



Pitt State

August 2026

MAGAZINE

**ACCESS
PITT STATE:**
Transforming
lives of Gorillas
for generations
— Page 2



From the editor

Each edition of the Pitt State Magazine offers a valuable opportunity to reflect on the accomplishments that continue to shape our university community. From the dedication of our faculty and staff to the achievements of our students, alumni, and partners across the region, there is always much to celebrate.

At the same time, every issue is a reminder that even after 123 years, the story of Pitt State is still being written. Looking ahead, we anticipate another season filled with inspiring fine and performing arts events, exciting athletic competitions, innovative academic projects, and meaningful community engagement opportunities.

Thank you for being part of this journey. We hope these pages help you stay connected to Pitt State's progress, pride, and momentum, as well as the 71,000 Gorillas and counting that make up Gorilla Nation. Most of all, we hope it inspires you to stay engaged in all that comes next!

— Andra Stefanoni, editor



The Pitt State Magazine is the official magazine of Pittsburg State University. Circulation: 67,000.

The Pitt State Magazine is produced by Creative and Strategic Communication for alumni and friends of the university.

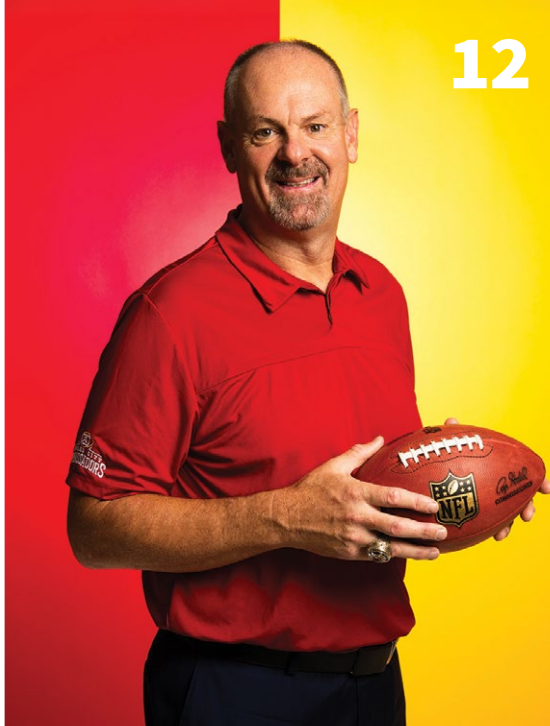
For extra copies or information:

Creative and Strategic Communication
106 Russ Hall
1701 S. Broadway
Pittsburg, KS 66762-7575
psumag@pittstate.edu

7



12



Vol. 34 No. 1 August 2026

PittState

MAGAZINE

In this issue

7 NEW END ZONE FACILITY

Fundraising has begun for a new end zone facility at Carnie Smith Stadium.

12 MAKING AN IMPACT OFF THE FIELD

A former Gorilla football player and Kansas City Chiefs long snapper is now making an impact off the field.

14 DEEP CONNECTIONS

Behind nearly every major university event and milestone is a team whose connection to the institution runs deeper than ink on paper.

18 ACCOMPLISHED COACH

A new outdoor track and field complex honors one of the most accomplished and influential coaches in university history.

20 TRANSFORMATIONAL EXPERIENCES

This month, the ribbon was cut on a new project that will transform the university experience for thousands of students for decades to come.

18



20



President

Thomas Newsom

Vice President for University Advancement
Kathleen Flannery

Associate Vice President for Creative and Strategic Communication
Abigail Fern (BA '98, MA '24)

Creative and Strategic Communication

Sam Clausen (BS '14)
Gregor Kalan (BS '01, MBA '19)
Kaylee Long (BS '22)
Paulina Scholes (BST '95, MS '21)
Andra Stefanoni (BA '91, MA '94)
Aaron Thompson (BS '09, MA '25)

Editor

Andra Stefanoni

Content

Andra Stefanoni
Bethanne Elliott (BS '18)

Design

Paulina Scholes
Allison Rawlings (student)

Photography

Sam Clausen

More photos and stories at:
pittstate.edu/GorillaConnection



@pittstate



@pittstate



@pittsburg_state



@pittsburgstate

AS WE BEGIN A NEW ACADEMIC YEAR, Vicky and I are grateful to be part of Gorilla Nation, and we look forward to what's to come!

Our first academic year exceeded all the expectations, and something happens daily that tells us that we made the right choice to make this community and university our home.

Now, a new strategic plan, Access Pitt State, is underway. A five-year, \$100 million capital campaign that will transform the lives of current and future Gorillas for generations is part of that plan.

And, it will fund an endowment that will fuel our renewable four-year Great Gorilla scholarships. Contributing to that endowment in whatever amount

you are able is your opportunity to leave a generational legacy. Doing so will help us remove barriers, help students stay enrolled — and if we can raise \$25 million, it will fund Great Gorillas forever.

Not just this year, not just next year. Forever. Thousands and thousands of students.

What a legacy you could be part of — ensuring future students, many of them first generation, get an education, start a career, and transform their lives and the lives of their families and future generations.

This campaign also reimagines what a modern campus can offer:

A cutting-edge Diesel Heavy Equipment and Electric Vehicle facility, renovated labs at Heckert-Wells and Yates Halls,



“It is a commitment — to access, to excellence, and to the belief that when opportunity expands, entire communities rise with it.”

an improved student experience with a new campus dining facility, and enhancements to Carnie Smith Stadium.

Endowments to sustain the Kelce College of Business, the Bicknell Family Center for the Arts, and the Plaster Center for generations.

Academic programs that grow in fields that are shaping today's workforce — cybersecurity, healthcare, supply chain, and criminal justice, just to name a few.

Investments in our faculty through naming of faculty chairs to ensure that Pittsburg State is offering the best for students in the classroom.

Running through June 2031, this initiative is more than a campaign. It is a commitment — to access, to excellence, and to the belief that when opportunity expands, entire communities rise with it. An opportunity to build or grow your personal legacy in Southeast Kansas and beyond.

We invite our alumni, partners, and friends to join us in that commitment.

Thank you for being part of Pitt State.

– President Thomas Newsom

LEARN MORE: pittstate.edu/capitalcampaign



Former Pitt State Football Player reunited with long-lost championship ring

A piece of Gorilla history has made its way home.

More than a decade after it was lost, a 2014 MIAA Championship ring belonging to former Pittsburg State University football player Lorenzo Purnell has been recovered and returned to its owner, thanks to a keen-eyed bowling alley employee and a community who helped make connections.

The ring was discovered beneath Lane 17 at Holiday Lanes Bowling Alley, ending a 12-year mystery for Purnell, a standout cornerback who was part of the Gorillas' MIAA Conference Championship team.

The Topeka native and Hutchinson Community College transfer graduated from Pitt State in 2016 with a degree in recreation and a minor in military science.

He'd only had the ring for a day when he wore it bowling.



"My ring bounced down the lane alongside the bowling ball," he said. "The bowling alley staff looked for it for a long time, but they weren't able to find it."

Purnell held out hope briefly — but eventually accepted that the ring was gone for good.

"It's been around 12 years and I assumed I'd never see it again," he said.

Then, during routine work at the bowling alley in June 2026, the ring was discovered. A photo posted by Holiday Lanes on Facebook got engagement by local followers, who in turn helped connect management with the owner.

Purnell serves full-time as a captain in the Kansas Army National Guard, and lives in Olathe with his wife, Chelsea, who was a member of the Crimson and Gold dance team at



Pitt State. His mother-in-law, Marisa Montgomery, retrieved the ring on his behalf. He is considering giving it to his mom to display next to a Big 12 championship (K-State 2022) ring earned by his brother, Desmond.

The ring represents far more than a championship season for Purnell.

"The ring is a symbol of the amazing time I had at Pitt," he said. "My teammates felt like family and I'm still very close to a handful of them. Attending Pitt State was one of the best decisions of my life."

Purnell expressed appreciation for the community network of support that exists in Pittsburg.

"I've always appreciated how much Pitt State and Athletics were supported by the community," he said. "Glad to see that nothing's changed! It's awesome. Thank you for returning my ring and thank you to those who reached out!"

Finding Gus

And the winner is...

Taylor Griffith (2023) spied the Wooster Gorilla hanging out on Page 24 with Wizard of Oz characters in front of Memorial Auditorium! We received a lot of entries, and we wish we could give each correct guess a prize!



Can you find it?

Search this issue and email your guess to alumni@pittstate.edu to be entered in our drawing. Include your first and last name, the year you graduated, and the page number and location you found it. One entry per person. Entries must be received by **October 1**. We'll mail one lucky winner a hardbound copy of "Pittsburg State University: A Photographic History of The First 100 Years."

Men in nursing

Pitt State is now home to the first Kansas chapter of the American Association of Men in Nursing, following the initiative of senior Nursing student Brandon Freeman, who led the effort to bring the national organization to campus.

Freeman approached School of Nursing Director Amy Hite last year with a vision to create a supportive community for men in nursing. With her support, he worked through the Campus Activities Center to formally establish the organization, which recently received official acceptance from AAMN — marking a historic first for the state.

Professor Cheryl Giefer serves as the chapter's primary advisor, with Travis Battagler, BSN, CEO of Girard Medical Center, as co-advisor. The chapter includes 19 members who meet monthly and host guest speakers to share career advice and professional experiences.

"Establishing the first AAMN

chapter in Kansas not only supports our male nursing students but also strengthens nursing statewide," Hite said.

A transfer student from the University of Kansas, Freeman said Pitt State's faculty and state-of-the-industry simulation hospital drew him to the program. He recently

attended the AAMN National Meeting and hopes the chapter encourages more men to pursue nursing careers.

The chapter plans to grow, promote men's health initiatives, and expand awareness of nursing as a meaningful and rewarding profession.



Legacy of leadership

In April, Mary Carol Pomatto was recognized on campus and in Topeka by Gov. Laura Kelly for 50 years of extraordinary service to Pittsburg State University. A member of the first graduating class of the RN to BSN program in 1974, Pomatto devoted her career to thousands of Gorillas as a university professor, the chair and director of Nursing, as a legislative liaison, and as dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. Her legacy of leadership, advocacy, and care spans generations. An endowed scholarship has been created in her name to benefit graduate students in the Irene Ransom Bradley School of Nursing. To make a gift: pittstate.edu/givenow.



Fine and performing arts

Performing and fine arts opportunities abound on campus. This year will include:

Hispanic Music Festival

At the 3rd Annual Hispanic Music Festival Sept. 15–Oct. 17, hear a mariachi band, attend a choir fiesta, listen to the KC Latin Jazz Orchestra, see “In the Heights,” and more. Most events are free.

Details: pittstate.edu/hispanicmusicfest or @hispanicmusicfest on Facebook and Instagram.

Broadway’s “Legally Blonde – The Musical”

The national tour of the hit musical “Legally Blonde – The Musical,” the coming-of-age story of Broadway’s brightest heroine, will take the stage at the Bicknell Center on Feb. 17, 2027. Ticket sales will begin on Aug. 24.

Details: bicknellcenter.com or @bicnellcenter on Facebook and Instagram.

Jazz Festival

At the 53rd Annual Jazz Festival, hear a headliner band as the culmination of a day of performances by more than 70 regional high school jazz bands — many of them directed by Pitt State alumni. The concert is ticketed. Details: pittstate.edu/jazzfestival or @pittstatemusic on Facebook and Instagram

Music Ensembles

From the Southeast Kansas Symphony and the Solo & Chamber Music Series seasons to performances by the university’s jazz ensemble, wind ensemble, choirs, opera, symphonic band, and percussion ensemble, there are concerts nearly every week. Many are free. Details: pittstate.edu/music or @pittstatemusic and @bicknellcenter on Facebook and Instagram

Exhibits

The work of local and visiting artists will be showcased in exhibits being planned in the Harry Krug Gallery and the University Gallery in Porter Hall. The exhibits are free. Details: pittstate.edu/art or @pittstateartdept on Facebook.

Inaugural IDEA Fest

An inaugural entrepreneurship showcase designed to spotlight student innovation at Pittsburg State University drew 40 student registrations and dozens of judges who offered constructive feedback and scholarship support.

The event, IDEA Fest, transformed the Overman Student Center into a pop up marketplace featuring student run businesses, creative ventures, and international flavors representing India, Brazil, and France. Judges and attendees explored booths, sampled products, and used replica dollar bills to “invest” in their favorite ideas. That feedback helped determine three \$500 scholarship winners and a \$500 People’s Choice Award, while providing valuable real world critiques for participating students.

IDEA Fest was created by Jane Talkington, coordinator of the new Entrepreneurship Program in the Kelce College of Business; it includes six new courses, a minor, a certificate, and hands on programming that connects students with mentors and practical experience.

Among the featured ventures: Lawnsmith Co., launched by Grayson Smith. TA Exterior Surface Revival, operated by Tyler James and Aidan Reyes, showcased residential and commercial exterior cleaning services developed through interdisciplinary collaboration.

Creative services were represented by Prince Miller and Josh Lawrie, who offer videography and graphic design services.

Crafted goods and creative businesses included BrightLeaf Creations by Morgan Hastings, featuring custom hand painted banners, and Warm & Fuzzy LLC by Carly Reif, offering a range of handcrafted home fragrance products.

“I was completely blown away by the enthusiasm and professionalism of the students,” Talkington said. “It took courage to have a public conversation about early stage ideas, and the audience responded with encouragement and strong advice.”



Setting the pace

What began as a senior design idea has become a game changing innovation for the Pitt State Track & Field program, thanks to a senior project in Electronics Engineering Technology.

Nate Hinrichs (BST '26) and Tristan Hamilton (BST '26) designed and built a custom electronic pacing light system that allows runners to maintain precise race paces using illuminated guides placed along both the inside and outside lanes of the track.

Their system made its official debut at a spring home meet, drawing praise from athletes, coaches, and spectators.

Pacing lights — popular at elite and professional track meets — help distance runners stay on target throughout a race by visually guiding them at a consistent speed. The



Tristan Hamilton and Nate Hinrichs

project is estimated to have saved the university nearly \$80,000.

"This is exactly the kind of project we hope for from our students," said Coach Ben Barrows, who proposed the idea. "Their system gives us indoor and outdoor capability at a fraction of the cost and will help us attract more national level distance runners to our meets."

Plans underway for new end zone facility

Plans are underway for a new end zone facility on the north end of Carnie Smith Stadium, designed to enhance the student-athlete experience, engage the community and alumni, and strengthen recruiting and retention efforts.

It will include a game day locker room, private suites for fans and corporate partners, coaches' offices and a centralized recruiting area, team meeting rooms, student-athlete study and collaboration space, and event space capable of serving both

university and community needs year-round.

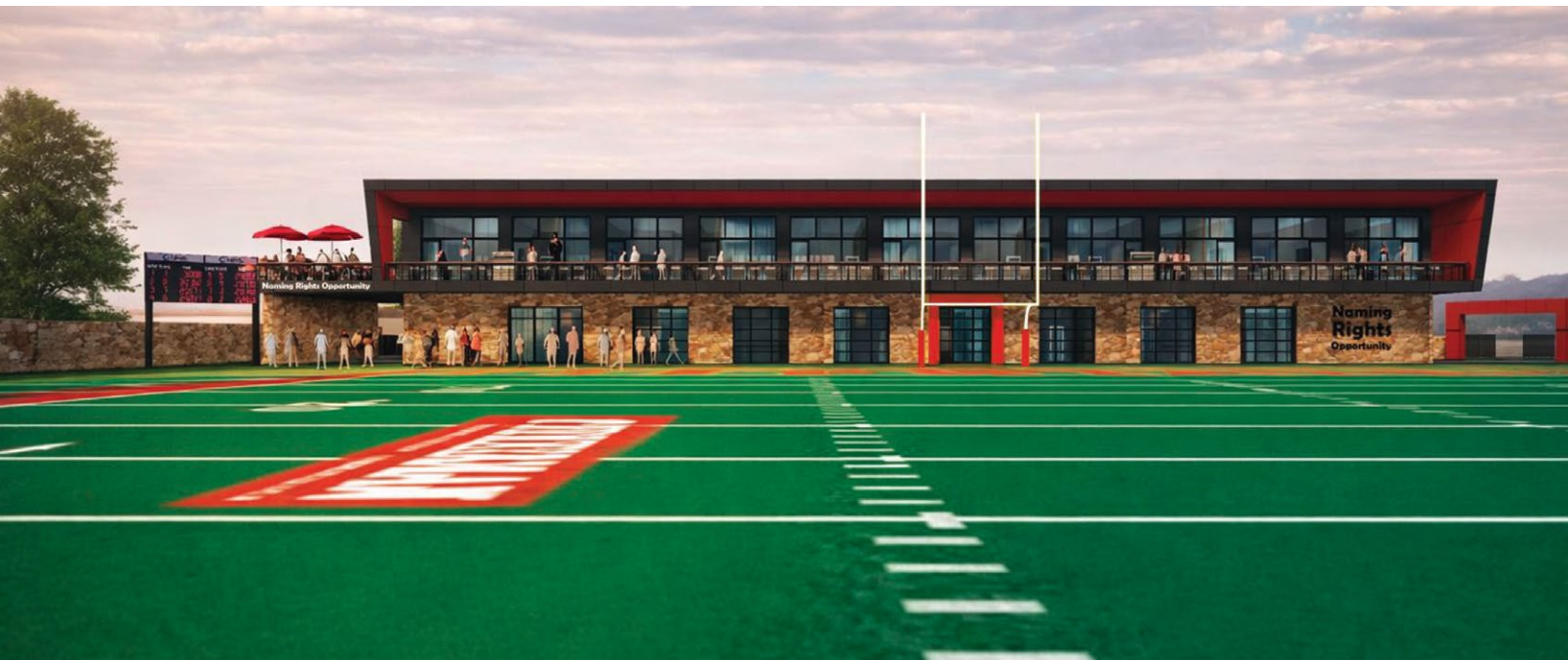
It is to be funded entirely by private dollars; donors still are being sought. Vice President for Athletics Anthony Crespino said suites and event spaces will create new opportunities for engagement with alumni, donors, businesses, and fans, and will generate additional revenue to support athletes and strengthen the university.

The historic rock wall surrounding the stadium will not be impacted,

nor will important and traditional elements of game day like Gorilla Walk.

Head Football Coach Tom Anthony said the project will have an immediate impact on the program. One particular challenge is the transfer portal, which has created an environment in which student-athletes have more mobility and options than ever before.

The goal is to complete the new endzone facility in time for the 2027 football season.



Grads work together to add new flavors to Pittsburgh

Fatimah Bader (BST '18), now a dual major in the HRD and MBA programs in Kelce College of Business, longed to start a food business of her own focused on Middle Eastern and Mediterranean flavors.

"I love cooking and sharing my food with the community through different gatherings, bake sales, and celebrations," said Bader, who is from Saudi Arabia. "I dreamed of starting my own catering or culinary business."

That dream is coming true thanks to mentorship from a two-time Pitt State graduate with a culinary business of her own.

Heather Horton (BA '05, MA '07) and her husband, Roger, own TOAST Restaurant in historic Block22 at Fourth and Broadway, where they lease their space from Pittsburgh State University.

Just around the corner, they are completing an incubator kitchen to help aspiring small business owners and entrepreneurs have a licensed commercial space in which to get started.

Horton met with Bader and connected her with the Small Business Development Center — part of the university's Economic and Community Engagement office — for advice about LLC paperwork,

an EIN number, and other requirements.

As a trial run, they planned a pop-up lunch at TOAST featuring beef kabobs, basmati rice, grilled vegetables, hummus, and grilled pita. Customers encouraged Bader to sell her hummus commercially at TOAST, to cook for ArtWalk, and to launch a small-scale catering business on Facebook.

For Horton, supporting Bader reflects both her own entrepreneurial experiences and her desire to foster collaboration rather than competition.

"Going through starting my own businesses, I had support from programs like the Small Business Development Center, but I didn't have anyone in the industry specifically

to mentor me or open doors to real customers or a licensed kitchen," Horton said. "I had to do it all myself from scratch. I often think about how much further along we'd be if I had a mentor. That's why it matters — I want to be that opportunity for someone else."

Horton encourages other small business owners to consider mentoring emerging entrepreneurs.

"My advice to other small business owners considering helping a young entrepreneur get started: Do it. It's not only rewarding to help someone else get started, you're strengthening your local business ecosystem," Horton said.





Model approach

What does it look like when a university and a community grow together by design? Leaders from Aberdeen, South Dakota, traveled to Pittsburg last spring to find out.

Pitt State, the City of Pittsburg, and the Chamber of Commerce hosted a delegation of city, business, and higher education leaders from Aberdeen and Northern State University for a multi-day visit focused on how strong university community partnerships can drive economic development, revitalize downtowns, and improve quality of life.

The group traveled nearly 20 hours round trip to see firsthand how Pitt State's collaborative approach has reshaped the community. The visit was especially relevant because both communities face similar challenges related to housing, workforce development, and aligning

university growth with city needs.

"We are at the lower end of the learning curve," said Heath Johnson, an Aberdeen realtor and volunteer chair of the city's Community Foundation. "You are at the top end."

The delegation toured several signature projects that demonstrate how partners align priorities, stack funding, and maximize impact. Stops included the Plaster Center, the Russ Jewett Track & Field Complex, the Crossland Technology Center, and the R&D Park under development on the east edge of campus.

Downtown, they learned how unique partnerships and creative solutions can save crumbling historic buildings and help drive the economy.

A recurring theme was the blending of funding sources,



including university grants, city sales tax revenues, county and tourism support, private donations, and state and federal investments.

FROM BLEACHER CREATURE TO AD

From a childhood spent as a “Bleacher Creature” in Carnie Smith Stadium to a career in Division I athletics, sports have always been central to Anthony Crespino’s life.

This year, they took on an even larger role.

Crespino (BBA ’12, MS ’17), who has served as deputy athletic director at Pitt State since 2025, was selected as the university’s next vice president of intercollegiate athletics, succeeding longtime AD Jim Johnson.

Johnson was promoted by President Thomas Newsom to executive vice president for engagement and executive affairs, a role connected to the launch of the university’s new “Access PITT State” initiative.

Raised in Girard, Crespino grew up surrounded by athletics and community. He played basketball, ran cross country and track, and attended Gorilla football games with his family. As a Pitt State student, he performed on the snare line with the Pride of the Plains Marching Band on game days.

“No matter the sport, athletics has been a key part of my life,” he said. “It’s also one of the front doors to the

university — it’s visibility, exposure, and connection.”

Athletics runs deep in his family. His grandfather, Frank Crespino (BSEd ’56, MS ’59, EdS ’76), was a Pitt State football standout and Hall of Fame coach. His uncle, Dennis Franchione (BA ’73), led the Gorillas from 1985–89. His father, Craig Crespino (BSEd ’83), was a beloved longtime high school coach.

Just before Anthony began college, his father was killed in an accident at football practice — a defining moment in his life.

“Coaches, professors, and mentors here helped me find my way,” he said, including former head coach Tim Beck and business professor Eric Harris.

After graduating, Crespino built a career in Division I athletics with stops at Penn State, TCU, and Northwestern, where he met his wife, Joanna.

In 2024, Crespino and his family returned to Pitt State, quickly advancing through leadership roles overseeing daily operations and long-term strategy.

“The community support here is like nowhere else,” he said. “At the end of the day, this is about people. Supporting student-athletes, coaches, and a community that means so much to me.”

“No matter the sport, athletics has been a key part of my life, It’s also one of the front doors to the university — it’s visibility, exposure, and connection.”







From the gridiron to the dance floor **GAMMON GIVES BACK**

Former Gorilla football player and former Kansas City Chiefs long snapper Kendall Gammon continues to make an impact off the field, most recently through his participation in Dancing with the Stars Kansas City, a high-profile annual fundraiser supporting Cristo Rey Kansas City High School.

Gammon and seven other notable Kansas City figures paired with professional dancers to perform for a crowd of 1,200, raising a record \$1.6 million.

"It was phenomenal," said Gammon. "It was a lot of work, but completely worth it for such a great program."

Cristo Rey Kansas City serves students from families earning \$38,000 or less annually. Each week, students attend four days of classroom instruction and work one day as interns at partner companies in the metro area. Earnings from these internships cover half of each student's tuition, with fundraisers supporting the remainder. The graduation rate is almost 100 percent.

"You're helping provide real-world opportunities and a path forward for these students," Gammon said. "It's such a great program."

Gammon drew on his high school experience in musicals, show choir, and band to prepare. Long intrigued by ballroom dancing, he completed 32 lessons and dedicated additional time to practice.

"It definitely used different muscles than you're used to using in the NFL!" Gammon said. "It was incredibly challenging."

Gammon, who also serves at Pitt State as special assistant to the president for external relations,

is no stranger to philanthropic involvement in the Kansas City region.

He is a member of the KC Ambassadors, a nonprofit founded by late Chiefs Hall of Famer Walter White. The group of former players mentors younger athletes and hosts and participates in fundraisers — including galas, golf tournaments, and partnerships with agencies such as Kansas City Police Athletic League (KC PAL), which provides after-school programming for youth. Gammon will assume the presidency next year.

Gammon also supports events for Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) in support of children in the foster system, and he contributes to fundraisers for Steps of Faith, a nonprofit that provides prosthetics

to uninsured amputees; his wife, Paige, serves on its board.

He serves on the board for Welcome House Kansas City, a 100-bed residential facility and recovery program for men battling addiction, and participates in 10 to 12 golf tournaments each year to benefit charitable causes. At almost every stop, he reconnects with fellow Pitt State alumni.

"The Gorilla network is incredible," Gammon said. "I never go anywhere without running into other Pitt State grads."

From the football field to the dance floor and beyond, he said, he'll continue to leverage his platform to strengthen communities, embodying the spirit of a Gorilla committed to giving back.



Gorilla Graphics: Built by Grads and Students

Behind nearly every major university event and milestone — recruitment events, athletic contests, band concerts, awards ceremonies, final exams, Commencement — is a team whose connection to the institution runs deeper than ink on paper.

Gorilla Graphics, the university's full-service printing and graphic design operation, is staffed by alumni and students from the Graphic Communications Department, making it a living extension of the academic programs it represents.

Together, they produce programs, posters, booklets, lanyards, and more, serving every office on campus as well as the community.

FROM CLASSROOM TO CAREER

Long-time staff members include Manager Jason Kermashek (BST Commercial Graphics '94), Administrative Associate Tracy Carrington (BST Printing Technology '85), and Print Production Specialist Daniel Macias (BST Commercial Graphics '06), all of whom returned to campus professionally after completing their degrees.

The shop also employs Print Production Specialist Logan Guffey (BST '26).

They are joined by Print Production Specialist Peyton Simpson (BST Graphic

Communications '24), who transitioned seamlessly from student to staff member following graduation.

In addition to full-time alumni employees, Gorilla Graphics employs five students, four of whom are majoring in Graphic Communications.

Together, in the second most historic building on campus, Whitesitt Hall, students work alongside the professionals to learn industry standards, production workflows, client communication, and problem-solving skills.





NATIONAL RECOGNITION, HOMEGROWN TALENT

The expertise of Gorilla Graphics was recognized on a national stage at the Association of College & University Printers 2026 Annual Awards, where the shop earned Best of Show, the highest production honor, along with a Platinum Production Award.

The award-winning entry was designed and produced by Peyton Simpson, showcasing the caliber of talent developed through the university's academic programs.

The honors mark the second consecutive year Gorilla Graphics has been recognized by the ACUP, following a gold award win in 2025.

Gorilla Graphics also brought home a silver award from the In-Plant Printing and Mailing Association, which represents industry segments including colleges, universities, associations, hospitals, insurance, manufacturing, primary and secondary education, and other organizations.

SERVING CAMPUS AND COMMUNITY

The daily impact of the shop is felt across campus and beyond through a range of graphic design and printing services not only for university departments, but also for community clients.

"Today, we're proud to serve as an example of how academic programs can fuel real-world operations and how student talent can become institutional expertise," said Kermashek. "Gorilla Graphics isn't just a print shop. It's a success story written, designed, and printed by Gorillas."



Building leaders beyond the letters



Owen Mall and Sydney Anselmi

When Sydney Anselmi arrived on campus as an undergraduate she was eager to belong. She found her footing through sorority life, then returned to campus as a professional to guide the next generation. A decade after earning her bachelor's degree, she helped lead the Greek community to national recognition.

This spring, Anselmi (BS '13, MS '15) received the Outstanding IFC Advisor Award from the North American

fraternity experience.

Additionally, the university's Interfraternity Council was named one of just 10 Outstanding IFCs nationwide — the only NCAA Division II institution among the recipients.

On the heels of that award was the Outstanding Staff Award, given to Anselmi by students in recognition of her mentorship, relationship-building, and belief in them.

Anselmi's passion for

Ashley Wadell, then the campus advisor for fraternity and sorority life and now director of first year programming, with helping her see leadership as a lifelong commitment.

"This is something you're a member of your whole life," Anselmi said. "That connection was really important to me. It's very special to have this role at my home institution."

Returning wasn't just a career move; it was a chance to give back to a campus community that helped shape who she became.

Under Anselmi's guidance, the IFC has evolved into a space where peer leadership and real-world learning thrive side by side.

Owen Mall, a first-generation college student and Automotive Technology major, was named Outstanding IFC President by NIC.

"I've built leadership skills, stepped outside my comfort zone,

improved my soft skills, strengthened my involvement on campus, and gained confidence in public," Mall said. "None of that would have been possible for me or any of the other members without the support of Sydney."

Mall's experience mirrors that of many students with whom Anselmi works — young adults who arrive unsure of their voice, then graduate with confidence, clarity, and connection.

Anselmi is happy that today, fraternities and sororities do more than when she was in school and they aren't as siloed — they collaborate across chapters, take pride in accountability, and challenge one another to grow.

"There's more emphasis on self-governance, philanthropy, and working together," she said, "and that will teach students lessons that will last a long time."

"This is something you're a member of your whole life; that connection was really important to me. It's very special to have this role at my home institution."

Interfraternity Conference (NIC), a national honor recognizing advisors whose leadership and mentorship elevate the

student organizations began during her own undergraduate years, when she was an active member of Alpha Sigma Alpha. She credits



Honoring a Legendary Coach

The Russ Jewett Outdoor Track & Field Complex, dedicated May 1 during the MIAA Outdoor Track & Field Championships, honors one of the most accomplished and influential coaches in university history.

For more than 35 years, Jewett (BS '83) was head coach of the men's and women's track and field and cross country programs, retiring from coaching in 2021. He guided the Gorillas to unprecedented success at both the conference and national levels, establishing Pitt State as one of the premier NCAA Division II

programs in the nation.

"It honors a legacy," said Vice President of Athletics Anthony Crespino. "Russ Jewett's impact on Pitt State Athletics, on our student-athletes, and on this community is immeasurable."

The complex is located between the Bicknell Family Center for the Arts and the Crossland Technology Center along east Ford Street. It is just south of the Robert W. Plaster Center, which hosts multiple large-scale indoor track and field events each year.



A national championship legacy

Under Jewett's leadership, Pitt State reached the pinnacle of Division II competition. In 2016, he guided the women's team to the NCAA Division II Outdoor Track & Field National Championship and he led the men's team to the NCAA Division II Indoor National Championship, marking the first national titles in program history for both.

Jewett's teams captured 55 conference championships spanning the Central States Intercollegiate Conference and the MIAA. His student-athletes earned more than 300 All America honors and 36 individual national championships.

Jewett was named MIAA Coach of the Year 44 times and earned multiple NCAA Division II National Coach of the Year honors, placing him among the most decorated coaches in college track and field history.

Jewett consistently emphasized





tradition, mentorship, and gratitude.

“My coach used to talk about standing on the shoulders of giants,” Jewett said in a 2016 interview. “And it’s so true. Doc Weede, Prentice Gudgen, David Suenram — they provided the foundation that has allowed our program to be so successful.”

From athlete to coach

Competing for the Gorillas in the early 1980s, Jewett specialized in the hurdles and the decathlon. He was a three time conference champion in the hurdles and earned NAIA All America honors in the decathlon in 1982, finishing second nationally at the NAIA Outdoor Track & Field Championships.

“My head coach at Pitt had such a profound experience on me, almost like a second father,” Jewett said. “That didn’t take me long to come back and commit to exploring collegiate coaching. There really was no looking back after that.”

Legendary leadership

In addition to his coaching success, Jewett played a key role in collegiate athletics governance, serving as chair of the NCAA Division II Track & Field Committee.

His contributions in the world of athletics have been recognized with numerous honors, including induction into the Kansas Sports Hall of Fame (2023), the Pittsburg State Athletics Hall of Fame (2023), and the MIAA Hall of Fame (2024). In 2025, Jewett was selected for induction into the USTFCCA Coaches Hall of Fame, the highest national coaching honor in track and field.

Investment in the community

The complex represents the university’s most recent major investment in athletics and community engagement. Led by Mammoth Sports Construction, the facility features an eight lane Beynon track, fencing, storage buildings, a practice area, and seating for up to 1,700 spectators.

The project got support from the City of Pittsburg and the Crawford County Commission for amenities that will draw tens of thousands of attendees for multi-day events.

“That’s what we’re most excited about — bringing teams and young athletes into this town,” said Coach Kyle Rutledge. “We want to get kids excited about track and field, bring people from across the region to

Pittsburg, and give the community something they can be proud of.”

The Business & Economic Research Center reported that large outdoor meets at the facility could generate up to \$3.4 million in new sales, create 37 new jobs, and produce \$137,000 in production and import taxes.

A fitting tribute

University leaders said naming the facility after Russ Jewett ensures that generations of student-athletes, fans, and visitors will understand the foundation on which the program was built.

“Russ Jewett didn’t just win championships,” Crespino said. “He built a culture, mentored countless young people, and elevated Pittsburg State on the national stage. This facility stands as a lasting tribute to that legacy.”

GORILLA RISING

*a transformed
university
experience*

By the time this magazine lands in readers' hands, the ribbon will have been cut on a new project that will transform the university experience for thousands of students for decades to come.

Known as Gorilla Rising, it is comprised of a new home for the Kelce College of Business and the revitalization of the historic Besse Hotel.



Building on earlier momentum created by Block22 — a living-learning district in renovated historic buildings at Fourth & Broadway that opened in 2019 — the project signals a future where education, entrepreneurship, and community life are connected.

“Gorilla Rising will strengthen the local business district while giving students new, immersive learning experiences,” said Dean Paul Grimes. “It will take the connection between community and the university to a new level.”

The project is just steps from local shops, restaurants, and offices that soon will serve as extensions of the classroom.

DESIGNED FOR TODAY’S LEARNING

While the Kelce College of Business has set the standard for excellence in education, is nationally recognized, and ranks among the best business schools in the country, the old building had become severely outdated.

It was constructed in 1951 to serve as College High School, a lab school for training teachers.

There were no collaboration spaces, plenty of barriers to technology integration, and limits when it came to being able to host conferences or speakers.

The new building, located at Third and Broadway, solves all of that.

“This new space allows us to teach, collaborate, and connect with the community in ways we’ve never been able to before,” Grimes said.

It includes valuable learning spaces to be used by students and the community:

- The Business and Economic Research Center
- The Center for Business and Talent Development
- The Professional Sales and Sales Management Center
- Entrepreneurship programs
- The Spigarelli Selling and Behavioral Lab designed for focus groups

Immediately inside the front door is the Lowe Family Atrium — a gathering space with casual seating and study areas designed

PITTSBURG STATE UNIVERSITY



to forge connections. It has the flexibility to stage speakers and more formal events.

"It's a place where students and faculty can feel connected with each other and with the business community,"

Grimes said.

The Walters Student Engagement Center will provide space for advising, recruitment, and internship support, with meeting rooms for prospective students and their families.

"These new additions are not just amenities; they reflect a shift toward hands-on, team-based learning that modern employers expect," said Associate Dean Lynn Murray.

Equally important is its location.

By placing the Kelce College of Business in downtown Pittsburg, the university is embedding students directly into the economic life they are preparing to enter. Students will be surrounded by local enterprises offering opportunities for internships, consulting projects, and real-time engagement with industry and business partners.

Faculty offices overlook nearby businesses — a subtle but powerful design choice that reinforces the connection

between classroom theory and real-world practice.

This proximity is expected to create a daily flow of energy between the building and its surroundings.

A REIMAGINED LANDMARK

If the new Kelce College of Business building represents the future, the Besse Hotel, located at Fourth and Locust streets just a block north, represents a bridge between Pittsburg's past and its next chapter.

Constructed in 1927 and a long-defining feature of the skyline, the 13-story hotel was vacant for years, gradually falling into disrepair. Gorilla Rising gives it a new life.

The renovation preserves the historic structure while transforming it into a multi-use living and learning environment. Upper floors now house nearly 60 student apartments, including a cohort of business majors, while the ground level features spaces that serve the community, including:

- The Center for Reading, which relocated from Whitesitt Hall
- The Small Business Development Center, which relocated from cramped quarters in the National Bank Building in Block22
- ConnectEd PSU, designed to bridge the gap between higher education and K-12 schools

The design mirrors the successful mixed-use approach of Block22; combining housing, academic programming, and community services in one place. The result is not just a restored building, but a dynamic



For students, it means access to modern facilities designed for collaboration, innovation, and connection to industry.

For faculty, it provides an environment better suited to contemporary teaching methods and research.

And for the community, it means revitalized buildings, increased economic activity, and better access to services such as business conferences, professional speakers, and small business development.

WHAT'S NEXT

In August, students moved into the Besse Hotel apartments. Faculty and staff put finishing touches on offices and learning spaces in the new Kelce building. And ribbon-cutting ceremonies and open houses for both buildings on Aug. 11 officially ushered in the next academic year.

Now, sidewalks are starting to fill with new routines — morning commutes, lunch meetings, and chance encounters that spark ideas and relationships.

“The success of Gorilla Rising will not be measured solely by its architecture, but by the interactions it enables,” said Grimes.

As the school year unfolds, workshops, special projects, and collaborations will be planned and begin to take root.

It is in those moments — a student pitching a business idea to a local entrepreneur, a faculty member gaining insight from a downtown partner, or a community member walking into the Besse for the first time in decades — that the project’s true impact will be felt.



Class of 2026 Intercollegiate Athletics Hall of Fame

A diverse group of 14 individuals and one historic team will be inducted into the 2026 Intercollegiate Athletics Hall of Fame in October — the largest group of inductees since the inaugural Class of 1988.

The class is headlined by the 2016 NCAA Division II National Champion Women's Outdoor Track & Field Team, as well as a cast of decorated athletes and coaches:

Garrett Appier (2013-16) a three-time national champion shot putter in track & field;

De'Vante Bausby (2011-14) an All-American in football and an eight-year NFL cornerback;

Cassie (Caswell) McCarthy (2013-16) a seven-time All-America thrower in track & field;

Amanda DeCastro (2009-12) a two-time All-American and record setting power hitter in softball;

Linda (Igbinigie) Ayoade (2005-08) an All-America performer and record setting middle blocker in volleyball;

Jeff Piepenbrink (2013-15) a five-time All-America pole vaulter in track & field;

Antqunita Reed (2014-15) a two-time national champion triple jumper in track & field.

LEGACY CATEGORY:

Wayne Cichon a two-year Pitt State basketball letterwinner (1976-77) who served 39 years as head boys basketball coach at St. Mary's-Colgan High School (1984-2022);

Phil McCoy (1990-91) an All-American and record setting defensive lineman in football.

IN MEMORIAM CATEGORY:

Peter K. Hamilton the iconic public address "Voice of the Gorillas" football for more than a quarter century;

Todd Mayhew (1985-86) an All-American offensive lineman in football;

Steve "Mingo" Mingori (1964) a talented lefthanded pitcher in baseball who enjoyed a 10-year MLB career with the Cleveland Indians (1970-73) and Kansas City Royals (1973-79);

Mary Nutter (1980-86) the record setting softball coach who guided

the Gorillas to 173 victories and a fourth-place national finish in the 1981 NAIA National Tournament;

Brandon Pate (2000-01) an All-American and record setting guard in men's basketball.

The induction will be part of Homecoming festivities; it is planned for 6 p.m., Oct. 23, at the Bicknell Family Center for the Arts, and is open to the public.

Champion Gorillas return home for 30th anniversary celebration

Pitt State Athletics celebrated the 30th Anniversary of the 1996 MIAA Champion Women's Basketball Team by inviting these exceptional alumnae back home to John Lance Arena on game day. In attendance were Lisa Cropper (BSEd '97), Jenni Croy (BSEd '97), Megan Reid (BSEd '99, MS '08), and Jamie Didde (BBA '98, MBA '99).



The 1903 Society

For generations, alumni have understood that giving back is part of what it means to be a Gorilla. Today, that spirit of philanthropy is taking root even earlier, thanks to a growing initiative that invites students to begin their legacy before they cross the graduation stage.

Launched by the PSU Foundation, the 1903 Society recognizes current students who make their first-ever gift to Pittsburg State University. Named for the year Pitt State was founded, the society connects today's students to more than a century of generosity that continues to shape the university.

While philanthropy has long been woven into Pitt State's history, the 1903 Society is designed to show students that giving back isn't something reserved for future alumni. It's something they can be part of right now.

"At Pitt State, we talk a lot about legacy," said Becky McDaniel (BA '97, MA '98), associate vice president for University Advancement.

"The 1903 Society helps students begin that legacy before graduation by making a commitment to invest in the university they love."

Participation is student friendly. With a \$10 gift to any fund or area of their choosing, graduating seniors officially join the 1903 Society and receive a green giving cord and a 1903 Society T-shirt.

Students also can choose to donate an amount tied to their graduation year — for example, a Class of 2026 graduate might give \$20.26 — and receive both a



"The 1903 Society helps students begin that legacy before graduation by making a commitment to invest in the university they love."

green giving cord and a 1903 Society T-shirt.

Though the dollar amounts are modest, the impact is anything but, said McDaniel.

Each gift — whether it supports scholarships, campus programs, academic departments, or facilities — contributes directly to the student experience and fosters a lifelong mindset of philanthropy, reminding

students that collective giving, over time, is what sustains and strengthens Pitt State.

"When you make your first gift, you join a community of thousands who believe in the power of giving back," McDaniel said. "That sense of shared responsibility is what makes Pitt State special."



Troop 1908

Pittsburg State University Intercollegiate Athletics formally recognized the three honorees of this year's Troop 1908 Award in the spring semester.

The award pays tribute to individuals or groups who have supported Athletics programs through substantial service and/or contributions over a significant period of time, or who have otherwise distinguished themselves through outstanding achievements in the field of athletics.

Its name is a reference to both the university's first year of intercollegiate sports competition and what a group of Gorillas is called.

The award is administered by a committee of staff and coaches

that annually select the honorees and is chaired by long-time track and field coach Russ Jewett.

DICK COLEMAN

Dick Coleman (BSIT '69), vice president of Miller's Professional Imaging, has strengthened programs including Outdoor Track & Field, Golf, Football, and Sports Performance. A yearly Silverback Fund contributor, he ensures Pitt State student-athletes have the resources they need to succeed.

RICHARD MILLER

Richard Miller, CEO and majority owner of Miller's Professional Imaging, has advanced major facility projects and multiple programs including the Outdoor

Track & Field complex, Carnie Smith Stadium renovations, and Women's Basketball. His contributions to Gorilla Football have helped advance updated uniforms and new technology for student-athletes.

STEVE SCOTT

Steve Scott (BSEd '73, EdS '84) has been in lifelong service to Pittsburg State — as student, faculty member, dean, provost, and 13-year president — and has strengthened the university and its athletic foundation. He led major facility improvements, including the Plaster Center and Weede upgrades, and continues supporting student-athletes through his presence and annual contributions to the Silverback Fund.



President Thomas Newsom, Dick Coleman, Richard Miller, Steve Scott, and Jim Johnson.

Campus Awards

OUTSTANDING FACULTY

Winners of the Dr. Robert K. Ratzlaff Outstanding Faculty Award, chosen by students, are Heather Carter (Family and Consumer Sciences), Jody Neef (Chemistry), and Chris Huitt (Graphic Communications).

Carter was praised for her engaging teaching style, personal approach, and ability to connect course content to real-life experiences.

Neef was recognized for his commitment to student well-being, accessibility, and support in the classroom and beyond.

Huitt (BST '82, MS '07) was commended for creating hands-on, industry-focused learning experiences in an engaging classroom environment.

CULINARY AND ELEMENTARY TEACHERS HONORED WITH ALUMNI AWARD

The College of Education celebrated two alumni with the Outstanding Educator Award that recognizes early-career teachers who are making a significant impact in their schools, and two graduating seniors with the Teacher of Promise Award, a statewide initiative from the Kansas Department of Education. The awards were presented in May in conjunction with the annual Student Teacher Recognition Ceremony.

"We love seeing all the great things our graduates go on to do in schools around the country, and we can't wait to watch the next group take their oath and begin making a real difference for students," said Associate Dean Jason Clemensen.

The Outstanding Elementary Educator Award went to Camille Raby (BSE '22), a third-grade teacher at Central Heights Elementary. Administrators, parents, and colleagues praise her innovative teaching; strong relationships with students; and commitment to fostering kindness, inclusivity, and community engagement.

Christopher Krenzin ('26), culinary and baking instructor at Abilene High School, received the Outstanding Secondary Educator Award. Known for blending industry experience with hands-on instruction, Krenzin also leads FCCLA, oversees a student-run coffee shop, and engages students in community projects addressing food insecurity.

Teachers of Promise recipients were Alexis (Lexi) McGowen, an Elementary Education major from Frontenac and Emily Imhof, a Family and Consumer Science major from Pittsburg, who did her student teaching at Southeast High School in Cherokee.



President Thomas Newsom, Professor Jody Neef, Professor Chris Huitt, Assistant Professor Heather Carter, and Student Government Association representative Charlie Judd.



Top photo: Associate Dean Jason Clemensen, Camille Raby, Christopher Krenzin, and Teacher Education Director Jean Dockers. Bottom photo: Associate Dean Jason Clemensen, Alexis McGowen, Emily Imhof, and Teacher Education Director Jean Dockers.

Distinguished Service Award

Two alumni were chosen for this year's Dr. Ralf J. Thomas Distinguished Alumni Award, named in memory of a retired faculty member who volunteered for the Alumni Association for 22 years. A recognition ceremony was held in April at the Wilkinson Alumni Center.



Ralph B. Cowman
Printing Technology BST '75

Cowman is a longtime supporter of the Graphic Communications program at Pitt State. As the HR and Purchasing Manager at Boelte-Hall, LLC, he created an internship program for students there.

A resident of Olathe, Kansas, he is married to Sharon Cowman. They have three sons and six grandchildren.

He is active at Crossland College of Technology Company Days and career fairs and has secured thousands of dollars of donations of consumable materials for Graphic Communications students.

He never forgot the education he received; it inspired him to give back.

He comes to campus each year to conduct interviews with students for the internship program or full-time employment, and coordinates student submissions of graphic files to Boelte-Hall employees to be checked for correctness as an exercise in print file preparation.

"I am very honored to receive this award, but the real reason for our continued relationship with Pitt State is the interns we have hired over the years from Graphic Communications that have had a huge impact on Boelte-Hall's success," he said. "If it were possible, I'd share this award with all of the interns and with all the instructors for doing such an outstanding job."



Michael S. Robinson
Biology BS '78 – Environmental Studies, MS '83

Robbinson was the recipient of the Meritorious Achievement Award in 2022. At that time, he was celebrated for his accomplishments in his profession — accomplishments related to environmental and safety compliance leadership and best practices.

After graduation, he propelled himself into a career as a leader with major manufacturing companies in the aerospace and defense industries.

He spent the final eight years of his career with a \$16 billion global facilities management and commercial real estate company as vice president of Safety, Health & Environment for the Americas, and was selected as an expert consultant to conduct a management systems audit of the tallest building in the world and the largest mall in the world, both in Dubai.

Now retired and living in Lenexa, Kansas, he is married to Carol Robinson.

He never forgot the foundation of learning he gained from the Biology Department and dedicates time whenever he can to volunteer in the Sperry Herbarium.

There, he assists Professor Neil Snow in the processing of collected plant specimens for study by students, faculty, and researchers around the world through the use of digitization. Robinson regularly mentors students while visiting. He and his wife have invested in scholarships for students of the program and are members of the Heritage Society.

"I gained so much from my education and time at Pitt State, and I truly love being able to give back to the university," he said.

Robbinson serves as a trustee of the PSU Foundation.

Meritorious Achievement Award

Two alumni were chosen for this year's Meritorious Achievement Award. Based on career achievement, it's the highest award presented by the Alumni Association. A recognition ceremony was held in April at the Wilkinson Alumni Center.



John M. Lair
Recreation '96

Lair sealed his professional fate when he volunteered at a Special Olympics track meet at Carnie Smith Stadium when he was a student. The following week, he chose Recreational Therapy as his major.

Lair went on to start his own team, which grew from four athletes to 150. In the 35 years that followed, he rose to the top position at the state level.

He has forged lifelong friendships and traveled with athletes to games in Austria, Greece, Italy, China, and South Korea; has been honored as one of "50 Kansans You Should Know" by Ingrams Magazine; and received numerous recognitions, including the Presidential Lifetime Achievement Award, North America Special Olympics Coach of the Year, the American Health Care Association Hero of the Year, Pitt State's Dr. Kenneth K. Bateman Outstanding Alumni Award, and is a member of the Pittsburg State Alumni Association Board of Directors and the Pittsburg State University Foundation Heritage Society.

Since 2017, the state Special Olympics organization grew from 3,000 athletes to 7,000.

Lair lives in Shawnee and is married to MeLinda Lair (BA '99).

"Pitt State taught me the value of relationships. It's a place where professors know your name, mentors invest in your growth, and leadership opportunities aren't just available — they're encouraged," he said. "This award is not just about me. It reflects the athletes, coaches, volunteers, law enforcement partners, and staff across Kansas who make our mission possible," Lair said.



Patricia L. Sullivan
Nursing (BSN '99, MS '03, DNP '16)

Sullivan is a nurse practitioner at Freeman Internal Medicine & Family Practice.

A resident of Pittsburg, she is married to Dr. William Sullivan (BS '86).

She is the first graduate to earn three clinical degrees from the Irene Ransom Bradley School of Nursing.

She assisted in the design, development, and implementation of the Sullivan Clinic in Frontenac, which has generated more than 70,000 patient encounters and brought 14 new professional jobs to the local economy; the Verdigris Valley Free Medical Clinic in Altoona, which assists the poor and underserved with free medical care; and the first dedicated provider-based emergency department at Wilson Medical Center in Neodesha, which provides continuous care to residents of Wilson County.

And, she has conducted important medical research on polycystic ovarian syndrome. Her other research includes heart disease, long-haul Covid, and inflammatory and infectious diseases.

Sullivan also is a decorated hero of the May 2011 Joplin tornado, moving Level 1 trauma patients in her truck to Freeman Hospital for lifesaving intervention; and has been a financial supporter of several university programs, including the Bicknell Family Center for the Arts, Partners in Progress, ROTC rappelling tower, the Plaster Center, and the Veterans Memorial, as well as scholarships.

"Our instructors demanded excellence and were kind with nurturing our progress along the way," she said. "All my instructors, professors, and preceptors along my educational journey at Pitt State are why I am who I am today."

Where have you traveled with Gus or wearing your Gorilla gear? Email your photo, a caption, and your degree and graduation year to alumni@pittstate.edu.



Andrew Johnson (BS '63) took along his Gorilla gear on a Viking expedition cruise on the Great Lakes, where he did a 200-foot-deep dive in Lake Superior in a six-passenger submarine.



Beverly Jennings (MA '90) and husband Ian Jennings travelled to the ancient Greek/Roman city of Paestum in southern Italy in April 2026. Here, she shows her Gorilla pride in front of the Temple of Athena (500s BC).



Bethany Harris (BA '14) made sure to bring a piece of Pitt State with her on her visit to Glacier National Park in Montana. Here, she is holding a flag at the Jackson Glacier Overlook.



Brenda Josey (BST '87) and her husband, John, celebrated their 35th wedding anniversary in March 2026 at St. Thomas and St. John in the U.S. Virgin Islands. Brenda showed her Gorilla Pride at the dock in Cruz Bay and, upon arriving at Maho Bay Beach, ran into two other Gorillas enjoying their vacation. What a small world!



A group of Gorillas — Rosanne Greene (BGS '22), Joyce Boyd Steuernagel (BSEd '82), Bill Steuernagel (BBA '82), Kim Jergens Berns (BBA '85), Dave Berns (BSEd '83, MS '85), Patti Higgins Schmitz (BBA '85), Mark Schmitz, Shannon Bailey (BA '85), and Pete Fortman — flew to San Juan, Puerto Rico to board the Valiant Lady with Virgin Voyages. The Steuernagels and Berns met while attending Pitt State and have been married for more than 40 years!



Dr. Danielle Grisolano-Longnecker (BS '20) and her dad, Gorilla Battalion Cadet Captain and former US Army officer John Grisolano (BBA '87), posed with Honorary Gorilla, Little Jimmy Dickens, outside the Grand Ole Opry at the Ryman Auditorium in Nashville, Tennessee, during Spring break 2026.



Janet Lewark-Bryant (BSEd '68, MS '82, EdS '87) and Gordon Glover (BA '03, MA '08) sported their Gorilla gear from the top of a glacier during a trip to Alaska.



Mike Krull (BSEd '91) and his wife, Misty, posed with their Gorilla gear in front of the Stari Most ('Old Bridge'), located in Mostar, Bosnia Herzegovina, which is part of the Balkans in southeast Europe.



Pitt State pride was on display on the island of St. Lucia, in the city of Castries, with this group: Scott Holland, Karen Sullivan Holland (BS Art Education '13), Dennis Sullivan (BS Computer Science and Mathematics '83), Rose Tavernaro Sullivan, Bridget Sullivan Ritchey (BS Graphic Arts '93), and Keith Ritchey (BST '90).



Professor John Daley (History) and his wife, Helen Daley, remembered to pack Pitt State gear for their trip to the Grand Canyon. What an adventure!



Four Pitt State friends posed in front of the Sphere in Las Vegas before watching the "Wizard of Oz." Bob Izard (BBA '75) and Terri Izard ('73-'75) along with Jan Eaton (BSEd '75) and Doug Eaton (BBA '76).



The Venning family showing off Gorilla pride at the US Capitol Mall: Jeff Venning (BST Automotive Technology '07), Jenny (Clark) Venning (BS Social Work '06), with future Gorillas (hopefully) Oliver and Franklin.



Mark S. White (MBA '79) visited Antarctica in November 2025 aboard the expedition ship *Polaris*. What an unforgettable adventure at the bottom of the world!



Former college roommates Cornelia Cavinee Jeffery (BS '72), Lois Manly Light Young (BA '72), and Kay Wampler (BFA '72) showed their Gorilla pride in Prescott, Arizona, at Watson Lake.



Julie Ferraro (BS '01, MS '25) took a trip with Jason Ferraro (BSET '02), Jenna Ferraro (BSN '16), and Mike Ferraro (BS '76, MS '89, EdS '02) to Dallas, Texas to visit AT&T Stadium.



A scenic resort in Kasauli, Himachal Pradesh, India, served as the backdrop for the wedding of Gaurav 'Sid' Sidana (MS '19) and Niyati Arora (MS '21). They were joined by fellow alumni Abby Johnson (BGS '21), Zeel Patel (BSET '22), and Rhonda Zafuta McFarland (BA '91).



Don Hughes (BBA in Marketing '70), Dr. Felix Livingston (BA in Economics '68), and Pat Normile (BA, Bio/ Chem '68) — "Three Amigos" from the 1965 National Intercollegiate Hall of Fame Cross Country Team — made great memories together while fishing off the Coast of Palmetto, Florida.



Judson Hall (BBA '79) traveled with his wife, Carol, to Mexico, Belize, Honduras, Costa Rica and Panama on their first ocean cruise in December 2025.



Grads showed their Gorilla pride sailing around Lagos, Portugal with members of the Freeman Advantage travel group. Front row: Sherry Jagels (BS '76, MS in ECSE '94), Debbie Post Potter (BA '71, MS '73, EdS '82). Back row: Phil Jagels, friend of PSU, Larry O'Neal (MS '78), Vicki O'Neal (MS '79), Alicia Potter Burk (BGS '99, MS '00, EdS '04, BSN '16).



A group of Alpha Sigma Alpha alumnae including Mary Russell Sippel (BS '74, MS '77), Barbara Nelson Hersh (BS '76, MS '77), Gale Russell Hansen (BS '76, MS '78), Diana Chancey Penrose, Brenda Christy Johnson (BS '75), Brenda Wiedner Gustafson (BBA '73), Verna Lou Fincher Smith (BBA '76), Patty Conrey Borushaski (AS '75), Laura Zimmerman Scott (BGS '77), and Kristin Johnson Wiedner (BSEd '76) took a trip to Branson together this spring.



Ron and Pearl Walters (BBA '73) proudly represented Pitt State on the Island Princess on their recent Panama Canal Cruise, which caught the notice of their fellow passengers.



Will (BS '60) and Ida May Willhaus proudly show off their Gorilla Pride with their daughter, Lisa, under a shrine in Kyoto, Japan.



Cheryl Sullivan (BS '83) and Michael Sullivan (MS '79) took along their Gorilla gear on a trip to southeast Asia that included Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam. Here, they pose at Angkor Wat, Cambodia.



Siblings Katy Hays (BSED '80) Cheri Walden (BSED '74) and Bob Daniel (BS Math '58), visited the great state of Alaska along with friend Toni Speith (BSN '94). They were accompanied by Lois Daniel and David Walden.

1970

Miles Schnaer (BS '70) was named 2026 Citizen of the Year by the Chamber of Lawrence and Douglas County. As one of the Chamber's most prestigious awards, it recognizes an outstanding commitment to the Lawrence Community and its citizens. Schnaer serves as chair of the board of trustees for the PSU Foundation.

1973

Steve Scott (BSEd, EdS '84), retired president of Pittsburg State University, was awarded the 2026 Meritorious Service Award from the Division 2 Conference Commissioners Association in recognition of 10 years of service.

1974

Eric Johnson (BSEd) was inducted into the Missouri Sports Hall of Fame Class of 2026 in February. For 49 years, he coached high school basketball in Horton and Columbus, Kansas and Webb City and Joplin, Missouri. While at Webb City, Johnson coached the basketball team to two Final Fours and won the 1997 State Championship. He is now retired and coaching golf at College Heights.

1985

Ann Elliott (BS) retired as executive director from the Family Resource Center in November after 15 years. Elliott spent 25 years total at the childcare facility, previously serving as a grant coordinator.

Allen Edmonds (BA) was named to the board of the Missouri Press Association. Edmonds is the editor and co-owner of the North Cass Herald in Belton, Missouri.

1989

Cheryl Woodson (BST), a Christian author and writer, published her first novel, "Two Decembers, A Journey to Faith," in December 2025. All proceeds for the book are donated to One Stray Sheep, a nonprofit dedicated to supporting local charities and individuals in her community.

1991

Lori Wilks (BSEd, MS '08) was named 2026 Pitsco Educator of the Year by the Pittsburg Area Chamber of Commerce. Lori currently works at George Nettles Elementary in Pittsburg Community Schools.

1994

Brad Stefanoni (BS '96) opened a new small business, McKay Street Coffeehouse, with his wife, Andra (BA '91, MS '94), and son, Dominic (AA '22), as part of the new Frontenac Public Library and Heritage Hall Museum project in his hometown of Frontenac, Kansas. The library and museum are directed by Seth Nutt (BS '10).

1998

Katie Ervin (BS), PhD, published her second book called, "52 Weeks of LEADERShip." This weekly leadership journal is built around the idea that leadership isn't an event; it's a daily practice. Ervin is the founder and CEO of Catalyst Development.

Jason Vieselmeyer (BSEd) was named head principal of North Middle School at Joplin Schools. He previously served as assistant principal at North Middle School and as the Joplin Middle School summer school principal since 2020.

2002

Mary Swearingen (MS), a teacher in the Independence, Kansas Unified School District #446 was named a Region 2 semi-finalist in April at the Kansas Teacher of the Year banquet in Topeka. It marks two consecutive years that USD 446 has had a teacher recognized as a semi-finalist.

2005

Lindsay Young (BBA, MBA '09) was honored as the 2026 Northwest Arkansas Outstanding Council Member by the Associated Builders and Contractors of Arkansas at their annual Excellence in Construction Award Banquet. Young is the founder of Nu Marketing LLC in Rogers, Arkansas.

2006

Melissa Kipp (BST, MA '14) was named the 2025 William & Allene Guthrie Van Meter Outstanding Alumni Achievement Award recipient, which recognizes Labette Community College graduates who have made significant contributions both in their professional careers and through community service.

Christina Williams (BS '06), project manager at Corner Greer Architects and co-owner of Joplin Floor Designs, was recognized as the 2026 Outstanding Citizen of the Year at the Joplin Area Chamber of Commerce 109th Annual Banquet. She was chosen for her visionary leadership and creative approach, which have made a lasting impact on the Joplin community.

2007

Dr. Mark Brown (BS) was named medical director for Freeman Fort Scott Hospital. Dr. Brown resides in Carl Junction with his wife, Melinda Brown, MHA (BBA '96), and their children Zakory (BS '21), Maggie (BS '24), and Ashdyn, an eighth grader.

Christel Benson (MS, EdS '20), professor of Graphic Communications in the School of Technology and Workforce Learning, was named a Woman of Distinction by the Pittsburg Area Chamber of Commerce. She has lent her design expertise to numerous community initiatives, including creating the

Women of Distinction Calendar project 20 years ago, Paint the Town Red, Pittsburg Area Young Professionals, Pittsburg Beautiful, Family Resource Center, Pittsburg Community Schools, and many more.

2008

Jason Wright (BSEd, MS '10, EdS '11, MS '13, MS '17) was named interim executive director of the Southwest Kansas Area Cooperative District USD 613 in December.

Ryan Mills (BST) was promoted to chief operating officer at MegaKC. Mills brings more than 13 years of experience with MegaKC and a deep understanding of the company's operations, culture, and people.

Anna Nimz (BSEd, MS '09) was named head coach for women's basketball at the University of North Alabama in Florence, Alabama.

Kurt Seiler (BSEd), principal of Independence High School, was chosen as Kansas Principal of the Year. He represented the state in Washington, D.C., in April as a finalist for National Principal of the Year.

2009

Christa Warlop (BMed, MST '16) was chosen as the Outstanding Elementary Educator of the year by the Southeast Kansas Music Educators Association. She has taught music at George Nettles Elementary School in Pittsburg for 17 years.

2011

Dustin Wiley (BSEd, MS '13) named Public Schools Administrator of the Month in Kansas City, Kansas in April. Wiley serves as principal of Lindbergh Elementary.

2012

Amisha Daniels (BSET, MET '14) was named as one of the 2026 40 Under 40 honorees by the Wichita Business Journal. Amisha serves as a Project Development Manager for McCownGordon Construction.

2013

Jeremy Kadoich (BBA '13) received the Green Jacket Award from Lamar Advertising for the Southwest Region. He is a senior account executive at Lamar Advertising Company in Las Vegas.

2014

Kaylyn Hite (BA) of Hite Law, LLC was named 2026 Chamber Volunteer of the Year by the Pittsburg Area Chamber of Commerce.

2016

Endesha Simone Flanigan (BSEd) was chosen for the Educator of the Year Award at Sunrise Elementary. Flanigan teaches in the Cherry Creek School District in Aurora, Colorado.

Renato Pinto (BAS) of Marathon Graphics was named 2026 Young Professional of the Year by the Pittsburg Area Chamber of Commerce.

2017

Sheryl Patterson-Coulbaly (MA History), recently defended her Doctor of Education dissertation at the University of North Florida and graduated in July. Her dissertation, "Brewing Black Girl Magic: From Hushed-Toned Kitchens to Educational Spaces: A Narrative Inquiry into the Inherited Wisdom, Radical Resilience, and Professional Becoming of Black Women," was completed using a three-article dissertation format and explored the experiences of Black women educators. She frequently presents and publishes scholarly work and remains actively engaged in research, educational leadership, and professional service.

2020

Morgan Auman Smith (BBA) was named one of the Chiefs Cheerleaders Veterans of the Year. This award is given to members of the squad to honor their impact and dedication.

2023

Elizabeth Draper (BGS) was named the recreation manager for the City of Pittsburg. She has served the last six years as an engineer officer in the Kansas Army National Guard.

ALUMNI:

We love to hear about your achievements! Send your class note to alumni@pittstate.edu

Giving Back

Chris Hanna is the newest president of the Pitt State Alumni Association Board of Directors.

Hanna earned his Bachelor of Science in Recreational Therapy in 1995, and for more than 30 years has brightened patients' lives through his work in recreational therapy, primarily in hospitals and psychiatric facilities.

He chose the field because he wanted to make a positive difference; he's able to help individuals develop coping strategies and social skills to overcome physical and emotional challenges.

Outside of his professional life and serving on the board, he enjoys attending as many Pitt State and alumni events as possible — especially football games. He was a member of the 1991 National Championship football team and was inducted into the Pitt State Intercollegiate Athletics Hall of Fame in 2021.

Of note: he can juggle (not as well as Kendall Gammon, but "not bad," he said).



Hanna said his life would be unrecognizable had he not attended Pitt State, crediting his mother, his football coach Chuck Broyles, his roommate and teammate Shane Tafoya, and teammate Phil McCoy, for their encouragement and support.

"I love visiting teammates and alumni whenever I can," he said, "and if I could, I'd love to time-travel back to a Saturday in the '90s one more time to play another football game in Carnie Smith Stadium."

IN MEMORY

1941

Helen C. Hubbard, Carthage, Mo.

1945

Nellie J. Marsh, Fort Wayne, Ind.

1949

Mary L. Sanders, Overland Park, Kan.

1950

Carl A. Otto, LeRoy, Kan.

1951

Pete D. Adams, Gardner, Kan.
Kenneth A. Baden, Oceanside, Calif.
Virgil E. Daniels, Tulsa, Okla.
Betty J. Fosmire, Dallas, Texas
Nancy E. Jacobson, Walker, Minn.
Franklin J. King, Ooltewah, Tenn.

1952

Mamie E. Allen-Egbert, Milpitas, Calif.
Ruth A. Foster, Little Rock, Ark.
Robert D. Holland, Springfield, Mo.
Jack D. Irwin, Langhorne, Penn.
Inez L. Stafford, Overland Park, Kan.
Jack J. Theis, Nacogdoches, Texas

1953

Billy J. Billiard, Charlotte, N.C.
A.O. Brown, Frontenac, Kan.
Harold D. Murray, San Antonio, Texas
Conjoe L. Williams, Ward, Ark.

1954

Ramon C. Butts, Kearney, Mo.
Lois O. Sandford, Prairie Village, Kan.

1955

James L. Gantert, Albuquerque, N.M.

Bernita D. Hill, Fort Scott, Kan.

Martha J. Jacobs, Jamestown, Kan.

1956

Donald L. Breshears, Lamoni, Iowa
Dale Dean, Parsons, Kan.
Arthur R. Little, Keizer, Ore.
Harry D. Oribson, Manhattan, Kan.
Bob Semonisck, Blue Springs, Mo.
Byrne Wood, Ellsworth, Kan.

1957

Domenic C. Bertoncino, Pittsburg, Kan.
Carroll E. Brust, Hereford, Ariz.
Fred P. Freisberg, Lawrence, Kan.
Barbara J. Grilz, Frontenac, Kan.
Shirley J. Herman, Chicago, Ill.
Cleta C. Jeffries, Port Clinton, Ohio
Bill E. Lockhart, Wamego, Kan.
Wayne L. McDaniel, Chanute, Kan.

Robert D. Nelson, Bucklin, Kan.
William L. Nelson, Laguna Hills, Calif.
Betty A. Smith, Lenexa, Kan.
Roger E. Thompson, Lafayette, La.
Art Zimola, Roeland Park, Kan.

1958

Peggy A. Dettmer, Manhattan, Kan.
June A. Frager, Oklahoma City, Okla.
Frank D. Grispingo, Maryville, Mo.
Lewis R. Hevel, Parsons, Kan.
Suzanne K. Kell, Webb City, Mo.
Donald G. Sambol, Fishers, Ind.
Bill O. Samuels, Pittsburg, Kan.
Julia M. Weidman, Hutchinson, Kan.

1959

Bob D. Allen, Whittier, Calif.
David D. Almes, Fort Worth, Texas
Lee D. Austin, Battle Creek, Mich.
Reece C. Bohannon, Wichita, Kan.
Helen M. Carter, Paola, Kan.
Sandra A. Craig, Overland Park, Kan.
William W. Curry, Darien, Ill.
James E. Danenhauer, Centennial, Colo.
Sally G. Elkins, Smithville, Mo.
Betty L. Harlow, Rogers, Ark.
Marijane A. Koopman, Pittsburg, Kan.
John L. Levra, Raymore, Mo.
Lynn E. Pollock, Cherokee, Okla.
Melvin R. Royse, San Juan Capistrano, Calif.
Bob L. Wooton, Kansas City, Mo.

1960

Bobby J. Allen, Mesa, Ariz.
Mona L. Atkins, Colorado Springs, Colo.
Richard L. Benson, Tulsa, Okla.
Jerry L. Coltrane, Spring Hill, Tenn.
Glen E. Hornbaker, King George, Va.
Pamela S. Landrum, Independence, Mo.
Bill E. Nicholson, Plano, Texas
Ralph C. Schlatter, South Hutchinson, Kan.
Bernie L. Stine, Yates Center, Kan.
Robert W. Summers, Wichita, Kan.
Bill Swearingin, Stokesdale, N.C.

1961

Winona L. Crampton, Cape Girardeau, Mo.
Eldon V. Danenhauer, Topeka, Kan.
Judy A. Hartshorn, Shawnee, Kan.
Richard E. Henthorn, Hyattsville, Md.
Patsy M. Ivan-James, Independence, Mo.
Donald R. Lee, Tulsa, Okla.
Gene Leigh, Girard, Kan.
J.D. Smith, Norman, Okla.
Joyce R. Smith, Norman, Okla.
Harold E. Toevs, Mechanicsburg, Penn.
Robert A. Volk, Buffalo, Kan.

1962

James A. Curl, Broken Arrow, Okla.
Jerry L. Dodson, Tulsa, Okla.
Floyd Gwin, Salina, Kan.
Margaret K. Johnson, Saint Louis, Mo.
J.C. Louderback, Arkansas City, Kan.
Maurine M. Miller, Rogers, Ark.
Freda E. Reynolds, Bonner Springs, Kan.

1963

Bob I. Clubine, Salina, Kan.
Marvin W. Fornwalt, Wildwood, Mo.
Jim L. Murrow, Springfield, Mo.
Larry J. Schreiber, Sartell, Minn.
Meade T. Smith, Fredonia, Kan.
Julia M. Tam, Seattle, Wash.

1964

Jerry B. Couch, Tucson, Ariz.
Carolyn E. Cowan, Jay, Okla.
Judy D. Crowley, Denver, Colo.
Charles M. Crumbaugh, Silver Point, Tenn.
Lance A. Davis, Kingman, Ariz.
Jimmie W. Gill, Leawood, Kan.
Larry W. Holmes, Oxford, Penn.
Jeanette Jackson, Hutchinson, Kan.
Dave J. Johnston, Pratt, Kan.
Martha J. Lewis, Aurora, Ill.
A.J. Morris, Bella Vista, Ark.
Frank H. Scott, Fayetteville, Ark.

1965

Roger M. Amos, Neosho, Mo.
Tom L. Davis, Jacksonville, Ill.
Max W. Grossnickle, Ankeny, Iowa
Chuck L. Hosman, Pittsburg, Kan.
Pamela A. Kendrick, Joplin, Mo.
Daniel L. Stwalley, Wichita, Kan.
Alan D. Tener, Richardson, Texas

1966

Bruce Belline, Lamar, Mo.
Jacquelyn S. Black, Overland Park, Kan.
John G. Epting, Burlington, Kan.
Ray J. Gollhofer, Choctaw, Okla.
Judith M. Leblanc, Lawrence, Kan.
Gary D. McDonald, Frontenac, Kan.
Jennifer C. Phillips, Prosper, Texas
Larry H. Treece, Montgomery, Ill.

1967

Sharon A. Allen, Vinita, Okla.
Becky S. Boyd, Joplin, Mo.
Joe Broyles, Gainesville, Fla.
Bill J. Crespino, Carl Junction, Mo.
Don J. Devaney, Elk River, Minn.
Todd K. Hampton, Greeley, Colo.
Jay J. Lucas, Overland Park, Kan.
Vivian J. Moore, Sand Springs, Okla.
Betty J. Nicholson, Plano, Texas
Joe D. Porter, Pittsburg, Kan.
John L. Potocnik, Cherokee, Kan.
Al L. Taylor, Stillwater, Okla.
A.J. Wachter, Pittsburg, Kan.

1968

Tom V. Adams, Houston, Texas
Merle Allen, Joplin, Mo.
Bob L. Couch, Lamar, Mo.
Bob D. Eshelbrenner, Derby, Kan.
Gene L. Hicks, Des Moines, Iowa
Marilyn L. Hook, Fredonia, Kan.
Kenneth D. Keith, Willard, Mo.
John D. Kowalchuk, Prairie Village, Kan.
James C. Long, Saint Joseph, Mo.
Bill A. Miller, Wilburton, Okla.
David L. Nicholas, Altamont, Kan.

Jeane Petrie, Oskaloosa, Kan.
Robert M. Rueter, Decatur, Ill.
Wayne E. Severtson, Marion, Iowa
Bill E. Stange, Belle Plaine, Kan.
Jeannine S. Wormington, Sarcoxie, Mo.

1969

Patricia L. Baker, Round Rock, Texas
Robert M. Basham, Eureka, Calif.
Steve J. Borel, Olathe, Kan.
Jim E. Cessna, Sun City West, Ariz.
Bob A. Cuthbertson, Pittsburg, Kan.
Terry J. Ferneti, Frontenac, Kan.
Jillayne King, Queen Creek, Ariz.
Don E. Morford, Holton, Kan.
Lynn R. Schooler, Carthage, Mo.
Joe M. Smith, Colwich, Kan.
Ed C. Stewart, Lawrence, Kan.
Donna J. Trites, Merriam, Kan.
Carmen E. Wade, Wichita, Kan.
James A. Ward, Sallisaw, Okla.
Howard E. Wimmer, Overland Park, Kan.
Thomas A. Zuzzio, Santa Claus, Ind.

1970

Mary A. Allen, Gallup, N.M.
Dale E. Armstrong, South Padre Island, Texas
Bill D. Arnold, Wichita, Kan.
Steve D. Bilyew, Claflin, Kan.
Steve D. Blom, Scottsdale, Ariz.
Fred K. Church, Iola, Kan.
Judy E. Fleming, Columbus, Ohio
Jim E. Gladbach, Deerfield, Mo.
Toni A. Gould, Grain Valley, Mo.
Anthony P. Kinnaman, Overland Park, Kan.
Patrick W. Knapp, Bentonville, Ark.
John E. Lavendusky, Gardner, Kan.
Linda M. Leonard, Humboldt, Kan.
Paul R. Loparco, Oak Forest, Ill.
Jody J. Mayer, Saint Louis, Mo.
Fred E. Miller, Spring Hill, Kan.
Bill G. Province, Fort Scott, Kan.
Fredrick L. Schoening, Peculiar, Mo.
Rodger J. Shinn, Fredonia, Kan.
Donald J. Talbott, Tonganoxie, Kan.
David L. Ward, Diamond, Mo.
Hassan A. Zavari, Mount Morris, Mich.

1971

Betty A. Bartolac, Mooresville, N.C.
Randy L. Beets, Springfield, Neb.
Carol L. Farley, Rich Hill, Mo.
Jerome Gnatek, South Coffeyville, Okla.
Dave G. Jeffery, Peoria, Ariz.
Eileen L. Leininger, Sheldon, Mo.
Sam H. Loughmiller, Merriam, Kan.
Daniel J. Mead, Arlington, Texas
Terry J. Nelson, Wichita, Kan.
Floyd A. Osburn, Olathe, Kan.
Virginia A. Pellman, Kansas City, Kan.
Patrick M. Smith, Beloit, Kan.
Randolph B. Whipple, Wichita, Kan.
Greg Willard, Willard, Mo.

1972

Neal Amick, Fall River, Kan.
Gail Dubray, Arma, Kan.
Terry C. Grotheer, Pittsburg, Kan.

Betty A. Halderman, Valley Center, Kan.
Cindy J. Helms, Mount Juliet, Tenn.
Martha E. Oneslager, Coffeyville, Kan.
Joe W. Reagan, Columbus, Kan.

1973

John H. Brant, Broken Arrow, Okla.
Stanley V. Holmes, Spring Hill, Fla.
Charles L. Hilscher, Leavenworth, Kan.
Walton K. Ingham, Leawood, Kan.
Larry H. Jones, Overland Park, Kan.
Dale R. Lindbloom, Rogers, Ark.
Robert E. Minchew, Denison, Texas
Jerry L. Trollope, Independence, Kan.
Richard L. Viets, Gladstone, Mo.

1974

Mike B. Ashenfelter, Bartlesville, Okla.
Bard K. Cade, Coffeyville, Kan.
John W. Gardner, Oneonta, N.Y.
Sharon Gonzales, Shawnee, Kan.
Mary J. Horseman, Wichita, Kan.
Ira A. Morriss, Harlingen, Texas
Don D. Prock, Kansas City, Mo.
Arthur L. Vanhouten, Rogers, Ark.

1975

Pat A. Amick, Port Orchard, Wash.
Darryl B. Anderson, Columbus, Kan.
Stephen Brandenburg, Brownwood, Texas
Steve J. Burnidge, Pittsburg, Kan.
Patty J. Clay, Tulsa, Okla.
Terry W. Drake, Ottawa, Kan.
Pat L. Durrie, Saint Joseph, Mo.
Martha Ann Flanagan, Columbus, Kan.
Shelby P. Horn, Joplin, Mo.
Marsha N. Huffman-Swepston, Galena, Kan.
Cynda L. Jarrett, Pittsburg, Kan.
Delores E. Otter, Wichita, Kan.
Lupe Ponce, Parsons, Kan.
Alice M. Rauniker, Pittsburg, Kan.

1976

Russell W. Johnson, Deerfield, Mo.
Paul A. Lero, Saint Paul, Kan.
Paul L. Lewis, Spring Hill, Fla.

1977

Patricia A. Forehand, Republic, Mo.
Richard L. Holt, Pittsburg, Kan.
Jo Locke, Coffeyville, Kan.

1978

Michael L. Duggan, Fairfax, Iowa
Tanny M. Hanahan, Frontenac, Kan.
Noreen R. Harper, Joplin, Mo.
Marilyn S. Heitz, Topeka, Kan.
Gayle L. Jeffress, Clinton, Mo.
Roger A. Kirby, Carthage, Mo.
Loren D. Larkin, Saint Joseph, Mo.
Janet J. Myers, Overland Park, Kan.
Deborah D. Reedy, Neodesha, Kan.
Jamie D. Russian, Pittsburg, Kan.
Ronald L. Wilson, Belton, Mo.

1979

Karen A. Conklin, Shawnee, Kan.
Joe E. Johnston, Kansas City, Mo.
Cindy M. Vann-Green, Fort Scott, Kan.

1980

Karen R. Carl, Andover, Kan.
Jody A. Rice, Independence, Kan.
Jane Richardson, Chanute, Kan.
Carolyn J. Snyder, Lees Summit, Mo.
Bertie M. Tilberg, Joplin, Mo.

1981

Linda K. Childress, Coffeyville, Kan.
Dee Ann D'Amico, Arma, Kan.
Jeff A. Hughey, Joplin, Mo.
Rick A. Knapp, Independence, Kan.
Philip A. Roth, Columbus, Kan.
Donald R. Sampson, Pine Bluff, Ark.
Phyllis E. Sprenkle, Sheldon, Mo.

1982

Michael D. Eddy, Webb City, Mo.

1983

Norma J. Iverson, Longbranch, Wash.
Dan L. Jeffery, Cape Coral, Fla.

1984

Jackie L. Allmendinger, Carl Junction, Mo.
Mark L. Christy, Fort Scott, Kan.
Becky M. Hrabik, Olathe, Kan.
David R. Keller, Pittsburg, Kan.
Steven R. Lee, Frontenac, Kan.
Kathie L. Puffinbarger, Quapaw, Okla.
Sandra S. Robb, Foster, Mo.
Donald G. Wiley, Lenexa, Kan.

1985

Paul D. Gray, Neosho, Mo.
Dotty R. Hansen, Joplin, Mo.
Karl E. Pabst, Altoona, Penn.
Sarah M. Starkey, Siloam Springs, Ark.
Tom B. Stringer, Topeka, Kan.

1986

Lori A. Carpino, Scammon, Kan.
Roger D. Cornett, Skiatook, Okla.
Tomi L. Hatfield, Miami, Okla.
Sam G. Hedges, Chanute, Kan.
David L. Shipman, Bloomington, Ill.
Lesli A. Soles, Wichita, Kan.

1988

Keith Coonrod, McCune, Kan.
Paula M. Secondo, Mission, Kan.

1990

Donna L. Alvested, Arma, Kan.
Duwayne Graybill, Weatherford, Okla.
Paulla L. Mitchell, Neodesha, Kan.

1991

Tom Audley, Wichita, Kan.
Anita Boatman, Girard, Kan.
Gene A. Jones, Hutchinson, Kan.
Jo Dee Rye, Parsons, Kan.
Greg A. Tallent, Alvin, Texas

1992

Jay D. Atkin, Burlington, Kan.
Terri A. Ellis, Butler, Mo.
Gregory L. Meredith, Tulsa, Okla.
Teresa I. Wood, Joplin, Mo.

1993

Brian W. Burghart, Pittsburg, Kan.

1994

Jon W. Risner, Independence, Kan.
Galen E. Shepard, Burlington, Kan.

1995

Chuck W. Delp, Arma, Kan.
Cindy J. Jones, Scammon, Kan.
Judy A. Scott, Pittsburg, Kan.
Natalie R. Stipanovic, Windsor, Colo.

1997

Chad E. Bright, Cherryvale, Kan.
Holly E. Murdock, Columbus, Kan.
Michael W. Talbot, Coffeyville, Kan.

1998

Jennifer L. Limbacher, Cypress, Calif.
Tamula J. Ward, Independence, Kan.

1999

Kathy Daniels, Valley Center, Kan.

2000

Rhonda K. Cole, Parsons, Kan.
Debbi Scotten, Nevada, Mo.

2001

Jeanne L. McCallum, Parsons, Kan.
Lynn A. Mowder, Paola, Kan.

2002

Heather R. Burgess, Pittsburg, Kan.
Mirjam E. Cascione, Saint Clair Shores, Mich.
Kent A. Thompson, Weir, Kan.

2004

A.J. Brown, Kansas City, Kan.

2005

Barbara J. Combs, Fort Scott, Kan.

2006

Terry L. Barton, Pittsburg, Kan.

2007

Maria G. Barrientos, Siloam Springs, Ark.

2011

Doug W. Drybread, Chanute, Kan.

2012

Ed L. Eichenberger, Pittsburg, Kan.
Jerry W. Springer, Afton, Okla.

2013

Tyler L. Edwards, Archie, Mo.

2017

Andria N. Anderson, Garnett, Kan.

2018

Eric A. Boman, Kansas City, Mo.

A.O. Brown

ENGINEERING AND TECHNOLOGY

A.O. Brown, a longtime professor of engineering and technology, died Dec. 29, 2025. He was 94.

After earning a bachelor's from Pitt State, he enlisted in the U.S. Navy and served in the Korean War. He taught at Pitt State for 36 years.

He is survived by his wife, Donna; four children, Sheri Jo Adkins, Mark Brown, Doug Sellars, and Kimberly Barber, and their families.



Helen Hubbard

ALUMNA – AGE 106

Helen Hubbard, who is thought to have been the oldest graduate at the time of her death, died on June 6 at age 106.

She earned her bachelor's from Kansas State Teachers College of Pittsburg in 1941. She served in the U.S. Army and worked as a dietitian. She was married to Dolph Hubbard for 55 years until his death in 2004.

She is survived by her sons, Dolph Hubbard and Judd Hubbard, and their families.



Anil Lal

ECONOMICS

Anil Lal, professor of economics, died Dec. 23, 2025. He was 68.

Lal, who was teaching remotely for the Kelce College of Business from Pennsylvania, is survived by

his wife, Archana Lal, and their son, Ankit and his family.

Prior to joining the faculty, he worked as an economist in India and as a consultant to the World Bank. He was published in numerous journals and presented at national and international conferences.



William "Bill" Powell

GEOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

William "Bill" Powell, a longtime professor of Geology and Geography, died Jan. 6 at Mercy Hospital. He was 94.

Powell taught Geography and Geology at Pitt State from 1959 until 1995.

He was a veteran of the U.S. Army Signal Corps and the Army Reserves.

He authored numerous articles that documented the history of immigration and coal mining in Southeast Kansas.

He is survived by daughters Sara Powell-Moody and Anne Powell and their families.

The family suggests memorial gifts to the Social Sciences Department. Gifts can be mailed to the PSU Foundation, Inc., PO Box 4005, Pittsburg, KS 66762 or given online at pittstate.edu/givenow.



William "Bill" Samuels

FORMER ATHLETIC DIRECTOR AND COACH

Longtime coach and former athletic director William "Bill" Samuels died July 2, 2026. He was 90.

Samuels was a three-year letterwinner for the Gorilla football team. A defining moment of his playing career came in the 1957 NAIA National Championship game, when Pitt State defeated Hillsdale College, 27-26, in the Holiday Bowl. He kicked the decisive extra point that helped secure the Gorillas' first national championship.

After graduating in 1958, he joined the U.S. Marine Corps. For 29 years, he was a coach, instructor, and athletic administrator at Pitt State, and taught in the Health, Physical Education, and Recreation Department. He coached numerous positions with the football program. From 1990 to 1996, he was Pitt State's athletic director and helped guide the university's transition from NAIA to NCAA affiliation.

He was inducted into the Pitt State Intercollegiate Athletics Hall of Fame in 1998.

He is survived by his wife, Fran Samuels, and his children, Susan Dellasega, Valerie Grisham, and Scott Samuels, and their families.

The family asks that expressions of sympathy be in the form of memorials to Our Lady of Lourdes Memorial Fund and/or Pitt State Athletics.



Donald "Earl" Ward

PSYCHOLOGY

Donald "Earl" Ward, a longtime professor of Psychology, died Feb. 7. He was 79.

His career spanned 43 years at Pitt State and Ball State University until his retirement in 2017.

He and his wife, Susan, lived in England and Spain for a year while he taught at U.S. Air Force bases in the mid-1970s.

He was a member of psychology and counseling boards and organizations, published numerous articles and textbook chapters, and was awarded the Pitt State Psychology and Counseling Department Lifetime Achievement Award.

Survivors include a son, Christopher Ward, of Greensboro, North Carolina; a daughter, Jennifer Glenn, of Joplin, Missouri, and their families; and a sister, Denise Brewer, of Silver Spring, Maryland, and her family.



A.J. Wachter

ATHLETICS HALL OF FAME

Athletics Hall of Fame member A.J. Wachter 83, of Pittsburg, died June 7, 2026. He was 83.

A lifelong resident of Pittsburg, he earned a bachelor's in 1967. He served in the U.S.

Army Reserves from 1961 to 1969, then worked in private law practice until 2002 with Wilbert and Towner Law Firm in Pittsburg and served as president of the Crawford County Bar Association.

He was appointed by Gov. Bill Graves in 2002 as Kansas District Judge for the 11th Judicial District, serving on the bench for 15 years, including four as chief judge, until his retirement in 2017.

A member of the Gorilla football team from 1963 to 1966, he was inducted into the Pitt State Athletics Hall of Fame in 2017 for Meritorious Achievement. He was a lifetime supporter of Pitt State Athletics and shared many lifetime friendships with his teammates and coaches.

Survivors include his wife; three sons and their families; and two brothers and their families.

The family asked expressions of sympathy be in the form of memorials to the Our Lady of Lourdes Memorial Fund and/or Pitt State Athletics.



Planned Giving

The PSU Foundation would like to recognize the following individual for creating a planned gift.

Shelly Kiblinger

Shelly Kiblinger (BSEd '89, MEd '97), devoted her career to education in several Kansas school districts — first as a teacher, then a principal and superintendent — and most recently by serving on the Kansas Board of Regents and the PSU Foundation Board of Trustees.

It was her service on the Foundation Board that inspired her to create a planned gift for Pittsburg State University to fund scholarships for future education majors who come from each of the school districts at which she worked (Fredonia, Garden City, Hutchinson, and Cherryvale) and her high school alma mater, Neodesha.

“I became an educator to give Kansas kids an opportunity to pursue their dreams,” she said. “When I began serving on the Foundation Board, I realized the need for scholarships is so great. The answer became clear: setting up a planned gift like this at my alma mater will make a positive impact on Kansas kids for generations to come.”

Kiblinger wanted to ensure her wishes were outlined clearly in advance, and planned giving allowed her to do that.

“I have seen the difference an education can make, and I was fortunate to have a family that supported me, but as a teacher, I saw many kids who did not have that opportunity,” she said. “You don’t have to have millions of dollars to be a legacy donor — you can still do something meaningful and lasting through planned giving.”

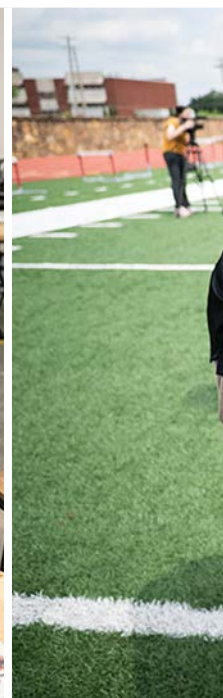
“Doing this means I can keep making a difference long after I’m gone, and I feel really good about that.”



For more information regarding the Heritage Society and leaving a legacy, visit pittstate.giftlegacy.com.

The Summer Camp program at Pitt State has grown in recent years to provide youth with a range of opportunities to pursue their interests outside of the classroom. Day camps in sports, music, construction, robotics, reading, nature, and more help them grow their individual skills and try new experiences. For most camps, enrollment opens in March. Learn more at pittstate.edu/summercamps.

1. Music Department faculty and alumni get to know participants in the Summer Strings Camp in McCray Hall. Campers concluded the camp with a public concert.
2. Associate Head Basketball Coach Jamahl DePriest runs campers through the paces during Basketball Camp in John Lance Arena/Whetzel Court.
3. A camper takes a swing during Baseball Camp at the Gene Bicknell Sports Complex.
4. Two campers work together to create a STEM project in the Idea Shop at Block22 — a makerspace at Fourth & Broadway utilized for several camps open to a variety of ages.
5. Gorilla Wide Receiver Khali Best signs the shirt of a camper on Brandenburg Field at Carnie Smith Stadium.
6. Youth from across the region rehearse together in the 3rd Annual Josiah Fletcher Jazz Camp, a collaboration by the Music Department, the Bicknell Center, and the Josiah Fletcher Foundation taught by faculty, alumni, and university students.
7. From left, graduates Melinda Weis (BBA '83) and Lisa Otto (BS '83) build birdhouses with their grandsons August Lane and Owen Hughes during the first Grandparents University camp, coordinated by Alumni & Constituent Relations. Participants rotated through academic learning stations and finished the day with their own "graduation" ceremony.
8. Professor Barbara McClaskey engages participants in Nursing Camp, which gave youth the opportunity to learn about CPR, Ace bandage wrapping, blood flow, patient care, and more.
9. A camper in Nature Reach Camp harvests a potato for the first time, one of many hands-on experiences at the Nature Reach preserve that allowed youth to get outside their comfort zone to explore animals, plants, and ecosystems.







Pittsburg State University

1701 S. Broadway

Pittsburg, KS 66762-7500

NONPROFIT
U.S. Postage
PAID
Pittsburg State
University

ONCE A GORILLA. ALWAYS A GORILLA.

RIDE WITH GORILLA PRIDE

Invest in a Gorilla license plate and support future Gorillas.

Plates available in Kansas, Missouri, and Oklahoma. The annual, tax-deductible donation supports student scholarships.

Learn more at pittstate.edu/licenseplate.



SAVE THE DATE

Homecoming Week 2026: October 12-17

'90s Greek Reunion

Join us for a '90s Greek Homecoming Reunion filled with tradition, Gorilla Pride, and a chance to reconnect! Learn more at pittstate.edu/90sgreeks.



Overman Student Center 75th Anniversary

Celebrate the 75th Anniversary of the Jack H. Overman Student Center! Learn more at pittstate.edu/osc75.

GATHER AND STAY CONNECTED

Stay connected with Pittsburg State by attending a Gorilla Gathering in your area hosted by Alumni & Constituent Relations.

For a list of upcoming events and e-newsletter information, visit pittstate.edu/alumni.



Pittsburg State University Alumni & Constituent Relations



@pittstatealumni • pittstate.edu/alumni • 620-235-4758