

ADVANCEMENTS

FEBRUARY 2026

ELEVATING THE **FUTURE**



As the Clifton M. Smart III University Advancement Center comes together, supporters pledge more than \$12.5 million to benefit the facility and other areas of campus. Your gifts for student scholarships, labs, athletics and more drive meaningful change and turn big ideas into real impact.

CONTENTS

12-21

Gifts that will shape the future for generations to come

The Missouri State University Foundation announced more than \$12.5 million in new gifts during its annual Board of Trustees meeting on Nov. 13. The gifts from individuals and businesses support student scholarships, athletics and construction of the Clifton M. Smart III University Advancement Center, as well as many other programs and areas.



STORY OF A GIFT

6-7

Alumni donors: "The R.A. role helped me discover my passion"

Two former resident assistants built a life together. Cindy and Rich Miller have now paved the way for the next generation of Bears by endowing two scholarships.



EVENTS AND EXCITEMENT

8-11

A NEW ERA OF ATHLETICS:

Football team heads to bowl; first Homecoming in C-USA

This fall, we celebrated our first Homecoming as a member of Conference USA. This means Missouri State University is playing at the highest levels. On the final day of the college football regular season in November, Missouri State also officially earned a spot in a bowl game for the first time!



IN EVERY ISSUE

4-5

Brent's corner

The future has never looked brighter

22-23

Sights and scenes

Photos that capture the vibe of campus

24-25

Lightning round

Meet new Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs Dr. Clarendia Phillips

26-27

Foundation leadership

Board of Trustees; executive committee; committee chairs

28-29

Meet a Trustee

Beverly Miller Keltner '73

30-31

Faces of the Foundation

Ginger Stringer, director of university advancement communications

Advancement staff

Contact information

ADVANCEMENTS

FEBRUARY 2026

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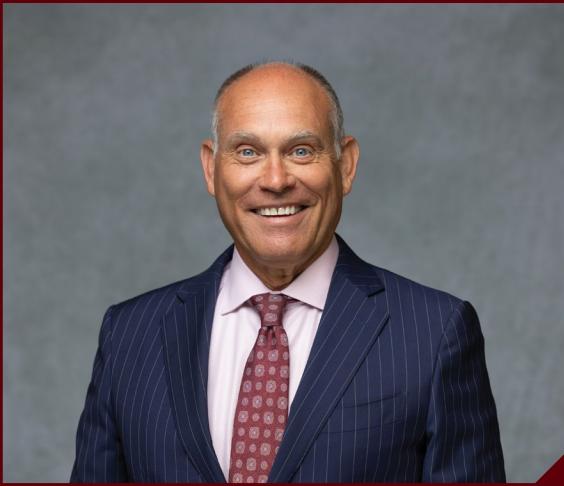
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BRENT'S CORNER



Dear alumni and friends of Missouri State,

I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to everyone who made this year's Foundation Board of Trustees meeting one of the most memorable of my career.

The announcement of more than \$12.5 million in new private gifts is an extraordinary milestone — one that reflects the enduring strength, generosity and spirit of our Missouri State family.

These gifts will change lives. They will open doors for students through scholarships, bolster our athletics programs, enhance broadcast services and support academic excellence across our colleges.

They will help bring to life the Clifton M. Smart III University Advancement Center, a facility designed to serve as a Bear's home for life and a place where the next generation of alumni engagement and philanthropic leadership will take shape.

I am deeply grateful to the individuals, families, organizations and anonymous donors who stepped forward to support these meaningful initiatives. Their commitments — from named spaces in the Advancement Center, to endowed scholarships, to major investments in student success and athletics — will strengthen Missouri State for decades to come.

Each gift tells a story of belief in this university's mission and trust in its future.

I also want to express my sincere appreciation to the Foundation Board of Trustees for the great honor of naming the vice president's suite in the new Advancement Center after me. To say I was surprised would be an understatement.

I have spent more than 40 years working alongside incredible colleagues, alumni, donors and friends who care deeply about this institution. To have my name associated with a building that will support the work of University Advancement for generations is profoundly humbling.

My family and I will cherish this recognition for the rest of our lives.

As we look ahead, I remain inspired by the momentum we are building together. With the leadership of President Richard B. Williams, our dedicated faculty and staff and the unwavering generosity of our donors, Missouri State's future has never looked brighter.

What we accomplish is only possible because of you — your passion, your belief in our mission and your commitment to creating opportunities for students.

Thank you for all you do for Missouri State. Go Bears!

With deep gratitude and Bear pride,

W. Brent Dunn,

*Executive director, Missouri State University Foundation
Vice President for University Advancement*



SHAPE
GROW
CHAMPION

CELEBRATE
UNITE
ADVANCE
BOOST

Mo State

Thank you to all 2,252 donors who supported Giving Day 2025.

**WE'RE READY
FOR 2026!**

Your support during the 36 hours of Giving Day goes further and does more than at any other time of the year. That's the power of Bears around the nation pulling together.

This year, Giving Day coincides with Missouri State's birthday party on March 24. Join us in celebration of all things maroon and white!



MARCH 24-25, 2026
GivingDay.MissouriState.edu

THE STORY BEHIND A GIFT

From the residence halls to a lasting legacy:

A LOVE STORY ROOTED IN MISSOURI STATE

Two former resident assistants built a life together. Cindy and Rich Miller have now paved the way for the next generation of Bears by endowing two scholarships.

WRITTEN BY JULIANA GOODWIN



BLAIR/SHANNON RESIDENT ASSISTANTS: 1st Row - Amy Bauer, Karen Conkright, Kathy Shipman, Cindy Mann, Jackie Graves. 2nd Row - Andrea Routh, Madonna Palladino, Cheryl Hutchison, Judy Collins. 3rd Row - Bob Scheilhorn, Rich Miller, Mike Griggs, Scott Holland. 4th Row - Bill Jantz, Joe Smith, Roger Easley, Doug Greenlee.

The 1982 Ozarko yearbook featured Rich Miller and Cindy Mann along with their fellow resident assistants.

For Rich '83 and Cindy (Mann) '82 Miller, being resident assistants at Missouri State wasn't just a campus job. It was the launch pad for their future.

It was where they cultivated leadership, learned to build relationships and, most importantly, where they found each other.

“As an RA, you had approximately 48 new freshmen on your floor every year,” Rich Miller said. “You had to build relationships. You had to work as a team. All those skills, all the communication skills that we learned being R.A.s, I could tell immediately that those experiences were going to be incredibly valuable to me when I started my first job at Shell Oil Company in Houston.”

Cindy Miller said being a resident assistant helped her decide what she wanted to study.

“I loved having the responsibility. I loved leading,” she said. “The R.A. role helped me discover my passion. I realized I could turn that into a career in business.”

Cindy double-majored in management and marketing.

Rich, a first-generation college student, found his calling in the university’s emerging computer science program.

That degree set a new course for his life.

A snow day that led to melting hearts

Their love story began on a winter day in 1981 when classes were canceled due to weather. An impromptu dance party broke out in the common area of their residential house, Blair-Shannon.

From that frigid day, a lifelong partnership was born. Their first dance blossomed into a relationship that is still going strong four decades later. Their family includes three children and six grandchildren.

To honor the place that laid the foundation for their success, the Millers have given back to Missouri State by establishing two endowed scholarships:

- The Rich and Cindy Miller Computer Science Endowed Scholarship. It goes annually to one undergraduate or graduate student who is seeking a degree in computer science.
- The Rich and Cindy Miller Resident Assistant Endowed Scholarship. It goes to a student involved in residence life who also completes an essay on public affairs and has other involvement on campus.

The couple has also given to building projects on campus, such as the Smart University Advancement Center.

But their commitment extends beyond financial contributions. Rich is a member of the Missouri State University Foundation Board of Trustees and the President’s Strategic Planning Committee. Both are members of The Founders Club and hold a President’s Medallion, recognizing their high level of support for the university.

In retirement, the Millers can again be on campus often

Three years ago, Cindy and Rich moved from the Kansas City area to Rogers, Arkansas, to be closer to their children and their families.

They now spend their days chasing grandchildren, entertaining at their home on Table Rock Lake and connecting with the Missouri State community.



Each year, Rich and Cindy Miller (right) are able to meet some of the recipients of the scholarships they have established at the university's annual Gratitude Gathering. PHOTO BY JESSE SCHEVE



The Millers (right) often attend Missouri State events, like the 2018 MarooNation Ball in Kansas City. PHOTO BY JESSE SCHEVE



Rich and Cindy Miller were honored for their support at the 2017 Founders Club Medallion Reception. PHOTO BY JESSE SCHEVE

Several nieces and nephews have attended MO State, and the Millers are a regular presence on campus. As football season ticket holders, they can be found tailgating at home games.

The Millers are both entering a new chapter. They are embracing retirement after successful careers in sales, technology and the health-care industry. Rich retired three years ago as a vice president, and Cindy, an executive recruiter, joined him in November.

Rich and Cindy said their time at Missouri State and their education was more than just a degree. It has served as a foundation for a full life.

Their R.A. scholarship recipient appreciates the gift

Their generosity is making a tangible difference in students' lives. That includes junior McKinley Brown, the 2024-25 recipient of their Resident Assistant Endowed Scholarship.

Brown was raised in Greenwood, Missouri, and is the youngest of four children. He is a 3D design major who has worked long hours to help pay for school. The scholarship allows him to focus on his passion.

"Last summer I worked 70-hour weeks, so it helped out a lot this semester to be able to do what I wanted to do and make art," he said. "I worked significantly less."

Brown serves as creative director for his fraternity and is a photographer for the student-run magazine Sartorial.

He emphasized the importance of being able to build his portfolio, which is his résumé, he said. The scholarship gave him the "gift of time and money" to explore themes like personal identity through a series of paintings.

He summarized the impact of the scholarship from his perspective: "An investment into someone who's trying to build their future." ▶

EVENTS

A new era for

FOOTBALL AND HOMECOMING

The music of the Pride Marching Band. The sights of fairy tale decorations and whimsical costumes, representing the Once upon a Homecoming theme. The high spirits and good vibes when you get lots of Bears together. And the rumble and roar as the football team takes to the field.

It was all part of our first Homecoming as a member of Conference USA. This new era of athletics means Missouri State is playing at the highest levels. Significant private support helped the university become a full-time member of C-USA effective July 1, 2025.

This means MO State will become a full member of the National Collegiate Athletic Association's Division I Football Bowl Subdivision, or FBS, in 2026. That subdivision consists of the 136 largest schools in the NCAA.

"This year's celebration was extra meaningful as it was our first as a member of Conference USA," said Missouri State University President Dr. Richard B. Williams. "I was especially excited for our alums and friends to see our growth and progress. There's a vibrant energy here — one that reflects both our momentum and the pride we share in Missouri State's future." ▶

PHOTO BY JESSE SCHEVE



The Band of Bears Homecoming Parade started the morning off right, marching up John Q. Hammons Parkway.

PHOTO BY JESSE SCHEVE



Bears went all out for the parade's Once Upon a Homecoming theme, with fairy-tale inspired costumes and floats.

PHOTO BY JESSE SCHEVE



The weather was unseasonably warm, perfect for being outdoors. A quote from a member of the Pride Band summed it up: "75 degrees in November. What is happening!?"

PHOTO BY JESSE SCHEVE



Everyone was invited to the tailgate in BearFest Village, which had food, drinks, giveaways, a DJ, games, a face painter, a balloon artist and plenty of other fun for all ages. PHOTO BY JESSE SCHEVE

Tailgate presented by Reliable Subaru



One of Missouri State University's greatest strengths is our alumni and friends network.

151,000+
Bears

live and work around the world!



The Class of 1975 celebrated their 50th reunion. Events included lunch, a campus tour and other special programming. PHOTO BY KEVIN WHITE



Golden Bears and Grand Bears gathered in the Plaster Student Union Ballroom. Golden Bears is a group for alumni who graduated from (or last attended) Missouri State 50 or more years ago. Grand Bears graduated 70 years or more ago and/or have reached 90 years of age. PHOTO BY BRIAN LONG



The court was crowned at halftime. King Sam Wang is the student body vice president and an anthropology major. Queen Mallory Chapman is a leader on the Panhellenic Executive Board. She is a geography and sustainability major.

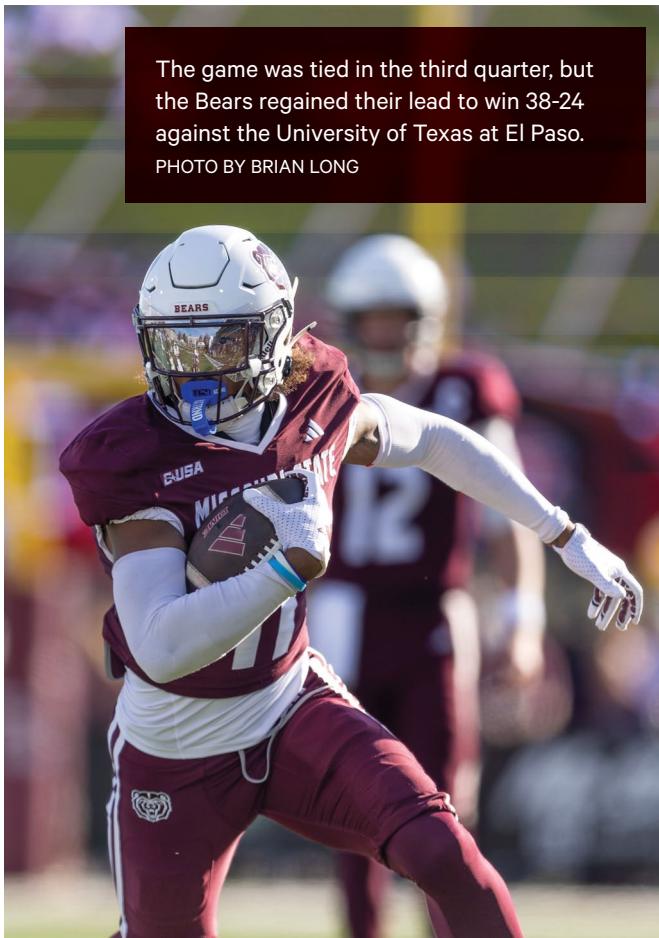
PHOTO BY KEVIN WHITE



After the game, the team gathered on the field to chant "B-E-A-R-S" with the student section. PHOTO BY JESSE SCHEVE



There was instant excitement at the football game as the Bears took an early lead. Each touchdown was celebrated with firework cannons. PHOTO BY JESSE SCHEVE



Football Bears play in XBOX BOWL!

It was the last day of the college football regular season in November, but for MO State it was a time of firsts: The Bears found out they would play in the first-ever Xbox Bowl. It's the program's first bowl game in the Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS), and it follows their first season in the FBS.

Missouri State was originally ineligible for a bowl game, since we just transferred to the FBS. However, the university petitioned the NCAA for eligibility — and was granted the chance to play.

The Football Bears took on Arkansas State on Dec. 18 in Frisco, Texas. MO State rallied in the fourth quarter, but the game ended with a 34-28 loss.

"We wanted to bring championships home to Springfield and make a name for Missouri State and to be in a bowl game ... we're on the right path. We're making a name for ourselves," said player Caden Wiest after the game.



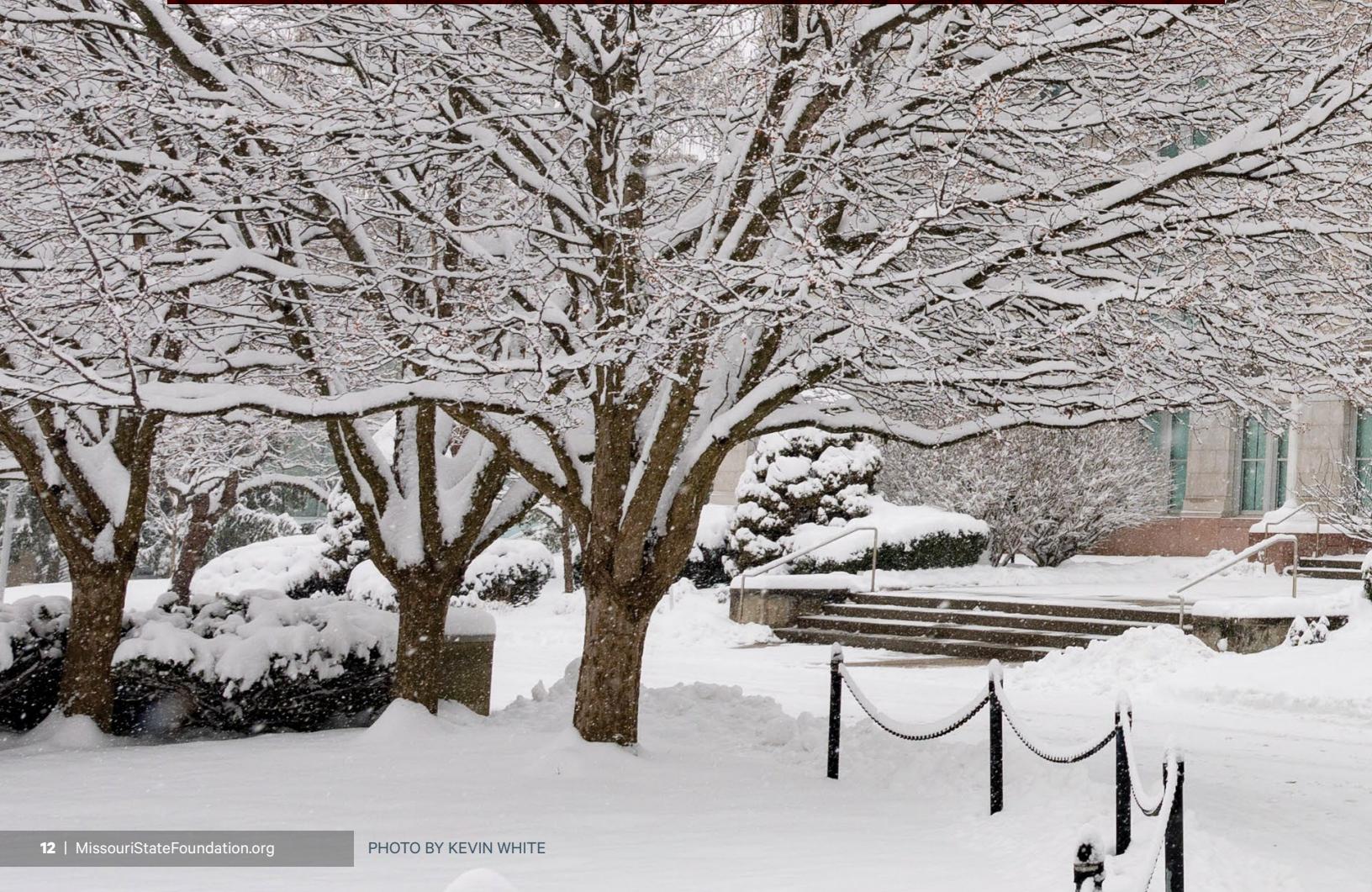
The team goes into next season with a new head coach. Casey Woods has two decades of major college experience, and though this is his first time as a head coach, he played a pivotal role in leading previous teams to championships.

"We will hit the ground running as we seek to capitalize off the current momentum, alignment and success to bring a championship to Springfield," Woods said. ▶

“THE IMPACT OF OUR COLLECTIVE COMMITMENT”

More than \$12.5 million was raised in the last part of 2025 for student support, facilities and more that will shape the university for decades to come.

WRITTEN BY JULIANA GOODWIN





Progress continues on the new University Advancement Center.

PHOTO BY KEVIN WHITE



Foundation trustees toured the space, wearing bright vests and hard hats. PHOTO BY JESSE SCHEVE

On a sunny November morning, Brent Dunn '85 & '91 stood in the future Clifton M. Smart III University Advancement Center. He was surrounded by steel beams, open walls and a crowd of supporters and media.

He was there to announce more than \$12.5 million in new private support for Missouri State. The gifts from both individuals and businesses support student scholarships, MO State athletics, construction and other programs and areas.

"Private gifts are critical to Missouri State's success," said Dunn, the executive director of the Missouri State University Foundation. "We're truly grateful to our donors whose generosity helps the university provide opportunities, enhance programs and strengthen the student experience for generations to come."

It was meaningful for him to share the announcement of new gifts as part of the foundation's Board of Trustees fall meeting: "This is a time when we celebrate the impact of our collective commitment to the university's future."

The donors who made recent gift commitments

The Pinegar Family Executive Boardroom

A family whose name is synonymous with Missouri State is the Pinegar family. Carol Pinegar and the late Ed Pinegar have made Missouri State an integral part of all areas of their family.

The family's gift to name the Pinegar Family Executive Boardroom in the Smart University Advancement Center is yet another demonstration of their dedication to Missouri State.

This gift adds to the many areas the Pinegars have supported at the university, including agriculture, athletics, the College of Business and Greenwood Laboratory School.

Mercy

Mercy made a substantial gift commitment to name the Mercy Sports Medicine and Athletic Training Lab in the McQueary College of Health and Human Services, and a gift for Traditions Hall in the Smart University Advancement Center.

Brent Dunn Vice President for University Advancement Suite

This gift was made by the foundation Board of Trustees in honor of Dunn's service and commitment to Missouri State.

Jeff and Amy Counts

In support of the Smart University Advancement Center, Jeff and Amy Counts made a gift commitment to name the Jeffrey and Amelia Counts Advancement Office.

Kathryn Allred Al-Lamadani

Kathryn Allred Al-Lamadani provided a gift commitment for the Smart University Advancement Center by naming the Kathryn Allred Al-Lamadani Advancement Office.

Leo and Carolyn Mirts Johnson

Leo and Carolyn Mirts Johnson continued their support for Missouri State by making a gift commitment to name the Leo and Carolyn Mirts Johnson Advancement Office in the Smart University Advancement Center.



William H. Darr College of Agriculture students will benefit from a few recent gifts. PHOTO BY KEVIN WHITE

Missouri State President Richard B. and Kristin Williams

Dr. Richard B. and Kristin Williams have established an endowed scholarship to benefit students in the William H. Darr College of Agriculture.

Denney Family Trust

The Denney Family Trust provided the naming for the math department head's office in the College of Natural and Applied Sciences, as well as a deferred gift commitment for scholarships in CNAS.

Dr. Betty K. Adams Retained Life Estate

The late Dr. Betty K. Adams made provisions through her estate for a significant deferred gift to support scholarships in the Darr College of Agriculture and the College of Education.

Three anonymous gifts in the seven figures to support MO State football

Wayne and Diana Hutchins Retained Life Estate

Wayne and Diana Hutchins are long-time supporters of scholarships, athletics and Broadcast Services. They recently made a deferred gift provision to enhance educational opportunities for students in the Darr College of Agriculture.

Howard and Linda Bailey family

As the founder of BP Builders, Howard Bailey and the Bailey family continue to champion innovation and excellence in the construction industry. Through the establishment of two endowed funds, they are helping to provide the School of Construction Design and Project Management with resources to assist students and faculty to be leaders in the construction industry.

► *Donor list continues, page 16*



Some of the support will go to Football Bears and other Bears athletics teams. PHOTO BY JESSE SCHEVE



Several basketball fans committed to giving to the men's and women's programs. PHOTO BY JESSE SCHEVE



A local company supported the School of Construction, Design and Project Management. PHOTO BY KEVIN WHITE



First-generation students will be eligible for some of the scholarships that were established. PHOTO BY JESSE SCHEVE

► *Donor list, continued from page 15*

John and Constance Toler

John and Constance Toler made provisions through their estate to establish the John M. Toler Family Endowed Mathematics' Scholarship in the math department.

Lynn and Karen Thompson

As Bear athletics enthusiasts, it would be difficult to find anyone more dedicated to MO State athletics than Lynn and Karen Thompson. Through their generosity, two new Competitive Excellence Funds were created, one for Bears basketball and one for Lady Bears basketball.

Don Kinder estate

An avid fan of Bears and Lady Bears basketball, Don Kinder left provisions in his estate to support these programs through the creation of Competitive Excellence Funds for each program.

Denise L. Gibson Endowed Scholarship

Denise Gibson established this scholarship in her name with a deferred gift through her trust for students in need of significant financial assistance or are first generation students.

Dr. David O. and Susan Belcher Lobby

In memory of her late husband, Dr. David Belcher, a former dean of the Reynolds College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, Susan named the lobby in the new Judith Enyeart Reynolds Performing Arts Complex the Dr. David O. and Susan B. Belcher Lobby.

Snyder Construction

Snyder Construction continued its support for the School of Construction, Design and Project Management by naming the Snyder Construction Rooftop Terrace and the Snyder Construction Group Collaboration Room in the newly renovated Kemper Hall.

JMS Charitable Foundation

The JMS Charitable Foundation continued its support for Missouri State students through a gift for nondepartmental scholarships assisting first-generation students with strong community involvement who demonstrated financial need.

Bombas

Bombas continued to partner with Missouri State, providing gift-in-kind support to the Bear Pantry and the MSU Care Clinic.

Anonymous, for a scholarship

An anonymous gift established a new scholarship to support first-generation students in the College of Education.

Anonymous, for campus programming

An anonymous gift to support broadcast services. ▶

Welcome, new Trustees!

The Missouri State University Foundation Board of Trustees are some of our most devoted supporters and volunteers.

The board advises the foundation about planning for gifts, seeking private support and investing.

Two new trustees, both alumni, joined during the group's fall meeting in November. Michelle Brekken '92 and Jarrod Sohosky '92, who both live near Dallas, Texas, will bring valuable career

and life experience to their roles. During the meeting, the Board of Trustees also thanked James H. Wilson for his service as chair and welcomed Beverly Miller Keltner. She assumes the chair role Jan. 1, 2026.

"We had a wonderful day," said Brent Dunn, vice president for university advancement. "We are so grateful to each of these volunteers for sharing their time, talent and treasure."

Michelle Brekken '92



Brekken graduated with a degree in accounting. At Missouri State, she was involved in Phi Kappa Pi. She was then employed with Forvis Mazars for 30 years. In the 1990s, she was a key player in the firm's transition to paperless audits. In 2021, Brekken was awarded the firm's highest internal honor, the PRIDE Award. She is now retired and is involved in BearsWIN (Women's Impact Network).

Why did you join the Board of Trustees?

I want to give back to a university that's given me so much. Missouri State opened doors for me, and now I want to help make sure future students have the same chance to reach their full potential.

What does Missouri State mean to you?

Missouri State gave me the foundation for a rewarding career, and I'll always be grateful for that. On top of that, the firm I worked for hired a lot of MSU grads, so I've seen firsthand how strong and well-prepared its students are.

What are your hopes for the future of Missouri State?

I think the future is really bright. My hope is that all the great things happening here get even more recognition, so more people see the impact the university is making.

Jarrod Sohosky '92



Sohosky earned a degree in marketing. He joined Lord Abbott & Co. in 1997 and was named a partner in 2005. He is active in financial industry groups. Sohosky has also given back to Missouri State by serving on the College of Business Executive Advisory Committee. He has also hosted a donor gathering at his home.

Why did you join the Board of Trustees?

Being involved with the COB advisory committee was incredible, so this was a chance to be part of a different area. I feel my almost 30 years of experience in asset management can help me be a meaningful contributor.

What does Missouri State mean to you?

Missouri State gave me a foundation of learning and experiences. I will always respect that the institution provided me with that.

What are your hopes for the future of Missouri State?

I am incredibly optimistic! I find it so rewarding to see the quality of alumni who are giving back. They are smart, successful individuals who want to see the university thrive. You couple that with the phenomenal leadership we have in all areas and there is no doubt the future is quite bright. My hope is to see us in the next 10 years be a dominant university defined by excellence in all aspects of education and student experience.

A SUITE SURPRISE

Trustees banded together to honor Brent Dunn, a Bear known as “Mr. Missouri State.”



Brent Dunn, vice president for university advancement, was about to lead the crowd at the Board of Trustees meeting on tours of the advancement center.

That's when trustee leaders Beverly Miller Keltner and Jim Wilson made their move: They shooed him away from the microphone. Shocked, he clasped his hands behind his back and took a deep breath as the two hijacked the meeting.

They had a big surprise.

Together, trustees had named an area in the center in his honor: the Brent Dunn Vice President for University Advancement Suite.

Wendy Ferguson, assistant vice president for development and strategy, and Stephanie Smith, executive director of

“It’s a privilege and honor.”

Brent Dunn, vice president for university advancement

university advancement relations, had approached them with the idea.

It was a no brainer, Miller Keltner said.

“He has truly been a difference-maker at Missouri State,” she said.

His name is synonymous with the university, said Wilson, who is the outgoing chair.

“With the coming of this incredible new facility, the Board of Trustees couldn’t let this opportunity pass without recognizing Brent’s service,” Wilson said. “Brent loves this university. He works 14 hours a day. He’s given his whole life to this university.”

Missouri State President Richard B. Williams agreed that Brent “isn’t here to just do a job. He is Mr. Missouri State.”



Beverly Miller Keltner hugs Brent Dunn, and Jim Wilson takes the microphone, as they surprise Brent with the gift in his name.

PHOTO BY KEVIN WHITE

He was a first-generation student who didn't know if he'd ever go to college

Dunn is a Springfield native raised by a single mother. His dad died of a heart attack when Dunn was 1.

His grandma died the next day of a heart attack, devastated at the loss of her son.

When young Brent started elementary school at Bingham, his mom became a cafeteria cook at Jarrett Middle School so she could be off of work when her son was home.

His first connection with the university started with Art Hains, who hired Dunn his junior year of high school to call games for radio station KGBX.

Dunn received a federal Pell grant his freshman year to attend then-Southwest Missouri State University.

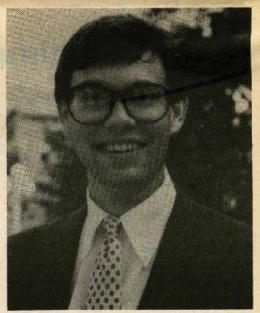
That first day on campus was special, because he wasn't sure he'd even have an opportunity to go to college. He still remembers that feeling.

After a rocky start — Dunn jokes that no one told him he had to study — he rebounded and had a blast in college.

He served two terms as speaker pro tem for the Student Government Association.

He also worked full time in radio and sports, becoming news and public service director of KWTO.

Dunn joins staff



Brent Dunn, '85

News and public service director at radio station KWTO in Springfield since 1980, W. Brent Dunn became the annual-giving director at SMS July 1.

1985 SOUTHWEST MISSOURIAN

Dunn named vice president for university advancement



Twenty-two year fund-raising veteran Brent Dunn has been named the new vice president for university advancement at Missouri State University and executive

director of the Missouri State Foundation. He began his duties Aug. 1.

Dunn was selected following a national search, which resulted in three finalists being invited to campus for interviews. Dunn replaces Greg Oinstot, who retired early in 2007, after 25 years at Missouri State. Dr. Don Aripoli, vice president for student affairs, had been serving in an interim role for the past six months.

"The keys to being successful in development are 1) believing in your product — in this case the University — and 2) cultivating and maintaining relationships," said Missouri State President Michael T.

Netzel. "In the opinions of the search committee, others who participated in the search and me, Brent excels in these two areas. He will be an excellent leader for our advancement staff and the Missouri State Foundation."

Dunn, a Springfield native, joined the Missouri State development staff in 1985 as director of annual giving, a role he held until 1989. As director of annual giving, he managed direct mail programs, managed and directed the volunteer telemarketing campaigns, and developed annual giving programs for academics and athletics.

From 1989-95, he was associate director of development/director of annual giving.

In that role, he managed and directed all annual giving programs, developed the annual giving program for Juanita K. Hammons Hall for the Performing Arts, conducted solicitations for potential members of The Founders Club, and developed the "paid-student" telemarketing program.

Since 1995, he has been the director of athletics development/assistant director of athletics, where he has managed and directed

the \$1.7 million Bears Fund program for athletics, organized and directed special events, such as the Auction Benefiting Athletics, and prepared and conducted major gift solicitations.

Dunn is active in the community, having served in a number of roles with a variety of organizations. He currently is chairman of annual giving for Rotary District 6000, a member of the Central High School A+ Advisory Board, on the Springfield Sports Commission, chairman of the Southeast-K-Park Committee for Rotary Club of Springfield, and chairman of the financial development committee at Wesley United Methodist Church.

Dunn received his B.S. degree in sociology in 1985 and his M.A. degree in communication in 1991, both from Missouri State.

"I am a lifelong resident of Springfield and a lifelong admirer of Missouri State University," said Dunn. "This is a great opportunity to help the University I love prepare for and be successful in the future. I am both humbled by and excited about this opportunity."

2007 MISSOURI STATE INSIDER

From a first job in 1985, to a vice president role in 2007

After earning his bachelor's degree in sociology in 1985, Dunn was hired as the university's director of annual giving.

Miller Keltner remembers Dunn's early days when he was at all the basketball games. She is a 40-year season pass holder for football and basketball.

"He was always there and always talked athletics," she said. "We have developed a friendship over all these years."

While working, he was also in graduate school. He earned his master's degree in communication in 1991.

In 1995, he was appointed director of athletic development and assistant director of athletics.

In 2007, Dunn was promoted to vice president of advancement. He is the longest-serving advancement employee, and is in charge of elevating Missouri State University through philanthropy, engagement and collaboration.

► *continued on page 20*

► *continued from page 19*

He met his wife on campus; their son is a recent graduate

One day at the Meyer Center, graduate assistants toured the building. He noticed one student and asked someone to find out her name. It was Jennifer.

A week later, Dunn was invited by David and Lisa Officer to a Final Four party.

Lo and behold, Jennifer was there — she was David's sister-in-law. David was a season ticket holder.

"I told him: If you can get me a date with your sister-in-law, I'll get you better seats," Dunn said.

He got the date. David got the seats — but he had to pay for the upgrade.

Brent and Jennifer have been married 31 years and have one son, Dalton, who graduated with a bachelor's in agriculture from Missouri State in 2025.

After Miller Keltner and Wilson announced the naming of the suite, Dunn's family came out



Brent and Jennifer Dunn.

ARCHIVE PHOTO



Brent and his son Dalton, back in the SMS days.

PHOTO BY KEVIN WHITE

of hiding and hugged him. Miller Keltner thanked them, saying she knew they attended many university events and gave up time with Dunn as he worked tirelessly.

Dunn was visibly moved but tried to keep his emotions in check. The gravity of the gesture didn't hit him until that night — he was "shocked and humbled."

Jennifer Dunn said the naming was a "huge honor. This means the world to him. He bleeds maroon, that is for sure."



Dalton Dunn and Brent Dunn at graduation in 2025. Dalton earned a bachelor's degree in agriculture.

PHOTO BY KEVIN WHITE



Brent Dunn's family, including wife Jennifer (right) and son Dalton (left), surprised him at the gift announcement. Soon, guests to the new building can check out the Brent Dunn Vice President for University Advancement Suite.

PHOTO BY KEVIN WHITE

Four decades of raising funds and making friends

For more than 40 years, Dunn has served as an ambassador, spokesperson and advocate for the foundation and university.

Dunn gets up at 4:30 a.m. and is usually in the office by 6 or 6:30 a.m. to get a jump on his day.

In the afternoon and evening, he goes to games, and university events, and galas, and meetings. And not just in the community, but around the world.

He has been involved in everything from athletics to art events to building dedications. He's watched — and helped — the university grow.

In 1985, when he joined the foundation, there were 16 employees. Today, there are 43.

Dunn has led the two most successful capital campaigns in university history.

The Our Promise campaign goal was \$125 million, and ended with \$167 million in 2012.

The Onward, Upward goal was \$250 million and ended in 2022 with \$274 million.

But his job goes way beyond dollar signs.

"Working with alumni, friends and donors I would not have otherwise met is my favorite thing," Dunn said. "We share a common love for this institution. I have a chance to meet thousands of people, and that is the coolest thing. After 40 years, some families, like the McQuearys, I've known three or four generations and I feel like I'm part of their family. They are good people who have done great things for this university."

Outside of the foundation, Dunn is involved in the community. He was elected to several terms for the Nixa Board of Education.

He is a board member with the Missouri State Fair Foundation and the Nixa Public Schools Foundation.

He's been a Rotarian since 1986 and is on the Springfield Rotary Club of Springfield Southeast Foundation Board.

When asked how he wants to be remembered when he retires, Dunn said: "Oh gosh, that's weird. I feel like I am dying. I haven't thought about that. I was just fortunate to get a college degree and this job. It's a privilege and honor to get a degree and do things to improve yourself and your community. I appreciate the lifelong relationship I have to this school." ▶



Dunn was part of the team that showcased the Bears at the 2025 state fair. PHOTO BY KEVIN WHITE



Dunn's day may start early and go late. Here, he's part of a group of administrators who served breakfast to students in the Blair-Shannon dining hall. PHOTO BY JESSE SCHEVE



Dunn led the university's fundraising team through the Onward, Upward campaign, the largest in MO State history. PHOTO BY JESSE SCHEVE

SIGHTS AND SCENES

1. Scholarship donors and recipients

met at the West Plains Gratitude Gathering, held in April.
PHOTO BY KEVIN WHITE



1

2. The Gratitude Gathering in

Springfield was held April 10 at the Old Glass Place.
PHOTO BY JESSE SCHEVE



2

3. MO State agriculture teams

competed at the Missouri State Fair from Aug. 7-17 in Sedalia. The university played a bigger role in the state fair this year, hosting a booth and a dinner.
PHOTO BY KEVIN WHITE



3

4. The fall semester kicked off

with Welcome Weekend events, such as Playfair — the best way for new students to meet 1,000 of their classmates in one hour!

PHOTO BY JESSE SCHEVE

5. The New Student Convocation

was held Aug. 17. It's the official fun welcome for the 2025-26 academic year, and a public affairs signature event on campus.

PHOTO BY JESSE SCHEVE



4



5

6**7****8****9****10**

6. Becoming a part of Conference USA

USA is a huge score for the university. We held a Party in the C-USA in August to celebrate.

PHOTO BY KEVIN WHITE

7. David Feherty (right), a former professional golfer turned broadcaster, author and humorist, was the keynote speaker Sept. 16 at the 2025 Public Affairs Conference. The event was made possible by the Missouri State Foundation with support from KY3.

PHOTO BY KEVIN WHITE

8. Legendary athlete Jackie Stiles spoke at the Lady Bears Gala, held Oct. 24. It included dinner, fellowship and an inside look at the program.

PHOTO BY TABITHA EASTERWOOD

9. Veterans Day events on campus included a breakfast and the cascading sound of Taps played by university trumpeters, accompanied by the Missouri State Bear Battalion.

PHOTO BY KEVIN WHITE

10. Missouri State University set new enrollment records this fall. System enrollment increased from 26,874 to 27,235. Enrollment on the Springfield campus increased from 25,038 to 25,238.

PHOTO BY KEVIN WHITE

LIGHTNING ROUND

Dr. Clarenda Phillips

Provost and vice president of academic affairs

Grew up in: Terre Haute, Indiana

Education: Bachelor's degree in sociology from DePauw University; master's degree and doctorate in sociology from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; Master of Divinity from Asbury Theological Seminary

Career: Dr. Clarenda Phillips is in her first year as Missouri State's provost, our chief academic officer. She was named in March 2025 and started in July.

Family: One of six children in a blended family.



Describe your job in a nutshell.

I support faculty and staff to ensure we're meeting the academic mission of Missouri State University so that our students are learning. We work together to make sure Bears have that epic learning experience, have what they need and have a strong sense of belonging in our campus community.

Favorite aspect of your job?

When I interact with students and they tell me about their favorite professors. I love hearing the stories about faculty who have made learning interesting, fun and challenging.

Favorite quote or saying?

"Lifting as we climb." It's from Mary Church Terrell, who was part of the black women's club movement in the late 1800s and early 1900s. She believed we get educated so that we can lift others as we climb.



"This is a university where people continuously learn, grow and evolve — where we can figure it all out and innovate together," Phillips said. PHOTO BY JESSE SCHEVE

How are you enjoying Springfield so far?

I love Springfield. It's easy to navigate. The people are welcoming and warm, and the community has embraced me.

Earliest influence in your life?

My mother. My parents divorced when I was very young and there were times when my mother worked two jobs. She said, "You've got to stand up for yourself, but you also have to take care of business."

Favorite food?

Indian.

Pick only one: Movies, television, gaming or live music?

TV. The diversity of programming on TV allows me to access different kinds of genres and content.

Favorite day of the week?

Wednesday. It's that day in the week when I get to look back and think about what we've been able to accomplish but also look forward to what is yet to come. It's a bridging day.

Biggest splurge ever?

I took a two-week trip to Egypt and traveled north to south.

Fun fact about yourself?

I wear a size 11 shoe.

What never fails to make you laugh?

Children laughing. It's infectious. The world is still a wonder to them. Somewhere along the way, we lose that.

Any hobbies?

I'm a quintessential nerd — I love reading. And I have a spinning bike. I love to crank up the music and just escape. I work out three or four days a week.



Dr. Clarendia Phillips held a listening session in July 2025 with a group of students from across campus. "The future is full of possibilities," she told them. "And you are at the center of our possibilities." PHOTO BY JESSE SCHEVE

What would be your ideal workday?

First of all, it would start at 10 a.m. I would come in, have a couple of meetings, get some ideas, have time to process and then get busy.

A great day includes time for understanding what we need to do, reflecting on it and then getting after it.

Would you rather be an expert in one topic or know a little bit about everything?

Know a little bit about everything. I'm a sociologist. I like being able to make connections between thoughts, ideas and people. It requires knowing a little bit about everything.

Favorite city to visit?

In the U.S., it's Washington, D.C. Internationally, it's Paris.

Both cities are walkable, so you can easily take in the landmarks, the people and the museums. And there's no shortage of great food.

Place you most want to travel?

I keep an adventures list, and Victoria Falls in Zimbabwe is next on the list.

Three activities that would make a perfect weekend?

Sleep, reading a book and spending time with family and friends. I'm solo, so I enjoy connecting with family and friends and just laughing and having a good time.

What inspires you?

Every morning, understanding that I have to model what it means to be a Christian. Being a follower of Jesus Christ inspires me to do my best and to do right by others.

What is your most dreaded chore?

Dusting. I just don't want to spend my time dusting. I'll do anything else. My favorite is cleaning the bathroom because I like a clean bathroom.

Proud life moment?

Getting a PhD. I didn't do it by myself. At the moment I finished, I thought about all the people who supported me along the way. And the degree is not just about me. It's about everyone I now get to support.

Are you counting down the days until retirement or more likely to work 10 years past retirement?

I love my job, but I'll be comfortable retiring one day because I want to make room for other people to lead. I'm not the only one who can do this job or provide leadership in higher education. There are very capable people who would be great at this, and I believe it's important for leaders to make room for others.

Fill in the blank. Missouri State is ...

The place where dreams come true. ▶

— Interview by Juliana Goodwin

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MEET A TRUSTEE: Beverly Miller Keltner



WRITTEN BY TAYLOR LADD | PHOTOS BY JESSE SCHEVE

Beverly Miller Keltner '73 first came to Missouri State as a nontraditional student from Lebanon, Missouri.

"I got married right out of high school to my first husband, Jack Miller, who has since passed away. We were high school sweethearts," Miller Keltner said. "We attended Missouri State together."

She earned her bachelor's degree in education with summa cum laude honors.

She then taught for three years in Kansas City before moving back to Springfield, where she taught high school for 17 years. During that time, she also taught classes for MO State.

After retiring from education, Miller Keltner volunteered at the American Red Cross. She was deployed to 39 national disasters.

She has been an important figure on campus for decades: She served on the Board of Governors for 10 years, and has been on the foundation's Board of Trustees since 2022. In 2026, she will begin a two-year term as its chair.

She lives in Springfield with husband Mike Keltner, a fellow Bear. She has two children, both lawyers, and three grandchildren.



1970 OZARKO



The final beam of the university's new advancement center was hoisted into place Sept. 12, 2025. Beverly Miller Keltner's signature is among others on the beam.

What other connections do you have to Missouri State?

(Husband) Mike went to school here at the same time I did and played on Missouri State's basketball team. We didn't realize we were on campus at the same time until we were introduced in 2017.

He later taught in Missouri State's kinesiology department. For the last 20 years or so he has been a radio color commentator for the men's basketball team.

Mike's son, Connor, is also a Bear and is now a university director of development.

Jack served as chairman on the Board of Governors. He and I are probably the only husband and wife team that have both been on the board at different times!

The Board of Governors governs all of MSU. How did you become part of that?

A few years after Jack served on the Board of Governors, I was nominated. I chose a three-year term. During that time, Jack passed away unexpectedly. I loved the board, and it gave me a lot of purpose in my life. I felt like the board was making important decisions, and I wanted to be part of that.



Mike Keltner (left), Beverly Miller Keltner and Mike's son, Connor Keltner, (right) attended a Board of Trustees social on Nov. 13, 2025.



Beverly Miller Keltner and her husband Mike Keltner (right) were honored at the 2024 Founders Club medallion reception.



Beverly Miller Keltner played a role in the December 2021 commencement ceremonies.

Those were some of the best years. I met people with diverse viewpoints, yet they all were working toward the goal of making Missouri State the best it could be for the students.

How did you join the Missouri State University Foundation's Board of Trustees?

I was liaison between the Board of Governors and the Board of Trustees for several years. I learned a lot about the foundation. A lot of people don't realize that nearly all money they raise goes back to the students in some way or another.

The foundation board nominated me, and I was elected. From there, I got involved in as much as I could and chaired the development committee.

What are some fundraising initiatives that are especially important to you?

- We started and supported the BearsWIN (Women's Impact Network) program. I'm on the BearsWIN committee now. That all came out of our long-range plan to get more people involved. Now, we have a whole group of women who are totally engaged.

- The development committee realized that many trustees are older, and we needed some young people to share ideas. Now we have five associate trustees who are all younger than 40. They serve on the board with most of the same requirements, duties and privileges. They have already been a big help.
- Scholarships are always huge. One of the most important events we do is the Gratitude Gatherings, when we recognize scholarships that have been awarded to students. The stories students share about how our scholarships and programs have affected their lives are really the most important thing.

What will be some focus areas when you are chair of the Board of Trustees?

A big one is getting people engaged with the university — not just faculty, staff or students, but people in the community.

There are also student organizations and other groups on campus that aren't quite as aware of everything the foundation does. I want to see us get our message out and tell those stories.

We want to share our story with our community and university partners. ▶

—

faces of the foundation

Ginger Stringer

Director of university advancement communications

Hometown: Nixa, Missouri

Career: Has worked at Missouri State since 2024. Before that, first worked in the newspaper industry before transitioning to marketing and communications. Has worked in nonprofit and public sectors doing graphic design, website management and digital communications.

Family: Ginger and her husband, Cody, have a son, 15, and daughter, 9. Their furry family members are their dog Chacho and cat Pearl.

How has your first year on the team been?

It is fast-paced and challenging, but in a fun way. I get to learn all about the university and the ways alumni and friends are continuing to make an impact even after their student experience is over.

My position is new for the organization, so learning a new role and establishing a new department has been really fulfilling.

The people here are just so great. Everybody wants to help students go to school. It is just a dream job, really.

What is your role?

I serve the communication needs for University Advancement, which houses the Missouri State University Foundation and the Alumni Association. With the foundation, we do a lot of things to support the university, raise funds and add more scholarships and endowments. With the association, we get alums engaged all around the country.

Supporting both of those sides makes my job fast-paced. We write communications and support them on social media. Then, we evaluate our communication impact and what's effective or what could be more effective. It's a lot of talking and a lot of listening at the same time.

What does a typical day look like for you?

I don't have a typical day, but I can always plan on writing some content and working on communication campaigns. I do a little graphic design and sometimes have meetings with my team or other teams around campus. I do all those things daily, but the amount of each is variable each day.

What are some significant projects you've been working on?

- Conference USA and our first time in a football bowl game is huge. Supporting pep rallies and events across the country



Ginger Stringer tours the new Advancement Center.

PHOTO BY KEVIN WHITE

has been really exciting. It's fun to watch Bears come together, celebrate their alma mater and get energized for this new conference in the football and basketball seasons.

- The Pride Band reunion was in September. It was the first one in 10 years. People were eager to come back, do a performance and see other band members.
- Dinner with Eight Bears started again this fall. Host families will invite students to share a meal and discuss career opportunities. They'll discuss their own careers and maybe give advice to students they're hosting.
- Probably the biggest thing is the new Advancement Center that's being built. We are all so thrilled to see that come to life.
- It's been great to get to know some of the association's board members. The foundation trustees are also really involved in a great way. They're so supportive.
- The BearsWIN (Women's Impact Network) initiative has been really great. It's so committed to mental wellness and the ASCEND (Autism Support Can Empower New Directions) program in West Plains. They're helping students through whatever they need to make it to the end of their degree and be healthy while they're doing it. It is incredible.



How do you spend your time when you're not at work?

I do a lot of reading. The kids are busy, so that means we're pretty busy. But when we're not running kids around, we're riding bikes, hanging out, watching movies and reading books.

What do you want Missouri State supporters to know?

Their support is really making a difference, right away, in the areas they choose.

— Interview by Taylor Ladd

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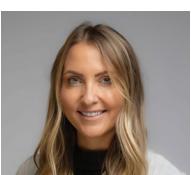
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