

Austin College

MAGAZINE | 2025 ISSUE



CURIOSITY CAN TAKE YOU ANYWHERE

**Crafted in
Curiosity**

**A Green Future
in the Making**

**Maiden
Voyage**



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Robert M. Johnson '53 was named a Distinguished Alumnus in 1987 and served Austin College as Chair of the Board of Trustees from 2007 until 2012. The Johnsons' ardent support of the recently completed enhancements to Apple Stadium inspired the naming of the Robert M. and Joyce Johnson Field at Jerry E. Apple Stadium, which was dedicated as part of Homecoming 2024 festivities.

PHOTO BY NICHOLAS HUMMERT

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PHOTO BY CHLOE TAYLOR '26

◀ **ON THE BACK COVER:**
Attendees could choose from three showings of Jen Silverman's *Collective Rage: A Play in Five Betties* during Homecoming Weekend 2024. The play was presented by the Austin College Theatre Department, and was directed by Brooke Lee '25.



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“Whether solving complex problems, engaging in creative pursuits, or leading with compassion and integrity, the Austin College spirit of curiosity and innovation is evident in all they do.”

Greetings, 'RooNation!

The *Austin College Magazine* is a look back at the previous year in the life of the College, and what a year it has been! Coming on the heels of our 175th year, there is a momentum and energy on campus that is palpable. In the pages of this magazine, you will read about a lot of things that are new—a new faculty cohort that is one of the largest in the College’s history, new bachelor of science degree offerings that will help our graduates be competitive in today’s job market, and new homes along Grand Avenue that will serve as transitional housing for new employees as they settle into the area.

You will also read about some things that are *not* new to Austin College, like a spirit of creativity, curiosity, and servant leadership among our graduates. In fact, **curiosity** is the keyword for this issue. This year, we launched a new website at austincollege.edu, and the tagline on the homepage is “Curiosity can take you anywhere.” That sentiment rings true across these pages. As you read about the makers, inventors, performers, and scholars featured in these pages, you will see time and again how a spark of curiosity, supported by a dynamic liberal arts education, leads to creativity and innovation.

That innovative spirit can be seen in every corner of campus. Over the past year, we have made some much-needed updates to our grounds and landscaping; this campus renewal effort has me thinking more than usual about trees. When planting a tree, you are instructed to dig a hole twice the size of the root ball and loosen the soil at the bottom so that the new tree has the best

chance of growing a strong and deep root system. The final step in the instructions, once the tree is planted and the hole is backfilled with soil, is always “water liberally.” It occurs to me that this is an apt metaphor for a liberal arts education. Here at Austin College, we educate liberally just as you liberally water a sapling. Create a wide base, give plenty of room to grow, and water generously.

The evergreen skills gained through a liberal arts education—critical thinking, creative problem solving, effective communication, flexibility, adaptability, working as a team, and the ability to connect ideas—are more vital than ever. These pages are filled with stories of our incredible faculty, students, staff, and alumni who have benefited from a liberal arts education and are using it to make meaningful contributions in their fields and communities. Whether solving complex problems, engaging in creative pursuits, or leading with compassion and integrity, the Austin College spirit of curiosity and innovation is evident in all they do.

I hope you enjoy this latest edition of our annual magazine and feel a sense of pride in being part of 'RooNation. Thank you for your continued support of Austin College and for helping us nurture the next generation of thinkers, creators, and leaders.

Here’s to another year of curiosity and growth.

Best,

STEVEN P. O'DAY, J.D., L.H.D.
President
Austin College

AUSTIN COLLEGE Traditions

The list of Austin College traditions—
and the memories they inspire—is endless.
Here are a few traditions that unite us as 'Roos.



Opening Convocation kicks off the
new academic year each fall.



A favorite tradition at Commencement is the
inclusion of bagpipers as part of the processional.



The Austin
College mace
is carried by
the College
marshal during
academic
processions.

Unique Traditions



2024

The freshman class photo is a tradition, sometimes with the students arranged in the shape of 'A' or 'AC.' As evidenced from photos going back decades, student groups from earlier eras had the same idea.

Above: Freshman class, August 2024; **Right:** Freshman class, August 2023; **Top right and below:** Student "A" Association; **Bottom right:** Austin College Marching Band



2023



Date unknown



1947



1949



1962-1963



2024

Special occasions, such as birthdays, are often celebrated with a friendly toss in the fountain by fellow students. We found evidence of this tradition in the 1965 *Chromoscope*.



1965

Traditions of Service

Service has been a longstanding tradition of Austin College, evident through annual events such as First We Serve, GreenServe, Great Day of Service, JanServe, Alternative Spring Break, and more.



2024



2024



2024



2000

Alpha Phi Omega (APO) service fraternity hosts 'RooBoo, an annual fall event for the community and students.



2000



2024

Fun Traditions



Some traditions are reserved for certain classes, such as Monte Carlo night, an opening-of-school event for first-year students, and the Senior Toast.

Finals breakfast is about more than fueling up students for exams. Faculty and staff standing in to serve food to students makes this a fun way to celebrate the end of each semester together. At the December 2024 meal, a performance by Band on Grand, featuring faculty and staff musicians including President O'Day on guitar, was a crowd-pleaser.



New Traditions



The new Austin College Commons space just north of Wright Campus Center and the addition of crimson Adirondack chairs along Windsor Mall have revived the heart of campus as a place to study, socialize, or relax—creating new memories and traditions.



Recent graduates have experienced a new tradition at Commencement. The processional has expanded by taking a new route through Sandra J. Williams Founders Plaza before the ceremony.



The Veterans Day Roll Call ceremony honors veterans with connections to Austin College.



Declaration Day, the day sophomores and transfer students officially declare majors and minors, is commemorated with an Austin College challenge coin. Students receive a second coin at the Senior Toast, which they are encouraged to give to someone who has made an impact during their college journey.

Noteworthy Events from 2024



Austin College buried a time capsule in May 2024 to commemorate the College's 175th year. The time capsule will be opened in 2074, 50 years after its burial. Heidi Rushing '04 (left), Chief Marketing and Communications Officer, and Nia Carter '25 (right), 2024 Student Assembly President, are pictured assisting President O'Day with the burial.

Students, faculty, and staff gathered across campus to watch the solar eclipse on April 8, 2024. At this location, they experienced 99.8% totality and were able to see the phenomenon using proper telescopes and special AC-branded eclipse glasses.

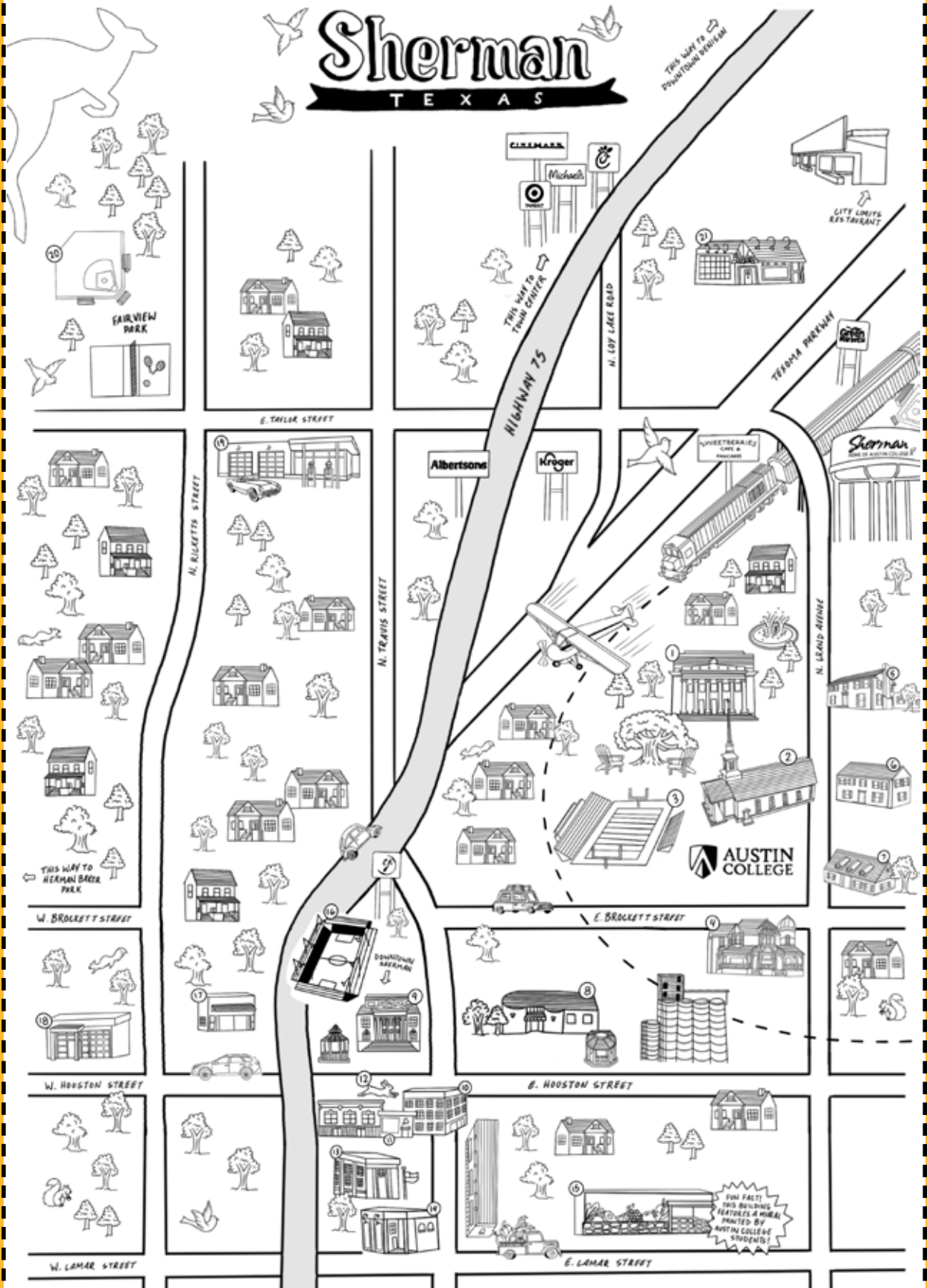


▶ The City of Sherman is in the midst of rapid growth and change, yet local favorites remain at the heart of its unique character and charm. Whether you graduated 5 years ago or 50 years ago, you may find some of your favorite haunts on this hand-drawn map, created by **Maddie Wilson '23**, to highlight some current student favorites for shopping, dining, and recreation.

Cut it out, color it in, and keep it handy as a guide to rediscovering Sherman's beloved local treasures on your next visit!

Sherman

TEXAS



1. AUSTIN COLLEGE ADMIN. BUILDING
2. AUSTIN COLLEGE WYNNE CHAPEL
3. AUSTIN COLLEGE APPLE STADIUM
4. AUSTIN COLLEGE TEMPLE CENTER
5. AUSTIN COLLEGE PRESIDENT'S HOME
6. AUSTIN COLLEGE VICE PRESIDENT'S HOME
7. AUSTIN COLLEGE ALUMNI HOUSE

8. SHERMAN PUBLIC LIBRARY
9. SHERMAN MUNICIPAL BUILDING
10. CHASE BUILDING
11. RISK SHOE STORE AND SHOE REPAIR
12. WHITE RABBIT COFFEE HOUSE
13. SHERMAN COURTHOUSE
14. OLD IRON POST RESTAURANT AND BAR

15. GRAND CENTRAL STATION-THE DINING CAR
16. BEARCAT STADIUM
17. TRACKS RESTAURANT
18. LA PLACITA
19. M6'S RESTAURANT
20. SHERMAN SHADOWCATS BASEBALL STADIUM
21. CELLARMAU'S PUB AND BREWERY

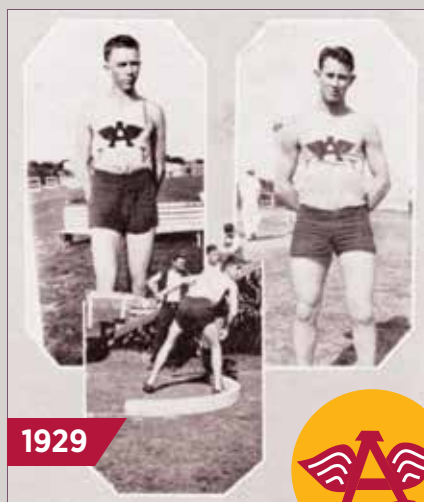
Curiosity can take you anywhere

This year, Austin College launched a new website at austincollege.edu. Inspired by a clean, modern aesthetic and committed to an accessible, mobile-first user experience, the redesign provided an opportunity to take a fresh look at the Austin College visual brand.

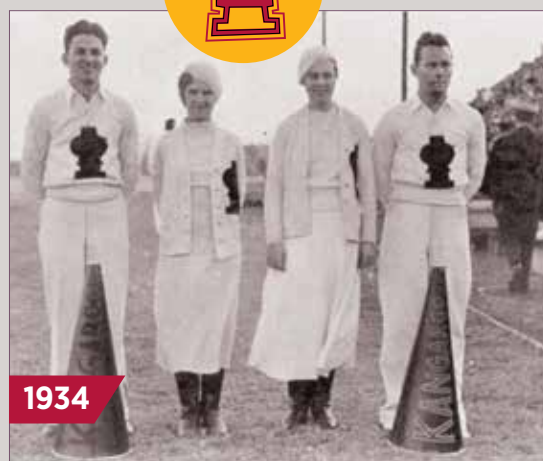
When you visit the new website, the phrase “Curiosity can take you anywhere” welcomes you. *Our* curiosity took us back into old issues of the Austin College *Chromoscope* yearbook to explore the evolution of our visual brand over the years. Do you recognize your favorite logo or monogram?



1905



1929



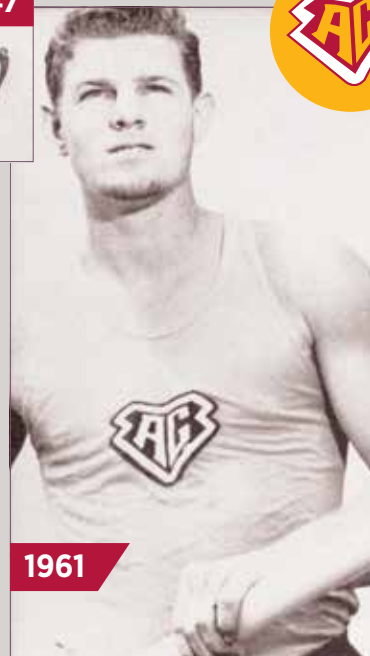
1934



1947



1949



1961





AUSTIN COLLEGE

1978



1976



1978



Official Austin College Logos – Past & Present



1950s - 1980s



1970s - 1980s



1984 - 1994



1994 - 2009



AUSTIN COLLEGE

2009 - present



Crafted in Curiosity

by Laura J. Veach

Alumni combine liberal arts education with creative minds to explore interests from boots to beans.

For a liberal arts graduate, it is likely a familiar experience to explain that a liberal arts degree doesn't mean that one studied art or anticipated a career as an artist, artisan, maker, or other creative type. But for some of our alumni, creative making is the destination to which their path of curiosity and education have led. They are successfully blending the artistic with the technical to bring concepts into reality, demonstrating that a liberal arts education is solid preparation for just about anything. From capital "A" artists to folks making a variety of things that might surprise you, in this issue, we are highlighting just a few examples of the makers among 'RooNation.



Candace Hicks '00
Fiber and Paper Art | Nacogdoches, Texas

Candace Hicks '00 can unquestionably be referred to as a working artist. In addition to her position as Associate Professor of Art at Stephen F. Austin State University, she has a prolific body of work currently featured in over 90 public collections, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Museum of Fine Arts Houston, and MoMA NY.

What's harder to define is her art. The main corpus of her work consists of hand-embroidered books, and in making them she is equal parts writer, builder, needleworker, and designer. "For twenty years, I have been working on a series, *Common Threads*—hand-embroidered books that catalog coincidences from my reading," she says. "I read a lot, and I notice that sometimes a word, phrase, or character name appears in two or more books in a row. I find unexpected phrases like 'black currant lozenge' or 'antique dental instrument' in two unrelated books read in succession." These coincidences serve as topics for her musings, which Candace hand-stitches into composition notebooks she creates from fabric and thread.

Notes for String Theory is another project composed of dozens of related, yet unique individual pieces. "Playing around with a way to make a drawing of a sheet of blank paper, I discovered that I could stretch the embroidered canvas like a painting over a shaped panel," Candace explains. "Suddenly, so many variations occurred to me. I've made hundreds of these drawings. They share the trompe l'oeil effect of the notebooks in that viewers sometimes do a double take, at first not placing the texture as stitching."

Candace says her undergraduate studies in art at Austin College laid the foundation for her career as an artist. That foundation also contributed to her recent selection as a Fulbright U.S. Scholar, which will take her to Amiens, France, from January through July 2025, where she will be researching textiles and creating a project on the subject of reproductive health care.

COURTESY PHOTOS



Thrya



Caleb Charles Campaigne '04
Master Shoe Designer | Austin, Texas

Caleb Charles Campaigne '04 has enjoyed a career in the arts, and credits his time as an art major at Austin College with developing his appetite for research, sculpting, painting, and art history. “Professor Mark Monroe taught a 3D sculpture class

that really demonstrated it is possible to create anything and nothing is impossible,” he says. This idea of limitless potential further fed his fascination with fashion, especially footwear design.

The opportunities Austin College provided to travel abroad and learn in different cultures has proven especially valuable for Caleb, as he has

lived and worked around the world. He says, “I was invited to attend Kobi Levi & René van den Berg’s Masterclass in The Netherlands. I have consulted with fashion brands in Europe, Mexico, and Texas.” In 2023, he attended the Arsutoria School in Milan, Italy, where he earned a Shoe One-Year Diploma.

“I completed courses in shoe pattern making, sewing, leather and materials, outsole design, fashion history, hand and digital drawing, 3D design (iCad & Rhino), collection line building, and prototyping,” Caleb explains.

Arguably, his most notable creation has been THRYA, for which he was awarded Honorable Mention in the 2024 Global Footwear Awards. The design was created from scratch, down to the curved heel, sculpted from a mold of Caleb’s own creation. Clad in mesh and leather of royal blue, gold, and silver—traditional Danish colors—and accentuated with gold and silver rivet hardware, the boot was inspired by Thrya, Queen of Denmark, who was known as the “strength” or “salvation” of her country. Of the design, Caleb says, “Together, the elements of gold and silver with the commanding power of a sturdy heel and a slight lift embody regal strength and confidence that I hope transfers to the wearer.” His blending of technical mastery with artistic vision showcases innovative craftsmanship that resonates with history, culture, and personal expression.





Dr. Mark Smith '74
Journeyman Broom Maker | Nisswa, Minnesota

The word “broom” isn’t likely to arise in conversations about art. However, the post-retirement work of **Dr. Mark Smith '74** (not to be confused with Mark S. Smith, Professor Emeritus of Art) goes far beyond making simple implements used to sweep floors.

“I build handmade whisk, hearth, and sweeper brooms, mostly in the Appalachian tradition,” Mark explains. “I amused myself in the hard sciences for my entire career (biochemistry, immunology, drug and medical device development), so when I retired, I may have had a few repressed artistic tendencies.” Broom making is considered an obsolete occupation, appearing in lists with the likes of knockers-up, lamplighters, and town criers, but the fact that brooms no longer need to be fully utilitarian allows modern-day broom-squires to explore the artistic aspect of their creation.

“I was introduced to the craft of broom tying at the North House Folk School in Grand Marais, Minnesota, where I acquired the basic knowledge for assembling whisk brooms, novelty brooms, hearth brooms and traditional kitchen sweepers,” says Mark. “The processed broomcorn used is a

traditional material identical to that produced by many Midwestern farms in the late 19th century as raw material for the thriving cottage industry of broom making. The handles are made of harvested saplings (either straight or vine curled oddities) or storm-felled split logs of pine, birch, oak, and ash. Colored nylon twine is used to attach the broomcorn to the handles, or to cinch the processed broomcorn when making smaller whisks or hearth brooms. Occasionally, the broomcorn is hand-dyed to add more vivid color than the natural tones of the raw wood and fiber.”

The Austin College tenets of mentorship and lifelong learning are still much a part of this Golden 'Roo's life and his post-career pursuits. He continues, “I also had an opportunity to work with master broom-squire Marlow Gates at the John C. Campbell Folk School in North Carolina. Working with a master crafter is a wonderful and enlightening experience. It's truly rewarding to create a functional piece that folks really connect with, and they are willing to both use it and hang it on the wall for ‘show.’”



Dr. Sandy Davis '06
Lelo's Coffee | McKinney, Texas

Dr. Sandy Davis '06 and her husband, Derek, are self-taught coffee roasters and owners of Lelo's Coffee Co. based in McKinney, Texas. Their beans are roasted to order and delivered to individual customers who've ordered through their online store or to one of several businesses that either serve their coffee or incorporate it into their own products. "We wouldn't have made it so far with Lelo's if not for the collaborations and relationships we've secured and the immense support we continue to receive from other businesses and the community," Sandy says. "One of our favorite collaborations is our coffee whiskey, called Andromeda." Andromeda was made in conjunction with Ironroot Distillery in Denison, which is partially owned by fellow 'Roo Robert Likarish '09.

Sandy is proud of her Puerto Rican heritage, one element of which is its "coffee culture." She says,

"At the time of my grandfather's passing in 2017, we visited a coffee shop that roasted their own beans, and it sparked the idea." The resulting business is named in honor of Sandy's late grandfather, Luis Ayala-Bousono, affectionately known as Lelo.

Sandy met Derek during her senior year at Austin College, where she earned a degree in psychology. That's right—she's also a practicing psychologist in addition to being an entrepreneur with a thriving business and plans for opening a café. She credits her time on campus with helping her develop the skills required to balance competing roles. She says, "The idea of community and individuality existing side-by-side is such a huge part of the culture at AC." Sandy's melding of professional pursuits with entrepreneurial ambitions perfectly demonstrates the balance and versatility among Austin College alumni.



Kristy Peet '02
 Photography | Houston, Texas

Kristy Peet '02 works primarily in photography, using a large format film camera to capture scenes she most often creates in her studio. "I'm interested in personal psychology," Kristy says. "My work is generally about topics that are of special interest to me at the moment."



Her time at Austin College has had a lasting impact on her creative pursuits. She shares, "I took my first photography class at AC, and it

altered the course of my life. I'm still using skills I learned while there." Kristy credits retired Professor Emeritus of Art Tim Tracz, with whom she still keeps in touch, as a huge influence on her work and skillset. "We went to galleries on field trips that I still visit on a regular basis," she says.

Kristy's work was featured in an exhibition, titled *Sway*, in the Wilma and Terence Dennis Gallery within the Betsy Dennis Forster Art Studio Complex from Homecoming Weekend 2024 until the end of January 2025.



Ahead of the Game

Isaac Cervantes '28 | Duck Tape® Design Contest Winner
 Pilot Point, Texas

Isaac Cervantes '28 wasn't entirely on board when his mom suggested he enter the Duck Tape® Stuck at Prom® competition. He was in the middle of his senior year of high school and preparing to attend Austin College in fall 2024. Creating a full tuxedo out of tape seemed a daunting task, but his desire to do one more project with his mom before leaving for college won out. "My mom would send me ideas while I was in class, and I would be drawing outlines of details for the tux. Everything was made out of Duck Tape®, from the buttons to the belt," says Isaac, whose design was inspired by his Mexican heritage and Christian faith.

The Stuck at Prom® competition is an annual event in which entries of dresses or tuxedos crafted entirely of Duck Tape® are displayed on the company's website, and winners are chosen by a public online vote. Isaac's entry was promoted on the AC Alumni Facebook page, and 'RooNation quickly welcomed Isaac to the fold, promoting and boosting his entry. Sixteen rolls of Duck Tape® later, his effort paid off. Isaac was awarded the \$15,000 grand prize and an additional \$1,000 for creating the most meaningful design. ■

Striking the Right Chord

By Tori Walters



The Enriching Experience of Austin College's Summer Music Camp

Over the summer, the Austin College campus becomes quiet as students leave for their long-awaited break—quiet enough that you might hear the echoes of musicians tuning their instruments as an eager audience sits, ready to experience the fruits of a week-long endeavor in the name of innovation, education, and music.

For the third year in a row, in June 2024, campers came from across the region to learn and share their musical talents at Austin College Summer Music Camp (ACSMC). The camp, conducted in a joint effort between Austin College and the Sherman Symphony Orchestra (SSO), provides middle and high school students with opportunities to develop their musical prowess in woodwinds, brass, strings, percussion, voice, and chamber music.

Leslie Whelan, Education Director of the SSO and Director of ACSMC, glows when reflecting

on the past three summers, “We knew going into this that it was going to be most students’ first experience, and most families’ first encounter with this kind of thing. And so, I think we wanted to make it approachable and accessible.” She is the heart of the camp, which grew from her initiative with the SSO in 2021 to establish an educational

program for aspiring musicians in middle and high school in the region. “The return rate has been amazing. We have captured that particular audience of kids who have always wanted this or didn’t know it was what they wanted. They get here and realize they’re among like-minded peers. They can do music

all day, every day, without worrying about the competing interests or demands of school.”

In true liberal arts fashion, students at the camp are invited to explore a range of topics alongside music. This year, presentations were given by faculty



Austin College Music Camp Leadership

Leslie Whelan* | *Director*

Daniel Dominick* | *Director, Strings Division*
Dr. Ash Glenn* | *Director, Woodwind/Brass Division*

Dr. Wayne Crannell* | *Director, Vocal Division*
Michael Reed | *Director, Percussion Division*

*Austin College faculty

Learn more: <https://shermansymphony.com/educational-programs/>



outside of the Music Department—such as Associate Professor of Media Studies **Dr. Erin Cople Smith’s** session on “Film Music” and Associate Professor of Anthropology **Dr. Brian Watkins’s** session on “Anthropology of World Music”—harmonizing with the camp’s goal of offering a holistic view on education. “If they can just meet another person, have another encounter with a college professor who’s a regular human being, but happens to study something different—they can be exposed to something new and interesting,” said Whelan when describing her hope for the campers. This year, the camp also invited four recent alumni, now working in music-related fields, to lead a panel sharing their insights into ways they use their musical talents in the workforce in both traditional and non-traditional “music” jobs—giving the campers a glimpse into their potential futures.

Daniel Dominick, conductor of the SSO and Austin College Music Department Chair, directs the strings ensembles of the camp and has a deep admiration for ACSMC. He sees ACSMC as the foundation for the Music Department to open the door to the greater Texoma community. “We want to be supporting our faculty (inside the Music Department and out) to get involved in local middle and high schools. The ensembles in those schools will be at a higher level, and music, alongside the community, will grow.” He asserted, “Whether you care about music or not, the Music Department is doing innovative, new things with the ACSMC.”

Looking ahead to summer 2025, the camp will take place June 9–15, offering familiar electives such as Jazz Improv, and new opportunities to discover how music influences more than students may realize. Whelan, Dominick, and the faculty and staff of ACSMC look forward to welcoming familiar faces from summers past, as well as new campers stepping into the camp for the first time.

The Austin College campus will continue to reverberate with mellifluous melodies in the otherwise sweltering summers, thanks to ACSMC. ■



PHOTO BY NICHOLAS HUMBERT

Participants in the alumni panel—Zoe Rice Rheus '20, Paola Matus Rheus '20, Toni Richardson '20, and Megan Chiu '18—presented on music education, audio engineering, music performance, and music therapy.

Campers learned about music in film with Dr. Erin Cople Smith, Associate Professor of Media Studies, and even biochemistry with Dr. Jim Hebda, Associate Professor of Biochemistry.



PHOTO BY KENDALL KATISAK '22



PHOTO BY NICHOLAS HUMBERT

Dr. Brian Watkins, Associate Professor of Anthropology, and Dr. Patrick Duffey, Professor of Spanish, both explored World Music through the lens of their respective fields.



PHOTO BY KENDALL KATISAK '22



PHOTO BY KENDALL KATISAK '22



A GREEN FUTURE IN THE MAKING

By Tori Walters



Austin College's Commitment to Carbon Neutrality

Austin College's dedication to environmental sustainability began in 2008 when then-**President Oscar C. Page** signed the Presidents' Climate Leadership Carbon Commitment, which initiated the development of a comprehensive Climate Action Plan for the College. This commitment remains strong today under **President Steven P. O'Day**, with the Austin College Climate Action Plan outlining an ambitious goal of achieving complete carbon neutrality by 2035—solidifying AC's role as an environmental leader in the region.

Since 2008, Austin College has made myriad efforts to become more energy efficient and reduce its carbon emissions. "From 2010 to 2015, the college made various energy efficiency improvements, such as replacing all exterior lighting with LEDs and shifting to wind-generated electricity," says **Dr. Peter Schulze**, Professor of Biology and Environmental Science. "As a result, carbon emissions declined by about 50%. Today, they are down almost 60%." The efforts not only contribute to carbon reduction but also reflect the

College's commitment to renewable energy sources.

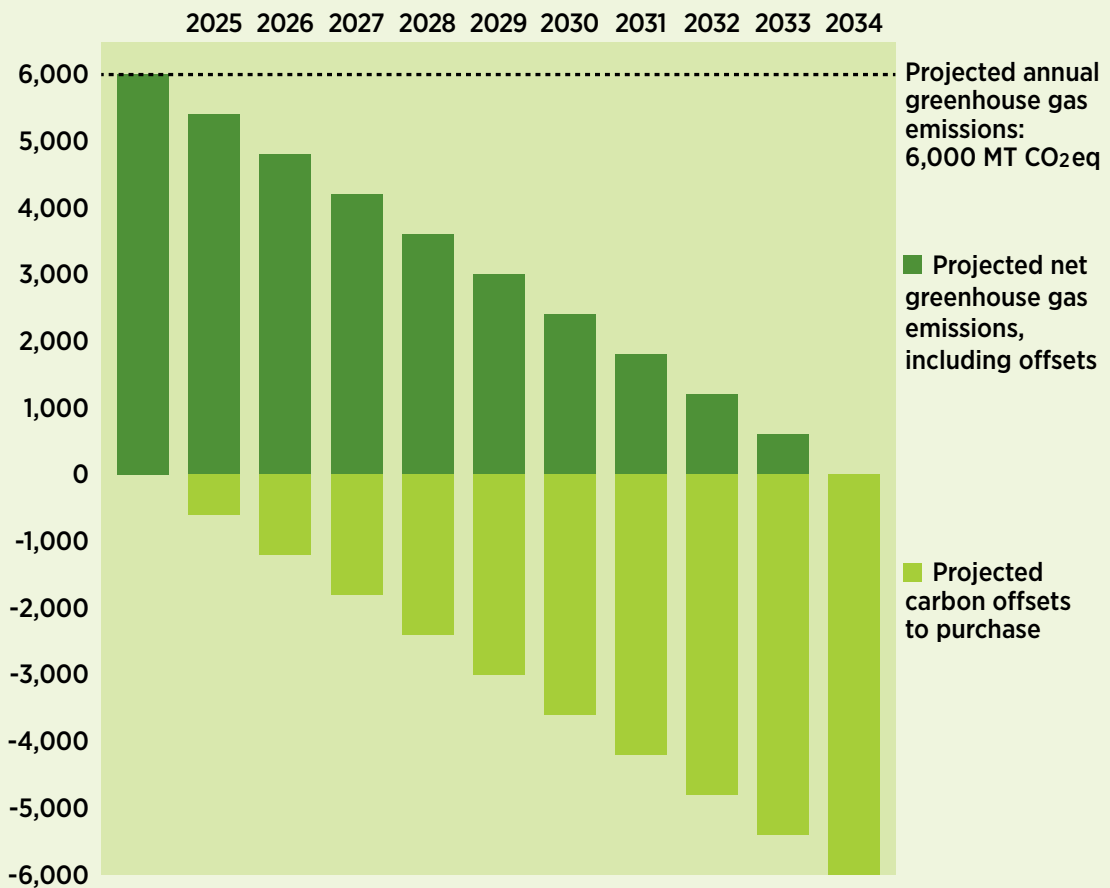
"Carbon neutrality involves reducing greenhouse gas emissions as much as possible and purchasing offsets for unavoidable emissions," explains Professor of Physics **Dr. David Baker**. In the past, Austin College has partially offset carbon emissions from student international travel through the purchase of carbon offsets. With the forward-thinking Climate Action Plan signed by President O'Day, all carbon emissions—including natural gas for heating and all College-related travel—will be balanced through high-quality, third-party verified carbon offsets. "The College just made a purchase of 600 metric tons worth of offsets through Tradewater, a carbon offset provider, and plans to continue to do so again in the future." The College's Climate Action Plan follows a ten-year map, breaking down the carbon offsets needed each year to achieve the 2035 complete carbon-neutral goal. Coordinator of the Center for Environmental Studies **Rebecca Jones '13** plays a crucial role in this effort, calculating the College's greenhouse gas inventories to ensure accountability and progress.

Austin College has successfully organized carbon-neutral events by reducing carbon emissions through proactive, energy-efficient measures and by utilizing carbon offsets. “This year’s TEDxAustinCollege was carbon-neutral,” Baker says proudly. “Future events, like the Posey Leadership Award convocation and luncheon featuring climate scientist Dr. Katharine Hayhoe will also maintain this standard of carbon neutrality.” These and other “carbon-neutral campus” days are supported by generous donations that help the College work toward minimizing its environmental footprint.

Support for climate action is a long-standing tradition at Austin College, with President O’Day

continuing the initiatives of his predecessors, Dr. Oscar C. Page and **Dr. Marjorie Hass**, by endorsing the Climate Action Plan. The College’s three-part strategy of reducing carbon emissions, pursuing renewable energy sources, and purchasing carbon offsets for unavoidable emissions exemplifies how educational institutions can lead the way in environmental stewardship, setting a benchmark for sustainability that benefits not only the campus community but also the broader world. With a clear vision, tangible results, and the generosity of gifts, Austin College is well on its way to achieving its goal of carbon neutrality by 2035, proving that a greener future is on the horizon.

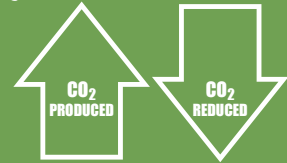
Projected Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Carbon Offset Purchases



This commitment contributes to Austin College's recognition as one of *The Princeton Review's* 511 Green Colleges.



AC is on the UN's *Race to Zero* list as one of 1,228 institutions involved and one of the 558 institutions committed to carbon neutrality.



One of the most remarkable outcomes of these efforts is the College's financial savings, totaling approximately \$400,000 per year. These savings stem from various energy-efficient changes implemented across the campus, showcasing that environmental responsibility can also yield economic benefits.



The Sneed Prairie Restoration project, one of the College's ongoing environmental initiatives, was awarded the Texas Environmental Excellence Award in 2020.



Maintaining one day of carbon neutrality for the campus costs just \$329, a manageable and attainable investment in a sustainable future.



Make your birthday, anniversary, or favorite holiday carbon-neutral! ■

Scan this QR Code to make a gift





New Beginnings on Grand: Welcome Home!

By Tori Walters

PHOTOS BY NICHOLAS HUMBERT

▶ If you have driven down Grand Avenue this year, you may have noticed new houses accompanied by fresh sod and sprouting saplings. These homes are part of an initiative to provide **transitional housing** for **new faculty and staff** relocating to Sherman.

The modern craftsman-style houses are designed to complement the existing neighborhood architecture. There are three different floorplans and exterior façades, each about **1,800 square feet** and featuring **three bedrooms, two bathrooms, and a two-car garage**. They were built by **Blair Weaver Construction** and completed in July 2024.

In addition to modern construction techniques that ensure the houses are inherently energy efficient, solar panels were installed by Your Solar Expert, LLC—founded by alumna **Natalia Carter '05**—aligning all aspects of the new homes with the College's climate pledge. It is anticipated that the solar installations will **generate nearly 100% of the electricity** that will be used in each home.



All seven houses are happily called “Home” by AC faculty, staff, and students from the Physician Assistant Program. Beyond providing competitively priced options for new employees in their first few years, these homes also play a

vital role in revitalizing the east Sherman neighborhood, fostering a sense of belonging for newcomers as they begin to plant their roots in the area. ■



The President’s Home at Wood House

- Trustee **Bill Crook '80** spearheaded fundraising for additional landscape improvements for the President’s Home at Wood House, such as sprinkler and drainage systems to shore up the foundation, and an **ADA-accessible concrete walkway** added from the driveway to rear patio area.
- These fundraising efforts established the **Evans Herron Campus Renewal Fund**, named to honor the lasting impact of **John Evans '64, Jay Evans '64, and John Herron**.
- John, Jay, and John also contributed pieces from their personal art collection—six-foot-tall bronze and stainless steel sculptures titled “Tailfin Fetish” and “Manifold Grace” fabricated by **artist Brett Chomer**—to further enrich the home and its grounds. ■



Lasting Lessons in Leadership

By Laura J. Veach



COURTESY PHOTOS



A “witness tree” is a tree that existed at the time and place of a major historical event. If the 100 or so documented Witness Trees of Gettysburg could speak, they would tell innumerable stories of fear and courage, heartbreak and joy, loss and victory. The trees are quite literally rooted in the soil from which still weeps an invisible force that demands reverence from present-day visitors.

During his first visit to Gettysburg in 2007, **President Steven O’Day**—who was then coaching and teaching at Franklin & Marshall College in Pennsylvania—was inspired by the dynamic impact the location exudes and wanted to harness it to the benefit of his students. “I met (licensed battlefield guide) Sue Boardman during that visit,” he says. “She had ideas on how Gettysburg Battlefield could be utilized to educate people on various leadership concepts that can be applied to their own lives.” Together, President O’Day and Boardman formulated the framework of a leadership seminar for students in leadership positions. The experience was so meaningful for O’Day and the participants that he has held the seminar in some form nearly every year since.

Though the two-day seminar was initially aimed primarily at students, it has since evolved to include coaches, staff, faculty, alumni, and trustees. While it takes place in arguably one of the

most historically significant locations in the U.S., the seminar is not meant to be a history lesson. Leadership can be difficult to define, and the topic of the Civil War teems with tangible examples of leadership—both good and bad—that are relevant to professional development. Trustee **Bill Douglass**, who has attended the seminar, says, “As a leader, one gains a unique perspective into the many human judgement errors which created this epic tragedy, and leaves this site of enormous dedication, discipline, and sacrifice with a new understanding of a leader’s responsibility in preventing needless loss of time and resources.”

Participants analyze decisions made—and sometimes not made—by leaders in the course of the battle, the reasoning behind them, and their consequences. Standing in the actual locations where those decisions were made, the ramifications resonate.

At the conclusion of the seminar, each attendee creates an action plan for applying the lessons learned to their own life. Just as the Witness Trees of Gettysburg are rooted in history and bear silent testimony to moments of profound transformation, each participant walks away changed by the same emotional impact that inspired President O’Day and Sue Boardman to develop the seminar all those years ago. ■

'Roos' Commitment to Service is Good News for Communities

A liberal arts education opens one's eyes to the needs around them and equips them to take action. At Austin College, this has been intentionally taught and practiced from the institution's beginning and continues today.

To celebrate its 175th Year, Austin College set a goal of 17,500 collective service hours reported by members of 'RooNation. Between August 2023 and June 2024, alumni, students, parents, faculty, and staff reported their volunteer work on campus and from coast to coast.

The Austin College Service Station helped manage the information by tracking hours logged at student service events and counting and recording hours reported by others online. A total of 48,256.5 hours were reported, which is equivalent to 5.5 years of 'round-the-clock time given freely to others.



Chaplain **John Williams '84**, co-chair of the Milestone committee, said, "The tremendous response to the Make a Difference initiative indicates that Austin College students, through the years, have been encouraged to think about how their education should be good news for others in their communities."

"To me, the most impressive thing about our Make a Difference invitation was the variety of the responses," he continued. "So many alumni and others from different decades, in different locations, engaged in so many different kinds of service."

These stories represent the hundreds of alumni who shared their service experiences for the Make a Difference campaign and show the ongoing spirit of service that is encouraged at Austin College.



Service to Earth

Vee Volpe '90

I love this group of people [at San Marcos Greenbelt Alliance Volunteer Trail Crew] because they are the salt of the earth, and I would not have ever known them except for this joint love of nature and desire to do something about it. They make me happy and the support we get from the community is outstanding. We go out every Thursday and Saturday as a trail crew to work, enjoy each other's company, and commune with nature. It's the best.



Service to Animals

Leita Hatcher '98

My kids and I discovered the joy of adopting rabbits for house pets three years ago and have since begun to foster rabbits for the Alamo City House Rabbits organization.



Service with Pride

Dr. Gary Howell '00

I volunteered as the Gala Chair for Equality Florida Tampa and volunteered with their Pride parade efforts. I also volunteered and raised \$6,000 for a 165-mile, two-day bike ride from Miami to Key West (The SMART Ride). I also give three hours each week in my clinical practice providing free support groups for trans youth, adults, and parents of both.

During my time at Austin College, I had two amazing mentors, Dr. Howard Starr and Dr. Roger Platizky, who were instrumental in my service work. I was already volunteering with the AIDS Resource Center of Texoma, so when they recommended I join ACCARES, it was a perfect match. I served as President of ACCARES my senior year at AC, and my involvement allowed me to bring AIDS awareness education to our college campus.



Service to the Ill

Iris Jacobs '97

I logged three hours as an Imerman Mentor Angel. I am a breast cancer survivor living with cancer in remission, and I spent those three hours offering peer support to a patient currently undergoing chemotherapy for her breast cancer, which was diagnosed earlier this year.



Service to the Unsettled

Polly Johnson '64

I have volunteered at Casa Juan Diego in Houston on Monday mornings for the past several years. Casa Juan Diego provides a temporary home for newly arrived immigrants in the U.S. They also provide groceries for the food-insecure in the surrounding community. We pack 200-250 bags with groceries for distribution on Tuesday mornings.

I love working at Casa Juan Diego. They are staffed by Catholic Workers who have taken a vow of poverty. They work with no pay, take meals to residents, and live with the residents in a very humble environment. It is a privilege to do a tiny bit of work with them.



Service to Country

Dale Labine

Father of Matthew Labine '28

I am an active member of Sons of the American Legion. As a member, I volunteer monthly doing various activities to support veterans and their families. Those activities include things like meal prep, meal serving, fundraising, building repairs, etc. I am also an officer on a state level, which requires time and effort in support of the organization as a whole.



Service to Children

Nicole Christy '00

Although federal nutrition programs provide meals for students during the school week, weekends can be especially challenging for children from food-insecure families. Snack Pak 4 Kids is one of my favorite volunteer opportunities in San Antonio! It usually lasts an hour to an hour and a half, and volunteers walk through lines to create snack bags for kids. I get my steps in while doing a great thing for the community! All of the people I work with are great, and we are making kiddos happy!

At Austin College, my favorite service project was at Sneed Prairie with Dr. Peter Schulze. I loved getting my hands dirty and seeing firsthand the tangible improvements we were making to the land. I must admit, when I sign up for volunteer events, I wonder “Why did I commit to this today? I am so busy!” However, I’ve never left an event regretting it. On the contrary, I always feel invigorated and inspired to do more. It reminds me that making a difference is far more important than the everyday worries we often get caught up in. Giving back and caring for others truly takes precedence. ■

COURTESY PHOTOS

Epic Improv



By Reed A. Cook '16

In any creative act, the method of “making things up as you go” may be an apt metaphor. For a theatrical improviser, this is the axis on which every performance turns. Members of The Austin College Improve Troupe, or TACIT, are led by **Dr. Kirk Everist** and supported by the dedicated staff of the Austin College Theatre Department. These talented performers have staked their claim in the world of emergent comedy and drama across stages and venues with diverse audiences as keen for laughs as they are for poignant creative expression.

For most of us, exposure to comedic improvisation likely begins and ends with late-night comedic television, Monty Python’s *Flying Circus*, or skit shows such as *Whose Line Is It Anyway?* While the improv style performed and practiced at Austin College shares some of its genealogy with these short-form performances, its roots connect to a far more unique and expansive play mode: The Improvathon. Inspired by the scholarly work

of improvisers such as Mick Napier and Del Close, the London Improvathon (which claims its descent from Canadian comedians) runs annually for a continuous 50-hour performance. This ambitious legacy is what inspired TACIT’s annual Epic Improv.

During a 2013 JanTerm studying English theatrical history, TACIT members approached Dr. Everist and asked about possibly performing their own Improvathon. Taking on the perspective of a working, developing laboratory for experimental improvisation, this student-led proposal for “Epic Improv” began to take shape. This collaboration between instructors and troupe members to build an eight-hour performance from little more than genre awareness and chutzpah has grown into an annual act of defiant theatre open to the entire community.

The question of what makes these hours of improvisation special is tied



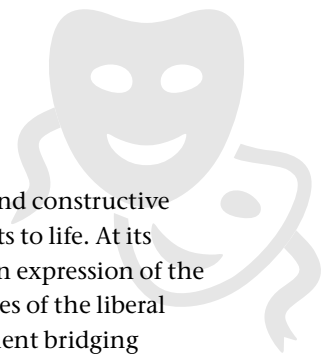
into its chronology. Styles have ranged from high fantasy epics to pulp narrativization, from TV serials to superhero showdowns, and as the hours fly by, maintaining the threads of a cohesive story becomes an increasingly arduous artistic affair. Whether adopting the form of a sentient gummy bear, a bewitched hand puppet, or an interstellar tax accountant, each performer commits to finding laughter and heart in every discovery on stage.

More than ten years later, the Epic Improv is still making things up as they go. Each spring during finals week, these intrepid students prepare for what has grown into a twelve-hour performance. The delight and diversion from finals week has resonated with campus audiences.

This project would not be possible without the collective efforts of key individuals across campus. **Dr. John McGinn** has lent his substantial creative talents to devising music for many Epic Improv performances. Technical Coordinator **Dan Pucul '04**

has likewise provided lighting and constructive wizardry to bring improvised sets to life. At its core, Epic Improv has become an expression of the intertwining nature of the studies of the liberal arts; a symposium of creative talent bridging disciplines of all shapes and forms, with current troupe members representing majors from biology to English to music.

As alumni of TACIT move into creative spaces of their own beyond Austin College, the reverberations of their work on campus continue to live and grow. From immersive projects such as **Sarah Davis Reynolds' '15** The Twenty-Sided Tavern to **Lizzie Lincoln's '14** showcase performances in New York City's Kraine Theater and The Puppet Lab, members of The Austin College Improv Troupe are part of a new school of thought in theatrics. As this proud legacy continues, one can only guess where future creativity will lead. It may all be made up, but that's what makes it matter. ■



Expect the unexpected when the subject is improvisation!



Dr. Kirk Everist directs members of The Austin College Improv Troupe (TACIT).





Maiden Voyage

Austin College's Inaugural Asia-Pacific Scholars Explore Geopolitics

By Laura J. Veach



Nine Austin College students made memories they won't soon forget during summer 2024 when they took a three-week trip to Australia, Singapore, and South Korea as the inaugural cohort of Asia-Pacific Scholars.

The journey served as an opportunity to research the geopolitical role of the Asia-Pacific region as part of the College's new Asia-Pacific Scholars Program. In preparation for their trip to these destinations, students in the program completed the fall term course "International Politics of the Asia-Pacific," and formulated a topic to research during their travels.

"Participating in the inaugural Asia-Pacific Scholar's Program was truly transformative.

I never imagined I would have the opportunity to conduct rigorous academic research and travel abroad to such an extent," said **Emma Samaniego '25**. "Exploring the countries of some of our strongest allies, examining our foreign affairs, and understanding our geopolitical ties deepened my appreciation for both my country and our international relationships."

Acceptance into the competitive program was based on the student's demonstrated interest in subject matter relating to geopolitics, regional defense, climate change, international trade, or migration in the Asia-Pacific region. The inaugural cohort included **Andrew Easley '24, Robert Cagle '24, Emma Samaniego '25, Nolan Adams '25,**



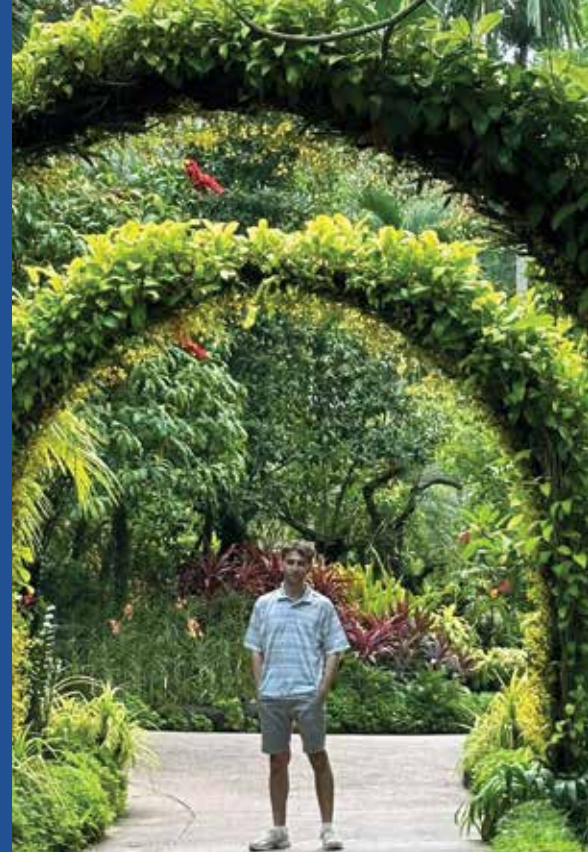
Chase Mitchelson '26, Jack Graman '26, Jasmine Galdamez '26, Pedro Echeverria '26, and Tanya Gonzalez '26. Cheryl Marcelo, Director of International Programs for the College, and Dr. Ruchan Kaya, Associate Professor of Political Science, advised the group and accompanied the students on their travels.

The students comprising the cohort represented a variety of majors including political science, international relations, and international finance. They participated in a total of 21 academic engagements during the trip, including visits to local parliaments in Australia and chambers of commerce in Sydney and Singapore, meetings with American Embassy foreign policy officers, and attendance at five lectures at three different universities. The students conducted surveys and ethnographies, interviewed experts, and performed observations in support of their individual research projects. **Jack Graman '26** said, "The Asia-Pacific Scholars Program granted me the wonderful opportunity to learn more about an increasingly important region, through firsthand experience and independent research." The completed projects on topics including climate change, geopolitics, soft power, and criminal systems are to be presented to peers and faculty sponsors during the Austin College Scholars Conference in March 2025, an annual event which is free and open to the public.

The inaugural cohort of Asia-Pacific Scholars took a three-week trip to Australia, Singapore, and South Korea in summer 2024. In addition to 21 academic engagements, the students and their advisors enjoyed sightseeing and visits to attractions in all three countries.



COURTESY PHOTO



COURTESY PHOTOS

The places the group visited were as varied and unique as the students themselves.

In addition to academic activities, the group visited museums and botanical gardens, hiked Australia’s Blue Mountains, experienced Singapore’s Chinatown, Little India, and Arab Street, and participated in local market immersion activities. They also visited the demilitarized zone (DMZ) between North and South Korea and the Korean War Memorial. “Throughout the trip, we met people from all over the world including Israel, Netherlands, Austria, Spain, and so much more. By meeting these people, we were able to engage in political discourse,” said **Tanya Gonzalez ’26**. “Those conversations opened up my mind and allowed me to understand more about the world and the importance of democracy and human rights.”

The Asia-Pacific Scholars Program is funded

through the generosity of a private alumni donor who participated in a similar opportunity while attending Austin College and wanted to replicate that transformative experience for current students. The award includes all travel costs plus a stipend for each student, which supports the program’s goal of providing each scholar an equal learning experience, regardless of their family’s financial position.

Of the trip, faculty advisor Kaya said, “This is one of the most immersive and comprehensive research travel opportunities that a student could ever get. Traveling to three countries, five major cities, meeting with experts, academics, policymakers, and diplomats; our gifted AC students have gone through a life-changing research travel experience.” ■



PHOTO BY NICHOLAS HUMMERT



PHOTOS BELOW BY ALYSSA VYRVA '24

Colors of Compassion

By Laura J. Veach

Austin College students, faculty, staff, and alumni were joined by Sherman residents to complete a colorful mural at local nonprofit Grand Central Station. The collaborative, paint-by-numbers-style project represents the services that Grand Central Station offers to community members in need, including groceries, school supplies, laundry and shower facilities, and more.

The community project was inspired by the 2024 Posey Leadership Award recipient Rick Lowe. Lowe is a Houston-based artist and activist who has worked with communities around the world to use art as a springboard for social understanding. Perhaps best known as the founder of Houston's Project Row Houses, his practice is rooted in working with members of a community to address and resolve social issues.

Coincidentally, Austin College students had been planning a mural with Grand Central Station back in spring 2020, when the project was shelved due to COVID. The students who led the 2024 Posey Leader-in-Residence events, **Nick Estes '24** and **Pedro Echeverria '26**, were inspired to resurrect the project as an opportunity to practice the principles they were learning from Lowe.

The 10' X 50' mural was designed by **Maddie Wilson '23**, Assistant Director of Graphic Design and Production for Austin College. **Mike Goolsby '87**, owner of Roberts Decorator Supply, generously donated paint and supplies for the project.

"Creating this mural was a challenge, as I've never done anything so big before," said Wilson, "but I am so pleased with how it turned out and especially that it attracted so much community involvement. I hope people will drive past and think about how they helped make this happen for many years to come."

The mural can be viewed at 619 E. Houston Street, Sherman, Texas. ■





Charting New Paths

Initial Cohort of Physician Assistant Students Experience a Master of Medical Science Program Done the Austin College Way

By Laura J. Veach

The initial cohort of the Austin College Master of Medical Science-Physician Assistant (PA) program arrived at the College's Health Campus on June 3, 2024. Simply securing a place in the program was an accomplishment, with over 1,200 applications received for the 34 openings. In her comments welcoming the students, **Dr. Diana Noller**, Assistant Professor of Medical Sciences and Founding Director of the program, said, "Today marks the beginning of Austin College's mission to train talented graduate students who have the heart to serve others, guiding their transformation into PAs who practice with excellence and make a difference in the lives of individuals and communities."

The 13,000 square foot Austin College Health Campus facility was designed exclusively for the physician assistant program, with simulated inpatient and outpatient rooms to facilitate mock

patient encounters and state-of-the-art teaching tools, including holographic anatomy software and Anatomage tables, which allow students to interact with the human body virtually. "The Anatomage table is an innovative medical education tool. This technology not only saves us countless hours of study, but also enhances our learning experience by offering high-resolution, 3D anatomical structures and dynamic visualizations of the body's physiology. It has proven to be an unparalleled resource in deepening my understanding of the human body," said student **Shania Ford**.

The faculty of the Health Campus are also making their mark, both on campus and in their field. The PA faculty are actively contributing to the PA profession through peer-reviewed publications and national presentations. Noller explained, "We have had four faculty members contribute to peer-reviewed publications on topics including race-

The ARC-PA has granted Accreditation-Provisional status to the Austin College Physician Assistant Program sponsored by Austin College. Accreditation-Provisional is an accreditation status granted when the plans and resource allocation, if fully implemented as planned, of a proposed program that has not yet enrolled students appear to demonstrate the program's ability to meet the ARC-PA Standards or when a program holding Accreditation-Provisional status appears to demonstrate continued progress in complying with the Standards as it prepares for the graduation of the first class (cohort) of students. Accreditation-Provisional does not ensure any subsequent accreditation status. It is limited to no more than five years from matriculation of the first class.

The program's accreditation history can be viewed on the ARC-PA website at <https://www.arc-pa.org/accreditation-history-austin-college/>

conscious admissions practices, promoting tolerant listening skills to enhance patient-centered care, and supporting diversity through best practices in technical standards.” She also noted that faculty and staff have planned volunteer outings in the community in a demonstration of the program’s core value of engagement. They kicked off National PA Week in October by volunteering to pack groceries at Masterkey Ministries, a local food bank.

In addition to regular courses with physician assistant faculty, the students have heard lectures by faculty in other departments, including **Dr. Saritha Bangara**, Associate Professor of Public Health & Public Health Department Chair; **Dr. Huy Nguyen**, Assistant Professor of Mathematics; **Dr. Beth Gill**, Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean of the Faculty; and **Dr. Mathias Akuoko**, Associate Professor of Public Health. Alumni, too, have made their contributions. **William Roberts ’73**, **Dr. Paul Putman ’78**, and **Rupak Dhoot ’13**, among others, have also shared their perspectives with the students. These content experts have discussed topics from microbiology to sociocultural influences on health care. “The opportunity to learn from expert guest speakers in the medical field, particularly alumni from Austin College, offers invaluable insights into both the academic journey and real-world applications of health care knowledge,” said **Kathryn Woodruff**, member of the cohort. “Alumni bring



a unique perspective, share professional wisdom, and inspire current students to envision their own success.”

In keeping with the College’s hallmark of hands-on, immersive learning, the PA program will send students off campus to observe and assist health care professionals in clinical rotations during their second year in the program. Over 100 PAs, physicians, and other health care providers, many of whom were sourced through the vast network of Austin College alumni, have committed to instructing the students in a variety of clinical settings. Clinical rotations are expected to begin in June 2025, when the initial cohort enter their second year of the program.

Small, rigorous classes. A spirit of servant-leadership and engagement. Exposure to a broad range of disciplines and viewpoints. An emphasis on hands-on, immersive learning. All are hallmarks of a PA program done the Austin College way. ■

The Austin College Master of Medical Science-Physician Assistant program was developed in response to a critical shortage of healthcare providers in Texas. Start-up costs were funded through the generosity of Hillcrest Foundation, Texoma Health Foundation, Clara Blackford Smith and W. Aubrey Smith Charitable Foundation, M.B. and Edna Zale Foundation, and individual donors.



Balancing Act

By Tori Walters

Student-Athletes Excel in School and Sports

Austin College takes immense pride in its student-athletes, who embody the very essence of Division III athletics by excelling in both academics and sports. This year, the spotlight shines on three outstanding individuals whose achievements are a testament to hard work, determination, and a relentless pursuit of excellence.

Junior **Samantha Graham** is a key member of the volleyball team, where she holds a starting position. “Austin College Athletics has had an immense impact on my life. Being a member of the AC volleyball team has taught me many things—for instance, what it really means to be a team player. It is amazing knowing that every girl on the team has my back while I have theirs. Seeing the culture come together on the court is indescribable. I have also had the blessing of playing for my father, Anthony Graham, who is the assistant coach. This is an experience that I will truly cherish forever,” said Samantha about her experience on the volleyball team. Samantha earns exceptional grades while pursuing a major in kinesiology and minor in biology. Balancing academics with the rigors of competitive sports is no small feat, yet Samantha consistently rises to the challenge. “It is amazing being able to walk into any building and see so many familiar faces. The size of our campus is perfect because it is big enough for opportunity, but also small enough where my professors know me and are welcoming any time I need help with anything.”

Samantha Graham '26 – Volleyball

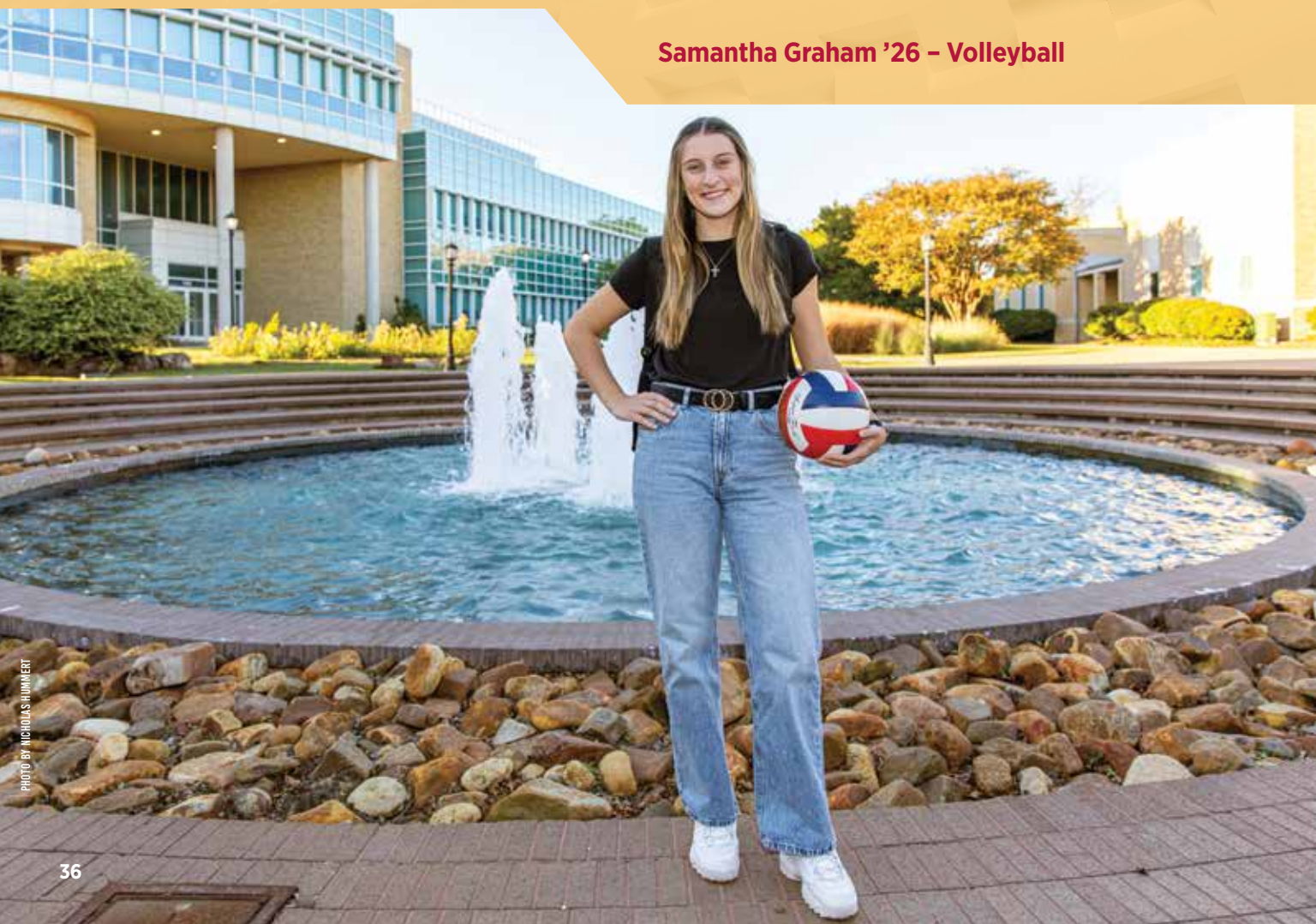




PHOTO BY NICHOLAS HUMBERT

Cameron Hammond '27 - Football

▶ **Cameron Hammond** is a sophomore majoring in engineering physics while also pursuing a minor in computer science. He has quickly proven himself on the field as a two-year starter for the football team. “My favorite part about being a 'Roo is the family and community around me. Many of the people I have met in this open-armed community will be my brothers for life,” Cameron says about his experience as a student-athlete at Austin College. “It has caused me to mature not only as an athlete or a student but also as a young man in preparation for life after college.” In addition to his impressive athletic contributions, Cameron maintains outstanding marks. His accolades began in high school, where he was named the National Football Foundation’s Gridiron Club of Dallas Scholar-Athlete of the Year during his senior year at Colleyville Heritage High School. What is his secret to success when it comes to balancing sports and school? “Discipline and time management are truly key,” Cameron says. “The secret to balancing sports and school is being able to focus on your goals, whether that be on the field, in the classroom, or both.”



PHOTO BY NICHOLAS HUNWERT

Grace Moothart '26 - Basketball

▶ **Grace Moothart**, a junior and a women's basketball team starter, is a stellar example of what it means to be a dedicated student-athlete. "Austin College Athletics has strengthened all areas of my life. This program has made me a stronger athlete, teammate, student, and overall, a better person," Grace says. She juggles multiple majors—business finance, sports management, and psychology—while maintaining an impressive GPA. "I find myself the most organized when I focus on one activity at a time. For me, it is all about living in the moment. Being exactly where your feet are with the people you love most is crucial, and without it, the balance is thrown off." Grace made history by becoming AC's first student selected to the National Student-Athlete Advisory Committee (SAAC) recently. In this role, she will represent both the Southern Collegiate Athletic Conference (SCAC) and the American Southwest Conference (ASC), a prestigious appointment and a testament to her efforts as a student-athlete at Austin College. "The Austin College community is my favorite part about being a 'Roo. I am fortunate to have met some amazing people here and to have built incredible relationships with them. I cannot believe the doors that have opened to me through the connections I have made. I deeply value my teammates, coaches, professors, as well as the staff at AC. The 'Roo environment is like no other, and I am beyond grateful to be a part of it."

Samantha, Cameron, and Grace epitomize the extraordinary commitment required to excel both in the classroom and in sports, exemplifying what it means to be a DIII athlete. They are not only setting the standard for Austin College's athletics program, but also inspiring their peers and representing 'RooNation with distinction on a national level. The lessons learned on the field and in the classroom will carry these student-athletes to even greater achievements beyond Austin College. ■

By Leaps and Bounds: Growth of Athletics Program Fosters Student Opportunities

By Jeff Kelly



PHOTO BY HUY NGUYEN



PHOTOS BY KENDALL KATUSAK '22

With Austin College approaching 20 years as a member of the Southern Collegiate Athletic Conference (SCAC), it's remarkable to look back at just how much growth the Athletics Department has seen over those two decades.

In 2005-2006, Austin College's final year as a member of the American Southwest Conference (ASC), the 'Roos saw 238 student-athletes take to the pool, courts, and fields, representing 11 varsity sports.

Fast forward to the 2024-2025 academic year, and the number of student-athletes competing for the 'Roos has grown by nearly 200, and the number of varsity programs has grown to 14, plus a competitive cheer team. Over the course of these past two decades, Austin College has seen the creation of a softball program and men's and women's water polo teams—with those three programs combined accounting for more than 60 participants this year.

To support the growth in the number of student-athletes and programs, the Athletics Department staff has also expanded, going from 20 full- and part-time employees in 2005 to 35 in 2024, including 27 full-time personnel and eight part-time coaches.

But it's not just the number of teams or competitors that's signaled the growth of 'RooNation athletics. While the 'Roos rarely left Texas in 2005, Austin College's entry into the SCAC opened up more opportunities for teams to travel across the country—with trips to Tennessee, Georgia, Kentucky, and Colorado to compete with SCAC schools in those states. For 'Roo water polo programs, travel reaches from coast to coast, with games each season in California, New England, and the Midwest.

The regional conferences continue to shift, including the expansion of the SCAC with the additions of LeTourneau University and Hendrix College next year. While it seems like only yesterday Austin College was the new kid on the block in the conference, the 'Roos now find themselves as the elder statesmen of the group.

Opportunities for athletes will continue to grow as Austin College continues to enhance its facilities, expand its staff, and attract more outstanding student-athletes. The value in this is that athletics are not simply about the sport—they foster time management, leadership, and collaboration skills. At the end of the day, the best measure of growth of our athletics is in opportunities for growth for our student-athletes. ■



Leveling the Field: Austin College Introduces B.S. Degrees

By Laura J. Veach

▶ When looking to fill open positions in their organization, employers, especially large organizations, use screening software to search resumes for keywords matching their job requirements, saving the company time by eliminating unqualified applicants from the outset so they can focus on fully qualified candidates. An organization in the technology or health sectors, for example, might include “bachelor of science” or the shortened “B.S.” in its list of required elements, along with the necessary skills to perform the job. Resumes lacking those terms are removed from contention before a human ever reviews them.

This practice poses an obvious challenge for a liberal arts college that has historically bestowed bachelor of arts (B.A.) degrees almost exclusively: how to ensure graduates are given the equal opportunity they deserve when applying for jobs, rather than being excluded from contention where a B.S. is the default credential.

So, what’s the difference, anyway? In very general terms, a B.A. degree involves more broad subject matter, and is often based largely on the humanities. In some schools of thought, this breadth comes at the sacrifice of depth in a particular subject. Conversely, a B.S. degree has long been thought of as representative of technical, often STEM-related material, with more focus on research. Although any Austin College alumnus can tell you their B.A. program (whether they majored in physics or French) was anything but shallow, screening software does not have the capability of distinguishing such a quality.

The faculty and leadership at Austin College recognized that students who graduate with B.A. degrees in the sciences were increasingly being caught by these automated pre-screens, and recognized that it was time to consider a change.

But, it wasn’t as simple as changing what can be printed on diplomas. All baccalaureate programs offered by colleges in the state of Texas must be accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC). AC faculty performed a gap assessment ahead of the accreditation process to identify and address any requirements of the B.S. that would not be fulfilled by current B.A. programs. Perhaps unsurprisingly for graduates of these programs, they found that the existing programs *already met* the SACSCOC criteria required of B.S. programs. **Michael Higgs**, Professor of Mathematics and Computer Science and Dean of Sciences said, “The programs that transitioned to a B.S. degree option were already offering the required science and math courses typical of a bachelor of science program. Major curricular changes to these programs were not necessary.”



That's right—as a testament to how thorough the Austin College B.A. curriculum is, *nothing* needed to be added or expanded in current requirements for Austin College to gain approval to grant B.S. degrees in nine key majors. As a result, Austin College is now offering bachelor of science degrees in biochemistry, biology, chemistry, computer science, mathematics, neuroscience, physics, psychology, and public health. As of fall 2024, students enrolled in these programs have the option to choose whether their degree will be conferred as a B.A. or a B.S. Research and active learning requirements are already a signature aspect of every AC program, embedded within the breadth for which our liberal arts education is known—meaning that once our graduates have the right initials on their diploma to get through that pre-screen, they are poised to stand out among their peers.

Austin College is proud of its rich history of providing an exceptional liberal arts education. The introduction of bachelor of science degree designations is not an affront to that tradition, but rather a demonstration of the thorough curriculum a degree from AC represents—and the conscientious, caring faculty who are making sure that our alumni enter the workforce ready to succeed. ■



Austin College is now offering bachelor of science degrees in biochemistry, biology, chemistry, computer science, mathematics, neuroscience, physics, psychology, and public health.

Weaving New Threads

Welcoming Austin College's Largest New Faculty Cohort in Recent History

By Tori Walters

Each fall, the arrival of a new cohort of students brings an exciting energy to campus. As faculty, staff, and returning students welcome first-years to 'RooNation, it is a time filled with promise. How will these new students fold in and become part of the fabric of Austin College? How will their unique gifts contribute to and shape our campus community? Many of these same questions were sparked this fall by the arrival of a different cohort of new 'Roos—the largest group of new faculty in recent history.

This moment is more than a transition; it's an infusion of fresh ideas and approaches. These 14 talented educators have joined the College to replace retiring and departing faculty, bringing with them a renewed energy and dedication to the close-knit academic community for which Austin College is renowned. Each of these individuals represents a new story, a new perspective, and a commitment to the College's mission of supporting student-centered learning.

Dr. Beth Gill, Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean of the Faculty, shared her enthusiasm for this milestone, saying, "We are thrilled to welcome these 14 exceptional faculty members to our Austin College family! Each of them brings unique expertise and a passion for teaching that will enrich the academic experiences of our students. They embody the College's tradition of fostering close, engaging, and challenging interactions that are the hallmark of our small-class environment."

By joining Austin College, these faculty members are stepping into a tradition of excellence, where cultivating close relationships with students is paramount. Their arrival reflects Austin College's ongoing dedication to nurturing an environment where students can thrive through meaningful connections with their professors. Their contributions will uphold and further the College's legacy of offering an encouraging and individualized educational journey.



“While my first semester as AC faculty was a whirlwind of new faces, challenges, and student engagement, AC provided a solid foundation comprised of a welcoming collegial work environment, motivated students eager for research experience, and diverse professional opportunities,” said new faculty member **Dr. Thomas Stidham**, Associate Professor of Biology. “Looking forward, I am enthusiastic about integrating my diverse scientific and international teaching and research interests with the rich fabric of the AC community from leading students in their research discoveries of ancient fossils to being stunned by dazzling birds and other biological wonders around the world.”

Dr. Ryan Felix, Associate Professor of Chemistry and Chair of the Faculty Executive Committee, shared his enthusiasm regarding the newest cohort of faculty, “We are all excited to have such an outstanding group of new colleagues. Their energy and fresh perspectives have already started to reinvigorate conversations across campus, and we look forward to the ways they will contribute to our students’ success.”

These new faculty will tie together key threads of the institution by inspiring students, collaborating with colleagues, and enriching the broader academic and local community. Their arrival signifies a reaffirmation of what makes Austin College unique—a vibrant tapestry where every student is woven into a supportive community, finding mentorship and inspiration both in the classroom and beyond. ■



The new faculty members represent a variety of disciplines—anthropology, art, biology, business administration, data science, economics, education, engineering, English, medical science, music, public health, sociology, and Spanish—enriching the academic landscape of Austin College.

Learn, Grow, and Serve: A Summer in Ghana

Emma McLemore '27 received a Global Outreach Fellowship to Ghana in summer 2024. This is her response and reflection on the experience.

Hello 'RooNation,

In summer 2024, I embarked on a Global Outreach Fellowship through Austin College. The GO! Fellowships are designed to give people like me a chance to go into the world and make a difference through being of service in a different country.

I had the blessing of going to Frankadua, Ghana to spend my summer in service. I arrived in Ghana with ambitions of assisting in building up a soccer program. However, soon after I arrived, a need arose for a substitute teacher at a local elementary school. I had some experience student teaching, so this was an added challenge that I was excited to take on.

Soon, I fell into a routine, spending the first half of each day teaching the "P3" (third grade) class and the afternoons assisting in coaching the local football (soccer) club, Shark FC. The exhaustion, long days, even the moments I really missed my mom, all proved to be worth it as I watched the kids grow. Once the teacher returned and we were grading final exams, it was gratifying to see things I had taught, like obtuse and acute angles, be answered correctly by students. We were so excited to celebrate all that they had learned.

I grew up playing club soccer, and so working with the teams was also rewarding. They worked with enthusiasm, giving their all to each drill, game, and scrimmage that we put them through. Sports are not just about the physical skills developed, but a microcosm of life, where we learn to work hard to achieve our goals and aspirations. It was sweet to see the kids get stronger in this way as well.

The learning and growth, of course, didn't end with my students and players—there was plenty for me as well. One day, I came to class to teach, but no teachers were there. It was July 15, 2024, a day of national strike for a change in the government.



COURTESY PHOTOS



It shocked me, because I have never experienced anything like it. Sadly, it is something my colleagues know all too well, as they must continue to raise their voice for the justice they deserve. Yet, that doesn't stop them from being joyous every day, constantly singing hymns together and always wanting to honor God. This encouraged me as a Christian, because I got to meet brothers and sisters abroad, all united by one Creator and one faith in Jesus. I saw that the pure joy that God brings, no hardship or circumstance can take away.

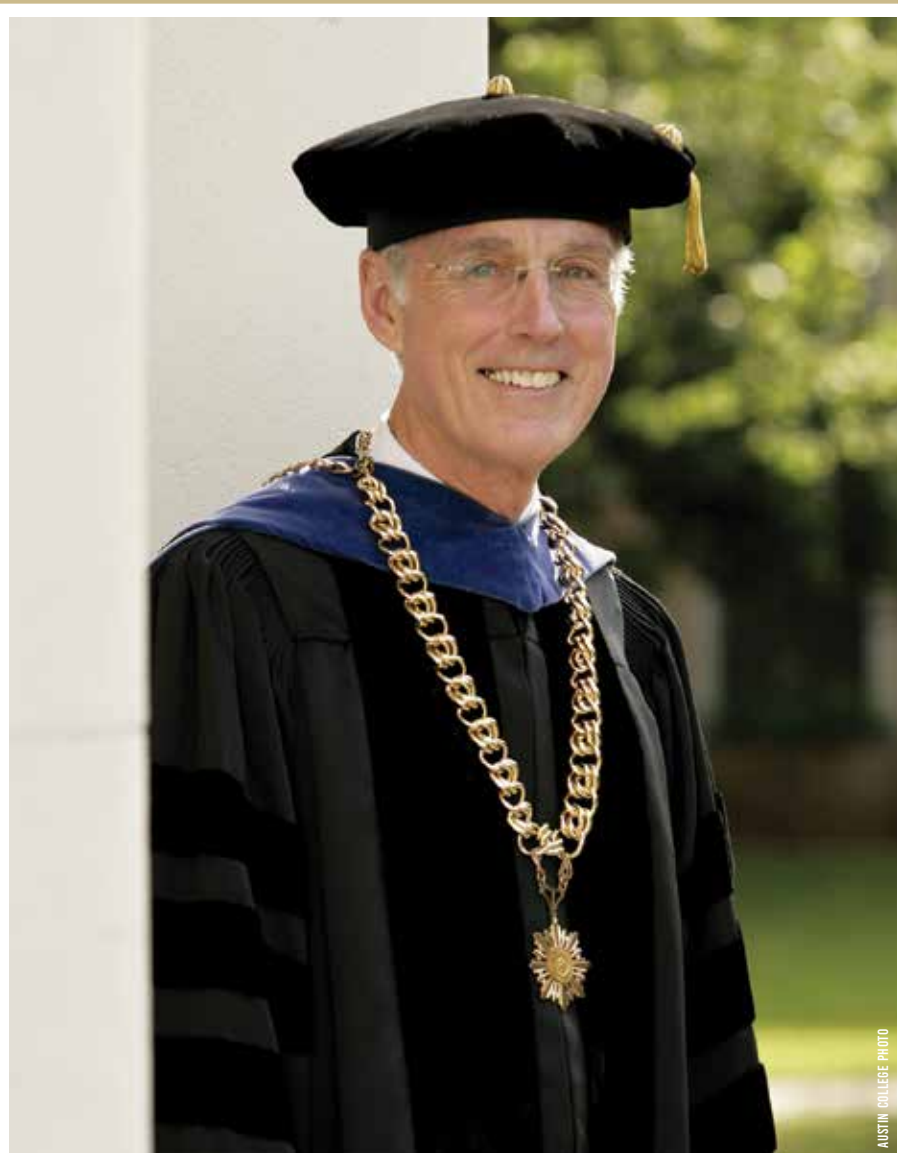
Truly, what a special place Ghana is. I am so grateful that Austin College encourages and mobilizes students to learn, grow, and serve those around us. God continues to use Austin College to bless me in all my endeavors and I am so grateful.

And to Frankadua and all my sweet brothers and sisters: akpe na mi, melō mi katā ale gbegbe! I cherish you all beyond words. Keep sharing smiles and fighting for what is right, knowing challenges are an opportunity to grow. And most importantly, I pray that you feel God's grace and love always.

*Regards,
Coach/Madam Emma*



In Memoriam: President Emeritus Dr. Oscar C. Page



President Emeritus Dr. Oscar C. Page was born on December 22, 1939, in Bowling Green, Kentucky, the third child of Oscar H. and Elizabeth Page. He spent many hours with his father, a pastor and home builder, often with his pants nailed to a roof, learning how to build houses and fix just about anything. His mother nursed him through polio and instilled in him a resilience and determination to never give up. His love of learning and education began in the one-room schoolhouse he attended as a child, and it became a passion that followed him throughout his life.

Page earned a bachelor's degree from Western

Kentucky University and a master's degree and Ph.D. from the University of Kentucky—where he met his future wife, **Anna Laura Hood**. Together, they touched countless lives at many institutions including the University of Georgia, Wesleyan College, Lander University, and Austin Peay State University. Each community and institution benefited from Page's vision of servant leadership and his commitment to mentoring others. He believed deeply in the transformative power of education and inspired students to recognize their personal responsibility in shaping their communities.

In 1994, Page arrived at Austin College as its 14th president, bringing with him an already distinguished career and legacy of leadership. From his first days in Sherman, he made his purpose clear: to shape not only the campus but also the lives of students, emphasizing servant leadership and values-based education. His enduring optimism and tireless work ethic defined his tenure as president, leaving an indelible mark on Austin College.

Page’s legacy was rooted in his dual role as an “architect of change and builder of character.” Drawing from a self-made foundation forged during his early years in Kentucky and his rise through academia, Page saw every challenge as an opportunity for transformation. His vision materialized through over \$100 million in campus improvements during his tenure, including the construction of landmark facilities such as the Robert J. and Mary Wright Campus Center and the Robert M. and Joyce A. Johnson ’Roo Suites.

Beyond bricks and mortar, Page invested deeply in people. His philosophy of servant leadership inspired countless students and faculty members, who continue to embody his example of integrity and dedication. Page’s unwavering fervor for education extended to finding ways to support students in pursuing their dreams, whether through mentorship or practical assistance. “In his

“
When there’s a vision to follow, he doesn’t waiver.
When there’s a goal to be reached, it is never unattainable.
”

— Robert M. Johnson ’53
Austin College Board of Trustees
Chair, 2007 – 2012

Quote from *Austin College Magazine*
June 2008
Architect of Change, Builder of Character

many, assorted engagements with others, Oscar’s character and dignity showed by way of example; he was always mentoring and teaching, never failing to display respect for all. After engaging with Oscar, one left striving to be a better person,” said **Dr. Daniel Nuckols**, Associate Professor of Economics.

During his career as an educator, Page was instrumental in starting leadership programs, including the Austin College Posey Leadership Institute, which cultivates future leaders

by emphasizing service, community involvement, global perspectives, and personal responsibility. He consistently sought opportunities to connect influential thinkers with students. Among the many notable individuals he introduced to the Austin College community were President George H.W. Bush, Barbara Bush, Dr. Paul Farmer, General Colin Powell, Maya Angelou, Madeleine Albright, Cokie Roberts, Henry Winkler, Robert Ballard, Nobel Prize winner Oscar Arias, and many more.

President Emeritus Dr. Oscar C. Page’s story exemplifies the enduring power of leadership rooted in service and optimism. In today’s world, his example serves as a poignant reminder that the most lasting legacies are those that inspire others to lead with purpose and integrity. “Dr. Page has cast a long shadow, and there’s no doubt that his presence will continue to be felt for generations to come,” said **Austin College President Steven P. O’Day**. ■

Below, from left to right: Dr. Page often joined students with volunteer projects during Great Day of Service. • President Page pictured at Commencement in 1999, the College’s sesquicentennial year. • Dr. Page brought many noted individuals to campus such as Maya Angelou. • Dr. Page at the podium during the Oscar C. Page Atrium dedication in the IDEA Center.





Meghan Cardwell-Wilson '04, Discipline Lead and Professor of Dance at Collin College and performer with Full Circle Dance, led an interactive audience engagement activity for attendees at TEDxAustinCollege 2024. Using flashlights that were given out as event swag, her choreography helped the audience embody the event theme, *Illuminate*.



Ellen (Nelson) Clarke '75 and her husband, Brian, took the whole family—all 22 of them!—to Disney World for Christmas 2023.



In November 2024, **Seth Howard '20** competed in the 2024 North American Regional Bench Press Championships as a member of Team USA. He competed in the 74kg Open division, setting new NAPF and Pan American Regional Records with a bench press of 167 kg (367.4lbs). His performance secured an individual gold medal and contributed to Team USA's Classic Men's Open Team Award.



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Weddings
- Page 59 **JOEYS**
Additions to the 'Roo Family
- Page 60 **ALUMNI BOOKSHELF**
- Page 62 **IN MEMORIAM**

'ROONOTES

1964



Don Newsom '64 was inducted into the Mt. Pleasant, Texas, Athletic Hall of Fame in September 2024. Pictured from left to right are Judd Marshall, Superintendent of Mt. Pleasant ISD, Don, and Don's wife Carol Campbell Newsom '62, MAT '71, a 1997 Distinguished Alumna.

1965

James E. Deans Jr. '65 would like to let everyone know that he and Catherine Upshaw '64 are still around, just a bit "creakier." James retired in 1997 after a 30-year career with Texas Instruments.

1966



Sheryl Stice Ross '66 retired after 50 years of nursing, with 20 years as

a pediatric ER nurse and the remainder in management. She shares that she has loved her career, a highlight of which was working in the camps in Albania and Bosnia during the war.

1969

Jean Dodge Holland '69 retired in 2004 from Spring Branch ISD after 32 years. She then retired again in 2020 after 16 additional years.

1970

Rev. H. Sharon Howell '70 enjoyed a 40-year career with the Kansas East and Great Plains Conference of the United Methodist Church from 1972 to 2012. During that time, she held positions as pastor, district superintendent, president of the Scarritt Bennett Center in Nashville, and president of Saint Paul School of Theology.

1972

Barbara Bailey Parker '72 of Collinsville, Virginia, was elected chair of the Virginia Commission for the Arts Board of Commissioners for the 2024–2025 year. She was appointed to the VCA in 2019 by then-governor Ralph Northam.



Barbara served for 19 years as Director of Programs for Piedmont Arts, an accredited museum and arts center in Southside Virginia. A passionate advocate for the arts, she has served as a board member of the Virginia



Presenters Network and the North Carolina Presenters Consortium and is one of the founders of TheatreWorks Community Players in Martinsville, Virginia.

After the death of her daughter, journalist Alison Parker, in 2016, she founded the For Alison Foundation, a non-profit organization dedicated to providing arts opportunities for youth in southern Virginia.



Dr. Carmen Tafolla '72 was awarded the 2024 Lifetime Achievement Award by the Texas Institute of Letters. The Lifetime Achievement Award was established in 1936 to recognize distinctive literary achievement and is the highest honor given by the organization.

1973



Newt Cunningham III '73 was elected Fannin County Judge in November 2022 and took office January 1, 2023.

1977

Julie Hayes '77 retired from University of Massachusetts Amherst in 2022. She served as chair of the Department of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures, and then as Dean of the College of Humanities and Fine Arts for 10 years. This winter saw a new milestone, with the publication of her fourth scholarly book, *Women Moralists in Early Modern France*, from Oxford University Press (2024).

1980

Michael Noss '80 has retired to San Felipe, Baja California, Mexico after a career as a psychiatrist.

1984

Mark Barcus '84 has been named Assistant Chief Immigration Judge for Training and Management by the U.S. Department of Justice Executive Office for Immigration Review.

TRAINING & TRAILBLAZING



Dr. Kerry Yancy Dolan '85 completed a Master of Criminal Justice in Homeland Security and Emergency Management from the University of

Mississippi in 2022. In 2023, she used this training as the basis to become the first physician in the state of Mississippi to be certified in disaster medicine by the American Board of Physician Specialties, and one of only four physicians in the U.S. to achieve this certification last year. She put her knowledge into action and led her workplace, the Pediatric Emergency Department at the University of Mississippi Medical Center, in the disaster response for the Rolling Fork Tornado in spring 2023.



1984 (continued)

In this new role, Mark will coordinate and supervise all judicial, legal, and staff training for immigration courts nationwide. He will also supervise the new West Los Angeles training court.

1985

H. Denyse Seaman Rodgers '85 retired from Baylor University Libraries after a 37-year career. She and her husband, David, will continue to live in Waco, Texas.



Lynn Northcutt Vega '85 has had a year of exciting changes. On December 29, 2023, Lynn retired after 32 years with the U.S. Agency for International Development. During her time with the agency, Lynn served as a career foreign service officer and worked to promote national security and foreign policy through social and economic development initiatives in more than 20 countries around the world. She served long-term assignments in Nicaragua, Honduras, Jamaica, Colombia, and Moldova. A week after retiring, she took on exciting new responsibilities as Representative of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma in Washington, D.C. The Choctaw Nation is the third-largest Native American nation in the

United States, with over 225,000 tribal members. Lynn will work to advance the Choctaw Nation's priorities and programs before the U.S. Congress, the executive branch, and other stakeholders in our Nation's capital. Lynn also had exciting news on the family front. Her second grandchild, Daniel Alexander Vega, was born in June 2024. He joins his older sister Olivia Rose and parents Wiley and Carlota Vega.

1988



University Medical Center and Texas Tech Physicians recognized **Dr. Mike Ragain '88** with the naming of The Mike Ragain, MD Endowed Professorship in Medical Excellence in Family Medicine. This naming is an acknowledgment of his commitment to UMC and Texas Tech Physicians. He serves as the Executive Vice President and Chief Medical Officer for UMC Health System.

1989

Tim Newsom '89 has become a Fellow in the American College of Trial Lawyers and the International Academy of Trial Lawyers. He is also the Immediate Past President of TEX-ABOTA, a 1,400-member regional organization of the American Board of Trial Advocates.

1991

Le Anna Brun '91 was ordained to the priesthood in the Episcopal Church on January 24, 2024, at St. James Episcopal Church in Taos, New Mexico, by Rt. Rev. Bishop Michael Hunn on behalf of the Diocese of Texas. In November 2023, Le Anna was called to serve as the Missioner for Christian Formation for the Diocese of the Rio Grande and will be serving diocesan youth and parishes in New Mexico and far West Texas.



Dr. Estevan Garcia '91 recently began working as the inaugural chief health and wellness officer at Dartmouth College.

1997

Dr. Stuart Borrett '97 is serving as a program director at the National

Science Foundation for the 2024-2025 academic year. He will be working with the Growing Research Access for Nationally Transformative Equity and Diversity (GRANTED) program. Stuart



is excited to serve in this capacity, to learn more about the national research and development ecosystem, and to address systematic barriers to increase participation and capacity in STEM.

1999

Justin Miller '99 was elected to serve as president of the League of Minnesota Cities for the 2024-2025 year. The League represents over 800 cities across the state, and as president, Justin leads the Board of Directors, comprised of elected and appointed officials from across the state. The League of Minnesota Cities advocates for cities at the state and federal level, provides training for local officials, and serves as the primary insurance option for most Minnesota cities.

2004



Lindsey Lumsford Drake '04 has been awarded the Corporate/Transactional Attorney of 2024 award by Travis County Women Lawyers Association. Lindsey also teaches elder law in her role as an adjunct professor at University of Texas School of Law.

Abbas Ravjani '04 was recently promoted to director of privacy and public policy at Meta. He and his wife and two children (8 and 5) live in Arlington, Virginia.

2005

Dr. Kayla Smiley Tallant '05 left her current chiropractic practice in November 2023 after almost 10 years and opened Tallant Chiropractic in Oak Cliff, near the Bishop Arts District. Her goal

is to provide accessible, affordable chiropractic care to the community she lives in and loves. She says it has been a breath of fresh air to venture out on her own, run her business, and care for her patients at the highest level.

2007

Dr. Rachel Aker '07 has earned a master's degree in Theatre Studies from University of Houston (2015) and a Ph.D. in Theatre History, Dramatic Literature, and Dramatic Theory and Criticism from Louisiana State University (2024). She is currently working as a career coach for the College of Music and Dramatic Arts at LSU's Olinde Career Center. Aker has taught undergraduate courses in introductory theatre and acting at LSU and was previously a high school theatre teacher in Temple, Texas. She has experience as a dramaturg, set designer, scenic artist, and educator with companies in Houston and Baton Rouge, including Houston Shakespeare Festival, Houston Grand Opera, Main Street Theatre, Swine Palace, and Playmakers.

A SUCCESSFUL START

Evan Cueva '23 received the prestigious *We Are McKinney* Superintendent Award on February 26, 2024. Evan is the only first-year teacher to receive this recognition. The award is given each month to one elementary and one secondary teacher to honor and showcase McKinney ISD's very best teachers who are doing incredible work serving their students.



2007 (continued)



Dr. David Savage '07 finished his fellowship in hematology/oncology at Scripps Clinic in San Diego, California, in June 2024. He accepted a position as assistant professor at the University of New Mexico's Comprehensive Cancer Center in Albuquerque in August 2024.

2009



Lisa Emery '09 has been selected for the Communities Foundation of Texas Emerging Leaders in Philanthropy program

2024-2025 cohort. Lisa is senior coordinator of community relations for Fluor Corporation in Irving, Texas.

2012



A play by **Ayvaunn Penn '12**, *Why Ain't a Grape a Berry? The Colored Thespian Complex When Progress—Gets Hairy*, has been published in *Stonecoast Review*, a Pushcart Prize-winning literary journal. Her play *For the Love of Uvalde: A Play Inspired by the Robb Elementary School Shooting in Uvalde, Texas* was a semi-finalist for the 2023 Princess Grace Playwriting Fellowship and made the 2024 Yale Drama Series Short List, an honor conferred by Broadway playwright and competition judge Jeremy O. Harris, who

selected the play to be in the top 10 scripts from over 2,000 submissions. Ayvaunn also directed *dwb (Driving While Black)* for Fort Worth Opera during Black History Month 2024, and was named an Arts Influencer by *Patron Magazine* in 2023.

2014



Truman Word '14 has earned a Ph.D. in Materials Science from The University of Texas-El Paso, and has begun a job with SpaceX as a materials engineer.

2017

Chelsea May Law LaRue '17 became a board-certified chaplain with the Association of Professional Chaplains. She earned her Master of Divinity

from Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary in 2020.

Rebecca Rogers '17 has earned a M.A. in International Affairs and Political Analysis from American University in 2023. This is her second master's degree; the first was an M.Sc. in Development Studies from London School of Economics in 2018. Prior to attending American University, Rebecca spent two years in South Korea teaching English. She currently works as an analyst at the Government Accountability Office in Washington, D.C., where she has authored reports on public transit counterterrorism grants, China's Belt and Road Initiative, and a variety of other topics.

2018

Nancy Asusena Coto '18 began a new position as a kindergarten Spanish language arts teacher at YES Prep Public Schools—East End Elementary in August 2024. 🐾



THE MINISTER MADE HIS MARK

The life of **Jorge Lara-Braud '54** has been celebrated in a book published by his widow, Gretchen Lara-Shartle. A discussion panel and book signing for *Dare to Adventure* were held at Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary on November 13, 2024.



Escaping an impoverished childhood in Mexico City, Mexico, Lara-Braud grew to be an internationally recognized minister, champion of social justice, Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary Professor of History, first director of the Hispanic American Institute in Austin, and an Austin College Distinguished Alumnus (2003).

ILLUMINATE



9TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE

TEDx AustinCollege

Two alumni, one student, a 'Roo parent, and two friends of the College took the stage on October 5 at TEDxAustinCollege 2024, in Sally and Jim Nation Theatre of Ida Green Communication Center.



Shari Barkin, M.D.
Seek to Understand: Solving Problems for Children's Health



Erik Cabrera-Zamora '22
The Effects of Parental Incarceration on Families



Nehal Elramly, Ph.D.
Cultural Diversity as the World Comes into our Classrooms



Nino Fincher
Stagnation Solution



Deedee Jansen '25
Learning Leadership Through Self-Advocacy



Dallas Key '10, J.D.
Your Resume Isn't As Important As You Think

See all 2024 TEDxAustinCollege talks: www.austincollege.edu/tedx

HONORING OUR SPORTS LEGENDS

Legends 2024

Athletes returned to campus in July 2024 for the annual Legends event and celebrated some of the greats of 'Roo sports. The awards event on July 27 was highlighted by the presentation of the Athletic Hall of Honor inductions and the Coach Joe Spencer Award for Meritorious Service and Lifetime Achievement in Coaching.



PHOTO BY NICHOLAS HUMBERT

The Legends honorees (L to R) are Al Hockaday, Lauren Hutton, Andrea Coachman, Wilson Renfroe, Cody Dean, Mike Foster, Ned Muñoz, and Marty Secord.

Athletic Hall of Honor Inductees

- Cody Fletcher Dean '24 – Para-Athlete/Swimming
- Andrea Coachman '06, MAT '08 – Basketball
- Mike Foster '86 – Football
- Al Hockaday Jr. '76, MA '77 – Football/Baseball
- Lauren Wheeler Hutton '16 – Swimming
- Ned Muñoz '93 – Swimming
- Wilson Renfroe '80 – Football/Baseball

Coach Joe Spencer Award for Meritorious Service and Lifetime Achievement in Coaching

- Marty Secord '84, MA '85

DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI & VOLUNTEER AWARDS

Four distinguished alumni were honored for exemplary careers and service during Homecoming 2024. These individuals are recognized for excellence in their professions and communities, and for modeling the spirit of service and broadened perspective fostered by Austin College. A fifth alumna and an Austin College employee were honored for service to the alumni community.

DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI AWARDS

Squire Booker '87



Squire Booker is Evan Pugh Professor of Chemistry at The Pennsylvania State University. Along the way to becoming a professor of Penn State's highest level, he was selected as a Howard Hughes Medical Investigator in 2015, and Penn State awarded him their Faculty Scholar Medal in 2016. Squire lives in State College, Pennsylvania, where he is heavily involved in the mentoring of young scientists, particularly those who come from groups that are historically underrepresented in the sciences.

Holly Mace Massingill '94



Holly Mace Massingill has been a successful residential realtor for over two decades, and has become a demonstrated leader in her field. She has represented her industry on political committees and has also served on the Texas Realtors Board of Directors. Holly served on the Austin College Board of Trustees from 2015 until 2023, endowed the Mace Massingill Scholarship, was a founding member of the Kappa Gamma Chi Scholarship Committee, and since 2020 has served as advisor to the Kappa Gamma Chi Alumnae Board.

Robin Reynolds '74



Robin Reynolds served over 44 years in health care volunteer management. While working for Central Arkansas Radiation Therapy Institute (CARTI), Robin designed and implemented a program called CARTI Kids, which sponsored educational retreats for pediatric patients and families. She implemented Knitting for Noggins, a program which continues today, recruiting volunteer knitters across the world to knit caps for patients and family members. Robin also designed and implemented the Festival of Stars program, which fulfills holiday wish lists of hospitalized children during the holidays.

FIRST DECADE AWARD

Suzanne Timmerman '15



Suzanne Timmerman is an office management specialist with the U.S. Department of State, currently posted in the Regional Security Office in the U.S. Embassy in Barbados, serving the Eastern Caribbean and the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States. Suzanne has received several group and individual honor awards from the U.S. Embassy for her work on the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Council, with the DipNotes Choir, with Public Diplomacy in support of Ukraine, and for filling in at the Executive Office.

HEYWOOD C. CLEMONS VOLUNTEER SERVICE AWARD

Ginny Harleston '79



Ginny Harleston has been actively engaged in service to Austin College for many years. She has dedicated her time and talents to supporting a variety of departments and initiatives and recruiting students from East Texas. She has also taken a special interest in creating connections between East Texas alumni and their families and Austin College presidents. In her community, Ginny has served with the League of Women Voters, her children's schools' PTA and Band Parents Association, her HOA board, and has held several positions in her local United Methodist Church.

CINDY CURTIS BEAN SERVICE TO ALUMNI AWARD

David Turk



David joined the Austin College staff in 1997 and currently serves as the executive director of facilities. For nearly three decades, he has maintained the campus buildings and outdoor spaces, ensuring students, faculty, and staff are comfortable, and upholding Austin College's reputation as an extraordinarily beautiful place to learn, live, and work. David also manages all campus renewal projects, and is largely responsible for bringing the significant upgrades throughout the grounds in the past several years to fruition.



HIGHLIGHTS FROM

AUSTIN COLLEGE HOMECOMING

NOVEMBER 15-17 • 2024



Homecoming 2024 was a fun-filled weekend of events including the Distinguished Alumni & Volunteer Awards, tailgating, football, a volleyball tournament, theatre performances, an alumni art reception, the 'Roo Run 5k, an alumni career panel for students, and campus tours. There were gatherings for Golden 'Roos and other groups, plus the main homecoming celebration at 903 Brewers.



Continuing Their Family Traditions

Making Austin College a family tradition comes in many forms; whether following the footsteps of siblings, parents, cousins, aunts, uncles, grandparents, or other family connections. These legacy students carry on their family connection to 'RooNation. At opening of school, we invited new students to share their legacy connections and be photographed with their fellow 'Roo family members.

PHOTOS BY KENDALL KATSAK '22



Art Clayton '28 (left) with father **Arthur Clayton '95**



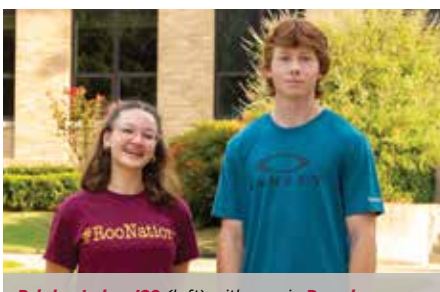
Lucia Costantino '26 with sister **Sophia Costantino '28** (right)



Thalia Estes '28 (center) with parents **Jake Estes '99** and **Montserrat Ferrer Estes '98**



Grace Henry '28 (right) with aunt **Amanda Land Billings '92**



Brinley Lokey '28 (left) with cousin **Braydon Lokey '28** (right), not pictured Brinley's father **Bryce Lokey '99** and Braydon's parents **Brandon Lokey '02** and **Ashley Veal Lokey '00**



Dylan Lynch '28 (center) with parents **Aaron Lynch '99** and **Chasity Tomlinson Lynch '99**



Giselle Reyna '28 (right) with brother **Ismael Reyna '18**



Maddee Nunn '28 (left) with father **Derrick Nunn '01**



Jonah Reine '28 (left) with brother **Warren Reine IV '26**



Kalyn Stinson '27 (left) with mother **Jennifer McClure Reed '99**



Serena Sutherland '28 (center) with parents **Revs. Amy Poling Sutherland '00, MAT '01,** and **Joshua Sutherland '01**



Cayden Woolard '28 (center) with parents **Dr. Matthew Woolard '99** and **April Splane Woolard '00, MAT '01**

Gael Lupian '28, stepson of **Nicolas Ayala '09**, reported his family connection, but is not pictured.

1988

Helen Lowman '88 and Jack Wylie '87, MA '88 married on April 13, 2024, in Gruene, Texas. Dr. Clayton Oliphint '83 officiated, with more than 80 Austin College alumni attending. Helen is a professor and director of the Center for Research, Public Policy, and Training at Texas State University. Jack is a partner at Prospera Advisors. The newlyweds will make their home in San Marcos, Texas.

2007

Tad Hopp '07 and Bob Bertucci were married September 7, 2024, at the First Unitarian Universalist Society in San Francisco. In attendance were fellow AC alumni Tara Singleton Pearce '06 and Liz Davenport '07. The couple returned to their home in San Francisco, California, upon returning from a two-week European honeymoon.

2013

Sarah Villaseñor '13 and Christian Holt McLellan were married in the Westmoreland Chapel at South Main Baptist Church in Houston, Texas, on February 24, 2024.

2019

Ashley Rocha '19 and Aidan Bolton '21 were married October 4, 2024, at Camp Lucy in Dripping Springs, Texas. Ashley and Aidan live in Prosper, Texas.

2022

Kyle Brown '22 and Abby Agan were married September 27, 2024, in Lake Jackson, Texas. **William Koelzer '22, Alex Rodriguez-Mintzias '22, Nick Calapan '22, and Dylan Laventure '23** served as groomsmen. Other alumni in attendance were **Madeline Jacks '23, Robert Griffin '21, Kendall Katusak '22, Alyssa Albers '22, Lauren Olivier '23, Sam Skinner '22, Brett Skinner '22, Connor Watson '22, and Nik Koelzer '24.**

Lily Kate Clayton '22 and Austin Box were married April 20, 2024, at the Botanical Gardens in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Lily Kate is the daughter of **Arthur Clayton '95** and **Elizabeth Clayton** and the sister of **Art Clayton '28.**



Helen Lowman '88 and Jack Wylie '87, MA '88



Bob Bertucci and Tad Hopp '07



Sarah Villaseñor '13 and Christian Holt McLellan



Ashley Rocha '19 and Aidan Bolton '21



Abby Agan and Kyle Brown '22



Austin Box and Lily Kate Clayton '22



Evelyn Elizabeth and Joseph William
(Holland '06)

2006

Katie Deeds Holland '06 and Joseph W. Holland III welcomed twins Evelyn Elizabeth and Joseph William Holland IV on December 1, 2023. Godparents are Katie Masucci Walker '11 and Star Walker and Andrew Phifer '06 and Julian Pineda.

2007

Fannin Glenn was born to **JR '07** and Morgan Ohr on June 8, 2024. He was welcomed home by big sisters Waverly (5) and Palmer (2).

Penelope Elise was born to **David Savage '07** and Elizabeth Frost in April 2024.

2011

Wyatt Harper was born to **Spenser Cruikshank Garrison '11** and **Zachary Garrison '11** on March 8, 2024. Wyatt was welcomed home by big sister Emery.

2015

Suzanne '15 and **Nicholas Timmerman '11** welcomed their son Jack Joseph on February 16, 2024.

2016

Alex Martinez '16 and **Noelle Low Martinez '17, MAT '18** welcomed their baby boy, Luis Alexander Martinez, on March 12, 2024. The Martinez family recently moved into their new home in McKinney, Texas.



Fannin Glen
(Ohr '07)



Luis Alexander
(Martinez '16)

2017

Aubrey Mae was born to **Madison Lee Halford '17** and **Jeremy Halford '16** in October 2023.



Penelope Elise
(Savage '07)



Aubrey Mae
(Halford '17)

2022

Forrest Box was born to **Lily Kate Clayton Box '22** and Austin Box on August 15, 2024. The family lives in Sherman, Texas.



Wyatt Harper with big sister
Emery (Garrison '11)

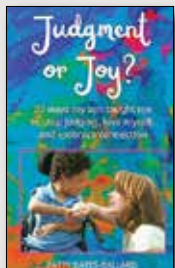


Forrest
(Box '22)



Jack Joseph
(Timmerman '15)

ALUMNI BOOKSHELF



❖ In April 2024, **Patty Bates-Ballard '85** published her book, *Judgment or Joy? 33 Ways My Son Taught Me to Stop Judging, Love Myself, and Embrace Connection*. The book is about her son, Kory, who was born with disabilities and passed away in 2019. *Judgment or Joy?* is a collection of vignettes from Kory's life that offer recipes for finding joy through releasing judgment of ourselves and each other.

With three decades of experience as a speaker, writer, educator, and mediator, Patty is a strong advocate for effective communication across differences. Her *ACE-ing Conflict* book and learning program have empowered thousands of individuals to bridge differences and build inclusive communities.

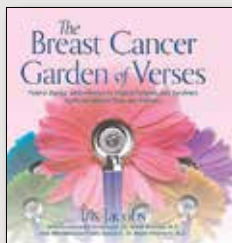


❖ **Susan Polk Van Dusen '92** has announced the publication of her first children's book, *What's so Special About a Tree?* The rhyming book is written for children ages 4-8 and features original artwork by her father, the late John S. Polk.

"My dad was a very talented artist who left behind hundreds of paintings when he

passed away four years ago. I was inspired to incorporate some of his work into a children's book that I hope will bring joy both to children and the adults who love them," Van Dusen said.

The 32-page book features 14 paintings and drawings of both realistic and whimsical trees. Most of the works were completed in recent years, with the exception of one dated 1970.

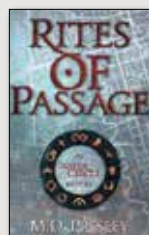


❖ Written by a cancer patient for those facing serious health challenges, *The Breast Cancer Garden of Verses: Poetry, Songs, and Artwork to Inspire Patients and Survivors to Bloom Where They are Planted* is an inspiring debut release from poet, lyricist, and artist **Iris Jacobs '97**.

During her breast cancer treatment, Jacobs started rewriting nursery rhymes, turning classics such as "Mary Had a Little Lamb" into "Leftie Had a Little Lump" and Christmas carols into songs titled "The

Twelve Months of Treatment" and "What Growth Is This?" Folk songs, jazz standards, and original oil paintings of flowers followed.

The book contains over 100 unique poems, songs, and paintings to inspire other cancer patients and survivors in their journeys. In the author's words, "This book is a whimsical collection of traditional poems and songs repurposed to empower, entertain, comfort, and inspire those looking for creative healing from cancer and other chronic illnesses."



❖ **M.D. Presley '00** published *Rites of Passage*, a fantasy novel about a teen with an enchanted iPod and a knack for finding missing things.

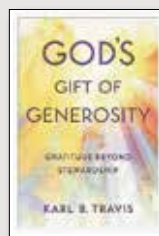
❖ **Beth Ford '08** published two novels in 2024. *In the Time of Spirits* is a historical fiction set during the 19th-century Spiritualist movement, and *Love Between Times* is a time-travel romance.



Books by Other 'Roos



❖ **Senior Trustee Dr. Fazlur Rahman** has published a book titled *Our Connected Lives: Caring for Cancer Patients in Rural Texas*. The book contains the stories of five of his patients and the unique medical and personal aspects of each case.



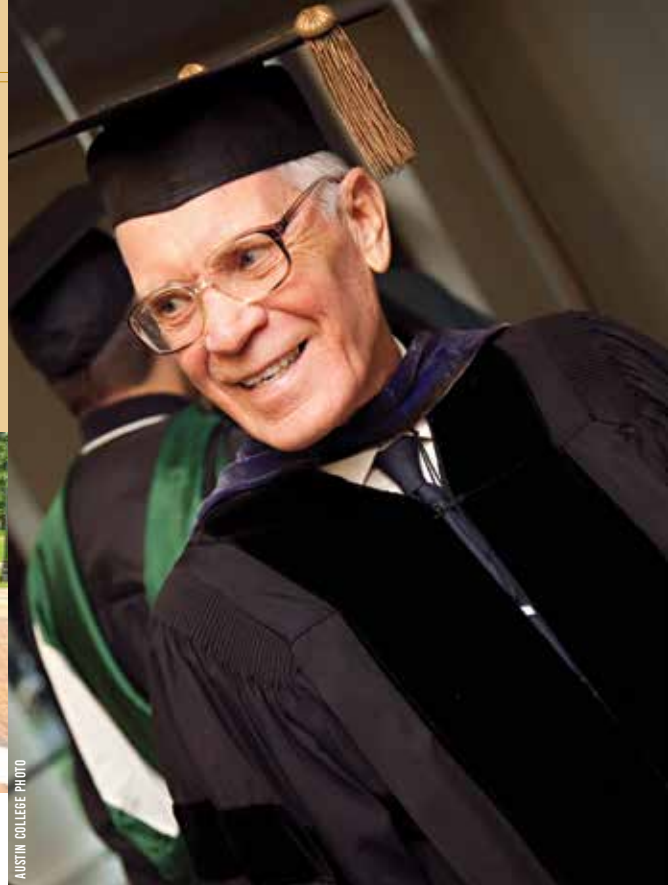
❖ **Senior Trustee Karl Travis** has published a book titled *God's Gift of Generosity: Gratitude Beyond Stewardship*, which provides guidance for pastors and lay leaders as they navigate the often-challenging task of seeking financial support.

The Legacy of Dr. Clyde Hall (1922-2024)

By Tori Walters



PHOTO BY NICHOLAS HUMBERT



AUSTIN COLLEGE PHOTO

Dr. Clyde Hall '46, a beloved professor emeritus and community historian, passed away on June 9, 2024, at the age of 101. A lifelong resident of Sherman, Texas, Dr. Hall was deeply embedded in both Austin College and the community, where his contributions span nearly a century.

Born on October 15, 1922, on South Travis Street, his lifelong connection to the College began with his father, Hugh Hall, who maintained a close friendship with then-President Thomas Clyde. This connection laid the foundation for a lifetime of loyalty and service to the institution.

Hall enrolled at Austin College as a member of the Class of 1944. His education was briefly interrupted by World War II, during which he served in North Africa and Italy. Returning to Sherman in 1945, he resumed his studies and graduated in 1946. After earning advanced degrees in business and economics, he returned to his hometown to join the Austin College faculty in 1950, where he dedicated nearly 40 years to teaching.

His legacy lives on in Austin College campus landmarks, with the Clyde L. Hall Graduation Court and a computer lab in Abell Library bearing his name. The Clyde L. Hall Presidential Scholarship also commemorates his impact, helping future generations pursue their education with the same dedication he exemplified.

Hall was also an unofficial historian of the City of Sherman, dedicated to preserving the area's heritage by establishing historical markers around Grayson County and inspiring future generations through the Clyde L. Hall Resource Room at the Sherman Museum.

Dr. Clyde Hall's remarkable life, spanning over a century, reflected unwavering dedication to learning, community, and heritage. His influence lives on through his family, his former students, and the many local landmarks enriched by his work. As we remember Dr. Clyde Hall, we celebrate a life defined by service, scholarship, and an enduring love for Austin College and the Sherman community. ■



COURTESY PHOTO

🎧 **Listen to the conversation** between Rev. John Williams '84 and Dr. Clyde Hall '46 which took place in September 2022, just before Dr. Hall's 100th birthday. Together, they reflect on Dr. Hall's connection with Austin College and his remarkable life.



LISTEN ONLINE
acmagazine.austincollege.edu

ALUMNI

1946 Clyde L. Hall	June 9, 2024	1966 Thomas Whelan III	March 30, 2024
1948 Mary "Betty" Elizabeth Hess Sherron.	February 26, 2024	1967 Linda Byrd Andrews	April 3, 2024
1951 Doris Jean Gloff Haggard	December 29, 2023	1967 Kary M. Walker.	September 4, 2024
1952 Roger Fullington	May 10, 2024	1968 William B. Forbes	July 26, 2024
1952 Diane Deison O'Leary	March 3, 2024	1969 Perry Denning	June 29, 2024
1953 Hope Lawrence Sheppard	May 8, 2024	1969 Vernon "Chris" Nyvall	September 8, 2024
1955 Martha Jarvis Box.	October 8, 2024	1969 Janet McKenney Reese	December 15, 2023
1955 Cherry Lee Alexander Cox	June 18, 2024	1970 Diana L. Norman Antoniello.	November 5, 2024
1956 James W. Deatherage.	May 17, 2024	1970 Robert L. Ganaway	March 14, 2024
1957 Jim Jecker	September 25, 2024	1971 William Ayres.	February 4, 2024
1957 Wallace Eugene March.	May 2, 2024	1971 John Henry Hall.	August 29, 2024
1958 Mary Elizabeth Thulemeyer Murray	May 29, 2024	1972 John Hopps Fain Jr.	July 30, 2024
1958 Elaine Russell Olson	November 20, 2024	1972 Thomas Austin Jaco	July 2, 2024
1958 Betty Tappan Payne	August 11, 2024	1972 Marion Carolyn Felknor Johnston.	August 1, 2024
1958 Hallie Spragins Simmins.	October 29, 2024	1972 Helena O'Neal Thurlby	August 12, 2024
1958 Vick Williams	August 21, 2024	1973 Janet Skidmore Cason.	May 30, 2024
1959 Don Kiser	October 25, 2024	1973 Stephen Arthur Goodwin	January 5, 2024
1959 Richard Ortiz	September 29, 2024	1973 Walter Frank Lenoir III.	March 30, 2024
1960 William H. Crawford	July 13, 2024	1973 Jerry Nolin Lynch.	July 10, 2024
1960 Fleda Gregory Lambert	March 14, 2024	1973 Shelby Cunningham Stewart	September 18, 2023
1960 Jack Manes.	September 10, 2023	1975 Patricia Bradley Able	May 1, 2024
1960 Tommie Sue Spalding.	April 18, 2024	1975 Tamara Chauncey.	September 25, 2023
1960 Martin Junius Taylor III	May 31, 2024	1976 Gerald Don Alexander.	August 2, 2024
1960 Roy Laughton Whitehead Jr.	April 19, 2024	1976 Karen Stewart Stephenson.	September 10, 2024
1961 Virginia Dale Watson Keyes.	October 28, 2024	1977 Michael Gaisbauer	January 20, 2024
1961 James G. Miller.	September 3, 2024	1977 Kirk McIntosh.	January 28, 2024
1961 Doyle W. Read Jr.	December 8, 2024	1978 Cynthia Finch.	February 20, 2024
1961 Sandra Lynn Reiffert White	May 19, 2024	1978 Henry Lee Pendergrass.	July 5, 2024
1961 Jack G. Walker.	March 8, 2024	1978 Kristine Berry McKinney	November 16, 2024
1962 William Emory Glover.	June 21, 2024	1979 Lee Ray Massey.	September 4, 2024
1962 Marcia Roman Holt.	December 13, 2024	1979 Doris Nelson	October 15, 2024
1962 Dian Gould McCall.	October 29, 2024	1980 Allan Poindexter.	October 26, 2023
1962 Byron D. Myrick.	December 11, 2024	1982 Kenneth "Randy" Randall Hufstetler.	March 17, 2024
1962 Robert E. Richardson Jr.	December 15, 2024	1983 Bill Montero	October 7, 2024
1963 Don "Steve" Stephen Burket.	June 26, 2024	1987 Peter Odom	April 8, 2024
1963 Kenneth Krause	February 16, 2024	1989 Charles Henderson.	January 16, 2024
1963 Larry Ledebur	February 5, 2024	1990 Rodric A. Brock.	November 19, 2024
1963 Geraldine Goleman McKay	October 22, 2024	1990 Charles Mattingly	April 10, 2024
1963 Florence Margaret Spragins Quillin	November 4, 2024	1990 Charles "Bart" Barton Pruitt	July 18, 2024
1963 Mack Snider	March 5, 2024	1991 Marla Danielle Jenkins-Tsai.	February 19, 2024
1964 Pamela Conaway Bice	August 14, 2024	1994 Shrayashi Jariwala Browne.	February 6, 2024
1964 John Goodman	January 21, 2024	2002 Mike Entzminger.	September 7, 2024
1964 Henry M. Staat	October 27, 2024	2004 Robert Sherwood Carter Jr.	September 4, 2024
1965 Robert Jeffrey Caswell.	May 1, 2024	2010 Matthew Logan Finke	September 25, 2024
1965 Ted "Teddy Ray" Chapman	June 26, 2024	2010 John Mark Purcell.	March 29, 2024
1965 Linda Sue Loper Monroe	July 13, 2024	2016 Mohammed Y. Allawala.	December 25, 2024
1966 James Daniel Breazeale	December 30, 2023	2023 Samuel Gonzalez	March 5, 2024

Austin College Board of Trustees



Trustee **Kristine Berry McKinney '78** died November 16, 2024. She served as a member of the Board of Trustees from July 1, 2023, until her death.

A native of Denison, Texas, she was entrusted with leadership roles in community organizations across Grayson County and was associated with F. Kohfeldt and Son Real Estate as an owner, broker, and general partner from 1980 until retiring March 31, 2024, due to her declining health.

Over the years, Kris was actively involved in the Austin College community in numerous ways, including service as vice president of the Alumni Board, co-chair of Grayson County Women Get Connected, and member of the Athena Leadership Recognition Award Committee. She also hosted alumni and student events in her home, and participated in the 2010 JanTerm trip to Africa.



Senior Trustee **Harold "Wally" Wallace Totten Jr.** died August 30, 2024. He served as a member of the Board of Trustees from 1985 until 1991.

Following two years of service in the U.S. Army, Wally returned to Sherman to work for his family's business, Washington Iron Works Inc., representing the fifth generation to own and operate the company. He also owned and operated Washington Air and Day Packaging.

In addition to the Austin College Board of Trustees, Wally served on the Wilson N. Jones Board for 12 years as a vice chairman and then became chairman in 1996. He was also the finance chairman of the Southern Gas Compression Conference and served on the State National Bank of Denison Board.

Austin College Faculty



Michael Imhoff passed away on December 29, 2024. Dr. Imhoff devoted his entire professional life to Austin College, where he served as Professor of Chemistry from 1970 to 1999, then Vice President for Academic Affairs, a position he held from 1999 until his retirement in 2013, at which time he was named Professor Emeritus of Chemistry. In 2017, Dr. Imhoff returned to campus to serve as Interim President during the search that ultimately brought President Steven P. O'Day to Austin College.



Peter Lucchesi died April 28, 2024. Dr. Lucchesi served as a Professor of English from 1968 until 1995, at which time he was named Professor Emeritus of English. At the time of his retirement, he held the Henry L. and Laura Shoap Professorship of English Literature. He received the Teaching Excellence and Campus Leadership award in 1990 and the Homer P. Rainey Award, which is given annually in recognition of outstanding achievement or exemplary service to Austin College, in 1995.

Austin College Staff



Dan Snow died May 11, 2024. Snow served as Head Swimming & Diving Coach from 2021 until his death. During his time with Austin College, he helped guide the 'Roos to several program and Southern Collegiate Athletic Conference records, and under his direction, Austin College had the first swimmer in program history to earn a spot in the NCAA Division III Championships, as well as the first NCAA All-American in 'Roo swimming history.

 See tribute articles for **Oscar C. Page**, 14th Austin College president, on Page 46, and **Clyde L. Hall '46** on Page 61. 

Friends We Will Miss

Tangela Brown-Jones died June 3, 2024. She started as data entry specialist in 2005 and then worked as administrative assistant to the vice president for business affairs until 2007. Tangela was the wife of current Vice President for Business Affairs, Pernell Jones.

Betty Cantrell died April 16, 2024. Betty had been a part of the Austin College community as an administrative secretary from 1956 until 1972.

Jane DeFrange Donahue died August 21, 2024. Jane served as an acquisition librarian for Austin College from 2000 until her retirement in 2021.

Lana Hill died November 4, 2024. Lana served as post office assistant from 1996 until her retirement in 2013.

DeRinda Sue Kelly died February 12, 2024. Sue joined Austin College in 1977 as an administrative assistant. She assisted the Austin College Teachers Program, followed by the vice president for student affairs, retiring in 1995 after 18 years of service.

Mary "Betty" Elizabeth Tappan Payne '58, wife of Senior Trustee Freeman Marcus Payne '58, died August 11, 2024. Betty loved Jesus and her family—she is remembered by her family as a perfect example of devotion to both.

Anne Hebert Smith died November 11, 2024. Anne's career in improvisational dance spanned for over 50 years. Anne was married to the late former Austin College President Harry E. Smith when he began his tenure in 1978.

Alice Stratton died November 5, 2024. She served as an analyst/programmer from 1989 until her retirement in 2000.

Joyce Vanston Wright, wife of Senior Trustee Dr. Linus D. Wright, died July 24, 2024. Joyce was active in her church and community and enjoyed a diverse career in education. Among other accomplishments, she was a cofounder of Educational First Steps, which currently assists 8,000 preschoolers who may otherwise be unprepared for academic success.

Mentors and Makers: Faculty Who Shaped My Austin College Experience

By Harri Drake '19

After graduating in 2019, I worked for Austin College as an admissions counselor for a couple of years. Because I was a proud alumna, every student and parent invariably asked what my favorite thing was about Austin College. What “made” my experience?

My answer was always the faculty. Cliché for someone trying to sell the College to a student, I know, but it’s the truth. When I think back on Austin College and relive my favorite memories, I have just as many of the faculty as I do of my friends. It’s hard to describe *how* exactly they made my experience because there’s no one way; all of my professors uniquely impacted my time at AC.

There were, of course, faculty who went above and beyond to ensure I understood the class material; who met with me multiple times a week at seven in the morning to review assignments and answer my many lingering questions; who sat with me for at least half an hour explaining the solution to a lab report until I finally got it on the sixth attempt—and who acted just as proud as if I’d gotten it on the first.

Other professors gave me space to explore life-long passions and discover new ones. Like the theatre professor who advised me while I directed a play; and helped me write (and re-write) my first script in a directed study; and made me reexamine my relationship with theatre during my capstone; *and* led my Theatre in London Jan-Term, all in the same semester (I know Dr. Everist must have been relieved to see me graduate that May). There was the English professor who took me back to the very basics of creative writing and gave me tools I still use in my writing today—and made writing poetry accessible and *way* less intimidating than it seems; and the English professor who changed the way I look at writing and gave me most of the editorial skills I use professionally and personally.

But the professor who made the biggest impact was my mentor professor. I may have taken four (or five?) classes with him, but my fondest memories are of sitting in his office. I’d come in with questions about a paper or a theory about a book we’d read, and we’d talk and laugh for so long that I was nearly late for my next class. He was equal parts advisor, confidant, and cheerleader.

A college experience without these professors is unimaginable to me. The best part is that my story isn’t unique. I don’t know a single alumnus who doesn’t have a faculty member who encouraged them, who helped them, who pushed them to learn something new. We all have professors who “made” our college experience. Whether we have kept in touch or not, the lessons I learned from my professors will continue to guide me as I build my career and explore my passions. ■



COURTESY PHOTO

Harri graduated from Austin College with a B.A. in Theatre and currently works as the content writer for a social media app. While at AC, she was an active member of Alpha Psi Omega, Iota Eta, Phi Beta Kappa, Alpha Chi, Sigma Tau Delta, and the Order of Omega, and worked as an RA, a campus tour guide, and a First-Year Seminar teaching assistant. When not writing her debut novel, she can be found baking, collecting books, eating dessert, drinking wine, and snuggling with her cat, Millicent.



Support the 'Roo Tradition

Students and alumni have been laying a solid foundation of learning, service, and responsibility from the earliest days of Austin College. Throughout the decades, 'Roos have established traditions and organizations on campus that transcend time and connect generations. Annual Fund and scholarship support allow the Austin College experience to extend to 'Roos of today and tomorrow.

Continue the tradition by making a gift today!



www.austincollege.edu/giving



