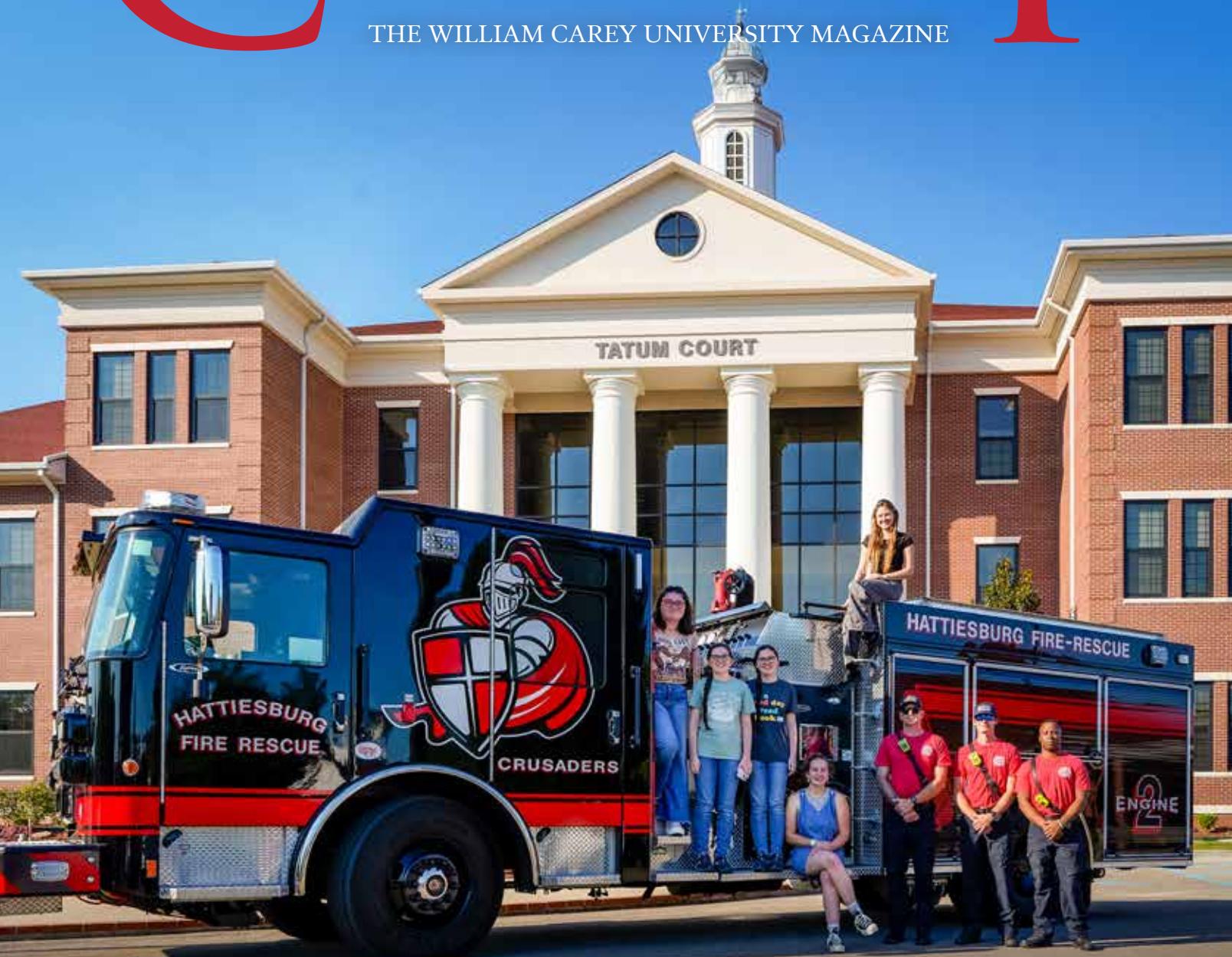


# CAREY

THE WILLIAM CAREY UNIVERSITY MAGAZINE



## Responding to Present Needs

STORY ON PAGE 12

# LETTERS FROM CAREY



Dear Carey Family,

As I conclude my fourth year as your president, Denice and I continue to be deeply grateful for the privilege of serving William Carey University. Each year, our appreciation grows as we see firsthand the dedication, faith, and spirit that make Carey such a special place. We have loved connecting with so many of you—our alumni, students, faculty, staff, and friends—and we look forward to strengthening those bonds in the years ahead.

God has richly blessed WCU this year, particularly in the area of enrollment. We have continued our focus on building strong undergraduate programs that support vibrant campus life and create a foundation for our graduate studies. I'm thrilled to share that enrollment has reached new heights once again. Since 2022, our first-time freshman enrollment has grown by 80 percent, and our total enrollment—including dual-enrollment students—now exceeds 6,000, the highest in school history.

We also celebrated a record number of first-year pharmacy students, and our College of Osteopathic Medicine opened the new Institute of Primary Care, advancing our mission to meet healthcare needs across Mississippi and beyond. With 200 future doctors in each class, Carey is the largest medical school in the state.

God's blessings extend across every part of our university. The number of religion majors has doubled since 2022, reflecting a growing passion for ministry and service. Our School of Music has soared to an all-time high of 345 music majors, and our School of Education continues to lead the way—ranked #1 in Mississippi and among the Top 10 nationwide out of more than 950 schools offering education degrees.

Our university continues to receive recognition that reflects the quality and value of a Carey education. We are once again ranked the #1 Christian University in Mississippi and now stand among the Top 20 Christian Universities in the nation. WCU also earned the #1 Best Value ranking in the state for our commitment to affordable tuition, scholarships, and free undergraduate textbooks. Our athletic programs continue to shine, achieving the #1 winning percentage among all college athletic programs in Mississippi for the second straight year.

As we celebrate these accomplishments, we also look to the future. Earlier this year, we launched the "Great Things" campaign, a three-year initiative to expand scholarships, strengthen academic programs, and enhance our campus for future generations. We continue to work toward this important goal and ask for your prayers and support as we seek to ensure that Christian higher education remains accessible to all who are called to serve through it.

The future of Carey is bright, and none of this would be possible without you—our alumni, friends, and supporters. Thank you for your prayers, encouragement, and continued belief in the mission of William Carey University. Please help us spread the word about Carey and the importance of Christian higher education.

It's always a Great Day to Be a Crusader!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ben Burnett".

Ben Burnett  
President, William Carey University

# CAREY

THE WILLIAM CAREY UNIVERSITY MAGAZINE

## UNIVERSITY

- 4 Baton Rouge Open House
- 5 Carey Birthday
- 6 Charles W. Pickering Institute of Primary Care
- 8 Carey Dinner Theatre
- 9 William Carey & Howard Technology Solutions Launch New Partnership
- 10 AI Workplace: MAIN & William Carey Announce Partnership
- 10 Employer Support of the Guard & Reserve
- 11 Crusader Classic JROTC Drill Competition
- 12 William Carey Responding to Present Needs
- 13 Senior Art Show
- 14 Crawford Hall Open House
- 16 Jenkins-Chastain Award Winners
- 17 Tristan McSwain Wins WCU Student Leadership Award
- 18 2025 Commencement

## SERVICE

- 20 2025-2026 WCU Theme: 'Called to Serve'
- 20 Missions & Volunteers
- 22 Community Service
- 23 Rhetorica Christiana
- 23 Robert Whitehead Institute for Christian Leadership

## ATHLETICS

- 24 Athletic Highlights
- 25 Sports Hall of Fame

## FACULTY

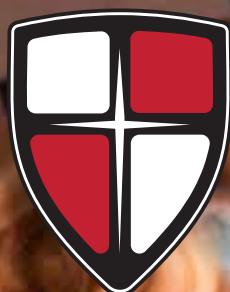
- 26 Faculty Publishing & Presentations
- 27 WCU's Zachary Harris Joins "Legendary" Bandmasters
- 28 Strategic Leadership Announcements

## ALUMNI

- 31 New Fight Song Adopted
- 32 Spring 2025 Homecoming
- 34 WCU Inducts Four into Alumni Hall of Fame
- 35 New Parent Engagement Program
- 35 Alumni & Faculty Passings
- 36 Class Notes
- 38 Great Things Campaign Update

**COVER PHOTO:** Station 2 has a new fire truck. Hattiesburg firefighters show Carey students features of the new Crusader Fire Engine.

William Carey University is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges to award bachelor, master, education specialist, and doctoral degrees. Contact the Commission on Colleges at 1866 Southern Lane, Decatur, Georgia 30033-4097 or call 404-679-4500 for questions about the accreditation of William Carey University.



Called to Serve

Matthew 23:II

# BATON ROUGE

## *Open House*



**WILLIAM CAREY UNIVERSITY  
HOSTED AN OPEN HOUSE AT THE  
NEW HOME OF THE WCU SCHOOL  
OF NURSING AT BATON ROUGE.  
FACULTY, STAFF, STUDENTS AND  
GUESTS GATHERED AT 5615  
CORPORATE BOULEVARD TO  
TOUR THE NEWLY RENOVATED,  
7,475-SQUARE-FOOT FACILITY.**

WCU-Baton Rouge opened in fall 2018, offering the Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree (BSN).

The first class had 22 students. Current enrollment is 145 students.

Graduates work at Woman's Hospital, Our Lady of the Lake, Promise Hospital, Baton Rouge General and other healthcare organizations.

**DEGREES CURRENTLY OFFERED:  
BACHELOR OF SCIENCE IN NURSING  
WITH FIVE DIFFERENT PATHWAYS:**

Traditional, LPN Advanced Placement to BSN,  
Healthcare transitions to BSN

"Second Degree" to BSN, and RN to BSN

Master of Science in Nursing Education

PhD In Nursing Administration and Education

Health Administration & Education – bachelor,  
master, PhD

Health Information Management – bachelor,  
master





*Dr. Bennie Crockett, co-director of the Center for Study of the Life and Work of William Carey, talks to Judy Prine about William Carey's work.*

# CAREY BIRTHDAY



FACULTY, STAFF AND STUDENTS  
GATHERED ON AUGUST 15 TO  
CELEBRATE WILLIAM CAREY'S  
BIRTHDAY AND LEARN ABOUT  
THE IMPORTANT CONTRIBUTIONS  
HE MADE AS A MISSIONARY,  
TRANSLATOR, BOTANIST AND  
PUBLISHER.

*Robert Donnell and Ted Bower of William Carey University's board of trustees examine an exhibit about William Carey's work in Donnell Museum — home of the Center for Study of the Life and Work of William Carey.*

# CHARLES W. PICKERING INSTITUTE of PRIMARY CARE



Judge Charles Pickering spoke at the dedication of the IPC.

WILLIAM CAREY UNIVERSITY DEDICATED ITS NEW INSTITUTE OF PRIMARY CARE ON JULY 28 – A FEW DAYS AHEAD OF BOTH ITS SCHEDULED COMPLETION DATE AND THE ARRIVAL OF 200 FIRST-YEAR MEDICAL STUDENTS READY FOR FALL ORIENTATION.

Looking out over a crowd of hundreds gathered for the ceremony, WCU President Ben Burnett said the Institute of Primary Care (IPC) is more than bricks and mortar: It's a place where future physicians will be trained, lives will be changed, and our commitment to serving the underserved will grow deeper.

"We are deeply honored to dedicate this building to Judge Charles Pickering – a man whose life has been marked by integrity, courage, and deep commitment to faith, justice, and education," Burnett said.

"As a longtime member of our board of trustees, he has been a steady, faithful force behind the growth of this university. Quite simply, without Judge Pickering's leadership, we would not be standing here today. His fingerprints are all over this university, and now, his name will be part of its future."

## UNDERSERVED COMMUNITIES

The IPC enhances WCU College of Osteopathic Medicine's ability to increase the number of primary care physicians in Mississippi and the Gulf South.

"The idea took shape about four years ago as we were becoming the largest medical school in the state. We watched our students

*William Carey University dedicated the 50,000-square-foot Charles W. Pickering Institute of Primary Care on July 28. Now under construction, a second phase of the project, at left, will include multiple-use lecture halls capable of seating 200 medical students.*



go into underserved rural communities, train there, and then stay there. And hospitals were saying, we want more of that," said Dr. Italo Subbarao, dean of the medical school.

"Just at that time, COVID challenges were making access to healthcare even harder. The legislature asked how they could make an investment that had generational benefits. We decided we wanted an institute that focused on primary care doctors. That's who people go to first – they're members of the community, they catch things early, they work with their patients on preventive care."

In the end, construction of the IPC was supported by a \$20 million infrastructure grant through AccelerateMS.

The 50,000-square-foot building has a large osteopathic manipulative medicine lab and an ultrasound skills lab. It includes a patient encounter center, a multi-purpose training room and a large conference center for medical gatherings. In addition to teaching student doctors, the IPC can also help practicing physicians advance their training and certifications – and partner with them on community-based solutions.

"We're just so blessed. Only the divine hand of the Lord could make this possible," Subbarao said.

## FAITHFUL LEADERSHIP

Judge Pickering said he was surprised to learn William Carey University wanted to name the IPC after him.

"I never dreamed a building might be named for me. It was a complete surprise. I told Dr. Burnett I didn't think I was worthy of the honor. What I've done was just what any board member would do – and I thank the Mississippi Legislature for appropriating the money to build the Institute of Primary Care," Pickering said.

Pickering served on the WCU Board of Trustees for 18 years. Some of the busiest were the ones spent as part of a team working through the steps to open an osteopathic medical school – and later, seeing it double its class size and plan the IPC.

"As I think back on our journey planning a medical school, going through accreditation, and opening the William Carey University School of Osteopathic Medicine, it's obvious to me that God indeed walked alongside us each step of the way," Pickering said.

Phase 2 of the IPC, under construction now, will open this winter. The 20,000-square-foot addition will include two large lecture halls that can be adapted in several configurations.



## COCA AWARDS HIGHEST ACCREDITATION STATUS TO WCU COLLEGE OF OSTEOPATHIC MEDICINE

William Carey University College of Osteopathic Medicine has been granted accreditation for 10 years by the Commission on Osteopathic College

Accreditation. COCA is responsible for evaluating all osteopathic medical schools in the U.S. and assigning each an accreditation status.

The 10-year accreditation status is the most prestigious level offered by COCA. It is reserved for only the highest quality osteopathic medical schools. This news comes after an extensive review and site visit by a COCA team in the spring.

*Carey Dinner Theatre gives rising young artists professional production experience. The 51st anniversary company included students from Mississippi, Alabama, Illinois, North Carolina – and one cast member from Guatemala.*



# CAREY

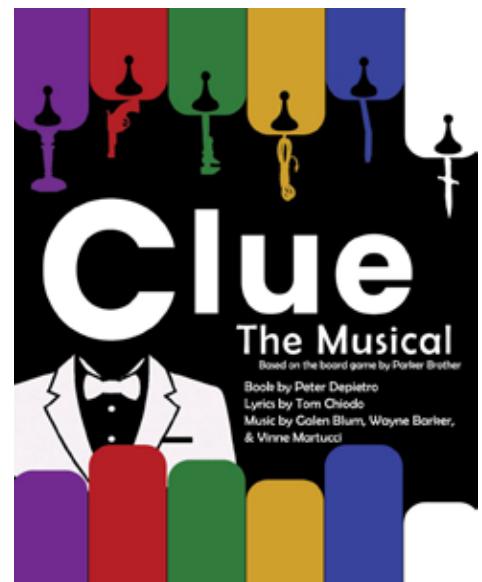
## Dinner Theatre

**CAREY DINNER THEATRE OPENED ITS 51ST SEASON WITH A COMEDY, "CLUE: THE MUSICAL." LIKE THE EVER-POPULAR BOARD GAME, "CLUE: THE MUSICAL" BRINGS THE WORLD'S BEST-KNOWN SUSPECTS TO LIFE AND INVITES THE AUDIENCE TO FIGURE OUT WHO KILLED MR. BODDY, IN WHAT ROOM, AND WITH WHAT WEAPON.**

Audience members became armchair sleuths as they unraveled a murder mystery with 216 possible solutions.

Released in 1949, the Clue board game became a world-wide sensation. In 1985, it was made into a major motion picture; in 1990, a British game show. In 1993, "Clue: The Musical" premiered at the New Boston Street Dinner Theatre in Maryland.

Besides performing onstage and working behind the scenes, company members served tables during dinner, giving the audience a chance to meet them.



# WILLIAM CAREY & HOWARD TECHNOLOGY SOLUTIONS

## LAUNCH NEW PARTNERSHIP

### A NEW PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN WILLIAM CAREY UNIVERSITY AND HOWARD TECHNOLOGY SOLUTIONS HAS CREATED NEW CAREER PATHS FOR STUDENTS.

Through an agreement signed July 22, Carey students now have access to a curriculum tailor-made to train them in the skills needed by one of the largest employers in the Pine Belt.

Carey Institute for Excellence, launched last year, spear-headed the effort. Its goal is to provide professional development training responsive to the needs of the business community.

“Our career people got with the curriculum people at William Carey and created a program to train their students in the areas we need, as far as hiring people for different job classifications,” said David Perkins, executive

vice president of sales for Howard Technology Solutions.

The training will range from business networking and sales to client service and human resources.

WCU President Ben Burnett said the university has always worked to strengthen Mississippi, creating programs to graduate more teachers, doctors, and nurses. The new partnership with Howard Technology Solutions focuses on a local business.

“What our students learn through this new curriculum will serve them wherever they go. But they’ll be especially well-suited for Howard Industries, and we feel that’s a great landing

place for our graduates. Likewise, we welcome current Howard employees who want to strengthen their skill sets,” Burnett said.

The Carey Institute for Excellence is also working with the City of Hattiesburg and local military units to develop learning modules to suit their specific needs.

“We are excited to offer a range of dynamic training this year geared toward empowering professionals at every stage of their journey—both here in the Pine Belt and along the Mississippi Gulf coast,” said Dr. Marla Yeager, director of Carey Institute for Excellence.

*To see this year’s schedule, visit [www.wmcarey.edu/excellence](http://www.wmcarey.edu/excellence)*

***David Perkins of Howard Technology Solutions, left, and Dr. Ben Burnett of William Carey University sign a new agreement to train students to be strong candidates for jobs at the Howard Industries division.***



***Carey Institute for Excellence director, Dr. Marla Yeager, worked with Dr. Robert Thompson, dean of the Carey School of Business, and Howard Technology leaders to develop a tailor-made curriculum.***

# AI Workplace MAIN & WILLIAM CAREY ANNOUNCE PARTNERSHIP



WILLIAM CAREY UNIVERSITY HAS JOINED THE MISSISSIPPI ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE NETWORK (MAIN), THE NATION'S FIRST STATEWIDE AI INITIATIVE. THE GOAL IS TO PREPARE STUDENTS FOR THE OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES OF AN AI-DRIVEN WORKPLACE.

As a MAIN partner, William Carey University will integrate AI training into its programs, giving college students and instructors access to practical, relevant education about artificial intelligence. The MAIN option will also be available to working professionals through WCU's Carey Institute for Excellence.

"Artificial Intelligence is already reshaping how we interact with the world. Giving our academic community access to MAIN's curriculum is a major step forward in our mission to provide an education that challenges our students," said Dr. Noal Cochran, WCU vice president of academic affairs.

"We look forward to working with MAIN as we help students integrate their Christian values into an emergent technological landscape."

Dr. Kollin Napier is the director of MAIN.

"We're excited to welcome William Carey University as our first private university partner.



*Xavier Washington of Laurel, left, and Blaize Chaudron of Meridian check out an AI application's responses.*

Their involvement expands MAIN's reach across Mississippi's higher education landscape, ensuring AI education and workforce readiness are accessible to learners at both public and private institutions," Napier said.

The Mississippi Artificial Intelligence

Network was established in 2023 in response to the rapid rise of AI and its projected impact on workforce sectors. MAIN provides AI leadership through awareness, education, training, and innovation initiatives.

## EMPLOYER SUPPORT OF THE GUARD & RESERVE

William Carey University enlisted Aug. 27 in the ESGR program – Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve. ESGR employers believe people who serve in the military are central to the strength of the nation and the well-being of our communities. Brigadier General Mark Prine, a retiree of the Army National Guard, now represents WCU's Office of Veteran and Military Affairs. He reports that William Carey campuses have about 100 military students – and 350 students who are military dependents. Shown after the signing ceremony are, from left: Brig. Gen. Mark Prine; Sgt. 1st Class September Wallace of Camp Shelby, area chair of the ESGR program; WCU President Dr. Ben Burnett; and Dr. Brett Golson, WCU Vice President for Strategic Operations.





## CRUSADER CLASSIC JROTC DRILL COMPETITION

PHOTOS BY AMANDA D. LEE,  
©2025 EMMERICH NEWSPAPERS

WCU WELCOMED JROTC CADETS FOR AN INAUGURAL EVENT ON SEPT. 19 – THE 1ST ANNUAL CRUSADER CLASSIC JROTC DRILL COMPETITION. IT FEATURED MORE THAN 120 CADETS FROM HIGH SCHOOLS IN ADAMS, FRANKLIN, FLORENCE, GEORGE, HANCOCK, HARRISON, LAMAR, LAWRENCE AND RANKIN COUNTIES. THE EVENT WAS HOSTED BY THE UNIVERSITY'S OFFICE OF VETERAN AND MILITARY AFFAIRS. THE WINNERS OF THE FIRST, SECOND, AND THIRD-PLACE AWARDS WERE HANCOCK HIGH SCHOOL, LAMAR COUNTY SCHOOLS AND WEST HARRISON HIGH SCHOOL.





# William Carey Responding to Present Needs

AS MANY COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES COPE WITH ENROLLMENT DECLINES, WILLIAM CAREY UNIVERSITY IS CELEBRATING A RECORD INCREASE FOR THE FALL SEMESTER. COMMITTED TO ITS 2025-26 THEME, "CALLED TO SERVE," THE UNIVERSITY IS EXPANDING WHERE MISSISSIPPI NEEDS IT MOST – HEALTHCARE, EDUCATION, MINISTRY AND THE ARTS.

"This strong growth would not be possible without the support of Mississippi Baptists, the dedication of our board of trustees, and the commitment of faculty and staff who go the extra mile to serve students," said WCU President Ben Burnett.

"William Carey has also been recognized by national ranking organizations as one of the state's 'best values' in higher education – proving that Christian education doesn't have to be expensive."

## MEETING THE NEED

- **PHYSICIANS:** WCU College of Osteopathic Medicine welcomed another class of 200 medical students this fall. The COM is the largest medical school in Mississippi and among the largest in the South. With a focus on rural medicine, Carey doctors are part of the solution to Mississippi's critical shortage of healthcare providers.
- **NURSES:** Nearly 1,100 students are nursing majors at the WCU College of Health Sciences. WCU also has an established physical therapy program and debuted a new occupational therapy program this fall.
- **PHARMACISTS:** Located at WCU's Tradition campus, the School of Pharmacy welcomed a record number of first-year students this fall, underscoring the university's growing impact on healthcare education in the Gulf South.
- **TEACHERS:** WCU School of Education plays a vital role in fighting Mississippi's teacher shortage. On average, more than 500 teachers graduated each year for the last six years.

*WCU students gather at King Student Center for the first Monday night worship service of the 2025-26 school year.*

- **MINISTRY:** WCU's Cooper School of Missions & Ministry Studies has doubled the number of religion majors since 2022 – and offers a bi-vocational degree in the realization that many small churches can't afford a full-time pastor.
- **MUSIC:** Winters School of Music has tripled in size over the last seven years. With 345 music majors, its legacy of enriching Mississippi's cultural and spiritual landscape is going strong.

## ENROLLMENT GROWTH

- Enrollment is rising at all WCU campuses – Hattiesburg, Tradition/Biloxi, and Baton Rouge. Since 2022, the number of residential students at the Hattiesburg campus has grown by 50 percent. University-wide, first-time freshmen increased by 80 percent and total undergraduates rose by 40 percent.
- Since 2024, WCU's combined graduate and undergraduate enrollment grew from 4,502 to more than 5,140 – an increase of 14 percent in a single year. With high school dual-enrollment students included, overall enrollment is just over 6,000.

# SENIOR *Art Show*

THE 2025 SENIOR ART SHOW  
AT LUCILE PARKER GALLERY  
CELEBRATED THE WORK OF FIVE  
ART MAJORS FROM CENTRAL AND  
SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI.

## JAKARA HARDY, GULFPORT, MISS.

Jakara Hardy's work is called "Cats & Owners."

"I've been asking my friends questions about their cats. These conversations allow me to better represent not just the cats, but the feeling of their relationships with the people who adore them," Hardy said.

"My creative journey didn't begin with a paintbrush. It started with music, and that opened the door to a deeper love for all kinds of artistic expression. I was self-taught in visual art for years and didn't take a single art class until my first year of college, but by then, I had already fallen in love with visual art. It gave me a way to connect, express, and explore the world around me."

*Both the Lucile Parker  
Gallery and the Gillespie  
Museum are open Tuesday,  
Wednesday and Thursday  
from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.  
Or art-lovers may view the  
exhibits by appointment.*



*Jakara Hardy*

*Ella Pitts*

*Hailey Hudgins*

*Arielle Williams*

*Ana Walters*

## HAILEY HUDGINS, OCEAN SPRINGS, MISS.

Hailey Hudgins has been drawing since she was four years old. She said she enjoys working outside her comfort zone.

"I've always loved Cruising the Coast. I wish to bring some of that color back into our modern world, to bring back that blast from the past. In a world where colors are fading and negative emotions are in the air, we need God's artwork through his artists," Hudgins said.

"I studied graphic design and drawing, and my goal with this show was to portray a sense of symmetry, exploration and fun. But the two main pieces in my show represent what is next in my journey – as I pursue an auto-collision degree."

## ELLA PITTS, PASCAGOULA, MISS.

Ella Pitts said she started creating art as soon as she could hold a crayon.

"I have also been obsessed with technology and computers all my life. As a graphic designer, I can perfectly mesh these two passions into a single profession," Pitts said.

"My graphic design style consists of fun, colorful patterns and detailed illustrations. As the oldest daughter of six children, my family plays a huge role in my life. As a result, many of my designs are inspired by family members. Because I am created in the image of God, I use the skills He has given me to glorify God not only in the art I create, but in every aspect of my life."

## ANA WALTERS, LAUREL, MISS.

Ana Walters says each piece of art that she creates is a window into the rich tapestry of human culture.

"I love seeing the creation of God put into each individual who is so specially and wonderfully made! Using the fluid nature of painting mediums and oil pastels, I bring to life figures that embody the diverse stories, traditions, and identities that shape our world," Walters said.

"My work aims to spark curiosity, foster connections, and celebrate the beauty of cultural expressions through bold and thoughtful representations."

## ARIELLE WILLIAMS, HATTIESBURG, MISS.

Arielle Williams says the vibrant culture of her childhood in New Orleans captured her heart.

"It is the birthplace of black history, jazz, and other distinctive customs. My passion for New Orleans, its music, and its soul are all uniquely expressed in my artwork," Williams said.

"But years of living outside of New Orleans have caused me to sense a profound disconnect, which motivates me to produce artwork that evokes feelings of dissonance or desire. My creative approach is now motivated by the pull of my youth and the realities of my current life. I aspire to rediscover my roots and develop into the artist I need to be."



# *Crawford Hall* OPEN HOUSE

THE OFFICE OF STUDENT ENGAGEMENT RECENTLY HOSTED AN OPEN HOUSE AND RIBBON CUTTING TO CELEBRATE THE NEWLY RENOVATED CRUSADER WALK, COMMON GROUNDS, AND CRAWFORD HOUSE. THESE REPURPOSED AND RENOVATED SPACES IN THE HEART OF OUR HATTIESBURG CAMPUS WERE DESIGNED TO BETTER SERVE OUR STUDENTS, FACULTY, AND STAFF.

Crawford Hall was completed in 1936, making it one of the oldest buildings on campus. It's been a real-life classroom for home economic students, WCU president's residence, Baptist Student Union, student health center and alumni house.

It now serves as home to the Office of Student Engagement and the starting point for campus tours. We invite you to stop by and visit us the next time you're on campus!





OUR VISION  
IN THE OFFICE  
OF STUDENT  
ENGAGEMENT IS  
CENTERED ON  
**PASSION,**  
**PURPOSE,**  
**AND MISSION**

Our **PASSION** is Jesus, and our **PURPOSE** is People—rooted in the greatest commandment found in Matthew 22:37–39.

Our **MISSION** is Impact, drawn from 1 Peter 2:9.

Above all, our desire is for students to come to Carey, find their calling, and go out to change the world.



# Jenkins-Chastain

## AWARD WINNERS



WCU President Ben Burnett congratulates this year's winners of the Jenkins-Chastain Award, Aidan Albritton of Madison and Anna Carroll of Carriere.

WILLIAM CAREY UNIVERSITY HELD ITS 2025 HONORS DAY ON APRIL 30. THE YEAR-END EVENT RECOGNIZES STUDENTS FOR OUTSTANDING ACADEMIC AND SERVICE ACHIEVEMENT.

WCU President Ben Burnett presented the day's top honor, the Jenkins-Chastain Award, to Aiden Albritton of Madison and Anna Carroll of Carriere. Established in 1957, the Jenkins-Chastain Award goes to two students who exemplify citizenship, scholarship, leadership, and Christian service.

"This award is the highest honor given by William Carey University. Anna and Aiden represent all of the qualities expected of students who win this prestigious award. They lead academically, spiritually and in the way they serve others. We expect great things from both of them after graduation," Burnett said.

This year's Jenkins-Chastain winners were also elected Mr. and Miss WCU by their classmates. And between them, they won three departmental awards, too.



### AIDAN ALBRITTON

Aidan Albritton majored in business administration and minored in strategic communication and leadership. He was active in a wide spectrum of campus groups, including Carey Ambassadors, CareyWOW, and the WCU Strategic Planning Council. He served as president of the Baptist Student Union and helped lead a mission trip to New York City.

He also won this year's Outstanding Management/Marketing Student Award from the School of Business and the Alumni Association's School Spirit Award.

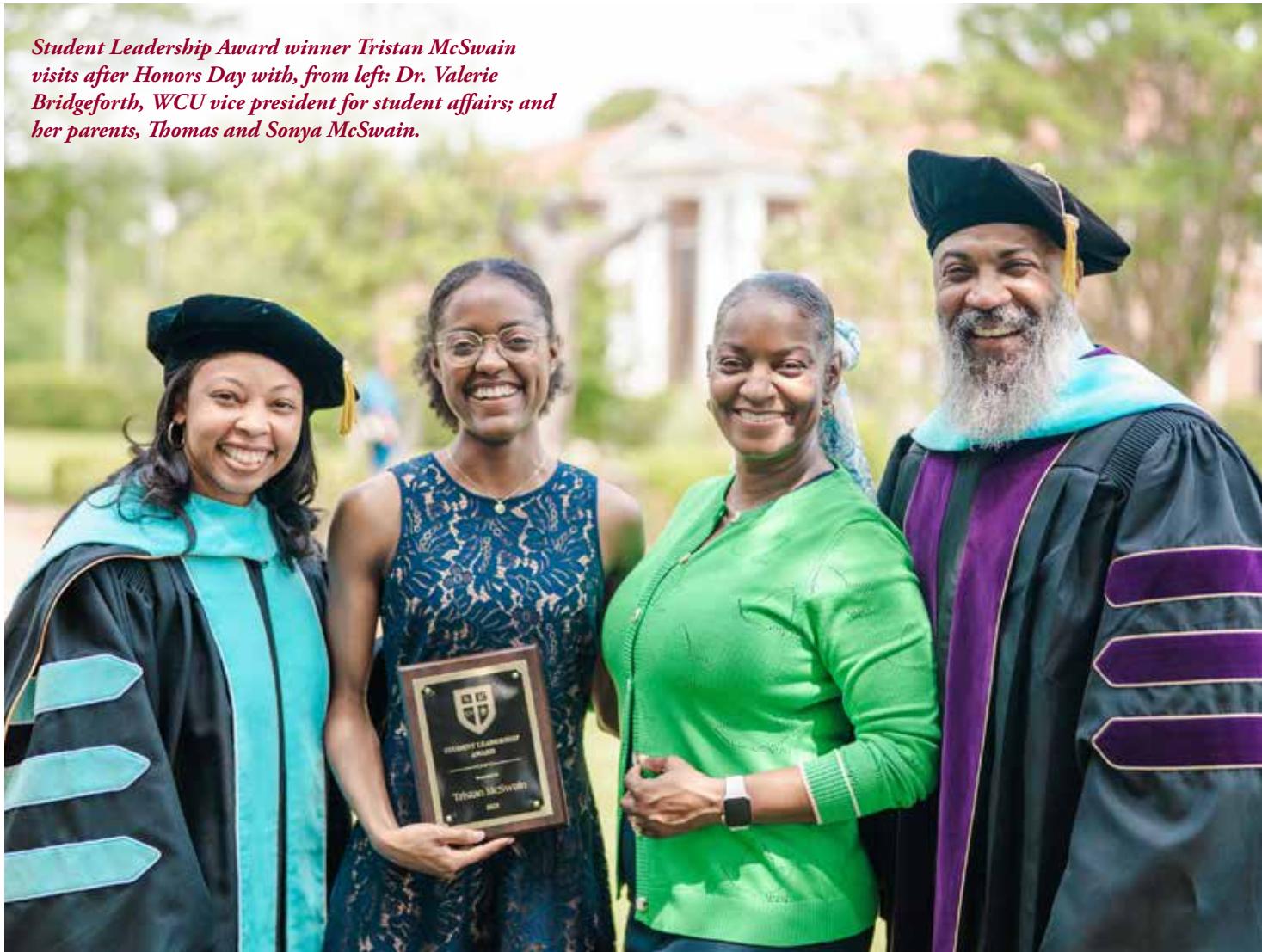
### ANNA CARROLL

Anna Carroll majored in biology with a pre-medicine concentration. She was a member of Carey Scholars and Alpha Chi Honor Society – and made the President's List every term. She served as president of the Student Government Association, performed with WCU's Worship Choir, and won this year's Senior Biology Award from the School of Natural & Behavioral Sciences.

Anna plans to start medical school in fall 2026.

# Tristan McSwain Wins WCU STUDENT LEADERSHIP AWARD

*Student Leadership Award winner Tristan McSwain visits after Honors Day with, from left: Dr. Valerie Bridgeforth, WCU vice president for student affairs; and her parents, Thomas and Sonya McSwain.*



## TRISTAN MCSWAIN RECEIVED THE 2025 STUDENT LEADERSHIP AWARD DURING HONORS DAY AT WILLIAM CAREY UNIVERSITY.

Each year, WCU's Student Life Committee selects one graduating senior for this award, among the highest bestowed by the university. Dr. Valerie Bridgeforth, WCU vice president for student affairs, made the presentation.

"Tristan McSwain is a true servant leader. She has reflected the very best qualities of a Carey student with her selfless spirit, outstanding character and commitment to service," Bridgeforth said.

Tristan stayed involved in campus life through the BSU, mission trips, worship choir, SGA and the Carey Scholar Program.

What's next: Tristan was accepted for admission by the WCU College of Osteopathic

Medicine (COM) and started classes as a first-year medical student in August.

Three McSwain children have attended Carey: Tristan; older sister Trinity, a second-year medical student at the COM; and big brother Tylon, who earned a Master of Divinity at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and is pursuing doctoral studies.

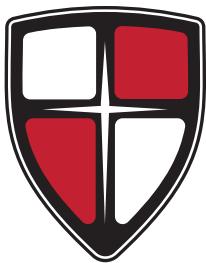


# 2025 COMMENCEMENT

WILLIAM CAREY  
UNIVERSITY  
CELEBRATES  
THE CLASS OF  
2025 DURING  
COMMENCEMENT  
CEREMONIES FOR  
THE HATTIESBURG  
AND TRADITION  
CAMPUSES.







## Called to Serve

Matthew 23:11

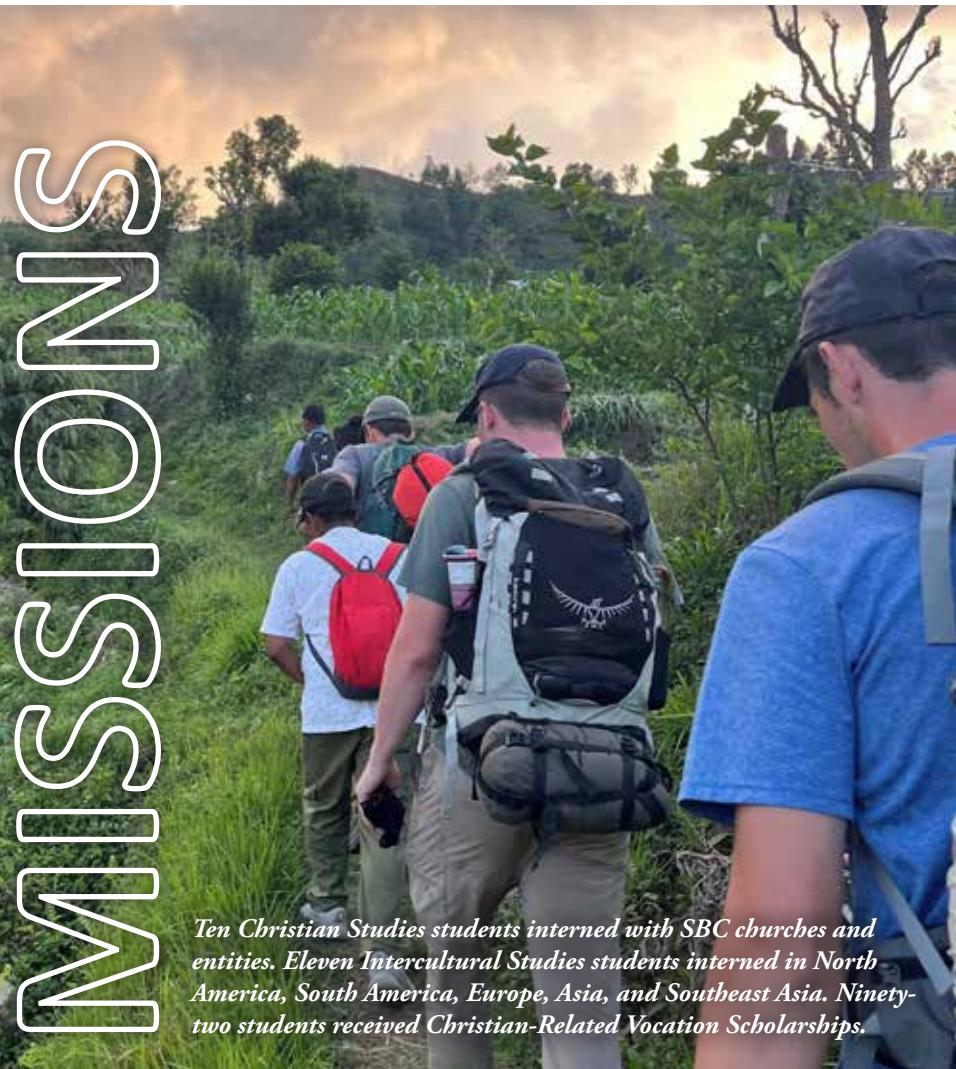
# 2025-2026 WCU THEME *‘Called to Serve’*

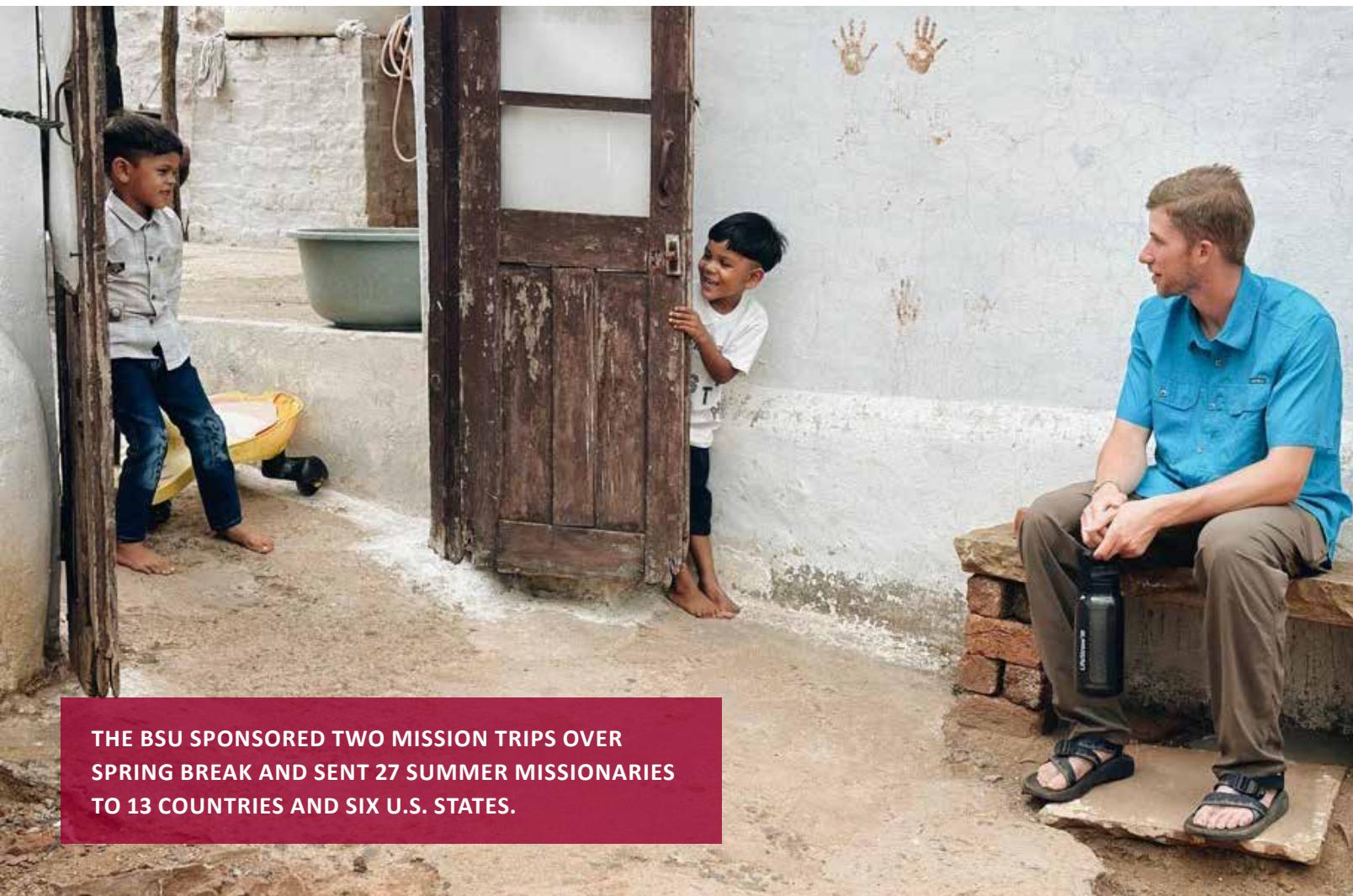
EACH FALL, WILLIAM CAREY UNIVERSITY SELECTS A THEME VERSE FROM THE BIBLE TO GUIDE ITS MISSION AND FOCUS FOR THE ACADEMIC YEAR.

This year's theme, "Called to Serve," is inspired by Matthew 23, which describes events in Jerusalem during the week before Jesus Christ was crucified. Knowing his time on earth was short, Jesus spoke to many people – focusing on major themes from his ministry with heightened urgency.

In Matthew 23:11-12, Jesus tells the crowd gathered at the Temple: "The greatest among you will be your servant. Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted."

Now just as then, Jesus calls us to serve. Greatness is not about accumulating accolades or possessions. True greatness is found in loving and serving others.





THE BSU SPONSORED TWO MISSION TRIPS OVER SPRING BREAK AND SENT 27 SUMMER MISSIONARIES TO 13 COUNTRIES AND SIX U.S. STATES.



20 pharmacy students went on a mission trip to Costa Rica. They treated about 650 people in a four-day clinic and provided a one-day VBS for about 200 children.

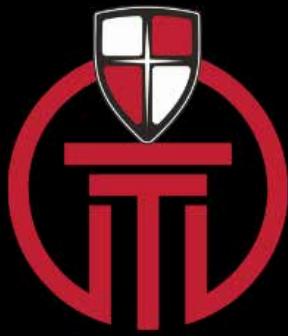




**INCOMING FRESHMEN AT WILLIAM CAREY UNIVERSITY FANNED OUT ACROSS HATTIESBURG ON AUG. 16 TO VOLUNTEER WITH 13 COMMUNITY SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS. IT'S PART OF CAREYWOW – A WELCOME AND ORIENTATION WEEKEND THAT HAPPENS RIGHT BEFORE THE START OF THE FALL SEMESTER. THE WEEKEND'S COMMUNITY SERVICE ELEMENT IS HUBSERVE.**

A tradition at William Carey University since 2014, CareyWOW is a long weekend for new students to get unpacked, meet new friends, and learn their way around campus. The event is staffed by student leaders as well as faculty/staff mentors.





ENGAGE • EMPOWER • EMULATE

## RHETORICA CHRISTIANA

### FORUM

RHETORICA CHRISTIANA HOSTED TWO FORUMS LAST YEAR. THE FALL FORUM, "READING THE APOCALYPSE THROUGH CULTURAL AND POLITICAL LENSES" FEATURED GUEST SPEAKER DR. GERALD STEVENS. THE SPRING FORUM, "SACRED IDLENESS: GEORGE MCDONALD AND A DEFENSE FOR CHRISTIAN IMAGINATION" FEATURED GUEST SPEAKER MR. RODNEY MOONEY.

The discipline of rhetoric historically was a foundational part of education and sought to train students for wisdom in practical living. Although the discipline became untethered to the search of truth, the great bishop of Hippo, Augustine, saw a valid need for Christians to see an inherent connection between the Christian faith and rhetorical training.

As a Christian Liberal Arts University, we continue to believe and value the role of dialogue, discourse, and debate because these tools allow us to further seek out and understand creation as well as our role within it. The Rhetorica Christiana Forum centralizes the role of discourse from a Christian perspective and thus uses rhetoric as a useful tool in the search for truth.

The true lifeblood of Rhetorica Christiana programming is a humble exploration for ways to speak and live more like Christ in a postmodern society.



*Janet Whitehead and her late husband made significant contributions to establish the Robert Whitehead Institute for Christian Leadership.*

# Robert Whitehead Institute for Christian Leadership

**CAREY SUPPORTERS GATHERED APRIL 2 TO HONOR THE MEMORY OF MAN WHOSE FAITH AND GENEROSITY RESULTED IN A NEW RESOURCE FOR TRAINING MINISTERS – THE ROBERT WHITEHEAD INSTITUTE OF CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP.**

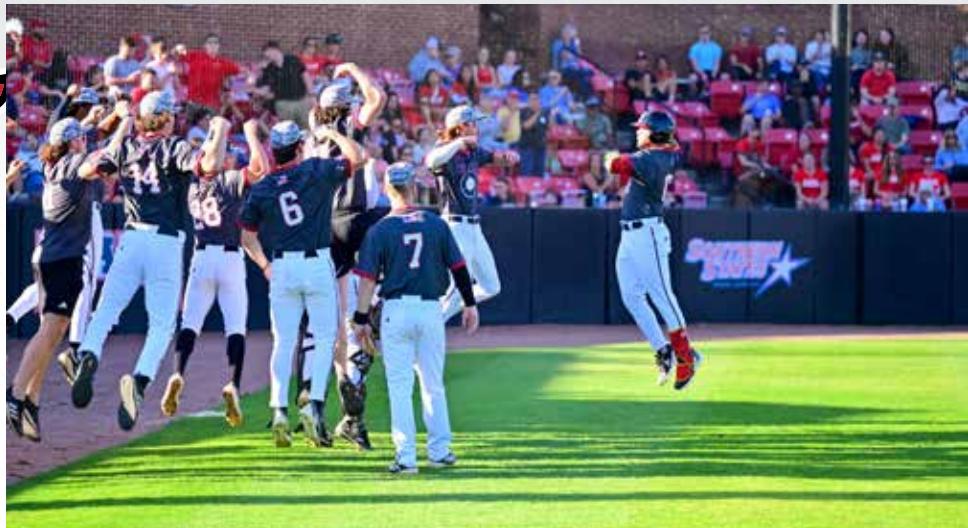
The story began with a conversation between Mr. Whitehead and Dr. Brett Golson, then dean of the Cooper School of Missions and Ministry. It progressed over the years with anonymous support from Mr. Whitehead and a final large donation, in his last days, to establish the institute. Guests at the reception had the opportunity to meet the institute's first director, Dr. Thomas McSwain, pastor of Old Hopewell Baptist Church in Collins and assistant professor of religion at Carey.



## CONFERENCE CHAMPIONSHIPS

*William Carey University won conference championships in women's cross country, women's soccer, women's indoor & outdoor track and field, women's basketball, women's golf, men's tennis, women's tennis and baseball.*

# WILLIAM CAREY CRUSADERS



**NEW RECORD** *On May 1, 2025, Crusader head baseball coach Bobby Halford surpassed former Mississippi State head coach Ron Polk on the all-time-wins list with victory number 1,374 at Rockabilly Stadium.*





↑ **WINNING PERCENTAGE** In August 2025, overall winning percentages for all four-year colleges and universities in the state were calculated. For the second straight year, William Carey University topped all athletic departments in Mississippi – with an overall winning percentage of just under 74 percent.



**SSAC & NAIA** Carey Athletics won the Southern States Athletic Conference (SSAC) Commissioner's Cup for the ninth straight year. The Crusaders were also recognized as one of the top five athletic departments in the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA) for the second straight year with a fifth-place finish out of 250 schools for the Learfield Cup.

**POSTSEASON** In the 2024-25 season, 16 of William Carey's 21 sports made it to the NAIA postseason, which also led other Mississippi four-year schools. Of those 16 sports, 14 finished the season ranked in the NAIA Top 25. Eight Crusader coaches were named SSAC Coach of the Year.

## SPORTS

# Hall of Fame



**CAREY ATHLETICS INDUCTED THREE ATHLETES INTO THE SPORTS HALL OF FAME AS A PART OF HOMECOMING IN APRIL.**

### GREGORY ALEXANDER

Gregory Alexander, Jr. played baseball at Carey and majored in business. After graduating in 2009, he played minor league from 2009 – 2012. He currently works in the trucking industry. He and his wife, Andrena, have a son, Gregory Alexander III.

### SARAH BECKMAN FULLER

Sarah Beckman Fuller, a 2014 graduate, attended Carey on a softball scholarship, earning Academic All-American honors and a spot on the NFCA All-American team in 2014. She practices veterinary medicine in Flowood. She and her husband, Jeremy, have two children, Wyatt and Lily.

### JUSTIN HENINGTON

Justin Henington pitched for the Crusader baseball team. He earned First Team All-American honors and graduated in 2008 with a degree in business administration. Justin continued his baseball career for three minor league seasons. He now works as a contract specialist in the shipbuilding industry. Justin and Danielle live in Leakesville and are the proud parents of two boys, Knox and Nash.

# Faculty PUBLISHING & PRESENTATIONS



## LANDON ADAMS

Dr. Adams won first place in Midland History Journal's prestigious annual essay contest for "Reevaluating William Ward's (1769–1823) Early Radicalism: An Archival Assessment of the 1797 Thelwall Riot in Derby and the Parties Responsible."

Dr. Adams is an assistant professor of religion and BSU director.



## MELISSA BURMEISTER

Dr. Burmeister co-authored four peer-reviewed articles: "Colchicine and drug interactions in ASCVD" in "U.S. Pharmacist;" "Bigorexia nervosa

review" in "U.S. Pharmacist;" "Examination of the utility of an algebra-based interview day math assessment to predict academic outcomes in an accelerated pharmacy curriculum: a retrospective observational cohort study" in "Currents in Pharmacy Teaching and Learning;" and "OTC supplements for managing acute pain" in "U.S. Pharmacist."

She had three poster and podium presentations: "Assessing readiness for ACPE 2025 standards," "Where's COEPA? Exploring how foundational and pharmaceutical sciences can incorporate and assess COEPA in their courses" and "Navigating complex admissions cases: ethical and practical considerations" at the American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy (AACP) Annual Meeting.

Dr. Burmeister is an associate professor of pharmaceutical sciences.

## MARK BLANCHARD

Dr. Blanchard published a peer-reviewed article in the "Journal of Interprofessional Practice and Collaboration" on the effectiveness of a rehabilitation intervention in addressing both upper extremity and spatial awareness for post-stroke clients. The article is titled "An Innovative Constraint-Induced Movement Therapy (CIMT) Program Design and Case Study to Address Upper Extremity Use and Spatial Inattention."

Dr. Blanchard is an associate professor of occupational therapy.



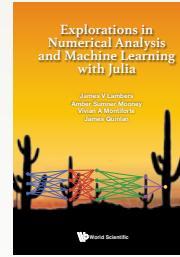
## BEN DRIBUS

Dr. Dribus was awarded a patent by the US Patent and Trademark Office. The patent is for a new type of artificial intelligence and is called "Sparse Local Highly Connected Artificial

Neural Network Architectures Involving Hybrid Local/Nonlocal Structure." The patent shows how to construct artificial neural networks that are just as highly connected as current models but are much more efficient.

Dr. Dribus also received a \$180,000 grant funded by National Institutes of Health and involves applications of artificial intelligence (including his patent) to certain biomedical problems. The grant, "Application of Novel AI Methods to Selected Predictive and Diagnostic Problems in Women's Health, Behavioral Psychology, and Oncology" is administered through Mississippi Idea Network for Biomedical Research Excellence.

Dr. Dribus is a professor of mathematics.



## AMBER MOONEY

Dr. Mooney co-authored "Explorations in Numerical Analysis and Machine Learning with Julia," a textbook published by World Scientific.

Dr. Mooney is an associate professor of mathematics.



## PATTI PERMENTER

Dr. Permenter was invited to join the distinguished ranks of Social Science Research Fellows at the Mississippi State University Social Science Research Center. The

prestigious appointment highlights her dedication to pk-12 teacher preparation, rural education advocacy, and leadership development.

Dr. Permenter is an associate professor in the School of Education at the WCU Tradition Campus. She also serves as associate director of the Program of Research and Evaluation for Public Schools (PREPS) and co-director of the Mississippi Rural Education Association.



## ALICIA WATTS

Dr. Watts published two articles in the "Journal of AHIMA." The articles are titled "The Classroom Chronicles: Voices of HI Educators – Workplace Readiness" and "Council for Excellence in

Education (CEE) Faculty Development Workgroup: Survey Insights and Strategic Support of Health Information Educators."

Dr. Watts is an assistant professor and director of health information management.

# WCU's Zachary Harris Joins Ranks of “LEGENDARY” BANDMASTERS



*Zacary Harris*

**PHI BETA  
MU, DELTA  
CHAPTER, AN  
HONORARY  
FRATERNITY  
THAT  
PRESERVES  
THE HISTORY  
AND  
IMPACT OF**

**MISSISSIPPI'S “LEGENDARY”  
BAND DIRECTORS THROUGH  
ITS LEGACY PROJECT, CHOSE  
WCU'S ZACHARY HARRIS TO  
JOIN THIS ELITE GROUP.**

“Mr. Harris and I started as high school band directors at the same time and within 30 miles of each other. I've known since 1986 that he would one day be legendary,” said WCU President Dr. Ben Burnett.

“He's been a good friend but, more so, an inspiration with his dedication to his students and to the state of Mississippi. We are indeed fortunate and blessed to have him as a part of the Carey family.”

Harris was a band director at Mississippi public schools for 31 years.

He started out in Newton, then moved on to Forest Hill, Brookhaven then to Gulfport High School. His marching and concert bands earned consistent superior ratings. As he finished the last concert before his retirement, the mayor of Gulfport

declared May 1 as “Zachary Harris Day.”

Harris didn't stay retired for long. Since 2017, he has played to his strength as an adjunct at WCU's Winters School of Music. He mentors music education majors as they get their first hands-on experience at middle and high schools and conducts WCU's Symphonic Winds.

*For more about  
Winters School of Music,  
visit [wmcarey.edu/music](http://wmcarey.edu/music).*



# Strategic Leadership

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

*William Carey University made a series of strategic moves in summer 2025 to align the university for growth by maximizing strengths and being responsive to student needs. They included a number of leadership announcements.*



### DR. LADD TAYLOR

*Vice President, Tradition Campus*

**THE NEW VICE PRESIDENT OF WCU-TRADITION CAMPUS IS DR. LADD TAYLOR, LONGTIME VICE PRESIDENT OF MISSISSIPPI GULF COAST COMMUNITY COLLEGE'S PERKINSON CAMPUS.**

During his 23 years at MGCCC, Taylor served in a wide variety of roles – residence life, admissions, athletics and administration. He's making an impact on WCU's Biloxi campus with his knowledge of higher education on the Gulf Coast.

"I'm ready to forge a new path in my career journey. I was honored to earn specialist and doctoral degrees in higher education administration at William Carey – and I'm excited to re-join the Carey family. The potential for growth at WCU's Tradition campus is promising and I'm delighted to be a part of it," Taylor said.

WCU-Tradition now accounts for more than 20 percent of WCU's enrollment. The campus has expanded over the last eight years, adding two new buildings, Sciana Hall and Sanderson Hall – the latter custom-designed to be home to the WCU School of Pharmacy.

More infrastructure improvements are in the planning stage. They include a full-service cafeteria, nursing simulation lab and residential housing for students.

Taylor replaces Dr. Cassandra Conner, who retired in June after decades of service to K-12 and higher education on the Gulf Coast.



## DR. JANET WILLIAMS

*Vice President, Academic Program Development*

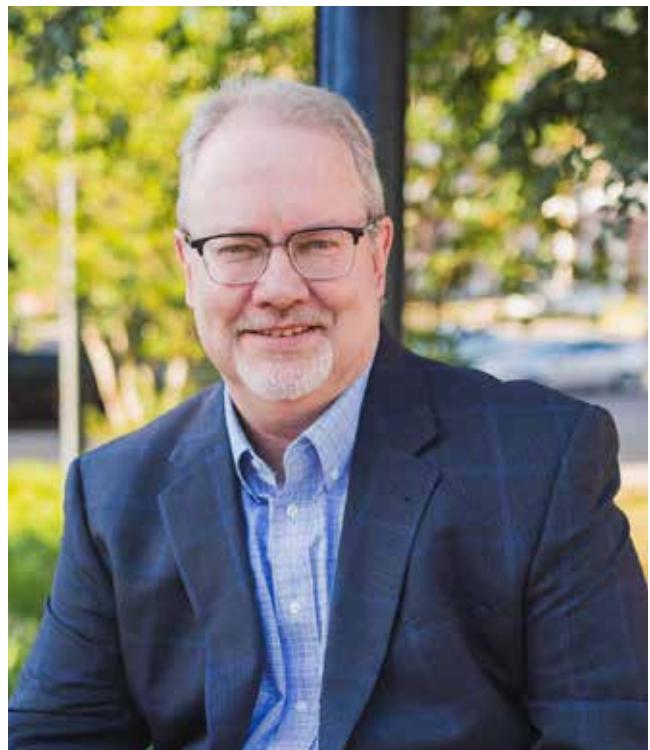
**WITH HER LONGTIME EXPERTISE IN INCREASING THE NUMBER, QUALITY, AND FLEXIBILITY OF CLASS OFFERINGS AS VICE PRESIDENT OF THE COLLEGE OF HEALTH SCIENCES, DR. JANET WILLIAMS WAS PROMOTED TO VICE PRESIDENT OF ACADEMIC PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT TO HELP OTHERS REPLICATE SIMILAR SUCCESS IN THEIR AREAS.**

In this newly created role, she drives innovation in curriculum development across all three campuses and works closely with academic deans, faculty, and external partners.

Williams arrived at Carey 35 years ago to develop a new nursing program at the coast campus. Later, at the Hattiesburg campus, her team developed more health-related majors – health information management, health administration and education, pharmacy, physical therapy and occupational therapy.

“During the COVID pandemic, it was necessary to offer high-quality online classes. We realized that with the extreme shortages of healthcare workers, especially nurses, we needed to think outside the box to reach new students,” William said.

“We developed new ways for students to achieve their goals, while also allowing more flexibility to accommodate their job schedules, geographical distance, and modes of communication. As a result, the nursing department, and the rest of the College of Health Sciences, saw large growth in enrollment and in geographical reach.”



## DR. WES DYKES

*Vice President, Student Engagement*

**WILLIAM CAREY UNIVERSITY STEPPED UP ITS CAMPUS LIFE GAME WITH THE PROMOTION OF DR. WESLEY DYKES TO VICE PRESIDENT FOR STUDENT ENGAGEMENT. THIS NEWLY CREATED POSITION INCLUDES BOTH LEADING THE RECRUITMENT OF POTENTIAL STUDENTS AND ENHANCING THE “CAREY EXPERIENCE” FOR CURRENT ONES.**

“My life changed in college and that’s what fuels my motivation to reach students. I’m a recruiter at heart. I believe when we bring students to Carey, we impact their lives with the gospel. In turn, they can learn their craft and go out to change the world,” Dykes said.

“I want campus to be a place where students feel at home. Where they feel people care for them, where they feel valued by their community. I want them to feel the same way about Carey that I do.”

Dykes joined William Carey in 2012. By 2018, he was dean of the Winters School of Music. At that time, there were 108 music students. Enrollment surpassed 300 this fall. In the same seven years, Winters School launched three new online graduate degrees and two bachelor’s degrees. The new degrees recognized the rise of bi-vocational church leaders and the growing need for technical skills in worship services.

# Strategic Leadership

## ANNOUNCEMENTS



### DR. ROBERT THOMPSON

**DR. ROBERT THOMPSON WAS NAMED DEAN OF THE WCU SCHOOL OF BUSINESS IN AUGUST.**

Thompson joined the faculty since 2022 – bringing 30 years of global hospitality experience with hotels, resorts, cruise lines and country clubs in destination markets like Las Vegas, Beverly Hills and Biloxi. His career includes roles such as hotel general manager, cruise director, country club manager, director of development, executive director – and a 20-year stint with Wyndham Worldwide Inc.

Thompson's plans include strengthening industry and educational partnerships, expanding impact, and leveraging my industry experience to create innovative opportunities for students.

The International Hospitality Institute has recognized Thompson among the "Top 30 Most Influential Educators in Global Hospitality."



### DR. BRANDON HARDIN

**DR. BRANDON HARDIN WAS NAMED DEAN OF THE WINTERS SCHOOL OF MUSIC IN JUNE.**

Before his promotion, he served as its chair of operations and worship studies.

In this capacity, he managed the details, large and small, for more than 200 music events. He coordinated the Carey Worship Choir's appearance at the 2023 Southern Baptist Convention meeting in New Orleans and recent performances for the Southern Baptist Church Music Conference. He also arranged recording partnerships with top Christian music publishers.

Hardin has been instrumental in refining the worship studies program – which has more than doubled in size under his leadership. He has mentored students serving all over the country.



### DR. TRAVIS COAKLEY

**DR. TRAVIS COAKLEY WAS NAMED ASSOCIATE DEAN OF THE WINTERS SCHOOL OF MUSIC IN JUNE.**

Before his promotion, he was WCU's chair of instrumental activities and music education.

In this role, he supervised the band department, which grew 80 percent in two years. The Spirit of Carey marching band has almost 200 members – and Carey Honor Band Clinic attracts more than 300 high school students from across the region.

Coakley's experience also includes 20 years as a high school band director at public schools in Florida, South Carolina and Mississippi and director of fine arts and bands for the Biloxi Public School District.



# WILLIAM CAREY FIGHT SONG

Carey has adopted a **NEW FIGHT SONG & RALLY CRY**

# Carey On!

*Words by Tim Matheny & Music by Justin Williams*

Stand up you mighty Crusaders  
 Stand up you faithful and true  
 Fight the good fight  
 Run the good race

Press on until it's through (Run! Fight! Win!)  
 Onto the field we go boldly  
 Our courage and honor renewed  
 Carey's mighty red and black  
 Are marching through.



*Scan to hear the fight song.*

*"As an alum and someone who's spent most of my career here, William Carey University means a great deal to me. It was a great privilege to be asked to participate in this project. I spent time thinking about Carey's core values. What stood out most to me was our foundation of missions and the overlap between the language of missions and that of sports: stepping boldly onto a field, striving for victory, facing a challenging adversary head-on, and playing your part for something greater than yourself."*

#### **TIM MATHENY**

*Department Chair and Associate Professor of Theatre,  
 Interim Dean of Arts & Letters*

# ARMOR UP

EPH 6:10-18



HOMECOMING  
COURT



# 2025

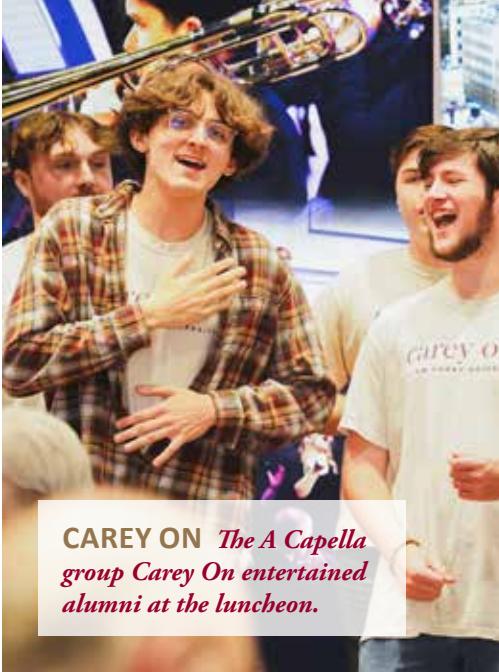
## HOMECOMING

ALUMNI, FACULTY,  
STAFF, AND  
STUDENTS ENJOYED  
HOMECOMING  
ACTIVITIES ON  
APRIL 4-5.

*Last Spring Homecoming*



CRAWFISH BOIL



**50 YEAR LUNCHEON:**  
*The class of 1975 received their 50-year medallions during a luncheon in their honor.*

WCU Inducts  
Four into

# Alumni HALL of FAME

**WILLIAM CAREY UNIVERSITY  
INDUCTED FOUR NEW MEMBERS  
INTO ITS ALUMNI HALL OF  
FAME – A BANKER, A NURSE,  
AN EDUCATOR, AND A COACH.  
THE HONORS CAME APRIL 4  
DURING HOMECOMING AT THE  
HATTIESBURG CAMPUS.**

“Carey alumni are making a difference in Mississippi and around the world. This year’s inductees are volunteering in their community, shaping lives, and making a lasting impact for the Kingdom of God,” said Pam Shearer, WCU’s director of alumni engagement.

The newest members of the WCU Alumni Hall of Fame are:



**DAVID BUSH  
CLASS OF 1978**

David Bush graduated from William Carey with a bachelor’s degree in business administration in 1978. After that, he pursued graduate

degrees at the School of Banking of the South at Louisiana State University in 1986 and the Mississippi School of Banking at the University of Mississippi in 1982.

He began his career as a banking executive trainee and, 40 years later, retired as a bank executive vice president. He was the primary banker for the medical community in Hattiesburg both commercially and for individual physicians for 24 years. He was also instrumental in establishing the William Carey University College of Osteopathic Medicine.

As an alum, Bush received WCU’s Shoe Leather Award. He has delivered a commencement address and served as

president of the Alumni Council. As a student, he played baseball at Carey and was inducted into the Sports Hall of Fame in 2017.

Bush and his wife, Susan, also a Carey alum, remain connected to their alma mater through support of the Winters School of Music, baseball program, and other Carey activities. They also support a number of charitable and civic organizations in Hattiesburg.



**JACQUELINE  
CLAVO-HALL  
CLASS OF 1982**

Jacqueline Clavo-Hall earned a bachelor’s degree in nursing at William Carey in 1982.

During her time at Carey, Clavo-Hall was

active in the Carey Student Nurses Association and served as senior class president. She also received the Outstanding Achievement in Nursing award.

She went on to attend four other universities – earning a law degree and advanced degrees in nurse anesthesia, health informatics, nursing science and health care leadership.

Clavo-Hall makes her home in Benicia, Calif. Her professional career spans 37 years as a practicing certified registered nurse anesthetist and six years as assistant director of Touro University California School of Nursing. She has also dedicated her talents to missionary work in the Philippines, Guatemala, Kenya, Senegal, and Sierra Leone. She recently completed her second service tour aboard the Global Mercy Ship.

As an alumna, she is proud to leave a lasting legacy on campus through the Dr. Jacqueline A. Clavo-Hall Nursing Lab in the WCU School of Health Sciences.



**TRACY COOK  
CLASS OF 2017,  
2020**

Tracy Cook earned a specialist degree in education from William Carey in 2017 – and followed it up with a WCU doctor of education degree in 2020. A native of Fayette, he had previously received three degrees from Alcorn State University – a bachelor’s in agricultural economics, and master’s degrees in agronomy and educational administration/supervision.

Cook is now president of Alcorn State University, where he previously held various administrative positions, including interim president, vice president for student affairs and enrollment management, and chief of staff.

Before joining Alcorn, Cook worked in the Jefferson County and Claiborne County school districts as superintendent, assistant superintendent, principal, assistant principal, athletic director, and teacher.

In addition, he served on WCU’s Program of Research & Evaluation for Public Schools Advisory Committee and other professional and educational groups – including Copiah-Lincoln Community College’s board of trustees. He also co-founded the Southwest Mississippi Educator Conference.

In 2015, Cook was inducted into the Alcorn Sports Hall of Fame. In 2023, he received the Southwestern Athletic Conference Alumni Association’s Lifetime Achievement Award.

He is married to the former Dr. Crystal Smith and they have two children, Kennedy and Casey.



**BOBBY  
HALFORD  
CLASS OF 1975,  
1977**

Bobby Halford earned a bachelor's degree in physical education from William Carey in 1975 and

completed his master's degree in education in 1977. A native of Meridian, Halford was a member of a state championship baseball team at Meridian High School before arriving on Carey's campus to play baseball and basketball for legendary coaches John O'Keefe and John Stephenson.

Since 1976, he has held various positions on Carey's coaching staff, including assistant baseball coach, head coach for women's basketball, and athletic director – and he has led his teams to many championships. He is currently in his 40th season as head baseball coach and also teaches in the WCU School of Education.

Halford has been selected coach of the year several times, won conference championships, and led his teams to berths in the NAIA World Series. He picked up his 1,300th win in 2023, becoming the "Winningest Baseball Coach in Mississippi."

He was inducted into the Carey Sports Hall of Fame in 2015 and is the first Carey coach to be inducted into the NAIA Hall of Fame.

During his tenure, more than 50 of his players have gone on to play professional baseball.

Halford has been married to the former Kathy Pittman for 47 years, and they have four daughters (Kelly, Brittany, Leslie, and Lori) and seven grandchildren.

# *New* **PARENT ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM**

William Carey University recently launched its new Parent Engagement Program, designed to connect families more closely with campus life. Though the program is still in its early stages, it has already welcomed more than 400 members.

Through the Carey Parents Portal, families can sign up to receive newsletters and stay informed about events, important dates, and campus news. This fall, the program hosted several Carey Launch Parties, giving parents and students the opportunity to meet representatives from key departments like Financial Aid and Recruitment, ask questions, and prepare for a successful start at Carey. Looking ahead, the Parent Engagement team is excited to announce the planning of the university's first-ever Family Weekend, set for spring 2026.



*To learn more or get involved, visit the  
Carey Parents Portal using the QR code provided  
or email [careyparents@wmcarey.edu](mailto:careyparents@wmcarey.edu)*



**Alumni  
& Faculty**

*Passings*

#### **CLINT AMBROSCH '15**

*March 12, 1991 – September 9, 2025*

#### **GEORGIA EASTERLING '93**

*November 23, 1954 – May 3, 2025*

#### **CHARLES JONES '67**

*February 22, 1937 – July 6, 2025*

#### **PEGGY SUE REED '68**

*October 5, 1946 – April 24, 2025*

#### **RANDY SKAGGS '83**

*July 8, 1961 – May 28, 2025*

#### **JOHN STEPHENS '76**

*November 14, 1952 – April 9, 2025*

#### **PAUL STRAHAN '79**

*December 16, 1957 – June 3, 2025*

# Class NOTES

## 60s

### RUTH JOAN GEIGER '62



Joan Geiger wrote the words to the Alma Mater. Joan's friends in Birmingham performed the Alma Mater in her honor at the Veterans Home where she is a resident. Joan earned a B.A. in 1962.

### JO ANN BERGER '63 & '97



Jo Ann, two-time Carey School of Education graduate, celebrated her granddaughter's recent graduation from Carey's School of Education. Jo Ann retired after more than 30 years of classroom teaching. She is proud of Alex for earning her master's degree from Carey. Her granddaughter continues the family tradition of educators.

## 80s

### DON BIADOG '83



Don received the Man of Courage award at the Red Letter Awards, a nationally recognized celebration of Christian influence across culture. He was the only Navy chaplain to win an award and one of only two Southern Baptists.

As a Navy chaplain, his service extended beyond bases and battlefields to include counseling and delivering humanitarian aid overseas.

The Red Letter Awards highlight Christian leaders across the performing arts, science, sports, media, and the military, encourage believers to "step up and step out for Christ."

At Carey, Don doubled majored in Biblical studies and social sciences.

*He is pictured here (right) with Jim Linzey and Carla Jackson.*

## 90s

### NEAL GREGG '98



Neal was inducted into the Hattiesburg High School Hall of Fame. At Carey, he majored in biology and earned the doctor of osteopathy from Kansas City University of Medicine and Biosciences. He is a board-certified general orthopaedic surgeon and practices at Southern Bone and Joint Specialists, P.A. He is a member of the American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons, American Osteopathic Association, and Mississippi Orthopedic Society.

## 00s

### CATERRIA PAYTON '04



Caterria was named superintendent of Pascagoula Gautier School District. She earned the master of education in elementary education from Carey in 2004 and the specialist and doctorate in education from USM.

She was honored as the 2023 Mississippi Administrator of the Year and brings 23 years as

an educator, serving first as an assistant teacher, then teacher, lead teacher, principal, and assistant superintendent.

## SANDY HAMPTON '06



Sandy was named principal at Sumrall High School. He brings 23 years in education as teacher and assistant principal in Petal, Oak Grove, and Sumrall schools. He earned the B.S. in Sports Administration from USM and the M.Ed. from Carey. Sandy has been married to his wife, Vicki, for 31 years. Together, they've raised four wonderful children: Anna Catherine Swann, Emma Hampton, Avery Hampton, and Will Hampton.

## 10s

### RICHARD CALDERONE '10 AND '14



In February, the Mississippi State Department of Health (MSDH) appointed Richard Calderone, DO, MPH, as the director of the Office of Mississippi Physician Workforce (OMPW).

He is a native of Slidell, Louisiana, and was a graduate

of the inaugural class of William Carey University College of Osteopathic Medicine (WCUCOM). He completed his residency training at the University of Mississippi Medical Center as well as through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Dr. Calderone is also the president of the Mississippi Osteopathic Medical Association (MOMA) and the immediate past president of the South Mississippi Medical Society.

#### AME KEROLY POSEY '11



Ame and a co-worker won third place in the Investigative Reporting category in the 2025 Mississippi Association of Broadcasting Awards. She also won the First Amendment Award of Excellence and placed third in the Multimedia category. Ame majored in mass communication/public relations and works at WDAM.

#### COURTNEY DALEY THOMPSON '13



Courtney received The Pittman Young Faculty Award at Mississippi College in April.

Courtney earned a B.S. in biology and psychology at Carey and a PhD in Microbiology and Immunology at UMMC.

Courtney is an assistant professor of biological sciences at MC. She is married to Jonathan Thompson, Carey class of 2016.

The Pittman Young Faculty of the Year Award honors professors no older than 35 who demonstrate strong Christian values, possess a doctorate and are recognized by their peers for their accomplishments and potential as a teacher.

#### MOHIT CHHATPAR '14, '19

Mohit was named the 2025 Outstanding Resident of the Year in Addiction Medicine by the American Osteopathic Foundation and the American Osteopathic Academy of Addiction Medicine.

Mohit earned the Master of Biomedical Science degree from Carey in 2014 and is a 2019 graduate of WCUCOM.

#### JAMES WESLEY QUICK '17, '20



Wesley was appointed superintendent of Lamar County School District in September. He began his career as a high school science teacher in the Clinton Public School District, later serving as an assistant principal in both the Hinds County and Madison County school districts. In 2019, he was named principal of Germantown High School in Madison County. He served

as dean of students and as the director of high school services, safety, and security for Madison County Schools.

He holds a specialist and doctoral degree from Carey's School of Education.

#### ALYSE IDELL '19



After graduating with her BSN and working as a nurse for 5 years, Alyse and her husband Ben started Alyse & Ben Photography, a portrait and wedding photography business. Together they have photographed luxury weddings across the Gulf South and internationally.

Today, they are one of the top luxury wedding photographers in New Orleans and have a nine-month-old son, Ezra.

#### 20s

#### DELANEY DUKES '22



Delaney won first place in the Investigative Reporting category in the 2025 Mississippi Association of Broadcasting Awards. She also won third

place in the Best TV Reporter category and shared a second-place award with two co-workers in the Special Report category. Delaney majored in mass communication and works for WDAM.

#### RACHAEL SCHMITZ '24



Rachael recently published her research in the American Journal of Nursing. The article is titled "The Lived Experiences of Fathers with Postpartum Depression: A Qualitative Study." Rachael is an alumna of the WCU PhD in Nursing Education and Administration program. She is a board-certified family nurse practitioner and a member of the nursing faculty at Coastal Carolina University. She has 27 years of clinical experience. She lives with her family in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina.

#### LARINDA BROWN JOHNSON '25

Larinda was named head of the English Dept and University Writing Center at Dillard University in New Orleans. She earned the Ph.D. in Higher Education Administration from Carey in 2025.

**IF YOU HAVE AN UPDATE FOR CLASS NOTES, send the information along with a photo to [alumni@wmcarey.edu](mailto:alumni@wmcarey.edu).**



# GREAT THINGS *Campaign*

## UPDATE

### THOMAS FINE ARTS RENOVATION

The music program has always been a cornerstone at Carey. This project would enhance the performance hall by providing new seating, acoustic tiles, and a new projector system. Donors can purchase a seat in their name for \$500.

### TENNIS FACILITY

#### THIS MODERN FACILITY WILL INCLUDE:

- Locker rooms
- Film Room & Strategy Center
- Observation Deck

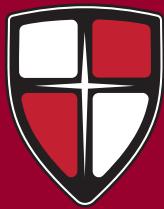


### TRADITION ADDITION

This project will offer affordable, on-campus housing on the Tradition campus, changing the culture from a commuter campus to a residential community.

Visit [wcugreatthings.org](http://wcugreatthings.org) or scan the QR code for more information about the Great Things Campaign.





## Single & Recurring Gifts

Gifts of any amount are crucial to the growth and development of scholarships. Donors may make single gifts by mail or through our online giving page at any time. To schedule recurring gifts, contact the Office for Advancement.

## Planned Gifts

Planned giving to William Carey University allows a donor to become part of the university's Covenant Society. Many planned giving options are available, including wills, estate planning, life insurance, charitable gift annuities, charitable remainder trusts, and real estate.

## Ways to Give

### MAIL

 WCU Box 141  
710 William Carey Parkway  
Hattiesburg, MS 39401

### CALL

 601.318.6192

### EMAIL

 advancement@wmcarey.edu

### ONLINE

 www.wmcarey.edu/give

### SCAN

 To donate, scan code below.



Show your  
**CAREY**  
**PRIDE** and  
**SUPPORT WCU**

Display your Carey pride by purchasing a William Carey University special license plate for your vehicle, and at the same time, you will be supporting the university. Over half of the additional fee for each WCU special tag comes directly back to the school from the State of Mississippi Department of Revenue. For more information about purchasing a WCU license plate, visit [www.dor.ms.gov/mvl/availabletags](http://www.dor.ms.gov/mvl/availabletags).



# Stay CONNECTED

### UPDATED CONTACT INFO?

Phone numbers, email or mailing addresses

### PHOTOS TO SHARE?

You, your friends/family or a new baby

### ALUMNI NEWS?

Birth and marriage announcements, awards, honors, jobs

*Send information to [alumni@wmcarey.edu](mailto:alumni@wmcarey.edu)*



Fall 2025

Volume 35, No. 3

### PRESIDENT

*Dr. Ben Burnett*

### EDITORS

*Pam Shearer '12 | Suzanne Monk*

### CONTRIBUTORS/COPY EDITORS

*Charlotte Green | Kevin Rosiere '10 | Ben Smith '08 | Henry Cook*

### CAREY CONTACTS

Hattiesburg Campus | (601) 318-6051 | (800) 962-5991

Tradition Campus | (228) 702-1775

Baton Rouge Campus | (225) 953-7017

Admissions | (601) 318-6103 | [admissions@wmcarey.edu](mailto:admissions@wmcarey.edu)

Advancement | (601) 318-6192 | [advancement@wmcarey.edu](mailto:advancement@wmcarey.edu)

Alumni Relations | (601) 318-6108 | [alumni@wmcarey.edu](mailto:alumni@wmcarey.edu)

Registrar | (601) 318-6195 | [regoff@wmcarey.edu](mailto:regoff@wmcarey.edu)

[WWW.WMCAREY.EDU](http://WWW.WMCAREY.EDU)

## CAREY

The William Carey University magazine is available online to all alumni and friends at [www.wmcarey.edu/alumni](http://www.wmcarey.edu/alumni) and is published periodically and mailed to alumni association members and donors.

*Also available online at [www.wmcarey.edu/alumni](http://www.wmcarey.edu/alumni)*

WCU works in friendly cooperation with the Mississippi Baptist Convention and is supported by churches that contribute to the Cooperative Program.



# CAREY

WILLIAM CAREY UNIVERSITY

710 William Carey Parkway  
Hattiesburg, MS 39401



*New Rally Cry*  
**ARMOR UP**  
EPH 6:10-18

READY TO **LEAD**, READY TO **SERVE** AND  
READY TO **MAKE A DIFFERENCE** IN THE WORLD.