

# CROSSROADS

MISSOURI SOUTHERN STATE UNIVERSITY | WINTER 2024

A woman with long brown hair, wearing a white lab coat, is seated at a desk in a laboratory. She is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. Her right hand is resting on her chin. In the foreground, there is a clear glass jar containing brown, textured samples. To her right, a microscope is visible on the desk. The background is dark with some green foliage.

## AN AMBASSADOR FOR THE NEXT GENERATION IN SCIENCE

Alum Honored with Science Education Ambassadorship

MSSU Celebrates 20 years of university status

Artist uses his work to express grief and inspire others





# from the editor

We've been thinking a lot about new beginnings, especially since the start of the semester; we were excited to see the many new students walk on campus for the first time, the ones returning for another semester, and others who would come here for a new beginning in whatever capacity it manifests itself: furthering one's education, creating new art, or even traveling abroad. We believe these stories display the thrill of starting anew or striving for a better life.

The cover story describes Joplin science research teacher Karisa Boyer's ambassadorship through *Science News Learning*, a unique opportunity only three people in the country are awarded.

You'll meet alumni Olivia Lewis, a working professional who's returned to MSSU for the new healthcare administration graduate program, and Whitney Fair, a graduate art student channeling grief through stunning, visceral art.

You'll hear from the students who studied abroad in Ireland and the student actors who performed the classic musical "Guys & Dolls" in the newly renovated Taylor Performing Arts Center.

Then there is the KGCS' new digital screen, green screen, and studio space that will provide new opportunities for students in the Communications department and beyond, as well as the celebration of our 20th anniversary of university status. You'll also read about the second annual Artful Medicine Symposium, Missouri Southern's international conference uniting healthcare and humanities professionals to bridge the gap between medicine and art and provide better care for patients.

It's always a pleasure to share stories with you. If you have a story idea, please drop us a line at [crossroads@mssu.edu](mailto:crossroads@mssu.edu).

Here's to new beginnings. We'll see you in the summer!

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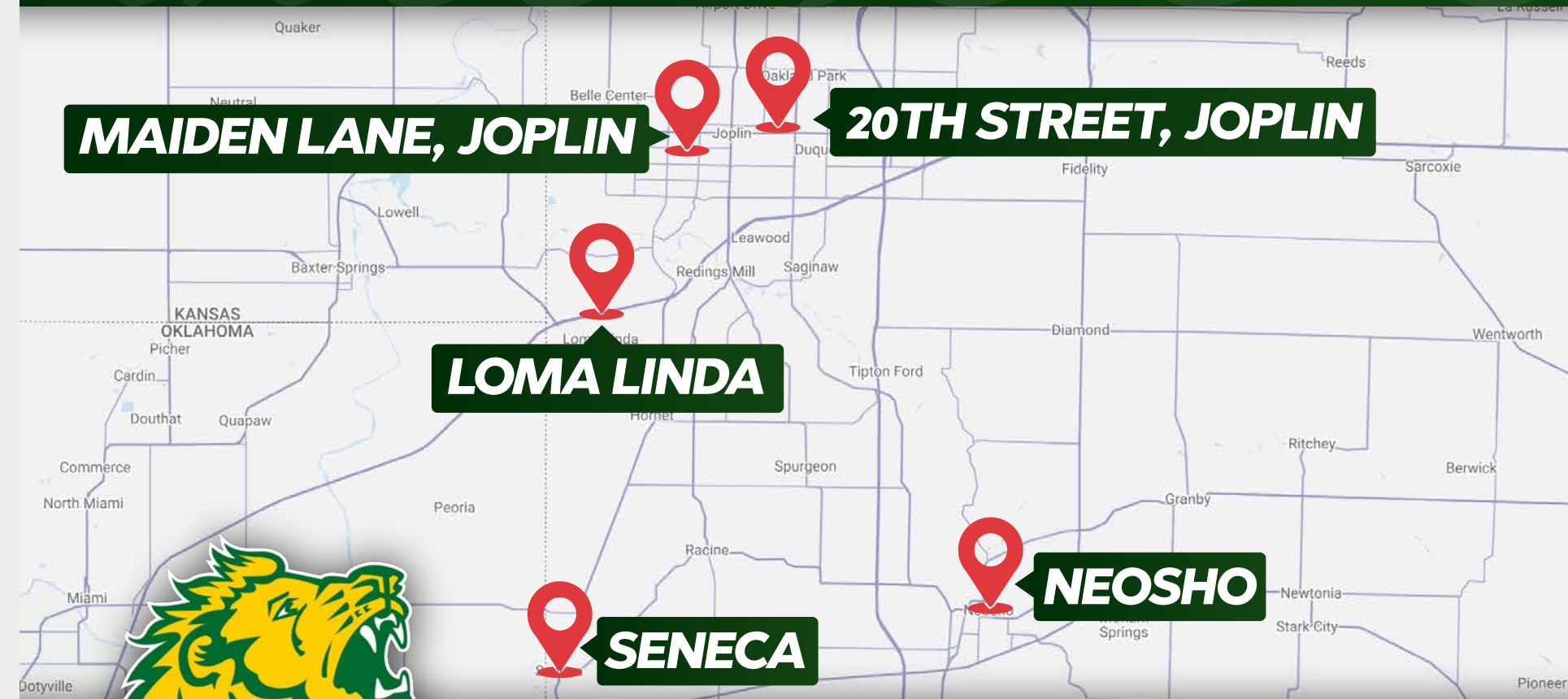


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**G**reetings from Missouri Southern!

We have enjoyed another fantastic fall semester on campus, which saw a spike in campus vibrancy thanks largely to continued new student growth, a 17-year high in our retention rate, and tremendous involvement from students, faculty, staff, alumni and friends. The future is bright for the Lions!

While enjoying this edition of Crossroads, you will see images that exemplify this new wave of campus vibrancy. This magazine's pages are filled with students enjoying every aspect of our campus, like the newly renovated KGCS studio space, a spring concert, new homecoming traditions, and so much more. The heart of a great university is its people, and in this edition you will also read about the success and impact of several graduates of our university, as well as current faculty and staff.

Our university has a proud history, and you will learn about the 20th anniversary celebration of Missouri Southern gaining university status, a milestone achievement for the institution. You'll also read about more recent achievements including the May 2023 nursing cohort's impressive 100% passing rate of the NCLEX, the exam required to become a practicing nurse.

After reading this edition of Crossroads, I hope you feel inspired to visit campus for a concert, theatre production, athletic event, or—in the fall, one of the many Canada Themed Semester events. The support of MSSU alumni and friends is truly appreciated. We hope to see you on campus this spring.

Lions Together. Lions Forward.

**Dr. Dean Van Galen**

President

Missouri Southern State University





### MSSU HOSTS TEDx EVENT

In May, Missouri Southern had the chance to partner with TEDx to bring Connectedness – TEDxMSSU to campus and the surrounding community.

12 speakers were selected for the event, presenting topics adhering to the theme of connectedness, with the goal being conversation, connection and community. Topics such as bonding with loved ones through the laughter and joy of boardgames to the connections created while traveling, brought community members together for one day to share their stories.

“Part of TEDx is to have an overarching concept or idea that can be spoken about from any standpoint,” said Julie Wengert, associate vice president of student success. “Connectedness felt like something everyone could relate to and talk about within their ideas or research.”

Plans for the project began in the summer of 2021, but it wasn’t until last year that things began moving forward.

“We were looking for opportunities for global leaders to get involved and create, while also bringing in innovated leaders to campus. This was one way of doing it,” said Wengert. “But there’s a lot of planning that comes with the application process, so we waited until we were ready.”

Seats for all 12 speakers were sold out for the entire afternoon, not only giving the speakers a once-in-a-lifetime experience, but also allowing the audience to see a TEDx presentation in person.

“Everyone was there to talk about different things, but we all felt like we had something important to share with the world,” said Dr. David Locher, professor of sociology. “That sense of common purpose created a friendly environment that I really enjoyed.”

Dr. Christine Bentley, professor of art and design, and Locher are both employees from MSSU who participated in the TEDxMSSU event. Bentley focused on the relationship between medicine and art: how both scientists and artists spend years observing human anatomy, forming a unique bond. For Locher’s presentation, he talked about the damage stereotyping and discrimination can cause, creating a rift between different groups of people.

“MSSU hosting a TEDx event was a great opportunity for everyone in the region,” said Locher. “The range and variety of speakers was fascinating, and everyone was supportive of everyone else. I think we all learned something from each other.”

### NEW STUDENT ENROLLMENT INCREASES

Missouri Southern’s new student enrollment has risen 6.5 percent in the Fall 2023 semester, the second consecutive year of increased enrollment in freshman, transfer, and graduate students. This is a significant growth from Fall 2022’s enrollment increase of 1.7 percent.

The retention rate of first-time full-time students—those who enrolled in Fall 2022 and stayed in Fall 2023—increased eight percent from the previous year and is the highest rate at MSSU in 17 years.

“More students and their families are recognizing the quality and value of a Missouri Southern education,” said Dr. Dean Van Galen, president of MSSU. “With strong academic programs, a vibrant campus, and an array of scholarship opportunities, MSSU is increasingly a first-choice university for the Four States region and beyond.”

This fall, the university saw a 19 percent increase in new transfer students from the previous year as well as a 63 percent increase in graduate student enrollment.

In addition to the 90 percent of MSSU students hailing from the Four States, the class represents 19 different states and seven different countries. The top majors among freshman include nursing, business, and biomedical science. Student credit hours have also risen 1 percent from 45,027 in Fall 2022 to 45,444 in Fall 2023.

“We are thrilled to welcome new students to the Lion Pride and are excited that we are a part of their college journey,” said Dr. Shellie Hewitt, dean of admissions. “We look forward to many more students choosing MSSU as their preferred institution for high-quality academics and much more.”

### NORTH END ZONE FACILITY RENAMED TO RON RICHARD ATHLETIC CENTER

In a unanimous vote on November 9, Missouri Southern’s Board of Governors chose to rename the North End Zone facility to Ron Richard Athletic Center, memorializing their former colleague and well-known community member.

Ron Richard was appointed to the MSSU Board of Governors on Nov. 6, 2019, and served until his death earlier this year. He previously served in both the State Senate and House of Representatives—the only person to ever hold the top leadership position in both bodies—and as Mayor of Joplin. He was an alumnus of Missouri Southern as well.

“The North End Zone is a very visible and active facility on Missouri Southern’s campus, so it is fitting that this facility will be renamed for Ron Richard, who was extremely visible and active in our community,” said Anita Oplotnik, chair of MSSU’s Board of Governors. “He loved Joplin, and he loved Missouri Southern. We’re honored to be able to recognize and remember him in this meaningful way.”

The naming idea was suggested in a letter to President Dean Van Galen from Dan Stanley, a friend of Richard.

“Ron was a fierce competitor, and he competed every day to see the best ideas embraced and adopted in business, in government, and in every organization in which he served and led,” Stanley wrote. “To look out on the football field and the track facilities and watch the intense competition, personal sacrifice, and total dedication of every athlete and every team is something that Ron would relish. It is the perfect setting to associate with Ron Richard.”





## CREATING NEW TRADITIONS

Missouri Southern State University is blending new and old traditions into the annual homecoming experience. After almost two decades of homecoming parades on campus, the university celebrated a third consecutive year of hosting the parade downtown.

"Having the parade downtown shows that we are engaged and a part of this community, creating a traditional homecoming feel," said Dr. Brad Hodson, executive vice president. "Not only is it a symbolic importance to move it back, but it also helps reconnect with our roots as a campus."

Missouri Southern began its journey downtown in 1937, originally known as the Joplin Junior College. In 1967, MSSU would outgrow the downtown location and move onto its current 373-acre campus.

"We're pleased that we had the opportunity to go back

downtown, and the city of Joplin has been very cooperative with us," said Hodson. "They went out of their way to accommodate us downtown and we're grateful for their support."

Not only has the downtown parade come back, but new traditions have begun on campus. Events like holding a bonfire at the Mayes Student Life Building create lasting memories for all those who participate.

"Homecoming adds a sense of belonging. A lot of students who come to campus are away from their friends and family," said Kaylea Furgerson, director of student activities. "We plan to continue to host amazing homecoming activities and opportunities for not just the students but for the staff and community as well. It's a great way to get involved, and it can also provide a sense of pride to be here at MSSU."



# JUSTICE STUDIES

Criminal Justice • International & Political Affairs  
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## HOLIDAY HAPPENINGS

As the autumn nights grow longer and colder, Missouri Southern brought a little more warmth and cheer to the upcoming holidays by hosting Holiday Happenings for a second year, with the goal to stay for years to come.

2023's Holiday Happenings introduced new attractions like an ice-skating rink, several local food trucks, and live music from MSSU's band and choir. Keeping up with the themed semester, this year's Holiday Happenings also hosted an Irish cake decorating booth following the theme of Nollaig Shona Duit, Gaelic for "Merry Christmas".

"The holiday season presents a wonderful opportunity for us to gather and cherish the company of our loved ones and friends," said Kaylea Furgerson, director of student activities. "I sincerely hope that students, faculty, staff, and community members alike will join us in future Holiday Happenings, fostering connections and creating cherished, festive memories together."



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MISSOURI SOUTHERN STATE UNIVERSITY



# JESSE MCCARTNEY

## MOSO 2000'S SPRING CONCERT

Students, faculty, staff and the Joplin community gathered for a night of music and fun as Jesse McCartney performed live from Fred G. Hughes stadium on May 5, 2023. Local band, Dawson Hallow, also performed at the end of semester celebration.





# VOICES OF SOUTHERN

## OLIVIA LEWIS

Healthcare Administration Graduate Student

"I wanted to see how far I could go."

That was Olivia Lewis, Healthcare Administration alumna and current MSSU graduate student's, motivation behind starting her master's degree this fall.

During her undergraduate career, Lewis had to find a balance between being a student and an athlete – this led her to the Healthcare Administration program. After she graduated in May of 2022, Lewis began her professional career as a health practice manager at Joplin's Mercy Hospital and decided to continue her education by pursuing a graduate degree in Healthcare Administration. She once again had to find a balance, this time between school and her profession.

### THE FIRST SERVE

I took a business class in high school and really enjoyed it. When I found out that Healthcare Administration was an undergraduate program at MSSU, I knew that it was what I wanted to do. I was playing volleyball at the time, which made juggling class time and time on the court difficult. So, finding a program that took my demanding schedule into consideration was exciting.

### A NEW MATCH

Volleyball has been a part of my life for a long time. After I was done playing, I started coaching at a local high school.

With the transition from player to coach, I had to quickly shift my mindset. The change placed me in a position I'd not been in before and I had to start focusing on what my athletes were seeing and feeling. Now, I use my experiences as both player and coach in my profession. I'm able to connect with my coworkers and patients by putting myself in their shoes. It allows me to build trust.

### RETURNING TO SOUTHERN

As I was earning my bachelor's degree, I envisioned myself being a health practice manager and all of the professors that I had were fantastic about making that dream a reality. They helped me maintain a balance between my class and volleyball schedules. After I graduated, I knew that I wanted to take the next step and get a master's degree, and I wanted to get it from Southern. I'm not sure where it will lead me but I'm excited to see how far I can go.

### SETTING HERSELF UP

I really enjoy what I do now as a health practice manager. My undergraduate education helped prepare me tremendously for the difference experiences I've had so far in the workforce, and I believe that the Healthcare Administration graduate program will set me up for success at the next level.







MISSOURI SOUTHERN ALUMNI AND FRIENDS

# MAKING CONNECTIONS

MSSU is proud to announce that the Alumni Association has honored the 2023 award winners. This event took place on Friday Oct. 6 in the Ron Richard Athletic Center.

### MATTHEW JOHNSON, '12 2023 Outstanding Alumnus

Matthew Johnson is a cofounder of Midwestern Built Cross-Fit and Midwestern Interactive, as well as the CEO of Midwestern Interactive and the co-owner of Zinc Coffee. Midwestern Interactive is based in Joplin and works to creatively solve clients' problems by providing access to highly skilled software engineers, project managers, and UI/UX and product designers as embedded team members. The business started in one room with just two employees and now employs over 100 individuals from Joplin and Springfield, naming Midwestern Interactive as one of the nine best places to work in Missouri by Inc. Magazine.



### CLIFFORD WERT, '75 2023 Distinguished Alumnus

Clifford Wert graduated from Missouri Southern in 1975, receiving his degree in Business Administration. Having worked nearly 40 years at U.S. Bank, Wert has also held longtime leadership positions in church and various nonprofits.

Actively engaged in the community, he passionately supports diverse arts initiatives in Joplin. Wert not only founded Connect2Culture but also played a pivotal role in securing \$19 million in donor contributions to construct the Harry M. Cornell Arts & Entertainment Complex, serving as Connect2Culture's headquarters.



### CHUCK HENRY, '94 2023 Distinguished Alumnus

Dr. Chuck Henry graduated from Missouri Southern in 1994, and now teaches chemistry as well as chemical and biological engineering at Colorado State University. During the COVID-19 pandemic, many places shut down, but Henry and his colleagues continued to work on projects using simple virus-detection device.



During their research, they were able to create a disposable device similar to a home pregnancy test that uses a finger prick, nasal or saliva swab to get a diagnosis within half an hour. This device was licensed by Quara Devices and could move into production within the next year.

### THE TIEDE FAMILY 2023 Outstanding Family Award

Dr. John Tiede and his wife, Harleen, have been supporters of MSSU for decades. Tiede dedicated 55 years to MSSU, where he held various roles such as professor, assistant to the president, dean of the School of Business, VP for business affairs, senior VP, and interim VP of development before transitioning to a major gift officer.

The Lion Pride runs deep in the Tiede family, with daughter Angela (Tiede) Brown and son-in-law Dr. Voyd Brown, both from the class of '92; son Jason Tiede, class of '96, and daughter-in-law Becky (Budding) Tiede, class of '03; grandson Joshua Brown, class of '19; granddaughter Avery Brown, class of '23; and Drake Reese, currently a student and fiancé to Avery Brown. The Tiede Family is a Lion Legacy, and through their support, Missouri Southern continues to evolve and develop graduates who are knowledgeable global citizens.



### MATT CLINE, '96 Spirit of Service Award

Matt Cline graduated from MSSU in 1996. Since then, Cline has been working to support the local community in any way he can. He has been a member of several organization and non-profits. Cline has spent 29 years with Joplin Elks Lodge; 25 years with the St. Peters Outreach House; 3 years serving the Solace House of the Ozarks; 7 years at the Joplin Area Fuller Center for Housing; and recently became a new member at the Friends of the Joplin Public Library.



### GLENDA AUSTIN Lion Hearted Award

Glenda Austin always had a passion for the MSSU music department and is respected by students and colleagues alike. She puts her heart and soul into every performance at MSSU and doesn't hesitate to donate her time and talents to the Department of Performing Arts at MSSU. Over the last few years, her presence has provided consistency within the department, and she didn't hesitate to take on more duties as needed to help the students remain successful. Glenda is truly a Lion at Heart.



## ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT:

Lt. Col. Barbara (Blackford) Bevins, '69, stands with a custom MSSU firepit recently donated to Missouri Southern in her name. Lt. Col. Bevins was the first student to receive a four-year degree from Missouri Southern and was also named MSSU's Outstanding Alum in 1991. Bevins' husband Doug donated the firepit in Barbara's honor as a surprise. Lt. Col. Bevins saw the firepit for the first time when the couple returned to Joplin for Missouri Southern's 2023 Homecoming. The custom piece came in quite handy during Holiday Happenings this year as visitors to the Ralph L Gray Alumni Center were treated to a warm fire.





MISSOURI SOUTHERN CELEBRATES

# 20 years

OF UNIVERSITY STATUS

On July 12, Missouri Southern celebrated 20 years since former Missouri Governor Bob Holden signed Senate Bill 55, elevating the institution from college to university status.

"Reflecting on our history makes us all appreciate the impact MSSU has had on Joplin, Southwest Missouri, and beyond," said Dr. Dean Van Galen, president of MSSU. "We are all a part of something meaningful, and it makes a tremendous difference."

Speakers included Dr. Van Galen, Holden, and former State Sen. Gary Nodler, who led the legislation through the Missouri Senate, which was signed on July 12, 2003. The signing was a culmination of many years work among

Dr. Julio León, then Missouri Southern State College president, Nodler, and members of the local legislative delegation. Concurrent bills were sponsored in both the House and the Senate with Rep. Bryan Stevenson carrying the bill. Senate Bill 55 made it through both chambers and to Gov. Holden for signature.

"It was their collaboration and unwavering commitment which allowed for this pivotal moment of Missouri Southern history," said Holden. "Gaining university status has propelled Missouri Southern to new heights of academic excellence, expanding opportunities, and increasing local and national recognition, positioning Missouri Southern as a key player in shaping the future of this region."

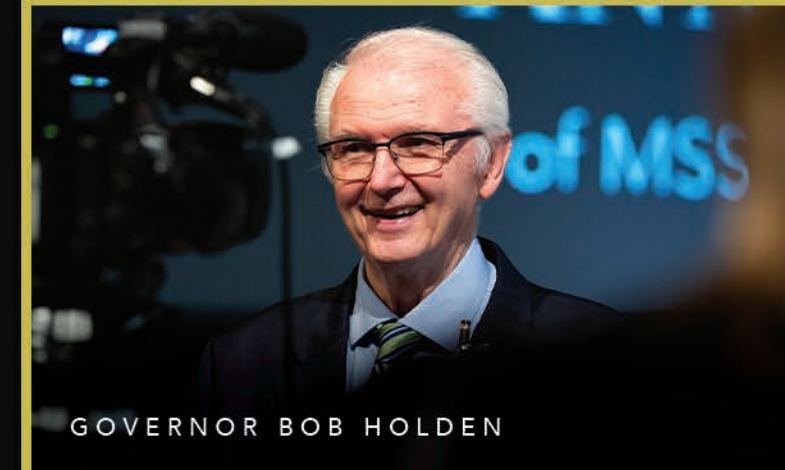
In addition to changing the university's name, Senate Bill 55 also allowed MSSU to offer graduate programs. In the 20 years since the signing, MSSU has created programs in fields such as business, education, and criminal justice. Graduate program selection continues to grow, with the most recent additions being healthcare administration and data analytics as well as an MBA, accepting enrollment in Fall 2024.

Nodler reminisced on seeing the real-life effects of Senate Bill 55.

"I was asked to be the MSSU commencement speaker three years after the bill's signing," said Nodler. "MSSU's first master's degree graduates sat in the front row. Seeing them made me realize that Senate Bill 55 isn't just politics but a real, transformative change for people who have better lives because of it."



SENATOR GARY NODLER



GOVERNOR BOB HOLDEN



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# A NEW ERA OF CREATIVITY

Down the first floor of Webster under an "ON AIR" sign is the KGCS-TV studio. Inside on the left is a room full of monitors playing an old '70s show, a computer that holds all the stations tracks rolling the episode. But it's not the show nor the computer itself that has everyone's attention—it's the two brand new studios just past the main room.

On the back wall is a nearly 20-foot-tall LED monitor, each panel connected to generate an image of standing on a beach, the cliffs and water painted with the hue of a red fading sun, as grass sways in a silent breeze. The light from the scene fills the large studio, showing off new cameras and motion tracking sensors on the ceiling.

To the left through another set of doors is the second studio. A large, curved green screen set up as though in front of a live studio audience—couch, table, and all. Surrounding the mini living room is a row of cameras, empty of their handlers.

Remodeling for the studios began in the 2023 Spring semester after MSSU received a \$1.5 million MOExcels Grant with the goal of creating a cooperative learning environment for students from different departments.

"The world of video production and commercial film production is changing rapidly," said Lisa Green, general manager at KGCS. "Our new studios will help students prepare to work in digital marketing environments, TV or film studios, and GFX studios, while also creating a space for those who like hosting and being in front of the camera as well."

With these new studios, students will be able to produce more creative projects, allowing them to work together and imagine new worlds while utilizing the same equipment as major production companies.

"They're designed to provide students with immersive learning experiences in producing film, commercial and broadcast productions," said Brian Mehrens, master instructor of communications. "For these studios to work, it requires a great mix of technical and creative skills, providing some really exciting collaboration opportunities for students in Art, Computer Information Systems, and Communication."

The LED wall uses the Unreal Engine software, which has traditionally been used to create computer games and is equipped with a MoSys camera motion tracking system, as well as new high-tech cameras: an Arri Alexa Mini LT, a Red Komodo, and a Sony FX6.

The greenscreen studio upgraded to fiberoptic camera connections, Ultimatte 4K keying hardware, wireless microphones, new teleprompters, three 4K Blackmagic Broadcast cameras, and uses the same Unreal Engine as the LED studio for creating the graphics. The studio is also set up with HTC Vive's new Mars tracking system, which uses the same technology in their virtual reality systems but focuses on tracking cameras in real-time video productions.

"Unreal Engine is the same systems people use to build communities for Minecraft," said Green. "Our new equipment will enable us to create and work in 3D virtual environments and produce videos just like Disney does to create the shows like 'The Mandalorian.'"

For students like Ethan Hoover, a KGCS Student Producer, the new studios open the door for a lot more opportunities.

"Working in film is my dream, and the new tech gives us the ability to use the studio for more nuanced productions without having to build an expensive set or find an external location," said Hoover. "Virtual production technology is quickly becoming the standard in film and knowing how to use it will give us a huge edge in finding work in the field." Allowing students to produce short and long films and other creative projects isn't the only hope for the new spaces.

"I would like to see MSSU become a hub for education on emerging technologies in the area of media production," said Mehrens. "It would be incredible if we could partner with some of our local media production companies and have our students assist in productions within the new studios, providing experience in professional experience."







An Ambassador for the Next Generation in

# Science



Surrounded by illustrated animal diagrams and many jars, beakers, and microscopes, it's difficult not to be inspired to embark on one's own research project. In Karisa Boyer's classroom, her Science Research students do exactly that.

In addition to several other varying levels of science classes, Boyer teaches a unique course simply titled "Science Research", but the content is anything but simple. Each student conducts their own project including research and experiments in accordance with International Science and Engineering Fair (ISF) guidelines implemented by Society of Science, an organization that aims to promote science literacy, STEM education, and scientific research.

With cardboard fish floating above them as witnesses, each Science Research student creates and conducts their own novel research projects. Everything is done independently, down to designing and analyzing their findings.

"I help direct students through independent research, but they coordinate their project which includes a final research paper, research poster, and a PowerPoint talk," said Boyer. "The students then compete at several events including MSSU Regional Science and Engineering Fair and the MSSU Research Colloquium."

Boyer is also an adjunct instructor at MSSU, where she graduated with her Bachelor of Science in biology in 2001. She has since received a master's degree in education, leading to her success in teaching, which is apparent through not only her successful students—some of whom have presented at international science fairs—but also by Boyer's selection for an extraordinary honor: She is one of three teachers in the country selected to be a national ambassador for *Science News Learning* for the 2023-24 school year.

*Science News Learning* is a magazine by Society for Science. The magazine is devoted to publishing new

and current science research as well as lessons plans for middle and high school students. As a national ambassador, Boyer will help promote science literacy, support fellow science educators nationwide, and inspire students with interesting and current research. She is also responsible for creating a lesson plan that will be used by science teachers across the country.

"Being selected is a very big honor," said Boyer. "There are only three ambassadors chosen across the country. I use *Science News Learning* in my classroom, so it is humbling to think that they entrusted me with this responsibility."

Boyer's students utilize *Science News Learning* in class to learn about current scientific research and coordinate their projects according to the Society for Science's ISF guidelines.

"The class greatly benefits from *Science News Learning* as it helps them see what current research is being conducted, how science is communicated, and helps them generate their topic ideas," says Boyer. "Through the ambassadorship, I get to focus in on some way the publication can help my students and I am able to build my lesson plan around that concept, even presenting *Science News Learning* to my department to show them how to look for existing lesson plans created by Science News as well as other educators across the country. Good lesson plans benefit both teachers and students."

Boyer was also invited to Society for Science's annual High School Science Research Teachers Conference this year in Washington, D.C. There, she interacted with other research teachers and learned how they coordinate student projects and align their classroom goals.

"It was an amazing experience," said Boyer. "I'm excited about the ambassadorship because I enjoy helping others and love promoting science. It's going to be a challenge, but I'm ready for it!"



# MAY THE ROADS RISE UP TO MEET YOU: THE IRELAND SEMESTER

Missouri Southern is known for its themed semesters, beginning with the China themed semester in 1997. This experience gives students the opportunity to bridge gaps and interact with people from different cultures, becoming global students as MSSU encourages. Immersing ourselves in different ways of life sets us on a fulfilling, lifelong journey, and it begins here on campus.

During the semester, Ireland-themed events exposed students and the community to facets of Irish culture such as music, food, literature, business, history, and art. Through these events, students could interact with professionals in these fields, finding connections between Ireland and the United States.

The MSSU Spiva Art Gallery hosted the Finding Inspiration: Dublin Photographs & Paintings Exhibit from Sep. 5 through Oct. 11. Photographs by ALEN MacWeeney capture life in Dublin, Ireland in 1963. During the 2020 lockdowns, MacWeeney's partner, artist Peysa Altman, posted the photographs to a Facebook page, receiving hundreds of comments reminiscing over the images. Many of these memories would be incorporated into Altman's artworks, which are featured alongside MacWeeney's photographs in the exhibits.



On Sep. 8, MacWeeney and Altman also discussed the importance of capturing moments, remembering people and events through art, and how sharing these pieces is vital to maintaining connection with culture and history.

The project brought people together on Facebook and at MSSU. Students like Zoe Angelpoulos, sophomore biology major, were inspired by the discussion.

"As a culture, we focus so much on ourselves," said Angelpoulos. "We should be focusing on taking pictures of the things around us. We don't consider the idea that things are temporary."

Discussions aren't the only themed events on campus. Just a Taste, a venue in Webb City,

hosted a sold-out Irish whiskey tasting on Sep. 14. Attendees savored a selection of Irish whiskey and were enchanted by World-renown Irish fiddler and singer Eimear Arkins, who was joined by Irish harpist Eileen Gannon and tin whistler Nicolas Brown.

The musicians also performed at Corley Auditorium, captivating the audience with Celtic music. During the performance, they described Irish music history and the significance of keeping music alive in both Ireland and in the U.S.

"I studied abroad in St. Louis for the Irish music scene in the area," said Arkins. "It's amazing to see that there's people wanting to learn Irish music and keep it alive over here. If it weren't for music, I wouldn't have found my way here."

Themed semesters often come with international trips to the represented country. This year, students in the Honors program and the art department studied abroad in Ireland over the summer. This was some students' first international trip, like junior elementary education major Abby McCaffery, and others' second or third time out of the country, like junior computer science major Andrew Cashion.

"When I heard about this trip to Ireland, I knew in my heart I was meant to go," said McCaffery. "MSSU made it happen."

Cashion and McCaffery traveled with the art department from May 22 to June 3, visiting in and around Belfast and Dublin. Students visited historical sites like Newgrange passage tomb and Kilkenny Castle. The centuries of stories and history seeping into the streets were too clear to miss.

Students saw a spring celebration in the city square as well as Napoleon's Nose, a rocky hill that supposedly inspired Jonathan Swift's novel "Gulliver's Travels." They also traveled the Antrim coast, seeing the cliffs of the Rathlin Island, where traces of Scotland's shores can be seen in the distance.

The group ended their time in Belfast with a trip to Giant's

Causeway, the legendary cliffs of hexagonal columns made of black basalt. Giant's Causeway appears in ancient myth and on television shows like "Game of Thrones."

"The view was striking," said Cashion. "It was exceptionally cool that Scotland has the same structures directly across from the Causeway, giving some credence to the legends of Scottish and Irish giants fighting upon both shores."

The group then traveled to Dublin, the capital of Ireland. Visits were made to St. Patrick's Cathedral, the Library of Trinity College, and Oscar Wilde Museum. Students also saw biblical manuscripts like the letters of Paul and the Book of Kells.

When they returned to the U.S., students created and displayed their Ireland-inspired artwork at the MSSU Far and Away: Reflections on Art & Conflict exhibit, proving that themed semesters influence students, exposing them to new experiences and creative ventures.

"It encouraged me to continue pursuing my goal of becoming a teacher," said McCaffery. "I want to impact others and show them that their dreams can come true, too."

Themed semesters extend beyond the classroom. They show students what is possible and help them reach their full potential. Themed semesters can be a road to the world, and MSSU sets students on that path.

## A LOOK BACK AT PREVIOUS SEMESTERS:





# “Love is more powerful than either you or I”

Whitney Fair's art was displayed at the Graduate Student Showcase as a love letter, and a goodbye.

Born in Joplin and raised in Carthage, Fair became an artist in middle school by buying canvasses and cheap acrylic paint, but he found his true passion when he enrolled at Missouri Southern in 2005, taking sculpting classes from professors Frank Pishkur and Scott Murray.

“Sculpting just kind of grew and grew,” said Fair. “MSSU is where my creative side was nurtured and guided in a direction to where technique met ideas, and both grew to form the artist I am now.”

Fair graduated in 2009 with his Bachelor of Arts with an emphasis in Sculpture. A week later, he met his husband, Todd. They instantly hit it off and eventually relocated to Georgia for ten years. While they dabbled in various industries like hospitality and real estate, Fair never stopped creating even with a lack of dedicated studio space.

“I had to make art around the house, even converting my closet into space occasionally,” said Fair. “But I never stopped being an artist. I was always creating something, and it became a kind of adventure.”

While many mediums and artists inspired Fair such as fashion designer Alexander McQueen, film director Tim Burton, and visual artist Christian Boltanski, rewatching R.E.M.'s “Losing My Religion” music video sparked inspiration for his next big project.

“I was inspired by Director Tarsem Singh’s visually striking, saturated colors and the images of St. Sebastian with the arrow in his chest,” said Fair. “These elements made me consider the abstraction of arrows and hearts, which eventually gestated into the concept of a relationship’s breakdown. I was thinking about how to make these ideas into smaller sculptures, how can I create paintings that I can easily store, but I didn’t start working on them until I moved back to Joplin.”

In May 2021, Fair returned to Joplin to care for his mother with plans to drive back to Georgia to celebrate his and Todd’s birthdays and anniversary, their “birthday-birthday-anniversary” as Fair called it.

But that week, Todd unexpectedly passed away.

“It was rough,” said Fair. “I had a great support system in Georgia, but I had to leave because it wasn’t home without Todd.”

Upon moving back to Missouri, Fair visited MSSU’s art department in August 2021 and met Scott Murray once again.

“It was as if no time passed at all, visiting again,” said Fair. “Scott always made the classroom feel like home.”

By the end of the visit, Fair had enrolled in an art class. That’s when the broken hearts and arrows from “Losing My Religion” reemerged. Between socializing and grieving, Fair worked in secret. Just in time for Fall 2021 semester finals, Fair had three pieces prepared, perfectly lit and ready for display.

“No one knew I had them,” said Fair. “I don’t think anyone expected me to have them prepared, but Scott and Frank were impressed by the work, and both told me I had to be a part of the master’s program.”

For the past two years, Fair has been pursuing his master’s certificate, creating more pieces that still follow the theme.

Six more sculptures were made for the Graduate Student Showcase in addition to the three pieces from Fall 2021. Attendees toured a graveyard that explored the complexity of grief and love: Hearts were served on silver platters or in gold pedestal bowls with others pinned to the wall and pierced by an arrow or twelve. One hand rose from a bouquet of black roses while another presented a bleeding heart from beyond the grave. This exhibit was to push viewers to their limits, to make them think. The text circling the gold pedestal bowl states the message of the exhibit: “Love is more powerful than either you or I”.

“Todd was a good man, a caring man. He was the life of the party. Even if life wasn’t ideal, there was always something to be happy and positive about,” said Fair “Being around people and toying with this work is how I survived everything better.”

This exhibit invited attendees to experience the universality of grief. Fair hopes that others can view his art and find release from their own pain.

“I’m doing this for Todd, too,” said Fair. “I plan to pursue my MFA after this and teach college art courses. I’m carrying on and continuing the life that we wanted to live. Even though he’s gone, our connection will never die—I think he’ll always be with me.”







# COLLEGE OF ARTS & SCIENCES



## MSSU PERFORMING ARTS HOSTS GUYS & DOLLS IN TAYLOR PERFORMING ARTS CENTER

The Performing Arts department transported audiences to 1930's New York City with the classic musical "Guys & Dolls" performed at MSSU's newly renovated Taylor Performing Arts Center.

The musical follows two gamblers, Sky Masterson (played by Isaiah Bruley, freshman speech and drama major) and Nathan Detroit (played by Logan Carnes, junior theater performance major), who bet one thousand dollars that Masterson can date missionary Sarah Brown (played by Anne Marie Wright, senior at Webb City High School). Detroit needs the cash to finance a crap game without his fiancée Miss Adelaide (played by Taylor Lewis, senior general studies major) knowing, but things go awry when Masterson and Brown unexpectedly fall for each other.

"Guys & Dolls" is the first theatrical performance to be held in Taylor Performing Arts Center since its renovation. With structural issues fixed in addition to new flooring

and seating, cast members and audiences are now able to enjoy more productions in the space.

"I've never been in a space like this before," said Lewis "It brought me to tears with how amazing it is."

"Guys & Dolls" is also the first production with director NaTasha O'Brien, the new assistant professor of theater at MSSU. She aims to reconnect the theater program with the surrounding community, and "Guys & Dolls" presented a great opportunity to execute this plan.

"The production blended individuals from the community, area high schools, and various other different backgrounds and levels of theatrical training," said O'Brien. "It has been my pleasure to work with and guide each actor on their individual journey of creativity. I could not be more impressed with the result."

## SOCIAL WORK HOSTED EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF MISSOURI NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SOCIAL WORKERS

Missouri Southern's Social Work Program hosted a community Lunch and Learn in October, allowing MSSU students and members of the community to sit down and participate in a Continuing Education Unit (CEU) event to help further their knowledge and skills in the Social Work field.

"Our social work department is committed to being a leader in making connections for the empowerment of all populations the profession serves," said Jannette Eldred, program director of social work at MSSU. "Training events like this open positive collaboration between representatives at the state level and the individuals and families served."

Presenter Cassie Brown, executive director of the Missouri National Association of Social Workers, spent the afternoon discussing the legislative process, as well as current Missouri policies and the impact of social work. Attended by several MSSU students, faculty from various MSSU departments, and community members, the event was a hit among those interested in social work.

"Brown works diligently alongside Missouri Congress and regulatory agencies," said Eldred. "Her presentation afforded CEU opportunities for students and community social workers regarding the legislative process, helped develop bi-partisan advocacy skills, and an update on current status of Missouri social welfare policies."

Later, MSSU students spent more time learning about NASW-MO social justice priorities and how they relate to the field's Code of Ethics.

"Events like Lunch and Learn help increase students' exposure to ethical practice standards and provide a sense of professional identity," said Eldred. "It gives students opportunities to network and gain advocacy skills with local and state representatives."



## ARTFUL MEDICINE SYMPOSIUM SUCCEEDS FOR THE SECOND YEAR

What began as a one-day occurrence has evolved into a now three-day hybrid conference. Hosted from Oct. 19-21, the symposium took place on the MSSU campus with the goal to unite healthcare and humanities by pursuing innovative pathways to improve patient/physician interactions through research and artwork. Scholars and artists from all over the world, including the U.S. Virgin Islands and renowned institutions such as Yale and Harvard University, presented research and artwork.

"We wanted to bring together medical professionals and non-medical professionals—those who teach the arts and humanities—to see what we can do to help us improve healthcare," said Dr. Alla Barry, conference co-chair and professor of biology & environmental health.

This year's keynote speakers were poet Renée Nicholson, director of the Humanities Center at West Virginia University, and Angela N. Pierce, assistant dean of Whole Health Integration at Alice L. Walton School of Medicine. The symposium was sponsored by Freeman Health System, Dr. Lance and Mrs. Sharon Beshore, and Kansas City University.

Dhvani Patel, second-year MKEAP student, and partner Collin Gray's study "The Forgotten History and Principles of Native American & Indian Traditional Medicine", analyzes how Native American and Indian cultures intertwined medicine with religion, spirituality, and art.

"I think symposiums such as these show the constantly evolving nature of medicine," said Patel. "I cannot wait to intertwine art therapy with Western medicine when I start practicing as a doctor."





# COLLEGE OF BUSINESS, COMMUNICATION & TECHNOLOGY



## DR. ELKE HOWE PROMOTED TO DEAN

In July, Dr. Elke Howe was named the new dean of the College of Business, Communication and Technology, having previously served as professor and chair of industrial engineering technology at MSSU.

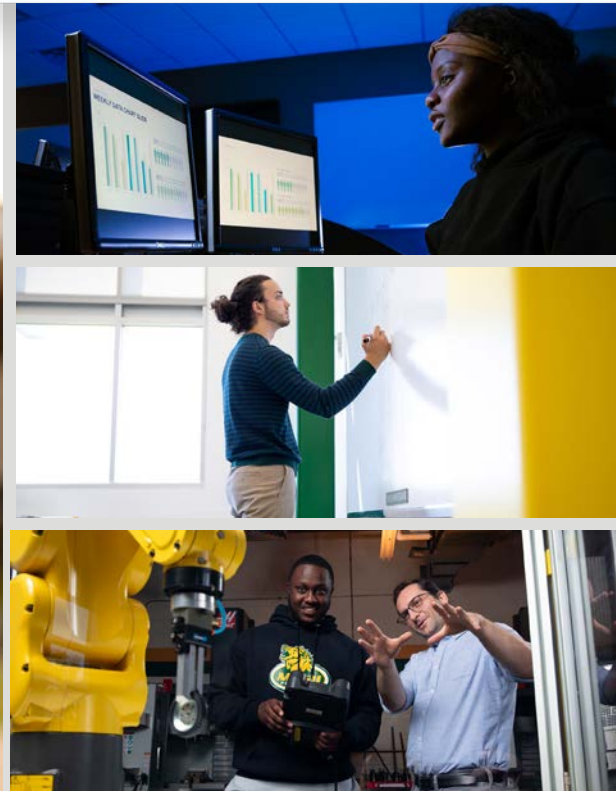
"I've had the pleasure to work with wonderful students and colleagues in the Technology department both as an educator and department chair," said Howe. "Now, I intend to apply the same principles as dean."

She has since worked to prepare students for their futures by offering new degree programs, looking at trends and employer needs when developing a curriculum, teaching relevant skills, and engaging students in immersive experiences so that they graduate career-ready.

"I want to be cognizant and responsive to our students' needs," Howe said. "I believe in preparing students for tomorrow so they will thrive in this global world by providing a nurturing and inclusive environment that supports student development and helps them achieve their potential."

Nearly a semester into her new position, Dr. Howe is eager to continue exercising her duties as dean.

"I am looking forward to continue working with dedicated and competent colleagues who care deeply about Missouri Southern and our students," said Howe. "I love arriving at my office, the day full of possibilities, and getting started on making progress towards achieving meaningful goals."



## SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CENTER CELEBRATES RENOVATION

The Small Business Development Center at Missouri Southern hosted a ribbon-cutting ceremony in celebration of their office renovation at 3 p.m. on July 31 in the basement of the Robert W. Plaster School of Business.

This is SBDC's first renovation since their opening on April 1, 1987.

"We purged a lot of furniture and outdated material that was no longer current, so it's a whole new space to better serve our clients," said director Katie Fields.

The renovation will give SBDC a warm, inviting environment for their clients. "I think appearance goes a long way in terms of making a space welcoming," Fields said. "That was our number one goal: When a student or a new client comes to our office, they feel welcomed in this space."

The Missouri SBDC is in Plaster Hall in Room 107. For additional information, call (417) 625-3128 or email [SBDC@mssu.edu](mailto:SBDC@mssu.edu).

## SHRM CHAPTER AWARDED SUPERIOR MERIT AWARD FOR SECOND YEAR RUNNING

From organizing a food drive for the Lion Co-Op to Vice President Allison Tillman leading a volunteer effort for the international non-profit Days for Girls, it's no surprise that Missouri Southern's Society for Human Resource Management student chapter was awarded the Superior Merit Award for the second consecutive year.

The SHRM chapter at MSSU is one of 450 in the country and is the voice of all things work, employees, and businesses. The Superior Merit Award represents the highest of three tiers awarded to eligible student chapters each year. Chapters are recognized based on operations, chapter programming and professional development of members, support of the human resource profession, and SHRM engagement.

"Our students at MSSU never cease to amaze me, and SHRM is no exception," said Dr. Sarah Holtzen, SHRM co-advisor and assistant professor of management. "In three short years, our students have worked to make this club into something amazing. I am grateful for the continued opportunity to work alongside such a talented team of student leaders."

SHRM members have volunteered for various efforts within the Joplin area and on the international level since their inception in 2020. Endeavors include sponsoring a child through the MSSU Angel Tree in 2021 and 2022; Makinna Loftis, current club president, serving on a Tri-State HRA subcommittee since last spring to help plan the annual HR Day of Service event; and Isabella Zepeda, SHRM secretary, spearheading efforts to organize a larger food drive in collaboration among the other registered student organizations in the Plaster School of Business.

"It is very validating to see the hard work of myself, my fellow officers, and our dedicated advisor, Dr. Holtzen, be recognized by such a high degree of achievement for the second year in a row," said Loftis. "We strive to support the club and our members in every way possible, and it is an incredible feeling to know that our efforts are not going unnoticed."







# COLLEGE OF HEALTH, LIFE SCIENCE & EDUCATION



## BIOLOGY CLASS TREATS BIOLOGY POND OF INVASIVE SPECIES

Every semester, Dr. David Penning, professor of biology and environmental health at MSSU, takes his General Ecology class to the Biology Pond to do a bit of clean up.

"This is for a class, so technically against their will," said Penning. "But a lot of the students are interested in environmental work, and this helps them decide if they want to do labor work or something else in that field."

In 2009, it was discovered that someone had dumped their aquarium in the pond, allowing an invasive species to take root within the water. This aquatic plant is known as an Eurasian Watermilfoil, an aquarium plant that grows in thick batches, killing off native plants that fish and other species use as food and shelter.

"The way we normally get rid of invasive species is to use chemicals," said Penning. "But since this is a natural spring and it leads to Turkey Creek, we're trying to minimize the amount of chemicals we use."

Students in waders go out to the middle of the pond and bring bunches of watermilfoils to the shore, while also looking for the largest crawdad for extra credit. After they collect as much of the aquatic plant as possible, the piles are then placed on a terraria plant that is also invasive to the area, known as Winter Creeper, using the watermilfoils ability of blocking the sun to wither the fellow invasive plant.

Clean up of these invasive species began in 2016, making the task a long but satisfying and educating one. With every semester, the hope of native plants taking back what is theirs grows stronger.

"We're not killing it, we're restarting the race for the seeds," said Penning. "We're giving the native plants a chance to win."

## SPORT AND RECREATION MANAGEMENT PROGRAM EXPANDS AFTER FIRST YEAR

Being the only degree program in Southwest Missouri that was purposely designed for students interested in careers in both recreation and sport industries, the Sport and Recreation Management degree has taken off, almost doubling in the number of prospective students since Fall 2022.

"There was only one student in the program when I arrived here last fall, but by the end of the semester, we had around 30 declared majors," said Dr. Zachary Beldon, program director of sport & recreation management and assistant professor of kinesiology. "Since this semester has begun, we have around 50 majors, with new students interested in the degree reaching out on semiweekly basis."

The program is also organizing a one-day symposium open to both MSSU students and the entire region. Speakers include professionals and leaders from the Southwest Missouri sports industry. The keynote address will be delivered by Dr. Jay Coakley, a world-renowned Sport Sociologist. The symposium is funded by Rod Anderson, '76, MSSU alumnus and former Board of Governors chair.

"I am absolutely honored that Rod is willing to support this event," said Beldon. "It illustrates the commitment from the community to better prepare future sport and recreational employees in this region."

Faculty are working to provide students with more hands-on learning opportunities and experiences. This fall, they took a group of 15 students to Northwest Arkansas to meet with the front office staff of the Northwest Arkansas Naturals, a Minor League baseball team in Springdale, Arkansas. There, students watched how the staff manage and operate a professional sports organization.



## 2023 NURSING COHORT ACCOMPLISHES 100 PERCENT PASSING RATE

The May 2023 nursing cohort has accomplished an impressive 100 percent passing rate for the NCLEX-RN test, the exam necessary to become a practicing nurse.

"The NCLEX-RN outcome for the May 2023 cohort demonstrates the hard work of graduates and faculty," said Dr. Lisa Beals, assistant professor and department chair of the nursing program. "The program is successful because of the faculty's dedication towards their profession and the department's cohesiveness as we work together to ensure a positive, supportive learning environment."

The nursing program's integrated curriculum, driven by the use of the best innovative practices in nursing education, also contributes to the successful passing rate. Unique elements such as e-books, various directed clinical experiences, and virtual reality simulations give an advantage to graduates.

"We have high expectations for our students," said Beals. "As staff, we know how tough it is. We're doing our best to be there for our students and to prepare them for their careers."





# LION ATHLETICS



## CROSSING THE NATIONAL STAGE

### MSSU HOSTS NCAA DII NATIONAL CROSS COUNTRY CHAMPIONSHIPS

A successful cross country season for the Lions culminated with the NCAA Division II National Cross Country Championships on the Tom Rutledge Cross Country Course on November 18. This marked the fifth time Missouri Southern has hosted the championship races. Most recently, the Lions hosted the championships in 2015, but also in 2012, 2007, and 1999.

“Hosting the NCAA Championships is something that we are very proud to do. We have developed one of the best running courses in the country, and in many ways feel compelled to host”, said Bryan Schiding, Director of Cross Country and Track and Field at Missouri Southern. “It is an amazing opportunity to showcase not only our course and ability to run high level competitions, but also has a significant impact on Joplin’s hotel, restaurant, and retail markets.”

The Lions were well represented, with the women’s team qualifying and Gidieon Kimutai individually qualifying for

the men’s race. The women were one of 10 teams selected at-large, thanks to a fifth-place finish at the Central Region Championship. Kimutai finished fifth overall in the men’s Central Region Championship, which would be enough to secure his spot to compete as an individual. This was Kimutai’s fourth time competing in the NCAA National Championships.

The women’s team had seven runners compete in the championship 6k race led by Lilah Genel, with a time of 21:50.4. Other members of the team were Kyla Weems, Jenari Lopez, Kayanna Gaines, Riley Vickrey, Jayna Gunter, and Isabella Frost. This was the first time the Lions qualified as a team since 2014.

Kimutai finished the 10k race in 29:46.3, which was good for 14th place, securing his spot as an NCAA All-American. This was his third cross country All-American honor in his career and his fastest time in a National Championship race.



## WRITING ON THE WALL

### OPLOJNIKS' GIFT TRANSFORMS WOMEN'S BASKETBALL LOCKER ROOM

The 2022-2023 season was a banner year for the Missouri Southern women’s basketball team. The Lions won 29 games – a program record, celebrated their first MIAA Tournament Championship victory since 1996, and made an appearance at their first Regional Championship game since 1994. Images of these successes and many other historic achievements are now commemorated on the walls of the newly renovated locker room.

Thanks to a generous and transformational gift to the Lions Forward Campaign from Brad and Anita Oplotnik, the women’s basketball locker room received a complete redesign. The impact of this gift will help attract top talent during recruitment as prospective athletes visit the Lions’ facilities and serve as a point of pride for the familiar faces on the walls. The Oplotniks know what it takes to succeed at the collegiate level, having been outstanding student-athletes at MSSU, and believe that this gift will help the Lions do so in the future.

Brad is an '85 graduate and football alum. Anita is an '88 graduate, MSSU Athletics Hall of Fame women’s basketball alum, and the current chair of the MSSU Board of Governors. They have four children, and their two sons, Darin and David, are MSSU student-athletes.

The new locker room, complete with new lockers and floor-to-ceiling wall graphics, was unveiled in August.



# IN THE HISTORY BOOKS

## LIONS ATHLETICS ADDS SIX TO THE ATHLETICS HALL OF FAME

The Missouri Southern athletics department inducted five former student athletes and one distinguished individual into the 2023 Athletics Hall of Fame on Oct. 28th.

This year's class included Danee Jones (Women's Track & Field, 2002-05), Bill Martz (meritorious service), Nikki (Llewellyn) Nill (Women's Soccer, 2005-08), Harold Noirfalise (Football, 1981-84), Kaney Tyler (Women's Soccer, 2004-07), and Brandon Williams (Football, 2008-12).



**DANEE JONES** held the program record in the outdoor weight throw (18.84m), indoor hammer throw (54.99m) and indoor discus throw (50.90m) at the end of her time as a Lion, with her discus mark being an MIAA record for some time as well. She was a seven-time MIAA event champion, four-time All-American, and the 2005-06 MSSU Female Athlete of the Year.



**BILL MARTZ** is a Lionbacker and has been a supporter of the Lions for over 25 years, attending games at Missouri Southern since the mid 1970s. Attendees of MSSU contests have likely seen Martz proudly supporting the Lions, as he represents the green and gold at nearly every home athletic event. Martz has signed up more than 100 Lionbackers over the past three years.



**NIKKI (LLEWELLYN) NILL** was and still is the greatest goalscorer the women's soccer program has ever seen while still holding career records for goals (49), game winning goals (17), total points (109, 49G, 11A), shots (264) and shots on goal (126). Nill was the 2005 MIAA

Freshman of the Year, a four-time first-team All-MIAA midfielder, and a four-time All-Region player. She is the only Lion in program history to be named an All-American and did so from 2006-08, earning second-team honors in 06, first-team honors in 07, and third-team honors in 08. A standout in the classroom as well, she was a three-time MIAA Academic Honor Roll recipient along with being an Academic All-Region selection in 2008 and an Academic All-American in 2007.



**HAROLD NOIRFALISE** is the greatest running back in program history with his name still atop several career leader boards nearly 40-years after he concluded his playing career. Noirfalise finished his career with 3,864 yards from 687 attempts, scoring 42

touchdowns on the ground with 17 games rushing for 100 or more yards, along with his 266 career points from 43 total touchdowns to rank first in each career category. He was a four-time NAIA All-District 16 and first-team All-CSIC selection during his time as a Lion, and was a three-time NAIA All-American. He is one of two Lions to earn All-American honors three times in a career.



**KANEY TYLER** is the most successful goalie in Lions history for the women's soccer team, holding career program records in wins (33), shutouts (28), GAA (0.73), saves (335) and time in goal (5,938:08).

Among program season ranks she is first in wins (11, 2005), shutouts (10, 2005), GAA (0.58, 2005) and minutes in goal (1,942:00, 2006). She was the only Lion in history to have eight or more wins and a GAA below 0.90 and at least 1,500 minutes in goal in three consecutive years (2005-07) along with having at least three shutouts in all four years. Tyler was the 2005 MIAA MVP, earned All-MIAA honors three times in her career from 2005-07, with honorable mention laurels in 2006 and 2007 along with being a 2005 second-team NSCAA goalkeeper to round out her athletic honors.



**BRANDON WILLIAMS**, the 2012 BSN and D2football.com National Player of the Year is still the program's leader in career sacks (27.0) and TFL's (49.5) while holding three of the top-five single-season sack totals in program history.

Williams would receive All-American honors in 2010, 2011, and 2012. In addition to being named the 2012 National Player of the Year by D2football.com and BSN, Williams would be recognized as the MIAA Defensive Player of the Year. He is the only player selected to the Senior Bowl in Lions history. Williams was drafted in the 3rd Round of the 2013 NFL Draft by the Baltimore Ravens. With the Ravens, Williams played in 123 games from 2013-2021. He finished with 323 total tackles (183 solo), 33.0 tackles-for-loss, 19 quarterback hits, 11 pass defended, 6.5 sacks, five fumble recoveries, two forced fumbles, and a defensive touchdown while earning Pro Bowl honors in 2018. In 2022 he signed with the eventual Super Bowl champion Kansas City Chiefs, appearing in five regular season games and all three playoff games.



## ONE OF TWO

### MISSOURI SOUTHERN HOST BASEBALL AND SOFTBALL REGIONAL

Missouri Southern was one of two universities to host both an NCAA Baseball Regional and an NCAA Softball Regional.

The Missouri Southern baseball program earned the second seed in the Central Region and hosted its first regional since 1992. This was the program's third time to host an NCAA Regional and the ninth time overall to make an appearance in the regional tournament. The 2023 season ended in the final game of the NCAA Central Regional Tournament with a tough loss to Minnesota State – Mankato. The Lions would finish the season with the second most wins in program history at 45 wins.

The Missouri Southern softball program would also earn the second seed in the Central Region and host its first regional since 1993. This was the third time in program history to host an NCAA Regional and the ninth overall NCAA Regional appearance, with the last happening in 2001. The Lions would make it as far as the semi-final before falling to Rogers State, the defending national champions. That game would end a historic season that saw the Lions win 41 games.





## 1970s

**John Keen, '73**, became the Interim President of Alamance Community College in Graham, N.C.

## 1980s

**Mark Boyer, '84**, published "Four Catholic Pioneers".

**Benjy Fenske, '86**, retired from public education at Pierce City and Clever, Mo. He recently authored and published a book entitled "Unscripted and Undeniable—Unforgettable Tales from a Teacher, Coach and Administrator."

**Greg Garton, '87**, career scoring champion for Missouri Southern Lions men's basketball was inducted into the Missouri Sports Hall of Fame.

## 1990s

**Kevin Cooper, '91**, was named the new Superintendent at Riverton Unified School District in Riverton, Kan.

**Derek Martin, '91**, started a new position as President and CEO at Malone's Aerospace Holdings. LLC in Blossom, Texas.

**Emily DeFranco, '92**, named Chair of Obstetrics and Gynecology at the University of Kentucky College of Medicine in Highland Heights.

**Kevin E. Hooks, '92**, was hired to be the first ever Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer for the California Department of Justice.

**Andrew Patterson, '94**, was promoted to Executive Director for Strategic Initiatives in St. Louis, Mo.

**Tammy Walker, '96**, was promoted to Deputy Director of Economic Security Corporation in Joplin.

**Jeremy Willman, '98**, is now the Chief Technical Officer for Velocity Solutions, LLC out of Fort Lauderdale, Fla.

**Jimmy Thrasher, '99**, is now the Senior Talent Acquisition partner at Jack Henry in Monett, Mo.

**James Lowary, '99**, is promoted to Lieutenant with the Missouri State Highway Patrol, in Jefferson City.

## 2000s

**Shawna Price, '00**, is the new Director of Human Resources at Springfield Public Schools in Springfield, Mo.

**Steve Reed, '01**, after 34 years of service with Joplin Schools, he has retired as Assistant Director of Franklin Technology Center's Joplin High School in Joplin.

**Matt Rosebrough, '01**, has been named the Director of Assessment and Intervention at Springfield Public Schools in Springfield, Mo.

**Timothy Barrett, '02**, was promoted to the rank of Sergeant of the Missouri State Highway Patrol.

**Amy Sampson, '03**, was awarded the 2021-2022 Teachers for Global Classrooms Fullbright Fellowship at Monett High School, Mo.

**Heather Van Otterloo, '05**, received her doctorate in Educational Leadership. Currently an English Language Arts teacher for gifted students in Joplin.

**Jeff Taylor, '06**, was welcomed as the HCA Florida Orange Park Hospital's new Chief Executive Officer.

**Tracy Cordova, '07**, new position as Marketplace Director at Walmart International in Bentonville, Ark.

**Erica Missavage, '09**, is now the Regional Director of Preferred Family Healthcare of Joplin.

## 2010s

**Wesley Coatney, '09**, is the Chief of Police for the Aurora-Marionville Police Department in Marionville, Mo.

**Kimi Reed, '10**, was awarded the Wynn Award as one of the most decorated athletes at MSSU, eight-time All-American in cross country.

**Isaac Norman, '10**, has joined First Community Bank as Assistant Vice President in Joplin.

**Jesse Cordova, '11**, received a 2022 Mid-America Regional EMMY Award, Evening Newscast – 50-99 market.

**Brandon Weaver, '12**, has been promoted to a Level 6 Principal Software Engineer – Payroll Services at Gusto in San Francisco, Calif.

**Logan Wilson, '13**, is now the Assistant Principal for Branson Junior High School in Branson, Mo.

**Ryon Phillips, '15**, is now the Associate Director of Athletics for Compliance and Academic Services at Dallas Baptist University.

**Keegan Tinney, '15**, has been presented by the Missouri Bar Young Lawyers' Section the Tom Cochran Community Service Award.

**Gary Dodson, '18**, has gained new employment with Missouri Southern State University as the Chief Information Security Officer.

**Brian Way, '19**, is now the Vice President of Development for Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Ozarks.

## 2020s

**Cam Walton, '22**, is now an Associate Broker with AON in Chicago, Ill.

**Katelyn Grider, '22**, is now the Patient Access Representative with Arkansas Children's Northwest Hospital in Springdale, Ark.

## LION CUBS

**Ryon, '15**, and Kourtney Phillips welcomed Kamrynn Phillips in June 2022.



**Shane, '05**, and **Blair Hirschman, '06**, welcomed Fisher Cate Lee on July 26, 2022.



**Tasha, '09**, and Jerad Titch welcomed Abigail Titch on Oct. 13, 2022.



**Levi, '10**, and **Leslie Jett, '10**, welcomed Madden Ragains on Nov. 26, 2022.

## MARRIAGES

**Aaron, '18** and **Sarah (Burtrum) Linder, '20**, were married on September 18, 2021.



# I N M E M O R I A M

DATES AS OF NOVEMBER 2, 2023

## ALUMNI

Juanita Alloway '78 | March 4, 2023  
Donald Ashworth '71 | Sept. 11, 2023  
Pamela Bastin '77 | Nov. 6, 2022  
Josephine "JoAnne" Bauni '79 | Jan. 7, 2023  
Steven Bearden '82 | Jan. 6, 2023  
Guy Leroy Benson '74 | Oct. 8, 2022  
Janna Bentz '97 | April 19, 2023  
Billy Bishop '03 | April 25, 2023  
Rodney Bradfield '84 | May 1, 2023  
Paula Brite '71 | March 7, 2023  
Kenneth L Brown '82 | May 20, 2023  
Mary Jo Brown '72 | Feb. 12, 2023  
Roger Brown '64 | Oct. 17, 2022  
James Buck '73 | Feb. 15, 2023  
Carol Burnham '81 | June 25, 2023  
Danielle Busch '11 | Oct. 3, 2023  
Gary Butler '74 | July 18, 2023  
Brenda Caflin-Laub '03 | Oct. 1, 2022  
Corban Caldwell '13 | Aug. 13, 2023  
Evan Callaway '78 | Aug. 27, 2023  
Donald Calvin '77 | April 21, 2023  
Earline Carnes '52 | Dec. 3, 2022  
Douglas "Doug" Christerson '88 | Jan. 12, 2023  
Janet Cole '71 | Aug. 14, 2023  
Patrick Collins '93 | March 15, 2023  
Roilynn "Buffy" Comer '99 | Feb. 20, 2023  
Arthur "Art" Combrink '73 | May 4, 2023

Thomas Coop '69 | Dec. 10, 2022  
Cris Crissman '82 | Oct. 10, 2022  
Donna Crockett '93 | Aug. 9, 2023  
Vickie Cupp '82 | Jan. 17, 2023  
Carla Culver '82 | Sept. 28, 2023  
Kyle Daniels '12 | Oct. 26, 2022  
Gary Dawson '63 | July 10, 2023  
Ailene DeWelt '60 | Aug. 8, 2023  
Andrew "Andy" Dodson '19 | Oct. 22, 2022  
George Dorsey '70 | March 8, 2023  
John "Randy" Dunlap '68 | July 17, 2023  
Tammi Dunlavy '91 | Nov. 2, 2023  
Archie Edwards, Jr. '93 | Jan. 29, 2023  
Judith "Judy" Emmert '88 | March 25, 2023  
Zona England '70 | Nov. 12, 2022  
Donna Erisman '61 | Aug. 30, 2023  
Josephine "Jo" Evatt '87 | Oct. 17, 2022  
Beth Fitzlaff '81 | May 26, 2023  
Michael Ford '68 | Nov. 12, 2022  
Gary Frazier '86 | Dec. 26, 2022  
Iola French '90 | May 13, 2023  
Sheryl Fullmer '80 | May 5, 2023  
Billy Gaines '69 | Feb. 2, 2023  
Charles Garde '55 | Oct. 25, 2022  
Patti German '75 | Aug. 24, 2023  
Mickey Gold '79 | March 5, 2023  
Edward Haffner '80 | Oct. 20, 2022

Hester Haney '75 | Oct. 9, 2022  
Marolyn Hardy '66 | Jan. 13, 2023  
Dean Harkrader '91 | Aug. 30, 2023  
Dennis Hare '67 | Dec. 1, 2022  
Ronald Harnar '83 | June 27, 2023  
Rowena Harrold '70 | Feb. 4, 2023  
Kara Harter '04 | Jan. 28, 2023  
Axel Hartman '12 | July 11, 2023  
Linda Heatherly '75 | March 18, 2023  
Max Helms '81 | June 17, 2023  
Kevin Herd '75 | Dec. 17, 2022  
Heather Hicks '01 | July 20, 2023  
Cathy Holt '77 | Dec. 10, 2022  
Guy Hudson '59 | Feb. 11, 2023  
Margaret "Peggy" Hughes '83 | April 20, 2023  
Bert Hurn '44 | June 11, 2023  
Richard Jaynes '66 | Aug. 30, 2023  
Bonnie Johnson '69 | July 19, 2023  
Robert Johnson '66 | Nov. 23, 2022  
David Jones '90 | Feb. 19, 2023  
Phyllis Jones '74 | Nov. 7, 2022  
Shirley Kelly '88 | Feb. 27, 2023  
Larry Kerbs '90 | July 6, 2023  
Robert "Bobby" Lamoure '13 | March 16, 2023  
Shirley Landers '56 | Nov. 7, 2022  
Raymond Lee '79 | April 19, 2023  
Gail Leslie '93 | April 10, 2023  
Sandra "Sandy" Lovett '99 | April 11, 2023  
Donna Loyd '08 | Sept. 12, 2023  
Hugh Lundman | Feb. 16, 2023  
Teresa Lynch '86 | Nov. 26, 2022  
Donna Magee '77 | Oct. 10, 2023  
Jeremy Mather '00 | July 5, 2023  
Sharon McGuire '86 | Oct. 16, 2023  
Walter Meador '66 | Oct. 4, 2023  
Carol Metzger '70 | March 1, 2023  
Paul Milton '51 | Jan. 6, 2023

Robert "Bob" Miner '69 | Oct. 6, 2023  
Michael "Mike" Mitchell '73 | Dec. 1, 2022  
Norine Moffatt '78 | Aug. 18, 2023  
Jo Ann Molinar '85 | July 6, 2023  
Gordon "Griz" Moore '78 | Jan. 11, 2023  
Donald "Ray" Mosley '82 | March 8, 2023  
Oliver "O.J." Moss '80 | Aug. 25, 2023  
Kyle Ollis '09 | July 10, 2023  
John "Nick" Parolin '67 | Nov. 5, 2022  
Keith Patterson '03 | Jan. 21, 2023  
Connie Patton '02 | Oct. 30, 2022  
Carl Perkins '11 | April 10, 2023  
Margaret Perry '50 | Oct. 22, 2023  
Melissa Plant '97 | Sept. 5, 2023  
Charles Price, Jr. '92 | Aug. 15, 2023  
Karent Pyron '89 | June 2, 2023  
Connie Quinton '87 | Oct. 12, 2022  
Ronald "Ron" Richard '69 | June 9, 2023  
Kenneth Richards '71 | Jan. 21, 2023  
Rickey Richardson '83 | Jan. 6, 2023  
Clark Ridpath '50 | Sept. 24, 2023  
Christine Samuel '96 | June 26, 2023  
Sallie Schwaninger '09 | Dec. 23, 2022  
Denise "D" Seller '00 | July 11, 2023  
Larry Shelton '71 | April 22, 2023  
Dorothy Sherwood '50 | Feb. 24, 2023  
Kayna "Kay" Sims '84 | Feb. 19, 2023  
Kevin Smith '88 | April 24, 2023  
Othelia Smith '79 | March 27, 2023  
Richard Smith, Jr. '92 | June 12, 2023  
Bill Snodgrass '65 | April 4, 2023  
Gary Sorensen '73 | Nov. 20, 2022  
Dayna Spencer '88 | Aug. 23, 2023  
Dorothy "Christine" Stipp '48 | Feb. 5, 2023  
Erick Studyvin '11 | July 13, 2023  
Rachel Sturm '80 | Feb. 16, 2023  
Marvin "Clark" Swanson '81 | March 10, 2023



(ALUMNI CONTINUED)

Phyllis Talley '93 | May 20, 2023  
Rick "Ricky" Thompson '71 | March 11, 2023  
Warren Townsend '80 | Aug. 15, 2023  
Riley Walton, Jr. '77 | July 24, 2023  
Helen "Eileen" Warren '73 | Jan. 20, 2023  
Elton Weeks '50 | May 29, 2023  
Donald Weston '55 | March 11, 2023  
Jacob Williams '17 | July 3, 2023

Charlotte Wilson '88 | Oct. 30, 2022  
Elizabeth "Ann" Wilson '72 | Nov. 24, 2022  
Kristull Wingert '07 | July 9, 2023  
William "Zeke" Wintjen '87 | May 7, 2023  
Roberta "Bobbie" Wood '91 | Oct. 30, 2022  
Andrew "A.J." Wuch '04 | Oct. 9, 2023  
Lloyd York '48 | Dec. 13, 2022

FRIENDS

Meredith Lentz Adams | Jan. 2, 2023  
Heather Briley | June 2, 2023  
Jo Ann Brothers | July 25, 2023  
Lewis Cole | Feb. 10, 2023  
Robert "Bob" Cooper | Feb. 17, 2023  
Mike Couk | March 5, 2023  
John Davey Jr. | Jan. 17, 2023  
John Eli | Oct. 25, 2022  
Maxine Flournoy | April 5, 2023  
Della Frazier | Oct. 2, 2023  
Robert Guarino | March 26, 2023  
Wayne Lawson | May 14, 2023  
Florence "Ann" O'Leary | Nov. 22, 2022

Carolyn Phelps | March 25, 2023  
Harry "Preston" Pate | Nov. 19, 2022  
John "Pat" Phelps | Nov. 20, 2022  
Ernest "E. Elliot" Potter | June 6, 2023  
Betty Reed | Feb. 17, 2023  
Dale Reneau | Aug. 6, 2023  
William Roehling | Oct. 9, 2023  
William "Bill" Searce | Jan. 21, 2023  
Dr. Dennis Smith | Feb. 23, 2023  
Dennis Sutton | Aug. 12, 2023  
Willa Mae Williams | April 1, 2023  
Larry Woodmansee | June 3, 2023  
Terry Wright | Jan. 4, 2023

FACULTY, STAFF & RETIREES

Albert "Al" Carnine | May 2, 2023  
Jimmy Couch | March 21, 2023  
Emma "Carolyn" Cunningham '72 | Sept. 23, 2023  
James "Stu" Dunlop, Jr. | June 26, 2023  
Kenneth Dwyer | Jan. 5, 2023  
Steven Gale | Feb. 12, 2023

Robert Gray | Sept. 20, 2023  
Duane Hunt '58 | Dec. 8, 2022  
Kenneth "Reed" Kneeland | Oct. 17, 2022  
R. Clyde "R.C." Shipley | Oct. 16, 2023  
Charles Thelen | Feb. 4, 2023  
Leonard Tunnell, Jr. | Oct 8, 2023

# WHY I GIVE

MICHELLE RAMIREZ, '05

Michelle Ramirez is giving back to the sport that gave so much to her. Having competed on the Missouri Southern Track and Field and Cross Country teams for three years, she wanted to support current and future student athletes by donating to the Winged Foot Club, an alumni-driven fund that provides competition needs such as equipment and travel.

"Athletics made me disciplined, hardworking, and responsible," said Ramirez. "It has strengthened my employment opportunities."

Ramirez says giving to the Winged Foot Club means continuing to support current and future MSSU student athletes with their educational and athletic goals.

"Some of my fondest memories of cross country and track are the lifelong friendships that it has created for me," said Ramirez. "I still keep in close contact with many of the athletes that I attended college with during my years at Missouri Southern."

"It's important to continue the legacy of the track and field and cross country teams at MSSU by supporting our athletes and coaches."

In addition to athletics, Ramirez had the opportunity to study abroad in countries like England and Italy. She ended up training with a variety of people, learning how to work with others from different backgrounds and cultures. "Studying abroad taught me how to motivate people, talk to them, and to best understand working with them. These are hard to learn in school."

Ramirez continued to apply these lifelong skills after graduating from MSSU in December 2005 with two bachelor's degrees in Management and Accounting. Since then, Ramirez has earned two master's degrees and is currently the director of Revenue Cycle Support Services for a children's hospital in Corpus Christi, Texas where she lives with her husband Philip. She credits her time on the team to helping her succeed.



To discuss how you can support Missouri Southern, please call the MSSU Office of Development at 417-625-9615.





3950 East Newman Road  
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If you are a parent of an alum and they no longer live with you,  
please call 417-659-LION or visit [www.mssu.edu/alumni-update](http://www.mssu.edu/alumni-update)  
to update their contact information!

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