

AUSTIN PEAY

ALUMNI MAGAZINE

The official alumni
magazine of Austin Peay
State University

Fall 2025



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Dear Austin Peay community,

As we begin a new academic year, I'm excited to share how this issue's stories embody this year's theme: It all starts at Austin Peay. Our campus is thriving with growth and opportunity, and our commitment to excellence and hands-on learning remains strong.

This semester, we opened the 114,600-square-foot Health Professions Building, equipped with advanced technology and flexible collaboration spaces where students learn by doing. By bringing together nursing, allied health sciences, health and human performance, psychological science, and

counseling and social work under one roof, we're reflecting real-world healthcare teams and strengthening Tennessee's workforce.

Strong academic leadership is driving this momentum. Over the summer, we welcomed Dr. Mitchell Cordova as provost and vice president for academic affairs. With 27 years of experience, he will help advance our "Experience Austin Peay" strategic plan: elevating student success, academic excellence, and community engagement.

Our growth lies in our students and alumni. In this magazine, you'll meet students like Mia Ayarza, who found her voice as an educator; Aarionna Williams, whose resilience fuels a career serving children; and Ugochukwu Onumadu, whose work in mathematics and ethical AI bridges cultures. You'll also see alumni Anthony and Amanda Economos building community through entrepreneurship. These stories begin here and continue beyond campus.

We also want to honor our Governors Circle Alumni Award recipients, whose lives reflect our values. Larry and Roberta Richardson and Andrew Wilson model service and philanthropy; Trevor Brand and Shane Lantigua exemplify rising leadership; and Dr. Vernon Michael Carrigan and Maj. Jacquelyn Messenger show how APSU graduates advance health and security at home and abroad. Their achievements inspire our students.

In athletics, we thank Vice President and Director of Athletics Gerald Harrison for seven impactful years as he departs to lead Marshall University's program. His tenure elevated student-athlete success, strengthened wellness and academic initiatives, and positioned APSU for a bright future. We will build on that momentum.

These initiatives reflect our vision as we approach our centennial in 2027. Each facility, program and partnership is a step that will open doors, launch careers and strengthen the communities we serve.

Each of us is an important member of our Gobs community. Together, we're creating a future where every Governor can reach their potential and contribute to positive change beyond our campus.

It all starts at Austin Peay.

Dr. Mike Licari
APSU president



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AT AUSTIN PEAY

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Pixar's 'Turning Red' director kicks off new APSU speaker series

Austin Peay State University's Center of Excellence for the Creative Arts, in collaboration with the Department of Art + Design and the Department of Communication, recently hosted the inaugural CECA Interdisciplinary Director's Series featuring Domee Shi, director and vice president of creative for Pixar.

The free public event featured screenings of Shi's films *Turning Red* and *Bao*, and the director also spoke to the community about her work, artistic practice, and career.



Recent APSU graduate earns top scholarship to Princeton Theological Seminary

Austin Peay State University alum Sara Lusk has been on a spiritual journey since childhood, and her path recently led her to one of the world's most esteemed seminaries.

Lusk graduated with a double major in philosophy and classics in Spring 2025 and is currently attending Princeton Theological Seminary on a top scholarship. The institution is among the oldest seminaries in the U.S. and holds the world's second-largest theological library after the Vatican.



Austin Peay's MBA, PsyD programs celebrate first graduating classes

Austin Peay State University has awarded degrees to more than 2,000 students since last fall, including the inaugural graduating classes for its Master of Business Administration and Doctorate of Psychology programs.

The MBA program, available 100% online, has become one of the university's largest graduate offerings and is designed to meet the business needs of the Middle Tennessee region. The PsyD program awards Tennessee's first and only accredited doctoral counseling degree and allows students to work directly with clients while supervising master's-level trainees.



Health Professions Building opens new chapter in healthcare education

APSU's 114,600-square-foot Health Professions Building opened this semester, bringing together the nursing, allied health sciences, health and human performance, psychological science and counseling, and social work programs under one roof.

This state-of-the-art facility is the largest academic building on campus and features advanced labs, active learning classrooms, and collaborative spaces. It was designed to help students excel in modern healthcare environments while meeting regional and community needs.



Carnegie Foundation gives national spotlight to APSU's research impact

Austin Peay State University has been recognized as a Master's: Larger, Research institution by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and the American Council on Education (ACE), marking a significant advancement in the university's research profile and opportunities for its students.

As part of the Carnegie Foundation's revamped classification system, this designation opens the door for APSU to pursue expanded research opportunities, increased external funding, and stronger partnerships with industry and government agencies.



Department of Criminal Justice launches major VR initiative

Austin Peay State University's Department of Criminal Justice is ready to bring students from courtrooms to crime scenes without leaving campus, thanks to a significant investment in virtual reality technology.

Thirty Meta Quest 3 VR headsets will be integrated into the department's curriculum this semester, with plans to offer hands-on learning opportunities to students across campus. Potential use cases include virtual mock trials, interrogations, and simulated ride-alongs with police officers or EMTs.



Austin Peay becomes Tennessee's first Vets BRAVO campus

APSU has been designated as Tennessee's first Veterans Education Transition Support (VETS) Bravo Campus by the Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC), showcasing the university's commitment to military-affiliated students.

The VETS Bravo Campus designation is the highest recognition under the Tennessee VETS Act. It honors institutions that have maintained VETS Campus status for at least three consecutive years and implemented specific programs, including student support initiatives and tailored career placement services to help veterans transition into the workforce.



Dr. Mitchell Cordova named provost and vice president for Academic Affairs

Dr. Mitchell Cordova, previously a vice president and professor at Florida Gulf Coast University, began working as APSU's provost and vice president for Academic Affairs on July 1.

Cordova brings over 27 years of higher education experience to APSU and oversees academic programs, faculty affairs and student success initiatives. He is also playing a crucial role in implementing the university's strategic plan, "Experience Austin Peay," which focuses on student success, academic excellence and community engagement.



Ginna Holleman named chief of strategic communication

Austin Peay State University has appointed Ginna Holleman as its chief of strategic communication, a new position on the senior leadership team focused on telling the university's story and advancing its mission.

Holleman brings more than three decades of communication and leadership experience to the role. She previously served as chief experience officer at Fortera Credit Union and as CEO of United Way of the Greater Clarksville Region, and holds a Bachelor of Business Administration in marketing from APSU.



Austin Peay launches campus-wide AI training initiative

APSU recently announced a strategic \$51,000 investment in artificial intelligence training and integration across campus, which will support comprehensive AI education programs for students, faculty, and staff. The initiative includes professional development courses, instructor training, licensing for specialized learning, and an AI symposium this fall.

The College of Business has also introduced a new AI concentration to its Master of Business Administration program, supporting the university's commitment to preparing graduates for an AI-driven workforce.



Career Success Center charts new course at APSU

APSU has hired Keashla Marengo as the inaugural director of its newly rebranded Career Success Center, where she is leading strategic initiatives to enhance career development opportunities and strengthen employer engagement across the university.

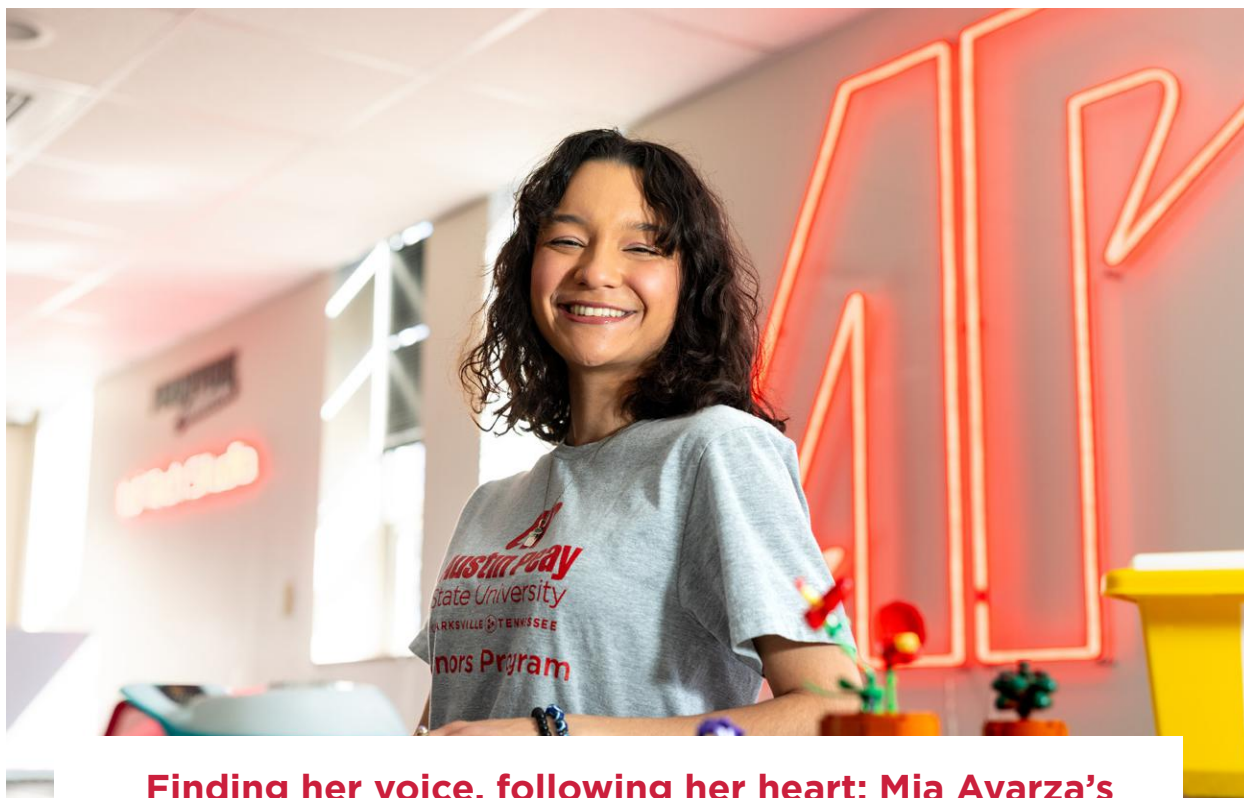
Marengo has already begun implementing her vision while building on the CSC's recent successes. Notably, the center connected more than 750 students with 54 employers at its 2025 Spring Career Expo, and the student employment platform Handshake has generated more than 4,300 job applications since its launch last year.



It All Starts at **AUSTIN PEAY**

Some universities measure success in job placements and starting salaries, but Austin Peay measures it in lives transformed and communities strengthened.

No matter where you are, you don't have to look far to find a Governor leaving their mark on the world. Whether they're finding their voices as students, launching careers as new graduates, conducting groundbreaking doctoral research, or building their own businesses, it all starts at Austin Peay.



Finding her voice, following her heart: Mia Ayarza's journey to becoming an educator

During her senior year at Northwest High School, Mia Ayarza was deep into clinical rotations in the Health Science Academy, following a path toward medical school. Like many children of immigrants, she felt the weight of cultural expectations to pursue a prestigious career.

"Being Latino, your family expects you to be a doctor, a lawyer, really high-quality things," Ayarza said. "[But] I didn't like seeing the kids cry after giving them shots. I didn't like that kids were scared to come to the doctor. There wasn't a sense of community that I wanted to be in."

The turning point came when her pre-calculus teacher, Ms. Alvarez, allowed her to guide freshmen through a study review.

"Having that interaction with them and actually seeing that little light bulb turn on in their heads was so fascinating," said Ayarza, a junior education major at Austin Peay State University. "Since then, I've been passionate about teaching."

Changing career paths wasn't easy. Ayarza had been accepted to Hollins University to study pre-medicine, earned a spot on the soccer team, and met her future teammates. When financial realities collided with family circumstances, she had to make a difficult choice.

"My mom was like, 'I'm going to have to work three jobs,'" Ayarza recalled. "And I was like, that's not what I want."

The experience forced her to reevaluate her college choice and career path.

"I dealt with a lot of backlash from my family because a lot of Hispanic families want their children to be doctors, lawyers, bankers," she said.

Born in South Korea, Ayarza comes from a family with rich immigrant roots. Her Colombian father immigrated to the U.S. and gained citizenship through military service. Her U.S.-born mother has Dominican heritage, and her maternal grandmother immigrated from the Dominican Republic as a teenager.

Ayarza grew up navigating multiple cultural identities in Clarksville and often felt caught between worlds, sometimes hesitant to speak Spanish for fear of judgment about her accent.

That changed when she found her community at Austin Peay, particularly through Sigma Lambda Gamma, the university's first multicultural sorority.

"Being with so many people who were so proud of their culture, regardless if it was Korean or Black or White or Spanish — I was like, 'Oh my goodness, that's so nice,'" Ayarza said. "It encouraged me to be like, 'I am

Dominican, I can speak Spanish,' and not have shame."

This sense of belonging was particularly meaningful for Ayarza, who struggled with isolation during high school - especially during the pandemic. She overcompensated for her anxiety by joining numerous extracurricular activities.

"Although I was busy and doing all these things that forced me to be sociable, it all felt like too much," she said. "My mental health took a major decline, and I became very suicidal."

"I want learning to be super fun!"

Track helped her find balance.

"Running made me feel free," she said. "It felt like the first thing that I finally did for myself. When I was running, nothing else in the world mattered."

In this supportive environment, Ayarza found her voice.

"This was the first sport where I spoke, and people cared," she said. "They knew I identified as a lesbian, and they showed me unconditional love anyway."

Today, she balances academics with roles in the Honors Program, the President's Emerging Leaders Program, work at Austin Peay's Little Gobs Child Learning Center, and leadership in her sorority - experiences that have shaped her personal growth and vision.

"I want learning to be super fun," she said. "I feel like there's a transition between fourth or fifth grade where students stop liking to learn. I want them to feel like they have control of their learning and that their learning has meaning."

As she works toward becoming a K-5 teacher, Ayarza sees her different cultural identities as assets for creating an inclusive classroom.

"Growing up, I went through K-12 and didn't learn anything about my culture unless it was a presentation I did about the Dominican Republic," she said. "I want to diversify the curriculum as much as I can. I don't want students to feel unrepresented."

Ayarza's teaching philosophy centers on creating safe, welcoming environments for every student to thrive.

"I value humanism and progressivism because to teach students we need to create a safe and welcoming environment in the classroom," she said. "Making connections with students is the best way to be a teacher because they know that we care for them."

Ayarza plans to start her teaching career after graduation before pursuing graduate studies to become a professor of education. She envisions classrooms where diversity is celebrated and creativity flourishes.

"If students don't want to draw and they prefer writing, write," she said. "If you're a great talker and you're not good at writing, talk and tell me your story. If you want to be an actor and act out instead of draw, do that. I want creative freedom in my classroom because every job requires creativity."

Ayarza also wants to inspire self-determination in other Latino students, regardless of external pressures.

"Latino students deserve to choose a major that fits their expectations of themselves and nobody else's," she said. "I'm a junior now, so my family has realized that I am sticking with education, but they've come around. They know I am happy, and at the end of the day, that's what they want most."



From trauma survivor to child advocate: Austin Peay social work graduate builds paths to healing

When Aarionna Williams sits across from children at her internship watching them play with toys, she sees more than their imaginations.

"If they build a sword, they might have more aggressive behavior," said Williams, a recent Austin Peay State University social work graduate. "If they build a wall, it shows they keep their guard up because somebody close to them has violated their trust. You can tell a lot about their feelings through play."

This understanding emerged from Williams' childhood experiences and her journey to APSU, where she found purpose and community.

Williams' path to social work began with her experience navigating childhood trauma. Growing up in a family struggling with drug addiction, she witnessed how substance abuse can devastate families across generations.

At 10, Williams took steps to protect herself. When authorities failed to recognize the abuse in her environment, she recorded her mother's behavior as evidence for the Department of Children's Services.

"That is how the system failed me; I had to take it upon myself at the age of 10 to record her to get my evidence myself," Williams said. "A child shouldn't have to do that on their own."

By 12, with her uncle and aunt's assistance, Williams moved under the guardianship of a military couple who provided structure and stability, helping her break generational substance abuse patterns.

Williams initially attended The Ohio State University but found the environment overwhelming after growing up in a structured household. High costs and academic challenges led her to transfer to Austin Peay, something she approached cautiously due to out-of-state tuition costs from her military family's relocations.

"I was very sad about not staying at Ohio State because my whole life I was like, 'I'm going to go to college,'" she said. "But looking back, I'm very glad because it gave me the opportunity to branch out and actually do what I wanted to do."

Initially, Williams isolated herself to focus on academics—a response she now recognizes as part of her trauma. That changed when she got involved on campus, joining the Iota Upsilon chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Inc. in Spring 2024.

"I wanted to figure out how to support mental health via networking, collaborating with others in programs, or creating new programs," she said. "However, I got more than just networking possibilities—I also acquired lifelong sisters."

At APSU, Williams found a sense of belonging she'd never experienced before, particularly within the social work program.

"Because many students in the social work program want to make a difference and find a place in society for everyone, the professors and people you are surrounded by eventually become your family," she said.

Williams started a 400-hour internship this year working with children facing mental health challenges, including traumatized kids. She observed therapy sessions and implemented evidence-based practices, solidifying her passion for clinical social work.

"I do see [my] inner child in [these kids]," she said. "At the end of the day, the inner child only wants to help them and show them, 'Hey, you know, you're not alone.'"

For Williams, watching children transform during therapy sessions is especially rewarding.

"They come in and they're happy to see their therapist," she said. "When they leave, they have the biggest smile on their face. 'I can't wait to see you next week.' It becomes their sanctuary, their safe haven." Drawing from personal experience, Williams understands trauma's impact on children.

"Children who have experienced trauma frequently see the world through a prism of dread, distrust, and hypersensitivity," she said. "I say this because that was exactly how I viewed the world. I know I cannot fully stop the problem, but something has to change within our legal systems."

Williams' personal experiences have fueled her determination to improve the child welfare system, noting that overworked social workers and judges often miss signs of abuse.

"If the child has access to basic necessities like food, clothing, and a roof over their head, they're not in danger, and the judge won't even bother opening or reviewing the case," she said. "For these reasons, I want to find better ways to alleviate the problem of child maltreatment."

Williams graduated in May 2025 and plans to pursue a master's in social work. Her long-term goals include becoming a Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW), opening her own practice, earning a doctorate, and writing a book about overcoming trauma.

"I don't want to sit here and constantly say, 'Oh yeah, this person hurt me, so this is how I'm going to act,'" she said. "I want to fight for others and those kids that can't advocate for themselves, the ones who are sitting in the corner and wondering if there's someone out there that can help them. I want to be that person."

"At the end of the day, the inner child only wants to help them and show them."



APSU Holmes Scholar aims to bridge cultural gaps through mathematics

When Ugochukwu Onumadu arrived at Austin Peay State University to pursue his doctorate in education, he came with a vision to make mathematics into a language everyone could understand. A few months later, he decided to serve as an adjunct instructor in the mathematics department.

Now, after being chosen to represent Austin Peay at this year's American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE) conference as a Holmes Scholar, he is one step closer to making his dream a reality.

"It was a defining moment, offering national exposure and a platform to advocate for equity and excellence in education," said Onumadu, who aims to become a global mathematics consultant, educational leader, and researcher. "I returned from the conference deeply inspired, and upon my arrival I received the Chair's Award of Excellence from the Department of Educational Specialties. This recognition affirmed my efforts in academic leadership and service."

During the conference, Onumadu engaged with key topics like ethical AI usage and fostering a sense of belonging among students.

"One of my biggest takeaways was how artificial intelligence transforms the teaching and learning landscape," he said. "I was especially inspired by the discussions on using AI to engage [with students] and support equity and inclusivity in education."

Onumadu already has over 15 years of experience working with students from across Africa, Europe, and the U.S. Along the way, he earned a Bachelor of Science in statistics from Imo State University (East), a Master of Business Administration in marketing from Ladoke Akintola University of Technology (Southwest), a Master of Science in statistics from the University of Lagos (Southwest), and a Master of Science in mathematics from the Technical University of Munich.

"My diverse academic journey has taught me that math is a universal language, but one that is interpreted differently across contexts," he said. "Nigeria grounded me in perseverance and creativity, Germany sharpened my precision and research skills, and the U.S. has taught me to merge innovation with equity."

This global perspective inspired Onumadu to publish *Math Language for Beginners Part 1* in 2019. The book targets secondary school and undergraduate students and reflects Onumadu's leadership style and educational approach.

"I realized that many students struggle not with math, but its language," he said. "The book introduces mathematics using the structure or parts of speech, similar to how we learn English grammar ... [this] has proven especially helpful for students who relate to language more easily than numbers."

Onumadu also works with doctoral candidates as a graduate assistant for APSU's Eriksson College of

Education. He helps teach Statistics I, supports faculty-led research, and guides students academically.

“This experience has sharpened my teaching methodology, deepened my research skills, and strengthened my ability to connect with students of diverse backgrounds,” he said. “It has also reinforced my belief in mentorship as a tool for academic success and social transformation.”

Onumadu’s dedication to students inspired him to continue his own academic journey, and he learned about APSU through a recommendation from a friend.

“My decision to pursue an Ed.D. at Austin Peay is primarily based on the university’s deep commitment to innovation, educational leadership, research, and real-world impact in culturally responsive education,” he said. “The faculty’s expertise and APSU’s support for international scholars convinced me this was the right environment in which to grow as a global educational leader.”

Since arriving at APSU in 2024, Onumadu has immersed himself in campus life and joined multiple committees, including the AI Task Force, Ed.D. Recruitment and Retention Team, and the Student Faculty Council.

Working alongside faculty members has been particularly valuable for Onumadu, who said their efforts are helping him achieve his long-term goals.

“The faculty at APSU have been mentors, advocates, and co-learners,” he said. “They’ve encouraged my studies, professional career, conference leadership and guided my dissertation journey. Their recommendation led to my Holmes Scholar recognition, and their affirmation came full circle with the Chair’s Award of Excellence.”

As he continues through his doctoral program, Onumadu remains thankful for the foundation Austin Peay has provided.

“My experience at APSU has been lovely, empowering, inclusive, and profoundly transformative,” he said. “I have felt truly valued, not just as a student, but as a contributor to the university’s mission.”

Game on: An APSU alumnus’s quest to bring people together

Anthony and Amanda Economos, alumni of Austin Peay State University (APSU), are on a mission to unite people through their unique gaming venture and passion project, Infinity Game Lounge.

Anthony is no stranger to entrepreneurship, having launched his first business as a student at APSU. His curiosity and passion for problem-solving have led him down many paths, each one more diverse than the next. From developing an improved helicopter pilot helmet to roofing to gaming, his inquisitive nature makes him the quintessential entrepreneur.

For his latest venture, Anthony is tapping into his experience as a business owner, entrepreneur, and educator to invest in his possibly most important project—creating a welcoming space where gamers of all levels can connect, learn, and forge new relationships. At the heart of Infinity Game Lounge is Anthony’s passion for people and creating a tight-knit community centered around the shared love of gaming and learning.

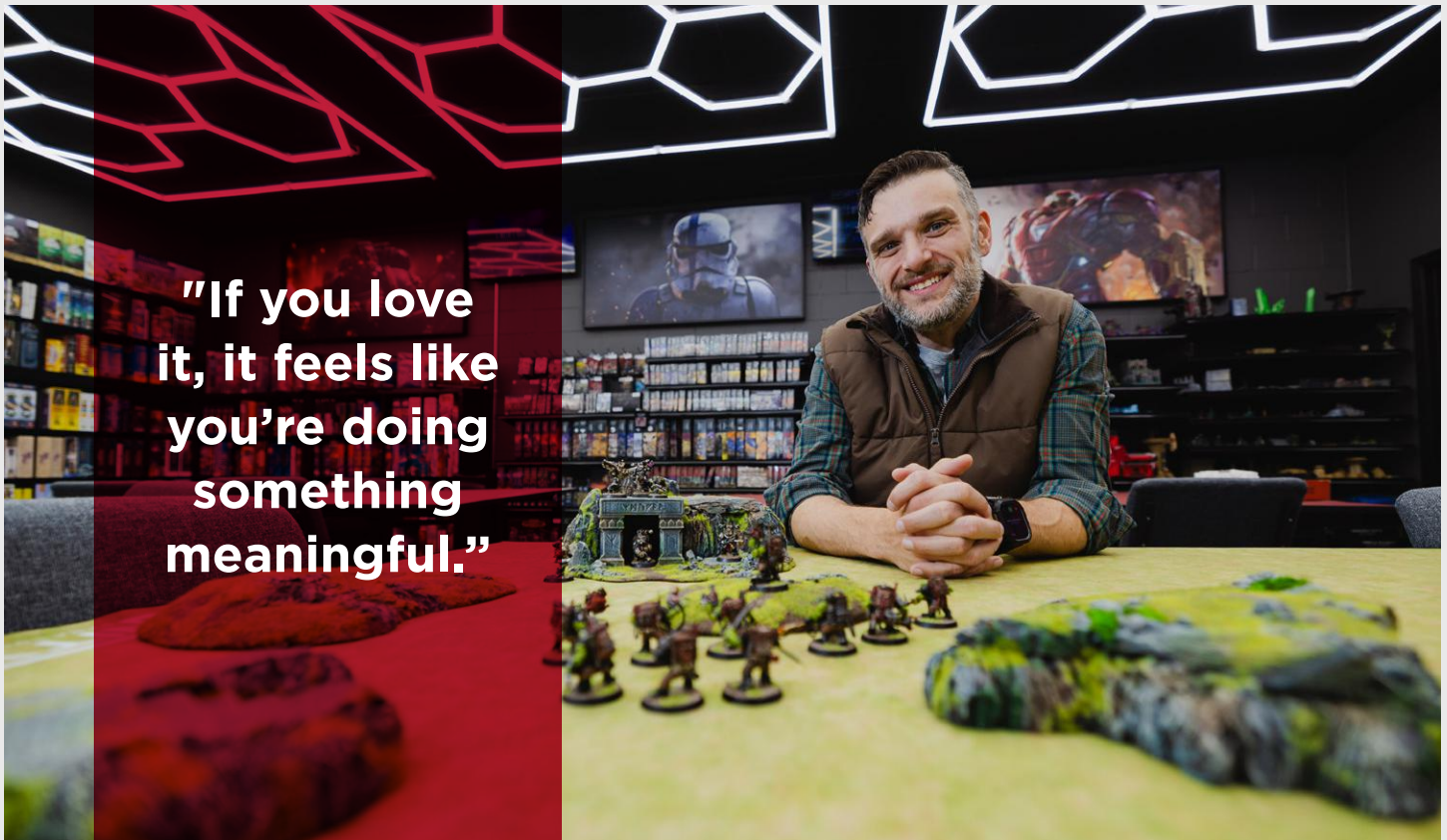
“I’ve always loved gaming—every part of it,” he said. “The stories, the competition, the strategy, and most of all, the people ... that’s what led to Infinity Game Lounge - not just a place to play, but a place to connect, to build relationships, and to create something bigger than just the games themselves.”

Anthony said his wife Amanda, a longtime special education teacher, is the reason for Infinity Game Lounge’s success. She currently manages the store’s HR and operations and has been working there for over a year.

“We’re really focusing on event-driven gaming, where we’re facilitating and coordinating competitions,” Anthony said. “We host events almost daily and allow people to try something new and get people in the same room to connect and learn together. We will be sharing our team’s knowledge and pushing ourselves to improve.”

The marketing skills Anthony learned as a student and now an adjunct professor at Austin Peay have also helped him give the store its own identity, and the layout has proven popular with customers.

“If you look around at the artwork and everything else in our space, that’s all inspired by my time in marketing classes, from the things that I’ve done at



Austin Peay," he said. "We're trying to make sure that we're building something more here ... [and] it all stems from the things that I've learned along the way."

One of the business's major goals is to create a welcoming experience for new players. Visitors can join "learn to play a new game" sessions each week, try their hand at a library of free games, take advantage of the store's fabrication bay, and enjoy food and drinks at a full-service café.

"If you spend enough time here, you'll undoubtedly hear me tell people I built this place to love on people," Anthony said. "The world is on fire right now, you know? I focus my energy on what I can control and the impact I can make. I believe if you focus on that, then the rest will follow. I can already see that happening as I communicate with customers."

Anthony and Amanda often receive messages from customers about how much they enjoyed spending time at Infinity Game Lounge, and they see the atmosphere they've created as what sets them apart.

"There's always room for improvement and innovation," Anthony said. "While I haven't necessarily invented anything new, I've consistently iterated, redesigned, and improved existing concepts. This approach of making things incrementally better has been key to my success."

For those looking to build a business of their own, Anthony emphasized the importance of being passionate and not afraid to fail along the way.

"I fail a lot, but I keep throwing darts; eventually, some will stick," he said. "And you have to be passionate about anything you're working towards because it feels much less like work ... if you love it, it feels like you're doing something meaningful."

Anthony and Amanda plan to expand Infinity Game Lounge into other locations in the future and are always looking for other opportunities to drive their business forward.

"It's a great space for networking and getting to know people," Anthony said. "The connectivity, the people, and the relationships that are being built here are incredible and create space for conversation ... this was really built as a place to love on people."



APSU alum talks performing with Kendrick Lamar at Super Bowl LIX

Girlfriend, you deserve to be here.

After years of battling self-doubt, Austin Peay State University alumna Kyrstin Young affirmed these words as she stepped onto the field to perform with Kendrick Lamar as a dancer in this year's Super Bowl halftime show.

The broadcast drew a record-breaking 133.5 million viewers, and the stadium crowd was the largest Young had ever seen. For the former APSU dance team member, it was a sign her hard work had paid off.

"I'll never forget the experience, and I never thought I'd be part of history like this," she said. "I remember getting on TikTok and Instagram afterward - it was all anyone talked about for days, and I was there."

However, Young nearly missed her chance to travel to the Super Bowl. A friend sent her the audition notice four hours before the deadline, and she recorded and uploaded her video with little time to spare.

"The old me would have thought, 'I'm not doing that,'" said Young, who teaches dance classes at various Nashville studios. "But I'm trying to be very intentional about where I'm at in life right now, and I want to spend more time dancing and performing."

By the time Young left work and started to record, she had less than an hour to meet the audition's 2 p.m. deadline - but she was determined to succeed.

"Once I got everything together, I had about five minutes left to post the video to YouTube," she said. "I think the right one was submitted at 2:01 p.m. I was really sad ... I thought they'd never choose me because it was technically late, and I didn't think it was that good because I was panicking about not having much time."

After three weeks, Young was surprised to see an email asking for her information and measurements. She thought it was sent by mistake, but replied and was booked for the job a week later.

"Prior to this experience, I've had a really hard time with internalizing that I'm good enough," she said. "I convinced myself I wasn't good enough for the job ... [but] this was a confirmation for me that I can do something like this."



"NEVER STOP
BEING GREAT,
IF YOU'RE SCARED,
JUST DO IT. ART
RUNS THE WORLD,
SO KEEP BEING
CREATIVE."

Young said choreographer Charm La'Donna made sure the dancers were prepared and had plenty of opportunities to work with Lamar before the Super Bowl.

"At the last rehearsal, he huddled us all up and gave us a pep talk - 'never stop being great, if you're scared, just do it. Art runs the world, so keep being creative,'" Young said. "That was really nice to hear before game day. Some artists are in and out, but he took the time to talk to us and let us know he appreciated us being there and doing this with him."

Thousands gathered inside the venue for the performance, but Young's experience and training kept her from feeling overwhelmed. Once the lights filled the stadium and the music began, she felt a wave of confidence and excitement.

"I went to take my first step onto the field when it was time to dance, and I just snapped in," she said. "Even though beforehand I felt like I wasn't good enough, I knew in the moment that I was where I needed to be."

College of STEM

**forges innovative
partnerships across
military, industry,
community**

A wave of new partnerships is positioning Austin Peay State University's College of STEM as a regional innovation hub. By connecting students with Fort Campbell's military innovation center, equipping the Department of Agriculture with cutting-edge machinery, and deploying advanced community research projects, the college is creating opportunities while addressing real-world challenges.

APSU signs landmark agreement to study Fort Campbell's economic impact

Austin Peay State University's GIS Center and the APSU Department of Mathematics and Statistics have signed a historic 10-year Intergovernmental Support Agreement (IGSA) with Fort Campbell to conduct comprehensive economic impact studies of the military installation's influence on the region.

The collaboration marks the mathematics department's first IGSA partnership and represents a unique interdisciplinary approach to analyzing Fort Campbell's economic impact. The project will be led by Dr. Michael Wilson, director of the GIS Center, and Dr. Raman Sahi from the Department of Mathematics and Statistics.

"This partnership allows us to examine Fort Campbell's impact beyond traditional boundaries," Wilson said. "By looking at retiree ZIP codes alone, we expect to find the base's influence extends well beyond the immediate surrounding counties. People are driving an hour or more to access medical care and use the commissary on post, just as an example of the far-reaching implications Fort Campbell has on our region."

The initiative will analyze local employment numbers, tax revenue, construction contracts, and the economic impact of military retirees. Students will gain hands-on experience in data analytics and statistical analysis while helping develop automated systems for ongoing data collection.

"This project gives our students real-world experience right in their backyard," Sahi said. "Many of our military-affiliated students want to stay in this area because their families are here. This research could help attract industries that would allow more of them to look for work locally rather than uproot their families."

***"We're enhancing our
agricultural education
programs and strengthening
our commitment to
the region"***



EagleWerx partnership creates unique military innovation opportunities

APSU engineering and technology students are also tackling real military challenges through internships at Fort Campbell's EagleWerx Applied Tactical Innovation Center. Alongside the U.S. Army Combat Capabilities Development Command's Pathfinder program, participants are developing practical solutions that impact soldiers in the field.

The internships give students experience across the product development cycle—from problem identification and wireframing to prototyping and field testing. Projects range from software development to advanced engineering solutions like a wheeled litter for battlefield medical transport.

“Our collaboration with Austin Peay allows us to bring fresh, innovative ideas into military projects,” said Scott Homer, a CMI2 Pathfinder Warfighter Innovation Chief (PWIC) at Fort Campbell. “Students work on actual soldier problem sets and develop solutions with tangible impacts.”

Agricultural education gets major boost

The Department of Agriculture's Farm and Environmental Education Center has been renamed the Coleman Tractor APSU Farm Powered by Kubota following a significant three-year partnership with Coleman Tractor Company and Kubota Tractor Corporation.

The agreement provides state-of-the-art Kubota tractors, mowers, hay equipment, and utility vehicles for the farm each year, along with internship opportunities, career fair participation, and integration with APSU athletic events.

“By providing access to cutting-edge technology and creating meaningful connections with industry leaders, we're enhancing our agricultural education programs and strengthening our commitment to the region,” said Austin Peay President Mike Licari. “This collaboration exemplifies our focus on developing mutually beneficial community partnerships that improve student success and workforce readiness.”

LiDAR technology enhances traffic safety

In partnership with Vanderbilt University and the Clarksville Street Department, the APSU GIS Center is deploying LiDAR technology to enhance traffic safety in Clarksville.

The project, funded by a Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development grant, uses light detection and ranging technology to analyze travel patterns of cars, pedestrians, and cyclists.



“LiDAR provides a unique opportunity to gather data without infringing on privacy,” said Dr. Michael Wilson, director of the APSU GIS Center. “It allows us to monitor traffic patterns effectively and safely. We're eager to see how this data can influence street designs for improved safety.”

The technology creates detailed 3D models through pulsed light, offering a non-intrusive way to study traffic behaviors. The first data collection site at Warfield Boulevard and Rossview Road will help optimize signal timings and contribute to future city planning.



Thanks to the unwavering support of our alumni, friends, and community partners, Austin Peay State University continues to thrive. I'm proud to report that during the 2024-25 fiscal year, we raised a total of **\$15,663,385.27** from **2,762** donors who made **6,970** gifts to the university for a **28.4%** increase in overall dollars raised from 2023-24. Athletic corporate sponsorships totaled over **\$1.8** million this year, up **20.5%** from last year. This is the fourth consecutive year of growth for Austin Peay, outpacing national trends in philanthropic giving. Your exceptional generosity has propelled APSU to new heights as we approach a historic centennial milestone in our institution's journey.

This year, we've celebrated several transformative partnerships enhancing the Gobs For Life Experience. In February, we opened the Esports Gaming Room Powered by CDE Lightband for our Gobs Gaming program. April saw the dedication of the Sara and Mike Gotcher Theatre, establishing professorships in the Department of Communication and the Department of Theatre and Dance. Our farm was renamed the Coleman Tractor APSU Farm Powered by Kubota through a partnership providing students with cutting-edge agricultural equipment. We celebrated the Downey Bullpen ribbon-cutting, continuing Doug and Linda Downey's legacy of athletic support. This fall, we celebrated the opening of the Health Professions Building on campus. These partnerships demonstrate how community investment directly strengthens our educational mission.

As we approach Austin Peay's centennial in 2027, we invite you to become a Centennial Ambassador for this milestone. Ambassadors will use their networks to advocate for the celebration and encourage our community to embrace our Gobs for Life concept. To express interest, visit www.alumni.apsu.edu/centennialambassador.

This celebration honors Austin Peay's heritage and the countless lives transformed through education. Your participation will help this milestone inspire future generations of Gobs while recognizing our institution's enduring regional impact.

Thank you for your continued investment in Austin Peay State University. Together, we're preserving our legacy and shaping the next century of excellence at APSU. Your support profoundly impacts our students' lives and the future of our institution.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'KRISTOPHER R. PHILLIPS'.

Kristopher R. Phillips, MSL ('91, '21)
APSU Vice President for Alumni, Engagement and Philanthropy
Executive Director of the APSU Foundation

National Alumni Association Executive Board

President

Gretchen Hancock ('14)
gretchen.hancock1@gmail.com

Vice President

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Past President

Victor Felts ('91)
feltsv@apsu.edu

Faculty Representative

Tracy Nichols ('92)
nicholst@apsu.edu



I'm excited to share our recent accomplishments and upcoming opportunities from the Austin Peay State University Office of Alumni and Engagement, which had an extraordinary year.

I want to thank everyone who participated in Gobs Give 2025 on March 18 and 19. Our "On The Move" campaign was truly record-breaking, with 1,588 gifts totaling \$533,072.19! This represents an unprecedented 36.9% increase over the previous year and brings our nine-year Gobs Give total to over \$2.6 million. Mark your calendars for Gobs Give 2026, which will take place from 10 a.m. on March 17 to 7:27 p.m. on March 18.

Our Gobs Gatherings continue to connect alumni nationwide. Recent events were held in Murfreesboro, Chattanooga, Memphis, Nashville, San Antonio, Houston, Dallas, and Washington, D.C. These gatherings offer opportunities to network and reconnect with fellow Governors - more dates will be announced soon.

On July 18, the National Alumni Association Board met to welcome new board members and officers, who are already developing initiatives to engage our dynamic alumni family across stages of the Gobs For Life Experience.

Our SHAPE Faculty and Staff Campaign continues to build momentum, celebrating the transformative impact our dedicated employees make at Austin Peay through both their professional excellence and generous financial support. We're proud to share that 40% of APSU faculty and staff have made a gift to the university in the last year. We also look forward to our fourth "GOVing Tuesday," APSU's version of Giving Tuesday, on Dec. 1, 2025. Funds raised during GOVing Tuesday will support projects that directly impact the Austin Peay experience for students, faculty, staff, and our community.

Save the date for Homecoming 2025, which will take place on Oct. 24 and 25. We look forward to welcoming you back to campus for this special weekend of celebration.

Visit www.alumni.apsu.edu for a complete list of APSU alumni events. If you have questions, need information about our events, or if you're interested in forming a new alumni chapter, please contact us at alumni@apsu.edu or 931-221-7979.

Sincerely,

Brad Averitt ('10, '17)

Assistant Vice President for Alumni and Engagement



APSU Governors Military Hall of Fame Induction and Military Alumni Chapter Scholarship Dinner

Friday Nov. 7, 2025

5:30 p.m. Reception | 6 p.m. Scholarship Celebration and Induction Dinner
Morgan University Center Ballroom • Tickets are \$50 per person
RSVP by Oct. 31 by visiting www.alumni.apsu.edu/halloffame25

Saturday Nov. 8, 2025

Gobs Military Appreciation Game | 3 p.m. Gobs. Central Arkansas (Fortera Stadium)
Class of 2025 honorees will be recognized

Col. (Ret.) Ernest DeWald • Maj. (Ret.) Lance Richardson ('89)
Lt. Col. (Ret.) James M. Walker, Jr. ('81) • Col. (Ret.) William (Ted) Wootton



APSU BOARD OF TRUSTEES MILITARY SERVICE AWARD

JOEL C. PRUITT

Pivot Program Director, 5th Special Forces Group

Retired Master Sgt. Joel C. Pruitt served 24 years of active duty in the United States Army, with extensive service in the 5th Special Forces Group at Fort Campbell. His distinguished military career included five combat tours in Iraq and deployments to Somalia, Panama, Qatar, Spain, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Djibouti, and Kenya. His service has been recognized with five Bronze Star Medals, the Combat Infantry Badge with Star (2nd award), and numerous other decorations.

In 2017, Pruitt earned a Bachelor's Degree in psychology from Austin Peay State University, graduating magna cum laude. His commitment to APSU has continued well beyond graduation. As president of Chapter 38 of the Special Forces Association, he has been instrumental in establishing four scholarship endowments at APSU specifically for Special Forces personnel and their families. In 2023, he collaborated with Retired Chief Warrant Officer 4 Joe Shakeenab to create the CSM(R) Francis McFadden Military Scholarship, further strengthening the bond between the military and academic communities in Clarksville.

Pruitt's impact on the Clarksville community extends to his role as Pivot Program Director at 5th Special Forces Group, where since 2021 he has directly assisted over 500 service members with their transition to civilian life. His dedication to veteran causes earned him the Charlie Daniels Patriot Award in 2022 and the titles of Kentucky Colonel and Tennessee Colonel Aide-de-camp in 2023. He serves on the advisory board for the Charlie Daniels Journey Home Project, where he has fostered crucial relationships between the 5th Special Forces Group and the Clarksville community.

Through his unwavering commitment to APSU, military personnel, and veterans in the Clarksville area, Pruitt has created lasting pathways connecting military service members to educational opportunities and community support, embodying the spirit of the Board of Trustees Military Service Award.



APSU PHILANTHROPIST OF THE YEAR

COLEMAN TRACTOR COMPANY

Agricultural and Construction Equipment Dealer

Coleman Tractor Company, under the leadership of Dealer Principal Spencer Coleman, has demonstrated extraordinary commitment to agricultural education and student success at Austin Peay State University. Established as a family-owned business with locations in Clarksville, Nashville, White House, and Paris, Tennessee, Coleman Tractor has become a leading provider of agricultural and construction equipment in the Middle Tennessee region, specializing in Kubota equipment sales, service, and parts.

The company began its partnership with APSU in 2017, initially providing six pieces of Kubota equipment for use at the university's Farm and Environmental Education Center. In 2025, this relationship expanded significantly with a formal three-year partnership between Coleman Tractor Company, Kubota Tractor Corporation, and Austin Peay State University. This collaboration led to the renaming of the APSU Department of Agriculture's farm as the Coleman Tractor APSU Farm Powered by Kubota and includes the provision of state-of-the-art equipment such as tractors, mowers, hay equipment, and utility vehicles.

The partnership has transformed agricultural education at APSU by providing students with hands-on experience using cutting-edge technology. The equipment has dramatically improved farm operations and forage production for the university's livestock, while creating meaningful connections between students and industry leaders. Beyond equipment donations, Coleman Tractor has enhanced student opportunities through internships, career fair participation, and integration with APSU athletic events.

Coleman, a Clarksville native, has emphasized the importance of supporting local education and agricultural advancement. His family's commitment to the community extends through their presence at university events and their dedication to equipping APSU students with the knowledge and resources needed to become the agricultural professionals of the future.



APSU BOARD OF TRUSTEES SERVICE AWARD

LAWSON AND BETH MABRY

Real Estate Development and Business Professionals

William Lawson Mabry and Beth Fletcher Mabry have demonstrated exceptional dedication to their alma mater through decades of service and philanthropy.

The Mabry family has to date established two endowed scholarships at APSU: The Harriett Noland Mabry Memorial Scholarship for language and literature majors in the College of Arts and Letters and the William Marrast Mabry Memorial Scholarship for finance majors in the College of Business.

Lawson graduated from Austin Peay State University in 1977 with a Bachelor of Science in English. He was editor of *The Tower* campus literary publication, editorial editor of *The All State*, and president of Pi Kappa Alpha. Since graduation, he has worked in real estate in Clarksville, Tennessee, focusing on land acquisition, development, and construction. He has been involved with the development of many neighborhoods and thousands of residential lots.

He was an organizer and director of Heritage Bank in Clarksville from 1988 until its acquisition by Old National Bank in 1999. He also served as chairman of the board of First Federal Savings Bank/First Advantage Bank in Clarksville from 2006 until its merger with Reliant Bank in Brentwood, Tennessee in 2020, and served on Reliant Bank's board until its acquisition by United Community Bank in 2022.

Additionally, he was an organizer and president of both the Clarksville-Montgomery Public Library Foundation and the Clarksville Academy Foundation. Lawson has served on various other philanthropic boards, including the Austin Peay State University Foundation, the Customs House Museum, the Aspire Clarksville Foundation, Clarksville Academy, the Fort Campbell Historical Foundation, the Clarksville-Montgomery County Public Library, the ZSR Library Board of Visitors at Wake Forest University, the Clarksville River District Commission, and Leadership Clarksville.

Beth Fletcher Mabry, a 1985 APSU graduate, majored in business administration. At APSU she was a member of Chi Omega and was elected Homecoming Queen. After graduation Beth had a corporate career in marketing with Globe Business Furniture, Haworth Inc., and Fruit of The Loom. She currently serves on the Woodward Library Society Board and has also served on the Candlelight Ball Committee.

Beth and Lawson have two children, Elizabeth and Will. Elizabeth is pursuing a full-time MBA at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, and Will works as an investment banking analyst at Barclays Investment Bank in New York City.



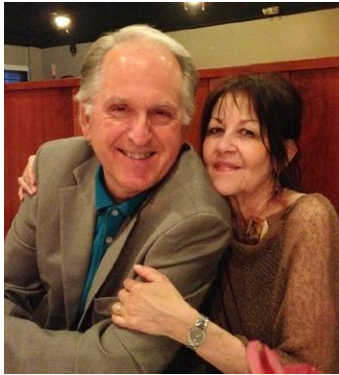
"On The Move" propelled Govs Give 2025 to unprecedented success during the university's ninth annual online giving event. This campaign showcased the significant achievements and forward momentum of Austin Peay's students, faculty, staff and community members. In just 1 day, 9 hours, and 27 minutes—from 10 a.m. on March 18 to 7:27 p.m. on March 19, a timeframe chosen to honor Austin Peay's founding in 1927—generous donors invested \$533,072.19 to APSU Funds of Excellence, empowering initiatives across academics, athletics and student affairs.

The campaign shattered records as alumni and friends made 1,588 gifts—establishing a new all-time high in the history of Govs Give and a growth of 36.9% compared to the previous year. APSU's own faculty and staff demonstrated their commitment through the SHAPE Faculty and Staff Giving Campaign, which honors how these dedicated individuals shape the university through their talents and contributions. An impressive 311 faculty and staff members also participated in Govs Give 2025 as part of the SHAPE Campaign. Since its inception, Govs Give has raised a substantial \$2,671,125 over nine years to transform the Austin Peay experience.

Govs Give 2026 will begin at 10 a.m. on Tuesday, March 17 and run until 7:27 p.m. on Wednesday, March 18.

Governors Circle **Alumni Awards 2025**

Outstanding Service Award



Larry ('66, '70) and Roberta ('69, '80) Richardson

Larry and Roberta Richardson exemplify lifelong dedication to Austin Peay State University through their continued service and support. Larry earned his undergraduate degree in biology in 1966 and his master's degree in 1970, serving as SGA president from 1964-66. Roberta completed her Bachelor of Arts in English with a minor in music in 1969 and later earned her Master of Arts in English in 1980, actively participating in University Choir, Concert Band, and as a GOMB majorette during her student years.

The Richardsons have maintained deep connections with APSU throughout their lives, returning for Homecoming events and attending alumni gatherings wherever they have lived. Larry has served twice as National Alumni Association President and as an APSU Foundation Board Member, while Roberta has served on the board of directors for the APSU National Alumni Association and mentored APSU students. Both have contributed significantly to university initiatives, including support for the Southeastern Grasslands Institute and the College of Arts & Letters.

Beyond APSU, the couple remains active in the broader community. Larry, known as the Cumberland River Artist, combines his biology knowledge and artistic talent to create paintings of areas along the Cumberland River, donating works to local organizations for fundraising. He currently serves as chairman of the board for the Customs House Museum and Cultural Center. Roberta has served as board president for the Gateway Chamber Orchestra and received the GCO Dee Boaz Crescendo Award for superior leadership. Their commitment to service reflects the values they developed during their time at Austin Peay.



Andrew Wilson ('13, '15)

Andrew Wilson, a financial advisor, entrepreneur, veteran, and community leader, embodies the values of hard work, service, and lifelong learning. He earned both his Master of Science in management and Bachelor of Business Administration from Austin Peay State University, complemented by a Bachelor of Science in management and organizational development from Bethel University. As a proud U.S. Army veteran, Wilson brings the discipline, leadership, and mission-focused mindset from his military service into every aspect of his professional and community involvement.

Currently serving as a financial advisor with The Cowan Group at R.W. Baird and as owner and principal broker of Dreamfield Lending, Andrew has established himself as a respected professional in the financial services industry. His commitment to community service is exemplified through his decade-long active membership in the Rotary Club of Hopkinsville, where he served as president and was honored as the 2024 Rotarian of the Year. His continued dedication to the club's fundraising efforts and service initiatives earned him the 2025 William Turner G.O.A.T. award for his considerable contributions.

Wilson and his wife, Melissa, reside in Hopkinsville, Kentucky with their two daughters, Amelia Kate and Peyton Lynn. Whether serving clients, volunteering in the community, or spending time with family, Wilson is driven by a commitment to build meaningful relationships and create lasting impacts.

Outstanding Alumnus



Dr. Vernon Michael Carrigan ('73)

Clarksville native Dr. Vernon Michael (Mike) Carrigan, a proud 1973 graduate of Austin Peay, built an exemplary career in medicine spanning more than 40 years. After completing his pre-med studies at APSU, he earned his medical degree at the University of Tennessee Health Science Center in 1976 and completed internal medicine training at Methodist Hospital in Memphis in 1979 before returning to serve his hometown community.

Carrigan's distinguished career includes roles as a practicing physician, practice administrator, and healthcare delivery leader. He has served in numerous positions with Tennova Healthcare, managed care organizations, and was a founding member, president, medical director, and chief administrator of a large multi-specialty medical practice in Clarksville. Throughout his career, he developed meaningful, long-lasting relationships with thousands of patients who valued not only his medical expertise but also his good-natured and humorous approach to medicine.

Beyond his professional practice, Carrigan has demonstrated extraordinary commitment to service. He volunteered at Clarksville's Good Samaritan Clinic serving low-income patients for 30 years and participated in nearly 30 international mission trips to Brazil, China, and the Middle East. He also co-founded and oversaw Bethany House ministry, a nine-month, free, in-residence, faith-based restorative program serving women overcoming addiction. He and his wife Ruth Collins Carrigan, a 1986 APSU nursing graduate, have endowed two scholarships to the APSU School of Nursing, embodying their commitment to enriching the lives of others.

Carrigan wishes to recognize the important influences of others in his life, in particular and in loving memory his first wife Melynda Collins Carrigan, RN and Jessie Rakestraw Dukes, one of the first Bethany House graduates and later in-residence director, who was like a daughter. He is humbled to accept this honor in their memory.

Outstanding Service Award



Trevor Brand ('14)

Trevor Brand, a dynamic healthcare leader recognized nationally for his excellence in administration, currently serves as the CEO of Sutter Delta Medical Center, where he oversees strategy and operations serving residents of Contra Costa County. Prior to this role, Brand served as chief operating officer at City of Hope in Atlanta and Phoenix, leading significant operational and financial improvements that contributed to a 20% increase in operating margin and a 34% increase in patient volume.

Brand's impressive career trajectory includes roles as strategic initiatives executive and operations administrator for Erlanger Health System, where he oversaw strategic planning and service line development for community health centers. His exceptional leadership has earned numerous accolades, including the 2020 Modern Healthcare Emerging Leader Award, recognition as the Most Influential Man in the Valley in 2022, selection for Georgia State University's 40 under 40 class of 2023, and inclusion in the Atlanta Journal Constitution and Becker's Hospital Review 2024 40 under 40.

During his time at Austin Peay State University from 2011 to 2014, Brand was an active student leader involved in Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity - Tau Phi Chapter, the Student Organization Council, and as a resident hall director. His commitment to the university has continued beyond graduation through service as both a member and chair of the Master of Healthcare Administration Advisory Board, assisting with the university's accreditation through the Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Management Education, and as a dedicated member of the Advisory Council for Student Affairs.



Shane Lantigua ('17)

Shane Lantigua's decision to become a financial advisor was influenced by personal experience. After losing his father to lung cancer at age nine, he witnessed the strain his family faced due to a lack of financial planning. This pivotal moment inspired him to pursue a degree in finance at Austin Peay State University, where he also played college baseball. While at APSU, Shane began an internship with Northwestern Mutual in 2016, laying the foundation for his successful career in financial planning.

Since graduation, Lantigua has become a partner at Capital Stewardship Partners-Northwestern Mutual Private Client Group and earned his Certified Financial Planner (CFP) designation. As a first-generation American with Dominican heritage, Lantigua was raised in Bartlett, Tennessee, predominantly by his mother, Nidia Lantigua. His commitment to helping others extends beyond his professional life into community service, including serving on the board of CASA (Court-Appointed Special Advocates) as the vice president.

Currently residing in West Nashville's Charlotte Park area with his wife Cortney and young daughter Rielle, Lantigua balances his professional responsibilities with personal interests including golf, watching sports, spending time outdoors, and attending The Belonging Co. church. He remains physically active, having competed in two marathons in 2024. Through his personal experiences and professional achievements, Lantigua embodies the spirit of service and excellence that distinguishes APSU alumni.



Major Jacquelyn Messenger ('09)

Maj. Jacquelyn M. Messenger, a distinguished military officer and medical professional, began her Army career in 1999 as a medical laboratory technician. After three deployments with the 86th Combat Support Hospital, including service in Uzbekistan, Kuwait, Iraq, and Baghdad, she received the 44th Medical Brigade Commanding General's hip-pocket Green-to-Gold Scholarship, which led her to Austin Peay State University.

In 2009, Messenger completed her bachelor's degree in medical laboratory science as a Distinguished Military Graduate from APSU through the Army Green-to-Gold Program. Upon graduation, she commissioned into the Medical Service Corps as a clinical laboratory officer. Her subsequent achievements include completing the Tri-Service Blood Bank Fellowship as Distinguished Honor Graduate, earning a master's degree in immunohematology from The George Washington University, and commanding the 153rd Medical Detachment (Blood Support) through a successful deployment to Afghanistan.

Messenger further distinguished herself by earning a PhD in cell and molecular biology from the University of Texas-San Antonio in 2022, graduating with honors. Currently, she serves as the chief of blood services at Brooke Army Medical Center, the Department of Defense's only Level-I trauma center. Her numerous decorations include the Bronze Star Medal, and she has received multiple professional recognitions including the 2013 National Capital Region Silver Caduceus/Golden Twig award and the 2015 Society of American Federal Medical Laboratory Scientists Tri-Service Blood Bank Award. Messenger continues to contribute to research improving clinical outcomes for combat wounded while planning to return to Clarksville with her husband, retired Maj. Jon Messenger, and their two sons upon her retirement in 2029.



A Legacy of Leadership: _____ **Turner Family Event Center Honors Decades of Service**

When Jack and Margie Turner first became involved with Austin Peay State University, they couldn't have imagined their commitment would span decades and touch nearly every aspect of campus life. Now, their impact will be permanently recognized with the naming of the Jack and Margie Turner Family Event Center at 416 College St.

"Our relationship with Austin Peay has grown into such a meaningful part of our lives," Jack Turner said. "To see our family name on this event center that will serve both the university and Clarksville community for generations to come is truly an honor. We're proud to have been partners with APSU for decades and to witness how the university continues to evolve and strengthen its impact on students, military families, and our entire community."

Jack and Margie's active leadership in cornerstone university organizations, including the Red Coat Society, Tower Club, Candlelight Ball, and Governors Club, has helped strengthen APSU's connection to the Clarksville community. Through these roles, the Turners have become instrumental in bridging the university with its surrounding community.

"The Turners represent the very best of the Austin Peay community," said Kris Phillips, vice president of Alumni, Engagement and Philanthropy. "Their investment in the university has reshaped programs across academics, athletics, and more, affecting generations of students. Jack and Margie's support of the university has also elevated Austin Peay's standing and reputation among peer institutions, helping us attract exceptional students,

faculty, and additional philanthropic partners who recognize the university's growing excellence."

Jack and Margie have also shown their dedication to military-affiliated students through their sponsorship of the Command Sergeant Major Darol Walker Award Ceremony and Breakfast and the APSU Governors Military Hall of Fame. These initiatives have reinforced Austin Peay's vital relationship with Fort Campbell and the university's growing population of military-affiliated students.

The event center's strategic location near the Newton Military Family Resource Center makes it an ideal future home for the APSU Military Hall of Fame recognition ceremony, as well as other major gatherings.

"The versatility of the space means it will be a hub for university and community events at Austin Peay," APSU President Mike Licari said. "The Jack and Margie Turner Family Event Center honors the family's longstanding commitment to both APSU and our military community while addressing our growing need for quality event venues."

Designed to accommodate 200 to 300 people, the space will host signature university events such as the Governors Circle Alumni Awards Celebration and serve as a venue for external community partners. It will benefit future generations of students, military families, and community members - the same populations the Turners have supported for decades.

GOVS *Gatherings*



Govs Gatherings: On The Move and Coming to You

This year marked another journey of connection for Austin Peay State University. The Division of Alumni, Engagement and Philanthropy traveled across the country hosting Govs Gatherings in Murfreesboro, Chattanooga, Memphis, Nashville, Dallas, San Antonio, Houston, Washington, D.C. and Atlanta. These events successfully strengthened ties with alumni beyond the APSU campus, with more than 200 alumni and friends joining us for these special gatherings.

Each Govs Gathering provides alumni with valuable opportunities to reconnect with old friends, expand their professional networks, share fond memories of their time at APSU, and learn about the exciting transformational experiences currently taking place at the university.

We're exploring opportunities to expand our reach with additional gatherings in new cities across the country, ensuring every Governor has the chance to reconnect with their APSU family.

Building on this momentum, we're excited to continue the tradition with new locations for Govs Gatherings. Check the QR code for information about upcoming events and join us in a city near you. The past year has shown that distance cannot diminish the Govs spirit, and we remain committed to building and strengthening the APSU community, one Govs Gathering at a time.



Beyond the Name: How Donor Spaces Are Shaping APSU's Future

When alumni and community partners invest in Austin Peay State University, they establish legacies that enhance student experiences and strengthen the university's future. Recent naming ceremonies and ribbon cuttings highlight how these partnerships are transforming APSU while honoring those who invest in Austin Peay.

Embracing Modern Student Experiences

In February 2025, the Esports Gaming Room Powered by CDE Lightband opened in the Morgan University Center. This state-of-the-art facility features high-performance gaming computers, consoles, and specialized gaming furniture, creating a dedicated competition and practice space for the university's growing Govs Gaming program.

"Being part of Govs Gaming gives Austin Peay students a way to work together with peers, build camaraderie, and engage in competition in a way that's accessible to everybody," said Sasha Puskas, President of Govs Gaming. "The new esports room strengthens our community — anybody in Govs Gaming can connect online to game together, but having a place on campus to be together strengthens our bonds and enhances our competitive edge."

The facility serves multiple purposes: a practice and competition space for gaming teams, a tournament venue, and a social hub fostering connections among students with shared interests. Since its inception in 2019, the program has grown to over 100 dedicated members, positioning APSU as an attractive destination for prospective esports students.



Honoring Excellence in the Arts

The university celebrated the dedication of the newly named Sara and Mike Gotcher Theatre with a ribbon-cutting ceremony on April 22. The theatre honors Dr. Mike Gotcher and his late wife Sara, both distinguished APSU alumni who made significant contributions to the university and performing arts community.

"This theatre is a permanent testament to the Gotchers' legacy of excellence, passion, and commitment to education and the arts," said Kris Phillips, APSU's vice president for Alumni, Engagement and Philanthropy, during the ceremony.

The Gotchers' gift establishes two professorships: the Dr. Mike Gotcher Communication Professorship and the Dr. Sara Gotcher Theatre and Dance Professorship, enhancing APSU's ability to attract and retain outstanding faculty and high-achieving students.

Dr. Mike Gotcher, whose 30 years at the university included roles as professor, department chair, and interim dean, earned the university's Richard M. Hawkins Award and the APSU National Alumni Association's Distinguished Professor Award. Dr. Sara Gotcher's work included "Project 101," which focused on military deployment's impact on Fort Campbell families, as well as extensive community involvement in the Clarksville theater community. She taught at APSU for 25 years.

"This theatre is a permanent testament to the Gotchers' legacy of excellence, passion, and commitment to education and the arts."

Cultivating Agricultural Innovation

In April, APSU announced a three-year partnership with Coleman Tractor Company and Kubota Tractor Corporation. The partnership includes renaming the Austin Peay Farm and Environmental Education Center as the Coleman Tractor APSU Farm Powered by Kubota.

The partnership provides state-of-the-art equipment, including Kubota tractors, mowers, hay equipment, and utility vehicles for educational purposes and farm operations. Updated equipment will be provided annually, giving students hands-on experience with cutting-edge agricultural technology.

For nearly a decade, we have been proud to partner with APSU in advancing the future of farming," said Spencer Coleman, Coleman Tractor's dealer principal. "[We're] equipping students with the knowledge, resources, and hands-on experiences needed to lead the industry forward.

Sara and Mike Gotcher Theatre



Supporting Athletics and Alumni Connections

The generosity of Governors baseball players continues to enhance campus athletic facilities. Doug Downey ('79), a standout right-handed pitcher who led the team in appearances throughout his college career, and his wife Linda Moore Downey began their major investment in APSU baseball in 2016. Their initial contribution, alongside other donors, funded crucial dugout renovations at Raymond C. Hand Park. This marked the first step of comprehensive enhancements that culminated in the opening of the Downey Baseball Operations Center & Clubhouse, made possible by the couple's transformative gift. In 2018, the APSU Board of Trustees named them Philanthropists of the Year, and in 2022 the university celebrated the opening of the Downey Baseball Operations Center & Clubhouse.

"Austin Peay, the entire Athletics Department and Governor baseball are very special to me and my wife Linda," Doug Downey said. "The Operations Center and Clubhouse is a tribute to every Governor baseball player past, present and future, and we hope many more championships will be celebrated inside those walls."

The celebration continued with the Downey Bullpen ribbon cutting on April 25, kicking off the APSU Softball & Baseball Alumni Weekend. The Downeys' commitment to APSU baseball shows no signs of slowing as they continue to invest in excellence at Austin Peay.

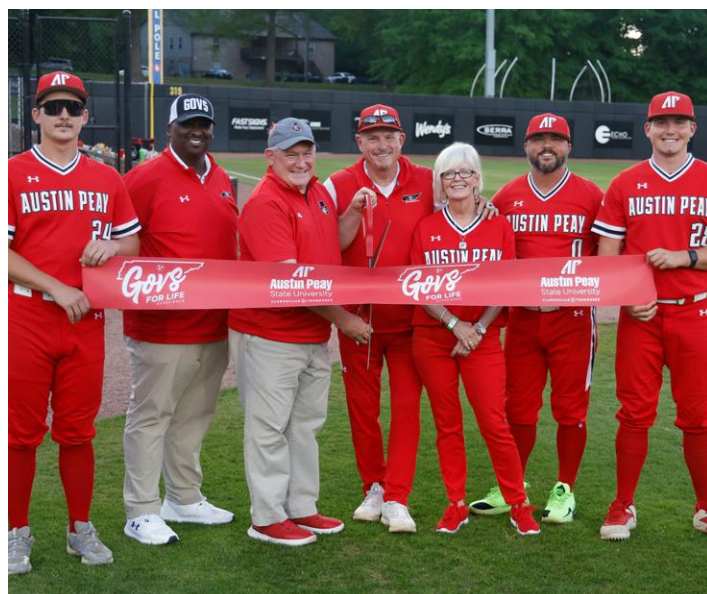
Amplifying APSU's Educational Mission

These naming initiatives showcase transformative partnerships that shape the educational landscape at APSU. From elevating artistic expression to pioneering agricultural innovation, strengthening athletic excellence to embracing digital competition, each investment creates a ripple effect of opportunity benefiting the

Austin Peay experience for future Governors. These collaborations cultivate environments for students to develop real-world skills, forge meaningful connections, and prepare for tomorrow's challenges with today's tools.

"By providing access to cutting-edge technology and creating connections with industry and community leaders, we're enhancing our education programs and strengthening our commitment to the region," said Austin Peay President Mike Licari. "These collaborations exemplify our focus on developing mutually beneficial community partnerships that improve student success and workforce readiness."

To establish a corporate partnership or support other fundraising initiatives, contact the APSU Division of Alumni, Engagement and Philanthropy at 931-221-7127 or give@apsu.edu.



AUSTIN PEAY STATE UNIVERSITY
CANDLELIGHT BALL

**Austin Peay's
41st Annual Candlelight Ball:**
A Success Like No Other

The elegance and excitement of Austin Peay State University's 41st Annual Candlelight Ball transformed the Renaissance Nashville Hotel into a celebration of philanthropy and achievement on the evening of May 3. The black-tie gala brought together alumni, donors, and community leaders for a night that would set new fundraising records for the university.

This year's event raised an unprecedented \$266,642 for student scholarships and academic programs, continuing the ball's tradition as one of APSU's most significant event fundraising initiatives. Since 2023, the Candlelight Ball has generated more than \$600,000 to support Austin Peay students.

A highlight of the evening was the Candlelight Ball raffle for a new Toyota RAV4, generously donated by Wyatt Johnson Toyota. The raffle raised over \$13,000 for the Candlelight Ball Endowment, with Reese Durrett announced as the winner of the vehicle.





A Community Effort

The success of this year's Candlelight Ball reflects the dedication of the 2024-25 Candlelight Ball Committee, co-chaired by Kimberly Wiggins and Ginna Holleman. Their leadership, along with the efforts of committee members Lesleigh Averitt, Adrienne Beasley, Victor Felts, Andrea Goble, Gretchen Hancock, Andrea Herrera, Traci Koon, Amelia Magette, Lorneth Peters, Julie Runyon, Nicole Rye, and Lauren Woods, directly contributed to the record-breaking fundraising total.

Generous support from numerous underwriters also ensured this year's Candlelight Ball was the most successful ever. Wyatt Johnson Toyota served as the Governor Underwriter, continuing their tradition of service to APSU students, while F&M Bank contributed as the Top Hat Underwriter. Presenting Underwriters included Legends Bank, Planters Bank, Steadfast Mortgage, and Regions Bank.

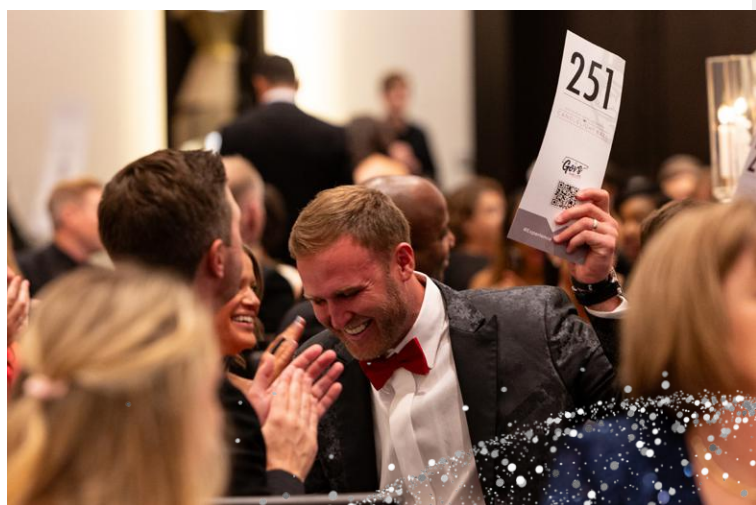
A Tradition of Excellence

The Candlelight Ball has been a cornerstone of Austin Peay's fundraising efforts since its inception. Established in 1984 by the late retired Brig. Gen. Wendell H. Gilbert to fund APSU student scholarships, the event has raised millions of dollars to support student scholarships and university initiatives over its four-decade history. Gilbert served as APSU's Vice President for Development and University Relations for 17 years. He passed away in July 2022, just a few months after his wife Jean. The 2025 Wendell H. Gilbert Award was presented to Antonio Murgas. The Spirit of Austin Peay Award was presented to Jeff Truitt ('99). The annual gala not only serves as a vital funding source for the university but also strengthens the bond between APSU and the surrounding community.

SAVE THE *Date*

42nd Annual Candlelight Ball
May 2, 2025 6 p.m.

Renaissance Hotel Downtown Nashville



Paying It Forward: Kevin ('87) and Linda Staton's Investment in Future Govs



When Kevin ('87) and Linda Staton began thinking about their legacy and how to make a lasting impact, they knew Austin Peay State University would play a central role in their plans. Their recent establishment of the Kevin and Linda Staton CSIT Endowment was just the beginning of their commitment to supporting future generations of Governors.

"We included APSU in our estate plan because we want our good fortune to help young people," Kevin said. "By helping people just starting their adult life, our donation can continue growing through them to help the next generation, and the next."

Kevin's Austin Peay journey began through family ties.

"My connection to the school started when my uncle, Dr. Wayne Smith, accepted a position in the math and computer science department as a computer science instructor," Kevin said. "I had barely heard of Clarksville before that. After spending time in the city with my cousins during the summers, I learned more about it and the university."

It wasn't until his senior year of high school that Kevin decided to attend APSU, majoring in computer science to launch a career spanning over three decades with organizations like SAIC, Clayton Homes, The University of Tennessee, and Raymond Corporation.

While at Austin Peay, Kevin formed lasting connections through the computer science department, cheerleading, and his fraternity, Kappa Sigma. For Linda, who has dedicated her professional life to education as a biology professor for 35 years, the connection came through Kevin.

"I've always felt welcomed by people at Austin Peay, and I'm grateful for the friendships I've formed through APSU activities," she said.

The Statons recently became members of Austin Peay's Legacy Society by including the university in their estate plans. Their planned gift reflects their individual passions.

"I specifically chose the Department of Computer Science and Information Technology because I wanted to give back to the part of the school that gave me the skills for a successful career," Kevin said.

"I also chose to invest in the cheer program because it gave me the confidence to meet and talk with anyone and a family of brothers and sisters for four years."

Linda's portion will support wildlife management and conservation projects at the Coleman Tractor APSU Farm Powered by Kubota. "I have two degrees in animal science and was a biology professor for 35 years," she said. "I've emphasized good stewardship of the planet during my career and hope that the money for the APSU farm will support research or educational activities related to land conservation and care of native flora and fauna."

The Statons hope their example will inspire others to consider how they might support Austin Peay through planned giving. As Legacy Society members, they join a community of forward-thinking investors ensuring the university's academic excellence will continue into the future.

"Pay it forward by giving back," Kevin said to students who will benefit from their generosity. "You can make a big difference a little bit at a time. You don't have to make large donations to make a difference in someone's life. Give back consistently to help those that come after you."

The Statons have straightforward advice for those considering including APSU in their estate plans.

"There is such a wide diversity of programs at Austin Peay," Linda said. "You can really find an area of personal interest to support."

Kevin added that the price to attend college has grown significantly since he and Linda attended college, making it more important to support the next generation of students.

"Invest in the future leaders of business, industry, local and state government," he said. "Invest in future doctors, teachers, and military commanders. Invest in the people who will make society better."

To learn more about joining the Legacy Society or establishing an endowment, contact the Division of Alumni, Engagement and Philanthropy at 931-221-7127 or via email at give@apsu.edu.



APSU HOMECOMING

Fri., Oct. 24 - Sat., Oct. 25

All Alumni Reception

Fri., Oct. 24, 2025
Morgan University Center Lobby
5 p.m.

Join fellow alumni from every corner of campus and every class year for an evening of lively conversation, shared memories, and complimentary drinks on us. Don't miss this chance to celebrate the past and toast to the future!

To RSVP, www.alumni.apsu.edu/alumnireception25

Governor's Circle Alumni Awards Celebration

Fri., Oct. 24, 2025
Morgan University Center Ballroom
6 p.m. Dinner | \$45 per person

Please join us as we celebrate our alumni joining our Governor's Circle as our Distinguished Alumni Award Winners.

To RSVP, www.alumni.apsu.edu/awards25

All Athletic Alumni Mixer

Fri., Oct. 24, 2025
Shelby's Trio Skyline 500 Rooftop Bar
7-10 p.m.

Join us to reconnect with your former teammates and fellow APSU athletics alumni. All past athletes and their guests are invited. Enjoy complimentary food and cash bar.

To RSVP, www.alumni.apsu.edu/athleticmixer25

GOMB & All Music Alumni Smash Bang Party

Fri., Oct. 24, 2025
416 College St.
7-10 p.m.

To RSVP, www.alumni.apsu.edu/gomb25



African American Alumni Chapter Scholarship Mixer

Fri., Oct. 24, 2025

The Emerald Event Center; 2631 US-41 ALT,
Clarksville, TN 37043

7 p.m. - midnight

Come enjoy an evening of socializing and dancing! Food trucks will be available from 8-10 p.m. Donations at the door will support the Marvin Posey Jr. Scholarship Endowment.

To RSVP, www.alumni.apsu.edu/mixer25

47th Annual Homecoming Golf Tournament

Sat., Oct. 25, 2025

Swan Lake Golf Course

10 a.m. | \$100 per person

Four-person scramble. Open to the public. Fee includes gift, one skirt/throw/mulligan package, lunch, beverages on course.

To register, visit www.alumni.apsu.edu/hcgolf25

Homecoming Game APSU vs. North Alabama

Sat., Oct. 25

Fortera Stadium

Kickoff at 3 p.m. | Tailgate Alley 11 a.m.

For admissions prices, contact the APSU Athletics Ticket Office at 931-221-7761 or LetsGoPeay.com.

TAILGATE SEASON *is here!*

Don't forget to pick up the official
Governor's Golden Ale - a crisp, light
beer perfect for cheering on APSU.

Must be at least 21 to drink. Please drink responsibly.





2025 Atlantic Sun Conference
GOLFER
OF THE YEAR
Patton Samuels

In his first season on the Austin Peay State University men's golf team, junior Patton Samuels was named the 2025 Atlantic Sun Conference Golfer of the Year and a First Team All-ASUN selection. In addition, sophomore Seth Smith was named a Third Team All-ASUN selection, the league announced in May.

Samuels became the first Governor to earn a conference player of the year award since Marco Iten was named the 2014 Ohio Valley Conference Player of the Year. He was also the first Gov to earn ASUN Golfer of the Year

and First Team All-ASUN honors since APSU joined the conference in 2022.

Samuels and Smith were the first Austin Peay teammates to earn all-conference selections in the same season since Iten and Anthony Bradley were both First Team All-OVC selections in 2014.

In May, Samuels was named one of 45 individuals to qualify for the 2025 NCAA Men's Golf Championship and competed at the Urbana Regional, May 12-14,

hosted by Illinois at Atkins Golf Club in Urbana, Illinois. In his first season under first-year head coach Easton Key, Samuels became the first Austin Peay men's golfer to qualify for the NCAA Men's Golf Championship as an individual without winning a conference title. He was also the first Gov to qualify for the event since 2014 when Iten won the OVC Championship and advanced to the Auburn Regional, which he won to claim a spot in the NCAA Men's Golf National Championship.

Samuels led the Gobs with a 70.14 scoring average, 14 rounds in the 60s, and 21 rounds at even or under par this season while also recording a counting score for the team in all 29 rounds played. He also posted a team-best 723-55-11 record against the field, which was good for a .929 winning percentage, and finished the season ranked No. 159 in the NCAA Men's Division I rankings.

A Clarksville native, Samuels won in his Austin Peay debut when he shot 15-under 201 to win the Golfweek Fall Challenge at True Blue Golf Club in Pawleys Island, South Carolina. His 54-hole score of 201 was tied for the fourth-best tournament score in Austin Peay history. Samuels followed the win in his APSU debut with a top-five finish in each of his first six tournaments as a Governor and posted a top-five finish in eight of 10 events this season.

Samuels carded his best round of the season at Arkansas State's Bubba Barnett Intercollegiate, shooting 8-under 64 in the opening round to post the fourth-best 18-hole score in APSU history. Samuels also played to a perfect 4-0 record in match play.

Smith led Austin Peay with two individual wins during his sophomore campaign, winning back-to-back weeks at Murray State's The Buddy and the Xavier Invitational. The victories made Smith the first Austin Peay golfer to win consecutive tournaments since Chris Barron during the 2005-06 season. He also was the first Governor with multiple individual wins in a season since Iten won three times during the 2013-14 season.

Smith ranked second on the team with a 73.10 scoring average this season. He totaled five rounds in the 60s and 13 rounds at even or under par, with a counting score for the team in 28 of 29 rounds played. Smith recorded a 481-293-15 record against the field, which was good for a .621 winning percentage, and finished the season ranked No. 787 in the NCAA Men's Division I rankings.

A native of Campbellsville, Kentucky, Smith's third-round score of 8-under 63 and 54-hole score of 200 at Murray State's The Buddy were both the second-best marks in Austin Peay history.



Governors Post Second-Highest GPA in Department History, All 15 Varsity Programs Posting a 3.0 GPA

Austin Peay State University's student-athletes posted the second-highest grade-point average in department history at 3.401 during the Spring 2025 semester.

"After posting the second-best GPA in department history during the fall, our student-athletes have done it again by topping the mark this semester," said former Austin Peay Vice President and Director of Athletics Gerald Harrison. "I am so proud of our Governors student-athletes and all their hard work during this record-breaking semester."

This marks the 16th consecutive semester that APSU's athletics department has posted a 3.0 GPA or higher, and the 19th in department history. All 15 varsity programs and the Governors cheer team recorded at least a 3.0 GPA for the second semester in a row.

Nine teams finished with a 3.5 or higher GPA, with women's golf leading all programs at 3.969 - the highest single-semester GPA in department history.

More than 80% of the university's student-athletes also received academic recognition: 78 earned a 4.0 GPA, 151 were eligible for dean's list recognition, and 120 were named to the Athletic Director's Honor Roll.

"None of this would be possible without the hard work of our student-athlete success team, so I want to thank Kristal McGreggor, Bobby Fieman, and Kendell Johnson," Harrison said. "Our student-athletes and the entire department's continued commitment to the 'Total Gov Concept' can be seen in this sustained academic success."



Austin Peay Inducts Inaugural Class into Chi Alpha Sigma Honor Society

During the fall semester, Austin Peay State University Athletics became a member of Chi Alpha Sigma, the nation's first and only honor society for four-year collegiate student-athletes. The athletics department celebrated the induction of its inaugural class during a special ceremony honoring academic excellence among Governors student-athletes.

Chi Alpha Sigma recognizes student-athletes who have reached junior academic standing or higher after at least four full-time semesters, are actively competing in their sport, and have achieved a cumulative grade-point average of 3.5 or higher. Austin Peay's first Chi Alpha Sigma class includes 56 student-athletes representing all 16 varsity sports, reflecting the department's deep commitment to academic achievement across all programs.

"This milestone speaks volumes about the caliber of student-athletes at Austin Peay," said Associate Director of Athletics Student-Athlete Success and Strategic Initiatives Dr. Kristal McGreggor. "These individuals represent the best of what it means to be a Governor — excelling in the classroom, on the field, and in the community. We are incredibly proud to recognize their dedication."

Senior women's basketball player Anala Nelson was among the student-athletes being honored, and said the recognition was extremely meaningful.

"It shows that all the late nights, early mornings, and sacrifices were worth it," she said. "It's not always easy to balance school and sports, but this recognition makes it even more rewarding."

Former Vice President and Director of Athletics Gerald Harrison tied the honor to the department's core philosophy.

"This is what the Total Gov Concept is all about - developing well-rounded individuals who strive for greatness in every area of their lives," he said. "This inaugural class sets a high standard and serves as an inspiration for all of us."

The Chi Alpha Sigma induction reinforces Austin Peay Athletics' unwavering commitment to holistic student-athlete development and academic success.



KURT KUJAWA

**HEAD MEN'S TENNIS COACH,
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF TENNIS**

After 11 seasons on the Austin Peay State University men's and women's tennis staff, former Austin Peay Vice President and Director of Athletics Gerald Harrison recently named Kurt Kujawa the Governors' head men's tennis coach and assistant director of tennis.

"It truly is a great day to be a Gov," said Harrison. "I am excited to welcome Kurt Kujawa as our head men's tennis coach and assistant director of tennis. Kurt has been a valuable member of our tennis programs for years in his volunteer assistant role. I look forward to watching his teams excel on the court, in the classroom, and across the entire Clarksville and Montgomery County communities."

Kujawa takes over for Ross Brown, who retired after 13 years at the helm of Austin Peay tennis. Kujawa served alongside Brown and current head women's tennis coach Maria Sorbello Morrison since the 2020 season, helping the women's tennis program to an Ohio Valley Conference Tournament title in 2021 and an OVC Regular Season Championship the following season. He also served on the Governors' tennis staff from 2004-08 alongside former head coach, Ed Dickson.

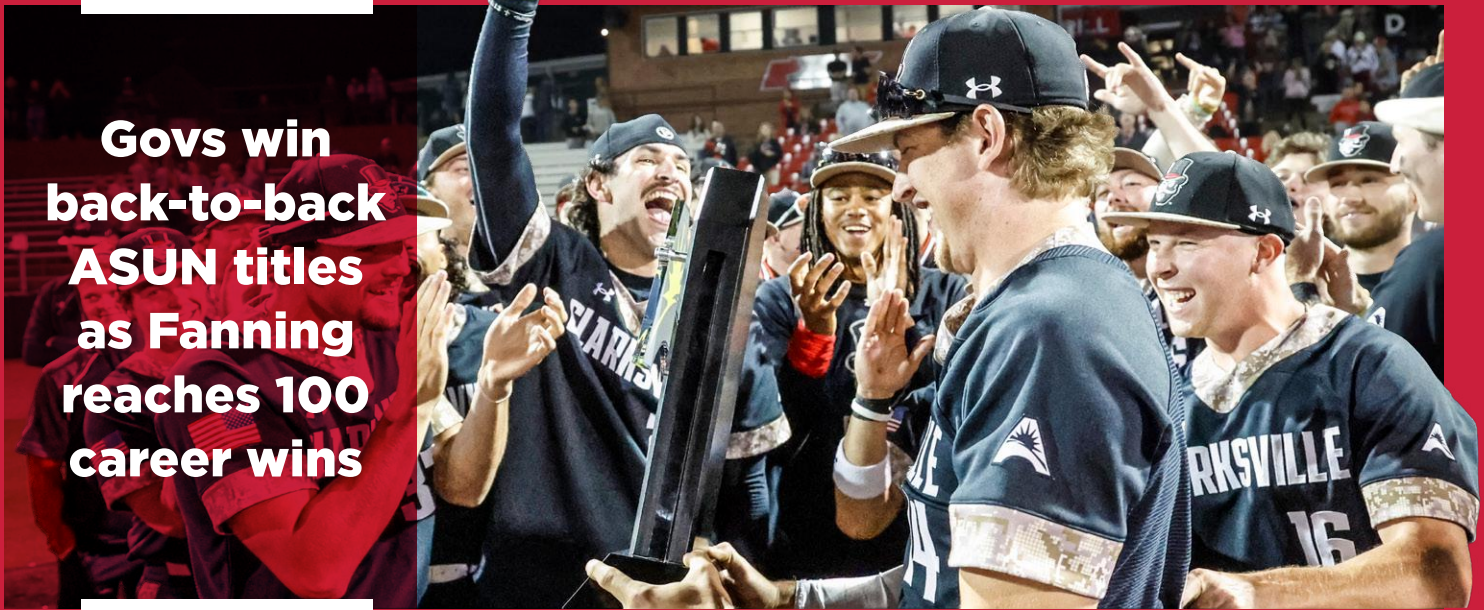
In addition to his work on the tennis courts for APSU, Kujawa managed the Kujawa Tennis Academy, which he created in 1997 to provide instruction for beginner, intermediate, and advanced juniors while providing private and semi-private lessons for both junior and adult players.

Kujawa was also the head women's tennis coach for Fort Campbell High School during the 2001 and 2004 seasons, leading the Lady Falcons to an 18-1 record across the two seasons. Prior to arriving in Clarksville, Kujawa served as a head tennis pro at the Sedgwick Farm Tennis Club (1999) and Pine Grove Country Club (1998-99) in Syracuse, New York, in addition to being an assistant tennis pro at Amherst Hills Racket Club in Buffalo, New York.

**"IT TRULY IS A
GREAT DAY TO
BE A GOV!"**



Govs win back-to-back ASUN titles as Fanning reaches 100 career wins



Austin Peay State University turned a 1-3 start into the longest winning streak in Division I baseball, capturing their second straight Atlantic Sun Conference Baseball Regular-Season Championship and establishing themselves as one of the field's most dominant programs during the 2025 season.

The Governors finished the season with a 45-14 overall record and a 26-4 conference record. Along the way, Head Coach Roland Fanning reached 100 career wins at APSU and earned his second straight ASUN Coach of the Year recognition.

Despite losing two-thirds of their roster the year before and getting off to a shaky start in the 2025 MLB Desert Invitational, the Governors were determined to succeed.

The team found its stride when it returned to Raymond C. Hand Park, winning 10 of their next 11 home contests and sweeping Purdue Fort Wayne and Eastern Illinois.

A few weeks later, the Govs opened ASUN Conference play with a home series win against Lipscomb before going on a 13-game winning streak, which was the longest active streak in Division I baseball.

After winning a second-straight ASUN Baseball Regular-Season Championship — this time winning the league's Gold Division — the Govs opened the conference tournament with wins against North Florida

and Jacksonville. However, their run in the postseason ended when they dropped their next two contests.

Historic milestones mark championship season

Fanning's 100th win (vs. Central Arkansas on May 9) was the fastest by any head coach in program history, coming after only 164 games. He was named the 2025 ASUN Coach of the Year for his team's achievements and is the only coach in program history to be named the league's Coach of the Year in back-to-back seasons.

In addition, Fanning became the fourth coach in Austin Peay's history to lead his team to a 40-win season. His team reached the 30 and 40-win marks faster than any previous Governors team. They also swept a program record nine series, and reached 43 wins before the postseason — the most in a single regular season of any team in program history.

The Governors' success earned them a program-record 14 All-Conference selections. Outfielder Cameron Nickens was also named ASUN Player of the Year, and infielder Cole Johnson was named the ASUN Freshman of the Year and an All-Freshman Team honoree.

After one of the most historic seasons in program history, Fanning is returning for his fourth season at Austin Peay in 2026, with his sights set on another run at an Atlantic Sun Conference Championship.

Governors Partner with Taymar Sales U. in Historic Revenue Deal

Austin Peay State University recently announced a groundbreaking multiyear partnership with Taymar Sales U., marking a first-of-its-kind collaboration in college athletics. With this agreement, Austin Peay became the first school in the country to team up with Taymar across all three major revenue areas: sponsorships, ticket sales, and annual giving.

"It was a great day to be a Governor and an exciting time in 'Stacheville' as we announced our new partnership with Taymar Sales U.," said Gerald Harrison, former vice president and director of athletics. "Driving revenue growth is essential to the continued advancement of Austin Peay Athletics, and Taymar's expertise is a key component of that mission. Their data-driven strategies will allow us to elevate our efforts in sponsorship, ticket sales, and donor engagement — helping us reach more fans, deepen our connection with the community, and build on the incredible support for Clarksville's Hometown Team."

Taymar placed a dedicated five-person team on-site to support all three revenue streams. The partnership reflects Austin Peay's continued commitment to innovation, growth, and fan engagement as one of the fastest-rising mid-major programs in the country.

"We were honored by the trust Dr. Mike Licari, Gerald Harrison, Jordan Harmon, and the entire team at Austin Peay placed in Taymar," said Taymar President Joe Rickert. "Together, we'll implement a comprehensive revenue strategy that deeply engages Governor fans across every touchpoint, from ticketing and fundraising to corporate partnerships."

Taymar's founder and CEO Mark Dyer said he has personal ties to the region.

"Being from the Middle Tennessee area, I've followed Austin Peay for many years and wanted Taymar to have the privilege of working for the athletics department," Dyer said. "The university has an outstanding leader in Dr. Licari, and I've watched Gerald Harrison rise through the ranks and become a top-flight athletics director. This opportunity was an important milestone for our company."

Austin Peay extends softball, women's golf coaches' contracts through 2027



Kassie Stanfill
Head Softball Coach

After leading Austin Peay's softball team to one of the best seasons in program history and its best finish in the Atlantic Sun Conference Softball Championship, head coach Kassie Stanfill has agreed to a contract extension through 2027.

Stanfill is the all-time winningest head coach in APSU softball history, with 190 victories across seven seasons. Her team's 39 wins during the 2025 season is tied for the most in the program's 40-year history.

"It's an incredible honor to lead this program, and I take great pride in saying I've been part of the Governor family for seven seasons," Stanfill said. "I'm grateful for the opportunity to keep building something special here - continuing to grow our program and elevate the name of Austin Peay Softball. I'm excited for what the future holds."



Jessica Combs
Head Women's Golf Coach

After leading Austin Peay's women's golf team to its best team and individual finishes at the 2025 Atlantic Sun Conference Women's Golf Championship, head coach Jessica Combs has agreed to a contract extension through 2027.

Combs, a 2016 APSU graduate, has led the women's golf program to 11 tournament wins over the last four seasons. Her biggest victory came when the Governors won the 2022 OVC Championship and clinched a spot in the NCAA Division I Women's Golf Championship for the first time in program history.

"I'm excited to continue coaching at this great university and to keep building relationships with our phenomenal student-athletes," Combs said. "I hope to continue improving each year I'm here and bring more championships back to Clarksville."

APSU Board of Trustees Approves Naming of Fisher-Roberts Family Lobby at Fortera Stadium

The Austin Peay State University Board of Trustees recently approved naming Fortera Stadium's lobby in honor of the Fisher and Roberts families, recognizing their decades of contributions to the university's athletic programs.

"The Fisher-Roberts Family is one of the paramount families in the history of Austin Peay Athletics," said former APSU Vice President and Director of Athletics Gerald Harrison. "Few families have had such an impact on Austin Peay Athletics, and the Fisher-Roberts Family Lobby is the perfect way to welcome people to The Fort."

George Fisher captained Austin Peay's football and basketball teams as a student-athlete, later coaching multiple sports and serving as the university's athletics director from 1972-77. His wife Myra worked in the Office of Admissions for over 20 years, and their son Mickey played basketball at APSU from 1973-76 before a 32-year career with Fort Campbell Schools.

Mary Fisher, Mickey's wife, was an All-American cheerleader at APSU in 1973. After her retirement from teaching in 2010, she established the Mickey Fisher Memorial Endowment to provide scholarships for dependents of wounded or fallen Fort Campbell soldiers.

Harold "Red" Roberts, George's son-in-law, remains APSU's career leader in receiving yards (2,999), receptions (232) and touchdown receptions (31). He was the first player in conference history to earn All-

OVC honors four times and was a Little All-American in 1970. His wife Stephanie (George and Myra's daughter) was a cheerleader who earned two degrees from APSU and taught for 47 years before retiring in 2019.

"The Fisher and Roberts Families have done so much for our student-athletes," said head football coach Jeff Faris. "I am so glad we are able to recognize the contributions and time that Mary, Red, Stephanie, and their family have given to Austin Peay Athletics, and specifically our football program, with the naming of the Fisher-Roberts Family Lobby."

“

The Fisher and Roberts Family is one of the paramount families in the history of Austin Peay Athletics.

”





Jordan Harmon Appointed Interim Director of Athletics

Austin Peay State University President Dr. Michael Licari has named two-time APSU graduate and former Governors baseball player Jordan Harmon as Austin Peay's interim director of athletics.

"I am excited to have Jordan step into this role," Licari said. "As an alum and former Governor student-athlete himself, he definitely understands what Austin Peay athletics is all about."

Harmon began his career at Austin Peay in November 2017 in athletics fundraising. He progressed through several roles, including assistant director of athletics for development (2020), senior associate director of athletics for revenue generation (2021), and deputy director of athletics and chief revenue officer (2024). Most recently, he served as general manager for APSU Athletics, coordinating revenue sharing and NIL management.

"I'm deeply thankful to President Licari for entrusting me with this opportunity to lead the athletics department at my alma mater," Harmon said. "My wife Reagan and I are both former Austin Peay student-athletes, and we are truly honored."

Harmon pitched for the Governors baseball team from 2014-17 and earned bachelor's and master's degrees from APSU. His wife played on the women's golf team.

Harmon assumed the role on Aug. 15. The university will conduct a national search this fall to name a permanent director in February 2026.

APSU relaunches Victory Fund under interim AD Jordan Harmon



Former Austin Peay State University Vice President and Director of Athletics Gerald Harrison recently announced the relaunch of APSU's Victory Fund, which will be managed by interim Director of Athletics Jordan Harmon.

"This enhancement of responsibilities for Jordan reflects the increasing importance of coordinated leadership in areas such as revenue sharing and Name, Image, and Likeness management," Harrison said. "I strongly believe that dedicating a leader to these efforts is critical as we navigate the evolving landscape of college athletics."

The Victory Fund, previously focused on retention of coaches and staff, will now prioritize recruitment and retention of student-athletes. Austin Peay's improved

salary positioning allows the fund's redirection to talent acquisition.

"Recruiting and retaining top student-athletes is paramount for success in this new day of college athletics," said Harmon. "We are striving to be the nation's premier mid-major athletics department, and the Victory Fund will continue to position Austin Peay to achieve that goal."



Dr. Sue Evans retired as professor of leadership after 45 years of service to the university.



Daniel Christian ('96, '05) performed as a featured soloist at Carnegie Hall, singing music by composers Mark Hayes and Lloyd Larson during the Jubilate Choral Master's Series.



Andy Kean retired as senior director of Morgan University Center and Event Services after 36 years of service to the university.



Mary Wills ('98) was appointed principal of White Bluff Elementary School by Dickson County Schools.



Maria Harmon ('90), a computer science grad and passionate software engineer, has developed a new product called *ShadeAbout*, a simple, lightweight, portable sunshade.



Stephanie Travis ('98, '05) received the Woman in Business Award at the 120th Chamber Gala at the Wilma Rudolph Event Center on June 2, 2025.



Veronica Marable Johnson ('90), vice president of small business initiatives for the Nashville Chamber of Commerce, was recognized with a Hitmaker Award for her exceptional care and compassion. The Music City Hitmakers Awards celebrate hospitality professionals who go the extra mile to make every visitor's Nashville experience memorable.



Drake Reed ('09), an APSU men's basketball standout, was appointed head boys basketball coach at Clarksville Christian School. In addition to his coaching duties, Reed will teach special education at Clarksville Christian's RISE Academy, a specialized program for students on the autism spectrum.



Lori Haneline Moore ('90) was promoted to director of business operations for APSU Public Relations and Marketing Department.



Dr. Diarese George ('07, '11) a 2020 Outstanding Young Alumnus Award winner, was named president and CEO of the Nashville Public Education Foundation.



Dr. Jerome E. Morris ('90) was named president-elect of the American Educational Research Association Council. He will serve in this role for the 2025-2026 academic year, followed by a term as president in 2026-2027.



Brad Averitt ('10, '17) graduated with the Leadership Middle Tennessee Class of 2025.



Capt. Liane Wilson ('94) was promoted to deputy chief of special operations for the Clarksville Police Department. She becomes the first female and first African American to hold a high-ranking position in the department.



Chris Brown ('12) was named the associate athletic director for compliance, student-athlete success and operations at Colorado College on June 11, 2025.

IN MEMORY



Beth Rates ('17) was promoted to assistant director for design for the APSU Public Relations and Marketing Department.



Sean McCully ('18) was promoted to assistant director of visual media and communication for the APSU Public Relations and Marketing Department.



Lakeisha Gregory ('19) was announced as the next head coach of North Greenville University Women's Basketball.



Khari Turner ('19) returned to Austin Peay with *Lost at Sea*, a solo exhibition held at The New Gallery inside APSU's Art + Design Building.



Olivia Hershey ('23) was hired as a corporate communications associate at AllianceBernstein.



Aubrie Lauren ('23) played the role of Anya in the Croswell Opera House's run of *Anastasia*.



Shae Webber ('24) was accepted into Marriott's highly competitive Voyage Program.

Richard L. Brown ('68)

1/30/25

Sue Perry Ellis ('84)

1/30/25

JoAnne Crockarell Caldwell ('60)

2/4/25

Ralph Lucas Brewer ('67)

2/6/25

Linda Ruth Fizer ('66)

2/7/25

Benjamin James Unruh ('17, '20)

2/8/25

Tracey Ann McAuliffe ('94)

2/12/25

Judith Ann Lowe ('81, '85)

2/13/25

Alan Arthur Baker ('85)

2/16/25

Scott Swindell ('09)

2/17/25

Joe C. Sanders ('76)

2/19/25

Susan Basham Lamb ('87)

2/22/25

Eldon David Schmidt ('77)

2/27/25

Lesley Sue Potts ('75)

2/28/25

Gregory Jones ('83)

3/8/25

Edgar Ronald Woodall ('65)

3/12/25

Robert Michael Grebe ('66)

3/14/25

Joyce Kay Dunn ('61)

3/20/25

Robert Walker Gaskell ('61)

3/20/25

Virginia Mae Gray ('62)

3/22/25

Melissia Patterson Gray ('91)

3/23/25

Lew Blane Wallace ('65)

3/23/25

Tony Dale Lamb ('81)

3/25/25

Helen Landrum Sanders ('61)

3/26/25

William Earl Covington ('68)

3/27/25

Christine Mahan Bedwell ('82)

4/2/25

Brenda Cheryl McKinney ('72)

4/2/25

Arnold Huskey ('67)

4/4/25

Herman Wayne Depriest ('88)

4/8/25

Judith Ann Fortune ('65)

4/8/25

David Reid Woodward ('61)

4/13/25

Bailey Basford Stack ('61)

4/17/25

James Vogel ('88, '94)

4/18/25

Billy Joe Lamastus ('71)

4/22/25

Walton Northington Smith ('63)

4/23/25

Charles Glenn Banton ('66)

4/25/25

Timothy Douglas Poole ('01)

4/25/25

Wesley Howard Robson ('89)

4/25/25

Anthony Jerome Cammack ('84)

4/28/25

Sheila Rae Runyon ('60)

4/29/25

William H. "Bud" Coley ('62)

5/3/25

John Steven Haley ('83)

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5/19/25

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6/5/25

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6/6/25

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6/16/25

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6/20/25

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6/22/25

Stewart Franklin Dowlen ('90)

6/25/25

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Last year, these individuals and organizations established new scholarships and endowments at Austin Peay, creating life-changing opportunities for future APSU generations. Because of their generosity, their names — or the names of people they love — will now be associated with Austin Peay in perpetuity.

An endowment is a permanent, self-sustaining source of funding. Endowments are invested, and each year, a portion of the value of the fund is paid out to support the endowment's purpose. The minimum amount to start an endowment is \$25,000.

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An asterisk indicates a gift that has been included in an estate plan.

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This list contains information compiled in a computerized database since 1986. The 2024-2025 Honor Roll of Donors is dedicated to all donors who made gifts during fiscal year July 1, 2024, to June 30, 2025. Every gift, regardless of amount, is needed and is appreciated by students, faculty and staff. The following listing recognizes contributors who have made cumulative lifetime gifts totaling \$10,000 or more. Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of this listing. Please let us know of any corrections that need to be made so we can ensure accuracy in future years. If an error has been made, please accept our apologies.

*Denotes individuals who are members of the Consecutive Giving Society who support Austin Peay through consecutive annual contributions.

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P.O. Box 4417

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(931) 221-7127

E-mail: adkisonk@apsu.edu

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Organizations, Corporations, Foundations and Estates by Giving Club

President's Society

Sal D. Rinella Circle

(\$100,000 and above)

Edward R and Anna Kathryn Atkinson Estate
The BAND Foundation
Clarksville Montgomery County Community Health Foundation
Coleman Tractor Company
Fortera Credit Union
Joe Hendricks Fox Estate
Gary Mathews Motors, Inc.
Jenkins & Wynne, Inc.
Joint Chiropractic
Reyes Bottling Coca-Cola
Sodexo Operations, LLC.
Volgenau Climate Initiative

President's Society

Oscar C. Page Circle

(\$50,000 to \$99,999)

Anonymous
Antonio Murgas, LLC.
BMW of Nashville
Continental Expedited Services (CES)
DreamChasers
ECHO Power Engineering, LLC.
F&M Bank
Legends Bank
Optimize U
Project 2231
The River Club
Minerva W. Williams Estate

President's Society

Robert O. Riggs Circle

(\$25,000 to \$49,999)

Ajax Distributing Company
Alpha Moving & Storage
Altra Federal Credit Union
Buffalo Wild Wings
CDE Lightband
Clarksville Fencing
The Flats Off Madison
Google
H & T Carpets
Hankook Tire Manufacturing
James L. Robertson Estate
Tennessee Orthopaedic Alliance
Tennova Healthcare
Travis Electrical Service
Wendy's

President's Society

John S. Ziegler Circle

(\$10,000 to \$24,999)

Big Burger, LLC.
Bojangles
Byers and Harvey
Chick-Fil-A
Courtyard Marriott

Dex Imaging

Double Tree by Hilton Clarksville
Riverview

Executive Chauffeurs of Clarksville
Fairfield by Marriott
FastSigns
Furniture Connection, Inc.
Jetsen, Inc.
Kelly's Big Burger
Millan Foundation
MLB Office of the Commissioner of Baseball
Morgan Contractors, Inc.
Noodles and Company
Powco, LLC
Regions Bank
Sango Eye Care
Sigma Theta Tau-Nu Phi
Tropical Smoothie Cafe
Trozzolo Communications Group
University Landing, LLC.

President's Society

Philander P. Claxton Circle

(\$5,000 to \$9,999)

Beachaven Auto Care & Towing
Bulley & Andrews LLC
The Buntin Group
Carlson Family Foundation, Inc.
Clarksville Civitan Club
Clarksville Mobile Mix and Materials (CM3)
Clarksville-Montgomery County Convention and Visitors Bureau
Culvers
Cumberland Electric Membership Corporation (CEMC)
D & D Companies, Inc.
Drakes
Faris Properties, LLC
Five Star Media Group
Hiller Plumbing, Heating, Cooling & Electrical
Jodi's Cabinet Sales LLC
Legacy Home Loans, LLC
Liberty Park Grill
McReynolds, Nave and Larson Funeral Homes, Inc.
Metalsa
Michael's Pizza
Millan Enterprises, LLC
Official Wings
Planters Bank
Roundstone Native Seed
Ryne Harper: B&H
Snap-On
Traditions First Bank
Trane U.S., Inc.
Trio Hospitality
TriStar Beverage of Clarksville

President's Society

Halbert Harvill Circle

(\$2,500 to \$4,999)

American Beauties, LLC.
Clarksville-Montgomery County Economic Development Council
Double Good
Dutch Bros Coffee
GFWC Clarksville Women's Club
Goolsby and Rye Used Appliances
L&G Restaurant Management, LLC
Manna Cafe Ministries
Medtronic (PAC)
Penn Station East Coast Subs
The Presser Foundation
Ryan Homes
Tennessee Veterinary Medical Association
West Creek Elementary School
Whataburger
Women Veterans of America, Chapter 47

President's Society

Joe Morgan Circle

(\$1,000 to \$2,499)

ABC Supply Co. Inc.
Alan's Arsenal LLC
Beta Sigma Phi Laureate Eta Chapter
BFS Insurance Group, LLC.
Bridgestone Metalphi U.S.A., Inc.
The Chickasaw Nation
Clarksville Christian School, Inc.
Clarksville Pediatric Dentistry
Cross Creek Clays
Cumberland Tree Service, LLC
Dr. Joe C. Greer & Associates
Ellis & Company Retirement Strategists
Friends of Tandy Hills Natural Area
Hunters for Hungry
Kennedy Law Firm
Len Rye Construction Co
Montgomery County Farm Bureau
Montgomery County Republican Women
Providence Builders
Rehabilitation Corporation of Tennessee
Rotary Club of Clarksville
Scottsburg Glass
Snap Mobile, Inc.
Spring Creek Pediatric Dentistry, PLLC.
Stone, Rudolph and Henry CPAs

Tennessee Farmers Co-Op Foundation

Thrive Creative Group, LLC.
Tri-Star Stunting, LLC
Vanderpoel Conservation Foundation

Columns Club

(\$500 to \$999)

Erin S Poland Attorney at Law
Golden Eagle Jewelry
Jeff Cates Financial Services
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Kiwanis Club of Clarksville
Kroger
Loomis Armored US
Magnolia Builders, LLC.
Mortenson Construction
National Sign Systems
One Source Accounting & Tax
Rhino Linings of Clarksville
The Runners Hub, LLC.
Tennessee Council of Cooperatives
Tennessee Independent Colleges and Universities Association
Yow Foundation

Sentinel's Club

(\$250 to \$499)

Alford Plumbing, LLC.
Aydelott Equipment, Inc.
Baird Foundation
Bay Metal Design
Clarksville Volleyball
Collier Insurance
Cub Scout Pack 503 09/02
Custom Signs Today
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Lamar Advertising of Nashville
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Middle Tennessee Lumber
RB Perry, LLC.
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Service One, Inc.
Sign Tech Management
Special Forces Association, Chapter 38
Thorncraft Publishing
Tour Performance Golf, LLC
Venture Construction Company

VikingCloud
Volunteer Welding Supply
Watchfire
WSS Solutions

Century Club
(\$100 to \$249)
Beachaven Vineyards & Winery
Blended Pedaler
Clarksville Floor Covering

College Street Fellowship House
Lloyd's Ice Cream, Inc.
Oasis In-Home Care, Inc.
Quick Flow HVAC, LLC

Rose Hill Memorial Baptist
Church
Salem Community Church

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The Austin Peay State University Graduating Class Gift is an opportunity for each class to ensure that future students enjoy the same positive university experience that they had while at APSU. The goal is for each graduating class to support the area of their choice by taking their first step as engaged alumni. Contributions of any amount are welcome; listed below are those that qualify for the Century Club that have given \$100 or more. To make your class gift, contact the APSU Office of Alumni and Annual Giving at 931-221-7979 or visit alumni.apsu.edu/classgift.

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Austin Peay State University Legacy Society signifies the university's effort to recognize, in a meaningful way, those who share a commitment to the institution through planned & estate giving. If you have already made provisions for APSU in your will or through another type of planned gift, or you would like more information about how to include Austin Peay in your estate plan, contact the division of Alumni, Engagement and Philanthropy at 931-221-7127.

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Join us as a Centennial Ambassador and be the driving force behind celebrating our rich history and vibrant future! Use your influence to inspire faculty, staff, alumni, and community members to embrace the Gobs for Life spirit. Sign up today and be a part of something extraordinary! Together, let's make 2027 - our centennial year - a legacy to remember.

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