Leon Holley, Cory Holley '10, '12, Carly Holley, Morgan (Walston) Autrey '15, J.T. Autrey '14, Meagan (Adams) Guidry '10 and Jake Guidry '12; front row from left, future Cardinals Brooke Holley, Emma Holley, Ledger Autrey, Collins Autrey, Stella Guidry and Savannah Guidry



Jim Hendricks and Kathé (Kovec) Hendricks '96



Anna Foster '24 and Cody Wulf '25



Brian Wulf and Brandi (Spoonmore) Wulf '97, '13



Chris Partin, Cindy (Dinkins) Partin '97, '99, Julie (Turner) Weldy '98 and Brett Weldy



LU Alumni Advisory Board president Emily (Everett) Allen '98, '04



Jeff Darby '88 and Matt McClure '88



Natalia Hebert '22, '23, and future Cardinals Julianne Edwards and Julecia Edwards



Cody Guidry and Holley (Killingsworth) Guidry '05

Sebastian Lopez Jr. '13, B.A.A.S. applied arts and sciences, is director of technology for Barbers Hill school district. He lives in Beaumont.

Amy Lovoi '13, B.B.A. general business, '15, M.B.A. business administration, is CEO and president of the Greater Beaumont Chamber of Commerce. She lives in Beaumont.

Jonathan May '13, B.S. communication, teaches at Bob Hope Middle School in Port Arthur school district. He and his wife, **Danielle (Wiggins)** '18, B.S. family and consumer sciences—nutrition, dietetics, hospitality, who is an office associate with Bette H. Davidson State Farm, live in Port Neches.

Nathan Mistrick '13, B.B.A. entrepreneurship, B.B.A. management, B.B.A. general business, '21, M.B.A. business administration, is a technical account manager at AWC Inc. His wife, **Megan (Fournier) Mistrick** '13, B.G.S. general studies, recently earned her master's degree in social work and is a hospice liaison with Amedisys. Together, the couple has three children: Forrest, 9, Maverick, 7, and AnnMarie, 4. They live in Nederland.

Srinivasa Mukkala '13, M.S. chemistry, is director of statistical programming and biostatistics at Epis Data Inc. He lives in Washington, Mich.

Shaqueena (Parker) Nobles '13, B.S. criminal justice, '24, M.P.A. public administration, is emergency management coordinator for the City of Beaumont and an MPA program adjunct instructor at Lamar University. She and her husband, Martell, live in Beaumont.

Tiffany (Rider) Perkinz '13, B.A. English, '17, M.A. English, '19, M.Ed. administration, and her husband, Jordan, welcomed a son to their family last April. She teaches English at St. Anne Catholic School. They live in Groves.

Christine Zabala-Eisshofer '13, B.A. history, B.A. English, is an assistant professor at Anne Arundel Community College. She and her husband, Mike, live in Baltimore, Md.

Timothy Berube '14, M.Ed. school counseling, is principal of Wilson Middle School in Northwest school district. He and his wife, Amber, live in Fort Worth.

J. Paul Drury '14, M.Ed. education technology leadership, earned his doctorate in history in 2025 and is retired. He and his wife, Khiam, live in Baton Rouge.

Lachelle (Lavalais) Edwards '14, B.A.A.S. applied arts and sciences, and her husband, Jacoby, welcomed a son into their family last August. She received the 2025 Humanitarian of the Year Award at the Constable Chris Bates Scholarship Breakfast April 12, 2025. Lachelle is public affairs and communications manager for the Port of Port Arthur, where they live.

Lauren (Anderson) Frederick '14, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, '20, M.Ed. school counseling, and **Deidre (Frazier) Lawrence** '88, B.S. psychology, own Choices Counseling, offering individual, couples and family counseling for all ages. Lauren and her husband, **Blake** '14, B.S. mechanical engineering, live in Orange. Deidre and her husband, **David** '04, B.A.A.S. applied arts and sciences, '11, M.Ed. administration, who teaches at Vidor Junior High School, live in Vidor.

Courtney Glidden '14, B.S. communication, is a member services representative with Education First Credit Union. She lives in Bridge City.

Jason LeBlanc '14, B.S. biology, is a technical supervisor with ExxonMobil Corp. He and his wife, **Aishah (Muhammad)** '14, B.S. biology, '21, M.Ed. administration, live in Beaumont.

Arturo Rodriguez Jr. '14, B.S.W. social work, is coordinator of continuing education at Lamar Institute of Technology. He lives in Beaumont.

Jane (Kirchner) Smith '14, M.Ed. administration, retired from Hardin school district as a math teacher May 31, 2025. She and her husband, Robert, live in Thicket.

Patty Stephens '14, B.S. biology, earned her master's in physician assistant studies in 2018 and is a physician assistant with UT Southwestern Medical Center. She lives in Dallas.

Nancy Zepeda '14, B.B.A. finance, '16, M.B.A. business administration, owns the financial consulting firm Nancygrazie. She and her husband, Daniel Valencia, live in Port Arthur.

Amy (Wallace) Adkins '15, M.Ed. school counseling, is assistant principal of Paris Junior High School. She and her husband, Kevin, live in Paris.

Morgan Autrey '15, B.S. communication, teaches technology in Nederland school district. She and her husband, **J.T.** '14, B.G.S. general studies, who is a contractor safety specialist with BASF TOTAL Petrochemicals, live in Orange.

Jenna (Cook) Garcia '15, B.S. family and consumer sciences—family studies, '18, M.Ed. clinical mental health counseling, and her husband, Travis welcomed a daughter to their family last July. She is a psychotherapist with The Conative Group. They live in Missouri City.

Hillary (Haynes) Gravett '15, B.B.A. marketing, is assistant economic development director of the Orange Economic Development Corp. She and her husband, Gregory, live in Orange.

Christopher Guastella '15, M.Ed. administration, is superintendent of Waskom school district. He and his wife, **Jennifer (Thomas)** '15, M.Ed. school counseling, live in Ferris.

Stephen Janecek '15, M.Ed. administration, is principal of Needville High School. He and his wife, Jan, live in Beasley.

Congratulations to **Jasmine (Rogers) Scott** '15, B.S. health education, and her husband, Samuel, on the birth of their daughter last June. Jasmine teaches fourth grade in Fort Bend school district. They live in Rosharon.

Chloe (Tucker) '15, B.A.A.S. applied arts and sciences, '18, M.Ed. school counseling, and **Ty Weaver** '19, B.S. industrial technology, were married last May. Chloe is a counselor with Bridge City High School. They live in Groves.

Danielle (Ellis) Zabala '15, B.S. psychology, is an anesthesiologist for Oklahoma University Health. She and her husband, **Kevin** '16, B.S. psychology, live in Oklahoma City, Okla.

Corbin Carr '16, B.B.A. economics, 'B.B.A. finance, owns Let It Foam, a foam party entertainment company. He lives in Kingwood.

Donald Heseman '16, M.Ed. administration, '24, Ed.D. educational leadership, is superintendent of Levelland school district. He and his wife, Autumn, live in Levelland.

Gerald Landry '16, B.B.A. management, '17, B.B.A. business administration, is a sales and marketing specialist with Sinclair Inc. He and his wife, **Faith (Hubbard)** '16, B.B.A. marketing, live in Beaumont.

Tanya (Miles) Ledger '16, M.Ed. administration, is principal of STEM Academy at Enis Elementary School in Decatur school district. She and her husband, Priestly, live in Decatur.

Rhonda (Austin) Meredith '16, B.A.A.S. applied arts and sciences, '23, M.Ed. teacher leadership, is a resource teacher in Pasadena school district. She and her husband, Scott, live in Houston.

Jael (Spencer) Moody '16, M.Ed. teacher leadership, is director of special programs and testing for Vidor school district. She and her husband, Donald, live in Beaumont.

Whitney Murdock '16, B.S. psychology, '25, M.S. psychology—industrial and organizational, is an instructor of psychology at Lamar University. She lives in Beaumont.

Amber (Bailey) Owens '16, B.S. nursing, owns Better Me Meals. She is a fitness instructor/coach at Miss Fit—The Female Fitness Solution. She and her husband, **Fred** '14, M.Ed. administration, who is principal of Amelia Elementary School in Beaumont school district and is a commissioner for the Port of Port Arthur, live in Port Arthur.

Richard Rosario Jr. '16, B.B.A. finance, '16, B.B.A. accounting, '17, M.B.A. business administration, is a senior tax accountant at the Houston Branch of CommunityCPA. He lives in Beaumont.

Brooklyn (Hogden) Sampere '16, B.S. exercise science and fitness management, is the local government and community affairs representative for Cheniere Energy Inc. She and her husband, Bryce, live in Bridge City.

Ken Stanley '16, M.Ed. administration, retired as head football coach from Coldspring-Oakhurst school district. He owns Stanley Insurance Group. He and his wife, **Tyletha (Donaghe)** '16, M.Ed. administration, live in Coldspring.

Sara Alvarez '17, is principal of Centennial Elementary School in Lubbock school district. She lives in Lubbock.

Tricia Contreras '17, B.B.A. management information systems, '20, M.S. management information systems, is an SAP coordinator for Lamar University. She and her husband, Frank, live in Beaumont.

Siara (Dodds) Haas '17, B.S. political science, is senior associate attorney at Frost Brown Todd Attorneys. She and her husband, Vantz, live in Houston.

Andre Harness '17, M.B. music performance, '25, M.B.A. business administration, is executive director of the non-profit The Golden Triangle Big Band, dedicated to preserving the legacy of big band jazz and expanding access to music education in Southeast Texas through free concerts and regional clinics for high school musicians. He and his wife, Taryn, live in Baytown.

Kaitlin (Warren) O'Quinn '17, B.B.A. entrepreneurship, B.B.A. management, B.B.A. general business, owns KO Creative Agency, helping small businesses, entrepreneurs and nonprofits grow. She and her husband, Ryan, live in Lumberton.

Emily (Carl) Rhine '17, B.B.A. marketing, is marketing manager at Education First Federal Credit Union. She and her husband, Justin, live in Port Neches.

Sierra (Haygood) Ramirez '17, B.S. nursing, is a registered nurse with Christus St. Elizabeth Hospital and was commissioned as a leader. She and her husband, **Jacques** '17, B.S. nursing, who is a registered nurse with Christus St. Elizabeth Hospital, live in Bridge City.

Jessica (Myers) '17, B.S. nursing, and **Marcus Rodgers** '20, B.S. mechanical engineering, welcomed a daughter into their family last July. Marcus is an aerospace engineer with NASA. They live in Dickinson.

Morgan (LeBlanc) Sumrall '17, B.S. nursing, is a pediatric hematology nurse practitioner with Baylor College of Medicine. She and her husband, **Tyler** '16, B.S. communication, who is senior external communications specialist for Honeywell, live in Houston.

Kennedy (Mitchell) VanDevender '17, B.S. psychology, '22, M.Ed. counseling and development, is the early onset program supervisor for Spindletop

Center. She and her husband, Julian, live in Vidor.

Lyndsey (Dumesnil) '17, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, and **Kade Weaver** '16, B.S. criminal justice, welcomed a son to the family last July. Lyndsey teaches kindergarten in Leander school district, and Kade is a detective with the Travis County Sheriff's Department. They live in Leander.

Victoria (Martinez) Young '17, B.S. criminal justice, '18, M.S. criminal justice, teaches at C.O. Wilson Middle School in Nederland school district. She and her husband, Jesse, live in Nederland.

Chastadie Barrs '18, B.S. communication, is director of recruiting for Memphis Women's Basketball. She lives in Charleston, S.C.

Benjamin Bridges '18, M.Ed. administration, is principal of Finley Junior High School in Waxahachie school district. He and his wife, **Jenny (Parker)** '19, M.Ed. digital learning and leading, live in Waxahachie.

Ryan Donina '18, B.S. environmental science, is an air quality specialist at TG Natural Resources. He lives in Houston.

Matthew Frederick '18, B.S. criminal justice, earned a doctorate in criminal justice in 2024 and is a lieutenant with the West Orange Police Department. He lives in Orange.

Omar Gonzalez '18, B.S. biology, is a clinical research assistant at IQVIA. He earned a master's degree in molecular, cellular and developmental biology in 2020 and lives in Denton.

Lacey (deBretagne) Johnson '18, B.S. communication-corporate, is executive national accounts coordinator for Apex Systems. She and her husband, Jordan, live in Baytown.

Chantal (Douglas) Mangum '18, M.Ed. educational leadership, is assistant director of community and media relations for Beaumont school district. She lives in Beaumont.

Katie (Leavins) McGee '18, B.S.W. social work, owns Katie McGee, LCSW, providing online counseling services to individuals age 10 and up. She earned a master's degree in social work in 2019 and lives in Port Neches with her husband, **Kevin** '16 B.S. communication, who is a multimedia specialist with the City of Beaumont.

Rachel (Brammer) Mullins '18, B.B.A. accounting, is tax services manager with Mitchell T. Fontenot CPA Inc. She and her husband, Matthew, lives in Groves.

Karlee (Wilkes) Ogden '18, B.S. psychology, and her husband, Garrett, welcomed a son to their family last August. Karlee is associate director of operations in the Lamar University Office of Student Aid. They live in Sour Lake.

Stephanie (Betrand) '18, B.S. nursing, and Nathan Spence were married last July. She is an NICU nurse at Children's

Memorial Hermann Hospital. They live in Rosenberg.

Autumn (Harris) Taylor '18, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, and her husband, Zach, welcomed a daughter to their family last July. She teaches first grade at Vidor Elementary School, and they live in Groves.

Cristina (Villa) '18, B.S. family and consumer sciences-nutrition, dietetic and hospitality, '19, M.S. nutrition, and **Alex Tso** '19, B.S. exercise science and fitness management, were married last May. Alex is an outreach athletic trainer for Memorial Hermann Hospital in Houston, and Cristina is a clinical nutrition manager at Pediatric Home Service. They live in Houston.

Kristen (Bass) '18, B.S. speech and hearing sciences, '20, M.S. speech-language pathology, and **Caleb Washburn** '16, B.S. mechanical engineering, welcomed a son to the family last May. Kristen teaches fifth grade in Nederland school district, and Caleb is a mechanical engineer with Lion Elastomers Inc. They live in Nederland.

Madison (Marino) Doan '19, B.B.A. economics, B.B.A. finance, co-authored *Slacking: A Guide to Ivy League Miseducation*, which exposes the need for academic renewal as students navigate a maze of shallow, politicized courses to uncover the rare gems of a classical education, chronicled in one chapter per each of eight universities. Madison is a policy analyst with The Heritage Foundation. She and her husband, **Edward** '20, B.S. chemical engineering, who is an MBA associate with Anacapa Partners, live in Boston.

Katie (Lasater) Duff '19, B.G.S. general studies, '24, M.Ed. administration, is assistant principal of Silsbee Elementary School. She lives in Hardin.

Steven Edlin '19, Ed.D. educational leadership, is principal of A.C. Jones High School in Beeville school district. He lives in Beeville.

Corey Isbell '19, Ed.D. educational leadership, is president of Fort Hays Tech Northwest. He and his wife, Heather, live in Goodland, Kan.

Lt. Serene Kaggal '19, B.S. psychology, serves in the Navy and lives in Missouri City.

Madison (Read) Neely '19, B.S. kinesiology, is an AVID teacher and coach at Edwards-Johnson Memorial Silsbee Middle School. She and her husband, Jared, Kountze.

Morgan (Takach) '19, B.B.A. finance, and Trey Nicar were married last March. She is a transition support partner with LPL Financial. They live in Charlotte, N.C.

Monica Ozuna '19, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, and Angel Pedraza '20, B.S. chemical engineering, welcomed a daughter into their family last June. Monica teaches science in Goose Creek school district, and they

live in Baytown.

Benjamin Powell '19, M.Ed. administration, is head football coach of Metairie Park Country Day School. He lives in Reserve, La.

Amy Sparks '19, M.Ed. administration, is director of special education for Rockwall school district. She and her husband, Tommy, live in Rockwall.

20s

Tatum (Kieschnick) Austin '20, B.A.A.S., applied arts and sciences is owner of Kieschnick Chiropractic in Beaumont. She earned her chiropractic doctorate in 2023 from Texas Chiropractic College. She and her husband **Brandon** '18, B.S. mechanical engineering who works as an onsite applications engineer at Flowserve in Port Arthur, reside in Groves.

Elyse Broussard '20, B.B.A. human resource management, '22, M.B.A. business administration, is a physician liaison and marketer with Diagnostic Group. She lives in Beaumont.

Dr. Katelyn "Katie" (Meaux) '20, B.S. psychology, B.S. biology, and **Dr. David Vindel Brower** '20, B.S. biology, married last May. Katie earned her medical doctor degree from the University of Texas at Galveston Medical Branch in 2024, and David earned his doctorate in dental surgery degree from the University of Texas School of Dentistry in Houston in 2024. They live in League City, TX.

Taylor (Angelle) Dolce '20, B.S. speech and hearing sciences, '23, M.S. speech-language pathology, is a speech language pathologist with Rehab at Home. She and her husband, **Jackson** '20, B.B.A. management, who earned his medical degree in optometry in May, live in Houston.

Madison (Hamby) Hardisty '20, B.A. psychology, earned a master's degree in applied behavioral analysis in 2025 and is wellness program director for Samaritan Counseling Center of Southeast Texas. She and her husband, Brant, live in Port Neches.

Alfredo Jimenez '20, M.Ed. educational technology leadership, is principal of Tyrrell Elementary School in Port Arthur school district. He lives in Port Neches.

Beth (Castillo) '20, B.S. exercise science and fitness management, and **Avery Murdock** '19, B.S. exercise science and fitness management, welcomed a daughter to their family last July. Avery is a physical therapist with Memorial Hermann, and they live in Port Neches.

Congratulations to **Aubrie (Martin)** '20, B.S. chemical engineering, and **Tristan Rhodes** '22, B.S. exercise science and fitness management, on their marriage. She is a project engineer with Alliance Engineers & Project Consultants, and

he is head coach at Mauriceville Middle School. They live in Orange.

Monica (Machen) Ventress '20, M.Ed. administration, is principal of Bullard Early Childhood and Primary School. She and her husband, Robert, live in Bullard.

Margaret Fazio '21, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, '25, M.Ed. teacher leadership, owns Shining Star Embroidery and Cooking with Margaret. She teaches fourth grade science and social studies in Hamshire Fannett school district and lives in Beaumont.

Congratulations to **Makenzie (Callender)** '21, B.S. nursing, and **Dane Jones** '21, B.S. chemistry, on their marriage. She is an intensive care unit nurse at Baptist Hospitals of Southeast Texas. They live in Buna.

Itzel Lopez '21, B.S. university studies multidisciplinary, is a bilingual kindergarten teacher at Hillcrest Elementary in Nederland school district. She lives in Groves.

Randy Mathisen '21, M.Ed. administration, is principal of Elgin Intermediate School. He and his wife, Chenda, live in Elgin.

Kaitlyn (Harvey) Miller '21, B.S. university studies multidisciplinary, teaches at Central Middle School in Nederland school district. She and her husband, **Chaston** '20, B.S. communication studies, who earned a master's degree in theological studies in 2025 and is worship pastor for First Baptist Church of Groves, live in Groves.

Alexis (Sturrock) Patronis '21, B.S.W. social work, earned her master's degree in social work in 2023 and is director of operations for Court Appointed Special Advocates of Southeast Texas. She and her husband, **Zachary** '22, B.B.A. economics, B.B.A. finance, who is founder of Patronis X, live in Orange.

Zac Tabor '21, M.Ed. administration, is girls' basketball coach for Tascosa High School in Amarillo school district. He and his wife, Niya, live in San Antonio.

Bethany (Derouen) Taylor '21, M.S. management information systems, is project manager at Magellan Federal. She and her husband, Kyle, live in Conroe.

Katie (Williams) Teel '21, M.B.A. business administration, '24, M.Ed. clinical mental health counseling, owns Teel Therapy Services and is a mental health counselor. She and her husband, Shawn, live in Lumberton.

Maggie (Lucia) Dixon '22, B.G.S. university studies multidisciplinary, is human resources coordinator for Broussard's Mortuary. She and her husband, Tyler, live in Orange.

Alicia (Kirven) Hittle '22, M.Ed. counseling and development, is a school counselor. She and her husband, Spencer, live in Temple.

Board welcome 2025

New members of the LU Alumni Advisory Board gathered for an orientation and welcome luncheon Aug. 21, 2025

Front row from left, Becky Fussell '82; Anna Sigur '19, '22; Gwendolyn (Johnson) Lacy '72; Vanlam Nguyen '01, '03; Emily (Everett) Allen '98, '04, 2024-2025 board president; Kristin Hampton '10; Johnny O'Connor, dean, College of Education and Human Development; back row from left, Chris Graham '90, 2025-2026 board president; Dakota Doman '08, '11; President Jaime Taylor; Richard Valley '70; and Juan J. Zabala '07, vice president for university advancement and CEO of the Lamar University Foundation Inc.



FIGUEROA

Amber (Wilson) '22, B.S. university studies multidisciplinary, married Zamean Hooks last July. She teaches in Kountze school district.

Kaylie (Overstreet) '22, B.S. nursing, and **Marc Lerma** '20, B.B.A. finance, B.B.A. economics, were married in March 2025. Marc is director of M&A and corporate strategy at WWEX Group. They live in Houston.

Ryan Snell '22, B.S. university studies, '25, M.S. applied nutrition, teaches physical education at Hardin Elementary School. He and his wife, **Kaitlyn (Lawrence)** '24, B.S. family studies teaching, who teaches art at Bridge City Middle School, live in Orange.

Veronica Clay '23, B.S. university studies multidisciplinary, '24, B.S. criminal justice, owns Woman 2 Woman accounting and tax service firm. She lives in Beaumont.

Jetta (Terrell) Glenn '23, B.S. speech and hearing sciences, teaches first grad special education at Silsbee Elementary School. She and her husband, Joshua, live in Silsbee.

Madison (Richards) '23, B.S.W. social work, married Kade Gilbeau last July. She is director of social services for Touchstone Communities, and they live in Kountze.

Lindsey (Chirafis) Grantham '23, B.A. political science, '24, M.P.A. public administration, is a human resources assistant for the City of Nederland. She and her husband, Colton, live in Lumberton.

Samantha Jordan '23, B.S. speech and hearing sciences, is a speech-language pathologist at Silsbee Elementary School. She lives in Silsbee.

Tracy Ramirez '23, B.S. communication-broadcasting, owns TR Media to help businesses grow,

reach the right audience and tell their stories. She is the lifestyle show host for KFDM News Channel 6. She lives in Port Arthur.

Anthony Sanders '23, M.S. criminal justice, is police chief of Fort Bend school district. He and his wife, Cheryl, live in Corpus Christi.

Grace (Richard) Theriot '23, B.S. exercise science and fitness management, and her husband, Caleb, welcomed a son into their family last July. They live in Groves.

Congratulations to **Courtnie (Wheeler)** '23, B.S. nursing, and **Kelby Weyler** '21, B.S. exercise science and fitness management, on the birth of their son last June. Courtnie is a registered nurse with Baptist Hospitals of Southeast Texas, and Kelby teaches science in Hardin-Jefferson school district. They live in Kountze.

Mindy Escobedo '24, B.B.A. human resources management, is correspondence coordinator with the Office of the Speaker, Texas House of Representatives. She lives in Austin.

Charlee (Hollyfield) Harvill '24, B.B.A. marketing, owns Charlee Harvill Digital Marketing Solutions. She and her husband, Skylar, live in Sour Lake.

Pitcher Riely Hunsaker '24, B.S. university studies multidisciplinary, joined the Chicago Cubs as a 2025 major league baseball draft pick. He lives in Peculiar, Mo.

Paul Idahosa '24, Eng.D. industrial engineering, is a continuous improvement specialist at ABB. He lives in Fort Worth.

Melissa King-Knowles '24, Ed.D. educational leadership, is deputy superintendent of Waco school district. She and her husband, Kelly, live in Woodway.

Janelle Martin '24, M.Ed. clinical mental health counseling, has written *Losing Her, Finding Us: A Mother's Fight, A Daughter's Journey and the Road to Recovery*, a story for parents walking a similar path through a teenager's drug addiction and recovery told from both perspectives. She lives in Magnolia.

Alexandra (Mixson) '24, B.S. nursing, married Logan O'Dell last July. Alexandra is a registered nurse at Baptist Hospitals of Southeast Texas, and they live in Buna.

Travis Phelps '24, B.S. university studies multidisciplinary, '25, M.S. applied nutrition, signed a pro contract with Frontier League's Florence Y'all Berries, becoming the first player in franchise history to sign a professional baseball deal. He lives in Alvin.

Angelica Sanchez '24, Ed.D. education leadership-education technology innovation, is executive director of college, career and military readiness and enrichment for United school district. She and her husband, Alfredo, live in Laredo.

Congratulations to **Kaitlyn (Lawrence)** '24, B.S. family studies teaching, and **Ryan Snell** '22, B.S. university studies multidisciplinary, '25, M.S. applied nutrition, on their marriage. She teaches art at Bridge City Middle School, and he teaches physical education at Hardin Elementary School. They live in Orange.

Sullivan Spell '24, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, teaches in Nederland school district and is assistant cheer coach for Nederland High School. She lives in Nederland.

Skylar Wade '24, B.S. university studies multidisciplinary, teaches third grade English, language arts and reading at Silsbee Elementary School. She lives in Beaumont.

Travis Walker '24, M.B.A. business administration, teaches and coaches in Port Neches-Groves school district. He and his wife, Amber, live in Beaumont.

Nurjei Weems '24, B.S. university studies multidisciplinary, is on the women's basketball coaching staff of Central Methodist University. She lives in Missouri City.

Erin Beard '25, B.S. physical education/teacher education, is a special education teacher in Vidor school district. She lives in Vidor.

Emilio Flores '25, M.B.A. business administration, is sales manager for FE&SCO Manufacturing. He lives in Natalia.

DeAnna Gilmore '25, B.S. nursing, is a registered nurse with Memorial Hermann-Texas Medical Center. She lives in Houston.

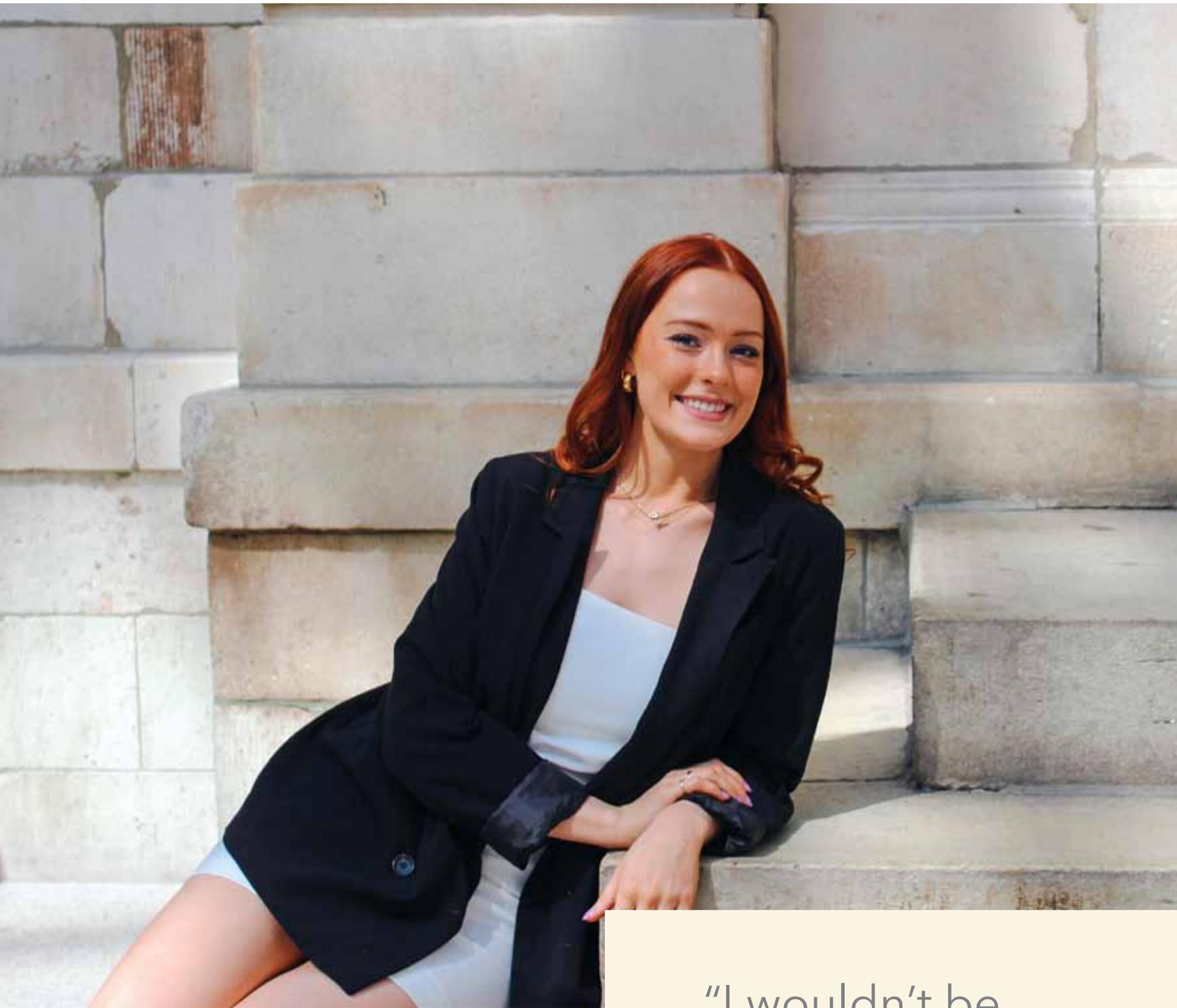
The Philadelphia Phillies signed **Peyton Havard** '25, B.B.A. management, as an undrafted free agent last July. He lives in Orange.

Shannon (Hay) Shumate '25, M.Ed. administration, is an assistant principal. She and her husband, George, live in Splendora.

Jill Stokes '25, B.S. communication-public relations, is stewardship coordinator for the Lamar University Division of University Advancement. She lives in Beaumont.

Hannah Thrash '25, B.S. forensic chemistry '25, B.A. music, is a forensic chemist for Harris County Institute of Forensic Science. She lives in Houston.

Andres Valenzuela '25, B.S. electrical engineering, M.E.M. engineering management, owns Precision Era Concrete and Construction. He lives in Hillsboro, Ore.



"I wouldn't be
where I am today
without **Lamar.**"

—Mac Cumpian '20

A Mac of all trades

by MONA BRITAIN

Where is Mac? Cumpian lives and works in New York City as an educator at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, studio manager for acclaimed artist John Alexander '68 and adjunct art professor at Lamar. She's also a digital marketer; graphic designer; owner and content creator of MacArts LLC; digital and film photographer; and competent in using power tools—a self-described Mac of all trades.

Mac Cumpian '20 grew up in Beaumont wanting to be a dancer. She danced at Marsha Woody's Academy of Dance, graduated from West Brook High School then attended Kilgore College on a Rangerette Scholarship, after being selected to its famed dance team.

Returning to her hometown and entering Lamar, Cumpian said, "Lamar is so welcoming. I immediately got involved in student organizations and the Lamar Dance Team, and through LU's faculty, staff and my peers, I discovered my passion, my love of the arts—especially art education." She graduated with a Bachelor of Science in studio art education.

Cumpian stated that spending so much time at Lamar's Dishman Art Museum turned into a job while at LU. "Director Dennis Keil put such faith in me. I'm so grateful for the experience," she said. What were her favorite classes? "Color theory with Xenia Fedorchenko, ceramics with Linnis Blanton '72, '76, and photography with Keith Carter '70. They cultivate creativity," she replied.

"Dr. Joana Hyatt was my art education teacher, advisor and mentor. She wrote letters of recommendation and instilled in me the confidence to apply to top graduate schools," she said.

Cumpian graduated from New York University in 2023 with a Master of Arts in Museum Studies. She recalled her first day at NYU when students went around the room giving their name and alma mater. "Everyone was from some Ivy League or other big-name university. When it was my turn, they never heard of Lamar University, and I said to myself, 'And I'm sitting at the same table as you.'"

Now at the Met, Cumpian teaches art to intergenerational families, leads adult art-making classes and conducts tours for the museum and the Met Cloisters,

a museum of medieval art that she calls a little oasis.

Cumpian said Keil's recommendation led to a job interview with John Alexander. "At the Dishman, my desk faced one of Alexander's paintings. I never dreamed I would ever meet him. I did and was hired." As studio manager at Alexander's Manhattan and Amagansett studios, "I guess I'm what you call his right-hand man. John is the best. He takes art very seriously, and he's fun. He has kept his southern charm."

BEST ADVICE

"Work hard and never be afraid to ask for help. It's okay to reach out and talk to professors. After all, you're paying for your education and college resources."

FAVORITE QUOTE

"Don't forget where you came from, but always remember where you're going."

LAST WORDS

"Art is for everyone. It makes us more well-rounded. Being creative can help you in any field of work. Art gives us more understanding, more patience that we all need and, well, it's fun."

COURTESY CUMPIAN





Beck Fellows share transformative research *experiences*

by APRIL THOMPSON

Two aspiring researchers shared stories of discovery and growth during the annual David J. Beck Fellowship ceremony Nov. 6, where they presented their research in speech rehabilitation and neurological disease detection.

The Beck Fellowship, one of Lamar University’s most prestigious undergraduate awards, provides full academic funding for one year and up to \$10,000 for a summer research or study abroad experience. Beck Fellows are selected for their academic excellence, leadership and potential for meaningful impact in their fields.

This year’s presentations highlighted the far-reaching influence of the fellowship, with projects conducted in Chicago and Qatar that pushed the boundaries of clinical and scientific understanding.

Speech and hearing sciences major Harvest Fairchild described her fellowship at the Shirley Ryan Ability Lab in Chicago—the nation’s top-ranked rehabilitation research hospital—where she worked on the NORLA-6 Scale Study, an effort to improve speech assessment for individuals with aphasia, a language disorder often caused by stroke or brain injury.

Fairchild said the experience offered rare, hands-on access to clinical work that undergraduates in her field seldom receive. “I wanted to get as much as I could during my undergraduate experience, and through the David J. Beck Fellowship, I was able to gain clinical experience far sooner than many in my field,” she said.

Her research involved hours of listening, transcription and scoring speech patterns to refine the six-point Norla scale used to measure communication recovery. Beyond research, she participated in aphasia support groups and observed swallowing and feeding assessments, deepening her understanding of medical speech pathology.



FAIRCHILD AND IRHABI

“It really did shape and strengthen my relationship with my field,” Fairchild said. “Lamar got me here and I am elated and so grateful to everyone involved in this extraordinary opportunity.”

Biology major Mohamed Irhabi conducted his fellowship research at Weill Cornell Medicine–Qatar, exploring how retinal imaging could serve as an early diagnostic tool for neurological diseases such as migraines, Parkinson’s and multiple sclerosis.

“The eye truly can act as a window to the brain,” Irhabi said. “If we catch those

changes early, we can move from late detection to early prevention.”

Irhabi’s study focused on using optical coherence tomography angiography and corneal confocal microscopy to map and measure the smallest blood vessels and nerve fibers in the eye. His findings suggested significant differences in blood vessel density among migraine patients, opening new possibilities for early diagnosis.

Both students expressed deep gratitude to Distinguished Alumnus David J. Beck, a 1961 Lamar University graduate and prominent Houston attorney whose endowment has funded dozens of undergraduate research projects since the program’s inception in 2009. He is recognized nationwide for his career achievements.

“This is the best part of our program,” Brett Welch, provost and vice president for academic affairs, said. “Listening to these students reminds us why this fellowship exists.”

The Beck Fellowship continues to empower Lamar University students to pursue high-impact research and global experiences—bridging classrooms and real-world innovation through opportunity and excellence.