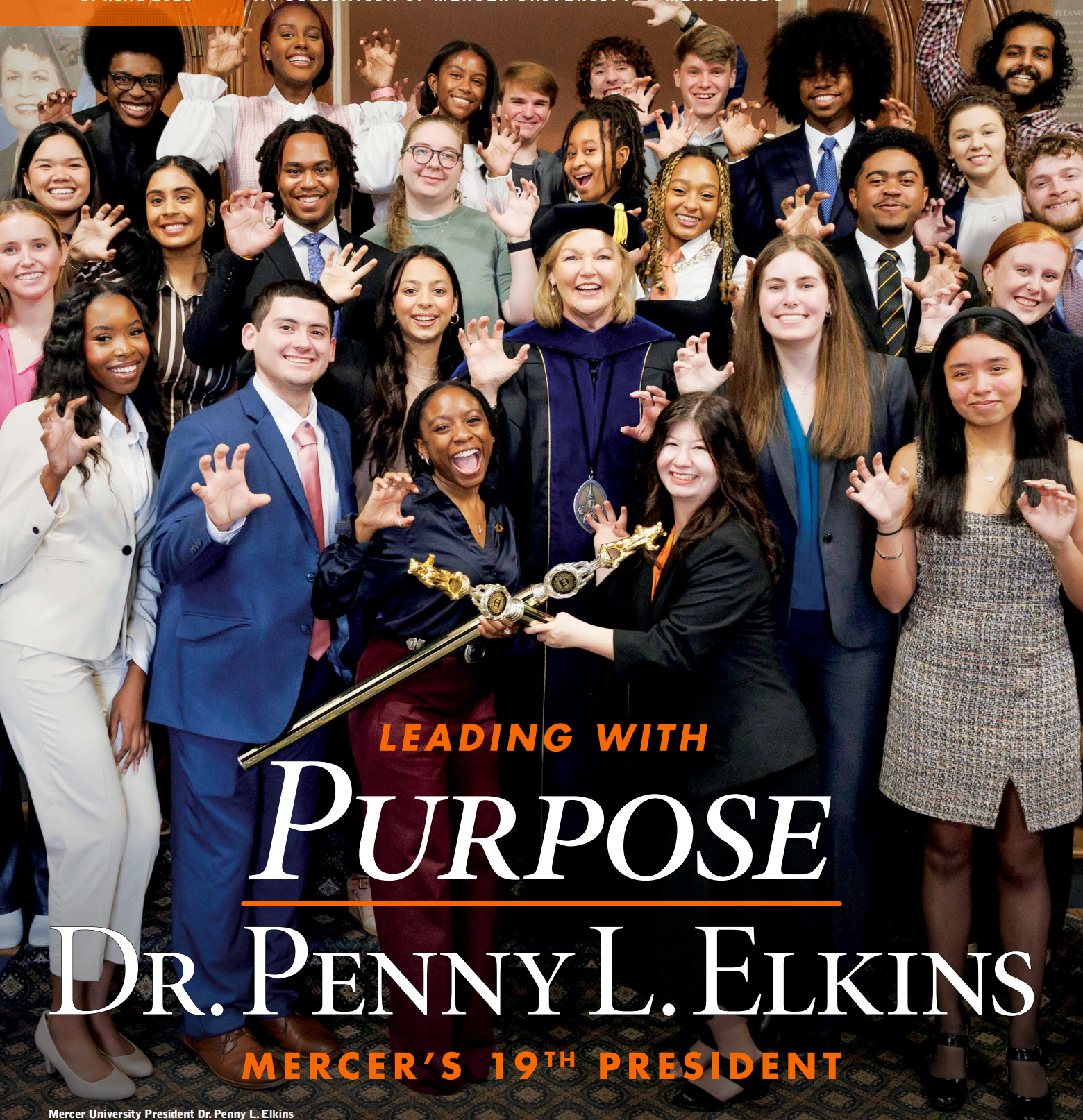


THE
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Mercerian®

SPRING 2026

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LEADING WITH

PURPOSE

DR. PENNY L. ELKINS

MERCER'S 19TH PRESIDENT

Mercer University President Dr. Penny L. Elkins with Student Government Association representatives and students during the Feb. 4 Founders' Day event in Toney Auditorium.

The World Needs More Mercerians



Penny L. Elkins, Ph.D.
CLAS '90, '92
President

Now, more than ever, the world needs Mercerians who are creative, innovative, wise, empathetic, trustworthy and selfless. The urgency of this calling reverberates daily, buoyed by the tenacity of our students who dare to dream big dreams and our faculty and staff devoted to

transformative teaching, groundbreaking research, and meaningful service. I stand in awe of Mercer's more than 90,000 alumni who carry our mission into every field and every community. And I am humbly grateful for the generous donors, sponsors, corporate partners, and friends of this University who invest in our mission passionately.

Without a doubt, it is the collective commitment of this unparalleled community that makes Mercer University the most uniquely impactful private research university of its size in the world.

The evidence of our growing impact is unmistakable. 2026 marks our 20th year of international impact through Mercer On Mission. In January, we announced that Mercer received the Carnegie Community Engagement Classification for our commitment to making an impact in our local communities. At our most recent Go Baby Go event in February, our School of Engineering and Tift College of Education celebrated the milestone build of our 200th modified toy car for children with limited mobility. Preparations are eagerly underway on our Cecil B. Day Graduate and Professional Campus in Atlanta for the upcoming fall launch of the College of Health Professions' Doctor of Occupational Therapy program. Construction begins this summer on the School of Medicine's new \$80 million facility in downtown Macon. You can read more about these highlights and many more in this issue of *The Mercerian*.

As we chart the course for Mercer's future, our purpose remains steadfast. Our vision is clear. Together, we will continue to change the world — through the lives of the students we serve and throughout the communities they strengthen.

As always, GO BEARS!

Penny L. Elkins

Dr. Penny L. Elkins, President



THE MERCERIAN®, SPRING 2026 FEATURE

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In Our Lens

Mercer's Go Baby Go program delivered its 200th car to 2-year-old Anthony during the Feb. 21 build event in Penfield Hall. Since the program's 2016 launch, freshman and senior Engineering Honors students have been adapting toy cars for children with limited mobility. Anthony needed a handheld push-button joystick to power the vehicle and room to carry his medical devices. The event also serves as a hands-on lab for Tift College of Education students, supported by Mercer student-athletes and local high school volunteers.

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THIS SPREAD AND COVER: LEAH YETTER PHOTOS



BECOME A DOUBLE BEAR!

Mercer University's Special Consideration Program for Graduate Studies offers eligible alumni the opportunity to receive the Double Bear Scholarship toward selected graduate programs.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATION PROGRAM BENEFITS



Double Bear Scholarship



Waived application fee with code **KEEPROARING26**



Priority admission consideration

LIMITED TIME OFFER

Typically available to those who completed a Mercer degree within the past two years, Mercer University President Dr. Penny L. Elkins is extending this opportunity to **all Mercer alumni*** who enroll in an eligible graduate program in 2026.

*Applicants must meet all Special Consideration Program admission criteria.



Explore eligible programs at mercer.edu/doublebear.

Most classes are offered fully or partially online in eight-week sessions, with multiple start dates throughout the year.



B E A R I N G S



NEW SCHOOL OF MEDICINE BUILDING

MERCER BREAKS GROUND ON NEW MEDICAL SCHOOL BUILDING IN DOWNTOWN MACON

By **JENNIFER FALK**



Mercer University and community leaders held a ceremonial groundbreaking Nov. 7, 2025, at the site of a new medical school building. This building and multi-use development will transform the gateway to downtown Macon.

The development, anchored by the new home of Mercer's School of Medicine, will be located along Riverside Drive between Spring and Second streets. It also will include residential lofts, retail space, offices and parking decks.

"It's going to be magnificent," then-Mercer President **William D. Underwood** said, looking out at the building site. "It's going to sit right over here and provide a beautiful >>

An artist's rendering shows the proposed \$400 million public-private development in downtown Macon on Riverside Drive bordering the Ocmulgee River.



OPPOSITE: MARIN GUTA PHOTO



NEW BUILDING, MACON LAKE PROJECT



Mercer University then-President William D. Underwood, Macon-Bibb County Mayor Lester Miller, School of Medicine Dean Dr. Jean Sumner and other University and community leaders ceremoniously break ground at the site of the new medical school building on Nov. 7, 2025, in downtown Macon.

gateway into downtown Macon, and I think the development around it is going to confirm in the minds of people that this is a city really on the move.”

The groundbreaking was held in partnership with Macon-Bibb County, the Urban Development Authority and Sierra Development, which is developing the adjacent facilities.

Sheridan Construction will build the new \$80 million medical school facility, which is being designed by McMillan Pazdan Smith, the architectural firm that also designed Legacy Hall, Five Star Stadium, Drake Field House, OrthoGeorgia Park and the medical school building in Columbus, among other Mercer facilities.

The new 150,000-square-foot building will have two wings — one three-story and one five-story — with a courtyard in between. Each wing will feature a rooftop terrace, and at 120 feet tall, the building will be among the tallest in Macon. Primary entrances will be located off Spring Street and Riverside Drive, which is undergoing plans for a lane reduction and landscaped median.

The School of Medicine has grown dramatically since it opened in 1982, more than doubling the number of M.D. students in Macon from 96 to 240 and adding Ph.D. and master’s-level programs for a total Macon enrollment of 322. The new building will be better suited to meet the needs of the growing student population and provide more advanced equipment and technology.

“The transformative research, the excellence in education that will occur in this building will provide physicians for not only Macon and Middle Georgia but for areas across our state, particularly in rural underserved areas,” said School

“The transformative research, the excellence in education that will occur in this building will provide physicians for not only Macon and Middle Georgia but for areas across our state, particularly in rural underserved areas.”

— **Dr. Jean R. Sumner**



of Medicine Dean **Jean R. Sumner**, M.D., MACP.

Trying to replace the existing 126,000-square-foot building on the main campus would be difficult due to space limitations, and relocating the medical school downtown will create an opportunity to have a transformative impact on the broader Macon community.

Across the street from the medical school development, the county is planning to build a new convention center and adjoining hotel at 108 First St., the site of the former Ramada Plaza, which was demolished in January.

“There was a lot of history to that

building. ... But in order to move forward as a community, sometimes you have to let those things go to see what’s coming behind it,” Macon-Bibb County Mayor **Lester Miller**, CLAS ’91, LAW ’94, said. “People also talk about, ‘Why don’t you build on the river?’ Well, we needed that fire to ignite us, and this is going to be that fire.”

Combined, the medical school; lofts, office and retail development; convention center; and hotel are expected to represent an investment of about \$400 million.

At the end of October 2025, the county began demolition of a vacant gas station on Spring Street to make way for a new trailhead for the Ocmulgee Heritage Trail, which is adjacent to the new medical school facility. The trail extension and new development will connect the area with the new East Bank development along Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard, the new Macon Coliseum, Ocmulgee Mounds National Historical Park and Mill Hill: East Macon Arts Village.

Site work will begin in late spring/early summer, and the new Medical School building is set to open in fall 2028. ♦

PROJECT AIMS TO BALANCE FISH POPULATION IN MACON LAKE

By **ANDREA HONAKER**

A Mercer University multidisciplinary project is working to improve the health of fish species in Macon’s Javors Lucas Lake. In mid-July 2025, a team installed 11 aquatic habitats to help balance the fish populations there.

The 581-acre lake is the Macon Water Authority’s primary reservoir for drinking water, and it’s also open for recreational fishing. Largemouth bass, spotted bass and hybrid striped bass are among the aquatic inhabitants, the latter of which were introduced to the lake for sport fishing in more recent years and >>

Largemouth bass
Micropterus salmoides



A team installs artificial fish habitats in Javors Lucas Lake in July 2025.



LAEH VETTER PHOTO; OPPOSITE: CHRISTOPHER IAN SMITH PHOTO

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

MACON LAKE PROJECT

have altered the predator ecosystem.

“Some of the longtime recreational fishermen of Javors Lucas Lake said they felt like [fishing for] largemouth bass has gotten worse as the striped bass has gotten better,” said **Dr. Craig Byron**, biology professor and chair. “Macon Water Authority had several reasons to feel like the largemouth bass fishing was under pressure from the striped bass and the spotted bass.”

In collaboration with Macon Water Authority, Dr. Byron and students in his biostatistics and morphology course collected and analyzed fish data from the lake in 2023. From those numbers, they saw signs that largemouth bass were less robust than normal. The hybrid striped bass appeared to be beating the largemouth bass to its main food sources.

“The hybrid striped bass have anatomical and physiological indicators of superiority over the other predators in the lake,” Dr. Byron said. “We know that those striped bass are going everywhere, whereas largemouth bass and spotted bass are spending more time in shallower waters in the coves. Hybrid striped bass show up too because they are so opportunistic and so competitive in this ecosystem. They’re not supposed to be there, but they are.”

Under the direction of Professor and Chair of Environmental Engineering **Dr. Philip McCreanor**, **Carter Coursey** applied that data to his graduate research project. He holds a bachelor’s degree in biology and completed his Master of Science in environmental systems in December 2025.

“I really wanted to do research with fish, but I couldn’t think of an idea where engineering and fish went together. Dr. McCreanor was able to put together the idea,” he said. “There are a lot of possibilities of

what you can do with that project alone. That’s the main takeaway, that there’s a whole lot you can do with these two fields together.”

Coursey conducted literature reviews on artificial habitats, also known as fish attractors, in various environments



Spotted bass
Micropterus punctulatus

to improve fish populations, Dr. McCreanor said. These man-made structures are modeled after natural habitats and provide an area where fish species can feed, breed and be protected from predators.

For Javors Lucas Lake, Coursey researched and designed two types of artificial habitats: one that would attract minnows or baitfish and one that would attract crayfish, which are the preferred foods for largemouth bass.



Macon Water Authority Warehouse Manager Paul Cumbess and Mercer Professor Dr. Philip McCreanor prepare to install artificial fish habitats at Javors Lucas Lake in July 2025.

So the habitats will stand the test of time, Coursey identified building materials that are safe for the lake but also non-degradable. The habitat boxes contain elements that imitate rocks and sticks, small holes for crayfish or baitfish to enter, and larger holes for largemouth bass to enter. So, the habitats are constructed in a way that lets largemouth bass and their primary food sources in and keeps the predator striped bass out, Coursey explained.

“They would all presumably be attracted to the baitfish attractor, and it would give them something to gravitate toward, which allows them to stay a little bit hidden and avoid being eaten by something else,” Dr. Byron said.

Coursey did the preliminary assembly of the habitats. Then on July 16 and 18, 2025, a team joined him at the lake for the final construction and installation of five baitfish attractors and six crayfish attractors, Dr. McCreanor said. In addition to Mercer professors Dr. McCreanor, Dr. Byron and Assistant Professor of Environmental and Civil Engineering **Dr. Adaline Buerck**, Macon Water Authority staff and Stratford Academy teacher Michael Kelley and five of his high school students contributed.

A number of the Stratford students are bass fishers and free-divers, which proved to be beneficial during the installation.

“The fun part was putting them in the water,” Coursey said.

In partnership with the Macon Water Authority, Mercer researchers have continued to study the lake’s fish population since the habitat installation. Dr. Byron taught his biostatistics and morphology course again in fall 2025, and his students conducted survey sampling to get a better picture of

The goal is for these artificial habitats to be studied for many years into the future and involve many Mercerians and community members.



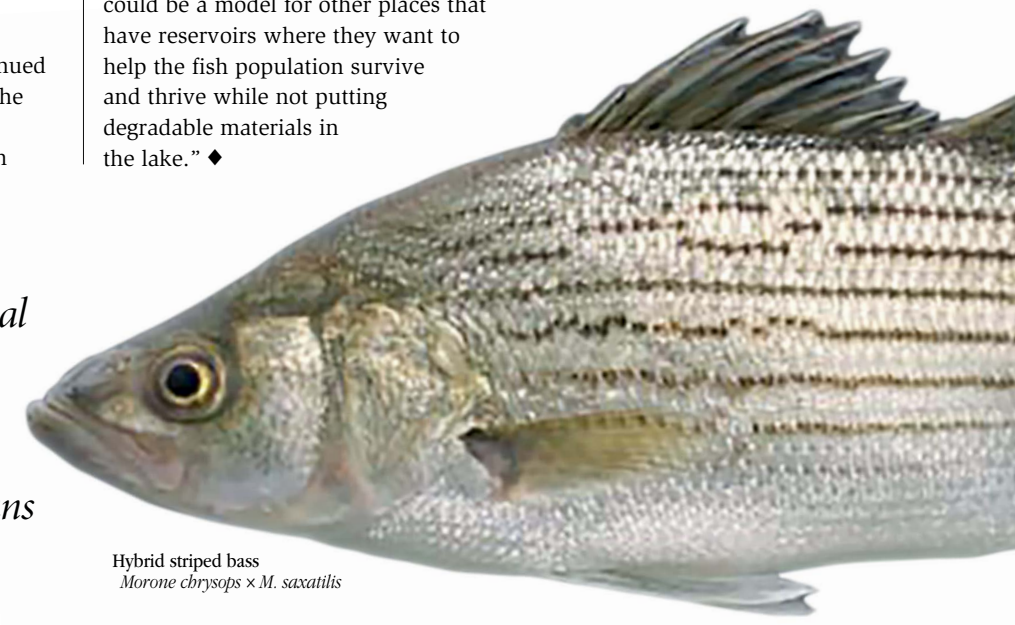
A team installs artificial fish habitats in Javors Lucas Lake in July 2025.

how predator species are using the habitats in the lake. The data indicates “encouraging shifts” in the bass community, he said.

“Largemouth bass were more common than the invasive spotted bass in the 2025 collections and were also larger on average than those sampled in the first field season in 2023,” Dr. Byron said. “We also documented a sharp decline in the previously stocked hybrid striped bass, which were not detected in the most recent surveys. Ongoing analysis of body condition, feeding activity, and habitat use will help scientists and local managers better understand how predator populations are changing and how artificial habitat structures may influence fish communities in the lake.”

The goal is for these artificial habitats to be studied for many years into the future and involve many Mercerians and community members.

“I’m constantly excited to work at a university where they encourage the collaboration across the university and the engagement of students and the community in projects,” Dr. McCreanor said. “(This project) could be a model for other places that have reservoirs where they want to help the fish population survive and thrive while not putting degradable materials in the lake.” ♦



Hybrid striped bass
Morone chrysops x M. saxatilis

NEW PROVOST, RECORD CLASS, NEW ENGINEERING DEAN, GADA

DR. LISA MURPHEY LUNDQUIST

NAMED EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT FOR ACADEMIC AFFAIRS AND PROVOST



Dr. Lisa Murphey Lundquist

President **Penny L. Elkins**, Ph.D., during her inaugural news conference on Jan. 5 announced the appointment of **Lisa Murphey Lundquist**, Pharm.D., as University executive vice president for academic affairs and provost, effective immediately. Dr. Lundquist, the founding dean of Mercer's College of Health Professions and senior vice provost, will lead the University's 12 schools and colleges, the Mercer Health Sciences Center, the Division of Student Life, University libraries, research, institutional effectiveness, international programs, registrar, academic and advising services and Mercer University Press, among other units. Over her 20-year tenure at Mercer, Dr. Lundquist has served as a faculty member in the College of Pharmacy, an assistant and associate dean of the College of Pharmacy, and since its founding in 2013, dean of the College of Health Professions.

RECORD FRESHMAN CLASS

Mercer began its 193rd academic year by enrolling 1,130 new residential undergraduate students on the Macon campus, a record number for the University. The Class of 2029 includes 1,016 first-time freshmen, the most in Mercer's history and surpassing last year's total by 24%.

"This record-setting class reflects Mercer's steadfast commitment to providing academic excellence grounded in purpose. By surpassing the previous record and welcoming our largest freshman enrollment, Mercer stands stronger than ever," said President **Dr. Penny L. Elkins**.



PHOTO COURTESY GULFSTREAM AEROSPACE; OPPOSITE: LEAH YETTER PHOTO; MATT SMITH PHOTO



Dr. Vicki Britt

DR. VICKI BRITT

APPOINTED DEAN OF SCHOOL OF ENGINEERING

Dr. **Vicki Britt** has been named dean of the School of Engineering, effective June 1. She currently serves as senior vice president of innovation, engineering and flight at Gulfstream Aerospace in Savannah and will retire from the role in May to begin her work at Mercer. Dr. Britt brings to the position deep industry experience, a strong track record in research and innovation and a knowledge of Mercer gained through nine years of service on the University's National Engineering Advisory Board. She succeeds **Dr. Laura Lackey**, Kaolin Industry Chair and professor of environmental engineering, who has served as dean since 2018.

MERCER TO HOUSE GADA

Gulfstream Aerospace Corporation, Lockheed Martin, Rolls-Royce, FlightSafety International and RTX announced in August the formation of the Georgia Aerospace & Defense Alliance (GADA), a new, statewide organization dedicated to advancing Georgia's aerospace and defense industries through strategic collaboration and advocacy. The formation of the Alliance marks a pivotal step in advancing this high-growth industry, and it will be housed at Mercer in Macon, a strategic location that underscores the city's commitment to statewide economic development, research and innovation. Georgia public policy leader and vice president for external relations **Ember Bishop Bentley** was named GADA executive director, and Jay Neely, Georgia aerospace industry veteran, was appointed chair.



TOP MARKS IN LATEST U.S. NEWS & WORLD REPORT RANKINGS

Mercer once again ranks among the top national universities in value, undergraduate teaching, nursing and engineering, according to *U.S. News & World Report's* annual America's Best Colleges issue, released in September 2025. Mercer came in at No. 38 on the Best Value ranking list and continued to be recognized for outstanding undergraduate teaching, ranking No. 58. Coming in at No. 74, the College of Nursing's undergraduate program jumped 56 spots in the rankings, and the School of Engineering's undergraduate program, consistently ranked among the nation's top engineering programs that have bachelor's or master's as their terminal degrees, ranked No. 46. Undergraduate business and psychology programs also ranked highly, and Mercer was again recognized as one of the Best Colleges for Veterans.



ONE OF PRINCETON REVIEW'S 'BEST COLLEGES' FOR 23RD YEAR

For the 23rd consecutive year, Mercer is one of the nation's best institutions for undergraduates, according to The Princeton Review®. In the guide's detailed ranking lists, Mercer was ranked 15th on the Top 20 Best Schools for Making an Impact, 20th on the Most Engaged in Community Service list, 19th on the Friendliest Students list and was also noted for its research opportunities.





(Front row) Vice President and Dean of Students Dr. Doug Pearson, Executive Director of Campus Life and Student Involvement Meredith Keating White, Associate Director of Engaged Learning Lauren Shinholster, President Dr. Penny L. Elkins, Vice Provost of Engaged Learning Dr. Kathryn Kloepper, Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost Dr. Lisa Murphey Lundquist, students Abigail Williamson, Cindy Cao and Sanjna Desai, (back row) Director of Student-Athlete Support Services Eric Shephard, Senior Vice President for Marketing Communications and Chief of Staff Larry D. Brumley, Professor of Biomedical Engineering and Director of Graduate Programs Dr. Sinjae Hyun, University Minister Dr. Craig McMahan.

MERCER SELECTED FOR CARNEGIE FOUNDATION 2026 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT CLASSIFICATION

Mercer is one of 237 U.S. colleges and universities to receive the 2026 Carnegie Community Engagement Classification, an elective designation awarded by the American Council on Education and the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching that highlights an institution's commitment to community engagement. The CE Classification has been the leading framework for institutional assessment and recognition of community engagement in U.S. higher education for the past 19 years. Mercer initially received the designation in 2008 and reclassification in 2015. "It further validates the emphasis we place on changing the world and improving the human condition, beginning with the Georgia communities where we have campuses," said Mercer President **Dr. Penny L. Elkins**.



LEAH VETTER PHOTOS

LAW SCHOOL RANKS No. 4 IN ELITE GAVEL RANKINGS; FIRST-TIME BAR PASSAGE RATE AMONG HIGHEST IN GEORGIA

Mercer University School of Law has been ranked No. 4 in the nation, according to the Elite Gavel Rankings released in December 2025. The program has remained in the top five nationally since 2023. The Gavel Rankings evaluate law school advocacy programs based on competitive performance at elite invitational tournaments nationwide, including tournament success, strength of competition and consistency against the country's top programs. Additionally, a greater percentage of Mercer Law graduates are passing the bar exam than those from nearly any other law school in Georgia. With a first-time pass rate of 88.4%, Mercer Law came within just two-tenths of a percentage point of claiming the top spot among all Georgia law schools in the most recent administration of the bar exam.



MERCER NAMED COLLEGE OF DISTINCTION

Mercer has been named a College of Distinction for the 2025-2026 academic year, a prestigious designation awarded to schools whose commitment to engaged, experiential education sets them apart. Mercer was recognized as a private university on both the state and national levels and for business, education, engineering, nursing and career development. The recognition is based on criteria known as the Four Distinctions: Engaged Students, Great Teaching, Vibrant Community and Successful Outcomes.



BOARD APPROVES NEW DOCTORAL PROGRAM; ELECTS NEW TRUSTEES, OFFICERS

During its annual Homecoming meeting on Nov. 14, 2025, held on Mercer's historic campus in Penfield, the University's Board of Trustees approved a new Doctor of Occupational Therapy (OTD) degree program in the College of Health Professions, which will launch in fall 2026 on the Cecil B. Day Graduate and Professional Campus in Atlanta. The board also elected **Cathy Callaway Adams** as board chair and elected nine new trustees including **Heather Darden, Nathan Deal, Donna Hyland, Stanley Jones, Shaun King, J. Curtis Lewis, Brandon L. Peak, Chip Russell** and **Marc Treadwell**. Trustees who rotated off the board and were recognized for their service included **Virgil L. Adams, Michael P. Boggs, Ashley Amos Copelan, Julie Long, W. Louis Sands, Jennifer Nunn Tarbutton** and **J. Henry Walker IV**. **David E. Hudson**, who completed a record eighth five-year term on the board, was elected a Life Trustee.

SCHOLARSHIPS FELLOWSHIPS & HONORS

MERCER WELCOMES 14TH CLASS OF STAMPS SCHOLARS

Mercer welcomed nine incoming freshmen this past fall as part of the University's 14th class of Stamps Scholars. The Stamps Scholars Program awards multi-year, full scholarships to driven and talented student leaders to help them achieve their goals by partnering with visionary colleges and universities to enable extraordinary educational experiences. Mercer's newest Stamps Scholars are

Lucas Ardelean, Mars Carstens, Andrew Fleming, Aknara Fonseca, Kris Hammond, Olivia Howell, Allie Mahoney, Akanksha Manna and Bill Nguyen.

Below: The 14th Class of Stamps Scholars was honored during a luncheon on Oct. 24, 2025, attended by the full cohort of Scholars, national Stamps Scholars Program representatives, and campus administrators and faculty who work with the Stamps Scholars.



TEN STUDENTS SELECTED TO STUDY ABROAD AS GILMAN SCHOLARS

Ten students were chosen during the October 2025 selection cycle to receive a total of \$26,500 in funding to study abroad through the prestigious Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship program. The recipients are

Anisha Dieujuste, Amar Gibson, Rubby Gyan, Kaitlyn Hawkins, Tristen Lowell, Chandra Sentell, Hannah Simpson, Talia Tamayo Vega, Lauren Tickle and Charlotte Whitehead.

Mercer has been recognized as both a Gilman Top Producing Institution and a Gilman Greatest Growth Institution.



OFFICE OF GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT AWARDS 27 SCHOLARSHIPS FOR STUDENTS TO STUDY ABROAD

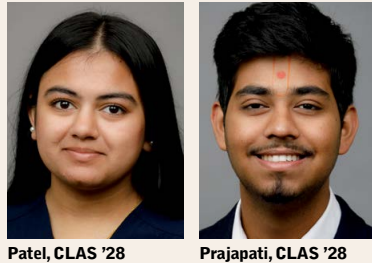
The Office of Global Engagement awarded its latest round of Global Leader Scholarships (GLS), providing 27 students with a total of \$66,000 to participate in study abroad programs during the upcoming spring semester. The GLS program was launched in 2019 to support students with financial need in pursuing long-term study abroad opportunities at the University.

The recipients are **Trinity Bennett, Raven Brand, Evelyn Erickson, Elijah Frazier, Candra Garrett, Sandra Harris, Marilyn Jones, Taylor Kennedy, Anisa Khan, Srilakshmi Koya, Sarah Martin, Asher McCowen, Nia McGill, Komal Memon, Bailey Middleton, Taneka Miller, Shante Nasir, Abbie Paul, David Pham, Eniya Robinson, Chandra Sentell, Hannah Simpson, Chelsea Smith, Sydney Stapleton, Talia Tamayo Vega, Victoria Whitehead and Darrell Yankey.**

SCHOLARSHIPS, FELLOWSHIPS, HONORS

TWO SOPHOMORES CHOSEN AS SULLIVAN FELLOWS

Sophomores **Uji Patel** and **Arya Prajapati** were selected for the Algernon Sydney Sullivan Foundation's Sullivan Fellows program, which aims to cultivate leaders committed to positive social change. Fellows are provided a unique opportunity to engage in immersive experiences, rigorous coursework and community-based projects focused on addressing pressing societal challenges. Patel, from Tifton, is a biochemistry and molecular biology major with minors in global health, psychology and biomedical physics. She is a Presidential Scholar, in the Honors Program and received the Spright Dowell Award. Prajapati, a neuroscience major with a minor in chemistry from Columbus, is a member of the Phi Eta Sigma honor society.



Patel, CLAS '28 Prajapati, CLAS '28

JUNIOR CHOSEN TO RECEIVE VOYAGER SCHOLARSHIP FOR PUBLIC SERVICE

Alexander Marshall was one of 100 college juniors chosen to receive the prestigious Obama-Chesky Voyager Scholarship for Public Service — a two-year program that includes up to \$50,000 in financial aid, an immersive work-travel experience and access to a strong network of leaders and mentors. From Augusta, Marshall is a law and public policy major with minors in military science and ethics. He is Mercer's first recipient of this award.



Marshall, CLAS '27

SENIORS AWARDED NATIONAL ENGINEERING SCHOLARSHIPS

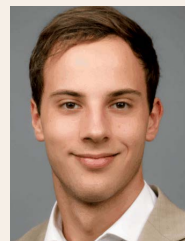
Senior **Marina Serra** was awarded two prestigious honors: the NCEES Professional Licensure Scholarship from the American Council of Engineering Companies (ACEC) Research Institute and the Tau Beta Pi scholarship. Senior **Cynthia Gaddam** was also awarded a Tau Beta Pi scholarship. Serra, a biomedical engineering major with a minor in chemistry from Peachtree City, is a member of Phi Kappa Phi and has consistently earned recognition on the President's List. She is also vice president of the Biomedical Engineering Society, media specialist for the Women in Math and Science Club, and a member of the Engineering Honors Program, the Society of Women Engineers and the Prosthetics and Orthotics Club. Gaddam, from Sugar Hill, serves as a math preceptor and the recording secretary for Tau Beta Pi at Mercer. She has received multiple math honor awards and the Legacy Preceptor Award.



Serra, EGR '26 Gaddam, EGR '26

ENGINEERING SENIOR NAMED POWER AND ENERGY SOCIETY SCHOLAR

School of Engineering senior **Grant Clark** was named an Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) Power and Energy Society (PES) Scholar. Scholars are recognized for their academic achievement and meaningful engagement in power-engineering studies. An electrical engineering major from Brentwood, Tennessee, Clark is a member of the Tau Beta Pi engineering honor society and has served as the IEEE student chapter treasurer.



Clark, EGR '26

GRAPHIC DESIGNERS MARK FIVE-YEAR WINNING STREAK

Graphic design students won nine 2025 American Graphic Design Awards from Graphic Design USA, making Mercer a winning design program for five years running. From more than 6,000 entries, only the top 10% were recognized as winners. The 2025 winners include **Josh Bishop, Gracen Bohling, Eryn Chenault, William Dietrich, Elle Eley, Gray Law, Abby Milam, Alexis Taylor** and **Caroline Wood**.

Left: Josh Bishop, Kinetic Typography



ALUMNI & STUDENT HONORS

ALUMNI & STUDENT HONORS

OUTSTANDING MERCERIANs RECOGNIZED DURING 10TH ANNUAL ALUMNI AWARDS RECEPTION

Fourteen Mercerians were recognized by the Mercer Alumni Association for their contributions to the University during the 10th annual Alumni and Friends Awards Reception and Program held Nov. 14, 2025, during Homecoming. The Thomas Sewell Plunkett Young Alumnus Award was presented to **Grant P. Radakovich**; the Meritorious Service Award was presented to **Charlie Cantrell**; the

Distinguished Alumnus Award was presented to **William "Bill" Pou Jr.**; the Alumni by Choice Awards were presented to **Mark J. Adams, Darla C. Bishop, Robert J. "Bob" and Carolyn B. Hargrove, Jackie Baugh Moore** and **Joan L. "Joanie" Moore**. The Mercer Athletic Hall of Fame welcomed **William Boli Bagrou, James Florence, Susie Gardner** and **Bobby Lamb**, and **Gary Louis Abbott Jr.** was inducted into the Athletic Hall of Honor.



Several Mercerians were recognized for their contributions to Mercer University during the 10th annual Alumni and Friends Awards Reception and Program held Nov. 14, 2025, during Homecoming.

CLAS ALUMNA RECEIVES NATIONAL AWARD

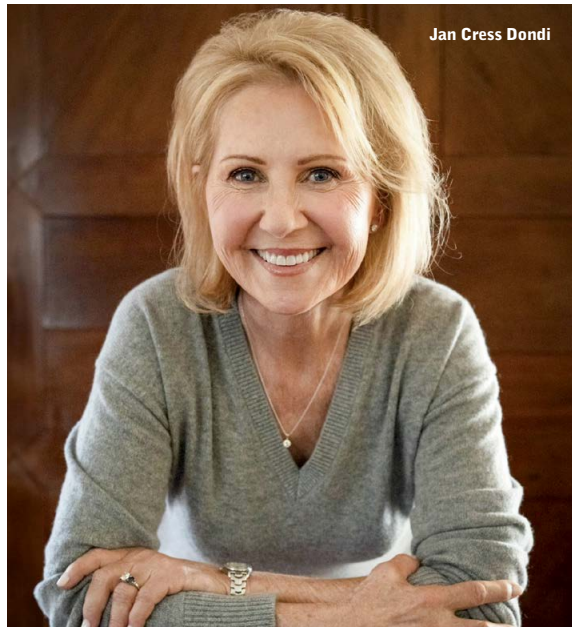
Class of 2024 biochemistry and molecular biology and Spanish graduate and current second-year medical student **Arsha Moorthy** was recently named the recipient of the Virgil L. Tweedie Scholarship, a \$10,000 national award presented to a member of national health preprofessional honor society Alpha Epsilon Delta. Moorthy graduated *summa cum laude* with University and departmental honors, and she was a Stamps Scholar and inducted into both Phi Beta Kappa and Phi Kappa Phi. From Flowery Branch, she is currently pursuing her medical degree on the Columbus campus and hopes to serve the underserved rural population of Georgia.



Arsha Moorthy

LEAH VETTER PHOTO

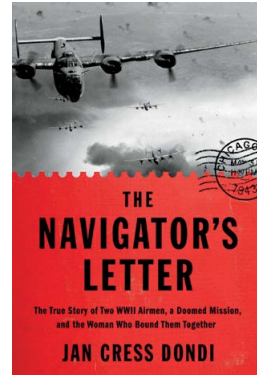
ALUMNI & STUDENT HONORS



Jan Cress Dondi

MERCERIAN'S WORLD WAR II BOOK MAKES BEST-SELLER LIST

Jan Cress Dondi's nonfiction book *The Navigator's Letter*, crafted from hundreds of family letters dating back to World War II, was released from leading publisher Hachette Book Group in February and made the *USA Today's* Best-selling Booklist. Dondi attended Mercer from 1973-75 and finished her bachelor's degree at the University of Georgia in 1977. The book is not just a family story; it's a historical account sourced from personal letters and scrapbooks as well as memoirs of crew members, pilot logs, interviews with veterans and experts, and information in the national archives in Germany and America.



ALUMNA INDUCTED INTO GEORGIA BROADCASTERS HALL OF FAME

Alumna **Karla Heath-Sands** was inducted into the Georgia Association of Broadcasters 2026 Hall of Fame class. Heath-Sands majored in English, graduated in 1984 and has been an anchor at WALB News 10 in Albany for 28 years. Among her many accomplishments, she recently succeeded Mercer President **Dr. Penny L. Elkins** as president of Georgia Women of Achievement, serves on the grants committee for the Georgia Humanities Council, is an alumna member of the Albany (Georgia) Chapter of The Links Inc., is a past chair of the Mercer President's Club, and is active in the Delta Eta Omega Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Inc. and its service initiatives. Every year, she helps with WALB's annual food drive in partnership with Feeding the Valley.



Karla Heath-Sands, right, co-anchors the news with Jim Wallace at WALB.



(From left) former President William D. Underwood, Karla Heath-Sands, President Dr. Penny L. Elkins and the Hon. W. Louis Sands.



Rylee Kirk

ALUMNA COVERS BREAKING NEWS AS PART OF NEW YORK TIMES FELLOWSHIP

Alumna **Rylee Kirk** started a prestigious journalism fellowship at *The New York Times* in summer 2025. A journalism major who graduated from the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences in 2020, Kirk was one of 31 early-career journalists selected for the one-year fellowship at one of the country's largest and most influential daily newspapers. She is working on the express desk covering breaking news and trending stories from around the world.

COPA ALUMNUS RECEIVES METROPOL SCHOLARSHIP

College of Professional Advancement alumnus **Ben Olson** was awarded the 2025 Atlanta Metropol Continuing Education Scholarship. A Double Bear, Olson received his master's degree in criminal justice and public safety leadership in December 2025. He received his bachelor's degree in criminal justice in 2024. Olsen is the fourth Mercer student from the College of Professional Advancement to receive a Metropol Scholarship in the last 10 years.



(From left) Dr. Stephen E. Ruegger, associate professor of leadership studies, and 2025 Atlanta Metropol Continuing Education Scholarship recipient Ben Olson.

SNAPBACK FILMS & PHOTOGRAPHY LLC PHOTO

ALUMNI & STUDENT HONORS



ALUMNUS VISITS AUSCHWITZ AS PART OF EDUCATION FELLOWSHIP

Alumnus and Holocaust history teacher **Jake Lankford** was one of 43 U.S. high school educators selected for the yearlong Auschwitz Legacy Fellowship, which included an intensive, week-long study in Poland. The fellows took guided tours through Auschwitz concentration camps and participated in a three-day seminar at the Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum.

Alumnus Jake Lankford, bottom right, was one of 43 U.S. high school educators selected for the Auschwitz Legacy Fellowship.

The fellowship is the flagship initiative of the Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial Foundation. Lankford earned a Bachelor of Science in psychology and Bachelor of Arts in political science from Mercer in 2014 and obtained his Master of Arts in Teaching from the University's College of Education in 2015.



Zainab Shaik, center

MERCERIAN SELECTED FOR FULBRIGHT

Class of 2025's **Zainab Shaik** received the prestigious Fulbright U.S. Student Award for the 2025-26 academic year. She was awarded the Fulbright English Teaching Assistantship and is serving as an English teaching assistant in Senegal, where she's helping to teach English and lead activities to promote cross-cultural learning. At Mercer, Shaik was a global health studies, international affairs and French triple-major with minors in biology, chemistry, computer science and information science and technology.

MERCER UNIVERSITY PRESS celebrates 47th year of publishing excellence

Publishing authors from across the United States, **Mercer University Press** proudly offers a new season filled with essays, nature, fiction, poetry, biography, literary criticism, history, philosophy and religion.

Spring/Summer 2026 season highlighted titles include: **Shakespeare's Dramatic States**, a collection of essays examining Shakespeare's insights into the historical understanding of politics, morality and philosophy from the 2024 A.V. Elliott Conference on Great Books and Ideas at Mercer University, edited by Charlotte C.S. Thomas, Mercer University professor of philosophy; **Grand Papa Jefferson** by John B. Boles, emeritus professor of history at Rice University, a rich history of Thomas Jefferson and his grandchildren; **What You Cannot Tell**, a novel by Judson Mitcham, former poet laureate of Georgia and member of the Georgia Writers Hall of Fame; **Thoreau and Philosophy**, edited by David H. Gordon, associate professor of philosophy at Loyola University, and Marc A. Jolley, director of Mercer University Press, a collection of essays exploring the philosophical value of Thoreau's thought; **The Long Road Home** by W. Douglas Skelton and Frances C. Carter, celebrating Skelton's legacy of mentorship, insight and institutional impact in health care, medicine and education at Mercer University and throughout Georgia; and **Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania**, edited by Jane E. Calvert, the first annotated edition of John Dickinson's Revolutionary letters published in 1767-1768.

Visit www.mupress.org to see a complete listing of titles or to download a catalog. Books are available from your favorite major online retailer or wherever fine books are sold. **Order from Mercer University Press directly and receive a 40% Mercer alumni discount online by using coupon code MERCERALUM at checkout or by calling (478) 301-2880.** Shipping charges and taxes will apply.



MERCER UNIVERSITY PRESS
www.mupress.org (478) 301-2880

FACULTY & STAFF HONORS & RECOGNITION

CARDELINO, STEELE HONORED ON ALL-SOUTHERN CONFERENCE FACULTY AND STAFF TEAM

Dr. Natalia Cardelino, associate professor of civil engineering, and **John Steele**, supervisor of campus services, were awarded the 2025 All-Southern Conference Faculty and Staff Awards. The award is presented annually by the All-Southern Conference to university staff and faculty

from the 10 member institutions who demonstrate outstanding service and dedication to their campus and its broader community. Dr. Cardelino has been an assistant professor in the School of Engineering since 2018. Steele is the campus services supervisor for the Physical Plant and has worked at Mercer for 26 years.



Pictured at the All-Southern Conference Faculty and Staff Awards presentation on Dec. 2 (from left) are Southern Conference Commissioner Michael Cross; Dr. Natalia Cardelino; John T. Steele; President Dr. Penny L. Elkins; and Professor of Chemistry and Mercer University Faculty Athletics Representative Dr. Jeffrey Hugdahl.

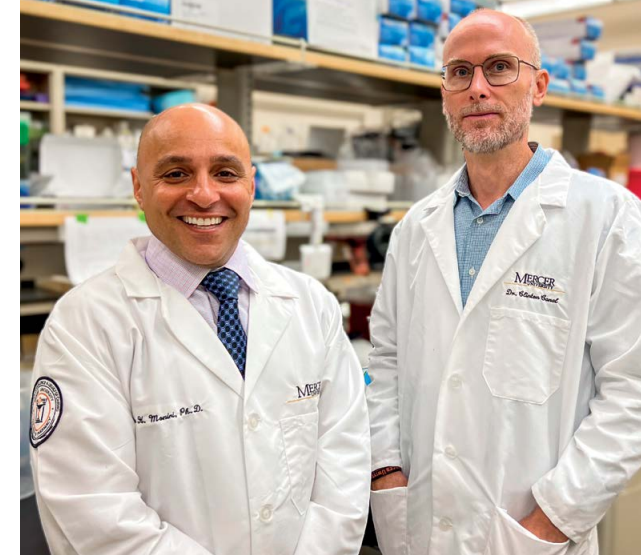


Dr. Gordon Johnston

ENGLISH PROFESSOR CHOSEN FOR INAUGURAL GEORGIA HUMANITIES SPEAKERS BUREAU

English professor **Dr. Gordon Johnston** was chosen for the Inaugural Georgia Humanities Georgia Circuit Speakers Bureau, which brings storytellers, scholars, artists, musicians, culture bearers and community leaders to towns and cities across Georgia to share their knowledge, spark conversation and inspire civic imagination. Dr. Johnston will present the performance *A River Runs Through Us*, which weaves personal narratives with ecological reflections to show how Georgia's waterways have shaped the people who have lived beside them across many generations.

COMPANY FOUNDED BY MERCER PROFESSORS WINS AWARD FOR HEART TREATMENT BREAKTHROUGH



Dr. Nader Moniri and Dr. Clinton Canal

Channel Therapeutics, a pharmaceutical startup founded by College of Pharmacy faculty members **Dr. Clinton Canal** and **Dr. Nader Moniri**, has received the Entrepreneur and Innovation Award from the Georgia Research Alliance for its groundbreaking work in developing new therapies for bradycardia, a condition where the heart beats too slowly. **Dr. Lydia Newsom**, clinical associate professor, serves as clinical advisor for the company, helping connect laboratory research to patient care. Mercer will own the rights to this technology while Channel Therapeutics licenses it.



Dr. Lydia Newsom

PROFESSOR ELECTED TO NATIONAL LEADERSHIP IN AACP PHARMACY PRACTICE

Dr. Lydia Newsom, clinical associate professor of pharmacy practice in the College of Pharmacy, has been elected chair-elect of the Pharmacy Practice Section of the American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy (AACP) for the 2026-2027 term. The Pharmacy Practice Section is the largest section within the organization, representing more than 2,000 faculty members

nationwide. This election marks the beginning of a multi-year leadership commitment within AACP. Dr. Newsom will serve as chair-elect from 2026-2027, chair from 2027-2028 and immediate past chair from 2028-2029. Through this progression, she will help guide the section's strategic direction, priorities and initiatives.

BIOLOGY PROFESSOR EARNS EXPY AWARD FOR GENE PROJECT WORK

Dr. John Stanga, associate professor of biology, was awarded Mercer's 2024-25 EXPy Award for excellence in experiential learning for his work helping dozens of students get research experience while making contributions to genome annotation projects. Dr. Stanga specializes in genetics and molecular biology and works with the Genomics Education Partnership — a national collaboration of institutions that is devoted to making research experiences in bioinformatics and genomics more available and accessible to undergraduate students and faculty.



Dr. John Stanga works with Mercer student Ian Garcia on a research project.

WRIGHT SELECTED FOR INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL ON DISABILITIES

Assistant Director of Fellowships and Scholarships **Johna A. Wright** was selected to serve as one of 10 members of the U.S. International Council on Disabilities (USICD) Youth Advisory Committee. The committee is a dynamic platform for emerging leaders with disabilities ages 18-30 who are passionate about global disability rights, inclusion and the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Wright, a 2020 psychology graduate, is visually impaired and has worked to change the campus climate for students with disabilities and lobby for disability rights throughout the nation.



Johna Wright

PHOTO COURTESY KIRKWOOD CONNELL WETHERINGTON, DON REAM PHOTO; OPPOSITE: AARON WILLIAMS PHOTO, DR. KATHY KLEPPER PHOTO

FACULTY, STAFF



Biology Mentorship Program mentors are pictured with Dr. Shonteria Johnson (middle row, second from right) in front of Godsey Science Center.

BIOLOGY PROFESSOR RECOGNIZED FOR STUDENT MENTORSHIP INITIATIVES

Dr. Shonteria Johnson, senior biology lecturer, was recognized with the Mary Ann Drake Award for Mentoring and Advocacy from the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences for her work supporting students through the Biology Mentorship Program. Launched with former biology

professor **Dr. Sahar Hasim** in 2023, the program focuses on forging individual mentor-mentee connections between underclassmen and upperclassmen. The program started with 17 student mentors, and this year there are about 50 mentors and 90 mentees.



DR. LOLETA SARTIN HONORED FOR CONTRIBUTIONS TO TEACHER EDUCATION

Dr. Loleta Sartin, professor of organizational leadership and associate dean for strategic initiatives in the College of Professional Advancement, was awarded the 2025 Cindi Chance Award from the Georgia Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, which recognizes outstanding service and contributions to educator preparation. Dr. Sartin joined the College of Education in 2020 and transitioned to the College of Professional Advancement in July 2025. In 2022, she served as the principal investigator on a \$9.1 million award from the U.S. Department of Education — the largest grant in the College’s history — supporting the GENERATE teacher residency program, which supported more than 400 working adults in earning master’s or bachelor’s degrees in education at no cost to them.

MARKETING WINS ‘BEST OF’ AWARDS FOR WRITING, VIDEO

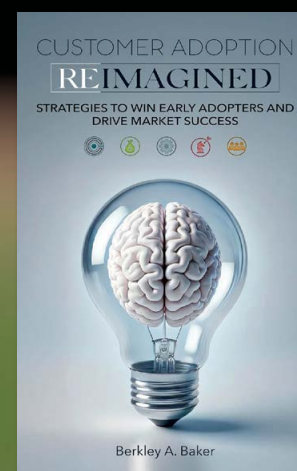
Two Mercer marketing team members were recognized for outstanding work in the Council for Advancement and Support of Education’s (CASE) 2025 Best of District III Awards. The story “Mercer tackles global water crisis by bringing clean water to communities in need” was honored in the research, medicine and science news writing category. It was written by **Andrea Honaker**, digital content specialist in the Office of Marketing Communications. The video “Mercer On Mission: Vietnam 2024” was recognized in the promotional (long) video category. It was filmed and edited by **Marin Guta**, associate director of creative strategy in the Office of Enrollment Management. CASE received 829 entries from District III, and Mercer was one of 72 institutions from District III to be represented through the Best of District honor.



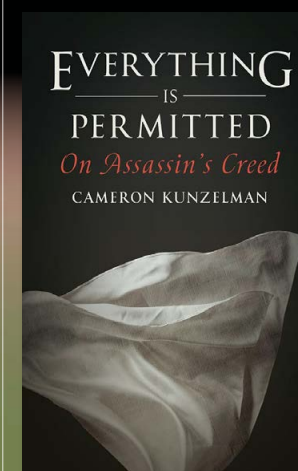
Andrea Honaker, BUS '26

Marin Guta, CLAS '16, BUS '21

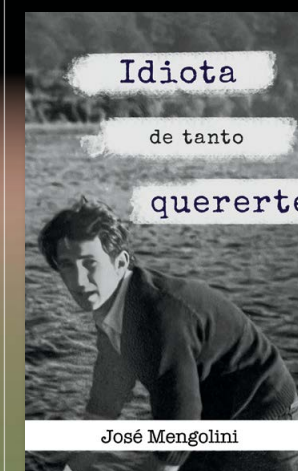
MERCER FACULTY AUTHOR NEW BOOKS



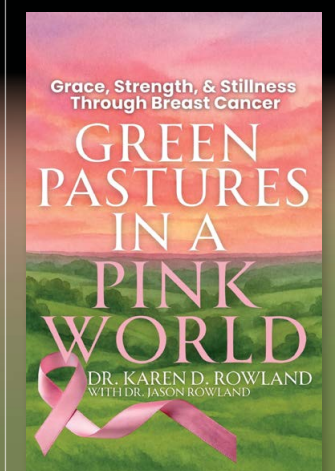
DR. BERKLEY BAKER, adjunct professor in the School of Business, published the book *Customer Adoption Reimagined: Strategies to Win Early Adopters and Drive Market Success*. The book introduces Baker’s CFOSS® framework, which helps innovators and organizations accelerate adoption by aligning with customers across five dimensions: Core, Financial, Operational, Strategic and Social.



DR. CAMERON KUNZELMAN, assistant professor of communication studies and theatre in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, published the book *Everything Is Permitted On Assassin’s Creed*. The book is described as an entertaining deep dive into the world, gameplay and evolution of the hugely successful Assassin’s Creed video game franchise.



DR. CLARA MENGOLINI, associate professor of Spanish in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, published the book *Idiota de tanto quererte*, an anthology of love letters written in 1969 by her father José Mengolini, to her mother the year they met. The book was released by Futurock Libros in Buenos Aires.



DR. KAREN D. ROWLAND, professor of counseling in the College of Professional Advancement, published the book *Green Pastures in a Pink World: Finding Grace, Strength, and Stillness Through Breast Cancer*. The book is the raw and powerful journey of how God turned a stage 4 diagnosis into a testimony of survival and supernatural grace.

PHOTO COURTESY DR. SHONTERIA JOHNSON, LEAH YETTER PHOTO

'MERCER'S BEST DAYS ARE AHEAD'

DR. PENNY L. ELKINS IS PROUD TO LEAD THE UNIVERSITY THAT CHANGED THE TRAJECTORY OF HER LIFE

By **ANDREA HONAKER**



DR. PENNY L. ELKINS DIDN'T SET OUT TO GO INTO HIGHER EDUCATION OR BECOME A UNIVERSITY PRESIDENT. BUT THROUGHOUT HER CAREER, SHE HAS ALWAYS ASPIRED TO SERVE OTHERS AND DO THE VERY BEST WITH

EACH OPPORTUNITY PRESENTED TO HER. THAT MINDSET AND AMBITION HAVE TAKEN HER ON A JOURNEY OF SUCCESSES AND ADVANCEMENTS, AND NOW TO THE HELM OF MERCER UNIVERSITY. >>



BY A UNANIMOUS VOTE, DR. ELKINS WAS ELECTED AS THE UNIVERSITY'S 19TH PRESIDENT

IN THE FALL OF 2025 AND TOOK OFFICE IN JANUARY, BECOMING MERCER'S FIRST FEMALE PRESIDENT. SHE SUCCEEDS **WILLIAM D. UNDERWOOD**, WHO LED MERCER FOR 20 YEARS BEFORE STEPPING DOWN TO RETURN TO FULL-TIME TEACHING AS THE TOMMY MALONE DISTINGUISHED CHAIR OF TRIAL ADVOCACY AT MERCER SCHOOL OF LAW.

Dr. Elkins earned her bachelor's degree in Christianity and education and master's degree in education at Mercer, making her the first Double Bear to serve as president since George Connell in the 1950s. She also holds an education specialist degree in education, administration and supervision and a Ph.D. in educational leadership.

A Columbus native, Dr. Elkins said her "modest beginnings" inspired and helped prepare her for a life as a leader. Her father, **James Hamm**, was a long-haul truck driver, and her mother, **Mavis**, was a bookkeeper and co-owner of a city cafe. Neither finished high school, but their constant encouragement and examples of a strong work ethic drove Dr. Elkins to dream bigger. >>



Newly-elected President Elkins with family at historic Penfield.

GET TO KNOW

PRESIDENT PENNY L. ELKINS, PH.D.

BEFORE MERCER

- Named valedictorian of her high school graduating class in Columbus. Turned down Princeton to go to Mercer.
- Received STAR Student Award, given to a Georgia high school senior who has the highest SAT score for a single test date.
- Served as captain of her high school debate team.
- Played clarinet in her high school marching band.

AS A MERCER STUDENT

- Did her homework on the living room floor of the President's Home. Then-First Lady Joan Godsey was her deacon at First Baptist Church of Christ.
- Sang in the "Living Water" women's choir when Tift College merged with Mercer in the late 1980s. The choir — made up of four Mercer students and four Tift students — was formed to signify the joining of the two institutions.
- Started Mercer on the pre-law track but changed majors after a conversation with her first of many Mercer mentors.
- Went on her first plane trip while a Mercer student.

CAREER/PERSONAL LIFE

- Became an elementary school administrator at the age of 25.
- Went skydiving for her 40th birthday.
- Captained the America's Cup boat for a day.
- Collects lighthouse figurines/paintings, photos of sunrises/sunsets, and of course, Bears!





MERCER'S
NEW
FIRST DOG —
CHAMP

As presidential pets go, **Champ** may have some big paws to fill. His predecessor, Cricket (Underwood), was a true campus celebrity. Still, Champ appears more than ready to chase down the legacy.

According to Dr. Elkins, Champ is about 5 years old and a mixed-breed mutt. But it's not his pedigree, or lack thereof, that makes him special. It's the un-bear-ably sweet, straight-out-of-a-holiday-movie story of how he trotted into the Elkins family and curled up in the heart of the Mercer community.

"Champ was shivering in the bushes at the President's House in Christmas of 2020," recalls Dr. Elkins. "We were very much dog people, but at the time we did not have a dog. President Underwood texted me and said, 'Come get your dog.' I texted him and said, 'I don't have a dog.' And he said, 'Oh yes, you do.'"

And just like that, Champ was home. "He's a rescue on this campus, and he certainly rescued our hearts," said Dr. Elkins. "And Cricket, the Underwoods' dog, actually found Champ, and so they are big friends and they're fun friends. Champ is an amazing boy, and I love the fact that we found him on campus and that he will be a part of this campus. He loves exploring the Macon campus."

Left: President Dr. Penny L. Elkins and husband Jason Elkins with Champ.



"I'm a first-generation college student, the first person in my family to get a four-year bachelor's degree," she said. "My father, though not formally educated, was a very wise man, and he insisted that I pursue educational excellence. He always wanted me to go to college. He knew education was the way for our family to be successful and for us to really shift the legacy."

Dr. Elkins graduated as valedictorian of the 1986 class at Jordan Vocational High School and was accepted to Princeton University. But the summer before she was set to begin classes in New Jersey, she visited

Mercer at the urging of a member of her church.

"I thought, 'There's something very different about this campus. I feel supported. I believe that I will be challenged here. I believe that I will have a community here and that I will be accepted here,'" she said. "And that is exactly what I received. So, I changed everything. I came to Mercer, and obviously, the rest is history."

Another change for Dr. Elkins came during her sophomore year. A political science major on the pre-law track, she checked off an elective requirement by registering for an >>





education class with **Dr. Bobby Jones**, who would become one of her most influential mentors. During class one day, he pointed out how passionate she was about children during their conversations and asked why she was a pre-law major. “It wasn’t that Bobby was trying to get me to change my major at all, but he really wanted me to be fulfilled in whatever I did,” Dr. Elkins said. “He saw something that was already within me, and it was in that moment that I knew exactly what I was supposed to do. I changed my major to education, and I couldn’t be more proud that I did that.”

Her father had instilled in her a responsibility to do more and be better while serving those around her, and a career in education aligned with her desire to support, encourage and challenge others to achieve success beyond what they thought possible.

Dr. Elkins began her career teaching third grade at Jessie Rice Elementary School in Macon, and three years later, at age 25, she was asked to become assistant principal at L.H.

Williams Elementary. She didn’t necessarily want to leave teaching, but she accepted the position because there was a need and others believed she could do the job. Not long after, she became the sole leader at the school when the longtime principal went on family medical leave.

“I was challenged more than I have ever been challenged, and I’m so thankful for that opportunity that I served,” Dr. Elkins said. “I learned a lot about myself, about leadership, about serving others, and about really understanding my ‘why’ for why in the world I would choose to do something like that.”

Two years later, Dr. Elkins took another chance when she agreed to help lead Georgia College & State University’s new field-based teacher education program. She served in the role for five years and became the department chair of >>



President Dr. Penny L. Elkins with 2025-26 Student Government Association Vice President Callie Lowery, CLAS '26 (left), and President Alisha Mitchell (right), CLAS '26.

DR. ELKINS THROUGH THE YEARS

1990 Earns a bachelor’s degree, *summa cum laude* in Christianity and early childhood education from Mercer.

1992 Earns a master’s degree in early childhood education from Mercer.

1997 Appointed department chair for early childhood education at Georgia College & State University.

2000 Appointed associate professor and department chair for early childhood education in the Tift College of Education at Mercer University.

2005 Promoted to professor and leads the establishment of Department of Educational Leadership and the first doctoral program in the College of Education and the University’s first non-clinical Ph.D. program, the Ph.D. in Educational Leadership.

2007 Serves as one of two education faculty representatives on the Georgia Professional Standards Commission Educator Preparation Committee that oversees all educator certification for the state, as well as the approval of all professional education programs in Georgia.

2008 Appointed senior associate vice president for Atlanta Campus.

1990 Begins her education career as a third-grade teacher at Jessie Rice Elementary School in Macon. Three years later, she is asked to become the assistant principal at L.H. Williams Elementary School.

1995 Earns a specialist degree in education, administration and supervision from Georgia College & State University. Begins higher education career as assistant professor for early childhood education at Georgia College & State University.

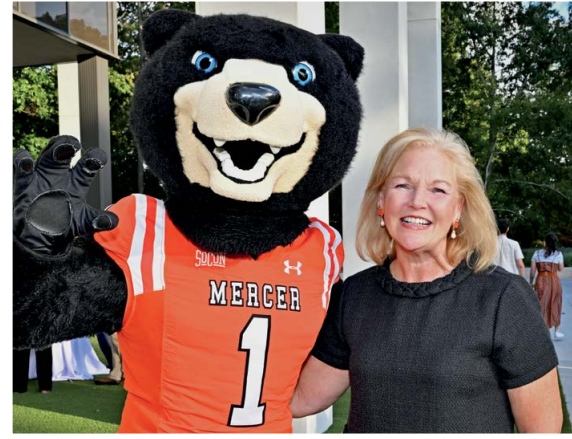
1998 Earns a Ph.D. in educational leadership from Georgia State University. Appointed department chair for early childhood and middle grades education at Georgia College & State University.

2004 Earned tenure and appointed chair of educational leadership.

2007 Appointed associate dean in the Tift College of Education and appointed to the Fred L. Miles Endowed Chair of Educational Leadership.

elementary and middle grades education. She was happy at Georgia College and planned to stay there long term, until a few Mercerians she met at an educators conference planted the seed for her return to Mercer.

“My goodness, they were persistent, and I’m glad they were. So they brought me back home,” she said. “So many folks think, ‘I bet she was always aspiring to be president.’ No, I was not. I was aspiring to do the best job I could do with what was in front of me, and every single time, there’s been another opportunity presented.”



Dr. Elkins has been a member of Mercer’s faculty and senior administration for more than 25 years. Years ago, she decided she would spend the rest of her career at Mercer, and she has remained committed to bettering it in every way that she can.

“I have immense gratitude for my predecessor, mentor and advocate who always ensured that my voice was heard and elevated,” Dr. Elkins said of Underwood.

She is a tenured professor in the College of Education and holds the Fred L. Miles Endowed Chair >>

2010

Named Educator of the Year for the state by Georgia Association on Young Children. She helped design the curriculum standards for birth-to-5-year-old education for Georgia and helped to launch Mercer’s Early Care and Education degree program, which was the first in the state approved by the Professional Standards Commission.

June 2011 **Named senior vice president for enrollment management.**

Led the University in achieving record-breaking enrollment growth, including an 80% increase in freshman enrollment and 47% increase in the total residential undergraduate student population.

October 2023

Appointed executive vice president.

2025 **Appointed to the Board of Trustees**

for the Lettie Pate Whitehead Foundation, serving as the first female board member and strategic advisor on higher education issues.

Jan. 1, 2026

President Elkins takes office.



2009 **Appointed by Georgia’s then-governor Sonny Perdue to the Georgia Professional Standards Commission,** the organization that oversees all educator certification for the state, as well as the approval of all professional education programs in Georgia. She served as chair of the Educator Preparation and Certification Sub-Committee for two years and as chair of the Commission for the last four years of her six-year term.

2010 **Named vice president for the Cecil B. Day Graduate and Professional Campus in Atlanta in January and appointed senior vice provost for strategic academic initiatives in September.**

2021 **Mercer’s fall enrollment surpasses 9,000 students across all campuses.** It is the 15th consecutive year that the University enrolled a record number of students.

February 2025 **Assumes leadership for the Provost’s Office as interim provost.**

Nov. 14, 2025 **The Mercer Board of Trustees unanimously elects Dr. Penny L. Elkins as the institution’s 19th president.** She is the first female president in the institution’s 192-year history.

“ I AM CONFIDENT THAT THE UNIVERSITY WILL THRIVE

in the extremely capable hands of Dr. Penny L. Elkins. She will be an innovative, courageous and inspiring leader in carrying out Mercer University’s mission of preparing and equipping students for lives of discovery, empowerment, service and impact, and in the process, changing the world.”

— **CATHY CALLAWAY ADAMS**
CHAIR, BOARD OF TRUSTEES 2026

“ MERCER HAS BEEN BLESSED WITH STRONG VISIONARY LEADERSHIP.

We have only had three presidents in the last seven decades. After thoughtful consideration, we chose Dr. Elkins because we believe she has the right experience and skills to continue Mercer’s dramatic growth, prepare the University for the challenges that will face higher education in the years to come and be our next long-term president.”

— **THOMAS P. (TOM) BISHOP**
CHAIR, BOARD OF TRUSTEES 2024 AND 2025

“ DR. ELKINS HAS BEEN A POWERFUL ADVOCATE FOR THE UNIQUE MERCER EXPERIENCE

for more than 25 years. The Presidential Search Committee engaged with Mercer’s stakeholders — on every front — and asked them to tell us the qualities and traits they would like to see in Mercer’s next president. Our committee found that Dr. Elkins has all of them. I am honored to be part of the team that recommended Dr. Elkins to be the 19th president of Mercer University.”

— **RICHARD A. (DOC) SCHNEIDER**
CHAIR, PRESIDENTIAL SEARCH COMMITTEE



President Dr. Penny L. Elkins with School of Medicine Dean Dr. Jean R. Sumner

of Educational Leadership at the University. She has served as associate dean and department chair for both teacher education and educational leadership in the College of Education, vice president for the Cecil B. Day Graduate and Professional Campus in Atlanta, senior vice provost for strategic initiatives, senior vice president for enrollment management, and most recently, executive vice president and interim provost.

Dr. Elkins said her upbringing has grounded her in the servant-leadership philosophy. To her, leadership is not about the person or the title but about character and stewardship of the mission. She believes in transformational leadership and collaborative, collegial work that moves people toward a common vision.

“At the end of the day, people are following you as a person, which is incredibly humbling. They have to believe that you are leading them for the right reasons. They have to trust you,” she said. “Leadership is about influencing and hopefully inspiring others around you to be even greater than you are. I am the 19th president at Mercer in almost 200 years. What a privilege to do that, and I treat it as such.” >>





“ THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES HAS MADE THE BEST CHOICE IMAGINABLE

in electing Dr. Penny Elkins to serve as the 19th president of Mercer University. I am overjoyed for Mercer. She will be an amazing president, given her exceptional and demonstrated leadership, relational and problem-solving talents. I can hardly wait to watch Mercer flourish in the coming years under her leadership.”

— **WILLIAM D. UNDERWOOD**
18TH PRESIDENT

“ I AM ABSOLUTELY THRILLED ABOUT PENNY’S ELECTION AS MERCER’S PRESIDENT.

We’ve been friends and colleagues since our time as Mercer students, and I’ve watched her dedicate more than two decades of her life to this university. Her leadership is grounded in deep love for Mercer, respect for its people and a clear sense of purpose. I can’t imagine anyone better prepared, or more genuinely invested, to lead us all into Mercer’s future.”

— **LYNN CREECH MURPHEY**
CLAS ’90
KNIGHT FOUNDATION
DIRECTOR/MACON



As she settles into her role as president, Dr. Elkins is focusing on three main commitments: increasing impact for students; enhancing Mercer’s academic enterprise; and amplifying Mercer’s story. But before any tactical strategies are developed or implemented, she’s listening closely to the Mercer community through a variety of platforms, including surveys and forums.

“I want [the Mercer community] to come alongside us in the vision of making Mercer the most impactful private research university in the world. I’m so grateful for our students, faculty, staff, trustees, donors, supporters and partners. What an incredible group of people who are aligned in the mission of Mercer University,” she said. “I do believe that Mercer’s best days are ahead, our best chapters are yet unwritten.”

While she works to usher in Mercer’s best years, Dr. Elkins is backed by a strong family support system. **Jason**, her husband of nearly 23 years, is a champion for her and Mercer, and the couple is close with their family, many of whom reside in Columbus. Jason is an agency manager

for Georgia Farm Bureau Insurance and is also from Columbus. Growing up, his mother was best friends with Dr. Elkins’ eldest sister, Teddie Ussery, who is proud to have later played matchmaker for the couple.

“Jason has been with me all my Mercer years,” Dr. Elkins said. “He believes very strongly that it is a team effort. We call ourselves Team Elkins, and we believe it. We’ve never been blessed with biological children, so I love to say that the Lord decided to give me 10,000 Mercer children, which he did, and I’m very fulfilled and very blessed, as is Jason.”

Seeing and sharing the successes of Mercer students, faculty and staff is what keeps Dr. Elkins going. This gives her energy every day, even amid the challenges that executive leadership can bring.

“There is nothing more special to me than being able to serve the institution that literally changed the trajectory of my life,” she said. “The idea that I get to lead this university and that we may be the ones to see her through the bicentennial is absolutely astounding to me. I could never have come up with a story that I would get to do that.” ♦



Photographers: Jessica Gratigny, Marin Guta, Paula Heller, Rod Reilly, Christopher Ian Smith, Leah Yetter



MERCER UNIVERSITY HOMECOMING 2026

Save the Date for Oct. 30 and 31!

Homecoming 2025 was an incredible celebration of Bear pride, bringing alumni and friends together to reconnect, reminisce and celebrate all that makes our community special. Planning is already underway for Homecoming 2026. We can't wait to gather again to celebrate the bonds we've built, the progress we've made and the bright future ahead. Together, we'll continue to roar louder than ever! Registration opens in late summer. In the meantime, view photos from last year's celebration at homecoming.mercer.edu.



FOOTBALL

BACK 2 BACK SoCon Titles

BEARS RELOAD *AND REIGN*

The pivot point came early for the nationally ranked Mercer football team in 2025 as the Bears rebounded from a season-opening loss to Presbyterian to bully their way through the remainder of the schedule and become the first team in 16 years to lay claim to back-to-back outright Southern Conference championships. Fueling another historic run was a school-record eight-straight wins on the way to a 9-3 record and the program's third-straight trip to the NCAA postseason.

The script for success was flipped from the historic 2024 campaign as the Bears showcased the nation's third-ranked total offense (485.2 yards/game), but defense remained on the board as the calling card for the Bears, who finished the campaign with 3.50 sacks per game (3rd NCAA) while also sporting FCS's 11th-best rushing defense (110.2 rushing yards allowed/game).



RACKING UP THE RINGS — Southern Recognition Inc. designed and produced the 2025 football championship rings. The ring features orange stones in the outline of a football on the face, three orange stones under the player names to represent the three straight playoff appearances and side-by-side SoCon championship trophies to honor football's back-to-back championships.



Head coach Mike Jacobs (left) earned his second-straight SoCon Coach of the Year award after leading the Bears to an unbeaten record in league play.

Offensive fireworks played the lead role for Mercer in 2025, however. The Orange & Black rallied behind freshman quarterback **Braden Atkinson** to register 318.2 passing yards and 36.2 points per game, while also shattering no fewer than eight program single-season offensive records along the way. The Bears amassed 500 offensive yards or more six times, including a record

829 yards in a 62-0 shellacking of VMI in late October. The postseason awards harvest was plentiful again for Mercer as well, especially on the national level. Three student-athletes — Atkinson, sophomore **Andrew Zock** and senior **Xavier Jennings** — were named to at least one all-America team, while Atkinson also joined **Gavin Marks** and **Kobe McInnis** in claiming at least one freshman all-America award. Jennings also became the fourth player in program history to be lauded with academic all-America laurels.

Mercer became the first team in 16 years to claim back-to-back outright Southern Conference championships. Seventeen players picked up All-Southern Conference laurels at season's end, including the league's Defensive (Andrew Zock) and Freshman (Braden Atkinson) Player of the Year awards.

The national spotlight was, again, on Atkinson and Zock in early January when both players came away with hardware at the FCS National Awards Banquet in Nashville, Tennessee. Atkinson was named as the recipient of the 2025 Jerry Rice Award, which honors the national freshman player of the year in college football's Division I FCS. Zock, in turn, was crowned as the winner of the 2025 Buck Buchanan Award, which is presented annually to the national defensive player of the year in Division I FCS college football.

The national honors followed a flurry of awards announcements on the conference level. Thirteen scholar-athletes, including a septet of first-teamers, graced the All-Southern Conference squads, while the Bears also donned a quintet of SoCon All-Freshman honors. Zock was named the SoCon Defensive Player of the Year, Atkinson was crowned as the league's Freshman of the Year and **Mike Jacobs** was tabbed as SoCon Coach of the Year for the second-straight season.



Taylor Returns to Mercer as Head Football Coach

Athletics department officials announced on Dec. 11 that 21-year collegiate coaching veteran **Joel Taylor** has been named as the football program's 22nd head coach.

Taylor, who led West Georgia to a dozen victories in the program's first two seasons at the NCAA Division I FCS level, returns to Mercer after serving as the defensive coordinator for the Bears from 2020-23. He is fresh off an eight-win campaign in 2025 that garnered him both United Athletic Conference and American Football Coaches Association Region 3 Coach of the Year accolades.

"We are thrilled to welcome Joel Taylor back to Mercer as our head football coach," said Director of Athletics Jim Cole. "Joel is one of the brightest leaders in college football. He is a tremendous teacher, a man of integrity and someone who pours into young people. What truly sets Joel apart is his vision for building a championship program grounded in culture, character and purpose."

Former MU head coach Mike Jacobs resigned just one day



Coach Joel Taylor

earlier to assume the same role at Mid-American Conference (NCAA FBS) member Toledo. Jacobs led the Bears to 20 victories and back-to-back Southern Conference championships in two seasons, as well as a pair of berths into the NCAA FCS Playoffs.

Prior to trekking to Carrollton, Taylor constructed a dominant defensive unit in Macon from 2020-23 — one that helped the Bears register 28 victories, including a 9-4 mark in 2023 that culminated with the program's first NCAA FCS Playoffs berth. Mercer yielded just 142.1 rushing yards and 24.7 points per game in 45 games with Taylor as defensive coordinator and boasted one of the nation's top total defenses in both the 2021 and 2022 campaigns. The 2022 squad also paced all 126 FCS squads with 17 interceptions.

"Mercer is a place that has meant a great deal to my family and me," Taylor said. "We are incredibly grateful for the chance to come home. This university, this community and this football program have played an important role in my coaching journey."

XAVIER JENNINGS EARNS SPOT ON ACADEMIC ALL-AMERICA TEAM

Offensive lineman **Xavier Jennings** put an emphatic cap on his illustrious collegiate career in January when the Shelby, North Carolina, native earned a spot on the College Sports Communicators Academic All-America squad.

The Academic All-America® program, selected by College Sports Communicators, is the longest-running and most prestigious academic and athletic award for student-athletes. All nominees must have a GPA of 3.5 or above and be a starter or important reserve. The laurel is widely considered to be the most prestigious academic honor that can be bestowed on a collegiate student-athlete.

Jennings is the 23rd student-athlete in the history of Mercer Athletics to be named to the Academic All-America squad, and just the fourth football player to log the accolade. **Tee Mitchell** (2015), **Jack Raines** (2019) and **Riley Adcock** (2024) previously received the honor.



MERCER ATHLETIC FOUNDATION

EST. 2008

IT'S ABOUT TIME: MERCER UNVEILS CUSTOM WATCH

The Mercer Athletic Foundation partnered with watchmaker Mr. Eatwell to produce a custom line of Mercer watches. Each timepiece features the Sailor Bear logo and swappable bands, and they are individually numbered. The initial order sold out, and plans are in the works for a second, even larger order. Email maf@mercer.edu to be placed on a waiting list.

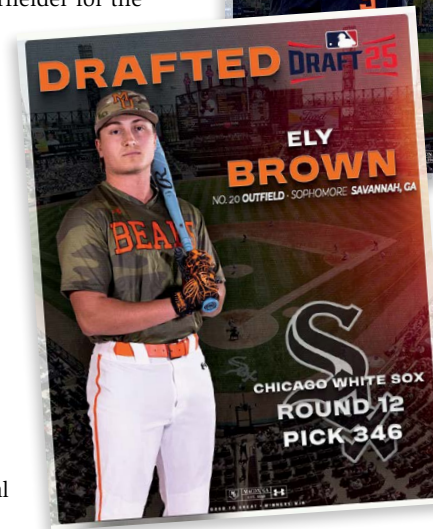


MLB Pipeline

Mercer's Major League Baseball pipeline continued to produce over the summer with one scholar-athlete making his way to the professional ranks via the 2026 MLB Draft, while two others inked free agent deals to take the next step in their already-illustrious playing careers.

A 12th-round selection (346th pick) of the Chicago White Sox on July 14, outfielder **Ely Brown** became the 34th Craig Gibson-coached player to be picked in MLB's annual amateur player draft. A native of Savannah, Brown played in 95 games (78 starts) across the 2024 and 2025 seasons for the Bears and compiled a .300 (90-for-300) batting average to go along with 15 extra-base hits (5 HR) and 44 RBI. He committed just one error in nearly 200 defensive chances as the everyday centerfielder for the Bears as well.

Less than 24 hours later, shortstop **Bradley Frye** saw his professional dreams realized as well when he signed a free agent deal with the San Diego Padres. A product of Marietta, Frye was electric both offensively and defensively for the Orange & Black. He compiled a .296 (88-for-267) batting average across three seasons (2023-25) and 175 games (173 starts) for the Bears, while also registering 65 extra-base hits (25 HR), 124 RBI and 119 runs scored. The Southern Conference's 2025 Defensive Player of the Year also earned first team all-league accolades in his final season in Middle Georgia.



Southpaw **Colton Cospers** joined baseball's professional fraternity on Aug. 1, when the New York Mets came calling with a free agent contract. While serving as Mercer's staff ace

across the 2024 and 2025 campaigns, Cospers picked up a pair of All-SoCon accolades, as well as a bid to the SoCon All-Tournament Team as a junior. He made 69 appearances (43 starts) on the mound for the Bears from 2022-25 and compiled a 20-10 career record, a 4.83 earned run average and two saves in 279-2/3 innings pitched with 230 strikeouts and just 65 walks.

MERCER ATHLETICS PHOTOS

MEDICINE, NURSING

School of Medicine Partners with Tanner Health to Open Clinical Campus in Carrollton

The School of Medicine announced a new partnership with Tanner Health to establish a regional campus for clinical training in a dedicated medical education unit on the main Tanner Medical Center/Carrollton campus. Third- and fourth-year medical students will live, learn and train during

the final two years of their education at the new campus, which will allow students to gain experience in a tertiary care setting that serves largely rural communities. The first group of third-year medical students will begin rotations in Carrollton in July, transferring from MUSM's Columbus, Macon and Savannah campuses. **Tim Paul**, M.D., senior vice president of medical affairs and chief quality officer at Tanner Health, will lead the Carrollton clinical campus as associate dean.

Below: The Mercer University School of Medicine Carrollton campus will be located in a dedicated medical education unit on the main Tanner Medical Center/Carrollton campus at 705 Dixie St.



PHOTO COURTESY COLLEGE OF NURSING, JESSICA GRATIGNY PHOTO, JOHN KNIGHT PHOTO, OPPOSITE: PHOTO COURTESY TANNER HEALTH

Nursing Program Expands to Macon Campus

The first cohort of Bachelor of Science in Nursing students began their studies on the Macon campus this past fall. Previously, Macon residential undergraduates had to transfer to the Atlanta campus after their sophomore year to complete their nursing classes. There are 26 first-year nursing students in the first Macon cohort. **Dr. Jennifer Bartlett**, professor and associate dean of nursing on the Macon campus, said bringing nursing to Macon aims to fill gaps in the field by creating another workforce pipeline for local hospitals and health care facilities.



College of Nursing Macon faculty are shown in the simulation lab on the Macon campus. (From left) Brandy Vann, Dr. Patsy Butts, Dr. Jennifer Bartlett and Savelia Howell.

Below: First-year nursing students are celebrated during the first white coat nursing ceremony on Mercer's Macon campus on Sept. 12, 2025.



Georgia ACP Establishes Rural Care Award in Dean's Name

School of Medicine (MUSM) Dean **Jean R. Sumner**, M.D., MACP, was honored as the inaugural recipient of the Commitment to Rural Care Award, established by the Georgia Chapter of the American College of Physicians (ACP). The award was created to recognize physicians who have shown outstanding dedication to improving health care in rural Georgia through innovation, leadership and compassionate care. The award was unveiled during the Georgia ACP's 2025 Annual Scientific Meeting, where Dr. Sumner was recognized for her transformative impact on



rural health care. During the ceremony, the chapter announced that the award will be renamed in her honor to celebrate her lifelong dedication to improving access to quality care in rural Georgia.

Dr. Alice House Named Joy McCann Professor for Women in Medicine

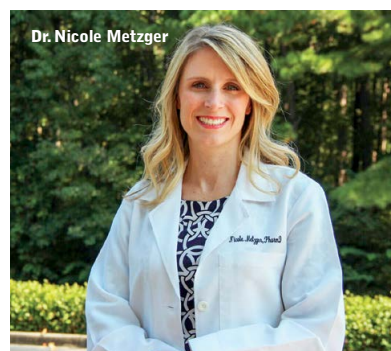
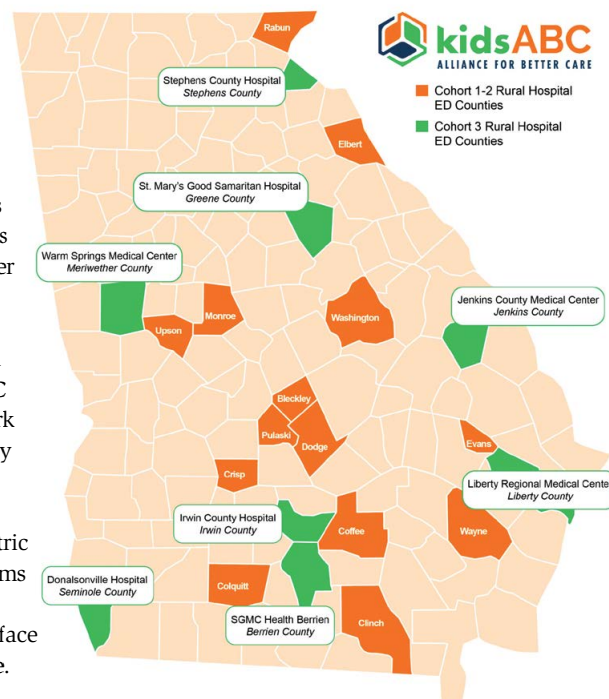
The School of Medicine announced **Alice Aumann House**, M.D., FAAFP, as the newest recipient of the Joy McCann Professorship for Women in Medicine. A longtime leader, mentor and advocate for students, Dr. House has been a cornerstone of the School of Medicine community. The recognition honors her ongoing impact on the School, its mission and the students she serves. Established in 2004, the professorship is awarded every three years to a female physician faculty member who demonstrates excellence in medical education, mentorship, research, patient care and community service.

Dr. Alice House (center) stands with School of Medicine Dean Dr. Jean Sumner (left) and Kim Meeks, associate professor in the library and information science department, following the award reception.



MUSM, GRHC Select Rural Hospitals for Year 3 of KidsABC Program

The School of Medicine and its Georgia Rural Health Innovation Center, with continued support from Children’s Healthcare of Atlanta, expanded their statewide rural pediatric health initiative for the third consecutive year. The newest hospitals selected to join KidsABC in Year 3 include Donalsonville Hospital, Seminole County; Irwin County Hospital, Irwin County; Jenkins County Medical Center, Jenkins County; Liberty Regional Medical Center, Liberty County; SGM Health Berrien, Berrien County; St. Mary’s Good Samaritan Hospital, Greene County; Stephens County Hospital, Stephens County; and Warm Springs Medical Center, Meriwether County. KidsABC now includes 22 rural hospitals across the state. Launched in February 2023, KidsABC creates a statewide network of rural hospital emergency departments, pediatric and family medicine physicians, regional pediatric hospitals and school systems addressing the significant challenges rural hospitals face in delivering pediatric care.



Metzger Named 2025 ACCP Fellow

Nicole Metzger, Pharm.D., FCCP, BCPS, and clinical professor of pharmacy practice at the College of Pharmacy, was named a 2025 Fellow of the American College of Clinical Pharmacy, the highest recognition of membership within the national professional organization. The fellowship designation (FCCP) honors pharmacists who have demonstrated sustained excellence in clinical practice, research and service to the profession. Those selected for the fellowship are recognized as leaders in advancing clinical pharmacy practice and scholarship.

BRANDYORHEES PHOTO, JOHN KNIGHT PHOTOS

Evans Named 2025 Sandra Deal Fellow

The School of Medicine named **Donna L. Evans**, M.D., FAAP, the 2025 Sandra Dunagan Deal Rural Service Fellow. The award, presented on Oct. 2, 2025, during the Nathan Deal Scholars Luncheon, recognizes Dr. Evans’ extraordinary contributions to mentoring and inspiring future physicians to serve rural underserved communities in Georgia. The award was presented by Mercer Vice President of External Relations **Ember Bentley**, who previously served as a special assistant to Georgia First Lady **Sandra Deal**.



Dr. Donna L. Evans

Dr. Michael Crouch Appointed Dean of the College of Pharmacy

Dr. Michael Crouch, FASHP, was appointed dean of the College of Pharmacy, effective Jan. 6. The appointment followed a nationwide search to succeed **Dr. Brian Crabtree**, who retired in 2024. A third-generation pharmacist, Dr. Crouch served as the Fred E. McWhorter Dean and Professor at Samford University’s McWhorter School of Pharmacy before coming to Mercer. Dr. Crouch previously held several faculty and leadership positions at Virginia Commonwealth University, South University and East Tennessee State University, including department chair, executive associate dean and director of interprofessional education.



Dr. Michael Crouch

School of Medicine Announces 2025 Nathan Deal Scholars

The School of Medicine recognized 10 new Nathan Deal Scholars for the 2025-26 academic year. The prestigious scholarship honors medical students committed to improving access to health care in Georgia’s rural underserved communities. They are selected based on their strong ties to rural Georgia, as well as their character, leadership, community involvement and their likelihood of serving in a rural underserved community after their

scholarship obligations are met. Each recipient receives 85%–100% of tuition for up to four academic years. This year’s class of Nathan Deal Scholars are **Kaitlyn Bennett** of Canon, **Allie Dishman** of Bowdon, **Callie Hill** of Commerce, **Kennia Kirksey** of Waycross, **Shelby Knowles** of Valdosta, **Kiersten Ley** of Naylor, **Sydnee Nix** of Cleveland, **Elijah Pyrz** of Cairo, **Gracie Surratt** of Bainbridge and **Lilah Widner** of Bainbridge.



The 2025 scholars were honored during the annual Nathan Deal Scholars Luncheon, in the presence of former Georgia Gov. Nathan Deal, Chief of Staff for Georgia Speaker of the House Chris Riley, School of Medicine Dean Dr. Jean Sumner, Mercer Trustee Terry England, and then-President William D. Underwood.



Achievements

1960s

Karen Dove Barr, CLAS '67, recently published her second historical novel, *Night's a Shadow; Day's a Shine: A Geechee Tale*, about Reconstruction on Skidaway Island (Wipf and Stock, June 2025). Because of her research, she was interviewed and quoted in Reveal's 2025 Pulitzer Prize finalist podcast, "40 Acres and a Lie," and in the July 2024 issue of *Mother Jones* magazine.

1970s

Peter R. Corbin, LAW '75, was recognized by the Florida Bar for being a member in good standing for 50 years.

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

Ted E. Day Jr., LAW '75, was recognized by the Florida Bar for being a member in good standing for 50 years.

John F. Dickinson, CLAS '72, LAW '75, was recognized by the Florida Bar for being a member in good standing for 50 years.

Kenneth A. Jones, LAW '75, was recognized by the Florida Bar for being a member in good standing for 50 years.

Randall A. Jordan, LAW '76, was selected for inclusion in *The Best Lawyers in America 2025*.

Jordan practices railroad law with HunterMaclean in St. Simons Island.

Charles A. Sorenson, CLAS '72, LAW '75, was recognized by the Florida Bar for being a member in good standing for 50 years.

Bill Spencer, CLAS '78, has a newly published book of short

humor essays from *Humor Outcasts Press* titled *Funny as Hell*.

Stephen E. Tanner, CLAS '71, LAW '75, was recognized by the Florida Bar for being a member in good standing for 50 years.

1980s

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

The Hon. R. Violet "Vi" Bennett, CLAS '78, LAW '81, received the Ogden Doremus/Kent Lawrence Award from the Georgia Council of State Court Judges. The award recognizes professional integrity, ethical leadership and meaningful service to the community and is the highest distinction for a State Court Judge.

Cynthia "Cy" Clanton, LAW '86, was given the Bob Bray Award by the Georgia Council of State Court Judges. The award honors a public official who has assisted the work of the State Court by improving the quality of justice that they deliver in the communities they serve.

Philip D. Irwin, LAW '86, joined Stites & Harbison PLLC as a partner in the Nashville, Tennessee, office. Irwin is a member of the Business Litigation Service Group.

Leott Ferlita Lowdermilk, PHA '86, published a book titled *Hot Flashes & Cold Truths*. Drawing on more than 35 years of experience in pharmacy and women's health, the book addresses common misconceptions about menopause and midlife health. Lowdermilk is owner of Dr. Leott's Custom Care.

Jo Bremer Parker, TIFT '85, was recently promoted to supervising editor for CNN's FactCheck team.

Deborah Denise Tillman, LAW '88, was appointed as the district court judge in Mobile County by Alabama Gov. Kay Ivey. Tillman previously served as a state, federal and military prosecutor and was an adjunct professor at the University of South Alabama, where she taught criminal law, contracts and civil procedure.

1990s

Greg Brooking, CLAS '94, historian, author and teacher, published a nonfiction work,

REMEMBERING...

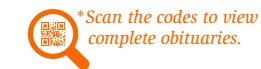
Former Trustee

Tommy Boland

Thomas E. "Tommy" Boland Sr., of Atlanta, died on Dec. 26, 2025. Boland attended Emory University and ultimately earned a B.B.A. degree from Georgia State University, where he was later named the 1986 Distinguished Alumnus from

Georgia State's J. Mack Robinson College of Business Administration. For 40 years, he served in varying roles of increasing responsibility within the banking industry. Prior to his retirement in 1994, he held the positions of chair of the board of Wachovia Corporation of Georgia and Wachovia Bank of Georgia, N.A. Following his retirement, Boland served as special counsel to two

presidents of Mercer University. During his tenure, he was influential in the establishment of the McAfee School of Theology. He served two terms on Mercer's Board of Trustees and was a president of The President's Club.



Alumna and Former Trustee

Nancy Brown Cornett

Nancy Childs Brown Cornett, CLAS '60, MED '00, of Macon, died on Nov. 9, 2025. After graduating from Mercer in 1960, Cornett became one of the first female

stockbrokers at Merrill Lynch. A long-time Macon resident, she was an ardent community supporter, serving as founding executive director of the Macon Arts Alliance and volunteering for many other community and civic organizations. Cornett served on the University's Board of Trustees from 1977-82. She later returned to Mercer as a student, earning a master's degree in marriage and family therapy. She

practiced as a clinician for 12 years. Cornett was a generous supporter of the School of Medicine, the School of Music and the Mercer Athletic Foundation. She was recognized as a Lifetime Member of The President's Club in 2022.



From Empire to Revolution: Sir James Wright and the Price of Loyalty in Georgia, with the

University of Georgia Press in July 2024.

Lt. Col. Raoul Calimlim, EGR '98, was appointed commander of the 165th Maintenance Squadron in December.

Former Faculty

Dr. Jeff Denny

Dr. Jeffrey Knox Denny, of Macon, died on Sept. 28, 2025. Dr. Denny graduated *magna cum laude* from Furman University in 1994, earning a Bachelor of Science in mathematics and computer science-mathematics,

where he was also inducted into Phi Beta Kappa. He earned a Master of Science in mathematics in 1997 and a Doctor of Philosophy in mathematics in 2000 from Florida State University. For 25 years, Dr. Denny served as a professor of mathematics at Mercer, rising to the rank of full professor and later receiving the title of professor emeritus.



Former Administrator

Tom Estes

Thomas Glenvall "Tom" Estes Jr., of Hattiesburg, Mississippi, died on Oct. 3, 2025. Leaving his well-established teaching career at the University of Southern Mississippi and professional work at the American Institute of

Certified Public Accountants, Estes came to Mercer in 1992 to serve as senior vice president for finance and administration until his retirement in 2007. Throughout his career, he held many prestigious professional positions, including president of the Southern Association of College and University Business Officers and chair of the Technical Issues and Management

Results Committee for the National Association of College and University Business Officers, for which he received the Daniel Robinson Award in acknowledgement of his contributions to college and university accounting.



The Hon. Robert "Chan" Caudell, LAW '92, was appointed vice president and general counsel at Georgia Transmission, a not-for-profit

electric cooperative serving 38 local EMCs and over 4.7 million Georgians. Caudell brings nearly 30 years of legal experience to the role, including more

than a decade as a Superior Court judge in the Mountain Judicial Circuit.

Penelope Cliff, CLAS '97, was honored with a lifetime

achievement award during the Georgia Historical Records Advisory Council's 2025 Outstanding Archives Awards ceremony in October. The award recognized Cliff's leadership, teaching and service to preserve Georgia's historical records, expand public access to archives and inspire future generations of archival professionals. Prior to retiring in December, Cliff served as Clayton State University College of STEM director of the archives and information studies program. She also served as an assistant professor for the program — one of only two online Master of Archival Studies programs in the country — and oversaw College of STEM's social media efforts.

Christian E. Hardigree, LAW '96, was named president of Texas A&M University-Victoria. Most recently, Hardigree served as regional chancellor of the University of South Florida St. Petersburg campus and was a member of the OneUSF executive team.

Margaret "Meg" Heap, LAW '92, was named the U.S. attorney for the Southern District of Georgia, which covers 43 counties with a population of 1.6 million people including the cities of Savannah, Augusta and Brunswick.

Dr. Carmen Kavali, EGR '92, MED '96, was installed as president of the Medical Association of Atlanta (MAA) for 2025-2026 at the MAA Summer Gala at the Fox Theatre on July 19, 2025. Dr. Kavali is a board-certified plastic surgeon and founder of Monarch Plastic Surgery & Skin Renewal Center. She has served on the board of directors of MAA since 2018 and on its executive committee since 2022.

Matthew Lepore, LAW '95, has been appointed as executive vice president, general counsel, secretary and chief compliance officer at Air Products. Lepore will operate from the company's global headquarters in Allentown, Pennsylvania, reporting directly to the chief executive officer.

James "Jim" B. Manley Jr., LAW '96, was appointed to the Judicial Nominating Commission by Gov. Brian Kemp.

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

Anthony Snipes, CLAS '92, received the Legacy of Service Award from the Alpha Impact Charitable Foundation (AICF) on Oct. 11, 2025, at the AICF's First Annual Black-Tie Gala: Building for Our Future. The award recognized Snipes for his impact and unwavering commitment to faith, service and community leadership and reflects his lifelong dedication to uplifting others, advancing justice and exemplifying the values for which the organization stands.

2000s

Jacob "Jake" E. Daly, LAW '00, was elected to the board of directors of the Georgia Defense Lawyers Association.

Andrew R. Fiddes, CLAS '95, BUS '96, LAW '00, was selected for promotion to Commander in the U.S. Coast Guard Reserve, where he is currently serving on active duty for a year in San Diego. As a civilian, he is regional counsel for the U.S. Economic Development Administration in Atlanta, supporting U.S. Department of Commerce projects across 13 states and the Caribbean.

Nicholas J. Laybourn, LAW '05, was selected for inclusion in *The Best Lawyers in America 2025*. Laybourn practices commercial and construction litigation at HunterMaclean in Savannah.

Charise A. Morgan, LAW '08, received the National Bar Association Women Lawyer's Division Hidden Figure award at the Annual Achievement Awards breakfast.

Amanda C. Morton, LAW '06, has returned to Ice Miller in the Indianapolis and Naples, Florida, offices, where she will continue to grow her national practice representing lenders, developers, universities, Fortune 500 companies, start-ups and family-

Please send your ACCOMPLISHMENTS, MARRIAGES, BIRTHS & ANNIVERSARIES and IN MEMORY announcements for THE MERCERIAN® to ERIN LONES, director of advancement communications, at lones_ep@mercer.edu.

owned businesses in a variety of real estate and finance matters. **Dhaval Patel**, BUS '01, accepted a new role as product manager with Wellstar Health System in June 2025. **Dr. Earl Stewart Jr.**, CLAS '09, was appointed to the inaugural board of managers of the Wellstar Health Plan for a three-year term and to the advisory board of Assured Medical Supply AI.

Zachary H. Thomas, LAW '04, was reelected as an NTL-Civil Plaintiff Top 100 Trial Lawyer in the State of Georgia and was recognized as a 2025 Georgia Super Lawyer for the third consecutive year. He serves on the board of the Civil Justice Political Action Committee of the Georgia Trial Lawyers Association. He is a graduate of the Georgia Trial Lawyers

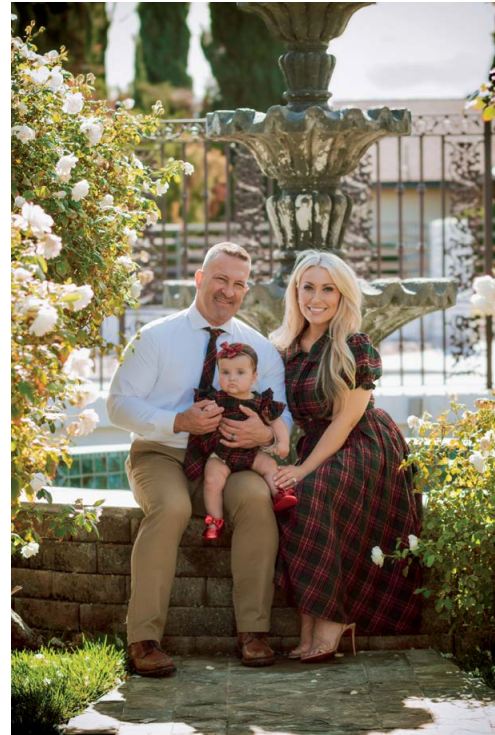
Association leadership program, has served on the Executive Committee of the Georgia Trial Lawyers Association and is the past president of the Savannah Trial Lawyers Association. **Matthew Younce**, CLAS '00, recently joined the Coastal Regional Commission in Darien as the senior GIS analyst. After nearly two decades in federal service performing

geospatial analysis, Younce is glad to be back home on the Georgia coast, using GIS to support regional planning and sustainable growth. **Christopher J. Mueller**, LAW '05, on behalf of the firm Taylor Day Law, accepted the award for 2025 Law Firm of the Year by the ALFA International (ALFAI) legal network during ALFAI's annual meeting in Madrid, Spain.

2010s
Halton "Tony" Albritton, LAW '18, is a partner with Hall Booth Smith in their Columbus office. Albritton's practice focuses on medical malpractice, government liability, insurance defense and premises liability. **Lauren Wilmer Atkinson**, LAW '18, joined the Georgia School Boards Association as General



Rachel Copeland Terro, CLAS '19, DIV '22, and Blake Terro, BUS '25, with their son, "LJ."



Jacqueline Bretell, LAW '11, and husband, Matthew H. Swartz, with their daughter, Claire Anne.



Katie Ryan Foster, BUS '21, and Collin Foster, BUS '21, were married on Oct. 18, 2025.



Tiffany Wilkerson Tullis, CLAS '19, earned a Master of Arts in speech language pathology in August 2025.

REMEMBERING...
Alumnus and Generous Supporter
Dudley Gunn

John "Dudley" Gunn, PHA '50, of Wadley, died on June 20, 2025. A native of Millen, Gunn moved to Wadley in 1956 and purchased Tarver Drug Company, which became Gunn Drug Company. He was a partner in multiple business ventures, including Glendale Nursing Home, Gunn Wood Company and Jefferson Pharmacy in Louisville. Gunn was active in his community and served one term as mayor of Wadley. He was also involved in many civic organizations and served in various leadership positions in his church. He was a loyal supporter of the College of Pharmacy and made a generous contribution to the construction of the Moye Pharmacy and Health Sciences Center on Mercer's Atlanta campus.



Former Faculty
Dr. Kenneth Hammond

Dr. Kenneth Lewis Hammond, of Macon, died on Aug. 31, 2025. A native of Atlanta, Dr. Hammond earned his bachelor's and master's degrees in English from the University of Georgia.

After attending the University of Wisconsin-Madison for doctoral studies, he joined Mercer University in 1971 and served in various capacities, including professor and chair of the English department, dean pro tem, and assistant provost. Dr. Hammond retired in 1999. His deep connection to Mercer extended to his family; all his children attended Mercer; his first wife was also a graduate, and his wife, **Beth**, served the Mercer University Library for 40 years. Dr. Hammond was a loyal and generous supporter of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences throughout his tenure and beyond.



Counsel, continuing her work supporting public education in Georgia.

Brittany Bennett, LAW '16, accepted a trial attorney position with the U.S. Department of

Justice in the Voting Section of the Civil Rights Division in Washington, D.C., where she will litigate cases involving the Voter Registration Act and Help America Vote Act, on behalf of

the United States.

Shayla Thomas Curtis, MED '15, married Martellis Curtis in 2013 and has three daughters, Alayna, Elyse and Olivia. She served as chief of medical staff at

Dorminy Medical Center (DMC) from 2019 to 2024. Curtis is currently a physician with DMC Primary Care. **Billie Rampley Frys**, BUS '07, EGR '17, began a new job as marketing director at Strong Rock Christian School, located in Locust Grove, in July 2025. **Franklin T. "Frank" Gaddy**, LAW '16, has joined The Champion Firm as a partner. **Joel A. Graham**, LAW '14, has joined NASA as the associate administrator for the Office of Legislative and Intergovernmental Affairs at NASA Headquarters in Washington, D.C. Graham will lead and coordinate all communications with the U.S. Congress and serve as a senior advisor to agency leadership on legislative matters.

The Hon. Amanda N. Heath, LAW '10, was honored by the National Bar Association as a member of the centennial class of the Top Forty Under Forty Nation's Best Advocates. Judge Heath is a Superior Court Judge for the Augusta Judicial Circuit of Georgia.

Michael B. Hill, LAW '13, opened The Hill Firm in Macon. The firm specializes in medical malpractice, nursing home neglect, catastrophic injuries and civil disputes. **Katlynn Kressin**, CLAS '15, was named to the 2026 Leadership Georgia Class.

Dr. Benjamin Long, MED '13, published a new book, *Sleep Habits Journal: Practices, Prayers, and Devotions to Ease Your Sleepless Nights*, Dec. 9, 2025. The book, which combines theology and sleep medicine into one resource to help Christians discover a new way to navigate their sleepless nights, is published by Ink & Willow, an imprint of Penguin Random House. For more information, visit sleephabitsjournal.com.

Josh Lovett, BUS '13, was named to the 2026 Leadership Georgia Class.

Joan McCallum, LAW '10, senior counsel in Chamberlain Hrdlicka's Atlanta office in the Corporate, Securities and Finance Practice group, was ranked by Chambers & Partners, the leading independent

professional legal research company, as an Up-and-Coming Corporate/M&A attorney in Georgia.

Anna G. Mills, LAW '18, joined Leitner, Williams, Dooley & Napolitan PLLC as a licensed associate attorney in the Chattanooga, Tennessee, office. Her primary practice areas are general liability, juvenile law, wills and trusts and workers' compensation law.

Matthew C. Mitchell, LAW and BUS '10, was appointed district judge for the 38th Judicial Circuit in Jackson County, Alabama, by Gov. Kay Ivey.

Trent Reichling, LAW '10, was appointed by Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis to serve as a Circuit Court Judge in the 20th Judicial Circuit in January 2025.

Dr. Stacy Arrington Stewart, CLAS '10, started a new position as primary care physician with Perimeter North Medical Associates in Woodstock, a division of the Northside Hospital System.

Tiffany Wilkerson Tullis, CLAS '19, earned a Master of Arts in speech language pathology in August 2025.

Tullis is now a licensed speech language pathologist in Georgia and enjoys working as a medical speech language pathologist with Innovative Therapy Concepts.

Lindsey Hancock Warden, CLAS '15, presented at the Indiana Council for the Social Studies Annual Conference in November 2025. Her spotlight session, "Sparking Curiosity and Engaging Students with Media and Collaboration," delved into combining the building blocks of classroom inquiry with collaborative learning activities and captivating media to intrigue students and get them up and talking about social studies. Warden is currently a professional learning specialist at Imagine Learning, where she leads educator learning and school implementation nationwide around the company's flagship social studies curriculum, *Traverse*.

Barclay R. Taylor, LAW '10, became a partner at Nelson Mullins Riley & Scarborough in February.

Randi Warren, LAW '12, was awarded the Top Forty Under Forty Nation's Best Advocates by the National Bar Association.

2020s

Matt Cooper, LAW '24, has joined the State of Georgia Office of the Attorney General as assistant attorney general.

Carson Heinen, BUS '21, joined Sterling Seacrest Pritchard, one of the nation's top 100 commercial insurance brokers, as a client advisor. He is based in the company's Atlanta office, where he will concentrate on risk management related to general commercial lines. Prior to joining Sterling Seacrest Pritchard, Heinen worked for Summit, where he concentrated on writing, sales and marketing. He received a bachelor's degree in sports marketing and analytics from Mercer and is currently working to achieve his Associate in Underwriting designation.

Dorisse Lester, EDU '13 & '23, was named Fulton County Schools Professional of the Year for Hapeville Elementary School.

Marissa H. Merrill, LAW '20, was promoted to partnership at Swift, Currie, McGhee and Hiers.

Forbes C. Ouzts, LAW '22, joined Coleman Talley as an associate in the Jacksonville, Florida, office. Following graduation from law school, Ouzts obtained his LL.M. in Taxation from the University of Florida Levin College of Law.

Valerie Jane Pallos, LAW '25, joined Horst Shewmaker as an associate attorney. While at Mercer, she received the Honorable Walker P. Johnson Memorial Award and the Clover Award.

Laura Picott, LAW '23, was recently promoted to senior corporate strategy manager at UPS, where she will lead corporate strategy efforts for the \$90 billion enterprise. Previously, Picott served on the Global Healthcare Sales Operations team supporting the president of Global Healthcare Sales. In that role, she aligned priorities and strategies to grow the \$14 billion Healthcare Enterprise, while managing an international team that supported over 430 sellers and about 30 support

staff across the U.S., the Americas, Europe and Asia. She also served as the first chair on negotiating for the Healthcare team and leading a global technology program intended to deliver more than \$24 million in cost savings, slated for global adoption in Q1 2026.

Nicholas B. Tuz, LAW '20, has joined the Atlanta office of Wood, Smith, Henning and Berman as a senior associate.

Katherine L. Twomey, LAW '23, has joined Indiana University Robert H. McKinney School of Law as a visiting assistant professor of law.

Sarah Whalen, CLAS '22, LAW '25, joined the Corporate Practice Group of Hunter Maclean, a leading business law firm with offices in Savannah and St. Simons Island. She earned dual B.A. degrees in law, public policy and ethics and sociology from Mercer and a J.D. from Mercer Law. As a student, she was involved with the Association of Women Law Students, served as an academic peer mentor and is a member of the Order of Omega Honor Society. Whalen served as a summer associate with the firm last year.

Marietta H. Hiers, LAW '20, was promoted to partnership at Swift, Currie, McGhee and Hiers.

Forbes C. Ouzts, LAW '22, joined Coleman Talley as an associate in the Jacksonville, Florida, office. Following graduation from law school, Ouzts obtained his LL.M. in Taxation from the University of Florida Levin College of Law.

Valerie Jane Pallos, LAW '25, joined Horst Shewmaker as an associate attorney. While at Mercer, she received the Honorable Walker P. Johnson Memorial Award and the Clover Award.

Marriages, Births & Anniversaries

2010s

Jacqueline Bretell, LAW '11, and her husband, Matthew H. Swartz, welcomed a baby girl, Claire Anne, in April 2025.

2020s

James Elliott, EGR '22, married classmate and fellow resident assistant, **Alyssa Roberts**, CLAS '21, in November.

Katie Ryan Foster, BUS '21, and **Collin Foster**, BUS '21, were married on Oct. 18, 2025. Katie was a member of the women's lacrosse team, and Ryan was a member of the Mercer Bears football team.

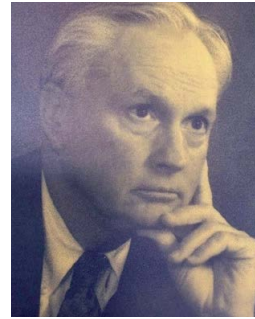
Bella Rama Mowell, CLAS '20, and her husband, **Harrison Mowell**, CLAS '19, welcomed their first baby, Micah Harrison Mowell, on April 10, 2025.

REMEMBERING...

Alumnus and Generous Supporter

Bob Hicks

Robert Edward "Bob" Hicks, CLAS '50, LAW '51, of Atlanta, died on July 22, 2025. Hicks graduated from Dublin High School in 1943. After serving in the Merchant Marines and the Navy, he attended Mercer, earning a bachelor's degree in 1950 and a law degree in 1951. He had a distinguished legal career of more than 60 years that included a position with Law Department of Georgia as assistant attorney general and serving as an aide and legal counsel for the Eastern Airlines chair in New York. He practiced with several firms in Atlanta before forming his own firm with other partners. He was a generous donor to Mercer for more than six decades, supporting Mercer Law School and Mercer University Press.



Alumnus and Generous Supporter

Jim Hiers

James B. "Jim" Hiers Jr., CLAS '50, of Cleveland, died on Aug. 24, 2025. A third-generation Atlantan, Mercer alumnus, and Emory Law School graduate, Hiers served in the U.S. Navy in World War II and went on to a distinguished legal career, co-founding the firm Swift, Currie, McGhee & Hiers. Known for his professionalism, civic engagement and dedication to family and community, he later worked in mediation and was active in his church. Hiers was the recipient of the University's Meritorious Service Award in 1965 and the Distinguished Alumnus Award in 1999. He was a loyal and ardent supporter of Mercer Athletics, serving on the Athletic Foundation Board of Directors and becoming a driving force in welcoming football back to Mercer's campus in 2013.



Matthew Smith, BUS '24, '25, and his wife, Elena, welcomed their daughter, Amelia, on Oct. 22, 2025.

Rachel Copeland Terro, CLAS '19, DIV '22, and her husband, **Blake Terro**, BUS '25, welcomed

their son, Louis Joseph "LJ" Terro, on Dec. 16, 2025.

Tiffany Wilkerson Tullis, CLAS '19, married John Tullis in October 2024.

In Memory

1940s

Juanita Johnson Brightwell, EDU '48, of Hixson, Texas, on Sept. 28, 2025.

Beverly Hill Cobb, CLAS '49,

Alumnus and Former Dean

Dr. Ted Matthews

Dr. Hewitt W. "Ted" Matthews III, PHA '68, of Atlanta, died on Sept. 26, 2025. Dr. Matthews earned a bachelor's degree in chemistry from Clark Atlanta University and a Bachelor of Science in pharmacy from Mercer's Southern School of Pharmacy in 1968. He went on to earn an M.S. (1971) and Ph.D. (1973) in pharmaceutical biochemistry from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Dr. Matthews joined the faculty of Mercer College of Pharmacy in 1973. Over the next decade, he held several academic and administrative positions, including associate dean of the College of Pharmacy and assistant provost of the University. After serving as interim dean, he was appointed dean of the College of Pharmacy in 1990, a position he held until he retired in 2017. Dr. Matthews made history as Mercer's first Black dean of any college or school. He played a central role in the establishment of the Mercer Health Sciences Center and was named senior vice president for health sciences in 2012, while continuing to serve as dean.



Former Faculty

Dr. Bob Moon

Dr. Robert J. "Bob" Moon, of Macon, died on Nov. 11, 2025. Dr. Moon graduated from Eastern University in St. David's, Pennsylvania, in 1964 and completed a Ph.D. in microbiology at Bryn Mawr College in 1969. He was an associate professor of microbiology at Michigan State University from 1968 to 1982, including an National Institutes of Health research fellowship at Walter Reed Medical Center in Washington, D.C., in 1981-82. Dr. Moon joined the newly formed Mercer University School of Medicine in 1982 and retired as the associate dean in 2009. He was a loyal and generous supporter of the School of Medicine and the Mercer Athletic Foundation.



of Union, South Carolina, on Oct. 3, 2025.

Allene B. Corley, NUR '48, of Roswell, on Oct. 24, 2025.

1950s

Jane Maddox Abel, CLAS '51, of Senoia, on Sept. 7, 2025.

Mona Kennedy Brooks, CLAS '53, of Clarksville, on Oct. 18, 2025.

Dennis Lamar Cason, CLAS

'56, of Clinton, Tennessee, on Sept. 12, 2025.

Dora Summerour Freeman, TIFT '53, of Roswell, on July 27, 2025.

Gaines Calhoun Granade, CLAS '59, of Lawrenceville, on Sept. 16, 2025.

James Thomas Hatcher Jr., CLAS '57, of Ringgold, on Sept. 11, 2025.

William Franklin "Bill" Huggins, CLAS '52, of Albany, on June 29, 2025.

Allan B. Imes, CLAS '59, of Griffin, on Nov. 21, 2025.

Shirley Ann Thompson Keyes, NUR '58, of Lexington, Virginia, on Aug. 15, 2025.

Rowena Elizabeth Cruce Lovell, CLAS '51, of Clarkesville, on Aug. 28, 2025.

Delamar Eugene Parkerson, CLAS '52, of Wilmington, North Carolina, on Oct. 29, 2025.

Robert Russell Pender, CLAS '50, of Panama City, Florida, on Aug. 27, 2025.

Victor "Vic" Serafy, PHA '57, of Steamboat Springs, Colorado, on Sept. 23, 2025.

Ellie Ruth Morris Whelchel, TIFT '58, of Evans, on Oct. 2, 2025.

Norma T. Williamson, CLAS '51, of Macon, on July 11, 2025.

Elton M. "Bubber" Adams III, CLAS '68, of Macon, on Oct. 17, 2025.

Marie Bonner Bailey, CLAS '67, of Macon, on Oct. 7, 2025.

James Taylor Collier Jr., PHA '65, of Alpharetta, on Oct. 2, 2025.

Robert Fletcher Denton, PHA '65, of Aragon, on Sept. 22, 2025.

James Wingfield Forrester Jr., CLAS '66, of Dahlonega, on June 6, 2025.

Thomas Lovett Giddens Jr., CLAS '62, of Tampa, Florida, on July 7, 2025.

Angelyn Sims Hearn, TIFT '65, of Jackson, on June 18, 2025.

Thomas G. "Tom" Hudson, CLAS '61, of Marietta, on Oct. 29, 2025.

Susan Harmon Meadows, CLAS '60, of Winder, on Sept. 6, 2025.

Guerry Roland Moore, LAW '69, of Atlanta, on Oct. 16, 2025.

Alfred Peter "Al" Muller, CLAS '67, of Greenville, North

Carolina, on Oct. 5, 2025.

Constance Viola "Connie" Edge Patton, TIFT '68, of Griffin, on July 26, 2025.

Mary Faye Harper Paulk, TIFT '62, of Ocala, on Aug. 22, 2025.

Franklin Edward Payne Jr., CLAS '65, of Augusta, on Oct. 30, 2025.

Marvin L. Pipkin, LAW '66, of St. Simons Island, on Nov. 23, 2025.

Delma "Del" Eugene Presley, CLAS '61, of Statesboro, on Jan. 8.

Steven Alfred "Steve" Siebel, PHA '67, of Jeffersonville, Indiana, on Oct. 16, 2025.

Rebecca Lee Smith Singleton, CLAS '62, of Cumming, on Nov. 13, 2025.

James Randall Watson, CLAS '67, of Vidalia, on Sept. 7, 2025.

Clara A. Whitesides Williamson, LAW '64, of Florence, South Carolina, on Nov. 11, 2025.

1970s
Walter Hilbert "Hibby" Bedingfield Jr., EDU '74, of Forsyth, on Oct. 23, 2025.

Penelope Hale Noble Blakeney, CAS '78, of Social Circle, on Sept. 27, 2025.

Charles H. Brewer Jr., CLAS '72, of Greer, South Carolina, on Aug. 24, 2025.

David Albert Brooks, TIFT '79, of Barnesville, on Aug. 11, 2025.

Kenneth Andrew Clarke, CLAS '72, of Macon, on Sept. 13, 2025.

Douglas Brice "Doug" Ciendaniel, CLAS '73, of Chestertown, Maryland, on Oct. 2, 2025.

Ralph Gary Evans, CLAS '75, of Jacksonville, Florida, on Dec. 1, 2025.

Jean Leighton Hatten, CLAS '70, of Danville, Virginia, on Sept. 9, 2025.

Candace Joy "Candy" Head, CLAS '73, of Woodbury, on July 28, 2025.

Laura Hull Hinton, TIFT '71, of McDonough, on Oct. 6, 2025.

Claire Houser-Dodd, EDU '71, of Fort Valley, on Aug. 29, 2025.

George McGregor "Greg" Jordan Jr., LAW '73, of Macon, on Oct. 16, 2025.

Mary Tucker Keating, TIFT '72, of Warner Robins, on Sept. 3, 2025.

William John Lillycrop, CLAS '77, of Charlotte, North Carolina, on Sept. 1, 2025.
James Frederick MacLeay, EDU '73, of Morristown, Tennessee, on Oct. 2, 2025.
Phillip Wayne Mann, CLAS '75, of Macon, on Aug. 30, 2025.
Sadie Pearl Gunn Moore, CAS '74, of Marietta, on July 4, 2025.
Arthur Lawrence "Larry" Owens, PHA '70, of Douglasville, on Sept. 7, 2025.
Patricia Williams Prince, EDU '72, of Warner Robins, on July 29, 2025.
Samuel M. Ramsey III, CLAS '70, of Augusta, on Nov. 5, 2025.
Clyde Holmes "Robbie" Robertson Jr., CLAS '77, of Lake Mary, Florida, on Aug. 9, 2025.
Larry W. Rowe, LAW '76, of Kill Devil Hills, North Carolina, on July 10, 2025.
Joanne Marrs Royer, EDU '76, of Jefferson City, Missouri, on Sept. 18, 2025.
Leonard Vincent Smith Jr., CLAS '70, of Monticello, Florida, on July 17, 2025.
Melinda "Kim" Angle Warner, EDU '78, of West Point, on Oct. 19, 2025.
John Eugene West, PHA '70, of Moultrie, on Aug. 29, 2025.

1980s

Sandra Jean Fallin, TIFT '83, of Thomaston, on Sept. 19, 2025.
Frank J. Greco, LAW '83, of Tampa, Florida, on Oct. 12, 2025.
William Thomas Haywood III, LAW '81, of Newnan, on Aug. 29, 2025.
Pamela A. "Pam" Simmons Host, CAS '83, of Cumming, on Dec. 2, 2025.
Zandra L. Ryner Hubble, BUS '82, of Macon, on Aug. 12, 2025.
June Rollins Lawler, CAS '83, of Auburn, on Sept. 23, 2025.
John Henry McCleskey, BUS '87, of Savannah, on Aug. 30, 2025.
Christopher Shawn "Chris" Moyer, CLAS '89, of Boca Raton, Florida, on Oct. 7, 2025.
Robert "Bob" Ragan, BUS '83, of Duluth, on Aug. 28, 2025.
Terry Lee Reece Sr., TIFT '84, of Toccoa, on Oct. 13, 2025.

Oneida Johnston Sims, BUS '85, of Macon, on Oct. 5, 2025.
Laurie Virginia Smith, TIFT '87, of Daytona Beach, Florida, on July 2, 2025.
Debbie Miller Taylor, CLAS '80, of Byron, on Nov. 3, 2025.
Leanne Michelle Van Meter, PHA '82, of Oakwood, Virginia, on Oct. 29, 2025.

1990s

David S. Bexley, BUS '90, of Atlanta, on Sept. 25, 2025.
Tracy Lewis Coleman, LAW '97, of Macon, on Nov. 1, 2025.
Gary Anthony Daniel, MED '97, of Macon, on June 5, 2025.
Larry Michael Jarrell, COPA '97, of Thomaston, on Oct. 21, 2025.
Jeffery Lee "Jeff" Joslin, PHA '90, of Wears Valley, Tennessee, on Oct. 21, 2025.
Bobby Lee Rogers, EDU '97, of Thomaston, on Sept. 9, 2025.
Nancy Snyder Minette, CLAS '96, of St. Simons Island, on Nov. 2, 2025.
Sheridan "Cherie" Smith Tidwell, EDU '90, of Rome, on Sept. 26, 2025.

2000s

James Woodrow Miles Jr., EDU '00, of Dahlonega, on Oct. 18, 2025.
Curtiss Michael Mull, BUS '06, of Beaufort, South Carolina, on Aug. 6, 2025.
James Russell "Jim" Oxford Jr., LAW '04, of Summerville, on Aug. 22, 2025.
Carole King Tucker, COPA '09, of Atlanta, on July 28, 2025.
Donald Wade "Bo" Warren, BUS '04, of Monroe, on Aug. 26, 2025.

2010s

Darry Lynn Coverson, CHP '14, of Baltimore on July 22, 2025.
Dana Lawing Ferrero, EDU '15, of Atlanta, on Nov. 19, 2025.
Ella Louise Flemister, MED '14, of Griffin, on June 2, 2025.
Benjamin Howard Norman, COPA '17, of Lawrenceville, on Oct. 24, 2025.

Friends

Larrie Sutton Bradford, of Jacksonville, Florida, on Sept. 28, 2025.

REMEMBERING...

Friend and Generous Supporter

Gene Strouss

Gene B. Strouss, of Macon, died on June 21, 2025. Strouss was educated in Indiana Public Schools, Freed Hardman College and Lipscomb University. He retired from Freeport-McMoRan, an American mining company formerly based in New Orleans. Strouss was an active member of his church and volunteered with many civic organizations. He was a member and generous supporter of the Mercer Athletic Foundation, and he especially enjoyed cheering for Mercer's basketball teams.



Former Faculty

Tom Trimble

Thomas Mac Trimble, of Lizella, died on Nov. 9, 2025. Trimble arrived at Mercer in 1962 as an instructor of philosophy. In 1963, he was appointed assistant dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and later served as acting dean of the College. He was promoted through the ranks, achieving full professor status in 2002. Trimble retired in 2005 and was named emeritus professor.



James "Derry" Burns Jr., of Macon, on Aug. 19, 2025.
David Hamilton Daniel, of Macon, on Dec. 20, 2025.
John Theodore "Ted" Emig, of Macon, on Dec. 3, 2025.
Emma Jean Martin English-Hurst, of St. Simons Island, on Oct. 5, 2025.
Charles E. Hamner Jr., of Chapel Hill, North Carolina, on July 4, 2025.
Julia Louise Rainwater Jennings, of Augusta, on Nov. 6, 2025.
Margaret Davis Kenworthy, of Macon, on June 20, 2025.

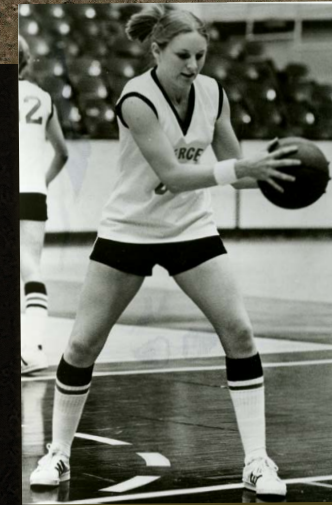
Robert Gerald Kersey, of Lawrenceville, on Sept. 2, 2025.
Patricia Gorton Martin, of Warner Robins, on Aug. 19, 2025.
Amy S. Landers May, of Columbia, South Carolina, on Sept. 7, 2025.
Sara June McRae McDavid, of Atlanta, on Nov. 15, 2025.
Betty Jean Moye Myers, of Lafayette, Louisiana, on July 6, 2025.
Myrtle A. Sanders Page, of Macon, on Dec. 6, 2025.
Larry Joe Pierce, of Blue Ridge, on Sept. 23, 2025.

Wilfred C. "Wil" Platt, of Macon, on Dec. 31, 2025.
William Henry "Skip" Rankin, of Sandy Springs, on Sept. 27, 2025.
Jimmie Roy Reddy, of Buford, on July 24, 2025.
John William "Johnny" Walden Jr., of Columbus, on Oct. 24, 2025.

50-75-100 YEARS AGO

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

50 YEARS AGO



1976 - Cindy Brogdon Selected for Olympic Team — In 1976, Mercer women's basketball player Cindy Brogdon earned a spot on the U.S. women's basketball team for the Summer Olympics in Montreal. The selection came after Brogdon's freshman season where she broke seven school records. As a member of the Olympic team, Brogdon helped the U.S. women win a silver medal. (SOURCE: *The Macon Telegraph and News*, May 22, 1976, and *The Mercer Cluster*, August 15, 2012)



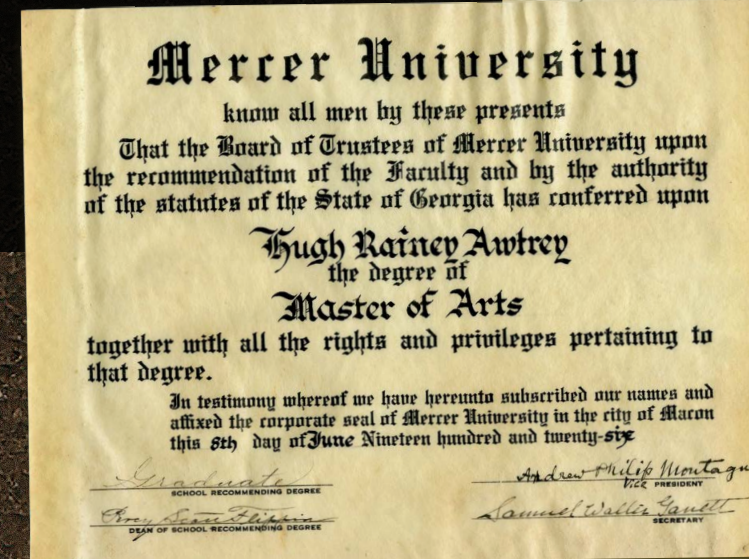
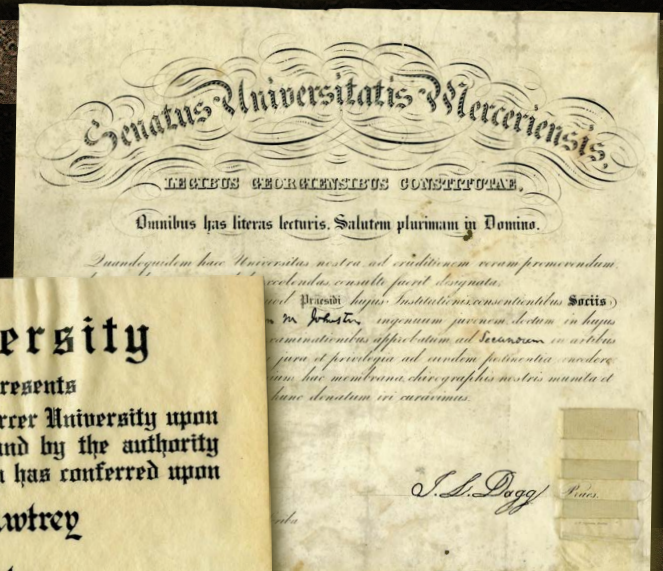
75 YEARS AGO

1951 - Mercer Men's Basketball Team Wins Dixie Conference — On Feb. 28, 1951, the Mercer men's basketball team defeated the top-seeded Florida State Seminoles 69-65 to win the Dixie >>

Conference championship. The game was played at Porter Gym on Mercer's campus in front of a capacity crowd of approximately 2,000 people. Mercer's captain and center, Lamar Clements, led the scoring with 34 points. The championship was the first for the Mercer men's basketball team since the early 1920s. (SOURCE: *The Mercer Cluster*, March 2, 1951, and *The Macon Telegraph*, March 1, 1951)

100 YEARS AGO

1926 - Seniors Petition for Diplomas to be in English — In 1926, Mercer's senior class asked faculty for their diplomas to be written in English rather than the traditional Latin. The students' reasoning for the request was, "we want to be able to read what is written on our diplomas." On March 1, 1926, the faculty granted the students' request after a motion from Dr. Andrew P. Montague, head of the Latin department. (SOURCE: *The Macon Daily Telegraph*, Feb. 20, 1926, and *The Macon Daily Telegraph*, March 2, 1926)



A NEW ALUMNI EXPERIENCE

BUILDING A BETTER CONNECTION

The Office of University Advancement is in the process of transitioning to a new advancement and alumni engagement platform that will strengthen how we serve our alumni and friends. The upgrade will enhance how we communicate, how you engage with the University and how we steward your generosity.



What This Means for You

The new system is designed with alumni and friends in mind. Once the transition is complete, you can expect:

- **An Online Alumni Community** — Connect with classmates, network professionally, discover events and engage with affinity groups through a centralized online community.
- **Communication Preferences You Control** — Choose how and when you hear from us — email, mail, event invitations or digital updates — so communications align with your interests.
- **Improved Event and Engagement Experiences** — Register for events more easily and receive information tailored to your location, class year and interests.
- **Data Security** — The new platform meets the latest security standards to better protect your personal information.

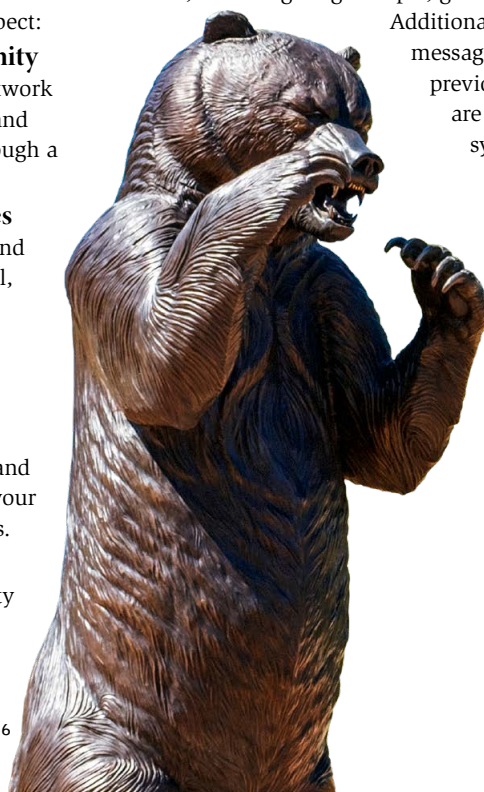
What to Expect During the Transition

During the conversion period, there may be brief interruptions to certain services, such as giving receipts, giving reports or event registrations.

Additionally, you may temporarily receive messages to email addresses from which you previously unsubscribed, as preferences are carefully migrated into the new system. We will share updates and instructions to help you select your communication preferences and explore new features once the migration is complete.

Our Commitment to You

This conversion is an investment in stronger relationships with our alumni and friends at the center. By improving how we connect, communicate and steward support, we are better positioned to serve our Mercer family and advance the mission of the University for generations to come.



Alumni Giving Changes Lives

“Think about all the ways Mercer shaped your story and imagine the joy of helping someone else begin theirs.”



For Craig Head, CLAS '10, LAW '13, and Addie Gibson, CLAS '09, LAW '12, Mercer was a community that felt like home from their very first tour. Mercer offered rich academic and service opportunities, personal relationships with faculty and an environment where students were seen, challenged and supported.

Their education prepared the Double Bears to return to rural Georgia, where the need for legal professionals is significant and urgent. Craig built a career in public defense, eventually serving as chief assistant public defender, while Addie advocates for clients in catastrophic injury and wrongful death cases. Mercer helped make that impact possible.

Craig and Addie give back to Mercer because they have witnessed how Mercer empowers students to find their calling. Whether through transformative programs like Mercer On Mission or innovative initiatives such as the Roberts Academy, Craig and Addie believe Mercer's efforts extend its mission far beyond campus and into communities across the state and around the world.

Supporting Mercer means investing in life-changing opportunities for future students. Craig and Addie encourage other alumni to consider giving back. The couple said, “When you're deciding where to direct your charitable giving, think about all the ways Mercer shaped your story and imagine the joy of helping someone else begin theirs.”



giving.mercer.edu (478) 301-2715



MATT SMITH PHOTO; OPPOSITE: KAYLEE BOWER PHOTO

BE THE BEAR

BEARS FOOTBALL

2 0 2 6 S C H E D U L E

HEAD COACH
JOEL TAYLOR



AUG. 29



SEPT. 5



SEPT. 12



SEPT. 19



SEPT. 26



OCT. 3



OCT. 10

HOMER AND RUTH DRAKE FIELD HOUSE



OCT. 17

BYE

OCT. 24



OCT. 31



NOV. 7



NOV. 14



NOV. 21

HOME

AWAY



SEASON TICKETS NOW ON SALE
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