

BLUE & GOLD

MURRAY STATE UNIVERSITY'S ALUMNI MAGAZINE • SPRING 2025



**We Did it
Together**

\$100 MILLION RAISED

BE BOLD

Forever Blue & Gold

The Murray State University
CENTENNIAL CAMPAIGN

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POSTMASTER

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Dear Alumni and Friends:

With a great sense of appreciation, I am excited to announce that our Be Bold: Forever Blue and Gold Centennial Campaign has achieved its \$100 million goal, marking a transformative moment in Murray State University's history. Due to the generosity of nearly 25,000 donors and more than 110,000 gifts, the support from this historic campaign will advance student access and support and academic excellence, along with strategic campus modernization, including support for Racer Athletics. Thank you so much for your unwavering support of this campaign as we propel Murray State into its second century.

In this edition of the Blue & Gold magazine, you will read more about incoming Murray State President, Dr. Ron K. Patterson, who will assume the role on July 1, 2025. As my retirement on June 30 nears, I am excited to welcome Dr. Patterson along with his family to Murray State University and the Murray community. Dr. Patterson brings 25 years of experience in higher education. His enthusiasm and vision will continue to advance Murray State and the upward trajectory that our institution is experiencing.

Also in this edition, you will learn about our Racers Finish adult degree completion program. This program began just last year, and we have already seen many success stories of students who began their college career at Murray State, but had not completed their bachelor's degree. According to a 2023 study by Georgetown University's Center on Education and the Workforce, 72 percent of jobs in the U.S. will require postsecondary education and/or training by 2031. We are confident that our nearly 150 academic programs and excellent faculty and staff, this new program will assist many returning Racers as they resume their academic journey and reach the finish line in earning their degree.

The 2025 Kentucky Legislative Session resulted in wonderful news as we continue to pursue a School of Veterinary Medicine at Murray State University. Senate Bill 77 passed the House and Senate unanimously and was signed into law by Governor Andy Beshear. This legislation provides a path forward for Murray State University to offer a Doctorate in Veterinary Medicine, and we are very grateful to the individuals who worked tirelessly during the past two years to advance this initiative. This bill will allow us to meet the needs of our economy and workforce, along with ensuring that we address the pressing needs of our multi-billion-dollar agricultural industry in Kentucky.

Since August 2018, I have had the privilege of serving my Alma Mater as President. There is no greater honor in higher education and this service has been the capstone of my professional career. As a new chapter begins for Karen and I on July 1, please know we are grateful to each of you as fellow alumni and friends of the finest place we know!

Sincerely,



Dr. Robert L (Bob) Jackson, '85
President



Murray State President Dr. Bob Jackson with Murray State
Board of Regents – March 2025

BLUE & GOLD

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Discover recent news about Racer alumni (more than 80,000 strong!) throughout the world, including this year's Distinguished Alumni Award winners and Tidy Dad!

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Groundbreaking held for new learning commons/residence hall

Murray State University held a groundbreaking for the construction of a new learning commons/residence hall on March 28 as the University continues to expand and modernize its housing options for students.

Located just south of the Susan E. Bauernfeind Wellness Center on the residential side of campus, the four-story building will include more than 250 beds along with multiple study and meeting rooms that can be used for student instruction, activities and programs. This includes a large divisible room capable of seating 120 people or two 60- person rooms. The 83,370-square-foot building will offer dining options as well.

\$38 million in funding was secured in the 2024 Legislative Session for the construction of the new building.



Conceptual Interior Rendering

As University enrollment continues to grow, the new facility will further modernize student housing while meeting the needs of an increasing number of students who are choosing to live on campus. Within the past year, Murray State opened Station Seventy-Four at Murray State University, which consists of approximately 270 beds in various apartment-style layouts.

“We are very grateful to the Kentucky legislature, our Board of Regents, students, faculty and staff as this new learning commons and residence hall will be a wonderful resource and enhancement at Murray State University to support campus life for our students while assisting with recruitment and retention,” Murray State President Dr. Bob Jackson said.



Conceptual Exterior Rendering

Murray State University earns reaffirmation of accreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges

Murray State University has earned reaffirmation of its accreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC). The new 10-year accreditation was a rigorous multi-year effort and process led by the Office of the Provost and involved numerous academic and administrative areas across the University to present a profile of the institution and demonstrate compliance with all SACSCOC standards and requirements. The process culminated in a multi-day campus visit by a SACSCOC review team.

This is the second consecutive 10-year reaffirmation in which there were no recommendations given by SACSCOC to Murray State.

“Murray State University received its first accreditation in 1928. Since that time, it has cultivated a tradition of excellence through the development and enhancement of its programs, services and resources,” said SACSCOC liaison and Senior Associate Provost Dr. Bob Pervine. “It is because of this diligence that Murray State University has consistently upheld all accreditation requirements and standards presented by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges. Murray State University is, first and foremost, committed to the success of its students, which makes the reaffirmation process a top priority.”



Shannon Slate named as director of Murray State University's Hopkinsville and Fort Campbell Regional Campuses



Shannon Slate

In February, Murray State University announced its new director of the Hopkinsville and Fort Campbell Regional Campuses, Shannon Slate.

Slate earned her bachelor's degree and master's degree from Western Kentucky University in 2016 and 2021, respectively. She is married to Davis Slate, and they have two children, Raelynn and Sadie.

In recent years, Slate has worked in secondary education as the gifted and

talented enrichment specialist for Christian County Public Schools. She has created various programs to challenge high school students beyond their grade level, leading students to compete at the national level. Slate has also developed community partnerships to provide enriching experiences for students outside of school that align with their strengths.

Slate had been serving as the western Kentucky gifted and talented cadre leader for the Department of Education. In addition, she has taught advanced placement social studies courses and was awarded Kentucky's National History Day Patricia Behring Secondary Teacher of the Year for 2024.

"We're very fortunate to have found Shannon Slate. She possesses an outstanding combination of skills and energy to lead Murray State University's efforts in Hopkinsville and beyond. She'll be able to connect with key community partners to help the region improve the number of people starting and completing a four-year degree," said Dan Lavit, executive director of the Center for Adult and Regional Education.

For more information about Murray State University's Hopkinsville Regional Campus, call 270-707-1525 or visit murraystate.edu/hopkinsville.

Murray State University and the SSC Services for Education grounds department recognized nationally

Murray State University and the SSC Services for Education grounds department have been honored as a Grand Award Winner for a Green Star Award by the Professional Grounds Management Society, in recognition of their outstanding work on Murray State's campus. SSC has partnered with Murray State since 2020, providing custodial and grounds maintenance services for its campus. This is the second consecutive year that SSC has achieved a Grand Award.

The award was given in the University and College Grounds (mid-size: 201-499 acres) category for exceptional grounds maintenance and is the highest award given. Winners were honored during the society's 2024 Awards Celebration, in conjunction with the Annual Conference and Equip Exposition in Louisville, Kentucky.

As part of the recognition, it was noted that "Murray State University's campus is unique in its geographical location which provides the energy of an exciting, state of the art university with the feel of a welcoming hometown college. Murray State's athletic complexes coupled with a vibrant landscape, draws in the eye and invites the onlooker to explore the campus' never-ending natural beauty."



The Arbor Day Foundation recognizes Murray State as a 2024 Tree Campus

The Arbor Day Foundation also recognized Murray State University as a 2024 Tree Campus for its dedication to enhancing community well-being through tree education, investment and community engagement.

"Trees have the power to inspire learning and improve well-being," said Michelle Saulnier, vice president of programs at the Arbor Day Foundation. "By growing campus green spaces, forward-thinking higher

education leaders like Murray State University are cultivating vibrant learning communities that also benefit the greater environment."

Trees on campus can lower the energy cost of campus facilities by providing shade cover, reducing extreme heat, improving air quality and boosting physical health benefits for students and staff. In addition, trees improve students' mental and cognitive health, provide an appealing aesthetic for campuses and create shaded areas for gathering and studying.

Murray State University's economic impact is highlighted in recent report

Murray State University's economic impact on the Commonwealth and the west Kentucky region was highlighted in a recent report.

Based on a 2017 comprehensive study led by Professor Emeritus Dr. Gil Mathis, updated for inflation, Murray State University generates more than \$633 million in economic output activity for the Commonwealth.

Report findings also include the following:

- \$265 million: annual total revenue generated by University employee, student and visitor spending
- \$23 million: annual state and local tax revenue generated by activity associated with Murray State University
- \$1.18 billion: estimated increase in earning capacity generated by nearly 42,000 Racer alumni who reside in Kentucky
- 6,025: total direct and indirect jobs created as a result of Murray State University's business operations

Based on a 2024 Economic Impact Report led by Murray State Professor of Economics Dr. Simone Silva, University construction



projects will generate more than \$348 million in economic output activity from 2024-2030.

Report findings specific to the University's construction projects also include the following:

- \$192 million: total contribution from Murray State University Construction Projects to the state's GDP (2024-2030)
- \$43 million: total estimated tax revenue from Murray State University Construction Projects (2024-2030)
- 2,457: total direct and indirect jobs supported by Murray State University Construction Projects (2024-2030)

Capital projects and enhancements to Murray State's campus include:

- New School of Nursing and Health Professions Building - \$45.5 million

- New Veterinary Sciences Building - \$60 million
- New Living/Learning Commons Building - \$38 million
- Construction, renovation and operations for the Cyber Education and Research Center - \$10 million
- Asset Preservation/Deferred Maintenance for campus buildings - \$46.6 million

"For more than 100 years, Murray State University has had an important responsibility to the Commonwealth of Kentucky and the west Kentucky region. This recent report highlights that importance in a variety of aspects as we move forward as an institution," Murray State President Dr. Bob Jackson said. "Students and families continue to count on us to make a difference in their lives through the transformational experience that a Murray State University education provides. As our University grows and expands through multiple capital projects and enhancements to benefit our students, we are very grateful to our state legislators for their support of Murray State University as we continue to enhance the economic well-being of our region and state."

Two Murray State University psychology graduate students recognized for their extraordinary work



Nia Jaco

Nia Jaco, a second-year school psychology graduate student from Paris, Tennessee, received the Jennie S. Ewald Award on Sept. 24 at the Kentucky Association for

Psychology in Schools event in Bowling Green, Kentucky.

This scholarship is designed to recognize and support school psychology students likely to impact the profession in Kentucky. This marks the fifth consecutive year that a student from Murray State University has won this award.

Speaking about her experience in the school psychology program, Jaco highlighted how her professors have

worked to ensure she and her peers are prepared for their future careers, citing her work as a graduate assistant.

"Working at the Center for Autism Spectrum Disorders and the Counseling and Assessment Center has provided me with real-world experiences in applying the knowledge I've gained in lectures," Jaco said. "These roles have allowed me to administer psychological assessments with guidance from my professors and consult directly with families to better understand their needs and help them."

Eliza Kho, a second-year clinical mental health counseling graduate student at Murray State University, was named the 2024 Outstanding Graduate Student Award recipient by the Kentucky Counseling Association.

Kho, an international student from Malaysia, initially arrived at Murray State in 2019 as a scholarship recipient for the women's golf team. Over the past few years, she has managed the demanding combination of being a student-athlete while pursuing a graduate degree in clinical mental health counseling. Currently, Kho is gaining hands-on experience in her internship at the Murray State Counseling Center, where she works directly with clients facing real-life challenges. Kho, who is set to graduate in August 2025, plans to pursue licensure as a clinical counselor and hopes to practice in the United States.



Eliza Kho

Murray State University senior Andriah Hawthorne chosen for prestigious ASHA Minority Student Leadership Program



Andriah Hawthorne

Andriah Hawthorne, a senior communication disorders student from Paducah, Kentucky, was chosen as one of 40 participants in the 2024 American Speech-Language-Hearing Association

Minority Student Leadership Program (MSLP) in Seattle, Washington, on Dec. 2-8.

This prestigious program aims to recruit and support minority students who have been historically underrepresented in audiology and speech-language pathology.

Selected from a competitive pool of 260 applicants, Hawthorne was one of only four undergraduate students admitted to the program; the other 36 were PhD or master's students.

Hawthorne, who graduated in May, plans to attend graduate school to obtain her master's degree in speech-language pathology.

"The most rewarding part of the experience was connecting with other students from universities worldwide who are at various stages in their communication disorders journey, with most being master's and Ph.D. level students," said Hawthorne. "Additionally, seeing professionals in decision-making positions who looked like me was incredibly inspiring. It demonstrated that working at that level is achievable, especially since many of those professionals were alumni of the MSLP program."

"Through her position as president and founding member of the CDI Diversity Council, she has worked diligently to recruit students of all backgrounds to major in communication disorders," said Dr. Alison Brown, assistant professor from the Center for Communication Disorders. "She combines vision with pragmatism, not only generating innovative ideas, but putting the work in to accomplish them."

In response to Hawthorne receiving this honor, Brown said Hawthorne is tenacious, both about her future as a speech-language pathologist and diversifying the field.



Alumni Association honors Dr. Jamie Rogers with student-nominated 2025 Golden Apple Award

Murray State University President Dr. Bob Jackson, '85; Director of Alumni Relations Carrie McGinnis, '20; Jones College of Science, Engineering and Technology Dean Dr. Claire Fuller; family members; colleagues and friends surprised Dr. Jamie Rogers, School of Engineering director and professor, with the 2025 Golden Apple Award during one of his classes in March as this year's Murray State University Alumni Association (MSUAA) Distinguished Professor.

The student-nominated award is the highest honor the MSUAA presents to a member of the faculty each year. Anna Werner (pictured), a sophomore mechanical engineering/physics major, nominated Rogers for this year's award, and he was selected by a committee made up of members of the MSUAA Board of Governors, in addition to the 2024 recipient, longtime nursing professor Dr. Mike Perlow.

Rogers has been with Murray State University for nearly 23 years. He first began as a professor teaching mechanical engineering in 2002. He then added the titles of Quality Enhancement Plan co-director in 2013 and engineering program coordinator in 2016. He has served as the director of the School of Engineering since July of 2022.

In her nomination letter, Werner said of Rogers, "He is the kind of professor who truly wants all of his students to succeed, and it shows in everything he does. From my very first college tour, he made such a big impact on me and was one of the main reasons I chose to attend Murray State. He's not just a professor—he's someone

I can turn to whenever I need guidance, whether it's for academic help or just some encouragement. As the director of the School of Engineering, he creates a supportive and engaging environment where students feel at home. There's no one else I would want as both a professor and a director. His dedication to his students and his passion for our success are unmatched."

As part of a longstanding tradition, Rogers served as the mace-bearer during commencement exercises in May, leading the academic procession and placing the mace in its holder on stage. The mace, which symbolizes order and authority, was designed and hand-crafted by Murray State's department of industrial education in 1968.



Anna Werner and Dr. Jamie Rogers

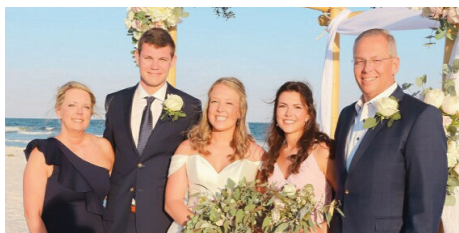
Murray State University surpasses \$100 million goal in historic Be Bold: Forever Blue & Gold Centennial Campaign

by the Office of Development

Murray State University proudly announces that it has surpassed its ambitious \$100 million goal in the Be Bold: Forever Blue & Gold Centennial Campaign, marking a transformative moment in the University's history. The campaign, designed to propel Murray State into its second century, has focused on two critical areas: student access and support and academic excellence, coupled with strategic campus modernization, including support for Racer Athletics.

Murray State President Dr. Bob Jackson highlighted the campaign's lasting significance. "Our vision to make Murray State University an accessible and modern campus for the twenty-first century, welcoming to all students, is now possible thanks to the generosity of thousands of donors," said Jackson. "We will be forever grateful for their thoughtful and generous support."

Learn more about some of the wonderful gifts and support that has been shown throughout the campaign. Thank you to the nearly 25,000 donors who have contributed more than 110,000 gifts, underscoring the broad and passionate support for Murray State's vision.



The Lawson Family

FIRST-GENERATION ALUMNI COUPLE GIVE BACK TO TODAY'S FIRST-GEN AGRICULTURE STUDENTS

Donors: Mr. Doug, '93, and Mrs. Stacey, '94, '00, Lawson and family

Gift: Creation of the Harry E. Lawson, Jr., and Billy F. Allen Memorial Scholarship Endowment

Impact: This endowed scholarship will provide financial assistance to first-generation students who are juniors or seniors majoring in a program within the Hutson School of Agriculture. More than 40% of Murray State students are first-generation students, meaning they will be the first in their families to graduate from a four-year college. First-generation students often face challenges such as financial limitations, and nationally tend to have a lower

graduation rate than non-first-generation students. This scholarship joins other forms of support that help first-generation students succeed at Murray State.

Inspiration: Doug and Stacey were both first-generation students who met at Murray State and later married. Although their fathers, whom they memorialize through this scholarship, never attended college, they believed in the power of a college education and inspired their children to pursue higher education. The Lawsons hope to help current and future first-generation Murray State students successfully graduate like they did so they can go on to achieve their career dreams.

NURSING ALUMNA AND HUSBAND MAKE MAJOR GIFT TO FUND SCHOLARSHIPS FOR NURSING STUDENTS

Donors: Mrs. Patti, '74, and Dr. Paul Eisenberg

Gift: Significant infusion of funds into the Dorothea J. Leitch Memorial Scholarship for nursing students

Impact: This gift will provide financial assistance to 10 nursing students each year, helping them achieve their dreams in the healthcare field.



Mrs. Patti and
Dr. Paul Eisenberg

Inspiration: A 1974 graduate of Murray State's nursing program, and one of the University's first nursing students to be recognized in the "Who's Who Among Students," Mrs. Patti Eisenberg knows personally

the hardships students face and how financial support can make a difference in their lives. She said that she would not have been able to attend Murray State without the scholarships she received, and thanks to that support, the experience she had with Murray State's nursing program and faculty opened doors that made all the difference in setting her on the course of the highly accomplished career she went on to enjoy. In her decades-long nursing career, Patti engaged in groundbreaking and nationally-recognized research at Jewish Hospital in St. Louis, Missouri; served on the faculty at several universities; received numerous prestigious awards in nursing and research; and was elected to be one of three members representing nursing practice on the National Board of the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education. Beyond her professional achievements, she and Paul have made a profound impact through philanthropy, including their generosity to support nursing students at Murray State.

2025 DISTINGUISHED ALUMNA MEMORIALIZES HER MOM, WHO TAUGHT NURSING AT MURRAY STATE FOR 24 YEARS

Donors: Kelli, '90, '91, and Scott Parsons

Gift: Commitment of major support to help furnish the soon-to-be School of Nursing and Health Professions Building, Jackson Hall,



Kelli and Scott Parsons

with modern, state-of-the-art equipment and technology.

Impact:

Construction of Jackson Hall has begun, and the University anticipates its doors opening for students in the

fall 2026 semester. The new building will offer nursing students cutting-edge technology, expanded space for labs, larger classrooms, simulation areas and more. The Parsons' generous gift will help make it possible for Murray State to furnish the building with the type of equipment that will give students professional-quality learning facilities.

Inspiration: This gift honors the legacy of Kelli's mom, Mrs. Oleta Burkeen, who taught nursing at Murray State for 24 years until her retirement in 2001. Not only did Mrs. Burkeen touch the lives of countless students through her teaching, but she and her husband Charlie also established the Phoebe Fund Endowment in Nursing to provide financial assistance to nursing students with demonstrated financial need. In appreciation of the support of both the Burkeens and Parsons, one of Jackson Hall's most integral learning spaces will be named the "Oleta E. Burkeen Nursing Essential Skills and Health Assessments Lab."

FAMILY OF NATHANIEL DURHAM, WHO PASSED AWAY AT AGE 20, CREATES SCHOLARSHIP IN HIS MEMORY

Donors: Adam Chustz, '99, Dwight Chustz and other family and friends of Nathaniel Durham



Nathaniel Durham

Gift: Establishment of the Nathaniel Durham Memorial Scholarship

Impact: This scholarship will assist undergraduate and graduate level students pursuing degrees within the Bauernfeind College of Business.

Inspiration: Nathaniel Durham, of Spring Hill, Tennessee, sadly passed away at the young age of 20. A landscaper who loved working with plants, he also had a passion for sports and played football throughout

high school. Although Nathaniel had not yet attended college, some of his family members had attended Murray State and chose to memorialize Nathaniel's spirit through the creation of a scholarship at MSU.

FIRST ENDOWED PROFESSORSHIP IN CONSTRUCTION MANAGEMENT ESTABLISHED

Donors: Lead gift from the Western Kentucky chapter of the Associated General Contractors (AGC); other gifts from alumni, AGC members and friends and family of Dr. Danny Claiborne



Pictured (from left to right): AGC Executive Vice President Chris Nelson, Dr. Danny Claiborne, Director of the School of Engineering Dr. Jamie Rogers and former Director of Development Christian Barnes.

Gift: Establishment of the Associated General Contractors Danny Claiborne Professorship in Construction Management

Impact: This prestigious new faculty position in the School of Engineering will help the University attract and retain exceptional faculty who have shown outstanding teaching effectiveness, scholarly productivity and community engagement by offering salary, research and professional support. By supporting such faculty, this award will ensure continued academic excellence in the construction management program into the future.

Inspiration: Dr. Danny Claiborne not only taught as a member of the faculty in Murray State's engineering program for 37 years, culminating in his role as Director until his recent retirement, but he also served an instrumental role in building the Construction Management and Architectural Design Program into the strong and successful program it is today. This professorship will honor his legacy by giving years of future support to the program that he worked so hard to create.

FIRST ENDOWED PROFESSORSHIP IN ENGINEERING PHYSICS TO HONOR FORMER DEAN STEVE COBB

Donors: Lead gifts from Rex Geveden, '83, '84, and Cindy Griner, '82; other gifts from alumni and friends and family of Dr. Steve Cobb

Gift: Establishment of the Dr. Steve Cobb Distinguished Endowed Professorship in Engineering Physics

Impact: Having an endowed professorship in engineering physics will not only reward outstanding faculty, but will also contribute to a more enriching and stimulating academic environment for students and the department as a whole. Students will benefit from learning from a distinguished expert in their field with demonstrated excellence in teaching and the resources to involve them in innovative research projects.

Inspiration: This professorship honors retired faculty member and former Dean of the Jones College of Science, Engineering and Technology, Dr. Steve Cobb. An alumnus of Murray State himself, and with more than 33 years of service to the University, Dr. Cobb embodied the commitment and dedication to teaching and to his field of study that Murray State so strongly values in its teaching staff. Through this professorship, Dr. Cobb's legacy will live on by supporting other deserving faculty members and will give students the same excellence in teaching and passion for the profession that he showed throughout his career.



Pictured (from left to right): (Back): former Director of Development Christian Barnes, Murray-Calloway County Hospital Radiologist and longtime friend of Dr. Steve Cobb Dr. Robin Floyd, Director of Murray State's School of Engineering Dr. Jamie Rogers, Executive Director of Advancement Dr. Tina Bernot, (Front): Longtime colleague of Dr. Steve Cobb Rhonda Anderson, Dr. Steve Cobb and Dean of the Jesse D. Jones College of Science, Engineering and Technology Dr. Claire Fuller.

RACER ATHLETICS RECEIVES LARGEST GIFT IN SCHOOL HISTORY FROM DILL FAMILY

Donors: David, '90, and Ashley, '89, Dill and family

Gift: Major multi-year commitment in support of Racer Athletics and the development of its student-athletes and sports programs.

Impact: The largest gift ever in Murray State University's history, this commitment from the Dill family will provide resources for much-needed facility upgrades and renovations, enhancements to the student-athlete experience, and future facility projects. By providing a long-term source of funding for these projects, the Dill family helps to ensure that Murray State can continue to recruit and retain excellent student athletes and operate a successful athletics program for years to come.

Inspiration: The Dill family's connection to Murray State runs deep and wide. The late Mike Dill came to Murray State in 1978 to join the Racer basketball coaching staff. Marilyn Dill, then Marilyn Valentine, arrived in the mid-1970s as a student. Mike and Marilyn's two sons, David and Chris, carried on the Racer tradition by both attending Murray State as student-athletes, David in the golf program and Chris in football. They both also met their spouses,

Ashley and Michelle, while attending Murray State. David is a member of the Murray State University Foundation Board of Trustees and served as the chair for the Be Bold National Campaign Council.



David and Ashley Dill

A RECORD-BREAKING GIFT FOR THE HUTSON SCHOOL OF AGRICULTURE

Donors: The estate of the late Bill, '49, and Merry Garrett

Gift: The largest estate gift received in Murray State University's history, in support of the Hutson School of Agriculture and especially the area of veterinary sciences, through the establishment of three endowed funds: one for an Endowed Professorship in veterinary sciences, one for scholarships for veterinary science students, and one for financial support for the Hutson School of Agriculture.

Impact: The Garretts' unprecedented estate gift will provide tremendous support for agriculture education at Murray State by providing financial assistance to students

pursuing careers in veterinary science, enhancing the University's ability to attract and retain high-caliber faculty in veterinary science and making resources available for internships, student and faculty research, support for graduate students, equipment purchases and upgrades and more.

Inspiration: Bill Garrett graduated from Murray State University, where he met his wife Merry, in 1949 with a degree in agriculture. He and Merry spent their working lives in the citrus industry in Florida, as well as in real estate development. This estate gift follows many years of strong



Bill Garrett

support for the Hutson School of Agriculture, recognized in 2011 with the dedication of the Bill and Merry Garrett Agricultural Education and Research Center at Murray State's University Farm.

ANONYMOUS GIFT MAKES TRANSFORMATIONAL IMPACT ON MUSIC PROGRAM

Donor: Anonymous Murray State alum

Gift: Multi-year commitment to provide funding for a new Steinway Grand Piano for the Performing Arts Hall and other program equipment needs, and the establishment of two endowed funds: one for scholarships for music students and one for program and operational needs for the music program.

Impact: This transformational gift will ensure the long-term health and stability of Murray State's music program, particularly by maintaining critical accreditation standards pertaining to instruments and equipment, allowing the program to thrive for future generations of Racers. As permanent endowments, this support will directly benefit students by providing them with top-tier tools to hone their craft, scholarships, travel opportunities, internship funding and more.

Inspiration: This anonymous donor has been inspired to support music education at Murray State in tribute to a close family member who had a lifelong love of music.

BADGETT FAMILY MAKES NEW GIFT TO SIGNIFICANTLY BOLSTER TEACHER EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES

Donors: Family of the late J. Rogers Badgett

Gift: Significant multi-year commitment to the College of Education and Human

Services, providing resources to three existing scholarship funds previously created by the family to support current and future teachers; creating the new Rogers Badgett, Sr. Student Assistance Fund with the purpose of eliminating barriers of entry aspiring teachers face; establishing an endowed professorship in each teacher education area offered at Murray State; and creating a new fellowship for graduate students in education training programs.

Impact: With 74% of teachers in the 18-county western Kentucky region being graduates of Murray State, the Badgett Family's generous new gift will impact the educational landscape across the region by making high-quality education programs available to scores of current and future teachers. This recent gift deepens the already immense impact that the Badgett family has had on teacher education at Murray State and throughout the region. With many of their scholarships targeted at nontraditional students and those transitioning from two-year community colleges, their generosity makes life-changing differences in the lives of these aspiring educators. With this new gift supporting both student scholarships as well as professorships, it will also enhance Murray State's ability to attract and retain high-quality faculty, enriching the educational experience for students.

Inspiration: The Badgett Family is among Murray State's most supportive donors with a passion for strengthening the educational landscape in the western Kentucky region. The family's legacy of supporting education began many years ago and honors the memory of Mr. J. Rogers Badgett, founder of the Badgett Construction Company and Badgett Mine Stripping Corporation, who strongly believed in the value of earning an education.



The Badgett Family

MURRAY STATE DEDICATES "LOGAN HALL OF BIOLOGY" TO RECOGNIZE FAMILY'S EXCEPTIONAL SUPPORT FOR SCIENCE EDUCATION

Donors: Dr. Thomas B. Logan, MD, '61, Mrs. Jo Lloyd Logan, '62, and family

Gift: Creation of two new endowed funds, the Logan Family Science Equipment and



Logan Hall Dedication

Technology Endowment and the Dr. Thomas B. Logan Endowed Chemistry Professorship, as well as an increase in support for their previously established Anna S. Brown and Ruth B. Logan Endowed Chair in Pre-Medicine

Impact: Building on a long history of support for Murray State University students and programs, which spans 28 different funds over decades of giving, the Logan family's new gift demonstrates an incredible and transformative investment in the Jones College of Science, Engineering and Technology. These permanent endowments will bolster the college's ability to move confidently into the future of science research and education by being able to provide its students with updated laboratories and equipment and attract and retain outstanding faculty.

Inspiration: The Logan family has deep roots at Murray State, especially in the sciences. Not only did Dr. Thomas and Mrs. Jo Logan receive their bachelors' degrees from Murray State, but so did their son Dr. Mark Logan, M.D., his wife Donna Krueger Logan, Dr. Thomas's brother William and their nephew Dr. William Logan II. Dr. Thomas Logan, as well as many other Logan family members, went on to achieve tremendous professional success in the medical field. The Logan Hall of Biology will proudly bear the family's name for decades to come and serve as a reminder of the incredible legacy of giving back to their Alma Mater that this extraordinary family has shown.

LIFELONG LOVE OF NATURE INSPIRES MELISSA EASLEY TO CREATE NEW FIELD RESEARCH AREA FOR STUDENTS

Donor: Melissa Easley, '64, '90

Gift: A gift of property to be turned into the Murray State University Easley Conservation Stewardship Area and the establishment of the Easley Conservation Stewardship Fund for Excellence to ensure long-term care and sustainability of the site.



Melissa Easley

Impact: This generous gift of both property and financial support creates an ecological learning lab for students closer to campus than other sites previously-established for this kind of hands-on education and research. Over 55 acres in size, this new Conservation Stewardship Area will offer students an ideal site to study botany, wildlife biology, soil science, ecology and more.

Inspiration: Melissa and her late husband Sid, '62, purchased this property decades ago due to their love of nature. Although they originally intended to build a home there, unfavorable site conditions and Sid's passing led Melissa to maintain the property as a natural area for birds and other wildlife. This special gift allows Melissa to pass her love of nature to the next generation and provides Murray State's biology and related sciences students with an outdoor classroom close to campus for pursuing their studies.



CFSB CONTINUES DECADES OF SUPPORT OF RACER ATHLETICS WITH NEW \$2 MILLION GIFT

Donor: Community Financial Services Bank (CFSB) of Benton, Kentucky

Gift: \$2 million commitment to support Murray State University's vision to enhance the fan and student-athlete experience through the addition of the CFSB Center Courtside Club, a trailblazing and first-of-its-kind bunker club that will be created as one of the most prominent new features of the renovation of the CFSB Center.

Impact: The soon-to-be CFSB Courtside Club will offer a unique and innovative courtside space where Racer fans can experience the game right next to the action on the court while enjoying a community social experience, interaction with student-athletes and coaches and food and drink in a Kentucky-themed area. CFSB's investment will make a monumental impact on the game-day atmosphere and the fan experience, contributing to Racer Athletics' broad strategy to elevate the overall collegiate sports experience on campus.

Inspiration: CFSB's impact on Murray State University and the entire region extends well beyond this latest contribution. Over the years, they have generously donated several million dollars to Murray State in support of a range of initiatives across academics and athletics. Their philanthropy, paired with their active role

in the community at large, speaks to CFSB's dedication to fostering growth and opportunity throughout the region. This new commitment reinforces CFSB's position as an integral part of the University community.

NEW NURSING SCHOLARSHIP MEMORIALIZES BELOVED LABOR AND DELIVERY NURSE DANA BAZZELL

Donors: Family and friends of Dana Bazzell, '75

Gift: Establishment of the Dana Bazzell Memorial Nursing Scholarship

Impact: This new scholarship will help aspiring nursing students pursue their education and attain professional goals. By reducing the financial burden of their education, this scholarship will increase access for more students drawn to the nursing profession and enable them to focus more on their studies and less on financial worries.

Inspiration: A 1975 graduate of Murray State's nursing program, Dana Bazzell served as a nurse in the Labor and Delivery Department at the Murray-Calloway County Hospital for more than 44 years, ultimately as Director of Perinatal Services. Being present at thousands of deliveries and dedicating her care to countless new moms, babies and families during her long and respected career, Bazzell became a cherished caregiver to multitudes of people in the Calloway County area. Through this scholarship, her family and friends allow her legacy of passion for nursing and care for others to live on in the lives of future Murray State nursing graduates.



Dana Bazzell

LONG-TIME SCHOLARSHIP DONORS STEEPLY INCREASE SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS

Donors: James, '66, and Patricia, '66, Wilson

Gift: Establishment of the James Frank and Patricia Ann Wilson Chemistry, Physics,



Patricia and James Wilson

Mathematics and Engineering Scholarship Endowment, as well as a large infusion of funds to the already-existing J.B. Wilson Pre-Pharmacy Scholarship Endowment.

Impact: On top of many years of giving in support of student scholarships, the Wilsons' recent contributions directly impact the lives of students in the Jones College of Science, Engineering and Technology by making more scholarship dollars available to assist them with their education. The Wilsons created their scholarship for pre-pharmacy students in the early 1980s in memory of James's father, who served the Murray community as a pharmacist for 40 years. Their recent gift to create an additional scholarship expands their generosity to students pursuing a variety of other scientific disciplines.

Inspiration: Both alumni of Murray State, the Wilsons met while running for office of junior class representative. James has served as a Tennessee attorney in private practice for more than 40 years, and Patricia is a retired elementary school teacher. Murray State has played a large part in their family's life with many of their relatives, including two of their four children, having attended the University. The Wilsons feel that their experience at Murray State changed their lives profoundly for the better, and that appreciation has inspired them to give back with generosity that will change the lives of other students for years to come.

SWIFT & STALEY, LED BY MURRAY STATE BOARD OF REGENTS CHAIR LEON OWENS, SHOWS UNWAVERING AND MULTIFACETED SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS

Donor: Swift & Staley, Inc., of Paducah, Kentucky, led by company President and Murray State Board of Regents Chair Leon Owens, '14

Gift: Multiple significant gifts: \$1.5 million commitment to Racer Athletics to contribute to a multitude of athletics facility projects and recognized with the naming of the Leon Owens Winner's Circle and Performance Center outside of the CFSB Center; creation of the Dennis Jackson Leadership Athletics Program to mentor and guide student-athletes in the areas of career readiness, leadership and civic engagement, NIL preparedness and brand management and financial literacy; and establishment of the Swift & Staley, Inc., Scholarship to assist students at Murray State's Paducah Regional Campus.



Dr. Bob Jackson, Leon Owens and Nico Yantko

Impact: Taken together, these multiple generous gifts will make a transformational impact both on Racer Athletics as a whole and on countless students, both athletes and non-athletes. By investing in athletic facility enhancements, Swift & Staley will help Murray State provide high-quality physical spaces and equipment to benefit student-athletes in their training and competition. Hand-in-hand with that, the Dennis Jackson Leadership Athletics Program provides these student-athletes with intangible tools in the areas of personal growth, life skills and professional development to enable them to succeed not only in college but throughout their lives.

Inspiration: A staunch supporter of Murray State University, Regent Owens feels a personal drive to make a positive impact on the lives of young people and give back to Murray State University. Similarly, Swift & Staley employs numerous Racer alumni who feel pride in being able to assist current and future Murray State students.



Melanie Peacock Culver and Jay Culver

BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEMBER AND HUSBAND PLEDGE EXTRAORDINARY PLANNED GIFT

Donors: Melanie Peacock Culver, '84, and Jay Culver. Melanie joined the Murray State University Foundation Board of Trustees in the fall of 2024.

Gift: Planned gift commitment in support of student scholarships—including a scholarship in equine science—and student support services

Impact: The Culvers' extremely generous planned gift will impact thousands of future Murray State students financially, academically and with their quality of life. By supporting both student scholarships and student support services such as mental health and counseling services, the Culvers will help make a Murray State education more accessible for more students as well as enhance the kinds of support they can take advantage of to help them succeed and thrive during their college years.

Inspiration: Melanie Culver's mom, Dr. Sonja Peacock, had a 20-year career in student mental health counseling and student support, and

she will be honoring her mom's life's work by helping to ensure this essential component of student success for future generations of Racers. Although Jay did not graduate from Murray State, his love of equine science and his positive impression of Murray State's program motivated him and Melanie to want to support this program and its students at Murray State.

CHILDREN AND GRANDCHILDREN OF MARVIN "M.O." WRATHER CONTINUE TO GIVE BACK TO MURRAY STATE

Donors: Rebecca Hoke Zion, Justin Zion and family of Charles, '63, and Anne, '64, Hoke (daughter of Dr. Marvin "M.O." Wrather)

Gift: Establishment of the Charles and Anne Hoke Scholarship Endowment along with an additional gift for the renovation of the Wrather Auditorium Balcony, recognized by the naming of the Charles and Anne Wrather Hoke Mezzanine

Impact: The renovation of the Wrather Auditorium balcony has transformed this space into a VIP experience for events hosted in Wrather Hall, including the first event on April 25 of a presidential portrait unveiling and reception for President Jackson.

Inspiration: The rich legacy of the Wrather family is woven into the history of Murray State University. Dr. Marvin "M.O." Wrather, a distinguished member of the inaugural graduating class of 1926, played a pivotal role in establishing the foundations of our present-day University. His daughter, Ann Wrather Hoke and her husband Charles have continued this legacy in recent years with generosity that has enabled Murray State to make several significant renovations to Wrather Hall. The family's support now spans three generations as Charles and Anne's daughter, Rebecca Hoke Zion, has made this recent generous commitment that carries on the Wrather family's legacy.



The Hoke Family

WOMEN'S PHILANTHROPY SOCIETY LAUNCHES AT MURRAY STATE

Donors: Founding Members: Whitney Bechtel, '06; Nancy Becker, '63; Dr. Tina Bernot, '14, '21; Wanda Bigham, '56; Dr. Susana Bloomdahl; Melanie Brooks, '92, '93; Dr. Dina Byers, '99, '04; Kala Dunn, '10, '17; Cris Ferguson; Dr. Claire



Fuller; Kathy Harris, '80; Abby Hensley, '07, '08; Deborah Hulse; Ashley Ireland, '05; Karen Jackson, '84; Carrie McGinnis, '96, '20; Nikki Murphy, '02; and Lana Porter, '65, '72

Gift: Establishment of the Women's Philanthropy Society Fund for Excellence

Impact: Since its founding in 2022, the Women's Philanthropy Society has funded student scholarships, research and mentoring opportunities and leadership development programs for Murray State students, staff, faculty and community members.

Inspiration: Because the Women's Philanthropy Society and its founding members believe that high-quality educational opportunities build the foundation for personal and professional growth, the group brings members together to invest in the development and empowerment of leaders at Murray State.

DR. JESSE D. JONES BESTOWS EVEN MORE GENEROSITY UPON MURRAY STATE



Dr. Jesse D. Jones

Donors: Dr. Jesse D. Jones, '64, namesake of Murray State University's Jones College of Science, Engineering and Technology (JCSET), and the late Mrs. Deborah Jones

Gift: New

commitment to support equipment and technology for the new School of Nursing and Health Professions Building, Jackson Hall; continued strong support of many other projects and funds including the Dr. Jesse D. Jones Endowed Professorship, which sustains four professorships in JCSET, Murray State's annual Math Day for students and student scholarships in the sciences. In appreciation of Dr. Jones's decades of support to Murray State, the Dr. Jesse D. Jones Faculty Lounge in the soon-to-be Jackson Hall will be dedicated in his honor.

Impact: The difference that Jesse D. Jones has made to Murray State during his lifetime of giving cannot be overstated. Dr. Jones made the lead gift in the University's previous capital campaign, Hold Thy Banner High, and has continued to give over three decades towards projects including the Jesse L. Jones Family

Clocktower, named for his late father; the creation of a satellite library in Jesse D. Jones Hall; the creation of the Racer Writing Center; the funding of numerous professorships and student scholarships and so much more. His impact has literally helped build Murray State's modern campus and enabled the JCSET to grow, thrive and provide students with some of the highest-quality science education programs in the southeastern United States.

Inspiration: Dr. Jones graduated from Murray State University in 1964 with a double major in chemistry and mathematics. A native of Marshall County, he was a nontraditional student and earned his degrees while he was married with two young children and working evenings at a plant in Calvert City. Jones considers his education at Murray State to be an incredible experience that led him to his lifelong successful career as an engineer with Ethyl and Albemarle Corporations.

MAYFIELD NATIVES, NOW IN CALIFORNIA, GIVE BACK TO RACER STUDENT ATHLETES

Donors: Tommy, '87, and Sandy, '89, Draffen

Gift: Major gift to Racer Athletics for improvements to the facilities in Roy Stewart Stadium, recognized with the naming of the "Tommy and Sandy Draffen Performance Level" on Level 1 of Roy Stewart Stadium

Impact: This gift directly impacts the experience, training opportunities and quality of life for Murray State University's 350+ student athletes. The long-term goal is to create a complete Performance Center addressing the strength and conditioning, nutrition, treatment and rehabilitation of current and future Racers. Major renovations to this aim have already been made to the football team room and lounge and the weight room, with much more to come.

Inspiration: Originally from Mayfield, Kentucky, the Draffens still hold Murray State and their experiences as students close to their hearts. They come back to Murray several times a year both to visit family as well as attend athletic events and cheer on today's generation of Racers. Additionally, Tommy recently served on the Be Bold National Campaign Council. They are very excited to be able to play a part in enhancing the experience for Murray State's student athletes.



Tommy and Sandy Draffen

FORMER FOOTBALL LETTERMAN SUPPORTS LONG-TERM VISION FOR THE FUTURE OF RACER ATHLETICS

Donors: Scotty, '74, '75, and Debi Crump

Gift: Two major commitments in support of Racer Football

Impact: Having made their first major gift in 2021, the Crumps followed with another significant pledge in 2024, both in support of Racer Football. These funds directly strengthen the football program by investing in facility upgrades, recruiting, team apparel and equipment, capital projects and team travel, greatly enriching the student-athlete experience.



Scotty and Debi Crump

Inspiration: Since earning both his undergraduate and graduate degrees from Murray State, Scotty Crump has gone on to enjoy a wonderfully successful career serving in leadership roles for major companies including General Telephone and Electronics and Parker Hannifin until his retirement in 2015. Throughout his life he has enjoyed continued fellowship with lifelong friends he made through his student-athlete experience at Murray State and treasures his connection with Murray State, recently serving on the Be Bold National Campaign Council. Because of the lasting influence Murray State has had on his life, he and Debi felt motivated to give back and help ensure that student-athletes of today and tomorrow also enjoy a foundational experience during their years at Murray State that set them on a course of decades of success.

GOLDEN REUNION REFLECTIONS MOTIVATE ALUMNI COUPLE TO MAKE PLANNED GIFT

Donors: Retired Colonels William "Bill" M., '74, and Barbara E. Wilder, '75

Gift: Commitment of planned estate gift to expand and increase the resources in the Wilder Fund for Excellence in Nursing, which the Wilders established in 2001

Impact: The Wilders' new commitment will impact the educational experience of Murray State University's nursing students by supporting faculty in many ways. The expanded fund will support the Nursing Department with resources for operations, faculty development, internships, equipment, special seminars and the creation of three endowed nursing faculty positions known as the Cols.

William M. and Barbara E. Wilder Distinguished Endowed Professorships. This multifaceted approach will enrich all aspects of nursing students' educational journeys at Murray State through enhancing opportunities for faculty professional development.

Inspiration: At Homecoming 2024, the Wilders, both nursing alumni, returned to campus to celebrate Bill's golden reunion, the 50th anniversary of his graduation. While there, they reflected on how important one of their professors, Dr. Ruth Cole, had been to both their academic and professional lives, as well as their personal lives. They attributed much of their positive college experience and professional success to the positive influence that Dr. Cole had on them as an inspiring teacher and mentor. These reflections inspired them to make a commitment that would ensure that Murray State's nursing program could continue to provide students with professors and learning opportunities of the caliber they experienced under Dr. Cole's leadership.

2006 ALUMNA MEMORIALIZES BOTH OF HER PARENTS WITH SPECIAL GIFTS

Donors: Dr. Brett and Mrs. Whitney Medley Bechtel, '06

Gift: Creation of two endowed scholarships, one in memory of each of her parents: the Karen Joy Medley Memorial Scholarship Endowment for theatre students and the Patrick J. Medley Veteran Scholarship Endowment for student veterans.

Impact: These two generous gifts will expand access to a Murray State education by offering more scholarship opportunities, making a college education more attainable for aspiring students.



The Patrick J. Medley Veteran and Military Student Success Coordinator Office Dedication

Inspiration: Whitney Bechtel, her husband Dr. Brett Bechtel, and her late parents Patrick James and Karen Joy Medley have showered Murray State with support ever since Whitney enrolled as a student more than 20 years ago. By seeing the positive impact Murray State had on their daughter, the Medleys became avid Racer fans and supported the University for many years, even after her graduation. After sadly losing both of her parents in 2022, Whitney was inspired to honor their memory in a special way by creating scholarships in each of their names. Her mother loved and performed in theatre throughout her life, and her spirit will live on by helping students pursuing a theatre degree at Murray State. Her father served his country as a Sergeant in the Air Force during the Vietnam War, and his spirit will forever assist student veterans who are studying in STEM-H areas at Murray State after their time of national service. In addition to the endowed scholarship, the Patrick J. Medley Veteran and Military Student Success Coordinator Office was also dedicated to memorialize Sergeant Medley in appreciation of the Bechtels' generosity.

AFTER SUCCESS IN THE ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY, ALUMNI COUPLE GIVES BACK TO ARTS STUDENTS

Donors: W. Earl, '86, and Carrie Brown, '88

Gift: Generous support for the College of Humanities and Fine Arts (CHFA) Fund for Excellence

Impact: The Browns' support provides Murray State's CHFA with flexible resources to address its most pressing needs, which can include student scholarships, faculty support, research opportunities, campus enhancements and emergency needs. This versatile support allows CHFA to be responsive to changing needs and priorities by having resources available that can be used in a variety of ways. Already, their gift has provided numerous CHFA students with study abroad scholarships.

Inspiration: Carrie and Earl Brown were high school sweethearts who both attended Murray State and went on to enormous professional success in the entertainment industry, Earl as a professional actor and Carrie as a communications executive for prominent entertainment companies, including, most recently, The Walt Disney Company. Earl was honored with the Distinguished Alumni Award in 2017, and Carrie recently served on Murray State's Be Bold National Campaign Council. Now based in California, the couple remains attached to their roots at Murray State and gives back in many ways to benefit the students striving to follow in their footsteps.



Carrie and W. Earl Brown

We are Racers. This is our legacy.

JOIN TODAY!



To join, please visit
murraystate.edu/alumni
or scan the QR code.

Your membership in the MSUAA supports a wide range of activities that advance the mission of Murray State University, including Homecoming, special reunions and other alumni events throughout the country, Distinguished Alumni and Distinguished Faculty Awards, the Raising Racers Legacy Program and alumni scholarships. Membership is what makes it all happen!



MURRAY STATE
UNIVERSITY
Alumni Association



Dr. Ron K. Patterson named Murray State University President

The Murray State University Board of Regents Presidential Search Committee announced Dr. Ron K. Patterson as Murray State University President on March 10. Currently Chadron State College President, Patterson will commence his role as the 15th President of Murray State on July 1. He will succeed President Dr. Bob Jackson, who will retire on June 30. The selection of Patterson follows an extensive process and national search.

Patterson serves as President of Chadron State College, one of three state college institutions within the Nebraska State College System and an institution with approximately 2,300 students and 600 full-time faculty and staff. In his role, Patterson launched and chaired the college's new five-year strategic plan; established strategic enrollment partnerships; commenced new academic programs and partnerships; furthered external relationships with federal, state and local government leaders; and fostered an environment of success within the college's Division II athletic programs.

Prior to Chadron State College, Patterson served at the University of North Alabama. His administrative progression at the University of North Alabama included service as associate vice president for enrollment management, chief enrollment officer, and chief enrollment officer and special assistant to the president for diversity and inclusion with responsibility for both enrollment management, academic programs and centers, and diversity and inclusion.

Prior to the University of North Alabama, Patterson served for 14 years as an administrator at Marietta College, University of Central Arkansas, University of Tennessee Health Science Center and Christian Brothers University in Memphis. He also spent four years as an assistant men's basketball coach and head men's golf coach at Tusculum College and Marietta College.

With 25 years of higher education experience, Patterson has developed a collaborative, servant leader approach who values accessibility and affordability, education and innovation.

Patterson earned a Doctor of Education in Higher Education Administration and Leadership at Creighton University, an Education Specialist degree with a concentration in Community College Administration at Arkansas State University, a Master of Arts at Marietta College, a Bachelor of Science at the University of Tennessee – Southern

and an Associate of Arts at Northeast Mississippi Community College. He recently completed professional development offered by the American Academic Leadership Institute and Penn State University's Academic Leadership Academy for Academic Administration.

Patterson hails from Corinth, Mississippi. He and his wife, Jenny, have two children, Olivia and Braylon.

"I am truly humbled and honored to be selected as President of Murray State University," Patterson said. "I would like to thank the Presidential Search Committee, Board of Regents, campus community and alumni for entrusting me to lead this historic university.

"My family and I are honored and privileged to join the excellent students, faculty, staff and city of Murray to continue the great momentum of Dr. Bob Jackson and the leadership team, capital improvement projects, and rich tradition of Murray State University in its second century."

"We are excited to welcome Dr. Ron K. Patterson as the 15th President of Murray State University," Murray State Board of Regents Chair Leon Owens said. "Dr. Patterson brings considerable experience in numerous areas of higher education, all of which are necessary, to continue the upward trajectory of our institution. Dr. Patterson is a servant leader and a proven collaborator who has a commitment toward excellence. We welcome Dr. Patterson, along with his wife Jenny and children Olivia and Braylon to our campus and broader community.

"I am grateful to our Board of Regents Presidential Search Committee as well as Academic Search for their hard work and assistance during the search process.

"I would like to also thank Dr. Jackson for his continued wonderful leadership, excellence and many years of service to Murray State as his retirement approaches on June 30, 2025."

"I am excited to welcome Dr. Ron K. Patterson, his wife Jenny and children Olivia and Braylon, to Murray State University, and am confident that the future of Murray State is in excellent hands with Dr. Patterson," Murray State President Dr. Bob Jackson said. "As I've said many times, Murray State University is truly a special place. Dr. Patterson's experience, vision and passion for higher education will continue to advance this special place that is shared by our many students, faculty, staff, alumni and supporters."



Preliminary rendering of new Veterinary Sciences Building

2025 Kentucky legislative session includes continued support for Murray State to pursue a School of Veterinary Medicine

Murray State University's exploration of a School of Veterinary Medicine received a strong showing of support in the 2025 Kentucky legislative session.

Senate Bill 77, which was passed unanimously by both chambers in a bipartisan manner and was signed into law by Governor Andy Beshear, continues to provide a path forward for the University to establish a new Doctorate in Veterinary Medicine at Murray State.

Said Murray State President Dr. Bob Jackson: "Countless individuals worked extremely hard over the past two years to further this important initiative. Rep. Mary Beth Imes, Majority Leader Steven Rudy, Sen. Jason Howell, Speaker David Meade, and other legislative leaders, along with Congressman James Comer and Sen. Rand Paul, assisted with the passage of this bill.

"I would also like to thank our Board of Regents, Dean Brian Parr of our Hutson School of Agriculture, Assistant Vice President of Public Affairs Jordan Smith, our alumni, friends, supporters, agricultural groups, faculty, staff and students along with many others, all of whom were instrumental with advancing this key initiative to benefit our multi-billion dollar agricultural industry."

Said Murray State University Hutson School of Agriculture Dean Dr. Brian Parr: "This is a very exciting time for the agriculture industry in the Commonwealth of Kentucky! There is no doubt that this effort represents a needed advancement in educational opportunities for our students that will pay immeasurable dividends in the future in terms of employment opportunities, animal health care, and the advancement of the animal agriculture industry in our state. I am very thankful to our legislators who recognized this need and the potential solution offered through establishing a School of Veterinary Medicine here at Murray State University!"

"I am very grateful to our state and federal leaders for recognizing Murray State University's decades-long desire to assist our animal agricultural industry, particularly our many cattle farmers and others who are in desperate need of additional large animal veterinarians," said Murray State Assistant Vice President of Public Affairs Jordan Smith. "This is an exciting time for our university, region and state and we are ready to move forward in the establishment of a Doctorate in Veterinary Medicine and School of Veterinary Medicine at Murray State University."

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), there are 86,300 veterinarians in the United States and this occupation is expected to grow by more than 19% by 2031. The BLS also reports a total of 122,800 veterinarian technologists/technicians are working today and the field is expected to grow by 20% by 2031. Eighty of 120 counties across Kentucky have a veterinary shortage or are deemed underserved rural areas with low ratios of practicing veterinarians to livestock.

Murray State holds multiple existing assets on its campus, as well as a new \$60 million Veterinary Sciences Building to be constructed. The University's Hutson School of Agriculture has the largest estimated pre-veterinary medicine/veterinary technology enrollment of any university in Kentucky, and is just one of three programs in Kentucky that is fully accredited by the American Veterinary Medical Association.

A task force has been created for the planning and development of a School of Veterinary Medicine at Murray State University.



BOARD OF REGENTS SPOTLIGHT Tom Waldrop

Tom Waldrop's enduring association with Murray State University (MSU) began long ago when his parents, Ralph T. Waldrop Sr., a returning WW II bomber pilot was smitten with Mary Julia Moore, the Bardwell High School valedictorian; their first date was the Murray-Western football game. Both became graduates of MSU, were married in 1950 and moved to Mayfield where they raised Tom and his four siblings.

Waldrop graduated cum laude from the University of Kentucky in 1977 with a degree in Agricultural Economics, subsequently embarking on a distinguished real estate career by joining the family firm established by his grandfather in 1922. Under Mr. Waldrop's leadership, the firm has evolved into a multi-disciplinary organization providing a comprehensive array of real estate services across four states. In 1988, he earned the prestigious MAI designation from the Appraisal Institute and is a Certified General real property appraiser in Kentucky and Tennessee. From 2016 to 2019, Mr. Waldrop served on the Kentucky Real Estate Commission and held board positions with the West

Kentucky Regional MLS and now the Paducah Association of Realtors.

Currently, Waldrop serves as managing partner and principal broker at Trifecta Real Estate Services, specializing in all aspects of commercial real estate. He serves on several statewide Realtor committees, including chairing both the Kentucky Realtors' 2024 Economic Development Committee and the 2025 Legislative Quick Response team. He was honored by his KY Realtor peers with the 2024 Presidential Service award.

Since 2021, Waldrop has been a member of the Murray State University Board of Regents, serving as chair of the Audit and Compliance Committee, and participating in various other committees. Most recently, he was a member of the Presidential Search Committee which selected Murray State's 15th President, Dr. Ron Patterson.

In addition to his professional accomplishments, Waldrop has made significant contributions to community service. He is the founding chair of the Board of New Lease on Life, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization focused on helping 2021 tornado survivors who



Tom Waldrop

were renters at the time of the disaster become homeowners. He holds various leadership roles within the City of Mayfield and Graves County, where he is also actively involved with the Mayfield/Graves County Industrial Authority, the Mayfield Telecommunications Authority, the Purchase Players Community Theatre and Mayfield's First United Methodist Church.

Waldrop was married to LaVerne Mitchell Waldrop, the Graves County High School musical theatre and oral communications teacher until her passing in 2020. He resides in Mayfield with his two doodles, Winston and Bueller. His daughter, Clarke, is a graduate of Transylvania University.

2025 Distinguished Alumni Award recipients honored

The Murray State University Alumni Association (MSUAA) honored six Murray State alumni as the 2025 recipients of the Distinguished Alumni Award on April 11.

The Distinguished Alumni Award has been presented annually to Murray State alumni who have made meaningful contributions to their professions on a

local, state and national level. It is the highest honor an alumnus can earn from the MSUAA and recognizes those who have excelled both professionally and personally.

The Distinguished Alumni honorees for 2025 were John "Bosco" Bostick, '72; Summer Carney, '04; Tripp Gibson, '05; Kathy Harris, '80; Kelli Parsons, '90; and

Dale Wilson, '70. The 2025 Outstanding Young Alumni Award recipient was Jonathan Lemmon, '08.



Learn more about the recipients by scanning the QR code or by visiting murraystate.edu/distinguishedalumni.



*John "Bosco"
Bostick*



Summer Carney



Tripp Gibson



Kathy Harris



Kelli Parsons



Dale Wilson



*Jonathan
Lemmon*



Racer Athletics updates

Women's basketball caps off historic season with NCAA Tournament berth



Murray State University women's basketball head coach, Rechelle Turner.

The 2024-25 women's basketball team will forever be remembered for a historic season with unforgettable moments and highlights galore, captivating countless number of fans and alumni throughout the special journey.

Head Coach Rechelle Turner became the Murray State women's basketball all-time wins leader in January. Turner, in her eighth year at the helm for the Racers,

picked up her 121st career victory to surpass Rob Cross as the program's wins leader.

As the regular season concluded and the team's winning momentum advanced, all-time great and the program's leading scorer and rebounder, Katelyn Young, had her #31 jersey retired on Senior Day. Young was one of four players, including Ava Learn, Haven Ford and Halli Pooch to be named to the 2025 All Missouri Valley Conference team.

The team clinched the Missouri Valley Conference regular season championship before making the short trip to Evansville behind a supportive Racers crowd, and defeated Bradley, Drake and Belmont to win the Missouri Valley Conference (MVC) Women's Basketball Tournament, clinching a spot in the Big Dance.

The Racers fought hard in their NCAA Tournament first round match up against the Iowa Hawkeyes in Norman, Oklahoma, trailing by just three points near the end of the first half before the Hawkeyes began to pull away.

Their final average of 86.8 points per game (second nationally) is a school-record as they bested the 82.8 by the 1987-88 team.

Katelyn Young concluded her amazing career as a top-15 all-time NCAA scorer with 3,029 points in 155 games and a scoring average of 19.5 points per game.

The Racers (25-8) finished the 2024-25 season with a program-record 25 wins and the program's second NCAA Tournament appearance. This historic run marked the team's first title as members of the MVC and their first title since the 2008-09 season, taking the Racers to their first appearance in the NCAA Tournament since the 2007-08 season as a number 11 seed, the highest seed ever.



Katelyn Young answers questions at a press conference during the NCAA Tournament.

Long-standing program powerhouse claims fifth straight conference crown

In their 70th season of competition, the Racers captured their fifth consecutive and 19th Ohio Valley Conference championship of all time and reached the NCAA Championships for the 36th time.

Murray State Rifle finished its 2024-25 season at the NCAA Rifle Championships at Memorial Coliseum in Lexington, Kentucky.

The Racers fired a 2371 in air rifle for an aggregate of 4693 after recording a 2322 in smallbore on Friday. Freshman Carlotta Salafia placed fourth individually in air rifle with a 207.2.

Salafia finished the day with a 598 to lead the Racers. Scott Patterson was just behind with a 594, while John Blanton posted a 590, Allison Henry put up a 589 and Zach Jackson finished with a 587.

"The team worked hard. Just getting here is a win," said head coach Alan Lollar. "We got to play on the last day. Only eight teams get to do that. I'm extremely proud of this team and what we accomplished."



CFSB Center renovations

One of the largest projects in Murray State Athletics history took a major step forward in December when the University's Board of Regents formally approved plans to begin the design phase of the renovation to the CFSB Center during their Dec. 13 meeting.

The Racers formally broke ground on the first phase of the significant eight-figure project earlier in the day in conjunction with the naming rights ceremony of the Leon Owens Winner's Circle and Performance Center. This is the first major renovation since the facility was opened in 1998 and is being funded through private donor contributions.

A primary vision of the entire project is on the enhancement of the overall fan experience and entertainment through new premium areas. Patrons will see a total overhaul in the seating structure in the lower level of the arena, including seating enhancements and the lower bowl becoming permanent seating in the shape of a horseshoe, moving on from the current retractable bleacher system currently in place with the exception of the student section to allow for other auxiliary events such as University commencement, concerts and more.

For the first time in Murray State history, Racer fans will have the ability to watch a game from the comfort of the anticipated 1,000 premium seats that will be installed. The conceptual plans also include premium loge boxes throughout the top of the seating bowl that will create a world-class game day experience while providing luxurious, private spaces

for entertainment, while additional ledge seating and new courtside opportunities will bring the fans closer to the action.

As part of the anticipated renovation plans, the CFSB Courtside Club will allow patrons to take in the game in a premium setting right on the baseline of the court. The club will feature a rustic Kentucky feel and will showcase a high-class bar and food offerings, comfortable seating, special pregame team experience and an unforgettable view of the court.

New revenue opportunities will come from the state-of-the-art ribbon boards that will be installed throughout the new façade inside the lower bowl, further contributing to the Racers' ability to thrive in the new NCAA landscape and Name, Image and Likeness (NIL).

Additional enhancements and amenities include one of the largest dedicated basketball performance spaces in the country that includes a nutrition oasis, rehab/prehab space, a hydrotherapy room, an NIL studio and a player development/academic space.

A full overview of the exciting new vision for the home of Racer Basketball can be found at <https://bit.ly/4ckkcq1>.

Ryan Miller named men's basketball head coach

Ryan Miller, who is regarded as one of the nation's top recruiters and boasts a winning pedigree that included stops at Creighton, Texas Christian University, Auburn and others, was named the 18th head coach of the Murray State men's basketball program in March.

Miller previously served as a top assistant for the Creighton Bluejays, has coached in eight NCAA Tournaments, won five regular-season championships and has one league tournament title on the sidelines over the course of his career.

He is regarded as one of the top recruiters in the country, having assembled multiple top-15 recruiting classes nationally throughout his

tenure. He has also developed numerous NBA standouts including Desmond Bane, Derrick Jones, Baylor Scheierman, Christian Wood, Rashad Vaughn and Patrick McCaw.

During his tenure at Creighton, Miller helped guide the Bluejays to the Big East Championship game in 2024-25 and to four straight NCAA Tournament appearances, including two Sweet Sixteen showings and a visit to the Elite 8.

Prior to his arrival at Creighton, Miller spent five seasons at Texas Christian University as an assistant coach (2016-18) and as an assistant head coach (2018-21). The Horned Frogs reached the postseason three times with Miller on staff, including a 2018 NCAA Tournament trip that was the program's first bid to the Big Dance in 20 seasons.



Men's basketball head coach Ryan Miller



Visit goracers.com for the latest Racer Athletics news!



CFSB Center renovation architectural renderings

LEFT: Renovations to the arena include installation of permanent seating in the shape of a horseshoe.

BELOW: The new CFSB Courtside Club



Racing ahead

by Shawn Touney

Murray State University is always looking for innovative ways to support our students through their academic journeys, personal and professional growth opportunities, and post-graduation, leading to a fulfilling career.

New academic programs, partnerships and initiatives continue to be a focal point of that student-centered support. Below is a small snapshot of several of these examples.

Electromechanical Engineering Technology

Murray State University and Madisonville Community College (MCC) signed a 2+2 articulation agreement in 2024, which provides students who have earned an Associate of Applied Science in Advanced Integrated Technology degree at MCC a seamless transfer process into Murray State's Bachelor of Science in Electromechanical Engineering Technology degree program. The program is offered at Murray State's Madisonville Regional Campus.

Murray State currently has approximately 35 transfer pathways with the Kentucky Community and Technical College System (KCTCS) that are either approved or being reviewed currently.

The pathways are program-specific agreements that clearly outline selective admission requirements, course equivalencies, and other relevant information for students who have enrolled in a particular academic program at KCTCS and who intend to maximize those credits to transfer seamlessly into a specific program at Murray State.

Continued momentum in School of Nursing and Health Professions

Enrollment in Murray State's Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) program continues to grow. This in-person, full-time, four-year program at the Murray campus prepares students to become licensed as a registered nurse. Students learn through a combination of classroom, clinical and simulation settings to be workforce ready. The BSN program recently admitted its largest class to date.

Murray State anticipates an expected completion of its new School of Nursing and Health Professions Building, Jackson Hall, by the Summer of 2026, with its doors opening for students in the Fall 2026 Semester. The new building will offer nursing students state-of-the-art technology, expanded space for labs, larger classrooms, simulation areas, spaces for student and faculty collaboration and study and the campus health clinic.

Murray State's BSN to Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) program has two specializations: a nurse anesthetist specialization for students to become a Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist (offered in Madisonville and Lexington), and a family nurse practitioner specialization for students to provide primary care to patients in a variety of settings (offered in Murray). Both of these recently admitted their largest cohorts to date.

The Master of Science in Occupational Therapy (OT) is a two-year graduate program offered at Murray State's Paducah regional campus that prepares students to become certified occupational therapists. For individuals interested in pursuing a rewarding graduate degree in OT, this is an excellent opportunity to plan and



A partnership between Murray State University and the Kentucky Community & Technical College System (KCTCS) includes many transfer pathways for KCTCS students who are seeking to earn a bachelor's degree at Murray State.

achieve career goals of providing quality health care services to a variety of populations. This program continues to experience significant growth. The Fall 2024 cohort is its largest ever.

Statewide Program of Distinction in Cybersecurity and Network Management continues to grow and expand

Murray State offers a bachelor's degree in Cybersecurity and Network Management (CNM), along with an accelerated master's degree (available online) in Cybersecurity Management that can be completed in 12-18 months, as well as certificates at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. As one example, a cybersecurity analyst certificate began in 2024 and is a nine-month, 12-credit hour program where students can take classes either online or in-person to support their complex schedules better.

The CNM program continues to see increasing enrollment as it empowers the next generation of cyber professionals with the knowledge, skills and hands-on experiences they need.

Ed.D. in P-20 and Community Leadership program continues its success

The Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) in P-20 and Community Leadership program at Murray State University is one of the first doctorates in the nation to provide an innovative, integrated P-20 approach to educational leadership across the learning continuum.

The program, which has admitted its largest cohorts in the last two years, features specializations in postsecondary leadership, PK-12 leadership and agriculture education. The College of Education and Human Services' (COEHS) Ed.D. is designed for working professionals, intentionally integrating a cohort approach to learning.

The program has significant enrollment from the state of Georgia. More than 25% of their agriculture teachers completed a degree at Murray State University, such as a Master of Science, in the Hutson School of Agriculture and the Ed.D. in the COEHS. The program is gaining popularity in Alabama and other states as well.

The program is designed to be completed in three years. The cohort meets (on campus or via Zoom) four weekends in the fall semester and three in the spring semester with the balance of the work being completed online. The program can be completed 100% online.

Murray State and University of Louisville exploring joint initiative for medical school campus

Officials from Murray State and the University of Louisville signed a letter of interest in November 2024 to explore a joint initiative for a four-year regional medical school campus of the University of



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The Murray State News won 45 awards, including first place in its division and College Journalist of the Year, at the Kentucky Press Association (KPA) convention Jan. 24 in Lexington, Kentucky. The 45 awards are the most The News has received from KPA.

Louisville School of Medicine on the main campus of Murray State.

The partnership between both institutions aims to benefit future students while advancing both the education and healthcare needs of the western region of Kentucky as well as the large multi-state region surrounding Murray State.

A possible pathway for the program would allow pre-med students who complete their undergraduate studies at Murray State to enroll at the University of Louisville and attend classes at Murray State for the first two years of medical school. Students could then complete their next two years of medical school at the University of Louisville before returning to western Kentucky to complete a residency program.

Journalism and Mass Communications department continues to thrive and adapt

The Journalism and Mass Communications department is one of only 111 programs in the United States and one of three in Kentucky accredited by the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications.

The department is introducing an updated curriculum beginning in the Fall 2025 semester, with bachelor degrees in Multimedia Journalism, Strategic Communication and Visual Communication. Students in the Strategic Communication major may select between a public relations or advertising track. The Visual Communication degree offers tracks in Media Production, Photography and Graphic Communication. The department offers minors in Media Production, Advertising, Graphic Communications Technology and Photography. A Master of Science in Mass Communications can be earned entirely online.

The updated curriculum is consistent with evolving industry standards. In each major, student projects culminate in portfolios that demonstrate their acquired skills and expertise.

The Murray State News won 45 awards, including first place in its division and College Journalist of the Year, at the Kentucky Press Association (KPA) convention Jan. 24 in Lexington, Kentucky. The 45 awards are the most The News has received from KPA. The Murray State News dominated the photography categories in the KPA competition.

The News transitioned last year from a weekly newspaper to a digital-first online publication with monthly printed publications and two specialty publications. The digital-first model has allowed student journalists to showcase their skills in photography, videography, podcasts, audio pieces and social media, as well as writing.

WKMS took home two awards last fall in Excellence in Broadcasting from the Kentucky Broadcasters Association, including Radio Reporter of the Year for News Director Derek Operle. The WKMS student news team took home Best Overall Digital Presence in the College Radio category, and Assistant News Director Hannah Saad was runner-up for Rookie of the Year, having made a strong entrance into the radio news scene since her start in March of 2023.

Bachelor of Fine Arts in Graphic Design hits new enrollment heights

Since its launch in 2019 with just 10 majors, the Department of Art & Design's Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) in Graphic Design has experienced steady growth. Enrollment has increased more than eightfold, reaching a record high of 82 students for the 2024–25 academic year. This sustained momentum reflects both student interest in using visual elements to communicate ideas, messages or information and the rising demand for industry-ready graduates. In November 2024, the program earned final approval for listing as a National Association of Schools of Art and Design (NASAD) accredited degree—another major milestone for this thriving program.

On March 26, 17 advanced graphic design students traveled with Professors Jim Bryant and Scott Cook to Nashville, Tennessee, for a full day tour of ad agencies and design firms. They met with art directors, marketing professionals and business leaders—including several Murray State Art & Design alumni—who shared insights into their careers and offered advice on navigating the design industry. Experiences like this, paired with a rigorous curriculum, portfolio development, client based projects and internships prepare students to enter the evolving world of graphic design.

Graduates go on to make their mark across the country in a wide range of creative roles. Alumni have secured positions such as Art Director at Omega Mart/Meow Wolf and Designer at Hallmark Cards. Others are Senior Designers at leading companies including Amazon, Big Machine Label Co., Buck Design, Bungie Video Games, Google, the Pentagon's Department of Defense, New Honor Society, Sony PlayStation, ST8MNT and Warehouse 21. Additional roles include Senior UI Designer at Discover Card and Home Depot and Senior UX Designer at AT&T.

Learn more about Murray State's academic programs at
murraystate.edu/programs
 or by scanning here:





with

Murray State President Dr. Bob Jackson



With retirement on the horizon, Dr. Bob Jackson reflects on his tenure as Murray State University's 14th President.

Q What is your favorite time of year on campus and why?

A Karen and I love the fall semester, the beginning of a new academic year with the arrival of hundreds of new students. We enjoy all campus and student events in the fall and the extraordinary beauty of the campus at this special time of the year. Murray State University is truly one of the most beautiful campuses in the United States.

Q What has been the most rewarding part of your job?

A It is extremely rewarding listening to the hopes and dreams of students and helping them to plan and achieve their academic pursuits while seeing them participate in campus activities and become campus leaders. Also, it is a tremendous honor to work with world-class faculty and staff to guide our students and strengthen our University with new academic programs and facilities while addressing infrastructure needs and making enhancements to our historic buildings. In doing all of these things, we will better educate the next generation of student leaders and workforce for the Commonwealth.

Q What has been the most challenging part of your job?

A Time management. There is never enough time nor hours in the day to address everything you would like to do as a President. Driving to Frankfort to do the important work of enhancing our efforts for institutional funding, seeking appropriations for capital projects and addressing policy matters of a quickly changing higher education landscape is extremely time consuming. It is also important for the President to be involved in student activities, ensuring new and enhanced academic offerings, addressing budgetary

matters, being present in high schools recruiting future students, working with regional and state leaders in order to advance our Commonwealth, attending donor and athletic functions, and all of these duties and responsibilities, among many others, take you away from campus and students. It is a challenge and then you must find time for your family and self-care.

Q As you look back on your tenure as Murray State's 14th president, what word comes to mind?

A Grateful. Karen and I are very grateful to have had the privilege to play our respective roles in leading our Alma Mater. These roles have been the capstone of our professional careers and we are very grateful for the trust that was placed in us. There has been no greater honor as we have been caretakers for a period of time of the University we love and that means a great deal to us and our family. We are thankful to our alumni and friends who have donated millions of dollars to advance Murray State University and provide student financial assistance and especially appreciative to our faculty, staff and students who work hard every day to make our institution even better.

Q Of all the memories you have of Murray State, is there one you cherish the most?

A First, I met Karen here 43 years ago, we married and built our careers and lives here and we will forever be connected to MSU. We will celebrate our 40th anniversary in August of this year. Lastly, we have so many wonderful memories with friends and family at Oakhurst and at University events. We cherish each and every one of them.

Campus and broader community attend presidential portrait unveiling and reception to recognize President Dr. Bob Jackson

Members of the campus and broader community attended a special presidential portrait unveiling and reception on April 25 to recognize Dr. Bob Jackson, who will retire from Murray State University as President on June 30.

Prior to the portrait unveiling, a welcome was given by First Lady Mrs. Karen Jackson. Remarks were delivered by distinguished guests including portrait artist Connie Erickson, master framer Fred Thomas, Kentucky Attorney General Russell Coleman, Murray State University Board of Regents Chair Leon Owens and former Murray State University Board of Regents Chair Dan Kemp.

The portrait features Jackson seated near a window view of campus in the parlor room of Oakhurst. He is holding a fountain pen resting on “The Finest Place We Know,” a book he co-authored. The pen was used by Murray State University founder and former president Dr. Rainey T. Wells, dating back to the early 20th century and was given to Jackson by the Wells family at the beginning of his presidency. The portrait will be displayed inside Pogue Library and later moved to Jackson Hall.

“Sharing today’s event with our students, faculty, staff, current and past members of our Murray State Board of Regents, Board of Trustees and Murray State Alumni Association Board of Governors, friends, alumni, supporters, as well as having my family alongside me, will be moments that I will treasure for the rest of my life,” Jackson said. “All of these individuals have an unwavering support of Murray State University and a deep love for our institution.”



Pictured is the Jackson family: Mariel, Bob, Karen and Nolan.



Distinguished guests included Murray State University Board of Regents Chair Leon Owens, former Murray State University Board of Regents Chair Dan Kemp and Kentucky Attorney General Russell Coleman.

FACULTY SPOTLIGHT: Dr. Rebecca Williams

Dr. Rebecca Williams, associate professor of art education and Murray State University’s Chair of the Department of Art and Design, has been an art educator for 17 years, getting her start as a high school visual arts teacher in Louisiana.

Williams earned her Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Louisiana at Lafayette and went on to earn her Master of Art Education degree and Doctorate of Philosophy from the University of Georgia (UGA). While at UGA, she also completed certification in interdisciplinary qualitative studies. She has taught at Murray State since 2015.

Williams has had undeniable success in the field of art education, earning the Kentucky Art Education Association’s (KyAEA) Higher Education Art Educator of the Year Award and Kentucky Art Educator of the Year Award in 2023 and 2024, respectively.

“Being recognized two years in a row by KyAEA is incredibly humbling,” said Williams. “These awards affirm the passion and dedication I’ve poured into art education, but more than that, they

reflect the support, collaboration and shared purpose I’ve found in this field. It’s especially meaningful to be honored by fellow art educators who are deeply committed to this field.”

In 2024, Williams also had the honor of sharing the spotlight with a former student, Anna Pace, who earned the Elementary Art Educator of the Year Award. Pace, who earned her bachelor’s degree from Murray State in art/teaching certification in the fall of 2015 has taught art at North Calloway Elementary School since 2016.

“I was thrilled when Anna was named the 2024 Elementary Art Educator of the Year, and it was a joy to see her receive the award,” said Williams. “She works hard to challenge and celebrate the young artists in her classes. Seeing the impact that former students are making in the field is one of the most meaningful and rewarding parts of my career.”



Dr. Rebecca Williams

A second chance at graduation:

Murray State's Racers Finish program supports adult learners

by Madison Harrigan

Murray State University is proud to offer the Racers Finish adult degree completion program and scholarship, offering incentives to former Murray State students who were unable to complete their degree due to various life circumstances. With this initiative, Murray State is taking steps to ensure that students are equipped with the education and skills they need to be competitive in the workforce.

Natalie Thurmond, associate director of Murray State's Center for Adult and Regional Education, coordinates the Racers Finish program. She shared, "The Racers Finish program began in Fall 2024 and 42% of our students were able to complete their degree and graduate in just one semester. Murray State has awarded nearly \$17,000 in Racers Finish Scholarships, and 13 of our Racers Finish students are expected to graduate by May 2025. We are extremely pleased with how successful this program has been in reaching our former Racers and assisting them in their path to graduation."

The Racers Finish scholarship offers former Murray State students a second chance at earning their bachelor's degree. Students eligible for the scholarship must be 25 to 64 years old; have completed and earned at least 60 credit hours at Murray State; must have a minimum 2.0 cumulative GPA; may not be a current student or have earned credit from Murray State in the previous two years; must have an outstanding balance of \$2,500 or less at Murray State; and may not have earned a bachelor's degree at any other institution. Qualified students may receive up to \$120 per credit hour tuition discount for a maximum of \$2,500 over four semesters. Students must also complete the FAFSA for each award year.

Students seeking to return to Murray State have flexible options to complete their degree. Murray State offers in-person courses at the Murray campus and regional campuses in Fort Campbell, Henderson, Hopkinsville, Madisonville and Paducah. Online courses and programs are also available which provide convenience for students who do not have access to one of Murray State's campuses. Several former

Racers who completed their degree through the Racers Finish program have been able to do so from a distance, including from their homes in California and Texas.

Student Ashley Brewer was a former Racer who qualified for the Racers Finish scholarship and re-enrolled during the first semester the scholarship was offered. Brewer was able to complete her degree in just one semester and graduated in December 2024.

Brewer chose to pursue Murray State's Bachelor of Integrated Studies degree program, an adult student degree completion program which offers flexibility in the curriculum and allows students to tailor their field of study emphasis to meet their career goals. This program is a great option for students who have already earned at least 60 credit hours. Those who have significant life and work experience may even be able to earn college credit through a prior learning assessment process.



"Take the leap of faith and do it! It was absolutely worth it!"

— Ashley Brewer,
December 2024 graduate

Brewer, who currently resides in Missouri, previously attended Murray State but never graduated. She reached out to a previous advisor, Marla Poyner, who then informed her of the Racers Finish scholarship after seeing that Brewer would potentially be eligible. When asked what led her to finish her degree, Brewer said, "I decided to finish because it was always something I wanted; I just finally had the opportunity to make it happen." Brewer also notes, "The program's most helpful aspect was all the support. Even though I wasn't physically on the campus, the professors, staff and advisors were so great at communicating and keeping me updated on information."

Brewer advises anyone considering finishing their degree: "Take the leap of faith and do it! It was absolutely worth it! This program gave me the ability to work and finish my degree at the same time. It allowed me to move closer to my ultimate goal of being an educational director in special education."

Dan Lavit, executive director of the Center for Adult and Regional Education is proud of Murray State's efforts to serve an important population of returning students. "There are many citizens across Kentucky and the country who started college but did not finish for one reason or another. Life circumstances often pause someone's pursuit of a better life through higher education." He continued, "Some students may have left college with debt and a collection of credit hours, but I often talk to many who have always had it in the back of their minds to finish what they started. The Racers Finish program allows them to do exactly that."

Those who know a former student who did not finish their degree and would benefit from the Racers Finish program can visit murraystate.edu/racersfinish or contact Natalie Thurmond, associate director of Murray State's Center for Adult and Regional Education at nthurmond@murraystate.edu.

**We are driven. We are accomplished.
We are Racers.**



ALUMNI NEWS AND CLASS NOTES



Dr. Allison Duke, '96, '02, has been appointed dean of Lipscomb University's nationally recognized College of Business. Duke has been

a prominent figure at Lipscomb since 2010, serving in leadership roles and as a professor of management. Before transitioning to higher education, she spent nearly a decade in the corporate sector in human resources. Lipscomb President Candice McQueen praised Duke for her visionary leadership and commitment to excellence, noting her ability to strengthen partnerships within both the university and the broader business community.

The American Athletic Conference (AAC) recently honored

Coach Amir Abdur-Rahim, '07,

former Murray State Men's Basketball coach, by naming an award in his honor. The "Amir Abdur-Rahim Sportsmanship Award" celebrates the late coach's outstanding contributions to the sport and his lasting impact on collegiate athletics. The honor will be presented annually to the AAC men's basketball student-athlete who best exemplifies sportsmanship, fair play and leadership. Abdur-Rahim died unexpectedly at the age of 43 last October from complications that arose during a medical procedure.



Murray State University Alumni Association Board of Governors member and past president **Amber DuVentre, '06,**

'09, was named to Nashville's Black 40 Under 40 list. This prestigious recognition highlights her exceptional leadership, professional accomplishments and impact within her community. DuVentre serves as risk manager at Meharry Medical College in Nashville. For three years during the pandemic, she led the city of Nashville's COVID-19 efforts as the logistics leader for all drive-through testing and vaccination centers.



Murray State University Alumni Association Board of Governors member **David Moss, '01, '10**, was named one of SBO+ magazine's 50

Music Teachers Who Make A Difference. This prestigious recognition celebrates music educators who go above and beyond to inspire students and positively impact their communities through music. SBO+ magazine, formerly known as School Band and Orchestra Magazine, is a leading publication for school music educators. Moss previously served as both the director of the West Hopkins County Middle School band in Nebo, Kentucky, and as an assistant band director for Hopkins County Central High School, located in Madisonville, Kentucky. He has recently been named band director for Hopkins County Central.

Macy Mitchell, '23, has been named Kentucky Music Educators Association District 2 Elementary Teacher of the Year.

As a music teacher for North Hancock Elementary School, located in Lewisport, Kentucky, Mitchell introduced an engaging curriculum and seasonal programs, creating valuable performance opportunities for students.



Colonel (Ret.) Derik Crotts, '95, a 1984 Distinguished Military Graduate of the University of North Alabama and a Master of Public

Administration holder from Murray State University, has been inducted into the U.S. Army Public Affairs Hall of Fame. With over three decades of service, Crotts played a key role in shaping Army communications and fostering public trust. He was honored in Washington, D.C. on Dec. 3, 2024, for his outstanding contributions to military public affairs. His induction celebrates his leadership and mentorship, inspiring future generations of public affairs professionals.



Through her groundbreaking work, **Elizabeth Garrett, '11, '17**, is helping lead an innovative treatment to slow the progression of

Alzheimer's Disease. Garrett, a graduate of Murray State's Bachelor of Science in Nursing and Doctor of Nursing Practice programs, has also been recognized for her work with stroke patients and how to see the warning signs before a stroke occurs. Her work has helped Mercy Health-Lourdes Hospital in earning the certification as an Advanced Primary Stroke Center with the Joint Commission.

Laken Falwell, '10, '17, K-5 library media specialist and STEM teacher for North

Calloway County Elementary, has received the Kentucky Farm Bureau 2024 Excellence in Ag Literacy Award. Falwell was recognized for her creative efforts to incorporate agriculture into the curriculum through hands-on lessons, special projects and collaborations with local farmers and community partners. From Dairy Cow Week to lessons on pollination and soil types, her innovative teaching has inspired students to connect with agriculture in fun and meaningful ways.



Racer Basketball alumnus **Tim Haworth, '04, '06, '08**, was inducted into the Planters Bank Hopkinsville High School Hall

of Fame in January. Haworth played for three seasons, helping the Racers win the OVC Tournament and reach the NCAA Tournament in 2004. Afterward, he served as a graduate assistant under Head Coach Mick Cronin. As Hopkinsville's Boys Basketball Coach, Haworth achieved a 200-58 record, earning five district and five regional titles, with state semifinal and quarterfinal appearances. Now at Louisville Male, he has a 137-45 record, leading the team to the Sweet 16 three times.

ALUMNI NEWS AND CLASS NOTES



Murray State alumnus **Dr. Gregory Ross, '01, '08, and Ife Akindele, '18, '20**, returned to campus for the Office of Student Enrichment, Academic Excellence and Leadership College and Career Readiness Conference earlier this month. Ross, President of West End School in Louisville,

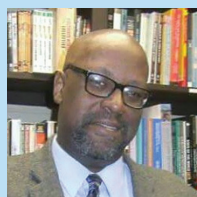
delivered a keynote address, while Akindele shared insights to inspire students. The event focused on academic success and career preparation.

Racer Basketball alumnus **Torrel Harris, '81**, was featured in USA Today this spring. Harris has built a groundbreaking career in sports management, securing one of the largest NBA contracts in history. After earning his degree in business administration, he forged a path in financial planning before founding Unique Sports Management International. He has represented elite athletes, including his son, Tobias Harris of the Detroit Pistons, while emphasizing financial literacy, wealth preservation and holistic athlete development.



Savannah Allen, '16, '17, has been promoted to director of economic development and grants for Hicks Partners in Columbus,

Ohio. Allen, who holds a master's degree in economic development and a bachelor's degree in economics from Murray State, has a proven track record of supporting local businesses and fostering economic growth. She previously played a key role in economic development in Union County and Marysville, Ohio, and is now focused on advancing community growth through grants and strategic business initiatives.



Dr. Brian Clardy, '88, '91, '99, professor of history at Murray State University, delivered the keynote address for the African American

Heritage Breakfast in February, held at the Bruce Convention Center in Hopkinsville, Kentucky. Hosted by the Modernette Civic Club, the event commemorated Black History Month. Clardy, who holds degrees from the University of Tennessee at Martin, Murray State and Southern Illinois University, specializes in U.S. foreign policy, the Vietnam War and comparative world religions.

Anna Pace, '15, (pictured at right alongside Department Chair of Art & Design Dr. Rebecca Williams) was named the Kentucky Art Education

Association (KyAEA) Educator of the Year at the Elementary Level. Pace, a teacher at North Calloway Elementary School in Calloway County, Kentucky, received the award at the KyAEA conference in Louisville Nov. 9. She was recognized for embodying the association's motto, "Leading a child to greatness through art" and for her outstanding contributions to arts education in Kentucky.



Murray State University's TRIO Talent Search Director, **Audrey Neal, '00, '09, '21**, recently participated in the Executive Leadership

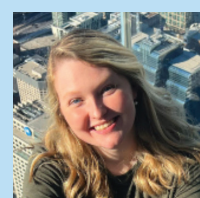
Institute for College Opportunity Professionals, hosted by the Council for Opportunity in Education (COE) at Yale University. This prestigious program equips leaders with skills to support low-income, first-generation students in achieving educational success. Neal's selection highlights her impactful work with Murray State's TRIO program. She presented her findings at the COE National Leadership Summit in Washington, D.C. in March.



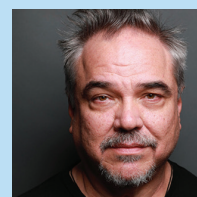
Mother and daughter **Tina Mullins, '95, '02, and Naomi Mullins, '24**, are both proud graduates of Murray State. Both are passionate about

English Language Learners education and serve as an outstanding example of the recent graduates' genuine inspiration to help others succeed. Tina (right) graduated from Murray State's Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) Endorsement program in August of 2020. Daughter Naomi graduated from the TESOL undergraduate program last May. Both now teach in the Christian County Public School District in Hopkinsville, Kentucky.

Megan Epperson, '18, served as co-author of the Murray State University Alumni Association's new children's book, *Murray State*



University A-Z. The book is available as a gift for the 3- and 4-year-old children and grandchildren of Murray State alumni as part of the Murray State University Alumni Association's free Raising Racers legacy program. A freelance writer and former Murray Middle School teacher, Epperson helped author the book in partnership with Murray State University Director of Alumni Relations Carrie McGinnis, '20, and Illinois-based family-owned publishing company Campus A-Z. The book is also available in Murray State's University Store for a retail price of \$24.99. To register your child or grandchild for Raising Racers, visit murraystate.edu/alumni.



W. Earl Brown, '86, has joined the cast of *Sheriff Country*, a spinoff of the hit CBS drama, *Fire Country*. Brown is best known for his recent roles

in *The Mandalorian*, *The Book of Boba Fett* and the popular HBO western series, *Deadwood*. The new series will expand on the *Fire Country* universe, focusing on small-town law enforcement, with Brown bringing his seasoned talent to the cast.



Garrett Clark, '22, '23, has been named Executive Director of the Lake Barkley Partnership for Economic Development,

serving Caldwell, Crittendon, Livingston and Lyon counties in Kentucky. In his new role, he will lead economic growth efforts across the region.

Murray State University's College of Education and Human Services honored **Dr. Robert Lyons, '89, '93, '01**, with the Outstanding Alumnus Service Award during Homecoming 2024. The award recognizes his 30 years of impactful service, starting in high schools and later in higher education before retiring from Murray State in 2020. Lyons held various positions within the College of Education and Human Services, including assistant professor, associate professor, chair of the Educational Studies, Leadership and Counseling department and assistant dean.



Marshall Thompson, '22, and Logan McGowan, '22, '23, demonstrated their impressive Geographic Information Systems (GIS) knowledge during a Murray City Council presentation in the fall. Their experience includes grave mapping for City of Murray Cemetery and other various utility projects throughout the community. City of Murray Director of Planning Carol Downey praised Thompson and McGowan for doing an outstanding job in their roles as GIS engineers for the city.



TIDY DAD

Tyler Moore, a 2008 Murray State University College of Education and Human Services graduate, social media influencer, author and digital creator known as “Tidy Dad,” recently appeared on the Today Show to announce the release of his new book, *Tidy Up Your Life*, and provide some quick and easy ways to declutter your home.

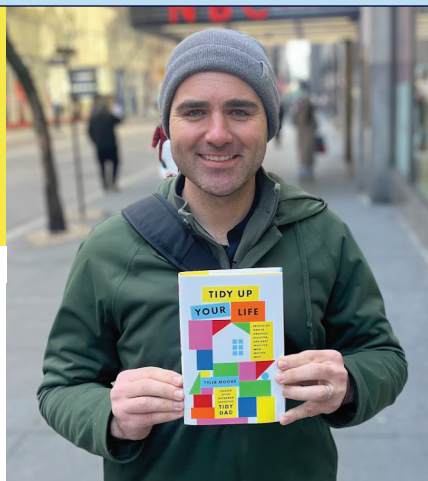
Moore, a full-time teacher by day, living with his wife, Emily, and three young daughters in a tiny Astoria, New York, apartment, knows a thing or two about how clutter and chaos in the home can make the hustle and bustle of everyday feel all the more stressful. Through his unique, practical and engaging “Tidy Dad” persona, Tyler is using his writing, photography and vast online following to help other busy families figure out how to transform their lives by transforming their space.

Tyler’s alter ego began to form when he came to the realization that getting organized is about much more than keeping a tidy home or successfully juggling the family’s busy schedule. It can actually result in creating more space for harmony, creativity, balance and peace.

“I always had a feeling there was a message tucked inside me,” Tyler said. “I didn’t see many stories like mine: a dad who loved being a parent, who loved figuring out how to make household chores just a bit more manageable, and who believed that less stuff could actually mean more joy.”

Since then, he has amassed hundreds of thousands of fans of his social media platforms, blog and newsletter, “The Tidy Times,” on Substack offering doable and affordable tips for everything from shoe storage and laundry to play spaces and kitchen cabinet hacks. According to Moore, his ideas are something he often takes from his own busy life, practicing what he preaches.

“I build Tidy Dad content around real life,” explained Moore, “not the Pinterest version of it. And, everything I share



has been test-driven in our small NYC apartment with three energetic kids. The strategies I offer aren’t from a perfectly lit dream house. They’re from my lived-in, laughed-in, lovingly-organized home.”

An interest in writing inspiring content first surfaced when Tyler was in elementary school and continued through his time as an undergraduate student at Murray State.

“When I was in fourth grade, I decided I wanted to write travel brochures — glossy, foldable dreams that could fit in your back pocket,” Moore said.

“So, in many ways, writing *Tidy Up Your Life* is me living out little-kid Tyler’s dreams. The time management skills I picked up at Murray State — juggling journalism deadlines and education practicums — helped me carve out writing time. Writing the book was a really tough process mentally and emotionally, but I’m proud I met every deadline in spite of teaching and being a dad, and trying to stay inspired to write.”

Tyler said he even drew from his time as a *Racer* when talking clutter on live television with Hoda and Jenna.

“The very first studio I ever stepped into was at Murray State, where I briefly anchored MSU TV-11. Being on the Today Show felt like full-circle magic. I cried the morning of the taping because I could feel that childhood dream meeting the grown-up version of me,” Moore said. “It also happened the same week my book came out, which made it all the more surreal.”

Tidy Up Your Life is a USA Today and Audible best seller. It is available at all major book retailers or by visiting thetidydad.com.



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