

AUSTIN PEAY

ALUMNI MAGAZINE

The official alumni
magazine of Austin Peay
State University

Fall 2026



#BeABusinessGov



AACSB
ACCREDITED

The Gobs Mean Business



During commencement night in May, I stood in a room full of newly commissioned Army officers and thought about a decision made more than 50 years ago. In January 1971, APSU announced it would establish an ROTC program. The approval was described at the time as a “substantial addition” to the university. That was, I think, an understatement.

On that Friday night, the Governors Guard Battalion commissioned its 1,000th officer, and the weight of that number is difficult to overstate. One thousand men and women — students who walked our halls, attended our classes, lived in our community — went on to lead and serve in our Army. It was one of the most memorable evenings I have spent at this university.

That night also reminded me that we have so much to celebrate in the coming year, Austin Peay's 100th.

A centennial invites us to look back, and we will. But what stays with me about 1971 is that no one in that room was thinking about an anniversary. They were making a decision, and the decision compounded for five decades. That is how I have come to see our 100th year, less a birthday than a starting line. The choices we make now are the ones someone will stand in a room and marvel at in 2076.

We are already making them. This year, our College of Business earned AACSB accreditation, a distinction held by fewer than 6% of business schools worldwide. Austin Peay is not simply growing anymore. We are being measured against the very best.

And none of it happens without the university's people.

In these pages you will meet Margaret Douglas, who arrived as an administrative assistant, saw what our students were missing, and built the College of Business's Student Success Center before retiring this summer. You will meet Dr. Mike Phillips, who taught his first class here in 1990 and calls it the moment he found his life's work.

Decisions compound over time. A decision made years ago touches more lives every following year. Moments can be momentous.

So here is my invitation: On Monday, April 26, 2027, we will gather on the Evans Harvill Quad to open our second century together.

Be there.

I want to stand in that crowd with you and think about what we are starting. Think about what your presence will bring over the next 100 years.

Thank you for making moments like these possible.

And, as always, thank you for all that you do for our students!

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Mike Licari".

Dr. Mike Licari
APSU President

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For questions, email **alumni@apsu.edu**.

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Soldiers' Choice

APSU emerges as top pick for Army nursing students

Austin Peay State University has become the nation's leading destination for soldiers pursuing nursing degrees through the Army Medical Department's (AMEDD) enlisted commissioning pathway.

Twelve AMEDD students graduated with their BSNs in May, and the university has averaged a 97% NCLEX pass rate over the last three years. In recent years, soldiers selected for the pathway have chosen APSU ahead of any other program in the country — including 32 of 50 nationwide in 2024.



Setting the Stage

Austin Peay graduate students produce original musical on Belizean unrest

Alysia Norales and Cameron Tillett made history by creating what is believed to be the first international Belizean musical—and it premiered on campus this May at the APSU Fringe.

Nora, A Belizean Musical tells the story of Nora Parham, a woman wrongfully executed in 1963 for the alleged murder of her abusive husband, and the protests that followed. The work blends traditional Belizean music styles like Brukdown and Punta with theatrical elements and has been well-received by members of the Belizean diaspora.



Nursing, Fast-Track

TCAT-Dickson, APSU launch LPN-to-BSN pathway

TCAT Dickson and Austin Peay State University have signed an agreement giving TCAT Dickson practical nursing graduates 27 credit hours toward APSU's Bachelor of Science in Nursing—more LPN credit than any other Tennessee university.

The accelerated pathway also allows graduates to finish their BSN in three years instead of four. Students are taking prerequisite courses through the agreement as of Fall 2026, with nursing courses starting in Fall 2027.



A Sound Solution

STEM majors design acoustic system to protect regional water supply

Engineering physics students Casey Holly, Lily Skau, and Eric Rose have developed a promising, low-cost solution that could be used to inspect a critical water pipeline serving 13 Tennessee and Kentucky communities without shutting off the water supply.

Rather than traditional robotic inspection, their project uses an acoustic monitoring system to detect sediment buildup. The work earned the top prize at the College of STEM's annual Innovation Experience and was sponsored by the Logan Todd Regional Water Commission, with the potential to be permanently installed.



More to the Table

APSU Food Pantry expands resources through partnership with Second Harvest

The Austin Peay State University Food Pantry recently announced a major partnership with Second Harvest Food Bank of Middle Tennessee, increasing the volume of resources available for students as the pantry prepares to move into the Millan Foundation Impact Center next year.

As a community partner, Austin Peay can now order from Second Harvest online or pick up items from their free store, including frozen foods and fresh produce. The university also has access to the nonprofit's case management software to track pantry usage and manage inventory.



Rooted in Restoration

SGI picks up record \$10M to restore Tennessee's grasslands

The Southeastern Grasslands Institute (SGI) at APSU has received a significant grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's (NFWF) America's Ecosystem Restoration Initiative (AERI), which, combined with matching contributions from benefactors, brings the project total to \$10 million.

The funding will be used to identify, restore, and reconstruct approximately 2,500 acres of grasslands in Central Tennessee over the next four years. The Turner Foundation also awarded SGI a \$50,000 grant to support restoration efforts in northwest Georgia and across the southern tip of the Appalachians.



Welcome Home

Transfer Enrollment Services and Advisement centralizes support for transfer students

Austin Peay State University has optimized its support for transfer students with the launch of Transfer Enrollment Services and Advisement, a formalized office dedicated to guiding them through their move to APSU.

The office brings the university's existing transfer enrollment and advising functions into a single team. Its professional staff members offer comprehensive services through each student's first semester, from transcript and credit evaluations to academic planning.

A New Chapter

APSU establishes Honors College

Austin Peay State University's Honors College began operating on Aug. 1, bringing the university's high-impact learning programs together to strengthen recruitment and support for high-achieving students.

The college houses the Honors Program and the President's Emerging Leaders Program (PELP), alongside three offices dedicated to hands-on learning: the Office of Global Education and Competitive Fellowships, the Office of Undergraduate Research and Innovative Learning, and the newly created Office of Community-Engaged Learning.

Dr. Tony Morris will serve as interim dean during a national search for permanent leadership, with the new dean expected to start in July 2027.



Moments, Not Money

Free commencement photography saves graduates \$425K and counting

Austin Peay State University's free commencement photography recently surpassed \$425,000 in estimated savings, a milestone reached just two years after the Office of Public Relations and Marketing began handling the service.

Thousands of graduates have benefited from the program, which provides in-house professional photos with no download limits or access fees. Photos are added to a searchable archive within a month of each ceremony, making one of the most important parts of the Austin Peay experience accessible to all students and their families.



Decade of Belonging

Full Spectrum Learning celebrates 10 years at APSU

Full Spectrum Learning (FSL) hosted its annual Autism Awareness Week this year, marking the 10th anniversary of Tennessee's largest support program for neurodiverse students.

Throughout the week, attendees met with FSL students and staff, learned about program resources, and heard how FSL has supported autistic students in achieving their academic and career goals. The program served over 60 students in 2025-26 and has become a national model for fostering success and belonging.



THE MAN BEHIND THE MASCOT: **AJ CROWDER**

Spring 2026 graduate AJ Crowder is used to big stages. For four years, he has worked inside packed arenas and stadiums, creating moments that linger long after the event. This spring, the man behind the Gov stepped into the spotlight as himself and hung up the top hat.

Crowder received his bachelor's degree in communication media in May, marking the end of his four-year journey as APSU's first scholarship mascot. In 2022, he came from Greenbrier, better known then as Bobby the Bobcat. He made the Gov larger than life while learning to tell the university's story in the classroom and on the field. His final project traced the pop-culture inspirations behind the Gov, from costumes and dances to the "showstopper" pose, tying sports communication concepts directly to what fans see on game day.

"The lessons that I've learned in the classroom, in the costume and just as a human here at Austin Peay State University are some of the biggest lessons that I've learned in my life," Crowder said.

Over four seasons, Crowder helped redefine game-day energy at Austin Peay, reimagining the Gov's look midway through his tenure, crafting skits rooted in campus and Clarksville culture, and taking the character into some of college sports' biggest venues at the University of Tennessee, Georgia, Alabama and Louisville.

He competed at collegiate mascot nationals all four years, placing second as a freshman and winning APSU's first national championship as a sophomore. His final nationals routine was part reflection, part thank-you note, an homage to his four years at APSU that ended with the high school dance that first put him on the path to becoming the Governor.

The journey was not always easy. Three weeks after he won the 2024 title, his grandmother died. He almost walked away from the suit. Instead, he carried her initials on his wrist under the costume for every game and appearance.

"When you can turn one of your lowest points into one of your biggest motivations, that's how you overcome," he said.

The lesson became part of the job: show up, be present, turn love into fuel.

Looking back, he remembers being a toddler chanting "Let's Go Peay" because he wanted to act like the Gov. He remembers young kids who met their first mascot at Austin Peay.



"I hope they remember the love and unity," he said. "The small moments, one high five, one positive interaction, that can turn someone's day."

His guidance for the next Gov is simple and sturdy: Be yourself, represent Austin Peay the best you can and do not let expectations bury your passion.

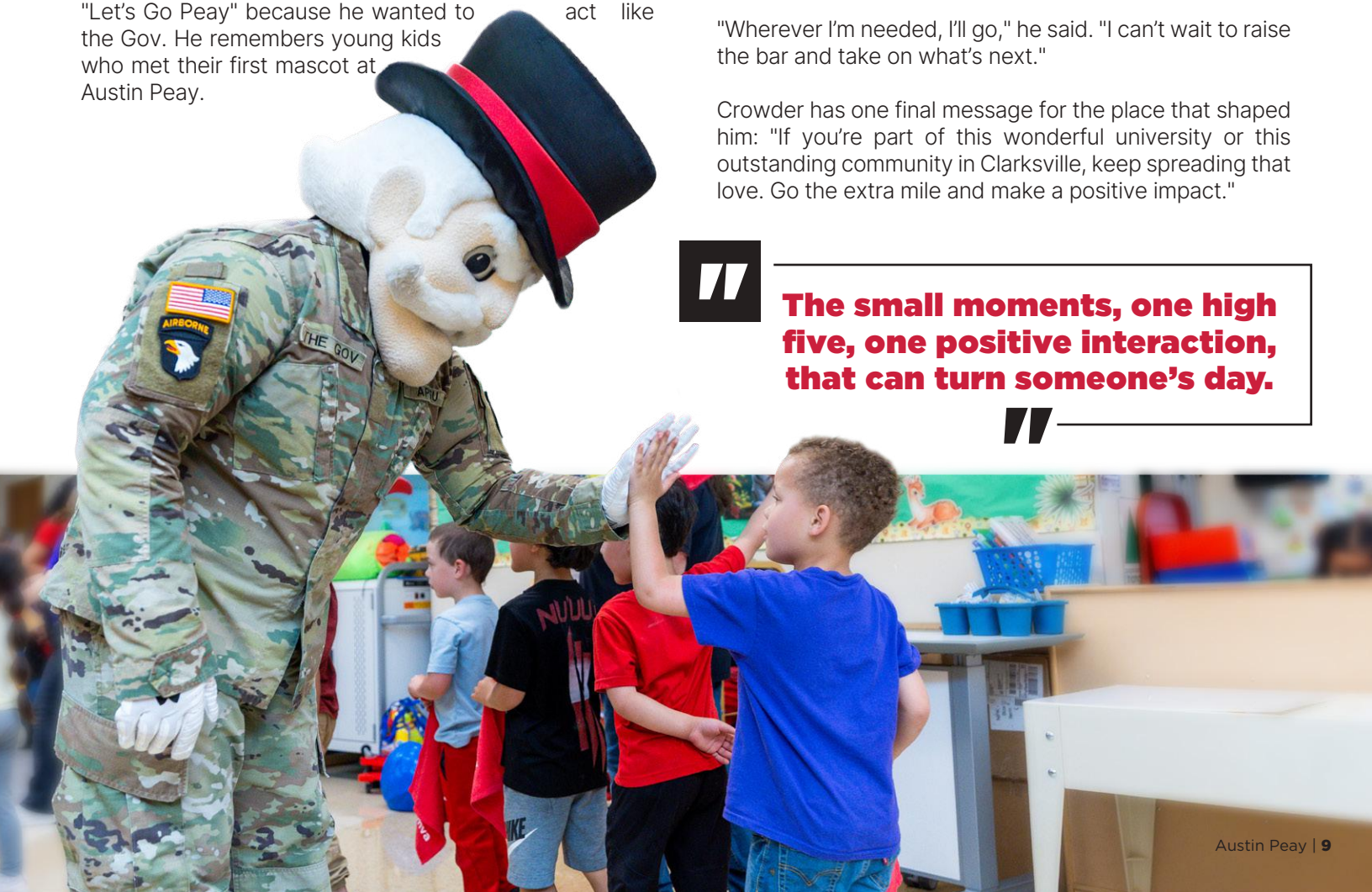
Crowder is currently looking for mascot and mascot-manager roles in the pros. With his next endeavors, he hopes to bring his showmanship and storytelling.

"Wherever I'm needed, I'll go," he said. "I can't wait to raise the bar and take on what's next."

Crowder has one final message for the place that shaped him: "If you're part of this wonderful university or this outstanding community in Clarksville, keep spreading that love. Go the extra mile and make a positive impact."



The small moments, one high five, one positive interaction, that can turn someone's day.





TOP OF THE CLASS

APSU's College of Business meets highest standards with AACSB accreditation

The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) has announced that APSU's College of Business has earned AACSB accreditation, a distinction held by less than 6% of business schools worldwide.

AACSB is the premier global accrediting body for business education and is recognized as the highest standard of quality. To earn accreditation, schools undergo a rigorous multi-year evaluation process.

"I am incredibly proud of our faculty and staff, whose dedication, talent, and commitment to excellence have made this achievement possible," said Dr. Mickey Hepner, dean of the College of Business. "AACSB accreditation is both a recognition of their work and a testament to the culture of continuous improvement we have built together. At Austin Peay State University, this milestone is not a culmination, but a catalyst—one that challenges us to keep growing, to lead with purpose, and to expand our impact across Middle Tennessee and beyond."



APSU President Mike Licari said the accreditation is a platform for future growth and credited the College of Business's faculty and staff for their dedication.

"This is a direct reflection of every faculty and staff member in the college," Licari said. "They dedicate themselves to continuously improving and sustaining excellence in and out of the classroom. Dean [Mickey] Hepner and his team continue to elevate the college to new heights, and the

impact of this accreditation will benefit our students for years to come."

Behind the accreditation are the people who enriched the journey. Meet a few of them:

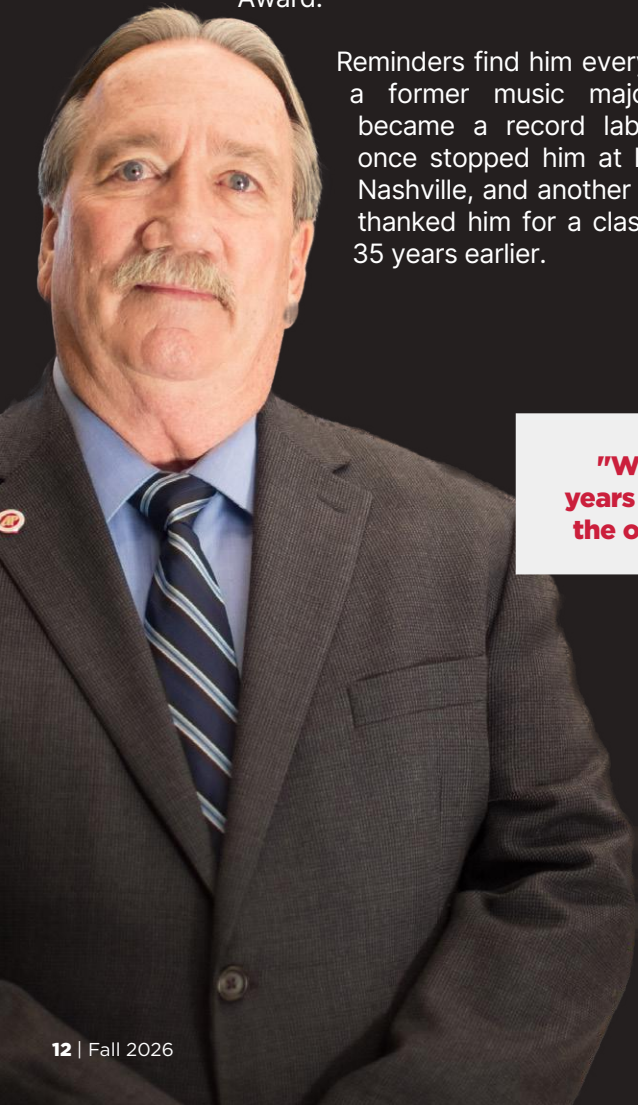
Dr. Mike Phillips: Teaching Beyond the Textbook

Dr. Mike Phillips was building a corporate career in real estate and finance when his MBA professor asked him to teach a few courses as an adjunct.

"The very first class I taught hit me like a bolt of lightning — I had found my real career passion and calling," he said.

Taking that risk brought him to Austin Peay in 1990, where the finance professor has spent over 35 years pushing students beyond the textbook. A first-generation college graduate, he saw his own story in APSU's students and set out to help them discover what was possible. His honors include the Socrates Award and the A.J. Taylor Distinguished Professor Award.

Reminders find him everywhere: a former music major who became a record label CFO once stopped him at lunch in Nashville, and another student thanked him for a class taken 35 years earlier.



"What got me through these four years were my peers, my mentors, and the opportunities they helped open!"

Daniela Díaz Campos: Building a Big Four Future

At 16, Daniela Díaz Campos boarded a one-way flight from Cuba, unable to hug her grandmother goodbye without risking her family's chance to leave. She spent high school learning English before and after class, driven by memories of her grandfather working 12-hour factory shifts without getting ahead, then arrived at Austin Peay determined to make the sacrifice count.

The accounting and finance double major chased every opportunity: five internships, two published research projects, volunteer tax prep through VITA, and the presidency of Business Govs Serve, which won the Division of Student Affairs' "Best Program" award for collecting 300 bags of food for Fuel for Kids.

"What got me through these four years were my peers, my mentors, and the opportunities they helped open," she said.

She walked the commencement stage this spring with an offer from EY, a Big Four accounting firm, accomplishing the dream she has worked toward since arriving in the U.S.



Margaret Douglas: Taking the Time

Margaret Douglas joined the College of Business 15 years ago as an administrative assistant. By her retirement this summer, she had become director of student success and founded the college's Student Success Center, building a dedicated support network students had been missing.

The center's advising model is now central to the college's career readiness efforts. A nontraditional student herself, Douglas advised with the care she never received.

"I look at everyone's credits coming in to prevent repeat classes," she said. "Nobody took the time to look at my transcripts. I wanted to change that."

For Douglas, advising is also about connecting with students.

"I want students to find something they're passionate about," she said. "It's about talking to them and relating their interests to the degree they want to pursue."

The team she mentored now carries that work forward, sustaining the college's culture of student success.



Kameron Young: Finding His Voice

When Kameron Young arrived at Austin Peay from Clarksville High School, the transition felt overwhelming. Then came one crucial "yes" during orientation: joining the College of Business Living Learning Community, where first-year students share housing, classes and engagement opportunities.

Now a sophomore, the finance major credits the LLC's support with helping him find his voice. Classmates encouraged him through their public speaking course, and he returned the favor when they struggled in economics. The group posted a combined 3.64 GPA in its first semester.

"Just knowing that I'm surrounded by people who also care heavily about not only business, but their careers, success, and goals, really helped me," Young said. "Honestly, they're going to be my lifelong friends."

He hasn't slowed down since — attending industry networking events, joining the Hospitality and Tourism Society and studying abroad in May.



"I want students to find something they're passionate about."

ONE IN A THOUSAND

Austin Peay ROTC makes history with 1,000th officer, record class of honorees

The 2025-26 academic year was a milestone for Austin Peay's ROTC program, which commissioned its 1,000th U.S. Army officer and saw a record 12 cadets earn the Distinguished Military Graduate (DMG) designation.

Together, these achievements tell the story of a program that has spent decades shaping APSU students into Army officers, with the Governors Guard now standing among the strongest commissioning sources in the country.

A salute across generations

When APSU announced plans to establish an ROTC program in January 1971, then-President Joe Morgan described the approval from the U.S. Army as a "substantial addition" to the university.

More than five decades later, that addition reached a historic milestone. In May, the Governors Guard commissioned its newest class of second lieutenants — and with them, the 1,000th Army officer in program history.

No one in the room, not even the cadets, knew who held the honor until each graduate received a numbered commemorative coin following the ceremony's traditional

pinning and first salute. Cadet Christopher Martin, who commissioned into the Army's logistics branch, learned in real time that the milestone was his.

"It was a long two years, but there were a lot of good times in this program," Martin said. "Everybody thinks about commissioning and what comes next, but one of the biggest things I learned here was not to live in yesterday or stress about next week. Just take today as it is."

Martin earned a bachelor's degree in criminal justice and commissioned as an active-duty officer after previously serving as a military police staff sergeant through the Army's Green to Gold Active Duty Option Program. He was pinned by his grandfather, John Huffman, a U.S. Army veteran, who also delivered Martin's first salute.

"This milestone represents generations of Austin Peay students who answered the call to serve," said Lt. Col. Daniel Manor, professor of military science. "For more than 50 years, the Governors Guard has developed leaders of character for the Army and for our communities. Reaching 1,000 commissioned officers is a reflection of the excellence, sacrifice and commitment that define this program."



"This milestone represents generations of Austin Peay students who answered the call to serve."

A distinguished dozen

Months earlier, the program celebrated a different milestone when 12 cadets earned the Army's DMG designation. The honor is awarded to fewer than 20% of cadets across more than 270 ROTC programs and recognizes exceptional academic performance, leadership, and physical fitness.

APSU's recipients from 2025 include Daniel Barrera, Connor Cornwell, Derek Fulks, Christopher Higuchi, Robert Leon, Jessica L'Hoste, Ethan McNamara, Raphael Oshodi, Micheal Walker, Jaryd Ward, Andrew Wells, and Heath Williams.

"This group is simply outstanding," Manor said. "Each of these soon-to-be second lieutenants has demonstrated the initiative, discipline and energy that define the future of our Army. I'd have any of them in my organization from day one."

The record cohort reflects a program still gaining momentum. The Governors Guard, an eight-time recipient of the General Douglas MacArthur Award recognizing the nation's top ROTC battalions, welcomed 43 freshmen in Fall 2025.

"The university's already challenged us to see if we can take 80," Manor said. "That speaks volumes about the confidence in what we're building here. The Governors Guard is competing with—and outperforming—programs at much larger universities."





SEVEN PROGRAMS, **ONE PURPOSE**

APSU's largest simulation to date prepares students for emergency response

Austin Peay's most ambitious collaborative simulation took place on April 13, when roughly 250 students, faculty, and actors recreated the aftermath of a drunk driving crash. Led by Dr. Adrienne Wilk of the School of Nursing, the exercise carried students through first response, treatment, family notification, and post-event communication.

The stakes were intentional: Tennessee recorded 332 drunk driving fatalities in 2024, and nearly one in three traffic deaths statewide is caused by impaired driving. Students from seven disciplines took part, each putting their training to the test during a fast-moving emergency.



Emergency Medical Service (EMS) students Gavin Weddington, at left, and Noah Garcia, at right, demonstrate rapid assessment, patient extrication, and the ability to carry out life-saving interventions while coordinating patient transport from the simulated crash scene. Nursing student Leon Britton played the role of the patient.



Medical laboratory science (MLS) majors Toniayah Rizer, at left, and Vanessa Lahoud analyze a variety of diagnostic tests, including blood alcohol levels and toxicology panels. This allowed them to communicate critical test results to the healthcare team to help guide patient treatment.



Nursing students Abigail Isikhuemhen, at left; Robin Tandarich, at center; and Jasmin Sando manage patient care in the simulated hospital, coordinating treatment and collaborating with multiple healthcare professions. The setting strengthened their ability to communicate under pressure and care for those in need.



Criminal justice major Sarah Smith, at right, investigates suspected impaired driving as part of the coordinated emergency response to the simulated crash scene. Smith and other criminal justice students were also responsible for securing the scene, managing traffic, and interviewing witnesses.

Radiologic technology majors Kimberly Traugher, at left, and GeorgeAnna Belle Strange perform diagnostic imaging as part of an integrated hospital team, providing critical information to guide patient diagnosis and treatment. The patient went into cardiac arrest as part of the scenario, requiring the students to perform life-sustaining interventional measures.



Social work major Jorge Haro, at right, provides trauma counseling and emotional support for radiologic technology major Calvin Sheffield, who portrayed a grieving husband as part of the simulation. Haro said he appreciated the chance to learn, make mistakes, and receive feedback before taking on real-world scenarios.



Philosophy and religion major Patrick Horst, at left, and communication major Branton Brunner, at right, speak with nursing major Emma Stewart while reporting live from the simulated crash scene. The two conducted interviews with first responders and witnesses, and also participated in a mock press briefing.





I'm proud to share that Austin Peay raised over \$23 million in fiscal year 2026—our second-highest fundraising year in 99 years, and a testament to your unwavering commitment to our students.

This year, 2,861 donors made 7,240 gifts, representing a 3.58% increase in donors and 3.87% increase in gifts. Candlelight Ball broke all previously established records for event fundraising, bringing in \$423,615 for student scholarships and academic programs - that's over \$1 million raised by investors like you over the last four years. We also celebrated 10 years of Gobs Give this spring, raising \$423,866 with 1,290 gifts. The milestone campaign capped a decade that has generated over \$3 million for student success

initiatives at Austin Peay.

With broad support from our donors, 31 new endowments totaling \$6.5 million were established, and 999 students received a total of \$2.2 million in scholarship funding during the year.

We are full steam ahead for Austin Peay's 2027 centennial celebrations. We hope you will plan to join us on campus on Monday, April 26, 2027 at the Evans Harvill Quad for a special centennial celebration. Trust me - you'll want to be there.

You know the Gobs who've made a difference—this is your chance to put them in the spotlight. Help us celebrate a century of Governor excellence by nominating outstanding alumni and friends across business, athletics, the arts, education, STEM, health sciences, military service, and volunteer leadership to be recognized as Notable Peayple during our centennial celebration. Submit your nominations at www.alumni.apsu.edu/notablepeayple to honor the remarkable individuals who have shaped Austin Peay's legacy for the last century. Your nominations matter—help us celebrate the Gobs who deserve recognition.

Your investment in Austin Peay is powering something bigger than buildings and programs—it's fueling dreams, launching careers, and changing lives. As we celebrate 100 years in 2027, the best is yet to come. Thank you for making it possible.

Sincerely,



Kristopher R. Phillips, MSL ('91, '21)

APSU Vice President for Alumni, Engagement and Philanthropy

Executive Director of the APSU Foundation

National Alumni Association Executive Board

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This has been a great year for Austin Peay State University's Office of Alumni and Engagement. Record-breaking fundraising, expanded gatherings across the country, and new alumni leadership are ready to take our community to the next level.

Thank you to everyone who participated in Goves Give 2026, our milestone 10th annual day of giving. Under the theme "It All Starts at Austin Peay," you rallied to raise \$423,866 through 1,290 gifts, pushing our decade-long total beyond \$3 million invested in student success. Mark your calendars for Goves Give 2027 on April 27-28 during Austin Peay's historic centennial year.

Our Goves Gatherings continue to draw record turnout, with recent events in Murfreesboro, Chattanooga, Memphis, Nashville, Jacksonville, San Antonio, Houston, and Dallas. As we expand to more cities, we're committed to meeting alumni where they are and creating opportunities to reconnect with fellow Governors. Stay tuned for upcoming dates.

This summer, the APSU National Alumni Association Board welcomed 12 new members to its board of directors: Montrell Besley ('04, '09), Tom Chester ('73), Amanda Fryer ('06, '12), Jana Gilbert ('14, '22), Gloria Humphrey ('89), Jonathan Jeans ('14), Jasmine Jones ('04), Krista Miller ('17, '18), Tyler Rose ('26), Emily Tardiff ('18), Jim Walker Jr. ('81), and Zavion Williams ('15, '20, '25). This expanded board brings dynamic professional expertise and leadership that will strengthen the Goves For Life Experience. As the board grows, we're expanding alumni chapter engagement across more communities while creating meaningful opportunities for alumni to connect, serve, and support Austin Peay.

Save the date for Homecoming 2026, which will take place Oct. 2-3. We look forward to welcoming you back to campus for this special weekend of celebration.

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

Sincerely,

Brad Averitt ('10, '17) Associate Vice President for Alumni and Engagement



Goves Give Celebrates 10 Years, \$3 Million Raised

Goves Give 2026 raised \$423,866 with 1,290 gifts, capping a decade that has generated over \$3 million for student success. The campaign has grown 82% in donor participation since its 2017 launch during APSU's 90th anniversary.

The funding enables first-generation students to accept internships, students to present research at national conferences, faculty to launch innovative teaching initiatives, and much more.

"Over the past decade, Goves Give has become a testament to our alumni, faculty, staff, and friends' commitment to Austin Peay and our students," Vice President for Alumni, Engagement and Philanthropy Kris Phillips said.

SAVE THE DATE

Goves Give 2027 will begin at 10 a.m. on Tuesday, April 27 and run until 7:27 p.m. on Wednesday, April 28.

LEADING THE WAY:

Meet the APSU Foundation Board

A distinguished group of business and community leaders is guiding the Austin Peay State University Foundation, beginning their service in the 2026-27 fiscal year, bringing expertise that spans banking, real estate, finance, and public service. Members ensure compliance with applicable policies and laws while actively cultivating philanthropic support for scholarships, academic programs, and other university priorities.

Executive Committee

Thomas "Tommy" Bates, Chair – President, Legends Bank, Clarksville
Barry Kulback, Vice Chair – Retired, Trane Technologies, Clarksville
Kathryn Wedemeyer, Secretary – Owner, Allstate Insurance Company, Gallatin

Board Members

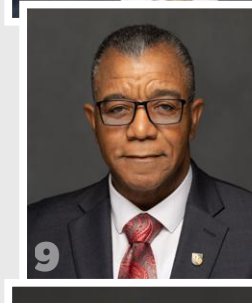
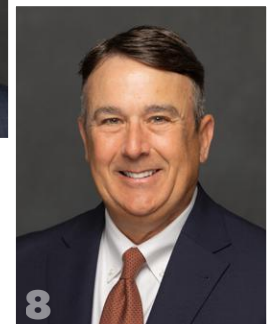
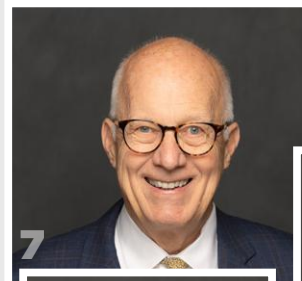
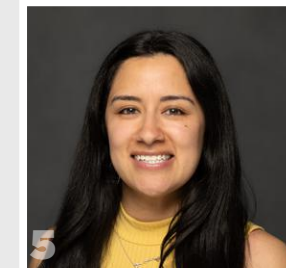
James Corlew Jr. – Real Estate Development, Clarksville
Ginny Gray Davis – Vice President of Business Development, EnSafe, Knoxville
Doug Downey – Retired Vice President of Treasury, HCA, Springfield
Arianna Millan Hamilton – Organizational Consultant, Millan Enterprises, LLC, Anchorage, Alaska
Lawson Mabry – Real Estate Development, Clarksville
Evans Peay – Owner, Peay and Company, Clarksville
Joe Shakeenab – Clarksville City Council (Ward 11) / Shakeenab Consulting, Clarksville
Jennifer Ventimiglia – CEO, Fortera Credit Union, Clarksville
Brad Withrow – Retired Partner/CPA, Ernst & Young, Hendersonville
Larry Rocconi – Legal Counsel, Mitchell Ross Rocconi, PLLC, Clarksville

The foundation's investment committee is chaired by Brad Withrow, and Larry Rocconi of Mitchell Ross Rocconi, PLLC, serves as the foundation's legal counsel.

"It's a privilege to serve alongside such a dedicated group of community and business leaders who share a commitment to Austin Peay State University's mission," Bates said. "This board brings dynamic expertise and a unified vision to ensure the foundation continues providing critical support for scholarships, academic excellence, and opportunities that transform students' lives."

Since its establishment in 1975, the foundation has served as a vital partner, stewarding resources that support scholarships, academic programs, and university priorities beyond traditional funding sources.

Tommy Bates (1), James Corlew Jr. (2), Ginny Gray Davis (3), Doug Downey (4), Arianna Millan Hamilton (5), Barry Kulback (6), Lawson Mabry (7), Evans Peay (8), Joe Shakeenab (9), Jennifer Ventimiglia (10), Kathryn Wedemeyer (11), Brad Withrow (12), and Larry Rocconi (13)



AP₁₀₀

Ready for 100: *Join the Celebration*

2027 is APSU's year.

Austin Peay State University turns 100 in 2027, and we're inviting every Governor—past, present, and future—to be part of the celebration. What began as a two-year teacher-training school has become one of Tennessee's fastest-growing universities, serving over 11,000 students. But this milestone isn't about looking back. It's about launching the next century of Governor excellence.

We need your help making it happen.

An element of our centennial celebration is "Notable Peayple"—a year-long spotlight on extraordinary Governors who exemplify what this university can create. Business titans. Athletic legends. Creative mentors. Historic trailblazers. STEM innovators. Healthcare heroes. Educators who change lives. Military veterans. Community champions. They're all part of our story.

And we want YOU to tell us who they are.

Continue to submit your nominations at www.alumni.apsu.edu/notablepeayple. Nominate the professor who changed your path. The classmate who went on to do impossible things. The alumni leader who embodies the Govs For Life Experience. Every event in 2027 will celebrate this milestone—but it starts with identifying the people who make APSU exceptional.

This isn't just a birthday party. It's a launchpad. From 1927's humble beginning to today's thriving campus, Austin Peay has transformed countless lives. The next 100 years start with the community we build together right now. Watch for the official launch of our centennial celebration website, where you'll find more ways to participate in events throughout 2027.



AUSTIN PEAY STATE UNIVERSITY



CANDLELIGHT BALL

Four Years Running: **Inside Candlelight Ball's Million-Dollar Momentum**

The champagne flowed and the ballroom sparkled, but nothing shined brighter than the generosity on display at the 42nd Annual Candlelight Ball. On an unforgettable evening at the Renaissance Nashville Hotel, APSU's signature fundraising event reached a historic milestone: \$423,615 raised for student scholarships and academic programs—the highest total in the event's 42-year history.

Even more remarkable? This marks the fourth consecutive year the Candlelight Ball has shattered its own record. In just four years, this beloved black-tie affair has raised over \$1 million for Austin Peay students, fueled by an expanding circle of supporters—32% of this year's underwriters were first-time sponsors.

"The energy in the room this year was electric, with so many new faces and sponsors joining our APSU family," said Vice President for Alumni, Engagement and Philanthropy Kris Phillips. "As we look ahead to our centennial celebration next year, we are thrilled about the momentum we're building together. The best is yet to come for Candlelight Ball and Austin Peay."

Transformative Giving

The evening featured several major gift announcements that will create lasting impact. An anonymous donor made a \$150,000 gift honoring the College of Business's AACSB accreditation. Ascension St. Thomas established a \$50,000 endowment. Scott and Tammy Cowan announced a commitment to create APSU's first scholarship endowment for resident assistants and hall directors—commemorating how they met while







working as RAs on campus. Judge Ken Goble unveiled a crowd-funded initiative for the 20/10 Scholarship Endowment, supporting justice-involved juveniles through education.

Honoring Austin Peay's Champions

The Candlelight Ball recognized two pillars of the APSU community. Shelia ('71) and Mitchell Ross ('72) received the Wendell H. Gilbert Award for their decades of service—Shelia worked at APSU for 39 years, retiring as director

of alumni relations in 2010, while Mitchell has served the community through his legal practice and board service. Todd Harvey earned the Spirit of Austin Peay Award for his extensive community involvement and longtime support of the Governors.

Building Momentum

The 2025-26 Candlelight Ball Committee, led by co-chairs Ginna Holleman and Kirsten Licari, orchestrated an unforgettable evening. The record-breaking success was



made possible through generous support from Presenting Underwriters F&M Bank, Legends Bank, and Planters Bank, along with dozens of additional sponsors.

As APSU approaches its centennial in 2027, the Candlelight Ball's unprecedented momentum signals an exciting future. The 43rd Annual Candlelight Ball will be held Saturday, April 10, 2027, at the J.W. Marriott in Nashville, Tennessee—promising to be the most spectacular celebration yet as Austin Peay enters its second century.

For more information about supporting APSU through our Candlelight Ball, contact the Office of Alumni and Engagement at 931-221-7979 or alumni@apsu.edu.

A *Legacy* OF SERVICE

Kathleen Evans' Sustained Investment in APSU Students



When Kathleen Evans arrived at Austin Peay State University in January 1996, she planned to stay a year or two. More than two decades later, she describes her experience with a simple truth: time flies when you're having fun. Her journey from temporary employee to Legacy Society member reflects a deeper transformation—one that led her to establish the Houser-Evans Student Service Scholarship Endowment and include APSU as a beneficiary in her life insurance policy.

"After experiencing some serious health issues in 2011 and 2012, I began to think of what I needed to do to fulfill the financial requirements to endow the scholarship to which I'd been systematically contributing over a number of years," Evans explained. "I had a conversation with Nanette Morford at AllState Insurance, and she explained how easy it would be to simply add Austin Peay as a beneficiary on my life insurance policy."

Evans' connection to APSU transformed her understanding of work and service. "Austin Peay is more than just a job, it is a way of life," she said. "The campus environment is a nicer atmosphere, so I had to learn to work and operate with more kindness, and had to learn the importance of building relationships and how that enables us to provide better quality service to our students."

Her scholarship journey began in 2002 when she established the Student Service Scholarship through systematic payroll deductions—a giving method she found "incredibly easy" and describes as "a tremendous investment." By 2021, combined with generous gifts from family and friends celebrating a milestone birthday, Evans had also fully funded the Houser-Evans Student Service Scholarship Endowment. The scholarship, which honors her late mother Georgiana Houser and mother-in-law Geraldine Evans Prince, provides funds to full-time students who maintain a 2.5 to 3.0 GPA, with preference given to those demonstrating financial need and campus involvement.

"I have very humble beginnings, being the product of the welfare system and raised in public housing," Evans shared. "I am carrying on the legacy of my single mother, who believed that it isn't necessary to have a lot in order to give a little and help others who oftentimes have less."

Her motivation came from observing students withdraw from classes due to unmet financial needs for textbooks and supplies. "I wanted to create a scholarship that would be need-based, to reach students often overlooked when awarding merit-based scholarships and with an emphasis on reaching students engaged in serving the campus community and would likely give back after graduation."

To students who will benefit from her generosity, Evans offers this wisdom: "While personal achievements are important, your greatest accomplishments will be for that which you do for others. Your most meaningful experiences and the best feeling ever is the gratification felt when you can help another."

Evans encourages others considering planned giving to remember that "including APSU in estate plans allows your legacy of giving to live on by investing in the future of bright and promising students."

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





Forged at Austin Peay: Changing the Course of One Student's Life

When Dr. Pete Bunger reflects on his life, he credits one institution above all others: Austin Peay State University. Through the largest planned gift to the College of STEM in APSU history, Dr. Bunger hopes future generations of students—especially those who doubt their own potential—will have the same life-changing opportunity he experienced more than 60 years ago.

"Before arriving at Austin Peay, I had little confidence in my academic ability," Dr. Bunger explained. "I struggled with dyslexia and had spent years believing I simply wasn't as capable as other students. There was little reason to think I would someday earn a Ph.D. in chemistry or build a successful career."

Dr. Bunger's connection to Austin Peay began in 1959 when his family moved to Clarksville after his father Dr. Fred A. Bunger joined the Education Department faculty as a professor. After graduating from Clarksville High School in 1960, he enrolled at Austin Peay State College.

At Austin Peay, he found faculty members who believed in him before he fully believed in himself. The chemistry professors challenged him academically, encouraged him personally, and helped him discover abilities he had never recognized. Motivated by their confidence and mentorship, he attended classes year-round and completed his chemistry degree in only three years.

Dr. Bunger went on to earn a Ph.D. in chemistry from the University of North Carolina and later enjoyed a successful career in industrial research and marketing with DuPont and Occidental Petroleum before founding ZEO, Inc. Looking back, however, he credits the confidence and foundation

he gained at Austin Peay as the turning point that made those opportunities possible.

"People occasionally ask why I chose to support Austin Peay rather than UNC, where I earned my Ph.D.," Dr. Bunger noted. "The answer is simple. UNC helped me become a professional chemist, but Austin Peay changed the direction of my life. By the time I arrived at UNC, Austin Peay had already done the hard work."

Dr. Bunger's planned gift will create three endowments: the Bunger Endowed Chemistry Teaching Professorship, the Bunger Chemistry Student Development Endowment, and the Bunger Endowed Chemistry Scholarship. Together, these endowments will support outstanding faculty, encourage student development, and help ensure that financial barriers do not prevent talented students from reaching their potential.

"Looking back, I believe Austin Peay changed the course of my life," Dr. Bunger reflected. "There are undoubtedly students at Austin Peay today who are much like I was in 1960—capable of accomplishing far more than they realize. I hope these endowments provide the same encouragement, opportunity, and mentorship that I was fortunate to receive. If they help even a few students discover abilities they did not know they possessed, then the gift will have accomplished its purpose."

For Dr. Bunger, the greatest impact of a university is not measured simply by the degrees it awards, but by the lives it changes. His hope is that these endowments will help future students experience the same encouragement and confidence that Austin Peay gave him.



Where Generosity Meets Gratitude: Inside Austin Peay's Scholarship Donor Dinner

When donors arrive at Austin Peay's annual Scholarship Donor Dinner, they don't immediately realize the significance of their table assignments. But as the evening unfolds, the intention becomes clear: seated beside them are the students whose educational dreams they've helped make possible.

"Look around—you're seated together because you're both essential to this story," Vice President for Alumni, Engagement and Philanthropy Kris Phillips told attendees at the 2026 event. "Our students bring inspiring Austin Peay journeys and tremendous potential. Our donors provide the commitment and resources that turn that potential into reality. Neither exists without the other."

This invitation-only gathering serves as the university's most intimate donor recognition event for those who

have established scholarships, creating face-to-face connections between scholarship investors and student recipients. During the 2024-25 academic year, Austin Peay awarded \$2,632,630 in scholarship funding to 1,121 students—impact made possible by the individuals, corporate partners, and community members gathered in the room.

Looking ahead to Austin Peay's centennial, one thing is clear: every scholarship awarded isn't just financial aid—it's a launchpad. The Scholarship Donor Dinner honors the people making those launches possible, proving that a single act of generosity today creates endless ripples for tomorrow.



The foundation of every Governor's journey begins on campus, but the connections forged at Austin Peay State University extend far beyond Clarksville. This year, the Division of Alumni, Engagement and Philanthropy brought that spirit to 10 cities across the country, proving that no matter where life takes our Govs, the bonds formed at APSU remain unbroken.

From Florida's Gulf Coast to the heart of Texas, and from our home state of Tennessee, Govs Gatherings this year brought alumni together in Tampa, Jacksonville,

Chattanooga, Murfreesboro, Jackson, Memphis, Dallas, Houston, San Antonio and Austin.

These events remind alumni and friends that while degrees are earned at Austin Peay, the relationships, values, and Gov pride established here travel with alumni throughout lives and careers. As we look ahead to new cities and continued expansion, one truth remains constant: every Gov's story starts at Austin Peay, but new chapters are written whenever we gather together.

**SCAN THE QR CODE TO SEE
WHERE WE'RE HEADED NEXT!**



Board of Trustees Award Recipients



BILLY ATKINS **APSU PHILANTHROPIST OF THE YEAR**

Billy Atkins has dedicated over 66 years to community banking and civic leadership in Clarksville-Montgomery County. A lifelong resident, Atkins founded Legends Bank in 1998 with \$9 million in assets and it has grown to nearly \$1 billion today. Prior to his 2019 retirement, he served as organizer, president, CEO, and chairman. He continues as senior chairman on the board of directors.

His commitment to Austin Peay State University runs deep. Gov. Bill Haslam appointed him to the inaugural Austin Peay State University Board of Trustees in 2017. He previously served as president of the Governors Club and on the foundation board. In 2019, the Atkins family and Legends Bank established the Billy Atkins Family Endowed Scholarship, supporting College of Business students majoring in finance. Atkins and his late wife, Sue, have been strong philanthropic supporters of APSU's academic and athletic programs, and their legacy of generosity continues to impact the university community.

Atkins' community impact extends far beyond banking. He has played an instrumental role in local economic development, helping attract major corporate investments including Hankook Tire, Google, and LG Electronics. He served four six-year terms on the Clarksville-Montgomery County Industrial Development Board (chairing it four times), led the Clarksville Area Chamber of Commerce as president in 1994, and contributed to numerous civic organizations.



DR. JEANNIE BEAUCHAMP **APSU BOARD OF TRUSTEES SERVICE AWARD**

Dr. Jeannie Beauchamp has distinguished herself as a national leader in pediatric dentistry and community health advocacy. Raised in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, she earned her D.D.S. from the University of Tennessee Health Science Center in 1991, then completed her pediatric dentistry residency in 1993. She began working in Clarksville in 1993 and founded Clarksville Pediatric Dentistry in 1999, which she continues to own and operate.

Dr. Beauchamp's professional leadership extends nationally. She has served as the president of both the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry and the Tennessee Dental Association. She has served on four councils for the American Dental Association. She previously led the Tennessee Academy of Pediatric Dentistry and the Eighth District Dental Society.

At Austin Peay State University, Dr. Beauchamp has demonstrated sustained leadership and philanthropic commitment. For several years she served on the Foundation Board's executive committee and the Candlelight Ball Committee, chairing the event in 2008-2009. She is a member of the Tower Club and Reagan Giving Circle, supporting the university's mission through her ongoing engagement and generosity.

Dr. Beauchamp received APSU's Wendell H Gilbert Award in 2019 and was inducted into the Governors' Red Coat Society in 2023, recognizing her ongoing commitment to the university and the community.

Her community involvement is extensive, including Cumberland Electric Membership Cooperation, Clarksville (Sunrise) Rotary Club, Clarksville Chamber of Commerce, United Way, Leadership Clarksville, Cogioba District of Boy Scouts of America, Immaculate Conception Catholic Church, Customs House Museum Foundation, Montgomery County Health Foundation Board, TennCare Advisory Board and others.



DR. MICHELLE D. SMITH

APSU BOARD OF TRUSTEES MILITARY SERVICE AWARD

Dr. Michelle D. Smith ('91) has dedicated her career to serving those who serve. Her military journey began as an enlisted combat medic in Korea. She attended APSU as a cross-country student athlete from 1988 to 1991—graduating in three years.

After earning her M.D. from the East Tennessee State University Quillen College of Medicine in 1996 on an Army scholarship, Dr. Smith completed her dermatology residency at Walter Reed Army Medical Center, where she served as chief resident during 9/11. As a major in the U.S. Army Medical Corps, she served at Walter Reed and as chief of dermatology at Fort Jackson, where she established the hospital's first dermatology clinic. She also served as assistant professor of dermatology at the Uniformed Services University of Health Sciences

in Bethesda, Maryland.

Throughout her military service, Dr. Smith balanced her role as an Army physician with supporting soldiers' families as a commander's wife, leading family support groups for the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment during deployments. After leaving active duty, she founded Dermatology of Lexington, LLC in South Carolina, where she practiced for 15 years. During this time, she employed many enlisted medics upon their separation from the military. This assisted in their transition from the military by helping build their resumes.

Now practicing in Hopkinsville, Kentucky, Dr. Smith serves on APSU's library and National Alumni Association boards and continues extensive service to the military community as an Eagle Ambassador at Fort Campbell. She assists veterans with VA disability claims, attends military memorials, supports Gold Star Families, mentors APSU pre-med students, and helps connect soldiers and families with resources they need.

The majority of the volunteer work Dr. Smith does for soldiers, veterans and their families involves helping one soldier at a time as a quiet professional behind the scenes.

GOVERNORS CIRCLE

ALUMNI AWARD RECIPIENTS

Outstanding Service Award

Jeff Bibb ('76)
Tamira Samuel ('07, '08)

Outstanding Young Alumnus/a

Amanda Martinez ('22, '23)
Josh Hinckley ('15)

Outstanding Alumnus/a

Jay Albertia ('89, '91)
Kyle Luther ('99)

APSU GOVERNORS MILITARY HALL OF FAME CELEBRATION

Nov. 6, 2026

Reception at 5:30 p.m., Dinner at 6 p.m.

COL (R) John Brunt

COL (R) Troy Douglas

CW5 (R) Charles King

MAJ Jacquelyn Messenger

MSG (R) Joel Pruitt

COL (R) Thomas Washer



48th Annual Homecoming Golf Tournament

Friday, Oct. 2, 2026
10 a.m., Swan Lake Golf Course

\$100 per person. Four-person scramble. Open to the public. Fee includes a gift, one skirt/throw/mulligan package, lunch, and beverages on course.

To RSVP by Friday, Sept. 25, 2026, visit alumni.apsu.edu/golf26.

Governor's Circle Alumni Awards Celebration

Friday, Oct. 2, 2026
Morgan University Center Ballroom
5 p.m. Reception | 6 p.m. Dinner

\$45 per person

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

To RSVP, visit alumni.apsu.edu/awards26.

All Athletic Mixer

Friday, Oct. 2, 2026
7-10 p.m.

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

To RSVP, visit alumni.apsu.edu/athleticmixer26.

GOMB & All Music Alumni

Smash Bang Party

Friday, Oct. 2, 2026
APSU Choir Room | Music and Mass Communication Building
7-10 p.m.

To RSVP, visit alumni.apsu.edu/gomb26.

African American Alumni Chapter Scholarship Mixer

Friday, Oct. 2, 2026
The Block, 303 Fairview Lane, Clarksville, TN 37040
8 p.m. - midnight

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

To RSVP, visit alumni.apsu.edu/mixer26.

Greek Parade Watch Party

Saturday, Oct. 3, 2026
Browning Lawn (College Street)

Reconnect with fraternity and sorority alumni from all chapters and enjoy the Homecoming Parade together. Free event.

Homecoming Football Game

APSU vs. New Haven
Saturday, Oct. 3, 2026
4 p.m. Kickoff
Fortera Stadium

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

Events are subject to change so please visit www.alumni.apsu.edu/homecoming for updates.

JORDAN HARMON DIRECTOR OF ATHLETICS

Austin Peay State University President Dr. Mike Licari recently named two-time APSU graduate and former Governors baseball player Jordan Harmon as Austin Peay's 15th director of athletics.

Harmon's appointment affirms APSU's commitment to building pride, strengthening connections, and driving momentum through a successful athletics program. During his recent tenure as interim director of athletics, the university's continued investments in student-athlete development, facilities, and academic and wellness resources have ensured that Governors thrive.

"I am thrilled to have Jordan in this role," Licari said. "His passion for Austin Peay runs deep, and his work in athletics administration has earned him the respect of colleagues across campus and fans and supporters in the community. Jordan's drive, spirit, and creative energy will serve Austin Peay well, and his leadership will ensure that it is a great time to be a Gov."

Harmon had served as Austin Peay's interim director of athletics since August 2025 and previously worked as the general manager for APSU Athletics, coordinating leadership in revenue sharing and name, image, and likeness management.

"I want to thank Dr. Licari for entrusting me with the opportunity to lead the athletics department at my alma mater," Harmon said. "I'm incredibly grateful for the Austin Peay Athletics staff, my colleagues across campus, and the Clarksville-Montgomery County community for their unwavering support."

Harmon, a St. Louis, Missouri, native, returned to Austin Peay in March 2024 after a year as the director of development at Bishop Verot Catholic High School in Fort Myers, Florida. Upon his return, he was named deputy director of athletics and chief revenue officer – the first in department history.

"We are honored, energized, and ready to continue to take APSU Athletics to new heights."

During a previous three-year tenure with APSU Athletics, Harmon played a key role in the most successful fundraising period in department history, with more than \$6.35 million raised over two years.

As a student-athlete, Harmon was a pitcher on the Austin Peay baseball team from 2014-17 and earned a bachelor's degree in finance, followed by a master's degree in management from Austin Peay in 2020. His wife, Reagan (née Greene), played two seasons on the Austin Peay women's golf team, and they welcomed a daughter, Parker, in December 2024.

"My wife Reagan and I are both former Austin Peay student-athletes, and there is truly no place we would rather be," said Harmon. "This is our home. We are honored, energized, and ready to continue to take APSU Athletics to new heights. We are passionate about competing at the highest level, raising the standard across Governors Athletics, and building something special – something extraordinary – for our student-athletes, our campus, and our community."

Tahmar Upshaw's [World] Record Year

When Tahmar Upshaw arrived at Austin Peay ahead of the 2025-26 academic year, he brought an impressive resume as a para athlete and distance runner. Over the next 12 months, he turned that promise into one of the most remarkable individual years in Austin Peay Athletics history, rewriting record books while elevating the Governors onto the international stage.

The breakthrough came on April 17, at the Bryan Clay Invitational in Azusa, California, where Upshaw raced in the T46 800-meter. The Murfreesboro native crossed the finish line in 1:48.80, breaking the world record of 1:51.82 that had stood since the 2012 Paralympic Games. His time established a new global standard and came just 8.11 seconds shy of David Rudisha's Olympic world record in the open division. With the performance, Upshaw became the first known student-athlete in Austin Peay Athletics history to hold a world record.

The accomplishment quickly drew national attention. One week later, Upshaw was named the USA Track & Field (USATF) Athlete of the Week, becoming the first Governor to earn the distinction. The honor also introduced Austin Peay to a national audience following one of the premier performances in para track and field during the 2026 season.

Upshaw's momentum carried into the summer. Competing at the USATF LA Grand Prix, June 13, he delivered another historic performance by breaking the T46 Americas record in the 1,500-meter. His time of 3:52.69 eclipsed the previous continental mark of 3:54.43 that had stood for nearly a decade, further establishing him among the world's elite para middle-distance runners.

Just weeks later, Upshaw returned to the national stage at the 2026 Toyota USATF Para National Championships in New York. Facing the nation's top para athletes, he posted a 3:52.75 in the 1,500-meter, the second-fastest performance of his career and just six hundredths of a second behind his Americas-record. After sitting in third entering the final 300 meters, Upshaw surged into second place to finish as the national runner-up.

While his performances on the track garnered international recognition, Upshaw also made an immediate impact during his first cross country season as a Governor. He led Austin Peay across each of its final five meets of the 2025 campaign, including the ASUN Championships and the NCAA South Regional. From his first 8K race of the season to the conference championship, Upshaw trimmed nearly a minute and a half from his time, highlighting the steady progression that paralleled his historic achievements on the track.





APSU volunteers help pack 600K meals through Clarksville Feeds the World

On Feb. 14, hundreds of APSU volunteers prepared 611,424 meals for people in need during the second annual Clarksville Feeds the World event at the Dunn Center.

With help from Convoy of Hope and U.S. Hunger, the meals were distributed to communities around the world facing food insecurity. Pastor Mike Burnette with LifePoint Church developed the project idea, while APSU Athletics provided location and volunteer support.

"Having access to these meals really is a lifeline for some people, and it was incredible to see how much we were able to pack," said Mayer Marks, the project manager for Clarksville Feeds the World. "Austin Peay really showed up, and the football team came in clutch during our last shift. We ended up putting a lot of them onto the assembly lines to help pack bags, and the numbers started going up much faster."

An estimated 2,300 pounds of canned food and water were donated to support Loaves & Fishes in Clarksville, and Convoy of Hope contributed 24,000 pounds of food and cleaning supplies.

Over 3,000 volunteers worked in three shifts to surpass last year's numbers (500,288 meals) and this year's target (600,000 meals). A majority of APSU's student-athletes participated throughout the day.

"We can't be Clarksville's hometown team by just saying it," said Jordan Harmon, APSU's director of athletics. "When our community needs our help and our support, we need to extend a hand and do so. It's also a great opportunity to help those who are less fortunate, and it shows our student-

athletes some of the ways they can give back."

For sophomore communication major Paige Chrustowski and the rest of the APSU women's soccer team, the event was a way to connect with new people while making a difference.

"We did this last year, and really enjoyed the opportunity to be a part of something that feeds so many people," Chrustowski said. "It's been great, and there's a strong system for keeping it moving and getting the boxes packed."

The team prepared bags of rice using assembly-line formation. Other volunteers heat-sealed and boxed the meals, loaded them onto pallets, and kept the work areas clean.

"It makes your heart full knowing that you're able to help people in need, and it's a special opportunity," said John Mark Mills, a junior university studies major and member of the APSU men's golf team. "It also just represents who we are as a team—we like to serve our community in whatever way we can."

Mills signed up for Clarksville Feeds the World for the first time this year after hearing about it from his teammates. The event's continued growth is encouraging for the volunteers behind the project, who plan to establish it as a designated nonprofit.

"You can't go wrong when you have so many people coming together to leave a lasting impact on others," Marks said. "We want to continue doing that, and potentially inspire other communities to do the same."

AUSTIN PEAY, GIPSON AGREE TO CONTRACT EXTENSION THROUGH 2029-30

After winning the first Atlantic Sun Conference Championship in program history during the team's most successful season in nearly two decades, Austin Peay State University head basketball coach Corey Gipson agreed to a contract extension through the 2029-30 season.

"In his three years at the helm of Governors basketball, Corey has not only established a winning culture and brought a championship back to Clarksville, but he has revitalized the Clarksville, Montgomery County, and Fort Campbell communities," Austin Peay Director of Athletics Jordan Harmon said. "Corey is a proven leader, a winner, and an influential part of what it means to be a Governor. I look forward to Clarksville's Hometown Basketball Team competing for and winning more championships."

A two-time Austin Peay graduate, Gipson led the Governors to a 2026 Atlantic Sun Conference Men's Basketball Regular-Season Championship. It is the program's first championship since its 2016 OVC Tournament title and its first regular-season championship since 2008.

"Corey Gipson has done an outstanding job leading our men's basketball program and representing the values of Austin Peay," APSU President Mike Licari said. "As an Austin Peay alumnus, he understands what this university and this community mean, and he has built a program that reflects that pride ... we are proud to see the continued growth of our basketball program under his leadership and look forward to the success that lies ahead for Austin Peay."

Gipson led the Governors to a 22-9 record and 15-3 mark in ASUN Conference play last season, including a 16-game winning streak and a 12-1 record at home. The team tied for the most total wins since the 2007-08 campaign, and the most regular-season wins since the 1976-77 season.

Austin Peay earned a record six ASUN postseason honors following its historic 2025-26 campaign, while Gipson became the third head coach in the program's 95-year history to win more than 50 games by the end of his third season. His 55 career victories already rank seventh all-time.

For the second time in three seasons, Gipson was also named a finalist for the Ben Jobe Award, which is presented to the top minority head coach in Division I, while also being named a finalist for the Hugh Durham Award, given to the top mid-major coach in college basketball.

Off the court, the Governors have set the team-record grade-point average each of the last two years and recorded over 400 community service hours in the past year.

"Corey is a proven leader, a winner, and an influential part of what it means to be a Governor."





AUSTIN PEAY, FARIS AGREE ON CONTRACT EXTENSION THROUGH 2030

After a historic 2025 season, Austin Peay State University head football coach Jeff Faris has agreed to a contract extension through the 2030 season.

In the 2025 season opener, Faris led the Governors to their first win over an FBS opponent since 1987 when they beat Middle Tennessee 34-14. Austin Peay also defeated No. 16 West Georgia 44-30 to secure the first season in program history with both an FBS win and a ranked FCS win.

"Jeff has the Austin Peay football program moving forward, and I am confident he will continue to build on this successful season," Austin Peay President Dr. Mike Licari said. "I am proud of the team culture he has built, which competes for championships while pursuing excellence in the classroom and being committed to our Clarksville community."

Faris and the Gobs went 6-0 at Fortera Stadium in 2025, the first time the program had done so since 1949. Faris also recorded the fourth-best second-year turnaround in program history, increasing his win total from his first season by three with a 7-5 record.

"Jeff has brought outstanding leadership, a relentless work ethic, and a clear vision for this program," APSU Director of Athletics Jordan Harmon said. "His commitment to our student-athletes – both on and off the field – has elevated the standard of Gobs football. We believe wholeheartedly in the direction he's leading this team, and we're excited for the future of Austin Peay under his continued guidance."

Faris said he and his family look forward to their future at Austin Peay, and commended university leadership for their commitment to the program and its student-athletes.

"Austin Peay continues to be aggressive and bold in this new era, and we are closing the gap in an effort to support our players like never before," he said. "Our family loves Clarksville, our unbelievable community, and we look forward to the myriad of great memories that lie ahead."

In Faris' second season, the Governors' offense ranked fourth in the FCS and led the UAC in red zone offense (.935). Austin Peay ranked 13th in the FCS in total offense (451.1), 14th in passing offense (264.7), and 15th in scoring offense (35.1) – it ranked second in the United Athletic Conference in all three categories. The Governors also ranked 25th in the FCS and third in the UAC in rushing offense (186.4). Quarterback Chris Parson, a finalist for the 2025 Walter Payton Award, ranked fourth in the FCS in total offense (312.2) and points responsible for (222) – he led the UAC in both categories.

BUILT TO FORGE AHEAD.



UNISUN SPORTS COMMENCES, KICKING OFF 2026-27 SEASON

Unisun Sports, the groundbreaking strategic alliance between the Atlantic Sun Conference (ASUN) and the United Athletic Conference (UAC), has officially commenced as of July 1, 2026. Unisun Sports will serve both conferences, significantly enhance operational efficiency, foster deeper collaboration, and drive innovation across both NCAA Division I organizations.

"Today marks more than an official launch date—it represents the beginning of what's next in collegiate athletics," Unisun Sports CEO Jeff Bacon said. "It celebrates a new era for the UAC as it officially steps into a multi-sport conference, the continued strength of the ASUN, and the formation of a joint-venture, Unisun Sports."

The UAC, newly rebranded from the Western Athletic Conference (WAC), will sponsor 16 sports and championships with nine full-time members across six states (Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Kentucky, Tennessee, and Texas) reaching millions of people across the south.

United Athletic Conference Members

Abilene Christian University, Abilene, Texas
Austin Peay State University, Clarksville, Tennessee
University of Central Arkansas, Conway, Arkansas
Eastern Kentucky University, Richmond, Kentucky
University of North Alabama, Florence, Alabama
Tarleton State University, Stephenville, Texas

University of Arkansas at Little Rock, Little Rock, Arkansas
University of Texas at Arlington, Arlington, Texas
University of West Georgia, Carrollton, Georgia

The Atlantic Sun Conference (ASUN) will continue its success across the southeast region with eight full-time members. Spanning across four states with cities like Charlotte, Jacksonville, Louisville and Nashville in its market, the ASUN has defined itself as the destination-based conference.

Atlantic Sun Conference Members

Bellarmino University, Louisville, Kentucky
Florida Gulf Coast University, Fort Myers, Florida
Jacksonville University, Jacksonville, Florida
Lipscomb University, Nashville, Tennessee
Queens University of Charlotte, Charlotte, North Carolina
Stetson University, DeLand, Florida
University of North Florida, Jacksonville, Florida
University of West Florida, Pensacola, Florida

"I would like to recognize our university presidents, directors of athletics, administration, and those whose vision and leadership helped make this possible," Bacon said. "Together, we're creating a platform that strengthens our member institutions and delivers innovation when asked what's next."



Kris Phillips ('91, '21), vice president of Alumni, Engagement and Philanthropy and executive director of the APSU Foundation at Austin Peay State University, was named the 2026 Distinguished Service Award recipient by CASE District III during the annual district conference on Feb. 9, 2026.



Patrick Miller ('06) enters a new role as the Oliver Springs Middle School principal under the Roane County School District after serving as an assistant administrator.



Christy Pennington ('97) has been promoted to member at Clark Hill.



Derek Wright Jr. ('08) won the Nike EYBL Scholastics Championship in his first year as head coach for Bella Vista College Prep in Phoenix, Arizona.



Dr. Lisa Sullivan ('00) has been promoted to senior vice provost and senior associate vice president for faculty affairs at Austin Peay State University.



Kathleen Evans ('09) has announced her retirement after 30 years of dedicated service. Throughout her career, Evans helped establish the APSU Foy Fitness and Recreation Center as a staple of campus life while leaving a lasting legacy behind.



Thomas "Mace" Langston ('02, Kappa Sigma) earned an Executive Certificate in Public Administration from Liberty University while completing his DPA as a federal employee. He now serves as plans and operations specialist for the Prevention Force Modernization Proponent.



Rosa Hart ('10) now serves as the founder and executive director of The Lou Review Foundation, Inc. Apart from her role as an executive director, Hart works as a stroke nurse navigator for the Norton Neuroscience Institute.



Dr. Joseph Miller ('02) has been named vice president for strategic enrollment management at the University of West Georgia.



Stephen Huff ('10) of College Grove shared testimony with Tennessee legislators in support of Senate Bill 0435, a cancer survivor-backed bill expanding insurance coverage for biomarker testing.



Rhet Wierzbza ('04,'05) has been named the 2026 Pat Summitt Most Courageous Award Winner from the United States Basketball Writers Association as associate head coach of women's basketball at Indiana University.



Cara Sierra ('12) has earned three new certifications for her diligent work as a career and travel writer for the award-winning website ResumeCoach.com.



Tina Tucker ('05) has been announced as the next CEO of the U.S. Space & Rocket Center in Huntsville, Alabama.



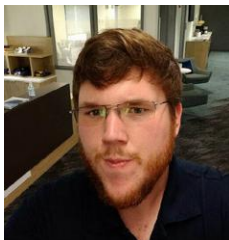
Gretchen Hancock ('14) has had the distinct honor of earning a degree from the Graduate School of Banking at Louisiana State University.



Anthony Economos ('15) has launched ClarksvilleWorks.com, a free hyper-local job portal designed to connect Montgomery County residents with local employment opportunities.



Emily Tardiff ('18) has been promoted Senior Account Manager, Development at United Way of Greater Nashville.



Nicholas Herrud ('20, '23) has received a Fulbright research award for open study/research in Lithuania.



Drew Crook ('21) has been awarded Tennessee Bankers Association scholarships to attend LSU's Graduate School of Banking and the TBA Washington Conference in May.



Brandon Young ('22) has been appointed principal of Cloudland Elementary School in Carter County, Tennessee.



Hannah Eden ('22) has been elected to serve as president of the Tennessee College Public Relations Association (TCPRA), a statewide organization of communication professionals in higher education.



Lauren Bond has co-published her first book, Cartwheels & Fairways. Since then, Bond has also co-founded Little Birdie Co., an organization created to partner with golf brands to create bonds that connect with families through original stories, illustrations, and meaningful experiences.

In Memory



APSU mourns the loss of Dr. John L. Butler, a longtime leader, dedicated philanthropist and beloved member of the Austin Peay community, who passed away on June 30, 2026.

Dr. Butler joined Austin Peay in 1985 as vice president for academic affairs, guiding curriculum development and strengthening academic performance for 11 years. From 1996 to 2001, he served as director of leadership studies and headed the President's Emerging Leaders Program.

A professor of biology and professor emeritus in retirement, Dr. Butler received the APSU National Alumni Association Distinguished Professor Award in 2001.

Katelyn LeBlanc-Hart ('24)
1/17/26

Eddie Brown ('05)
1/20/26

Sharon Long ('87)
1/29/26

Thomas Winn ('68)
2/1/26

Wayne Ard
2/4/26

James Charlet ('63)
2/7/26

Joe Parker ('69)
2/12/26

David Schuff ('55)
2/12/26

Garry Lalone ('98)
2/13/26

Robert York ('60)
2/19/26

Thomas Donnelly ('63)
2/21/26

Philip Hertz ('70)
2/23/26

Bill Van Beber ('80)
2/28/26

Rodger Bowman ('63)
3/1/26

Joe Delk
3/1/26

James Cochran ('50)
3/4/26

Marilyn Griffy ('80)
3/4/26

Deborah Suiter
3/6/26

Grant Cole ('87)
3/9/26

Marvin "Peete" Ross ('61)
3/12/26

Inetta Samuel ('82)
3/19/26

Alice Euton ('62)
3/21/26

Bethel Flatt ('65)
3/23/26

Gregory Bagwell ('87)
3/29/26

Lena Orgain ('51)
4/1/26

Sidney Sawyer ('97)
4/1/26

Charlie Morrow ('86)
4/3/26

Solie Fott ('24)
4/6/26

James Alsop Sr. ('50)
4/11/26

Donald Harrison ('92)
4/18/26

L. Bowers ('70)
4/19/26

Marion Gossett ('55)
4/21/26

Allen Luffman ('82)
4/26/26

Donna Conklin ('18)
5/1/26

Herbert Elliot ('73)
5/1/26

Linda Thompson ('70)
5/6/26

James Hathcock ('70)
6/23/26

Nancy Irby
6/29/26

Leading the Way

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

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

A non-endowed scholarship is supported with an annual gift. This gift is paid out to support the scholarship's purpose. The desired minimum award is \$500 per year.

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

Endowments

A+D Veterans Study Abroad Scholarship
Christopher Sanderford

Anderson-Osborne Scholarship Endowment
Kathleen Evans

APSU Food Pantry Endowment
APSU Center for Community Engagement and Sustainability

Bobby and Patsy Phillips Education Scholarship Endowment
Patricia E. Phillips

Brunson-Chapman Family Memorial Scholarship Endowment
John Chapman

Bunger Chemistry Endowment
Dr. Fred L. 'Pete' Bunger

Carolyn Yarbrough Memorial Scholarship Endowment
Kimberly Brown

Deborah J. and Gary A. Hutchinson Endowed Fund of Excellence
Virginia Tenney

Diana (Tenney) and Gerard Laperriere Endowed Fund of Excellence
Virginia Tenney

Dr. J.F. Burney Scholarship Endowment
Cumberland River Foundation

Drs. D.W. and Ben Howard Pre-Vet Endowment
Dr. Ernest & Mrs. Joan De Wald

Glistine Green Jones Scholarship Endowment
Ivy Endowment Circle

Gwendel Carlton Conner Memorial Football Scholarship Endowment
Peggy Conner, Thomas Washer, Karen Peltier, Kimberly Correa and Jonathan Washer

Jay Albertia Scholarship Endowment
Cumberland River Foundation

Joseph S. Filippo Health and Human Performance Endowed Scholarship
Dr. Joe Filippo

Judy Lynn Oetter "Above and Beyond!" Memorial Nursing Scholarship Endowment
Robert Oetter

Keri V. McInnis President Emerging Leaders Scholarship Endowment
Keri V. McInnis

KY Tri-County College of Business Scholarship Endowment
Sharon A. Dunn

Leroy C. Parks Civitan Scholarship Endowment
Cumberland River Foundation

Major Scott Swindell Memorial Scholarship Endowment for Education
Stephanie Swindell

Major Scott Swindell Memorial Scholarship Endowment for Science and Math
Brigitte & George May

Maury Regional Health MLS Endowed Fund of Excellence
Maury Regional Health

Maury Regional Health Nursing Endowed Fund of Excellence
Maury Regional Health

Patrick and Dorothy Miner Business Endowment
Patrick J. & Dorothy W. Miner

Richard E. and Bristol S. Gannaway Memorial Endowment
Dr. Richard P. Gannaway

Scott and Tammy Cowan Resident Assistant Scholarship Endowment
Scott & Tammy Cowan

Sr. Airman Gage Dean Chester Agriculture Endowment
Dr. Edward W. Chester

Sue and Rusty Evans Family Scholarship Endowment
Dr. Sue C. & Russell M. Evans Jr.

Valen A. Cox Scholarship Endowment
Terry & Valen Cox

William F. Cody History Graduate Program Endowment
William F. Cody

Non-Endowed Scholarships

Bibb Family Gap Scholarship
Richard & Patricia Bibb

Donna Conklin Memorial Scholarship
Steve Conklin

Dr. Rebecca Darrough Mathematics Education Scholarship
Dr. Jackie Vogel

Kade Rochelle Art Scholarship
Presley Rochelle, Kevin Rochelle and Sheila Purvis

Knight Family Legacy GOMB Scholarship
Jacob E. Knight

Nicole Witt Music Scholarship
Dr. Jillian Vogel, Dr. Jackie and Mr. Jon Vogel

Rena Mae White Frasier Memorial Scholarship
Thomas Frasier



Scan here to see the full honor roll of donors.

Graduating Class

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

LaPorsche Anderson	Angie Ellison	Alli Johnson	Kim Piccininno
Jeffrey M. Arnold	Denise Evans	Christopher Key	Jose Pablo Rodriguez
Kathrine Bailey	Sonia Evoy	Nicholas Kirschten	Adrian Johanes Rosario
Marco Barraza	Alex Ewin	Arnel Kroll	Tyler Rose
Wyatt Billbrey	Brandy Winbush-Florence	Ashley Landers	Austin Rutherford
Emily Michelle Birdwell	Dawn M. Frazier	Nichole D. Lemire	Ryan Saunders
Leon Britton Jr.	Serenity Fuller	Cristian Lopez	Zyair Scott
Isaac A. Burleson	Savannah Groth	Nathan Maynard	Jamie Short
Alexa Carattini	Sara Gutierrez	Tabitha McCormack	Kara Short
Terrence Carillon	Tanairy Franqui-Guzman	Janessa Millan	Christopher Smith
Kyle Christmas	Keith Harris	Miguel Montes	Donovan Stevens
Lisa Sue Corneal	Marleigh Heggie	Amanda Moore	Kevin Sunday
Jenna Cortez	Gary W. Hendricks Jr.	Brandon Morris	Skylar Wagner
AJ Crowder	Avery Hoang	Tony Munoz	Sandra Walsh
Bradley Dardas	Floyd Hughes	Halee Norman	Steven Warner
Marcia DeJesus	Leo Hunter	Amber Norris	Elisha Wells
Beverly DuBois	Logan Jackson	Ibrahim A. Olushola	Shawn Wickham
Destanie Eagles	Alex Jordan Johnson	Anna Parmely	

The Legacy Society

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

Jerry Addy	William F. Cody	J.D. Howell	Tracey Outlaw
Elizabeth Ambuhl	Caleb A. Copeland	Phillip Y. Jernigan	Iva Rose Patterson
Anonymous	Hester B. Crews	Rufus S. Johnson III	Robert D. Patton
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Mark Blick	Brenda Edington	Ben Kimbrough	Sandee Polier
Dee Boaz	Lars & Diane Eriksson	Barry & Maggie Kulback	Wayne Prosser
E. Henry Bowman	Kathleen Evans	Susan Kupisch	Phil & Clarinda Roe
Lallie Bridges	Victor Felts	John Lander	Brenda L. Starnes
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601 College St.
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SAVE THE DATE!

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