

CROSSROADS

MISSOURI UNIVERSITY | WINTER 2025

IN HIS OLYMPIC ERA

Alum, Rajindra Campbell, takes bronze at Paris Olympics

Det. Mark Kennedy reflects on life's journey from MSSU to "The First 48"

MSSU equips pharmacist to make a positive local impact

JAMAICA



Color Wars CAB Event



Homecoming King & Queen: **Jacob Martinez** and **Katie Candrl**



Artful Medicine Symposium



from the editor

Compiling these stories has been a great adventure. It seemed nearly impossible simply because Lions have accomplished so many incredible things this past year, but we're proud to present these amazing stories from our students, faculty, and staff.

Many of these stories display the strength and willpower of our Lions. Some accomplished these feats while in college, while others after they have graduated, but all have passed through these halls. Missouri Southern is just a step towards one's accomplishments.

You'll read about **Lacy Epperson**, a Neosho pharmacist dedicated to serving her community; homicide detective **Mark Kennedy** who's featured on "The First 48" and devoted to taking bad guys off the streets of Tulsa; and several biology students who are researching turtles and reptiles in Asbury.

And we can't forget about our cover story of track and field athlete **Rajindra Campbell**, who won bronze and proudly represented Jamaica in the 2024 Paris Olympics.

You'll hear from **NaTasha O'Brien-Davies**, director of Theatrical Studies, who is transforming the theater department and bringing more stories from page to stage at Missouri Southern.

Then there's the growth in the kinesiology department. From the inaugural Sports and Recreation Management Symposium to two new degree programs, there is a great deal of advancement for the department and its students.

Then we have two students—**Melody Reed** and **Eryn Wagoner**—attending conferences as some of the only undergraduates selected to present their research.

We also have two Spring 2024 graduates awarded the very first MO-SHRM conference scholarship who are also the only people in the state to win this scholarship. Not to mention the establishment of MSSU's MBA program.

Yeah, there's a lot in this issue.

The following tells the tales of tenacity, determination, and strength, all traits of Missouri Southern Lions.

It's a joy to share these stories. If you have a story yourself, please drop us a line at crossroads@mssu.edu.

See you in the summer!

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Our *Lion* Alumni

Deron Burr, 1992 | Amy Gannaway, 1993 | Crystal Franklin, 1998 | JE Cruse, 1998 | John Klute, 2005
Carrie Burgi, 2010 | Brett Burr, 2017 | Paige Mailes, 2019 | Layne Skiles, 2023 | Brendan Rozier, 2024
Anticipated Graduates: Shalea Tate, Lundyn Trudeau, Jolie Stipp, Kaitlyn Soden

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Greetings from Missouri Southern!

I hope you enjoy this latest issue of Crossroads in which you will read about several examples of innovation. The phrase “Lions Forward” is more than the name of our current fundraising campaign—it’s also a statement that our faculty, staff, students, and volunteer Board members are working together to build a bright future at MSSU.

Today, the university is providing new educational opportunities by successfully expanding its academic programs, especially at the graduate level. This includes master’s degree opportunities in historic areas of strength such as teacher education but also in new areas such as data analytics, sports and recreation management, and business administration (MBA).

Construction of the Roy Blunt Health Science Innovation Center is progressing well. When completed in summer of 2026, new spaces such as a simulation hospital will provide unique immersive learning opportunities for students, and a new welcome center will serve as an inviting “front door” for our campus. This has been made possible through investment of \$30 million by the State of Missouri, as well as philanthropic support and investment by the City of Joplin, Jasper County, and the federal government—we are most grateful.

In this issue, you will also learn of the remarkable success and impact of Missouri Southern graduates. We are proud of alum and former Lion student-athlete Rajindra Cambell who captured the bronze medal in the shotput at the 2024 Paris Olympics for his home country of Jamaica. We are also proud of the other alumni featured in Crossroads who exemplify the impact MSSU graduates have in their communities and broader world.

Thank you for the support that you provide to Missouri Southern. As always, student success remains at the heart of our mission, and your interest, advocacy, and charitable support of MSSU make a difference.

Lions Together. Lions Forward.

Dr. Dean Van Galen
President
Missouri Southern State University



ROY BLUNT HEALTH SCIENCE INNOVATION CENTER BREAKS GROUND AND BEGINS CONSTRUCTION

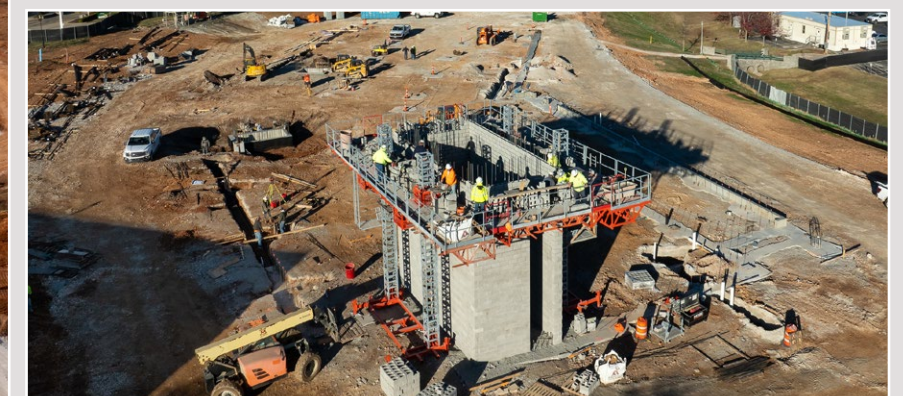
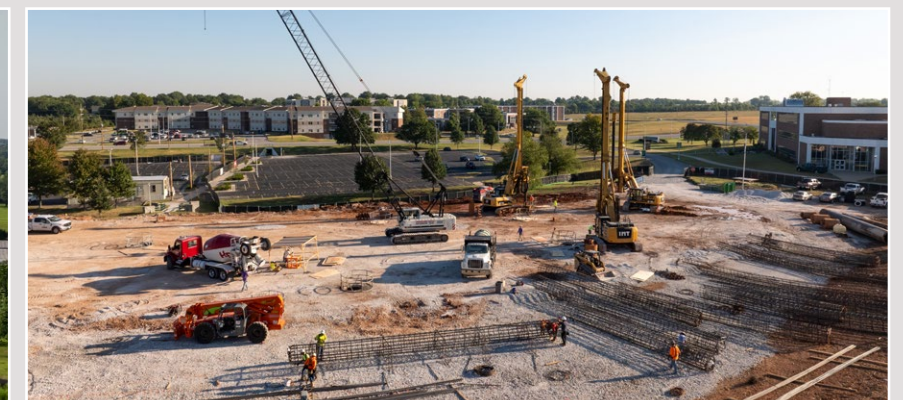
On April 11, 2024, Missouri Southern celebrated the groundbreaking of the Roy Blunt Health Science Innovation Center. Sen. Roy Blunt, the building's namesake, was the event's special guest. Set to open in July 2026, the building will provide MSSU healthcare students with more immersive-learning opportunities and experiences to enhance their education in preparation for the ever-changing field.

Funding for this transformative, \$48 million project has come from a variety of sources including federal, state and local governments, contractual agreements, and private donations to the Missouri Southern Foundation.

"Faculty and staff from nursing, biology, simulation, allied health, kinesiology, and more have worked diligently to create an innovative and flexible space that supports and welcomes anyone who enters its doors," Dr. Sherry Whiteman, assistant professor of Healthcare Administration at MSSU, said in her speech at the groundbreaking. "The new building will positively impact the allied health programs in two ways: expansion of available spaces and access to advanced technologies."

The Roy Blunt Health Science Innovation Center will house many avenues of learning, such as an in-home suite for EMS students to simulate patient care, a virtual reality room overlooking the building's atrium, and even an expansion of MSSU's current cadaver labs that offers a dedicated research space and anatomy lab spaces for students to apply their education to real situations. Not to mention, the welcome center becoming MSSU's new "front door." These are just a few features the building will host for students.

"The Blunt Health Science Innovation Center is an outward manifestation of all that I know to be true about Missouri Southern," said Whiteman. "This state-of-the-art facility will help students feel valued and seen upon entering the Welcome Center and atrium that promotes connectedness among every building and program on this campus. Faculty will engage with students in fully realistic environments to train the healthcare providers of the future."



MSSU WITNESSES INCREASED NEW STUDENT ENROLLMENT FOR THIRD CONSECUTIVE SEMESTER

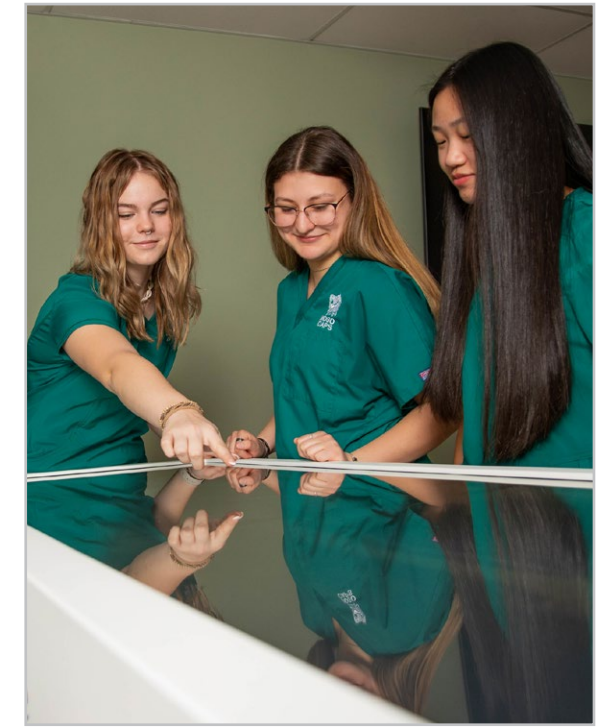
Missouri Southern has experienced increased enrollment this fall as the university saw the third consecutive semester of growth in new students. Overall enrollment increased 1.24%, with graduate student enrollment growing 66%. Additionally, MSSU's international student enrollment has grown 26% since last fall, with most of those students being new first-time freshman.

The ever-expanding offerings of new programs attracts prospective students to MSSU. In recognition of this objective, Missouri Southern added health and life sciences and immersive learning to the existing state-wide mission of international education, which was approved by the Coordinating Board for Higher Education in September 2023. In today's evolving educational landscape, students seek learning opportunities beyond the classroom, and employers prioritize graduates with profession-specific experience. Therefore, Missouri Southern is emphasizing

the necessity for immersive learning experiences outside the traditional classroom setting.

One way MSSU is achieving this goal is by constructing the Roy Blunt Health Science Innovation Center. The 65,000-square-foot facility will transform MSSU by equipping students with essential tools and simulated experiences to prepare them for successful careers in health sciences. A cutting-edge simulation hospital, a virtual reality lab, an expanded cadaver lab, and a skills lab are just a few components that will provide immersive learning experiences.

"Our focus on providing quality education, with immersive learning opportunities, along with offering scholarships to help cover cost, has proven to be successful," said Dr. Shellie Hewitt, Associate Vice President of Admissions and Enrollment. "Missouri Southern is becoming a choice institution for students in the four-state region and beyond."



SCIENCE TO JOBS EXPERIENCES SUCCESSFUL FIRST YEAR

Last fall, Missouri Southern, in partnership with Missouri Biotechnology Association and Missouri Western State University, was awarded a \$2.3 million state appropriation known as Science to Jobs for 2024-2025. The funds have been used to increase collaboration and educational opportunities in the health and agricultural science fields. The governor has since adopted Science to Jobs into MSSU's core, allowing the university to receive the appropriation continuously.

This opportunity came to MSSU through MOSO CAPS, a program for high school students to receive work experience within their area of interest before even starting college. Dr. Suzanne Hull, director of MOSO CAPS, helped secure Science to Jobs, and the grant has afforded unique opportunities for MSSU students in various disciplines.

In early 2024, MOSO CAPS purchased three Anatomage Tables and 12 VR licenses using Science to Jobs funds. These resources will strengthen MSSU's research capacity and instructional infrastructure in academic areas focused on health sciences. The Anatomage Tables are interactive digital displays of real-life cadavers. By providing a nearly identical experience of viewing a real cadaver, these tables allow students to learn about human anatomy from all

stages of life, while the VR licenses offer views of different anatomical structures within the human body. With the VR offerings, even online students can use these resources to enhance their education.

Summer 2024 saw the establishment of the middle school science day camps and the residency high school camps, where area high school students spent three days on campus, participating in classes hosted by MSSU professors in the science and healthcare fields. They learned about potential careers through hands-on activities, engagement with innovative technology, and industry partner tours.

"We were excited to offer the summer academies to area students this summer," said Hull, a co-director of Science to Jobs. "It has been a collaborative team effort and months of planning the engaging activities and the logistics to provide the best experience for the students."

There is much more planned for the program, such as a second section of the middle school day camp to accommodate the number of students and the development and implementation of an innovative resources lab that will feature 3D medical printing technology.



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MISSOURI SOUTHERN STATE UNIVERSITY

VOICES OF SOUTHERN

NATASHA O'BRIEN-DAVIES

Director of Theatre Activities, Assistant Professor of Theatre

"I've always had a flare for the dramatic."

For two years, NaTasha O'Brien-Davies—professionally known as NaTasha J. O'Brien—has worked as assistant professor of theater at Missouri Southern. She has launched a crusade to revamp the theater department and has been enjoying the challenge. With her experience as a professional artist and teacher, she brings a special energy and vision to MSSU.

Curtain Call

As a little girl, I loved dressing up, singing for my abuelita, and spending countless hours performing "plays" for the bottle calves at my dad's house. However, I never imagined that theatre would be my career path. As they say, "I didn't choose this life, it chose me."

I was the first blind/low vision student to be enrolled in McDonald County Schools, so my early educational career was littered with challenges, but my strong-willed mother, family members, and a few key teachers forged a path that allowed me to believe that I was unstoppable.

As a non-sighted teen, I missed out on opportunities that my friends had—I couldn't play sports, struggled socially, and no amount of pleading was going to score me a driver's license. It couldn't get much worse, right? Imagine my horror when the top of my schedule read "DRAMA." But throughout high school, Elwin Roe, my drama teacher, cultivated a deep appreciation for theatrical arts and an understanding of my own strength. I realized that performance would be a more sustainable, though unconventional career path.

And Action!

I earned a BFA in Theatre Performance from Belmont University in Nashville and an MFA from Lesley University in Cambridge, Massachusetts, focusing on drama/music therapy and writing for stage and screen. Prior to higher education, I had the privilege of working as a professional actor, vocalist, and teaching artist. My work allowed me to travel domestically and internationally to share my talents and love for the performing arts with audiences and students alike. My experiences in the industry and working with and learning from exemplary theatrical practitioners allow me to bring real world perspective to the classroom and rehearsal space.

The Director's Vision

My goals for the theatre department are to increase enrollment, build our patrons and donors, cultivate cross-functional collaboration among theatre and other on-campus programs, assemble a pool of expert creative faculty, and enhance our facilities to improve the immersive learning experience. My students have wonderful ideas for projects. The leadership teams and incoming students collaborate well and are excited to develop their program. I'm looking forward to growth and new opportunities at MSSU and within the local community.

All the World's a Stage

My first two years at MSSU have been full of learning experiences. I've enjoyed establishing a rapport with an eager, talented group of students. Everyone is working diligently to reintroduce the program to the community, and we have high expectations for growing our enrollment and patronage. Every time I see students discover the magic of connecting with an audience, it's the best feeling. Theatre intersects every single life. We often think of theatre as an organized event, but theatre is all around us and we are all active players. I can sincerely say that I've enjoyed the processes associated with refining our program so that we can best serve our student artists. Theatre equals freedom. In the safe confines of a theatre space, I found my authentic voice. Now, I have the liberty to share my passion for the craft with students. Theatre offers freedom to empathize, explore and imagine.





MISSOURI SOUTHERN ALUMNI AND FRIENDS

MAKING CONNECTIONS



Missouri Southern Alumni Association hosted 2024 Alumni Awards Dinner

MSSU is proud to announce the 2024 Distinguished and Outstanding Alumni awardees, Outstanding Family, Spirit of Service, and Lion-Hearted awards. The annual Alumni Awards Dinner took place on Friday, Oct. 4.

DOUG LAWSON & FAMILY Outstanding Family Award

Doug graduated from Missouri Southern State College in 1972 and was one of the first students to attend MSSU's current campus after its transition to a state college.

His father Vernon attended Joplin Junior College before serving in World War II. Later on, he and four other engineers founded Allgeier, Martin and Associates in Joplin. His legacy continues through the Vernon Lawson Family Scholarship.

Doug's own education was temporarily halted upon deployment to Vietnam where he served in the U.S. Navy.

He returned to Joplin and met his wife, Cindy, at MSSU. Doug later attended Emmanuel Christian Seminary. The couple soon moved to Hawaii, where Doug served as minister at Central Oahu Christian Church and then was commissioned as a Navy chaplain. His service led him to places such as Italy, Guam, California, Rhode Island, and Pearl Harbor. In 2003, he retired after 25 years of service with the rank of captain, having earned three Navy Commendation Medals and five Meritorious Service Medals.

DICK & APRIL RASMUSSEN Lion-Hearted Award

Dick served in the United States Navy and participated in the Cuban Embargo. He and his wife April eventually moved to Grove, Okla., where he worked as a liaison engineer for three years. After 32 years at McDonnell-Douglas/Boeing, Boeing awarded a contract for wire harness for the FedEx MD-10 Program to LaBarge, Inc. in Joplin. He worked

as a project engineer on the program before transitioning to Sikorsky Blackhawk Helicopter Program.

April worked as an operations manager at a small metal door manufacturing company while attending night courses at Cerritos Community College, where she met Dick. She later transitioned into aircraft manufacturing. After a three-year retirement, April joined LaBarge and was a project engineer on both the FedEx and Sikorsky Blackhawk Helicopter Programs.

Together, the Rasmussens began supporting MSSU Athletics in 2010. They have served in leadership roles on the Lionbacker Booster Club Steering Committee and are members of the Missouri Southern Foundation's Lantern Society. Their lead gift led to the Rasmussen Baseball & Softball Indoor Facility.

MIKE & ANN JERNIGAN Spirit of Service Award

Michael earned a Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education from Union University in Jackson, Tenn. After 11 years of teaching fourth grade at Trenton Elementary School and completing his master's in educational administration and supervision from the University of Memphis, he taught for the Department of Defense at both Spangdahlem Elementary and Middle School on Spangdahlem Air Force Base in Germany. While there, he met his wife Ann. He taught for 19 years before the couple relocated to Ann's hometown of Joplin in 1993. While teaching in town and pursuing his associate's degree in computer science at MSSU, Michael began working as Crowder College's first educational technology specialist. He earned his degree from MSSU in 1999 and worked for Crowder College until his retirement in 2017.

Ann graduated in 1971, graduating as the first class attending MSSU all four years at the current campus. She received her master's in education from Pittsburg State University. Her 40-year teaching career includes Seneca Elementary and 14 years at Bitburg Air Force Base Middle School in Germany for the Department of Defense Dependent Schools (DoDDS), where she met Mike. Ann became a consultant in military schools, teaching writing, cooperative learning, and middle school education. Upon returning from Germany in 1993, she taught at Joplin Junior High and continued teaching classes as a National Writing Project consultant. Her last 14 years of teaching were with Webb City schools in staff development and English/Language Arts education.

Soon after Michael's retirement, the Jernigans became involved in MSSU's Friendship Family Program. They currently serve on the Leadership Team for International Friendship Families.



MELISSA JEAN PETERSON, '11
Outstanding Alumna

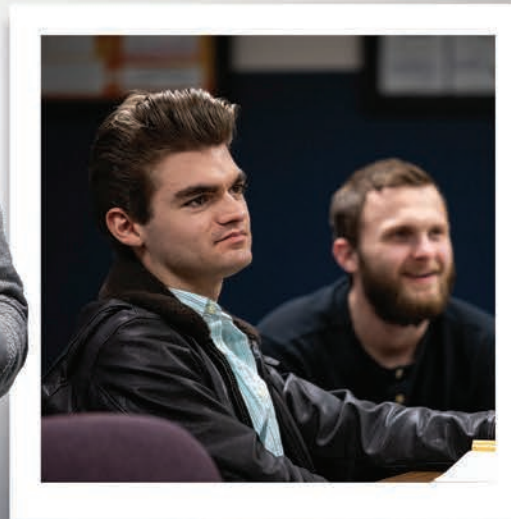
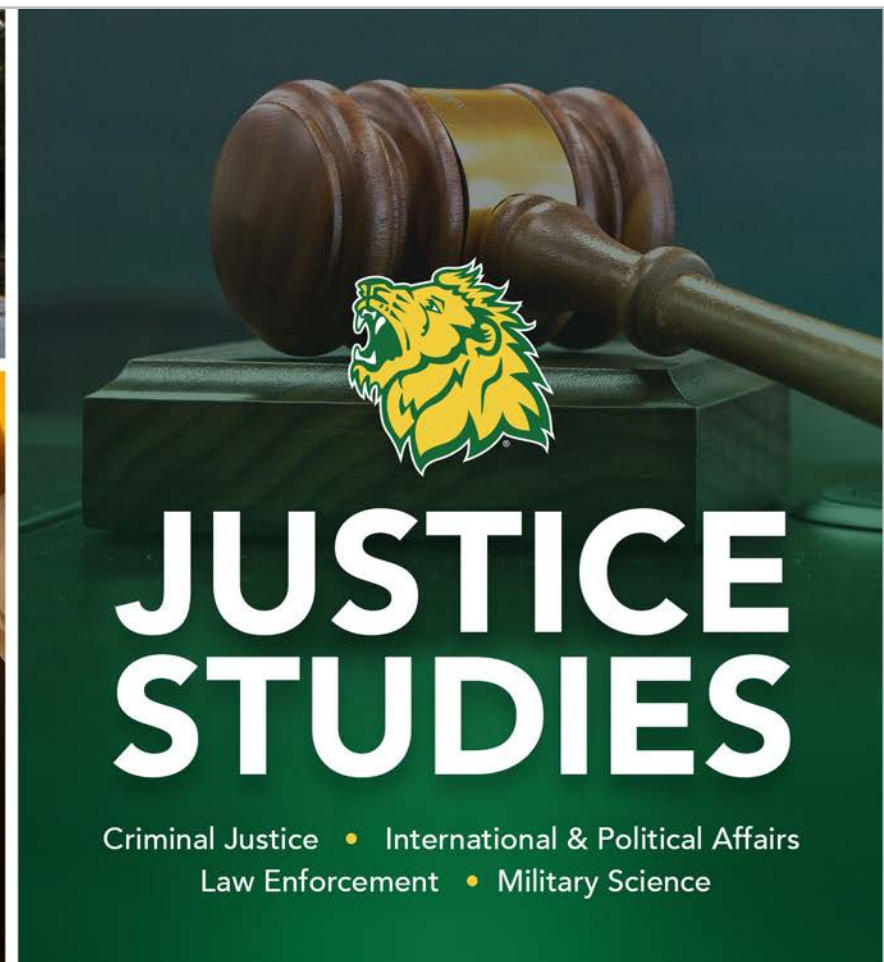
After graduating from Missouri Southern State University with her Bachelor of Arts in Theatre in 2011, Peterson became a production manager in the performing arts. Her career includes working as a production stage manager at Snow Camp Historical Theatre, managing major productions like "Hamilton" and Disney's "Frozen" at David A. Straz Center for the Performing Arts in Tampa, Fla., and gala performances at Youth American Grand Prix starring renowned ballet dancers at prestigious venues, including New York City's Lincoln Center. Later, she served as Production Manager at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, overseeing engagement of visiting National Broadway tours and high-profile events.

Since welcoming her first child, Peterson has transitioned into theater programming at the Kennedy Center, contacting visiting Broadway Tours, and acting as General Manager for the Broadway Center Stage series.

DAMON CLINES, MD, '77
Distinguished Alumnus

Dr. Damon Clines came to MSSU on a wrestling and football scholarship. He was an active member of the African American Association, playing a pivotal role in the successful campaign to rename Joplin's Broadway Boulevard to Langston Hughes Broadway in honor of Joplin-born African American poet. He also served as the Vice-Chair of the College Union Board. After graduating with his degree in education, he taught for several years in Joplin and St. Louis, even becoming an assistant football coach for St. Louis Public Schools, while also teaching GED night classes and completing pre-medical studies. He graduated from the University of Missouri-Columbia School of Medicine in 1988.

Clines is devoted to reducing healthcare disparities in both urban and rural communities through his private practice. His efforts have been recognized through numerous awards. Clines and his wife Diane built a free-standing ambulatory surgery center, the first of its kind in urban St. Louis.



MSSU Honors program celebrates

40th Anniversary

2024 is a cause for celebration for MSSU's Honors Program. This year, the Program observes its 40th anniversary, a significant milestone for the university.

Established in 1984, the Honors Program was created as an academic pathway for high-achieving students through challenges and opportunities supporting their leadership abilities, interdisciplinary thinking, and engagement as civic and global citizens. MSSU wanted to build a community of scholars by seeking the most promising students, regardless of major, origin, or economic status. The Honors Program helps students to not only realize their undergraduate potential but to achieve it.

Honors courses are comprehensive with a larger focus on class discussions and seminar-style learning. Students are often challenged to think beyond their discipline, enhancing their critical thinking skills through a program that celebrates interdisciplinary studies. The courses build upon one another deepening the educational experiences, fostering debate, and personal reflection in a variety of disciplines. Those who complete the Honors Program earn a certificate in Honors Interdisciplinary Studies.

The Program also requires all students to take a service-learning course, and a research methods course that teaches them the fundamentals of research and write an original research paper, which often leads Honors students to win awards at the annual MSSU Student Research Symposium. Additionally, students are required to study abroad during their tenure at MSSU, helping them become global citizens and gain intellectual development through a culture apart from their own.

To celebrate the 40th anniversary, the Honors Program hosted a reunion at the Ralph L. Gray Alumni Center, commemorating the scholarship and community the Program has built.

"The Honors Program making it to its 40th anniversary is a testament to all students, faculty, and staff who have worked so hard over the years to ensure that MSSU offers a distinguished learning environment for high-achieving students," said Dr. Michael Howarth, director of the Honors Program. "This an interdisciplinary program that helps them grow personally and professionally, both inside and outside of the classroom."

To support the Honors Program, please visit www.mssu.edu/advancement/giving/givenow.php

LIONS FORWARD

THE CAMPAIGN FOR MISSOURI SOUTHERN

Lions Forward propels MSSU into the future

The Lions Forward campaign has been quite successful since its launch in July 2022. Announced publicly this April, Lions Forward: The Campaign for Missouri Southern is the first comprehensive fundraising campaign the University has undertaken since the early 2000s. The five-year, \$42.7 million fundraising campaign will transform MSSU and provide current and future students with access to life-changing higher education experiences. With contributions totaling \$35,078,884 from over 2,500

individuals so far, the campaign is well on the way to transforming MSSU and the future of higher education in the four-states region.

The Lions Forward campaign aligns with MSSU's strategic plan and focuses on seven priorities: student scholarships, the Roy Blunt Health Science Innovation Center, immersive

learning opportunities, academic excellence, student success center, Billingsly Student Center, and athletics excellence.

Recent gifts from generous donors like Freeman Health System and David and Debra Humphreys have already made an impact on MSSU and students.

On Aug. 19, 2024, Freeman gave \$1 million to the Roy Blunt Health Science Innovation Center, which will provide significant funding to further educate the next generation

of health care workers in the area. In recognition of Freeman's generosity, two immersive learning spaces in the new facility will be named the Freeman Skills Lab and the Freeman Simulation Classroom. The former will be a large, flexible space where students from a range of health science programs can practice what they learn, professors can arrange or add equipment to enhance that day's lesson, and large glass walls offering campus visitors the opportunity to see learning in action, while the latter will be a space that can be used for prebriefing and debriefing of simulation scenarios, specialty lectures related to the scenario of the day, guest lecturers, or for students to complete assignments pre and post simulation.

Also dedicated to the advancement of MSSU students, David and Debra Humphreys are extending their impact on MSSU students by contributing \$1 million to their scholarship program. The Debra and David Humphreys Excellence Awards have benefitted more than 100 MSSU students—who are known as "Humphreys Scholars" since its establishment in 2017 through an initial contribution of \$1 million. The additional \$1 million gift announced in September means the program will continue to ensure many local students are financially supported at the university. Since its establishment, \$775,000 in scholarships have been awarded, 66 Humphreys Scholars have graduated from MSSU, nearly 90% of awardees



stayed in school and earned their degrees from MSSU, and more than 90% live and work within a 50-mile radius of Joplin.

These are just two initiatives within the Lions Forward Campaign that have already made momentous changes to the university, and the higher education experience has just begun—as of Nov. 1, 82% of the goal has been raised with 26 months left in the campaign, in addition to \$12,442,441 of scholarship money, 10 commitments of \$1 million or more have been pledged with 206 commitments of \$25,000 or more.

"The impact of the Lions Forward campaign can be seen across campus," said Dr. Dean Van Galen, president of MSSU. "From student scholarships to athletics, from academic programs to facilities, charitable giving is enhancing opportunities for students and making Missouri Southern a stronger university."

To discuss making a gift to the Lions Forward campaign, call the Office of Development at 417-625-3104.

To learn more about Lions Forward, visit www.mssu.edu/lionsforward.

We would like to recognize the following donors who have made transformational commitments to the Lions Forward campaign.

- Rod and Janice Anderson
- Kent and C.B. Eastman
- Freeman Health System
- Bill and Tracy Gipson
- David and Debra Humphreys
- Mike and Ann Jernigan
- K. D. & M. L. Steadley Trust
- McCune-Brooks Healthcare Foundation
- John and Nancy Messick
- Bob and Dot Willcoxon
- Anonymous Donors

Gifts from July 1, 2022 through November 30, 2024



Total Goal:
\$42.7 Million



Campaign Dollars Raised to date:
\$35,078,884

Percentage of Goal raised with
26 Months Remaining of a Five-Year Campaign:

82%



Scholarship Dollars Raised
During Campaign Period to Date:
\$12,442,441

Commitments of \$1M or More: **10**

Commitments of \$25,000 or More: **206**

Total Donors Who Have Participated in the Campaign Thus Far: **2,544**



FOLLOWING LIFE'S LEAD

Det. Mark Kennedy reflects on life's journey from MSSU to "The First 48"

A homicide detective leads the two cameramen through the crime scene. The details are gruesome and bloody but important. Real people are affected by heinous actions of others, and it's up to Detective Mark Kennedy, '85, and the Tulsa Police Department to solve these cases, and they often do. So frequently and successfully, in fact, that Tulsa's homicide detectives are featured on the A&E documentary series "The First 48."

"I think I'm close to having the longest tenure in homicide out of everyone else that's been in the unit," said Kennedy. "This is something I really love doing."

There's no better feeling than taking someone off the streets that ended a life."

Although he currently lives in Tulsa, Kennedy is a self-described local boy from Carl Junction. He was recruited to Missouri Southern's football team as a defensive lineman. For Kennedy, MSSU was a good fit.

"I'm a family guy and all of my family lived close to MSSU and could attend games," said Kennedy. "The football team was great, and I knew it was a great fit for me."

In 1985, Kennedy graduated not with a criminal justice degree, but instead a bachelor's in marketing and management. The mid-80s was a significant time for Walmart as the company expanded its business, and company representatives interviewed students at MSSU, offering Kennedy a place in their management program. He was eventually transferred to Tulsa for a few years to work as assistant manager—and learned that his life was leading elsewhere.

"Walmart's a great company, and I learned a lot about business while I worked there, but I realized that retail wasn't my thing," Kennedy said.

But it was his time at the global company where Kennedy found his next career steps. He befriended the police officers who would follow him when making nightly deposits at the bank.

"They noticed I was looking for something else and told me that the police department was about to start hiring again," Kennedy said.

From there, Kennedy embarked on the yearlong process of taking the test and applying to the academy, which he accomplished in 1989.

"My wife was kind of shocked at my change in career, but she was very supportive," he said.

Kennedy was a patrol officer at the Tulsa Police Department for two years post-graduation. He then worked on the tactical response squad, a patrol unit with citywide jurisdiction that responded to all major crimes such as armed robberies, break-ins, burglaries in progress. Kennedy estimates that his team arrested 185 armed robbers.

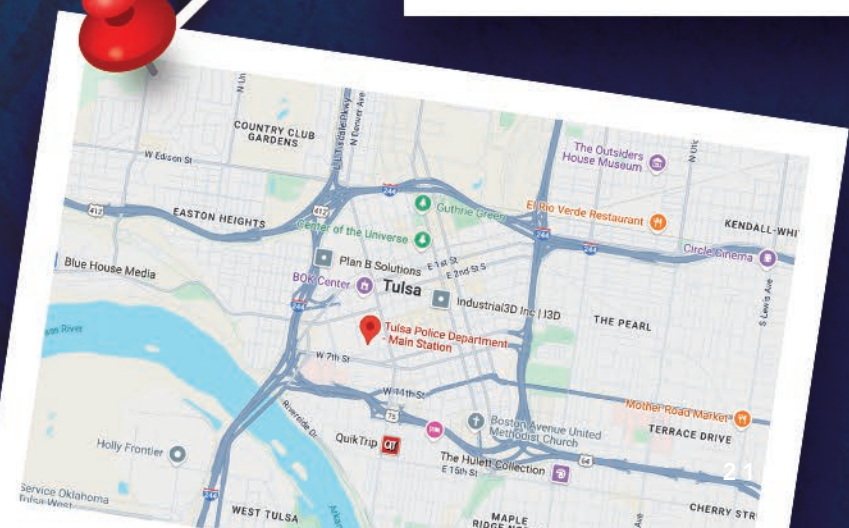
He spent some time in a vice unit before working in the city's Fugitive Unit as an investigator in 1999. It was a dangerous unit, since the goal is to chase the worst of the worst like murderers and armed robbers, but Kennedy found it fun. He earned two Medals of Valor and located not just one but two people on "America's Most Wanted."

"Earnest and Kaia Jackson fled Bergen County, N.J. and were on the run for 10 years after bonding out on charges of horrible child abuse, taking their remaining children with them," Kennedy stated. "They were in Florida when 'America's Most Wanted' ran a story on them. By the time authorities received a tip on their whereabouts, the couple had moved on. The next story that aired earned a hit in Tulsa."

Kennedy and his team were tasked with running down the tipster, who Kennedy says is the real hero in this story.

"A lady said she was watching 'America's Most Wanted' when she recognized the handyman that did some work for her," said Kennedy. "He looked like Earnest and even did the same work he did while in Florida. She provided the invoice he gave her, and his handwriting was so distinctive, it was immediately identified as Earnest's."

But it was 2000, and the team didn't have today's technology, so another plan was hatched.



"We worked with a local pizza place called Mazzio's," he said. "They had delivered to the address associated with the phone number on the invoice."

After verifying that the address belonged to the suspect, Kennedy's team took him down and brought in Earnest Jackson. Both Jackson and his wife Kaia were eventually sent to prison.

Since then, Kennedy started his dream position of homicide detective. Kennedy has been the lead detective on nearly 135 homicides and assisted on many more.

"I felt like this was my calling," he said. "The opportunity opened in 2005, so I took a swing at it and got lucky enough to be in this unit—I've enjoyed every minute of it. We try to get the bad guys off the street as quickly as possible."

That effort shows through Tulsa's impressive crime solve rate of a consistent 90-95% (compared to the national average of 52% in 2022). This caught the attention of "The First 48." The television show follows homicide detectives as they race against the clock to find a lead within 48 hours of the crime or the chances of solving the case are cut in half. The partnership between the police department and the show began in 2014 and has been quite successful.

"I was skeptical at first, but we have been so blessed with that crew," Kennedy said. "The two crew members are almost a part of the homicide unit."

"The First 48" has made a positive impact on the police department and the city—many people recognize Tulsa from the show, some only watching the episodes filmed in the city. Kennedy finds that the show has led to more community involvement, helping the department keep crime rates down and solve rates up.

"In this era, community involvement in policing is very important," said Kennedy. "The show has helped bridge that gap a little bit. 'The First 48' shows the more personal side of police officers, and it's the most accurate depiction of the process of an investigation. We've built a great relationship with the crew."

Kennedy still returns to MSSU for homecoming. He and his college friends can be found outside of the football stadium catching up and reminiscing about the good old days.

"I enjoy returning for the game. I look forward to it every year."

Now, Kennedy is less than two years from retirement but is still giving the job his all, even occasionally working with his son, who is in the Special Investigations Unit. He is proud of his work, but what he takes pride in the most are his loved ones.

"I'm most proud of my family," he said. "I've been so fortunate to have a wife that's been very supportive of me doing what I love. My son has been a police officer for seven years, and I'm really proud of him. This job has been a godsend—it's the best decision I ever made."



O CANADA



CANADA SEMESTER

MSSU explores America's northern neighbor

MSSU explored Canada this fall as part of the annual themed semester. The country was selected due to the very successful 2009 Canada semester, the Consulate General of Canada's Chicago office pledge to help secure guest speakers, and the trading partnership with the United States. The U.S. and its northern neighbor are each other's largest trading partner—Missouri itself exports more goods to Canada than any other country with \$6.5 million generated in 2023 alone.

One of the many highlights of the Canada semester has been the involvement of Art & Design and Performing Arts departments: In September, Southern Theatre hosted "Salt-Water Moon," a two-hander play set in 1926 Newfoundland, and the Concert Band performed the music of Canadian composers in October.

The art department also traveled to Vancouver and Montreal in preparation for the fall semester art exhibition showcasing paintings depicting some of the sites and computer-based illustrations portraying cultural themes. In Canada, students researched a wide range of art, specifically focused on the relationship between art and place—the region's physical geography and history influenced most of the art from every period.

"Vancouver and Montreal have great contrast that show

some of the range of cultural and geographic diversity across Canada," said Kyle McKenzie, associate professor in the Art and Design department at MSSU and coordinator of the trip. "Both cities also provided great access to lots of art, including Indigenous collections."

Other Canada-themed events included lectures covering the Canada-U.S. relationship, presented by Colleen Duke, senior foreign policy and diplomacy serves officer at the Consulate General of Canada in Chicago, and two presentations from 1983 graduate Jun Franciso, director of collections management at the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame in Cleveland, Ohio.

Another themed semester staple is the film festival. This year, 11 Canadian movies were shown in Plaster Hall's Cornell Auditorium. The Consulate General of Canada introduced the 2006 film "Bon Cop, Bad Cop" and held a post-movie discussion with the audience, and the film adaptation of Catherine Hernandez's 2017 novel "Scarborough" was introduced by Hernandez herself on Nov. 14.

"Those who attended the Canada semester presentations came away with a wealth of knowledge and a greater appreciation of our important neighbors to the north," said Dr. Chad Stebbins, recently retired director of the Institute of International Studies.

Volunteers with MSSU Ties Drive Local VITA Tax Service



Robert Medley, '73, joined VITA when he retired. He now serves as the director of the We Care Coalition that sponsors the Joplin VITA site, while also volunteering as a tax preparer.

"I was a tax auditor for 30 years," he said. "After retiring, a girl in my Bible study told me I should go work for VITA, so that's how I got started."

Torres and Medley aren't the only ones with MSSU ties to volunteer with VITA. Since the Joplin location's establishment in 1998, it has seen 12 alumni including John Joines, Phil O'Hare, Glen Barnett, Gary Miller, Joyce Hendren, Jessica Beck, Delmer Hampton, Shawn Robertson, Jane Sheller, and Jing Wang; eight donors to the Missouri Southern Foundation including Charles Kent, Marilyn Thornberry, Andrea Pence, Chuck Thornberry, Sandy Swingle, Pat Curry, and Donna Krudwig; and three retirees including Dan Stengel, April Bunch and Betty Ann Harris. It is safe to say that MSSU has significant ties to VITA.

With the spring semester comes tax season. While it typically isn't considered the most enjoyable time of the year, it does showcase the motivation of community-minded Missouri Southern alumni, retirees, and friends as they drive the mission of VITA.

VITA, Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Service, is a free tax service that helps qualified people with their tax return preparation. Funded through a partnership with Community Partnership of the Ozarks and operated entirely by volunteers—many with ties to MSSU—VITA is an essential asset to the community.

VITA's presence in Joplin was established in January 1998 when a course on income tax preparation was taught at MSSU. The first VITA site in Joplin opened and invited the class to volunteer as tax preparers. Since then, volunteers with various backgrounds such as MSSU students or veteran tax professionals to retired CPAs have served at VITA, filing an average of 4,000 tax returns annually.

"I fell in love with VITA when I started volunteering in 2000 while attending MSSU," said David Torres, '05, site coordinator of the Joplin VITA site. "This coming year will be my 25th anniversary."

"A lot of these people were professional CPAs or from big local accounting firms before retiring," said Torres. "They found out about VITA and joined us. They are an encyclopedia of tax knowledge."

VITA volunteers serve those of any age, who generally make less than \$65,000, with disabilities, or who speak limited English. However, some people may be unaware they can qualify for VITA's services, such as the Missouri Tax Credit.

"We still find people who aren't familiar with the senior citizen circuit breaker," said Torres. "They receive some of their portion back on their real estate or rent. Tax preparers can review returns up to three years prior through the Missouri Property Tax Credit Claim."



VITA will also file tax returns for all 50 states, which is ideal for those who live in Missouri and work elsewhere in the four-states area.

"We're very experienced in filing in both Kansas and Missouri," said Torres. "We file for other states as well—we want to help everyone."

However, to continue serving the community, VITA is seeking a permanent, easily accessible location and more volunteers.

"What we need is permanent space," said Medley. "We're not a run-in run-out type of shop. We have people sitting in the waiting area, and traffic is hazardous for our elderly clients."

As for volunteers, anyone is invited to apply, but students are strongly encouraged to join. VITA also offers the IRS-required training that can be completed before tax season.

"It's a wonderful job," Torres said. "You work with a lot of people in this position, and there's great office culture. Adding volunteer experience with VITA to a resume will be appealing to potential employers, especially if you're applying for a position in a tax department. Anybody can be a tax preparer. You just need to pass the training that we offer through the IRS before starting tax returns, but it can be done."

The ideal volunteer is someone who would be a people person, someone who is passionate about serving the community.

"The exceptional volunteer would be someone who enjoys working with people, numbers, and computers," said Torres.

"They would also need patience," Medley added.

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IN HIS OLYMPIC ERA

Rajindra Campbell wins bronze for Jamaica in Paris Olympics

In Paris, surrounded by thousands of viewers in the stadium, millions watching globally at home and standing shoulder-to-shoulder with the greatest athletes in the world, Rajindra Campbell, '23, thinks of one thing:

"It's gonna be a good day."

And he's right—Campbell won Jamaica's first shot put medal at the 2024 Paris Olympics, a huge feat for both his country and for his alma mater.

Originally from Ocho Rios, Jamaica, Rajindra Campbell was recruited to MSSU by Brian Allen, associate head coach and recruiting coordinator for the track and field program, who offered him a scholarship on the track team after seeing Campbell compete when he was attending community college in the U.S.

"Coach Allen liked how I competed and offered me a scholarship," said Campbell. "I really liked the athletics available at MSSU, so that's how I ended up here."

Although an Olympian in the sport, track and field wasn't what Campbell played growing up. A cricket player in childhood, Campbell switched to track and field as a teen when his high school didn't offer the sport.

"My brother was in track and field first, and by the time I started high school, the cricket team had been dismantled," Campbell explains. "My next step was to find another sport to channel my energy, and track and field was an option. While it's a totally different sport, it's been going well so far."

While studying for his degree in kinesiology, Campbell improved his skills in track and field, focusing on shot put. In 2019, he devoted the year's off-season to training. He sustained an injury but had a goal to improve his throw.

"If I could throw 20 meters (65 feet) weighing 220 pounds with the same level of consistency, I can throw farther," he said. "I gave it a try, and 22 meters (approximately 72 feet) at 300 pounds put me at top five in the world in shot put, qualifying me for the Olympics."

Campbell and the other athletes had a training camp in Germany preceding the Olympics. Here, they could train, settle their nerves, and get to know one another before moving on to the Olympic Village and meeting other Olympians.



J A M A I C A



"The energy was palpable and all the stars were there," said Campbell. "I met other track and field athletes as well as the basketball players, even meeting Giannis Antetokounmpo, or 'Greek Freak,' the basketball player from the Milwaukee Bucks."

The time came for the real competition. Campbell entered the stadium and saw the stands packed with fans from around the world with many, many more watching from home, while he stood alongside the best athletes in the world. With the mentality of "The only person you can defeat is yourself," Campbell gave it his all, and he won bronze.

"I went out there with that mindset and got a medal," he said.

His victory made Campbell the first shot-putter from Jamaica to win an Olympic medal.

"It feels amazing," he said. "With Jamaica being a mainly sprint country, it was a change to see shot put and discus place."

Coach Allen shares his pride in his athlete.

"It was years of hard work all coming to a head," he said. "Rajindra has had the Olympic dream for a while and has

worked his way into becoming one of the best shot putters in the world."

Upon his return to Joplin, Campbell is grateful for the support and positivity the community has given him.

"I really appreciate the love and support I've received from the community here," Campbell said. "It's amazing to see."

Now, Campbell is training full time at MSSU and competing at both national and international competitions. In September, Campbell placed third for men's shot put at the Boris Hanžeković Memorial in Croatia. The indoor season in 2025 will lead to more international competitions in Europe, and the World Championship takes place on Sept. 20 in Japan. Campbell is also considering diving back into architecture and construction, a passion of his since high school.

"The Olympics taught me patience and consistency," Campbell said. "I've almost given up a few times because my competitive side often tests my patience, but my coach and my brother stepped in and encouraged me. I've learned that once I'm consistent, small progress is good progress. If you don't believe in yourself, you're at a loss. Just believe and you can accomplish anything."

At Ease Within One's Own Shell

Students conduct research on amphibians on local land

Every other weekend, senior Saige Haddock wades knee-deep in the Asbury Field Site's pond. Haddock unlatches the turtle traps (that are floating on pool noodles) to tag and track the animals who find themselves caught in their temporary confinement before returning them to their watery home.

"So far," Haddock, a conservation major, began. "I have learned that the bigger the trap, the larger the catch, and to expect the unexpected."

Located just feet away from the Kansas border lies the Asbury Field Site, two square miles of land and 200 acres of water privately owned by a local family. In 2020, an MSSU alumnus contacted Dr. David Penning, associate professor of Biology & Environmental Health and overseer of the Asbury Field Site project, on behalf of the family, arranging a partnership with the academic department.

"This project was built by pure luck," said Penning. "We are fortunate to have this opportunity."

The Asbury Field Site is a unique and rare location. The land contains around 150 acres of prairie remnant, the most endangered ecosystem in the world—less than .5% still exists on Earth. Protecting the land was vital for any research to take place.

Since ensuring the safety of the land, students of all levels and disciplines have traveled to the field biweekly, quantifying, describing, and measuring the reptiles and amphibians of the region. Some are responsible for the turtles, others for tracking and recording the reptiles found in the grass. Some students have created their own projects, leading their peers in research.

Haddock is the creator and leader of the Large Hoop Net Crew, a project where the group compares species richness and diversity found in traps with different mesh sizes. In this case, they are trapping larger species, such as spiny softshell turtles and common snapping turtles.

"Since nearly every net has captured a species of fish, I decided to add the information correlated with turtle data," said Haddock. "The correlation is to test whether fish populations affect turtle population."

Also overseeing their own projects are senior Luke Hatfield and recent graduate Gabe McClain, '24. McClain, who majored in ecology and conservation, ran the aquatics turtle survey. For two years, he tested the effects of bait type and flotation color on aquatic turtle capture rates. In other words, he tested if turtles

responded differently to red, blue, or yellow flotation devices while also seeing if they show a preference for certain foods.

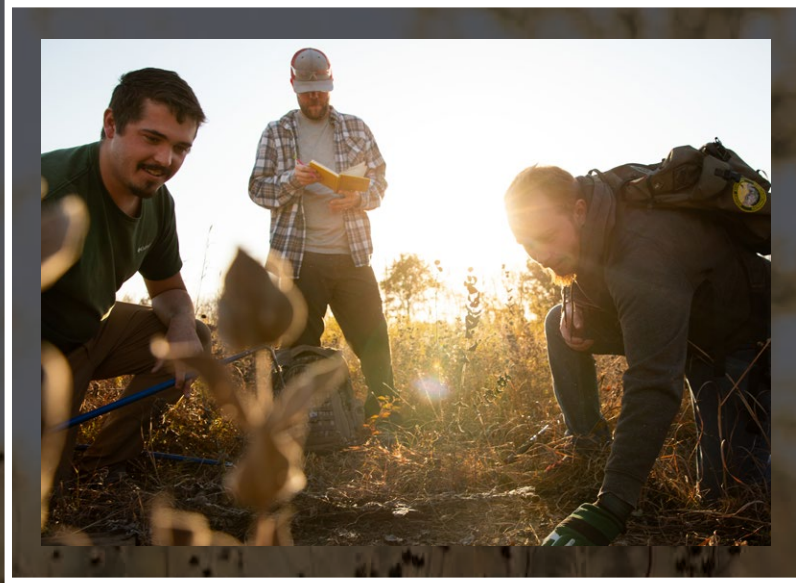
"Turtles are a heavy contributor to the aquatic environments, so learning their preferred diet allows scientists to draw conclusions on bigger concepts such as ecosystem level health," said McClain. "What this means for future research is we can better perform aquatic turtle research if we use specific colors or baits to target different turtle species."

The turtles aren't the only animals found on the land. In addition to his work with McClain, Hatfield leads his own project. The conservation biology major is responsible for the coverboard project. Since the beginning of the research, the students have scattered 300 types of covering throughout the field's grassland and woodland habitats. Constructed of materials ranging from plywood to metal in shapes like triangles, squares, and rectangles, these covers create custom habitats for these animals. Variables such

as cover complexity (how many layers each coverboard contains) and the shape and type of each coverboard are used to study the effects of coverboard type, shape, and the detection of terrestrial reptiles and amphibians.

Every other Friday, Hatfield, McClain, and classmate Jerod Thomas four-wheel over to the transects. If the animal doesn't evade the students, they take measurements of their length, weight, sex, and the type of coverboard where they are found before tagging them to track them in case of recapture.





The team is also beginning to collect data on the temperatures of the different layers on the coverboards.

“My favorite part of this project so far is simply being outside with other students who share my love for the outdoors and interacting with wildlife in a meaningful way,” said Hatfield, who returned to MSSU for a wildlife degree after a teaching career. “My career goal is to pursue some type of wildlife biology or conservation, so this project helps to give me experience with collecting data in the field and working with others.”

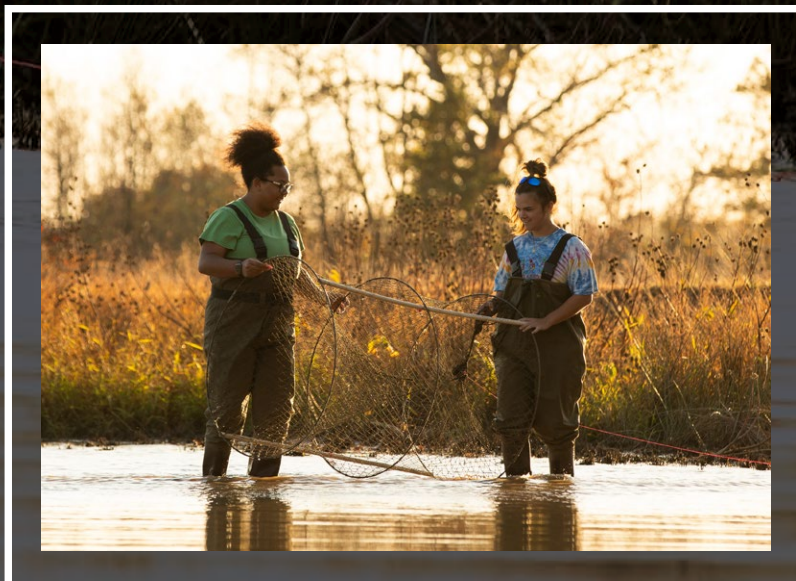
Among its discoveries, the Asbury Field Site is home to a rare species of salamander the students named the “slimy salamander.” The creature, scientifically known as the *Plethodon albagula*, is three inches long with white flakes sprinkled over its dark skin. The state of Kansas has only ever detected one individual found in Cherokee County in 1949, so it is assumed that it can be found there due to its proximity to the Missouri border.

“We found the amphibian on the Missouri side,” said Penning. “Salamanders don’t care about geopolitics, so if we found it that close to Kansas, the logic is that the ‘slimy salamander’ is likely found in the state today. Continued research hopes to verify this.”

The discoveries unearthed and research conducted on the Asbury Field Site have expanded beyond the property line. Students have presented their research at conferences, like MSSU’s Undergraduate Research Symposium and the Kansas Herpetological Society at Kansas University. Students like Hatfield have also written and are currently querying group research papers to esteemed scientific journals. The biggest impact the work has made on students is giving them a boost into graduate school and great job opportunities in places like the Missouri Department of Conservation.

And with science constantly evolving, there is no end in sight for the Asbury Field Site project.

“It will likely continue indefinitely,” said Penning. “Until I die or retire, whichever comes first.”



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MSSU equips pharmacist to make a positive local impact

On South Neosho Boulevard stands Mitchell's Drug Stores where pharmacist Lacy Epperson works as director of pharmacy clinical services. One day, she can be found giving vaccinations and dispensing medications; the next, setting up for a community outreach vaccination clinic, or maybe she'll be teaching the store's diabetes education program classes for people to learn how to self-manage their diabetes alongside other conditions—a program she established; or even overseeing the on-site pharmacogenomics testing. Her day-to-day responsibilities are always different and fulfilling.

"I've wanted to be a pharmacist since I was nine years old," said Epperson. "It's hard to believe, but it's true."

Epperson was inspired to pursue this path following her uncle's cancer diagnosis. What began as a quest to understand medication's role in his treatment became Epperson's mission to help the community.

"Through my experiences and endeavors, I have affirmed my desire to pursue pharmacy, and I believe in using my skills to serve others and make a difference in the health care system while also educating the community on what community pharmacies can offer," she explains. "It has been extremely rewarding."

Epperson chose Missouri Southern for its biochemistry program and affordable pathway to pharmacy school, but along the way, she also experienced its academic, financial, and social advantages. A Webb City native, she lived at home with her parents while attending MSSU and continued

working at the local pharmacy where she had been employed since her 18th birthday. Her courses were challenging, but she was offered support through study groups and one-on-one meetings with professors. No longer involved in high school athletics, Epperson made friends by attending Lion athletic events, campus activities, and joining student organizations like FCA, Biology Club, Caduceus Club, and CAB. She befriended fellow Webb City graduates she didn't have the chance to know and even former athletic rivals from other high schools. Epperson also met Jarrett, her lab partner turned husband in an anatomy and physiology class.

"I learned to participate in new organizations that aligned with my interests and involvement," said Epperson. "Some of the friendships I made at MSSU were ones that continued to support me through my journey in pharmacy school and into my career."

She took the next step in her education by attending pharmacy school at University of Missouri—Kansas City's Springfield satellite campus. But now, as she's living her childhood dream, she attributes her success to MSSU.

Since her time as a Lion and earning her doctorate in pharmacy, Epperson has worked at Mitchell's Drug Stores in Neosho for four years. She has involved herself in advocacy groups addressing gap closures within healthcare, developed new healthcare services and initiatives with community health workers, became the quality coordinator of Mitchell's Drugs Stores' accredited on-site self-management diabetes education

program, and is the overseer of their adherence programs that coordinate care and proactiveness to align patients' medications. These are just some of Epperson's responsibilities in her successful, community-focused career.

"As far as my experience in school in a challenging field, I believe that those challenges have helped prepare me for my future career and continued to strengthen my ability to persevere," she said. "I am passionate about using my skills to serve others and advance my patients' quality of life while also creating sustainability for the pharmacy profession."

After her time at MSSU, Epperson fondly reflects upon the university's role in her career and the efforts it invests into its students, like when she was invited to tour medical, dental, and pharmacy schools and connected with their liaisons on MSSU campus. She even reconnected with staff and professors within the community upon returning to the area to practice and stays up-to-date on MSSU's expanding programs.

"Interprofessional collaborations are important to understanding optimized patient care in one's respective field," she said. "I am appreciative of the increasing programs available to students at MSSU, and I look forward to seeing these opportunities grow."





COLLEGE OF ARTS & SCIENCES



MELODY REED PRESENTS RESEARCH AT INTERNATIONAL MEDIEVALISM CONFERENCE

Last spring, junior English major Melody Reed traveled to Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo for the International Congress of Medieval Studies, an annual conference for medieval scholars from around the world. Reed was one of only six undergraduates in the country selected to present at the Congress.

"My love for fantasy novels and films led me to reconsider Disney's film 'The Black Cauldron' and the conflict between the Christian ideals and Celtic ideals that would have been in direct opposition to each in the film and at the time the film is set," said Reed.

With encouragement from Dr. Rebecca Mouser, Reed submitted the proposal to the convention. A few weeks later, the paper was accepted for presentation.

"After the shock wore off, I was excited," said Reed. "Dr. Mouser is always so encouraging and makes me feel like an emerging scholar rather than just a student taking a class. That is a big reason I felt the courage to submit my paper."

Reed successfully presented her work in Kalamazoo, receiving positive comments from those attending the session while networking with several professors and graduate students from other universities. She plans to continue with her independent studies in medievalism while attending law school after graduating in December.

"I was excited to present my work and get feedback from some of the best in the field," she said. "I'm hopeful that this opportunity will show my abilities and dedication to my education and scholarship to potential programs."

SOCIAL WORK ESTABLISHES NEW ENDOWMENT

Missouri Southern's social work department implemented a new endowment called the Allan Craig Stephens Scholarship, implemented in Fall 2024.

Constance Stephens, a retired social worker, created the endowment intended for a junior or senior majoring in social work focusing on the autism spectrum population. She organized the endowment after visiting MSSU's campus in 2023 for her granddaughter's graduation. Stephens saw the opportunities the university affords social work students and the impact they make on the community.

Stephens recognizes the importance of social work students having access to education, service, and practice through not only her own career but through her son Craig, the scholarship's namesake. Craig received an autism diagnosis at 21 after years of bullying, denied services, and other hardships. However, Stephens never stopped fighting for her son, establishing resources and connections for him and others with disabilities within their community. Now, at 63 years old, Craig is thriving.

"We're honored to have this endowment from the family," said Jannette Eldred, program director of the social work department at MSSU. "It means a lot to the department since most of our students are working, caretakers, or have other responsibilities, so an additional scholarship elevates their goals. We're excited to honor Craig's legacy."

The scholarship's first recipient is senior Maddie Graff. She is pursuing a degree in social work, minor in psychology, and an ABA certification.

"I am extremely grateful to receive this scholarship," said Graff. "Getting support to further my education and achieve my goals is inspirational and meaningful. I am truly thankful for it."

BIOMEDICAL GRADUATE PRESENTS AT RESEARCH CONFERENCE IN CANADA



2024 graduate Eryn Wagoner traveled to Toronto, Canada in March to present her research titled "Exploring the Correlation Between Catecholaminergic Activity in the Cervical Vagus Nerve and Signs of Cardiac Remodeling: Implication for Vagus Nerve Stimulation Therapy" at the 2024 Anatomy Connected conference hosted by American Association for Anatomy.

Anatomy Connected is an annual conference that unites educators, researchers, and students to learn about current research and network with professionals in the anatomy field. For several months, Wagoner drafted an abstract summarizing the research she and Dr. Alla Berry conducted.

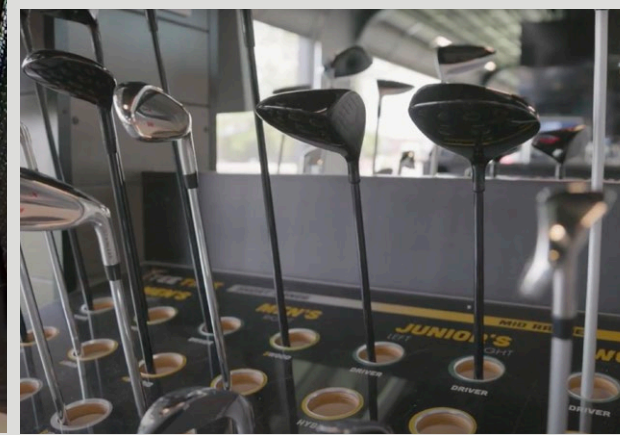
At the conference, Wagoner networked and discussed her research confidently with other undergraduates and professors from universities across Canada and the U.S. She was selected as a finalist in the undergraduate category of poster presentations—Wagoner was one of eight undergraduates awarded this honor.

Since graduating from MSSU in May 2024 with a Bachelor of Science in Pre-Medical Studies and certificates in Interdisciplinary Studies and Chemical Lab Sciences, Wagoner is pursuing her doctorate in Biomedical Sciences at the University of Missouri-Columbia.

"This was one of my favorite research conferences from my time at MSSU," said Wagoner. "It was incredible to have this opportunity before I graduated."



COLLEGE OF BUSINESS, COMMUNICATION & TECHNOLOGY



TEE TIME GOLF INVITES COLLABORATION WITH MSSU MARKETING COURSE

The entertainment venue Tee Time opened its doors in Webb City in June 2024. Hosting 19 driving bays, four pickleball courts, cornhole, not to mention its expansive food and drink menus, the business has been successful, and Missouri Southern students and the Missouri Small Business Development Center (SBDC) at MSSU had a hand in this process.

Tee Time co-owners approached the Missouri SBDC to help start their business and offered to collaborate with students. Professor Aaron Baker, master instructor of marketing, coordinated a collaboration with his MRKT 401 course during the Spring 2024 semester.

Throughout the semester, students created an advertising launch plan for Tee Time. They developed a marketing brief and determined what advertisement to use and what message to promote. At the end, the students pitched their strategies to Tee Time in-person.

“Students learned how marketers really work when developing promotions,” said Baker. “The project challenged students to rapidly apply what they were learning to a real-world application. My favorite part is when students say it confirmed that they really want to do marketing, or that they feel like they’ve done real marketing.”

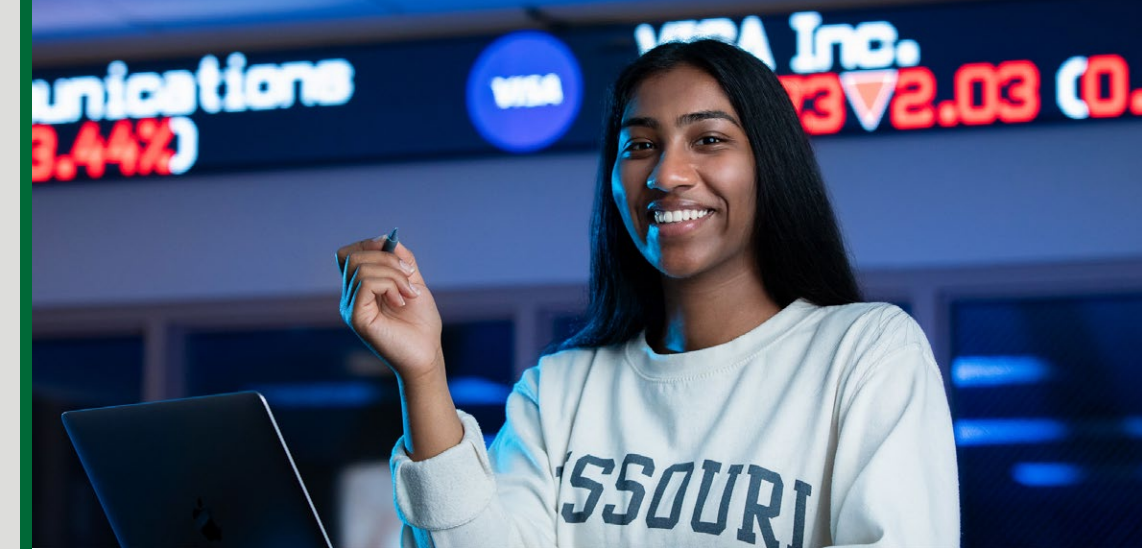
MISSOURI SOUTHERN ALUMNAE AWARDED INAUGURAL SHRM CONFERENCE SCHOLARSHIP

This summer, two 2024 graduates—April Black and Emily Studer—were awarded the inaugural Missouri State Council of the Society for Human Resource Management (MO-SHRM) Conference Scholarship. They are the only students in the state to receive this award.

MO-SHRM hosts an annual conference for HR students and professionals to network and attend panel discussions on HR practices and the future of the field. The scholarship offsets the cost of attendance. Dr. Sarah Holtzen, assistant professor of management and director of college relations of Tri-State Human Resource Association, the Joplin affiliate of MO-SHRM, was on the statewide committee that created the scholarship.

Black earned her Bachelor of Science in Business Administration with an emphasis in human resource management. Black currently serves as the chair of the IE&D portion of the board of directors for the Tri-State Human Resource Association. A first-generation and non-traditional student from Chetopa, Kan., Black found support through Project Stay and MSSU professors to help her achieve her goals.

Studer—a non-traditional student from Topeka, Kan.—earned her Bachelor of Science in Business Administration with a double emphasis in human resource management while working full time. At MSSU, Studer participated in two workplace-learning projects: an onboarding project at La-Z-Boy in Neosho and recommendation for a compensation survey for the City of Joplin.



NEWLY ESTABLISHED MBA PROGRAM EXPERIENCES SUCCESSFUL FIRST SEMESTER

Missouri Southern launched the new MBA program this fall. Aligned with the mission of the Plaster School of Business, the program provides advanced educational opportunities that help prepare graduates thrive in the global business world while supporting the economic development of the region. The degree will cultivate highly skilled business leaders prepared to tackle today’s challenges.

The 30-credit hour MBA program is designed with flexibility in mind. Full-time students can complete their studies in as few as 12 months. The degree is offered through an online or in-person setting. The unique aspect of the MSSU program is that prospective students without an undergraduate degree in business may complete prerequisite-leveling modules in just a few weeks in order to apply to the program, making the degree accessible for nearly everyone.

Students can also further tailor their education by selecting one of four specialized tracks: Applied Data Analytics, Management, Healthcare Management, or Education.

With a successful first semester, the MBA program has a bright future ahead with plans to begin new industry collaborations, additional resources to support students’ professional development and academic success.

“The first year has been incredibly successful,” said Dr. Sarah Holtzen, assistant professor of management and graduate program coordinator at MSSU. “Students have also praised the program for its practical curriculum, experienced faculty, and the flexibility it offers. We are looking forward to the first cohort of graduates in July 2025.”



COLLEGE OF HEALTH, LIFE SCIENCE & EDUCATION



DR. CRYSTAL LEMMONS NAMED DEAN

In May, Dr. Crystal Lemmons was named the new dean of the College of Health, Life Sciences and Education after serving as the department chair of the biology department and three years as a vice provost at Missouri Southern.

"I am very excited and thankful for the opportunity to serve," said Lemmons. "I believe in the education and opportunities that MSSU provides for our students, and it is truly an honor for me to serve the students, faculty, staff, and community in this new way."

Lemmons was a practicing veterinarian before starting her career at MSSU in 2000, serving as adjunct professor before being promoted to an assistant professor in biology a year later. In 2006, she rose to associate professor, earning tenure, and later became a professor of biology in 2012. Lemmons also served as vice provost from 2012-2015.

It was Lemmons' commitment to the campus community that made her ideal for this role. She currently serves on the Blunt Health Science Innovation Center steering committee, the Willcoxon Innovation in Health Sciences Summit committee, the University's Strategic Planning Task Force, and the Spencer-Bartlett Award selection committee, among many other committees and leadership of other campus initiatives.

"In my current role as Dean, I utilize my medical background on nearly a daily basis in different ways" said Lemmons. "One of the most rewarding experiences for me has been getting to know individual students, being part of their growth, and celebrating with them when goals are achieved. Every action on our part must be done with student success in mind, and that holds true no matter which role someone might have on campus."

KINESIOLOGY PROGRAM EXPERIENCES RAPID GROWTH AND SUCCESS

The kinesiology department has seen significant growth and success throughout the last year.

On March 2, four recent sports and recreation management graduates and one senior were honored at the local ADDY Awards at Downstream Casino.

The ADDY Awards is a national competition hosted by the American Advertising Federation that honors entries considered to be the best in the business. Mackenzie Pruitt, Haylee Smith, Oscar Campa, Corbin Beal, '24, as well as senior Chad Anderson created a social campaign for One Joplin—an organization uniting community leaders and advocates to improve the overall health and future stability of the area—in Shannah Slavings' Introduction to Public Relations course. The campaign—consisting of social media posts informing Joplin citizens of ways to be active and encouraging them to pursue a more active lifestyle on a budget—will launch in Spring 2025.

The Sports and Recreation Management Symposium had a strong inaugural year. Funded by Rod Anderson, '76, MSSU alumnus and former Board of Governors chair, the event included keynote speaker Dr. Jay Coakley, sports sociologist and author of "Sports in Society." The 2025 symposium will focus on current issues in NCAA sports and feature a panel session and roundtable network for students.

The online sports and recreation management graduate and the food science and nutrition undergraduate programs were established this fall. The sports and recreation management graduate program is designed to prepare students for management-level positions within the sports management field and will enhance their communication, leadership, and management skills. Through the online method, students can complete the 30-credit hour program within one year.

The food science and nutrition program, the second of its kind in Missouri, aims to provide students with a comprehensive understanding of food science, nutrition, and health. It will also require an internship for students to gain hands-on experience. In a field that has a 13% job growth rate nationwide, the degree is a great addition to MSSU's expansive academic offerings.



DENTAL HYGIENE AWARDED RCAT GRANT

Missouri Southern's dental hygiene department was awarded a \$409,928.00 Rural Citizens Access to Telehealth grant, also known as RCAT, on Feb. 1, 2024.

Funded through MO HealthNet, the three-year grant will allow the dental hygiene students to travel to local elementary schools and provide dental screenings, sealants, oral hygiene instructions, and fluoride treatments for children with less access to dental care. This opportunity also offers dental hygiene students immersive learning opportunities through community involvement.

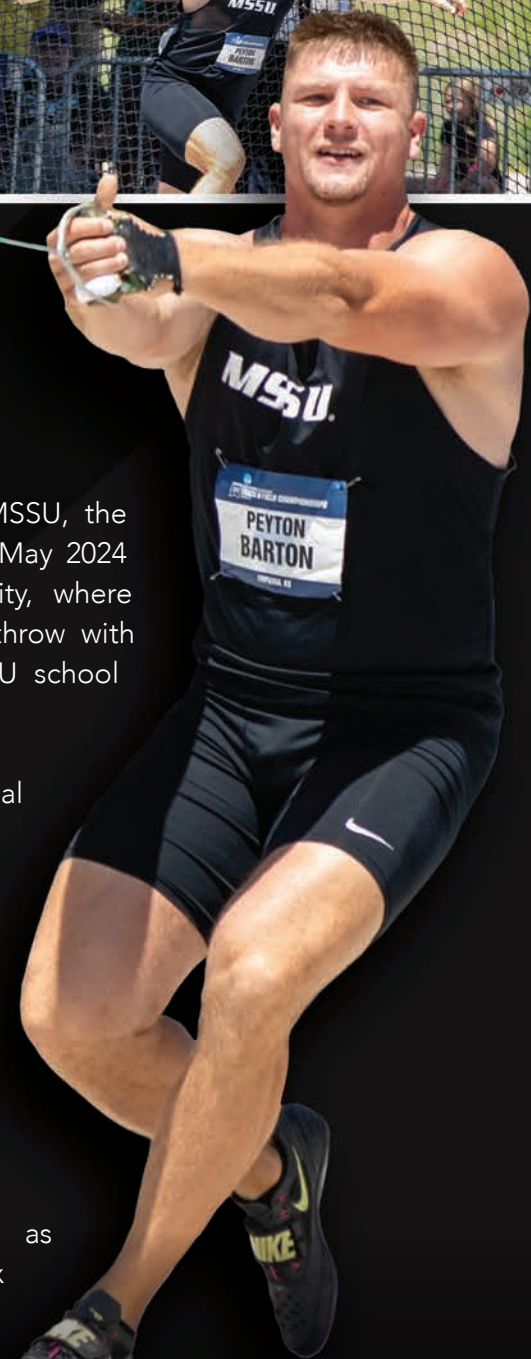
Using the grant, the department purchased a van for telehealth equipment. This provides easier transportation and ample space for any additional supplies.

"It has wonderful storage shelving, and the grant provides funding for fuel and upkeep of the van," said Jill Pyle, director of the dental hygiene program at MSSU. "The van has made our lives a lot easier since we can keep the equipment loaded and ready to go."

The department currently travels to Avilla, Jasper, Neosho, and Sarcoxie districts to conduct these services within the elementary schools' gymnasiums. They hope to eventually expand to other areas.

"The grant creates a sustainable program for years to come," said Pyle. "It will help us provide for families that cannot receive the dental care they need."

LION ATHLETICS



THROWING IT DOWN

TRACK AND FIELD COACHES DISCUSS SUCCESS OF THE TEAM

Last season was full of success for MSSU's Track and Field team. Boasting nine All-Americans with 12 total performances in just one year is a huge accomplishment. In fact, it's never happened in Missouri Southern history.

2024 ALL-AMERICANS

Peyton Barton	Bastien Franck	Malachi Pipkin
Samariae Bonds	Keilee Johnson	Brendan Rozier
Gabe Ford	Cedric Pearson	Kirsten Womack

"With our four coaches on staff with their own athletes, this shows that what we're doing works," said Coach Bryan Schiding, director of cross country/track and field. "It's a serious national recognition for the university, the athletic department, and for our athletes. This is unheard of for a small Division II-type program."

One of the only multitime national champions, 2024 kinesiology graduate Peyton Barton, won four national

titles during his time at MSSU, the final one accomplished in May 2024 at Emporia State University, where Barton won the hammer throw with a personal best and MSSU school record of 68.71m (225'05").

"I competed in many national championships, which are always an exciting experience," said Barton.

"The process leading up to the wins was a very challenging road that took a lot of discipline and grit to come away with."

Barton graduated MSSU as a 5x MIAA Champion, 9x

All-American, 4x National Champion and holds school records in the Weight Throw, Hammer Throw, and Discus.

"He developed into one of the most dedicated, hard-working kids I've ever had," said Coach Brian Allen, associate head coach and recruiting coordinator for the track and field program. "Barton is one of the most decorated throwers in MIAA and NCAA Division II history."

Barton is just one of the many talented MSSU track and field athletes who has experienced the push to reach their full potential. He chose to attend MSSU based on the track and field team's success.

"It's about finding your niche as a coach and pursuing the coachable athlete," said Schiding, the 2020 United States Track and Field and Cross Country Coaches Association Men's Indoor Track and Field National Coach of the Year awardee. "We give our athletes attention—they're going to get to know us as much as we're going to get to know them. It's an individual education in a classroom, but they won't be training alone. We have good coaches, and we're lucky to have a good staff that gets along well. That cannot be valued enough."

"We've built the program even more in the last 10 to 12 years," said Allen, who is a four-time Men's or Women's Regional Assistant Coach of the Year. "In that time, we placed fifth and sixth at nationals and won the first men's outdoor conference title in 2016, which was my third year here. We also won an indoor conference title in 2020 and 2021. Women's track and field placed fifth at an outdoor national meet, which is the highest rank they've ever achieved in that category. We're doing things that we've never done."

Like many other student-athletes, Barton has post-graduation plans that include part-owning a family construction company and getting married this year. Although now alumnus, he is continuing to train with Allen.

"I'm going to further my athletic career by training professionally to try to make a U.S. team," he said.



STANDING AS CHAMPIONS

MEN'S BASEBALL WINS CHAMPIONSHIP AND HOSTS REGIONAL

In May, the Missouri Southern Lions baseball team had a dominant performance at the MIAA Tournament Championship. After defeating Pittsburg State and Washburn, MSSU won the championship against the Central Missouri Mules 18-16. Central Missouri Mules were a top-seeded and #2 nationally ranked team, although MSSU beat Central Missouri within the first game. This is the first time MSSU has won this championship since 2015.

"We played in the conference championship game this year, so it was good to get back to Central Missouri and win it," said Coach Bryce Darnell, head baseball coach at MSSU. "It's a tough tournament involving good teams, so it's definitely an accomplishment."

Six players were named to the All-Tournament team, which was led by the Tournament's Most Outstanding Player, Henry Kusiak. Drew Townsend, Cole Gayman, Laif Hultine, Ethan Clark, and Will Doherty also received the honors.

All baseball student-athletes were presented a championship ring at the homecoming football game in October.

However, this isn't the only accomplishment baseball received—MSSU hosted the regional later that month.

"Only 16 teams in the country may host a regional, and we were one of those teams—and we did it twice in a row. That speaks to the success of our team and to our players' skills," said Darnell.

GOING DOWN IN HISTORY

LATEST MISSOURI SOUTHERN HALL OF FAME INDUCTEES HONORED

The Missouri Southern Athletic Department proudly announced the newest Hall of Fame class. The inductees were officially honored at the Hall of Fame Brunch on Oct. 12. This year's inductees include two former student-athletes, Larry Barnes (Football) and Arley Smith (Men's Track and Field), as well as two outstanding teams, the 2009 Women's Cross Country team and the 1974-75 Women's Basketball team.

LARRY BARNES



Larry Barnes became a standout member of the football team from 1975 to 1978. During his time at MSSU, Barnes consistently led the team in various single-season statistics.

Barnes's 1976 season was particularly remarkable. He led the team in rushing with 1,213 yards, scoring 66 points, and all-purpose yardage with 1,349 yards. He ranked eighth in rushing attempts (201) and third in rushing yardage (1,213 yards). His performance in 1977 was equally impressive, leading in rushing with 938 yards, scoring with 66 points, all-purpose yardage with 1,207 yards, and touchdown receptions by a running back with four. Notably, after his game against Pittsburg State on November 12, 1977, he ranked seventh in rushing net yards with 244 yards.

Throughout his career at MSSU, Barnes achieved several significant milestones. He holds the record for the highest average gain per rush (5.95 yards), ranks fourth in rushing attempts (558), third in rushing yardage (3,322 yards), and fifth in both rushing touchdowns (26) and overall scoring (200 points). Furthermore, he earned the most career touchdown receptions by a running back with eight.

Barnes's exceptional performance did not go unnoticed. During his 1976 and 1977 seasons, he was honored as

an NAIA and AP All-American Honorable Mention, NAIA District 16 First-Team, and All-Conference First-Team.

ARLEY SMITH



Arley Smith was a standout member of the Missouri Southern Men's Track and Field team from 2002 to 2004. During his tenure, he became a five-time MIAA Champion, excelling in the Hammer Throw (2003), Shot Put (2004), and Discus Throw (2004). Smith also claimed consecutive MIAA Weight Throw titles in 2003 and 2004.

In Indoor Track and Field, Smith's top performances included a Shot Put mark of 17.72m and a Weight Throw mark of 18.71m. His Outdoor Track and Field achievements were equally impressive, with top marks of 53.67m in the Discus Throw, 59.43m in the Hammer Throw, and 17.70m in the Shot Put.

Smith's excellence extended to the national stage, where he earned All-American status four times at the NCAA Division II Men's Track and Field National Championships in 2002 and 2004. He secured second place in the Shot Put and seventh in the Discus Throw in 2002, and placed fourth in the Weight Throw and sixth in the Hammer Throw in 2004.

WOMEN'S CROSS COUNTRY

Missouri Southern proudly celebrated the outstanding achievements of the 2009 Women's Cross Country team and their dedicated coaches. Building on a legacy of success from 2006 to 2008, the Lions embarked on a remarkable 2009 season, capturing the MIAA Championship for the fourth consecutive year. Their dominance was evident as six runners finished in the top seven.

At the South Central Regional Championships, the team continued to shine with six athletes placing in the top ten. The Lions secured four of the top five spots, with Kimi Shank taking first, Ashley Siler second, and Ashley Bunch third.

The pinnacle of their season was a stellar performance at the NCAA Division II Championships, where they finished third overall. Remarkably, the team remained undefeated by any Division II cross country team throughout the season until the National Championship. At the championship, Ashley Siler earned All-American status with a third-place finish, and Kimi Shank followed closely in fourth, also earning All-American honors. Courtney Waltbillig and Ashley Bunch joined them as USTFCCCA All-Americans, finishing in the top 30.

This extraordinary team, consisting of Courtney (Waltbillig) Carter, Michelle (Stevens) Dockray, Dora Eastin, Olga (Bulgurova) Garcia, Ashley (Siler) Gunnels, Kat (Oberle) Hough, Allyson (Benkert) Kassebaum, Silvia Pineda, Kimi (Shank), Reed, Katie (Schmidt) Smith, Alison Walker, Victoria (Kline) White, Ashley (Bunch) Wickman, Marlee (Tegenkamp) Zoellner and Coaches: Patty Vavra, Jamie Burnham, Kari (Fritchie) Benkert, and Kara (Eckard) Dixon, exemplifies the spirit of excellence and determination.

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

Missouri Southern proudly honor these trailblazing players and their coach for their innovation, merit, and groundbreaking achievements as the university's first women's athletics team. The 1974 Women's Basketball team, led by head coach Sallie Beard, pioneered women's athletics by collaborating with the community and MSSU to create opportunities for female athletes. Their efforts laid the foundation for the university to establish women's tennis and softball teams the following semester, marking a significant step forward in women's sports.

The pioneering team includes Cheryl Allen, Juanita (Elbrader) Alloway, Rosemarie Dieckhoff, Terrie Dresh, Marti (Gray) Garrett, Cyndi (Hearn) Leonard, Debby Nelson, Roanna Patterson, Janet (Gladwin) Rogers, Betsy Taylor, Linda (Ummel) Price, and Theresa (Francisco) Wilcox.



ENTERING THE SPOTLIGHT

MSSU CELEBRATES 50 YEARS OF WOMEN'S SPORTS ON CAMPUS

2024 marks the 50th anniversary of women's athletics at Missouri Southern. In celebration of this historic milestone, MSSU has invited back all former female athletes for a yearlong series of planned events and reunions throughout the academic year.

"It's an incredible milestone, and we are excited for all the plans that have been made to celebrate these amazing student athletes, who literally number in the thousands," said Rob Mallory, director of Athletics at MSSU. "It's a milestone that simply cannot be contained to one event and deserves an entire year dedicated to the trailblazers and the trendsetters who have worked to create opportunities for women yesterday, today, and into the indefinite future."

Women's athletics began in 1974 after a group of female students approached Sallie Beard—who was a faculty member at the time—with the idea of starting a women's basketball team. Known for her tenacity and passion for student success, Beard established partnerships on campus and in the community to make that happen. Beard would coach the team and eventually become MSSU's director of athletics for 34 years until her retirement.

The university developed women's tennis and softball the following semester, both coached by Beard that first year. Starting with an annual budget of just \$2,000 for all three teams, the program has grown into a multi-million-dollar NCAA Division II program, now encompassing eight women's athletic teams comprised of over 100 female

athletes. The women's athletic program has seen much growth and championships since its inception. In 1992, MSSU won its first national championship in softball and its first of six women's national championships in track and field in 1993.

Beard can still be found in the crowd at many MSSU athletic events, and she still remembers all the student athletes who contributed to the program's success. She is serving on a committee with former coaches, athletes, and others at MSSU to plan this year's events. Events include the annual homecoming parade on Oct. 5 that featured Beard and 1974-75 female student athletes as grand marshals; the Missouri Southern Athletics Hall of Fame induction brunch on Oct. 12, which saw the induction of the first basketball team into the university's Hall of Fame; the upcoming 50th Anniversary Alumni Weekend on Jan. 25-26 with a dinner featuring former female athletes and teams on Saturday and a brunch on Sunday, as well as a special recognition ceremony during halftime of the women's basketball game that invites all current female athletes.

"This celebration isn't about one woman or one team, but many women and many teams who have worked to build a successful women's athletics program at MSSU," said Beard. "We are looking forward to welcoming back the women who have been a part of the program's continued growth and success."



CLASS Notes



LET US KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON IN YOUR LIFE!

EMAIL US AT ALUMNIASSOC@MSSU.EDU

1990s

Mark McCall, '91, is the Chief of Police for the City of Carl Junction, MO.

Allen Moss, '93, is now the President of The Mesalands Community College in Tucumcari, NM.

Scott White, '98, promoted to Director of Public Information and Education Division for the Missouri Highway Patrol.

2000s

Alissa Owsley, '00, became the Founding Partner of LifeWork Talent Consulting in Joplin, MO.

Schuyler Adkins, '03, is the new Executive Director of CPS Fine Arts of the Robson Performing Arts Center in Claremore, OK.

Brandon Weaver, '12, is a keynote speaker at the Ruby Conference Chicago, International Conference.

Matt Liberty, '13, is the Assistant Vice President, Lender, at Southwest Missouri bank in Carthage, MO.

Lindsay Aycock, '17, now works at Benchmark Group, Inc. as a Marketing Specialist II in Rogers, AR.

Amanda Hosp, '19, '21, now works for the Webb City Police Department in Webb City, MO.

2020s

Rajindra Cambell, '23, makes Jamaican Olympic Team. 1st place in the men's shot put final at the Jamaican Olympic Trials.

LION CUBS



Cody, '12, and wife, Lindsey **McClafferty** welcomed Carter Wade McClafferty on April 5, 2023.

MARRIAGES



Joshua Moore and **Olivia (Lewis) Moore, '22**, were married on June 29th, 2024.

Chad Ryersee and **Sarah (Forman) Ryersee, '20**, were married on May 25th, 2024.

Karen (Wade) Bilton '08, married BJ Bilton July 22, 2024.

I N M E M O R I A M

DATES AS OF OCT. 29, 2024

ALUMNI

Terry Abernathy '05 | July 6, 2024
Ruthanne Alexander '77 | Feb. 26, 2024
Susan Allen '97 | Jan. 1, 2024
Mel Anderson '65 | Apr. 28, 2024
Nancy (Robson) Anderson '60 | May 1, 2024
Gerry Armstrong '96 | Jan. 28, 2024
William Baker '74 | July 4, 2024
Neal Ball '77 | Nov. 21, 2023
Hugh Barnes '91 | Aug. 29, 2024
Kerri (White) Beier '93 | Feb. 29, 2024
Bruce Bigley '73 | July 23, 2024
Carol Bingham '67 | May 30, 2024
Helen (Lumpkins) Black '63 | Dec. 2, 2023
David Bogner '71 | Mar. 15, 2024
Harry Boyd '81 | Feb. 11, 2024
William Boyd '69 | Apr. 30, 2024
Desiree (Chanslor) Bridges '03 | Feb. 20, 2024
Brady Bridges '12 | Apr. 6, 2024
Charles Bridges '60 | Sept. 10, 2024
Gordon Brown '62 | May 24, 2024
Terry Brownen '78 | May 18, 2024
Jack Burke '66 | Nov. 16, 2023
Curtis Campbell '71 | Dec. 2, 2023
Marie (Jeffries) Capps '55 | Sept. 23, 2024
Jim Castagno '57 | Sept. 2, 2024
Donna Clason '73 | Nov. 17, 2023
Randal Claxton '74 | Mar. 31, 2024
Charles Clinton '90 | Apr. 14, 2024
Harold Conner '51 | July 26, 2024
Sheila (Olinger) Denefrio '04 | June 4, 2024
Louis "Dusty" DeVillier, III '87 | Oct. 29, 2023
Lloyd Ditto '51 | Aug. 22, 2024
Jamie Dixon '84 | Dec. 6, 2023
Lorene Dugan '49 | Apr. 22, 2024
Larry Duvall '55 | Dec. 12, 2023
Paul Eggeman '73 | Sept. 9, 2024
Robert England '82 | Feb. 18, 2024
Larry Erwin '62 | Mar. 16, 2024
Rick Evans '87 | Mar. 13, 2024
Sara (Livingston) Forrest '62 | July 22, 2024
Steveie (Green) Frisbie '85 | Sept. 28, 2024
John Furgason '93 | Mar. 1, 2024
Janice (Gilstrap) Garrett '70 | Apr. 11, 2024
Gary Garvey '70 | June 4, 2024
Mary Glassburner '82 | May 15, 2024
Ralph Green '74 | Dec. 5, 2023
Mikell (Elliff) Hager '85 | Nov. 1, 2023
Michael Hartman '66 | July 17, 2024
Les Higdon '72 | June 30, 2024
Bobby Hightree '70 | July 29, 2024
Tom Hilton '76 | Dec. 22, 2023
Pam Hosp '80 | Sept. 3, 2024
Mark Jennings '93 | Nov. 4, 2023
Lester Kline '12 | Sept. 30, 2024
Terri Lee '93 | Jan. 1, 2024
Chester Lien '83 | Nov. 16, 2023
Wilma (Husted) MacNabb '69 | Nov. 7, 2023
John Matthews '58 | Dec. 31, 2023
Former Alumni Board Member
Joseph May '65 | Mar. 12, 2024
James McBee '79 | July 13, 2024
Bobby McCurry '74 | Dec. 9, 2023
Patricia (Musser) McDonald '79 | Jan. 8, 2024
Stephen Millwe '69 | Nov. 1, 2023
Nancy Niess '70 | July 29, 2024
Roy Nivens '87 | Sept. 3, 2024
Sharon Noel '85 | Sept. 5, 2024
Cindy (Taylor) Norman '70 | Aug. 8, 2024
Ivan Obert '75 | July 29, 2024
Red ODell '82 | Nov. 25, 2023

Ollie Patterson '72 | Feb. 2, 2024
Patrick Patterson '16 | Apr. 4, 2024
Birl Bruitt '78 | Jan. 7, 2024
Beverly Ramseyer '73 | Jan. 3, 2024
Connie (Roberts) Randall '96 | Apr. 24, 2024
Thomas Reed '94 | Sept. 10, 2024
Jewell (Zwink) Reed '80 | July 26, 2024
Mary Reed '73 | Jan. 26, 2024
Marlene Reineke '73 | Feb. 13, 2024
Violet "Lorraine" (Gregory) Robinett '88 | Oct. 28, 2023
Deborah Robinson '74 | Apr. 13, 2024
Ron Robson '57 | June 6, 2024
Randy Rogers '72 | May 20, 2024
Former Alumni Board Member
Harry Rogers '71 | Mar. 30, 2024
Jennifer Ross '05 | June 26, 2024
Joye Russell '69 | Apr. 24, 2024
Jerilyn (Farrar) Sanderson '71 | Jan. 28, 2024
Alyson (Stanley) Scott '13 | May 29, 2024
Edward Seela '61 | Jan. 7, 2024
Greg Simmons '66 | Oct. 21, 2023
Melanie Smith '18 | Feb. 18, 2024
Robin (Reed) Spencer '87 | Mar. 5, 2024

Sally (Reed) Stephan '81 | Sept. 13, 2024
Terry Swartz '82 | Mar. 17, 2024
Gerry Taylor '59 | Dec. 10, 2023
Lynne Teaford '06 | Nov. 29, 2023
Jo Testman '71 | Jan. 6, 2024
Jimmie Thomason '83 | Apr. 1, 2024
Joseph Tournear '81 | Feb. 24, 2024
Jerry Tucker '82 | Apr. 13, 2024
Natalie Turner '14 | Dec. 20, 2023
Laurie (Avey) Vance '05 | Apr. 6, 2024
Lorraine (Barnes) Vice '61 | Oct. 8, 2024
Marvin Vore '78 | Sept. 1, 2024
Don Walcher '85 | Dec. 2, 2023
Gary Wampler '72 | May 18, 2024
Cynthia (Powell) Weaver '83 | Oct. 3, 2024
Mark Whitwell '91 | Apr. 17, 2024
Charles Winscott '73 | Sept. 12, 2024
Pat (Wright) Wright '76 | Dec. 4, 2023
Cheryl (Myers) Yendes '83 | May 1, 2024
Michael Youger '86 | Mar. 20, 2024
Rita (Ashbaugh) Young '88 | Aug. 24, 2024
Betty Zapletal '90 | July 4, 2024

FRIENDS

Steve Beimdiek | July 17, 2024
Claudette Brown | Dec. 17, 2023
Betty Anne Coan | Sept. 22, 2024
Glenn Coltharp | Oct. 7, 2024
Cindy (Little) Corn | Nov. 29, 2024
Sabine Cramer | Sept. 20, 2024
Nancy (Broadwater) Dowson | Oct. 31, 2023
Curtis Ferneau | May 27, 2024
Harry Greninger | Feb. 22, 2024
Helen Habermann | Feb. 20, 2024
Doug Hollis | May 23, 2024

Phyllis Hoskins | Feb. 7, 2024
Mary Johnston | Aug. 16, 2023
Ronald Jones | Jan. 1, 2024
Teresa Massa | Jan. 31, 2024
Gene Schwartz | Mar. 17, 2024
Rick Stauffer | Aug. 7, 2024
Robert Stringer, D.O. | June 22, 2024
Danny Thayer | Jan. 10, 2023
Jimmie Thomas | July 8, 2024
Janice Tusinger | Dec. 20, 2023
Robert "Bob" Willcoxon | Nov. 18, 2024

FACULTY, STAFF & RETIREES

Ann Allman | Aug. 28, 2024
Hal Bodon | Dec. 23, 2023

Lynne Rusley | Feb. 20, 2024
Paul Shipman | Dec. 9, 2023



DEPARTMENT OF KINESIOLOGY

DEGREES:

- Exercise Science
- Food Science & Nutrition
- Physical Education K-12
- Sport & Recreation Management
(Bachelor's & Master's)

CERTIFICATES:

- Coaching
- Community Health
- Nutrition
- Rehabilitation Sciences

POSSIBLE CAREERS:

- Athletic Administration
- Dietitian
- Fitness Director
- Food Scientist
- Occupational Therapy
- Parks & Recreation
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WHY I GIVE

JOHN DITTO, '81, '83

For John Ditto, family is everything. It's why he's chosen to include Missouri Southern State University in his estate plans.

John graduated from MSSU with an associate degree in automotive technology in 1981, followed by a bachelor's degree in management technology in 1983—all while working at Norman Electronics in Joplin. Afterward, he had a 35-year career in the military and aerospace industry at local companies before retiring.

His decision to give back to MSSU comes from a deeply personal experience. In December 2018, his mother Ruth was diagnosed with advanced lung cancer and bravely battled the disease for one month. During this time, several nurses—including graduates of MSSU—made a lasting impact on Ruth and John.

"In the short time my mother received care, the nursing experience was amazing," John recalls. "My mother was strong, independent, and a very curious person. She asked the different nurses and caregivers why they pursued their careers. The answer always came to this: They just wanted to help people."

Ruth formed a special connection with her nursing staff, who even visited her outside of their shifts.

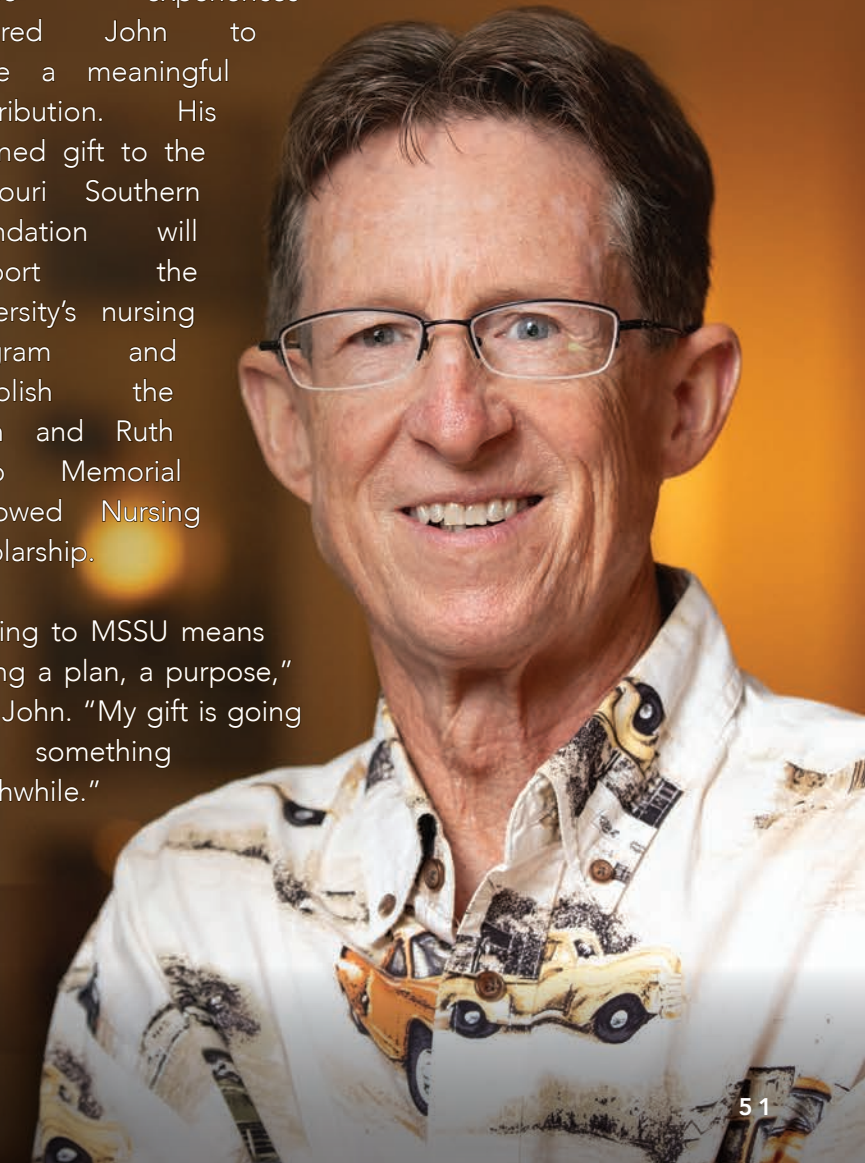
"She took an interest in them, and they took an interest in her," said John. "We were really impressed with their care."

When his father Lloyd, '51, passed away in the summer of 2024, John was again moved by the compassion shown by nursing graduates from MSSU.

"I saw good people giving quality care as they did with my mother," he said. "My father was a kind and gentle man but suffered severe dementia in his final month, so I was impressed with the care they offered him."

These experiences inspired John to make a meaningful contribution. His planned gift to the Missouri Southern Foundation will support the university's nursing program and establish the John and Ruth Ditto Memorial Endowed Nursing Scholarship.

"Giving to MSSU means having a plan, a purpose," said John. "My gift is going to something worthwhile."



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



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