

THE PINE LOG welcomes the *Class of 2029* and incoming transfer students

WELCOME EDITION 2025


# the PINE LOG

The Independent Voice of Stephen F. Austin State University

Monday, August 18, 2025


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# Pineywoods Dining Hall now open, serving up new fare, old favorites



Diego Barahona / **The Pine Log**

**Pineywoods Dining Hall** is now open at the intersection of East College Street and Wilson Drive. The all-you-care-to-eat facility offers state-of-the-art serving stations, a gluten- and allergy-free station, and sustainable practices like using reclaimed cooking oil, all in a relaxed, comfortable environment. A grand opening was held Aug. 14. The dining hall was constructed on the former site of Hall 16. Nearby Eatery on East will be torn down soon.

**By Diego Barahona**
*Editor-in-Chief*

With an open floor plan, large windows and exposed wood beams, Pineywoods Dining Hall is set to open this month as the latest campus addition in SFA's ongoing plans to renovate and enhance the campus

"Pineywoods Dining Hall will feature many exciting options that students can look forward to," said Hilario Espinoza Gonzalez, marketing director at Chartwells Higher Education Dining, SFA's dining partner.

"Inside the dining hall, an impressive rotisserie will churn out fresh roasted chickens that will be available on the serving line. Students can also purchase a whole chicken to take home," he said. "Additionally, fresh tortillas will be made daily, and a beautifully crafted Italian pizza oven will bake pizzas in just 90 seconds. Lumberjacks can also buy personal pizzas to take home. For those looking for a sweet treat after a long day of classes, a soft serve machine will be available."

Pineywoods Dining Hall will be home to some familiar items as well, the results of a series of 2021 focus groups conducted by Kirksey and Omniplan Architects. So, students can look forward to familiar staples found in Food Hall 1923 replicated in the new dining hall, but also new offerings. This includes Flame, Delicious Without and Rooted but also Kitchen 1923, with dishes that remind you of home, Pineywoods Pie Co., with Italian cuisine, and La Mesa, with Mexican-style offerings.

In addition to the roster of dining hall items, students can also look forward

*See* **DINING** *on* **Page 2A**

# Enjoy your time at SFA, Lumberjacks!



**Dr. Kent Willis**
*Senior Vice President for Enrollment and Student Engagement*

Welcome home to Stephen F. Austin State University—one of the most unique campuses in The University of Texas System. Whether you're returning for another year or stepping onto campus for the first time, we're thrilled to have you as part of our community.

As you embark on a new semester, I encourage you to stay focused on your goals, engage meaningfully with those around you, and make your health and well-being a priority. College is a time of discovery, challenge and growth, and we're here to support you every step of the way.

With more than 250 clubs and organizations, there are endless opportunities to find your place, make friends and build skills outside the classroom. Our dedicated team of student services professionals is always working to help you reach your full potential—whether you need academic support, career guidance or someone to talk to.

To help you get started, here are a few helpful links to important resources and services:

**Student Outreach and Support** for personal assistance and well-being resources: sfasu.edu/sos/resources

**Rec Center** for fitness, wellness, and recreation programs: sfasu.edu/rec

**Student Health HUB** for comprehensive health and wellness services: sfasu.edu/thehub/about/welcome

**Dining and Food Services** for meal plans and on-campus dining options: sfasu.edu/life-at-sfa/housing-dining/dining/on-campus-eateries

**General Information** for questions: 936.468.4SFA (4732)

And, of course, you'll be surrounded by the natural beauty of our campus—a place that inspires learning, creativity and connection.

Here's to a semester filled with new experiences, lasting friendships and personal growth. We're glad you're here, and we can't wait to see what you accomplish.

Axe 'em, Jacks!

# Barkley takes over academic reins as provost

**By Diego Barahona**
*Editor-in-Chief*

Dr. Jordan Barkley, former vice provost for academic resources and faculty affairs at the University of Northern Colorado, was appointed SFA provost and executive vice president for the division of academic affairs on July 1. Barkley, who has worked as a middle school teacher, assistant professor, dean of a college of education and more, said he is excited to bring to SFA his expertise not only in academic affairs but also in human connection

"I am a teacher, educator at heart. Everything about me revolves around how people are treated, the learning experience and how do we create the best, most positive learning environment for our students," said Barkley, who replaced Dr. Lorenzo Smith who served four years in the role.

"So, I would say my goal is [in] the first three to six months to just learn as much as I possibly can about all the programs we offer. I don't mean just academic programs; I mean support and extracurriculars. I want to wrap my head around what SFA considers the student experience, and then I see my role as provost as the chief advocate for academics."

To this end, Barkley said he has no intentions of being a policing force over colleges or departments. Instead, he plans to take in feedback from multiple sources to act as a lobbyist for the public. This mentality is exemplified by some of Barkley's prior undertakings such as authoring or being part of the presenting team for about 30 presentations, working recruitment or orientation at previous universities or even chaperoning a group to a meat-packing plant to be further connected to the students he represents.



Diego Barahona / **The Pine Log**

**Dr. Jordan Barkley** joined SFA as provost and executive vice president of the division of academic affairs July 1.

Being from Alabama and hopping around schools in the south, such as Jacksonville State University and Tarleton State University, Barkley's choice to come back to the region was a tough one. However, after careful consideration, with both his current position and future goals in mind, he made the choice to come to SFA.

"When the search firm reached out about this position [I] said 'No, I think I'm happy where I am. I can ski every weekend. I think we, my wife

*See* **BARKLEY** *on* **Page 2A**

# Cole Student Success Center coordinates resources, 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; Academic Advising for Undeclared/Exploratory Majors and Dual Credit students; Generation Jacks (GenJacks) program; Texas Success Initiative (TSI) for college readiness; and the Smith-Hutson Scholarship program. All of these initiatives were designed with one goal in mind—helping you 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 road map 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, special groups like Honors Students and GenJacks, as well as for transfer students.

"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 new student orientation and family 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!"

Full-time advisors are available in the Student Success Center to help students who are not ready to declare an academic major. Academic advisors will help students select courses, explore SFA majors and areas of study, and access career-exploration resources. Students work with their advisor to find a major that aligns with their interests, skills and abilities and prepare for a career.

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.

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

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**ThePineLog.com**

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# DINING: Jacks help with marketing

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to a retail location that will be connected to the dining hall. With its walk-up windows, food offerings such as sandwiches and tenders plus salads, and later closing time, Absurd Bird will be a unique addition to the east side of campus.

"The primary goal of this dining hall is to provide all students on the east side of campus with delicious meals, fueling them for success. This is especially important as the east side hosts the largest number of freshman dorms," said Espinoza Gonzalez.

"We want to ensure that our Lumberjacks don't have to worry about where their next meal will come from, allowing them to focus on earning their degrees and excelling in their classes. We understand that a student's first year on campus is both crucial and intimidating in their academic journey."

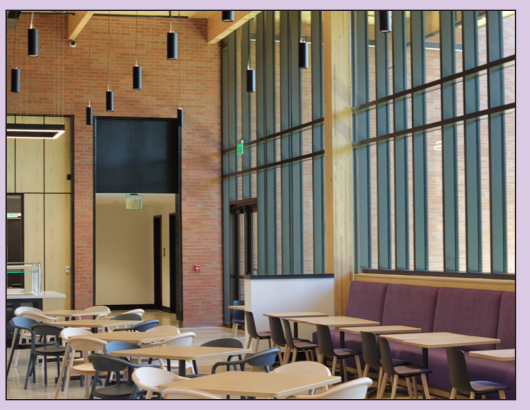
With personal seating, long benches or barstools to watch the stations, the dining hall will offer a variety of options for a variety of student personalities. This will be in addition to a wall outlining the University's century-long history and a wall for students to post"recipes that they cherished at home with the oportunity of three of them being selected to be cooked over the semester."

*"Pineywoods Dining Hall will feature many exciting options that students can look forward to." —Hilario Espinoza Gonzalez*

Espinoza Gonzalez has been with Chartwells since February 2021, working his way up from student graphic design intern to marketing specialist/regional graphic designer and now marketing director. He said the process of marketing the new dining hall has been rewarding and challenging.

"I would love to add that my marketing team has been hard at work on graphics for a while now. Alumna Laney Wise, who was previously a graphics design intern for Lumberjack Eats at SFA, and is now the Marketing Director for Islander Dining at [Texas A&M Corpus Christi}, created the foundation for the logo and brand identity of Pineywoods Dining Hall. I am currently leading the design effort alongside our amazing graphic design interns, who are current SFA students, KJ Gast and Cassandra Sarmiento," Espinoza Gonzalez said. "As a fellow Lumberjack myself, I am very proud to say that this dining hall is not only designed for Lumberjacks but was also developed by both new and former Lumberjacks!"








Marshall Fry / **The Pine Log**

# SUCCESS: Center welcomes 30 scholars

**From Page 1A**

This fall, the Smith-Hutson Scholarship at SFA welcomed 30 outstanding freshmen into its 2025 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 79 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. Watching these students find confidence, purpose, and connection is truly the best part of my job" said Kat Kessler Thompson, student success coordinator for the program.

The Student Success Center serves as SFA's liaison to the Texas Success Initiative, a statewide program that promotes academic success by ensuring students are prepared for college-level work. Advisors oversee the completion of developmental classes by hundreds of SFA students each semester to ensure they are prepared for more advanced coursework.

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

**Wear Purple on Spirit Fridays!**

# BARKLEY: New provost student-focused

**From Page 1A**

and I, are fine to stay here.' But the more we taught about it, the more we realized we love the small-town feel of a town like Nacogdoches," Barkley said. "We left a town of over 100,000 people in Colorado to move here. You also cannot put a price on southern hospitality, and there's just something about communities like Nacogdoches where you know that if you do the job you've been asked to do, the community is going to embrace you and wants you to be successful."

As changes start to come all across campus, Barkley said he wants to ensure students who have concerns have someone to speak to. While many on campus claim to have an "open-door policy," Barkley admitted that other business will often take him away from the office. Nevertheless, he said he will be available to schedule a meeting over Zoom or a phone call and will respond to emails. These meetings will come with a caveat, however, which is the meeting requestor will not bring a problem to his desk without also bringing a proposed solution they believe will work.

"Now I will say to anyone who wants to come and talk with me, especially if it's a problem, I'm more than happy to do that. What I'm not willing to do is to sit and let people just bring problems to me and drop them on the doorstep and then walk away quickly," Barkley said. "So, I would encourage people who, you know, want to bring concerns or suggestions for improvement, or ideas even about what SFA can do differently, or what the division can do differently. I absolutely will welcome all of those."



**Dr. Jordan Barkley**
*Provost*

Barkley said he is looking forward to being an advocate for SFA students. "I'm very much a student's first academic leader. I cut my teeth in education working with seventh graders and taught middle school for five years. Then I was a faculty member at a couple of institutions and then a dean," Barkley said.

"I can say my goal has always been talk with the students and find out what they need, make sure that faculty and staff are on the same page, so that we are true in advertising, and provide the experience to these students we say we are."



# 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 their either complete 60 semester credit hours or is ready to purchase his/her ring. If you have Federal Aid, you 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 prices, 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 8 a.m. to 5 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.




Photo courtesy of 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 Alumni Association. Students who have earned at least 60 credit hours are elegible to purchase their SFA ring and participate in the Big Dip ceremony, one of the most popular SFA traditions. Hundreds of Lumberjacks take part in the Big Dip each year, and family and friends are invited to be a part of the ceremony.

# SGA officers elected to second terms

**By Linnea Maddux**
*News Editor*

Last spring, the student government election featured two separate candidacies, a rare case at SFA considering the past few elections. The results have been released and show that current President, Uchenna Njoku, a senior nursing major from Abuja, Nigeria, and VP, Claire Westbrook, a senior psychology major from Chireno, will continue to serve the student body and lead the SGA for another year. Their campaign slogan, Experience Matters, highlighted both Njoku and Westbrook's' commitment to improving the lifestyles of SFA students.



**Uchenna Njoku**
*SGA President*



**Claire Westbrook**
*SGA Vice President*

Njoku joined residence life upon first attending SFA where she helped incoming freshman and has worked in student services ever since. With three years of this experience under her belt, and nearly four for Westbrook, "we know the ins and outs of what works and doesn't work," Njoku claims. For Westbrook, "being able to be there for the students and be able to advocate for them at higher levels in rooms they don't want to be in" is an aspect she enjoys about the role.

Additional motivation for their role ties into their future careers in public service, as Njoku pursues a degree in nursing and Westbrook in Psychology with a minor in Criminal Justice. As full-time students and leaders, both officials are often overwhelmingly busy, so to ensure work gets completed, Westbrook and Njoku have no problem cutting to the chase.

"I think we're both really blunt," says Westbrook. By understanding this aspect of one another, they said they can efficiently bounce ideas off one another and achieve objectives on time. "Our partnership is really strong," says Njoku. "We cover for each other; when I'm not there she's the one leading the herd."

Now elected for this upcoming semester, Njoku and Westbrook will begin working on implementing a few new transformations. From doubling organization funding to addressing parking inconvenience to the establishment of airport shuttles for international students, the newly elected officials are prioritizing five initiatives that tackle ordinary inconveniences that interfere with the lumberjack experience. Outside of the three just mentioned, President Njoku aims to bring recycling to the SFA community as well as advocate for an increase in student workers' wages.

Throughout the school year, they have taken note of successes such as gathering one of the largest turnouts for SGA's Trader Jacks event this Spring and making improvements to campus safety last fall while Njoku was VP, such as fixing the lighting issues on all emergency phone stands throughout campus.

All these initiatives are a work in progress already, but an idea being tossed around currently between administration is a Ring Dip award, meaning additional funding would be granted to students who are struggling financially to participate in the Ring Dip upon graduation.

"I know it's a tradition some people miss out on because they just can't afford it" says Westbrook. There are many conversations that still need to be had, and many initiatives like these take months to develop, but Westbrook is hopeful that it will pass by the fall of this year.

With these initiatives, Njoku still acknowledges the achievements of previous administrations. "For our platform, there's some new things we want to introduce but it's not like a whole shift completely."




Photo courtesy of University Marketing Communications

**(Above) 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) An SFA ring rests on a pine cone with a graduation stole, honor cords and mortor board.



Pine Log file photo

PART-TIME JOB AND VOLUNTEER FAIR

Wednesday, Sept. 3
11 a.m. to 2 p.m.
Grand Ballroom
Baker Pattillo Student Center

Free for students to attend
Professional dress encouraged
Find more information at sfasu.edu/ccpd

STEPHEN F. AUSTIN STATE UNIVERSITY
Career Center

# Regents approve $40 million for entrepreneurship facility




Illustration courtesy of University Marketing Communications

The University of Texas System Board of Regents approved a transformative new facility that will house SFA's Greg Arnold Center for Entrepreneurship during its regularly scheduled meeting May 7-8.

The building of the same name will be constructed next to the future home of SFA's $85 million Forestry Building and Agricultural Engineering and Technology Building on Raguet Street between Hayter and East College streets beginning in July 2025, with substantial completion anticipated by February 2027.

The $40 million project includes $21 million from the state's Permanent University Fund bond proceeds and $19 million from general revenue appropriated by the 88th Texas Legislature in 2023.

"The regents are proud to make another investment in this great university, and we are especially pleased that such an important program for students and faculty will have a new facility," said Kevin P. Eltife, UT System Board of Regents chairman. "The Greg Arnold Center for Entrepreneurship continues to establish itself as a signature center for all of East Texas."

The Arnold Center for Entrepreneurship, which was recently recognized as one of the top three emerging entrepreneurship programs in the nation by the United States Association of Small Business and Entrepreneurship, was established in 2023 to support innovation, collaboration and entrepreneurial growth across campus and East Texas. SFA's entrepreneurship academic program launched in fall 2020.

"This state-of-the-art facility not only will strengthen SFA's commitment to entrepreneurship and innovation but also will be a key resource in East Texas' entrepreneurial ecosystem, fostering regional economic growth by guiding students to collaborate with local businesses and government to discover their vision," said Dr. Neal Weaver, SFA president.

The two-story, 39,170-square-foot building will offer immersive and flexible spaces tailored to modern entrepreneurial education, including simulated learning environments, dedicated coworking spaces and innovation labs.

The facility's multipurpose LED volume production studio, which will feature technology to create realistic and immersive virtual environments for film, television and video production, will be available for collaborative projects and entrepreneurial ventures across SFA's areas of study. These disciplines encompass media and communications; forestry and agriculture; health care; science, technology, engineering and mathematics, or STEM; and education, including the university's construction management and aviation sciences programs.

With the approval of the design development plans and funding allocation, SFA moves one step closer to creating a dynamic hub for future business leaders, visiting entrepreneurs and students eager to bring their ideas to life.

# 'The College Tour' comes to SFA

SFA will be featured on an episode of the Amazon Prime television series "The College Tour," which highlights colleges and universities across the country and showcases campus life through stories told by current students.

Hosted by Alex Boylan, winner of CBS's "The Amazing Race," each episode of "The College Tour" focuses on a single institution, providing an in-depth look at academics, campus culture and student experiences.

"We are thrilled to be able to participate in 'The College Tour' and share the many parts of the campus experience that make SFA unique," said Dr. Kent Willis, senior vice president of enrollment and student engagement. "This award-winning show is a great opportunity to show prospective students what life as a Lumberjack is like."

Students are in the process of auditioning for one of 10 available spots in the episode where they'll be invited to speak about topics that resonate with their university experience. SFA's episode will highlight the university's state-of-the-art facilities, academic programs, one-of-a-kind traditions, involvement opportunities and thriving campus environment, with current students sharing their perspectives on life at the university.

"The College Tour" crew was on campus March 3-7 to film. The SFA episode is scheduled to premiere in fall 2025 and will be available for streaming on multiple platforms, including Amazon Prime Video, Google TV, Niche and Nearpod. It will also be on "The College Tour" app and website that is served to over 60,000 high school counselors nationwide.


CELEBRATING
Every
LUMBERJACK

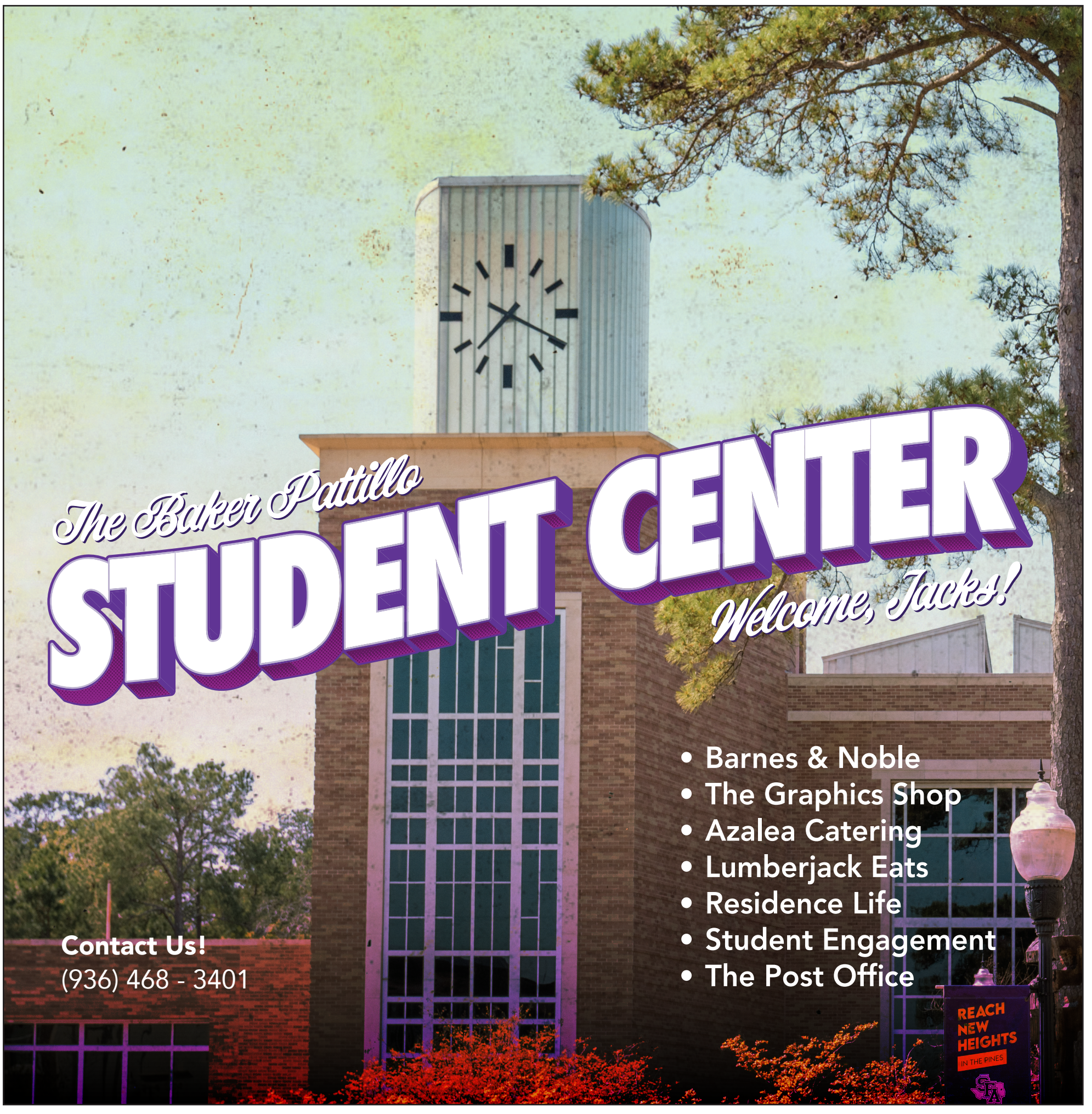
DISABILITY SERVICES



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





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

Explore Downtown Nac & the SFA campus with your Lumberjack!

# FAMILY DAY

## Nacogdoches, Texas

## Saturday, Sept. 27

Presented by New Student Orientation and Family Programs

# DON'T FORGET TO DRESS...

Help celebrate and promote the traditions and spirit that make SFA's college experience so special.

We encourage all students and faculty and staff members to show their pride for SFA's educational mission and colorful history by wearing apparel bearing the colors and insignias of the university each and every Friday!



# SFA introduces new therapy dog



Photo courtesy of University Marketing Communications

**SFA Counseling Services** now offers animal-assisted therapy with Rudy, the golden retriever. Students can visit the Baker Pattillo Student Center from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. every Friday to meet Rudy, or submit a request through the Lumberjack Wellness Network for a visit or event.

The flash of golden hair, the pitter patter of paws and a damp nuzzle from a nose may not sound like the cure to any ailments, but when it arrives in the friendly form of Rudy, Stephen F. Austin State University's newest golden employee, that's where the magic happens.

SFA's Counseling Services is now offering animal-assisted therapy with their new golden retriever, Rudy, to help manage student's mental health.

"One of the most beautiful aspects of animal-assisted therapy with Rudy is witnessing how naturally he senses and responds to human emotions," said Holly Randall, SFA counselor. "If someone is feeling down, he might nudge their hand for comfort or bring over a toy, inviting them to play and lift their spirits. Each interaction is unique, but Rudy's purpose is always the same: to offer warmth, joy and a quiet reminder that no one has to face life's challenges alone."

Randall and her therapy partner, Rudy, spent the past year training to become a certified therapy team with Association of Animal-Assisted Intervention Professionals and the American Kennel Club.

For years, Randall dreamed of having a therapy dog of her own. Rudy, who she named after the beloved sports film of the same name, came into Randall's life in March 2024. Randall joined the AAIP and completed over 50 hours of coursework, eventually passing a certification exam to become a certified animal-assisted therapist, and Rudy was required to take weekly training sessions and obedience training.

"The journey for me and Rudy to become a certified therapy team for SFA took nearly a year. It truly would not have been possible without the unwavering support and encouragement from so many people both on and off campus," Randall said. "With our certification complete, we began preparing to bring Rudy to campus. The process moved faster than I had imagined, as campus leadership and staff had been eagerly anticipating our official certification. They welcomed the new program with excitement, knowing it would bring a valuable service to our students."

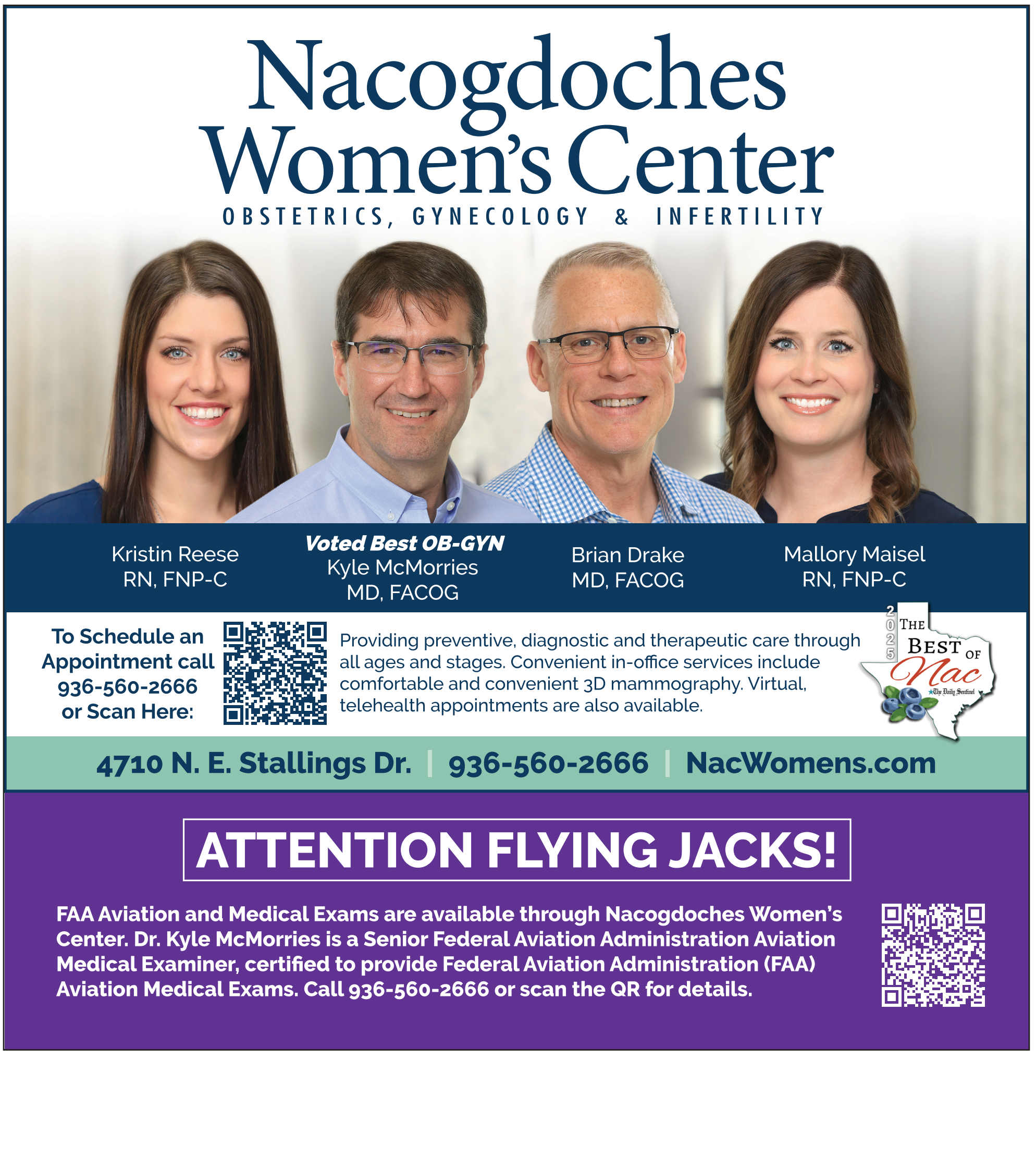
According to Randall, dogs have an extraordinary ability to detect changes in stress levels through both scent and behavior. Within moments of meeting someone, Rudy can pick up on stress hormones like cortisol, as well as subtle changes in breathing, posture or tone of voice.

"Petting a dog for as little as two minutes can lower stress hormones, while also increasing oxytocin, the hormone associated with social bonding and emotional well-being, reducing the symptoms of depression, creating higher self-esteem and greater social support," said Clare Fite, director of Counseling Services.

Rudy can often be found visiting the athletic training rooms or attending athletic events to offer comfort to student athletes. During midterms and finals week, Rudy will make rounds visiting Steen Library to provide students solace before their big exams.

"As a therapist, not everyone I see throughout my day is happy and smiling — it's simply the nature of the work," Randall said. "However, with Rudy as my therapy partner, I can confidently say that no matter what a student is facing, they leave with a smile. Just by being present or lying next to their feet, Rudy provides comfort and acceptance, helping them leave with a renewed sense of happiness. It honestly leaves me speechless that, with over 20 years of experience as a therapist, something that would take me hours, days, or even weeks to achieve, Rudy can do in mere minutes, simply by being present or engaging with a student."



# 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 during the evening hours. 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 it 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 entire 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, pickle ball, 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. We have 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



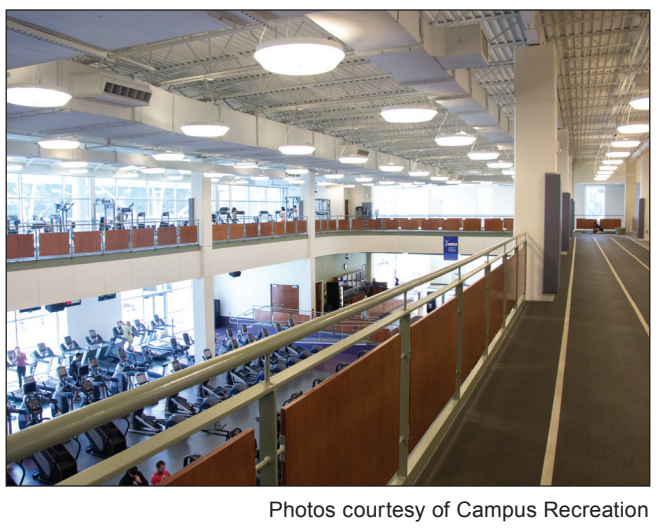
Photo courtesy of Campus Recreation

**The outdoor pool** at the Student Recreation Center features a lazy river where students can float or wade 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.

**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 hoop and volleyball net

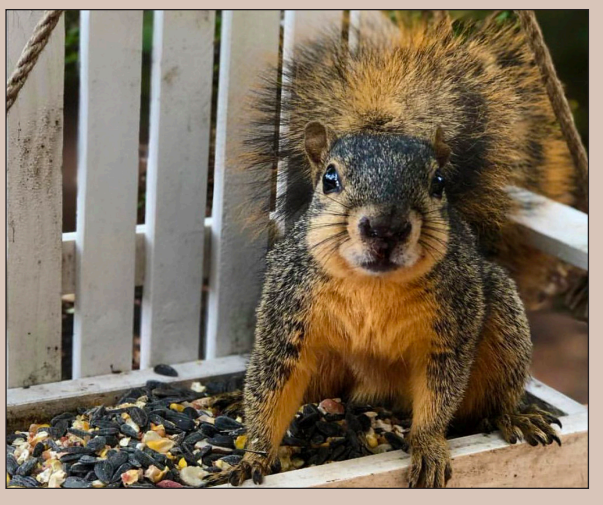




Photos courtesy of Campus Recreation

**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 our 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 Instagram and Twitter… 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.




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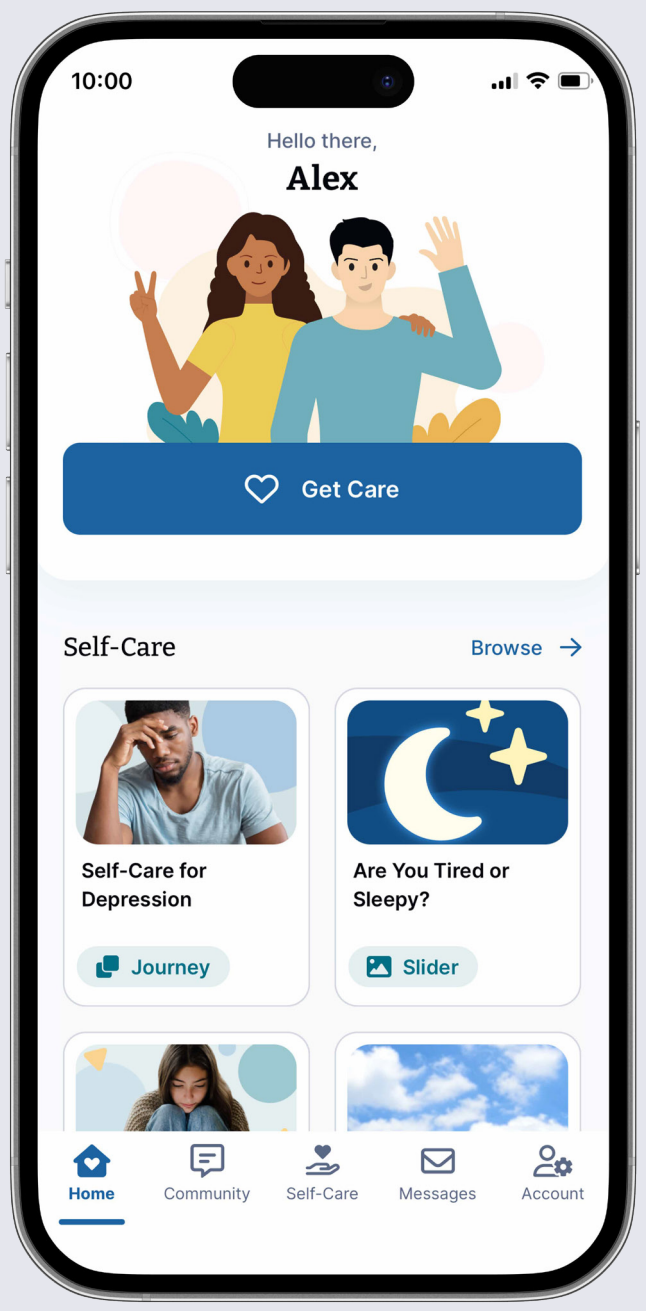
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# JACK LIFE



## 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!

## SFA sets new fall-semester record, processes more than 20,000 apps



Photo courtesy of University Marketing Communications

**Dr. Neal Weaver**, SFA president, (front row, seventh from right) poses for a photo in the Grand Ballroom with a large group of incoming Lumberjacks and their family members attending a recent AXEcepted Day on campus. For the first time in its history, SFA has received more than 20,000 undergraduate applications for a fall semester, marking a 17% increase over fall 2024 applications and a 67% rise since 2019. SFA also served more than 3,000 students during summer AXEcepted Days, marking the largest summer orientation attendance in SFA's history.

### More than 3,000 prospective students attend AXEcepted Days

For the first time in its history, SFA has received over 20,000 undergraduate applications for a fall semester, marking a 17% increase over fall 2024 applications and a 67% rise since 2019.

The surge follows The University of Texas System's investment to expand SFA's Purple Promise program, which covers tuition and fees for families earning $100,000 gross income or less. It's also a result of new initiatives like the Lumberjack Transfer Alliance and Lumberjack Launch to improve access, support and college readiness for students across Texas.

"We're incredibly energized by the excitement surrounding SFA right now," said SFA President Dr. Neal Weaver. "This explosive growth speaks volumes about the momentum behind the SFA brand. Crossing the 20,000 threshold is a milestone achievement and a reflection of the academic strength, value and sense of belonging that define the SFA experience. Students and families across the state and beyond are taking notice."

Due to the overwhelming interest, SFA added an extra in-person orientation session to accommodate students and families who plan to attend. In total, the university served more than 3,000 students during summer orientation, marking the largest summer orientation attendance in SFA's history.

"This surge in applications and positive early enrollment data signals the strength of our strategic outreach, recruiting and marketing, as well as the appeal of our academic and student life offerings," said Dr. Kent Willis, senior vice president for enrollment and student engagement at SFA. "From prospective first-year students to transfer and graduate students, more individuals are choosing SFA and committing to becoming Lumberjacks."

These numbers and early enrollment trends show not only more applications but also stronger yield, retention and growth across first-time undergraduates, transfer students and graduate programs. The incoming first-time undergraduate class is currently on pace to be the largest in the university's history.

"These numbers represent expanded opportunity for students and families across our region and beyond," Willis said. "Through programs like Purple Promise, Lumberjack Transfer Alliance and Lumberjack Launch, we're breaking down barriers and making it easier for students to achieve a four-year degree. Our recent integration into the UT System has only accelerated this progress, providing our students with even greater resources, support and connections within one of the world's most respected public university systems."

## HUB hosts Equine Therapy Workshops

**By Chesney Quillin**
*Staff Writer*

The Health and Wellness Hub is partnering with SFA's Department of Agriculture, in the Arthur Temple College of Forestry and Agriculture, to provide students with a unique way to take the reins on their mental health through Equine-Assisted Therapy Workshops. Available to students of any major and classification, registration can be done by scanning a QR code on the HUB's Instagram page, calling the HUB, or emailing Counselor Jenny Baker.

Equine therapy, also called equine assisted psychotherapy, focuses on "using the intuition and natural responses of horses to create a space for participants to learn and grow," said Jenny Baker, mental health specialist and organizer for the workshops. She added that students who find traditional talk-therapy daunting, equine therapy provides an alternative that may feel more comfortable.

"In my experience, equine-assisted psychotherapy allows people to be more vulnerable and authentic in a judgement-free space," said Baker. The program uses the Equine Assisted Growth and Learning Association models which creates a safe and organized space for self-reflection.

The session includes a mental health specialist, an equine specialist and horses. The participants stick to self-guided activities, such as guiding the horses through an obstacle course, observing their behavior or petting them. Additionally, participants will stick to the ground during the session, not being asked to participate in horseback riding during the session.

Providing students looking to step away from the hustle and bustle of campus life a unique opportunity, Equine-Assisted Therapy workshops offer a unique opportunity to improve their mental health in a peaceful, natural environment.



Meredith Bench / **The Pine Log**

**Julius Johnson, a** nursing student from Marshall, pets Pepper, one of the horses that participated in the February Equine Therapy Workshop.

The program, and EAGALA, is designed to help students tackle anything they may be struggling with. It is backed up by extensive research demonstrating it's effectiveness in improving both emotional regulation and personal growth. Considering the based methodology of EAGALA, it has been proven to be just as effective as speaking therapy for most individuals.

This research-based approach offers a more comfortable alternative to traditional therapy. Workshops not only provide a break from academic stressors but equip students with coping strategies while allowing for important personal growth.

Students interested can register by contacting the Health and Wellness Hub or scanning the QR code on the Hub's Instagram.

## Free career center services include student résumé reviews, job fairs

SFA's Career Center offers many free services to all students, regardless of major or classification.

These services have been designed with Lumberjacks' present and future in mind, and students are encouraged to engage with the Career Center many times during their time at SFA. It's never too early for even incoming students to begin planning for their future careers, according to Career Center Director April Place.

"In fact, the first steps toward that career have already been taken," she said. "Students choose to attend college because they think it is a good career decision. They choose a major because they think it will help them achieve a career that best fits them."

The center's services are designed to assist students as they journey toward their careers, she said. "Our purpose is to help students along this journey of finding meaningful work. We help them explore options, discover their professional path and take the steps needed to achieve their goals," she said.

Early on, students can take advantage of Career Center services that help them explore the possibilities of majors and careers through individual coaching appointments, self-assessments, online databases of informational interviews with working professionals and more.

"Students arrive on campus sometimes knowing exactly what they want to do when they graduate; they just may not be sure how to get there," Place said. "Sometimes students are not sure at all what they want to do, but they feel very confident about their major. And, sometimes students very honestly and bravely admit they have no clue. In any case, the Career Center can help students feel better about their steps forward through intentional exploration with our office."

Students can also rest assured 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 Career Center operates within a career liaison model, which allows the professional staff to cater to specific student populations based on their college and major. The result is a career coach who can specialize in ways to best help students find success on the career paths particular to them.

Along the way, students can 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 Career Center also has connections to thousands of employers who are actively recruiting SFA students and posting jobs and internships to our online job board through Handshake, an online career management platform. Students can also schedule appointments with the Career Center through Handshake by visiting http://sfasu.edu/handshake.

To learn more about Career Center services, resources and upcoming career fairs, visit sfasu.edu/ccpd or stop by the third floor of the Baker Pattillo Student Center.




Photo courtesy of the Center for Career and Professional Development

**The Career Center** hosts career fairs, conducts mock interviews, provides résumé reviews and more to help students prepare for a successful career after graduation. To learn more about available services, resources and upcoming career fairs, visit https://www.sfasu.edu/ccpd or stop by the center's office on the third floor of the Baker Pattillo Student Center, Room 3.302, between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. Monday through Friday.

# ‘Green as the trees in Nacogdoches’



Izzy Palmisano / **The Pine Log**

**SFA students take** over the mic during the 2024 Homecoming concert featuring the Josh Abbott Band. The band performed in conjunction with the Homecoming bonfire and drone show on the Intramural Fields on Oct. 27. A highlight of the concert was when Abbott sang “She’s Like Texas,” which contains the line “Her eyes are green as the trees in Nacogdoches.” Abbott told the crowd he enjoyed being back at SFA where he attended for one year.



Crystal Villanueva / **The Pine Log**

**The Purple Haze** student section cheers for the Ladyjack and Lumberjack Basketball teams during a double-header in early February in Johnson Coliseum. Purple Haze is the nickname for the student cheering section at all SFA athletic events. During basketball season, the students wear costumes and cheer from behind the visitors’ net.

# New student organization focuses on mental health

**By Meredith Hahn**
*Staff Writer*

Between assignments and being away from home, college can be stressful for new and returning students. That’s why Hailie Sauceda, a freshman student at SFA, founded the Wellness Society at SFA. The Wellness Society, a nationwide organization that has chapters in colleges and cities all over America, has welcomed SFA as one of its most recent additions, joining in March. Sauceda, the president of SFA’s new chapter, is excited to see the impact it has already had among students.

The Wellness Society was originally founded by two college students and has now expanded to over 40 colleges and cities. “The goal of the Wellness Society at SFA is to create a college experience that embraces balance, self-care, and holistic health,” Sauceda said. Their organization strives to provide students with tools for mental and physical well-being.

The organization puts on frequent events that offer students a way to take breaks and enjoy themselves, like Weekly Wellness Wednesdays and outdoor group yoga sessions. “We also plan fun events like pickleball to encourage a healthy balance between self-care and enjoyment,” Sauceda said. The Wellness Society’s events are meant to offer students ways to slow down and connect with others in meaningful ways.

Timber Bennett, another member of the Wellness Society and the vice president of wellness initiatives within the organization, also shared Sauceda’s enthusiasm about the new club. “It’s given me a space to prioritize my own wellness without guilt because we all need wellness reminders,” Bennett said. “It’s one of the most rewarding communities I’ve seen at SFA.” The Wellness Society has given Bennett a space to learn more about wellness and also improve her own leadership skills.

The Wellness Society at SFA is planning to host some events during finals week. “With finals approaching, I encourage SFA students to take a moment for themselves. It’s easy to get overwhelmed, but even during the busiest times, we still deserve rest and self-care,” Sauceda said. Bennett suggests breathing exercises and focusing on small habits to alleviate stress.

While the group may have just gotten started, it is clear they are ready to start next year off on the proper foot. This means events that provide the best experience to all those involved. In the mean time, Bennett noted some generalized advice to ensure your best possible mental health.

“Don’t forget to eat real meals, drink water, and schedule in breaks that actually feel like breaks. We’re not lazy for needing rest, we’re human.”

# SFA launches ‘Caring Jacks’

Counseling Services is now offering students, faculty and staff a new suicide prevention training program called Caring Jacks to create an environment where open conversations about suicide are met with compassion and support, helping build a community of care and connection.

“The Caring Jacks crisis response and suicide prevention training not only builds on the success of previous efforts but also aligns with The University of Texas System’s broader initiative to reduce suicide among college students across Texas campuses, ensuring that SFA remains at the forefront of mental health and crisis intervention education,” said Clare Fite, director of SFA Counseling Services.

Rooted in evidence-based, up-to-date methodologies, Caring Jacks replaces the Question, Persuade, Refer bystander intervention training Counseling Services used for over a decade.

“Since launching suicide prevention training at SFA, more students are actively engaging with crisis support services through Counseling Services, and we’ve observed positive trends in student safety and well-being,” Fite said. “These outcomes highlight the impact of awareness, education and proactive support. Together, we can reduce the stigma and risk of suicide — because at SFA, we’re not just Lumberjacks, we’re caring Jacks.”

Through a combination of expert-led presentations, real-life scenarios, role-playing activities and reflective discussion, Caring Jacks participants learn how to recognize the signs and symptoms of a suicide crisis, communicate with empathy and confidence, respond effectively and take informed action, and connect individuals to appropriate campus and community resources.

Two trainings are available. In the 50-minute introductory training, participants learn how to recognize the signs and symptoms of suicide, understand varying levels of crisis, strengthen supportive communication skills, and gain awareness of mental health resources.

For more in-depth training, Counseling Services offers a 90-minute comprehensive training. This extended session offers instruction on motivational interviewing techniques, empathetic communication and mental health first-aid principles.

Participants who complete the full training receive a certificate of completion, recognizing their preparedness to intervene and support others in crisis. To learn more about SFA’s mental health resources, visit the Health and Wellness Hub webpage at sfasu.edu/thehub and the Lumberjack Wellness Network at sfasu.edu/lwn.



CAMPUS RECREATION
RECreate Yourself.

Welcome, Lumberjacks!
Kick off the fall semester at the SFA Rec Center
with fitness, sports, fun, and more!

First Year Frenzy
August 21st Starting @ 3 p.m. • SFA Campus Rec
Attention all first year students Campus Rec is kicking the year off in style! From a scavenger hunt around campus, to tie dying, and then a massive Pool Party! Don't want to miss this!

Glowchella
August 27th, 7 - 10 p.m. • SFA Campus Rec
Kick off the fall semester at the SFA Rec Center
DJ, line dancing, and more!

Campus Recreation Job Fair
Sept. 3 & 4th • SFA Campus Rec
Looking for an on campus job?
Apply now at www.sfasu.edu/SFARecJobs

FLAG FOOTBALL
Sept. 5th • SFA Campus Rec
Register by 4 p.m. Sept. 5 at the competitive sports desk inside the SFA Rec Center. Season Starts Sept. 8th

Group Axe Classes
Starts Sept. 1st • SFA Campus Rec
Are you interested in Yoga, Pilates, or Barre? Make sure to check out our Group Axe Classes offered all Fall semester!

Visit us at
www.sfasu.edu/campusrec
@sfacampusrec

# More than 250 sudent orgs offered




Photo courtesy of University Marketing Communications

**Members of the** Student Activities Association take part in SAAChella, a music event organized by the group in spring 2022.

Students who are engaged and connected during college perform better academically, build stronger relationships, persist through challenges, and graduate more prepared for life after college. At SFA, we believe involvement is the key to unlocking your full potential — and we offer over 250 student organizations and opportunities to help you do just that.

From the moment you step on campus, there are countless ways to get involved — including Jack Camp, Fraternity and Sorority Life, the Student Activities Association, and a wide variety of student organizations spanning interests like leadership, service, identity-based groups, academic majors, recreation, and more. And if we don't have what you're looking for, you can start your own club with just a few friends.

There's a place for everyone — but finding it doesn't happen overnight. Building your college experience takes time, effort, and an open mind. The best way to find your fit is to show up, try new things, and connect with others. Attend events. Join meetings. Explore different groups. Keep showing up — the more you engage, the more your campus experience will come to life.

To get started, visit the Involvement Center on the third floor of the Baker Pattillo Student Center, swing by one of our involvement fairs, or email getinvolved@sfasu.edu to set up a personalized meeting with one of our involvement experts. We're here to help you find meaningful connections and make the most of your time as a Lumberjack.

Student Engagement is committed to creating inclusive and accessible experiences for all students. If you need accommodations to attend or participate in student events or organizations, please visit Room 325 in the Human Services Building to request support.

# Fraternities and sororities develop leaders, help members make lifelong connections

At SFA, fraternities and sororities offer students meaningful opportunities for personal growth, leadership development, and lifelong friendship. Rooted in values such as scholarship, service, cultural appreciation, and brotherhood or sisterhood, our Greek organizations help students build the skills and connections that will serve them well beyond college.

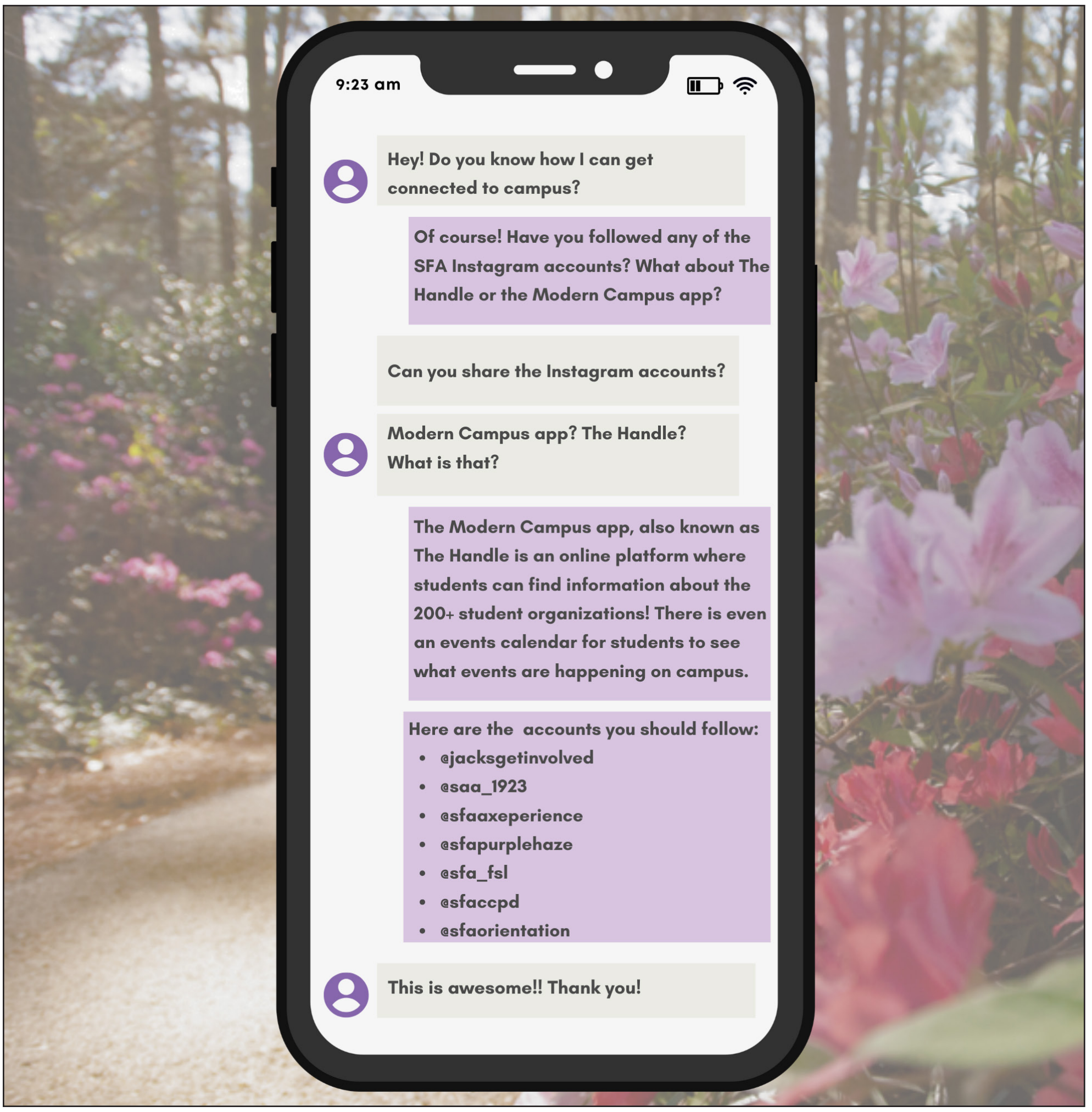
Membership in a fraternity or sorority is more than a college experience — it's a lifetime commitment. Within a supportive environment, members are challenged to grow, take on leadership roles, and engage in meaningful service, all while preparing for future career success and lasting relationships.

The Fraternity and Sorority Life community at SFA is diverse, vibrant, and united. Each chapter brings something unique to campus, contributing to a dynamic community that encourages students to explore their potential and make the most of their college years.

The Office of Fraternity and Sorority Life is committed to creating transformative, student-centered leadership opportunities that promote academic achievement, cultural understanding, service, inclusion, and strong connections with the university, alumni, and surrounding community.

SFA is home to four governing Greek councils Interfraternity Council (IFC), Multicultural Greek Council (MGC), National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC), Panhellenic Council (PHC). You can learn more about each council and how to get involved by visiting sfasu.edu/student-life/student-engagement.

To support the success of our chapters, SFA uses the STAR Standards of Excellence program — a framework designed to promote growth and recognize achievement. Each year, chapters are evaluated based on a point system to highlight excellence in areas such as academics, leadership, service, and operations.



# OPINIONS






Rhys Dean / **The Pine Log**

## Avoid common financial missteps

As you prepare for your first semester at SFA, it may be daunting to take in all that's going on around you—most notable new faces, experiences and price tags that make you thankful for the work you did during high school or community college. That last part is why it is important for students to remember that while college life should be fun and filled with adventure, spending money is not always a requirement.

While Nacogdoches is not home to many unique stores, restaurants or experiences, people enjoy taking advantage of the unique geographic location as a reasoning behind spending money. Unless given the opportunity to live in a small and walkable area before, it's not likely that you have Chick-Fil-A, McDonald's, Cane's, two Panda Expresses and more within a five-15-minute walk of your front door and academic buildings. Many students take this as a sign to spend on the convenience of the food they have around them and not on cooking or trying the dining hall food. While sometimes it is necessary, such as in late-night study sessions or when you don't have the time to sit down and eat, students should not be so quick to dismiss alternatives.

Another area where students rack up lots of expenses is experiences or hang-out sessions outside of campus which, while enjoyable, often require more commitment than some of the events provided by the variety of groups on campus. From sports to movies and hammocking to trivia, the event scene is always full across the SFA campus, especially during Weeks of Welcome, Family Weekend and Homecoming. These events are almost always free to students and provide you with not only a fun time for you and friends but also to make new ones who clearly share similar interests if they choose to go to the same event as you.

Another thing for students to note is how good or bad your first year can be and to ensure that you have some money set aside to alleviate any and all problems that may be thrown your way. While it may be easy to assume the reference is being made to educational expenses such as textbooks, software or even scantrons, which the AARC provides for free, instead the reference is being made to life expenses. Nacogdoches is an unusual place to move to with roads filled with potholes, copious amounts of pollen and historic buildings that are prone to mold, it's sure to make every day feel like you're on the edge. So, remember to always have something set aside for a worst-case scenario in case one of those things hits you.

This goes without saying: have fun during your first year at college. Your first year should be filled with memorable experiences with lifelong friends and getting to explore a place that will feel like a second home. However, just as much as it can be cherished with memories it can be filled with mistakes and wishes of do-overs you wish you would have had if you didn't spend so much on some mediocre encounters around some lackluster people.

## Books, shows help combat loneliness



**Linnea Maddux**
*News Editor*

For any student, your freshman year can bring on a multitude of emotions. Whether it be moving halfway across the world, figuratively and literally for some students, or the factor of new experiences, the year can become one of the most memorable of your life for both good and bad reasons. For students who find their greatest comfort in a favorite show or a good book, here are some entertaining recommendations that can offer fresh perspectives on your college transition.

Being transplanted into a brand-new environment can be disorienting. With the inevitable homesickness, sometimes a good laugh or a happy ending is all you need. Outside of your go-to comfort film or book, some recent literary developments may just satisfy your nostalgia while providing a new world to escape to. A popular pick to satisfy this craving, and rightfully so, is "Beach Read" by Emily Henry. With witty banter that makes you laugh out loud, and characters dealing with grief, identity and challenges in love, it's difficult not to wish you were best friends with this couple by the end.

If you would rather embrace the autumnal air and escape to a magical island, TJ Klune's "The House in the Cerulean Sea" does well to provide a whimsical story with fantastical, heart-warming characters. Other less recent but under-rated escapist films include "Midnight in Paris" or "About Time," two separate movies that both provide romantic escapism and the comfort of traveling back in time to revisit meaningful moments.

Along with the distance from home comes the obstacle of navigating independence and freedom. For some, the responsibility of curating your next meal or waking yourself up for 8 a.m. class is a novel challenge but an exciting one. Lovers of literary fiction should relate to most of Sally Rooney's novels such as "Normal People" which highlights the ups and downs of early adulthood, especially within relationships. For those that prefer a screen to a physical story, the Hulu adaptation of the book is a binge-worthy choice. Admirers of historical fiction may want to read Jojo Moyes's "Giver of Stars" which addresses similar themes of independence, for women especially, against the backdrop of the American South during the Great Depression.

Among all of these freshman year feelings, one that can creep up on students is loneliness, especially for those moving from out of or across the state. It takes time to establish connections that fill your cup, but in the meantime, this space from others allows you to re-discover yourself as an individual.

This is a case in which an autobiography, memoir or even documentary on your favorite artist, sports player or influential individual can bring immense comfort. Learning what kind of challenges and milestones your role models overcame can provide solace in unexpected ways. I recommend Matthew McConaughey's memoir "Greenlights," a book jam-packed with raw emotion and wild stories of travel and life and love. A vibrantly independent and passionate person, He encourages readers to look at every obstacle of adulthood, including college, as an opportunity for growth and self-discovery.

The first day of freshman year is full of adrenaline and excitement. You're jumping off the comfortable cliff edge into the unknown waters of college life. You continue to fall for the next few days, and on the way down you take in the new surroundings and friendly faces. Then you hit the water. One week passes, then two, and reality hits. It is more common than not to eventually crave the familiarity of that cliff edge you were so eager to jump from. You start to miss it. Miss home. However, when these feelings hit take solace in knowing that some of the above recommendations, or those from friends, can always be around to help you.

## Limiting phone time can increase success



**Diego Barahona**
*Editor-in-Chief*

As time goes on it seems as though people have become much more reliant on their phones, a change that can be seen quite often in college classes. From students being buried deep in their phones in class or feeling like they can't study because they are doomscrolling, the culture of phone usage has changed. So, students must take some necessary steps to distance themselves from their devices and take advantage of the time they have more productively.

I am incredibly guilty of getting into these deep scrolling sessions, but the most important part to realize is when to step away. This can be looked at in a multitude of ways, but one of the more effective techniques that has gained popularity is the time limit technique. This is where you dedicate yourself to anything, in this case phone usage, for a fixed amount of time and tell yourself what you will be doing after that time is over. This is especially whenever you have long study sessions as you can focus 90 minutes on studying with no phone and at the end of that time you can give yourself a 30-minute phone break. This way, while effective, is especially helpful when studying, but can fall flat in other regions.

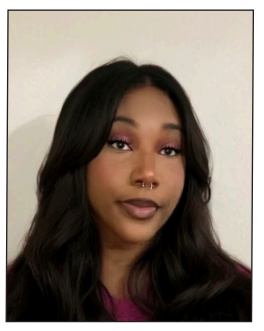
Another way is to allow your phone space to be a completely different space from your social or studying space. Time with friends should be open to conversation, playing games and overall camaraderie, but when everyone is on their phones it causes a riff in this atmosphere that is supposed to be cohesive. Although some friend groups can do both the camaraderie and scrolling in a circle. Same can be said with studying, studying should be a space free from phone usage as it becomes too easy to get distracted from what you may have used it for in the first place. This allows the chance for your phone to be your dedicated free time device and your computer to be your work device for an overall better workflow.

The last method to investigate is other activities that fill the space taken by doomscrolling. This could mean picking up a hobby that makes you passionate to keep pursing and improve on, taking a walk or anything else that brings you satisfaction. This almost seems a bit simple, but many of the reasons people reach for their phone falls on the fact of not having anything that scratches the same space their phone does. The hobbies could be as simple as taking time to watch an episode of a series that you've been wanting to start for a while, although this could always be just as harmful.

*"I am incredibly guilty of getting into these deep scrolling sessions, but the most important part to realize is when to step away."*

A phrase that is often said to incoming college students is "know when to take breaks;" however, just as important as that fact is knowing how to use those breaks successfully. While it isn't harmful to use your phone, reliance, greed and a sense of necessity are sure to ruin the screen needed between you and your phone.

## Virtual involvement can provide 'nudge'



**MeShanda Deason**
*Social Media Coordinator*

I used to think getting involved on campus meant physically showing up—walking into an event, scanning the room for a familiar face and hoping I didn't feel awkward the whole time. As a first-year student, I assumed everyone else already had it figured out. I didn't realize the most powerful tool for getting involved was already in my hands—social media.

Social media can often feel like a double-edged sword. We scroll endlessly, compare constantly and yet still feel disconnected. But when used with intention, it can be one of the most effective ways to stay informed, make connections and find your place on campus—especially at a university as full of opportunity as SFA.

One of the biggest shifts for me happened when I started following campus organizations on Instagram and X (Twitter). Whether it was the Black Student Caucus, the Pre-Health Society or even local ministries like the Baptist Student Ministries, these pages didn't just post flyers—they shared energy. You could get a feel for the organization's vibe before ever stepping into a meeting. When I was too anxious to walk into a room of strangers, seeing a familiar event post or story highlight gave me just enough of a nudge.

I began by following the University's main page and then branched out from there, looking through hashtags like #SFA and seeing what groups my peers were following. Before long, I had a digital map of what was happening on campus, right in my pocket.

Scrolling is passive, but engaging is powerful. Commenting on a post, replying to a story or even reposting a flyer can lead to genuine interactions. I once shared a flyer for an event on my story, and a classmate responded, "You're going? I've been wanting to go, too!" We ended up attending together and formed a friendship that's lasted ever since. These small interactions open doors. People begin to recognize your name, and those mutual follows start turning into familiar faces in real life. You become part of the campus rhythm, not just a silent observer of it.

But it's important to remember that social media should be the starting point—not the substitute. Knowing what's going on without ever acting still leaves you feeling left out. I learned to treat my saved posts like a to-do list. Whether it was a general meeting, a service project or a creative showcase, I made myself go, even when I didn't feel completely confident. Some of the most rewarding experiences of my college years—volunteering with Nac Core, joining Sigma Tau Delta and going to events with the Black Mental Health Organization—all began with a simple post. What changed everything was deciding to actually show up.

If I could give my freshman self one piece of advice, it wouldn't be to put down the phone—it would be to use it with intention. Social media isn't the enemy of connection. When used right, it's the bridge. And the beauty of a bridge is that you don't have to know what's on the other side, and it doesn't require you to have it all figured out—you just have to walk across it.

So the next time you see a flyer or story about a student event, don't just double-tap. Comment. Share. DM a friend. And most importantly, show up. You never know what kind of community and opportunities might be waiting for you just on the other side of a post.

## Take time to explore home away from home



**Meredith Hahn**
*Staff Writer*

In my first couple weeks at SFA, I struggled to find things to do in Nacogdoches on the weekends, this meant driving home almost every weekend, mostly because it was scary to try and find out all Nacogdoches has to offer. Even the things I could find were expensive and, as a broke college student, I could not afford to splurge on expensive outings. However, after taking a few steps out of my comfort zone, I have been able to find several fun, relaxing and cheap activities you can do on a slow weekend at SFA.

One of the most impressive things SFA and the entire Nacogdoches community has to offer is miles and miles of hiking trails. The Mast Arboretum, the Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden and the Pineywoods Native Plant Center all feature beautiful walking trails through Nacogdoches' signature pineywoods. If you are a nature person, these trails are perfect for taking a break from school and relaxing, like my friends and I who love to just wander around, taking in nature and resting up from a busy week.

Nacogdoches also hosts a farmer's market between W. Main St. and Pearl St. every Saturday morning, where vendors gather to sell fresh bread, homemade cheese, hand carved wooden tools and other locally sourced products. The market typically lasts from 9-12 p.m., and weekly details can be found on their Facebook page, Nacogdoches Farmers Market. Parking can be a little nerve wracking around the market, so if you ever find yourself unable to find a spot I recommend parking at Banita Creek Hall, across the street. When you're tired of dining hall food, or in need of a treat, the Farmer's Market has all sorts of goodies. There's nothing like fresh rosemary bread and fancy cheese after class.

SFA hosts several plant sales throughout the year and puts on shows in the on-campus SFA Planetarium. There are typically three unique shows per day, topics ranging from the ocean, Antartica and, of course, the stars. These shows are great ways to pass time on rainy weekends and a great way to learn more about the world around you, plus convenient for when you don't feel like driving anywhere for entertainment.

Banita Creek Hall is a very popular attraction for students and permanent Nacogdoches residents. Banita has line dancing and live music, which makes it a fun way to spend a night if you love to party. On Thursdays, women are allowed free entry into the club, but Banita is open every evening over the weekend. However, there are lots of unique places to go for weekend entertainment, but often you don't need to go anywhere to find something fun to do. Gathering friends for a game night or movie night have made some of my most favorite memories at college or taking time to just cook and enjoy a meal with friends is also a great way to pass the time.

Nacogdoches has so many fun things to offer, and this list is only a few of those things. If you find yourself bored one weekend, I encourage you to go try something new. Grab a friend and go play on the swing set at a local park and then spend some time walking through the many boutiques in downtown Nacogdoches. College is only what you make it, so get your assignments done, go to class but don't forget to enjoy the ride.


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# Scheduling self-care a must to avoid burn out in college



**Bethany McWilliams**
*News Editor*

College can be overwhelming and even unexpected. I know that I definitely wasn't expecting to be burnt out in my first semester. In an age where there never seems to be enough time, making time for yourself isn't a big priority for many people. Predictably, this leads many college students to face burn out. Avoid the same mistake and consider prioritizing yourself more than I did.

Prioritizing yourself can mean a lot of different things. One way of prioritizing yourself is remembering that you have the power to say "no." As college students, we are encouraged to participate in as many clubs and organizations as we can. Next thing you know, you're running from class to club to work and then home with no time to eat or rest. I've had my fair share of situations where I double booked myself or just felt exhausted from everything I've put on my plate.

Having the right to say no is something we forget sometimes. It's OK to not go to that party, it's OK to not pick up that extra shift and it's OK to say you need a break. It's about balancing yourself versus our commitments. Plus, maybe you'll get some extra sleep.

Let's face it, no one gets eight hours of sleep. Whether it's because you have an 8 a.m. class and you didn't go to bed until 3 a.m. or you just can't seem to get off TikTok, we all struggle with getting a good night's rest. Let's make it easy and lower our standards. Six hours. That's just midnight to 6 a.m. Even better if you don't have classes till lunch.

Find a way to eat during your day. It can be challenging to find the time to sit down for a full meal when you only have 15 minutes between your classes. If you have the resources, stash away a couple granola bars in your bag or take a protein shake with you to class. Otherwise, the vending machine is going to become your best friend.

Showering and self-care can be a perfect way to escape into your own world. Take a moment to reset, wash off the stress from the day and take a second to slow down. You can even show yourself a bit of love by trying out skincare. Skincare isn't just for the girlies; everyone can have fun with a face mask.

My biggest tip as someone who faced burnout is taking time for yourself. By the middle of the semester, I have committed myself to an outside job, two clubs, three single credit classes and a volunteer group. Some would say I'm overworking myself and to that I say "Lock in."

Take just 15 minutes and give it back to yourself. Fifteen minutes is the same amount of time you would spend scrolling on your phone, so why not spend that time with yourself instead? When I started giving myself this little break, I was able to put my energy back into hobbies that I used to enjoy. I started reading again and found myself looking forward to this small moment every day. As a bonus, I felt like I had actually found some freedom in my schedule even if it was just for a moment.

Prioritizing yourself doesn't mean making time for only yourself. It's important that you don't just stay cooped up in your room between classes. While your room can be a quiet place to study, you run the risk of creating a schedule that only has you going from class and then your room. Don't worry, I never said you must talk to other people but at least be in the same area.

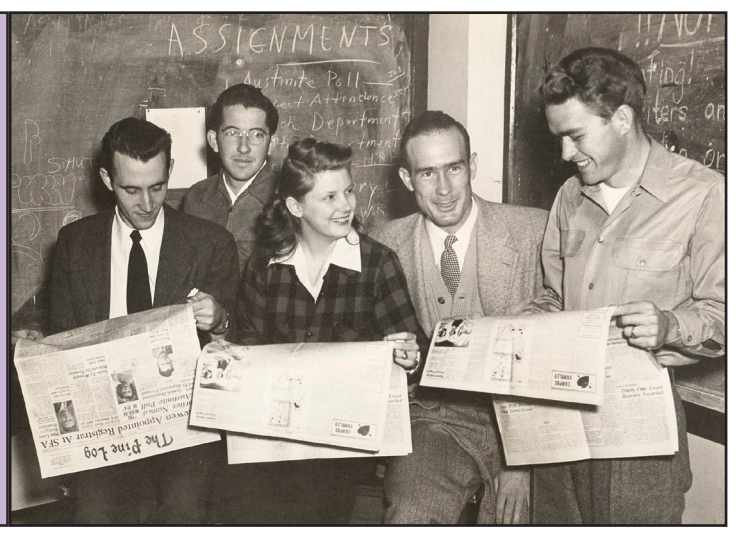
Start by taking advantage of all the free events hosted by SFA. You'll be able to interact with students who aren't normally in your classes, find people who share your interests and discover more things happening on campus. Remember, the funding comes from your tuition, so you might as well attend the events you're paying for! (How do you think we can afford to have everything in purple?)

Needless to say, prioritizing yourself will help you navigate college more than you would realize. If it gets to be too much, SFA offers a variety of mental health services such as counseling and workshops to ensure students have the resources to succeed. Take my advice to avoid the burnout, and maybe you won't get cooked like me.

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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.***

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# Leadership, service opportunities abound



Photo courtesy of 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.

At SFA, students are empowered to lead with purpose and serve with heart. College is a time to discover what matters most to you — and at SFA, you can turn your passions into action by advocating for causes and supporting projects that align with your values. Through meaningful partnerships with nonprofits across the region, Lumberjacks embrace the idea of thinking globally and acting locally, making a real impact in Nacogdoches and beyond. The leadership and service opportunities offered through the Office of Student Engagement allow students to support their community while laying the foundation for a lifetime of meaningful contribution to the greater good.

Each year, students raise thousands of dollars for the Children's Miracle Network through SFA Greek Week and come together each spring to participate in The BIG Event — a campus-wide day of service where hundreds of Lumberjacks fan out across Nacogdoches County to complete projects for local residents and express their appreciation. From yardwork and painting to window washing and trash collection, students work in small teams to make a visible difference in the lives of others. The BIG Event also coordinates the MLK Day of Service, during which students partner with local nonprofits to support missions that strengthen the Nacogdoches community.

Leadership development is a key part of the SFA experience, and students who go above and beyond are recognized for their impact. The Omicron Delta Kappa Leadership Honor Society honors top student leaders each spring, offering opportunities for scholarship, leadership training, career resources, and connection to a national network of service-minded peers. Student achievements are also celebrated at the annual Lumberjack Achievement Awards, where honors such as Top 23 Freshmen, Student Leader of the Year, and Student Organization of the Year recognize individuals and groups who leave their mark on campus. 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.

At SFA, there's a place for every student to lead, serve, and shine. All it takes is the willingness to show up, speak out, and get involved in the work that matters most to you.

# Part-Time, Volunteer Job Fair set for Sept. 3

## Additional fall events planned

Students seeking volunteer opportunities or a part-time job off or on campus should consider attending the Career Center's first career fair of the fall semester.

The Part-Time Job and Volunteer Fair will be held from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Wednesday, Sept. 3, in the Baker Pattillo Student Center Grand Ballroom. It is free for students to attend.

"Opportunities for experiences, ranging from on-campus jobs, volunteering locally or working off campus, will be represented at the fair," Career Center Director April Place said. "All types of experiences like these help students gain not only a paycheck but also transferable skills that recruiters tell us they want in interns and full-time hires. This is a great opportunity to meet with a lot of organizations' representatives all at once."

Students are encouraged to dress in business casual attire and bring a résumé to the fair, though it is not required. The Career Center 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. Sign in to Handshake at https://sfasu.joinhandshake.com/.

The Career Center will offer four additional career fairs the fall semester: Construction Management and Interior Design Career Fair on Sept. 9; Accounting Career Fair on Sept. 17; All Majors Career Fair on Oct. 15; and Teacher Career Fair on Oct. 24. The Career Center will also be hosting a Career Week starting Sept. 29 and other workshops throughout the semester.

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

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


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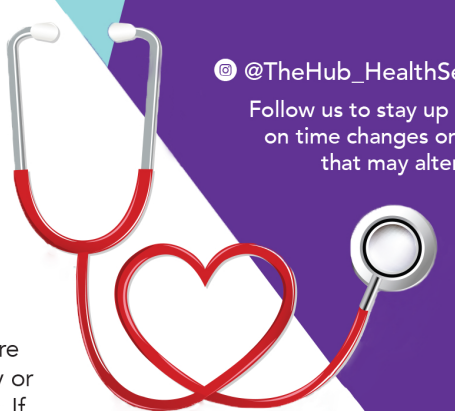
Students who do not have insurance to cover after-hours emergencies, hospitalization and any other medical needs that are not provided by SFA's Health Services are strongly urged to obtain the university-endorsed student health insurance policy or the equivalent. While the university has endorsed this student insurance policy, it is provided by an independent company. If you are interested in insurance coverage, you can learn more online at sfasu.edu/deanofstudents/student-resources/student-health-insurance-plan

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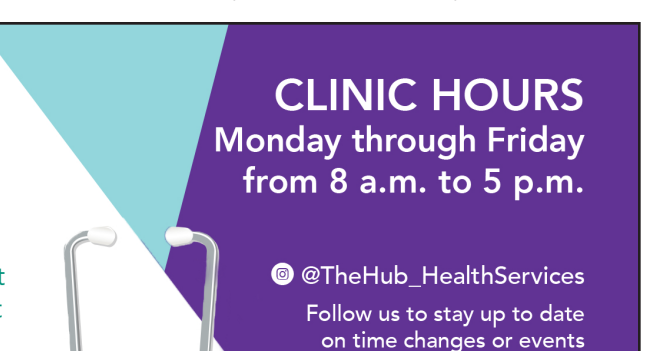
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# Best of SFA Awards honor students for leadership, scholarship

SFA named Garrett Bates of Frisco, Kate Middleton of Mansfield, Kently Northcutt of Crandall, and Olivia Wintz of Killeen as recipients of the 2025 Best of SFA Award.

"Our SFA student leaders all deserve recognition for the incredible impact they have on the university," said Dr. Lacey Folsom, director of Student Engagement. "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."

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. These students are recognized during the Lumberjack Achievement Awards Banquet held each spring semester and go on to represent SFA throughout the following academic year.

### Garrett Bates

Bates is an accounting major and a graduate of Frisco Independence High School. He is the son of Stephanie Gilkey and Jeremy Bates.

Bates served as president of Omega Delta Phi fraternity from spring 2023 to fall 2024 and accumulated over 60 hours of service each semester while participating in the organization's initiatives. One of those was the OD5K, which is held every semester with all proceeds benefiting the Wounded Warrior Project. In 2023, Bates was named Order of Omega Greek Man of the Year.

In addition to leadership roles in his fraternity, Bates served as an SFA Orientation leader, an Orientation student coordinator, an Orientation business intern, a Jack Camp counselor and a Weeks of Welcome leader. He was named Orientation Leader of the Year in 2023.

Off campus, Bates works as the assistant manager at the Nacogdoches Whataburger.

Bates plans to graduate next month and move back to the Dallas area to begin a career as an accountant. He intends to pursue a master's degree in accounting with the long-term goal of managing the financial operation of his family's landscaping business.

### Kate Middleton

Middleton is a psychology major with a minor in Latin American studies and women and gender studies. A graduate of Mansfield High School, she is the daughter of Angela Middleton and Martin Hernandez.

During her time at SFA, Middleton served as the vice president of community relations for Delta sorority and planned diversity, equity, inclusion, access and belonging educational programming for the organization. She assisted with National White Cane Safety Day, raised funds for All Blind Children of Texas, supported Special Olympics track team events and helped with the Miracle League baseball team. As a member of Delta and the Omicron Delta Kappa honor society, Middleton volunteered at local elementary schools, the Nacogdoches Animal Shelter, St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, SFA's Big Event and more.

Middleton has served as a student intern at the Counseling Clinic in SFA's Department of Human Services and Educational Leadership. In addition, she has presented at panel discussions on the guide dog lifestyle to help educate the public on guide dog usage and care. She also is a Panhellenic delegate as well as a member of the Psychology Club, Braille and Cane Club, SFA's School of Honors, Psi Chi psychology honors society and more. Middleton received the Outstanding Undergraduate Student in Psychology Award and the Outstanding Research in Psychology Award. She also was a 2025 Undergraduate Research Conference finalist.

Slated to graduate next month, Middleton aspires to become a counseling psychologist and plans to pursue a graduate degree in counseling or clinical psychology. Her dream job is to serve as director of a university counseling clinic, where she can help students navigate one of the most thrilling and challenging part of their lives.

### Kently Northcutt

Northcutt is an agriculture development major, a graduate of Crandall High School and the daughter of Pamela Northcutt.

She is a member of Chi Omega sorority, Order of Omega honor society, Omicron Delta Kappa honor society, Future Agricultural Educators Club, Student Activities Association and more. In addition, Northcutt has served SFA as a Jack Walker, Orientation leader, Jack Camp counselor and SAA vice president of internal relations. She also served on the Junior Rodeo Committee of the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo.

Northcutt received the Star Student Award from the Department of Agriculture in 2024, SAA President's Service Award in 2023, Best of SAA Award in 2023, Top 23 Freshmen Award in 2022 and more.

Northcutt plans to graduate in December and begin her career as a high school agriculture sciences instructor to teach animal science and floral design. She hopes to serve as her school's Future Farmers of America advisor.

### Olivia Wintz

Wintz is a theatre and hospitality administration major. A graduate of C.E. Ellison High School, she is the daughter of Dalia Lopez-Wintz and Andrew Wintz.

Wintz has served SFA as a Jack Walker, Orientation leader, Jack Camp counselor and School of Theatre and Dance peer mentor. She is involved in several organizations, including Multicultural Greek Council, Lambda Theta Alpha Latin Sorority, Order of Omega honor society, Omicron Delta Kappa national honor society, League of United Latin American Citizens, Black Student Caucus, Multicultural Ensemble and SFA's School of Honors.

She received the Top 23 Freshmen Award in 2023, Student of the Year Award for the School of Theatre and Dance in 2023 and several scholarships. Wintz also has made the President's List five times and was recently interviewed for the Archer Fellowship opportunity. She will be featured in SFA's upcoming episode of Amazon Prime's "The College Tour."

Slated to graduate in spring 2026, Wintz plans to pursue a career in the entertainment sector, focusing on television, film or theatre in a major U.S. city such as Houston or Atlanta.



**Frisco accounting major** Garrett Bates (right) receives his Best of SFA Award from Emile Smith.



**Mansfield psychology major** Kate Middleton (right) receives her Best of SFA Award from Uchenna Njoku.



**Crandall agriculture development** major Kently Northcutt (right) receives her Best of SFA Award from Uchenna Njoku.



**Killeen hospitality administration** major Olivia Wintz (right) receives her Best of SFA Award from Emile Smith.

Photos courtesy of University Marketing Communications






# Welcome Home!

Residence Life is committed to supporting our students living on campus. Our mission is to provide a learning-centered residential environment that fosters the academic success and personal development for our students. Res Life sponsors the Residence Hall Association, which provides activities for on-campus students to help them stay involved on campus.



## When can I move in?

Fall 2025 move-in begins **Aug. 20-21** for first-year students and **Aug. 22-23** for all other students.

## Is there a list of things students can and cannot bring?

Yes! This list can be found on our webpage at **gosfa.com/movein**.

## Are pets allowed?

Pets are not allowed, with the exception of small caged birds and fish in aquariums no larger than 10 gallons. Emotional support animals and service animals must be approved through the special accommodations process with the Office of Disability Services.

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Lumberjack Village Community Center

**STEPHEN F. AUSTIN STATE UNIVERSITY**

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS SYSTEM ★ NACOGDOCHES, TEXAS

# ACADEMICS



# UT System approves new forestry and ag facilities

## Two new buildings scheduled to open in 2027



Rendering courtesy of Kirksey Architecture

**The University of** Texas System Board of Regents approved a $5 million expansion of SFA's forestry and agriculture construction project. The expansion will add a nearly 17,000-square-foot Agricultural Engineering and Technology Building next to the planned four-story, 102,117-square-foot Forestry Building set to open in 2027. Pictured is a rendering provided by Kirksey Architecture of the new Forestry Building's southern facade on East College Street.

The University of Texas System Board of Regents approved today an additional $5 million be added to the nearly $80 million previously allotted to SFA for the construction of new state-of-the-art forestry and agriculture buildings on campus. The expanded budget supports the addition of an Agricultural Engineering and Technology Building next to the Forestry Building's construction site.

"This approval is a critical step in advancing our commitment to providing high-quality, hands-on education for students in some of the most vital industries in Texas and beyond," said Dr. Neal Weaver, SFA president. "UT System's investment in this new facility will benefit generations of students, strengthen SFA's position as a leader in forestry and agriculture education, and enhance our ability to contribute to critical research in environmental sciences. We are grateful for the support of the UT System and the Board of Regents as we work to bring this vision to life."

The board's approval increases the total forestry and agriculture project cost from $79.9 million to $84.9 million, with fund sources split almost equally between Capital Construction Assistance Project and the Permanent University Fund.

"The board's investment in a new building for SFA's Arthur Temple College of Forestry and Agriculture was one of the first and most important commitments we made to SFA. The college offers a signature program we did not previously have in the UT System, so it was especially meaningful for us to help SFA build capacity to lead nationally in this critical area of study and research," said Kevin P. Eltife, chairman of the UT System Board of Regents.

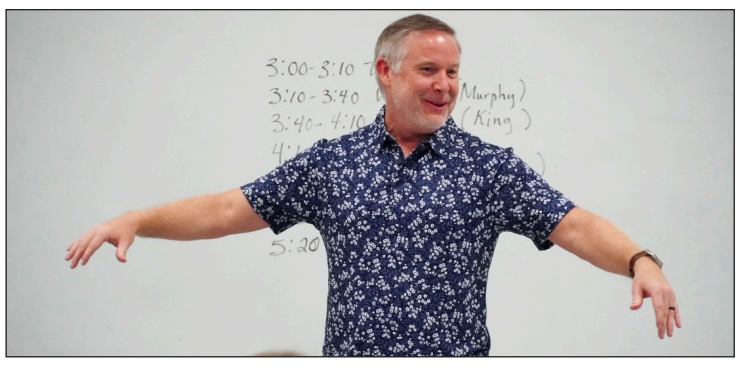
The new Forestry Building will be a four-story, 102,117-square-foot facility housing integrated technology classrooms, research laboratories, student resource areas and faculty office spaces. The addition of 16,990 square feet for the Agricultural Engineering and Technology Building will enhance hands-on training opportunities for students pursuing careers in agriculture and related industries.

"We are thrilled to see this transformative project move forward with the board's approval," said Dr. Hans Williams, dean of the Arthur Temple College of Forestry and Agriculture. "This facility will not only enhance the educational experience for our students but

*See* **BUILDINGS** *on* **Page 2C**



Marshall Fry / **The Pine Log**




Michon Lott / **The Pine Log**

**(Above) Members of** the first-ever SFA Alumni Choir perform in Cole Concert Hall on June 21. (Right) SFA Professor/Director of Choral Activities Dr. Michael Murphy rehearses with the Alumni Choir in anticipation of the summer concert. Murphy said the purpose of the event was to allow past members of SFA choral groups from over the decades to celebrate the history of the program and the university, reconnect with each other, and enjoy rehearsing and performing again.

# Alumni Choir Performs

## Director organizes first-ever SFA choral reunion

**By Diego Barahona**
*Editor-in-Chief*

On the longest day of the year, June 21, about 50 SFA choir alumni members rehearsed, laughed and gathered in the Cole Concert Hall to put on the first-ever Alumni Choir concert. The event, which featured past and present directors and alumni spanning 40 years, was a first for the program and required tireless planning from current Professor/Director of Choral Activities Dr. Michael Murphy.

"This is our first one, actually, that's why I am so excited about this," Murphy said. "You know we, in the history of our choirs, we've only had very few directors of choral activities, and I wanted to take this opportunity while we had three living directors of choral activities here to make sure we had an opportunity to get all three of us together and to get their alumni together and to celebrate that."

In addition, Murphy said he aspired to see the different groups of alumni connect to one another, despite the time they attended SFA or the director they had during their time here. The most important part, to Murphy, is the lineage and understanding the history they are coming from as a program and a university. However, to pull this off, he had to pull a lot of strings behind the scenes to ensure that a variety of people could attend.

"So, once I knew that we were going to have enough in the choir, that's when I reached out to Dr. [Ron] Anderson and Dr. [Tim] King and invited them," Murphy said. "They were very generous to be able to move their plans and make their schedules free to make sure they were here and part of it as well. That was very gratifying to know that all the things were falling into place."

The alumni involved in the process had a variety of reactions to the event, exactly what Murphy had wished for. One alumnus, Cole Jones, an elementary music teacher from Livingston, highlighted the impact this event had on him.

"I was super excited. We kind of had a small precursor to this event in the summer of 2024, and that led to a conversation about this event. I was lucky enough to be on the committee and get to help guide its creation in some small part," Jones said. "There were people who really took charge and made it a great event. I really hope to take that sense of community with me that hopefully will carry me throughout the next school year—really looking and seeing all the people I have to lean on, and who support me."

The concert, which featured a variety of compositions that were sure to highlight various sections, was conducted by Murphy and King, with Anderson choosing to enjoy from the wings. King, who shared that his last time taking the stage as a conductor was during his time at SFA, left no doubt that events like these are impactful to all of those who are willing and able to participate.

"You know people had asked me, 'What do you miss? Don't you miss your music?' and I say, 'I miss my students.' You know, because we work so well, and I'm sure Dr. Murphy would say the same," King said. "You work all this time for that culmination of a concert, and you just build relationships and a feeling for one another, and I really miss that."

# Honors school promotes acacemic excellence at SFA

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 internships and 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 comradery 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.

# SFA students earn top honors, scholarships at ad competition



Photo courtesy of University Marketing Communications

**SFA students accept** the third-place overall award at the 2025 District 10 American Advertising Federation National Student Advertising Competition held during the Advent10n conference April 9-12 in Arlington. SFA's interdisciplinary team, composed of graphic design, marketing and mass communication students, also earned the Judge's Award titled "You're Killin' It" for teamwork and execution. Pictured, from left, are Christian McClure, senior graphic design major from Austin; Cristian Roldan, junior graphic design major from Lufkin; Holland Davis, senior marketing major from Kingwood; Juliana Frigo, junior graphic design major from Abilene; Daphne Ortiz, junior graphic design major from Lufkin; Bradley Cavanaugh, senior English major with a marketing minor from Corrigan; Riley Troxel, senior graphic design major from Katy; KJ Gast, junior graphic design major from Nacogdoches; Julio Espinoza, junior graphic design major from Henderson; AAF award presenter; Melvin Gonzalez Acevedo, senior graphic design major from Miles; Asher McAlister, junior graphic design major from McKinney; Jacob Crosby, sophomore graphic design major from Kyle; Isabel Jedmears, senior marketing major from Little Elm; Laney Wise, senior graphic design major from Keller; Kassie Cressman, senior graphic design major from Lake Jackson; and Katie Carcerano, junior mass communication major with a marketing minor from Bridge City. Not pictured is Judith Johnson, senior graphic design major from Houston. **See story on Page 2C.**

# BUILDINGS: Construction underway



Rendering courtesy of Kirksey Architecture

**A rendering provided** by Kirksey Architecture shows the newly approved Agricultural Engineering and Technology Building set to be built on the north side of a state-of-the-art Forestry Building on SFA's campus. The additional building will enhance hands-on training opportunities for students pursuing careers in agriculture and related industries.

**From Page 1C**

will also provide cutting-edge resources for our faculty's research and outreach efforts. The addition of the Agricultural Engineering and Technology Building will equip students with the technical skills necessary to meet the challenges of the modern agricultural landscape, ensuring that SFA graduates are well-prepared to lead in this dynamic field."

The project is set to provide a modern, multidisciplinary space designed for 21st-century instruction, fostering collaboration among students, faculty and industry professionals. With the inclusion of specialized agricultural engineering labs, students will gain vital experience in carpentry, mechanics and other technical skills.

With the board's approval of the expanded budget and design plan, the abatement process of the existing Forestry Building began last spring. The building was then razed and the new facilities are being constructed in its footprint. The new forestry and agricultural buildings are projected to be complete in 2027.

# Students earn advertising awards

SFA students from the Micky Elliott College of Fine Arts, Nelson Rusche College of Business, and College of Liberal and Applied Arts showcased their creativity, collaboration and professionalism at the 2025 District 10 American Advertising Federation's National Student Advertising Competition, earning multiple awards and scholarships for their work on a campaign for AT&T.

Held April 9-12 as part of the AAF's annual Advent10n conference in Arlington, the event welcomed students from 13 universities across Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas and Louisiana. SFA's interdisciplinary team — featuring graphic design, marketing and mass communication students — earned third place overall, as well as the Judge's Award titled "You're Killin' It" for teamwork and execution.

"Students on the Stephen F. Austin State University team worked well with each other, always courteous in considering each other's opinions and contributions," said Dr. Marlene Kahla, professor of management and marketing at SFA.

Throughout the spring semester, SFA students collaborated to craft an original, integrated marketing campaign for the national telecommunications company. The work began in fall 2024, when faculty members and students developed the research strategy that helped anchor the final campaign. The result was a full-scale professional presentation judged by a panel of industry experts.

"The American Advertising Federation NSAC competition is a standout spring semester event," said Daniel Anguiano, associate professor of graphic design at SFA. "Our graphic design and marketing students dedicate months of hard work to developing a comprehensive campaign for a national client like AT&T, competing against well-funded universities from across the region. Earning third place in this prestigious competition is a significant achievement for SFA and a testament to our students' talent, determination and creativity."

In addition to the team award, several students received individual recognition through scholarships awarded by the AAF. Jacob Crosby, graphic design sophomore from Kyle, and Malachiyah Armstrong, animation junior from Flint, each received a $5,000 AAF Spring 2025 Scholarship. Laney Wise, graphic design senior from Keller; Bayleigh Edwards, graphic design sophomore from Gladewater; and Isabel Jedmears, marketing senior from Little Elm, each received a $5,000 AAF Fall 2024 Scholarship.

"I'm very proud of my teammates and was excited to see the competition results," Crosby said. "We overcame obstacles to win a coveted position. Our team advisor showed guidance and patience, helping us win."

SFA faculty members were also recognized, with Peter Andrew, professor of art and AAF/American Institute of Graphic Arts faculty advisor, receiving the AAF Outstanding Educator Award.

"The Outstanding Educator Award was a total surprise," Andrew said. "The nomination was anonymous, and the honor is humbling. I credit my teammates for this recognition."

Andrew, Anguiano and Kahla mentored the students throughout the yearlong effort.

For more information on opportunities for real-world learning in SFA's School of Art, Department of Management and Marketing, and Department of Media and Communication, visit sfasu.edu/art, sfasu.edu/mgtmkt and sfasu.edu/media-communication, respectively.

# School of Music takes show on road

## Students and faculty ensembles help recruit for SFA

**By Diego Barahona**
*Editor-in-Chief*

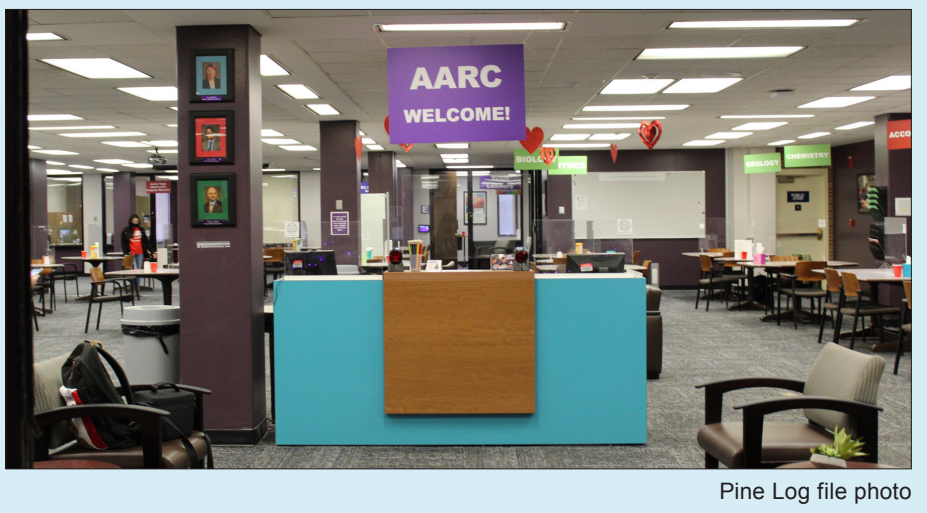
Recently, the SFA School of Music has had the opportunity to send out six student and faculty ensembles to a multitude of high schools, thanks to a $25,000 allocation from the SFA Office of the Provost. These recruiting efforts, which are focused on presenting to potential music educators and performers, has already reached over 1,000 students.

"It was first in 2022 that they offered a President's Innovation Fund, which I applied for with this premise we needed money for small ensembles of all kinds to go out because we had a unique way of getting into high schools to recruit band students, who are really good students but not just music majors," said Dr. Deb Scott, associate director for undergraduate studies and professor of trombone.

"We could do more. We have chamber music ensembles, faculty ensembles and soloists that can all go to high schools, and we've done that in the past and we've been limited by our budget," said Scott.

"Essentially the additional funds were helping to support events that we were already doing but having to use our own funds to do it. Each one of the ensembles gets their own budget and some of them, such as choir and band, tend to tour yearly. However, with the trombone, tuba-euphonium or jazz ensembles, each one would have to come up with their own or ask the School of Music" added Dr. J.D. Salas, director of the school of music.

As Salas and Scott are reviewing the possibility of receiving funding next year, they are currently looking back at the statistics that they have received from the above-mentioned groups. The groups were tasked with getting the high school students to fill out a questionnaire for the faculty to bring back that contained identifying information for the student along with personal perceptions of SFA. The most recent data showed the tour was the first time students had heard of SFA 81% of the time.




Pine Log file photo

**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.

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We offer speech and language therapy on campus to the SFA and East Texas communities. Including assistance with assessment and treatment for children and adults in the following areas: speech, language, voice, fluency, cognitive impairments, and swallowing.

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# Sylvans win 19th Conclave title, extend SFA win streak to seven



Photo courtesy of University Marketing Communications

**The SFA Sylvans** timbersports team claimed its seventh consecutive victory at the 66th annual Association of Southern Forestry Clubs Conclave, marking the Sylvans' 19th overall Conclave title. The group's winning streak was extend to seven consecutive Conclaves, tying the University of Arkansas at Monticello's historic run from 1987 to 1993 as the longest ever. A highlight of this year's competition was Holly Parkin's and Maddie Sweeten's record-setting performance in the women's crosscut event.

# SFA earns Carnegie recognition

The Carnegie Foundation and the American Council on Education designated SFA as a Higher Access, Medium Earnings institution due to its work to advance opportunity in a rural service area. Because of SFA, East Texas students benefit from greater access to a college education and above-average wages upon completion of their degrees, according to the designation.

"This designation highlights a commitment to serving first-generation, rural and underrepresented students who might not be served by larger or more selective universities," said Dr. Neal Weaver, SFA president. "SFA is transforming lives by preparing students for success, strengthening community partnerships and driving economic mobility across our region. We remain steadfast in our commitment to offering affordable and accessible education that meets the needs of East Texas."

SFA has also earned a Carnegie research classification for the first time, designated as a Research College and University. The Research College and University is a new designation that identifies research work being done at colleges and universities that have not historically been recognized for their research activity due to fewer doctoral degrees. SFA is one of six schools in Texas and one of 107 across the country that hold both "Research College and University" and "Higher Access" designations.

"SFA is offering a growing number of doctoral programs, which signals upward mobility toward doctoral classification," said Dr. Forrest Lane, dean of the Office of Research and Graduate Studies. "This designation reflects the exceptional scholarly contributions of our faculty, students and staff, and recognizes that meaningful, transformative research is taking place at regional institutions like ours."

The Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education is a system used to categorize U.S. colleges and universities based on various characteristics like degree types awarded, research activity, enrollment size, special focus or mission. Carnegie classifications are updated every three years, and the recent updates aim to make the classifications more useful and better aligned with today's fast-changing higher education landscape.

"The American higher education landscape is incredibly dynamic and complex. But the Carnegie Classifications as they are organized today do not capture that dynamism or the variety of higher education institutions," said Ted Mitchell, president of American Council on Education. "We are reimagining the Carnegie Classifications to better group and organize like institutions to accurately reflect the broad scope of their work with students, communities, and the broader public purposes of higher education."



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# Fine arts series debuts with Prince tribute

SFA's 2025-26 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 to Share," brings the Nacogdoches, campus and surrounding communities together through the arts with high-quality performances spanning from blues and Celtic music to stand-up comedy and holiday traditions. The series also will feature a special encore presentation of "Nutcracker! Christmas Ballet."

"The University Series is something we are proud to offer," said Dr. Gary Wurtz, dean of the Micky Elliott College of Fine Arts. "These performances represent a range of artistic disciplines, and we're grateful to have the opportunity to bring them to Nacogdoches each year. It's a privilege to provide access to this level of entertainment without our audiences having to travel far from home."

**Oct. 24 – Marshall Charloff & Purple xPeRIeNCE**

Marshall Charloff & Purple xPeRIeNCE, known as the most authentic celebration of Prince in the world, will kick off the series. The Minneapolis-based group was created by Prince's longtime collaborator Dr. Fink and front man Charloff and has toured globally since 2011, bringing the iconic sound, style and energy of Prince to audiences around the world. The performance is presented in part by Etech.

**Dec. 9 – Eileen Ivers Joyful Christmas**

Grammy Award-winning fiddler Eileen Ivers will display her Irish and American roots in "Eileen Ivers Joyful Christmas." This festive performance blends traditional Wren Day songs, poems and lively roots music with Ivers' signature warmth and artistry, creating a spirited celebration of the holiday season.

**Jan. 30 – James P. Connolly**

James P. Connolly, a stand-up comic and radio/TV host, has been featured on "America's Got Talent," Comedy Central, HBO and Netflix's "Larry Charles: Dangerous World of Comedy." His sharp wit and clean humor have made him a favorite for audiences nationwide.

**Feb. 27 – Sue Foley**

Grammy Award-nominated and five-time consecutive Blues Music Award winner Sue Foley will bring her fiery Texas blues style and refined acoustic performances to Nacogdoches. Her latest album, "One Guitar Woman," is a tribute to the female pioneers of guitar.

**Nov. 18 – "Nutcracker! Christmas Ballet"**

"Nutcracker! Christmas Ballet," celebrating its 33rd year, tours more than 100 cities across North America and features world-class dancers, Broadway-caliber sets and costumes and choreography blending ballet, puppetry and acrobatics. The performance is presented in part by Lehmann Eye Center.

Tickets go on sale Sept. 2 and season tickets will be available Aug. 15 for those wanting to secure their preferred seating for each show. Season ticket holders also can take advantage of flexible mix-and-match options to customize their package. Reserved seating for University Series performances ranges from $25 to $35, with discounts available for seniors, students and children. Reserved seating for the encore event ranges from $45 to $100 based on section. Discounts do not apply to encore events. To purchase tickets, visit sfasu.edu/boxoffice or call (936) 468-6407.



Photo courtesy of University Marketing Communications

**SFA's 2025-26 University Series** returns this fall with a lineup of nationally acclaimed artists inside Turner Auditorium in the Griffith Fine Arts Building. All performances will be held at 7:30 p.m. "Nutcracker! Christmas Ballet" will be among the nationally acclaimed performances this season, which is themed "A Season to Share."




Connor Bronson / The Pine Log

**Diego Pástor, a** former violin performance student from Quito, Ecuador, stands in front of the Ed and Gwen Cole Concert Hall.

# Ecuadorian student receives full ride for graduate teaching at Northern Colorado

**By Diego Barahona**
*Editor-in-Chief*

Diego Pástor, a graduate student majoring in violin performance from Quito, Ecuador, started taking classes at SFA in August of 2023, being one of the first entries to the series of stories covering international students at SFA. Now Pástor is setting his eyes on post-SFA adventures as he has received a full ride scholarship to the University of Northern Colorado for a Graduate Assistantship role.

"I'm going to miss the people I've met here, those valuable and friendly people, along with teachers and guides, but I'm really going to miss the tranquility and space I've had," Pástor said. "Nacogdoches is a small and peaceful town, which leads many to say it's a boring town with nothing to do. This is true, but if you come here with the objective of academic success you have 100% of the conditions to be able to study."

During his time at SFA, Pástor has been able to accomplish a multitude of successful explorations of his career path. This includes playing in the Longview, Texarkana and SFA Symphony Orchestras and singing as a tenor and playing at a variety of local churches and the Cottage Restaurant.

In addition to playing, he has developed his teaching skills as he worked as a professor for the Blue Lake Fine Arts Camp in Grand Rapids, MI and substitute teaching various forms of art at the Music and Arts School in the Cypress area. The most crucial experiences Pástor attributes to those he closely surrounds himself with, faculty and professors.

"It has been a major professional development that if not for Dr. Jennifer Dalmas, Dr. Gregory Grabowski and Dr. Evgeni Raychev and all the other professors that have been guiding me and helping me to respond," Pástor said. "I consider their help to be one of the guarantees that I've had to be accepted and called upon."

Dalmas, professor of violin, has gotten the opportunity to work with Pástor over the last two years. She shared that his work at SFA will ensure he has success in the future. "I'm excited for him as he begins this new chapter, pursuing a doctoral degree in performance at Northern Colorado," she said. "Pástor is such a motivated person and has so many great qualities; I see a bright future for him. In addition to being a fine violinist, he has skill in connecting with people and creating opportunities. This will serve him well in his future goals."

The success Pástor hopes to gain in the future he contributes to the teaching and methodology of SFA, such as doing opera which requires multiple nights of three-hour rehearsals. In addition to the technical challenges, he also contributes the teachings of his professors to his mental success and pedagogy. Pástor noted his physical training, lifting weights, flexibility exercises and other workouts, to be just as crucial as his academic training, believing in a steady mind and habits.

Looking ahead at studying under Jubal Fulks, professor of violin, Pástor is excited for what the final leg of his educational journey holds. While his time at SFA may be over, he shared his love for the school is permanent.

"I hold lots of emotions, gratitude and, of course, a bit of nerves. However, at the same time I am looking at it with the hunger and longing to learn and improve to share and help," Pástor said. "Once I get done there, I want to investigate the co-relationship between physical exercise and mental exercise, such as that done on the violin. From there, I want to be a professor, I want to help students, the same way others helped me, I want to inspire new generations to build their dreams and I want to share and help as much as I can."




SCHOOL OF THEATRE AND DANCE

At SFA's School of Theatre and Dance, students balance excellence in production with rigorous academics. Auditions ensure a high standard of talent, with opportunities ranging from performing to designing. We prepare students for careers in creative industries. We believe every student can contribute significantly to their art form and prepare them for employment in various creative industries.

SCHOOL OF MUSIC

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At the SFA School of Art, students don't just learn–they create. With diverse artistic methods from sculpture to animation, our small classes foster big creativity. We're dedicated to expanding appreciation, stirring emotions and engaging intellect through art exploration. Critical thinking and problem-solving empower students for professional careers.

For more information, scan the QR code or visit **sfasu.edu/cfa**

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MICKY ELLIOTT COLLEGE OF FINE ARTS

# Study abroad trips abound

By Samantha Hooker
*Staff Writer*

To some, studying abroad is a thrilling way to expand their education and career outlook, while others may see it as a step into the unknown. However, stepping out of your bubble can bring great intellectual and individualistic rewards, such as new cultures, experiences, and lifestyles. For the most recent group of travelers, experiences took shape as listening to Elton John piano music during dinner on the top deck of a boat in Prague, studying their schoolwork during the daytime and exploring the many exciting features of various countries during the night.

Junior Amanda De Leon, a horticulture major from Garland, said her experience brings insight into the rewards of studying abroad. Traveling to the Netherlands, De Leon noted her surprise at the opportunity to fully conduct her whole experience. Through being able to visit every church in sight, roam the cityscape, and explore local nightlife – something she isn't accustomed to – the experience was both interactive and hands-on as she could choose her own adventure. De Leon gives assuring advice to students hovering on the possibility of taking a trip

"If you're afraid or unsure, just remember that this is an opportunity and a gateway to an experience that many don't get," De Leon said. "Learn new cultures and new things."

It's not party central though; there is still some studying included in the study abroad trips. Despite the fun and freedom that study-abroad students enjoy, there are also exciting educational aspects of these trips. Students may broaden their perspectives of career opportunities abroad and deepen their education by exposing themselves to different cultures and practices.

Junior economics major from Conroe, Annie Johnston, notes her experience with the local business and the different techniques used to market their products. Traversing across Austria, Hungary and the Czech Republic, these countries made Johnston realize the potential for working and pursuing her career abroad rather than just as vacation sights.

"You start to realize that people here are identical to us: where we want a safe place to live and reliable healthcare," Johnston said. "If we were able to showcase that more, everyone would be a little less bitter to one another."

It's important to widen our perspective during such economic and political turmoil as we've seen recently and one way to open up is to embrace new people and accept new cultures despite our differences. Johnston also gives the advice to "look into scholarships being offered because those will make your already pretty affordable study abroad trip even less expensive."

Through studying abroad, students may learn something new not only in their chosen major but about the world as a whole and remember that people— no matter their status, religion, culture or background— simply want safety and peace. Students may also learn that SFA does not run an incredibly tight ship on students during their overseas adventures.

Italy traveler Hunter Baggott, a junior art major from Houston, said his experience doing his assigned schoolwork was shockingly lenient and left much time to wander and explore. He wants to advise students looking into studying abroad to be ready to walk many miles and spend a lot of time in airports. Baggott, who studied abroad with his drawing class, notes that his class walked everywhere almost the whole day. His assignments were to "go around and draw things in museums, draw architecture… whatever we saw." Baggott explains how he experienced education and personal freedom during his travels. He describes how his group had a couple nights of complete autonomy after completing their schoolwork. "We were set free to do whatever we want and getting to just explore in a place that's so different from Nacogdoches was awesome."

Maybe you have never considered study-abroad or maybe it's been in the back of your mind for years, but you've just never committed to it. Whatever the situation may be, let this be your push to seriously consider or commit to studying abroad during your SFA experience. Gather new insights, open your eyes to a new world of career opportunities or simply explore the nightlife in Amsterdam. Whatever you desire from a study abroad trip, you can make it happen.










Photos courtesy of Office of International Programs

**Students recently traveled** to (clockwise from top) The Netherlands, Italy, Gernany and Czechia.

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Photo courtesy of University Marketing Communications

**Students in SFA's** educator preparation program attended the Lumberjack Teachers for Texas advocacy event in April. Accompanied by Dr. Jannah Nerren, chair of the Department of Education Studies, and Dr. Christina Sinclair, associate dean of the James I. Perkins College of Education, students engaged in advocacy at the state level, met with state legislators, experienced networking opportunities and toured the Texas State Capitol and the offices of Raise Your Hand Texas, an education advocacy organization. They engaged in planning and training sessions to prepare for advocacy meetings, where they discussed legislation pertaining to educational issues. Pictured, from back row left, are Omoningho Ekoh, King Gourlay, Cristopher Martinez, Taylor McCloskey, Garret Owens, Margaret Wood, Colin Anderson, and Nerren. Pictured, from bottom row left, are Karina Bandaru, Sinclair, Amy Lavin and Bryanna Martinez.

# Professor recognized for outstanding leadership in geoscience education



**Dr. Julie Bloxson**

The American Association of Petroleum Geologists, a nonprofit foundation supporting educational and scientific activities in the field of geology, has named Dr. Julie Bloxson, associate professor of earth sciences and geologic resources at SFA, as its 2025 Inspirational Geoscience Educator.

The annual award honors college and university professors within 10 years of their initial tenure-track appointment who have demonstrated outstanding leadership in geoscience education. The recipient receives $6,000 and a commemorative plaque.

"I am very proud of Dr. Bloxson for achieving this prestigious national recognition," said Dr. Wesley Brown, chair of SFA's Department of Earth Sciences and Geologic Resources. "Dr. Bloxson has been creating waves on both the local and national scenes in her discipline and is an asset to the SFA community."

Bloxson, who earned her doctorate in earth science from Case Western Reserve University, has focused her research on subsurface systems, applying her expertise to real-world problems. Her work led to a research position at the Ohio Division of Geological Survey, where she concentrated on carbon sequestration and hydrocarbon assessments across the Appalachian Basin.

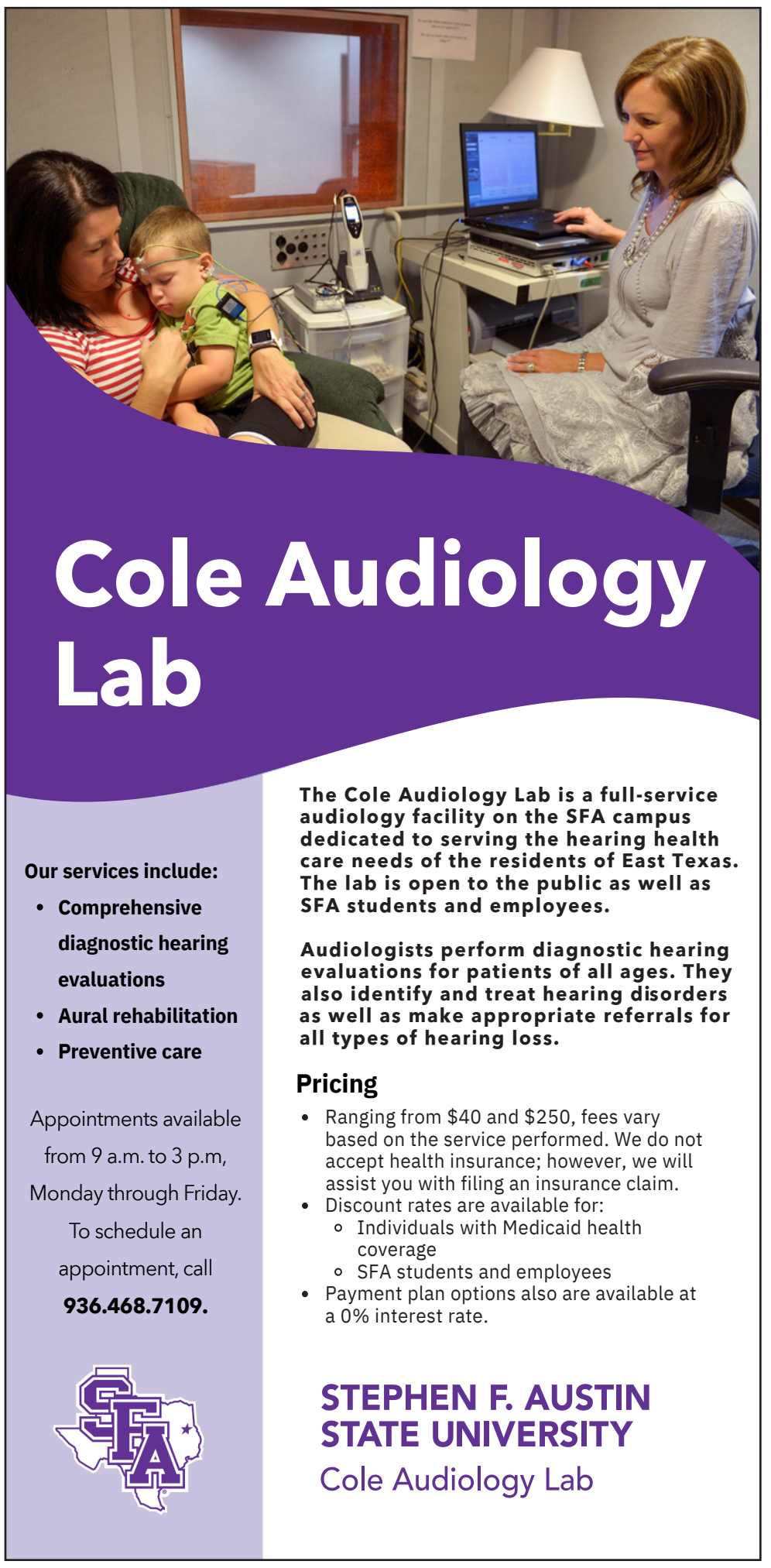
"Many of us who studied geology in university and pursued geoscience careers did so because of the influence and encouragement of one or more faculty members," said Jim McGhay, chairman of the AAPG Board of Trustees. "Recognizing faculty who have demonstrated this ability early in their careers is the purpose of this award, and Julie is eminently deserving of this recognition."

Bloxson's passion for applied geoscience has driven her teaching and research since she joined the SFA faculty in 2018. During her tenure at the university, she has advised more than a dozen graduate theses, supervised numerous undergraduate research projects and engaged in collaborative research with both industry and government partners.

Bloxson was also instrumental in bringing the Gulf Coast Association of Geological Societies GeoGulf 2025 conference to Nacogdoches in April. The conference hosted more than 400 industry professionals and afforded students in the College of Sciences and Mathematics and the Arthur Temple College of Forestry and Agriculture opportunities to present their research and learn.

"I am truly honored to be selected as the 2025 recipient of the Inspirational Geoscience Educator Award," said Bloxson. "This award affirms the power of community and collaboration in geoscience education and reinforces my commitment to creating inclusive, innovative learning spaces that bridge academia, industry and public engagement."

To learn more about SFA's Department of Earth Sciences and Geologic Resources, visit sfasu.edu/earth-sciences.

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# Students learn about lawmaking in Legislative Internship Program



Photo courtesy of University Marketing Communications

**Five SFA students** participated in the 89th Texas Legislature as part of SFA's Legislative Internship Program. Pictured, from left, are Miguel Koch, political science major from Allen; Dylan Miles, political science major from Center; Wil Stafford, management major from Lufkin; Trent Bush, political science major from Timpson; and Sydney Shifflett, criminal justice major from Carrollton.

Through SFA's Legislative Internship Program, five students served during the 89th Texas Legislature and learned the intricacies of Texas lawmaking and civic leadership. While gaining hands-on experiences, they left a strong impression in Austin.

Interns during the spring 2025 semester included Trent Bush, political science major from Timpson; Miguel Koch, political science major from Allen; Dylan Miles, political science major from Center; Sydney Shifflett, criminal justice major from Carrollton; and Wil Stafford, management major from Lufkin.

Started in 2009 under the leadership of the late Dr. Ken Collier, professor of government, the SFA Legislative Internship Program provides real-world, hands-on practical experiences to SFA students in law-making, issue advocacy and civic leadership during every regular session of the Texas Legislature. To date, more than 40 SFA students have served in the program. Over the years, interns have left such an impression in Austin that many state legislators contact the university seeking internships.

"Engaging with the Texas Legislature while they are in session provides the perfect laboratory for understanding how politics works in real time," said Dr. Charlotte Sullivan, SFA's director of government relations. "Students who go through the internship have an insight into politics that will benefit them no matter what career path they choose."

Interns are selected through a competitive application process that includes a résumé, a personal statement and an in-person interview. Once selected, interns are matched with state legislative offices or committees. Sullivan works with the interns to mentor and guide them.

The interns arrived in Austin before the start of the spring semester and remained in Austin until the end of the regular session in late May. While in Austin, students received course credit toward their degree.

According to Koch, who worked in the office of State Sen. Robert Nichols, serving as a legislative intern was a catalyst for professional growth and confidence. He was able to learn the basics of legislative analysis through hands-on experiences rather than watching from the sidelines.

"Serving in the 89th Legislature has given me an incredibly unique perspective on what it means to shape the law," Koch said. "Watching a bill go from an idea in Sen. Nichols' office to codified statute was incredible as a political science student, and getting to experience those moments firsthand gave me a perspective that will certainly assist my time in law school."

Miles, who worked in the committee office of State Sen. Brandon Creighton, felt the opportunity provided learning opportunities he wouldn't have gained in a classroom setting.

"Working at the legislature is truly a one-of-a-kind experience," Miles said. "There is no equivalent to the hands-on learning and insider perspective that it provides. Having studied state government previously, there was still a great deal I did not know about the norms of the legislative process that I would have otherwise never known."

"I cannot begin to describe what working in Austin has meant to me," Miles continued. "This has been my first step into the political and legal world, and had I been asked even a few weeks before having applied to the internship, I would not have thought it possible that I would be working at the state Capitol."

For Bush, who served as constituent manager in the office of State Rep. Todd Hunter, the internship reignited his passion for politics. He noted how the internship program offered a refreshing perspective on the political process and the importance of cooperation.

"With the political climate being what it is these days, it is easy to feel like the entire career is just a never-ending battle with whichever 'other team,'" Bush said. "This experience has shown me that even in a high-level political atmosphere, there are people willing to reach across the aisle with friendship."

For more information, visit the program's page on the SFA website.

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# FEATURES





Photo by Connor Bronson / **The Pine Log**

**Students taking part** in a Spring Break 2025 trip to Big Bend National Park organized by SFA Campus Recreation's Outdoor Pursuits prorgram paddle down the Rio Grande along the Boquillas Canyons. Nine students and three trip leaders took part in the adventure, during which they camped, hiked and canoed for eight days. **See more photos on Page 3D.**

## SFA students honored

Two students in SFA's Nelson Rusche College of Business earned top honors at the collegiate Future Business Leaders of America National Leadership Conference, which hosted an estimated 1,100 FBLA members last month in Dallas.

Jessica Frasier, president of SFA's FBLA chapter and general business senior from Bay City, earned fifth place in the Finance Case Competition, and Julian Ieva, treasurer of SFA's FBLA chapter and accounting senior from Houston, earned first place in the Foundations of Finance Competition.

The topic for the Finance Case Competition was a subject Frasier said she was already passionate and knowledgeable about: healthy eating on a budget.

"So to prepare, I spent the majority of the time researching specific sources to back up my claims," Frasier said. "Then I gave the presentation to anyone who would listen, from doing it in the mirror to showing it to my roommates for feedback."

Frasier tries not to overdo the rehearsing on competition day, though.

"It's always important to prepare yourself in the few hours before you compete," she said. "But don't over-rehearse the morning of. Take a deep breath and be confident in yourself."

Instead of preparing for the Foundations of Finance test by studying, Ieva's secret to competition success was teaching the content to someone else.

"I tutored someone in finance all spring, which kept the material fresh and really helped reinforce the fundamentals," he said. "Explaining the concepts over and over ended up being the best kind of prep without me even realizing it."

As faculty advisor for SFA's FBLA chapter, Dr. Marice Kelly attends nearly all of the organization's regular meetings and knows how much work Frasier and Ieva have put into preparing for these competitions.

"Jessica's and Julian's recent FBLA NLC wins show their dedication and drive to succeed," said Kelly, assistant professor of business communication and legal studies at SFA. "They both were finalists, meaning they were in the top 10 in each competition. This was their second time attending FBLA NLC, and they came prepared to win."

## Three Lumberjacks recount experiences as Archer Fellows in D.C.

Marking the second time in university history, three SFA students represented the university in the Archer Fellowship Program in Washington, D.C. during the spring semester — joining peers from across The University of Texas System and getting a front-row seat to the policymaking process through the elite program.

Jada Cartwright, a criminal justice major from Lockhart; Casper Dirkx, a political science major from Spaarndam, Netherlands; and Nathan Lyons, a political science major from Lufkin, represented SFA in the fellowship during the spring 2025 semester.

"Our SFA Archer Fellows embody the university's core values in Washington, D.C.," said Laura Ferguson, communication manager of the Archer Center. "They lead with integrity, compassion and respect, serving as bridge-builders within their cohorts."



Photo courtesy of Archer Center

**Students representing SFA** during The University of Texas System's Archer Fellowship Program in Washington, D.C., last semester pose with the SFA flag on the steps of the U.S. Capitol. Pictured, from left, are Jada Cartwright, a criminal justice major from Lockhart; Nathan Lyons, a political science major from Lufkin; and Casper Dirkx, a political science major from Spaarndam, Netherlands.

Founded in 2001, the Archer Center serves as the UT System's Washington campus and provides talented undergraduate and graduate students from across the UT System with the opportunity to live, learn and intern in the United States' capital. The purpose of the program is to educate the next generation of leaders for local, state, federal and international service, according to the Archer Center website.

The Fellowship Program, established by the UT System in conjunction with former U.S. Rep. Bill Archer, provides students a sense of direction and the tools necessary to launch their respective careers. Archer Fellows make and maintain social and professional connections that can lead to continued internship opportunities and jobs after graduation.

"The Archer Fellowship Program helps students focus their career goals and objectives by exposing students to real-world policymaking," said Dr. Steven Galatas, SFA associate professor of government and the university's Archer Fellowship Program campus coordinator. "Students develop their skills in handling diverse, and at times, contradictory positions, attitudes and beliefs about policies that are important to the student. SFA's Archer Fellows return with greater self-confidence, leadership skills and appreciation for civic life."

During their time in the program, participants 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 in either the fall or spring semester. Graduate Archer Fellows earn nine hours of in-residence credit during the summer term.

"SFA Archer Fellow alumni go on to pursue leadership roles in local, state, federal, and international service," Ferguson said. "Their transformative semester in Washington, D.C., helps Lumberjacks build confidence, establish professional connections and gain firsthand experience with federal policymaking, all while bringing essential perspectives from the East Texas region to our nation's capital."

### Jada Cartwright

Cartwright, who interned in the office of U.S. Rep. Joyce Beatty, considers the opportunity a privilege that profoundly shaped her understanding of public service and deepened her commitment to civic engagement.

"Being an Archer Fellow has been one of the greatest honors of my academic and professional journey," Cartwright said. "I left the program with a deep sense of pride, knowing I am part of a distinct and impactful network. The fellowship has opened doors, provided lasting connections, and helped shape my leadership and advocacy skills in ways I could never have imagined."

During her internship, Cartwright communicated directly with concerned constituents, helping to convey Beatty's positions with clarity and respect. On her first day alone, she and her fellow interns fielded more than 500 phone calls. Cartwright also assisted with drafting constituent response letters on behalf of Beatty.

"The letter-writing process is a critical component of any congressional office, serving as a direct line of communication between members of Congress and their constituents," Cartwright said. "Being trusted with this responsibility taught me how to write clearly, persuasively and in alignment with the congresswoman's voice and values. Contributing to this meaningful task gave me a sense of purpose and pride."

While in Washington, Cartwright found inspiration in the vibrant community of UT System fellows and the city's rich history. Some of her favorite memories came from the "Politics of National Memory" course, held in various iconic locations like the steps of the Supreme Court, where students discussed modern applications of constitutional law.

"I had never been surrounded by such a diverse and passionate group of individuals, many of whom held perspectives different from my own," Cartwright said. "Despite these differences, it was inspiring to see how committed we all were to public service — both in D.C. and back home in Texas. That sense of shared purpose reinforced my belief that I belonged in this space."

Looking ahead, Cartwright plans to prepare for the Law School Admission Test and pursue law school, crediting the Archer Center's mentorship and resources for helping shape those goals.

### Casper Dirkx

For Dirkx, serving in the office of U.S. Rep. Beth Van Duyne as a congressional intern was nothing short of a dream realized – an experience that brought his passion for politics to life in the heart of Washington.

"Being an Archer Fellow meant that I was able to grow personally and professionally," Dirkx said. "It was a dream come true to work in the U.S. House of Representatives, learn about the federal legislative process, learn about U.S. national memory in class, and live in the nation's capital where politics is taking place all around you."

While interning, Dirkx was tasked with balancing constituent calls and multiple projects at once, while also giving tours of the Capitol to constituents, including a night tour of 60 constituents from Dallas.

The fellowship classes, which Dirkx considers the most memorable part of the experience, ranged from discussions in front of national landmarks like the Lincoln Memorial and the Supreme Court to practical simulations inside House committee rooms. Fellows also learned how to read bills in the House of Representatives, where to look them up in the U.S. Code, and how to compare appropriations across fiscal years. Dirkx considered these as valuable and practical skills that will be of use in a career in foreign affairs.

"I learned many new perspectives, what values the United States represent, and how the meaning of 'We the People' has changed over the centuries," Dirkx said.

Dirkx plans to study transatlantic affairs and European political and governance studies at the College of Europe in Belgium for two years before beginning a career in foreign affairs.

"I learned and it confirmed that the classes offered at SFA are of high quality," Dirkx said. "While having debates and discussions in class in D.C., it became clear that students from SFA bring value to the classroom and have a well-deserved place at the Archer Center."

### Nathan Lyons

Originally slated to intern with the White House, Lyons found an internship that hit a little closer to home. Instead, he interned with U.S. Rep. Pete Sessions, who represents Nacogdoches and his hometown, Lufkin, while in Washington.

"It was a perfect fit to help constituents from the SFA community," Lyons said.

Though an invaluable experience, it also came with its challenges, particularly fielding constituent questions without a clear answer. However, despite the challenges, Lyons found the most rewarding parts of the internship were the opportunities and experiences, such as sitting in on House Oversight Committee meetings, visiting various committee offices, and meeting a wide range of lawmakers, along with living in Washington D.C.

The fellowship community also left a lasting impression on him, which included an impromptu snowball fight between Archer Fellows and the D.C. Fire Department.

Following graduation in August with a Bachelor of Science in political science and a minor in math, Lyons will begin an online Master of Arts in national intelligence and security studies at SFA.

"Being an Archer Fellow and experiencing life and work in D.C. has made me realize that there is more to life than I imagined," Lyons said. "It has broadened my horizons and made me feel like I can accomplish much more than I once thought. It has given me the confidence to pursue my dreams.

*See* **FELLOWS** *on* **Page 2D**







Photos by Connor Bronson / **The Pine Log**

**(Left) Students are** served a late-night breakfast during Waffles with the Weavers in December in Food Hall 1923. (Center) SFA President Dr. Neal Weaver, right, greets students as they arrive. (Right) SFA First Lady Kristi Weaver awards a trophy to a student whose organization won a holiday tree challenge.

# FELLOWS: Jacks spend spring in D.C.






Photos courtesy of Archer Center

**(Top) SFA student** Nathan Lyons, far left, was one of four Archer Fellows selected to lay a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Arlington National Cemetery in Washington, D.C. (Bottom) Three SFA students represented the university at The University of Texas Systems' Archer Fellowship Program. The fellowship program gives students a sense of direction and tools necessary to launch their respective careers.

**From Page 1D**

"One speaker told the fellows that 'looking back, my career has been very linear, but it didn't feel like that in the moment. You can't always see where your career will take you. Don't focus on a linear career, focus on taking opportunities in front of you.'"

Lyons is a proponent for fellow Lumberjacks to take a leap and apply to the Archer Fellowship Program.

"I researched the program before entering, so I thought I knew what it would be like, but I was not ready for the transformational semester awaiting me," he continued. "The Archer Center has provided me with the greatest semester of my undergraduate experience."

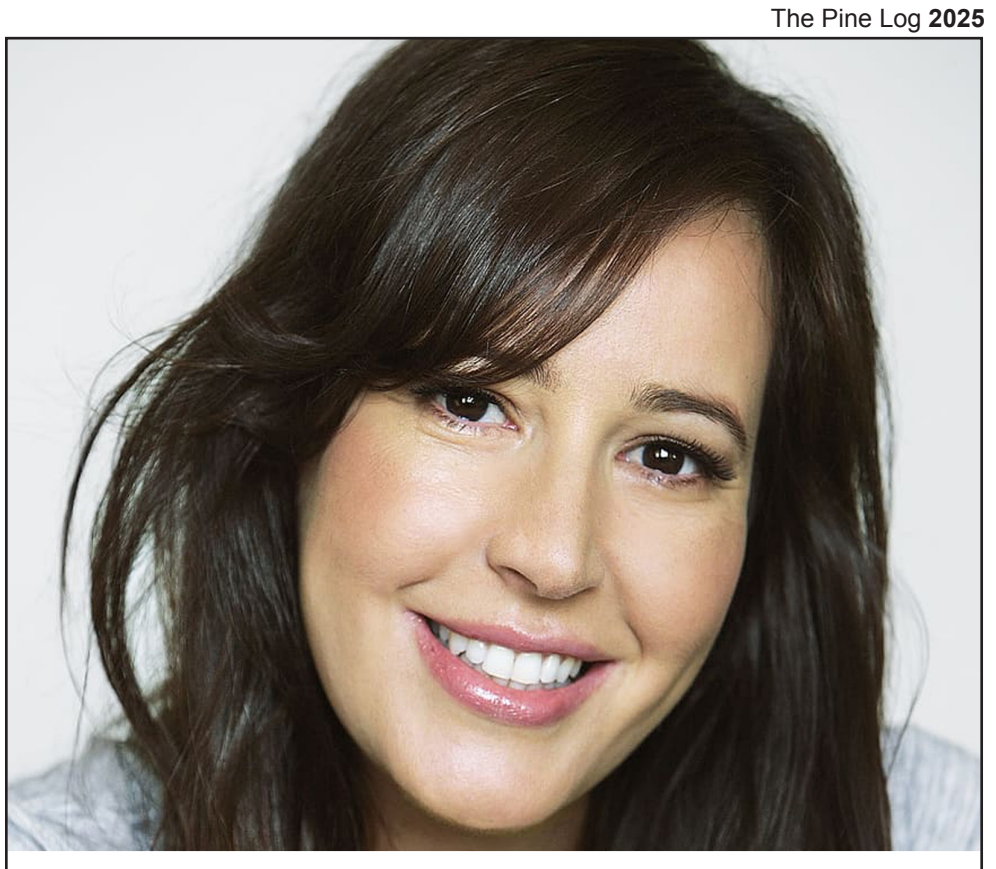
### A new cohort

Building on a record-breaking showing in the spring 2025 Archer Fellowship, SFA is set to make waves again — sending four new standout students to represent the university in the 2025-26 academic year. Miguel Koch, a political science major from Allen, and Jerrad Bush, a political science major from Timpson, were selected to attend in fall 2025. In addition, Uchenna Njoku, a nursing major from Kubwa-Abuja, Nigeria, and Barrett Williams, an economics major from Wake Forest, North Carolina, were selected for the spring 2026 semester.

"The growth in interest on campus for the Archer Fellowship Program is remarkable, Galatas said. "To have students from three of our colleges within the university is testimony of the value and importance that faculty and students see in the Archer Fellowship program. The increasing number of Archer Fellows is testimony to the quality of applicants from SFA."

For Whitney Rains, Archer Center program manager and SFA alumna, seeing fellow Lumberjacks fills her with an immense sense of pride.

"I was born and raised in rural East Texas, and SFA provided me not only with a great education, but also with opportunities that changed the course of my life," Rains said. "Each semester, I have the opportunity to witness firsthand how the fellowship helps our students grow, change and make a positive impact on the world. I know the Archer Fellowship will provide Lumberjacks with the same opportunities and impact that will change their life as well. Lumberjacks, at their core, are hardworking, thoughtful and empathetic leaders. They are curious about the world, innovative and always determined to do more. I know that they will be valuable members of the Archer Fellowship Program."



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# Around the Bend

Nine SFA students traveled to Big Bend National Park where they camped, hiked and canoed over eight days during Spring Break 2025. The group was organized and led by Campus Recreation's Outdoor Pursuits program.



Photos by Connor Bronson / **The Pine Log**

**Loriana Hernandez, a** Fort Worth freshman majoring in forestry, enjoys the view from the top of Emory Peak. Hernandez was the first of several student participants to make it to the 7,825-foot-tall peak after scrambling up a 25-foot rock face.



**Trip participants and** leaders pose for a photo next to a balanced rock at the end of Grapevine Hill Trail during their Big Bend adventure in March 2025.




**Participants and trip** leaders pose for a photo at the Big Bend National Park sign during a Spring Break 2025 Outdoor Pursuits trip.



**Eva Hampton (left),** a Frisco junior majoring in marketing, high-fives Bill Koehler, a San Antonio junior majoring in biology, after completing a climb near the end of Grapevine Hills Trail.






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# Freshman turns childhood hobby into 'Critter Creations' business






Photos by Crystal Villanueva / **The Pine Log**

**(Above left) Tessa** Cohen, creator of "Critter Creations," sews her frog stuffed animals at the SFA Makerspace. (Above right) Cohen, an entrepreneurship major from The Woodlands, holds up one of her creations.

**By Linnea Maddux**
*News Editor*

In the quest to avoid such expensive comfort-food spirals, some students have discovered that channeling energy into creative hobbies not only provides stress relief but occasionally opens unexpected doors.

Take Tessa Cohen, a freshman entrepreneurship major from The Woodlands, who has channeled her sewing abilities into her personal business, Critter Creations. Cohen has truly figured it out by maximizing her free time to create adorable plushies and actual profit.

Cohen's sewing journey began when she was 6 and received her first machine, where she taught herself everything she knows. In high school, she hand-sewed her first frog. She hadn't realized there would even be a market for them until introducing it to her peers.

"I brought it to school and everyone was like, 'Can you make me one?' To ensure each one was unique, she introduced accessories to the products which are attached by magnets rather than stitching. These frog plushies are the main attraction of her business and, keeping her audience in mind, Cohen's recent merchandise features purple hats and lumberjack axes, both radiating SFA spirit.

Upon arriving at campus, Cohen quickly found a multitude of resources to seek support and community for business-minded students. The Society for Entrepreneurial Advancement holds events and meetings for students that may have ideas for their own business or have already put one in motion. "It's a fun place to be," said Cohen, saying that as an entrepreneurship major, she is surrounded by ambitious, like-minded individuals. The camaraderie found on campus has allowed Cohen to express her business without fear of how it will be received.

Cohen's success effectively established a large following her senior year, but she knew the transition to college would mean that her audience would change, meaning her business would need to change to stay relevant. Initially, Cohen shifted from hand-sewing to machine-sewing in order to save time, however she quickly ran into some obstacles with the elasticity of her preferred fabric and the machine.

"Stretchy fabric does not work well with machines especially if it's fluffy," said Cohen. This required some problem solving, including "reinforcing the fabric to work with the machine."Her puzzle-solving attitude is what has kept Cohen creatively motivated and her business growing.

As far as the future for Critter Creations, Cohen is unsure what advancements will come of the business, but for now she's satisfied with creating these plushies as a hobby and for fulfillment. "I find a lot of joy in being able to work the machine," Cohen claims, "it's really therapeutic for me."

For those who would rather invest in something that won't melt away by morning, students can visit the Instagram page, crittercreationsshop, and meet with Cohen herself to customize and purchase a plushie.



Photo courtesy of University Marketing Communications

**The statue of** Stephen F. Austin is one of the most iconic landmarks on campus. Located in front of Ralph W. Steen Library, the fountain water is traditionally dyed purple during Homecoming week and other special events.

SFA student mail should be addressed to:

Student's Full Name
P.O. Box XXXXX, SFA Station
Nacogdoches, TX 75962

# Theatre, dance students explore NYC Broadway scene

Students from SFA's School of Theatre and Dance recently returned from an immersive five-day trip into the heart of Broadway and the performing arts industry, as part of the program's inaugural industry intensive in New York City.

Led by CC Conn, professor of lighting and sound design, and Zeke Bocklage, associate professor of acting and musical theatre, seventeen students of various classifications and theater focuses experienced the industry from multiple angles by attending performances, participating in workshops and connecting with professionals working on some of the biggest stages in the world.

"There's a huge difference between learning about this industry in a classroom and actually stepping into it," Bocklage said.

"For our students, this trip wasn't just about seeing Broadway shows, it was about witnessing the scale, rigor and humanity behind the work directly in the heart of our industry. They got to meet people who have built careers doing what they love, and in many cases, people who started in shoes just like theirs. That kind of exposure is incredibly grounding. It demystifies the industry and helps students see where they fit and what it really takes to get there."

Highlights included Broadway productions such as "Boop! The Musical," "Maybe Happy Ending" and "A Night of Brown Excellence: South Asians on Broadway," which was followed by a talkback with the show's creative team about representation and identity in the industry. Students also saw "Death Becomes Her," "Hadestown," "John Proctor is the Villain" and Stephen Sondheim's "Old Friends." Additionally, the students attended and participated in a taping of "The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon."

The group went behind the scenes at the John Golden Theatre with Valarie LaMour of IATSE Local-1, and the Samuel J. Friedman Theatre with SFA alumnus Bobby Malbrough, who shared insight into Broadway's day-to-day operations. They also met Chele Ware, SFA Distinguished Alumna and properties chief for "Saturday Night Live." Ware spoke candidly about her career path and the connection between live theater and television.

In addition to cultural stops at The Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Museum of Broadway, students participated in workshops and info sessions with the Actors' Equity Association, Stage Directors and Choreographers Society, Electronic Theatre Controls, International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees, and Maggie Flanigan Studio, where they explored Meisner-based training.

"There's no substitute for this kind of firsthand experience," Conn said. "It gave our students a vision for what's possible, and a network of professionals and alumni who've walked this path before them."

The industry intensive is part of the school's ongoing commitment to blending academic training with real-world, up-to-date opportunities, giving students a clearer view of their future in the arts.

For more information, visit the school's website.




Photo courtesy of University Marketing Communications

**Seventeen students from** SFA's School of Theatre and Dance participated in an industry intensive in New York City where they experienced the industry from multiple angles by attending performances, participating in workshops and connecting with professionals working on some of the biggest stages in the world.

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# SFA composition student showcases original works

By Chesney Quillin
*Staff Writer*

Sophomore composition major Preston Posey showcased several original compositions this spring, with performances held across multiple School of Music ensemble concerts. Posey, a Dallas-Fort Worth area native, is a member of the Roarin' Buzzsaws pep band, the SFA concert bands and the trumpet studio, all while preparing for a semester packed with premieres.

Posey's work "Beetles" debuted at the saxophone studio recital on April 6 and was performed again at the SFA composition studio recital on April 9. His piece "Siblings" also premiered during the April 9 concert alongside other student works. Additionally, bassoonist Tyler Kersey performed Posey's "Chasing Entropy" during a recent junior recital.

When he's not composing, Posey remains active in music through both university ensembles and professional-level Drum Corps activities. His creative interests also expand to the visual arts, particularly photography — a passion he inherited from his mother.

"When I'm not writing music, I am usually out and about with a camera. I take after my mom with a love for photography," Posey said. "This gives me another medium to express myself; however, rather than through sound, it's through light and color." Posey said he is always seeking new sources of inspiration.

"Essentially, in a creative field whether it's photography or music, I'm constantly in a headspace where I'm looking for something that inspires me," he said. A prime example of this is "The Water Garden," a piece he is currently working on that was inspired by photographing a garden.



**Preston Posey**

Posey's creative process often begins outside of music. He said new ideas sometimes emerge from chance encounters in nature or from reading. One such experience led to the creation of "Manta Rays" for saxophone quartet after he watched a video of thousands of manta rays swimming across the ocean.

Posey credits the faculty and community at SFA for helping him grow as an artist. "Studying at SFA has been super amazing for my career," he said. "It's allowed me to push myself to write better, more impactful music."

Posey's final premiere of the semester, "Duhovka", was performed at the SFA Trumpet Ensemble Concert in April 16 at Cole Concert Hall in the Tom and Peggy Wright Music Building.

Looking ahead, Posey plans to attend graduate school at the University of Texas at Austin to study with composer Omar Thomas. His long-term goal is to compose full time and support himself through his music.

More information and samples of Posey's work can be found at prestonposeymusic.com.







Photo courtesy of University Marketing Communications

**Pictured, from left,** are Lydia Sattler, graduate student from San Martin, California; Zala Ule, graduate student from Koper, Slovenia; and Dr. Derek Walton, assistant professor of sports business who advised the SFA team..

# Students earn top honors

Students in SFA's Nelson Rusche College of Business earned first place at the U.S. Soccer Student Hackathon during the 2025 World Cup Innovation Summit last month in Frisco.

"The hackathon is part of ongoing efforts to foster innovation and analytics in sport, with SFA students standing out among national peers," said Dr. Derek Walton, assistant professor of sports business who advised the SFA team.

Lydia Sattler, graduate student from San Martin, California, and Zala Ule, graduate student from Koper, Slovenia, worked as a team to win top honors at the competition over eight other schools from across the country, including California Polytechnic State University, the University of Oregon and the University of North Texas.

"The hackathon pushed us to think creatively and strategically under pressure while applying our sports marketing knowledge," Ule said. "Working as a team to develop ideas and pitch them to industry professionals made it an incredibly rewarding and practical learning experience."

During the competition, students were given U.S. Soccer's raw, e-commerce data sets with thousands of data points and were tasked with building an interactive dashboard to recommend marketing strategies to U.S. Soccer. Sattler and Ule prepared for this challenge by using SFA's partnership with Coursera Career Academy to learn about Tableau software.

"Participating in the hackathon was an amazing opportunity to work with raw, large-scale data with limited time utilizing my business analytics skills and illustrating our conclusions through Tableau," Sattler said. "This real-world experience supports my career aspirations of performing business analytics in the sports industry or other industries."

Using purchase behavior, Sattler and Ule segmented U.S. Soccer merchandise buyers into four key customer groups to observe year-over-year performance trends and marketing implications. Their geosegmentation heat map linked sales to regional fanbases, highlighting promotional potential in states like California, New York and Illinois.

The judges were most impressed by Sattler's and Ule's product analysis, which segmented products into "Franchise Players" and "Unsung Heroes" to represent high-impact or undervalued merchandise. They said the students' work analyzed the data in a "unique way to show a new perspective of U.S. Soccer merchandise, which was no easy task given the type of data sets."

Sattler's and Ule's poster presentation, "The Starting XI," offered "actionable insights across customer segmentation, product performance and geographic fandom behavior, which earned them top marks from judges representing U.S. Soccer and event organizers," Walton said.

The students' work also earned them an invitation to share insights with additional U.S. Soccer staff members at a future date.

"This win is a reflection of the experiential learning we prioritize not only within our sports business program but also in the Rusche College of Business," Walton said. "With a visually compelling, data-driven dashboard, our students showed exactly how data storytelling can unlock real business value in sports. Their data was not only informative but influential."

Co-sponsored by the Plug and Play Tech Center and U.S. Soccer, the World Cup Innovation Summit hosted executives and students from across the nation to explore cutting-edge opportunities in sport business and sport innovation ahead of the 2026 FIFA World Cup.

In addition to the competition, students participated in keynote panels, sports innovation pitches and networking receptions at the summit. They also received exclusive, behind-the-scenes access to key organizations and venture capitalists investing in sport innovation.

For more information on the opportunities available through the university's sports business program, visit SFA's Department of Management and Marketing website at sfasu.edu/mgtmkt.

# Explore space from campus




Photo courtesy of University Marketing Communications

**The SFA Planetarium** is one of the most sophisticated in Texas with a 52-foot diameter nano-seam dome and a state-of-the-art 4K Digistar 6 projection system. The 119-seat facility is managed by the Department of Physics, Engineering and Astronomy within the College of Sciences and Mathematics and provides a unique learning space for all STEM disciplines. Planetarium shows are popular events for SFA students to take their family and friends when visiting campus. Visit planetarium.sfasu.edu/publicshows for upcoming dates and times.



# 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 need to 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 first-year 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

# SPORTS



**SOCCER**

■ LADYJACK SOCCER PROGRAM ANNOUNCES THEMES FOR HOME MATCHES. **4E**

**BASEBALL**

■ NEW ASSISTANT BASEBALL COACH JOINS STAFF FOR UPCOMING SEASON. **3E**

**FOOTBALL**

■ LUMBERJACKS RANKED NO. 23 in FCS POLL. **4E**

**A YEAR IN PHOTOS**

■ CHECK OUT THE PINE LOG'S FAVORITE SPORTS PHOTOS FROM THE PAST YEAR. **5E**



Izzy Palmisano / **The Pine Log**

**Ayden Colbert, a** junior from Huntington, soars over the bar during the pole vault event at the Clark Knight Invitational and Multi April 11.

## SFA Men's Track and Field earns two championships

**By Diego Barahona**
*Editor-in-Chief*

While students were getting ready for spring break and the end of the school year, the men's track and field team was competing in the Southland Conference Indoor and Outdoor Championships, managing to take home wins in both events. With the team and coaches having a variety of positive emotions towards the result, it marks a new start in the team's history.

"Winning the indoor and outdoor SLC championships felt amazing but mostly due to the fact that I've been here too long enough to experience all the highs and lows that come with being an NCAA athlete," said Riley Elliott, a graduate student from Vernon who specializes in a variety of races ranging from 800-5000m. "I was a member of the Men's 2021 SLC Outdoor Champion team, but I've also been a part of SFA track teams that struggled throughout the rebuilding phase. To be able to return to the SLC and sweep both Men's championships during the 2025 season was surreal with our program coming full circle. It was a great experience to share with my teammates who were all winning their first SLC Championship."

Winning the championship was a multi-year affair for Director of Track & Field/Cross Country Robert Hansen and his team. Hansen was stepping up into the role after previous Director Phil Olson stepped down after 23 years, which included 39 team championships, 29 SLC coach of the year accolades and 2 NCAA national champions. These changes explained the brief rebuilding phases the program had before their success this year.

"Some of the biggest differences between who we were a couple of years ago to who we are now, there's just a lot of turnover," Hansen said. "Our director of track and field and cross country retired after being here for [23] years, he won 40 team championships, and when there's a retirement like that and there's just kind of the shuffling of coaches there was a big lack of continuity. It took a long time to kind of fill in the gaps and replace coach Olson."

Hansen further explained that coming into the role was not the first option, but instead the result of a couple of plans falling through. Along with the turnover at home, there was turnover of athletes, as entering the transfer portal looked more appealing which led to a natural "bottoming-out" as Hansen described. To counteract this effect, coaches started to ramp up recruiting, stay late and get in early to rebuild the team in one year, a task that Hansen is very impressed with.

Moving forward the team will have a target on their back, as Hansen put it. However, this is not viewed as a position of fear but rather an opportunity to show what they have to bring to the table. With this Hansen and Keith Reiter, assistant coach of track and field, have all intentions to keep morale high and keep accountability present. "I think we're set up for continued success, but it's not just going to happen. We still have to work for it and still have to keep pushing the athletes every day," said Reiter.

While many of the events for track and field may not take place in Nacogdoches and support may not be very high, Hansen recommends the community and students to keep up with the support regardless. Sending four students to the NCAA first round and many being in the first ten to miss qualification at the SLC championship, Hansen believes that they should be on track for continued success.

Ideally, he would like to accomplish a never-before-seen clean sweep in SLC men and women's track and field and cross country championships. While it is a hard task, the door is opening more with the men's accomplishments this year and the community should be watching out for such an achievement in the coming years.

## Ladyjacks leave their mark on sports year

**By Diego Barahona**
*Editor-in-Chief*

Last year the athletics department proved to be more successful than students had seen in recent years, with long playoff hiatuses, records, and expectations all being broken. However, what makes this more impactful is that most of the success came from women's sports, something that the everyday student should care more about.

One of the earliest story lines of the semester was the season the Ladyjacks soccer team was able to pull off after a lackluster performance in 2023 only compiling two wins. However, in the 2024 season the Ladyjacks were able to come up with a (14-4-2) record, their fourth Southland Conference title and a NCAA playoff berth for the first time in 12 years. While this is astounding for the team, individual players also excelled with Jayme Bailey, alumna from Wylie, taking SLC MVP, Ella Morgan, senior from Allen, being named 2024 soccer student athlete of the year and nine players named to the all-conference first of second team.

From there focus shifted to the Ladyjack volleyball as they were making a run at the SLC title and although they would fall short of that goal they were selected for another prestigious honor: hosting and playing in the first stage of the National Invitational Volleyball Championship. While they would fall short in the NIVC, losing to Arkansas State University, the results proved that SFA had the position to keep growing with time as they had the youngest team in Division I. Since the lost, the Ladyjacks have picked up players in the transfer portal and from high schools, resurfaced the court with Taraflex® for a state of the art playing experience and adopted the new Debbie Humphrey Court at Shelton Gym as their new home.

Then came a bit of a break before the Ladyjack basketball team would continue the trend of women's basketball being a premiere sport for SFA fans. After starting the season (5-0), a first since 2011, the Ladyjacks didn't lose steam as they would go on to assemble a (29-6) record, a best since the 2021-22 season. This would be enough to lead them to win the SLC championship even as a third-seeded team and make the NCAA tournament to face off against Notre Dame, a team that would be an incredible challenge for the Ladyjacks. The similarities between the 2021-22 teams continued as both iterations of teams would exit the tournament in the first round.

The final two events of the year for women's sports involved beach volleyball and tennis, which both had historic seasons. The former achieved their best record in program history (22-14) and made a late stage run in the SLC competition. Despite showing serious promise, this would be their final year as a SFA sport for the foreseeable future due to budget and other athletic shifts. The latter also had a historic season as they would secure the second SLC title in women's tennis and their first playoff appearance since 2012. They would go on to play LSU in the first round and lose in a sweep. Despite the early bow out, both teams proved to be improving in programs that have struggled in recent years.

In addition to these there were multiple individual achievements, such as Valentine Jemutai, sophomore from Edam-Ravine, Kenya, breaking the 5K record by three seconds, Matie Bowers, alumna from Lake Jackson, signing a soccer contract with FC Gintra of Lithuania or Brystal Beyer, senior from Ogdensburg, WI, moving on to the round of 64 for the United States Bowling Championship Queen event. The message the SFA community should put on this is instead of holding up more popular or likeable sports, start looking towards teams and groups that are performing.

## Help cheer on the Jacks this fall



**Aiden Fierro**
*Sports Coordinator*

When you first step onto campus, it's easy to miss out on athletics. With all the hustle of adjusting to classes, finding your crew and figuring out where the Chick-fil-A line starts, sports might not be at the top of your list. But here's the scoop: SFA boasts a competitive, thrilling and seriously underrated sports scene, and as a student, you can dive right in for free.

No joke! With your student ID, you can go to any home game, whether it's football, volleyball, basketball—any sport—and not spend a single penny. You're already chipping in through your tuition, so why not make the most of it? And trust me, you're not just catching boring games.

The Lumberjack football team made a significant turnaround last year, wrapping up its season at (7-5) after a rough (3-8) 2023 season. That kind of turnaround isn't just dumb luck; there's a fresh vibe around the program, and you can be a part of that vibe in the stands. If you haven't experienced a game at Homer Bryce Stadium yet, imagine this: sunset kickoffs, the band pumping up the crowd, fans going wild and a student section that can rock the house. It's the kind of atmosphere that makes you feel like you're part of something special.

Volleyball deserves just as much love. Last year, our Ladyjacks finished with a 24-9 record, and over the past five years, they're ranked the 12th winningest program across all conferences, and first in the Southland Conference. That's not just good; that's elite. You'll walk in not wondering if they'll win, but by how much. Join the crowd at the beautiful resurfaced and renamed Debbie Humphreys Court in the Shelton Gym, where you can witness greatness.

If you don't feel like being a spectator or have too much on your plate to keep up with SFA athletics, there's a vibrant club sports scene at SFA, as well. If you played in high school or just wish to keep active, club baseball is all about competition while still maintaining that team vibe. Last year, they were one game out of getting into the playoffs, so if you want to be a part of that, sign up through Campus Rec. Other clubs like pickleball, boxing and bass fishing are taking off lately, as well.

Whether you're cheering from the stands at a packed football game, getting hyped for volleyball right up front or stepping into the ring with the boxing club, SFA sports has a spot just for you. It's not only about racking up wins, though we definitely do that. It's about showing up, getting involved and creating unforgettable memories that extend far beyond the classroom. You've only got a few years here, so why not make them vibrant, thrilling and bursting with purple pride? Catch you out there, and Axe 'em, Jacks

## Matt Braeuer named SFA head men's BB coach

**By Diego Barahona**
*Editor-in-Chief*

After being the head basketball coach for nine years, Kyle Keller was relieved of his duties by SFA on Jan. 22, which many fans blamed on Keller's poor performance in recent seasons. However, after the news broke the search started for a new head coach, and the man selected was Matt Braeuer, former assistant coach for Texas Tech University— individual who Athletic Director Michael McBroom noted is "quite simply a winner."

"It became clear during our search process that he brings the competitive fire, integrity, passion, connections, and coaching acumen that we were seeking," McBroom said. "He has had some of the finest mentors in the game and has prepared himself extraordinarily well for this opportunity. I'm excited to work alongside him to prepare to return SFA to championship basketball."

After the month delay, due to Texas Tech being in the NCAA Men's Tournament, faculty, staff and community members were able to meet Braeuer on April 3 at his introductory press conference. McBroom, who was called on stage by Executive Director of University Marketing Communications Korbin Pate, further reinforced his points before passing the stage to SFA President Dr. Neal Weaver who shared what he wanted to see out of Braeuer from a humanity standpoint.

"When he came to me and said, 'what do you want in a basketball coach?' I said, I'll let you take care of the basketball part of it, what we want at this institution are good people who aren't afraid to win and to do what it takes to be at the top," Weaver said. "We have somebody who is a good person and he's not afraid to win."

After giving Braeuer an axe handle, Weaver left the stage for Braeuer to start his introductory press conference. Braeuer began by thanking all those individuals close to him, including his family, coaching mentors, peers and university officials, before he transitioned into why SFA means so much to him. He cited a Jan 23, 2016. game between the Lumberjacks and Bearkats when he was an assistant coach for Sam Houston State University. He walked into the William R. Johnson Coliseum being filled with 7,000 fans, using it as an example of what he hopes to turn SFA into.




Connor Bronson / **The Pine Log**

**Michael McBroom (left),** athletic director, Matt Braeuer, new men's basketball coach, and Dr. Neal Weaver, SFA president, pose for a photo after the announcement last spring.

Braeuer then laid out his biggest goals, which were involvement, respectfulness, character, and letting their work do the talking. He then expanded on these points by noting his intentions to get out there and be involved so people can see the face behind the team. Along with that, he expects the players to be at SFA because they are proud to be Lumberjacks, not for money. Lastly, he wants to be fully transparent, which laid out a preview of what to expect.

"I want everyone to feel comfortable to come to my office and say hello," Braeuer said. "I'm not going to have my door closed, we're not going to have closed practices, who I am is who I am. I want everybody that wants to be a part of this program to come watch practice and be a part of it."

While Keller transitions down into an assistant coach position at Texas A&M and Braeuer transitions up into a head coach position, the SFA community looks to have a coach who is excited to be at the campus, as he is ready to put in the work to appeal to the community, players and students alike.

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Wendy has more than 36 years of experience in the financial services industry. In addition to her applicable securities registrations and insurance licenses, Wendy holds the professional designations of Accredited Asset Management Specialist and Accredited Wealth Management Advisor. Her areas of focus include investment and retirement planning, insurance and tax-efficient investing. Wendy works directly with her clients to help ensure that they understand their investments. She assists them in developing personalized plans to help them reach their financial goals.

Building on 16 years of experience with Wells Fargo Advisors, Wendy opened Buchanan Wealth Management of Trinity Capital Management with the services, resources and support of Wells Fargo Advisors Financial Network. Recognized in a select group of Financial Advisors within Wells Fargo Advisors, Wendy earned the Platinum Council distinction from 2008-2025. The Platinum Council distinction is held by a select group of Financial Advisors within Wells Fargo Advisors Financial Network as measured by one or more of the following: completion of educational components, business production from the previous year, and professionalism. Additional consideration may have included best practices and team structures.

Wendy Wyatt Buchanan, AAMS®, AWMA® ranks #18 in Forbes Top Women Wealth Advisors Best-In-State 2025 for the State of Texas and #84 in the Forbes Best-In-State Top Wealth Advisors category.*

Wendy and her high school sweetheart, Mike, have celebrated more than 39 years of marriage. Together they are members of First Baptist Church of Nacogdoches and are very active members in the community. Wendy serves on the United Way board. She served as president of the Kiwanis Club and the NHS Alumni Association Board, is past Chairman of the Finance Committee for the SFA Alumni Association Board of Directors, and was a member of the Stephen F. Austin Foundation Board of Trustees.

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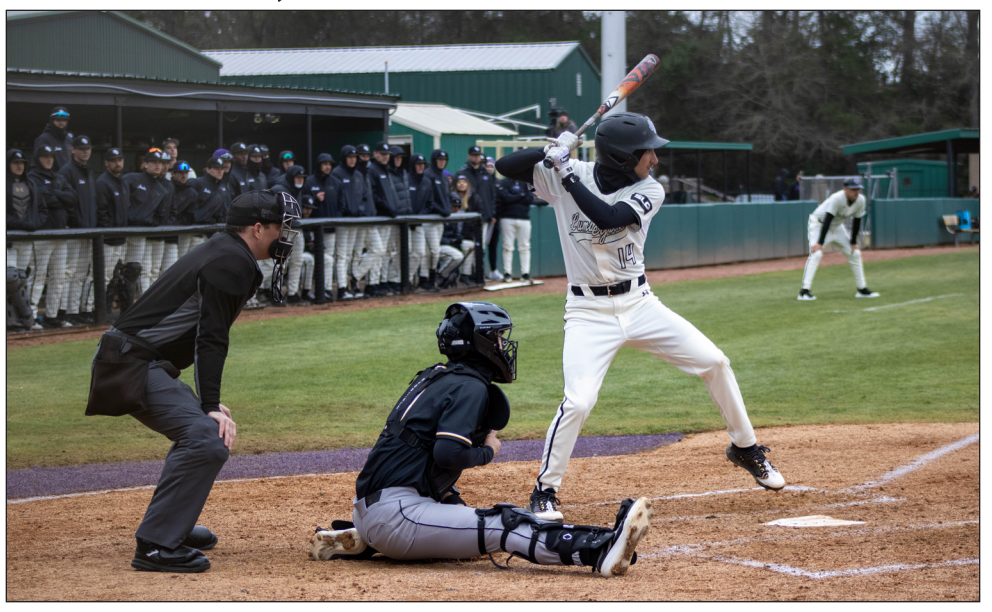
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Join us at the beach!

# Vanderburg named assistant Lumberjack baseball coach



Meredith Bench / **The Pine Log**

**Austin Cadroy, a** freshman infielder from Orange, prepares to swing the bat in a February game against the University of Arkansas Pine Bluff.

SFA second-year head baseball coach Matt Vanderburg has announced the hiring of Austin Baker as an assistant coach for the program for the upcoming 2025-26 season.Baker, a native of Amarillo, comes to the Piney Woods by way of Southern Arkansas University where this past season he served as the Muleriders' hitting coach as well as assisted in all aspects of recruiting.

"I'm excited to announce Austin Baker as our new assistant coach for the Lumberjacks," noted Vanderburg. "We are very fortunate to get Austin here to SFA and I believe in the value he will bring to this program. He is a really good baseball mind who will fit in great with our culture, and he believes in the direction our program is going. I'm looking forward to getting to work with him and I can't wait for our team to get here this fall."

In his return to SAU, Baker guided an offense that produced four all-conference performers, finished in the top five in the Great American Conference in slugging percentage, triples, home runs, stolen bases and total bases, and helped the Muleriders win 30 games for the fifth-straight season and for the 24th time since the turn of the century.

"I want to thank Coach Vanderburg for the opportunity to join his staff," remarked Baker. "I couldn't be more excited and thankful to be a part of the SFA baseball program and the SFA community. I'm ready to get to work. Go 'Jacks!"

Baker brings several years of experience in the areas of sports performance, operations and scouting. Prior to joining the staff at Southern Arkansas, Baker held an assistant position with Five Tool Baseball Showcases which saw him staff, organize and operate events, showcases and tournaments in and around the Dallas-Fort Worth area in addition to assisting in the scouting of junior college players for the organization.

His start in coaching came with Texas Cannons Baseball where he worked directly with athletes ages 7 through 18 in addition to assisting the organization in the areas of coaching, camps and clinics and practice planning. Baker served as the varsity assistant coach for Trinity Christian Academy during the 2023-24 season and aided in the development of seven student-athletes that continued their careers at the collegiate level.

Following his graduation as an Exercise Science major from Southern Arkansas University in December of 2020, Baker served both as a Baseball Performance Specialist Intern and then as a Physical Therapy & Sports Performance Technician at TMI Sports Medicine in Arlington, Texas. While at TMI, Baker focused on the creation of exercise, throwing and hitting programs to implement a strong biomechanical foundation as well as assisting with strength and conditioning, injury rehab and prevention, and performance enhancement.

Baker's collegiate playing career began in 2017 at Howard College where he played one season with the Hawks. He saw action in 17 of the team's 57 games as a true freshman infielder and hit .346 in limited opportunities. The Texan signed with Southern Arkansas and was rarely limited over his four seasons with the Muleriders. A two-time All-Great American Conference performer, which included first-team honors (2021), all-defensive team recognition (2019) and tournament MVP plaudits (2018), Baker capped his playing career as a consensus all-region honoree and was tabbed an All-American by both the American Baseball Coaches Association (ABCA) and the Division II Collegiate Commissioners Association (D2CCA), earning first-team acclaim from the former. Additionally, Baker was a multiple-time recipient of the league's all-academic recognition and he earned Google Cloud Academic All-District first-team honors in 2019.

Statistically, in four seasons in Magnolia, Baker slashed .347/.423/.439, collected 252 hits of which 53 went for extra bases, tallied 94 RBI, scored 176 runs, and delivered 74 walks, 28 hit-by-pitch and 87 stolen bases. Baker fielded at a 97% clip and at the time of his graduation he was one of just two Muleriders to rank in the career top ten in both hits and stolen bases.

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# Soccer program announces themes for home matches

The SFA Soccer program has officially released its 2025 home game theme schedule with an exciting slate of events for Lumberjack fans throughout the season. With six home matches on the calendar, SFA Soccer is creating a festive, fan-first environment that combines school spirit, community engagement, and exclusive giveaways.

2025 SFA SOCCER THEME NIGHTS

Thursday, Sept. 4 vs. Texas A&M – 7 PM
Noisy Night
Kick off the home schedule with energy and excitement! Fans are encouraged to bring the noise and create a dynamic environment for the Lumberjacks.

Sunday, Sept. 7 vs. Houston – 7 PM
Safari Night
Things get wild at the SFA Soccer Complex as fans are invited to dress for adventure. The first 100 students will receive free safari hats.

Sunday, Sept. 14 vs. Prairie View A&M – 1 PM
Senior Day / White Out
Help us honor our senior class and wear white as we celebrate their dedication and contributions to SFA Soccer.

Thursday, Sept.17 vs. McNeese – 7 PM
Black Out
SFA kicks off Southland Conference play under the lights against longtime rival McNeese. Fans are encouraged to wear black and bring their best game-day spirit.

Saturday, Sept. 28 vs. UTRGV – 1 PM
Family Weekend / Purple Out
Celebrate with fellow Lumberjack families and wear purple to show your pride. The first 100 fans will receive free purple rally towels.

Sunday, Oct. 26 vs. Nicholls – 1 PM
Last Home Game
Close out the home season in style! The first 100 students will receive a pair of exclusive SFA-themed Pit Vipers as a thank-you for their season-long support.

# Football ranked No. 23 in FCS

The Stats Perform FCS Preseason Top 25 Poll was announced Aug. 4, and among the programs receiving a national ranking ahead of the 2025 season is Southland Conference preseason No. 2 SFA.

The Lumberjacks were slotted in at No. 23 nationally and are one of two SLC programs (No. 5 UIW) in the ranking and one of seven teams to receive a preseason nod after not being ranked at the conclusion of the '24 campaign. SFA totaled 183 points to edge No. 24 Stony Brook and slot in behind No. 22 Monmouth.

SFA's 2025 schedule features two teams ranked in the preseason poll in No. 5 Incarnate Word (Oct. 4) and No. 16 Abilene Christian (Sept. 6). The 'Jacks will face both programs on the road.

Additional preseason recognition for the 'Jacks includes a top 25 ranking in the Hero Sports FCS Preseason Media Poll that placed SFA tied with Monmouth for the No. 21 spot nationally during the poll's release in late May.

SEASON TICKETS ON SALE NOW

There's never been a better time to lock in your seat at Homer Bryce Stadium! Season tickets for the upcoming SFA Football season are on sale now, offering the best value for a six-game home slate. Don't miss a single snap as SFA battles through a thrilling Southland Conference schedule. Visit SFATickets.com to secure your season tickets today and be part of the action all season long.

FOLLOW THE LUMBERJACKS

For all the latest information on SFA football, visit SFAjacks.com. For up-to-the-minute updates, follow the Lumberjacks on X, Instagram and Facebook.

# Players to watch

Stats Perform announced a 30-player preseason watchlist for the prestigious Walter Payton Award, presented annually to FCS Football's top offensive player, on Tuesday, July 29. Among the student-athletes represented are a pair of SFA Lumberjacks in senior quarterback Sam Vidlak and senior wide receiver Kylon Harris.

Vidlak joins eight other players as past finalists to earn recognition entering this season, while Harris appears on the list for the first time. While all 13 FCS conferences have a representative, the Lumberjacks are one of just four teams with multiple players on the watchlist joining South Dakota, Jackson State and Illinois State, and are the only squad to have a quarterback and a wide receiver.

Vidlak passed for more than 2,300 yards last fall completing 174 of his 257 attempts for 27 touchdowns. He led the Southland Conference in passing efficiency (177.3), completion percentage (67.7), points responsible for/game (18.0) and yards per attempt (9.29). The 2024 SLC Newcomer of the Year, Vidlak was a finalist for the Walter Payton Award and he enters 2025 with preseason All-America recognition from FCS Football Central.

Harris, a preseason All-America honoree from both Stats Perform and FCS Football Central, is coming off a 2024 season that saw the Louisiana native earn All-American honors from multiple outlets. He set career highs in receptions (87; 2nd most single season SFA), receiving yards (1,039; 2nd SLC) and receiving touchdowns (10) in addition to holding top 20 FCS marks nationally in receiving yards, receiving touchdowns and receiving yards per game (86.6). Harris ranked fourth nationally with a SLC-best 7.3 receptions per game.



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# A year in (Pine Log) sports photos



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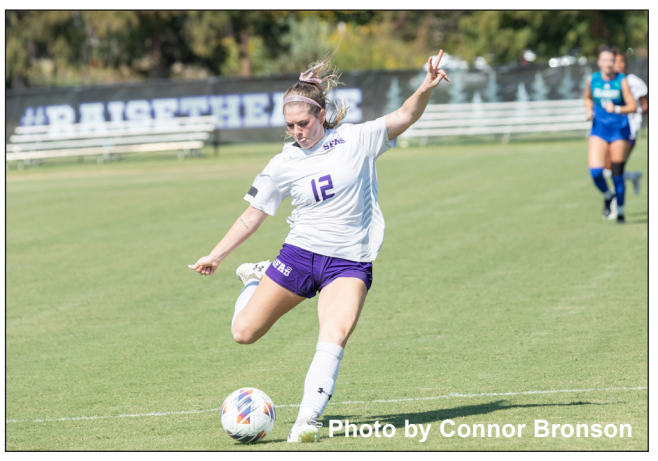

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# We bleed purple!




**Purple Haze is** the nickname for the University's student cheering section at all Lumberjack sporting events. Every SFA student becomes a member of Purple Haze after receiving their Purple Haze T-shirt at Orientation.



**The Homecoming Parade** is a beloved tradition for students, faculty, staff and community residents. Student participants and spectators head downtown early Saturday morning to show their Lumberjacks spirit!

**The game-day experience** in SFA's Homer Bryce Stadium is a highlight of every fall semester. Be sure to wear purple and bring your axe handle to support the Jacks all season.






**Jacks Charge is** a special tradition for football season, when the Purple Haze section rushes the field before kickoff, leading the Lumberjacks into the stadium.



**The Homecoming bonfire** is a much-anticipated tradition each fall. Current students join with SFA alumni, faculty, staff and community residents on the Intramural Fields to watch the blaze and listen to live music. Homecoming 2025 is set for Oct. 13-18.




**AXEperience is** the University-sponsored student organization responsible for preserving and promoting the spirit and traditions that make the Lumberjack experience unique. The group strives to be the main facilitators of Lumberjack Spirit across campus.

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