



MAY 2025 | OUDAILY.COM
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GRADUATION GUIDE

The class of 2025 reflect on
where they've been,
where they're headed

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OU FOOTBALL
How Sooners in the NFL performed in Week 1

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Since 1916, OU Daily has covered Norman and OU in depth, served as a public forum for community discussion and provided students on our staff real-world media experiences.

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Letters or guest columns may be submitted to dailyeditor@ou.edu. They will be edited for accuracy, space and style and run at the discretion of the editor-in-chief. Students must list their major and classification; community members must list their title.

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COVER ILLUSTRATION BY GINA SMITH

'A bittersweet moment'

Congratulations, class of 2025!

In the next few weeks, my fellow graduates and I will walk across the stage and officially close out our journeys at OU. It's a bittersweet moment for most of us, saying goodbye to the life we've known for four years and venturing into our next chapters.

In this issue, you'll read about three OU seniors and their successes in college. Three more seniors will talk about their relationships with their campus mentors and how those relationships helped them during their time here. Another story will feature where OU students land post-graduation. Lastly, you'll be able to take a look back at OU Daily's major headlines from the past four years at OU.

As we end our final semester, I hope all my fellow graduates take time to reflect on their years in Norman and the people who helped us get to where we are today, whether a mentor, family member or close friend. For me, I think of my mother, Angela Dodd, and my late grandparents, Curtis Dodd and Cynthia Stephens Dodd.

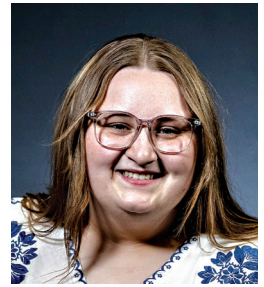
My mother, who raised me entirely on her own, gave so much for me to even attend OU and constantly encouraged my goals and quickly became one of the Daily's biggest fans. My grandmother Cynthia, known as Cindy to most, helped my mother in all the ways she could when I was little. I never had a chance to meet my grandfather Curtis before he died, but I constantly heard of the legacy he left behind. His memory served as a reason for me to continue — I wanted to make him proud. As I walk across the graduation stage, I'll have my grandfather's dog tags with me.

In terms of mentors, mine is most definitely OU Student Media director and newsroom adviser Seth Prince. I think of the hours I've sat in his office throughout my four years with the OU Daily, discussing my next story, my new source and whatever happened at Norman City Council that week. My time as editor-in-chief of the OU Daily is an experience that I will hold close to my heart and is certainly the hallmark of my time at the university.

Nothing I've achieved as editor-in-chief could have happened without the help of every staffer at the Daily — all 98 of them — from our extensive-Election Day coverage to the commemorative series for the Sigma Alpha Epsilon racist incident and the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing to the publication of this very magazine. They've all impacted OU Daily as an organization and me as a leader in ways I cannot describe.

As I wrap up this year and move on from OU, I'm proud of my team and the impact they left on the Daily. The power of student journalism cannot be overstated. The Daily has been serving this community since 1916, and I'm confident that this will continue in the years to come.

Best wishes,
 Peggy Dodd



Peggy Dodd

2024-25 editor-in-chief
pdodd@ou.edu

LOOKING BACK

Events that shaped the class of 2025

BY KEATON SHAFFER • KEATON.J.SHAFER-1@OU.EDU



FILE/OU DAILY

MARCH 2021: OU announces full in-person instruction for 2021-22 year

OU President Joseph Harroz Jr. announced a full return to campus in the fall. Students were encouraged to continue taking precautions such as social distancing, masking and COVID-19 testing.



FILE/OU DAILY

SEPTEMBER 2021: OU President Joseph Harroz Jr. officially inaugurated

Harroz was officially inaugurated as the university's 15th president in a ceremony at the Lloyd Noble Center.



FILE/OU DAILY

DECEMBER 2021: Brent Venables steps in as head coach to replace Lincoln Riley

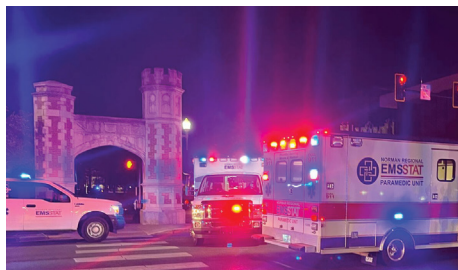
Football head coach Riley left OU after five years and four Big 12 championships to coach at the University of Southern California. Venables arrived in December as the Sooners' new head coach.



FILE/OU DAILY

JUNE 2022: U.S. Supreme Court overturns Roe v. Wade

The Supreme Court overturned Roe v. Wade with the Dobbs v. Jackson decision. The ruling ended the constitutional right to abortion.



FILE/OU DAILY

APRIL 2023: OU targeted in swatting incident, false active shooter alarm

On April 7, OU received international calls claiming there was an active shooter on campus. Law enforcement found no evidence of a shooting, and Harroz later confirmed it was a swatting incident.



PHOTO PROVIDED

MAY 2023: Work on new residence hall begins

Construction began on a new first-year residence hall, McCasland Hall, to replace the demolished Adams Center. The dorm will include over 500 beds, a coffee shop, convenience store, lounge spaces, outdoor spaces and storm shelters. Construction is set to be complete by move-in for the class of 2029.

JUNE 2023: OU softball wins third consecutive national championship

OU softball won its third consecutive Women's College World Series, defeating Florida State in two games. That season, the Sooners reached a win streak of 53 games, setting an NCAA all-time record.



BOB NGUYEN/OU DAILY



ANNIE DAVENPORT/OU DAILY

SEPTEMBER 2023: Norman City Council proposes \$1.1 billion entertainment district

Team Norman and city leaders proposed the Rock Creek Entertainment District to be built in University North Park. With hopes of bolstering economic growth, the \$1.1 billion district would include a multi-purpose arena featuring select OU athletic teams as anchor tenants.



FILE/OU DAILY

DECEMBER 2023: DEI in universities under formal review

Gov. Kevin Stitt signed an executive order calling for a formal review of diversity, equity and inclusion policies in Oklahoma higher education. In response, OU reaffirmed its commitment to DEI values.



ANNIE DAVENPORT/OU DAILY

MARCH 2024: Students protest amid war in Gaza

Over 150 students took part in pro-Palestinian protests and pro-Israeli counterprotests in the Oklahoma Memorial Union food court. Since October 2023, students have marched on campus and organized protests to bring attention to the war in Gaza.



FILE/OU DAILY

MARCH 2024: OU renames and restructures DEI office

In accordance with an executive order by Gov. Kevin Stitt, the university officially renamed its Division of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion to the Division of Access and Opportunity. The division took residence in the former DEI office space in Copeland Hall.



ANNIE DAVENPORT/OU DAILY

AUGUST 2024: First Friday night football game and SEC debut

OU played its debut game as a member of the Southeastern Conference, beating Temple 51-3 during the first Friday night football game in the Oklahoma Memorial Stadium's history. The Sooners ended with a 6-7 season, including a loss in the Red River Rivalry.



ANNIE DAVENPORT/OU DAILY

OCTOBER 2024: Norman residents petition entertainment district

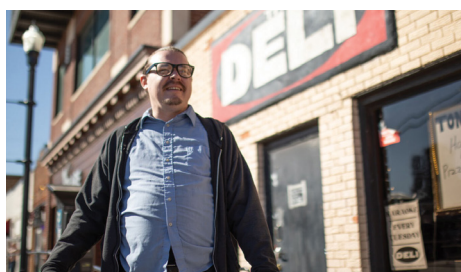
After Norman City Council approved the district in a 5-4 vote, residents filed a petition to turn the Rock Creek Entertainment District to a public vote. The petition collected over 10,000 signatures certified by the city clerk. Since its initial filing, the petition has faced a legal challenge, and its fate will be determined by the Oklahoma Supreme Court.



SUTTON SPINNER/OU DAILY

NOVEMBER 2024: President Donald Trump reelected

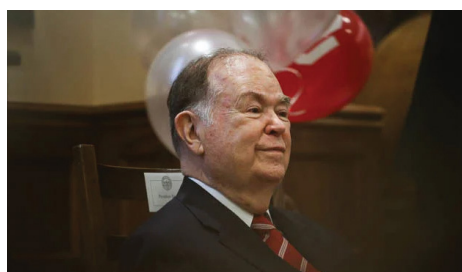
Trump defeated former Vice President Kamala Harris to become the 47th president of the U.S., winning 66.16% of the popular vote in Oklahoma and the state's seven electoral votes.



SAI YADAV/OU DAILY

FEBRUARY 2025: Stephen Tyler Holman elected Norman mayor

Ward 7 Councilmember Stephen Tyler Holman defeated incumbent Mayor Larry Heikkila and attorney Riley Mulinix in the election for Norman mayor on Feb. 11. Holman is a Norman native and is currently the longest-serving council member.



FILE/OU DAILY

FEBRUARY 2025: Former OU President David Boren dies at 83

Former U.S. senator, Oklahoma governor and OU President David Boren died on Feb. 20. Boren spent 24 years as the university's president, a tenure marked by fundamental changes to OU's physical appearance, academics and athletics. In retirement, Boren's legacy was complicated by allegations of sexual misconduct and misreporting of alums' data for which he was never indicted.



SUTTON SPINNER/OU DAILY

FEBRUARY 2025: DOGE cuts impact National Weather Center employees

As part of cuts by Elon Musk's Department of Government Efficiency, National Weather Center employees and OU meteorology students interning at the center experienced layoffs amid national NOAA cuts.



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FILE/OU DAILY

Graduates during the College of Arts and Sciences commencement on Dec. 15.

GRADUATION CEREMONIES

Times, locations for commencements, Party at the Palace

BY MACEY THAXTON • MACEY.C.THAXTON-1@OU.EDU

OU will have 13 commencement ceremonies for spring 2025. The universitywide celebratory event, Party at the Palace, will be held at the Gaylord Family-Oklahoma Memorial Stadium.

According to OU's informational webpage for commencements, doors will open an hour and a half before the ceremony starts, and ceremonies will be about two hours long. Security measures will include metal detectors at entrances and a clear bag policy.

At the ceremonies, graduates will be recognized and walk the stage to receive their diplomas.

Party at the Palace: 7 p.m., April 25, Gaylord Family-Oklahoma Memorial Stadium.

OU-Tulsa: 7 p.m., May 6, Donald W. Reynolds Center at the University of Tulsa.

College of Dentistry - Doctor of Dental Surgery, Dental Hygiene: 10 a.m., May 8, Lloyd Noble Center.

Fran and Earl Ziegler College of Nursing: 2:30 p.m., May 8, Lloyd Noble Center.

College of Allied Health, Hudson College of Public Health, OU Health Graduate College: 2:30 p.m., May 9, Lloyd Noble Center.

Galogly College of Engineering, College of Atmospheric and Geographic Sciences, Mewbourne College of Earth and Energy: 7 p.m., May 9, Lloyd Noble Center.

Michael F. Price College of Business: 10 a.m., May 10, Lloyd Noble Center.

Dodge Family College of Arts and Sciences - Humanities and Natural Sciences, Weitzenhoffer Family College of Fine Arts, College of Professional and Continuing Studies: 2:30 p.m., May 10, Lloyd Noble Center.

Dodge Family College of Arts and Sciences - Professional Programs and Social Sciences: 7 p.m., May 10, Lloyd Noble Center.

Jeannine Rainbolt College of Education, Christopher C. Gibbs College of Architecture, Gaylord College of Journalism and Mass Communication, David L. Boren College of International Studies: 1 p.m., May 11, Lloyd Noble Center.

College of Law - Juris Doctorate, Master of Legal Studies, Master of Laws: 5:30 p.m., May 11, Lloyd Noble Center.

College of Pharmacy: 10 a.m., May 17, Paul F. Sharp Concert Hall in the Catlett Music Center.

OU-Tulsa School of Community Medicine: 2 p.m., May 23, Lorton Performance Center at the University of Tulsa.

College of Medicine: 2:30 p.m., May 24, Lloyd Noble Center.



SUTTON SPINNER/OU DAILY

Sociology senior Laurein Drumm and her mentor Mitchell Peck, a sociology professor.

INSPIRING MENTORS

The faculty and staff who helped OU seniors succeed

BY HAYDEN GRUBBS • HAYDEN.K.GRUBBS-1@OU.EDU

Behind each student working toward their degree comes the people who have helped uplift and teach them during their time in college. With this encouragement, seniors are pushed to prepare for post-graduate life.

Three seniors looked back on their academic journeys, reminiscing on how their mentors made graduation achievable.

'Always has his door open'

For Laurein Drumm, pursuing an accelerated bachelor's and master's degree in sociology was made possible by her mentor and sociology professor Mitchell Peck.

After Drumm transferred to OU a year into college, she applied to be an office assistant in the sociology department. Peck, who was part of the job interview process, was one of the people to convince her sociology was in her future.

"Within my first semester at OU, he had

talked to me about the accelerated (bachelor's and master's) program that the sociology department offers," Drumm said.

Now, Drumm works closely with Peck in the sociology office where they talk about classes and discuss what is going on in the department.

Peck worked with Drumm to help her go from office assistant to undergraduate teaching assistant. She said she was grateful for the opportunities presented through her work with Peck.

"They've allowed me to thrive at OU academically and professionally," Drumm said. Drumm said Peck is always available and accessible to his students.

"Dr. Peck always has his door open for people to pop in, ask him questions, vent about homework or job applications or research," Drumm said.

Drumm said Peck helped advise her about

her future. After graduation, she plans to go to law school and practice criminal defense.

"Dr. Peck has supported that goal wholeheartedly throughout my time at OU," Drumm said. "Though it's not a conventional path for someone currently pursuing academic research, it's one of the many paths that pursuing a master's or some graduate level work can open."

"Dr. Peck always has his door open for people to pop in, ask him questions, vent about homework or job applications or research."

LAUREIN DRUMM,
SOCIOLOGY SENIOR



SHAYFER CANNON/OU DAILY

Luke Pauli, a biomedical engineering senior and research assistant, and his mentor Alex Frickenstein, a biomedical engineering professor.

'He is involved in anything and everything inside the classroom'

Luke Pauli, a biomedical engineering senior and undergraduate research assistant, met biomedical engineering professor Alex Frickenstein when Frickenstein was a teaching assistant.

"It was the first (biomedical engineering) class I ever took, ..." Pauli said. "He was still a Ph.D. student, and then he graduated the next year and became a professor."

Pauli said Frickenstein has been a transformative influence on the relatively new biomedical engineering department. The department was established in 2016, and the biomedical engineering building, Gallogly Hall, was finished in 2019.

"He is involved in anything and everything inside the classroom," Pauli said about Frickenstein's help leading the program.

Pauli and Frickenstein also worked closely together over the past year to host a national Medical Device Make-A-Thon. With the help of Frickenstein, Pauli said he was able to go from being a competitor to hosting the event.

"The Make-A-Thon specifically would have been a lot different without his help," Pauli said. "Any organization needs that faculty adviser to help connecting with the department and just to provide advice for things."

Pauli said he found a mentor that helps him meet both professional and personal goals — one of them being graduate school.

"If I do get (into graduate school), it's definitely huge, in part, due to him," Pauli said.

Aside from offering professional and academic advice, Pauli said Frickenstein keeps himself open for small, comfortable moments.

"He'll do weekly riddles," Pauli said. "He'll have those out. He'll do a chess game where people can come by and play a move or two, all sorts of stuff."

"Dr. Foley has helped me kind of step out of my shell. She herself had to work a job and do her master's. It made me realize that I can definitely do both."

MENAYA DESILVA,
SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGEMENT AND BUSINESS
ADMINISTRATION SENIOR

'She gave me some perspective'

Almost three years ago, the OU Writing Center hired Menaya DeSilva, a supply chain management and business administration senior. There, DeSilva met Ashton Foley-Schramm, associate director of the OU Writing Center.

"I made a connection with her while I was interviewing," DeSilva said. "She gave me



RACHEL NICHOLS/OU DAILY

Menaya DeSilva, a supply chain management and business administration senior, and her mentor Ashton Foley-Schramm, associate director of the OU Writing Center.

some perspective. She offered me life experiences but also advice that I hadn't considered otherwise."

Foley shared her experience in consulting with DeSilva, which sparked a turning point.

"(Foley) helped me realize that I want my degree to be focused on helping people and that I wanted to lean more toward supply chain consulting," DeSilva said.

DeSilva said Foley showed her that her academic journey did not need to be strict and she could explore different subjects. DeSilva said Foley taught her that growth and change is natural for college students.

Foley, who has a master's in English, helped DeSilva realize she wanted to pursue a master's and that DeSilva could push past the limits of what she thought she could do.

"Dr. Foley has helped me kind of step out of my shell," DeSilva said. "She herself had to work a job and do her master's. It made me realize that I can definitely do both."

DeSilva and Foley became mentor and mentee although they come from different sides of the university.

"Despite the fact that we're in completely different departments, a lot of the experiences that she's shared with me have intersected between the lines," DeSilva said.

KYLE ESKEW

BY ELLA CASE •
ELLA.R.CASE-1@OU.EDU

As Kyle Eskew, a meteorology major and class of 2025's overall outstanding senior, prepares to graduate, he reflected on his past four years at the university.

Eskew grew up in Beaver Creek Township, a town in southwest Ohio, and was drawn to OU because of the School of Meteorology and the scholarship opportunities.

Eskew began his first year at OU in 2021 during the COVID-19 pandemic. Eskew said, alongside starting college in the middle of a pandemic, one of the biggest challenges he faced early on was being so far from everything he knew growing up.

"I'm 1,000 miles from home. I had never really spent a night in Oklahoma until I was in my dorm room in Dunham College," Eskew said.

"I moved in a day or two early and no one else was really around. That was probably the hardest part that first year."

Eskew said moving to a new state alone to start college was difficult at first, but he found different communities at OU that he enjoyed being a part of, which turned into a truly rewarding experience.

"I'm kind of proud of myself for the way I found different interests on (the) main campus and at the National Weather Center," Eskew said.

One of the interests Eskew found on OU's campus was Crimson Club, an organization dedicated to preserving OU's history where members serve as OU's official student ambassadors. A member of the club for three years, Eskew was appointed chair last spring after serving as the special events coordinator.

Eskew said one of his favorite memories from his time at OU was with Crimson Club where he had the opportunity to help host Paul Ryan, former speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives.

Ryan gave a speech on campus as part of the Presidential Speakers Series in March 2024. He spoke about discouragement for young voters, populism's role in the modern Republican Party and the role of college students in the future of democracy.

Eskew said hosting Ryan not only allowed him to meet with a prominent political figure but also reflect on his personal achievements and leadership capabilities as a student.

Eskew said his main passion lies in



ANNIE DAVENPORT/OU DAILY

meteorology and his work at the National Weather Center.

Eskew said one of the most impactful classes he has taken at OU was Application of Meteorological Theory to Severe Thunderstorm Forecasting. The course was taught by one of the storm prediction meteorologists at the National Weather Center.

Eskew said the class showed him how the concepts he learned in the classroom could translate into meaningful, tangible work in his career.

"It's been a lot of fun to put together a lot of the theoretical and applied concepts that I've learned over the past four years to actual real world scenarios. ... That's probably been my favorite," Eskew said.

Eskew spoke highly of former university meteorologist Kevin Kloesel, whom Eskew worked with and learned under at the National Weather Center. From Kloesel, Eskew learned how to develop decision support services in meteorology and use weather information to prepare for the impacts of severe weather.

Kloesel retired in December 2024 from his roles as director of the Oklahoma Climatological Survey and university meteorologist for OU's Department of Campus Safety.

Eskew has worked in the atmospheric aerosols and air quality laboratory and the National

Weather Center as an honors research assistant during his time at OU.

Eskew said he plans to keep working at the weather center and laboratory in Norman after graduation. Eskew also plans to continue his education by earning a master's in meteorology from OU, which he hopes to begin pursuing this summer.

In the master's program, Eskew will further his work with aerosol physics, observing the smoke transportation of wildfires.

"My project will mainly be using radar and (light detection and ranging technology) to observe wildfire burns," Eskew said.

Eskew said the work experience he gained during his time at OU has given him valuable skills that will greatly support his continued work.

Eskew advised current and incoming OU students to take a step back and not let the little things ruin the overall experience.

"There are so many times where I got so stressed out worrying about this one thing that ultimately, in the grand scheme of things, never actually matters that much," Eskew said.




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Best wishes to this year's University of Oklahoma graduates. Here's to following your dreams and living your best life.



Together, all the way.®

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GRAD GRAMS



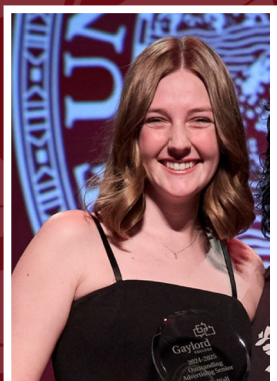
Abbey Alvarez
College of Arts & Sciences

Congratulations on your college graduation Abbey. I am so happy for you and what you have accomplished and can't wait to see what you do next. Good luck on your Master's journey. Love, your brother Ian



Abigail Alexis Alvarez
College of Arts & Sciences

Abbey you have worked so hard, and this graduation is a testament to your dedication and hard work. We are so proud of you and excited to see what the future holds. Keep God first. Excelsior.... Love, Mom & Dad



Abbigail DeWall Stovall
College of Journalism
& Mass Communication

Congratulations on your accomplishment! You are truly a blessing to us and we are so proud of how hard you have worked to meet your goals over the past four years while keeping the Lord at the center of your life. We love you! Mom and Dad



Aidan Bauer
College of Engineering

Congratulations! There are not enough words to describe the pride we feel for you. You have achieved success & it is only the beginning. Your future is wide open & we can't wait to see all that you accomplish. YOU DID IT! Love, Dad, Momma & Rini



Alyssa Fisher
College of Business

To Our Beautiful, Intelligent & Amazing Daughter, Alyssa: Enjoy this incredible accomplishment and be as proud of yourself as you have always made us! Congratulations, Baby Girl! We love you all the time, forever & ever & always, Mom & Dad XO



Brisa Carroll
College of Arts & Sciences

We love you beyond measure and are so very proud of you and your extraordinary accomplishments. Thank you for being such a beautiful, wonderful, loving daughter. We look forward to your continuing success. All our love.



Cararise Lubamba
College of Business

You've deeply influenced my OU journey with your care, strength, and sisterly guidance. I'm so proud of your growth and all you've achieved. Congrats on this milestone I know you'll do amazing things. Excited to see what's next for you!
- Terry Chishimba



Gabrielle Reed Pfleger
College of Journalism
& Mass Communication

We can't wait for your new chapter to begin as you take on the world with your positive attitude and charming spirit! Your mother would be more than proud and is smiling down on you every day! We love you tons and are so proud. You go, kid! Love, Dad and Kim



Gina Smith
College of Fine Arts

You've worked hard and grown so much while always staying true to yourself. We're so proud of you and cheering you on in whatever comes next!
Love-Cat, Dustin & Co



Harmony Peveto
College of Business

Here's to a brilliant daughter who has graduated with honors! It gladdens our hearts to see how much you succeeded. Indeed your efforts paid off with God on your side. Congratulations! We love you and couldn't be more proud!



Josh Buller
College of Arts & Sciences

Congrats! We are incredibly proud of you! Your determination and hard work have paid off—enjoy this moment! Keep dreaming big and finding joy in the journey. We can't wait to see where God leads you next!



Mya Thompson
College of Arts & Sciences

Dearest Mya, Congratulations! We are so proud of you! Your path has not been easy but you have learned a lot and had tons of fun. May your future journey be filled with joy, amazing adventures and lasting success. Boomer Sooner!
Love, Mom, Dad & Ian



Payton Hebner
College of Education

Congratulations!!! You had an amazing four years shining in every way possible! We are incredibly proud of you. Your future students are so lucky to have you to inspire them and make every day fun! We love you Payton!
Love, your family



Chase Pride
College of Journalism
& Mass Communication

To say we are proud of you doesn't seem adequate. You have always been the hardest-working and most loyal person. We know you will make a positive difference wherever God leads you. We love you so much!
-Mom and Dad



Cole Kaeser
College of Business

Enjoy your special day because you've earned it! All of your hard work and determination has paid off. We are so proud of you and your accomplishments! Congratulations!
Love, Dad, Mom, Morgan and Ramsey



Gina Smith
College of Fine Arts

We are so proud of you and this momentous achievement! You have put in a lot of hard work, blood, sweat, & tears into getting your degree. It has taken much dedication and determination, but you are here, and this moment is yours. Love, Mom & Dad (& Conner)



Haley Herman
College of Journalism
& Mass Communication

We are so proud of you and your accomplishments Haley Herman! You are a bright light everywhere you go and we can't wait to see you shine. Love your Family.



Kennedy Vice
College of Nursing

Miss Kennedy,
We are so proud of you! You are sweet, smart, beautiful and determined. What a privilege to be your parents. Congratulations on a successful year as The Big Event Chair and graduating with honors! Love you more, Mom and Dad



Mallory Onstot
College of Journalism
& Mass Communication

As you walk the stage today, it is our hope you will always treasure the memories you made at OU. Congratulations on this amazing accomplishment! Life is a journey & only you hold the map to your next destination. Love, Dad, Mama & Your Family



Peggy Faye Dodd
College of Journalism
& Mass Communication

I am so proud of the woman you are. Your passion for truth telling and justice and your compassion and love for others continues to amaze me. I cannot wait to see where these traits take you in your journey. It is the greatest privilege of my life to be your mother. I love you!



Wilson Broc Shields
College of Business

Broc,
We could not be more proud of you! You have achieved all your goals, shine as a leader, and continue to amaze us. These 4 years flew by! Congratulations son!!! We love you!
Your loving fan club

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Hannah Allam | The Washington Post

*National security reporter
focusing on extremism and domestic terrorism*

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JILLIENNE CONNELL

BY NATALIE ROE •
NATALIE.G.ROE-1@OU.EDU

Jillienne Connell came to OU when she was a sophomore after transferring from St. Edward's University where she played volleyball.

After being on the volleyball team for a year, Connell realized she didn't want to play anymore and wanted to reprioritize her future. She then enrolled at OU to study finance and management information systems.

"I wanted a big university that people knew of and I could get a really good education but that still felt small or homey," Connell said. "I felt like I still got the comfort and support that I needed, of feeling like I was at a small university. Even though it has global recognition, it has a really good program, so (I) kind of got the best of both worlds."

When she started at OU, Connell managed the volleyball team and helped create Price College of Business' Women in Finance, a student organization that supports women's engagement and empowerment in finance. She served as president when it was launched in the spring of 2023. In 2024, Connell served as vice president.

"I wanted a space where I felt like everyone could enjoy, ask questions that maybe seem dumb and get answers, almost like learning shame-free," Connell said.

Connell also became a teacher's assistant for multiple management information system classes. She said this experience made her realize she enjoyed tutoring people in math and helping them understand concepts.

"I realized I really liked teaching, as if I were a coach," Connell said. "That was a fun thing to be really involved in — the MIS department and getting to know the professors."

Through her academic and extracurricular endeavors, Connell has received multiple awards for her achievements. Her junior year, she received the Campus Life Award, the President's Award for Outstanding Transfer Students and the Regents' Award for Outstanding Juniors. This year, Connell received an outstanding senior award.

"I was just so honored and humbled," Connell said. "Price is full of so many outstanding students and to be recognized by faculty was the hugest blessing. It was really special to see my hard work be recognized."

Coming in as a transfer student, Connell said she struggled with the mindset that she



JENNA BURRESS/OU DAILY

was behind her peers. Through this experience, she has learned to focus on whatever awaits her and to do her best with the task in front of her. Connell said she also learned to say yes to the small things, which could open doors to bigger opportunities.

"All I have is what's right in front of me. I'm not gonna try to plan a million things or be the best at all these really big things," Connell said. "If I just do the best and steward precisely what's right in front of me, that's enough."

Through Price College, Connell said she found a community with professors, administrators and her fellow teaching assistants.

"I felt comfortable knowing my professors, introducing myself to them and getting to know them in my classes," Connell said. "When you know your professors, you learn more because you're actually invested in them and the course."

Connell said finding deep, open and honest friendships outside of academics and professional relationships is crucial in college and making time with friends helps when it's hard to be a student.

"We're all students dealing with competing priorities, ..." Connell said. "I think having people going through the same thing you talk

about and who are vulnerable can help you figure things out."

Connell said her religion helped her deal with struggles and challenges in college.

"The more I know (God), the more I know myself," Connell said. "I know who I am, and I know what I want to do and who I want to be. So I'm not gonna be searching for false validation or searching for these things and academic achievements. ... The complexities can fade away when you really know who you are because you have a lot of competing priorities."

After graduation, Connell will return to Dallas to work in technology consulting for Deloitte Consulting. She will be working on systems, applications and products in data processing and databasing software.

Connell said what she will miss most about college is the connections she has made in Norman.

"Norman has my second family," Connell said. "I've found such deep and meaningful community and relationships in Norman, and it is so bittersweet to leave."

Hal Smith

RESTAURANTS



CHARLESTON'S
RESTAURANT

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MEXI
DINER

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Burgers & Beer

HEFNER
grill

JIMMY B's
COUNTRY CRAFTERS

Louie's
grill & bar

Mahogany
PRIME STEAKHOUSE

Mama Roja
MEXICAN KITCHEN

NEW BRIDGE
JAM

PUB W

RED ROCK
Canyon
GRILL

TOBY KETTER'S
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SHREY KATHURIA

BY AUDREY MCCLOUR •
AUDREY.K.MCCLOUR-1@OU.EDU

With graduation quickly approaching, OU senior Shrey Kathuria reflected on his time spent in Norman and his growth through involvement in student organizations.

Kathuria said the first few months of his freshman year were “very up and down.” Originally from Tulsa, Kathuria spent a lot of time trying to become involved on campus and find community.

“I would go play basketball at Sarkeys, or I’d go look at some new clubs or organizations,” Kathuria said. “And then I remember on a random Saturday I ended up applying for student government.”

Kathuria now serves as one of 16 Student Government Association representatives for the Dodge Family College of Arts and Sciences, a position he has held since the spring semester of his freshman year. Through SGA, Kathuria has authored and collaborated on various projects and pieces of legislation. Most notably, he co-authored the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Matters Act as DEI policies began to shift during his junior year.

“I’ve always wanted to make a change on campus,” Kathuria said.

In December 2023, Oklahoma Gov. Kevin Stitt signed an executive order calling for a formal review of DEI in Oklahoma higher education. As a result, OU’s Division of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion was replaced with the Division of Access and Opportunity. The University also closed its Gender + Equality Center in response to the order.

Aside from SGA, Kathuria is involved in organizations such as the American Mock World Health Organization and the Hudson College of Public Health Student Association. A community health major on a pre-med track, Kathuria said he was prompted by the COVID-19 pandemic to pursue a career in health.

“(Medicine is) a very multifaceted, holistic field now, which I think really fits my strengths,” Kathuria said.

Kathuria has shadowed a variety of medical specialties while at OU, including oncology at Saint Francis Hospital in Tulsa and the internal medicine department at the OU Health Schusterman Center. Kathuria said shadowing provides students with good experience.

“It gets to help you give a preview of what your future is going to be like and what you’re going to put yourself into,” Kathuria said.



SUTTON SPINNER/OU DAILY

Kathuria said he has learned the importance of being himself while at OU and offered words of encouragement for underclassmen.

“Remain true to your values,” Kathuria said. “Remain true to who you are and I think good things will tend to happen.”

Kathuria said he has also learned how to prioritize his time by balancing fun and studying while staying positive.

“I tend to overthink things, or I tend to get very nervous,” Kathuria said. “It’s really been about just trying to battle between my anxiety and keeping up and keeping a growth mindset.”

Kathuria said his love of learning is what has inspired him to continue his studies despite these challenges. He encouraged underclassmen to have fun and find a system that works for them.

“You can fit stuff into your schedule, and you can still accomplish what you need to accomplish,” Kathuria said.

Kathuria’s time management skills came in handy while campaigning for SGA president. He said this endeavor is what he is most proud of during his time at OU. Though he did not win, Kathuria said he loved the experience.

“I was really proud of how I was able to manage taking some really difficult classes and campaigning at the same time,” Kathuria said.

Kathuria’s favorite memory from his time at OU was rushing the field after the 2024 OU-Alabama football game.

“You’re rushing the field with so many other people,” Kathuria said. “Regardless of our differences, I felt like we were one family all

together celebrating something bigger than ourselves.”

Kathuria has received a variety of honors during his time at OU. A member of the Phi Beta Kappa academic honor society, he will graduate summa cum laude in May.

Currently, Kathuria is finishing out his senior year while studying for the MCAT. He said his favorite course — biochemistry taught by professor Paul Sims — has helped prepare him for the exam. He said Sims’ passion for deep learning has helped him recognize the importance of problem solving rather than memorization in the health field.

“One of the big things that I really appreciate about what he says is, ‘Don’t mistake recognition for mastery,’” Kathuria said.

After graduation, Kathuria will pursue an accelerated master’s in public health, though he is undecided on where. He plans to start medical school in 2026. Years from now, Kathuria hopes to help people while working in the medical field.

“I aspire to be practicing medicine and being involved in public health in some way, shape or form,” Kathuria said. “Trying to make a difference in not just improving individual health but also improving population health.”

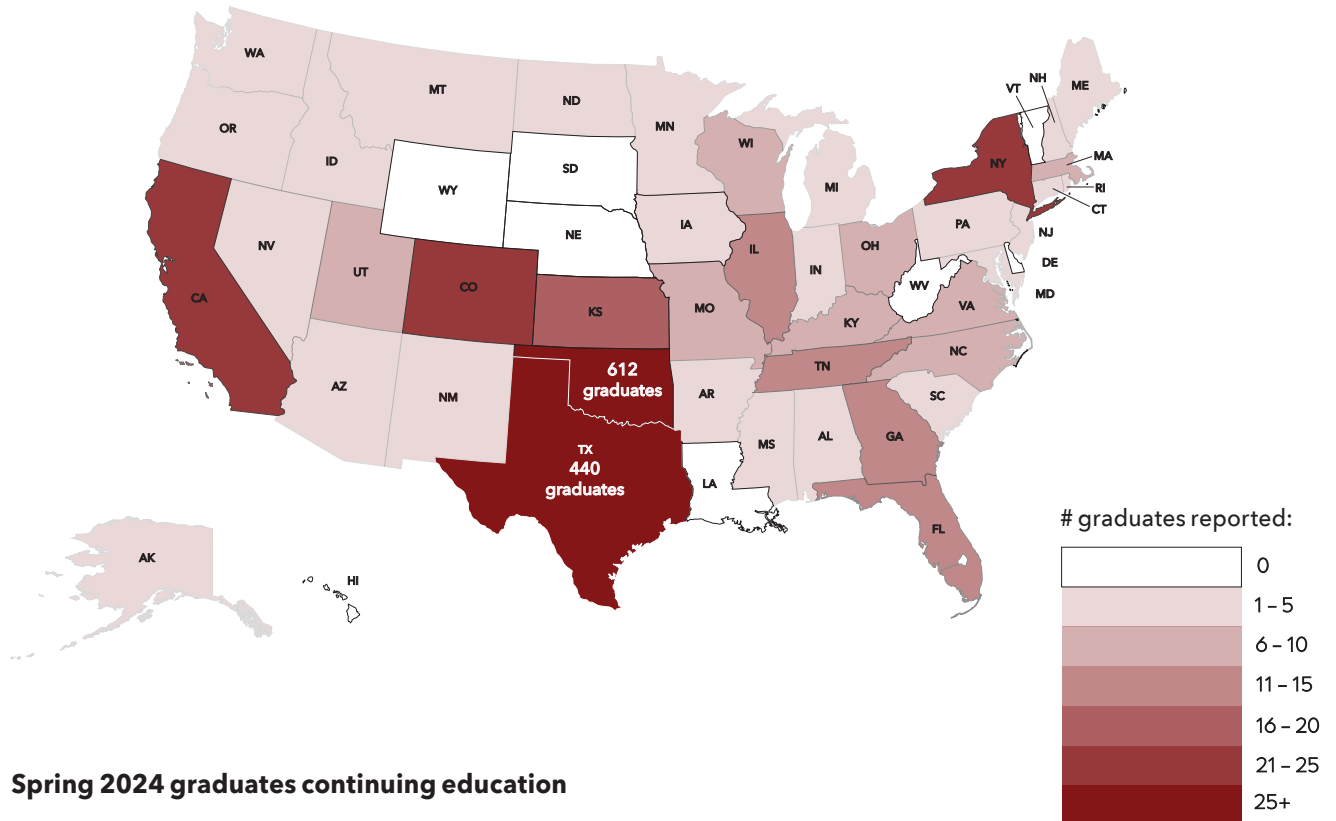
Kathuria said he will miss being involved on campus the most following graduation. He encouraged underclassmen to join clubs and organizations just as he did freshman year.

“You are here to build connections and build meaningful relationships which will carry you throughout life,” Kathuria said.

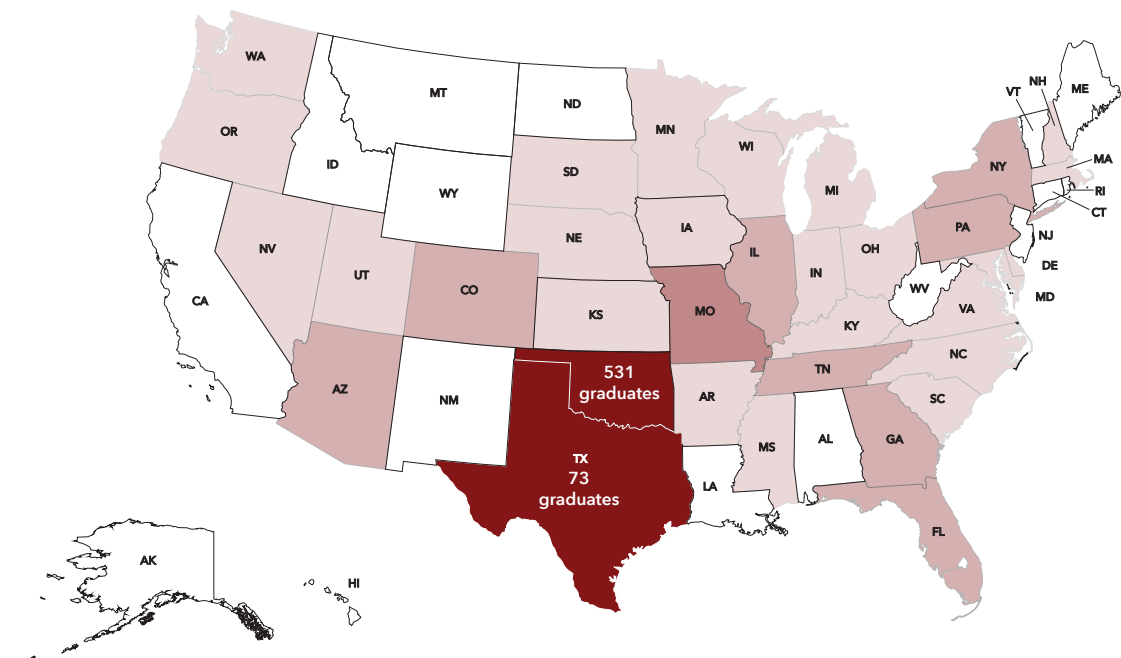
LOOKING AHEAD

Seniors chart course after graduation

Spring 2024 graduates working



Spring 2024 graduates continuing education



BETTY - SUE KIHUNRWA/OU DAILY

Illustrations represent spring 2024 survey data from the OU Career Center post-graduation outcomes dashboard. Of 2,933 students graduating that semester, 2,433 responded.

Spring 2024 graduates moving abroad



7 graduates working
21 graduates continuing education



2 graduates working



6 graduates working

BY MACEY THAXTON • MACEY.C.THAXTON-1@OU.EDU

Tassels have turned, caps have flown and the class of 2025 is charting courses beyond the South Oval. Some students plan to continue their education in graduate school while others will enter the workforce.

According to the Career Center's post-graduation outcomes dashboard, the spring 2024 class had 2,933 students. Of those students, about 44% have reported accepting a full-time position and about 26% have reported they will continue their education.

Last spring, 754 students reported they were continuing their education with 491 remaining at one of OU's three campuses.

Kaitlyn Denton is an English senior who intends to pursue an accelerated master's degree at OU after graduation. She wrote in an email to OU Daily that she's known since starting her undergraduate degree she would pursue a master's.

"My degree is very versatile, but I knew that getting a master's would help me stand out to employers and perhaps open more doors for opportunities," Denton wrote. "Humanities majors are not always sought after, but highly educated people are."

Denton wrote she didn't apply to any other graduate programs because she knew she could get the support and resources she needed from faculty at OU.

"At the end of the day, OU is home for me, ..." Denton wrote. "I could not imagine continuing my education anywhere else, and I did not apply elsewhere."

Denton wrote that her end goal is to enter the editing and publishing field as a production editor or managing editor. After interviewing people in her field of choice, Denton said she realized how important education is for the publishing field.

"When I think about my career I realize that while yes, there is plenty you learn on the job and from experience, there is a direct connection between academics and my career," Denton wrote.

According to the post-graduation outcomes dashboard, about 28% of English majors who graduated in spring 2024 reported they were continuing their education. Denton said having a master's degree will help refine her skills and set her apart from other candidates when applying for jobs.

"You need to be very well-read, write professionally and accurately, have a mastery of grammar and style, and have the literary foundation to succeed," Denton wrote. "A bachelor's degree provides some of that, but a master's degree truly refines those skills to the professional level needed for this industry."

Denton wrote it's important for students to be passionate about what they are studying when pursuing a master's degree.

"A master's degree is hard work, and it takes a certain level of dedication to your field," Denton wrote. "If you are not enthusiastic or passionate about what you are studying, the master's is not for you."

Sahil Tamboli is a computer science senior who is currently looking for a job. According to the post-graduation outcomes dashboard, about 60% of spring 2024 computer science majors reported accepting a full-time job or were still looking for employment at the time of graduation.

Tamboli said he's looking for a job that he can start soon after graduation. However, he said if this plan doesn't work out, he will pursue a master's degree.

"This decision was mainly made after talking to numerous people and hearing their

opinions on what I should do," Tamboli said. "I don't want to leave any gaps in my resume, so I would say this was the best plan of action for me."

Tamboli said his end goal is to work as a lead technician or in a managerial role. Tamboli said he will probably pursue a Master of Business Administration, regardless, to help advance his career.

"It also matters at what position you start off at as your first job," Tamboli said. "If you start off with a good, high-paying position, you will just grow from there and get better positions and income. If you start off in a lower position, it might take you some time to get to those higher positions."

Tamboli said his time as a computer science major at OU has been "a rollercoaster" of hard and easy classes. He said if he could do one thing differently, he would ask for help more often by attending office hours.

"This was a learning curve for me, but I learned that it's okay to get help when you're struggling with a course," Tamboli said. "You shouldn't feel ashamed to ask for help. If you're struggling, then chances are that everyone else might also be struggling."

Tamboli said while academics are important, it's also important to find a balance between school and life.

"Yes, academics is important, but your health and social life is also important," Tamboli said. "Try to step out of your comfort zone and join different organizations and clubs."

The University of Oklahoma

CAMPUS AWARDS

2025 RECIPIENTS

CHRISTOPHER C. GIBBS COLLEGE OF ARCHITECTURE

Outstanding Seniors

Architecture | Breanna Walls

Construction Science | Braxton Brown

Environmental Design | Taylor Fleming

Interior Design | Avery Eggers

PRESIDENT'S AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING TRANSFER STUDENTS

Paula Bogere
Ariana Browne
Jina Kim
Elijah Lena
Jessica Nguyen
Erin Perry
John Scherrei

JEANNINE RAINBOLT COLLEGE OF EDUCATION Outstanding Seniors

Early Childhood Education | Ellie Laurent & Amanda Holden

Elementary Education | Payton Hendrickson

English Language Arts Education | Kayla Stutzman

Math Education | Shalynn Skeen

Science Education | Mattie Wright

Social Studies Education | Adam Penxa

Special Education | Olivia Whetstone

Sooner Works | Matt Lange

World Language Education | Yuli Vazquez

DODGE FAMILY COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

Outstanding Seniors

Natural Sciences | Brooke Bauman, Jimin Kim, & Shreya Rohatgi

Social Sciences | Oghenekaro Imieye & Michael Stoyak

Humanities | Sean Kueny

Professional Programs | Elena Price

Carl Albert Award | Setara Khan

PRESIDENT'S AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING FRESHMEN

Sophie Chang
Jack Burrage
Sterling Foster
Jaycee Gideon
Lilian Higareda Castillo
Blake Hinerman
Grace Lagge
Alayna Leck
Cameron Longhurst
Barrett Love
Aubrey McVicker-Adkins
Suzanna Medina
Ella Newhouse
Tonymario Okpara
Cole Robinson

COLLEGE OF ATMOSPHERIC AND GEOGRAPHIC SCIENCES

SCHOOL OF AVIATION

Joe Coulter Aviation Scholarship | Bradley Core

Lindy Ritz ATC Scholarship | Jacob Maston & Paul Nguyen

James M. Cook Memorial Scholarship | Sydney Helms

SCHOOL OF METEOROLOGY

School of Meteorology Undergraduate Academic Achievement Awards

Juniors | Rylan Lopez, Sadie Mullinix, Anthony-Vincent

Raaijmakers, Ethan Stroberg, & Evan Sudler

Senior | Evan White, Xochitl Hidalgo, Parker Davis,

Andrew Kenny, Kyle Eskew, & Daniel Fenske

PRESIDENT'S AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING SOPHOMORES

Gulnessa Asif
Logan Brownfield
Ava Cassidy
Hayden Evon
Alina Hemani
Carson Howard
Suraia Khan
Aaron Lim
Mohammad Mian
Nathalia Mireles-Mota
Pierce Ogle
Luis Rivera-González
Caitlin Varghese
Isaiah Walker
Anayat Yousuf

REGENTS' AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING JUNIORS

Brian Bortz
Elizabeth Crawford
Avery Dunlap
Elle Evans
Annelise Huynh
Dala Korkoyah III
Chabelli Mendoza
Jhanvi Patel
Miranda Renteria
Baylor Savage
Bethany Sseruwagi
Dontre Staden
Liam Thompson
Thao Tran
Randi Wright

PRESIDENT'S AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING VOLUNTEERS

Betsy Rasplicka
Goldie Snow
Liam Thompson

GAYLORD COLLEGE OF JOURNALISM AND MASS COMMUNICATION

Outstanding Seniors

Advertising | Abbi DeWall

Creative Media Production | Azman Abdulla

Journalism | Victoria Anderson

Professional Writing | Emiley White

Public Relations | Kenna Williamson

OVERALL OUTSTANDING SENIOR | Haleigh Hurst

GALLOGLY COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING

Outstanding Seniors

Aerospace Engineering | Hannah Lang

Architectural Engineering | Bailey Barnes

Biomedical Engineering | Luke Pauli

Chemical Engineering | Jazmine Whitfield

Civil Engineering | Joseph Taylor

Computer Engineering | Ethan Aldridge

Computer Science | Cole Essary

Electrical Engineering | Tadiwa Mugwadi

Engineering Physics | Aiden Guild

Environmental Engineering | Megan Waters

Environmental Science | Sydney Nordquist

Industrial and Systems Engineering | Judah Anttila

Mechanical Engineering | Kylie Skarda

MEWBOURNE COLLEGE OF EARTH AND ENERGY

Charles N. Gould Award for Outstanding Senior in Geology | Braeden Moreland

Alan Witten Award for Outstanding Senior in Geophysics | Salim Al Harasi

David W. Stearns Award for Outstanding Achievement | Ben Matsumura

Estwing Hammer Award for Excellence | Dillon Taylor

Mewbourne School of Petroleum and Geological Engineering

Outstanding Sophomore Award | Jack Matthews

Outstanding Junior Award | Lindsey Kubsch

Outstanding Senior Award | Lucas Livingstone

DAVID L. BOREN COLLEGE OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

Admiral William J Crowe, Jr. Award | Rosette Hobeich



CONGRATULATIONS!

WEITZENHOFFER FAMILY COLLEGE OF FINE ARTS

Weitzenhoffer Family College of Fine Arts Outstanding Senior
Jody Farmer

F. Donald Clark Award for Excellence in the Arts
Sarah Scheerhorn

Elmer Capshaw Award from the School of Visual Arts
Mia Vinson

Dance Partners Outstanding Senior Award from the School of Dance
Dionne Bracey

Weitzenhoffer Award from the Peggy Dow Helmerich School of Drama
Cara Oates

Van Heflin Award from the Peggy Dow Helmerich School of Drama
Prairie Kaya

Outstanding Senior Award from the School of Music
Addie Yoon

MICHAEL F. PRICE COLLEGE OF BUSINESS

Outstanding Seniors

Accounting | Madison Barlow

Economics | Nathan Nguyen

Energy Management | Piper Lallier

Entrepreneurship | Grant Millsap

Finance | Jillienne Connell

Healthcare Business | Josey Carrell

International Business | Bridgette Schwank

Marketing | Annabelle Treadwell

Management | Ella Pappas

Management Information Systems | Emma McNeese

Supply Chain Management | Alexander Kidd

Sports Business | Abigail Errico

PROVOST'S PACE AWARD

Nikka Asuncion
Samantha Aulicino
Fawwaz Ayodele
Murphy Barnett
Cale Bible

Taonanyasha Botso
Matthew Boyd
Ava Burnett
Eva Busker
Keteyian Cade
Berkeley Caple
Addison Carroll
Sophie Chang
Muhammad Yousuf

Keeley Dailey
Arianna Dambold
Alexandra Dillon
Olivia Evans
Adediji Fakeye
Sterling Foster
Kingsley Funk
Ziyuan Gao
Casey Graves
Mallory Haake
Sophia Hassany
Lilian Higareda Castillo
Viktoria Hladiuk
Laura Huckabay

Ava Jenkins
Abigail Johnson
Trent Johnson
Andrew King
Grace Lagge

Kamryn Matthews
Jack McCarty
Adrian Milton
Ella Newhouse
Angelina Nguyen
Murewa Oderinde
Tonymario Okpara
Madison Perkins
Lexi Poyner

Lorelai Radzanowski
Emily Rajack
Claire Sheerman
Isabella Suttee
Lillian Talley
Jayce Toscano
Alexandra Toyos Perez
Jaden Trinh
Ali Usman
Kaylee Wardenburg
Ava West
Payton Wolfe
Devin Zheng
Ayan Zubair

J.R. MORRIS AWARD

Kennedy Corbin
Caden Glasscock
LJ Golston
Diego Gonzalez
Cyrus Mortazavi

Jordan Norris
Hope Rhoads
Shreya Rohatgi
Chloe Smith
Kennedy Vice

GEORGE HENDERSON JR. AWARD

Malcolm Williams

FERN L. HOLLAND AWARD

Tsewang Ghale

PAUL SHANOR MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP

Ashley Nguyen
Goldie Snow
Angelita Ochoa

MELVIN C. HALL LEADERSHIP-SCHOLARSHIP AWARD

Chabelli Mendoza

BELINDA P. BISCOE LEADERSHIP-SCHOLARSHIP AWARD

Elle Evans

HONORS COLLEGE

Honors College Leadership Award

Kate Leach

Honors College Vision Award

Maddie Meyers

Reading Group Moderator of the Year

Kaitlyn Denton

OUTSTANDING GREEK SENIORS

Maria de Asis | **Kappa Alpha Theta**
Luis Cervantes | **Sigma Lambda Beta International Fraternity, Inc.**
Aiden Dodd | **Beta Upsilon Chi**
Ella Laurence | **Sigma Phi Lambda**
Paula Le | **Lambda Delta Psi Sorority, Inc.**
Sydney McNair | **Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.**
Kennedi Patterson | **Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.**
Phillip Suh | **Pi Kappa Alpha**
Lauren Williams | **Alpha Sigma Kappa**

ANONA ADAIR GREEK AWARD OF EXCELLENCE

Maggie Moseley
Chi Omega

LETZEISER HONOR LIST AND MEDALISTS

The Letzeiser Awards are the highest awards presented during the Campus Awards Program. The selections are made each year by a student/faculty/staff committee and are based on leadership, scholarship, and service to the university.

| | |
|-------------------|------------------|
| Dieko Adebakin | Luke Pauli |
| Brooke Bauman | Mattie Pendley |
| Cass Condray | Elena Price |
| Jillienne Connell | Betsy Rasplicka |
| Maria de Asis | Shreya Rohatgi |
| Aiden Dodd | Hanaa Saidi |
| Alexa Dringus | Ariana Sayeed |
| Azucena Guerrero | Micah Scherrei |
| Ethan Haque | Emelie Schultz |
| Jack Hill | Manuvel Sibichan |
| Oghenekaro Imieye | Goldie Snow |
| Aniketh Koneru | Salma Waheed |
| Brittney Luong | Maya Williams |
| Cyrus Mortazavi | Kaylee Wimberley |
| Mirembe Mulimba | JaLynn Yoakum |

BRONZE MEDALIST | Maya Williams

SILVER MEDALIST | Ariana Sayeed

GOLD MEDALIST | Emelie Schultz

KRISTEN PARTRIDGE CAMPUS LIFE AWARD

| | |
|--------------------|-------------------|
| Dieko Adebakin | Chabelli Mendoza |
| Brian Bortz | Cyrus Mortazavi |
| David Colindres | Angelita Ochoa |
| Kennedy Corbin | Dakota Page |
| Elizabeth Crawford | Elena Price |
| Annebelle Czaruk | Chelsea Rose |
| David Dimandja | Ariana Sayeed |
| Elena Eaton | Emelie Schultz |
| Elle Evans | Manuvel Sibichan |
| Emma Evans | Goldie Snow |
| Jordan Hickman | Bethany Sseruwagi |
| Annelise Huynh | Liam Thompson |
| Kaden Keller | Salma Waheed |
| Bonkhe Magongo | Maya Williams |
| Halle McFarlane | Hayden Wolfe |

PE-ET

Top 10 Senior Honor Society

| | |
|----------------------|--------------------|
| 2024-2025 | 2025-2026 |
| Temalangen Dlamini | Brian Bortz |
| Kyle Eskew | Elizabeth Crawford |
| Azucena Guerrero | David Dimandja |
| Lily Melendez | Jordan Hickman |
| Hedisa Noyola Arvizo | Joelle Kimbrough |
| Ariana Sayeed | Halle McFarlane |
| Micah Scherrei | Chabelli Mendoza |
| Emelie Schultz | Jhanvi Patel |
| Allie Schwartz | Miranda Renteria |
| JaLynn Yoakum | Julia Roberts |

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