

THE  
**M**

FALL 2024

# Mercerian

A PUBLICATION OF MERCER UNIVERSITY

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## UNLOCKING THE GIFT OF DYSLEXIA

UNIVERSITY LAUNCHES  
ROBERTS ACADEMY  
FOR DYSLEXIC CHILDREN

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IS MY  
SUPERPOWER!  
WHAT'S YOURS?**

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Send address changes to THE MERCERIAN, 1501 Mercer  
University Drive, Macon, GA 31207-0001. THE MERCERIAN  
is published by the Office of Marketing Communications at  
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In **Our**  
Lens

**College Street Transformation** — Work was completed last March on the new College Street Plaza on the Macon Campus, which transformed the old asphalt street and the Connell Student Center parking lot into a functional and attractive public space. In addition to removing the Connell parking lot, two houses adjacent to Plunkett Hall were demolished to make way for the new plaza. Featuring a circular green space similar to Cruz Plaza, but smaller, other elements include brick pavers, additional landscaping and lighting, a sand volleyball court near the residence halls, and a new campus entrance on Coleman Avenue. **Meredith Keating White**, executive director of campus life and student involvement, described the plaza as “a beautiful space that already looks like a natural part of campus, and it has enhanced the entryway and ambiance of Connell Student Center, as well as Mary Erin Porter, Plunkett and Legacy residence halls.”

MATT SMITH PHOTO; COVER: LEAH YETTER PHOTO



# MAKE IT MERCER AGAIN!

**Alumni who graduated within the past two years may be eligible for Mercer's Special Consideration Program for Graduate Studies.**

# B E A R I N G S

## BEAR DINING

# NEW FOOD OPTIONS AND MORE COME TO STUDENT CENTER AS MERCER CULINARY GROUP LAUNCHES

By **JENNIFER FALK**

**B**ig changes came to the Mercer University student dining experience this fall, including expanded meal options and contactless food pickup in the Connell Student Center.

The improvements are part of a major rebranding of Mercer Dining to **Mercer Culinary Group**, signifying a strategic shift and expansion beyond traditional dining services. The rebranding, which was effective July 1, marks the group's 35th anniversary serving Mercer.

"Aramark (the food service provider behind Mercer Culinary

Group) has been on campus with us since 1989, and this is the most dynamic investment that they've made at Mercer University to enrich the campus experience," said **Ken Boyer**, associate vice president for Auxiliary Services.

Over the summer, the area where Which Wich was located was transformed into **The Drop**, a virtual kitchen. The Drop opened Aug. 19 and features three different restaurant concepts that can be rotated out for new ones as students' tastes change, said **Ed Robertson**, resident district manager of Mercer Culinary Group.

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The Drop, a virtual kitchen that opened Aug. 19, features three different restaurant concepts that can be rotated as students' tastes change.

The Fresh Food Co.

BEAR DINING, ADMIN PROFILE

“This gives us lots of versatility, so when we take surveys with the students and they say maybe we need an Asian concept on campus or we need a Mexican concept, we can do that,” he said. “So, in real time, we can get feedback and get what the students really want on campus.”

The restaurant concepts that premiered this fall include **The Spread**, featuring chef-inspired signature subs and house-made spreads; **Smokehouse 1833: Barbecue and Grill**, featuring locally sourced smoked meats; and **Beary Blends Fruit Smoothies and More**, featuring fruit smoothies and acai bowls.

Students order from the restaurants at a kiosk or using the Transact Mobile Ordering app, which already offered mobile ordering for other retail dining locations on campus, like **Chick-fil-A** and **Panda Express**. Students then pick up their food from secure lockers.

“Over 60% of consumers use takeout order or delivery once a week,” Boyer said. “What this new concept is going to do is to allow us to further enhance what we’ve already done with mobile ordering and order from different concepts that will be able to address the different culinary needs of students.”

Along with Which Wich, Brewed Awakenings also was replaced, and Mercer Culinary Group installed a **Costa Coffee Smart Café** that makes custom coffee drinks and offers 24/7 availability, Robertson said. The autonomous system offers more than 200 barista-quality drink choices and can make each in less than 90 seconds.

The Drop is the first piece of a multi-year renovation to the Connell Student Center. Renovations to the building’s entrances are in the design phase, including plans for a new entrance off Cruz Plaza, Boyer said.

Improvements also are planned for the lobby and seating area

“**IN REAL TIME, WE CAN GET FEEDBACK AND GET WHAT THE STUDENTS REALLY WANT ON CAMPUS.**”

— **Ed Robertson**  
RESIDENT DISTRICT MANAGER  
MERCER CULINARY GROUP



on the main level of Connell, including modern collaborative spaces where students can eat and work. An expansion of **Tot’s Corner**, a cashier-less convenience store, is planned as well.

“By thoughtfully integrating dining improvements into the broader renovation plan, the student center will become a more vibrant, functional and appealing hub for the entire campus community to enjoy,” said **Shonda Lewis**, marketing manager for Mercer Culinary Group.

The rebranding is a culmination of years of work to enhance the student dining experience.

This includes initiatives such as partnering with The Common Market to provide sustainable, local produce in the dining halls; offering a **True Balance** station that doesn’t use any of the top nine allergens; and providing the culinary team with professional development opportunities.

Three chefs — **Jimmy Brown**, **Vivian Byrd** and **Jarvis Napier** — have achieved Pro Chef II certification for their advanced skills and dedication to the culinary arts. Byrd now is pursuing Pro Chef III certification.

“This transformation should make Mercer among the best in class,” Robertson said. “With these exciting additions, we’re not just keeping up. We’re looking ahead to become the next in class.”



This artist’s rendering shows what the inside of the Connell Student Center and Fresh Food Co. could look like after renovations.

Read these and other stories about **all things Mercer** at **the Den**  
den.mercer.edu

# NEW COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS AND SCIENCES DEAN

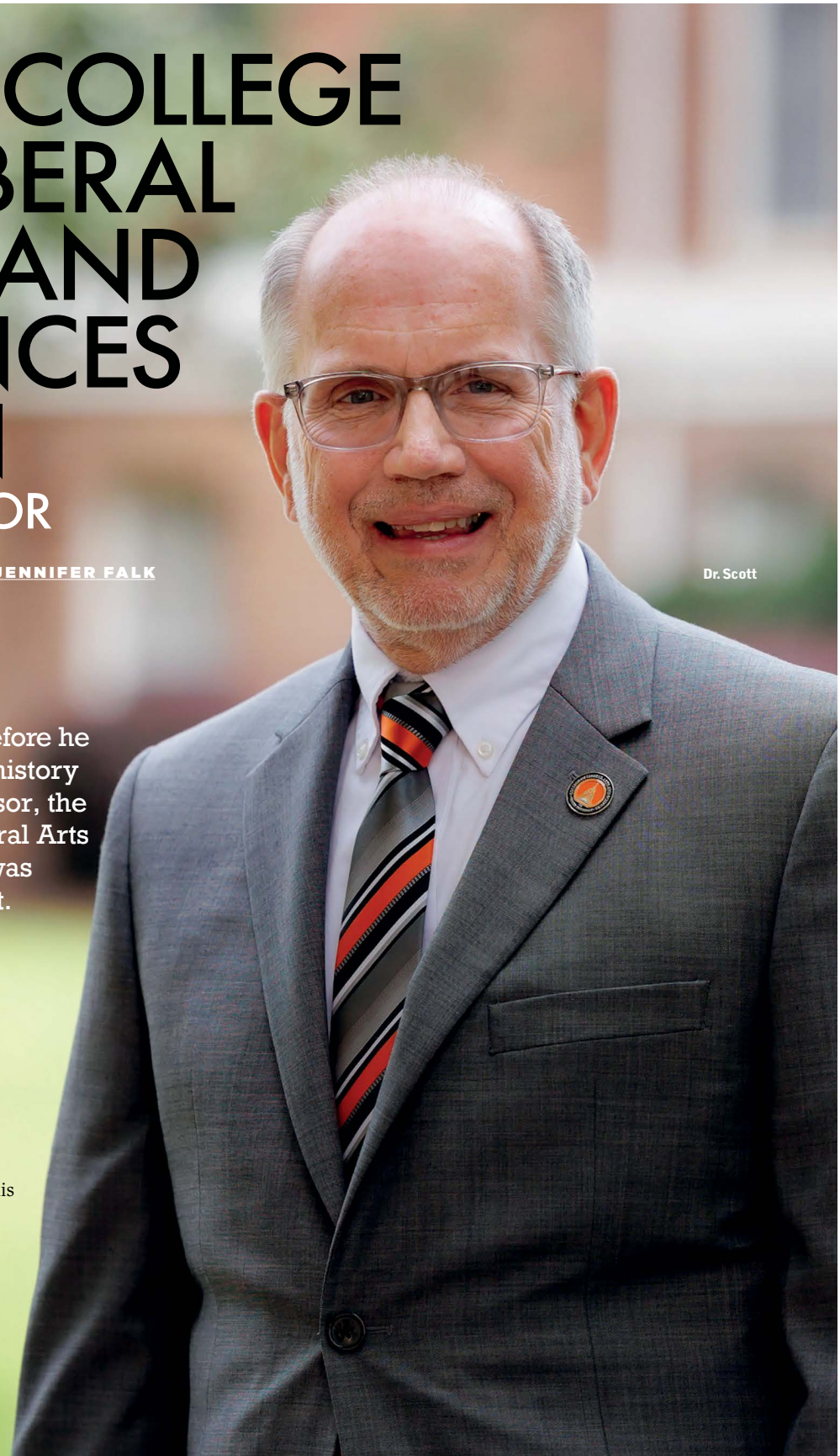
## A PROFESSOR AT HEART

By JENNIFER FALK

**L**ong before he was a history professor, the new College of Liberal Arts and Sciences dean was interested in the past.

“My dad was a seminary professor who taught, among other things, Old Testament history, and he loved history,” said **Dr. John Thomas Scott**, who goes by Tom. “He would take me around historical sites and give me history books to read. So, I’ve been a history nerd since I was a kid.”

Those experiences during his early years led him to pursue a bachelor’s, master’s and Ph.D. in history. He joined Mercer’s faculty in the History Department in 1991 and has served twice as chair. Over the past three decades, he’s been doing >>



Dr. Scott

LEAHYETTER PHOTO

ADMIN PROFILE, COMMENCEMENTS

some of what he enjoys most: conducting research, writing, teaching and learning.

Now, he's applying his skills and experience to a new role. In March, Dr. Scott was named the new dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. He previously served as interim dean for six months, after then-Dean Dr. Anita Olson Gustafson assumed the presidency of Presbyterian College in Clinton, South Carolina.

Dr. Scott has spent the past few months learning his new role, including getting to know the needs of other departments, understanding the college's complex budget and working with colleagues across campus offices.

"The learning curve is very steep," he said.

The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences is the largest and oldest of Mercer's schools and colleges. Nearly all traditional undergraduate students will take at least one class in the college to fulfill a general education requirement.

College of Liberal Arts and Sciences majors uniquely benefit from a liberal arts education, Dr. Scott said.

Liberal arts classes tend to be small, allowing students to interact closely with faculty. In addition, liberal arts students are exposed to multiple perspectives about problems that they're trying to solve, as seen in the Great Books and Integrative Studies curricula. The college offers 40 majors, many of which are interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary, Dr. Scott said.

"When you put the smaller setting together with this interdisciplinary approach, you end up using and learning skill sets that are important personally but also important in terms of employment and career," he said.

As a historian, Dr. Scott's primary field of research has been 18th and early 19th century North Atlantic history. Most of it has been geared toward religious history and individuals at that time. For the past 15 years, his research has focused on Georgia in the 18th century.

"What fascinates me is different people with different ways of living," he said. "The past is the most diverse place you will ever find because you get to see changes over time, from decade to decade and century to century.

"And so, you really do get exposed to this very broad rainbow of people and their experiences and their struggles."

The goal of any academic, Dr. Scott said, is to try to understand the human experience, make sense of it and figure out a path forward for yourself, your community and the world.

"I see the past as the largest laboratory. We're only observers. We can't redo it, but there's a large amount of information in the past that's available," he said. "And so, I see the past as really

one of the best elements to study to understand the human experience."

For Dr. Scott, his faith plays an important role as well. He regularly teaches Sunday school classes at First Presbyterian Church of Macon, where he and his wife, Holly, are longtime members. The couple has four adult children.

Dr. Scott enjoys travel, yardwork and classic films. A movie poster for *Casablanca* hangs behind his desk in his office in the R. Kirby Godsey Administration Building. On the wall to his right is a poster for *The Searchers*, a 1956 Western. Science fiction is his favorite genre.

"One of the courses that I have taught is a class on how to use American film as historical documents," he said. "In that class we spend probably half the time trying to teach them how to read a film, so we talk about things like editing and lighting and character positioning and costuming. But we also talk about how a film can be used to understand the period that the film was made in."

His love for classic films is another interest he picked up from his dad growing up in Clinton, Mississippi, a small town outside of Jackson.

"My dad loved classic movies," he said. "When I was growing up, you could only catch a classic movie if it happened to run on one of the

three channels that was available at the time or if it was a re-release at a local theater that you could go to. And I would watch old films with my dad."

In college, Dr. Scott studied at the University of Leeds in the United Kingdom. The experience forced him to find his own way in a place unlike home and interact with people different from himself.

The tutorial-style education format opened his eyes to what student and professor relationships could be like and inspired him to strive to have those kinds of relationships in his own career. As a historian, he saw early America from the British perspective.

"I think that study abroad experience really set the path of my career in terms of thinking about the past and thinking about what I wanted to do," he said.

Describing himself as a professor at heart, Dr. Scott said he never imagined he would be a dean.

"But as events turned out, here I am, and so, it has suited me." ♦

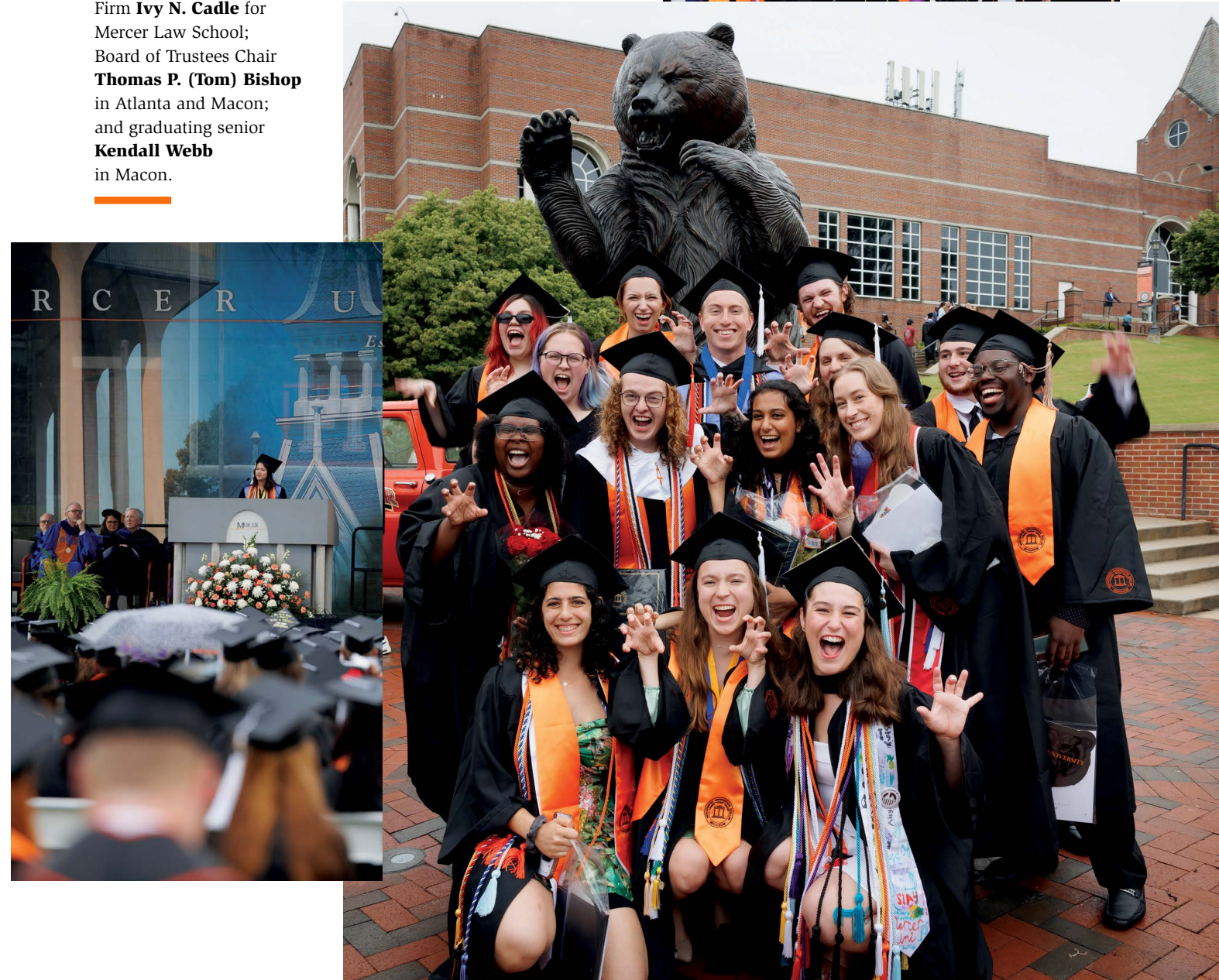
“ I SEE THE PAST AS THE LARGEST LABORATORY... AS REALLY ONE OF THE BEST ELEMENTS TO STUDY TO UNDERSTAND THE HUMAN EXPERIENCE. ”

— Dr. Tom Scott  
DEAN, COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS  
AND SCIENCES

## MERCER CONFERRED DEGREES TO MORE THAN 2,200 GRADUATES AT FIVE COMMENCEMENTS IN MAY

**M**ercer conferred bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees to more than 2,200 students participating in five commencements during May in Macon and Atlanta. The total number of students meeting the requirements for graduation exceeded 2,600. Commencement speakers included President and CEO of the Georgia Hospital Association Caylee Noggle for the School of Medicine; Managing Shareholder with Baker Donelson Law Firm **Ivy N. Cadle** for Mercer Law School; Board of Trustees Chair **Thomas P. (Tom) Bishop** in Atlanta and Macon; and graduating senior **Kendall Webb** in Macon.

Scan to see our video recap.



OPPOSITE: LEAH YETTER PHOTOS

NEW MEDICAL CAMPUS

# SCHOOL OF MEDICINE OPENS CLINICAL CAMPUS IN VALDOSTA

**M**ercer faculty and students joined leaders from across the state at SGMC Health in Valdosta on July 18 to celebrate the opening of the **School of Medicine and SGMC Health's clinical campus and simulation lab** where third- and fourth-year students will live and work for their last two years of medical school. The Valdosta campus features a dedicated medical education unit and offers all required clerkships and electives of Year 3, as well as the sub-internship, elective and required elective rotations for Year 4 of the M.D. program. The first group of 17 third-year medical students transferred to Valdosta from MUSM's Columbus, Macon and Savannah campuses and began clinical rotations in July. Opening a clinical site in Valdosta expands the school's reach to a critical medically underserved region. In addition to SGMC Health, students will rotate through clerkships at other regional facilities.

MUSM Dean Jean Sumner, M.D., FACP, and SGMC Health CEO Ronnie Dean. ▶

MUSM Dean Jean Sumner, M.D., FACP, with Valdosta clinical campus leadership, from left: James Davis, M.D. (surgery); Ene Grace Morgan, M.D. (OB/GYN); Joseph Hayes, M.D. (campus dean); Brian Griner, M.D. (pediatrics); Anthony Johnson, M.D. (family medicine); Megan Gallagher, D.O. (internal medicine); and Paresh Thanki, M.D. (psychiatry). ▼



The first class of third-year medical students to attend the MUSM Valdosta campus at SGMC Health, from left: Pierre Nguyen, Abby Young, Christopher Harvey, Bailey Boyd, Amari Evans, Raina Modi, Katie Waters, Rhett Parr, Carlton Faulk, Alyssa Phillips, Deep Patel, Marshall Scott, Brendan Mahoney, and Nathaniel Kirchoff.

PHOTOS BY WES SEWELL FOR SGMC HEALTH

# TRUSTEES APPROVE RECORD OPERATING BUDGET AND TWO NEW GRADUATE DEGREE PROGRAMS, DEDICATE MOYE CENTER

**M**ercer's Board of Trustees, meeting on the Cecil B. Day Graduate and Professional Campus in Atlanta in April, adopted a record \$308.8 million operating budget for 2024-25, exclusive of more than \$45 million in federal research grants. Continuing more than a decade of below-market annual tuition increases, trustees voted to limit the tuition increase for Macon undergraduate programs to 3.5% for 2024-25. Some programs, such as theology and certain graduate nursing tracks, will have no tuition increases for 2024-25. Law students will see a 2% increase, and M.D. students in the School of Medicine will see a 3% increase. Tuition increases for most other programs range from 3% to 4%. In addition, trustees approved a new Master of Science in instructional design and technology in the Tift College of

Education and a new Ph.D. in biomedical sciences in the School of Medicine. They also held a dedication ceremony for the new **Tony and Nancy Moye Pharmacy and Health Sciences Center**.



Following the April 19 Board of Trustees meeting on the Cecil B. Day Graduate and Professional Campus in Atlanta, trustees and other guests participated in a formal dedication of the Tony and Nancy Moye Pharmacy and Health Sciences Center, a 65,000-square-foot building that houses learning, teaching and administrative space for the College of Pharmacy and other health sciences programs. Classes began in the new facility in January.



## JOURNALISM SCHOLARSHIP HONORING REG MURPHY ESTABLISHED BY OMNICOM

**A** new scholarship named for Mercer alumnus and former trustee **J. Reginald "Reg" Murphy** has been established for students pursuing a journalism major within the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. The Omnicom Reg Murphy Scholarship in Journalism will be awarded to up to 10 students annually for the next 10 years. The scholarship will provide financial support to students pursuing a degree in journalism and will further strengthen the school's commitment to creating leaders who make a positive difference in the world. Juniors or seniors who have demonstrated engagement in the major and shown aptitude and curiosity in journalism and media studies will be eligible for the scholarship. In addition to the scholarships, Omnicom will provide a limited number of student internship opportunities for journalism majors at various Omnicom offices in Atlanta and the New York region.



Mercer named the Reg Murphy Center for Collaborative Journalism in honor of alumnus and journalist Reg Murphy, fifth from right, on Dec. 8, 2023, in Macon. He is pictured with his family and Mercer officials, including President William D. Underwood, fifth from left.

## MERCER AGAIN RANKED AS A NO. 1 MILITARY FRIENDLY® SCHOOL

**M**ercer is once again ranked as a **No. 1 Military Friendly® School for the 2024-25 award year**.

The rankings place Mercer top among 537 institutions across the country recognized for their military and veteran programs and initiatives. Mercer first received the Military Friendly® designation in 2017 and has earned rankings in one of the four exemplary categories — Top 10 Gold, Gold, Silver or Bronze — every year since.



CHRISTOPHER IAN SMITH PHOTO; OPPOSITE: JAMIE TUCKER PHOTOS



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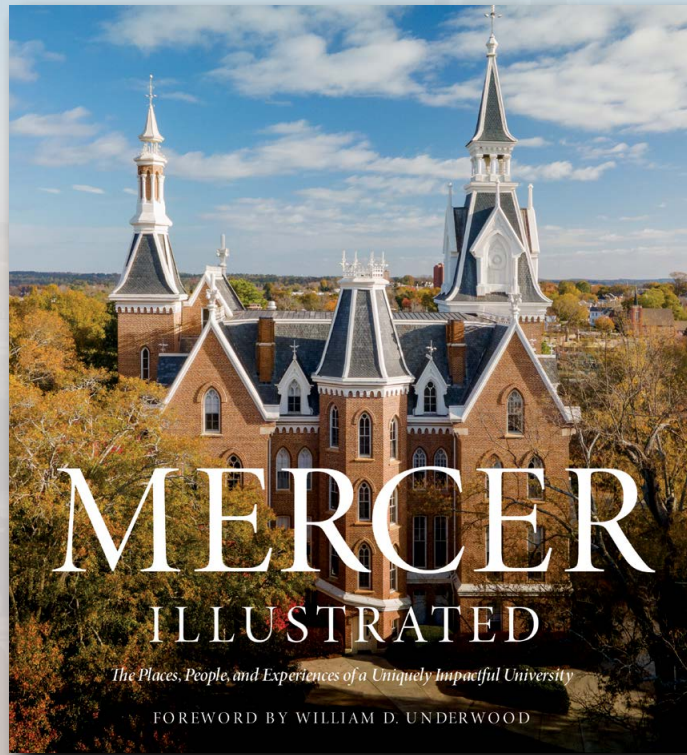
celebrates 45<sup>th</sup> year of publishing excellence

**M**ercer University Press offers a new season of books rich in fiction, poetry, essays, literary criticism, memoir, history, philosophy and religion. Specially highlighted for the Fall/Winter 2024

season is **Mercer Illustrated: The Places, People, and Experiences of a Uniquely Impactful University.**

This folio of more than 250 photographs with a foreword by President **William D. Underwood** and accompanying text by Gordon Johnston celebrates Georgia's oldest private university. Since its founding in 1833 in Penfield as Mercer Institute, Mercer University has educated tens of thousands of undergraduate, graduate and professional students, counting among its alumni 12 governors, 25 congressional representatives, a U.S. Attorney General, two Rhodes Scholars, two Pulitzer Prize winners, and many physicians, artists, poets, engineers, scientists, ministers, musicians, educators, judges, attorneys, business leaders, nurses and pharmacists.

*Mercer Illustrated* highlights the places, people, spirit and experiences that collectively contribute to Mercer's impact on the world. With sections depicting the University's campuses in Macon, Atlanta, Columbus and Savannah and the academic, athletic, arts, service and social events that nourish mind and soul and build community in each location, this collection offers a slice of Mercer life from all the areas of the world and the state that the University has come to call home over the last 191 years.



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**Publication date:** Nov. 5. **List price:** \$60, hardback.

**34<sup>th</sup>** Saturday, Dec. 14  
10:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.  
InterContinental Buckhead Atlanta

## Authors Luncheon



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**AUTHORS APPEARING** include Jonathan Eig, Benjamin Gilmer, Holly Haworth, Catherine M. Lewis, Donna Coffey Little, Richard Rankin, William Rawlings, Ronda Rich, Deborah Roberts, Francesca Rollins, Tennille D. Shuster, J. Dana Trent and Virginia Willis. For additional information got to [mup.mercer.edu/authors-luncheon](http://mup.mercer.edu/authors-luncheon).

FACULTY

# FACULTY HONORS & RECOGNITION

## PROFESSORS RECEIVE NEH GRANT TO OFFER EDUCATION ON IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE EXPERIENCES

Starting in Spring 2025, students will have the opportunity to take new advanced French and Spanish courses that focus on the immigrant and refugee experience. The courses are being developed as part of a \$150,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities' Humanities Initiatives at Colleges and Universities program.

**Dr. Katherine Roseau**, assistant professor of French, and **Libertad Aranza**, Spanish lecturer, are co-directing the grant project. Dr. Roseau and Aranza, with help from Vice Provost of Engaged Learning **Dr. Kathy Klopper**, will also offer faculty development workshops as part of the grant.



Aranza and Dr. Roseau

## ENGINEERING FACULTY MEMBERS RECOGNIZED NATIONALLY

School of Engineering faculty **Dr. Pam Estes Brewer** and **Dr. Sinjae Hyun** have been recognized nationally for their exceptional leadership and excellence in the classroom. Dr. Brewer, professor and chair of technical communication, has been recognized by the IEEE Professional Communication Society and awarded the Emily K. Schlesinger Award for Outstanding Service to the IEEE Professional Communication Society. Schlesinger Award

recipients have provided outstanding service to the society as evidenced by exceptional performance in a significant society leadership role or distinguished performance in a variety of roles within the society. Dr. Hyun, professor and chair of biomedical engineering, was selected as the recipient of the 2024 Gulf-South Summit Award for Outstanding Faculty Contributions to Service-Learning in Higher Education-Instruction. The award is given to a member of the teaching faculty who has demonstrated excellence in incorporating service-learning pedagogy in the college/university classroom.



Dr. Brewer



Dr. Hyun

EVEY WILSON WETHERBEE PHOTO



FACULTY

### MEDICINE DEAN SUMNER RECEIVES LIGHTHOUSE AWARD

School of Medicine Dean **Jean R. Sumner**, M.D., FACP, received the Lighthouse Award from the Georgia Commission on Women during the group's annual Champions for Change Day at the Georgia State Capitol on Feb. 22. The Lighthouse Award is given to a Georgia woman whose efforts have shined a light on solutions to problems and made lives better for Georgia families.



Dr. Sumner

### COPA PROGRAM AWARDED \$200,000 TO ADDRESS COUNSELOR SHORTAGES

The College of Professional Advancement received a nearly \$200,000 Rehabilitation Services Administration Long-Term Training (RSA LTT) grant from the U.S. Department of Education to help address personnel shortages faced by vocational rehabilitation agencies in Georgia. The grant funds scholarships, professional development and additional expenses for qualifying students pursuing a Master of Science degree in clinical rehabilitation counseling. **Dr. Suneetha Manyam**, professor of counseling, is the project's director.



Dr. Manyam

### ENGINEERING PROFESSOR AWARDED 2024 MIKE MACCARTHY MENTORSHIP AWARD

Associate Professor of Electrical and Computer Engineering **Dr. Makhin Thitsa** was awarded the Mike MacCarthy Mentorship Award for her unwavering dedication to enabling the dreams of others through mentoring and guiding undergraduate students throughout their educational journey. The Mike MacCarthy Mentorship Award is named for the late **Dr. Michael MacCarthy**, associate professor of environmental and civil engineering and director of the engineering for development program. He died in 2021.



Dr. David Davis, Dr. Thitsa and Johna Wright

### ENGINEERING PROFESSOR RECEIVES EPA GRANT TO STUDY HOW TO TURN FOOD WASTE INTO FUEL

**Dr. Sarah Bauer**, assistant professor of environmental engineering, and a team of students were awarded nearly \$75,000 by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to further their research studying and identifying sustainable fuel alternatives. The team's project investigates the sustainability of biofuels derived from beverage waste. Environmental, mechanical and biomedical engineering students are participating in this research project under Dr. Bauer's leadership. The grant was awarded as part of the EPA's P3 — People, Prosperity and the Planet — Program, which is aimed at college students interested in creating innovative solutions to the most pressing environmental and public health challenges.



Dr. Bauer, center

### PROFESSOR'S 'PRISON TOWN' PODCAST NOMINATED FOR PEABODY AWARD

Assistant Professor of Practice in Journalism **Evey Wilson Wetherbee's** podcast "Prison Town" was nominated for the prestigious Peabody Award honoring "excellence in storytelling that reflects the social issues and the emerging voices of our day." With reporting partner Jessica Szilagyi, editor of *The Georgia Virtue*, "Prison Town" explores systemic issues within the Georgia Department of Corrections by linking murders on the outside of prison back to an inmate inside Smith State Prison in Tattnall County. The Peabody nominees represent the most compelling and empowering stories released in broadcasting and streaming media during 2023. They were chosen from more than 1,100 entries.



Wetherbee and Szilagyi

### BUSINESS PROFESSOR RECOGNIZED FOR TEACHING INNOVATIONS INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM

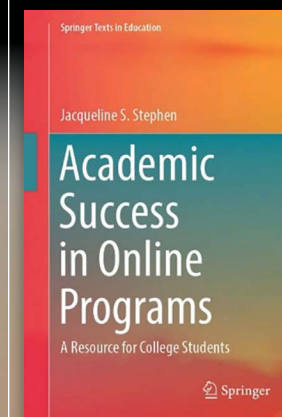
**Dr. Briana Stenard**, associate professor of management and entrepreneurship in the School of Business, received the Innovations in Teaching Award. Dr. Stenard was recognized for her innovative teaching techniques that allow students to apply their knowledge in engaging and fun ways. The award annually recognizes the efforts of an undergraduate faculty member who successfully provides students with engaging learning opportunities inside and outside the classroom.



Dr. Stenard

## MERCER FACULTY AUTHOR NEW BOOKS

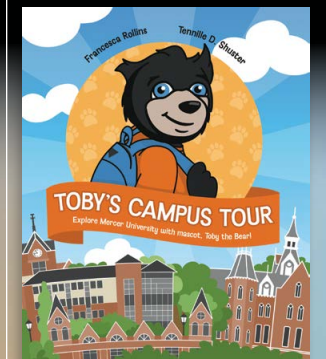
LEAH VETTER PHOTOS; OPPOSITE: PHOTO COURTESY EVEY WILSON WETTERBEE



**DR. JACQUELINE STEPHEN**, assistant professor, director of the office of distance learning and instructional designer in the College of Professional Advancement, published a book titled *Academic Success in Online Programs: A Resource for College Students*. The book provides students with a comprehensive resource to assist them in their academic success in an online course or program.



**JOSHUA FORDYCE**, a senior electronic warfare threat analyst at the Mercer Engineering Research Center, also known as MERC, and retired Navy veteran, published his debut novel *Black Sleeve*. The novel is a story about outcasts, people who are rejected by society, and follows several characters, who are each flawed but, in some way, find redemption.



**FRANCESCA ROLLINS**, associate professor of communication studies, and **TENNILLE SHUSTER**, professor of graphic design and chair of the Art Department in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, published *Toby's Campus Tour: Explore Mercer University with mascot, Toby the Bear*. Explore the highlights of the University's main campus in Macon on a playful and colorful guided tour led by beloved mascot, Toby the Bear.

STUDENTS

# STUDENT HONORS & RECOGNITION

## SENIOR SELECTED FOR CONGRESSIONAL BLACK CAUCUS FOUNDATION INTERNSHIP

Senior **Michaela Tolliver** was awarded a Congressional Black Caucus Foundation internship for summer 2024. The interns work in congressional offices and participate in professional development sessions to prepare them to become principled leaders, skilled policy analysts and informed advocates by exposing them to the processes that develop national policies and implement them, from Capitol Hill to federal field offices. Tolliver, from Alpharetta, is an economics major with a law and public policy minor.



Tolliver, BUS '25

## ENGINEERING ALUMNUS, STUDENT RECEIVE SMART SCHOLARSHIPS FROM U.S. DEFENSE DEPARTMENT

School of Engineering senior **Gregory Adams** and alumnus **Walter Lopez Chavez** were awarded the Science, Mathematics and Research for Transformation (SMART) Scholarship by the U.S. Department of Defense. SMART offers scholarships for undergraduate, master's and doctoral students pursuing a STEM degree. Scholarship recipients receive full tuition, annual stipends, internships and guaranteed employment with the Department of Defense after graduation.



Adams, EGR '25



Chavez, EGR '23

## RECENT GRADUATE SELECTED FOR PEACE CORPS SERVICE IN BOTSWANA

Class of 2024 graduate **Elizabeth Lyle Stinson** was selected to serve in the Peace Corps in Botswana, Southern Africa. She began her service over the summer and will serve in Botswana through September of 2026. Stinson, a global development studies and global health studies double-major, is serving as a community and youth health educator working to reduce HIV/AIDS rates in the community and strengthen health care for youth.



Stinson, CLAS '25

## SENIOR AWARDED U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE INTERNSHIP

Senior **Jason Rother** was awarded a paid internship with the U.S. Department of State and was posted with the Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs in Washington, D.C., this past summer. The Paid Student Internship Program is intended to expand opportunities for students in post-secondary degree programs to gain experience and insight into the role of diplomacy in advancing U.S. foreign policy objectives and be exposed to the variety of careers available at the U.S. Department of State and its diplomatic missions worldwide. From Columbus, Rother is majoring in international affairs with minors in history and environmental studies and hopes to work for the State Department after he graduates.



## MERCER LAW CLAIMS 13<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL LEGAL FOOD FRENZY CHAMPIONSHIP

The School of Law earned the Attorney General's Cup and reclaimed its title as champion of the 13th annual Georgia Legal Food Frenzy, an eight-day, intrastate law school competition to help support food banks in Georgia. Nearly half of this year's donations were raised by Mercer Law. The proceeds of more than \$15,000 from Mercer's team went to Middle Georgia Community Food Bank. This is the ninth time Mercer Law has won the title. The team was spearheaded by Mercer Law Student Bar Association Community Outreach Chairs **Michaela Manley**, '25, and **Jack Wareham**, '25.

Below, from left, Mercer Law School Assistant Dean of Students **Jeannie Zipperer**, Middle Georgia Food Bank CEO **Kathy McCollum**, **Michaela Manley**, **Jack Wareham**, Middle Georgia Food Bank Director of Marketing **Kayla Durham** and School of Law Dean **Karen Sneddon**



MARYANN HOWARD PHOTO

## MERCER LAW GRADUATE 1<sup>ST</sup> RUNNER-UP IN EXCLUSIVE NATIONAL MOCK TRIAL COMPETITION

School of Law graduate **Willie Sizemore** was named first runner-up in Baylor Law's Top Gun National Mock Trial Competition, one of the most prestigious and toughest advocacy competitions in the country, in Waco, Texas. Sizemore, '24, served as counsel during the competition, and his twin sister, **Tessa Sizemore**, '24, served as second chair. This was the second consecutive year Mercer was asked to participate in the invitation-only tournament, where the single best advocates from the 16 top trial advocacy schools across the nation go head-to-head for the honor of being designated as "Top Gun."



Willie, LAW '24, and Tessa Sizemore, LAW '24

SCHOLARSHIPS, FELLOWSHIPS

# SCHOLARSHIPS & FELLOWSHIPS

## ONE OF THE BEST YEARS for Mercer Students Earning Major Awards

This was a record-setting year for student achievement at the University, with 48 students receiving 55 nationally and internationally competitive merit scholarships and fellowships. At Mercer, everyone majors in changing the world, so it should come as no surprise that students are encouraged to apply for nationally and internationally competitive merit scholarship programs. Dozens of students earn awards each year allowing them the opportunity to develop their skills and experiences by applying what they have learned in the classroom in real-world settings.



**55** | **National Fellowships and Scholarships** Awards (MOST IN A SINGLE YEAR) to **48** Students

Including ...

**24**

**Gilman Scholars**



**1** **Newman Civic Fellow**

**1** **NSF Graduate Research Fellowship**

**Peace Corps Selection**

**4** **Fulbright Awards**

**2** **Goldwater Scholarships**

### SENIOR HONORED FOR COMMITMENT TO SOLVING PUBLIC PROBLEMS, NAMED NEWMAN CIVIC FELLOW

Senior **Reema Chande** has been named one of 142 student civic leaders from 38 states, Washington, D.C., and Mexico, who will make up the 2024-25 cohort of Newman Civic Fellows. The Newman Civic Fellowship is a yearlong program that recognizes and supports student public problem solvers. Fellows are nominated by their president or chancellor based on their potential for public leadership and their work with communities. Chande, a psychology and global health double-major from Sugar Hill, said her firsthand challenges with mental health care made her realize how deep the need for accessible, non-stigmatizing support is.



Chande, CLAS '25

### ALUMNUS RECEIVES TWO PHI KAPPA PHI AWARDS

Alumnus **Ryan Brownlee** of Flowery Branch was named a Phi Kappa Phi Fellow and received one of 54 awards presented annually in the amount of \$8,500 to members entering the first year of graduate or professional study. Each active Phi Kappa Phi chapter may select one of its members to compete for the awards. Brownlee, who was initiated into Phi Kappa Phi in 2021, is one of 54 students nationwide to receive the award to support his pursuit of a medical degree at the Medical College of Georgia at Augusta University. While an undergraduate, Brownlee was also one of 50 students nationwide to receive the Phi Kappa Phi Pioneer Award, which is designed to encourage and reward undergraduate members for developing the research, engagement and leadership skills necessary to become successful scholars.



Brownlee, CLAS '24

### 39 STUDENTS INDUCTED INTO PHI BETA KAPPA SOCIETY

Thirty-nine students were inducted into the prestigious Phi Beta Kappa Society by Mercer's Zeta of Georgia Chapter for the 2023-24 academic year. The invitation process is considered one of the most selective in the nation. Prospective Phi Beta Kappa inductees are usually seniors among the top 10% of their graduating class who have completed a broad range of liberal arts and sciences coursework, including foreign language study and mathematics. Exceptional students meeting the society's requirements may also be considered as juniors. The following students make up Mercer's ninth induction class:

**Amira Lissette Abbasi, Naomi Abbe, Adil Ahmed, Atia Bailey, Samuel E. Barrow, Sarah Grace Boyer, Mekai Elanna Brown, Ryan T. Brownlee, Luke Caldwell, Erin N. Cargin, Kayla Chambers, Jamyah Janise Combs, Cassandra Rose Carver, Wendy Lorena Cruz, Aaliyah Yasmin Deen Sesay, Amaan M. Faraz, Dakota Raye Ellis, Merin Jaya George, Papa Guerrero, Priscilla Haywood, Kyla N. Hudson, Olivia Grace Hundley, Mary Elizabeth Hendley, Lauren Elizabeth Insko, Yash Chirag Jani, McGregor Koenig, Stephania Lopez, Insia A. Merchant, Anjali Rajesh Patel, Saileer Renee Riser, Kaylee Nicole Miller, Eliza Jane Moore, Seiler Rivers, Anwyn Mackenzie Shanahan, Jaylen Rhea Smith, Lara Craig Smith, Diana Maria Tejera Berrios, Kendall Charlcie Webb and Samantha Vaquero-Covarrubias.**



LEAH YETTER PHOTO

SCHOLARSHIPS, FELLOWSHIPS

### SENIOR LANDS COVETED PUBLIC POLICY AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS FELLOWSHIP

Senior **Alana Murray** participated in the prestigious Public Policy and International Affairs Program (PPIA) Junior Summer Institute at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh this past summer. The PPIA is a national fellowship program that prepares students for a master's degree in public policy, international affairs or other related fields. Murray, a criminal justice and cybersecurity double-major, is also a Stamps Scholar and in the Mercer Honors Program.



Murray, CLAS '25

### TWO RECENT GRADS AWARDED GEM FELLOWSHIPS TO AID IN PURSUIT OF HIGH-LEVEL TECHNICAL CAREERS

Class of 2024 graduates **Leila Kelly** and **Kennedy Mays** have been accepted into the GEM Fellowship Program. GEM recruits high-quality, underrepresented students looking to pursue master's and doctoral degrees in applied science and engineering and matches their specific skills to the needs of GEM employer partners. Kelly, from Aurora, Colorado, was an environmental engineering major who interned at the National Renewable Energy Lab this summer and is attending Villanova University to pursue a Master of Science in sustainable engineering. Mays, from Savannah, was a computer engineering major who is enrolled in Carnegie Mellon's Master of Science in Software Management program.



Kelly, EGR '24



Mays, EGR '24

### OFFICE OF GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT AWARDS 16 SCHOLARSHIPS FOR STUDENTS TO STUDY ABROAD

The Office of Global Engagement awarded 16 Global Leader Scholarships (GLS), providing students with a total of \$52,800 to participate in study abroad programs during the upcoming spring semester. The GLS program was launched in 2019 to support students with financial need in pursuing long-term study abroad opportunities at the University. The recipients are:

**Naman Arora, Janae Bonaparte, Devin Dalby, Nailah Desamu-Thorpe, Gerell Glenn, Angelina Goodman, Kaytlin Haynes, Nyny Hoang, Lainey Hunt, Delaila Marquez, Lexsea Nix, Naahemaa Oser-Tutu, Emma Page, Taylor Parker, Breijaha Swain-Garland and Yuchan Zheng.**



### FOUR MERCERIANs SELECTED FOR PRESTIGIOUS FULBRIGHT AWARDS

Class of 2024 graduates **Josie Arbaugh**, **Seiler Rivers** and **Abigail Van Pelt** and graduate student **Marlo Mecredy** were selected to receive the prestigious Fulbright U.S. Student Awards for the 2024-25 academic year. Arbaugh and Rivers were chosen as finalists and awarded Fulbright English Teaching Assistantships to Laos and the Czech Republic, respectively. The Fulbright English Teaching Assistant programs place grantees in schools overseas to supplement local English language instruction and to provide a native speaker presence in the classrooms.



Arbaugh, CLAS '24



Rivers, CLAS '24



Van Pelt, CLAS '24



Mecredy, EGR '23

Mecredy and Van Pelt were awarded Fulbright Study/Research Awards to the Netherlands. Study/Research Awards are opportunities where the candidates design proposals for a specific country or pursue a master's degree at a host university. Mercer's latest cohort of Fulbright Students brings the University's total number to 36 since 2010.

### TWO STUDENTS NAMED GOLDWATER AND AMGEN SCHOLARS

**Sarah Boyer** and **Mia Jastrzembki** were named recipients of the Barry M. Goldwater Scholarship and the Amgen Scholarship. Goldwater is the nation's most prestigious scholarship for undergraduates in science, mathematics and engineering. Mercer is one of the state's leading producers of Goldwater Scholars, and Boyer and Jastrzembki were selected from a pool of 1,353 undergraduates nominated by 446 institutions for the 2024-25 academic year. The Amgen Scholarship is designed to provide an intensive research experience to outstanding undergraduates who hope to pursue a research-intensive career in biomedical science. Boyer, a biochemistry and molecular biology major in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, works in the biochemistry lab of **Dr. Garland Crawford**, professor of chemistry. Jastrzembki, a biomedical engineering major in the School of Engineering, is involved in conducting research with **Dr. Sinjae Hyun**, professor and chair of biomedical engineering.



Boyer, CLAS '25, and Dr. Crawford



Jastrzembki, EGR '26, and Dr. Hyun

### FOUR STUDENTS SELECTED TO STUDY ABROAD AS GILMAN SCHOLARS

Four students were chosen during the spring 2024 selection cycle to receive a total of \$10,000 in funding to study abroad through the prestigious Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship program. **Christian Grizzle**, a class of 2024 chemistry major, participated in a Mercer On Mission program in Belize; **Jakayla Jackson**, a senior sports marketing and analytics major, participated in a Mercer On Mission program in South Africa; **Robin Serrant**, a class of 2024 global health studies major, participated in a Mercer On Mission program in India; and **Amaya Shackley**, a senior global health studies and anthropology double-major, participated in a Mercer On Mission program in India. Mercer is one of the top producers of Gilman Scholars in the country. The University has been recognized as both a Gilman Top Producing Institution and a Gilman Greatest Growth Institution for its role in broadening the student population that studies abroad overall, as well as in areas of priority achievement.

LEAH VETTER PHOTOS

ALUMNI

# ALUMNI HONORS & RECOGNITION

## RECENT GRAD AWARDED LEWIS SCHOLARS POSITION TO HELP ADVANCE HEALTH EQUITY

Recent graduate **Jamyah Janise Combs** was awarded a CDC John R. Lewis Undergraduate Public Health Scholars (Lewis Scholars) position at the University of Pittsburgh this past summer. The Pitt Public Health Undergraduate Scholars Program's goal is to advance health equity by increasing public health workforce diversity. Combs, who graduated in spring 2024 with a global health studies major and anthropology and sociology double-minor, is attending Emory University Rollins School of Public Health to pursue a Master of Public Health degree.



Combs, CLAS '24

## RECENT GRADUATE SELECTED FOR JAPANESE EXCHANGE AND TEACHING PROGRAM

Class of 2024 graduate **Thomas Anthony Neely** was selected for the Japanese Exchange and Teaching (JET) Program and will serve as an assistant English language teacher in Japan for at least a year. The JET Program is a competitive employment opportunity that allows young professionals to live and work throughout Japan while representing the U.S. as cultural ambassadors. Founded in 1987, JET has sent more than 77,000 participants from around the globe to work in schools, boards of education and government offices throughout Japan. Neely double-majored in marketing and creative writing with a minor in psychology and was also named an alternate for the Fulbright English Teaching Assistantship to South Korea.



Neely, CLAS '24

## ALUMNUS, RESEARCH ASSISTANT AWARDED NSF GRADUATE RESEARCH FELLOWSHIP

Mercer graduate and research assistant **Caden Hamrick** was awarded the prestigious, oldest of its kind, National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship (GRFP), with a total award value of \$159,000. GRFP says it recognizes and supports outstanding graduate students who have demonstrated the potential to be high-achieving scientists and engineers early in their careers. Hamrick, from Covington, graduated with a computer engineering degree in 2023 and worked full-time as a research assistant in the lab of **Dr. Anthony Choi**, professor of electrical and computer engineering and director of machine intelligence and robotics. Hamrick started his Ph.D. at the University of Utah this fall, and he said he plans to pursue a career in academia as a professor.



Hamrick, EGR '23

## SCHOOL OF BUSINESS HONORS SINGH WITH IAPP WESTIN SCHOLAR AWARD

Graduate **Antara Singh** has been named the School of Business' 2024 International Association of Privacy Professionals Westin Scholar. Singh was selected by **Jordan "Jody" Blanke**, Distinguished Professor of Computer Science and Law, to receive the award in recognition of her outstanding performance in Blanke's course "Legal and Ethical Issues Affecting Big Data." Singh graduated in December 2023 with a Master of Science in business analytics. The annual Westin Scholar Awards were created by the International Association of Privacy Professionals to support students who are identified as future leaders in the field of privacy and data protection.



Blanke and Singh, BUS '24

## SCHOOL OF LAW ALUMNI AWARD RECIPIENTS

Three Mercer School of Law graduates were honored with prestigious awards during the Law School's annual alumni dinner on March 2 in Atlanta. **The Hon. William "Bill" P. Adams**, '77, of Macon, was honored with the Meritorious Service Award, which is presented to alumni who have demonstrated their support of the alumni association and Mercer Law School through their contribution of time and gifts. **The Hon. John E. Morse Jr.**, '82, of Savannah, was honored with the Outstanding Alumnus Award, which is given to alumni who have served

the profession of law in an outstanding manner, and in so doing, brought honor to themselves and Mercer Law School. **Amanda M. Morejon**, '17, of Tampa, Florida, was honored with the Young Alumni Volunteer of the Year Award, which recognizes young alumni who have provided valuable service and selfless commitment to enhance the experience of Mercer law students.



From left: Tanya Jeffords, Mercer Law alumni board president; the Hon. William "Bill" P. Adams; Amanda M. Morejon; the Hon. John E. Morse Jr.; and Mercer Law Dean Karen J. Snedden

OPPOSITE: PAULA HELLER PHOTO



# FINDING THEIR SUPERPOWERS

  
**Roberts Academy**  
AT MERCER UNIVERSITY  
Where Students with Dyslexia Thrive

MERCER LAUNCHES

## Roberts Academy for Dyslexic Children

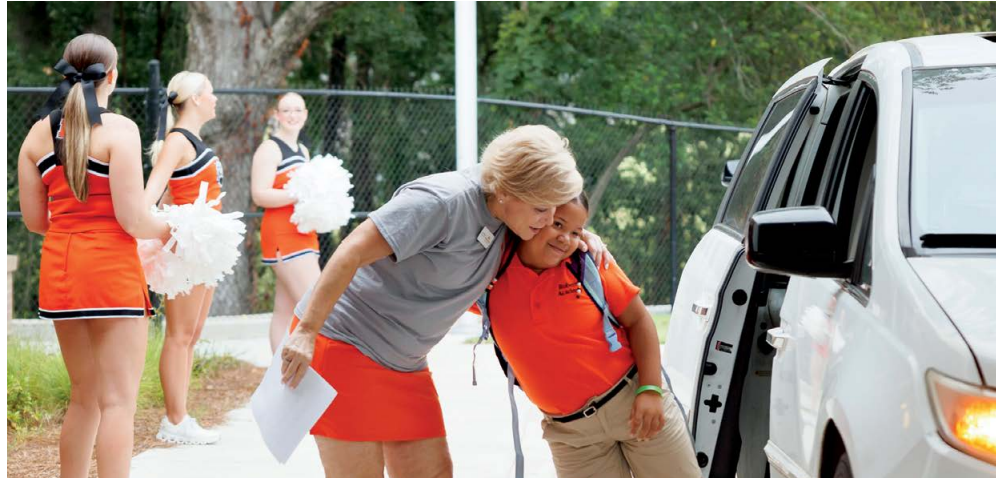
By **JAMIE DICKSON, CLAS '05** Photographs by **LEAH YETTER**

**S**unlight streams into **Teresa Kalmbach's** 5th-grade classroom as she organizes a learning activity for her students.

"I'm so excited to be here," she said. "This is a dream come true for me." Kalmbach is one of seven highly trained educators at Roberts Academy at Mercer University — Georgia's only school for dyslexic students outside metro Atlanta and the most affordable for dyslexic students in the state.

The Academy, located about two blocks from Mercer's Macon campus, serves students in grades 2-5. Its mission is to prepare students with dyslexia to achieve academic success through dynamic educational programs.

"I know firsthand how desperately Middle Georgia needs this school," Kalmbach said. "I wish it had been here when my son was younger." >>



**SOME OF THE WORLD'S MOST PROLIFIC SCIENTISTS, ARTISTS, ACTORS, MUSICIANS AND POLITICAL LEADERS ARE DYSLEXIC — STEVEN SPIELBERG, OCTAVIA SPENCER, TONY BENNETT, CHER, JENNIFER ANISTON, GWEN STEFANI, PABLO PICASSO, LEONARDO DA VINCI AND SEVEN U.S. PRESIDENTS.**



Now an adult, Jason Kalmbach has a successful career in information technology. “He makes more money than I will ever make,” Kalmbach said, laughing. But Jason’s journey with dyslexia continues as Kalmbach’s grandson, Eli (7), begins to navigate his own journey with the learning difference.

**The Roberts Academy Story**

Roberts Academy at Mercer was made possible through a historic and transformational gift from philanthropists **Hal** and **Marjorie Roberts**. The Robertses are passionate about supporting children with dyslexia because three of their grandchildren struggled to learn to read. After being diagnosed with dyslexia, the children attended a specialized school for dyslexia in Atlanta where their reading skills quickly improved and their academic confidence was restored. “We witnessed firsthand the toll dyslexia takes on a family and a child’s self-esteem, and then we saw the transformation that takes place in the right learning environment,” said Hal Roberts. “We know what works for children with dyslexia, and we need to make it accessible for all children.” Gifts from the Roberts family have also established

Her oldest son, Jason, was diagnosed with dyslexia in the fourth grade after years of struggling to learn to read. His undiagnosed dyslexia affected every part of his academic experience as well as his self-esteem. “He was reluctant to try in school, because he didn’t want his peers to know he was struggling,” Kalmbach said. “He knew something was wrong, he just didn’t know what.” But even after receiving his diagnosis, he continued to struggle. “His teachers tried to help him, but nothing was working,” she said. “His reading deficits were severe, and nothing he was learning seemed to stick.”



Once Jason entered eighth grade with little to no literacy gains, the Kalmbachs decided to look for outside support. Kalmbach, who was working as a pediatric nurse, left her job to help her son get the extra support he needed. She attended Orton-Gillingham parent training — an approach to literacy instruction specifically designed for dyslexic learners. But it didn’t take long for her to realize Jason needed support beyond what she could provide, so she enrolled him in a specialized learning center in Atlanta for students with dyslexia. “We spent hours every day commuting back and forth to Atlanta from Warner Robins so he could take classes at this center,” Kalmbach said. “I would nap in my car while he was in school. It was exhausting, but it was worth it.”

After four months at the center, Jason’s literacy level increased by four grades. Kalmbach was so amazed by his progress that she decided to pursue a second career in special education. “I knew our schools needed more teachers specifically trained to help students with dyslexia and other learning differences. I was so inspired by my son’s progress that I wanted to make sure that other dyslexic kids didn’t have to travel so far to get the support they needed,” she said. Kalmbach now holds bachelor’s, master’s and specialist degrees in elementary and special education as well as endorsements in general reading and dyslexia.





**“AT ROBERTS, WE DON’T CALL IT A DISABILITY. WE CALL IT A DIFFERENCE, BECAUSE THESE STUDENTS LEARN IN A DIFFERENT WAY ... AT ROBERTS, WE TEACH THEM TO READ IN A WAY THAT MAKES SENSE FOR THEIR BRAINS.”**  
**— JOY WOOD, HEAD OF SCHOOL**



remediation occurs, their dyslexic superpowers really start to shine through.”

**Finding Their Superpowers**

Dyslexic individuals are often extremely creative, great problem solvers and strong critical thinkers. Some of the world’s most prolific scientists, artists, actors, musicians and political leaders are dyslexic. These include Steven Spielberg, Octavia Spencer, Tony Bennett, Cher, Jennifer Aniston, Gwen Stefani, Pablo Picasso, Leonardo Da Vinci and seven U.S. presidents.

Dyslexia is also often a family affair. According to Understood.org — the leading nonprofit empowering the 70 million people with learning and thinking differences in the United States — it has a heritability rate of 40-80%.

“Thanks to the work I did with my son, we were able to spot Eli’s dyslexia early on, and now he will get the intervention he needs much sooner than his uncle,” Kalmbach said.

two other specialized dyslexia schools: The Roberts Academy at Florida Southern College in Lakeland, Florida, and the Roberts Academy at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee.

Hal Roberts said he chose to establish the schools at universities because he wants to make the biggest impact possible.

“Higher education drives progress in our country. It is the staging ground for thought leadership and cutting-edge research, and the launching pad for the next generation of thinkers and doers,” he said.

The connection between Roberts Academy and Mercer is symbiotic, said **Dr. Thomas Koballa**, dean of Mercer’s Tift College of Education.

“Roberts Academy will benefit from being part of Mercer because it will have quick access to top professors, leading research and state-of-the-art facilities,” he said. “In turn, the school will help shape the next generation of educators through its presence on campus. Roberts Academy will shine a spotlight on dyslexia and better prepare our students to change the lives of children.”

**What is Dyslexia?**

Dyslexia affects up to 20% of the U.S. population and makes up 80% of those diagnosed with a learning disability, according to the International Dyslexia Association (IDA).

“But at Roberts, we don’t call it a disability,” said the Academy’s Head of School **Joy Wood**. “We call it



a difference, because these students learn in a different way. And at Roberts, we teach them to read in a way that makes sense for their brains.”

According to the IDA, dyslexia is a brain-based condition that causes trouble with reading words accurately and quickly, as well as with spelling and writing.

These issues often arise despite having strong cognitive skills and receiving good instruction. As a result, students with dyslexia often struggle to understand what they read. They read less overall, which can slow down vocabulary acquisition and knowledge growth, as well as impact their self-esteem.

“Many dyslexic students believe that they can’t read because they are lazy or dumb, and that couldn’t be further from the truth,” Wood said. “One of our goals is to reframe dyslexia as a superpower, because once





## The Roberts Academy Difference

Roberts Academy uses the Orton Gillingham Approach — an individualized, intensive approach to reading instruction designed specifically for students with dyslexia.

Rooted in 80 years of research and teaching practice, it starts with the basics and focuses on the structure of words and language.

Gradually, it weaves the skills of reading, spelling and writing into an integrated whole. The approach is diagnostic, personalized, multisensory, structured, cognitive and success-oriented.

Every teacher at the Academy is trained in Orton-Gillingham and will continue to receive training throughout the school year.

“The Orton-Gillingham Approach is the gold standard in dyslexia intervention and remediation,” Wood said. “All students can benefit from Orton-Gillingham, but it’s the only way dyslexic students can learn to read.”

While reading is the focus of the Academy, the school’s curriculum is aligned with the Georgia Standards for Excellence; students will learn mathematics, science, social studies, computer science, fine arts, health and physical education and English language arts.

Because the curriculum will follow the Georgia standards, Academy students will keep pace with the learning advances made by students attending public or independent schools in Georgia.



Malcolm Mitchell (second from right), a former New England Patriots and Georgia Bulldogs football player who struggled with reading as a youth, launched the Roberts Academy Speaker Series in January. From left, College of Education Dean Dr. Thomas Koballa, Hal Roberts, Marjorie Roberts, Roberts Academy Head of School Joy Wood, Malcolm Mitchell, and Mercer University Executive Vice President Dr. Penny Elkins.



▲ Former Gov. Nathan Deal, CLAS '64, LAW '66, discusses his debut children's book, *Veto, the Governor's Cat*, with Roberts Academy students. Deal wrote the book as a tribute to his late wife, Sandra Deal, who championed literacy and early childhood education while she was a teacher and throughout her tenure as Georgia's first lady and beyond.



**“ROBERTS ACADEMY WILL BENEFIT FROM BEING PART OF MERCER BECAUSE IT WILL HAVE QUICK ACCESS TO TOP PROFESSORS, LEADING RESEARCH AND STATE-OF-THE-ART FACILITIES. IN TURN, THE SCHOOL WILL HELP SHAPE THE NEXT GENERATION OF EDUCATORS.”**

— **DR. THOMAS KOBALLA, DEAN, TIFT COLLEGE OF EDUCATION**



“Our goal is to remediate and release,” said Wood. “We want to provide our students with the tools they’ll need to be successful in any educational environment.”

Additionally, the Academy’s small class sizes ensure each student will get the individualized and prescriptive instruction they need to succeed. Homerooms at the Academy will not exceed 12 students, and reading groups will never exceed six students.

## The Inaugural Year

In August, the Academy’s faculty, as well as Mercer’s cheerleaders and mascot, Tot, welcomed 31 students to the Academy for their first day of school.

“That was a very exciting day,” said Wood. “It was two years in the making, and to see all of our hard work come to fruition was extremely rewarding.”

Roberts Academy parent **Betsy Griffith** said she and her husband, **Wes**, chose Roberts Academy for their son, **Knox**, because of its approach.

“We think that Roberts Academy will not only help Knox learn but also teach him to advocate for himself when he transitions back to the school of our choice,” she said. “Knox struggled last year in first grade, and there were many days he would come home in tears because of being so frustrated. At Roberts, he will be understood and accepted. We believe he will begin to enjoy learning and regain his self-esteem.”

The school can accommodate 180 students but won’t reach full capacity for several years. “Our priority is to maintain integrity while supporting each learner effectively,” Wood said. Kalmbach is excited about the launch of what she hopes will be an incredible school year.

“We are creating something very special here,” she said. “We’re going to change lives, and I can’t wait to watch it happen.” ♦

# Grad's Personal Experiences Lead Him to Pursue Career Helping Others Cope With Trauma

By **ANDREA HONAKER**

**A** devastating accident while serving in the military took **Nathaneal Barrow** from feeling like a hero to a zero.

With a painful and long physical recovery, accompanied by additional personal struggles, he slipped into darkness. But eventually, he found the light as well as a calling to help others facing difficult times.

On May 13, Barrow donned a cap and gown for Mercer's Macon campus commencement and celebrated the completion of his bachelor's degree in psychology from the College of Professional Advancement. He's already begun working toward a master's degree in clinical mental health counseling. >>

Barrow's story of perseverance led him to be awarded Mercer's 2024 McAfee Vision and Leadership Scholarship. Candidates who demonstrate leadership abilities on campus or in the community are nominated for the scholarship by the dean of their school or college.



Barrow, a Macon resident, said he and his siblings had a hard childhood as they grew up in foster care. He enrolled in the U.S. Army a year after finishing high school. About to become a father, he wanted to choose a heroic career that would make his son proud.

Barrow's military service earned him numerous awards, including the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, Afghanistan Campaign Medal with Campaign Star and NATO Medal for service in an imminent danger zone of hazardous duty.

After four years stationed at bases across the U.S., he deployed to Afghanistan, where he served for 11 months. His primary task was route clearance, which involves clearing roads of obstacles such as improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and retrofitting military bases. While on patrol, the vehicle in which Barrow was riding hit an IED and rolled, severely injuring Barrow's back, pelvis and abdominal organs.

He underwent two major reconstructive surgeries, followed by another to address complications. He thought he would never walk again. Barrow said it felt like "everybody had signed off on my fate" when he was medically retired from the military.

"It was devastating emotionally to go from being extremely active to being still," said Barrow, who now has three children, ages 15, 13 and 5. "The pain in itself was excruciating, and the things that I was able to do — playing with my kids, picking them up, tickling them — they were gone. Those were the kinds of things that hurt the most. But on the other side of that, those were the reasons to keep trying, regardless of the diagnosis."

With rehab, he was able to go from a wheelchair to walking with a cane to walking independently. He was able to do most of the physical things he could before the

accident, but other challenges remained.

"There were deep pockets of pain medication and alcohol use, trying to sort through those emotions along the way," he said. "My youngest brother committed suicide, and it shook me to my core. I had already been through so many challenging things. He called me the night before he did it. We stayed on the phone for four hours. It felt like it wasn't enough. I took it very personally, and I got into my own therapy."

Barrow participated in a cognitive behavioral therapy program for 18 months. After completing the program, he continued to serve as a mentor to other veterans, which opened his eyes to a career as a licensed therapist.

"To take that kind of pain and suffering and twist it into something beautiful and helpful and give it out to someone else is a better response than drowning in it," Barrow said.

He chose to attend Mercer at the recommendation of his aunt, who is a therapist and Mercer alumna. Through hybrid and in-person classes on the Macon campus, Barrow received a "master-crafted" academic experience. His advisor, Associate Professor of Human Services and Psychology **Dr. Merrin Oliver**, helped him choose classes that were tailored to his interests and goals. He was inducted into Psi Chi psychology honor society.

"It felt like not only did I put my best into it, but it got validated by the incredible people that I had the opportunity to work with," Barrow said.

Reacclimating to an environment with peers was challenging for Barrow, who was focused on the academic side of his education but not the social aspect. While at the University Center gym one day, University Minister **Dr. Craig McMahan** introduced himself to Barrow and became an important source of support. Dr. McMahan connected him with other veterans, a "beautiful gift" that led to lifelong friendships, Barrow said.

Barrow completed his psychology degree in December 2023 and is currently enrolled in the clinical mental health counseling graduate program. After he completes his master's degree, he wants to focus on providing therapy to law enforcement officers, first responders and veterans who are dealing with trauma. He hopes to partner with Veterans Affairs facilities, local police departments and hospitals in this work.

Barrow said talking with mental health professionals who hadn't been deployed or didn't share a similar



University Minister **Dr. Craig McMahan** (left) introduced himself to Barrow at the University Center gym and eventually became an important source of support and connected him with other veterans.

lifestyle to him created roadblocks during his own therapy. He was reluctant to open up and express himself. He hopes to be able to eliminate that barrier with his clients since he can relate to their experiences.

"As a therapist, that would be something that I could give immediately. It's not just that I know these things academically. I've lived through them," he said.

“To take that kind of pain and suffering and twist it into something beautiful and helpful and give it out to someone else is a better response than drowning in it.”

— Nathaneal Barrow, COPA '23

Barrow's inspiring story of perseverance led him to be awarded Mercer's 2024 McAfee Vision and Leadership Scholarship. Barrow said he was humbled to receive the recognition.

"It's hard to incorporate the good parts of all of that," he said. "It feels like a lot of these things are mixed with a lot of pain. Feeling like I did something that I had to do, it doesn't feel like I should be rewarded for that. But it feels like a huge honor."

Barrow is proud to show his children what he was able to accomplish and how he followed his passion. When he walked across the graduation stage, it was a celebration of not only him but his family.

"My grandfather, my mother, my kids, they'll get to see the results of all of the effort and stress and frustration that had been happening. It'll culminate publicly. It's a beautiful moment to be able to give to them, to show that it was all worth it, that they did something amazing," Barrow said. ♦



LEAH VETTER PHOTOS

MAKE PLANS TO JOIN US FOR



# Mercer University HOMECOMING

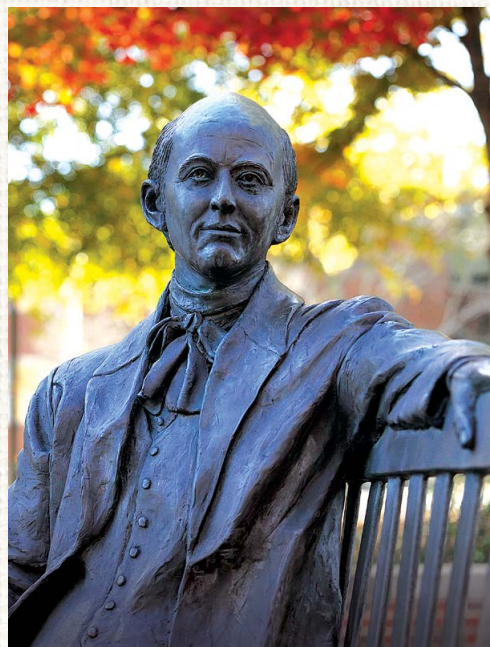
NOV. 1 & 2, 2024

*Welcome Home, Bears.  
Together We Roar!*

Hey, Bears! It's time to return to campus for Homecoming 2024. We invite you to rediscover cherished connections with old friends, celebrate time-honored traditions, and cheer on the Bears during the Homecoming game versus ETSU.

You can look forward to familiar favorites, new events, and soaking up our beautiful campus as you return home. Tailgating, fireworks, recognition of our Anniversary Classes, celebrations of our Half Century Club members and Alumni & Friends Awards recipients, and the Ford Concert Series are just a few of the exciting events awaiting you.

Visit [homecoming.mercer.edu](http://homecoming.mercer.edu)  
for the most up-to-date  
schedule and register today.



LACROSSE, ACADEMIC HONORS

# 6 Women's Lacrosse Wins 6th Conference Championship

**A**nother dominant campaign was on the menu for the Mercer women's lacrosse team in 2024 as the Bears amassed double-digit victories on the way to their third-straight Big South Conference championship, as well as their fifth league title in the last six seasons.

Mercer's 16-12 victory over High Point University at Five Star Stadium in the title bout of the Big South Conference tournament marked the 24th-straight win for the Orange and Black over league foes and secured the program's sixth NCAA Tournament berth under the direction of head coach **Samantha Eustace**. Mercer also improved to 24-7 at home with that triumph over the Panthers.

The Bears were blessed with a cornucopia of postseason accolades as **Gabby DiVirgilio** raked in the league's offensive player of the year crown, while fellow senior **Kayla Soltys** was

named defensive player of the year and rookie **Ansley Walters** collected conference freshman of the year laurels. Seven Bears earned All-Big South Conference honors, including a trio of first-team selections.

The program's dominance in the classroom was on display again as well. Thirteen student-athletes picked up academic honor roll distinction from the Intercollegiate Women's Lacrosse Coaches Association (IWLCA) and three Bears made the College Sports Communicators (CSC) Academic All-District Team.

Senior **Maddi Koury** was awarded one of the highest honors in college sports as an NCAA postgraduate scholarship recipient. Only 21 student-athletes across NCAA Division I, II and III earn the scholarship each year.



## BEARS SEND 256 TO SOCON ACADEMIC HONOR ROLL

A testament to a championship mindset both inside the playing arena and the classroom, the Mercer athletics department placed 256 student-athletes on the Southern Conference 2023-24 Academic Honor Roll. The Academic Honor Roll consists of student-athletes who participated in varsity sports and posted a 3.0 grade point average or higher for the academic year. Mercer's football team sent 68 student-athletes to the listing, while the baseball team had 38 student-athletes lauded with the honor. Six other teams sent 10 or more student-athletes to the distinguished list. A total of 78 Bears earned the Commissioners Medal as well, which is awarded to student-athletes who attain a GPA of 3.8 or higher throughout the academic year. A total of 2,473 student-athletes from the 10 member institutions and nine associate members earned the distinction. Lacrosse and beach volleyball student-athletes were not eligible for the SoCon Academic Honor Roll.



2023-24	256
ACADEMIC HONOR ROLL	HONOREES
78	COMMISSIONER'S MEDALS

# Michelle Clark-Heard Named Women's Basketball Head Coach

**M**ercer on March 22 appointed 26-year collegiate coaching veteran **Michelle Clark-Heard** as the women's basketball program's 11th head coach.

Clark-Heard made the move to Middle Georgia after spending the 2023-24 season on the staff at Mississippi State. She has amassed a 252-147 record in 13 seasons as a head coach, including previous stops at Kentucky State, Western Kentucky and Cincinnati, and has led her teams to seven postseason appearances, including four NCAA Tournament berths. She also has two regular season conference championships and a quartet of conference tournament titles in her stable as well.

Clark-Heard served a hybrid position on the Mississippi State coaching staff last season as both an assistant coach and the assistant athletics director for women's basketball. The Bulldogs flourished with her on the sidelines, collecting 21 victories and an appearance in the Women's Basketball Invitation Tournament (WBIT), while ranking among NCAA Division I's top scoring and rebounding teams, as well as one of the nation's top shot-blocking squads. Mississippi State also spent multiple weeks in both the Associated Press and USA Today Coaches Top 25 polls.

Prior to moving to Starkville, Clark-Heard compiled 74 wins across five seasons (2018-23) as the head coach at Cincinnati,



**MICHELLE CLARK-HEARD**  
MERCER WOMEN'S BASKETBALL  
HEAD COACH

including 20+ -win campaigns in each of her first two seasons at the helm of the Bearcats.

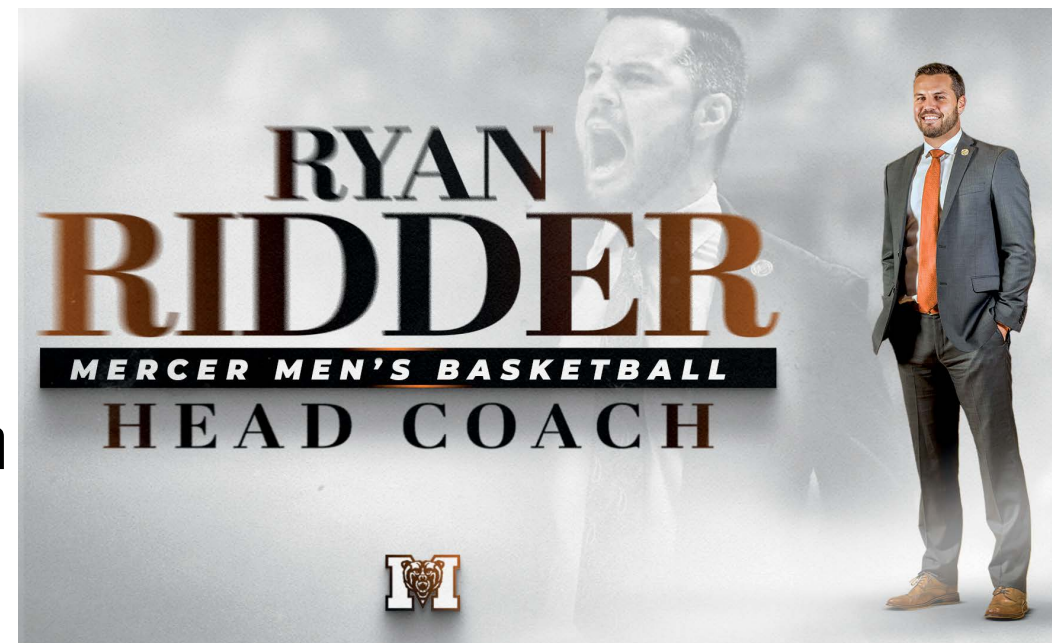
She and her husband, Luther, recently celebrated their 20th wedding anniversary.

# Ryan Ridder Named Men's Basketball Head Coach

**R**yan Ridder was named Mercer's 30th head men's basketball coach on March 15.

The 15-year collegiate coaching veteran comes to the Bears after leading University of Tennessee at Martin to 48 victories over the last three seasons, including a 21-11 mark in 2023-24. He has amassed a 191-120 (.614) record in nine seasons as a head coach — a career that includes previous head-coaching stops at both Daytona State and Bethune-Cookman.

Ridder bridged his first and second seasons in northwest Tennessee by leading the Skyhawks on a 9 1/2 game turnaround as UT Martin posted 19 victories during the 2022-23 campaign, a third-place finish in the final Ohio Valley Conference regular season standings and the program's fifth appearance all-time in the OVC Tournament semifinals. The 19



**RYAN RIDDER**  
MERCER MEN'S BASKETBALL  
HEAD COACH

wins marked the fifth-most victories for the program in its more than three decades on the NCAA Division I level.

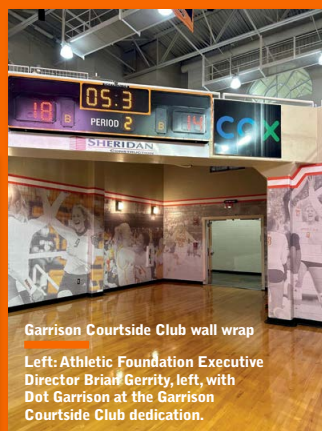
UT Martin boasted NCAA Division I's 23rd-ranked scoring offense (81.5 points/game) this past season, while also showcasing one of the nation's top rebounding teams as well. The Skyhawks captured 12 of their final 14 regular season contests to claim a share of the OVC regular season crown and the No. 2 seed in the OVC Tournament.

Ridder and his wife, the former Jen Calnan of Daytona Beach, Florida, have three daughters — Brixton, Remi and Marlee.

## ATHLETIC FOUNDATION NEWS

### BASKETBALL'S GARRISON COURTSIDE CLUB

The **Garrison Courtside Club**, named in honor of **Paul and Dot Garrison**, was unveiled this fall. The previously unused courtside area was transformed into a premium area in Hawkins Arena for men's and women's basketball games. The pregame and halftime gathering place with high-top tables serves popcorn, snacks, sodas and Fall Line beer products. It is open to MAF donors at the \$1,000 giving level and above, as well as courtside seat ticket holders. Paul Hope Garrison Jr., passed away in 2019. He graduated from Mercer in 1963 and was a member of the Mercer Alumni Association and Mercer Athletic Foundation, where he loved cheering on the Bears. Paul was also a lifetime member of the President's Club.



Garrison Courtside Club wall wrap  
Left: Athletic Foundation Executive Director Brian Gerrity, left, with Dot Garrison at the Garrison Courtside Club dedication.

### NEW WOMEN'S GOLF VAN GIFTED BY SCHECK FAMILY

Women's golf received a 2023 **Obsidian Black Mercedes Sprinter van** fully loaded and customized with embroidered Mercer logos. The van was funded through a gift by Kevin and Carolyn Scheck, parents of Mercer women's golfer Katie Scheck, who joined Mercer this year after two seasons at Penn State. This van puts Mercer golf on par with the top programs in the country.



### SKELTON FAMILY SOFTBALL ENDOWMENT ESTABLISHED

The **Skelton Family Softball Endowment**, which will enhance the program's operating budget, was established in April. The endowment was made possible with a generous gift from **Jane and Dr. Doug Skelton**, who are the most impactful donors in Mercer softball history. Between 2019 and 2023, their generosity led to a complete transformation of the softball facility, including renovations of the press box and locker room; addition of turf surrounding the playing surface; construction of a new bullpen, third base line fan observation area, concession stand/patio, brick column entryway, and exterior fencing; and the addition of outfield fence padding, backstop padding, bucket seating behind home plate, upgraded sound system, player restrooms, and enhanced landscaping. In honor of the Skelton family's loyal support and role as devoted Mercerians, the softball complex was named the Skelton Complex at Sikes Field.



### CHRISTY CANTRELL JOHNSTON WOMEN'S SOCCER FUND ESTABLISHED

The **Christy Cantrell Johnston Women's Soccer Fund** was also established in April to enhance the program's operating budget. The endowment was made possible with a generous gift from the Cantrell family. A four-time scholar-athlete for the Orange & Black from 2001-05, Cantrell Johnston played in 70 games for Mercer and helped provide the foundation of success for the program over the next decade. The Macon native closed out her career with seven assists, including four during her freshman campaign. Prior to her collegiate career, Cantrell Johnston was one of the most decorated athletes in Stratford Academy history and was a mainstay on four-straight state championship teams (1998-2001) while also starring for both softball and basketball state championship runs as well. She has already been inducted into the Macon Sports Hall of Fame and the Stratford Academy Athletic Hall of Fame.



MEDICINE, NURSING, PHARMACY

## MUSM AND GRHIC EXPAND MAJOR RURAL PEDIATRIC HEALTH CARE INITIATIVE

**T**he School of Medicine and its Georgia Rural Health Innovation Center (GRHIC) expanded their rural pediatric health initiative to additional rural counties across Georgia with the selection of six hospitals and pediatric and family medicine offices in six counties.

The initiative now includes a total of 14 hospitals in 11 counties throughout the state. In February 2023, the School of Medicine and GRHIC, with the support of Children's Healthcare of Atlanta, launched a major initiative to strengthen access to pediatric health care in rural communities across the state of Georgia. This effort established the Kids Alliance for Better Care, known as KidsABC.



School of Medicine Dean Jean Sumner, M.D., FACP, welcomes representatives from newly selected hospitals during a two-day KidsABC Rural Hospital Emergency Department Collaborative meeting.

## DR. TAMMY BARBÉ APPOINTED DEAN OF COLLEGE OF NURSING

**D**r. Tammy Barbé, who served as interim dean of the College of Nursing since May 2022, had the interim removed from her title in February. Prior to being named interim dean, Dr. Barbé served as a professor and oversaw the College's graduate programs. Dr. Barbé joined Mercer's faculty in 2012 and was promoted to associate dean in 2018. She has more than 25 years of nursing experience, is a certified nurse educator and a past recipient of the College's Distinguished Faculty Member of the Year Award and the Susan Sweat Gunby Excellence in Nursing Award from the Pi Gamma Chapter of Sigma Theta Tau International honor society. In 2019, she was inducted into the Georgia Baptist College of Nursing Alumni Association's Hall of Honor for excellence in mentoring.



Dr. Barbé

## COLLEGE OF PHARMACY LEADERSHIP TRANSITION

**A**fter seven years as dean of the College of Pharmacy, Dr. Brian L. Crabtree stepped aside at the end of July, and Clinical Professor of Pharmacy Practice Dr. Pamela Moye was named interim dean of the College, effective Aug. 1. Dr. Moye, who serves as chair of the Department of Pharmacy

Practice, joined Mercer's faculty in 2007. She is a past recipient of the College of Pharmacy's Distinguished Educator Award and the Excellence in Service Award.



Dr. Moye



Dr. Crabtree

JOHN KNIGHT PHOTO; OPPOSITE: ROGER IDENDEN PHOTO, PAULA HELLER PHOTO

## COMMUNITY MEDICINE PROFESSOR RECEIVES \$5.5 MILLION HRSA GRANT TO CONTINUE BUILDOUT OF SOUTH GEORGIA HEALTHY START

Under the leadership of Principal Investigator **Dr. Jennifer Barkin**, professor of community medicine and OB-GYN, South Georgia Healthy Start at the Mercer School of Medicine has received \$5.5 million in funding from the Health Resources and Services Administration. The Healthy Start Initiative: Eliminating Disparities in Perinatal Health grant supports the continuation of the South Georgia Healthy Start (SGHS) program in providing direct and enabling services to at-risk mothers and families as part of a proven, wide-ranging infant and maternal health initiative. SGHS serves expecting mothers, fathers, and those parenting babies up to 18 months of age in 10 HRSA-designated rural counties in South Georgia (Appling, Bulloch, Candler, Emanuel, Evans, Jefferson, Jenkins, Screven, Tattnall and Toombs).



Dr. Barkin

## PHARMACY PROFESSOR AWARDED GRANT TO FIGHT AGGRESSIVE FORM OF BREAST CANCER

The National Cancer Institute has awarded a \$143,000 grant to **Dr. Mahavir Bhupal Chougule**, associate professor of pharmaceutical sciences, to develop first-in-class medicines that will block the function of human epidermal growth factor receptor 2 (HER2) in an aggressive form of breast cancer. Dr. Chougule and his team will develop and test new medicines that inhibit HER2 in breast cancer cells and study safer dose determinations, how the medicine is circulated in the body, and the efficacy of treatment using breast cancer models. The project is funded for two years, beginning in February 2025.



Dr. Chougule

## SCHOOL OF MEDICINE PROFESSOR AWARDED GRANT TO STUDY OVARIAN CANCER

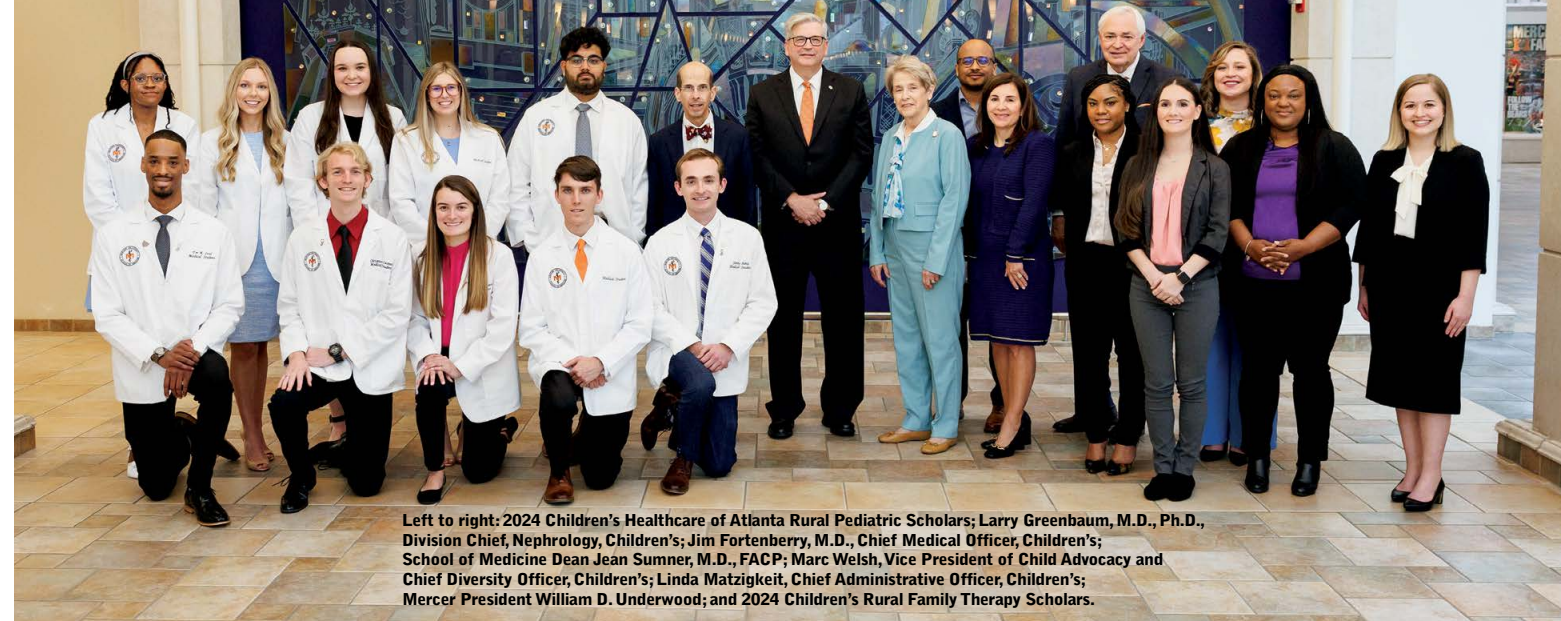
Associate Professor **Dr. Ilana Chefetz Menaker** received funding from the Kaleidoscope of Hope Ovarian Cancer Foundation to study early biomarkers of ovarian cancer to improve detection and prevention of the deadly disease. The one-year \$50,000 funding will support Dr. Chefetz and her team as they work to identify the process of ovarian cancer growth. Dr. Chefetz will work with co-investigators **Dr. Kristina Hawkins**, assistant program director in the OB-GYN residency program at Atrium Health Navicent, and **Dr. Kenneth I. Onyedibe**, associate professor.



Dr. Chefetz Menaker

JOHN KNIGHT PHOTOS, AARON WILLIAMS PHOTOS

## CHILDREN'S HEALTHCARE OF ATLANTA SCHOLARS ANNOUNCED



Left to right: 2024 Children's Healthcare of Atlanta Rural Pediatric Scholars; Larry Greenbaum, M.D., Ph.D., Division Chief, Nephrology, Children's; Jim Fortenberry, M.D., Chief Medical Officer, Children's; School of Medicine Dean Jean Sumner, M.D., FACP; Marc Welsh, Vice President of Child Advocacy and Chief Diversity Officer, Children's; Linda Matzigkeit, Chief Administrative Officer, Children's; Mercer President William D. Underwood; and 2024 Children's Rural Family Therapy Scholars.

The School of Medicine announced the first cohort of Children's Healthcare of Atlanta Marriage and Family Therapy Scholars and the second cohort of Children's Healthcare of Atlanta Rural Pediatric Scholars for the 2024 academic year. These scholars will receive full tuition for up to four academic years and have made a commitment to serve children of rural Georgia after completing their education. The scholars will also receive specialized training at Children's Healthcare of Atlanta's facilities, including autism training for the Master of Family Therapy students. The 2024 cohort of Rural Pediatric

Scholars is **Jimmy Asbell** (Class of 2026); **Christian Casteel** (Class of 2026); **Addison Clark** (Class of 2028); **Logan Dominique** (Class of 2028); **Anna Catherine Gates** (Class of 2027); **Haley Holloway** (Class of 2028); **Ritij Sarvaiya** (Class of 2028); **Jordan Simmons** (Class of 2028); **Tré Steel** (Class of 2027) and **Ke'Aysha Willis** (Class of 2028). The inaugural cohort of Marriage and Family Therapy Scholars is **Kyana Brown** (Class of 2024); **Audrey Pugh** (Class of 2024); **Lakeshie Robinson** (Class of 2025); **Haley Troup** (Class of 2025); and **Haley Waters** (Class of 2025).

## PROFESSOR RECOGNIZED FOR STROKE RESEARCH

**Dr. Mohammed Abdelsaid**, assistant professor of pharmacology on the Savannah campus, was one of six scientists recognized for his notable new research during the American Stroke Association's International Stroke Conference. The meeting is described as a world premier meeting for researchers and clinicians dedicated to the science of stroke and brain health. Dr. Abdelsaid received the Stroke Basic Science Award, which recognizes outstanding laboratory-based basic and translational science. Dr. Abdelsaid's winning research addresses a recent connection made between COVID-19 and an increased stroke risk.

Mercer research students (from left) Emily Clifton, Matthew Corn, Stan Heath and Veronica Hermanns with (center) Dr. Mohammed Abdelsaid







## ACHIEVEMENTS

### 1960s

**H. Lane Dennard Jr.**, CLAS '66, received the Albert Nelson Marquis Lifetime Achievement Award by *Marquis Who's Who*. Dennard was recognized as a leader in the fields of law, education and the *pro bono* representation of veterans. After earning his degree from Mercer, Dennard served in the U.S. Army as a captain and company commander in Vietnam. Upon returning from the service, he completed a J.D. at the University of Georgia School of Law and began his legal career with Ogletree Deakins in Greenville, South Carolina, where he subsequently served as managing partner of its Atlanta office. In 1991, he joined King & Spalding in Atlanta and retired as a senior partner in 2003. Dennard was an adjunct professor at the University of Georgia School of Law, Mercer University School of Law and Emory University School of Law. Through his work with Emory University, he also served as co-founder and co-director of the Emory Law Volunteer Clinic for Veterans. From 2010 until 2020, he dedicated a substantial amount of time and resources to the *pro bono* legal representation of veterans including assisting with service-connected disability claims

before the Department of Veterans Affairs.

**Nathan Davis**, CLAS '69, LAW '72, retired as the city attorney of Albany after 21 years.

### 1970s

**The Hon. William P. Adams**, LAW '77, received the Thomas O. Marshall Professionalism Award from the State Bar of Georgia. This annual award honors lawyers who have and continue to demonstrate the highest professional conduct and paramount reputation for professionalism. Adams also received the 2024 Meritorious Service Award from the Mercer Law School Alumni Association.

**David Barnett**, CAS '79, was named the 11th president of Brenau University in Gainesville. Barnett has worked in various positions at Brenau since 2005, most recently as interim president and as executive vice president and chief financial officer.

**John Douglas "Doug" Compton**, LAW '78, was appointed president of New Mexico's chapter of the American Board of Trial Advocates.

**Gerald Davidson Jr.**, LAW '76, will continue to serve in the Post 4 seat from the Gwinnett Circuit on the Board of Governors of the State Bar of Georgia.

### 1980s

**Therese Stiffler Barnes**, LAW '81, was reappointed as the executive clerk for the Supreme Court of Georgia.

**Richard D. Campbell**, LAW '87, was re-elected to serve on the Board of Governors of the State Bar of Georgia. Campbell will continue to serve in the Northern Judicial Circuit, Post 2 seat representing Elbert, Franklin, Hart, Madison and Oglethorpe counties.

**The Hon. M. Yvette Miller**, CLAS '77, LAW '80, received

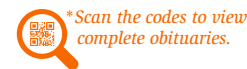
## REMEMBERING...

### Former Trustee

## Gus Bell

**Gus H. Bell III**, a former trustee and generous supporter, died on July 22. Bell earned a bachelor's degree in civil engineering from The Citadel in 1959 and attended graduate school at the University of Kentucky prior to becoming a registered professional engineer. Bell served in the U.S. Army with the Corps of Engineers, ending his service with an assignment that took him to Savannah. There, he met WWII veterans and local engineers, Roy Hussey and Ben Gay, the founders of Hussey and Gay, who hired him in 1966. His career with Hussey Gay Bell spanned 50 years, and he maintained his role as chairman from 1986 through 2012. Bell was extremely philanthropic and committed to his community, which he demonstrated by his engagement in a host of leadership and civic activities, including serving as chairman of the board of Mercer University's School of Medicine in Savannah and as a University Trustee. A Life Member of The President's Club, Bell's support was instrumental in establishing the School of Medicine campus in Savannah

and constructing the Science and Engineering Building on the Macon campus. In 2008, the Bell family donated a historic antebellum home on College Street, which now houses The Robert McDuffie Center for Strings.



the Randolph Thrower Lifetime Achievement Award from the State Bar of Georgia. Miller also received the 2024 Professionalism Award from the Atlanta Bar Association. In May, Miller was the guest speaker at the 2024 Annual Judicial Reception hosted by the Georgia Association for Women Lawyers in Columbus.

**The Hon. John E. Morse Jr.**, LAW '82, received the 2024 Outstanding Alumnus Award given by the Mercer Law Alumni Association.

**Darcee S. Siegel**, LAW '85, was elected treasurer of the Board of Trustees of The National

Judicial College, the nation's oldest, largest and most widely attended school for judges. Siegel is now a Florida Supreme Court-certified civil mediator. She has served in many leadership positions in the American Bar Association, including the Board of Governors, chair of the Government and Public Sector Division, and secretary/diversity officer of the Tort Trial Insurance Practice Section. She continues to serve as a member of the House of Delegates. She is a current member and former chair of Florida International University's Vice-Provost

Council and has been a trustee of The National Judicial College since 2019. **Christopher W. Yokom**, BUS '86, LAW '89, was reappointed as judge for the Juvenile Court of Fulton County for another four-year term. Currently, Yokom is the deputy chief judge for the court.

### 1990s

**Brad Coppedge**, BUS '93, LAW '96, was elected partner at Goggans, Stutzman, Hudson, Wilson & Mize. Coppedge practices in the areas of Wills, Trusts, Estates, and Corporate law in the Columbus office.

**Charles Curley Jr.**, LAW '96, recently joined

## Alumnus and Former Faculty Member

## Truett Gannon

**Dr. J. Truett Gannon**, alumnus and beloved former faculty member, died on July 18.

Born and raised in Cordele, Gannon, CLAS '51, HON '88, attended Southeastern Theological Seminary, ultimately earning a D.Min. He was recognized by Mercer as a Distinguished Alumnus, received the Louie D. Newton award for pastors contributing outstanding service to Mercer, and was awarded an honorary D.Div. in 1988. As a pastor, he served churches in North Carolina, Georgia and Louisiana.

Most of his years as pastor were in Georgia, including First Baptist Church, Eatonton; First Baptist Church, Avondale Estates; and retiring in 1996 from Smoke Rise Baptist Church in Stone Mountain. Following his retirement, he served as the Watkins Christian Foundation Professor of Ministry Experience at Mercer's McAfee School of Theology. He was named professor emeritus in 2018 and received the Lifetime Achievement Award from McAfee's Alumni Board in 2019. He was involved in the Georgia Baptist Convention, holding various committee work and positions of leadership, including convention secretary (1951-1952), first vice-president (1988), and president (1991-1992). He is remembered by his family, congregants and students as a humble, gracious, loving and supportive man who was devoted to God and to everyone he met. Memorial contributions may be made to the Truett and Margaret Gannon Scholarship Fund at the McAfee School of Theology.



Burr & Forman's Jacksonville office as a partner in the Corporate & Tax Practice Group.

**Dr. P. Saleena Rao Dakin**, MED '95, is the assistant physician in chief of service and capital planning and assistant chief of pediatrics for Northern Virginia Service Area of the Mid-Atlantic Permanente Group.

**Francis "Fran" Dougherty**, BUS '94, was named CEO of Curbit in April 2023 and took over the responsibilities

in September. Curbit is a pioneer in AI-driven restaurant technology solutions. Dougherty's unmatched expertise is rooted in his more than 20-year career at Microsoft, where he held a variety of executive leadership roles.

**Charles "Chuck" Nelson Eldred**, BUS '91, was named senior vice president/CFO of PNM Resources in January. Previously, Eldred served as CFO of Omaha Public Power District. Prior to his run in

the public power sector, Eldred headed financing and capital markets for Atlanta-based Southern Company where he executed multi-billion-dollar debt and equity financing strategies and managed rating agency and investment banking relationships associated with capital markets. He began his career with Georgia Power, one of the Southern Company utilities, after earning an undergraduate degree in

business from the University of Georgia and an MBA from Mercer.

**The Hon. James Freeman**, CLAS '96, LAW '99, was elected president of the Bibb County Board of Education for 2024. This is his fourth year on the board, and he has no opposition for election to his second four-year term on the board.

**Stephan M. Greco-La Serra**, LAW '97, joined Wood, Smith, Henning and Berman as a senior associate in the Miami office and will focus his practice on construction, catastrophic injury and complex civil litigation.

**David A. Marcontell**, EGR '90, was appointed vice president, technical operations of JetBlue in June. In his new role, Marcontell will lead maintenance, materials, engineering, quality and other operational functions. Marcontell brings nearly four decades of industry experience to JetBlue.

He began his career with the U.S. Air Force as a C-130 maintenance and engineering officer before joining Delta Air Lines, where he held various engineering and procurement positions. Marcontell then held engineering and operational roles at ABX Air, Boeing and North-South Airways

before transitioning to Oliver Wyman CAVOK. During his two decades with the aviation advisory firm, he led more than 200 engagements globally. In 2021, Marcontell joined Connect Airlines, a pre-revenue carrier, as its founding chief operating officer. More recently, Marcontell was an expert associate partner at McKinsey & Company, with a focus on airline operations, original equipment manufacturer aftermarket, as well as airline and independent maintenance,

repair and overhaul services. **The Hon. Cheveda Grier McCamy**, LAW '98, received the Thomas R. Burnside Jr. Excellence in Bar Leadership Award from the State Bar of Georgia.

**Valerie Story NeeSmith**, PHA '94, received the 2023 Best of the Best Pharmacist Award by SingleCare.

**Rev. Devita Bussell Parnell**, CLAS '94, DIV '01, was called to be the first female pastor of First Baptist Church of Morrow in August 2023. Parnell previously served with the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship as a staff member and director of Young Baptists. Prior to joining CBF, she was the director of development for Mercer's School of Theology. She was also a staff member of CBF Georgia and a campus minister.

**Christopher N. Smith**, LAW '91, was elevated to Knight of the Order of the Danneberg 1st class at a ceremony held at the Royal Danish Embassy in Washington, D.C., on March 15.

**The Hon. David L. Smith**, LAW '91, was recently appointed associate judge for the Municipal Court in Perry. Smith is a managing partner of the law firm of Lanford, Smith & Kapiloff in Macon.

**Anthony Snipes**, CLAS '92, was awarded the Marks of Excellence Award by the National Forum for Black Public Administrators. The award is bestowed upon an African American public administrator who has extraordinary success in the field of public management while demonstrating an unselfish commitment to the community. This prestigious award is NFBPA's highest honor and is presented annually at the Marks of Excellence Gala during the FORUM.

**Brian J. Suckman**, CLAS '94, LAW '97, was

Send your ACCOMPLISHMENTS, MARRIAGES & BIRTHS and IN MEMORY announcements for THE MERCERIAN to ERIN LONES, director of advancement communications, at [lones\\_ep@mercer.edu](mailto:lones_ep@mercer.edu).

named the clerk of court for the U.S. Bankruptcy Court for the Middle District of Alabama.

**Anthony "Tony" Wheel**, EGR '95, was hired as executive vice president of manufacturing and supply for J.J. Keller & Associates Inc., a North American leader in safety and regulatory compliance solutions for a wide range of industries. With an impressive background in operations, engineering and product design, Wheel brings more than 16 years of leadership experience from his previous role at Oshkosh Corporation (NYSE: OSK), a producer of purpose-built vehicles and equipment, based in Wisconsin. In his new position at J.J. Keller, Wheel oversees a team of more than 130 associates across global sourcing, manufacturing and distribution operations. In addition to his professional achievements, Wheel has an admirable military background, having served in the U.S. Army and the U.S. Army Reserve as Logistics Corps Officer. In addition to his bachelor's degree from Mercer, he holds a master's degree in engineering management from the University of Wisconsin-Platteville. Wheel is also a certified Project Management Professional, a Six Sigma Green Belt, and holds a Lean manufacturing certification.

2000s

**Ivy N. Cadle**, LAW '07, was installed as president of the State Bar of Georgia at the June meeting in Amelia Island, Florida.

**Shelsea Towela Chilumuna**, EGR '18, recently joined Helsell Fetterman, a Seattle-based law firm serving businesses, organizations and individuals. Chilumuna is part of the firm's Commercial Litigation and Trust and Estate Litigation practice groups.

**Freda B. Coleman-Jackson**, LAW '09, was appointed

assistant dean of career strategy at Washington and Lee School of Law in July after serving the role in an interim capacity since January. Coleman-Jackson joined Washington and Lee in 2020, with experience working in law school admissions, student affairs and career services at several institutions, including Indiana University Maurer School of Law, Barry University School of Law and Florida A&M University College of Law. She has spent most of her career at W&L counseling students with a focus on public interest and government-related opportunities. Coleman-Jackson has also held several leadership positions in the National Association for Law Placement, having previously served as co-chair of the Law Student Professional Development Section. She is currently serving a two-year term on NALP's Regional Leadership Council representing the Mid-Atlantic Region. She has presented nationally and internationally on topics related to law student career development and published articles on law student wellness and engagement in industry publications, such as the NALP Bulletin+. Originally from Florida, Coleman-Jackson completed her undergraduate degree at Florida A&M and received a master's degree from the University of Florida. She earned her J.D. from Mercer University and is currently finishing her doctorate in higher education and student affairs through Indiana University. **Dr. Tara Drew**, CLAS '04, was named a member of AnMed's board of trustees. She serves as emergency department medical director and vice chief of staff at AnMed. Since 2014, she has worked as a board-certified emergency medicine physician at the hospital system. Drew is

REMEMBERING...

Alumnus and Generous Supporter

Wayne Jones

**Kenneth Waynes Jones**, PHA '54, alumnus and generous supporter, died on Sept. 17, 2023. After graduating from pharmacy school, Jones served in the U.S. Army as a pharmacist. He owned and operated Garrett and Clayton Drugstores for many years. He was an active member of Bremen First United Methodist Church for more than 60 years. His commitment to service touched the lives of countless individuals in the community he held so dear. In 1985, Jones and his beloved wife of 63 years, **Patty Arnold Jones**, established the Kenneth Wayne and Patty Jones Medical Student Scholarship Fund to



provide scholarships for students enrolled in Mercer's School of Medicine. In 2005, the couple established a second endowed fund to provide scholarships for students enrolled in the School of Pharmacy. Jones was a Life Member of The President's Club.

Alumnus and Former Trustee

Curtis Pickels

**Curtis L. Pickels**, PHA '68, alumnus and former University trustee, died on Jan. 19. After graduating from pharmacy school, Pickels made Quitman his home and dedicated himself to the betterment of the community. As a former mayor of Quitman, he worked tirelessly to enhance the lives of others, leaving an indelible mark on the town he loved. For more than 40 years, he was the proud owner of Lee & Pickels Drug Store, a business that mirrored his commitment to excellence and care. Pickels's faith was the guiding influence in his life, and he often shared his faith with those he encountered. His impact reached far beyond the walls of his pharmacy, touching the hearts of those who were fortunate enough to know him. In 2005, Pickels and his beloved wife of 57 years, **Ola Pickels**, established an endowed scholarship in the School of Pharmacy to provide financial assistance to pharmacy students. In 2022, the couple



made a significant contribution to the construction of the Moye Pharmacy and Health Sciences Center on the Atlanta campus. Pickels served as a University trustee from 2006 to 2010 and was a Life Member of The President's Club.

Alumna and Past Alumni Board President

Lisa Rankin

**Lisa Renee Rankin**, NUR '96, alumna and former alumni board member, died on July 17. Rankin worked at Emory University from 1995 to 2000. After earning her degree from Mercer's Georgia Baptist College of Nursing in Atlanta, she worked as an adult/geriatric nurse practitioner. Rankin was a generous and loyal supporter of the College of Nursing and was actively involved with the College's alumni association, serving as president in 2013. Rankin was the recipient of the 2013 Edna Earle Teal Award from the College of Nursing. She recently retired from Thomaston Medical Clinic, where she served as a nurse practitioner. Rankin enjoyed going on several medical mission trips to Guatemala.



Friend and Generous Supporter

Bebe Reichert

**Bertha Burman "Bebe" Walker Reichert**, friend and generous University supporter, died on Jan. 2. After graduating from Agnes Scott College with a major in mathematics, Reichert worked with the Navy Instrumentation Laboratory at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) on a team designing the guidance system for the NASA Apollo Mission lunar landing module. Although Reichert and her husband, Albert, first met while in high school, it was not until she was working at MIT and he was attending Harvard Law School that they began dating. The couple married in 1964 and made Macon their home. Reichert began teaching algebra at Miller High School in 1964 and later taught geometry and algebra at Stratford Academy, eventually becoming the school's development director. She finished her teaching career at Mount de Sales Academy, where she taught through 1992. Reichert was actively involved in the community, serving as a member and president of the Junior League of Macon and on various boards, including the United Way, the Tubman African American Museum and Rotary International. Reichert's support for Mercer included the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, the School of Medicine, the School of Law, the McDuffie Center for Strings, The Grand Opera House and Mercer On Mission.



a graduate of Mercer and the Kentucky College of Osteopathic Medicine. She completed her emergency medicine residency at Michigan State University in 2012.

**Keitaro Harada**, MUS '07, '08, now leads the Savannah Philharmonic Orchestra as its music and artistic director. Harada is also associate conductor for the Tokyo Symphony Orchestra and principal guest conductor and artistic partner of the Aichi Chamber Orchestra.

**Bradley Harmon**, LAW '02, was selected as a 2024 Georgia Super Lawyer, an honor that is based upon peer review, professional achievements and independent research.

**Rev. Julie Whidden Long**, CLAS '02, DIV '05, was elected pastor of First Baptist Church of Christ in Macon in June. Long is the first woman pastor in the church's almost 200-year history. Long has most recently been interim director of staff and congregational life at the church, where she served for many years on staff, first as minister of children and families (2005-2013) and then as associate pastor and minister of children and families (2013-2018), before leaving to become associate director of Baptist Women in Ministry (2018-2019). In 2020, she began a coaching and consulting practice, Empowerment Coaching LLC, as a certified life coach and organizational leadership consultant to churches. Long is the author of *Portraits of Courage: Stories of Baptist Heroes*, with additional published sermons and chapters in several anthologies. Long has served two terms on the University's Board of Trustees and has twice been elected to the Coordinating Council of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of Georgia, serving as

moderator in 2017-2018. She received the Young Baptist Leadership Award from CBF in 2015 and continues to serve in a variety of leadership and mentoring roles with CBF and Baptist Women in Ministry.

**Dr. Courtney L. Maxey-Jones**, EGR '08, joined Upstate University Hospital in Syracuse, New York, in November 2023. Maxey-Jones is originally from central New York and is triple board certified in anesthesiology, perioperative TEE and critical care. Previously, she worked as a cardiac anesthesiologist and intensivist as well as a medical director for ECMO and mechanical support at St. Joseph's. Maxey-Jones went to medical school at NYU, completed her residency at Massachusetts General Hospital and fellowship at the University of Cincinnati.

**Edward McAfee**, LAW '02, was elected to Post 26 for the State Bar of Georgia's Board of Governors.

**Charise A. Morgan-Joseph**, LAW '08, was sworn in as president of the Miami-Dade Bar. She is the first Black woman president in the 108-year-old organization's history. Morgan serves as staff legal counsel for Zurich North America.

**Cayce Myers**, LAW '09, was promoted to full professor at Virginia Tech School of Communication, in August 2023.

**Erle Newton III**, LAW '09, was appointed by Gov. Brian Kemp to serve as the district attorney for the Cherokee Judicial Circuit.

**Andrea Pendleton**, CLAS '02, EDU '23, was elected international president of the Alpha Gamma Delta International Council and installed at the 2024 International Convention in Atlanta. In May, Pendleton joined Herschend Family Entertainment as director of giving after serving as

the director of development for Mercer's College of Pharmacy since 2019.

**Capt. Scott Raisor**, PHA '09, was awarded the United States Public Health Service Pharmacy PAC Mary Louise Anderson 2024 Leadership Award. Raisor serves as the Deputy Chief of the Formulary Management Branch and Section Chief of the Pharmacy and Therapeutics Section within the Pharmacy Operations Division of the Defense Health Agency (DHA). Effectively leading his team of 13 professionals from the Army, Navy, Air Force, PHS and DHA, including pharmacists, pharmacoeconomists and physicians, Raisor fosters innovation in pharmacoeconomic and clinical analyses aimed at enhancing the Military Health System's readiness and optimizing pharmaceutical care.

**James A. Robson**, LAW '07, was inducted as a member into the American Board of Trial Advocates. ABOTA members must have tried at least 10 civil jury trials to conclusion and possess significant litigation experience.

**Zachary H. Thomas**, LAW '04, was recognized as a 2024 Georgia Super Lawyer. Thomas was previously recognized by Super Lawyers as a Rising Star for 10 consecutive years.

### 2010s

**Kelsey Jones Bassett**, BUS '14, recently completed her Ed.D. in leadership at Valdosta State University.

**T. Alec Chappell**, CLAS '12, LAW '16, was installed as co-editor of *The YLD Review*, the newsletter of the Young Lawyers Division of the State Bar of Georgia. Chappell serves as career clerk for U.S. Bankruptcy Court Judge Edward J. Coleman III. He is current president of the YLD of the Savannah Bar Association

and is an adjunct professor of law at Mercer Law School.

**Veronica Rogusky Cox**, LAW '18, was installed as president-elect of the Young Lawyers Division of the State Bar of Georgia. Cox is a trial attorney with the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission Atlanta District Office.

**The Hon. Nathan Andrew "Andy" Crawford**, LAW '11, was elected as Superior Court Judge for the Piedmont Judicial Circuit serving Barrow, Jackson and Banks counties. For the last 12 years, Crawford worked in the Piedmont Circuit District Attorney's Office.

**Diantha Ellis**, LAW '18, was selected as the 2024 recipient of the W. Bruce and Rosalyn Ray Donaldson Award for Teaching Excellence at Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College. The purpose of the award is to recognize superior instruction and exemplary service to the college.

**Norbert D. "Bert" Hummel IV**, LAW '12, was elected to serve on the Board of Governors of the State Bar of Georgia. Hummel was also elected to the State Bar's Executive Committee. He will serve on the Board from the Post 7 seat from the Cobb Circuit.

**Hope Walker Lewis**, BUS '19, was recently named director of young professional and workforce development for the Johnson City Chamber of Commerce in Tennessee. In this role, Lewis will lead the young professionals of Johnson City program, a program of the Chamber Foundation that focuses on providing community and professional development for 21- to 41-year-olds through events and programs. Lewis will also curate new workforce development opportunities that connect college students and higher education partners to the business community through internships, trainings and an

### REMEMBERING...

#### Friend and Generous Supporter

## Jim Sanders

**James R. "Jim" Sanders Jr.**, friend and generous University supporter, died on May 24. A Macon native and the first of his family to attend college, Sanders graduated from the Georgia Institute of Technology in 1955. Upon graduating, he was employed by Westinghouse Electric as a sales engineer, where he was introduced to the nuclear industry. He subsequently became vice president of marketing, Power Division for Daniel International, where he marketed construction and maintenance services for the nuclear industry across the U.S. He later took a similar position with Bechtel. In 2002, Sanders married **Deen Day**, the widow of Days Inns of America Founder and his late fraternity brother, **Cecil B. Day**, the namesake of the University's graduate and professional campus in Atlanta. Deen Day Sanders, a Mercer alumna and former University trustee, and Jim Sanders have generously supported various areas at Mercer, including the Atlanta campus, the College of Nursing, the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, the School of Theology, the School of Medicine, Mercer University Press, Mercer Athletic Foundation and Mercer On Mission (MOM). They were named Life Members of The President's Club in 2003. In 2020, the couple made a seven-figure gift to establish the Cecil Day Family Center for International Groundwater Innovation, which is aimed at providing access to clean water to the world's most water-poor communities.



ETSU Young Professionals group, YP on Campus.

**Milinda Brown Martin**, LAW '17, was recognized as a winner in the On the Rise category by the Southeastern Legal Awards. Martin is a partner with Beal Sutherland Berlin & Brown practicing commercial litigation, labor and employment. She is a 2019 graduate of the YLD Leadership Academy and chairs the YLD's Professionalism and Ethics Committee.

**Amanda M. Morejon**, LAW '17, received the 2024 Young Alumna Volunteer Award given by the Mercer Law School Alumni Association.

**Kerry A. Nicholson**, CLAS '10, recently joined Cantor Colborn LLP as an associate. Cantor Colborn is one of the largest and most productive full-service intellectual property law firms in the country, with 100 attorneys and agents providing counsel to clients around the globe from offices in Hartford, Washington, D.C., Atlanta, Houston and Detroit. Nicholson advises domestic and international clients in trademark clearance, prosecution, monitoring and enforcement. She is involved in drafting cease and desist letters and settlement agreements resolving trademark

disputes. She further assists clients in trademark licensing, assignments and consent agreements. As a former Trademark Examining Attorney at the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office, Nicholson has experience in *ex parte* examination of applications for the registration of trademarks. She has also prepared cases and drafted briefs for *ex parte* appeal to the Trademark Trial and Appeal Board. Nicholson is an active member of the State Bar of Georgia, American Bar Association, Black Entertainment and Sports Lawyers Association, Intellectual Property Owners Association and

#### Friend and Generous Supporter

## Ben Saunders

**Gerald B. "Ben" Saunders Jr.**, a friend and generous University supporter, died on May 3. Born in Columbus, Saunders attended Columbus High School and Gordon Military College before graduating from Columbus College. Saunders was a pillar of his community, known for his generosity and willingness to lend a helping hand. He had many familial connections to Mercer, including his father, **Gerald Benjamin Saunders**, who served as a Mercer Trustee and received an honorary degree from the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences in 1987; his late wife, **Suzanne Henry Saunders**, who was a 1968 graduate of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and served on the CLAS Alumni Board of Directors as well as the Board of Trustees; and the couple's son, **Cameron Henry Alexander Saunders**, who graduated from Mercer School of Law in 2015. The Saunders family has generously supported Mercer for decades with gifts to Mercer On Mission, the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, the School of Law and the Mercer Athletic Foundation.



#### Friend and University Supporter

## Doris Warren

**Doris Jane Leonard Warren**, born in Perryville, Kentucky, passed away on March 21. She earned a bachelor's degree from the University of Kentucky, where she was a member of Alpha Delta Pi sorority. After graduating, she moved to Atlanta, joining the executive training program at Rich's Inc., and she taught in the DeKalb County School System. Doris was an active volunteer with several community organizations, including the High Museum, the Atlanta History Center and the Atlanta Preservation Society. She was a devoted member of Second-Ponce de Leon Baptist Church for over 60 years. In 1960, she married Raymond McLeod Warren Jr., with whom she had two children: **Jane Warren Hedgepeth**, a 1992 Mercer School of Law graduate, and **Raymond McLeod "Thad" Warren III**, a 1986 graduate of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and a past chair and member of the University's Board of Trustees.



International Trademark Association. In addition to her degree in political science from Mercer, she earned a J.D. from the Tulane University Law School.

**The Hon. Matthew Rollins**, LAW '11, was appointed by Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp to the Superior Court of the Paulding Judicial Circuit. Previously, Rollins served as the district attorney of the Paulding County Judicial Circuit.

**Brandon Sartin**, LAW '18, was named to the Rising Stars list of Georgia Super Lawyers. Rising Stars are attorneys under the age of 40 who have made exceptional contributions in a particular practice area for 10 years or less.

**David Tatem**, LAW '15, was appointed chief public defender for the Towaliga Judicial Circuit serving Jackson, Lamar and Monroe counties.

**Spencer Tyson**, CLAS '16, LAW '19, was appointed by Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp as the solicitor general of Effingham County. Tyson previously worked as an assistant district attorney for the Ogeechee Judicial Circuit.

### 2020s

**Kate Daly Cobb**, LAW '23, recently joined Oliver Maner in Savannah. Cobb concentrates on handling disputes related to misappropriation of assets and other misconduct by fiduciaries.

**Rev. Jeremy Sean Hall**, DIV '17, '22, was named senior pastor of North Hills Community Baptist Church in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, in July. Previously, Hall served as associate pastor of faith development at Towne View Baptist Church in Pensacola, Florida.

**Joseph Holguin**, LAW '23, is an associate attorney with Cranfill Sumner in the Charlotte, North Carolina, office.

**Forbes C. Ouzts**, LAW '22, joined Coleman Talley as an associate in the Jacksonville,

Florida, office. Following graduation from law school, Ouzts obtained his LLM in taxation from the University of Florida Levin College of Law.

**Akash A. Patel**, LAW '22, recently joined Hasner Law PC as an associate.

**Ben T. Tuten**, LAW '22, joined Oliver Maner last year. Tuten is a litigator representing municipalities, counties and quasi-municipal entities.

**Dalton Trammell**, LAW '22, and **Donald Garrett White**, LAW '22, recently formed the legal firm Trammell & White LLC. The firm is based in Newnan.

## MARRIAGES & BIRTHS

### 2010s

**Siena Berríos-Gaddy**, LAW '18, and **Franklin Thomas Gaddy**, LAW '16, welcomed a baby boy, Ignacia "Iggy" Gaddy, on Nov. 28, 2023.

**Dr. Chelsea Metzger Blanton**, MED '18, married Art Blanton on May 14, 2022. Blanton graduated from the Wake Forest Otolaryngology Residency in June and moved to Savannah. She began working as an otolaryngologist at ENT Associates of Savannah in September.

**Anna Leigh Nix Hutcheson**, CLAS '18, and **Brayden Hutcheson**, MUS '19, welcomed a baby boy, Barrett, on July 28. He weighed 8 pounds, 4 ounces, and was 20 inches long.

**Clayton Kendrick**, LAW '19, and his wife, Morgan, welcomed their daughter, Reagan Elizabeth, on Nov. 20, 2023. She weighed 6 pounds, 13 ounces, and was 20 inches long.

**Rebecca Barber Turner**, EDU '17, and **Dalton Turner**, CLAS '14, BUS '19, welcomed a baby boy, Anderson Redding Turner, on Feb. 26.

IN MEMORY

1940s

**Grizelda D. Dority Edwards**, CLAS '49, of Macon, on June 8.  
**Jessie C. Tanner Fawcett**, TIFT '46, of Richmond Hill, on March 7.  
**Irene Chavous Hodges**, TIFT '49, of Savannah, on May 15.  
**Carolyn Duggan Hollis**, TIFT '46, of Marietta, on March 29.  
**Mildred G. Waller Hunter**, TIFT '47, of Salem, Alabama, on June 22.  
**Ola Campbell Moody**, EDU '49, of Augusta, on April 21.  
**Dr. Robert L. Murdock**, CLAS '49, of Byron, on March 31.  
**Miriam Elmore Shi**, CLAS '43, of Waxahachie, Texas, on March 6.  
**Sarah Gilliland Sims**, NUR '40, of Marietta, on May 20, 2023.  
**Elaine Jacqueline Gross Wright**, NUR '48, of Milledgeville, on Jan. 6, 2023.

1950s

**William Austin Atkins**, PHA '54, of Marietta, on June 30.  
**Henry M. Barlow**, CLAS '57, of Highlands Ranch, Colorado, on May 26.  
**Rosemary Phillips Beggs**, EDU '57, of Marietta, on Dec. 21, 2023.  
**Dr. Bradley D. Brown**, CLAS '58, of New Market, Tennessee, on Feb. 1.  
**Carrie B. Burns Brown**, CLAS '55, of Greenville, South Carolina, on April 18.  
**Col. Lewis Charlton Brown**, CLAS '58, of Danville, Kentucky, on May 8.  
**Vashti Maxwell Carr**, CLAS '57, of Gray, on Jan. 11.  
**Pauline Campbell Cash**, NUR '52, of Eatonton, on Jan. 7.  
**O'Lita Hendon Chandler**, NUR '50, of Gainesville, on Jan. 13.  
**James C. Chirbas**, CLAS '54, of Grapevine, Texas, on Feb. 5.  
**Virginia L. Cochran**, NUR '52, of Chelsea, Michigan, on Sept. 4, 2022.  
**Patricia A. Scott Culbreth**, TIFT '57, of Albany, on Feb. 17.  
**Edward R. Davis**, CLAS '55, of Melbourne, Florida, on Dec. 8, 2023.  
**Peggy LeRoy Davis**, CLAS '56, of Blue Ridge, on June 15.

**John C. Dunn**, CLAS '56, of Newman, on Dec. 4, 2023.  
**Glenda J. Epperson**, TIFT '59, of Ringgold, on March 28.  
**Dr. Robert Eugene Hammonds**, CLAS '54, of Concord, North Carolina, on Dec. 28, 2023.  
**Rev. George Thomas Harrison**, CLAS '50, of Bartow, on June 24.  
**Norma Lee Fields Hawkins**, TIFT '59, of Roswell, on April 6.  
**Yvonne Hoyal Hollingsworth**, CLAS '59, of Augusta, on March 26.  
**John B. Kennedy**, CLAS '59, of Tallahassee, Florida, on June 29.  
**Robert Gwynn Kopp**, CLAS '50, of Flowery Branch, on March 8.  
**Louise Jones McAllister**, TIFT '59, of Abbeville, Alabama, on Jan. 10.  
**Richard Gostin Mitchell**, CLAS '58, of Salt Lake City, Utah, on June 29.  
**The Hon. Roy Dean Moultrie**, LAW '53, of Cataula, on Jan. 8.  
**Dr. Harvey Jack Murphy**, CLAS '59, of Savannah, on Dec. 15, 2023.  
**Dr. Joseph Jefferson Nixon**, CLAS '51, of Melrose, Massachusetts, on March 12.  
**H. Thomas Patton**, CLAS '58, of Fernandina Beach, Florida, on May 8.  
**Col. Clifford Monroe Payne**, CLAS '54, of Newman, on April 21.  
**Paul W. Peace**, CLAS '58, of Norman Park, on June 7.  
**Dorothy Hamilton Perkins**, CLAS '51, of Dallas, Texas, on April 26.  
**Joanne Eckels Pettey**, CLAS '52, of Fort Walton Beach, Florida, on June 11.  
**Margie Saunders Ragan**, CLAS '55, of Collierville, Tennessee, on Jan. 4.  
**Joyce Abbey Reagin**, CLAS '54, of Smyrna, on May 14.  
**Geraldine Troutman Robertson**, CLAS '56, of Fairview, Tennessee, on Jan. 30.  
**J. Harold Shalett**, PHA '57, of Chattanooga, Tennessee, on Jan. 13.  
**Sara Phillips Thompson**, TIFT '58, of Hixson, Tennessee, on June 14.  
**Carmen D. Trevitt**, CLAS '50, of Macon, on June 10.  
**Carlos Tucker**, CLAS '56, of Macon, on Feb. 16.  
**Benjamin W. Ussery**, CLAS '57, of Vero Beach, Florida, on April 17.  
**Phyllis M. Maddox Watson**, CLAS '56, of Purcellville, Virginia, on Jan. 3.

REMEMBERING...

Double Bear, Former Trustee and Generous Supporter

Howell Watkins

**H**owell L. Watkins II, CLAS '74, LAW '82, alumnus, former trustee and generous supporter, died on Feb. 1. Watkins attended high school at Woodward Academy in Atlanta and received

his bachelor's degree from Mercer. He earned a master's degree in zoology from Florida State University and a Juris Doctor degree from Mercer School of Law. He worked at Georgia Academy for the Blind where he was recognized as a Teacher of the Year. Later, he worked at Mercer before pursuing a career in real estate, eventually forming his own brokerage company, Howell Watkins Realty Corp. Watkins believed that his years at Mercer shaped him into the man he became, and he was forever devoted to his alma mater. He served two terms as a member of the Board of Trustees, was a Life Member of The President's Club and a board member of the Mercer University Press and the Mercer Athletic Foundation. While a student at Mercer, he was a member of Sigma Alpha Epsilon fraternity and remained friends with his fraternity brothers throughout his life. His wife, **Valerie Matthews Watkins**, graduated from the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences in 1981. The couple had three children, and two of them graduated from Mercer.



**Robbie Jean Williams**, TIFT '59, of Fitzgerald, on Jan. 2.  
**Rev. Lamar A. Willis**, CLAS '54, of Athens, on Dec. 23, 2023.  
**Col. Emory M. Wilson**, EDU '52, of Perry, on Jan. 18.  
**William McNerrill Woodward**, CLAS '53, of Griffin, on Dec. 19, 2023.  
**Myra Meek Zoller**, CLAS '54, of Gainesville, on May 8.

1960s

**Leone Stubbs Alexander**, EDU '63, of Hendersonville, North Carolina, on March 28.  
**Ellen Kicklighter Armstrong**, NUR '68, of Savannah, on July 3.  
**Rev. Dillmus William Barnett**, CLAS '63, of Brunswick, on April 11.  
**Jeanelle Layton Brown**, TIFT '62, of Canton, on May 9.  
**Wade Ronald Crow**, LAW '64, of Bennettsville, South Carolina, on Jan. 19.

**Richard M. Dennard**, PHA '67, of Soperton, on Jan. 31.  
**Carla Douthitt Dodd**, CLAS '68, of Macon, on June 13.  
**Dr. Nancy Edwards Dow**, CLAS '62, of Sherman Oaks, California, on May 5.  
**Jerry F. Ellington**, CLAS '64, of Milledgeville, on June 22.  
**Nora Wood Goodman**, NUR '61, of Temple, on Jan. 9.  
**Sara Jane Hale**, EDU '61, of Jackson, on May 21.  
**Ronald Sandy Harris**, CLAS '65, of Hendersonville, North Carolina, on March 28.  
**Julius E. Herren**, CLAS '63, of Greenville, South Carolina, on March 30.  
**Robert O. House**, CLAS '61, of Macon, on May 9.  
**Benjamin "Ben" G. Hudson Jr.**, CLAS '60, LAW '62, of Macon, on June 5.

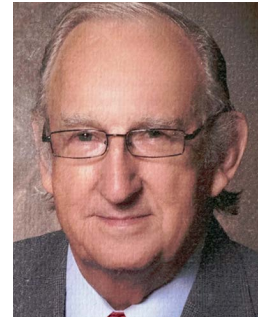
**Dr. George Gray Kitchens**, CLAS '66, of Greenville, South Carolina, on Jan. 21.  
**Mary Angela Strange Kuhlke**, CLAS '64, of Augusta, on April 30.  
**Walter Otto Loescher**, CLAS '60, of Muscadine, Alabama, on May 16.  
**Dixie Nix McCoy**, NUR '61, of Atlanta, on April 24.  
**Sandra L. Mitchell**, TIFT '64, of Forsyth, on June 30.  
**Harry G. Moody**, CLAS '63, of Macon, on April 15.  
**Martha Kay Scarborough Murphy**, TIFT '68, of The Rock, on Nov. 28, 2023.  
**Junay Harbuck Neisler**, NUR '66, of Americus, on March 5.  
**Sharon Tillman Norton**, NUR '69, of Macon, on May 9.  
**Robert Clinton Ogden**, CLAS '66, of Macon, on March 5.  
**Yates S. Palmer**, PHA '68, of Charlotte, North Carolina, on March 5.

Alumnus and Generous Supporter

Charles Wray

**D**r. Charles Herman Wray, EDU '55, alumnus and generous supporter, died on March 5. Wray graduated from Union Point High School and received his bachelor's degree from Mercer in

1955. As a teen, he was ordained as a Baptist minister by his church in Union Point. During his college years, he served as an interim pastor at Isle of Hope Baptist Church. He later chose medicine as his ministry and graduated from the Medical College of Georgia in 1959. After a general surgery residency at MCG, he joined the faculty in 1964. He had a busy clinical career and served the department as chief of vascular surgery, chief of general surgery, vice chair and interim chair. He also served MCG as interim dean 1988-1989 and 1992-1994, and as vice-president for clinical activities 1993-1997. In 2006, Wray and his wife,



**Dr. Betty Beasley Wray**, a 1956 graduate of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, established an endowed scholarship to provide financial assistance for students enrolled in McAfee School of Theology.

**Herbert Alden Rivers**, LAW '67, of Atlanta, on Jan. 3.  
**John L. Rutland**, CLAS '67, of Orlando, Florida, on June 8.  
**James D. Stokes**, LAW '67, of Marietta, on April 10.

1970s

**Stanley R. Carpenter**, CLAS '77, of Riverdale, on May 21.  
**Gene L. Chestnutt**, CLAS '75, of Columbus, on May 24.  
**Raymond S. Coleman Jr.**, BUS '77, of Douglas, on July 21.  
**Guy Anderson Cox**, PHA '76, of Tifton, on May 23.  
**Randy E. Crutchfield**, CAS '76, of Perry, on April 11.  
**Dolores English Davidson**, EDU '70, of Kalamazoo, Michigan, on Jan. 24.  
**David D. Ellis**, CLAS '74, of Houston, Texas, on Jan. 19.  
**Howard Keten Farmer**, CLAS '73, of Albany, on Jan. 7.  
**Joe E. Gambrell**, PHA '78, of Burlington, North Carolina, on March 15.

**Cary L. Grant**, CLAS '75, of Camden, South Carolina, on June 28.  
**Debra Sammons Jarvis**, TIFT '76, of Armuchee, on June 19.  
**Richard H. Johnson**, CLAS '74, of Marietta, on May 17.  
**Elizabeth K. Kirkland Jones**, EDU '73, of Waynesboro, on Jan. 9.  
**Glenda Hyatt Keith**, NUR '72, of Hampton, on Feb. 25.  
**Nancy Correnty Kenerly**, CLAS '75, of Athens, on March 8.  
**Richard Curt Kling**, CLAS '74, of Normandy Beach, New Jersey, on Sept. 5, 2023.  
**James E. Mathis**, CLAS '70, of Gainesville, on Jan. 29.

**Wandora H. Shearer**, EDU '77, of Albany, on Dec. 20, 2023.  
**Gary S. Tronccone**, PHA '74, of Louisville, Kentucky, on Dec. 25, 2023.  
**B. George Weich**, CLAS '70, of Murrells Inlet, South Carolina, on Jan. 22.

1980s

**Carl Althea Ashe**, CLAS '85, of Columbus, on Feb. 16.  
**Charles Glenn Barger**, LAW '88, of Melbourne, Florida, on Dec. 20, 2023.  
**Janice Strong Bembry**, CLAS '88, of Unadilla, on Jan. 23.  
**Dianne Turner Carter**, CLAS '88, of Macon, on June 3.  
**David Floyd Chambers**, CLAS '85, of Macon, on March 14.  
**John L. Davis**, LAW '86, of Birmingham, Alabama, on May 24.  
**John Edmund DuVall**, LAW '85, of Melrose, Florida, on Jan. 23, 2023.  
**Jerry Len Folds**, BUS '88, of Winston, on May 9.

**Nan M. Miller Freeman**, EDU '83, of Forsyth, on Nov. 16, 2023.  
**Suzanne Brown Jackson**, CAS '81, of Santa Rosa Beach, Florida, on Dec. 7, 2023.  
**Dr. Harry Abraham Linkous**, MED '87, of Macon, on May 11.  
**M. Florence Marino**, CAS '81, of Dunwoody, on June 22.  
**Angelia M. Mercer**, BUS '86, of Macon, on May 22.  
**Charles Eugene Sirlleaf**, BUS '87, of Acworth, on June 3.  
**Imogene Robertson Smith**, TIFT '87, of Jesup, on Feb. 15.

1990s

**Tony Ben Amadeo**, EDU '95, of Buford, on May 7.  
**William Jacob Astary**, BUS '99, of Tybee Island, on June 5.  
**Lee A. Bailey**, EDU '97, of Richmond Hill, on Oct. 12, 2023.  
**Jack Davidson**, COPA '98, of Lawrenceville, on March 31.  
**Wade C. Hansard**, BUS '93, of Roswell, on Jan. 5.  
**Parrish Cale Hill**, BUS '92, of Perry, on July 15.  
**Camille Nicole Renford Jarman**, LAW '99, of Atlanta, on May 23.  
**Michael Warren Nolin**, COPA '95, of Marietta, on April 19.  
**Anita Jean Gilleland Parker**, BUS '96, of Cartersville, on Dec. 28, 2023.  
**Larry Simmons**, COPA '91, of Macon, on March 22.  
**Joy Chambers Skeen**, EGR '95, of Perry, on Jan. 3.  
**Leonora Humphrey Stephens**, EDU '94, of Thomaston, on Aug. 14, 2023.  
**Terril Lee Watson**, EDU '91, of Warner Robins, on June 21.

2000s

**Trisha L. Bell**, CLAS '03, of Stone Mountain, on Jan. 10.  
**Michael Anthony Cosper**, COPA '06, of Douglasville, on Dec. 20, 2023.  
**Jasper J. Foust**, COPA '00, of Macon, on March 29.  
**Lucy Harvester Lott**, COPA '01, of Fitzgerald, on Jan. 22.  
**Patrick McLendon**, CLAS '05, of Hendersonville, North Carolina, on April 24.  
**Selena Xernona Mitchell**, BUS '06, of Douglasville, on Feb. 12.  
**Sylvia Elaine Richardson Stapleton**, MED '00, of Juliette, on April 5.

2020s

**Joseph L. Williams**, COPA '22, of Macon, on Aug. 14, 2022.

FRIENDS, FACULTY & STAFF

**Kahler H. Bell**, of Athens, on June 26.  
**Jane Bridges**, of Savannah, on March 7.  
**Jane M. Burns**, of Macon, on March 3.  
**Marja L. Beville Cooper**, of Warner Robins, on Jan. 30.  
**Michael C. Diagle**, of Acworth, on Nov. 26, 2023.  
**Valerie Beament Edmonds**, of Raleigh, North Carolina, on Feb. 24.  
**Alera Self Elliott**, of Macon, on April 5, 2023.  
**Dr. Victoria F. Guarisco**, of Roswell, on Jan. 5.  
**Andrea Lynn Hampton**, of Atlanta, on Jan. 23.  
**Linda S. Hodge**, of Albany, on June 7.  
**Martha W. Jones**, of Greensboro, on March 17.  
**Anthony L. Korey**, of Kennesaw, on July 22.  
**Dr. Michael N. LeBlang**, of Savannah, on July 5.  
**David K. Leitch**, of Cumming, on June 1.  
**James W. McCook**, of Macon, on Feb. 6.  
**John Satterfield McCord**, of Macon, on July 9.  
**John H. McPherson**, of Glennville, on Feb. 8, 2023.  
**Dr. John L. Palmer**, of Glenwood Springs, Colorado, on Dec. 17, 2023.  
**Kimberly Perry**, of Gainesville, on June 13.  
**Hazel Hiers Porter**, of Macon, on Sept. 26, 2022.  
**Nancy Ditterline St. John**, of Macon, on March 10.  
**Bob T. Tharpe**, of Macon, on Dec. 14, 2023.  
**William R. Warley**, of Alpharetta, on Jan. 4.  
**Dr. John Leo Zimmer**, of Glenwood, Iowa, on March 23.

# 50-75-100 YEARS AGO

Photos and archival information assembled by Haley-Marie Ellegood of the Tarver Library Special Collections staff.

## 100 YEARS AGO



**1924 - Professor Henry Fox Dismissed** — In 1924, a special committee of the Board of Trustees was appointed to investigate the religious beliefs of biology professor Henry Fox. After meeting with Dr. Fox and inquiring into his beliefs, the committee decided his faith conflicted with that of the Georgia Baptist Convention, of which Mercer was a part, and they asked for his resignation. Dr. Fox refused to resign as he saw that as an admission of

wrongdoing. President Rufus Weaver informed Dr. Fox that his position had been terminated and paid him his full salary. Students came to Dr. Fox's defense, passing a resolution emphasizing that he taught evolution only as a theory and that the main objective of his teaching was to find the truth. (SOURCE: *The Mercer Cluster*, Oct. 17, 1924, and *The Macon Daily Telegraph* Oct. 21, 1924)

## 75 YEARS AGO

**1949 - The Mercer Law Review begins publication** — In the fall of 1949, the *Mercer Law Review*, a scholarly journal edited by Mercer School of Law students, was published for the first time. This first issue featured legal articles written by judges, lawyers and law professors; studies of specific legal subjects written by students; analyses of recent cases; and reviews of recently published law books. The *Law Review* began with two issues per year and has now expanded to five issues a year. It is the oldest regularly published law review in Georgia. (SOURCE: *The Mercer Cluster*, Sept. 29, 1949, and the *Mercer Law Review* website, [digitalcommons.law.mercer.edu/jour\\_mlr/](https://digitalcommons.law.mercer.edu/jour_mlr/))



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## 50 YEARS AGO



**1974 - Bill Bibb Named Men's Basketball Coach** — After the resignation of Coach Joe Dan Gold, Bill Bibb was named head basketball coach of the Mercer men's team. Coach Bibb would go on to coach Mercer basketball for 15 years and win 222 games, becoming the winningest coach in the program's history. He led Mercer basketball to its first two conference titles and NCAA Tournament appearances. From 1980-1989, he also served as athletics director in addition to his coaching duties.



(SOURCE: *The Mercer Cluster*, Sept. 27, 1974, and "Legendary Basketball Coach Bill Bibb Passes Away," [mercerbears.com/news/2020/7/9/mens-basketball-legendary-basketball-coach-bill-bibb-passes-away](https://mercerbears.com/news/2020/7/9/mens-basketball-legendary-basketball-coach-bill-bibb-passes-away))

# ADVANCEMENT UPDATES



# MEET OUR NEW STAFF MEMBERS

To better serve Mercer's alumni and friends, the Office of University Advancement and Office of Alumni Engagement recently added several new staff members to coordinate fundraising and alumni activities, as well as to build relationships and foster goodwill among its constituents.



**C**aroline Carlton, CLAS '15, EDU '21, joined the Office of University Advancement as director of development for the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences in October 2023. A native of Franklin, Tennessee, Carlton came to Mercer as a volleyball student-athlete. Following positions as head volleyball coach at Wesleyan College and Centenary College, Carlton returned to Mercer as assistant director of admissions and athletic recruitment and was promoted to director of student success in May 2021. As director of development, Carlton's responsibilities include researching prospects, developing relationships with alumni and constituents, and generating annual fund and major gifts for the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.



**M**ichael DuVall joined the Office of Alumni Engagement in December 2023 as the coordinator of alumni engagement. DuVall holds a B.A. in writing and communications from Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College, where he served as a student ambassador and worked as an intern with the advancement office. Before joining Mercer, he was the director of public relations and communications for Tattnell Square Academy in Macon. DuVall will use his experience in communications to manage the alumni social media outlets. He will also oversee the University's student ambassador program. >>

LEAH VETTER PHOTOS

NEW STAFF MEMBERS — CONTINUED

**K**at Neubaum joined the Office of Alumni Engagement team as coordinator of alumni engagement in October 2023 after previously serving as coordinator of alumni relations at Oregon State University. Neubaum holds a B.S. in management and policy, business administration from Oregon State. In her role, she helps the Alumni Engagement team plan and execute special events like Homecoming each fall, as well as various Mercer Mixers throughout the year.



**J**osh Thompson, a graduate of Georgia Institute of Technology with a B.S. in business administration, joined the Office of University Advancement in February as the director of donor experience and digital philanthropy. In this role, he is charged with developing and implementing a comprehensive donor engagement and stewardship program to build donor loyalty while actively seeking new opportunities to connect with alumni and friends. Previously, Thompson worked with GNTV Media Ministry as a production manager.

MERCER CELEBRATES NEW PRESIDENT'S CLUB LIFE MEMBERS

Mercer recognized its most generous donors in April at the 58th annual celebration of The President's Club in Atlanta. On the evening of April 19, guests enjoyed a dinner and dessert reception to honor the newest Life Members at The St. Regis Hotel, Atlanta.

The University's highest level of leadership giving, The President's Club Life Member status, is conferred on those who have contributed at least \$100,000 to Mercer. At this year's event, the following were recognized for achieving Life Member status: **Liza and Ronny Chapman, Waldo and Kathy Floyd, David and Janet Hudson, Mary Beth LaPenna, Layth Saymeh and Maha Dawood, Claude and Linda Smith, Sam Smith, Bill Stembridge, and Henry and Laine Walker.**



(L-R, back row): President William D. Underwood; Ronny Chapman; Layth A. Saymeh; Claude D. Smith Jr., CLAS '74, LAW '82; Waldo E. Floyd; Samuel E. Smith; David Hudson, CLAS '68; Willard D. "Bill" Stembridge, CLAS '68; James "Henry" Walker IV, LAW '86  
(L-R, front row): Liza Chapman, PHA '02; Maha M. Dawood; Linda Dease Smith; Katherine "Kathy" McArthur Floyd; Janet Kirkley Hudson, CLAS '68; Mary "Beth" LaPenna, CLAS '75; Laine Spears Walker, CLAS '83, LAW '86

# Loyal Alumni Giving

Macon native **Bob Hearn**, CLAS '60, graduated from Lanier High School in 1956 and decided to attend Mercer so he could save money and live at home. While a student, he worked with his brother at Fickling & Walker Inc. and was actively involved on campus, serving as president of Sigma Alpha Epsilon Fraternity and as a lieutenant colonel in ROTC. He was also president of Scabbard & Blade, a Distinguished Military Graduate and a member of Blue Key, Phi Eta Sigma, Student Senate and the German Club.

After graduating from Mercer, he entered the U.S. Army and served two years in Abilene, Texas, before returning to Macon to begin his civilian career and rejoining Fickling & Walker Inc., from which the mortgage operations were purchased by Trust Company of Georgia, a predecessor of SunTrust Banks, in 1979. He retired as president and CEO of SunTrust Mortgage Inc. in 1996.

Hearn made his first gift to Mercer in 1962 and has made a gift every year since, making him one of Mercer's most loyal donors.

"I felt it was my obligation to support Mercer financially — not just a choice, but a requirement," said Hearn. "Young alumni may feel that they are not able to give because their income is limited, but no matter how small the gift, they add to the percentage of alumni donors who support the University. Alumni support shows prospective students, foundations and other constituents that Mercer alumni believe in the value of a Mercer education."

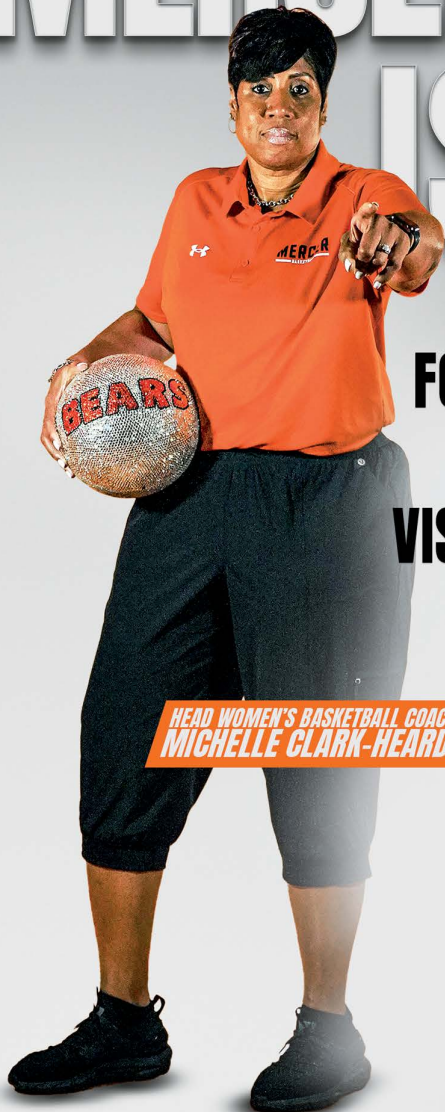


A gift to Mercer has the power to impact the lives of our students by strengthening academic programs, supporting student organizations and providing scholarships. For more information on ways to give, visit [giving.mercer.edu](https://giving.mercer.edu) or contact the Office of University Advancement at (478) 301-2715.



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