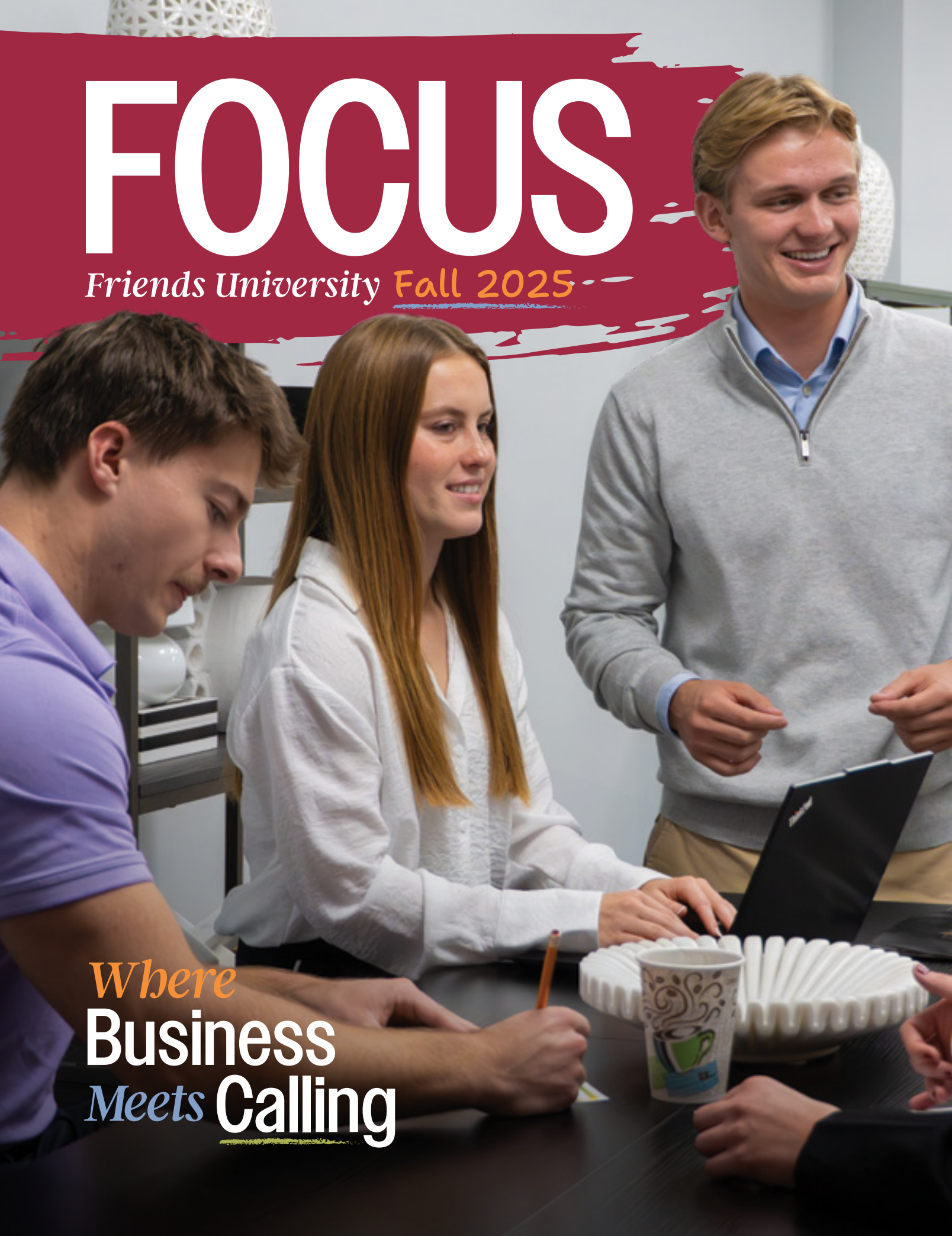


# FOCUS

Friends University Fall 2025

*Where*  
**Business**  
*Meets* **Calling**



## Letter from the President

It's truly special when we are able to uncover meaning in our work. Whether we're just establishing ourselves, entering a career transition or we've landed our dream job, our work can be viewed as a means to an end, or we can find moments in our careers to impact others and offer hope.

Doesn't it seem like it's increasingly countercultural to practice integrity and possess a spirit of cooperation? It can be uncommon to put mission over recognition and prioritize serving others.

But at Friends University, we desire for our graduates to see their work as a calling. We equip them to be business leaders and entrepreneurs of character. Our new Center for Enterprise and

Community Engagement is leading the way in this. Students involved with the center not only learn resume-building business skills, they also gain practical experience working with real clients in our community. This allows them to have a meaningful influence with local businesses and nonprofits while also discovering their areas of interest and skills in marketing, project management and design.

As a Christian, I consider my work to be sacred. From when I was a restaurant server to when I transitioned to higher education leadership, I've viewed every role as an opportunity to lead, offer hospitality, encourage others and prayerfully navigate each decision in

front of me. This call is not just reserved for pastors, music ministers or nonprofit organizers. It's for all of us — business owners, engineers, teachers, artists, and conservationists — to be a bright light in the world around us.

My hope is for each of our graduates to adopt this same perspective, leaning into their God-given vocation, so that they can stand out in our community and find fulfillment in their professions.



Dr. Amy Bragg Carey  
President, Friends University





PHOTO BY TIM SAVELY

# Where Business Meets Calling

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**10** Grounded in Faith



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## Vol. 48 | No. 1 Celebrating 60 years of momentum and memories in Focus.

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[friends.edu](https://www.friends.edu)  
[news@friends.edu](mailto:news@friends.edu)

## On the Cover

Center of Enterprise and Community Engagement students (from left to right) Bradan Balman, Innslee Albright, and Sander Fjell.

PHOTO BY BLAISE WEBSTER

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Dr. Kent Walkemeyer  
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# *A Wynn-Wynn for Students:* **AN ADVISOR'S LASTING IMPACT**

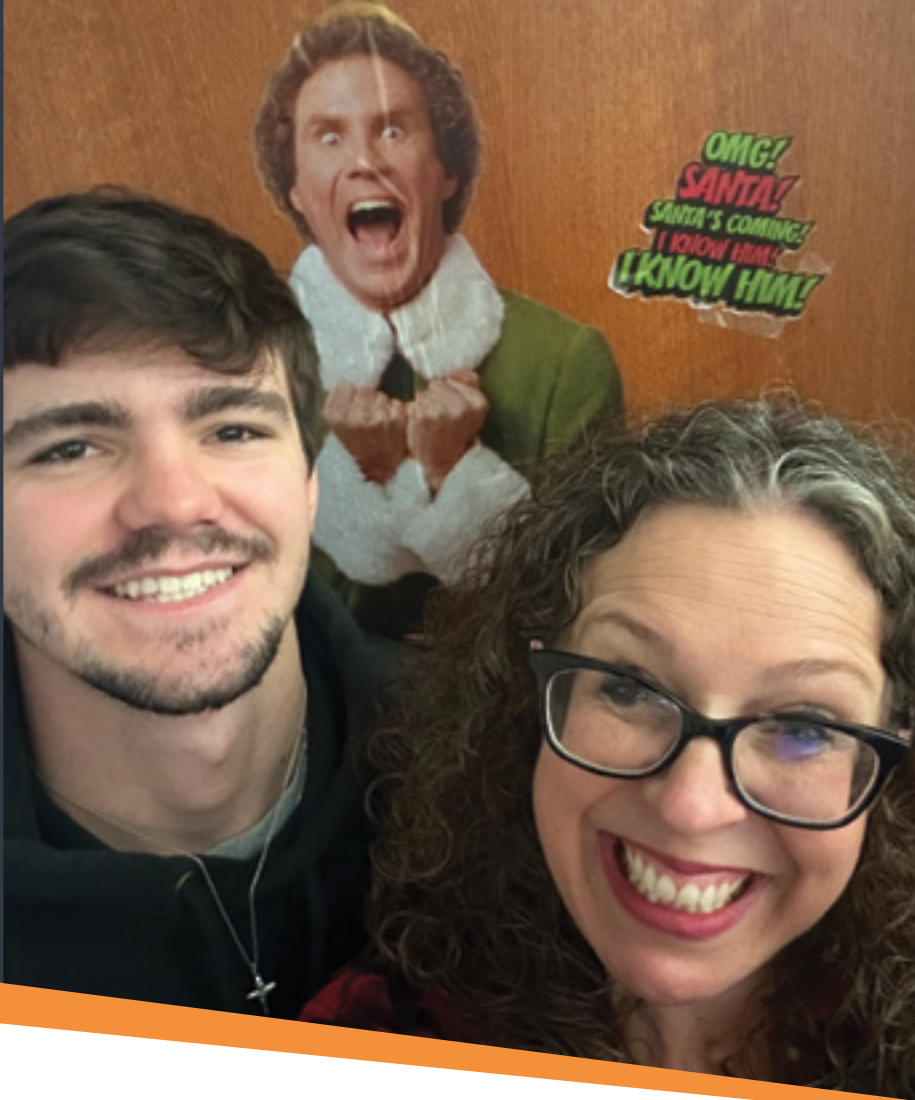


Throughout Professor Nichole Wynn's nearly 20-year tenure at Friends University, she has helped countless students fall in love with business, find internships and make connections through both the undergraduate program and the MBA in Accounting. Her service, purpose, and passion for helping students has been the backbone for the business department, empowering an audit-loving, CPA-certified community.

Professor Wynn's hand has touched hundreds of students, but all of them mirror the same positive outlook when thinking about their advisor. Just ask alumni Becker Truster, CPA ('24) and MBA student Tristian Rathbone ('26), both recent students under Wynn's guidance.

"Since the first day I walked into her office as a visiting prospect student, Nichole was great," said Truster. "We

**Nichole Wynn and  
Becker Truster.**



Tristian Rathbone  
and Nichole Wynn.

designed a four-year degree plan, and we never changed it — even when I had to create my own data analytics course. That's how amazing she was at keeping me on track and ready to succeed."

Both Truster and Rathbone enrolled in the 4+1 Master's degree program, which allows students to start earning credits for a master's degree while in the undergraduate program. For Truster, the MBA pathway was always the plan — thanks to Wynn — but for Rathbone, he had to jump around before finding an interest in business.

"I took a business course that caught my attention, and so, I made the switch, and Nichole substituted classes with MBA courses so that I could stay ahead and cut off hours that I didn't need," said Rathbone.

Professor Wynn doesn't limit her time spent with the students in her office;

she is a friendly face around the campus and community. She and her husband, Friends University Associate Professor of Sociology & Criminology Dr. Tor Wynn, are present at sporting events, freshman orientation, and in leadership positions on campus. Wynn even shares opportunities to lead with students, such as the Chapel Committee.

"Her actions were a super big framework for how I've gone about my life — both as a Christian and as an adult," said Truster. "Nichole prepared me academically and spiritually to go into the workplace, be a member of society and to be curious. And what I learned from her communicates with what I do every day."

Now, after leaving the classroom and stepping into an office, both alumni have found themselves thriving in the

culture around them. From internal LEAD programs to memberships in professional development, Truster's and Rathbone's careers at Adams Brown, a business advisory firm, aren't limited by success — which is reflective of the learning opportunities that Wynn provided them during their time in higher education.

"I saw the value 'You're the CEO of Your Career' at Adams Brown and thought that it was so cool, because Nichole had done the same thing. Nichole was able to think critically and helped me make the most out of my education. I could not be more grateful," said Rathbone.

Interested in learning more about an MBA degree? Visit our website at [friends.edu/mba](http://friends.edu/mba) for more information.

# BUILDING LEADERS in CONSTRUCTION

By Anna Carey



Dr. Cecil Riney and Dr. Nathanael May standing with Simpson Construction looking at the blueprints of the Riney Center.



Working on a job site is inarguably the best way to get experience in construction. But what about those who desire to be on the administrative side? That requires well-developed negotiation skills, financial and economic aptitude and a comprehensive understanding of engineering and design. Friends University's new B.S. in Construction Management was created to equip the next generation of project managers and executives that will rise to meet the demands of the growing industry.

Professor of Finance and Division Chair of Business, Dr. Jim Long says industry leaders like Dondlinger Construction, which has served Wichita for over 125 years, has expressed a need for "well-trained professionals who can bridge the gap between construction practices and effective management." President of Dondlinger Construction, Tom Dondlinger emphasizes that this is "long overdue" for the city of Wichita, which is home to some of the largest construction companies in Kansas and the Associated General Contractors of Kansas (AGC). According to Dr. Long, "This program directly responds to that demand by preparing students to step into leadership roles where both strategic thinking and practical expertise are essential."

The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that employment opportunities for construction managers are expected to grow 9 percent over the next decade. It's a dynamic, multi-faceted and challenging job that requires a competent understanding of budgeting, laws and codes, scheduling and employee management, working closely with civil engineers, architects, trades workers and inspectors.

"What sets the Construction Management degree apart is its position

at the intersection of every critical stakeholder in the building process," Dr. Long says. "Unlike engineering or construction science, this program equips graduates to serve as the conduit between the trades and labor force, government regulators, the customer, and the engineers." A construction manager's success is ultimately determined by their ability to skillfully steward these relationships.

Dondlinger Construction is an eager partner with the university in this new endeavor. Their expertise has proven invaluable in the development of the program.

President Dondlinger says, "The Construction Management Program will provide students with important curriculum to make them successful in the complex world of the construction industry. They will have an opportunity to learn how math, science and technology are all integrated and applied in construction through knowledge of accounting, business management, economics and engineering." Dondlinger Construction has also been instrumental in providing career pathways for students. "Our firm has been very fortunate in hiring three outstanding interns from Friends University with two committing to full time positions this fall and spring," Dondlinger says.

The balance of both classroom learning and hands-on experience is critical to a student's success in the Construction Management program, which is why Friends University is grateful for partners like Dondlinger Construction. But Dr. Long says it goes beyond producing competent construction administrators, it's about "ensuring graduates are prepared to manage complex projects with confidence and integrity."

For more information on the Construction Management degree, visit [friends.edu/construction-management/](https://friends.edu/construction-management/)

# Taking Research Further:

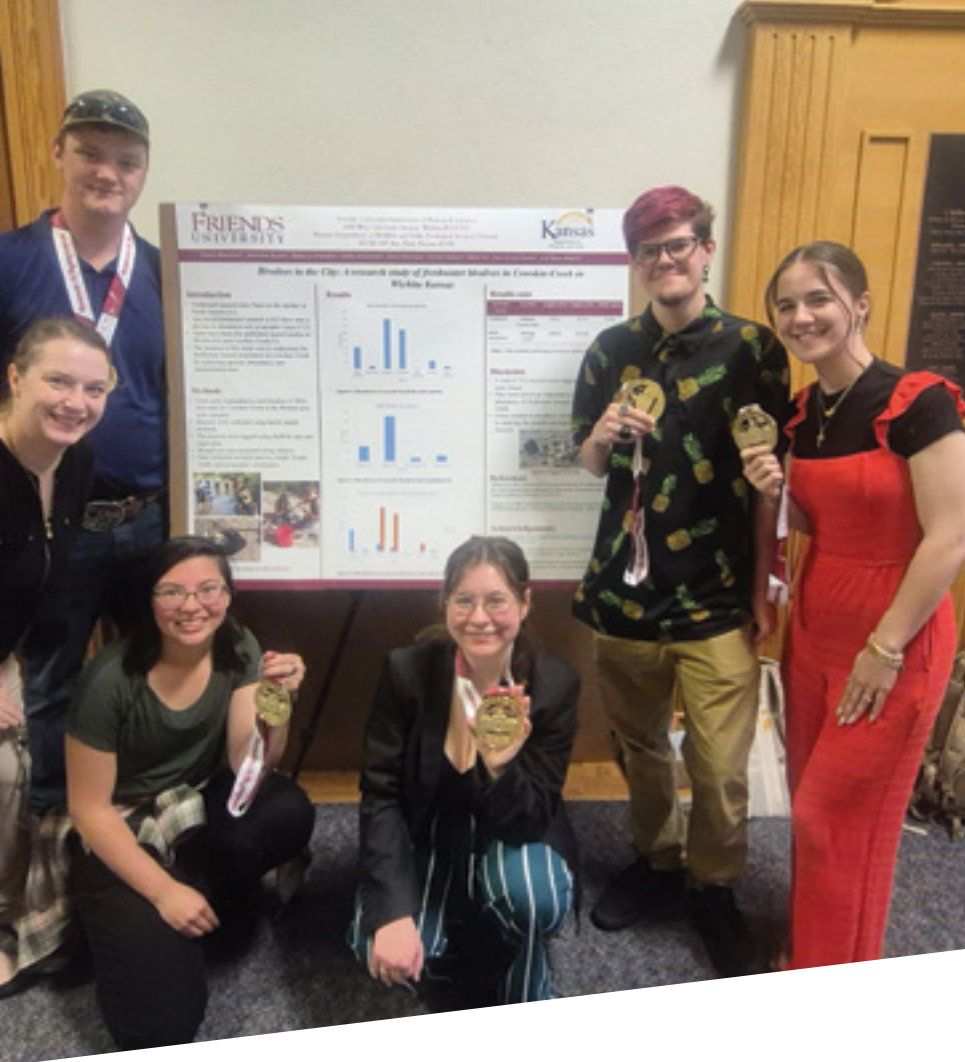
# CFMFTL HOSTS INAUGURAL RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM



Last year Friends University established the Center for Mission-Focused Teaching & Learning (CFMFTL) to foster Christian mission-driven education. Under the leadership of Dr. Lori Kanitz, the center marked its official launch with the inaugural Research Symposium, highlighting faculty-student research through scholarly presentations.

Though titled a “research” symposium, Dr. Kanitz and the symposium committee were intentional about soliciting proposals to include

**Dr. Wendy Mohler-Seib  
and Kelli Seiwert.**



**Bivalves in the City**  
research team.

outstanding work in Fine Arts, Theology & Humanities, Business, and STEM fields. The symposium showcased 30 projects led by 18 faculty members who collaborated with over 100 students.

“We were overwhelmed by the quality and quantity of submissions,” said Dr. Kanitz. “Over 30% of Friends full-time faculty members were working with students, on projects ranging from cancer research to earning national titles in vocal performance.”

Collaboration was evident throughout the event as projects spanned disciplines, demonstrated academic rigor, and emphasized personal passion. Student Kelli Seiwert ('25), with Assistant Professor of Theology Dr. Wendy Mohler-Seib, presented research on the alignment of student athletes and their bodies as “temples to God’s Spirit.” Sixteen interviews, a campus-wide survey, and nine months

of research later, Seiwert stood proudly next to her trifold at the symposium, reciting the conclusions of their project, Holy Bodies and Student Athletes.

Beyond the symposium, Seiwert presented to the Friends University athletic department, and was featured in Vice President of Athletics and Strategic Expansion Rob Ramseyer’s podcast, Beyond Coaching. Seiwert also got to present her research at the Wesleyan Theological Society at Baylor University, reaching an even broader audience with her work.

“Our biggest takeaway was developing terminology to articulate how athletes think their bodies and performance are connected to holiness—and then share it with others. It was a really fulfilling opportunity to take the research we had and give back to the athletic department,” said Seiwert.

Down the crowded halls at the symposium, Associate Professor of Biology Ana Jurcak-Detter, oversaw

two projects: Migrating Monarchs and Bivalves in the City. Both were inspired by student and alumni interest, which quickly evolved into class participation and partnership outreach.

Alumna Kristina Niles ('08 & '12), employed at Botanica, came to Friends with an interest in a collaboration for monarch tagging with Monarch Watch. Student Jasmine Conley enjoyed the project so much she took it on as her senior project. The mussel project began with alumni Sarah Yokley ('21), who was inspired by her work as an ecological technician with the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks (KDWP). It was then taken on by current students, who presented the research at two other conferences: the Kansas Natural Resources Conference and the Kansas Academy of Sciences.

“It’s great to get students involved in research. It can help develop a lot of skills like field sampling, organism identification, and public presentation. It’s also great because it helps students get internships and careers,” said Jurcak-Detter.

Following the symposium’s success and growing anticipation, Dr. Kanitz looks forward to continued campus involvement and encourages participation in all fields.

“I can’t wait to hear the faculty and student excitement as they present at next year’s symposium. It’s such an honor to work with phenomenal colleagues across the university to create a platform where faculty-student teams can share their hard work, passion, and achievements,” said Dr. Kanitz.

# GROUNDNDED *in* FAITH

*By Amy Geiszler-Jones*

After dealing with personal losses and the aftermath of the COVID pandemic, Byron McSwain was questioning his purpose in 2021. He found his answer in a business plan he had created years before as an assignment in a Friends University business class.

In July 2024, McSwain opened Greater Grounds Coffee in Wichita's downtown Douglas Design District.

Achieving that goal proved to be a grind as he encountered multiple rejections for funding and competition for a location. But McSwain was motivated by his faith to continue his efforts to find a place for community, connection and coffee.

"I feel like it's spreading God's Word to create a space where people can connect, whether it's finding a connection with Him or just connecting with family and friends," said McSwain as he shared a table — and a coffee, of course — across from the coffee bar and antique pastry display case located in the center of the shop.

Earlier that week, McSwain had posted a message on the shop's Facebook page to remind people about the importance of those connections.

"At Greater Grounds, we believe in gathering, connecting, and supporting one another — not just over coffee, but in life. You are never alone," he had written on Sept. 8. That date (988) is an annual day of awareness about the national 988 suicide and crisis lifeline.

The coffee shop's logo — an in-flight dove carrying an olive branch — and the artificial olive trees scattered throughout the olive- and brown-hued

historic space were inspired by the biblical story of Noah and the great flood.

"They're reminders of God's promise that 'I will not forsake you,' and it's one of those things I don't want us to ever forget. We can't become complacent and forget all the miracles around us," McSwain said.

McSwain credits his late mom for passing on a love of coffee. Raised in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, McSwain spent four years in the U.S. Navy, where he explored various coffees abroad. While studying at Grambling State University, he worked part time at a small airfield, which led to him earning certification as an FAA aircraft dispatcher and moving to Wichita. He later transferred to corporate aviation, working for two of the area's largest manufacturers.

In 2015, while working at then-Hawker Beechcraft, he attended a recruitment session run by Rachel Steiner, who was Friends' Director of Adult Recruitment for the College of Adult and Professional Studies at the time. Steiner is now the director of the new Center for Enterprise and Community Engagement.

About 15 credits shy of earning a bachelor's degree at the time, McSwain said the Friends degree completion program, comprising night classes, appealed to him and fit his work and family schedule.

That's when he wrote up his business plan.

After a layoff and jobs in different industries in the ensuing years, McSwain returned to finish his final three credit hours at Friends and revisit his dream of owning a coffee shop in 2021.

He currently manages the shop and its 18 employees while working full time as a replenishment analyst at Cargill, located across the street from Greater Grounds.

Byron McSwain



# University News

## Friends University Welcomes New Faculty & Board Members to Campus

*Friends University is excited to welcome the following faculty and board this fall.*

### **ANN HARDER**

Ann Harder is a new Psychology Professor. She received her Bachelor of Arts in Historical Theology from Moody Bible Institute and her Master of Science in Family Therapy from Friends University. For the past three years, Harder has balanced experience from serving as an adjunct instructor at Friends University, managing her own private practice, and collaborating with the Mindful Therapy Group. She is also a member in good standing of the Kappa Delta Society and the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy.



### **DR. ISMAEL HERON**

Dr. Ismael Heron is the new Special Appointment Associate Professor of Mechanical Engineering. Dr. Heron received a Bachelor of Science and Master of Science in Aerospace Engineering, as well as a Doctorate of Philosophy in Aerospace Engineering from Wichita State University. He has 30 years of experience in aerospace engineering, including 20 years of experience in 14 CFR Parts 23 (pre-2017 reorganization) and 14 CFR 25, EASA CS-25, TCCA AWM-525, and MIL-STD and Control Requirements. Heron authored and co-authored 15 published papers in relevant professional societies and 4 publications in peer-reviewed journals.



**DR. DURGA VENKATA SURESH KOPPISETTY**

Dr. Durga Venkata Suresh Koppisetty is the new Special Appointment Assistant Professor of Mechanical Engineering. Dr. Koppisetty received a Bachelor of Technology in Mechanical Engineering from JNTU University, India; a Master of Technology in Mechanical Engineering-Thesis from GITAM University, India; a Master of Science in Mechanical Engineering-Thesis and received a Doctorate in Mechanical Engineering at Wichita State University. Alongside his position as Graduate Teaching and Research Assistant, Dr. Koppisetty participated in several academic projects, publications and technical skills.

**SARAH MAE LAMAR**

Sarah Mae Lamar is the new Assistant Professor of Music Theatre. Lamar received a Bachelor of Theatre Education from MidAmerica Nazarene University, a Master of Theatre and Liberal Arts from Baker University, and a Master of Arts: Theatre Education from the University of Houston. She is a producer, director and owner of ACT OUT Theatre Company in Long Beach, CA, focusing on production and educational outreach in acting, movement, voice and production.



**DANIEL LITTLER**

Daniel Littler began his term on the Friends University Board of Trustees as of January 1, 2025. He also took the position as Friends University Chair of the Investment Committee this October. Littler received a Bachelor degree in Finance & Accounting from Friends University and a Master of Business Administration in Finance from Texas A&M University. Littler serves as Managing Director of Business Strategy for INTRUST Bank where he oversees various functions including the firm's corporate treasury and data analytics divisions.



**ANGELA PÉREZ**

Angela Pérez is the new Assistant Professor of Choral Music Education. Pérez received a Bachelor of Arts in Music from Friends University, a Bachelor of Arts in Music Education and a Master of Arts in Music Education from Wichita State University. Pérez serves as a member of the American Choral Directors Association member (ACDA), National Association for Music Education member (NAfME), and the National Association of Teachers of Singing member (NATS).



**SANYA WILES**

Sanya Wiles has been promoted to the **Vice President of University Advancement**. She has served as the Senior Director of Development for the past three years, and served various other roles during her 16 years of service at Friends and is a two-time alum of the university. Wiles is now responsible for designing and implementing comprehensive institutional advancement programs, recruiting, and developing talented team members focused toward the ultimate goal of increasing constituent involvement and fund-raising outcomes.



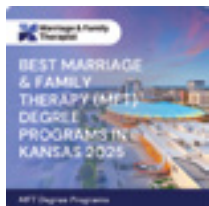
**TIMOTHY D. SCHLOETZER**

Timothy D. Schloetzer is the new professor for Cyber Security. Schloetzer received a Bachelor of Science in Cyber and Data Security Technology from University of Arizona Global Campus, a Master of Science in Computer Science from Colorado Technical University, and is expected to receive his Doctorate in Cybersecurity Management in 2027 from Nova Southeastern University. He has had certifications as CISSP, PMP, PenTest+, CySA+, Security+, A+, AWS Certified Cloud Practitioner, and ITIL 4 Foundation.

(From left to right) Danielle Wheeler, Matthew Johnson and Murphy Alvis.



## Awards & Accolades



## Forming Spirit-Led Leaders

For those seeking spiritual direction training beyond the intensive formation courses provided at Friends University, the Apprentice Institute offers a meaningful next step. Integrated in Friends' character of spiritual leadership, the Apprentice Institute takes its role of providing spiritual education experiences a step further, calling upon Matthew Johnson, Lead Spiritual Mentor and Spiritual Direction Coordinator, to lead **The Companion: An Apprenticeship in Spiritual Direction**.

Johnson, backed by his team Danielle Wheeler and Murphy Alvis, shaped The Companion to focus on one mission: to form spiritual directors — or those versed in the ancient spiritual practice where a spiritual director and a student prayerfully listen for God's voice in the student's life. The program equips participants with deep listening skills, discernment, and compassionate presence, enabling them to guide others effectively and create hospitable, Spirit-led spaces.

The 12-month experiential model is designed to honor a student's pre-developed experience in spiritual formation, providing a mentor to apprentice them into the practice of spiritual direction while remaining rooted in historically orthodox Trinitarian theology, Scripture, and contemplative practices. Johnson asked the first cohort, comprising of 18 participants, to embrace the training with a pioneering spirit. The greatest challenge has been the innovative and accelerated nature of this program.

"The response was amazing. Not only did we fill the first cohort, but I am comfortable saying they are all entering with a mindset of learning the art of spiritual direction and helping us shape and improve the program for those who will follow them," said Johnson. "I look forward to the first of those beautiful moments when students realize they can serve as a spiritual director to others."

If you are interested in learning more about The Companion program or The Apprentice Institute in general, visit their website at [apprenticeinstitute.org](http://apprenticeinstitute.org)



## Distinguished Alumni Awards

### *Outstanding Achievement in R.I.S.E.*

#### **RENAE RYAN '79**

Renaë Ryan graduated from Friends University in 1979 with a Bachelor of Arts in Music. She became deeply involved with the Miss Kansas Organization, played a key role in the success of Ryan International Airlines (1988–2005), and has since helped lead the rebuilding of Agriboard Green Building Systems.

Deeply committed to education, Ryan has supported over 70 students in pursuing higher learning. Her work reflects a lifelong dedication to empowering others, fostering community, and living out her faith through action.

Ryan served on the Friends University Board of Trustees for nine years.

### *Outstanding Christian Leadership and Service*

#### **DAVID ELTON WOLFE '72**

David Wolfe graduated from Friends University in 1972 with a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science. Wolfe began his career with aspirations in political science but a call to ministry during an internship shifted his focus, leading him to study at Earlham School of Religion.

A residency in Clinical Pastoral Education at NC Baptist Hospital led Wolfe into hospital chaplaincy, where he directed spiritual care services across Kansas and Virginia. He earned a Doctor of Ministry to support teaching overseas, later serving at Friends Theological College in Kenya.

Since 2020, he has served as chaplain at Summit Square Retirement Community.

### *Outstanding Achievement in the Fine Arts*

#### **LAURA BERGQUIST '90**

Laura Bergquist graduated from Friends University in 1990 with a Master of Music in Church Music. She has an expansive career spanning Broadway, Off-Broadway, regional theatre, sacred music, and concert stages.

She has led world premieres such as *Jane Eyre*, *Daddy Long Legs*, *Emma*, and *Sense and Sensibility*, and conducted at leading theatres including The Old Globe, Papermill Playhouse, Arena Stage, and Music Theatre Wichita.

A published composer with over 60 works, she is also a worship leader, certified spiritual director, and dedicated mentor in both artistic and faith communities.



*Pushing boundaries is something we always strive for, and experiential learning is the way of the future.*

— Steve Monsen

## Collaboration in the Arts

What began as an effort to amplify musical production with visual arts evolved into one of Friends University's most striking performances to date. In May 2025, the Fine Arts department held the Opera Workshop, a creative fusion between the voice and graphic design classes. This collaboration was musically and stage directed by assistant voice professor Dr. Lydia Bechtel, with collaborative pianist Cindy Blasdel, and visually directed by graphic design professor Steve Monsen.

The project started with basic concepts — static backgrounds, minimal set pieces, and black costumes — but student passion turned into a full-scale artistic spectacle. Graphic Design students created fluid backdrops like birds in flight, stormy seas transforming into clear skies, and emotion-based color shifts. Singers received full costumes that enhanced their character. A full lighting design was made for the show, unifying the stage, backdrops, and effects. Some students even taught themselves how to use new programs to bring their visions to life.

"When the groups were working together, you could see the creativity flowing with everyone," said Monsen. "Pushing boundaries is something we always strive for, and experiential learning is the way of the future."

Students from the voice class matched the vibrant energy of the stage designs, performing some of the most prominent operas like *L'elisir d'amore*,



*Don Giovanni*, and *Die Zauberflöte*. But the braggadocious generals, contented damsels, and united lovebirds did not end once the curtains closed, as students are eager to collaborate again — next up, *The Pirates of Penzance* in the Fall 2025 semester.

"I was blown away by the creativity of these students. It was amazing to see them excited about this collaboration and how the situations in each scene informed and amplified the design and vice versa," said Dr. Bechtel. "Steve and I are very excited to continue this collaboration, as are the students!"

PHOTO BY STEVE RASMUSSEN



## Hall of Fame

### JORDAN HIGHLEY '10

Jordan Highley earned a pair of NAIA All-American honors while powering the Falcons to back-to-back KCAC championships in the 2008 and 2009 football seasons. A two-time All-KCAC performer and a three-time all-conference selection overall, Highley was named the KCAC Defensive Player of the Year for the 2008 campaign.

### ROMAR JONES '11

A two-time All-KCAC selection, Romar Jones was both the KCAC Player of the Year and an NAIA All-America performer in 2010 for men's basketball. He served as team captain and his contributions fueled the team to the KCAC regular season and postseason championship along with an NAIA National Tournament appearance during the 2010 season.

### HEATHER MATTHEWS '07

Heather Matthews was a four-time NAIA All-American and broke the shot put and discus records while at Friends University. She earned a runner-up finish in the Shot Put and a fifth-place result at the NAIA Outdoor National Championship, then later added a pair of top three finishes at the NAIA Indoor National Championship meet.



### 2010 VOLLEYBALL TEAM

The 2010 Volleyball Falcons went 32-9 overall under head coach Martin Ayin, highlighted by a perfect 18-0 KCAC record and a conference regular season and postseason tournament championship. That season, the Falcons had the KCAC Coach of the Year (Martin Ayin) and both Player of the Year and Setter of the Year (Addie Jo Peterson).



Senior Dannon Lundy

## '24-'25 Athletic Highlights

**Football** went 11-2 for the program's most wins in the modern era and captured their first KCAC championship since 2008. Friends also made their first NAIA FCS Championship Series playoff appearance since the '08 season and defeated then No. 15-ranked OUAZ for their furthest playoff advancement in school history. Head coach **Terry Harrison** was awarded the KCAC Kessinger Division Coach of the Year, **Eric Kelly** was named the Assistant Coach of the Year, junior **K'Vonte Baker** was selected as the Division's Co-Offensive Player of the Year, senior **Kyree Watkins** selected as a 2024 AFCA NAIA Coaches' first-team All-America performer, and senior **Marquis Willoughby** was named an honorable-mention VSN All-America pick.

**Men's Golf** entered the dynasty conversations after winning their third consecutive KCAC championship in Garden City, Kan. They held a NAIA Ranking of #7 in the country and qualified for the NAIA National Championship in Silvis, Ill. **Dustin Galyon**, head coach of men's golf, was named KCAC Coach of the Year, with junior **Trinton Nobles** earning his second NAIA All-American honor.

Just one year after notching the program's first-ever undefeated KCAC regular season in the modern-era, **Women's Soccer** took another step under head coach **Brent Hobson** and claimed their first-ever KCAC postseason tournament championship in the modern era with a thrilling 1-0 overtime victory over York University

in the title match. The championship win gave the Falcons their fourth NAIA National Championship Tournament appearance in the last six years.

**Indoor Track and Field** produced several qualifiers for the NAIA National Championships: senior **Anya Walton**, sophomore **Aneesa Sheppard**, and senior **Mikkel Tarver** in Triple Jump; junior **Aaliyah Ramirez** and sophomore **Carter Gittinger** in Pole Vault; senior **Pablo Sanz-Rillo** in the 3000m Race Walk. A Falcon trio, **Walton, Gittinger**, and **Sanz-Rillo** recorded All-American honors in their respective events.

The **Powerlifting** teams continue to make their mark at a national level, as both teams recorded Top 10 finishes at the USA Collegiate Nationals: women finished seventh and the men came in ninth. The Falcons also produced four podium finishes last year: freshman **Grace Chatelain** placed 2nd in the 90kg; sophomore **Gennie Vitt** placed 4th in the 75kg; senior **Jacob Castellanos** placed 5th in the 125kg; and sophomore **Christian Landeros** placed 4th in the 140kg+.

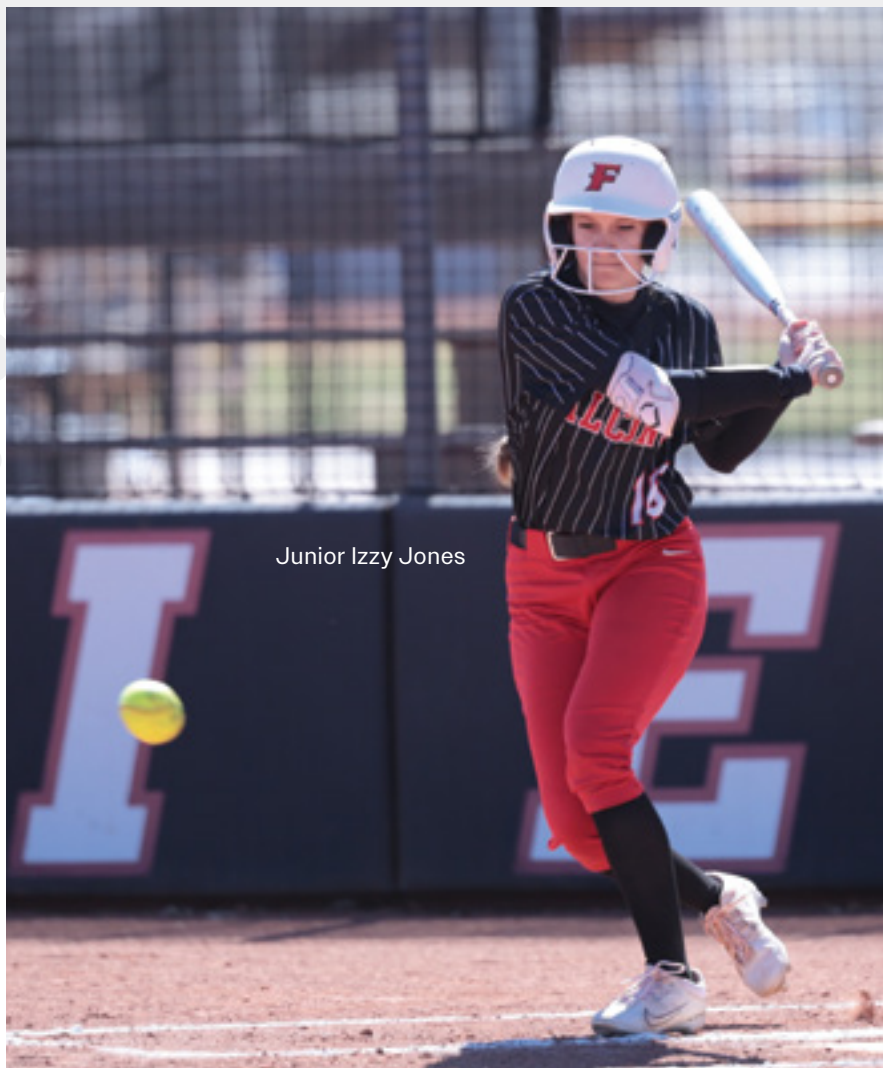
**Softball** qualified for their fourth NAIA Opening Round appearance in the past seven years after receiving their first KCAC regular season title since 2016. The Friends University Falcons staved off elimination on May 1, 2025, with a 2-1 win over the University of Northwestern (Ohio) Racers before later falling to the Baker University Wildcats in another elimination game in the NAIA Opening Round in Sioux Center, Iowa. Head coach **Suzanne Unruh** was named the KCAC Coach of the Year, and senior pitcher **Riley Wertz** earned NAIA and NFCA All-America honors.

**Wrestling** enjoyed a landmark season of their own, producing two female and three male national qualifiers: junior **Bailee Nelson**, senior **Gianna Moreno**, senior **Braden Morgan**, freshman **Benedict Holthaus** and junior **Ezavian Ortega**. Head coach **Tyler Mies** was named the KCAC Coach of the Year, wrestler **Morgan** earned NAIA All-American honors and grasped a fourth-place finish in the national meet, and **Kaylynn Martin** was named the U23 50kg All-American honor for the 2024-2025 season.

**Wrestling** welcomes **Austin Zaring**

as the new Women's Head Coach starting the 25-26 season.

**Men's Basketball** set a clear upward trajectory for their season, leading the team to their most wins (24) in six years, an NAIA postseason victory for the first time since the 2013-14 season and a runner-up KCAC finish. The Falcons finished 24-8 and defeated Florida Memorial University in the NAIA National Tournament before falling to eventual national champion College of Idaho. Senior **KJ Spiller** was named the KCAC Co-Player of the Year and earned a NAIA All-American honor.



Junior Izzy Jones



Sophomore Judy Nguyen

**Competitive Cheer** posted their second consecutive KCAC runner-up finish following two straight conference titles for the program. In a unique opportunity, the Falcons also competed for the first time at the National Cheerleaders Association (NCA) College Nationals and put together a solid performance to finish second in the Intermediate Small Coed NAIA division.

The **Men's Outdoor Track and Field** finished third at the KCAC Championships while the **Women's Outdoor Track and Field** finished fourth, both producing a list of NAIA National qualifiers: sophomore **Tinya Ridge** in the 100m Sprint, **Tarver** in men's Triple Jump, **Sanz-Rillo** in the 5000m RaceWalk, **Sheppard** and **Walton** in the women's Triple Jump, junior **Ramirez** in the women's Pole Vault, freshmen **Valeria Crespo**, **Rhianna Hill**, **Haidyn Thompson** and **Ridge** in the women's 4x100 relay, and junior **Abby Green** in the women's Hammer Throw. **Green** and the women's 4x100 relay team capped All-American honors for their performances at the national event.

**Cross Country** introduces **Tracy Jex** as the new head coach, starting the 25-26 season.



Junior **Women's Tennis** player **Silva Avakian** earned her second consecutive All-American honor by winning first-team All-KCAC honors after going 17-9 as the No. 1 singles player for the Falcons.

## Soaring at the '25 Homecoming Game

In the most crucial game of the KCAC Bissell Division, Friends University **Football** faced McPherson College during their annual Homecoming game, stacked with both teams' undefeated records and clashing history of 11-10 since 2004.

In the week after Homecoming, the Falcons were listed as No. 4 in the NAIA Top 25 Coaches Poll, having steadily risen throughout the season to land the program's first historic ranking. The Falcons also held the nation's top rushing team at 488 yards per game and gave a strict average of 19.5 rushing yards per game.



Senior Andrew Arnold

The Homecoming game proved to be a test, where after facing a double-digit deficiency in the first quarter, the Falcons beat the Bulldogs 56-32, maintaining their undefeated record and proving themselves a team that can answer adversity with grit and determination.



Senior K'Vonte Baker

## Falcons Currently Crushing the '25 Season



Senior Trinton Nobles

**Men's Golf** has once again set the swing across the nation, named 10th in the NAIA Men's Golf Coaches' Top 25 Poll. They are led by head coach **Dustin Galyon**, stepping into his fourth year at Friends and having won the past three KCAC championships, leading to three

consecutive NAIA National appearances. The Falcons also return two-time NAIA All-American performer and senior

**Trinton Nobles**. Nobles has already won an individual title at the Falcon Cup and received the Men's At-Large Academic All-American award by College

Sports Communicators (CSC) for his performance in the '24-'25 season.

### **Men's and Women's Tennis**

broke out in a big way at the KCAC Fall Championships in September, having earned multiple medals across the board.

Returning NAIA All-American senior **Silva Avakian** captured first place in the KCAC No. 1 Women's Singles draw and teamed with sophomore **Carlotta Klee** to finish third in the No. 1 Women's Doubles draw. Sophomore **Aneth Diaz** also posted a top three result in the No. 2 Women's Singles.

Juniors **Cristobal Fuentes** and **Gabriel Gomes** came out on top in the No. 1 Men's Doubles draw, while Gomes came in third in the No. 2 Men's event.

**Women's Basketball** was picked 2nd by the KCAC Preseason Coaches' and Media Polls, promising an exciting season ahead. They return after a 19-12 overall in the '24-'25 season, with first-team all-conference performing guard and graduate student **Lauryn McIver** and honorable-mention All-KCAC selection senior **Abigail Barr** at forward standing as leaders on the court.

## Friends University Receives \$10K Gift to Boost Student-Athlete Success

Friends University received a generous \$10,000 donation from the Walser Foundation toward the Student-Athlete Academic Success Center. The funds will be used to purchase 10 laptops and a portable charging cart, ensuring that student athletes can efficiently complete their required study hall hours. We thank the Walser Foundation for supporting our athletes and dedicating funds to their education!

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LCC INTERNATIONAL  
UNIVERSITY



# Student Voices

## Voice of a Sojourner: Haven Pruitt

Before Haven Pruitt ('25) walked across the stage at graduation this past May, she touched down from Lithuania, fresh off a global work opportunity she seized while finishing her final year of the MBA program. Pruitt is no stranger to travel, having led the mission team to Peru last summer, and wanted to spend her last year of higher education overseas once more. So when VP of Academic Affairs Ken Stoltzfus suggested LCC International University, Pruitt checked a map for the country's location and packed her bags, set to impact the world.

LCC and Friends University share a long-standing connection. Stoltzfus previously worked at the international university, and LCC President Marlene Wall has personal ties to Friends — two of her nieces and her sister-in-law are alumni. But outside of personal relations, LCC and Friends share many of the same identities: a Christian Liberal Arts University that transforms students for servant leadership. Those qualities were what first

drew Pruitt to the international university, as she knew it would feel like home.

Pruitt served as a resident director for LCC, where her team of five trained the resident assistants, disciplined the dorms, and planned events throughout the year. In this position, Pruitt adapted to the diverse way of life on the LCC campus, learning to balance her warm, southern hospitality with the more direct and reserved nature of Lithuanian culture. Pruitt also had to fundraise — an intimidating task — but her previous experience raising funds

for Peru helped her face the challenge with more confidence.

More than anything, Pruitt found that her time spent on the LCC campus was more than an educational adventure, and the university's vitality gave her far more than she expected.

"I was really excited to make this huge impact; I was going into support raising and serving in a missional setting. I was super excited to change the world. But I realized that my experience at LCC changed me way more than I changed anybody else," said Pruitt.

*I realized that my experience at LCC changed me way more than I changed anybody else.*

— Haven Pruitt '25



## Voice of a Politician: Josiah Watney

A kid from Kansas has stepped into the heart of American governance, his head held high and his heart full of change. Senior Josiah Watney, a double major in History & Politics and Fine Arts, was among the national thinkers in Washington, D.C. this past summer, interning for U.S. Senator Jerry Moran.

Along with a select group of students, Watney served on the front lines in one of the nation's most influential offices, from fielding constituent concerns to leading Capitol tours (which requires extensive memorization). Embracing the dynamic work, Watney also led a project in his free time, operating AI models to analyze resources that could be beneficial to counties across Kansas. This project, stemming from his subject concentration

of AI and technology policies, helps determine how to regulate, but not stifle, these instruments.

Watney is no stranger to the D.C. area, having previously worked at a think tank (or a public policy institution) in the summer of 2024. But his eyes have always been on the world of Capitol Hill, so he applied for a direct position under Senator Moran, the Kansas representative who Watney felt best fit his values. Landing the position was the beginning; once immersed in the Capitol Hill community, Watney was surrounded by an array of voices and visions.

On Capitol Hill (a true melting pot of ideas, motivations, and goals) the energy and purpose of the people's altruism around Watney was exhilarating,

*Regardless of how negative politics is painted, it's still the engine that changes the world.*

— Senior Josiah Watney

recognizing that, like himself, they are here for the right reasons.

"Regardless of how negative politics is painted, it's still the engine that changes the world. I'm willing to sacrifice a lot to achieve a positive impact. And I'm someone who wants to wake up every day knowing that I'm using my skills and abilities to try and make a positive difference," said Watney.

# Legacy Story

## Kellum, Long, and Wheeler

Top: Lorna and Richard Long.  
Bottom: Tony, Issac and Stacey Wheeler.

A timeless bloodline runs through Friends University, known by many names — the Kellums, the Longs, and the Wheelers — whose legacy traces back 14 generations to English ancestors connected with George Fox, founder of the Religious Society of Friends.

Everett and Ruth Kellum met at Friends University before marrying and becoming missionaries in Africa. Their daughter, Lorna (Kellum) Long ('61), was born and raised in Kenya, knowing she would attend Friends — just like the rest of the Kellums. The Singing Quakers stirred her heart, while biology classes (and a skunk-owning professor) nurtured her love for nature. It was here she met her husband of 64 years, Richard Long, at a chance reconnection in the back of a friend's bright red Corvair.

Richard Long ('60) attended Friends University because his father agreed to pay the tuition if he could still work on the farm. Balancing humanities classes with industrial math was difficult, but it shaped Richard's one-of-a-kind career. From starting engineer to director of design, Richard worked his way up at Coleman, where he was given monumental opportunities in his field; like creating the 2002 Salt Lake City Olympic torch. Countless hours went into building it and even more sharing its story as Richard continues to present the torch at schools and gatherings.

Between gas stove designs and gardening, the Longs had three children, Karen, Mark, and Stacey, all whom attended Friends University. The youngest, Stacey (Long) Wheeler, ('92) didn't expect God to lead her first to Barclay College (then Friends Bible College), where she met her husband, Tony Wheeler ('91). When Tony enrolled in the Marriage and Family Therapy (MFT) program at Friends University, Stacey was thrilled. But life had changed: they had young children and by her

senior year, a mass communications degree plan was no longer available. Undeterred, Stacey crushed 18 credits of English her final year, and the book club-style classes influenced the classroom culture she created as a teacher.

As Stacey dove into books, Tony explored what it meant to be a "counselor who speaks." He joined the second cohort of Friends University's MFT program, which was still in candidacy with the American Association of Marriage and Family Therapy. After graduating, Tony's role adapted into a model of counselor, professor, and author. Together, he and Stacey combined their strengths — his voice and her pen — to form Wheeler Ministries. Today, they speak at churches and seminars, feeling called to create spaces for healing and hope in the lives of others.

Isaac Wheeler ('15), son of Stacey and Tony, followed his father's path — earning a psychology degree from Barclay College, then a Master of MFT from Friends University. Like Tony, Isaac was shaped by the program's strong faith foundation, guiding him into Christian counseling. His work centers on a key theory he learned: a person can't be understood in isolation; to heal the individual, one must also bring health to the surrounding system.

Just like the systems theory, one cannot understand a Kellum, Long, or Wheeler without seeing the whole family. Tony and Stacey Wheeler, who have accepted the positions of Director and Assistant Director of Faith Community Resources at Friends University, offers a final message that echoes throughout the entire family: "We are grateful to Friends University and to the Board of Trustees. Since hiring Dr. Amy Bragg Carey, we have seen nothing but faith and Spirit driven decisions that have turned the university into a place where students can walk with Jesus. We are in eternal support of the university in every way."

# Alumni Spotlight

## Bryan and Kristin Robert

Bryan ('03) and Kristin ('03) Robert met at Friends University on the first day of the semester Fall 2000, in Econ. 101 — a notoriously tough subject — and became part of the dropout statistic after dropping the class themselves. They became friends over the next three years through common classes and the Friends athletic community, establishing a relationship by senior year. This would be the start of many milestones spent together, even celebrating their engagement photos at the Rose Window Plaza and recently celebrating their 21st wedding anniversary.

Kristin's family is well acquainted with the university, as both of her parents, her older sister, her brother-in-law, her younger sister and her niece all attended Friends as well. Kristin attended on both an academic and athletic scholarship; where the faith centered education of her business courses and the community of the women's basketball team immortalized her love for the university.

"Friends is the right size to build lasting relationships with fellow students, professors and administration. I found teachers outside the classrooms and took classes that made me appreciate the similarities and differences of others around me." said Kristin.



Kristin, Olivia, Addison, Kaitlyn and Bryan Robert.

Bryan started his academic journey at Tabor College on a baseball scholarship, before transferring to Friends University his sophomore year and joining the Falcons baseball team. His time on campus was as socially fulfilling as Kristin's; he worked as a student athletic trainer, stayed in the International House of Game (I.H.O.G.) for a year, and balanced his studies in the fall to play baseball in the spring.

"Friends impacted me the most through playing sports and leadership opportunities. Whether it was in class or on the field, I always felt challenged to grow and serve. Even after graduation, I saw how much I grew spiritually," said Bryan.

After walking across the stage, Kristin was hired in a position at The Boeing Company. Over the next 20 years, Kristin climbed the chain to become the Vice President of Operations. It wasn't the industry she imagined herself in, but she fell in love with the team-driven environment and fast-paced nature of the work.

Bryan's first position was a finance job at Textron Aviation. He later transitioned to Spirit AeroSystems, and after nearly 20 years moving up in the finance organization in corporate America, he felt a calling to venture out of aviation. As he paused one night for guidance, mid-prayer, a job alert popped up for the Eastminister CFO role. Bryan jumped at the opportunity and applied, which quickly became one of the best decisions he ever made for he and his family.

Now, the Roberts are enjoying life to the fullest. With family trips to Greece and their favorite Mexican food spots waiting around the corner, they feel a level of gratitude in their life as a whole.

"We're a pretty easy-going family; we are grateful for the life we've been blessed with. We look to guide our daughters to focus on their faith first and to work hard for success. With our oldest daughter at Oklahoma State University pursuing a nursing degree, and our two younger daughters carving their own paths in high school, they keep us on our toes and are our greatest joy!" said Bryan and Kristin.



# Fall 2025 Class Notes

## In Memory

“In Memory” passages were submitted by family and friends. Information received after August 1, 2025, will be included in the next issue. We reserve the right to edit as space allows.

**Bradley D. Almire ‘12** died on March 5, 2025. He spent the beginning of his career as a delivery driver and later ran his own business supporting locals with their technological needs.

**James S. Barcus ‘72** died on November 1, 2024. He was a retired SRS worker who was very active in the Kansas Special Olympics and Big Brothers.

**Ruth A. Bridgeman ‘96** died on April 25, 2025. She was a Registered Nurse and Nursing Instructor, and a member of the American Nurses Association.

**Darrell Wayne Bontrager ‘69** died on June 18, 2025. His love for the Lord was evident—he was often found working and in fellowship with others at Do-B’s Restaurant.

**Sally Joy Bouska ‘91** died on May 9, 2025. She had a zest for life that was contagious and followed her into every room and every interaction she had.

**Mary Evelyn Burke ‘92** died on January 14, 2025. She was a terrific mentor and nurse, inspiring many to be the best they can be.

**Kathryn Boyle**, a science professor at Friends University for over 40 years, passed away on May 25, 2025. Throughout her tenure, Kathryn inspired countless young minds to pursue science careers, embodying a passion for inquiry and a guiding hand for all who stepped into her classroom.

**Anita Marie Clark ‘97** died on March 13, 2025. In addition to being a scholar of Scripture, Pastor Anita had a curious mind and loved to read and study many subjects.

**Doris Crane** died on June 30, 2025. She taught ESL classes at Friends University. Her life was a testimony to her love of people, music, and art.

**Anita Ellison ‘91** died on February 10, 2025. She managed the Family Crisis Center, worked as the Program Coordinator at the Larned Juvenile Correctional Facility for 28 years, and worked at Barton Community College in data entry.

**Randolph “Randy” Degenhardt** died on July 4, 2025. He taught English at Friends University for 14 years. Randy was a man of faith who deeply loved his family.



**Daniel A. Engle '03** died on January 12, 2025. In his spare time, he enjoyed fishing and spending time with his children and family.

**Fred Gordon Garlett** died on May 29, 2025. He was the head of the College of Continuing Education at Friends University. He loved his family, sports, travel, and visiting Kansas City.

**Lamont Ted Gleason '91** died on March 18, 2025. He was completely content at home with his family and enjoyed woodworking and volunteering at their church.

**Dr. Marc Antone "Tony" Godding '59** died on January 23, 2025. He was a beloved teacher, respected colleague and cherished friend to those who knew him.

**Leona R. Grigsby '60** died on April 29, 2024. She was a teacher for 33 years and had a great love of music.

**Donna Jean Hadix '92** died on January 24, 2025. She dedicated over 30 years as the head of Student Accounts at Friends University. Donna was a loving mother with a unique sense of humor that endeared her to all who knew her.

**Ruth J. Hammer '03** died on January 6, 2025. She was devoted to her children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren, always attending as many activities as she could.

**Jerry Dean Hardin '86** died on May 13, 2025. He enjoyed golfing with friends and his grandsons, and sharing laughter over card games.

**Patricia Irene Smith Higgs '95** died on January 9, 2025. She served in the U.S. Marine Corps and was a lover of science fiction (especially Star Trek), science, literature, history and trivia.

**Stephanie Lynn Hill '03** died on January 4, 2025. She was an author of many stories on "Fan Fiction" which are still being enjoyed by many.

**Randle Kent Hope '64** died on May 9, 2025. He taught at his high school alma mater, North High, in the Industrial Arts Department and was twice retired, once from Pitney Bowes and another from Woodward.

**Virginia L. Ireland '52** died on December 13, 2024. She was a beloved wife and mother, and loved to travel, visiting all 50 states plus England, Wales, France, Italy, China and Australia.

**Luke L. Johnson '08** died on February 23, 2025. For several years, he worked at the Crown Uptown Theater in Wichita, before taking a job at the Florida Studio Theater in Sarasota, Florida, as the company manager and became the Voice of FST.

**Robert Vern "Bob" Johnston '00** died on May 18, 2025. He was a dedicated husband and father and was an avid sports enthusiast.

**Karen Jane Kaufman '90** died on June 17, 2025. She enjoyed traveling the world with her husband, often visiting Europe, New Zealand, and Australia.

**Kenneth E. Kellum '61** died on December 19, 2024. He was a devoted husband, father, and grandfather. He retired in 1996, having been a teacher, coach, and secondary administrator.

**Olivia V. Kreifels '09** died on August 18, 2024. She loved driving through the countryside, listening to music, traveling, and exploring the world at any chance.

**Charla Kremer '84** died on February 6, 2025. She was the beloved daughter of Art Brinford, and was a devoted wife and mother. A memorial has been established with Family Promise of Greater Wichita.



**Colleen A. Huff '92** died on March 2, 2025. She was an avid gardener, canner, and baker.

**Henry Daryll Lubbers '90**

died on February 15, 2025. In retirement, he and his wife Jane moved to Texas to be near family, where he faced every challenge with dignity, strength, his trademark humor, and his wife's amazing support.

**Donald C. Martinson '43**

died on September 17, 2025. He was a passionate and devoted man, spending many of his hours woodworking and with Meals on Wheels and Habitat for Humanity charities. Last year, Don represented the legacy of the Singing Quakers by attending the 100th anniversary concert in November, being the oldest voice in the auditorium.

**Ashlee "Asher Phoenix" May '17**

died on July 20, 2025. They found great joy behind a camera, in the spotlight, and sitting on the couch with an iPad and a coffee in hand, drawing and musing.

**John F. McGuire** died on February 24, 2025. He enjoyed many hobbies which included fishing, golfing, woodworking, classical music and, of course, hanging out with his grandchildren.

**Anita Loraine Mead '93**

died on June 27, 2025. Her professional journey reflected her dedication to serving others — working in various roles at law offices and higher education.

**Carol Cameron Meers '08**

died on May 31, 2025. Her desire was to share with others the love, joy, peace and hope that she had found in Jesus.

**Barbara Moore '90** died on June 16, 2025. Barbara spent her retirement touring museums, attending lectures, plays and concerts, and traveling to family events.

**James I. Morrison '55**

died on January 17, 2025. He enjoyed gardening, camping, and attending his grandchildren's activities.

**Shiley D. Nivens '75**

died on February 3, 2025. He was outgoing and friendly, never knowing a stranger.

**Dr. Robert Lynn Nida '96**

died on March 11, 2025. His life was marked by a profound dedication to his family, an unwavering commitment to education, and a love for sports and physical fitness.

**Robert E. Patterson '63**

died on January 16, 2025. He was an avid Kansas City Chiefs fan and passionate golfer, playing courses across the country and forming lasting friendships wherever he went.

**Rebecca Louise Potter '63**

died on May 3, 2025. She thrived as a homemaker, stay-at-home mom and Sunday school teacher and enjoyed gardening, sewing and baking for the family.

**Coral Jean Radabaugh '65**

died on February 21, 2025. Beyond her devotion to the church, she found purpose in service to others, spending 28 years as an EMT and volunteering with the Civil Air Patrol.

**Warren T. Ramsey '60**

died on January 6, 2023. He enjoyed singing in the church choir and spending time outside, especially bird watching.

**Murray Reimer '00**

died on April 23, 2025. He followed motor sports avidly, whether he went to the drag races or watched NASCAR on television.

**Kenneth Raymond Rollins '95**

died on June 21, 2025. He loved God, his family, his dogs, sports, Oklahoma University football, and driving through Oklahoma with a chocolate shake in his hand.



**Wanda Hammer Salsman**

'84 died on January 11, 2025. A loving mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother, she believed loving a good cat was one of life's highest callings.

**Karen Marie Seidel '99**

died on April 12, 2025. She was a teacher at Lyons Middle School for thirty-four years and an avid Kansas City Royals and Kansas City Chiefs fan.

**John Robert Slayton**

'70 died April 24, 2025. John loved sports and lifting weights as a hobby, winning the Oklahoma State Powerlifting Championships in the 275lb weight class in 1993.

**Rick L. Sroufe '99**

died on March 25, 2025. He served in the US Army from 1966-1970 and was stationed in Germany as E6 in the National Security Agency.

**Jerry Wayne Standrich**

'73 died on February 9, 2025. He loved and cherished all animals, especially dogs, and even at one point spent time rescuing squirrels.

## GIVE ONLINE!

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Thank you for your support!

**Elva Templeton '41**

died on January 10, 2025. Her love of travel was driven by intense curiosity to learn and engage in places and cultures far and wide.

**Virginia Louise Transue**

'92 died on May 25, 2025. She made it a point to attend all her children's school events and didn't hesitate to travel to weddings and graduations.

**Constance Wacker '60**

died on March 25, 2025. She worked as a florist until retiring in 2014 and enjoyed playing Bridge and gardening during her free time.

**Melissa D. Ward '00**

died on December 8, 2024. She loved concerts and never missed the opportunity to go, no matter who it was.

**Grace Olive Wheeler '58**

died on February 12, 2025. She was an active member of Bethel Friends Church and later in life attended Fellowship Baptist in Liberal, Kansas.

**Lewis Wendell**

**Wheeler '58** died on May 16, 2025. He was a well-known and respected farmer and a long-time board member for Citizens State Bank in Hugoton.

**Jeanne Marie White '44**

died on April 26, 2025. She was a gifted musician and enjoyed singing in her church choir, playing the organ, and directing the Blackjack 4-H Chorus for many years.

**Sue Ann Wiechman '56**

died on January 19, 2025. She was a retired educator at Goddard Junior High School.

**Patricia Elliott Williams**

died on July 9, 2025. She was a professor of Accounting at Friends University. She served on local library boards, participated in genealogy organizations, and held state-level leadership positions in the American Association of University Women (AAUW).

**Mary C. Winden-**

**Donnelly** died on May 15, 2025. She was a gifted musician and cook, and radiated kindness, humor, and care to the many lives she touched.

**Gary Ray Wright '15**

died on February 3, 2025. He dedicated his life to education, music, and community service, leaving behind a lasting legacy.

**Phyllis Clair "FeFe"**

**Zielke '54** died on February 5, 2025. She became involved organizing and planning many activities at the Real-Life Cooperative Senior Living in Burnsville and made many good friends and took wonderful trips.

## Class Notes

### 1950s

**Thelma Bray '50** celebrated her 100th birthday in April.

**Dr. Marshall Stanton '57**

published his novel "From a Precipice to Grand Opera, Reflections on the Stanton Presidency at KWU," in June 2025. The telling of his 18 ½ year presidency at Kansas Wesleyan University is available on Amazon.

### 1970s

**Sandra Hysom '71**

was highlighted by The Active Age for 30 years of volunteer service at Music Theatre of Wichita.

**Larry Bell '74**

was a recipient of the 2025 Class of Inductees of the Kansas Black Educators Hall-of-Fame.

**Mary Sue Dymak '79**

celebrated 50 years working at Music Theatre Wichita, which was highlighted by Wichita-based arts and culture newsroom, The Shout.

**Mark Regier '79**

donated a hand-crafted violin to the Friends University Fine Arts Center.

# 1980s

**Jay Delling '84** was highlighted by Yahoo! News for his 36-year commitment to volunteering at the Wichita Open golf tournament.

**Clay Murphy '88** is retiring as the superintendent of schools for Conway Springs USD 356 and has accepted a new position at Kruse Corporation in Wichita, Kansas.

**Dallas Woolf '93** was named as the new superintendent of USD 386 Madison-Virgil.

**LinLee Vanderhoof '94** was named one of Top 50 Women Leaders of Kansas City for 2025 by Women We Admire.

**James R. Wright '94** has established his own company, The VWH Company SP, and works as the Finance and Operation Manager, where he oversees all aspects of the company's sales, financial management, customer service, procurement and inventory management.

**Kym Money '97** was an honoree of the Wichita Business Journal's Women Who Lead in Major Companies.

# 1990s

**Lynn Deckinger '91** was a Wichita Business Journal 2025 Marketing Award honoree.



**Dr. Judy Holmes '98** was named the new Vice President of Finance and Chief Financial Officer at Kansas Wesleyan University.



**Aaron Micheal Lechien '06** won the Kansas High School Assistant Principal of the Year award.

**Robert Garner '98** was named a Wichita Business Journal Executive of the Year.

**Dale Heckman '04** was named the head coach of the men's and women's swim team at Sterling College.

# 2000s

**Brooke Bennett Aziere '00** was named a Wichita Business Journal Executive of the Year.

**Robert Cherne '02** was appointed as the Vice President of Operations at Uncommon Goods.

**Kim Kufahl '02** was an honoree of the Wichita Business Journal's Women Who Lead in Major Companies.

**Matthew Edmund McCall '02** was promoted to CIO of INVISTA.

**Rasmus Mambwe Lukunka '03** was highlighted in the ENX Magazine for his "rock star" attitude and drive as regional sales manager at Distribution Management.

**Shawn Webb '03** was appointed President of FlightWave Aerospace Systems Corporation, a Red Cat Holdings, Inc. Company.

**Michelle Allen '04 & '18** was a Wichita Business Journal 2025 Marketing Award honoree.



**Melissa Leigh Ewing '05** was hired as a therapist at the Clara Barton Medical Center.

**Megan M. Harper '08** was elected as the Flagship Kansas-Tech Board Chair for a two-year term.

**Jamie Wise '08** received a Wichita Business Journal 2025 Marketing Award.

**Kenneth Wayne Howard '09** was a keynote speaker for the Wichita Prayer Breakfast hosted by Lead Wichita on May 1. His message was titled, "Wholehearted: Healed Healers Co-creating Beauty with God."

**Shari Simmons '09** was named one of Top 50 Women Leaders of Kansas City for 2025 by Women We Admire.



**Travis Wells '09** (center) received a Wichita Business Journal 2025 Marketing Award.

## Faculty/ Staff/Board Notes

**Dr. Amy Bragg Carey** was nominated in the Wichita Business Journal's Women in Business Hall of Fame.

**Sean Cash** published "Modern Marketing Principles: Practice, and Purpose. A practical guide to today's marketing strategies, tools, and real-world applications" in July, alongside creating a comprehensive curriculum with AI assessment and enhanced learning integrated into the LMS.

**Frank Choriego** taught two classes in the "Your Pathway to Entrepreneurial Success" in the Chamber of Commerce's Veteran Entrepreneur Pitch Challenge, a program that was explicitly created for veterans and active-duty military members to help them achieve their business goals in the civilian world.

**Levi Convirs** was announced as the 2024–25 KCAC Sports Information Director of the Year.

Previous faculty **Laurie Dove** signed a deal for two more novels, with the projected publication of the second book, "Wrath of the Water Tiger," in spring 2026.

**Bellaly Escalante** was nominated for the A Difference in Education Award by Planeta Venus.

**Dr. Jeremy Gallegos** is continuing his guest lecture series at the Kansas College of Osteopathic Medicine, where his next topics will be "Introduction to Health Humanities" and "Ethics & Clinical Informatics."

**Dr. Keas Keasler** was appointed as a Research Affiliate of the Dallas Willard Research Center at Westmont College in Santa Barbara, CA.

**Dr. Keas Keasler** also had a chapter published in a volume of collected essays titled "The Continuing Witness of the Missional Church: Reflections on Darrell Guder's Life and Teaching." (Cascade, 2025). His chapter, "Lessons From a Theological Hero," explores the life-shaping lessons he has learned from Darrell Guder as a mentor, theologian, and embodiment of missional witness.

**Dr. Shawn Knopp** was elected to the position of President-Elect for the Kansas Bandmasters Association at the Kansas Bandmasters Association Summer Convention. He also has several adjudicator, conductor and clinician positions lined up in the semester, including serving in the Kansas State Fair Marching Band Competition, the Patriot League Middle School Honor Band, and the Kansas Music Educators Association - Southwest District and North Central District Honor Bands.

## 2010s

**Jessie Gorges-Sawhill '11** received a 40 Under 40 honor from the Wichita Business Journal.

**Laurie Labarca '11** was promoted to President of Via Christi St. Francis. She was also recognized as a Wichita Business Journal Executive of the Year.

**Todd Alan Lehman '12** was named the moderator-elect for The Mennonite Church USA Executive Board.

**Jamie Mullen-Hearn '12** was a Wichita Business Journal 2025 Marketing Award honoree.

**Ashley Elizabeth Reynolds '12** was recognized as a Marquis Who's Who Honors for Expertise in Metallurgical Engineering.

**Denise Sherman '12** was named director of the Center for Management Development and Executive Education at the W. Frank Barton School of Business at Wichita State University in Kansas.

**Rickey Deroy Frierson '13** was promoted to Assistant Vice President for Strategic Student Success Initiatives at Colorado State University.

**Lee Gray '14** was an honoree of the Wichita Business Journal Women in Business award.

**Brad Anthony Parker '15** was named the Executive Director of the Kansas State Board of Technical Professions.

**Tyler Levier '16** was named the Shawnee Global LLC Inaugural President and CEO.

**Michaela Lorene Frances Nixon '17**, in her role as the Lead Pathologist Assistant, helped create and open a pathology lab in May 2025.

**Anetra Burton '18** was honored with a Wichita Business Journal Women in Business award.

**Jordan Murdock '19** was named the men's head basketball coach at Kansas Wesleyan University.

## 2020s

**Derick Diaz '24** was an honoree for the Wichita Business Journal Unsung Hero award.

**Becker Truster '24** earned his CPA license.



**Rolaine Hetherington**, Assistant Professor of Music/ Applied Voice & Concert Choir Director, retired after 17 years at Friends University. She gave the 2025 commencement address as her farewell, encouraging our graduating Falcons to do good and add value to their work and to the lives of others, instead of striving for superficial greatness.

**Aaron Krone** published his painting “Stepping Stones” in the Summer 2025 issue of Art and Color Magazine. He recently won first place for his work “self-portrait” in the juried competition at Upward Gallery in September.

**Kassia Krone** was named Area Chair for Disability Studies for Southwest Popular American Culture Association. Her essay, “Demanding Love: Caring for the Mentally Ill in Reflections in a Golden Eye, The Violent Bear it Away, and The Ponder Heart,” was accepted into an

edited collection called *Illness and Dis/ability in Southern Women’s Literature*.

**Dr. Jim Long** received the 2025 ACBSP Teaching Excellence Award from the Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs (ACBSP).

Friends University professor emeritus **Dr. Daniel Lord** was the recipient of the 2025 American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy Lifetime Achievement Award.

**Dr. Nathanael May** had an eventful summer sojourn in Europe: he visited with students and faculty at the soundSCAPE Composition And Performance Exchange festival (which he founded in 2005), was hosted by the Paul Hindemith Foundation in Switzerland, and celebrated the 20-year residency anniversary of Barenboim Said Akademie in Germany.

Previous faculty **Dr. Matthew Magee** completed his doctoral degree at NorthwesternState University, with his dissertation “Gender Inequality in Computer Science Degrees: Is Lack of Exposure Playing a Role?”

**Teresa Molina** was one of five women honored with the “Mujeres Conquistando

el Futuro” (Women Conquering the Future) award by Create Campaign.

**Joshua Montgomery**, along with **Dr. Guy Chmielecki, Amanda Claxton, Case Bell, Sarah Cabral, and Kortney Schutt**, attended the Association for Christians in Student Development (ACSD) Conference in early June, hosted by our sister Quaker institution, George Fox University in Newberg, Oregon.

**Dr. Paul Robert “Rob” Ramseyer** was selected for the Wichita Business Journal’s inaugural Leaders in Major Companies recognition, which recognizes exceptional professionals making a meaningful impact within the community’s leaders.



**Dr. Jerry Smartt**

celebrates 50 years of service at Friends University. To honor her incredible legacy, it was announced at the State of the University Address that the third-floor atrium outside of Alumni Auditorium, a space frequented by Dr. Smartt over the decades, would henceforth be known as the Dr. Jerry Smartt Atrium.

**Dr. James Bryan Smith**

was awarded Author of the Year by The Association of Logos Bookstores, presented by InterVarsity Press (IVP).

**Eric Sanford** presented “The Power of Questions in Higher Education” at the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO) Annual Meeting in Seattle, WA in April 2025.

Sanford was also named President-Elect for the 2024-2025 year for the Kansas Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (KACRAO).

**Dr. Ken Stoltzfus** was ordained as a vocational deacon in the Anglican Church in North America (ACNA).

**Blaise Webster** took home the Audience Award for his short documentary, *Matt’s Monsters*, at the Doc Sunback Film Festival in Mulvane, Kansas. The film also was accepted into the 2025 Tallgrass Film Festival in Wichita as well as the 2025 Salt City Film Fest in Hutchinson.

**Sanya Wiles** received a Wichita Business Journal’s Women Who Lead in Technology, Innovation, and Education honor.

**Dr. Brent Yoder, Dr. Amy Bragg Carey, and Dr. Ramseyer** all presented at the Higher Learning Commission annual conference in Chicago in May 2025. Yoder co-presented in both topics, presenting with Dr. Carey for “Back from the Brink: How to Turnaround a Struggling University” and with Ramseyer for “We’re on the Same Team! Partnering for Student-Athlete Academic Success.”

**Damon Young** transitioned from his role as chief business officer at the Kansas Leadership Center to be the first CEO of Lead Wichita.

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