THE PINE LOG welcomes the ***Class of 2030*** and incoming transfer students

WELCOME EDITION 2026

the PINE LOG

The Independent Voice of Stephen F. Austin State University

Friday, August 14, 2026

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New forestry, ag building taking shape

Bethany McWilliams / **The Pine Log**

Construction continues on the new Arthur Temple College of Forestry and Agriculture building on the corner of East College and Raguet streets. Construction on the building began during fall 2024 and is slated for completion during spring 2027.

Welcome home, Lumberjacks!

Dr. Chad Thomas
Associate Vice President / Dean of Students

If you're new to SFA and feeling excited—and maybe a little uneasy—guess what?

Me, too.

Like you, I'm a newbie here. I started in my role as dean of students as the spring semester was coming to a close. It's been a few months since then, but I still can't navigate the campus without looking at a map first. I'm still struggling to remember all these new people's names. Some days are fulfilling and exciting; some are daunting.

Odds are, you're going to experience similar ups and downs, too. And you know what? That's perfectly normal.

My role here as dean of students is to support and advocate for you, work to improve the student experience, and help you be successful. I'm not the principal of SFA, so I'm not going to use this as an opportunity to lecture you. Instead, I want to share three genuinely heartfelt pieces of advice that I hope you'll consider. These should be useful whether you're brand new to SFA or coming back for your fourth year.

Find your people: It's hard to earn a degree without community, or what's sometimes called your "network of support." Shared interests are a great way to develop that network. Are you passionate about science? Talk with your faculty members about research opportunities. Love to play softball? Hit up Campus Recreation for ways to make friends in rec sports leagues. Are you a sustainability freak like me? Join the SFA Sustainability Club. It's one of hundreds of student groups registered with the Student Involvement office.

Ask for help: Taking ownership of your education means tapping into the many resources at your disposal. Want to do better in a class? Check out the Academic Assistance and Resource Center, or AARC, in Steen Library. Feeling anxious or emotionally overwhelmed? Staff with the Health and Wellness Hub in the Tucker Building provide valuable counseling services and other helpful well-being resources. People here want to help, so don't be afraid to accept it.

Give yourself grace: Part of the beauty of pursuing a degree is the opportunity to learn about yourself, especially from your mistakes. Many students make self-discoveries large and small, finding new passions, acknowledging areas for improvement and recalculating their life plans. While you should work to graduate in a timely fashion, don't be surprised if your personal goals, academic interests and career ambitions evolve over time. Seek guidance from faculty and staff mentors, and connect early with the career center as you plan for life after SFA.

In the meantime, if you see me wandering campus struggling to find the right building, please feel free to guide me—or just say, "Hey, it's that bald dean of students guy!" We'll do our best to look out for one another and make SFA a great place for all of us.

Axe 'em, Jacks!

Lumberjack Marching Band invited to London parade

By Kylie Chandler
Staff Writer

Founded in 1926, the Lumberjack Marching Band is hitting a milestone: their centennial year. This year in particular will be one of their biggest yet, as the "boldest sound from the oldest town" is headed overseas.

Last fall, at the Sul Ross vs. SFA game, the great-grandson of Winston Churchill extended a formal invitation for the LMB to perform at the 2027 London New Year's Day Parade. This will be their first appearance at the parade in over 13 years.

Over the course of a week, LMB members will not only get to perform at the parade but also tour Windsor Castle, Tower of London, Big Ben and several other English landmarks.

"It's a blessing of an opportunity; I'm so excited to go," Garrett Haught, a senior music education major from Hallsville, said.

The cost of the trip was originally around $5,000 per student, but the University has granted funds to help cut the cost and make it more feasible for band members to make the trip.

In addition, the LMB has repurposed old uniforms into tote bags, pillows and other items, selling them as part of a fundraiser. Through those efforts, the average cost per student has been cut in half, with each student paying on average around $2,200 for their trip to London.

Dr. Daniel Haddad, assistant professor and associate director of bands, believes this trip will broaden his students' horizons and put SFA on the international map.

"I'm excited for the students to go out and experience something they never have before," Haddad said.

"This is a great opportunity to bring the Lumberjack spirit across the pond to the UK."

For more information regarding the LMB or the London trip, visit sfasu.edu/lmb.

Courtesy Photo / **Lumberjack Marching Band**

(From left) SFA President and First Lady Neal and Kristi Weaver pose for a photo with Duncan Sandys, ambassador for London's 2027 New Year's Day Parade, and Associate Director of Bands Daniel Haddad during an SFA football game in fall 2025.

Career center encourages Jacks to explore opportunities early

The former Career Center and Center for Professional and Continuing Education recently combined to form SFA's Center for Career Education and Exploration, which offers many free services to support students of all majors and classifications on their professional journeys. These services have been designed to help students explore, discover and succeed along their career paths during their time at SFA and beyond.

"From day one, we encourage our Lumberjacks to explore the possibilities that they might discover opportunities that align with their career goals, while also providing resources and support to succeed in achieving these goals," said CCEE Executive Director Brent McLemore.

The CCEE provides comprehensive career education that includes many services meant to facilitate successful career exploration. Students can explore majors and careers through individual coaching appointments, self-assessments like the CliftonStrengths or those found in platforms like Focus2, and online databases of informational interviews with working professionals, among other resources.

Through their engagement with the center, students gain access to not only these services but also a framework for thinking about where they are and where they are going that fosters curiosity, collaboration, and a proactive mindset, empowering students to navigate ambiguous and complex problems in a changing world of work and make career path decisions with confidence

"Our purpose is to help students along this journey of finding meaningful work. We help them explore options in careers and majors, learn more about themselves and

See **CAREERS** *on* **Page 2A**

Courtesy Photo / **University Marketing Communications**

The Center for Career Education and Exploration guides students in exploring majors and careers through individual coaching appointments, self-assessments and more. Students can also have their résumés and cover letters reviewed, practice interviewing, learn about job and internship searching, participate in career-related workshop, and attend career fairs. To learn more about available services, resources and upcoming career fairs, visit https://www.sfasu.edu/ccee or stop by the center's office on the second floor of the Steen Library, suite 203, between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. Monday through Friday.

The Pine Log
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ThePineLog.com

Volume 109
Issue 1

Stay informed!

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Alumni Association offers Lumberjacks ring-savings program

The SFA Alumni Association offers an exciting program to help undergraduate students save for their official SFA class ring now. Students who have completed 60 or more credit hours are eligible to purchase their SFA ring and participate in the Big Dip, which is one of the first steps to graduation and one of the best-loved Lumberjack traditions. Students can sign up for the ring-savings program beginning their freshman year to save up for their ring early and not have to pay for the cost of their ring in one large amount.

To sign up for the program, a student should log into their mySFA account and select a savings amount of either $75 or $150 to be applied to their bill each fall and spring semester. By visiting www.sfaring.com, students and parents can get an idea of the type of ring their student might like and the estimated cost of the ring. Accounts will be billed each semester and saved for the student until they either complete 60 semester credit hours or are ready to purchase their ring. Students with Federal Aid must approve this charge with the Business Office.

In 2002, the SFA Alumni Association began a tradition called the Big Dip (Dipped in Pride) where students who had purchased rings dipped one hand in a large bowl of purple, grape-scented dye before receiving their rings. The students' hands remain purple for several days — showcasing their Lumberjack pride and achievement. This unique tradition has grown tremendously with an average of more than 500 participants each semester in three ceremonies throughout each Big Dip day.

"During the past several years, the cost of rings has escalated, and purchasing a ring is becoming harder for students and their parents to do in one lump sum," said Craig Turnage, executive director of the SFA Alumni Association.

The Alumni Association recognized there was a need to help remedy this situation and began working with several SFA departments and Balfour, the official SFA ring partner, to create an online program to help students start saving for their rings.

Visit www.sfaring.com to view class ring sizes, estimated prices and styles. The Alumni Association also has samples of each ring available for students to see in person. While the Alumni Association hosts SFA Ring Week in the fall and spring semesters, students can visit the Alumni Association's office anytime from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. weekdays in the Tracie D. Pearman Alumni Center, located on the SFA campus. Call (936) 468-3407 if you have questions, or students may visit their mySFA account to view a list of frequently asked questions concerning the ring-savings program.

To learn more ways students and their parents can get involved at SFA and with the Alumni Association, visit www.sfaalumni.com.

File photo / **The Pine Log**

An SFA ring rests on a pine cone with a graduation stole, honor cords and mortarboard. Hundreds of Lumberjacks take part in the Big Dip each year, and family and friends are invited to be a part of the ceremony. The SFA Alumni Association hosts SFA Ring Week every fall and spring semester at the Tracie D. Pearman Alumni Center on Vista Drive next to the Baker Pattillo Student Center.

Courtesy Photo / **SFA Alumni Association**

SFA students can begin saving for their SFA class ring as early as their freshman year through a program offered by the SA Alumni Association. Students who have earned at least 60 credit hours are eligible to purchase their SFA ring and participate in the Big Dip ceremony, one of the most popular SFA traditions.

Courtesy Photo / **University Marketing Communications**

The SFA Ring statue stands across the street from the Austin Building. The distinctive statue was dedicated in September 2023 in conjunction with the University's 100th anniversary celebrations. (Below) A Lumberjack shows off evidence of his participation in the Ring Dip ceremony, raising his axe in front of the Austin Building.

CAREERS: Center offers résumé reviews, job connections

From Page 1A

interests, find opportunities for growth like part-time work, internships and volunteer roles, and take the steps needed to achieve their goals," said CCEE Director April Place. "However, it is just as important for a student to take ownership of their professional development journey. An easy first step is to reach out to our office, even as a new student on campus."

Students can also take confidence in knowing they are meeting with a team that is dedicated to better understanding the career fields and industries related to their major and interest, she said. The CCEE operates within a career liaison model, which allows the staff to cater to specific student populations based on their majors and relevant career fields. The result is a career coach who is better equipped to help students find success on the career paths specific to them.

Along the way, students can also have their résumés and cover letters reviewed, practice interviewing, learn about job and internship searching, participate in career-related workshops, and attend one of the many career fairs hosted each year.

The CCEE also has connections to thousands of employers who are actively recruiting SFA students and posting jobs and internships to SFA's online job board through Handshake, the center's online career management platform. Students can also schedule appointments with the CCEE through Handshake by visiting http://sfasu.edu/handshake. To learn more about CCEE services, resources and events, visit https://www.sfasu.edu/ccpd or stop by Steen Library, Suite 203, between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. Monday through Friday.

Courtesy Photo / **University Marketing Communications**

Buchanan
WEALTH MANAGEMENT

A legacy rooted in SFA. A future invested in others.

Wendy Buchanan is a proud SFA alumna whose dedication to her alma mater spans decades. Honored as the Outstanding Young Alumna in 2003, she has served on the SFA Foundation Board, the Alumni Association Board, and the Nelson Rusche College of Business Advisory Board, where she supports the university through leadership and service.

Wendy and her high school sweetheart, Mike, have celebrated more than 40 years of marriage. Together they are members of First Baptist Church of Nacogdoches and are very active members in the community. Wendy currently serves on the Nacogdoches County United Way Board as Chairman, the Nacogdoches Kiwanis Club Board, and is Director Emeritus for the Nacogdoches High School Alumni Association.

With more than 38 years in the financial services industry, Wendy is passionate about helping others and proudly supports past, present, and future Lumberjacks.

Wendy Buchanan
Stephen F. Austin State University | Class of 1985

Investment Guidance | Education Savings | Insurance | Retirement Income Strategies

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*2025 Forbes Top Women Wealth Advisors Best-in-State: Awarded February 2025; Data compiled by SHOOK Research LLC based on the time period from 9/30/23 - 9/30/24 (Source: Forbes.com). 2025 Forbes Best-In-State Wealth Advisors; Awarded April 2025; Data compiled by SHOOK Research LLC based on the time period from 6/30/23- 6/30/24 (Source: Forbes.com). Fee paid for use of marketing materials.

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Summer enrollment on the rise

SFA is continuing its strong enrollment momentum, with summer 2026 headcount currently up 6% and semester credit hours increasing 7% compared to summer 2025.

While enrollment remains open and the University's preliminary summer census date is July 9, current trends position SFA for its first summer enrollment increase since 2020 and one of the largest summer enrollment gains in recent University history.

"Students are increasingly choosing SFA because they recognize the value of a degree that combines academic quality, personalized support and strong career outcomes," said Dr. Neal Weaver, SFA president. "These preliminary summer numbers build on the momentum we experienced throughout the past academic year and reflect the confidence students and families have in the direction of this University."

Preliminary data indicate that, in addition to a 6% increase in student headcount, SFA has generated 7% more semester credit hours than last summer. Credit hour production, a key indicator of student engagement, plays an important role in state funding.

According to Dr. Kent Willis, senior vice president for enrollment and student engagement, the increase reflects both student demand and institutional efforts to create flexible pathways to degree completion.

"Summer enrollment provides students with an opportunity to stay on track, accelerate their progress toward graduation and take advantage of flexible course options," Willis said. "We're seeing strong participation from continuing students and transfer students who are using the summer term to move forward academically."

For students like Billy Stewart, a kinesiology junior from Clarksville, the summer session has been a game changer.

"I was able to knock out two core classes online while working part time," he said. "It's helping me graduate on time and save money."

The preliminary summer enrollment gains continue SFA's pattern of growth. Earlier this year, the university reported its first spring-to-spring enrollment increase since 2019 and its largest spring enrollment increase since 2010.

In fall 2025, SFA welcomed the largest freshman class in University history, and applications and admissions for fall 2026 continue to outpace last year's record-setting levels.

Courtesy Photo / **University Marketing Communications**

SFA is continuing its strong enrollment momentum, with summer 2026 headcount and semester credit hours increasing compared to summer 2025.

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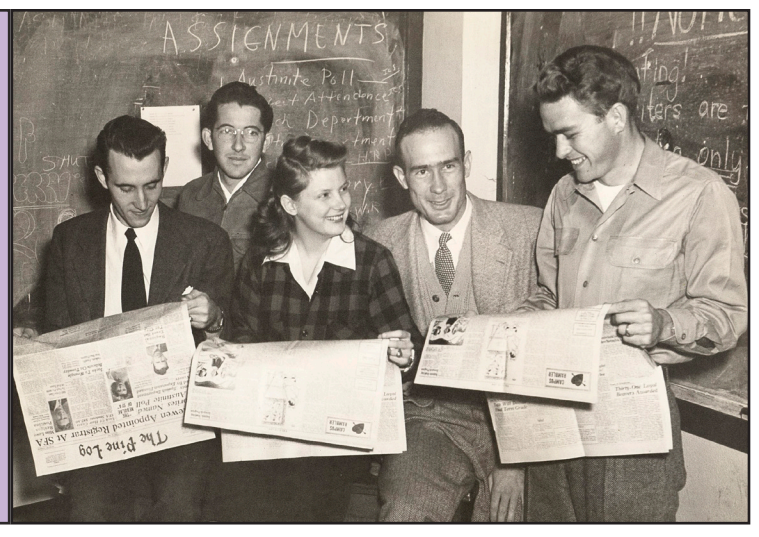


Williams recounts Archer experience

Courtesy Photo / **University Marketing Communications**

Barret Williams, a business economics major from Wake Forest, North Carolina, represented SFA in the Archer Fellowship Program last spring.

Barret Williams, a senior business economics major from Wake Forest, North Carolina, represented SFA in the Archer Fellowship Program in Washington, D.C., during the spring 2026 semester. Williams, the first Archer Fellow from the Nelson Rusche College of Business, represents the growth of the program at SFA and joined peers from across The University of Texas System to learn about the policymaking process through this elite program.

"Being an Archer Fellow means a great deal to me," Williams said. "To be perceived as valuable enough for donors, faculty and congressmen to commit a significant amount of their time and money to invest in me is truly impactful. Additionally, to be associated with the extraordinary collection of Archer Fellow alumni is an honor that I will spend the rest of my life working to live up to."

During their time in the program, fellows intern with an organization of their choosing based on their professional and academic ambitions. Undergraduate Archer Fellows also earn 15 hours of in-residence credit for their experience in Washington, D.C., in either the fall or spring semester. Graduate Archer Fellows earn nine hours of in-residence credit during the summer term.

"Archer Fellows work closely with the wonderful faculty to make the Capitol their classroom," said Dr. Derek O'Leary, Archer Center academic director. "In the 'Policymaking Process' course, career policy experts lead collaborative simulations of congressional markups, federal agency rulemaking and advocacy campaigns. In the 'Politics of National Memory' course, monuments and memorials open up reflective discussions about the nation's history and its meaning for our present. In our 'Internship' course and 'Advocacy and Politics' course, fellows develop skills to thrive as leaders who serve the public, whether in D.C. or their state and local community. Whatever one's background and aspirations beyond college, the fellowship offers students from all academic disciplines the opportunity to contribute to the Archer Fellowship cohort and explore career paths in public service."

Williams interned with U.S. Rep. Gary Palmer's office and the Conservative Partnership Institute. During the experience, he interacted with constituents, sometimes even addressing concerns they may have. Interacting with constituents, especially on Capitol tours, also gave him an opportunity to explain the country's important history and how a great legacy awaits in the future.

"Barret was able to experience real-world policymaking and was able to fine-tune his focus on career goals and objectives through the Archer Fellowship Program," said Dr. Steven Galatas, SFA associate professor of government and the University's Archer Fellowship Program campus coordinator. "In the program, students handle diverse and, at times, contradictory positions, attitudes and beliefs about policies that are important to the student. I hope Barret returned with greater self-confidence, leadership skills and appreciation for civic life."

As the only representative from SFA, Williams was able to interact with students from different universities in the UT System and across the political spectrum.

"I found it very enriching getting to know people from all over our state," Williams said. "Through these interactions, I not only learned from their diverse educational backgrounds but also gained a deeper understanding of our home state of Texas. People would discuss their favorite restaurants, what they missed, what they didn't miss, how they wished their homes might improve and how they wished it might stay the same."

Williams also was able to participate in a wreath-laying ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Arlington National Cemetery, an experience he cites as the most memorable during his time at the fellowship.

"The cemetery is one of extreme beauty and serenity, contrasting sharply with the extreme violence and pain that the men buried there suffered," Williams said. "It was an honor that I was proud to have, though I still feel entirely undeserving of it."

Williams plans on returning to Washington, D.C., to continue working in public policy, particularly with the American Enterprise Institute, which focuses on free market economics and public policy issues.

"My time in the fellowship gave me a network that I will rely on for the rest of my life," Williams said. "The opportunity the program gave me to live and work in Washington, D.C., helped me build a network within the city that will enable me to start my career with confidence."

STEPHEN F. AUSTIN STATE UNIVERSITY

CAREER FAIRS

Fall 2026

Part-Time Job and Volunteer

Wednesday, Sept. 2
11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Construction Management and Interior Design

Tuesday, Sept. 15
11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Accounting

Wednesday, Sept. 23
1 to 3 p.m.

All Majors

Wednesday, Oct. 14
1 to 4 p.m.

Teacher

Friday, Oct. 30
10 a.m. to Noon

STEPHEN F. AUSTIN STATE UNIVERSITY
Center for Career Education and Exploration

All career fairs are free for students to attend and are located in the BPSC Grand Ballroom.

Visit sfasu.edu/ccpd/upcoming-events for more information.

Cole Student Success Center offers myriad student support programs

The Cole Student Success Center, a hub for support and resources for SFA students, is located on the first floor of Ralph W. Steen Library in Room 104. The center houses a variety of programs, including: SFAS 1101—New Lumberjack Experience; Generation Jacks (GenJacks) program; and the Smith-Hutson, Bright, and Buddy Low Scholarship programs. All of these initiatives were designed with one goal in mind—helping students succeed at SFA.

"We understand that navigating college is very challenging, and it can feel confusing and even overwhelming at times," said Raquel Skidmore, director of the Student Success Center. "Our team works hard to ensure all our students know how to access the critical resources and programs we offer to not only help them accomplish their SFA goals but also to prepare them for success after graduation."

Many incoming SFA students are first introduced to the Student Success Center through SFAS 1101—New Lumberjack Experience, a one-credit course designed especially for first-semester college students that provides a roadmap for success in college. Each class is led by an experienced SFA instructor along with a successful junior or senior student. The Student Success Center offers SFAS 1101 sections tailored for specific majors and special groups like honors students and GenJacks.

"We help new Lumberjacks understand how the University operates and provide valuable insights to help them be successful at SFA," said Kate Childress, director of orientation and transition programs and an SFAS 1101 instructor. "The class helps students sharpen their study and critical-thinking skills and also teaches important life lessons like time management, professionalism, responsible decision-making and how to plan for a successful career. It's also a great way to make friends at SFA."

GenJacks is a program designed for first-generation college students, meaning they do not have a parent or guardian who has graduated from a four-year college or institution. Benefits of the program include academic learning communities, service learning and mentor opportunities, the Summer Leadership Academy, Residential Learning Communities, early course registration and designated study rooms.

SFA received a five-year TRIO Student Support Services grant from the U.S. Department of Education to expand GenJacks and provide comprehensive academic support to more first-generation students, helping them persist to graduation and become the first in their families to earn a bachelor's degree.

"The community we build within the GenJacks program is truly astonishing," said Jakoby Holder, a Batson junior majoring in agriculture.

"I wouldn't have been able to achieve as much as I have here at SFA without the support system that this program has provided me. I have gained friendships that will last me a lifetime and have received some amazing opportunities that will take me so far, even after college."

In addition, the Student Success Center manages the Smith-Hutson Scholarship program, which benefits promising incoming students with proven financial need by covering the cost of tuition, books and other college expenses for up to four years.

Last fall, the Smith-Hutson Scholarship at SFA welcomed 45 outstanding freshmen into its 2026 cohort—the University's largest group of Smith-Hutson Scholars to date. Each student receives up to $10,000 annually and becomes part of a supportive community focused on academic success, student engagement and preparing to be change-makers in their fields after graduation. The program now supports 110 scholars across all four class years, offering personalized guidance and meaningful opportunities throughout their college journey.

"We're thrilled to welcome our largest cohort yet of Smith-Hutson Scholars. This scholarship is more than financial support; it's a community where students are seen, supported and challenged to grow," said Kat Kessler Thompson, student success coordinator for the program.

"Watching these students find confidence, purpose and connection is truly the best part of my job."

Students are invited to check out the Learning Lounge multi-purpose space next door to Student Success Center. The area is a quiet place to study, collaborate, eat or just relax between classes.

For more information about the services offered by SFA's Cole Student Success Center, visit sfasu.edu/studentsuccess or email studentsuccess@sfasu.edu.

SuSu's Popcorn opens doors to sweet new downtown flavors

Family business expands to serve fudge, ice cream

By Bethany McWilliams
Editor-in-Chief

Community members, both kids and adults alike, lined the entrance of SuSu's Popcorn and Candy Cafe on April 13 as they unveiled their new fudge and ice cream shop. SuSu's Ice Cream and Fudge complete the already expansive selection of sweets offered downtown.

SuSu's Popcorn and Candy Cafe was opened in March 2023 selling homemade popcorn flavors, sweets, drinks and candies. After finding success within the community of Nacogdoches, the SuSu's family knew it was time to expand the vision of the shop.

"I've been coming here since my freshman year, and I love their popcorn, so I'm very excited that they opened a new joint here so then there's more places to get a little sweet treat for yourself," Carissa Garcia, an SFA student and junior theatre major from Dallas, said.

"I love SuSu's popcorn; therefore I'll love SuSu's ice cream."

On opening day, the new fudge and ice cream parlor sold 12 different Blue Bell ice cream flavors and 17 different flavors of homemade fudge with more to come. Additionally, the store boasts small areas for patrons to sit and enjoy the atmosphere and strike up a conversation with the owners.

"I've always wanted to do fudge and ice cream. We ran out of money when we first opened, and fudge is very expensive. We finally got our fudge machine in, and we're super excited as far as ice cream," Susan Sowards, part owner of the SuSu's Popcorn and Candy Cafe, said. "It's very popular for popcorn and candy stores to have ice cream, but for me, the smell is not compatible, so I've always wanted to have two separate rooms."

The original storefronts were built in the 1890s and had features that were over 100 years old. The Sowards took on the challenge replacing the electrical wiring of the building while still preserving the original floors, walls and ceilings. In order to open the new shop, the Sowards would have to start from scratch once again, facing different challenges than with their first store.

"When we walked in … there was this deterioration in the brick. Well, long story short, it was a fireplace that had been covered up, and so moisture was coming from the bottom up… all of that had to be redone, and there was no way we would have known about that," Sowards said. "It's a lot of little challenges, but it's also what makes it so incredibly fun and fascinating."

SuSu's Popcorn has a dedicated customer base due to the Sowards themselves. The welcoming atmosphere of the store encourages people to come for the community, not the business itself. The business helps organizations in the community through donations, partnering for fundraisers and school field trips.

"That's one thing that's really important to us that everybody is welcome here," Sowards said. "The growth and the blessings and everything—we had this opportunity, and that's why we're getting to do it. We have the opportunity to continue to serve our community, and I love seeing people happy."

Sowards is a part owner of her company alongside her husband, Alan, and their children. The Sowards' mission to give back to their community isn't limited to their business. They are both former teachers, among other things. Their roots run deep in Nacogdoches where Alan Sowards was a student and professor at SFA. They have a love for their community and an even stronger love for their family.

"I've retired from three different things, and I've realized that it's not for me. Living my dream here, the joy would be gone if I didn't have my family. I can tell that I wouldn't want to do this by myself, and I don't think Alan would want to either," Susan Sowards said. "I hope I do this 'til the day I die."

Bethany McWilliams / **The Pine Log**

(Above) Susan Sowards, part owner of SuSu's, leads the staffs of the two downtown stores in singing "Happy Birthday" for one of her employees. (Far left) Hannah Sowards, Susan's daughter, and Mark Easley (a.k.a. "The Fudge Guy"), work together at the fudge counter to serve customers on opening day. (Left) SFA students pose for a picture by the new mural inside the store. Nacogdoches media teams were filming and taking photos of the grand opening festivities. (Bottom) SuSu's Ice Cream and Fudge debuted 17 different flavors of ice cream on opening day, including favorites like "Birthday," "Dark Chocolate" and "SFA Swirl."

SFA conducting dolphin research

SFA continues its leadership role in drone-based dolphin health research using the Passive Health Assessment in Sea Mammals, or PHASM, platform in Galveston.

PHASM is a one-of-a-kind airplane-style drone that can stealthily approach dolphins in the wild and vacuum in breath samples when the animals come up to breathe. Those snotty breath samples can be used to study genetics, disease risk, pathogen presence and hormones tied to stress and reproductive health. Sampling dolphins this way can help illuminate issues affecting human health where water resources are shared among people and dolphins.

The PHASM project was created through a partnership between SFA, Oklahoma State University and Dolphin Quest, an organization that offers interactive, educational marine encounters in Bermuda and Hawaii. Now that the project has shifted from system testing with animals under managed care to wild deployment, SFA has also partnered with the Galveston Bay Dolphin Research Program to leverage their expertise in identifying and cataloging the dolphins of Galveston Bay. SFA biology students have been a part of the platform's development throughout the process.

"Projects like PHASM show that SFA can stand shoulder to shoulder with big R1 university partners, globally accredited marine animal facilities and influential nongovernmental organizations to drive meaningful change for animal and human health monitoring," said Dr. Jason Bruck, associate professor of biology at SFA and a principal investigator for the PHASM project. "Partnerships like these help our undergraduate and graduate students experience SFA not just as a great teaching institution but also as the best place to get the real research experience needed to be successful in marine mammalogy, including marine drone operation and retrieval, ocean sampling and acoustic monitoring."

Researchers are conducting these drone launch and recovery operations aboard SFA's purple-emblazoned 25-foot marine research vessel, the Iwa Bailey. The vessel was funded through The University of Texas System's Science and Technology Acquisition and Retention, or STARs, program that allows SFA faculty members to purchase state-of-the-art research equipment.

The first in a series of articles about PHASM's development will be published in the September issue of the Aquatic Mammals journal and will discuss the new technology of the system as well as how animals react to the drone.

"What makes PHASM different is that it is stealthy, and it doesn't blow away samples like traditional quadcopter drones do," Bruck said. "Because of our testing at Dolphin Quest, we know we have the least invasive and most effective solution for passive health assessment for small whales and dolphins."

Bruck and PHASM team members are also scheduled to demonstrate the system at the International Society for Atmospheric Research Using Remotely Piloted Aircraft conference in August at Daytona Beach, Florida, and at the Society for Marine Mammalogy meeting in October in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

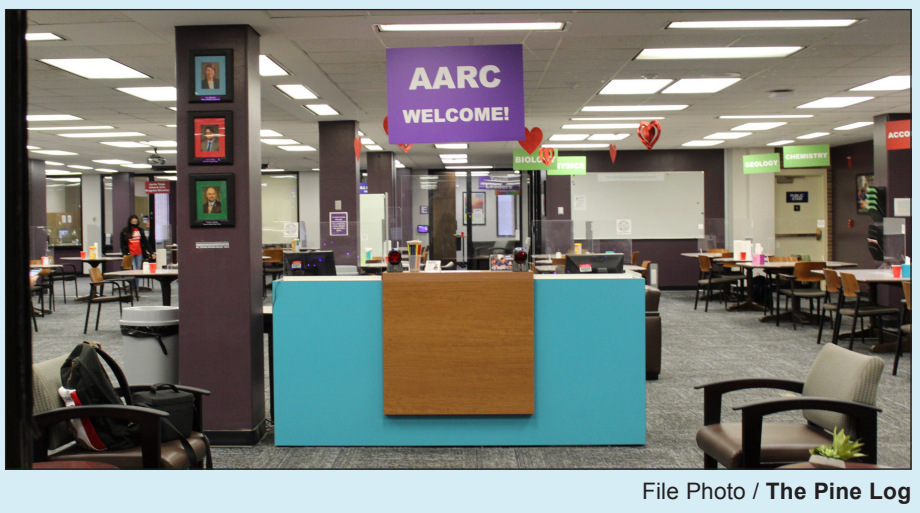
"PHASM is a project that spans air and sea, aerospace engineering, and biology and health," Bruck said.

"It is important to speak to diverse audiences to foster the types of collaborations needed for a project of this broad scope."

To learn more about SFA's Department of Biology, visit sfasu.edu/biology. To view the video "We Steal Dolphin Snot," visit gosfa.com/dolphinsnot.

Courtesy Photos / **University Marketing Communications**

SFA researchers are playing a leading role in dolphin research, using drones to collect dolphin breath for health assessment. (Left) PHASM swoops in to collect the breath of a wild dolphin in Galveston Bay. Images taken under NOAA/NMFS permit 28894.



File Photo / **The Pine Log**

The Academic Assistance and Resource Center is located in the Ralph W. Steen Library and offers free, award-winning peer tutoring, SI groups, walk-in tables and an Online Writing Lab. The AARC has been in existence at SFA since 1983 and has received many prestigious recognitions, including the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board's Star Award and the Distinguished Program Award from the Texas Association of Developmental Education. Students do not have to be struggling academically to take advantage of the AARC's services. To learn more about the AARC, visit sfasu.edu/aarc. The website is updated regularly and is easy to navigate on any smartphone.

Reese named dean of business college

Dr. Jason Reese has been appointed permanent dean of the Nelson Rusche College of Business, effective May 1. This appointment follows Reese's yearlong service as interim dean after the departure of Dr. Tim Bisping, who is now dean of the College of Business at the University of Central Arkansas.

"I am incredibly honored and excited for the opportunity to lead the Nelson Rusche College of Business forward during such an exciting time at SFA," Reese said.

"We have tremendous momentum across the University and within the college, and I look forward to building on that success by continuing to focus on student success, academic innovation and building meaningful community partnerships."

Reese brings more than a decade of academic and administrative leadership experience to the role. He began his higher education career at the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor in 2011 and joined the SFA faculty in 2014. Since arriving at SFA, Reese has served as assistant professor, associate professor and professor. He also has held several key leadership positions, including assistant department chair for the Department of Management and Marketing, director of the Master of Business Administration program and associate dean, before being named interim dean in March 2025.

Dr. Jason Reese

During his leadership within the college, Reese led significant initiatives focused on student success, academic innovation, external engagement and strategic growth. Working collaboratively with SFA's Division of University Advancement and divisional leadership, he helped secure more than $17 million in gifts and commitments through fundraising and corporate partnerships. He also guided the college's continued efforts toward Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business accreditation and facilitated strategic discussions surrounding innovation, college reorganization, student affairs and long-term planning.

For more information on the Rusche College of Business, visit sfasu.edu/cob.

GREETINGS FROM...

WEEKS OF WELCOME

STEPHEN F. AUSTIN STATE UNIVERSITY

AUG. 21- SEPT. 7

WoW is designed to welcome new students to campus and introduce them to campus life. For returning students, it offers a way to become involved and interact with new students and campus organizations. WoW programming takes place the first two weeks of every fall and spring semester

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Room 3.302

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Lumberjacks pursue well-being goals at Recreation Center

If you attended SFA orientation during the summer, you probably experienced a sneak peek of the SFA Rec Center.

Yes, it's a gym. It's BIG gym that boasts a weight room and cardio floor, indoor track, 39-foot Climbing Wall and 13-foot Bouldering Cave, two indoor basketball courts, and two racquetball courts. You can't miss the beautiful outdoor pool with a lazy river, hot tub and three lap lanes.

However, the SFA Rec Center is so much more than just a gym and a pool.

The Campus Recreation department is housed within the SFA Rec Center and offers several ways to get involved on campus through fitness and wellness programming, outdoor pursuits, intramurals, sport clubs, internships and employment.

Group Axe fitness classes run throughout each semester and include yoga, Zumba and kickboxing. Classes often develop a following, with students attending throughout the semester and creating a bond through group exercise. Students interested in careers related to fitness and wellness might want to look into certification prep courses for personal trainers and group fitness instructors.

The Outdoor Pursuits team provides a great escape for SFA students, or rather, several great escapes, through planned outdoor excursions to local, statewide and national outdoor destinations. Explore local lakes and hiking trails during day trips throughout the Nacogdoches area, and escape during overnight adventures to Tyler State Park, Ratcliff Lake and even the Grand Canyon. In addition, students can find outdoor excitement right on the SFA campus through the Experiential Learning Center, a low ropes course for team-building activities.

Intramurals and Sport Clubs gives students a competitive sports option outside of official collegiate athletics teams. Through intramurals, groups of students can form teams and play other SFA students throughout the semester in sports like soccer, sand volleyball, basketball and flag football. Students can also participate in one-day tournaments like dodgeball, pickleball, table tennis and capture the flag. While intramural leagues consist of teams of SFA students, sport clubs offer students the opportunity to join a team and compete against teams from other universities. SFA has 18 sport clubs to choose from with a few winning national championships.

With over 130 student employees, Campus Recreation is one of the largest student employers on campus. You don't have to be an expert in fitness to apply for a job at the SFA Rec Center; there are jobs available in administration, fitness, facility operations, wellness, graphic design and marketing, safety, lifeguarding, sports programming, referring and officiating, summer youth camps, and more. Campus Recreation also offers a flexible internship program. Find more information on how to apply for jobs and internships at www.sfasu.edu/sfarecjobs.

For more information about the SFA Rec Center and Campus Recreation, visit www.sfasu.edu/campusrec.

Indoor Facility

The SFA Student Recreation Center opened in 2007 and offers the following amenities:

- Indoor recreation space: 80,910 square feet
- Main gym with two basketball courts
- Weight room and cardio floor
- Two multi-purpose rooms
- Indoor track
- 39-foot climbing wall
- 13-foot bouldering cave
- Two racquetball courts

Outdoor Recreation Space

- 72,430 square feet
- Four intramural fields
- 300-square-foot padded artificial turf outdoor workout area
- Military spec obstacle course with 10 elements
- Schlief Tennis Complex with 16 courts
- Courtyard
- Two basketball courts
- Four pickleball courts
- Two sand volleyball courts
- Five miles of multi-use trails
- Low-element challenge course

Outdoor Pool

- 6,958 square feet
- 15,738-square-foot outdoor pool deck
- Lazy River
- Three lap lanes
- Diving well
- Large hot tub
- Multi-use area with basketball and volleyball net

Courtesy Photo / **Campus Recreation**

The outdoor pool at the Student Recreation Center features a lazy river where students can float away a carefree afternoon. The facility also offers three lap lanes, a diving well, a large hot tub and a multi-use area with a basketball hoop and a volleyball net, among other amenities.

Upcoming Events

Aug. 21 - First-Year Friendzy; 4 to 6 p.m. tie dye; 7 p.m. pool party

Aug. 22 – Glowchella; 8 to 11 p.m.

Aug. 31 – Group Axe classes start

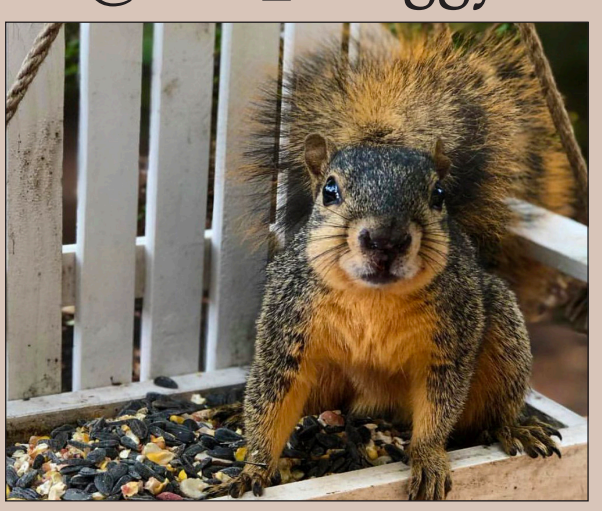
Sept. 2 – Pickleball tournament; 4 p.m.

Sept. 14 – Flag football season begins; register by Sept. 11

Courtesy Photos / **Campus Recreation**

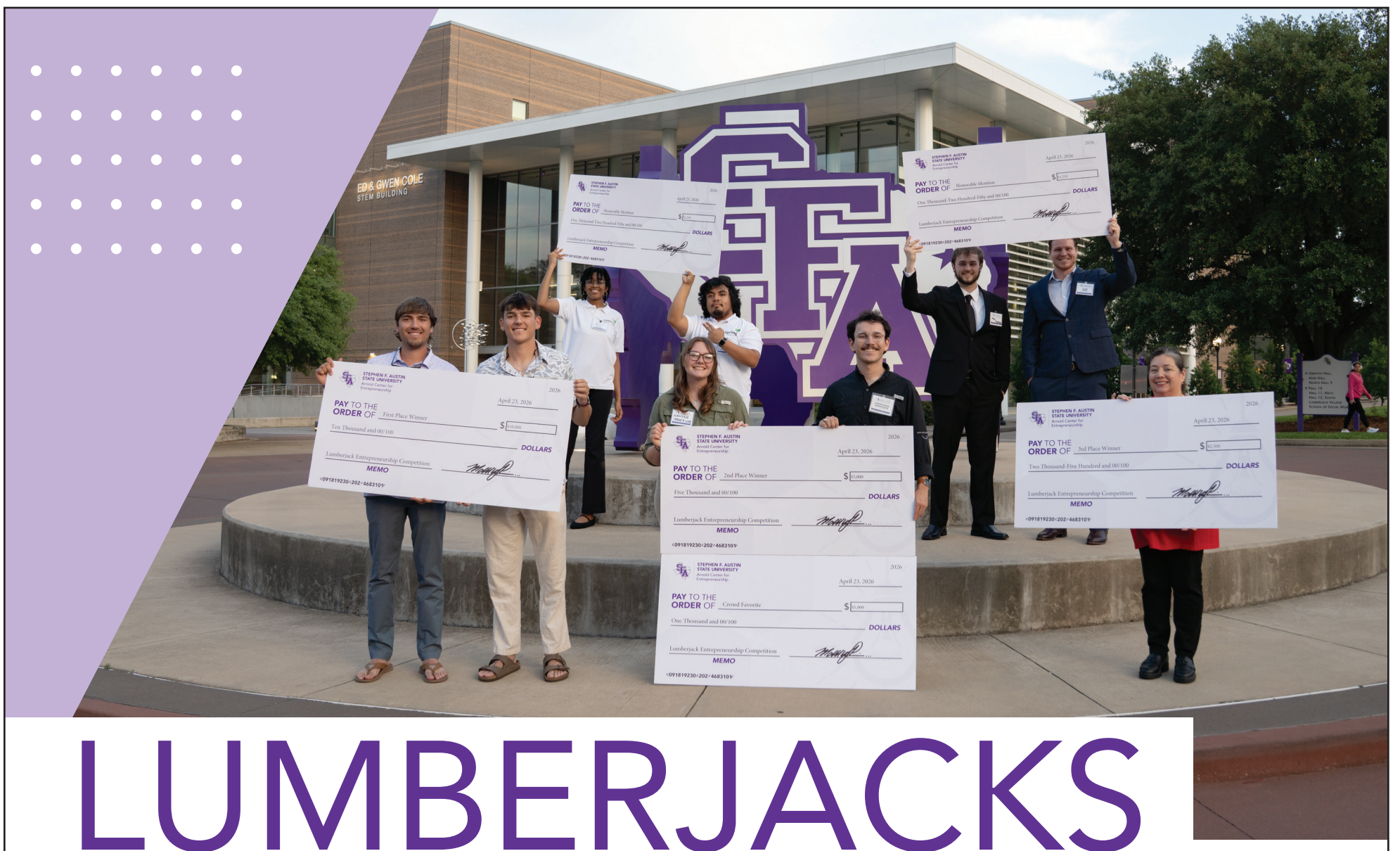
Students can learn more about the programs and classes offered by Campus Rec at sfasu.edu/campusrec. Up-to-the-minute facility counts also are available on the website, along with information about employment and scholarship opportunities.

@SFA_Twiggy



On SFA's beautiful campus in the heart of the Piney Woods, we are proud to be axe-toting Lumberjacks and Ladyjacks! However, we also claim one of the cutest, most bright-eyed and bushy-tailed unofficial mascots you can follow on social media … it's Twiggy, the SFA squirrel!

Usually found eating snacks and hanging around his swing outside the Ferguson Building, our furry friend enjoys meeting and greeting anyone who stops by or tosses a few crumbs his way. Join Twiggy's thousands of followers, and add a little sunshine to your day.



LUMBERJACKS MAKE GREAT ENTREPRENEURS

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According to United States Association for Small Business and Entrepreneurship

MGMT/ENTR 1399

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JACK LIFE

Get involved, make the most of college life

Dr. Lacey Folsom
Associate Dean of Students - Student Involvement

It is my absolute pleasure to welcome you to Stephen F. Austin State University! As the associate dean of students for student involvement, I am thrilled to invite you into a community that is ready to support you, challenge you and cheer you on every step of the way.

College is a truly unique chapter in your life — a time to learn not just from books and lectures but also from new experiences, new people and new opportunities. While you're here, I encourage you to fully embrace everything SFA has to offer. Get involved. Try something new. Find the people who make you feel at home. The friendships and connections you make here can become some of the most meaningful and lasting relationships of your life.

I know stepping out of your comfort zone isn't always easy. In fact, it can be downright intimidating. One of my favorite concepts comes from the movie "We Bought a Zoo": the idea of "20 seconds of courage." Sometimes, all it takes is a brief moment of bravery — walking into a campus event alone, introducing yourself to someone new or saying "yes" to an unexpected opportunity. Those few seconds can open doors to friendships, adventures and experiences that shape who you are.

At SFA, there are countless ways to find your place and build your Lumberjack story. We have over 250 student organizations waiting for you to explore, from academic and professional groups to cultural organizations, service clubs, and social fraternities and sororities. Be sure to attend the Involvement Fair during Weeks of Welcome and check out the many events happening during those first weeks as we celebrate the start of the year.

You might discover your leadership potential by joining a student organization, playing intramural sports, trying out for a fine arts performance or signing up for a research project in your major. The possibilities are endless — and each one will help you develop skills that will set you apart when applying for your dream job. We even have an entire office dedicated to helping you craft the perfect résumé and practice your interview skills before you attend the job fairs we host every semester.

Of course, supporting your fellow Lumberjacks is part of the experience, too. Don't miss the chance to cheer on our teams from the stands of the Purple Haze student section, where you'll feel the true spirit and pride that make SFA special.

Here, you can think globally and act locally. Whether it's participating in a Day of Service, attending a leadership workshop, joining a student government town hall, or volunteering in the community, you'll find countless ways to make an impact and advocate for the causes that matter most to you.

To learn more and stay connected, follow us on social media at @JacksGetInvolved, and download the Modern Campus Involve app to access The Handle, your gateway to all things involvement and events at SFA.

College will be both exciting and a little scary — and that's okay. We are a family here at SFA. You'll find resources, mentors and spaces where you can grow into the person you're meant to become. The student who walks across the stage in four years will be a more confident, courageous and spirited version of yourself, ready to take on the world.

We in the Office of Enrollment and Student Engagement are honored to be part of your journey. Welcome home. We can't wait to see all the incredible things you'll accomplish.

Axe 'em, Jacks!

Construction to begin on Lumberjack Crossing

Courtesy Illustration / **University Marketing Communications**

The University of Texas System Board of Regents recently approved $70 million for SFA to construct the 100,000-square-foot Lumberjack Crossing residence hall directly east of the Lumberjack Landing residence hall and south of Pineywoods Dining Hall. The four-story building will provide housing and support amenities for about 335 students.

By Bethany McWilliams
Editor-in-Chief

After the approval of the 10-year SFA Master Plan, planning for a new dorm is now underway. Lumberjack Crossing will serve as a sister-dorm to Lumberjack Landing, housing about 335 students and providing lounges, study spaces and student collaboration environments with substantial completion by 2028.

Situated to the east of Lumberjack Landing and south of the Pineywoods Dining Hall, the location of the dorm lends the area to becoming a "first-time, first-year corridor" that freshman and sophomore students will benefit from through proximity to nearby halls, dining areas and eventual shared outdoor spaces.

"When this facility was originally proposed and approved back in 2018 or 2019, the name Lumberjack Crossing was intentional. So, Lumberjack Landing was built because you, as a freshman, were to land in Lumberjack Landing, and then in your sophomore year you were to cross over and be in Lumberjack Crossing, and so I think that's really a neat concept,"

See **DORM** *on* **Page 2B**

Thomas appointed as SFA dean of students

By Diego Barahona and Bethany McWilliams
Contributing Writer and Editor-in-Chief

Diego Barahona / **The Pine Log**

Dr. Chad Thomas, dean of students, speaks at last spring's forum about his plan to be present and available for students during his time at SFA. Thomas previously served as senior associate vice president for student affairs at The University of Texas at Dallas.

Dr. Chad Thomas, former senior associate vice president for student affairs at The University of Texas at Dallas, has been appointed to the role of associate vice president and dean of students. Thomas, who has been in the role since April 30, noted his developmental plans and feelings as he steps into his first full academic year at the university.

"What I tried to really understand, or do, is to understand what are kind of the institutional and system priorities, familiarize myself with our various offices on campus, leaders on campus and figure out what are the shortcoming or gaps in my areas that I need to address," Thomas said.

"Something that I've said before is that it's not particularly exciting for most. We have our student code of conduct that really needs a significant overhaul, and that's a time-consuming process but requires a lot of campus partners to be involved in that process. So that has been something that I hit the ground running working on this summer and will continue to work on."

Thomas' ties to SFA didn't begin with the acceptance of the role as associate vice president and dean of students, but instead with his wife, alumna Erin Roth Thomas. He explained that Deep East Texas held a familial and social connection to him, as his wife's immediate family consisted of SFA alumni and native Lufkinites, but never an occupational one. However, when SFA joined The University of Texas System and an opportunity became available, the trajectory shifted.

"As SFA had joined The UT System, I started to learn just a little bit more about the trajectory of the institution, some of the plans for expanding some of the resources to the institution and expanding its footprint within Nacogdoches and being a bigger player on the state stage," Thomas said.

"As I became aware of the opportunity here, I thought coming from UT Dallas and being within the University of Texas System joining an up-and-coming new member was exciting. It was also sort of an opportunity to be closer to family and hopefully find some new life opportunities in a new place and get connected with a variety of new colleagues and meet a new student population."

Stepping in to this role, Thomas wants to home in on the latter point of meeting a new student population and preface that students should not be afraid of him. Thomas, who has a self-proclaimed "doofy sense of humor," encouraged open and often discourse and students to break the higher education stereotype of having the dean of students be someone who is avoided at all costs.

"Something I have told students, parents and even put into some comments I've made at other events is 'I don't want to be the principal of SFA.' At times, deans of students at institutions can be viewed this way as this distanced and buttoned up, punitive figure," Thomas said.

"Instead, what I want students to know about me is that I don't want to be your buddy, but I don't want to be somebody who is so far removed from the student experience that I can't be a good resource and advocate for you.

"So, I want students to feel comfortable to be able to come up and have conversation with me and let me know about their experience and areas where we need to make improvements."

As SFA approaches an era of bigger changes on campus and increased student enrollment, Thomas steps into the role of associate vice president and dean of students at a campus milestone. For students, the campus experience will be uniquely their own, but Thomas' principal goal is to pull some strings to make each student experience that much better.

"I see my role as being more of that, from a student perspective, doing a bunch of behind the scenes work that is not glamorous, that is not flashy, but hopefully makes their experience better and adds value long term to their degree," Thomas said. "So that when they tell people 'I graduated from Stephen F. Austin State University,' it's like 'yeah, that's a really great university and especially it's one that's continuing to grow and expand and raise its reputation and platform on the national stage.'"

SFA Sylvans axe competition at Conclave

Crystal Villanueva / **The Pine Log**

(Above) The SFA Sylvans timbersport team competed in the 67th Association of Southern Forestry Clubs Conclave and achieved multiple awards across various events on March 21. The annual competition is held among students from 15 southern forestry schools with events such as bowsawing, log chopping and throwing events.

(Top Middle) Marek Kaina, a senior forestry major concentrating on fire management from Round Rock, throws an axe to practice before the competition takes place at the University of Arkansas at Monticello. Kaina won first place in the Axe Throw competition with a score of 7.

(Top Right) Maddie Sweeten, a senior forestry major concentrating on fire management from Midlothian, practices her underhand log chop. Sweeten placed first in the Women's Log Chop and set a new conclave and world record of 59.53 seconds, giving her two conclave records and two world records.

(Above) Trent Kline, a senior forestry major concentrating on agroforestry from Temple, practices his bowsaw skill. Kline placed first in the Men's Bowsaw event with a time of 13.96 seconds. The Sylvans earned a total of 342.75 points for SFA, winning the title of "Overall Champion" and the "Overall Sportsmanship Award".

DORM: Incoming student enrollment growing

From Page 1B

Heather Howell, executive director for residence life and housing and the main liaison for the initiative, said. "I hope that we're able to do that, but ultimately, in order to support our growing needs, if we need to house more first-time, first-year [students] in that hall instead of sophomores, and then open up more spaces across campus that are more tailored to upperclassmen halls or housing, then that's what we'll do."

With incoming student numbers on the rise, housing may have to accommodate more freshman students than sophomores with this dorm. Despite this, Residence Life hopes to create a "living learning environment" for students to cultivate friendships and positive experiences.

"We know that sophomores are going to be faced with completely different things like barriers and academic responsibilities. They're going to be faced with way more things different than a first-time, first-year [student]," Howell said.

"It would be perfect for all your first-years to have a hall, all your second-years to have a hall, and then you know, third and fourth year you can kind of mix and mingle. My viewpoint is that if we can create true living learning communities that are based off of a commonality in the student population of that residential hall, that's ideal."

With Lumberjack Landing and Lumberjack Crossing being built side-by-side, the two dorms will share a common green space that will feature outdoor furniture, as well as host events and student activities. Not only can students look forward to the upgraded facilities and location but a space that works in their favor.

"We've already started working with the design team on the project about what type of furniture, what color schemes, what unique things we can bring into the facility. So, I think that's going to be really fun for the students, because part of our job in Residence Life is always advocating for the resident," Howell said.

Construction for Lumberjack Crossing is set to be completed in 2028. In the meantime, students will have to make changes to how to move around campus to navigate the construction. While Wilson Street will not be blocked off due to construction, students should be on the lookout for any construction and communication regarding changes to the area through social media and email.

"There could be some temporary rerouting and some other things for pedestrians, and we will message that as they come," John Branch, associate vice president of facilities services and campus operations, said.

Construction may cause difficulties for students when it comes time to move into the nearby dorms each semester. Howell said that the parking lot behind Lumberjack landing, Lot 21, is used as a major drop off point for move-in and move-out days. Students will need to look for communication from Residence Life to help prevent congestion and frustration.

"The design has parking spots once the facility is built, so it's not like there won't be any parking spots next to Lumberjack Crossing; it'll just be condensed," Howell said.

"In the master plan, there's a parking garage across the street, and that was intentional, because it's recognized that the more facilities we build, the more streets we close, that we're taking all these parking spaces away; we've got to find somewhere else to increase parking."

The dorm is expected to be substantially completed by 2028. While pricing is not yet confirmed for the dorm, Howell said that affordability is a top priority. Due to many design similarities, the price for students could reflect the price of Lumberjack Landing.

"The residential student population is going to have a new fun and exciting residence hall, and so it allows people to have more options, as we still have the requirement for our first time, first years to live on campus," Howell said.

"I want those students to have a residence hall that meets their needs, not from just accommodations, but also from a budget standpoint, and so by bringing another hall online, it just opens up the possibilities."

Courtesy Photo / **University Marketing Communications**

The SFA Baja SAE team recently completed its first-ever national Baja SAE New York competition, a milestone for the University's engineering program. Despite their newcomer status, team members successfully passed 98 of the 109 items evaluated for their off-road Baja vehicle during the rigorous technical inspection portion of the event.

Dr. Alton W. Birdwell
SFA President 1923—1936

A Word of Welcome and Advice

Perhaps this is your first year in college. The whole atmosphere is different. There will be new privileges, new obligations, new duties. Your happiness will depend upon complete adjustment to the college environment.

We are glad you have chosen this as your college home. You are entirely welcome to Nacogdoches and to our beautiful campus. You will find a good place to work, and, therefore, a good place to grow. The equipment, the faculty, administrative machinery, exist for your benefit.

Hard study is your main business here, but you will make a mistake if you do nothing else. Try to remember that college is an important part of life. YOU MUST LIVE. In addition to your study, therefore, you should take an active part in one or more college activities. Try for the thing you enjoy doing. If you like sports, by all means go out for the college teams. Similarly the Band, the Choral Club, the Dramatic Club, the Debating League will make their appeals. Consider them. Make your choice of one or more of them.

Try to live joyously and abundantly.

Get your schedule of studies arranged quickly and wisely. Waste no time trying to find easy courses or easy professors. Neither exists. Disappointments lurk for those who hunt "snap" courses and easy work. Get under a grown person's load and begin to do it from the first day. Remember you cannot make up for lost time.

Again, LIVE WORK, AND GROW — profit and happiness are sure to follow.

Sincerely,

A. W. Birdwell
1931

This advice was offered to students who entered SFA in the Fall Semester of 1931 by the University's first president, A. W. Birdwell. We believe it is as valid today as it was then.

CELEBRATING
Every
LUMBERJACK

DISABILITY SERVICES

SFA is committed to providing equal opportunities for all students. The office of Disability Services works collaboratively with students and faculty to facilitate specialized support services and accommodations that meet individual needs. Students who experience temporary limiting conditions as a result of injuries, surgeries, or short-term disabilities may also visit this office for access to resources throughout the duration of the condition.

CONTACT US:
sfasu.edu/disabilityservices
VOICE: 936.468.3004
VIDEO PHONE: 936.205.1944
EMAIL: disabilityservices@sfasu.edu
Human Services Building, Room 325

SFA involvement opportunities abound

Courtesy Photo / **University Marketing Communications**

SFA students pose with axes up near the Future Business Leaders of America booth at a fall 2025 Involvement Fair in the Student Recreation Center. Involvement fairs are an excellent way for new Lumberjacks to get connected to student clubs and organizations.

Getting involved is one of the most important steps students can take to make the most of their college experience. Not only do studies prove that students who engage on campus perform better academically, build stronger social skills, better cope with challenges and are more likely to graduate, but involvement also builds the foundation of a meaningful and worthwhile college journey. There are numerous opportunities and programs sponsored by the Office of Student Involvement that allow students to build connections from their very first days on campus.

As the University's official student programming board, Student Activities Association creates memorable campus events that bring Lumberjacks together throughout the year. Students can show their school spirit at athletic events and foster Lumberjack pride through Purple Haze, SFA's premier student fan organization. For those looking to dive deeper into campus life, AXExperience offers opportunities to explore campus traditions to create shared experiences. This is all in addition to the over 300 registered student organizations.

No matter your interest, the Office of Student Involvement can connect you with people who share your passions. And if you discover a passion that isn't represented, creating a new organization is easier than you might think. With a few like-minded students and a great idea, you can help build a new community at SFA.

There is truly a place for everyone, but finding your place on campus and shaping your college experience is a journey, not a destination. Meaningful involvement doesn't always happen overnight. It develops through exploration, curiosity and the willingness to step outside your comfort zone. To get engaged and find your people, attend events, visit organization meetings, volunteer for activities and put yourself out there. Keep showing up — the more you engage, the more you will thrive.

Getting involved can be overwhelming, but the Involvement Center is here to help. Located on the third floor of the Baker Pattillo Student Center, Room 3.102, the center serves as a hub for student involvement and connection. Students can attend annual involvement fairs, explore organizations or schedule a one-on-one meeting with an involvement specialist by emailing jacksgetinvolved@sfasu.edu.

Greek life offers friendship, fun, belonging

At SFA, joining a fraternity or sorority is a great way to find your people and make the most of your college experience. The University's Greek organizations give students opportunities to grow as leaders, build confidence and work ethic, serve others, celebrate the local and global community, and create friendships that last far beyond graduation.

Being part of a Greek organization is more than just something to do while at SFA—it is something that will be part of your story forever. Along the way, you will find support, encounter challenges, and be encouraged to take on leadership roles, give back to the community, and prepare for your future career. While doing all of this, you will make unforgettable memories and meaningful connections.

The Fraternity and Sorority Life community at SFA welcomes all members and provides opportunities for each of the 30 chapters. With every chapter bringing something unique to the campus culture, Greek Life has become a vibrant environment where chapter members can explore their interests, discover their strengths and enjoy a true sense of belonging.

The FSL Office provides engaging, student-centered opportunities that promote academic success, leadership development, service to the community, and connections both on campus and beyond.

SFA is home to four Greek Councils, each offering a different experience, so there is something for everyone. You can learn more about how to get involved at sfasu.edu/student-life/student-engagement.

To help chapters grow and celebrate achievements, SFA uses the STAR Accreditation program, which provides a clear and consistent framework for evaluating chapter success within the FSL community. It outlines expectations for demonstrating growth while supporting continuous improvement and recognizing chapters for success in areas including academics, leadership, service and chapter operations. This framework encourages continuous improvement across all councils and chapters.

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OPINIONS

Routine helps transition to college

Kallin Brantley
Contributing Writer

Starting college feels a bit like jumping into the deep end with your folks saying, "Good luck! Don't drown!" At SFA, those first few weeks hit hard. Everything seems awkward and tiring, kind of overwhelming in a way I did not expect. People always hype up the freedom part, like picking your classes and eating whatever, whenever. Cereal for dinner sounds fun at first. But then you realize no one is around to push you anymore.

Let's agree on one thing: there will be no fussing over homework or drawing the bedtime line. It's all too tempting to get lost on your phone late into the night, convincing yourself that just a quick five-minute scroll won't make a difference. But here's the truth: a single glance can easily turn into an hour of mindless browsing, and it can really disrupt your sleep—unless, of course, you're one of those natural night owls who thrive in the twilight hours like me.

A lot of students act like they have it all together right away. They seem to have friends already and know the campus inside out. It feels like everyone else is ahead while you are still mapping everything out. But honestly, most are lost, too, just figuring out where classes are.

Building some kind of routine takes time. Not overnight or anything. You start with little things, like finding a spot to study that works. Or timing how long it takes to get across campus without rushing like crazy. I signed up for an early class, thinking it was smart. Waking up for it was not so great, though.

Productivity changes a lot from high school. Back then, the schedule was set for you. Now, free time can mess you up if you are not careful. You tell yourself there is plenty of time left, but suddenly it is midnight, and stuff is due tomorrow. That happened to me once or twice.

Having a basic plan helps, though, for studying, eating and even relaxing. It does not have to be perfect. Nobody gets everything right all the time. Just try to stick with it somewhat.

You need to give yourself space to adjust. There is this pressure to love it immediately or make friends fast. But change is slow. Some days feel exciting, while others bring on homesickness out of nowhere. It's normal.

College is more than just classes anyway. The good stuff happens outside, like joining a club or chatting with someone in a lecture. Friendships start in weird ways sometimes.

No one knows exactly how to handle it at first. You experiment and mess up. You miss a deadline, but then you get better at organizing. You get lost on campus, and eventually you do not need the map as much.

Over time, things settle. The campus does not feel so big anymore. Routines start forming without you noticing much. It gets easier, but it is a process.

On-campus living convenient, fun

Mia Card
Contributing Writer

Living on campus has so many benefits for incoming freshmen: special events put on by room assistants that help you get to know the people in your dorm, proximity to the library, student center, professor and advising offices, as well as restaurants.

College can seem intimidating. Living with people you don't know and trying to connect with others and make friends is a big step, but resident housing can make this transition easier.

At SFA, RAs are required to host about three events a semester where residents get to come together and interact. These events range from movie nights to crafts to grab-and-go dirty sodas.

I have lived in Lumberjack Village 1 and 2 throughout my time here at SFA. This Spring semester, I went to two RA events, one in which I got to make sugar scrubs and talk about good studying habits, and the other was a fun pajama movie night!

All these events are made to be beneficial and allow you to bring roommates, suitemates and friends to have a good time! If you're working on breaking the ice with your new roommate, try one of these events!

During my first semester at SFA, I didn't know my roommate, but we ended up going to a few RA events together and became more comfortable with each other and eventually became friends.

Another benefit of living on campus is the proximity to campus amenities. Need to go print out a paper before class? Try the student center or the library. Want to get a coffee with your friends before a study session? Go to Starbucks, located in the student center, or Einstein Bros. Bagels, located in the library.

Even if you are living in dorms on the edge of campus, everything is about a 10- to 12-minute walk away, according to Google Maps.

Living on campus also allows you to be close to your professors' offices. Depending on their office hours, you can go visit your professors for last-minute questions and extra help. In fact, I recommend going to visit all your professors at least once throughout the semester. Showing your face can help you later in the semester if you need it!

Your advisors' offices are also on campus, so if you have questions for them, they're easy to access, too.

Being on campus will also (hopefully) allow you a greater chance to be on time for classes, appointments or study groups. You won't have to worry about finding parking spots; just get up and go. This has saved me when I've hit the snooze button on my alarm too many times, or I forget that I have an advising meeting at 9 a.m.

The on-campus living experience provides convenience, which will help the transition process for incoming freshmen and transfer students. I know I am so grateful for the time I have spent in resident housing and the memories I have made with my roommates and friends.

Schedule helps with school-life balance

Kate Davis
Contributing Writer

Like many students coming into college, I was thrilled at the idea of freedom. I wouldn't have to ask my parents for permission every time I left the house; I could go to bed whenever I pleased without getting lectured on the importance of sleep; and I wouldn't have anyone nagging me about homework. I thought time management would be easy.

I was already used to a busy schedule as a student-athlete. In high school, my days were practically scheduled for me. I went to school from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., went to practice until 6 p.m., ate dinner and went to additional training from 7 to 9 p.m. After that, I would do homework, go to bed and wake up the next morning to do the same thing.

Coming to SFA, I assumed college would feel the same way. Instead, I found myself with more unstructured time than I knew what to do with.

One semester, I had three classes throughout the day, with gaps between them. As an athlete putting roughly 15 hours a week into training, I expected to feel constantly busy. But somehow, I still found myself with stretches of empty time and no idea what to do.

The adjustment was harder than anticipated. In college, no one tells you when to eat, study, sleep or socialize. There are no bells telling you to move to the next part of your day. It becomes incredibly easy to spend all day in your room convincing yourself you still "have time." I learned that the hard way.

During my first year of college, I spent way too much time in my dorm. I'd tell myself I was simply taking a break between classes, then suddenly become aware that I had spent hours doom-scrolling on my phone or taking a nap. I pushed all my assignments off until the last second because I had more time to do them. This quickly became an issue when every assignment was due on the same day.

Then I over corrected. I started using every second of my day productively. If I wasn't at practice, I was in class. If I wasn't in class, I was studying. If I wasn't studying, I was putting extra hours into my training. I burned myself out immediately. I was barely sleeping, I wasn't eating and I was either doing too much or nothing at all.

It became clear that freedom in college only works if you create structure for yourself. I learned that sometimes you have to schedule the activities that you think you don't need to.

For me, that meant intentionally setting aside a gap in between classes to get lunch with a friend, instead of skipping meals because I had "better things to do." It meant finding places on campus I genuinely liked spending time outside of my dorm, like the student center and the STEM building. I dedicated one break between classes to doing productive work and another to socializing or decompressing. The most important change was to stop saving all my work for nighttime.

Using the time I had between classes to finish my assignments or study for exams helped me find balance. My evenings no longer felt like burdensome extensions of the school day. As an athlete waking up at 4:45 a.m., that schedule mattered. I had time to socialize with friends, relax and occasionally do the rarest thing a college student can do: sleep.

As an incoming freshman, I expected college to challenge me academically. I did not expect to be weighed down by the freedom I had so greatly anticipated.

No one immediately knows how to balance school, friends, self-care and other responsibilities when it's been done for them their entire lives. But learning how to use your unstructured time effectively is one of the most important transitions you'll make. Eventually, empty time stops feeling overwhelming and begins to feel like opportunity.

Follow your passions, learn from failures

Emily Lecureux
Contributing Writer

When incoming college students imagine their next four years, they often picture it like the movies: packed football games, huge parties every weekend and a glamorous social life while balancing perfect grades (because it was so easy in high school, right?). Social media only adds to the pressure by showing curated versions of what college "should" look like. But the truth is, there is no such thing as the perfect college experience—it is exactly what you make of it.

Coming to SFA taught me to change in ways I never imagined. It showed me that growth usually happens in moments of uncertainty and discomfort. Most experiences I had—and struggled through—in college ultimately shaped me into a stronger and more confident person. Four years and a lot of lessons later, I can proudly say I love who I am today.

When I first came to college, I learned it was OK to change directions. After about a year of being a marketing major, I realized the path I had chosen was not something I felt passionate about. At first, I was terrified to tell my parents or even my friends, especially while watching them seem so confident in their plans while I was going back to square one. Looking back now, changing my major was easily one of the best decisions I made because it led me to opportunities and experiences I genuinely enjoyed. College is the time to figure out what works for you, not to have every detail of your future perfectly planned at 18 years old.

I also learned that failing courses does not define you. Not everybody is good at every subject in school. I failed Philosophy. Man, I hated that class. When I found out I failed, I felt disappointment fill me like a pool. What was I going to tell everyone? But I did not give up. I took summer courses not only to replace the grade with a better one, but from then on, I was motivated to make only A's and B's. Almost every student experiences setbacks at some point. What matters the most is learning how to move forward, ask for help and keep trying.

Friendships were another area where my expectations and boundaries changed. I came into college thinking I was instantly going to make lifelong best friends through sorority life.

See **LECUREUX** *on* **Page 4B**

Fall 2026 Pine Log Editorial Board

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Seek out new friends, experiences early on

Christian Bramhall
Contributing Writer

Being away from home and in an unfamiliar place can already be a daunting task for new students coming on to campus for the first time, but what's even harder is being away from your friends and family. It can be easy to slide into a place of isolation and loneliness when first arriving. You don't know anyone, and it's scary to put yourself out there, but I am here to tell you it's worth it.

When I first got to campus, I remember my older sister, who had already graduated, telling me to make sure to go to as many events and club meetings as possible. I remember wanting to go to a bunch of different things, but I didn't want to go by myself, and I didn't know anyone yet, so I just ended up staying in a lot. I've since realized how much of a mistake this was as I found myself in a cycle of wanting to go to things and never actually going.

This caused me to end up too isolated for the first couple of years here because I would wake up, go to class, come back to my apartment, do homework and go to bed. This cycle eventually ended up making me more stressed because I didn't have anything to break up the long days of classes and schoolwork, and I would just go home with nothing to do.

This changed too late for me, going into my junior year, when I had finally made some friends through classes and found myself going out more and being a part of campus activities. I walk you through my experience, so you don't end up doing what I did.

Don't hold yourself back because you are scared of going out alone, and don't wait to make friends naturally. Go out there and find them, go to the campus events, go to the dorm events, go to club meetings, do it all. Even if you aren't sure if you want to, I urge you to go. Just because you go to something, doesn't mean you have to stay if you don't like it, either.

I always allowed myself to talk myself out of going to things as a waste of time or I had something better to do, but if you don't put yourself out there, it's really hard to find companionship in college. Classes aren't consistent enough with having the same students trust naturally building friendships, so that is why going to these events is so important.

Clubs ensure that you are around people with similar interests, and you will oftentimes be working on or toward a like-minded goal, helping to strengthen these friendships, as well. For me, this came in the form of broadcast production. I didn't get heavily involved until I started being a part of the news team and like magic, I suddenly found myself always saying "hi" to people passing in the hall or being recognized all over campus by new friends because of it.

I wish I didn't waste two years of my college experience waiting for these experiences to find me and not the other way around, so my main message is to allow yourself to be uncomfortable; allow yourself to put yourself out there. Do this because you deserve to find your people sooner than later, and friends will help ease the transition from living at home and around friends to the new world of college.

Make SFA memories at Lumberjack games

Roman Castaneda
Contributing Writer

Before coming to SFA, I never fully understood why people cared so much about college sports.

I knew that games were important to schools and their students, but I viewed them mostly as entertainment. However, that perspective drastically changed after I began attending basketball games at SFA.

What I expected to simply be a fun night out with friends quickly became one of the most memorable parts of my college experience.

One of the first things that stood out to me was the crowd and atmosphere. Watching an SFA basketball game on television doesn't compare to actually being there in person and living through it. The moment students begin filling the coliseum dressed in purple and white, the energy becomes impossible to ignore.

Every big shot, defensive play and fast break creates a reaction from the crowd that makes you feel like the sixth man on the court. Especially in the student section, there is a unique sense of unity that is difficult to find anywhere else on campus because, for those couple of hours, everyone is focused on the same thing.

Another thing that surprised me was how quickly basketball games became more than just sporting events. They transformed into experiences tied to friendships and memories.

Some of the best moments I have had at SFA so far came from sitting in the student section with friends, reacting to dramatic plays, and celebrating wins together afterward (and the free food from Dilla's, of course!)

Games during the middle of stressful weeks give students an opportunity to step away from assignments and responsibilities for a while. In a college environment where people are constantly busy, that kind of break is unbelievably valuable.

Attending basketball games also increased my appreciation for the athletes representing SFA. It is easy to overlook the amount of work that student athletes put in until you consistently watch them compete.

Seeing the intensity and effort they bring every game makes it clear how much pride they take in representing the university. That pride becomes contagious among students in attendance.

Ironically, my experiences at basketball games have even changed my perspective on other sports at SFA. Before attending basketball games, I had never gone to an SFA football game at Homer Bryce Stadium. I simply never made plans to go.

However, after realizing how enjoyable and memorable the basketball atmosphere was, I now fully intend to attend a football game this coming semester, as well. If basketball could create such an engaging experience, I can only imagine what a packed football stadium would feel like on game day.

That may be the greatest benefit of attending sporting events at SFA—they encourage students to become more connected to campus life as well as each other. Sporting events create school spirit, strengthen friendships and provide memories that students will likely remember long after graduation.

Years from now, I may not remember every assignment or lecture from college, but something I will remember is the excitement of being in a crowd at Johnson Coliseum.

For students who have never attended a game, especially freshmen or transfer students, I would strongly recommend giving it a chance. What may seem like just a game can quickly become one of the most rewarding experiences college has to offer.

The columns on this Opinions Page were written and submitted by members of Dr. Arthur Bremer's Spring 2026 Column and Editorial Writing class.

Take advantage of SFA tutoring resources

Madison Herman
Contributing Writer

If you had told my high school self, stubborn and used to straight A's, that I'd need tutoring in college, I would not have believed you.

In my second year of college, I surprised myself when I realized that everything in my science class was going right over my head. I attended every lecture, took notes of every slide and even made sure not to miss a single quiz, yet I still couldn't understand the material.

One day my professor mentioned that there was SI for his class. I had never heard of SI before, but it turned out to mean Supplemental Instruction. There was a student tutor hand-selected by the instructor who hosted tutoring sessions twice a week in the library, reviewing course material and answering questions.

I knew that SFA had an Academic Assistance and Resource Center (AARC) that offered tutoring, but I had no idea that it could provide personal assistance for specific classes. I never sought out tutoring before, but my grade was too important to ignore, so I decided to begin attending SI sessions.

Regularly attending SI changed everything. Being taught by a student who was well-versed in the subject, having already passed the class with high grades, made it so that they could teach in a way that suited my learning style. They understood where I was coming from, and it felt easier asking them for assistance because I could talk to them as a peer.

I ended that class with an A, something that initially felt impossible due to my struggles earlier in the semester. There would be no way that I could have ever managed that grade if it were not for the incredibly kind student instructor. That positive experience motivated me to return to SI when I took an honors class the following year. It would be counterproductive to ignore such a valuable resource when taking a difficult class.

The AARC provides a large range of flexible support services to accommodate students of every major juggling hectic schedules. It's not just SI; they offer walk-in tables for more immediate assistance, and for those who prefer a more personalized experience, appointments can be booked for in-person or online tutoring. It all depends on the students' preferences, whether in one-on-one sessions or small groups.

It was surprising to realize how many services were available. Initially reluctant to seek help because of my past, I realized that embracing the support offered by SI opened the door to so many opportunities for academic improvement. As someone who always worked deep into the night, stubbornly trying to understand complex material through sheer determination, I never knew how much easier things could be with a little assistance.

The numbers don't lie. Students who regularly attend the AARC have a 92% course pass rate, and over 4,000 students use the center each year. I highly encourage anyone who feels confused or struggles to grasp what their instructor is teaching to seek help from students who have been in the same position. There's no shame in using a service designed for you to help you succeed, even if you were someone who never needed outside help before.

The AARC is available from day one, and using it might be the best decision you make all semester. It truly makes a world of difference.

Embrace uniqueness of college experience

Josalyn Holley
Contributing Writer

When coming to campus, it seemed like a great deal of things were set in stone for me. I had spent years working to be a software engineer, I joined clubs I was already familiar with and I was hesitant to make new friends.

I figured that if I stuck to the plan, I would graduate with no issues in four years.

I did all the work. I found clubs and organizations that I thought would extend my network. I submitted software programs and apps for four semesters. I found a small group of friends that I kept up with as much as I could with my schedule. Everything was right on paper, but I didn't feel right. I felt disconnected from my major, and my organizations were great for a resume, but not for community. I was chasing the ideal "stable" career path while ignoring my actual strengths.

I eventually went to the Health and Wellness hub, which provides amazing resources for students, such as free counseling. I spoke to a counselor, and after an extensive conversation, I was convinced to change my major. I was definitely nervous about it. There are many stigmas surrounding changing your degree path, especially so far along in your educational career. You feel like you're going to "fall behind" or even that you have wasted two years of tuition. But with the help of the counselors and advisors, changing my major was one of the easiest processes I've ever gone through. There was never a step where I had to wonder what to do or figure it out on my own. The entire process was laid out step by step.

Because of them, I am now pursuing a degree that I am definitely more passionate about. I am honoring my strengths in storytelling, strategy and connecting people rather than lines of code. Moving from the uniform logic of software engineering to the creative, fast-paced world of media and communication was the best move for my college career.

I wish I had known that your major is not a life sentence and that it is sometimes just a starting point. The four-year plan is a guide, not a path set in stone. It is okay to change things when they are no longer working in your best interest. When I stopped trying to force myself into a box that didn't fit, my grades improved because I had a real passion for the material. My mood and mental health changed drastically, and I am now a part of actual communities while being in organizations that build my resume.

If you find yourself sitting in a lecture hall wondering why you're there, know that the pivot is a sign of growth, trust your gut and seek out the resources. SFA faculty and staff are more than happy to help you find success in your college career. They can help you find where you truly belong, not find ways to keep you on the path you chose when you were just 17. Changing your major is not a setback; it sets you on the right path.

The Handle is SFA's virtual student engagement platform, helping you make the most out of your college experience.

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Different priorities don't mean 'settling'

Karson Read
Contributing Writer

I got married when I was 19 to the boy I have known since the fourth grade. We held hands through high school, dating until we got married shortly after in 2021. I don't talk about being married a whole lot, especially being a college student. This is not because I am not proud of my relationship, but because it sometimes feels like a separate world.

My friends from class noticed my ring when I was 22, during my very first semester at SFA. It was exciting seeing how curious they were, and I was delighted to share as much as I could with them, though I lacked (and still lack) much of the wisdom required to answer many of their questions.

In the Media and Communication Department, our hearts are set on career building and climbing a ladder of success in a very big industry. Most of the students I have visited with don't plan to "settle down" for quite some time, or at least until they have reached their desired point of success. I still want those same things, but settling down for me was never what people claim it to be.

> *"Pursuing my degree has been an endeavor that challenges me not only intellectually but also socially."*

Being married is a lot of things. I can't begin to put the whole concept into words, and I, for sure, cannot speak for all married people because I have learned enough to know that it looks wildly different for everyone. However, it is the most fulfilling institution I have ever been a part of. "Settling down" was never the idea. For me, it looked more like a desperation to experience my life with someone I couldn't live without. I didn't consider myself a wife in the strongest sense for a long time because that title felt heavy.

Pursuing my degree has been an endeavor that challenges me not only intellectually but also socially. I have been invited to a few events, Chili's and Banita. I love the girls that I am friends with, and I fully intend on staying connected with them as we graduate and spread apart in life, but I really just want to be home.

Home is a night of watching "House" reruns on the bedroom TV. It is playing with two smelly (ugly, stinky, nasty) dogs, a cat and a leopard gecko. Being here feels like stepping away from the world and entering a space where I can "yap" for however long I want to, and there is always someone to "yap" with. He is here, and together we have worked to build something big.

My husband stopped going to school so that we could afford my tuition. I guess you could say I am a sugar baby. In reality, he is really riding on the chance that I could be his sugar mama. Once I win the Pulitzer Prize, this should all be worth it for him. Truly, I could not have made it this far without his support and math skills – considering that I failed college algebra twice alone.

In college, I have learned that people from all walks of life end up on the shores of this educational front. Just because some people don't understand your way of life or couldn't have time for the sacrifices and stories behind you doesn't mean that your path is wrong or right. I married the boy from the fourth grade, and I will still graduate with a degree I worked hard for. Settling down was just the beginning of my life, so it doesn't have to be the end of yours.

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LECUREUX:

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While I have been lucky enough to find the girls I call my best friends and future bridesmaids, I also experienced losing friendships. I learned that not everybody will like me, and that is okay. I also learned how to stand up for myself and my morals, which ultimately also helped shape who I am today. Some friendships are only meant for a season or a reason, and that is okay, too.

College also taught me independence in ways I never expected. I learned how stressful living situations can be, what it feels like to be completely broke and how difficult it can be to balance everything on my plate at once. I also found out how hard it is to find an internship or job when nearing the end of my four years, which at times put me under more stress than I could imagine. But somewhere between the stressful semesters and late-night study sessions, I started discovering my own hobbies, passions, life goals and dreams.

That is the part people do not talk about enough: college is not just about building a resume; it's also about building yourself.

Some students will thrive immediately, I won't lie. Some will struggle to adjust. Some will join organizations, change majors twice or decide college just isn't for them anymore. None of these experiences makes someone a failure. There is no timeline you must follow and no single version of what college is supposed to look like.

So, to all the incoming students at SFA: give yourself grace. You do not need to have everything figured out right away. College life is a rollercoaster of emotions. The "perfect college experience" is simply a myth, and honestly, that is what makes it so much more valuable. The mistakes, challenges and unexpected changes are often the experiences that teach you the most.

Your college journey will probably not look exactly how you imagined it would—but that does not mean it will not turn into something even better.

Students encouraged to participate in leadership, service activities

At SFA, leadership and service are more than extracurricular activities – they are integral parts of the Lumberjack spirit. Your time at SFA is the perfect opportunity to discover your passion, develop your leadership skills and make a meaningful contribution to the community. Take this chance to advocate for causes and support projects that align with your values.

Students are encouraged to think globally and act locally to make a real impact. The leadership and service opportunities provided by the Office of Student Involvement are meant to empower students in their efforts while laying the foundation for a lifetime of service.

Service can take many forms, which is evident by the numerous acts of service our students complete each year. One of the University's most visible traditions of service is The BIG Event, a student-led organization dedicated to community service and engagement. Through The BIG Event's MLK Day of Service and Big Day of Service, hundreds of students are mobilized and sent throughout Nacogdoches to complete service projects for Nacogdoches residents, nonprofits and community organizations. Whether by completing yardwork, painting, window washing or beautification efforts, students are strengthening the community around them, demonstrating what it means to be Lumberjacks and gaining hands-on experience addressing real community needs.

Courtesy Photos / **University Marketing Communications**

Lumberjacks prepare to take part in The Big Event, an annual SFA day of service that allows SFA students to give back to the local community.

Service can go beyond volunteerism. In addition to the days of service, The BIG Event hosts blood drives in collaboration with Gulf Coast Regional Blood Center to assist in their mission. SFA students from Fraternity and Sorority Life raise thousands of dollars for Children's Miracle Network Hospitals through their annual Greek Week fundraiser, demonstrating their commitment to improving lives of children and families in need.

Leadership development is equally important to the student experience at SFA. Students looking to distinguish themselves through their leadership and involvement can be recognized through several prestigious programs and award opportunities. Each semester Omicron Delta Kappa Leadership Honor Society celebrates and recognizes outstanding students. Members are provided with scholarship opportunities, leadership trainings, career development resources, and a national network of accomplished and service-minded peers.

Each spring, student achievement is further recognized and celebrated at the Lumberjack Achievement Awards, which honor exceptional individuals and organizations for their contributions to campus life. Awards such as Top 23 Freshmen, Student Leader of the Year and Student Organization of the Year highlight the impact students make both inside and outside the classroom. Additionally, the Best of SFA program highlights four exceptional student leaders who excel across multiple areas of involvement, showcasing the power of well-rounded engagement.

Whether through service projects, leadership roles, philanthropy or student organizations, SFA provides countless opportunities for students to make their mark. Every Lumberjack has the opportunity to lead with purpose, serve with compassion and leave a lasting impact on the campus, the community, and beyond.

Four students earn 2026 Best of SFA Awards

SFA's Student Involvement office named Colin Anderson, special education senior from Arlington; Emma Patton, chemistry senior from Wylie; Joelie Gentry, media and communication senior from Bakersfield, California; and Ruweida Mohamed, premed junior from Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, as recipients of the 2026 Best of SFA Award.

The awards are presented annually to honor students who excel in the areas of scholarship, participation and leadership in academic and cocurricular activities as well as service and loyalty to the university.

"Our SFA student leaders all deserve recognition for the incredible impact they have on the university," said Dr. Lacey Folsom, associate dean of students - involvement. "Out of all our wonderful students, the committee selected these four recipients for consistently demonstrating the spirit of the Best of SFA Award through their enthusiasm, commitment and hard work."

Colin Anderson

After graduating in May, Anderson hopes to teach abroad in Japan or Ecuador through the Peace Corps to gain the required teaching experience to apply for SFA's Master of Education in special education program with an educational diagnostician concentration.

"My dream job is to end up in a position where I can advocate for students with disabilities and ensure that as many of them as possible are getting the services and support they need to succeed," he said. "While this might start out in the classroom, I hope that I can move up to pass policies to reshape our education system in ways that will benefit all students."

The son of Steven and Bobbi Anderson, Anderson is a founding member for SFA's chapters of the Texas Association of Future Educators and the Student Council for Exceptional Children. He's been active in the Omicron Delta Kappa national leadership honor society, Kappa Delta Pi education honor society, Honor Student Association, Student Volunteer Network and Student Government Association. He was named Volunteer of the Year at the 2025 Lumberjack Achievement Awards.

Locally, Anderson has served as a clinical teacher at Mike Moses Elementary School and an education and animal care volunteer at Ellen Trout Zoo. At SFA, Anderson works as a resident assistant for Residence Life, advertising manager and graphic designer for The Pine Log, and student ambassador for the Department of Education Studies. He also has served as an orientation advisor and Jack Camp counselor.

Anderson has been a member of SFA's School of Honors since fall 2023 and holds the University Scholar distinction.

Joelie Gentry

Gentry, who also is graduating in May, plans to use her media and communication degree and experience as an SFA Athletics social media intern to obtain a media coordinator position with a sports team or company and work her way up to her dream job of marketing director.

"In addition to my dream job, I hope to use my own social media as a platform to offer support and advice to college students who are working to get themselves through college and balancing a lot of responsibilities," she said. "I hope I can turn my 'sip. study.slay' Instagram page into something big one day."

Gentry, the daughter of Jessie Shaff, has participated in SFA's MLK Day of Service and The Big Event to help clean up local parks, streets and trails. As a member of Sigma Lambda Gamma National Sorority, she's made wellness kits with cards for those in need, volunteered at the Nacogdoches Animal Shelter and participated in a voter registration drive.

Through the Multicultural Greek Council, Gentry has volunteered as a gardener at The Village Nac, a faith-based community of tiny homes for those experiencing mental health struggles and homelessness. She was named Volunteer of the Year at the 2024 Lumberjack Achievement Awards.

Locally, Gentry has worked as a shift lead at HTeaO and a client relations specialist at Spirit Outfitters. At SFA, she has served as a Jack Walker and an orientation leader.

Ruweida Mohamed

After graduating in May 2027, Mohamed plans to attend medical school and continue building on her academic and research experiences in biology, chemistry and allied health.

"My long-term goal is to become a physician specializing in cardiology or cardiothoracic medicine," she said. "My plan is to return to Nacogdoches and serve rural areas, where access to specialized health care is limited. I want to provide high-quality cardiovascular care, improve early detection and prevention, and help reduce health disparities in rural communities."

Through SFA's chapter of the American Medical Student Association, Mohamed participates in community outreach activities, including visiting local nursing home residents to promote social connection and well-being. Through SFA's MEDLIFE student chapter, she is taking a service-learning trip to Peru to provide medical support, health education and community outreach to underserved populations. At the Islamic Center of Nacogdoches, she serves as a young adult leader to organize activities that strengthen community relationships and support youth development.

At SFA, Mohamed works as a student assistant at the Office of International Programs to help support international students as they transition into a new country and academic environment. She also serves as the president of SFA's International Student Association chapter.

Mohamed, a member of the Pre-Health Program Leadership Council, was selected as a scholar for The University of Texas at Tyler School of Medicine's Pathways to Medicine early assurance program, which prepares 40 students each year from local colleges and universities for a successful career in the medical field.

Emma Patton

Patton, daughter of Jenny and Lee Patton, plans to take a gap year after graduating in May to work as a medical assistant in emergency medicine while she applies to physician assistant school.

"After completing PA school, I plan on continuing to work in emergency medicine, with the ultimate dream of opening my own practice in family medicine," she said.

A former medical assistant at Warthan Dermatology Center, Patton received the STEM Research Excellence Scholarship in 2026. She also has served as committee chair of the Pre-PA Organization Executive Board.

Along with volunteering at the Family Crisis Center of East Texas, Patton helped raise $34,000 for the center as vice president of philanthropy for Alpha Chi Omega sorority. Through Omicron Delta Kappa, she assisted with Family Fun Day, an event that helps East Texas children get adopted, and the Leaders of Tomorrow Crew, which led leadership workshops for East Texas students. She's also a member of the Order of Omega Greek honor society and National Society of Leadership and Success.

Courtesy Photo / **University Marketing Communications**

SFA's Student Involvement office named Colin Anderson, special education senior from Arlington; Emma Patton, chemistry senior from Wylie; Joelie Gentry, media and communication senior from Bakersfield, California; and Ruweida Mohamed, premed junior from Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, as recipients of the 2026 Best of SFA Award.

A Jacks Get Involved student assistant, Patton also serves as lead Jack Walker and as an SFA Delegate under the direction of the university president and first lady to help host SFA's prestigious events. In 2025, she was named Greek Woman of the Year and Emerging Student Leader of the Year.

Nacogdoches County Democrats

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Fraternities, sororities focus on philanthropy

By Alessandra Bartolo
Contributing Writer

Every year, SFA fraternities and sororities host events for their organizations, often raising thousands of dollars, while creating impact and bringing awareness to social issues. To students involved in SFA Greek life, the commitment to a philanthropy plays a major role in shaping both campus culture and community impact.

Though there are multiple fraternities and sororities on campus, philanthropy is one of their main priorities and can be the reason someone decides to join one over the other.

"I chose this fraternity because of the brotherhood and opportunities they present to everyone. We have over $15 million in scholarships given away each year, but our brotherhood is the most important," Cameron Headley, a brother of Phi Delta Theta and a freshman in agribusiness from Lufkin, said. "We have a philanthropy; it is for ALS. Specifically, the Lou Gehrig Foundation. Lou Gehrig was a famous baseball player who was diagnosed with ALS, and so we picked up that philanthropy."

Phi Delta Theta has been supporting ALS for around five years. The fraternity tries to host events at least once a month. Events range from hosting cookouts and sand volleyball tournaments to selling and giving away items to bring awareness to their cause and raise support. 100% of their profit goes into the organization to help raise additional awareness.

For SFA Greek Life, it's not just the fraternities who are committed to raising money and awareness to their philanthropy but the sororities, as well.

"Zeta Tau Alpha has been committed to breast cancer education and awareness since 1992; we have also been partnered with the American Cancer society for around 30 years," Ally Wiedman, a junior elementary education major from Houston and the vice president of philanthropy for Zeta Tau Alpha, said.

"All of our active members are involved within participation with our philanthropy. We hold a major philanthropy event every semester, along with additional smaller events to support breast cancer education and awareness like our pink out games."

When it came down to choosing their philanthropy, it was because it aligned with their mission of empowering women through knowledge and health advocacy. They don't just emphasize raising money but also spread awareness about early detection. The sorority raises awareness throughout the year by participating in "Making Strides Against Breast Cancer" walks and raised over $27,000 over the last two years and $8,000 during the spring semester.

Theta Chi is one of the many fraternities on the SFA campus and is best known for its military heritage. Theta Chi is partnered with the United Service Organizations because both organizations focus on U.S service members, especially moral transitions to civilian life, and honoring sacrifice.

"We have members that are related to military members and their families," Cooper McDaniel, a brother of Theta Chi and a senior business marking major from Houston, said.

Theta Chi hosts a week of events for the USO. Each member participates in the events including their biggest event of the week, GI Theta Chi, an event dedicated to their philanthropy campaign which raised $1,500.

SFA's fraternities and sororities not only provide community for the individuals involved but also are dedicated to their communities through raising awareness and helping their community.

"We believe heavily in campus involvement and spreading love to everybody, no matter where you are or where you come from." Angel Trevino, a freshman business communication major and a brother of Theta Chi, said.

We bleed purple!

Courtesy Photos / **University Marketing Communications**

(Top) Purple Haze is the nickname for the student cheering section at all Lumberjack sporting events. Every student is a member of Purple Haze. (Bottom) AXEperience is the organization responsible for preserving and promoting the spirit and traditions that make the Lumberjack experience unique.

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Contact SFA Student Government!
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STUDENT GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION

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The Student Government Association is a student led organization that acts as the official voice of the student body at SFA, representing their interests to school administration, faculty, and stakeholders.

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ACADEMICS

SFA breaks ground on ACE building

Courtesy illustration / **University Marketing Communications**

SFA broke ground for the new Arnold Center for Entrepreneurship building June 22. Made possible through the generosity of the Arnold family and support from the University of Texas System and the State of Texas, the center will serve as a hub for innovation, workforce development, applied research and economic growth across East Texas. The two-story, 39,170-square-foot building will offer immersive and flexible spaces tailored to modern entrepreneurial education, including simulated learning environments, dedicated co-working spaces and innovative labs. It also will feature a multipurpose LED volume production studio for entrepreneurial ventures and collaborative projects.

Academic colleges reorganized for visibility

Program budgets set to benefit

By Bethany McWilliams
Editor-in-Chief

The former James I. Perkins College of Education was not only home to students hoping to one day become school teachers and administrators but also aviation majors and pilots, students completing their doctorate of philosophy — even student artists of interior design were included under the education umbrella. After a year's long effort, this is no longer the case. To help students find their major and effectively support the programs offered at SFA, the Division of Academic Affairs has reorganized the six academic colleges. Four of the colleges will retain their names, while two will receive new ones to better reflect the programs housed within them.

"[For] the average student who wanted to be a pilot, who wanted to be interior design, or even hospitality, culinary, I don't know that they would go to a university's website and think 'I should look in the College of Education,'" Dr. Jordan Barkley, provost and executive vice president for academic affairs said.

Under the previous structure, not every program was big enough to have its own college, so they found themselves under colleges that were not the best fit, he said.

"Of course, the ultimate goal of the reorganization was twofold," Barkley said. "I wanted to make sure that things were easily found and made sense where they were, and two, I wanted them resourced appropriately."

While the number of colleges remains the same of before, the James I. Perkins College of Education was center focus and separated into its different studies. Allied Health and Family Sciences will move into the newly created College of Health Professions, while Aviation, Construction Management and Interior Design will move into the College of Sciences and Mathematics. Social Work and Psychological Sciences will join the College of Health Professions, as well as Nursing. As for the rest of the James I. Perkins College of Education, the remaining studies will be combined with the College of Liberal and Applied Arts to be renamed the James I. Perkins College of Education,

See **CHANGE** *on* **Page 2C**

Arthur Temple College of Forestry and Agriculture
- Forestry
- Agriculture
- Geospatial Sciences

James I. Perkins College of Education, Humanities, and Social Sciences
- Education Studies
- Education Resources
- Media & Communication
- English & Creative Writing
- Government & Sociology
- History
- Military Science
- Language & Cultural Studies

Micky Elliot College of Fine Arts
- School of Art
- School of Music
- School of Theatre & Dance

Nelson Rusche College of Business
- Accounting: Accounting, Business Law
- Economics & Finance: Economics, Finance, Banking
- Entrepreneurship & Applied Business: Entrepreneurship, Sports Business, Hospitality Administration, Business Communication
- Management & Marketing: Management, Marketing, Human Resource Management, International Business

Colleges of Sciences and Mathematics
- Aviation
- Construction Management
- Interior Design
- Computer Science
- Biology
- Chemistry & Biochemistry
- Geology
- Earth Sciences
- Astronomy
- Pre-Engineering
- Mechanical Engineering
- Electrical Engineering
- Mechatronics Engineering Technology
- Engineering Physics
- Physics
- Mathematics
- Applied Statistic
- Mathematics Education

College of Health Professions
- DeWitt School of Nursing
- School of Social Work
- Allied Health Studies
- Family Sciences
- Psychology

Icons courtesy of **Flaticon.com**

SFA welcomes inaugural dean of College of Health Professions

By Bethany McWilliams
Editor-in-Chief

The slow pace of Nacogdoches is a stark contrast to the busy life left behind in New York by the inaugural dean of SFA's newest academic college, the College of Health Professions. Growing up in western Massachusetts, she moves back into the quiet sounds of rural life as she takes on a new but not at all unfamiliar role.

Alongside the reorganization of the academic colleges by Academic Affairs, the creation of the new college needed a dean who could advocate for the needs of the students. Dr. Elisabeth Ploran, formerly a professor and the associate dean of student success and belonging at Hofstra University in Hempstead, New York, has been selected to lead the vision of the college. While her new role was announced May 16, Ploran's work began in July sorting out the nuts and bolts to prepare for the upcoming 2026-27 academic year as she was in the process of moving to Nacogdoches with her husband and son.

"I had started looking for dean positions, but I was having trouble finding the right combination of programs," Ploran said "When I saw the position profile, I was so excited about the combination of programs, and then I stopped and went 'Where is this university? How do I pronounce that town?'"

Bethany McWilliams / **The Pine Log**

Dr. Elisabeth Ploran, dean of the SFA College of Health Professions, is beginning her tenure at SFA this fall. "What I found when I got here was that everyone is so lovely and nice," Ploran said.

Ploran's location didn't prevent her from considering the opportunity in Nacogdoches. An extensive search was held involving 63 applicants, where the top four applicants came to the SFA campus to present to faculty and staff. Ploran's experience in her field was just one of many reasons for her selection as the new dean.

"My team and I are convinced that she has the desire to lead this new college. She has the background to lead the new college," Dr. Jordan Barkley, provost and executive vice president for academic affairs, said. "I think her clinical psychology background helps her automatically focus on mental health concerns, especially in rural areas, and so she's coming to us ready to help SFA begin launching rural health initiatives, so that is one of the focus areas that she's going to have, and ultimately she connected with the faculty and staff and campus stakeholders better than the other three, but I will say all four of them were exceptionally well qualified."

Ploran has a doctorate in cognitive neuroscience and has researched topics such as perceptual decision making and spatial navigation and a post-doctoral fellowship, where she moved into applied cognition. Her interest and studies of neuroscience and her role as the dean of student success and belonging at Hofstra has only furthered her expertise. This interest in neuroscience shifted into thinking about human performance and how students are performing in education.

"Now in terms of my interests, really is a focus on student success. It's a focus on our students who are performing at the top of their game. How do we get them into wherever they want to go, whether that's grad school or certain careers or certain positions? For those students who are in the middle, who maybe are performing just fine, but they haven't found their way yet. How do we help them find their way? How do we help them find their way into a career that they feel good about and excited about, and that will feel fulfilling?" Ploran said. "And then for our students who are struggling for whatever reason, are we doing our best to support them? Do we know what kinds of support they need? Sometimes it's academic, but sometimes it's financial. Sometimes it's social. Sometimes there's all these sorts of different reasons why students struggle."

While the vision for the college is clear, it is Ploran's role that allows the school to come together. Ploran works with the faculty and staff of the college to put together the official policies, guidelines

See **DEAN** *on* **Page 2C**

Friendships cultivated while studying abroad

Linnea Maddux
News Editor

Narrow stairs, stracciatella and city bikes will never fail to remind me of my time exploring the Netherlands with a score of my peers in the Arthur Temple College of Forestry and Agriculture and our two faculty leaders, Dr. Brian Oswald and Dr. Michael Maurer. Most of all, the experience challenged me to see the relationship between people and the environment through a new lens, exposing me to hands-on horticulture and forest management strategies that span beyond my environmental science background. I boarded the plane expecting to learn about Dutch forestry and sustainability, but I landed back in Texas two weeks later having learned just as much from the country's history, culture and people as I did from the landscapes themselves.

Some of the most impactful moments had little to do with trees or plants at all. Walking through Camp Amersfoort and later visiting the Anne Frank House transformed stories I had only encountered through history books and historical fiction into tangible places. As someone who spent years captivated by historical fiction novels of World War II, standing where those events unfolded was both sobering and deeply moving. The experience reminded me that history is not confined to museums; it is woven into forests, churches, city streets and monuments, influencing the way a country remembers its past. Even climbing the tower in Amersfoort, with church bells echoing across the city, reinforced the feeling that centuries of history are still very much alive in the Netherlands.

As an environmental science student, I was equally fascinated by the Dutch relationship with nature. Whether biking through Hoge Veluwe National Park, visiting campgrounds that oddly resemble small villages, or learning about the country's royally recognized flower industry, I began noticing how seamlessly nature was incorporated into everyday life. At first, I struggled to understand the idea of investing so heavily in breeding ornamental flowers destined to last only a short time. The more I learned, the more I appreciated how environmental stewardship takes many forms. While my education has largely emphasized conserving natural ecosystems, the Netherlands underscored the value of centuries of horticultural tradition alongside innovation and sustainability. It left me wondering if the respect we show nature during recreation should be the same respect we carry into our everyday lives.

Of course, the places themselves only tell part of the story. Some of my favorite memories came from the people beside me. Somewhere between navigating city streets by bicycle, searching for water at restaurants, laughing over bowls of stracciatella gelato and spontaneously jumping into the freezing North Sea, a group of classmates became close friends. Those unplanned moments reminded me that studying abroad isn't simply about the Instagram post or checking an item off your bucket list. It's about sharing unfamiliar experiences with people who quickly become family, discovering new perspectives together and returning home with stories that are impossible to separate from the friendships behind them.

Looking back, I don't remember every museum label or every lecture we attended. Instead, I remember daily market runs to Albert Heijn, Amsterdam's impossibly narrow staircases, miles of bike paths winding through forests and cities, and conversations that stretched long after each day's itinerary had ended. Before leaving for the Netherlands, I was anxious about stepping into an unfamiliar country with people I barely knew, navigating a culture completely different from my own. But by having the courage to say yes, I found that the people I once passed in the hallway without a second thought became the ones encouraging me to jump into the freezing waters of the North Sea. I now realize the trip taught me much more than forestry, horticulture and environmental management. It reminded me that growth rarely happens within the boundaries of comfort and is only amplified by strong mentors and ambitious peers alongside me.

SFA business students tour Spain, Potugal

Courtesy Photo / **University Marketing Communications**

Nearly 50 students from SFA's Nelson Rusche College of Business participated in an intensive, faculty-led study abroad program in Spain and Portugal May 10-21.The group is pictured during its tour of Toledo, Spain.

Nearly 50 students from SFA's Nelson Rusche College of Business participated in an intensive, faculty-led study abroad program in Spain and Portugal May 10-21.

Led by Dr. Matthew Lindsey, chair of the Department of Management and Marketing, and Dr. Mikhail Kouliavtsev, chair of the Department of Economics and Finance, the experiential learning trip bridged classroom business theory with real-world international operations across the Iberian Peninsula.

"Programs like this are vital because they push our students to apply academic frameworks in entirely unfamiliar environments," Lindsey said. "Watching them move past their comfort zones to engage directly with global executives and evaluate complex, historic business models is incredibly fulfilling. They return to Nacogdoches with an elevated level of self-reliance and a global mindset that will give them a distinct competitive edge in the job market."

The journey took students from the grand boulevards of Madrid and the sandstone streets of Salamanca to the historic coastal hubs of Porto and Lisbon. Throughout the tour, students engaged in a rigorous itinerary that combined high-level corporate site visits, historic trade exploration and hands-on cultural immersion workshops.

Students received an exclusive guided facility tour and participated in a mentorship session at the Amazon España corporate headquarters in Madrid with SFA alumna Ana Romero '16, who works at the international corporate center.

"With the Amazon visit, it was very motivating to see what your corporate life can look like if you really apply yourself in college and in the early years of your career," said Gavin Bock, sophomore management major from Wimberley. "It was cool seeing how an SFA alumna was able to be successful."

Ashley Hale, senior finance major from Orange, noted how the corporate encounter reshaped her career ambitions.

"We had the opportunity to speak with a former SFA student who now works at Amazon in Madrid, and hearing her experiences was very inspiring," she said. "It was motivating to see someone from our university successfully working internationally and adapting to a global business environment. Personally and professionally, this trip encouraged me to think more globally about my future."

In addition to modern e-commerce giants, the curriculum emphasized how historic firms leverage heritage as a competitive advantage. Academic site visits included a production and curing analysis at the Tienda Julián Martín Iberian ham factory in Guijuelo, a deep dive into centuries-old bilateral trade agreements at the Burmester winery in Vila Nova de Gaia, and a study of traditional, quality-driven manufacturing at the centennial Conservas Pinhais & Cia sardine cannery in Matosinhos.

The structural contrast between fast-paced American commercialism and the deeply relational, intentional Iberian business paradigm challenged students to shift their perspectives on global management.

"Before this trip, most of my understanding of international business came from textbooks and classroom discussions," said Colby Feece, senior management major from Sachse. "Actually experiencing it in person gave me a much clearer perspective. The trip helped me realize that successful business internationally is not only about numbers or efficiency but also about understanding cultural expectations and communication styles. In many European markets, tradition and authenticity can be just as important as efficiency and scale."

The profound personal growth that stems from navigating international environments was a recurring theme among the participants, many of whom were traveling outside the United States for the first time. From analyzing tile painting at the historic Fábrica Sant'Anna in Lisbon to navigating complex metropolitan transit systems, the trip served as a laboratory for building professional agility.

"Seeing businesses and institutions in Spain and Portugal showed me that business is global," said Travis Gilliland, junior entrepreneurship major from Spring. "Personally, I learned that I can handle being outside my comfort zone better than I thought. Professionally, I learned that I need to think bigger. To be successful internationally, I would need to listen first, learn the culture and adapt my strategy instead of assuming the American way is always best."

By directly connecting East Texas students with global markets and thriving alumni abroad, the Rusche College of Business continues to fulfill its mission of creating world-ready professionals.

"Overall, this study abroad experience gave me memories and lessons that I will carry with me for the rest of my life," said Makenna Burkhalter, senior international business major from Rusk.

"I loved sharing this experience with such a great group of people, and it made me proud to be a Lumberjack."

Courtesy Photo / **University Marketing Communications**

The Dr. Bill and Barbara Gandy Makerspace in the Cole STEM Building is unveiled July 16. Pictured (from left) are Dr. Kimberly Childs, dean of the College of Sciences and Mathematics; Dr. Neal Weaver, SFA president; and Barbara and Dr. Bill Gandy.

SFA College of Sciences, Mathematics makerspace named for Gandy family

SFA faculty, staff and students along with members of the Gandy family and the Nacogdoches community celebrated the unveiling of the Dr. Bill and Barbara Gandy Makerspace in SFA's College of Sciences and Mathematics at the Cole STEM Building July 16.

"One of the reasons I feel so connected to SFA is because I got a really wonderful education here," Bill Gandy said. "We're glad to give back."

Bill, a 1968 SFA graduate and retired dentist, and Barbara also have invested in theUniversity through donations to athletics, fine arts, SFA Gardens and scholarship programs.

"This incredible addition to our STEM college is part of the Gandy family's never-ending commitment to make SFA a better place," said Dr. Neal Weaver, SFA president.

One of several makerspaces on campus open to all SFA students, the Dr. Bill and Barbara Gandy Makerspace offers students a gathering point, cutting-edge technology and mentor help to apply science, technology, engineering and mathematics concepts to construction, electronics, robotics, woodworking, metalworking, laser cutting and programming projects. An upcoming expansion of the facility and additional equipment will help it serve more students who are working on projects ranging from coursework to entries for national competitions.

"How fotunate we are to have donors who care so much about our students and believe in them," said Dr. Kimberly Childs, dean of the College of Sciences and Mathematics. "Bill and Barbara make sure our students have what they need to be successful."

Though mostly reserved for SFA student use, the makerspace also hosts children attending summer camps. To learn more about SFA's College of Sciences and Mathematics, visit sfasu.edu/cosm.

DEAN: Ploran excited to settle in Piney Woods

From Page 1C

and structure of departments, the wider message of the college and preparing to assist students through advising and helping students who had previously been under other colleges adapt to the identity of the College of Health Professions.

"My job is to make sure that students have as many opportunities for their development as possible within the mission of the college. Then on the flip side, it's really as a guarantee of their experience, so some of that is getting you through your program of study on the optimal timeline and with minimal disruption," Ploran said.

"It's to make sure that at the end of the day, our students are well cared for, that their experience at SFA is as seamless as it possibly can be, and as fair as it possibly can be. It's creating the opportunities, and then making sure that everyone has access to them, and everyone can make it through them in one piece."

As Ploran cares for her students, she also cares how her family was affected by the new change, bringing both her husband and son to Texas for her interview to make the choice as a family. While she knew very little about Texas before taking on the position, she has felt a southern hospitality akin to no other.

"I felt nothing but embraced and comfortable and cared for. So hopefully that impression is true, and will remain true, but I left that interview weekend feeling really good about the University," Ploran said.

"It's always so exciting to have an opportunity where you're joining a place that's, you know, on this great upswing, and there's so much going on, and then to have it in a place that is calmer than New York."

When taking on a life change as big as becoming a Texan, Ploran has a motto that helps guide herself, her family and students who come by her office.

"I think it's a good one for students to think about, and our household phrase is, "Choices were made. Things do not happen by chance. Sometimes they do, but very rarely. There was a choice made somewhere.

"Many of those choices turn out either good or completely neutral. That's great, right? Sometimes bad things happen, and instead of blaming the universe or instead of blaming other people, right? 'Choices were made' forces you to reflect on what choices it took."

While Ploran is intensely passionate about her people and her field of study, she also shares a love for gardening, board games, knitting and sewing, as well as reading and learning languages.

CHANGE: Academic reorg maintains number of colleges while balancing SFA resources

From Page 1C

Humanities, and Social Sciences.

"My marching orders, if you will, from the president, when I arrived was 'I really would like some new college configuration. We probably need something that focuses on health-related programs, but I don't want seven colleges, so you can't create a new one. You can reconfigure existing,'" Barkley said.

Since the endeavor to reorganize the academic colleges has begun, Academic Affairs has been on the lookout for deans for these colleges. The renamed Perkins College of Education, Humanities and Social Sciences will be under the direction of Dr. Dustin Knepp, previously dean of the College of Liberal and Applied Arts.

The new College of Health Professions has brought in Dr. Elisabeth Ploran from Hofstra University in New York, where she served as a professor as well as the associate dean for student success and belonging.

The reorganization benefits the budgets of the departments and programs inside of the new and old colleges, according to the provost. Instead of competing for funding alongside programs that don't match each other's needs, programs will no longer have to compete alongside separate fields of study. If a college is moved within the reorganization, then it won't be moved without its budget. The new budget will take effect in the new fiscal year,and will be led by Tricia Cain, budget director for academic affairs.

"You're the School of Nursing and you are set inside a college of sciences and mathematics. You're vying with the hard sciences, you're vying with mathematics and statistics and computer science and engineering for resources versus, well, what if I pick all of the health professional programs and put them in one place and give them a dean who can now advocate for resources for all of the related programs?" Barkley said. "The intent is to do no harm."

Students will be relatively unaffected by this change, aside from finding themselves in a building they may not have previously frequented, he said. The purpose of the reorganization is to improve how the departments are funded as well as make it easier for students to connect to their desired field of study and reduce the number of times a student changes their major by providing similar programs within the same college.

"This was done in an attempt to help students connect with majors more easily, so it's easier to find a major," Barkley said. "There's nothing magic about the titles of the colleges. This really was, 'how do we take what we already have, package it, so that students can find it?' And also this provides a framework for SFA to grow."

SFA broadcast journalism students tour major Texas media outlets, visit with pros

Broadcast journalism students from SFA's Department of Media and Communication recently toured major media outlets in Dallas-Fort Worth and Houston, gaining firsthand insight into career opportunities awaiting them after graduation. The tours were provided, in part, by grant funding from the Academic Affairs AID Grant.

Led by Dr. Casey Hart, professor in the Department of Media and Communication, 13 students participated in the trip to Dallas-Fort Worth during the fall semester, and nine students participated in the Houston trip during the spring semester.

"These trips gave our students a chance to step inside real newsrooms and production studios, see how the work actually happens and connect with professionals in meaningful ways," said Dr. John Allen Hendricks, professor and chair of the department. "We're truly grateful to the Academic Affairs AID Grant through the Office of the Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs for making these kinds of hands-on, career-shaping experiences possible for our students."

The students who participated in the Dallas-Fort Worth trip toured the WFAA-TV station and AMS Pictures.

WFAA-TV, one of Texas' oldest television stations, is known for its strong local and investigative journalism and produces multiple daily newscasts. Natalie Haddad, a 2017 SFA graduate and Emmy award-winning reporter, is a staff member.

At AMS Pictures, a Dallas-based production company, the students learned about the importance of helping clients reach their goals through creative storytelling.

"At WFAA-TV, our students learned about the history of broadcasting in Texas, toured the cutting-edge broadcast facilities, sat in on a live broadcast, learned how investigative journalism works and discussed the ethical considerations connected with investigative journalism," Hart said. "They also learned about how the news, sales, commercial production and management teams all work together in the media industry. Finally, they had the opportunity to network with many WFAA personalities and insiders, hopefully opening doors to our broadcast journalism majors.

"Since our program balances news production with corporate and commercial production, AMS Pictures was a perfect company for our students to tour," Hart continued.

According to Faith Fuller, the tour provided a glimpse into her future.

"It was cool to see my career goals in the real world," Fuller said. "I liked seeing real people work in an environment that I've only ever been able to imagine. It opened my eyes to a lot, and I was able to see what positions I might be more interested in when I graduate."

Students on the Houston trip toured Houston Public Media and ABC13.

Houston Public Media operates KUHT-TV, a PBS affiliate and the nation's first public television station, and KUHF-FM, an NPR member station focused on news, talk and public affairs. Students used studio equipment, observed a live broadcast and spoke with reporters covering Artemis II at the Lyndon B. Johnson Space Center.

Students also visited ABC13, one of Houston's oldest and top-rated stations known for breaking news coverage. Iris Rios, a 2016 SFA graduate, is a digital producer and assignment editor at ABC13.

"Our students were treated to a full behind-the-scenes tour of Houston Public Media's operations," Hart said. "They learned a lot about the history of public broadcasting and how public broadcasting operates differently than commercial broadcasting.

"At ABC13, our students received a tour of ABC's top-tier broadcast facilities," he continued. "They were in-studio for a live newscast and even interacted with top on-air talent. Then, they went behind the scenes to learn more about how news directors and assignment editors work closely with the community to learn about news as it happens."

For Alex Enriquez, the tour helped him establish the type of environment in which he wants to work following graduation.

"It was a great opportunity learning the different departments each station had and how their business entity differs from each other," Enriquez said. "Knowing what they have to offer and how they work taught me that I should know what type of company I want to work for and not just the position I want to get into."

For more information about SFA's Department of Media and Communication, visit sfasu.edu/media-communication.

Courtesy Photos / **Department of Media and Communication**

Broadcast journalism students from SFA's Department of Media and Communication recently toured Houston Public Media and ABC13 in Houston and WFAA-TV station and AMS Pictures in Dallas. The tours, provided in part by grant funding from an Academic Affairs AID Grant, offered students firsthand insight into career opportunities awaiting them after graduation.

Aspiring journalists earn state-level awards

Several SFA broadcast journalism students earned awards during on-site competitions at the Texas Intercollegiate Press Association's annual conference and competition held in Denton in March.

Kylie Chandler won first place in feature writing; Bethany McWilliams earned second place in feature photo and honorable mention in press release writing; and Christian Bramhall earned honorable mention in both video news and TV sports writing.

The students were accompanied to the event by Media and Communication faculty members Dr. Casey Hart, professor, and Amy Roquemore, professor in practice.

'This annual event is an extraordinary learning and networking opportunity for our students," Roquemore said. "Not only do they compete with their peers from other institutions, but they also participate in journalism workshops, attend a career fair and learn from professionals in the field they are preparing to join."

TIPA is the oldest state collegiate press association in the nation with more than 50 member institutions of all sizes from across Texas. SFA's student attendees proudly represented all three SFA student media outlets, including The Pine Log newspaper, KAXM-FM and SFA-TV2.

Courtesy Photo / **Department of Media and Communication**

Broadcast journalism students from SFA's Department of Media and Communication successfully competed at the Texas Intercollegiate Press Association's annual conference and competition in Denton last spring. Pictured (from left) are Kylie Chandler, Christian Bramhall, Faith Fuller, Alex Enriquez and Bethany McWilliams.

Ad agency launches this fall

SFA will launch one of Texas' few university-based, in-house advertising agencies this fall, giving students the opportunity to build their portfolios, develop professional skills and produce work for real clients.

Housed in the Arnold Center for Entrepreneurship, the student-powered agency will bring together students from across academic disciplines to offer advertising, branding and marketing support for athletics, fine arts and other campus events, as well as ACE partner businesses and name, image and likeness campaigns.

In addition, Tim L. Wood has joined ACE as its latest entrepreneur in residence following decades of agency experience in marketing and creative direction as well as six years of managing his own freelance marketing services with WoodThink Creative. Throughout his career, he has worked with major brands including The Home Depot, Chick-fil-A and DieHard Batteries. Wood is a graduate of the University of Kentucky's communication program and Miami Ad School's Portfolio Center.

"This startup agency is so completely exciting," Wood said. "The stories we can tell about SFA are amazing, and the students' ability to learn their craft in a real agency environment will give every day an incredible energy. We're going to do great work, learn a lot — me included — and have fun along the way. I can't wait to get started."

Students will develop integrated marketing campaigns for athletics, fine arts, student engagement and other campus partners, working closely with SFA's University Marketing Communications department to ensure brand consistency and maximize each campaign's reach.

MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION

The world of communication is continuously reinvented as new media platforms emerge. At SFA, our media and communication students are prepared for the ever-changing digital world through hands-on learning opportunities with the latest technology, which allows our Lumberjacks to graduate fully career ready.

Our majors learn by doing, creating content and building media skills in state-of-the-art workspaces, including student-run KAXM-FM Radio, SFA-TV2 and The Pine Log newspaper.

- Advertising and Public Relations
- Broadcast Journalism
- Communication Studies
- Journalism
- Leadership
- Mass Communication
- Organizational Leadership
- Risk and Crisis Communication
- Social Media

STEPHEN F. AUSTIN STATE UNIVERSITY
Department of Media and Communication

Model EU teams earns third at national competition in Indiana

SFA's Model European Union team, consisting of eight political science majors and one accounting major, earned third place in the Best Delegation contest during the 2026 Midwest Model European Union in Bloomington, Indiana.

Hosted by Indiana University, the MMEU competition is the nation's largest and second-oldest intercollegiate simulation of the European Union in North America. The purpose of the competition is to provide students with opportunities to practice skills in negotiation, bargaining and professionalism while increasing awareness and knowledge of the EU. This year's competition included 23 teams from 19 universities.

"Our students showed a great sense of composure and commitment in this competition, which is regarded as the largest Model EU program in the country," said Dr. Steven Galatas, SFA associate professor of government and Model EU faculty advisor. "The students developed a greater understanding of the EU's global role and the critical importance of the United States and EU relationship in ensuring peace and stability both in Europe and worldwide."

SFA's team represented Poland, which was chosen through a lottery system. In preparation, the team met regularly to review EU legislature processes and research the country's positions on important or critical issues facing the EU today.

The simulation models the legislative bodies and administration of the European Union. Students use bargaining, negotiation, public speaking and diplomacy skills to pass legislation. In most legislative bodies of the EU, a unanimous vote or a weighted majority is needed.

"My most memorable part of my time at Midwest Model EU was serving in the European Parliament, where I passed and amended directives," said Aurora Williams, political science senior from La Porte. "I was also able to author protective legislation addressing the risks associated with AI-generated imagery. By building coalitions with peers and advisors, I successfully was able to pass directives, make important amendments and get my directive passed."

Additionally, Mia Bradley, political science senior from Lufkin, earned first place in the Foreign Affairs Council as foreign minister of Poland.

STEPHEN F. AUSTIN STATE UNIVERSITY
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS SYSTEM
NACOGDOCHES, TEXAS

official
Your Office of the Registrar Guide

Welcome to SFA! Here is a quick guide to familiarize you with the services our office provides:

FERPA Forms
The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act states your parent or guardian's rights to your educational records ceased when you enrolled at SFA. If you have a parent or guardian who pays your bills or makes decisions on your behalf, however, you may complete a student information release authorization form, which allows our office to work with your parents and to share your educational record. Authorization forms can be completed in the Academic tab in mySFA. If you have questions about the form, contact the registrar's office.

Registration
Registering for classes doesn't have to be confusing – here are some tips to help. Pay attention to registration dates, which will include when registration starts and ends, and learn how to register online. Visit us at **gosfa.com/registration** for information on both. For further assistance in registering, call our Registration Help Desk at (936) 468-1370, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday.

Dropping Classes
If you are feeling bogged down, keep in mind that you're not permitted to drop more than six courses during your entire undergraduate career, including transfer courses. Dropping courses also may cause you to lose financial aid, affect your medical and/or other insurance, and affect your academic status. Deadlines for dropping classes can be found at **gosfa.com/dropping-classes**.

Requesting Transcripts
The easiest way for students to request a transcript is by visiting **gosfa.com/transcript**.

Registration/Transcript Holds
You may occasionally be unable to register or receive a transcript because of holds on your account. These must be cleared before you can register. If you need help understanding your holds, visit the Registration tab of your mySFA.

Proving Good Grades for Insurance Purposes
You may qualify for a Good Student discount if you have commendable grades. Contact your insurance agent for further details to see if they carry such a policy.

Verifications for Insurance Purposes
Students often need to prove they are enrolled in college in order to stay on their parent or guardian's insurance policy. You can get a verification of enrollment on the Academics tab in mySFA, or stop by the Rusk Building, Room 202, with a picture ID during normal business hours.

The registrar's office hopes this guide was presented in a fun and easy-to-read format. It is our desire to serve you the best way possible and reduce stress you may experience during your first year at SFA.

ANNUAL NOTIFICATION TO STUDENTS

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act affords students certain rights with respect to their education records. These rights are:

1. **The right to inspect and review the student's education records within 45 days of the day the university receives a request for access.** Students should submit to the registrar, dean or head of the academic department [or appropriate official] written requests that identify the record(s) they wish to inspect. The university official will make arrangements for access and notify the student of the time and place where the records may be inspected. If the records are not maintained by the university official to whom the request was submitted, that official shall advise the student of the correct official to whom the request should be addressed.

2. **The right to request the amendment of the student's education records the student believes is inaccurate or misleading.** Students may ask the university to amend a record they believe is inaccurate or misleading. They should write the university official responsible for the record, clearly identify the part of the record they want changed, and specify why it is inaccurate or misleading. If the university decides not to amend the record as requested by the student, the university will notify the student of the decision and advise the student of their right to a hearing regarding the request for amendment. Additional information regarding the hearing procedures will be provided to the student when notified of the right to a hearing.

3. **The right to consent to disclosures of personally identifiable information contained in the student's education records, except to the extent that FERPA authorizes disclosure without consent.** One exception, which permits disclosure without consent, is disclosure to school officials with legitimate educational interests. A school official is defined as a person employed by the university in an administrative, supervisory, academic, or support staff position (including law enforcement unit and health staff); a person or company with whom the university has contracted (such as an attorney, auditor or collection agent); a person serving on the Board of Trustees; or assisting another school official in performing their tasks. A school official has a legitimate educational interest if the official needs to review an education record in order to fulfill their professional responsibility. Upon request, the university discloses education records without consent to officials of another school in which a student seeks or intends to enroll.

4. **The right to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education concerning alleged failures by the university to comply with the requirements of FERPA**. The name and address of the office that administers FERPA is:

U.S. Department of Education
Student Privacy Policy Office
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20202-8520

Available for download at **studentprivacy.ed.gov/file-a-complaint**

The following items are considered **DIRECTORY INFORMATION** by the university and the university may disclose any of these items without prior written consent, unless the student notifies the registrar by completing a Request to Prevent Disclosure of Directory Information form in the registrar's office, located in Room 202 of the Rusk Building.

A. Name
B. All addresses, including university issued email address
C. All telephone numbers
D. Major field of study
E. Academic classification
F. Participation in officially recognized activities and sports
G. Weight and height of members of athletic teams
H. Dates of attendance and enrollment status
I. Degrees and awards received
J. Previous schools attended
K. Photograph

For additional information regarding FERPA, contact the registrar's office, or visit **gosfa.com/registrar**.

Hours: 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday • Location: Rusk Building, second floor
Mailing Address: P.O. Box 13050, SFA Station Nacogdoches, TX 75962
Phone: (936) 468-2501 • Fax: (936) 468-2261 or (936) 468-7638 • Email: registrar@sfasu.edu

ACE debuts 'SFA 100' businesses

SFA's Arnold Center for Entrepreneurship has debuted "SFA 100", a new initiative designed to identify and celebrate the 100 fastest-growing Lumberjack-led businesses in the world. Nominations and applications for the 2027 rankings are currently open and will be accepted through Nov. 1, 2026.

The SFA 100 recognizes the success, innovation and contributions of the top 100 alumni-owned businesses that embody the legacy, values and entrepreneurial spirit of SFA and ACE. ACE established the SFA 100 in 2025 in collaboration with Greg Price '80, chief financial officer of Decisio Health in Houston and an angel investor and former judge of SFA's Lumberjack Entrepreneurship Competition.

"The SFA 100 is a transformative milestone for the Arnold Center for Entrepreneurship and our entire university community," said Dr. Todd Brown, associate vice president of academic affairs. "We are incredibly excited to shine a spotlight on the visionary alumni successful entrepreneurial ventures. We are not only honoring their hard work but also inspiring the next generation of SFA students. It is a privilege to finally recognize these leaders and showcase the profound economic impact our graduates are making across the world."

The SFA 100 rankings will be calculated based on each applicant's compound annual growth rate in sales or revenue over a three-year period spanning 2023, 2024 and 2025.

To be eligible for the "SFA 100", companies must meet specific longevity, revenue and leadership criteria. For this inaugural ranking of companies, each nominee or applicant must have been in continuous operation for at least five years as of Dec. 31, 2025, and have generated revenues of at least $200,000 every fiscal year since Jan. 1, 2023.

Furthermore, the business must be Lumberjack-founded, owned or led. Eligible leaders must hold a C-suite title, such as CEO, chair or managing partner, or own a majority stake of 50% or more. Former students who attended SFA but did not formally complete their degrees remain eligible to apply.

The honored companies will be announced publicly at an SFA awards ceremony, increasing businesses' visibility by sharing company names, logos, Lumberjack leadership names, contact information, locations and other self-reported information.

"This initiative is more than just a ranking," said Dr. Hollie Smith, ACE executive director of community partnerships. "By fostering these partnerships, we are creating a powerful network of Lumberjack entrepreneurs and innovation. As an alumnus, I'm so excited to connect with fellow alumni. We are eager to celebrate their resilience and success while building new opportunities for mentorship and growth that will benefit our students and the entire SFA community for years to come."

While waiting to hear back on the "SFA 100", alumni are encouraged to add their businesses to the Lumberjack Alumni-Owned Business Directory, which can be found online at sfasu.edu/ace/business-directory.

The inaugural "SFA 100" list will be unveiled during a special awards celebration in April 2027. Honored business leaders will participate in a luncheon revealing the rankings, deliver keynote speeches, engage in class presentations and network with college deans and SFA leadership.

To ensure the utmost integrity and financial privacy, all baseline financial data is submitted directly to an independent accounting firm, Carr, Riggs & Ingram. The financial data is kept strictly confidential; neither SFA nor The University of Texas System will have access to the raw numbers, and they will receive only the final, verified rankings for the awards.

To fill out an application for your business, visit gosfa.com/SFA100_application. To nominate a business, visit gosfa.com/SFA100_nomination.

To learn more about the SFA 100, visit sfasu.edu/ace/sfa100, or contact Smith at hsmith@sfasu.edu or (936) 468-2988.

FBLA chapter recognized

Courtesy Photos / **University Marketing Communications**

SFA's Future Business Leaders of America chapter was named Outstanding Chapter at the collegiate FBLA National Leadership Conference June 6-8 in Las Vegas. Ty Powers, first-year economics major from Lufkin, also earned seventh place in the Foundations of Economics competition. Pictured (from left) are DJ Baker, human development and family studies sophomore from Nacogdoches; Breanna Stephenson, accounting junior from La Porte; Jayce Scott, first-year finance major from Conroe; Powers; Kaylie Scalf, first-year entrepreneurship major from Rosenberg; and Dr. Marice Kelly, FBLA faculty adviser and assistant professor of business communication in SFA's Nelson Rusche College of Business.

PART-TIME JOB and VOLUNTEER Fair

Wednesday, Sept. 2
11 a.m. to 2 p.m.
Grand Ballroom,
Baker Pattillo Student Center

Find great experiences such as on-campus jobs, volunteer roles, part-time work and internships.

Free for students to attend.

Find more information at sfasu.edu/ccpd/upcoming-events

STEPHEN F. AUSTIN STATE UNIVERSITY
Center for Career Education and Exploration

careercenter@sfasu.edu sfasu.edu/ccpd

RUSCHE COLLEGE OF BUSINESS

14 Business Majors

20+ Areas of Study

13+ Student Organizations

95% Career/Grad Placement

Get involved in one of our many student organizations:

School of Honors helps students develop skills, engage in research

The SFA School of Honors is celebrating over 30 years of enhancing our students' educational experience.

The School promotes the intellectual curiosity of the University's most capable students, enabling them to confront complex issues. The program offers small classes designed to develop critical thinking skills, expand the scope of investigation of a topic and explore issues in greater depth than can be done in conventional classes.

"All students in the School of Honors engage in research, which is a major focal point," said Dr. Michael Tkacik, director of the School of Honors. "Research improves resumes, provides opportunities such as conference attendance, and increases engagement in college leading to improved understanding of material in class as well as increased networking with professors and peers."

Many Honors students have presented their work at professional or academic conferences across the nation, as well as at the annual Undergraduate Research Conference at SFA.

The program endeavors to develop active and thoughtful SFA students by working closely with faculty on challenging, individually tailored topics. The program features small class sections that provide many opportunities for collaboration with professors. Additional intellectually stimulating activities are offered, including Honors living arrangements and study abroad trips.

"While many of our students have directly entered the work world, others have gone on to attend medical school, law school and graduate school at a variety of internationally recognized universities," he said. "Whatever the Honors student's goal, we strive to prepare them for success while sharpening those attributes that make each student an individual."

There are many advantages to School of Honors membership. Honors students are entitled to early registration, have the opportunity to take Honors-only courses and earn the University Scholar diploma. The program has a computer lab, a research center and other services, including free printing, reserved exclusively for honors students.

"These quiet spaces facilitate good study habits, which is the cornerstone of success in college," Tkacik said. "Not everyone who is in Honors uses the facilities, but those who do also find camaraderie amongst their peers and support from the office staff that can serve them later in college and after graduation."

For more information about the SFA School of Honors, visit sfasu.edu/honors or call (936) 468-2813.

First job fair of semester set for Sept. 2

Students seeking professional experiences like volunteer opportunities or a part-time job off or on campus should consider attending the Center for Career Education and Exploration's first career fair of the fall semester during Weeks of Welcome.

The Part-Time Job and Volunteer Fair will be held from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Wednesday, Sept. 2, in the Baker Pattillo Student Center Grand Ballroom. It is free for students to attend.

"Opportunities for professional experiences, ranging from on-campus jobs to volunteering locally or working off campus, will be represented at the fair," CCEE Director April Place said.

"Experiences like these help students learn more about themselves, engage in the local community, explore new career paths and gain transferable skills that recruiters tell us they want in interns and full-time hires. This fair lets you connect with a lot of organizations' representatives all at once." Place added, "Don't be nervous about attending; the recruiters are very easy to talk to."

Students are encouraged to dress in business casual attire and bring a résumé to the fair, though it is not required. The CCEE offers virtual and in-person options for résumé development and reviews via Handshake, its career management platform. Students can also view a list of all employers attending the fair through Handshake. If you are not able to attend due to class, reach out to the employers directly using that list. Sign in to Handshake at https://sfasu.joinhandshake.com/.

The CCEE will offer four additional career fairs this fall: Construction Management and Interior Design Career Fair on Sept. 15; Accounting Career Fair on Sept. 23; All Majors Career Fair on Oct. 14; and Teacher Career Fair on Oct. 30. The CCEE will also be hosting other workshops throughout the semester.

Students needing professional clothing to wear to a career fair or interview are encouraged to utilize the CCEE Career Closet, located on the second floor of the Library, offering a wide range of business casual and business professional clothing. Students can borrow clothing for free, and the CCEE closet partner, VIP Cleaners, takes care of all the dry cleaning between each use.

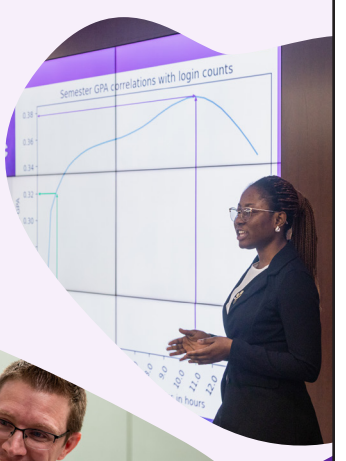
More information about CCEE's fall events can be found at https://www.sfasu.edu/ccpd/upcoming-events.

Wear Purple on Spirit Fridays!

It's never too early to start thinking about your next step.

Research and Graduate Studies empowers you to pursue your career and life goals. **Start planning now.**

Graduate research and teaching assistantships available



Contact us:
(936) 468-2807
gschool@sfasu.edu

SFA Research and Graduate Studies
@Sfa.research.gradstudies

Explore our programs at sfasu.edu/orgs

STEPHEN F. AUSTIN STATE UNIVERSITY
Research and Graduate Studies

ONE COLLEGE.
ENDLESS POSSIBILITIES.

Introducing the James I. Perkins College of Education, Humanities, and Social Sciences

Through the combined strengths of SFA's former Perkins College of Education and the College of Liberal and Applied Arts, you can now benefit from expanded collaboration across disciplines and enhanced opportunities for hands-on learning and research.

Whether educating the next generation, analyzing societal trends, telling powerful stories or leading communities, you'll be equipped to make an impact through the following departments:

- Education Studies
- Education Resources
- Government and Sociology
- English and Creative Writing
- History
- Language and Cultural Studies
- Media and Communication
- Military Science

(936) 468-2803 sfasu.edu/coe Ferguson Building, Room 273

2026-27 University Series announced

Courtesy Photo / **University Marketing Communications**

Zak Mirz, renowned magician, will be one of many artists to perform during SFA's 2026-27 University Series. The series will feature a lineup of nationally acclaimed artists, and all performances will start at 7:30 p.m. in Turner Auditorium, Griffith Fine Arts Building. To purchase tickets, visit sfasu.edu/boxoffice or call (936) 468-6407.

The Fabulous Thunderbirds to kick off series

SFA's 2026-27 University Series returns with a lineup of nationally acclaimed artists. All performances will be held at 7:30 p.m. in Turner Auditorium, Griffith Fine Arts Building.

This season, themed "A Season in Harmony," brings a wide range of performances to Nacogdoches, from Chicago blues and holiday traditions to stand-up comedy, soul-pop and interactive magic. The lineup includes The Fabulous Thunderbirds, Will Hearn's "Grand Ol' Christmas Show," "Seasonal Celebration" with vocalist Christie Dashiell, Pete Lee, Jon Lampley and Zak Mirz.

"It's an honor to be able to bring these incredible acts to our community," said Dr. Gary Wurtz, dean of the Micky Elliott College of Fine Arts. "I think patrons will enjoy the variety and blend of acts that make up this year's season."

Sept. 24 – The Fabulous Thunderbirds

The Fabulous Thunderbirds will kick off the series with "A Tribute to Chicago Blues." Led by legendary harmonica player and frontman Kim Wilson, the performance pays tribute to the Chicago blues sound while showcasing the band's signature style and hits.

Nov. 21 – Will Hearn's "Grand Ol' Christmas Show"

Will Hearn's "Grand Ol' Christmas Show" brings a retro radio-style holiday performance to the stage, featuring Christmas classics, sketch comedy and Americana music. The original production by The Grand Ol' Production Company blends nostalgia and contemporary humor in a lively holiday tradition.

Dec. 5 – "Seasonal Celebration" with vocalist Christie Dashiell

Grammy-nominated jazz vocalist Christie Dashiell joins the SFA Choirs for a collaborative "Seasonal Celebration" performance blending jazz, gospel, soul and choral artistry with expressive storytelling and rich vocal warmth.

Jan. 29 – Pete Lee

Comedian Pete Lee will bring his joyful humor to Nacogdoches. Lee was the first standup comedian to receive a standing ovation on "The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon" and has appeared on "Last Comic Standing," "Late Show with David Letterman," Comedy Central and TruTV.

Feb. 26 – Jon Lampley

Jon Lampley, a trumpet and sousaphone player, singer-songwriter, composer and bandleader, will perform as part of the series. Known for blending jazz, soul, gospel and contemporary roots music, Lampley has performed nightly with "The Late Show with Stephen Colbert" house band and has built a reputation as a dynamic frontman and collaborator.

April 24 – Zak Mirz

Magician Zak Mirz will close the series with an interactive magic performance. A "Penn & Teller: Fool Us" winner and "America's Got Talent" semifinalist, Mirz is known for combining illusions, audience participation and heartfelt storytelling in performances for all ages.

Tickets for new season ticket purchases go on sale Aug. 17. Single tickets go on sale Sept. 1. Reserved seating for University Series performances ranges from $20 to $35, with discounts available for seniors, students and children. To purchase tickets, visit sfasu.edu/boxoffice or call (936) 468-6407.

Wear Purple on Spirit Fridays!

Animation students earn awards

Nine students in SFA's animation program earned awards in the 2026 ACM SIGGRAPH SpaceTime International Student Competition, including first place, a second-place tie and seven honorable mentions. The students were mentored by Benjamin Anderson, assistant professor of animation.

ACM SIGGRAPH's, or Association for Computing Machinery's Special Interest Group on Computer Graphics and Interactive Techniques', SpaceTime International Student Competition is an event centered on the creation of a graphic poster for the SIGGRAPH conference. Students at the secondary and postsecondary levels may submit work based on an annually selected theme using computer-based media. Entries are evaluated by an international panel of jurors, and accepted works are displayed in the competition's online gallery.

Malachiyah Armstrong, senior from Flint, earned first place. Drake Nelson, recent graduate from Conroe, tied for second place.

Honorable mentions were awarded to Brannon Boyd, junior from Aubrey; Carl Andrew, junior from Nacogdoches; Dahlia Gonzalez, recent graduate from Tatum; and Haylen Link, recent graduate from Palestine.

Also earning honorable mentions were Skylar McCrary, senior from Huffman; Stanley Teal Jr., recent graduate from Nacogdoches; and Trey Tamez, senior from Fate.

"This result places SFA among the top-performing schools in the competition's international digital art poster category and reflects very positively on our students and program," Anderson said.

Armstrong and Nelson also were selected through SIGGRAPH's competitive student volunteer application process and attended the SIGGRAPH 2026 conference with Anderson in July at the Los Angeles Convention Center. Student volunteers support conference operations and receive full conference registration, networking opportunities and access to career-development experiences.

"Our students have been actively participating in the conference as SIGGRAPH student volunteers while also engaging with major animation studios and technology companies that have expressed tremendous enthusiasm for our students and our program," Anderson said.

During the conference, Anderson worked with members of the SIGGRAPH Education Committee, mentored SFA students and met with industry partners to expand professional opportunities for students and support the animation program's future initiatives.

SIGGRAPH is an international conference focused on computer graphics and interactive techniques. It brings together artists, researchers, developers, educators and industry professionals working in animation, emerging technology, artificial intelligence, immersive experiences and related fields.

For information about SFA's School of Art and its animation program, visit sfasu.edu/art.

Courtesy Photo / **University Marketing Communications**

Malachiyah Armstrong (right), animation senior at SFA, earned first place in the international 2026 ACM SIGGRAPH SpaceTime competition. Armstrong was one of nine SFA students recognized in the competition.

PINE-ING FOR THE OUTDOORS?

AGRICULTURE & ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE

FORESTRY & GEOSPATIAL SCIENCE

STEPHEN F. AUSTIN STATE UNIVERSITY

ARTHUR TEMPLE COLLEGE OF FORESTRY AND AGRICULTURE

sfasu.edu/atcofa

SPORTS

ESPORTS
■ ESPORTS GAINING POPULARITY AT SFA, ACROSS NATION **2D**

SOCCER
■ STUDENTS REVIVE MEN'S SOCCER CLUB **4D**

ULTIMATE FRISBEE
■ CLUB ENJOYS COMPETITION, CAMARADERIE **6D**

FOOTBALL
■ LUMBERJACKS KICKING OFF 100TH SEASON **7D**

Preseason scrimmage brings out purple pride

Bethany McWilliams / **The Pine Log**

The SFA women's soccer team plays in a preseason scrimmage in preparation for the upcoming season. The Purple and White match was hosted on the SFA Soccer Field Aug 1. Friends, family and other soccer fans filled the stands in purple and white attire to cheer for their Ladyjacks.

Goalie Brandie Musser, a sophomore from Brenham, attempts to block an incoming shot.

Kicked by purple player Elsie Zachry, a sophomore from Fort Worth, the ball flies past Musser and into the goal. The final score was Purple 1, White 0.

SFA students approve athletics fee

By Bethany Boerger
News Editor

The SFA Student Referendum vote regarding a new athletics fee passed on March 3, after two days of online voting. A total of 2,615 students voted in the referendum with 68% voting in favor (1,774) and 32% voting opposed (841), according to Will Stafford, president of SFA Student Government Association, in an email to the student body.

"We are grateful to every student who took the time to participate," said Stafford. "This was a student-driven process, and your engagement reflects the pride and care you have for our University."

The vote will establish an intercollegiate athletics fee, adding $5 per credit hour for current students, capped at 12 hours, beginning in summer 2026. Incoming students starting fall 2026 would pay $40 per credit hour under the same cap.

The money generated by this fee, an estimated $1 million in its first year, changes the way the athletics program is funded, freeing additional funding for other student experiences. SFA President Dr. Neal Weaver has said that the current $11 million athletics budget will not be increased as a result.

"In years past, the proposed fee was simply meant to add funding to athletics. It was hard to get behind that when it was easy to see all the places our own students had need for additional funding support," Dr. Gary Wurtz, dean of the Micky Elliott College of Fine Arts, said in a statement addressed to students, encouraging voting in favor of the fee.

"To put it very simply, if the athletic fee generates $1 million for athletics, then $1 million in tuition dollars that would have gone to athletics will now be distributed to be spent on things other than athletics."

The office of Student Engagement, led by Dr. Lacey Folsom, associate dean of students for student involvement, is slated to benefit heavily from new funds. SFA has not yet made an official announcement on specific the additional funding will be distributed. However, they have emphasized the necessity of student voices in the process.

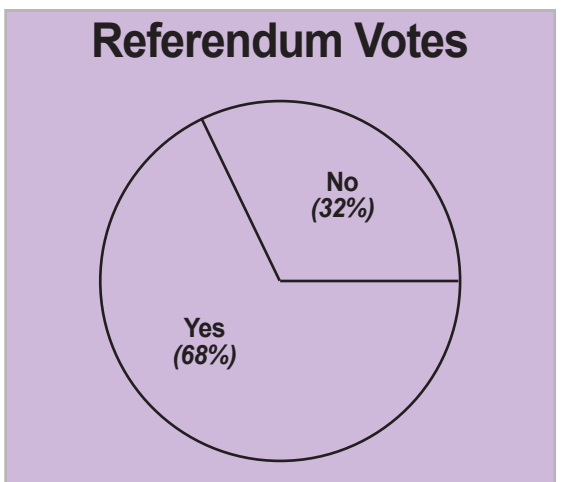
"The truth of it is, we've never had the opportunity to have additional funding, so we don't have a mechanism necessarily in place to ask those questions," said Folsom.

Folsom also discussed the possibility of student town halls and focus groups to help decide on the best way to use the new funding.

Graduate student and veteran Kiel Garrett spoke out against the proposal during the SGA hosted town hall Feb. 23 at the Baker Pattillo Student Center Theatre. Garrett highlighted the reality of many working students, arguing that the "student experiences" that the fee will go toward may not benefit the same students that pay for them.

"A lot of the student population, even if they would get a lot out of it ... they have to pay an extra $500 a semester. I don't know that they would have the opportunity to even utilize those programs," Garrett said.

Garrett's example of a $500 semester cost underscores students' concerns about affordability. The projected cost for current students would be $60 per semester and $480 per semester for most incoming students under this new plan.



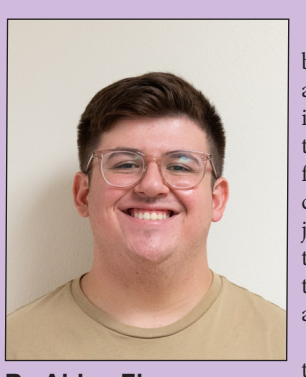
At the same town hall, Weaver also made a series of commitments regarding the financial future of SFA, including not raising dining or housing fees over the next two years and not increasing the athletics budget in the 2026-27 school year.

Weaver described the proposed fee as an effort to re-distribute the financial burden that has fallen on students paying dining and housing fees, which have been "artificially inflated" to cover additional expenses.

As of June 30, SFA had not announced final plans for the distribution of the new funding nor any public measure to receive student feedback.

The Pine Log will continue its coverage of the new fee and its distribution. Students with questions or concerns are encouraged to contact the Student Government Association at studentgovernment@sfasu.edu.

Become part of SFA's winning tradition



By Aiden Fierro
Staff Writer

There's never a bad time to become a Lumberjack, but if you're one of the thousands of freshmen arriving on campus this fall, you're joining SFA at one of the most successful times in its recent athletic history.

Winning was the standard for SFA last school year across nearly every corner of the athletic department. Whether it's football on Saturday afternoon, volleyball in Shelton Gym or basketball inside the Johnson Coliseum, there's no shortage of teams worth following during the school year.

That success was recognized this spring when SFA captured the Southland Conference Commissioner's Cup, awarded annually to the conference's top overall athletic department based on the combined success of men's and women's sports throughout the year. The Lumberjacks finished first in the women's all-sports standings and runner-up in the men's standings, giving SFA enough points to claim the conference's highest honor.

The biggest headline belonged to football. The Lumberjacks delivered one of the best seasons in program history, winning the SLC championship — the program's first since 2010 — before advancing to the FCS quarterfinals for the first time since 2009. Now entering its centennial season, SFA Football has once again become one of the premier programs in the conference.

Basketball also gave Lumberjack fans plenty to celebrate. The men's team earned a trip to the National Invitation Tournament, extending its postseason play against some of the nation's top programs. On the women's side, SFA captured its 20th SLC championship while securing back-to-back conference titles for the first time since 2022.

One of the easiest teams for freshmen to rally behind is SFA volleyball. The Ladyjacks have built one of the most successful programs in the SLC, winning 13 conference championships while becoming a regular participant in the NCAA Tournament. With another conference title and NCAA Tournament berth in 2025, championship expectations have become the norm in Shelton Gym.

Varsity athletics weren't the only teams making headlines.

After a long hiatus, SFA's men's club soccer returned to competition, giving students another opportunity to represent the University while adding another team for fans to support.

Club Baseball enjoyed one of the most, if not the most, memorable seasons in school history. The Lumberjacks won the Great American Regional Championship and advanced to the NCBA Division II World Series.

The club's biggest moment, however, came off the field. During their trip to the World Series, the team stopped at a St. Louis Cardinals game, where the players started the now-viral "Tarps Off" movement by removing their shirts in the stands during the game. The celebration caught the attention of Cardinals fans and organization members, with the team eventually adopting the tradition at Busch Stadium. What started as a fun SFA Club Baseball moment during a postseason trip became a tradition recognized by the MLB.

For incoming students, college is about finding a place to belong. For some, that comes through joining a club, attending a sporting event or becoming part of the crowd and cheering from the stands.

SFA Athletics enters this school year with momentum unlike any other time in recent memory. From conference championships to national postseason appearances, Lumberjack teams have shown what is possible when the student body rallies behind it.

For the freshmen arriving on campus this fall, the opportunity is simple: show up, get involved and become part of the next chapter in SFA's winning tradition.

Built on Sisterhood: Inside SFA Women's Volleyball Club

By Abigail Spraggins
Contributing Writer

At SFA, the Women's Volleyball Club is more than time spent on the court; the community built on teamwork and connection matters just as much as the game itself.

Students with a shared love for volleyball come together to create a space where every level of experience is welcomed. Whether a student played competitively before or is stepping onto the court for the first time, the club is designed to meet them where they are.

"The main mission of the club is to provide a safe space where people can come and find a sense of community while playing volleyball," club President Ayi-Lissa Dotson said. "Everyone is welcome, no matter their experience level."

Campus Recreation sports club coordinator Brandon Hatfield said that this approach reflects a larger purpose behind the sports clubs at SFA. "Sports clubs are about finding community, not just competition," Hatfield said. "Students don't need to be elite athletes; everyone is welcome, whether they're beginners or experienced players."

A sense of inclusion is important for newcomers because joining a club can seem intimidating, especially a sports club where there are varying skill levels, Hatfield said. "The goal is for students to feel like they can walk in and immediately be included."

The Women's Volleyball Club creates an inclusive environment that begins the moment a new player walks into practice. Dotson said she makes a point to personally welcome new members and guide them through expectations.

"I like to introduce myself and allow them to ask any questions they might have," she said. "I try to make them feel very comfortable, so if they need anything, they have a safe space to communicate."

Courtesy Photo / **Women's Volleyball Club**

The Women's Volleyball Club's mission is to provide a safe space for students to find community while enjoying playing the sport.

The club culture is described as a sisterhood built on trust, communication and support rather than competition between teammates. It's important to the women to create a family-like bond where they feel comfortable and have an environment to help them grow.

"The culture of the club is very family-oriented," Dotson said. "[It's] all about lifting each other, standing up for one another and being kind and welcoming."

The balance between learning and competition is built into every practice, including beginner-friendly instructions alongside more advanced drills and scrimmages. This allows club members to progress at their own pace while still being challenged.

Practices typically begin with warmups such as pepper drills and arm exercises before moving into positional work, hitting lines and competitive drills. Drills such as "Queens" and 6-on-6 scrimmages allow players to apply what they've learned in game-like situations.

Recently, the club has also practiced alongside the men's volleyball club, adding a higher level of intensity and competition that has helped players develop faster and adjust under pressure.

The strongest memories shared as a team often come from moments shared beyond practice and competition. Dotson recalled a recent tournament trip where the entire team traveled, stayed together and strengthened their bond.

"We all rode together and stayed in the same Airbnb," she said. "We had a team dinner, a study hall, made cinnamon rolls and got to know each other better. Our communication and trust were on a whole other level."

For the players, those bonding experiences define the club more than wins or losses, making it more than a sports club and instead a place that feels like family. "Being in this club has been one of the best decisions I have made," Dotson said. "It allowed me to build beautiful friendships with so many amazing girls."

Looking ahead, the club hopes to grow its membership, improve retention during the spring semester and eventually fundraise enough to compete in out-of-state tournaments.

Hatfield explained that this is a broad goal for all sports clubs across campus. "The goal is growth, expanding clubs, increasing funding and allowing teams to travel more."

For now, Women's Volleyball Club continues to grow in its own way, through practices, friendship and a shared commitment to building something bigger than the game itself.

Men's volleyball club aiming high

By Alex Enriquez
Contributing Writer

The sound of volleyballs smacking against the hardwood echoes through the gym as players dive across the floor, calling out rotations and celebrating points like a seasoned team. But what makes the SFA men's volleyball club unique is that many of these players had little to no volleyball experience before joining the team.

What started as a group of students looking to try something new has slowly become a competitive, tightly connected club built almost entirely by students themselves.

During a recent practice, the improvement was impossible to ignore. Players communicated constantly, hustled for every ball and showed chemistry that appeared years in the making. Team captain Nico Dubose said the growth of the team has been one of the most rewarding parts of the club.

"Everyone on the team has gotten exceptionally better since joining," Dubose said.

That development did not happen overnight, though. Like many sports clubs at SFA, the men's volleyball club relies heavily on student leadership and commitment, practicing twice a week from 6 to 9 p.m. in the Shelton gym. Players organize practice, recruit members, travel to competitions and help keep the club active throughout the school year. While Campus Recreation staff members oversee operations and assist when needed, much of the responsibility falls directly on the students.

The club's growth has also been fueled by the support of the women's volleyball club. The two organizations often practice together, helping each other improve while building a supportive volleyball community on campus. The partnership has created a competitive but encouraging environment where newer players can learn quickly from more experienced athletes. Instead of focusing only on winning, the club emphasizes improvement, teamwork and creating opportunities for students who may never have played organized volleyball before college. One player even says, "It's crazy to see how a bunch of random students can come together and become an amazing team."

Even with the progress, the club still faces challenges common among student-run orgs, especially funding.Travel costs, tournament fees and equipment expenses can quickly add up for a growing club hoping to compete at a higher level. DuBose said one of his biggest goals moving forward is increasing fundraising efforts to help the team expand its opportunities.

"I want to do more fundraising for the team to play in national competitions and games," he said.

Campus Recreation works to support all club sports programs as fairly as possible, but funding must be balanced across many organizations on campus. According to Brandon Hatfield, camps and sports club coordinator for Campus Recreation, every club has different needs and ambitions.

"Trying to keep it as proportional as possible while also meeting the needs of all the clubs, it all depends on what they need and how big they're dreaming," Hatfield said.

Despite financial limitations, the men's volleyball club continues to grow through word of mouth and student passion. Players believe the club could gain even more attention through campus demonstrations, social media promotion, fundraising events and collaborations with other organizations. Hosting open gyms or beginner friendly events could also encourage more students to join without feeling intimidated by experience level.

What makes the club stand out most is not just its athletic progress but the dedication behind it.

Unlike varsity athletes with scholarships and large budgets, sports clubs operate because students choose to invest their time and energy into something they care about. Every practice, fundraiser and road trip exists because students are determined to keep their team alive. For the SFA men's volleyball club, success is not only measured in wins and losses. It is measured in the growth of players who once stepped into the gym as beginners and now compete as teammates working towards bigger goals together.

Alex Enriquez / **The Pine Log**

(Left) Members of the SFA Men's Volleyball Club practice with their counterparts on the Women's Volleyball Club last spring in Shelton Gym. (Above) Cameron Robinson jumps to send his serve over the net during a spring practice in Shelton Gym. Men's club team captain Nico Dubose said watching the players' growth and steady improvement has been one of the most rewarding parts of participating in the organization.

Esports Club gaining popularity at SFA, across United States

By Ashton Woodards
Contributing Writer

Nestled within SFA's student center is a tiny, purple-lit space with gaming chairs, flashing computer screens and students strategizing with one another while donning headsets. The SFA Esports Club may appear to be a laid-back gaming area at first, but behind the screens is a fiercely competitive and rapidly expanding group that is attempting to redefine what it means to be a sport on campus.

Esports has been gaining popularity at universities around the country, and SFA is no different. In addition to giving students the chance to participate in formal gaming competitions, the organization fosters a sense of community among students who share a love of video games.

Members think the program has the potential to become one of the university's most notable groups, even though it is still relatively small compared to typical sports clubs.

For Brandon Hatfield, the coordinator of camps and sports clubs for Campus Recreation, esports deserves the same respect and preparation as any traditional athletic program. Hatfield explained that one of the biggest misconceptions about Esports is that people fail to recognize the amount of preparation required to compete at a high level.

"I know how much work has to go into Esports and being at the top level of that game," Hatfield said. "That preparation mirrors that of a collegiate basketball player, where you get to practice, hone in on strategy and work together as a team." SFA's Esports teams have already achieved notable competitive success, Hatfield said. He added that several teams performed well in their various contests during the course of the previous year, with some teams placing in the top four and others winning grand finals. These achievements show that Esports at SFA is far more than just students having fun with video games after school.

Despite those achievements, the club still faces challenges, especially regarding space and recognition. Currently, the Esports club shares its gaming lounge with the student center, limiting organized practice times and making it difficult for teams to consistently train together.

Hatfield believes that a dedicated Esports arena would dramatically improve the program and allow SFA to become a leader in collegiate esports across East Texas. "The sky's the limit for the program," Hatfield said. "The sky just happens to be space and funding right now."

The organization's advancements and shortcomings are reflected in the contemporary Esports lounge.

Purple and green lights illuminate rows of gaming rigs with matching monitors, keyboards, and gaming seats. The walls are adorned with posters from well-known video games, and the space is filled with Monster Energy-sponsored merchandise. Despite its small size, the lounge provides a setting where players can interact with other players and practice competitively.

Esports president Brady Potts, whose duties extend well beyond gaming, is at the heart of the club's expansion. In order to make sure the organization functions properly, Potts supervises officers, plans projects, collects match statistics and collaborates closely with coaches and media managers.

"To start, my day-to-day functions as the president of Esports vary day-to-day because of how hands-on things require me to be," Potts explained. "That's part of the fun with the job as president. I get to see things develop and change."

Potts described Esports as more than entertainment; for him, competition is deeply personal and motivating. His long-term vision is to eventually see Esports transition from a club into an official varsity program under SFA athletics.

"Being competitive isn't just something I do," Potts said. "It's who I am as a person, and that's what Esports offers to anyone who shares that same drive."

Under Potts' leadership, the club has also expanded its outreach efforts. The organization is currently planning fundraising events and collaborating with local businesses through sponsorships. One upcoming event includes a raffle featuring exclusive Monster-branded gaming equipment provided through sponsorship deals. These events help the club raise money while also increasing awareness across campus.

Members like Chandler Phillips cherish the regular sense of community that esports fosters, while the club's leadership concentrates on its future. In addition to managing the lab, Phillips participates in team competitions and assists in running the gaming area.

"What I like about the club is that there are many varieties of people," Phillips said. "Whether it's someone who only plays video games as a hobby or someone who plays competitively, everyone can get together and have fun."

The Sports Club Features in this section were written and submitted by members of Amy Roquemore's Spring 2026 Sports Writing class.

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SOCCER: Looking ahead

From Page 4D

coaching, officers and clearly defined roles.

"Ego is a big thing in soccer," Nyatome said. "You need it to compete, but you also need structure." That shift, he said, has helped bring consistency to both training and match preparation, replacing uncertainty with a more organized approach.

"We needed one clear voice leading training and games," he said. "Once we had a coach and a system, everything became more organized and we could actually go into matches with a plan instead of guessing."

Support from campus leadership has also played a role in the club's return. Brandon Hatfield, SFA's sport clubs and camps coordinator, said all club sports are treated equally within the university, but he emphasized soccer's potential impact in the local community.

"I think all clubs are important," Hatfield said. "I treat them all equally. I give them all the same opportunity for success."

Hatfield noted that Nacogdoches already has a strong soccer presence at the youth and high school levels, which could help the club build community support.

"I do think there is a soccer community within Nacogdoches that I think having a men's program would be really nice for our youth and our high school teams to come out and support and to watch and to grow," he said. He also suggested the program could grow further if it continues to develop stability and competitiveness.

"I think maybe men's soccer has that potential to go to a varsity level sport where if we can get our roots planted and get a really, really good program running," Hatfield said, we can hopefully see them become a varsity sport."

Beyond competition, Nyatome said the men's soccer club is designed to give students a place to stay connected to the sport while building community on campus.

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Club serves up friendly competition

By Alana Rouquette
Contributing Writer

SFA students dive for shots, laugh between rallies and compete beneath the sharp pop of pickleball paddles echoing across the court. What began as a casual pastime for members of the SFA Pickleball Club has grown into both a competitive sport and a close-knit community that brings students together on and off the court.

During a recent club practice, the atmosphere felt more lighthearted than intense. Players rotated between courts, joked with teammates and encouraged one another after nearly every point. Some members focused on drills while others played practice matches, but the sense of community was clear throughout the evening.

For many students, the club offers more than just a chance to play a sport. Members say pickleball has become a way to meet new people, relieve stress and create friendships that continue outside of practice.

"It's given me more opportunities to build friendships I didn't expect," club member Brooklyn Goins said.

The growing popularity of pickleball across the country has also reached college campuses, including SFA. Here, students of all skill levels are welcomed into the club, whether they are experienced players or trying the sport for the first time.

Alana Rouquette / **The Pine Log**

SFA Pickleball Club member Brooklyn Goins competes during a practice session on campus.

Club President Avery Parrish said becoming a leader within the organization changed the way he viewed the club and its responsibilities.

"My place is different being the leader of the club because everyone looks to you to have the answers," Parrish said.

"Previously, I was a regular member who just showed up to practice. Since becoming president, everything is more hands-on, and I've had to communicate with club members more than I thought I would."

Parrish said one of the biggest goals of the club is creating a supportive environment for members both on and off the court.

"This club has created a sense of community within its members," Parrish said.

"We occasionally have game nights or meet outside the club at festivals. It's created friendships that will last outside of college."

That sense of belonging has helped some members grow personally, as well as athletically. Club member Evelyn Virrueta said the club has helped her improve her mindset while competing.

"It helped me with my anger issues," Virrueta said. "I'm a very big sore loser, so it's given me a lot of fun opportunity."

Although the club focuses heavily

See **PICKLEBALL** *on* **Page 5D**

Students revive SFA men's soccer club

By Aiden Fierro
Staff Writer

After years away from campus, men's club soccer has officially returned to SFA, bringing together students trying to rebuild what was once a lost program while immediately stepping into regional competition.

The club's revival is led by Benjamin Nyatome, who said the decision to restart the program came out of a personal desire to give students something structured to connect with on campus.

"I started getting back into shape and realized I really missed playing soccer," Nyatome said. "Then I started thinking about incoming freshmen and how they're going to adjust to college life."

For Nyatome, the club is more than just a competition. He said organized soccer can help students balance academics while building a social life and keep up with athletics in a way that makes the transition to college more manageable.

"If you're used to playing soccer every day, it's a great way to set your schedule," he said. "You can stay on top of your studies and still have fun without getting overwhelmed."

The club's return followed a stretch of inactivity, when no one stepped up to maintain leadership. Nyatome said he took responsibility following his final semester on campus, aiming to restore structure to something that he had been involved with his entire college career.

"I realized it was my last semester, so I might as well try to bring it back," Nyatome said.

Rebuilding the club in a short timeframe created immediate challenges, especially once the regional season was already underway. Consistency in attendance and training quickly became one of the biggest hurdles.

"The biggest challenge was having a consistent amount of people show up to practice," Nyatome said. "We were trying to get into the league, but it was already too late, so it was about staying motivated and building chemistry."

To keep the group active, the club scheduled scrimmages against other schools, giving players structured competition while the roster and chemistry developed. SFA is competing in a regional league that includes programs across East Texas and surrounding areas.

Despite the limited time to organize, the club has begun to stabilize, with Nyatome noting steady participation and early progress. The roster also includes a handful of freshmen, something he views as an important step toward long-term sustainability.

A key part of that progress has come through restructuring leadership. Rather than relying on informal player organization, the club moved toward a more centralized system built around

See **SOCCER** *on* **Page 3D**

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Powerlifting club membership soars

Isabella Smith / **The Pine Log**

The SFA Powerlifting club is less than a year old but already claims nearly 60 student members.

By Isabella Smith
Contributing Writer

Most SFA students walk into the HPE Complex with a destination already in mind. They head toward the basketball courts, the indoor pool or the cardio deck without a second thought. But turn the corner into the weight room, and the energy shifts. Chalk dust hangs in the air, plates clatter against the floor and in the middle of it all is the fastest-growing sports club on campus: SFA Powerlifting.

Founded in fall 2025, the club has grown to nearly 60 members in just a few months, a surge that surprised even its founders. "We knew there was interest, but none of us expected it to take off like this," club President Taryn Burnet said. "The goal for our club is growth. Not championships or medals; those are cool, and we're always happy to have recognition. But our goal as leaders is the growth of our members and their abilities."

That philosophy has become the backbone of the club's identity. While many collegiate powerlifting teams focus on competition results, SFA Powerlifting is intentionally different. It's built on the belief that strength is personal and that every athlete deserves the space to develop at their own pace.

Powerlifting is an individual sport by design. Lifters compete alone on the platform, chasing their own numbers, but inside SFA's weight room, the club feels more like a community than a collection of solo athletes. "Everyone's here to lift each other up," club member Diana Keeler said. The club offers a noncompetition pathway, allowing beginners to train without pressure while still receiving coaching, support and structured programming. For many students, it's the first time they've felt comfortable in a weight-room environment. "We want people to feel like they belong here," Burnet said. "If someone eventually wants to compete, great. If they just want to get stronger and build confidence, that's just as important."

Behind the scenes, SFA Powerlifting is preparing for major changes. A new training space is in development, though details remain limited. "All I can say is that we're working on something that will give the club room to grow," said Brandon Hatfield, Campus Recreation's sports clubs coordinator. "The interest is there, the momentum is there and we want to support that." There is also talk of something bigger: a potential move toward varsity status. Athletic Director Micheal McBroom has reportedly expressed interest in elevating the club, though no official timeline has been announced. "Powerlifting is gaining traction nationally, and SFA is in a position to be ahead of the curve," Hatfield said.

For a club not even a year old, the possibility of becoming a varsity sport is almost unheard of — but not unrealistic.

Another sign of the club's rising profile is its early shoe and gear sponsorship, which provides members with discounted equipment. In a sport where proper footwear and belts can cost hundreds of dollars, the partnership is a game-changer.

The sponsor is also different from brands typically associated with collegiate powerlifting, signaling that companies see unique potential in SFA's approach. "It shows people believe in what we're building," Burnet said. "We're new, but we're serious."

Walk into the weight room during a team session, and you'll see lifters spotting each other, celebrating PRs, teaching technique and cheering for every rep. You'll see freshmen learning their first squat and seniors hitting lifetime bests. You'll see a community built on encouragement, discipline and shared goals.

SFA Powerlifting may be the newest sports club on campus, but it's already reshaping what strength looks like at Stephen F. Austin State University. It's proving that success isn't measured only in medals; it's measured in confidence, consistency and the belief that anyone can get stronger with the right support. And as the club continues to grow, one thing is clear: this is only the beginning.

PICKLEBALL: Club welcomes all students

From Page 4D

on building friendships and creating a positive environment, members are also working to improve competitively. Parrish said the club recently competed in a tournament that provided valuable experience despite difficult results.

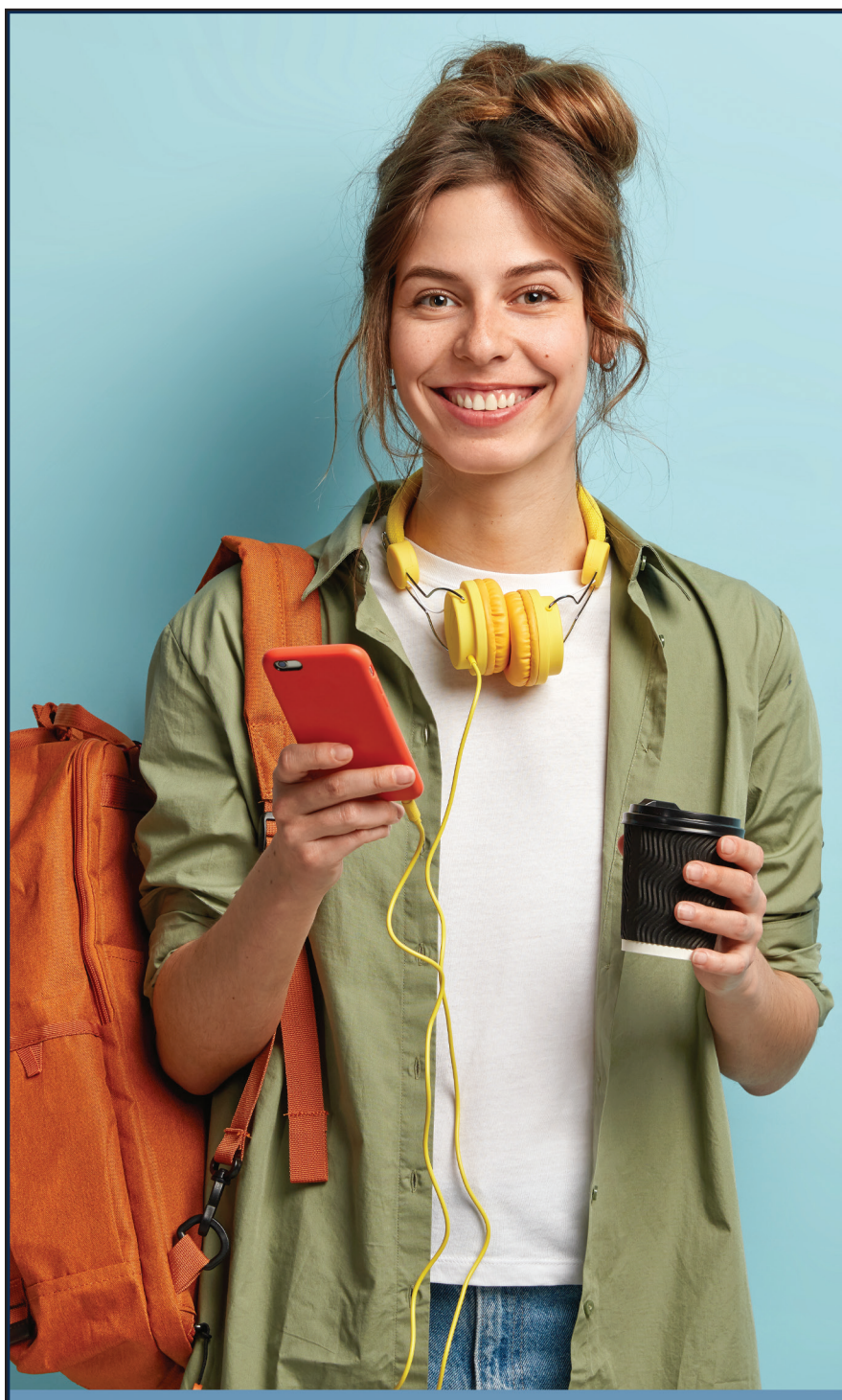
"This past tournament didn't necessarily go as planned," Parrish said.

"We only won two sets the whole weekend, but it gave everyone perspective on what to expect next semester. It also showed us our weaknesses, so now we can plan practices with specific drills in mind."

Even through challenges, the club continues to grow as more students discover the sport and the community surrounding it. Parrish believes the club offers students an opportunity to stay active while forming meaningful relationships during college.

"I believe everyone should join the club," Parrish said. "It gets you outside, gets your body moving and helps you socialize with people who have similar interests."

As practice came to an end, players continued laughing and talking while gathering their paddles and water bottles from the sidelines. For members of the SFA Pickleball Club, the sport has become more than competition — it has created a community that extends far beyond the court.



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Ultimate Frisbee Club enjoys competition, camaraderie

Madison Herman / **The Pine Log**

SFA's Ultimate Frisbee Club competes in tournaments around the state and welcomes members of all skill and experience levels.

By Madison Herman
Contributing Writer

The summer sun was scorching the turf, bodies dripping with sweat as players quickly passed the frisbee to their teammates. It was a new year for the SFA ultimate frisbee team, with a handful of returning members and a larger roster of newcomers, having only one week of practice under their belt. The weekend was harrowing at the A&M tournament, where the sun-baked turf was enough to melt the players' cleats.

SFA was playing UTSA for one final game on an August Sunday. After a long weekend of trial and error, the team captain, Noah Harris, wasn't expecting much to come out of it. Then everything clicked. Despite the sweltering heat and compromised cleats, the newcomers and vets alike found their flow and played as a team, ultimately winning the game 13-11.

Harris didn't come to SFA expecting to become an ultimate player. Like many members of the club, he had no experience, and what little exposure he had came from church events and casual hangouts. He learned quickly through weekly practices how to run and approach routes, and got to go on trips to tournaments to play actual games against other colleges. Above all else, he was a part of a club that genuinely enjoyed spending time together.

Most members join seeking a more casual alternative to the more intense basketball or tennis.

Almost everybody has thrown a Frisbee at least once in their life, making the entry level less intimidating than mainstream sports. Someone could enter without having any prior experience and still emerge as a pretty solid ultimate player.

Once Harris made his way to captain, he was determined to foster the same welcoming atmosphere he had entered into. Under his leadership, the team marked a significant milestone by including women on the roster for the first time, with three female players joining the team. This change opened the door for more students to connect outside the classroom and truly embrace the idea that "anyone is welcome."

SFA Sports Club Coordinator Brandon Hatfield, stresses the importance of sports clubs being open for everyone. "The one thing I always preach to our sports clubs is that we don't do tryouts. Everyone is welcome, whether it's your first time trying it or you've been playing it your entire life. Sports clubs are a place where you can come in and you can feel welcome. The Ultimate Frisbee club, deciding to become co-ed and accessible to those with little knowledge of the game, serves as a testament to the spirit of sport clubs.

Participation is crucial in these clubs as it determines how much the school can fund their ventures. Due to Ultimate Frisbee's lesser-known status, it struggles to receive the same amount as its popular counterparts.

"We're thankful enough to get enough money to go and be able to afford gas and tournament fees from the school, but we usually pay for jerseys, housing and lodging out of our pockets," Harris said. "We only get about 10 to 15 players coming to practice. I think if we had more involvement, we could get more funding, but we have a family or two in Dallas that usually open their doors for a [tournament] weekend, which is a big blessing."

Though money is far from the mind of players on these trips, what they lack in funding, they make up for in spirit. The long bus ride culminates in crowding into a house where a kind family offered to host them. The air buzzes with anticipation as the team occupies a single bedroom, littering the floor with sleeping bags and various air mattresses. Inside jokes are told between games, and stories over boxes of ordered pizza. For many players, the late nights of cramped spaces and greasy food are as memorable as the games themselves. They have earned this time to relish the excitement of competing in a tournament; it has been months since the A&M game, and the newcomers have had plenty of time to practice and integrate with the vets.

Preparing for a full weekend tournament requires way more running than one might expect in ultimate frisbee. It involves constant stop-and-go movements and quick sprints that demand a lot of stamina to endure a full day of games. Then there's the technique of actually throwing the disc. It needs to be thrown with exact precision, constantly adjusting the angle, changing the timing if necessary, to lead teammates and evade defenders. The sport calls for knowing what to do, how to do it, and coordination as a team to accomplish it.

At the long-awaited tournament in February hosted by UNT, Drew Hector, a member for two years, found himself facing an opponent who was five inches above him. Ultimate players know that any bit of physical advantage, specifically height, can significantly impact the game when it comes to reaching for a disc. Hector watched on as his adversary chased after a long throw, with nobody able to gain any ground on him. He seized the opportunity to swat the disc out of the air twice. With a powerful combination of handling and cutting, he turned the play around and went down to score a point immediately afterwards. "Within 30 seconds to a minute, that was probably my best defensive play ever," he said. "To be able to turn around that quickly and score a goal like that is my best one, even if it doesn't look as cool on camera. The amount of awareness of the game and knowing how to operate makes it…the most memorable play for me."

Many of the colleges and universities in Texas have dedicated ultimate frisbee teams, ranging from highly competitive squads to sport clubs like the one at SFA. Regardless of their prestige or skill level, they all come to the tournament to play a game they love. Harris even has a lot of numbers from guys on other teams, looking forward to seeing them when they travel. While every team aims to win on the field, before and after games, they are all fans of the same sport, loving the ability to compete against formidable opponents.

The last couple of games of the day are always intense, with both sides being heated and bringing extra energy to the final matches. At the end of a long day of competing, the sports club gathers for a team dinner to decompress. Regardless of whether they won or not, they know they gave it their all. "It's not fun to lose, but if anybody's excelled in the art of losing, I think we have gotten a lot better and comfortable with that, because we're just out there to have fun and go play some of Frisbee." Harris remarked, "We're out there competing. We're not out there sucking it up. We're having fun playing."

Although not a professional team, members of SFA's ultimate frisbee club get to see each other grow firsthand and celebrate one another's wins. They spend hours into the night anticipating a morning game, cheer as a teammate achieves an impressive play, and come together against all odds to win against an intimidating opponent. The connections they make through dedication, hard work and a shared love for the sport go beyond friendship; they truly become a family.

SFA baseball club thriving

By Kinley Thompson
Contributing Writer

The lines are painted, bases are set, and jerseys are buttoned. It's game day, and first pitch is minutes away. The stands should be filled with excited, supportive fans for both teams, ready to watch some baseball. But the seats are empty, and it's silent. All you hear is the scraping of cleats on concrete, the slap of contact as a ball hits a glove, and the ringing of bats warming up in the cages, but there's no cheering at all.

The only people in attendance are family members of the club baseball players at SFA. Their chairs are set up right next to the dugout, leaving the stands deserted as the starting pitcher takes the mound.

In baseball, fans often drive the atmosphere and keep the energy going through all nine innings, with the yelling of encouragement between each pitch. A roar of noise follows a highlight-reel catch or a ball leaving the yard. Without them, the field feels like a ghost town.

This is a constant challenge for the SFA Lumberjacks. The 2026 season for this club baseball team has been nothing but a success when it comes to scoring. They are 14-5 on the season and 14-2 in conference, showing they can face even the toughest competition. But as the season progresses, they are beginning to realize their biggest opponent may not be a physical one.

"There are all sorts of challenges that come with not being considered a collegiate team," club president Ian Alveraz said. One thing that has set them back this year is the lack of home games, which are usually held at a local high school in Nacogdoches. Alveraz explained that they have been constantly on the road as of late, giving them no real foundation for an audience to gather.

Fans aren't able to consistently travel, which leaves the team with empty stands at a majority of games.

But this doesn't stop the Lumberjacks from playing. The roster is filled with a talented group of young men who just want to play baseball. With players such as freshman pitcher Ben Stec and senior hitter Gage Bellati, the team is stacked both defensively and offensively. Though they face a quick and compact schedule, they have managed to come out on top in most of conference play. This has led to them earning the title of National Club Baseball Association Great America-South Conference champions.

It goes to show that a team can build game energy all on its own. Those who attend away games confirm that there is always noise coming from the Lumberjack dugout. They create their own atmosphere, which is one of their key points of success. For most of the players, it isn't about the noise or the glory that comes with cheering fans. It's about playing the game.

A majority of the club is made up of former high school athletes who fell in love with baseball at a young age. They are simply trying to keep that love alive as they continue their education, and the Campus Recreation Center at SFA is helping them do so.

One of the main goals of the recreation center and its development of the club sports program is to help students get involved. Brandon Hatfield, the sports club coordinator for the university, said, "Sports clubs aren't just for going out and being competitive. It's about finding your people, too."

Hatfield explained how club baseball has done an excellent job of being self-sufficient and successful in all aspects of the program. Not only are they keeping themselves energized between innings, but they are also running their own social media and practices. He hopes to grow this even more and give the hardworking players the environment they deserve.

"Building the atmosphere, trying to create these almost home game experiences where people are coming and attending and rooting them on, whether it's members of other clubs, parents, or Nacogdoches citizens, that really is the goal of mine."

These aspirations could lead to a more home-oriented schedule in the future, with the Lumberjacks hosting more games to build fan morale and a high-energy atmosphere. In the coming years, Hatfield plans to ramp up fundraising and promotions for all sports clubs, with baseball as a major focus.

Until then, the Lumberjacks still plan on playing baseball. The silence has yet to stop them, and they don't seem to be slowing down anytime soon.

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Lumberjack football kicking off 100th season in late August

The 100th campaign of the SFA football team kicks off Aug. 29 in Lake Charles, Louisiana. The defending Southland Conference champions are coming off one of the most dominant seasons in program history. Below is a collection of numbers to know regarding the program's humble beginnings alongside the birth of a Piney Woods institution.

1923: The first season of Lumberjack Football

Lumberjack Football and Stephen F. Austin State University, then known as Stephen F. Austin State Teachers College, have shared beginnings. Not long after the doors opened to the college, Dripping Springs, Texas native Robert H. Shelton was designated by SFASTC President Dr. A.W. Birdwell as the program's first football coach. Shelton, who would become known as "the Father of SFA Athletics," not only led the team in 1923, but dressed out and practiced as well.

120: The number of points scored in SFASTC's first-ever game

SFASTC defeated Center High School 120-0 in the first game in program history. It was the first of three wins in the inaugural season and the first of 16 victories in Shelton's six-season tenure. The point total remains a program record for points scored in a single game.

23: The number of players in the inaugural team photo

Nearly two dozen players joined head coach Bob Shelton in the team photo that was produced in the school's first yearbook: the 1924 edition of the Stone Fort. The first season's roster included the likes of Dewey Walker, Herman Alders, Vernon "Cotton" Olds, Eura "Wildcat" Bates, Ellison Shelton, Blackwell, Sanders, Putman, Hallmark, Miller, C.B. Davis (Captain), Glen Hale, Kirk Willingham, Grady "Chock" Thompson, Luther "Red" Garner, Zola Avery (Captain-Elect), William M. Ray, Russell, Landers, Madkins, Hollis "Red" Parrish, Crocker and Crawford.

11: The number of days from the University's opening to the inaugural game

SFASTC was created in 1921 by the 36th Texas Legislature and officially opened its doors on September 18, 1923. Less than two weeks later, the program's first game was contested at Birdwell Field.

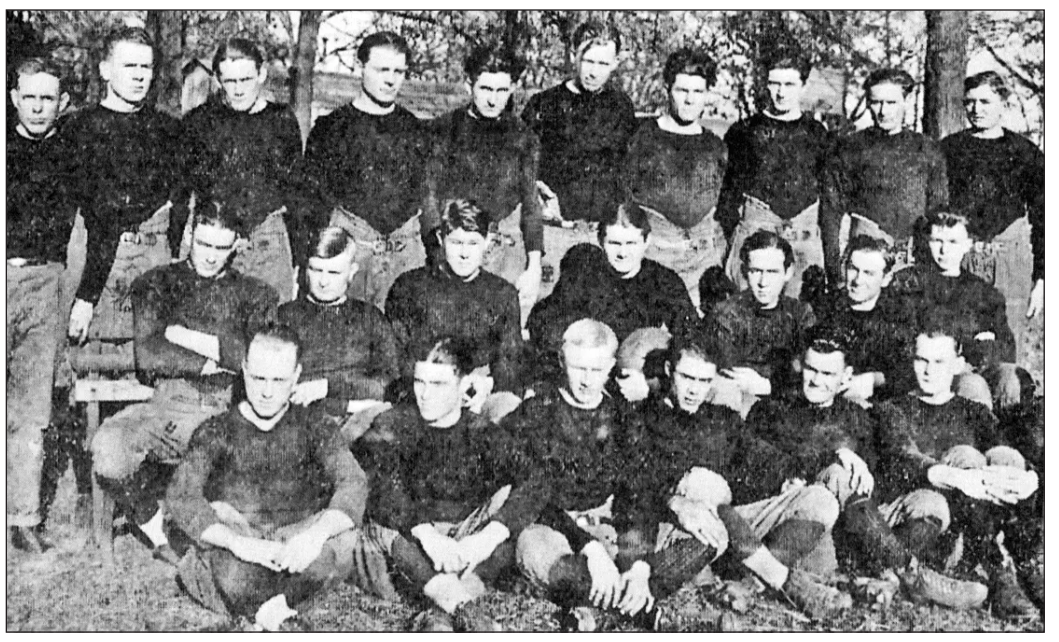
1: The number of opponents in season one that appear on the 2026 schedule

Lamar, which was known as South Park Junior College and was also in its inaugural season in 1923, defeated SFA 10-0 on Oct. 12 in Nacogdoches. The two sides will meet for the 39th time on Nov. 7 in Beaumont.

"From the standpoint of victories, the season does not seem successful, but when we take into consideration that the Lumberjacks were made up entirely of Freshmen and Preps, and that they were meeting colleges of long experience in football, then we feel that in the course of a year or two we will be meeting and holding our own with the best teams of the State." - Final paragraph of the 1924 Stone Fort's "A Resume of the Football Season"

SEASON 100: ON THE HEELS OF HISTORY

The 2026 season will be the eighth for head coach Colby Carthel as the SFA football program hits the century mark in gridiron campaigns. The Lumberjacks are coming off a historic 2025 that saw SFA capture the program's fifth SLC title and first since 2010, while making the program's ninth FCS postseason appearance. That title came behind the program's first eight-win conference season and first perfect finish in league play in 99 seasons. The Jacks reached double-digit wins for the fifth time in program history, and the 11 victories last fall are the most since the '95 campaign.



Courtesy Photo / **1924 Stone Fort Yearbook**

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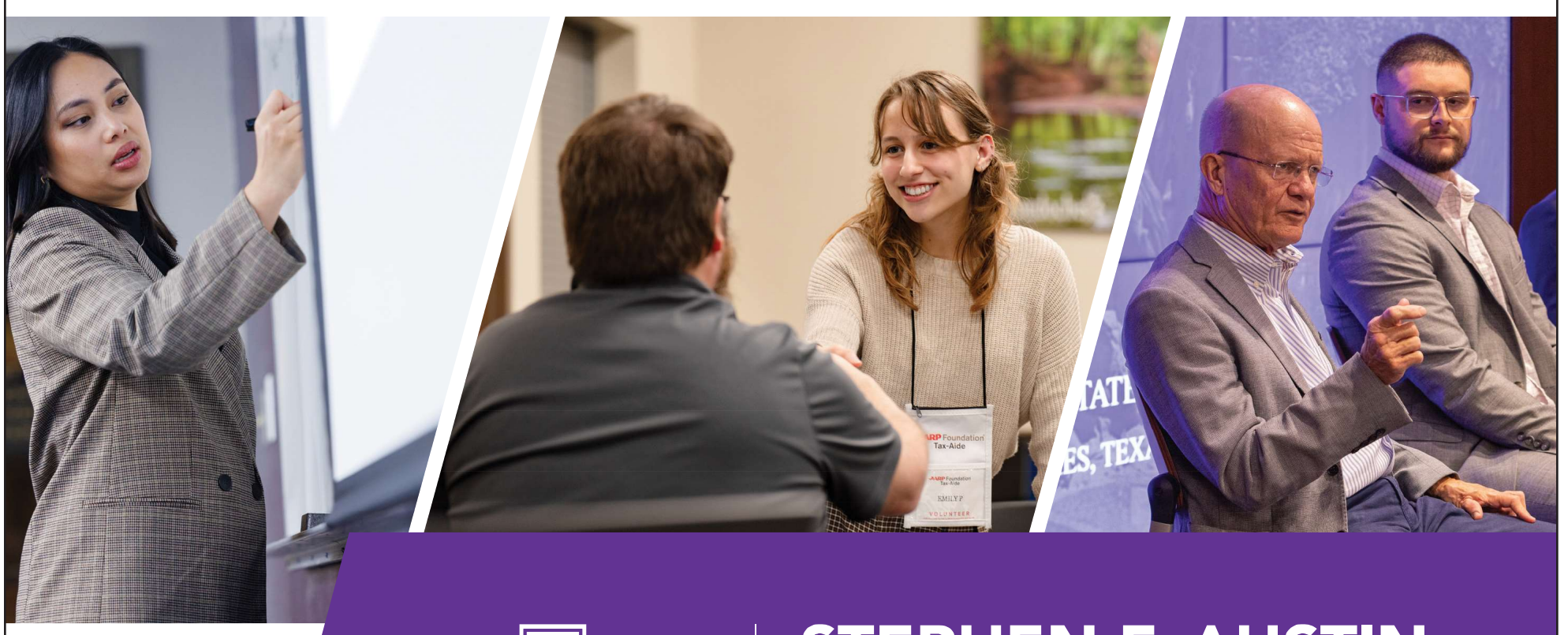

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