



Spring 2020

Pitt State

MAGAZINE



Coffee grounds to batteries

At Pittsburg State, student learning extends
far beyond the classroom. | 14





PittState

MAGAZINE

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More photos and stories at
pittstate.edu/magazine


From the editor

The team that creates this magazine can testify to the By Doing Learn nature of Pittsburg State University; our education helped us produce what you're holding in your hands. The laboratory experiences we were given provided a jump start to our careers. The skills we use daily have their roots in what faculty taught us in and out of the classroom. That's not unique; if you attended PSU, you very likely can say the same. We hope you'll enjoy reading about others who can, too. Drop us a line about what you're doing these days; we love to hear from our Gorillas! #OAGAAG

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Bachelor Degree Completion

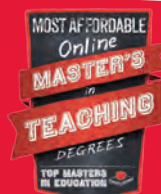
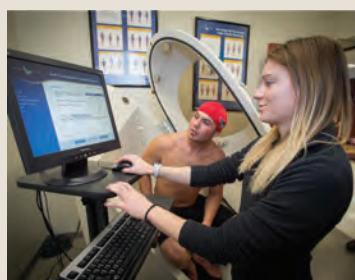
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- MS Educational Leadership
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- MS Reading
- MS Special Education Teaching
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- DNP-MSN to DNP

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Pittsburg State alumni and friends believe in the power of education, understand the importance of hard work, and share a commitment to helping others. Our focus on academic excellence, artistic expression, and dedicated research cultivates future leaders and lifts our region. Philanthropy is an important part of our success.

We're proud to announce that our capital campaign - Proven. Promise. Pitt State. - has raised more than \$70 million to date. Focusing on student success and faculty excellence, this \$100 million campaign will allow Pittsburg State to remain a destination of choice for the next generation of Gorillas.



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Former Secretary of State and National Security Advisor to President George W. Bush Condoleezza Rice made remarks and participated in a Q&A with President Steve Scott last fall to an audience of more than 1,000.

Rice had a front seat at historical events such as the Berlin Wall coming down, Germany reunifying, and Sept. 11, 2001. She also gave the audience glimpses into her life as a child growing up in Civil Rights-era Birmingham, Alabama, then as an adult being sworn in as the first female black Secretary of State by Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg.

Her message was one of optimism that the nation can heal divides and move past troubling political times. She praised PSU students with whom she met in a private panel, describing them as “extremely well prepared, and they wanted to know how to make a difference.”

Meet “Alexander”



Parker Albright, son of PSU alumnus Jeremy Albright, gets an up-close look at Alexander, the new Nature Reach ambassador that will be used in programming with thousands of school children in coming years.

On Aug. 28, a hawk became a Gorilla, thanks in part to a PSU alumnus who is a pilot.

Alexander replaces Harriet, a 35-year-old Harris's hawk who had represented PSU Nature Reach in hundreds of outreach programs since 1988; she died in January 2019.

Last summer, Director Delia Lister found a replacement, thanks to a partnership with Wild Heart Rescue in Arizona and assistance from pilot Jeremy Albright, a 2004 alumnus and 2002 Homecoming King.

“I couldn't have asked for a



PSU Nature Reach Director Delia Lister (BSEd '04, MS '06) and alumnus Jeremy Albright (BME '04).

better friend to help bring Alexander home,” Lister said.

Having Alexander will provide an opportunity for people to see a bird that they might not ever get to see in the wild and will help train students who want to work with raptors as part of their career path.

Photo: Roger Nomer/Joplin Globe



Natalie Vasquez, Cassandra Roque, and Samantha Ruvalcaba

Latina-based sorority

PSU became just the third university in the Midwest last fall to host a Latina-based sorority, Lambda Pi Upsilon Sorority, Latinas Poderosas Unidas, Inc.

The sorority was founded in 1992 at the State University of New York at Geneseo by six women to diversify collegiate offerings.

The first three members to be initiated were Nathalie Vasquez, a music education major from Kansas City, Kansas; Cassandra Roque, an integrated studies major with an emphasis in sustainability, society, resource management from Westwood, Kansas; and Samantha Ruvalcaba, a double major in Spanish and recreation and sports management from Wichita, Kansas.

"They aspired to strengthen the representation of students of color, particularly the women of color on campus, through cultural awareness and academic enrichment," said Deatrea Rose, PSU's director of student diversity programs.

Pritchett Trust scholarships

The PSU Scholarship Committee awarded \$50,000 in scholarships from the Pritchett Trust to 109 graduates of high schools in Crawford County, Kansas, last fall, to be used to further their education in the 2019-20 academic year.

"We appreciate the fact that these local students chose to stay home to get their education here,

and we understand the importance of that decision," said President Steve Scott in remarks during the ceremony. "It's our hope that after they graduate from PSU, they'll make another important decision: to stay home and invest in our community."

All recipients have a GPA of 3.0 or higher and have not received any other major scholarship assistance.

#OAGAAG

@jordynvogt: S/o to Pitt State for the best 3.5 years of my life and bringing so many amazing people into my life, forever thankful for this small town in Kansas #oagaag

@e_l_i_shiv: My future home looks like something straight out of a Hallmark movie! #oagaag

@TheBeesMagees: As much as I hate to see my Steelers lose, it's always awesome to see someone I went to college with doing great things! Get after it, John Brown! #OAGAAG

@cdominguez_17: 4 1/2 years ago, I was a lost and scared kid. Today, I am a college graduate, employed, confident adult. #oagaag

@john_kueflerg1: An extremely rewarding moment as an instructor to see a group of my amazing students walk across the stage and graduate from @pittstate this evening. #oagaag

@mrsfridayDHS: Had such an amazing trip to Family & Consumer Science Day at Pittsburg State. We even got the opportunity to meet with the President, Dr. Scott and the Provost, Dr. Howard Smith! #OAGAAG

@erinhorgang97: if you haven't listened to welcome to the jungle today ur doing gameday WRONG #oagaag

@KamiButterfield: Super proud of my @pittstate nursing student @kalliecook! I am one proud mama. #oagaag

@ecseals: Love being able to hear the @pittstate band practicing from my office & my house! #oagaag

@andrewcboyd: And just like that the calm and empty campus of @pittstate springs to life in one 24 hour period. Welcome back students have a safe and good semester. #oagaag

@atrow_: Very happy to announce that I will be attending Pitt State next year to further my education @pittstate #oagaag

@mrvesco: One of the best decisions I've made was the one to attend @pittstate! If you are wanting to be a teacher, this is one of the best places in the country to attend! #oagaag

Events Calendar

Go to pittstate.edu/events for a complete listing of events and latest event details.

Art

Contact joliver@pittstate.edu or call 620-235-4302 for more information.

Harry Krug Gallery Porter Hall
Jan. 30 through April 1
"Facets" by Jonathan Hils

Music

For ticket information and prices go to:
pittstate.edu/tickets or call 620-235-4796.
*ticketed event

March 13

Solo & Chamber Music Series:
Invoke String Ensemble
McCray Hall*

March 19

PSU Symphonic Band Concert
Bicknell Center

March 30

PSU Percussion Ensemble
McCray Hall

April 3

Solo & Chamber Music Series:
Alon Goldstein, piano
McCray Hall*

April 9

**SEK Symphony Orchestra/
New Music, New Voices**
Bicknell Center*

April 16

State Large Ensemble Festival
Bicknell Center

April 18

Mid-America Music Festival
Across campus

April 23

PSU Wind Ensemble Concert
Bicknell Center

continued

April 29

**PSU Jazz Ensemble/
Standards in Jazz, Now and Then**
Bicknell Center

May 3

University Choirs in Concert
Bicknell Center

May 7

**PSU Wind Ensemble and
4-State Honor Band Concert**
Bicknell Center

May 8

PSU Chamber Orchestra
McCray Hall

Theatre

For ticket information: pittstate.edu/tickets
or call 620-235-4796. *ticketed event

April 23-26

**PSU Theatre presents
"The Windshield and the Bug"**
Bicknell Center*

Community

May 15-16

Commencement
Garfield W. Weede
Physical Education Building

June 15-20

Summer Music Fest
Various campus and
community locations

June 5-6

**Treble Clef Piano Competition
and Festival**

Finding Gus Gorilla



Can you find the hidden Gus? Search this issue for the iconic bronze Gorilla that sits on the Oval in front of the Overman Student Center. The sculpture was created by Larry Wooster in 1965.

Email psumag@pittstate.edu to submit your entry. Please include your first and last name, as well as the page number and location where you found the hidden gorilla.

One entry per person.

Entries must be received by July 15, 2020.

The winner will receive a hardbound copy of "Pittsburg State University: A Photographic History of the First 100 Years."

Congratulations to Thomas Earp ('67 BSBA), Kansas City, Kansas, who found the hidden Gorilla in the Fall 2019 magazine! (It was on the right-hand side of the front cover, above the drum.)

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Spring 2020 Performances

March 17 PSU Symphonic Band Concert
Presented by Pittsburg State University Music Department

April 9 New Music, New Voices
Presented by SEK Symphony at Pittsburg State University

April 16 State Large Ensemble Festival
Presented by Pittsburg State University Music Department

April 18 Mid-America Music Festival
Presented by Pittsburg State University Music Department

April 23 PSU Wind Ensemble
Presented by Pittsburg State University Music Department

April 23-26 "The Windshield and the Bug"
Presented by PittState Theatre

April 29 PSU Jazz Ensembles,
 Standards in Jazz, Now and Then
Presented by Pittsburg State University Music Department

May 3 University Choirs in Concert
Presented by Pittsburg State University Music Department

May 7 PSU Wind Ensemble
 and 4-State Honor Band Concert
Presented by Pittsburg State University Music Department

For performance times and ticket information: bicknellcenter.com or call 620-235-4796.

Show your support of the arts.

Make a gift to the building operations and programming endowment: Friends of the Bicknell Family Center for the Arts, or make a gift to purchase a seat plaque in the Linda & Lee Scott Performance Hall.

The Friends of the Bicknell endowment fund is a new effort to support the Bicknell Center through annual giving. Gifts to the endowment will be used for programming, operational costs, equipment updates and other facility needs.

Seat plaques in the Linda & Lee Scott Performance Hall are available for gifts of \$1,000 or \$500, depending on where the seat is located.

Your support will provide more opportunities in the performing and fine arts for PSU students and the people of the region.

Gifts to the endowment or seat plaques may be facilitated online at bicknellcenter.com, under the Get Involved links.

Please contact the Office of University Development at 620-235-4768 or dev@pittstate.edu for assistance and additional information.

In Memory of
Jane Doe
 The Jane Doe Family

John and Jane
 Doe



More **Where in the World is Gus** photos at:
pittstate.edu/magazine and facebook.com/pittstate

“Where in the World is Gus?”



John (BA '64, MA '65) and Carole Robb at a whisky distillery in Scotland – wishing they could share a wee dram with their fellow Gorillas!



Michael and Nicole Arnott (Both Class of '93), show their true colors at one of the world's most famous prehistoric monuments, Stonehenge, near Wiltshire, England. Michael earned his bachelor's in Wood Technology (now AMMT) and Nicole earned hers in Home Economics/Early Childhood.

PSU alumna Ginger Luke (BBA '97) and her son/Future Gorilla, Spencer, at the Badlands National Park in South Dakota.



Erin Walton (BSEd '07) and daughter Kennedy in Spring Lake, NJ. Erin is currently working on her Master of Science in Special Education Teaching at PSU and will complete her degree in 2020.



Talk about taking Gorilla Pride to new heights! Alumni Bill Cantwell (BST '97), Johnna Gosch Cantwell (BS '95), Jessica Baldwin (BA '98), and Kyle Kelly (BST '01) experiencing Key West to the fullest!

Tell us what interesting places Gus has visited.
E-mail your photo & a brief story to psumag@pittstate.edu



2008 graduates Carrie Campbell, Samantha Pinkal, Kala Truman Jacobs, Sarah Brannock, and Kimberly Flory Beasley on their ninth annual summer reunion. They spent their reunion in the Great Smoky Mountains of Tennessee. Elizabeth Perrey Knight and Laura Toman Sponsel were unable to attend this year, but they usually join in on the fun. What an awesome alumnae tradition!



Ken Bateman (BBA '60, MS '64), Ruby Rios, Kebra Rios, Louis Rios, Andrew Rios, Barbara Bateman (BSEd '61, MS '65), Brock Patterson, Stella Patterson, and Tess Patterson (BA '90) exploring Alaska in their Gorilla gear.

Meagan Montis Lumb (BS '11), Megan Garman Hurrelbrink (BSEd '11), Chelsie Oshel Fisher (BS '10), Stacy Malle Osterthun (BBA '11), Stephanie Brown Krusich (BBA '11), and Cassie Wilson Quick (BS '12, MA '15) celebrating their 30th birthdays and sporting their Gorilla Pride at Excellence Punta Cana in the Dominican Republic.



Justin Root, a junior in Architectural Manufacturing Management Technology and a member of the PSU Baseball team, accompanied the First Baptist Church of Lee's Summit on their annual mission trip to Guatemala. Wearing one of his favorite shirts, Root helped deliver medical supplies for the people of Quetzaltenango and delivered food bags to villages.



Several departments at Pittsburg State University, Gorilla Country, and many others prepared a Crimson and Gold care package for Matt Lewis (BSEd '14) and the 607th Movement Control Team. The team is currently deployed in Kuwait. We cannot thank this group enough for their service, and a big thank you to Matt for making Gorilla Nation so proud!

“Where in the World is Gus?”

Tell us what interesting places Gus has visited.
E-mail your photo & a brief story to psumag@pittstate.edu



Dick Wilbert (BS '74 and his wife, Karrolyn (a College High graduate) showed their Gorilla pride at the Worthington Glacier outside of Valdez, Alaska. He made the Gorilla necklaces they're wearing by using Gorilla pictures he cut out of this magazine!

Gabrielle Hansen (BSN '17) cheered on fellow Gorilla John Brown with the crimson and gold at New Era Field in Orchard Park, New York, during the Buffalo Bills game.



PSU University Professor of Mathematics Cynthia Huffman (BSEd '86, MS '87) took Gus all the way to Easter Island



Steve Medved (BBA '81, MBA '85) and Joyce Medved (BSEd '77) took our magazine along on a trip to Capri, Italy.

The Hudson family reunion at Garden Creek Waterfall in Casper, Wyoming, had plenty of PSU grads! They included John Hudson (BS '72), Dave Hudson (BS '70 and MS '76), Betty Hudson Jensen (BST '85), Jerry Hudson (BSED '68 and MS '76), Mary Hudson Reed (BS '80), Juliana Cologna Hudson (BBA '04), Judy Cremer Hudson (BSED '70 and MS '75), Pat Johnson Hudson (BSED '74 and MS '82), and Mark Hudson (BBA '04). (not pictured – Brett Hudson -BSED '01)



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Champions Plaza

Bring the Tradition Home

CHAMPIONS PLAZA SCULPTURE

Part of the Gorillas' famed "Gorilla Walk" and a destination for alumni and fans, the Champions Plaza sculpture has become a beloved part of Pittsburg State tradition. Now, you can own a piece of history with this authentic solid-bronze casting of the dynamic sculpture by world-renowned artist Tom Corbin. Available in both an eight-inch study and a limited-edition 16-inch maquette.



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CHAMPIONS PLAZA PAVER

Make your mark on the university's famed "Gorilla Walk" by reserving a personalized Champions Plaza stone paver. A limited number of pavers are available, so don't wait! *Order your Champions Plaza paver today.* Two sizes: 8"x8" and 12"x12"



pittstate.edu/championsplaza



By Doing, Learn

A visitor to Pittsburg State won't find all of the classrooms in which students are learning on a campus map. Their classrooms also include Ozark streams. A playground. A nature trail on the outskirts of town.

The educational approach can be summed up easily in three words: the university motto, "By Doing, Learn."

It was the premise on which PSU was founded in 1903.

It's continued ever since.

Students speak with enthusiasm about unique projects in which faculty are engaging them. Alumni report that such experiences not only prepared them for their careers, they were an advantage when employers came to recruit. Thumb through the pages of this edition and you'll notice it's the common thread.





By Doing, Learn



At the Kansas Polymer Research Center, senior Jonghyun Choi saw treasure in trash – coffee grounds, to be precise.

Mr. Bean: coffee grounds to batteries

A BAG OF COFFEE BEANS MIGHT SEEM like an unlikely educational tool. So might a small pile of coffee grounds derived from the beans. But at Pittsburg State University, where textbooks and Powerpoints are supplemented with things like trail cams, fish seines, and cement trucks, it makes perfect sense.

Those coffee grounds that inspired Jonghyun Choi, a student from South Korea, wound up as fuel.

More than half of American adults drink coffee every day, or about 10 pounds per year per person. While coffee-drinkers may feel the effects of coffee as their own kind of “energy,” Choi figured out how to use coffee to create energy storage through research with Associate Professor Ram Gupta at the KPRC. It’s a place where students and scientists rub elbows often.

“We found that the carbons could be made into a supercapacitor, a small battery, that can last 10 years,” Gupta said.

It could power a small fan, for example, or perhaps someday



Coffee grounds to batteries



1. The process begins with coffee grounds that have been brewed. Any flavor will do!
2. Chemical activation happens when dried brewed coffee grounds are mixed with chemicals to synthesize activated carbon, and then heated.
3. Activated carbon is then washed and dried. The performance of a supercapacitor depends

on the surface area and porosity of the carbon used. The chemical activation process ensures it's suitable.

4. Next, the carbon is used to fabricate circular electrodes for supercapacitors. Two dry-coated electrodes are separated and a coin-cell type supercapacitor is assembled using a hydraulic crimping machine.

5. The result: a supercapacitor tested using industrial standards found to be much better than many oxide and carbon-based devices and suitable for using more than 10,000 cycles of charge-discharge, or more than 10 years of performance.

soon, a cell phone. If they could produce hundreds in a day, Choi estimates, then industry could create thousands.

Choi's work was accepted for publication in an international journal, and his work to perfect the batteries is continuing at PSU as he seeks a graduate degree.

"A professor like Ram — he's an excellent researcher, but his biggest impact is what he does with students," said Tim Dawsey, who directs the KPRC. "The work they're doing together is inspiring the next generation."

You 



As a senior in chemistry, Jonghyun Choi conducted research at the KPRC that led to the creation of batteries from coffee grounds. Choi, who completed his bachelor's degree last year, is now a graduate student at PSU furthering his research.



The life aquatic

ON A HOT AUTUMN DAY, graduate student Kali Boroughs didn't mind getting a bit wet as she collected research samples from a creek near Galena, Kansas. She and classmate Joshua Holloway and a recent alumna, Alexandra King, stretched a seine across the water so that the current swept aquatic life into it.

Their purpose: to determine how improved water quality in the Spring River and its tributaries has impacted fish and invertebrates. The two-year study is funded by a federal grant from the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism.

For decades, the waterways had elevated levels of lead, zinc, and cadmium as a result of mining in the region. But work done by the Environmental Protection Agency to clean up mining sites means improved water quality. Could that mean healthier populations of fish and insects?

Biology students and an alumna seine fish in a Southeast Kansas creek.

"It's a positive conservation story that the water has gotten so much better than it was 30 years ago," said Assistant Professor of Biology James Whitney, who is leading the team. "Now, it's important to determine how that has affected life in the water."

At 12 locations across a multi-county area, students assessed canopy cover, water depth and velocity, and habitat, and collected samples of species. Boroughs said the study provides an unparalleled opportunity for her as a student.

"I love the chance to do real-world, hands-on work like this that's meaningful," she said.

continued





KATHRYN WOLFE

Kathryn Wolfe had always known she wanted to be a physical therapist. What she couldn't imagine is just where that profession would take her early in her career.

Wolfe, who earned a bachelor's degree in exercise science in 2014, moved to New York to pursue her doctorate in physical therapy from Long Island University. During her studies at LIU, Wolfe discovered and worked with Neuro Tour Physical Therapy, a team of elite practitioners that specializes in providing physical therapy services to performing artists. She is now a full-time PT at Neuro Tour and is currently working with artists in Broadway's "The Lion King."

"I work full-time backstage," Wolfe said, "so I arrive two hours before the show to provide treatment ranging from soft tissue mobility to exercise prescription to taping various joints for the show. Then I stay throughout the show so performers and crew can drop into my office as needed or if they get hurt during the show."

Wolfe said her rigorous undergraduate studies prepared her for her fast-paced, intense work in New York.

"The education I received at Pitt State was foundational to the many concepts I learned when earning my Doctor of Physical Therapy degree," she said.



The Smithsonian invited biology students to take images of wildlife with trail cameras in Pittsburg as part of a national study.

Opossums, armadillos, and bobcats — oh my!

SOME 30 MILES NORTH IN WOODED areas, motion-activated trail cameras set out by biology major Caleb Durbin and Assistant Professor of Biology Christine Brodsky were capturing images of mammals.

By the end of the semester, they had photographic evidence of bobcats, deer, raccoons, gray and fox squirrels, opossums, eastern cottontail rabbits, mice, armadillos, coyotes, groundhogs, and a bobcat. And by the end of the semester, those photos were on their way to becoming part of the Smithsonian Institution's national wildlife database.

Durbin collaborated with seven other undergraduate students as part of a nationwide project, #SnapshotUSA, to analyze the diversity of mammals in all 50 states and the impact of humans on them.

Durbin said he's honored to have been chosen for the project.

"It's mind blowing," he said. "I'm thankful, really thankful, to have a professor who keeps me engaged — she's one of the greatest professors I've ever had. It's really crazy to think my name will be in a paper in the Smithsonian."

Durbin and his classmates will present results at a research colloquium in April, and the results will be uploaded to Digital Commons. The public will be able to access it there and via eMammal, a database for camera trap projects.





A tick study in local wildlife areas is giving students field and lab experience while providing scientists valuable data.

Tick busters

WHILE MOST PEOPLE SPEND their summers avoiding ticks, graduate student Leah Cuthill hopes to find them. She and Assistant Professor Anuradha Ghosh have been collecting them as part of a four-year surveillance study and research project that could shed some light on tick prevalence and tick-borne illnesses in Southeast Kansas.



Ticks carry the pathogen for Lyme disease, Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever, Tularemia, Ehrlichiosis, and host other potentially serious illnesses; Cuthill was inspired to do the project by a potential tick-borne illness she contracted.

“This area is a hub for ticks because of the heat and high humidity,” Ghosh said. “As our climate warms, ticks are prevailing in this direction following the migration of their hosts — they’re very sensitive to temperatures and humidity. We’re studying the distribution of various tick species and whether it’s going up or down. We’re watching for an invasion, as well.”

After collecting ticks in small vials from several locations, they freeze them in the lab in the Biology Department, where they are able to identify the tick species and do a molecular analysis to determine what pathogens the ticks carry.



SHANTANU DHAR

When Shantanu Dhar spoke at Pittsburg State in November 2019, it was his first visit to campus in 25 years. The Mumbai, India, native had many stories and lessons to share.

Dhar, who graduated in 1994 with a master’s of science in human resources development, has more than 20 years of leadership experience in the human resources field. His current position is in human resources at Astarc Group, one of India’s premier auto ancillary and printed flexible electronics company. He’s also served in executive leadership roles at J.M. Baxi Group, Kirloskar Oil Engines, and Dalmia Bharat Enterprises.

Dhar is the author of two books with a third on the way, is a singer, and is a movie script writer for Bollywood.

Dhar said his time at Pittsburg State prepared him to succeed in the global economy.

“If you want to have success abroad, go to a university where the faculty cares and you can build strong friendships with American and international students,” he said. “When you get out there to work and the company is global, it’s good to have friends you have studied with around the world. I can go to 45 countries, and almost always there is a Gorilla who picks me up from the airport.”



ABBY CLEVINGER

Not long after the devastating 2010 earthquake in Haiti, Abby Clevenger and her husband Lane began talking about how they could help the Haitian people recover. The couple had a long-standing relationship with the Caribbean nation and cared deeply about the people there.

Abby, who earned a bachelor's degree in family and consumer science in 2004, had an idea. She would use her FACS background to design jewelry that would be produced in Haiti. These job opportunities would allow the people of Haiti to provide for their families and create security.

In 2015 she launched *Béljoy*, a distinct line of handcrafted jewelry designed by U.S. artisans and produced in Haiti. The company focuses on local sourcing of jewelry components like clay, paper beads, and horn. The use of locally sourced elements also enables *Béljoy* to support other Haitian artisans.

"My experience as a fashion merchandising student at PSU was critical to my role today," Clevenger said. "My professor, Angie Dowell, was always very encouraging and gave me a strong educational foundation which fueled my love for fashion. The program gave me the tools and experience in the field that I needed to succeed."



Students in the School of Construction are leaving their mark: their projects will be used by children and adults for years to come.

If you build it...

WHEN HE GRADUATES IN MAY, Brody Caster, a construction major from Douglas, Kansas, will already have a solid resumé: he served as project manager for a pavilion he and his classmates spent last semester building at Schlanger Park in Pittsburg.



"We developed the scope, created design concepts, and carried out the construction," he said.

The client, the Parks & Recreation Department, paid for the materials.

"Our project is 100-percent student run, and the independent aspect of it is really valuable," Caster said.

Since faculty started the capstone projects program in the School of Construction 20 years ago, students have learned in a real-world way what they soon will do for a profession — estimating, conceptual design work, getting quotes for materials, pouring concrete, building, billing

and invoices, and more — while helping area schools, museums, trails, churches, and parks.

Assistant Professor Christopher Pross said the program is one reason recruiters routinely choose PSU graduates over others.

“In academia, we can give them all the book learning they need, but none of that means anything if they don’t actually get out and apply what we’ve taught them,” Pross said. “When I was a student at another university, my senior project was a full-blown design and estimate, but I hardly got to go to the project site, hardly used my hands. Here, we’re giving them a real-world experience of placing steel, pouring concrete — all of it.”

The students said they appreciated the chance to create something lasting for the community.

“It’s a neat feeling, to be able to work on something and at the end of the day, take a step back and say, ‘I built that,’” said Logan McArthur, a senior from Lamar, Missouri. “And as alumni, when we come back and see families using it, we can take pride in it and know that we made a difference.”

Next up

The ability of nursing students to learn by doing will be elevated when a 5,000-square foot simulation hospital is built adjacent to McPherson Hall, home to the Irene Ransom Bradley School of Nursing.

Private donors initiated the \$6 million project after learning of the need.

According to Kathleen Flannery, vice president for University Advancement and president and CEO of the PSU Foundation, it aligns with the university’s strategic plan and will help to meet the continued demand for nursing graduates.

The project will accommodate cohorts of 120 students; currently, there are 90.

“We’re beyond excited about the opportunities, experiences, and education this will provide our students to prepare them for patient care,” said Cheryl Giefer, director of the School of Nursing.

The initial donor, John U. Parolo, of Croweburg, Kansas, died last February at age 94. A graduate of Northeast-Arma High School, he served in the 13th Armored Division during the European Theater of World War II. Wounded in 1945 near Cologne, Germany, he was awarded the Purple Heart, ETO Ribbon, and two Bronze Service Stars. As a civilian, he worked as a machinist for McNally Manufacturing in Pittsburg and The Boeing Company in Wichita for nearly 40 years before retiring in Croweburg. The gift was made by the John U. Parolo Education Trust which was established following Parolo’s death.

Other donors wish to remain anonymous at this time.

“We will have an ongoing fundraising effort, the Caring Society, to provide an opportunity for others to also support this endeavor,” Flannery said. •

JACK JOHNSON

The Kansas Technology Center had just opened when Jack Johnson chose to be a Gorilla in the late 1990s. He was excited



for the hands-on learning it provided. The Columbus, Kansas, native has put that education to good use since graduating in 1999 with degrees in both automotive and engineering technology.

In 2009, Johnson led the launch of Johnson Controls-Saft joint venture, responsible for the \$250 million capital development of the nation’s first large format automotive focus lithium-ion plant in Holland, Michigan.

A few years later, Johnson used his knowledge and experience to launch two businesses: Volta Power Systems and Jolt Energy Storage Technologies. Volta Power Systems provides advanced energy systems for the RV, marine, and heavy equipment markets. Jolt Energy develops and engineers sustainable energy-storage technologies.

Johnson credits his PSU educational experience with preparing him to succeed in the engineering industry.

“I’m a hands-on learner,” he said. “At Pitt State, we get our hands dirty. We take things apart and put them back together. That’s one of the most valuable aspects of a PSU education. The focus on application-based knowledge is essential. By the time you’re ready to enter the workforce, you’re so far ahead of the game because you’ve already done a lot of what you’re asked to do.”

A daydream come true

WHEN MATT DENNETT was a student in Architectural Manufacturing Management and Technology, he daydreamed a bit while working at the reference desk in Axe Library.

“One of my classes was furniture design, and as I learned, I realized the furniture and the finishings were outdated,” he said. “I’d sit there and daydream about how it could be redesigned. I could picture how it would look.”

Four years later, the 2015 graduate’s daydreams became reality: he served as the project engineer for a \$926,000 renovation of the entire first floor at Axe — Phase IV of an overall renovation designed to meet the needs of 21st Century students and faculty. It was funded by state rehabilitation and repair dollars.

Dennett, a native of Winfield, Kansas, landed an internship the summer before his senior year at a millwork in Peoria, Illinois, which took his education beyond the classroom.

After graduation, he landed a job at MSW Engineering in Joplin,

[YouTube](#)

“Everything we did in class provided a foundation for me to build on. When I saw the project come across our bid board, I jumped on it.” – Matt Dennett

Missouri, and said he couldn’t believe he wound up back at Axe Library doing what he’d once daydreamed about.

“Everything we did in class provided a foundation for me to build on,” he said. “When I saw the project come across our bid board, I jumped on it.”

His job scope included millwork walls, desks, cabinetry, and counter-tops, and began with creating a set of millwork drawings based on architectural drawings. He then created a materials list and detailed drawings for the production floor.

He worked on it most of last summer and early fall, making weekly trips to PSU to get measurements and attend project meetings with other trades and the general contractor, then bringing product from Joplin to install. The official opening of the first floor was celebrated in a formal ceremony and ribbon cutting in October.

“I guess it’s pretty cool to see a dream come true, when you think about it,” Dennett said. “And it’s neat that I get to play a role in a project here, since this is where the foundation was laid to my career.” •



Matt Dennett

"I fit in"

WHEN NAVIT' HILL BLEW THE head gaskets in her Subaru Forester, she didn't bat an eye. She rebuilt the engine herself. She also fixed some body damage on the car after hitting a stump, using Associate Professor John Thompson's lab for the work.

"I'm super proud of it. It speaks to the amount of knowledge and experience I was able to get at Pitt State," she said.

Hill, one of PSU's newest alumni, earned a degree in automotive technology with an emphasis in collision repair. Days after her December graduation, she was headed to Dearborn, Michigan, to start her career with Ford Motor Company as a Tech Support Analyst, armed with what she'd learned and experienced in the Kansas Technology Center.

The seed for that career choice was planted when she was a child.

"My dad worked in auto body his whole life; from the time he could take things apart, he did," Hill said. "He worked for 30 years as an auto technician for dealerships, independent shops, and has his own shop. I grew up handing him tools."

But when Hill decided to follow in his footsteps, she was met with an industry stereotype.

"My mom said, 'There's no place for you in the automotive field,'" she said.

Hill relented and earned associate degrees in business management and business technology from West Georgia Technical College. But the pull was strong to follow her dreams; online research led her to PSU.

"I found six schools in the U.S. with a four-year degree in automotive



Navit' Hill

tech," she said. "All are business oriented, for people who have been in industry and want to get into management."

Hill wanted a hands-on, by doing learn approach, and PSU was one of

*"...women need to start
telling more people,
'Hey, I'm doing it,
and it's not that hard'."*

— Navit' Hill

two with such a focus. "Pitt State required the most technical classes, so I chose Pitt State," she said.

It was a good decision.

"When the Big Three (General Motors, Ford, and Chrysler) are coming out here multiple times a year and are saying that PSU graduates

are top talent, you know you've found a good program," she said.

Hill, now 24, wants other women considering entering the field to know that she's been treated with respect by her classmates and co-workers. She plans to contribute to scholarships for women in technology as soon as she is able.

"People told me you can't do this as a career, you shouldn't do this as a career, but women need to start telling more people, 'Hey, I'm doing it, and it's not that hard,'" she said. "Think back to the time when men went off to war, women worked in factories, they were building airplanes, and we're just as capable as women were then."

"There are so many opportunities in this industry all over the world — all kinds of opportunities," she said. "I did it. I'm proud that I could do it, and I proved that this is the place for me, that I fit in." •

Life-sized learning

Kristy Hutchison, a 49-year-old Wichita junior, was inspired to pursue a degree in nursing after surviving breast cancer and the loss of a child and interacting with nurses who treated them both.

Her education in the Irene Ransom Bradley School of Nursing was elevated last fall with the unveiling of an Anatomage, a 3D virtual dissection table that will let Hutchison and her classmates visualize anatomy at the highest level of accuracy using a life-sized, touch-screen experience.

It, along with a complete overhaul of the school's lecture hall to equip it for today's teaching and learning, was funded by Freeman Health System.

"It's an amazing tool," Hutchison said. "It will provide us with so many opportunities to learn, to practice memorizing and visualizing in a way we just can't in a book. And the new lecture hall is beautiful. It makes me proud to be a student here."

Paula Baker, CEO of Freeman Health System (BSEd '80, MS '99), said the school's nursing students are among the finest in the nation and she's pleased to be able to invest in them.



"We know PSU has an accomplished and extraordinary faculty of teachers who inspire and influence the nurses of tomorrow. Lessons learned at PSU stay with students for a lifetime," said Baker, who noted that Freeman has a solid training partnership with PSU nursing students and depends on PSU nursing graduates for advanced practice nurses and nurse leaders — all of which are in high demand. [YouTube](#)

A dream come true



Robert Dean Smith

World-renowned operatic tenor Robert Dean Smith (BS '80) grew up in the tiny town of Chetopa, Kansas, and once dreamed of making music his

career. Two degrees in music from PSU helped put him on the path.

In October, he returned home for two concerts with PSU students and faculty, one on campus in the Bicknell Family Center for the Arts and one at the esteemed Kauffman Center for

the Performing Arts in Kansas City — an experience of a lifetime, students said.

The Kauffman concert was sponsored by three other PSU alumni: Miles Schnaer ('71), Paula Schnaer ('72), and their daughter, Mandi Schnaer Dow ('99), who own Crown Automotive in Lawrence, Kansas.

"To have performed at the Kauffman with a musician like Robert Dean Smith is truly a dream," said Amelia Markley, of Joplin, Missouri, a graduate student majoring in orchestral conducting and a member of the Southeast Kansas Symphony at Pittsburg State University.

Like Markley, Smith spent a great deal of time in McCray Hall.

He graduated with two bachelor's degrees in music and went on to complete his master's at New York's famed Juilliard School.

"I knew that there was another world out there — the music world," Smith said. "But I didn't have any access to it. I was able to find that world, or at least was able to get started in it, at Pittsburg State."

Smith has earned awards and accolades performing in opera houses around the world, including from Barcelona to Zürich. He has performed in concert with the Vienna Philharmonic, the Philadelphia Orchestra, the London Symphony Orchestra, and many, many more notable and prestigious groups.



Kaitlynn Maslen

The business of art

Art professor S. Portico Bowman does not believe in the starving artist mentality.

“When students leave our program, they will know how to make a living with their art,” said Bowman.

To back up that claim, Bowman teaches the Business of Art, a unique class that met last semester in The Foundry in the newly-opened Block22.

“We’ve been able to utilize so many resources in the spirit of entrepreneurship,” Bowman said. “It’s been a true ‘By Doing, Learn’ class.”

They connected with experts from the Block22-based Kansas Small Business Development Center to develop a draft business plan, learned about nearby boutique businesses like Sonder & Co and ArtForms, heard from grant writers, and developed a partnership with Mpix.

Then, they opened a pop-up art gallery based on the theme of Glory Days:

Bringing Pittsburg of the Past into Pittsburg of the Present, complete with a logo, point of sale system, and merchandise. They grossed \$2,129.61, and their last field trip was to the post office to mail tax checks to the Kansas Department of Revenue.

Kaitlynn Maslen, who graduated in December, said her goal is to one day earn a living entirely on her art sales and commissions, and the class provided a foundation.

“I’ve never wanted to be anything other than an artist,” she said.

“When students leave our program, they will know how to make a living with their art.”

— Art professor,
S. Portico Bowman

Students create old-style radio show

Jason Knowles, a new assistant professor in the Department of Communication, is capturing the imagination of today’s audio production students — and their audiences — with an age-old technique: Foley sound effects to bring a radio story to life.

Their classroom: a stage with microphones. Their learning materials: random objects and a folding table.

Senior Vanessa Tapia used an empty bottle to produce the sound of wind, while senior Braiden Turner used boots and the table to create the sound of footsteps, and senior Bailey Noland dug in a box of sand with a wooden spatula to mimic the sound of a shovel digging a grave.

Inspired by the legendary 1938 radio classic by Orsen Welles, ‘War of the Worlds,’ his class brought to life their own original radio plays. In a bit of irony, they used modern technology to record the show so that it could air on Gorilla Radio.

The technique dates to the early 1920s, when sounds were added to live broadcasts of radio dramas, Knowles said. When the technique progressed to film, it had to be perfectly synchronized to the actors’ motions.

Knowles, who joined the department in August, tasked his students writing the scripts for the shows as well as figuring out what objects to use for the Foley effects and doing the narration. They invited an audience of PSU students, faculty, and staff to attend their live recording on, appropriately, Halloween. Knowles and his students said they’d like the project to become an annual event open to the public.





John Kuefler, left, leads a work session with students competing in a regional coding contest.

Bringing home the win

Five students were faced with the ultimate learning challenge last fall: create a web-based application that matches entrepreneurs willing to mentor new entrepreneurs. But they didn't have a semester; they had one weekend.

They wound up doing well: they brought home a first-place trophy and bragging rights from Code-A-Thon 2019, a unique competition hosted by the Kansas City Federal Reserve.

The team was comprised of CIS majors David Sexton of Carthage, Missouri; Devon Tinsley of Pittsburg, and Chris Evans of Nevada, Missouri; Graphics Communication/Web Design major Lydia Winters of Pittsburg; and CIS and Graphics Communication/Web Design major Aubri Stahl of Pittsburg.

To complete their entry, they collaborated with each other and with their instructor, John Kuefler, who teaches in the Kelce College of Business at PSU and owns DevSquared at Block22 in downtown Pittsburg.

Each student contributed expertise, from coding on the back end to using graphic design and layout skills to make it aesthetically pleasing.

After being chosen as one of the top three finalists, they made a final pitch to a panel of judges in Kansas City and were named "University Champion" — an award given to the university whose faculty/institution demonstrates the highest level of engagement.

Kuefler said it's encouraging to see that students who soon will enter the workforce are so well prepared.

"We need people like this in the IT/

programming field now more than ever," he said. "With as difficult as it is to find/hire them, especially in this area, it was great to see five people who I feel like I could be comfortable hiring at some point if needed."

In fact, most of the students have job offers or jobs already, even before graduating.

"I think all of that is a testament to the kinds of experience we are providing students here at Pitt State," Kuefler said. "These students certainly don't need to do this Code-A-Thon to have stacked resumes; they're all already incredible. They want to go above and beyond and show everybody what they can do and represent Pitt State because that's the kind of people they are."

'A sense of accomplishment'

Melissa Payne's mantra: "Don't quit your senior year, kids."

Payne, 50, became one of the newest alumni last year when she earned a bachelor's degree in Business Management. It took her 26 years to complete it.

"I have such a sense of accomplishment," she said.

She wasted no time in returning to campus: she soon was hired as an administrative assistant in KCOB.

In that role, she supports three areas: Academic Advising, Career Readiness & Enactus; Outreach & Business Engagement; and Kelce Business & Economic Research Center.

"I have two children who have completed college — my youngest graduated from the

nursing program at PSU five years ago, and another earned an Art History degree from KU two years before that. You look at yourself and think, 'What's next for me?'," said Payne, who first began as a student at Pittsburg State in 1993.

Life interrupted her plan to graduate in four years, but she continued to take classes on and off as she was able. "My family is proud, and I'm proud," she said.

She's not stopping; she was just accepted into the graduate program and will pursue her MBA with an emphasis in Human Resource Development.



Melissa Payne

Calling all entrepreneurs

Kelce College of Business hosted a unique workshop last semester to help develop the next generation of entrepreneurs. It inspired plans to continue fostering entrepreneurship education through KCOB in May.

Called 3 Day Startup, it provided an extreme hands-on environment. Day 1 focused on brainstorming, preliminary pitches/feedback, and team selection modules. Day 2 emphasized business model generation; teams focused on customer discovery, structured mentorship, intermediate pitches, and feedback sessions. Day 3 consisted of execution (including pitch workshops) leading into final pitches/demos for a panel of mentors and investors.

"The skills they picked up will be applicable whether they choose to open their own business or to use their skills helping a non-profit, serving in a governmental role, or working with an existing firm — now, or 10 years from now," said Lynn Murray, director of outreach and marketing and an associate professor of marketing in KCOB, who coordinated the event.

Guilherme Hansen, who earned a bachelor's in Communication last fall and immediately began his MBA, said the program helped him move a rough concept — a platform aimed at students and scholarship donors that facilitates the application process — closer to reality.

"We experienced the struggles of consumer research, prototyping, and even pitching our ideas to judges, and learned how to overcome these challenges," he said.

Next up: an intense, week-long course in June, tentatively titled Entrepreneurship and Small Business Start-up, offered to both undergraduate and graduate students through KCOB.

Marketing majors receive scholarship

Five marketing majors were awarded scholarships from the Harold and Muriel Berkman Charitable Foundation from a field of 900 applicants: Tanner Glenn, Kacy Kammerer, Christopher Wernimont, Allison Lucas, and Madeline Domnick.

"We're very proud of these students and grateful for the recognition and support they received. We predict great things from all of them. Their efforts are emblematic of the type of students the Kelce College and Pittsburg State University attract: accomplished, hard-working, and talented," said Lynn Murray, associate professor of marketing.



Christopher Wernimont, Allison Lucas, Madeline Domnick

A teacher-leader

Tim Vesco (BSEd '01, MSED '09) believes that in order for his students to become life-long learners, he needs to be a life-long learner. His motto: "You can't teach wi-fi kids with landline strategies."

Throughout nearly 20 years of teaching in the small, rural district of Frontenac, Kansas, he's made it a priority to learn new technologies that, once implemented in his fifth grade classroom, have enabled his students to learn by doing and connect with other students around the world.

Creating song parodies, designing digital books, producing green screen movies, and incorporating augmented and virtual reality is a typical part of reading, writing, and arithmetic for his students.

For several years, he's raised funds using Donors Choose to participate in the Global Read Aloud Project, which has connected his class and the books they're reading to other classes around the world via Skype and social media.

Vesco said his hands-on experiences at PSU propelled him into the



teacher-leader he is today; as an undergraduate, he was active in Sigma Tau Gamma Fraternity and the Pitt State Homecoming Committee, learning invaluable communication, collaboration, and leadership skills, and in the classroom, he was inspired by professors Alice Sagehorn and Brenda Roberts.

These days, he connects and collaborates with educators across the state, country, and world via Twitter: at 8 p.m., each Monday, he can be found moderating #ksedchat for more

than 3,000 Kansas educators with the hope that it helps them to continue to learn and grow.

"My students' world is constantly changing and I need to change, adjust, and make learning exciting and meaningful for them," he said. "I wish I was like Ms. Frizzle and could load up the students on The Magic School Bus and take them all over the world, but since I can't do that, connecting students via technology is the next best thing."

Connect with him at @mrvesco.

Teachers of Promise

Art education major Reyna Gabriel and elementary education major Kristin Curren McClure were chosen for the Teachers of Promise award, a statewide initiative developed by Kansas State Department of Education several years ago.

The College of Education awarded both students the Delta Kappa Gamma/Lyla Vaughn Award.

Gabriel, of Raymore, Missouri, was active in the Kappa Pi Art Honor Society and was a founding officer in the PSU student chapter of Kansas Art Education Association, serving as vice president for two years.

McClure, of Pittsburg, was active in

Kappa Delta Pi, an international honor society in education.

Both graduated in December. McClure is an online ESOL teacher with VIPKid and a substitute teacher for Pittsburg Community Schools and Gabriel is substitute teaching in the Kansas City area while they search for full-time jobs in their own classrooms.

According to Jean Dockers, director of PSU's Teacher Education program, the selection process includes faculty nomination, review of field experiences, and positive feedback from the field. The Office of Teacher Education monitors each candidate's progress.

"The designation is special to the students who are selected to represent their college or university as a Teacher of Promise," Dockers said. "They have wonderful opportunities to learn from and network with excellent educators."



Award-winning

The College of Education chose Steve Lilly, superintendent of schools for USD 342 at McLouth, Kansas, as the recipient of the 2019 Distinguished Service Administrator Award, and Jimmika Lawson, instructional coach to classroom teachers at Silver City Elementary



Steve Lilly



Jimmika Lawson

School in Kansas City, Kansas, for the 2019 Distinguished Teacher Award.

Lilly (MS '96) has worked in public education for 26 years, including as a special education teacher in several large Kansas school districts, as an at-risk teacher in Missouri, and as a basketball coach. He also has coached and taught at the collegiate level, including as a graduate assistant basketball coach at PSU under Gene Iba, and for six years as an instructor and basketball coach at Independence Community College, where his teams had winning records.

At McLouth, Lilly agreed to coach the team after a string of losses and no applicants for the job; last year's team went to the state tournament for the first time in 50 years.

Jimmika Lawson (BSEd '13, MSED '17, SPED '19) taught second grade for five years at William Allen White Elementary School in Kansas City, Kansas before becoming an instructional coach at Silver City Elementary, where she coordinates with families and teachers to implement interventions to develop skills for struggling learners. A STAR Teacher of the Year recipient at the building level, she is active on the leadership team.

She pursued a specialist in education degree in advanced studies in leadership, with an emphasis in general school administration with a hope to one day become an elementary school principal.

Two Gorillas recognized for school counseling

Two Gorillas were nominated as Kansas School Counselor Association School Counselor of the Year and were recognized at the fall conference of the KSCA. Both are employed by Pittsburg schools; Melinda Walsh DeGruson ('93 BSED, '97 MS, '01 EdS), is now in her 22nd year as a counselor and works at Lakeside Elementary. Brandi Wimmer Dalgarn ('04 BSEd, '06 MS), is now in her 12th year and works at George Nettels Elementary.

"I couldn't be more proud of the work they do to help children," said University Professor Becky Brannock, director of the PSU School Counseling Program. "This award illustrates the quality work we all do to cross-train our candidates and then send them out to their respective fields. It isn't something that can be accomplished by individual programs, but it takes all of us working together to make that happen."

"Fuel Up to Play 60!"

Gorilla tight end Kyler Ray had the chance to see things from a different perspective on the field last fall when he, along with classmates in the Health, Human Performance, and Recreation Department, got to do some coaching at Carnie Smith Stadium.

He and his fellow physical education majors oversaw several simultaneous flag football games being played by more than 200 students from Pittsburg Community Middle School as part of the "Fuel Up to Play 60!" program.

The national NFL initiative is in cooperation with the Kansas City Chiefs and the Midwest Dairy Council as a way to get youth actively moving for 60 minutes every day and making healthy food choices.

"It's a lot different being on this side of things, and it's good experience for me to get before I graduate," said Ray, a junior



from Idaho who hopes to become a middle or high school physical education teacher. "I like seeing them take what we tell them and make adjustments and learn from it. It's fun."

Happy 50th, Plastics Engineering Technology

Fifty years ago, the PSU Plastics Engineering Technology program was in its infancy, charting a path to become recognized as a national model.

Today, its graduates are sought after by industry leaders, and the program is playing a pivotal role in the local economy.

City leaders, alumni, faculty and staff, and industry representatives gathered at the Kansas Technology Center last fall to celebrate the program's 50th birthday, with an eye to the future.

The program's placement rate is 100 percent, and alumni have gone on to impressive careers from coast to coast. Partnerships with those alumni and the industries they represent have played a key role in the success of the department, noted Chair Greg Murray.

Michael McGrew (BST '06), current president of the PET advisory council and a leader at Alpha Packaging in St. Louis, Missouri, said it's a way to give back.

"This program and the faculty were very influential on me and my career," said McGrew, who now recruits graduates. "The hands-on experiences I had here, the faculty interaction, being able to operate equipment before I graduated, all contributed to where I am now."

Mike Mirocke (BST '89), owner of Mirocke Sales Company in Shawnee, Kansas, has served on the PETAC since 1992, and said the program remains just as important to him today.

"I know from having been a student here myself how important it is to have access to top of the line equipment, to bring in experts to provide seminars, and help them connect with internships," he said.

Associate Professor Rebeca Book said the groundwork laid 50 years ago



Supporters of the PET program gather for a ribbon cutting to celebrate its 50th birthday.

helped propel Plastics Engineering Technology into a program recognized nationally.

"I think our founders would be very, very proud," she said.

Unique study opportunity

Nine students majoring in Plastics Engineering Technology took their learning experience out of the classroom — way out of the classroom, over the Atlantic Ocean, and into Europe!

The trip was made possible with a grant from the PSU Professors Beyond the Classroom program, funded by the Student Government Association, with additional sponsorship from Study Abroad, with the help of corporate

sponsors Alpha Packaging, Big 3 Precision, Harold Payne Plastics, Orbis, PTA Plastics, Reiloy USA, Forte, Silgan Dispensing, and Viega.

The group attended the K Trade Fair in Dusseldorf, Germany — the world's largest plastic and rubber trade show, with 230,000 attendees and 1.9 million square feet of exhibits in 17 buildings.

Lexington Peterson, a junior from LaCygne, Kansas, said it allowed her and her classmates to be exposed to countless jobs, internships, and the latest innovations in plastics and polymers.

"It also immersed us in another country's culture for a week," she said. "An experience like this is one that simply cannot be taught in a classroom environment."

Other students on the trip included

Timothy Adcock, Carson Butz, Haley Denton, Camille Holman, Andrew Huffman, and Devyn Rexwinkle. The trip was led by Associate Professor Rebeca Book.



Visiting the Cologne Chocolate Museum in Germany was a revelation: the manufacturing process, including roto-molding, is similar to that of plastics!

Student signing

Four students in Electrical Technology don't graduate until May, but by last October, they already had jobs.

Two key leaders from Interstates, a major company in the electrical construction industry, flew to Pittsburg for the kind of signing ceremony that is routinely conducted for athletes, but not usually seen in academics.

But PSU's program, those leaders said, is producing graduates for which there is high demand.

The students they signed were Brandon Walker of Girard, Kansas; Stephen Gideon of Weir, Kansas; Cody Mein of Pittsburg; and Jace Burdick of Rose Hill, Kansas.

"Excellent things are happening here," Dave Crumrine, president of construction at Interstates, told families, students, faculty, administrators, and media who gathered at the Kansas Technology Center for the ceremony. "I know when I hear from our field people about what they're getting from Pitt State grads, or even interns, they say they know what they're doing, they're hardworking, they ask questions, they want to learn."

Crumrine said the students chose the right program for job opportunity; there is high demand for graduates.

"It's super hard to get tradesmen today," he said. "No matter where you go, the trades are an awesome opportunity for at least the next decade, probably two decades, before it even slows down — we are so short of professional craftspeople that there really is a huge opportunity."

Alumni create Women in Technology Scholarship

A couple who met as students at PSU and credit it with their success have created an endowed Women in Technology Scholarship to honor two female family members.

"It means so much to both Dave and I to be able to invest in the future of PSU students and at the same time honor my mother and my husband's grandmother — both leaders in their families and profoundly independent women for their time," said Susan VandeLinde, who with her husband, Dave, came to campus in November to tour the Kansas Technology Center and meet with female students.

Dave, now director of service and parts operations for Hyundai Motor America in Fountain Valley, California, earned his bachelor's degree in Automotive Technology from PSU in 1989. Susan attended PSU from 1987-89, then moved with Dave to begin his career in New York City. Today, the couple lives in Irvine, California.

The scholarship honors his late grandmother, Jean Cruce, who was born in 1926, became tech-savvy in her mid-70s, and is credited with



A student shows alumni donors around the KTC.

helping Dave land his first job in the automotive industry at the Sears Tire Center in Overland Park, Kansas. It also honors Lois (Grotheer) Hosier, who was born in 1938 and was a pioneering woman in the rapidly changing telecommunications business.

Dean Robert Frisbee said that in recent years, he's seen more demand by industry to hire female graduates; scholarships are vital to recruitment efforts to attract more female students to fill that need.

"It's very special to have alumni come back to support the college, and clearly their gift will have a far-reaching impact," he said.

Helping an industry shortage

When it comes to the ongoing shortage of qualified diesel technicians in the U.S., a recent donation of three 2015 International® WorkStar® trucks by Navistar to PSU's Diesel and Heavy Equipment program might help.

The trucks are providing students with hands-on experience to prepare them to work in the on-highway truck industry.

"They will allow faculty to provide instruction on the entire truck, from bumper to bumper," said Professor Tim Dell, program coordinator.

Dell said the trucks primarily will be used in his department's AT 630 On Highway Truck Systems Course, where students learn fundamental foundation systems including axles, transmissions, drive lines, and brake systems, and are being integrated into other courses such as HVAC, engine, electrical, and electronic classes.

Brian Wright named new head football coach

When Brian Wright graduated from high school, his dad decided he needed a summer job at a factory, working third shift loading pallets. It solidified his work ethic, also made him appreciate Dec. 9, 2019: the day he was introduced to Gorilla Nation as the new head football coach.

“You’re never quite sure when your moment is going to come,” he said. “One thing I knew: I always wanted it to be with great people. It was very evident...that this place had great people. It took me about five minutes to figure out the character, dedication, commitment of the leadership team.”

Wright was at the University of Toledo, where he guided offenses that were among the best in the Mid-American Conference while boasting four NFL draft picks. He also coached at Youngstown State and Montana State.

He replaces Tim Beck, who resigned after 10 years as head coach and led his alma mater to the 2011 NCAA Division II National Championship, a pair of playoff appearances, and two MIAA titles. He praised Beck and former head coaches Carnie Smith, Dennis Franchione, and Chuck Broyles, who “created a special place.”

“You have my word that we are going to go to work for you, for all the guys that helped build this place, in the community, in the weight room, on the football field, so that you’ll be very proud of us on Saturday afternoons,” he said.

The coaching staff will play a pivotal role, he said. That includes Tom Anthony as defensive coordinator and safeties coach, Pat Cashmore as special teams coordinator and running backs coach, Jerry DeMinno as tight ends coach, Bryan Larson as offensive line coach and run game coordinator, Jody Owens as co-defensive coordinator and linebackers coach, and Munir Prince as cornerbacks coach. Larry Garman will serve as an assistant coach, Matt Karleskint returns as wide receivers coach and Josh Lattimer will coach the defensive line. Travis Young also will return as an assistant coach. They will lead the players not just as athletes, but as well-rounded people, Wright said.

“I would expect us to excel in the classroom, to have a team GPA of over 3.0, to win every game that we set out to win... to put in the necessary hours in the community, to serve the community. Our program will be built on those three things.”



Brian and Laura Wright with their children Jake, Joseph and Marielle.



Wall of fame

Alumni and athletics boosters Phil and John Minton donated a collection of framed NFL jerseys to the football program. The collection features signed jerseys of eight former players who were drafted or signed free agent contracts in the NFL. They are on display in the football locker room.

Head Coach Brian Wright said they represent a proud tradition in the program and will serve as a reminder that hard work pays off, and to never give up on dreams.

On and off the field

Their sports are very different, but student athletes at Pittsburg State University have a lot in common. They're driven. They know how to manage their time. They're competitive in nearly every area of their lives. And they all call PSU a home away from home, with their teams, coaches, and faculty a second family.

They exemplify the motto "by doing, learn" on and off the court, field, or track. The blend of academic and athletic pursuits requires a level of thoughtful, active commitment on all fronts to find success. And these athletes, who in a few months will be four of the newest Pittsburg State alumni, have found it.

Christian Edmondson Basketball

Leadership is a lifelong pursuit, if you're Christian Edmondson. As the oldest of four children, it started early and blossomed when he got to PSU from his hometown of Flower Mound, Texas.

"I try very hard to lead by example, whether that be with my siblings at home or with my teammates," Edmondson said.

Providing a mature voice to his younger teammates helped develop his leadership capacity, as did overcoming his natural introverted tendencies.

"Being on a college team means I have a built-in social life, and I had to come out of my shell," he said. "I try to set the standard for work ethic and help our team be the best it can be."

He'll graduate in May with a degree in Business Management, though his path forward could be unconventional.

"I've always had an interest in law enforcement and helping remove negativity that is sometimes aimed at our police," he said. "I'm also interested in the ministry and real estate, so I look forward to seeing where my future takes me."

He believes his business education will serve him well no matter his career path, particularly the real-world projects: They recently

completed one in their Quality Management class for Jimmy John's, in which they examined the restaurant's business practices, identified issues, and presented solutions.

"My professors have taught me that the psychology behind the management of people and teams translates into any career," he said. "Combined with the problem-solving methods I've learned through real-world experiences in business, I feel I can apply my education in any field."

Louis Rollins Track & Field

Louis Rollins has known two things since he was a small child: he wanted to understand how things were built and he wanted to be a college athlete. In May, he'll graduate with a degree in Construction Management and the experience of four years of track and field. Rollins has one year of eligibility remaining, so will stay at PSU next year while working on his master's degree in technology.

"Sports are in my DNA – both of my parents were college athletes, and so was my brother," Rollins said. His



Christian Edmondson



Louis Rollins

brother Naron graduated in December 2019.

Rollins attended Shawnee Mission West High School in Overland Park, Kansas. A few moves around the country in his childhood exposed him to a variety of cities, buildings, bridges, and structures that sparked a deep interest in construction at an early age.

"I've always wanted to know how things were built," he said. "I am grateful for the faculty in the construction program at PSU because they gave us so many opportunities to get hands-on, real-world experience."

That includes completing construction projects in the community from start to finish. Rollins also completed two internships

continued



Morgan Henning



Tyson Cushman

with construction companies in Kansas City, which has shaped his career outlook.

“Because of Pitt State, my eyes are very open to the options in the field and what I might like to do when I finish my graduate degree.”

Morgan Henning Volleyball

For Morgan Henning, life is about community and people. Her interest in others’ lives takes many forms, not the least of which is with her volleyball teammates.

“We have a built-in support system, and that includes Pittsburg community support,” said Henning. “The community here is really wrapped up in volleyball and it shows, and we see a lot of familiar faces at our matches.”

The senior in psychology will graduate in May with a minor in Spanish and will continue her education (and another year of volleyball) by pursuing a master’s in clinical psychology this fall. She’s working on a research project studying the effect of classic television theme songs on Alzheimer’s patients’ facial recognition abilities.

“The opportunities we have at Pitt

State to get experience in our fields of study is phenomenal,” said Henning. “As athletes we simply have to make personal connections with our professors because we need them to understand our commitments to our sports. These connections result in a lot of opportunities.”

One opportunity came in 2018, when she spent three weeks living with a single mom and her son in Spain as part of a study abroad program. She values the cultural exchange she experienced with her peers there, learning about how they live differently than she does.

The best thing about being a college athlete?

“My teammates believe I can do more when I don’t even know if I can,” she said. “It won’t be easy, but I’m looking forward to building that level of camaraderie in my life with family, friends, and my future community.”

Tyson Cushman Baseball

Caring for others is how Cushman was raised in Lee’s Summit, Missouri; his mom is a teacher and his dad is a paramedic.

“I’ve always been around people who care for others for a living,” he

said. “I wanted to do something that would make an impact.” Cushman, who will graduate in May with a degree in Nursing, plans to work in an emergency room and then pursue an advanced practice degree from PSU in the future.

It was PSU’s combination of a quality baseball program and a leading nursing program that was the deciding factor when he signed to play as Gorilla.

“We get awesome support from our coaches — for most of us they know our academic paths will take us further than baseball,” he said. “The faculty are also extremely supportive. They actually want athletes in their program, and they care about us as people and students. Balancing athletics and nursing is tough; I couldn’t be successful without their commitment to our success.”

Apart from the character and leadership skills that being a student athlete develops, he said he has built relationships that will last a lifetime; those personal connections are what has made PSU special for him.

“It’s an honor to go here and be part of both the nursing and baseball programs,” he said. “Creating lifelong bonds is the best thing I will take from my experience here.”



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Members of the PSU Honorary Family: Kacey, Kim, Haley, David and Katy Pitts.

Pitts family chosen as 2019 Honorary Family

When senior Katy Pitts graduates in May with her nursing degree, it technically will be her second time across the stage; the first was when her mother, Kim Pitts, was pregnant and walking across the stage to receive her own degree.

Katy's dad, David, also is a graduate. Her older sister, Haley, graduated in May 2019 with a bachelor's in nursing, and her younger sister, Kacey, plans to start this fall.

The Girard, Kansas, family was chosen as the 2019 PSU Honorary Family in conjunction with annual Family Day activities. Recipients are selected by a committee of alumni, students, and staff, based on a student-submitted nomination and essays about the student's family involvement, school spirit, and Gorilla legacy.

"My mom cried when I told her," Katy said. "It's a huge honor; it signifies that Pitt State is a part of our family, and we are a part of the Pitt State family."

In her nomination, Katy wrote about her parents. Her dad, a teacher and coach at Arma High School – Northeast, earned two bachelor's degrees from PSU: one in criminal justice and one in education. Last year, he completed his master's. Her mom, a teacher at Girard Middle School, earned her bachelor's in biology with a teaching emphasis, and later completed her master's.

The family regularly attends PSU athletic events together as well as activities in their community.

"After watching our parents walk across the stage with their master's degrees and listening to their college experience, it was obvious PSU would be the home for my sisters and me," Katy said. [YouTube](#)



Margaret Scalet

Grandchildren establish endowed scholarship

Before the evolution of the college-age resident assistant, PSU typically employed "dorm moms" to watch over student residents. One, Margaret Scalet, was a retired grandmother who, in the 1960s, assisted and monitored students residing in Lakeside Dorm — a repurposed military barracks located near what is now Champions Plaza by University Lake — and later, Trout Hall.

Scalet, born in 1906, did not have a college degree, but she made sure her two children attended Pittsburg State. In turn, those children, Jim Scalet ('48-'52) and the late Pat Scalet Stuckey (BSEd '49), encouraged their children to attend, including Jim's daughters Jane Scalet Scott (BSN '78) and Anne Scalet (BSEd '82), and Pat's sons Kent Stuckey (BBA '75), Scott Stuckey (attended 1972), and Doug Stuckey (BBA '79).

They all have fond memories of their time as Gorillas, and their time in the residence halls with "Grandma Maggie." Her grandchildren would visit on holidays and summers, and remember having sleepovers in the lounge and enjoying the entire dorm to themselves.

Scalet died in 2007 at age 100. In 2019, those grandchildren established the Margaret Scalet Endowed Scholarship to assist today's resident assistants with their education.

A family affair

Luella Parks Jackson would be proud, says her granddaughter, Donna Jackson Campbell Brice: as a young widow and mother of six children, Jackson attended school to eighth grade, then worked in an ammunition plant and was a housemaid the remainder of her work life.

But at last count, at least seven of her grandchildren and great grandchildren have graduated from Pittsburg State, including Brice (BS '68), who was the first to graduate.

"My family has quite a history with PSU," she said. "I am grateful to our Lord that Kansas Teachers College (now PSU) accepted people of African descent, for I would not have a college education otherwise."

She also is thankful her grandmother got to sit on the front row to see her graduate. "A teacher once told my cousin she was college material, but that I was 'trainable,'" she said. "It stung, but I believed it."

A cousin encouraged her, though, and she set about making it happen. To earn her first semester tuition, and money for shoes and a sweater, she was able to find work for \$1 an hour at a book-making business. Her mother borrowed money from her uncle to pay for her textbooks. Once enrolled, she landed a job working in Porter Library (now Porter Hall).

After earning a degree in home economics with a business minor, her career was varied: it included serving as a home economist for the Human Resources Corporation Anti-Poverty Program and the Kansas City Power and Light Co., as director of Home Services for the Kansas City, Kansas, Board of Public Utilities, and jobs with the U.S. Department of Energy, and the City of Kansas City, Missouri.

She retired in 2007 and is a volunteer with AARP and world traveler. In 2009, she chaired a



reunion of all African-descent students who attended PSU from 1930-2009. She's also a cancer survivor, and continues to be involved in university activities, including football games at which she tailgates with the Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity and the Black Student Association.

Other family members who attended PSU included the late Delbert L. Jackson (BSEd '70), Jonathon Mack (BA '03, MA '05), Imber Mack (BS '05), Justin Mack (BST '07), and Joey Bitner (BGS '13). Campbell-Brice's

mother, Hassie Belle Jackson Mack, graduated from the PSU School of Cosmetology in 1982, as did her sister, Karen Mack Bitner in 1984.

Cousins and other siblings also attended school at PSU, including Beverly Giles Starnes Turner, who began at PSU in 1961 and went on to graduate from the School of Nursing, Wanda Jackson Underwood Woods who began in 1964, Wallace Earl Mack and Leonard Odell Mack Jr. who attended automotive classes, Judy Nelson Sharpe and Leroy Nelson III.

Hood returns to campus to share expertise

It's exciting when alumni return to campus to visit; it's a bonus when they spend time in classrooms to pass on what they've learned and experienced. Major General Jay Hood ('75 BA Economics) did just that last fall.

Hood, a 2002 Meritorious Achievement Award recipient and an ROTC Hall of Fame member, has served in key command and staff assignments in Europe, the 82nd Airborne Division at Ft. Bragg, and in the Middle East. He commanded the Joint Task Force at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, and served as the Chief of Staff in the U.S. Central Command for Gen. David Petraeus.

"As an accomplished retired military officer with an exciting 36-year career, we realized it would be a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for him to share his expertise and leadership training with our students and faculty," said Mary Jo Meier, director of Development for the College of Arts and Sciences.



Major General Jay Hood



Tim Senecaut

Hall of Fame

A desire by Tim Senecaut (BST '89) to serve his nation began in childhood. Last fall, he was inducted into the ROTC Hall of Fame in recognition of nearly 29 years of service. He directs the Physical Plant's Custodial, General, and Landscape Services; advises the Student Veterans Organization; and is a member of the Veterans Memorial Advisory Committee.

He was a leader in the 176th Engineer Brigade in Texas, Task Force Roughneck in Northern Afghanistan, the 111th Engineer Battalion, the Texas National Guard, the 235th Regiment, the National Guard Bureau's Installations Division, the 242nd Engineer Company, and the 299th Engineer Battalion in Iraq. Awards include Legion of Merit, Bronze Star, Meritorious Service Medal with four Oak Leaf Clusters, Army Staff Identification Badge for service at the Pentagon, and many more. He's also completed 20 marathons including the Boston Marathon, Pikes Peak Marathon, Inaugural Army Marathon, Inaugural Air Force Marathon, Marine Corps Marathon, and Blue Angel/Navy Marathon.

Outstanding Alumni

During Homecoming week, four alumni were honored for their achievements with the 2019 Dr. Kenneth K. Bateman Outstanding Alumni Award, named for Emeritus Director of Alumni Relations Kenneth K. Bateman.

After teaching middle school and starting his own company, Matt Frankenbery (BSEd '94) joined the Pitsco, Inc., team in Pittsburgh, Kansas, as a curriculum specialist. Now the company's vice president and director of education, he impacts thousands of students each year by assisting educators and administrators across the U.S. in developing and implementing custom curriculum solutions, particularly in STEM education.

After working in leadership positions for Via Christi Health, Rebecca VanTassel Light (BBA '93, MBA '94) opened her own company, SilverCreek Medical Reimbursement Solutions, which now employs nearly 100 in Pittsburgh and Kansas City.



Outstanding Alumni from left: Kimberly Young, Amy Trowbridge-Yates, Matt Frankenbery, Rebecca VanTassel Light

For 13 years, Amy Trowbridge-Yates (BA '01) has worked at Hallmark Cards in Kansas City, where today she is a senior creative writer, has her own card collection and has published a best-selling Hallmark book. She's widely read as a contributor to the Scary Mommy Blog and to Hallmark.com.

Kimberly Young (BS '97) is the

president of the KC Animal Health Corridor. Her career has included jobs with the Kansas Department of Commerce, the Greater Wichita Economic Development Coalition, and Missouri Partnership, and as vice president in bio science development for the Kansas City Area Development Council.

Class of 1958

John LeBar (BSEd '58), who holds a doctorate, published a book titled, "Marching Toward Madness: How To Save the Games You Always Loved," about the good and the bad of big-time athletics. It also discusses players' abilities to compete at a high level and still be able to excel academically. LeBar taught and coached for 53 years in higher education, including 47 years at Duke University before retiring in 2011.

Class of 1959

Dale Dennis (BSEd '59, MSED '66, EdS '83) was named one of two honorees for Kansan of the Year by Native Sons and Daughters of Kansas. Dennis is deputy commissioner of fiscal and administrative services for the Kansas State Department of Education. He has served students in

Kansas for 52 years – first as a high school teacher, high school principal, and state school finance administrator.

Class of 1967

Bob Gelso (BSEd '67, MSED '68, EdS '77) participated in an Honor Flight to Washington, D.C. thanks to Ozark Honor Flight. He visited many memorials, including World War II, Korean War, Vietnam War, the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, and more. During his time in the military, Gelso served in the Central Highlands in Vietnam from 1969-70 with the 4th Infantry Division at Pleiku and Hon Ga. After returning to the United States, he launched a 50-year career in education with stops in Shawnee Mission, Riverton, and Labette Community College, Kansas, among others. He then spent 18 years at Northeast Tech Afton Campus in Afton, Oklahoma.

Class of 1970

Linda Jopp Goytia (MS '70) is in her eighth year of service on two California school boards: Campbell Union HSD and MetroEd/Silicon Valley CTE. She had a 40-year career as a teacher and intern coach and was named 2001 CUHSD Teacher of the Year and CA League of High Schools Region V Educator of the Year. She holds five awards for Excellence in Education from SJSU and received a 2004 Fulbright Memorial Fund Scholarship to study education in Japan.

Class of 1974

Alan Spencer (BST '74, BSEd '75) was recognized as part of the 2019 Missouri Elite 11, which honors former high school and college standouts, as well as those who made

continued



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a positive contribution to the game of football in the state of Missouri. During his time at PSU, Spencer was a four-sport athlete – participating in football, basketball, baseball, and track.

Class of 1982

Jackie Hall (BSEd '82, MEd '89) was awarded gold level, the highest award, for facilitating and promoting quality physical education at West Bourbon Elementary in Uniontown, Kansas, by the Kansas Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance. Jackie has taught at the school for 38 years.

Phyllis Webster (BA '82) was appointed by Kansas Governor Laura Kelly as magistrate judge to the 13th Judicial District. The district includes Butler, Elk, and Greenwood counties in Kansas. Webster has spent the last five years as an assistant Butler County attorney.

Class of 1983

Mark Braun (BA '83) retired from Shawnee County District Court in Topeka, Kan., after 13 years as Judge and 33 years as a legal professional. Braun also served three terms on the Board of Education for Topeka Unified School District 501.

Mark Johnson (BBA '83, MS '87, EdS '89), who holds a doctorate, published a book called "Powerful Presentations That Connect," to help people overcome their fear of public speaking and ensure the audience remembers the speaker's message.

David Osborne (MM '83) is a famous pianist at the Bellagio's Petrossian Bar & Lounge in Las Vegas, also known as the "Pianist to the Presidents." Osborne played 65 events over the years for many United States Presidents, including Presidents Ronald Reagan, Jimmy

Carter, George H.W. Bush, George W. Bush, Bill Clinton, and Barack Obama. He has a particularly distinct history with former President Jimmy Carter and former First Lady Rosalynn Carter. They first met in 1988 and have sustained a lasting friendship. Osborne played at the couple's dual-birthday party last fall.

Class of 1986

Sam Pittman (BSEd '86) named Arkansas Razorbacks head football coach. He played defensive end for Gorilla Football, where he was a first-team NAIA All-American, twice earned all-conference recognition and was a member of the 1981 national runner-up team and was inducted into the PSU Athletics Hall of Fame in 1998. He most recently coached for the University of Georgia as associate head coach and offensive line coach for the Bulldogs. He has coached at seven different Power 5 schools during his 32-year coaching career, including Oklahoma, Missouri, Arkansas, North Carolina, Tennessee, Georgia, and Kansas.

Class of 1987

Michael Ehling (MS '87) was appointed new executive administrator for the Crawford County Mental Health Center by the Crawford County Commission in Pittsburg. Ehling has been with the Crawford County Mental Health Center for more than 30 years. He most recently served as the mental health director.

Class of 1989

Shelly Kiblinger (BSEd '89, MS '97) was appointed to the Kansas Board of Regents by Governor Laura Kelly. She was one of three new appointments and will serve four years on the board. Kiblinger also serves as Superintendent for Cherryvale USD 447 in Cherryvale, Kansas.

Class of 1991

Gina Pinamonti (BA '91) received the Kaye Lynne Webb Influential Woman in Business Award from the Pittsburg Area Chamber of Commerce. After graduating from PSU, Pinamonti pursued her doctor of dental surgery degree from University of Missouri-Kansas City School of Dentistry in 1996. In 1998, she opened Pinamonti Orthodontics in Pittsburg and continues to serve the community today. She has served in a variety of leadership and community volunteer roles. She chaired the 2019 Kansas Mission of Mercy event in Pittsburg, a massive undertaking which provided 743 patients with over \$1.1 million in donated dental care.

Class of 1993

Shelly Rowden Tarter (BSEd '93, MS '97) was named virtual and alternative learning administrator of Joplin Schools in Joplin, Missouri. Tarter has served the school district since 2000 as a teacher, instructional coach, educational technology specialist, and a district-wide technology trainer.

Class of 1995

Chris Hanna (BS '95) was recognized by Missouri Sports Hall of Fame as one of the Elite 11, which honors former high school and college standouts, as well as those who made



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positive contributions to Missouri football. During his career at PSU, he was voted Most Outstanding Freshman in 1990, helped the Gorillas win the 1991 NCAA D-II national championship and steered the team back to the national championship game in 1992. By the time he graduated, he earned an NCAA D-II All-American honor (1992) and four All-MIAA selections.

Class of 1996

Arvind Bhatia (MBA '95) was named vice president of investor relations for At Home Group Inc. in Plano, Texas. This is a newly created role. Responsibilities include overseeing the company's outreach with the investment community and reporting to the chief financial officer. Bhatia most recently worked for Dave & Buster's Entertainment, Inc., where he led all aspects of the company's investor relations functions as Senior Director of Investor Relations.

John Lair (BS '96) received the Presidential Lifetime Achievement Award for logging more than 10,000 hours over the last 25 years for Special Olympics Kansas. He has now received bronze, silver, and gold presidential medals and a congratulatory letter from President Donald Trump. Lair is the President and CEO of Special Olympics Kansas.

Class of 1997

Ami Koelliker (BSN '97) completed her doctor of nursing practice degree and is now working as an adult-gerontology nurse practitioner at Meritas Health Cardiology in Kansas City, Missouri.

Class of 1998

Nathan Cox (BBA '98) was promoted to vice president of sales at Midwest Employers Casualty in Chesterfield, Missouri. Cox is now responsible for revenue, sales growth and market

penetration and will lead the sales team in growing sales revenues while meeting or exceeding profitability and budgetary objectives. He has been with the company since 2002.

Cory Gibson, Ed.D. (BSEd '98, MEd '02, EdS '09), was selected as Kansas 2020 Superintendent of the Year by the Kansas School Superintendents' Association. Gibson serves as superintendent at Valley Center USD 262 in Valley Center, Kansas. He started his administrative career in 2002 as a principal in Miami, Oklahoma, before moving to Pittsburg where he served as a principal and assistant superintendent. In 2010, he moved to Halstead as the superintendent before joining Valley Center in 2012.

Robert Goltra III, Ed.D. (BSEd '98, MEd '02) successfully defended his doctoral dissertation. His research focus was on college student retention characteristics, models, and programs for underrepresented and underserved college student populations. He graduated from Lindenwood University with the degree of Doctor of Education and as a member of the Alpha Chi National College Honor Society. Goltra has served in education as a K-12 teacher and administrator, and also in higher education as dean and vice president of student affairs.

LTC David Oakley (BA '98) was awarded the 2020 Sidney D. Drell Academic Award by the Intelligence and National Security Alliance. The award was established in 2010 to recognize early achievers, as well as mentors who inspire these future leaders. The INSA Achievement Awards celebrate excellence in the intelligence, homeland security, and national security communities. The Drell Academic Award recognizes the accomplishments of early and mid-career academic professionals working

on intelligence, defense, and homeland security issues.

Class of 1999

Chris Collins (BA '99, BBA '03) named first permanent superintendent for Sainte Genevieve National Historic Park in Ste. Genevieve, Missouri, which is in the process of establishing as a unit of the National Park System. Previously, Collins was the chief of business and commercial services at Indiana Dunes National Park in northern Indiana, providing leadership to a group of administrative professionals assisting multiple national parks in the Midwest. He is a 16-year veteran of the National Park Service.

Class of 2000

Tony Kasten (BBA '00, MBA '01) was elected chief financial officer and secretary-treasurer by Monarch Cement Company in Humbolt, Kansas. Kasten has worked at Monarch Cement Company since 2002.

Amber Toth (BSEd '00) was named principal at Fort Scott High School in Fort Scott, Kansas. She served as assistant principal for one year prior and has 18 years of education experience.

Class of 2003

Anahi Gonzalez (BS '03) was named a sage of clinical services by UnitedHealthcare Group. This award represents the best of the best – celebrated for consistently demonstrating exemplary performance, professionalism, teamwork, and a clear commitment to improving health outcomes and health care delivery in the community. Gonzalez is a licensed baccalaureate social worker and serves as a care coordinator for UnitedHealthcare Clinical Services.

continued

CLASS NOTES

Submit Class Notes information online to: psumag@pittstate.edu.

Class of 2005

Lee Farmer (BS '05, MS '09) was hired as the recreation superintendent for the City of Fayetteville's Parks and Recreation Department in Arkansas. Farmer will oversee staff who are responsible for programming and events. He is active in the Arkansas Recreation and Parks Association and is currently the president-elect. He is certified by the National Recreation and Parks Association as a parks and recreational professional and is also a certified aquatics facility operator.

Amber Shaverdi Huston (BA '05) was named executive director for the National Association for Campus Activities. She is the first female in the role in the association's 60-year history. She most recently served as chief operations officer of Delta Sigma Phi National Fraternity & Foundation.

Class of 2006

Michael Allgood (BBA '06, MBA '07) was promoted to interim vice president for fiscal affairs at Northeastern Oklahoma A&M College in Miami, Oklahoma. Allgood served as the assistant vice president for fiscal affairs/controller for the previous six years.

Brett Pettibon (BSEd '06) joined the Nevada R-5 Middle School football coaching staff in Nevada, Missouri. Pettibon spent the past 13 years at Lamar High School in Lamar, Missouri, as an assistant coach for the seven-time state champions football program. He also served as the girls' track and field coach in Lamar.

Class of 2007

Dr. Mark Brown (BS '07) was awarded the Fellowship of the American College of Emergency Physicians at the Presidents Awards Reception for the ACOEP conference

in Denver, Colorado. Brown is an Emergency Physician at Freeman Health System in Joplin, Missouri, and lives in Carl Junction, Missouri, with his wife Melinda (BBA in Marketing '96) and their children, Zakory (current PSU student studying Communication with an emphasis in Media Production), Maggie, and Ashdyn Brown.

Class of 2010

Antonio Graham (BSEd '10) was named defensive coordinator for Rams Football at Owasso High School in Owasso, Oklahoma. He most recently served as associate head coach since joining the school district in 2017. Antonio played football for the Gorillas during his time at PSU.

Class of 2011

Doug Logan (MA '11) was named 2019 Kentucky History Teacher of the Year. The award is presented annually by the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History to honor exceptional history teachers in grades K-12. Logan teaches at Cooper High School in Union, Kentucky. In addition to a \$1,000 honorarium, the school received history books and Gilder Lehrman educational materials. He was also recognized during the Kentucky History Awards Ceremony.

Class of 2013

Bo Graham (BGS '13, MA '19) was hired as the Fort Scott High School Student Success Center teacher in Fort Scott, Kansas. He brings 15 years of education experience with him to this position.

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Class of 2014

Dr. Dustin Bonzo (BS '14) started his first year of residency in August at the University of Kansas School of Medicine – Wichita Family Medicine Residency Program at Smoky Hill-Salina in Salina, Kansas.

Class of 2015

Megan Meyer (BST '15) was named the first female in history to win a World Championship in the National Hot Rod Association Top Alcohol Dragster. She is only the fourth woman to win the entire Lucas Oil Drag Racing Series. Meyer holds the record for the fastest Pro-Sportsman female in 1/4 mile: 5.11 seconds at 285 MPH. She is the Winningest Pro-Sportsman female driver in the NHRA.

Devin Tally (BBA '15) was named staff accountant for the City of Fort Scott in Fort Scott, Kansas. His duties now include payroll, accounts receivable, assisting with budgets, bank reconciliation, sales tax, and more. Tally worked at Wise Tax and Accounting for the last four years.

Class of 2016

Ryan Schulteis (BBA '16) was named one of Ingram's 2019 20 in Their Twenties in the Kansas City area. Schulteis is a brokerage associate at Reece Commercial Real Estate and has been involved in deals worth more than \$14.5 million – more than double the \$5.8 million in sales/lease transactions he was involved with in 2018. This is his fourth year with Reece Commercial Real Estate.

Class of 2017

Sam Galliard (BST '17, MST '19) was awarded honorable mention for his woodworking submission called "Stuffed Sapele" at Freshwood Student Design Competition during the AWFS Fair in Las Vegas. This global competition showcases

woodworking design and work of young professionals.

Class of 2018

Emily Gallup (BA '18) was crowned Miss U.S. United in July 2019. The U.S. United pageant system has a national platform of breast cancer awareness and education – a cause close to her heart after several loved ones have fought this disease. U.S. United also encourages women to promote their own personal platform. Gallup promotes Giving Hope Foundation: A Campaign for Suicide Prevention.

Paula Hough (MSEd '18) was selected as executive director of teaching and learning at Manhattan-Ogden USD 383 in Manhattan, Kansas. She was the previous director of curriculum and instruction at USD 336 in Holton, Kansas.

Ethan Spurling (BA '18) was selected by the Kansas Department of Revenue as Legislative Liaison. Spurling joined the department after serving as operations and scheduling coordinator in Gov. Laura Kelly's office.

Misty Vyhlidal (BSN '18) was appointed as administrator for Carrington Place Assisted Living and The Cottages at Carrington Place in Pittsburg.

Class of 2019

Zach Spahr (BST '19) was awarded second place overall for his woodworking submission called "Coupe De Ville" at Freshwood Student Design Competition during the AWFS Fair in Las Vegas. This global competition showcases woodworking design and work of young professionals.

In Memory

Deaths are listed based on information received from families or reported in local newspapers. They are listed by graduation or attendance date.

1937

Genevieve Cramer, Hutchinson, Kan.

1942

Adelia M. Clark, Baxter Springs, Kan.

1943

Earl A. Perry, Reno, Nev.

1944

Glenn W. Hardy, Fayetteville, Ark.

Martha H. Mackin, Madison, Wis.

1946

Esther L. Jones, Brookville, Ohio

1947

Mimi Collar, Enid, Okla.

Annie Hall, Emporia, Kan.

Philip S. Norman, Baldwin, Md.

1948

Gladys C. Mabary, Fenton, Mo.

Robert J. Stine, Bartlesville, Okla.

1949

Gerald E. Ransbottom, Grove, Okla.

William M. Stephens, Kent, Ohio

Rosalie M. Stewart, Port Hueneme, Calif.

Patricia A. Stuckey, Junction City, Kan.

1950

Harold D. Burch, Saint Paul, Minn.

Geraldine K. Hopkins, Columbus, Kan.

Virgil E. Jameson, Monett, Mo.

Robert G. Russell, Joplin, Mo.

Pauline Steele, Bronaugh, Mo.

Glen E. Watt, Frontenac, Kan.

James A. Wilson, Parsons, Kan.

1951

Kenneth D. Mendenhall, Hutchinson, Kan.

Louise Mendenhall, Hutchinson, Kan.

Donald E. Overman, Scottsbluff, Neb.

1952

Domenic Poretta, Leawood, Kan.

1953

Bill M. Taylor, Flora, Miss.

Dr. Charleen McClanahan Varner,
Carl Junction, Mo.

Geneva E. Zilliox, Webb City, Mo.

1954

Robert J. Smith, Dallas, Texas

Robert W. Tompkins, Lenexa, Kan.

continued

1955

Catherine J Curry, Saint Louis, Mo.
Bill R. Spencer, Lenexa, Kan.
Martha M. Wakugawa, Honolulu, Hawaii

1956

Robert Curry, Saint Louis, Mo.
Jim Hoisington, Oronogo, Mo.
Milton E. Kirkpatrick,
San Clemente, Calif.
Delanne Willis, Springfield, Va.
Marilyn S. Yocum, Higginsville, Mo.

1957

James B. Hill, Blue Springs, Mo.
Ronald L. Panizzi, Haysville, Kan.
Janet Gayle Strukel, Topeka, Kan.
Rod P. Wilson, Bartlesville, Okla.

1958

Reba A. Enke, Greenwood, Mo.
Dale C. Farmer, Camden Wyoming, Del.
Richard E. Haines, Sierra Vista, Ariz.
Walter M. Holmes, Topeka, Kan.
Hillis R. Krokstrom, Jr., Chanute, Kan.
Glenn D. Wilson, Joplin, Mo.

1959

Joseph F. Cicero, Tucson, Ariz.
Charles W. Gentner, Wilmington, N.C.
Ralph E. Handley, Fenton, Mich.
Nora L. Loewe, Lamar, Mo.
Lawrence W. McGovern, Andover, Kan.
Robert L. Rice, Fort Smith, Ark.

1960

Vera M. Aronhalt, Maryville, Ill.
Raymond K. Baker, Kansas City, Kan.
Bobby E. Brillhart, Downs, Kan.
Donald R. Holt, Springfield, Mo.
Rowena M. Kruger, Las Vegas, Nev.
Paul E. Schleicher, Pittsburg, Kan.
Bob L. Vavra, Mountain Home, Ark.

1961

Victor L. Baldwin, Monmouth, Ore.
Donald D. Blythe, Winchester, Ky.
Robert L. Lundblad, Kansas City, Kan.
Edgar L. Webb, Wichita, Kan.

1962

Alan C. Crawford, Baxter Springs, Kan.
Fred J. Miller, Paola, Kan.

1963

Arno L. Ponder, Maumelle, Ark.
Walter Revey, Jr., Spring Hill, Kan.
Donald L. Wilmoth, Iola, Kan.

1964

Frank V. Alderman, Parsons, Kan.
Ronald R. Barlow, Skokie, Ill.

David D. Darrow, Woodstown, N.J.
Ruby M. Dehart, Joplin, Mo.
George B. Engle, New Brockton, Ala.
Merle E. Mintz, Derby, Kan.

1965

Patrick E. Campbell, Dayton, Ohio
Joseph E. George, Girard, Kan.
Jerry L. Jinks, Normal, Ill.
Theodore E. Snider, Cache, Okla.

1966

Margaret H. Burns, Lockwood, Mo.
Terri L. French, Weston, Mo.
Irma M. Hawley, Pittsburg, Kan.
Raymond G. Hudson, Oronogo, Mo.

1967

William H. Baker III, Findlay, Ohio
Margery A. Henley, Lee's Summit, Mo.
Melvin Williams, Galveston, Texas
Ellen Wolf, Tucson, Ariz.
Jim G. Wolf, Flagstaff, Ariz.

1968

Kenneth J. Brady, Pittsburg, Kan.
Robert L. Fleming, Wichita, Kan.
Michael R. Spurgeon, Raymore, Mo.
Fred D. Steinmetz, Lenexa, Kan.
Homer J. Watson, Schertz, Texas

1969

Susie Bandy, Baxter Springs, Kan.
Winifred K. Cullers, Joplin, Mo.
James F. Daniels, Republic, Mo.
Bruce D. Parmelee, Maryville, Mo.
Ronald L. Powlus, Berwick, Pa.
Judith M. Roberts, Pryor, Okla.

1970

David E. Ash, Salina, Kan.
Ronald D. Brown, Fort Scott, Kan.
Richard R. Culbertson, Lee's Summit, Mo.
Dennis K. Harris, Blue Mound, Kan.
Donald J. Rohrbaugh, Pittsburg, Kan.
Ted H. Vollweider, South Hutchinson, Kan.

1971

Edwin D. Disney, Broken Arrow, Okla.
Stephen W. McClain, Wichita, Kan.
James T. Ramsey, Linn, Kan.
Bobby D. Roberts, Prescott, Kan.
George T. Tollefson, Lenexa, Kan.
Elizabeth C. Vincent, Loveland, Colo.

1972

Robert M. Johnson, Fort Scott, Kan.
Robert L. Offutt, Reeds Spring, Mo.

1973

Gerald L. Cooksey, Knoxville, Tenn.
Sharon L. Grommet, Parsons, Kan.

1974

Merle Duncan, Baldwin City, Kan.
Kenneth R. Holt, Uniontown, Kan.
Raymond L. Judkins, Miami, Okla.
Joe W. McBride, Sedalia, Mo.
Roy M. Moore, Lenexa, Kan.

1975

Pam S. Arbuckle, Pittsburg, Kan.
Michael L. Brundage, Wichita, Kan.
Gerald L. Hoover, Jenks, Okla.
Steven E. Rexer, Topeka, Kan.
Joyce E. Shipman, Girard, Kan.
Eric D. Yarnell, Overland Park, Kan.

1976

Stephen R. Darnell, Columbia, Mo.
Dennis A. Hartman, Fort Scott, Kan.
Wanda L. Ladage, Parsons, Kan.
Allen D. Walter, Riddle, Ore.

1977

Connie D. Engle, Pittsburg, Kan.
Mike E. Sturgis, Joplin, Mo.

1978

Paul G. Elsasser, Weir, Kan.
Jay E. Shearhart, Coffeyville, Kan.
Laura M. Traul, Osawatomie, Kan.

1979

Robert S. Brant, Sublimity, Ore.
Jean Isaac, Overland Park, Kan.
Christen E. Medlin, Joplin, Mo.
Dale A. Swift, Colony, Kan.

1980

John W. Robbins, Sioux Falls, S.D.

1981

Sheila D. Price, La Cygne, Kan.

1982

Wanda J. Adams, Joplin, Mo.
Cathy Coomer, Tulsa, Okla.
Nila I. Dickason, Humboldt, Kan.
Brenda Stricklin Engleman, Weir, Kan.

1983

Aubrey P. Anglen, Livingston, Texas
Bart L. Carnoali, Glenwood Springs, Colo.
Anita M. McColm, Columbus, Kan.

1984

Annette E. Schreppel, Dewey, Okla.

1985

Patricia A. Blevins, Pittsburg, Kan.
Kathy L. Hadley, Wichita, Kan.
Kirk A. Phillips, Humboldt, Kan.

1986

Larry J. Beck, Mount Vernon, Mo.

1987

Christopher L. Cook, Port Richey, Fla.

1988

Don K. Hill, Kansas City, Kan.

Lorinda J. Mosteller, Coffeyville, Kan.

1989

Jeannie C. Widner, La Cygne, Kan.

1991

Marilyn S. Grotheer, Smithfield, N.C.

Marie M. Putnam, Carbondale, Kan.

1992

Louis E. Bruce, Lyons, Kan.

Cynthia D. Ray, McCune, Kan.

1993

Terrell J. Bates, Sedalia, Mo.

Jeff A. Kennedy, Galena, Kan.

1994

Gayle A. Newton, Miami, Okla.

Susan E. Peck, Topeka, Kan.

1995

Kristie J. Cleaver, Shawnee, Kan.

Debra J. Evensvold, Coffeyville, Kan.

Carol A. Grotheer, Pittsburg, Kan.

Jeff M. Switlik, Pittsburg, Kan.

1996

Spence E. Rigdon, Bartlesville, Okla.

1999

Scott A. McKenna, Shawnee, Kan.

2000

Barbara J. Arnold, Columbia, Md.

2004

Kelly J. Hensley, Pittsburg, Kan.

Scott A. Souders, Chetopa, Kan.

2007

Rivelian Rivai, Walnut Creek, Calif.

In Memory

Pittsburg State faculty and staff:

Barry Bengsten,* Pittsburg, Kan.

Kelly Borden, Pittsburg, Kan.

Paul Carlson,* Pittsburg, Kan.

William Duffy, Pittsburg, Kan.

Joan Hunter, Raymore, Mo.

Harry Krug, Jr.,* Pittsburg, Kan.

Mary Jo Litten,* Nevada, Mo.

Nancy Margrave, Joplin, Mo.

Carolann Martin,* Pittsburg, Kan.

Ron Morgan,* Weir, Kan.

William Pfannenstiel, Pittsburg, Kan.

William Spence, Wilmington, NC

Jim Thomas, Jr., Pittsburg, Kan.

*PSU alumni

Kelly Borden

Pittsburg State faculty, staff, students, and alumni are mourning the loss of Kelly Borden, a longtime administrative

specialist in the Department of Biology who died on Dec. 31, 2019, after a battle with genetic lung cancer. She was 58.

A 1979 graduate of Pittsburg High School, she attended PSU and in 1990, married Joe Borden. She joined the Biology Department in 1992, managing the day-to-day operations of the department for 16 faculty and more than 350 majors.

"She was a consummate professional and the heart of our department," said Department Chair Virginia Rider. "Kelly tirelessly supported our students and delighted in their successes. She was appreciated and loved by all who knew her."

Alumna Pam Clemenson (BS '98, MS '00) described her as "an amazing person who was always helpful, always had a smile, and always had an answer for my 1 million questions."

"When I would see her at PSU Science Day every spring, she always had a hug for me and continued with the smile on her face, even when she didn't feel well," said Clemenson, now a science teacher. "She will be missed dearly by so many!"

In 2018, Borden was recognized during PSU's annual Apple Day ceremony for being named the recipient of the Voya Outstanding Employee Recognition Award.

A memorial service to celebrate her life was held on Jan. 6 in Heckert-Wells.



Kelly Borden

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Harry E. Krug

Retired Art Department Chair and noted artist Harry E. Krug, Jr., 89, of Pittsburgh, died Nov. 27, in Pittsburgh.



Harry Krug

Colleagues remembered him as one who championed art and one who continued to be involved in the department beyond his retirement.

Krug joined the faculty at PSU in 1958, earning a promotion to full professor in 1978. He served as chair of the department from 1981 to 1995. He was known for his unique style of printmaking, including the mastery of serigraphs, or silkscreen prints, a time-consuming process that uses a squeegee to press ink through a taut, fine fabric mesh onto paper.

His art has been shown at major galleries and juried exhibitions throughout the U.S. and Europe. At the time he was named department chair, 30 of his original serigraphs were on permanent display at various U.S. embassies around the world, and his work had been referenced in four textbooks.

Today, his art is part of the permanent collection of the New York City Public Library, the Library of Congress, the Museum of Fine Art in Boston, and the Wichita Art Museum, and can be seen in offices across campus.

In 1997, PSU named the gallery in Porter Hall "The Harry Krug Art Gallery." Art Department Chair James Oliver said Krug continued his relationship with the department beyond his retirement, attending exhibitions and lectures and stopping by to chat.

He is survived by his daughter, Kim Meyer and her husband, Ed of Pittsburgh; two sons, Craig Krug of Mulberry, Kansas, Mark Krug of

Joplin, Missouri; four grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren. He was preceded in death by his parents, his wife, and two sisters. A private family celebration of life will be held in Summer 2020 at his wildlife refuge.

The family suggests memorials be given to the Harry Krug Art Gallery at Pittsburgh State University. They may be mailed to the PSU Foundation, P.O. Box 4005, Pittsburg, KS 66762.

Martin and Carlson leave legacy of Music



Carolann Martin



Paul Carlson

Two Music Department Professors Emeriti who impacted generations of students died within a few weeks of each other last September: Carolann Martin and Paul Carlson.

Martin, 83, taught from 1977 to 2001 and was a former conductor of the Southeast Kansas Symphony, propelling it into a regional ensemble.

"Her love for Pitt State, the SEK Symphony, and for music, was powerful," said Raul Munguia, current conductor.

She established the Friends of the Symphony Board and set up the symphony's non-profit status, but also was widely acclaimed as a performer and conductor nationally and internationally.

As a professional cellist she performed with symphonies and distinguished mentors across the U.S. and conducted orchestras across the nation and internationally. She was the first woman to win the National

Adult Conducting Competition and to conduct the national orchestra in Paraguay.

Memorials may be directed to the PSU Foundation for the Carolann Martin Endowment for Low Strings.

Carlson, 87, a noted musician, taught from 1965 to 1999 but remained involved with the Symphony for many years, serving as concertmaster. He founded the Waddill Chamber Music Competition and Scholarship Program for music students.

He was a member of Phi Mu Alpha, first violinist of the PSU Faculty String Quartet, and served as program chair of the Timmons Chapel Series.

He was the first American musician following the Vietnam War to be invited by The Hanoi National Conservatory of Music to perform and teach in Vietnam. He also taught and performed in London, England, South Korea, Taiwan, The Peoples Republic of China, and India.

He is survived by a son, Dr. Mark Carlson, and his wife Jessica of Pittsburg, Kansas, a daughter, Denise Biggs of Manhattan, Kansas, and six grandchildren.

Barry Bengsten

Former colleagues and alumni are mourning the death of retired longtime theater educator and director Barry Bengsten, associate professor emeritus, who died on Jan. 20. He was 80.



Barry Bengsten

Bengsten, who held a bachelor's in theater, a master's in design, and post-graduate studies in theater, joined the faculty at PSU in 1969 as designer/technical director/assistant professor

in the theater program, part of the Department of Communication.

For more than 32 years, he taught thousands of graduate and undergraduate students. He was the summer theatre designer/director at PSU Playhouse on Broadway from its inception in 1971 to its demise in 1985, and participated in *Tent By The Lake* at PSU. In 1986, he redesigned a lecture hall in Grubbs Hall as a studio theater which still is in use today. In his career he designed more than 130 theatrical performances.

As an international and award-winning designer, he designed and taught at Barking College in London. He also designed for the Missouri Repertory Theatre and many community theaters including Topeka Civic and Pittsburg Community Theatre.

He retired from PSU in 2001, but not before bringing in current Pitt State Theatre Director Cynthia Allan, chair of the Communication Department, to take over the program.

"For years, any designer from the region we interviewed or who designed shows for us always talked about their respect for Barry and that they hoped, if he came to the theater, that he would be proud of their work," Allan said. "He was a much beloved and respected theatre artist, both as a designer and director."

He is survived by his wife of 57 years, Sharon Bengtsen, two children, Colin of Pittsburg and Dr. Dana Malis of Overland Park, Kansas, and two grandchildren. Memorials may be made to the PSU Department of Communication, KRPS-FM, or a local animal shelter.

Helen Louise Rua

Pittsburg State University is mourning the death of a generous longtime university supporter, Helen Louise Rua, of Pittsburg. She

died on Dec. 28, 2019, at age 95.

She was the widow of August "Augie" Rua, a longtime Pittsburg businessman, who attended PSU after serving in the U.S. Army in World War II. He earned his bachelor's in business administration in 1949 and his master's in 1955. It was while he was attending college that he became an insurance agent, and in 1947, he founded Rua Insurance.

The couple were actively involved in numerous university activities. Together, they were the recipients of the Alumni Association's 2006 Dr. Ralf J. Thomas Distinguished Service Award, were original members of the Presidents Society, were charter members of the Heritage Society, and were members of the Centennial Society.

They established the August and Helen Rua Athletic Scholarship Fund



Helen Rua

and supported KRPS radio. August served as a member of the Foundation Board of Trustees, a member of the Athletic Advisory Board and was a Gorilla Ambassador. He was the 1969 Alumni Association president and was a recipient of the Meritorious Achievement Award. August also was a Half-Century Club inductee and was a Community Campaign volunteer.

Additionally, the Ruas jumpstarted the renovations to Carnie Smith Stadium over two decades ago by enabling the construction of the August and Helen Rua Press Box.

"Augie and Helen were instrumental in the development of Carnie Smith Stadium as we know it today," said President Steve Scott. "Their gift was the catalyst for investment in our fan and player gameday experience that resulted in skyboxes, field turf, and much more. We will forever be grateful for their contribution to Gorilla football and Pittsburg State University."

August preceded Helen in death in 2005. She is survived by her son, David Rua (Nena) and daughter, Brenda Rua Chappell (Paul), both of Pittsburg and both graduates of PSU; eight grandchildren, seven great-grandchildren and numerous nieces and nephews.

New book club features PSU authors

Before he was the author of a novel described as "downright dazzling" by the *New York Times*, Steve Weddle was a graduate student at Pittsburg State University. As of January, his book, *"Country Hardball,"* also carries another distinction: it's the first selection of the new Gorilla Alumni Book Club.

The club is virtual, operated through Facebook by Alumni & Constituent Relations and Axe Library. With some selections, like "Facing the Music: My Story" by Grammy-nominated singer-songwriter Jennifer Knapp, who performed on campus Feb. 22, readers have opportunities to meet with authors.

Sign up online at pittstate.edu/alumni and join the closed Facebook group to discuss the current book and network. The group will read one book approximately every two months. Ruth Monnier, learning outreach librarian, will serve as moderator and will post discussion questions each Wednesday.

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PSU Foundation Spotlight

Stu Hite, University Police and Parking Services; Amy Hite, Irene Ransom Bradley School of Nursing; Lynn Murray, Kelce College of Business; Ralph Thomas, retired faculty, Department of Mathematics; Christel Benson, Graphics and Imaging Technologies.

Mission Driven: PSU Faculty and Staff

SINCE PITTSBURG STATE UNIVERSITY OPENED its doors in 1903, current and retired faculty and staff members have given back to the University through their philanthropic gifts and continued service in a variety of ways.

The PSU Foundation, Inc., was formed in 1985, and the first formal faculty/staff campaign was held in 1986, with Paul Parker, a long-time faculty member and administrator in Education as the first chair. Every year since, a formal campaign has been held that includes recognition of their gifts. From their support of scholarships, academic programs and building projects, to planned gifts through the PSU Heritage Society, current and retired faculty and staff are included in every major

fundraising effort. You'll see their names on scholarships and in buildings. And you'll see them serving on the Foundation Board of Trustees, as well as sharing their expertise on numerous committees that have a direct impact on students.

Since the University celebrated its Centennial in 2003, current and retired faculty and staff have made gifts totaling more than \$6 million to the University through the PSU Foundation. They show their belief in the mission of Pittsburg State University not only through their daily work, but also by making charitable gifts. We thank them for their commitment, for shaping generations of Gorillas, and for their continued investment in the mission of Pittsburg State University.

To learn more about how you can join our faculty and staff donors in making a difference, visit: giveto.pittstate.edu

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Attend a Gorilla Gathering in your area or on campus!

Spring 2020 Calendar

March 29..... Wichita Travel Show

April 9..... Neosho County Gorilla Gathering Dinner

April 14..... Joplin Gorilla Gathering Dinner

April 16..... Northwest Arkansas Gorilla Gathering Dinner

April 23..... Springfield Gorilla Gathering Dinner

May 7 Wilson County Gorilla Gathering Dinner

Dates are subject to change.

For more information, please visit pittstate.edu/alumni.

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May 14-15, 2020

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