

Missouri State

THE MAGAZINE PUBLISHED FOR THE ALUMNI AND FRIENDS OF MISSOURI STATE UNIVERSITY ■ VOL. 21 ISSUE 1 ■ FEBRUARY 2026



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XBOX BOWL

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Graphic designer's work promotes FIFA World Cup 2026

The World Cup, a global soccer competition, is the most widely viewed sporting event in the world. Kansas City is one of the hosts this summer. Jadie Arnett '22 created the design and theme that is being used on merchandise, banners and other promotional materials.

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Alumni successes: Bears doing big things

- Brandon Lentz '17 & '19 received the NASA Exceptional Achievement Medal.
- Quantum Bears computing team, including Matthew Bruenning '23 & '25 and Gaige Riggs '17 & '18, again places well in global contest.

- Janet Adkison '97 inducted into National Association of Farm Broadcasting Hall of Fame.
- Danielle O'Neil '14 named Springfield Public Schools' 2025-26 Teacher of the Year.

OUR NORMAL HERITAGE: MSU HISTORY



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Remembering President Arthur Mallory '54

Dr. Arthur Mallory, an alumnus who was president from 1964-71, passed away Nov. 20, 2025. During his tenure, the university achieved growth in academics, enrollment and the size of campus, including 5+ new facilities.

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In Memoriam

CONSTRUCTION MODERNIZES CAMPUS

Projects that benefit students, faculty, staff and the Missouri State community have wrapped up or are expected to be finalized this fall. Here's an update!



▲ In Roy Blunt Hall, Bears study biology, chemistry, geography, geology and more. PHOTO BY KEVIN WHITE

Addition to Roy Blunt Hall has resources our students deserve: “Science is truly on display”

The addition to Roy Blunt Hall, home of the College of Natural and Applied Sciences, was dedicated Sept. 12, 2025.

A short program was followed by student-led tours of the new building.

The dedication celebrated the completion of the addition and recognized those who contributed to the project.

The \$80 million addition marks the first phase of a larger project that also includes renovations to the original building.

The project began in December 2022 and is on schedule. Renovations to the existing building are expected to be complete this summer.

CNAS Dean Dr. Tamera Jahnke said the expansion provides much-needed space for teaching and research.

“We had outgrown the building and were using closets for labs,” Jahnke said.

“Now we have the facilities our students and faculty deserve, and science is truly on display.”

The project strengthens Missouri State's ability to recruit students, support faculty research and advance the university's goal of achieving a higher research designation of R2.

“The future is bright,” Jahnke said. “Our faculty are already producing outstanding research, and now we have a building that reflects the quality of their work.”



▲ The project was fully funded through a combination of federal and state support. PHOTO BY KEVIN WHITE

ADDITION SIZE

77,000 square feet

FEATURES

- Modern, well-equipped labs
- Updated lecture halls
- Outdoor learning spaces
- Large windows allowing passersby to see research in action



▲ President Richard B. Williams adds his signature. PHOTO BY KEVIN WHITE

Campus friends, supporters sign final beam for Smart Advancement Center

The Clifton M. Smart III University Advancement Center reached an exciting milestone Aug. 20, 2025.

The final beam to be placed was signed by students, faculty, staff and friends of Missouri State. The facility will serve as the home for the division for university advancement, which includes the Missouri State University Foundation and Alumni Association.

“This facility will be the heart of our efforts to engage alumni, strengthen partnerships and secure the future of the university through philanthropy. It is not just about building a new structure — it is about creating a lasting foundation for generations of Bears to come,” said Brent Dunn, executive director of the foundation.

The center is on track to open this fall.

BUILDING SIZE

28,000 square feet
Two stories

FEATURES

- Nearly 200-person event center
- Two conference rooms
- Executive boardroom
- Living room
- Traditions hall
- Outdoor courtyard where the MO State community can gather and celebrate



“Bee” a part of the Advancement Center with a honeycomb in the Hive of Bear Pride

Now is your chance for a building to “bear” your name. Bears love honey, and you love the Bears — so you should be part of the Hive of Bear Pride to celebrate your sweet connection!

Anyone can purchase a honeycomb plaque for display outside the Clifton M. Smart III University Advancement Center.

Each honeycomb — available in three sizes — can be customized with your name, your family’s name or a message of support.

As the honeycomb wall grows in phases, it will stand as a powerful symbol of shared commitment. This hive, built one Bear at a time, reflects the spirit, generosity and pride that make Missouri State University a community you never outgrow.

Funds raised directly support work that advances Missouri State’s mission and fosters lifelong engagement.

Purchase a honeycomb for yourself or as a gift by June 1 to be included by the center’s grand opening!

SCAN FOR SIZES, PRICES AND CONTACT INFO





▲ The Jordan Valley Innovation Center, or JVIC, is a home for cutting-edge research and development. PHOTO BY KEVIN WHITE

JVIC's capacity expanded with Billy Long Advanced Technology Suites

A naming ceremony took place Oct. 14, 2025, for the completion of the Billy Long Advanced Technology Suites at the Roy Blunt Jordan Valley Innovation Center, or JVIC.

The new research and development space will support additional JVIC corporate partners.

"This expansion allows JVIC to meet the growing technology development needs of our partners while providing

interdisciplinary educational experiences for students," said Allen Kunkel, associate vice president for economic development and JVIC director.

It was made possible by \$2 million in congressional funding secured by former Missouri U.S. Rep. Billy Long.

"We're grateful to former congressman Long for his leadership and help in securing the funds for this project," said President Richard B. Williams. "His support ensures Missouri State continues to be a hub for innovation, collaboration and economic growth."



▲ Billy Long speaks at the ceremony. PHOTO BY KEVIN WHITE

SUITES SIZE

12,000 square feet

FEATURES

- Research and manufacturing labs
- Office and conference space
- Amenities to accommodate three corporate partners



▲ Ours is one of the only construction management programs in the U.S. that is part of a business college. PHOTO BY KEVIN WHITE

Grand opening held for Construction Education Success Center at Kemper Hall

A new **Construction Education Success Center in Kemper Hall**, home of the School of Construction, Design and Project Management, was unveiled Sept. 29, 2025.

This marks a major milestone in workforce development. The industry-focused space will allow the university to welcome more students into its construction management program, leading to more projects proudly built by Bears.

In this facility, experts will provide specialized training and students will earn credentials tailored to today's workforce.

For example, a high-bay training lab will help students gain hands-on proficiency with full-scale construction activities, such as aerial lift training, crane safety and structural steel erection.

"This center positions Missouri State as a leader in preparing the next generation of construction professionals," said College of Business Dean Dr. David Meinert. "We're committed to equipping our students with the skills employers need while driving regional economic growth."



CENTER SIZE

10,000 square feet

FEATURES

- High-bay training lab with 3,200 square feet; nearly 30 feet high
- Computing lab
- Rooftop terrace
- Student study lounge
- Surveying technology lab
- Collaborative spaces for student teamwork



Judith Enyeart Reynolds Performing Arts Complex continues to take shape

Work inside and outside of **Craig Hall**, and around the site of the former **Art Annex**, is on track to finish this fall.

The Judith Enyeart Reynolds Performing Arts Complex will be a new home for the theatre and dance department. The project includes:

- Updates to Craig Hall.
- A new building to replace the demolished Art Annex.
- A refreshed outdoor space between the two buildings.

MO State announced plans for this project, our new "front porch," in fall 2023. The space will greet visitors and be a place to connect with the university's neighbors. Demolition started in December 2024.

These changes were made possible by the largest one-time gift in university history, from the C.W. Titus Foundation.

"It's going to be night and day," Dr. Christopher Herr, department head of theatre and dance, said when the gift was announced. "This will give us facilities commensurate with the quality of our programs."

COMPLEX SIZE

- Two buildings
- Outdoor space between them

FEATURES

- Black box theatre with 150 seats
- Lobby/reception area that will double as event space
- Theatre changing rooms
- Climate-controlled costume storage
- Scene shop for building sets
- Large rehearsal studios
- Acting studios
- Voiceover studios
- Camera studio
- Student lounge
- Upgrades for accessibility ■

Board of Governors elects two new officers, both alumni

The Missouri State University Board of Governors elected new officers during its Oct. 3, 2025, meeting.

The terms for the new officers began Jan. 1.

Dr. Melissa Gourley, Mountain Grove, is now the chair.

Travis Freeman, Chesterfield, is the vice chair.



Gourley

About Dr. Melissa Gourley '90

Gourley is a veterinarian at Whetstone Veterinary Service in Mountain Grove. She previously owned Whetstone Veterinary Service.

She is a member of the American Veterinary Medical Association and the Missouri Veterinary Medical

Association. She has served as a member of Missouri State's West Plains Development Board and the Federal Appropriations Committee for Mountain Grove High School.

She holds a bachelor's degree in biology from Missouri State and a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine from the University of Missouri-Columbia College of Veterinary Medicine.

About Travis Freeman '06



Freeman

Freeman is a certified financial planner and partner with Moneta in St. Louis. He has 20 years of experience in the financial services industry.

Prior to joining the Board of Governors, he served as a trustee on the Missouri State University Foundation and established the Travis and Marina

Freeman Family Endowed Scholarship for first-generation students at Missouri State.

He is past president of the Financial Planning Association of St. Louis, a former board member with College Bound, and current chair of both The Fulton School and Moneta Charitable Foundation.

He holds a bachelor's degree in finance with a minor in economics from Missouri State. ■



Faculty member wins screenwriting award at Austin Film Festival

Cristina Pippa, director of the Master of Fine Arts in Dramatic Writing program, has earned recognition for a television pilot episode she wrote titled "Lady Em."

"Lady Em" re-imagines Shakespeare's "Macbeth" through a contemporary lens. It follows a North Carolina teenager who's a descendant of Lady Macbeth.

The teen confronts her family's dark legacy as she comes into her own power while navigating high school and battling actual demons.

The play has meant a lot to Pippa for many years.

"I have been focused on this 'Macbeth' story, especially Lady Macbeth, all the way back since high school, or maybe even before that. When I was in fourth grade and I was starting at a new school, I already had the witches' monologue memorized. So, I stood up and performed that. I don't really think I made many friends right away ... this story has really been in my bones for a long time."

She started writing it as a novel, but kept going back to the idea as a movie or a TV pilot.

She submitted it to the Austin Film Festival as a 60-page pilot for an hour-long drama. The festival's awards identify writers of what they call "unparalleled talent ... with a reputation as the premiere script competition in the world." All submissions are evaluated blindly by a panel of industry judges.

"I had never even made the semi-finals, let alone the finals," Pippa said.

But this year, her script won the Josephson Entertainment Teleplay Award. "Lady Em" is now making rounds with agents and producers. ■

TWO ALUMNI RECOGNIZED AT FALL COMMENCEMENTS

An athletics legend and a state senator receive university awards

Bill Rowe '61 receives Bronze Bear



Rowe

Former athletics director and baseball head coach Bill Rowe

has a lifelong history with Missouri State, embodying Bear

pride for more than six decades.

Since enrolling as a freshman in 1957 at what was then Southwest Missouri State College, Rowe has been a successful student-athlete, respected administrator and generous donor.

A 1961 graduate, he spent 19 years (1963-82) as head baseball coach, athletics business manager and assistant athletics director before becoming athletics director in 1982. In that role, he oversaw the university's move to NCAA Division I and the Missouri Valley Conference; expanded sports programs; and led the development and improvement of facilities.

After 52 years of service, Rowe retired in 2009 but remained one of Missouri State's most visible and active supporters. He volunteers to assist with fundraising projects in athletics.

He also serves on the Missouri State University Foundation Board of Trustees and is a major donor. His generosity has supported both academic excellence and athletic achievement across the university.

Most notably, in 2021, Rowe and his wife, Nydia, established an endowment to provide cost of attendance stipends for Missouri State baseball student-athletes, a landmark gift that continues to impact the program.

"Bill's a permanent presence on our campus," said President Richard B. Williams, "and I can't think of anyone more deserving of this award."

Missouri Sen. Sandy Crawford '95 receives Government Excellence Award



Crawford

Sen. Sandy Crawford has demonstrated leadership in public service

and steadfast support of Missouri State University.

A lifelong resident of Dallas County, Crawford served in the Missouri House of Representatives from 2010-17 following a 30-year banking career.

In August 2017, she was elected to the Missouri Senate and has served in that role since.

She has championed legislation across a wide spectrum, from agriculture and banking to education and local government and elections.

Crawford's support for Missouri State is among her key educational priorities. Her efforts include:

- This year, she carried House Bill 419 in the Senate — the first measure passed this session to include language authorizing Missouri State to offer PhD degrees.
- While serving on the Senate Appropriations Committee, she advocated for significant appropriations for Missouri State. Among them are:
 - More than \$40 million for the Roy Blunt Hall addition and renovation.
 - \$17.5 million for renovations of the Judith Enyeart Reynolds Performing Arts Complex.
 - \$7.5 million for the Neurodiversity and Autism Center at Missouri State University-West Plains.
 - \$4 million for facilities improvements at the William H. Darr College of Agriculture.

A Missouri State alumna, Crawford received her bachelor's degree in finance in 1995.

She is also a 1998 graduate of the Graduate School of Banking at Colorado.

"Sen. Crawford's dedication to the people of Missouri and this university exemplifies the very best in public service," said President Richard B. Williams. "Her leadership in advancing our ability to offer doctoral programs will shape the future of our campus and state for generations." ■



▲ Dr. Wenping Qiu is a distinguished researcher. He leads a team that focuses on finding effective strategies for preventing and managing diseases in grapevines. These diseases can cause significant losses to the fruit industry. PHOTO BY KEVIN WHITE

“A great achievement” 20 years in the making will help fruit growers

Professor discovers, patents new grapevine cultivar

A professor at the Missouri State University Fruit Experiment Station in Mountain Grove, Missouri, has discovered and patented a new grapevine cultivar.

Dr. Wenping Qiu is the director of the Center for Grapevine Biotechnology.

He was granted a patent for the Norton Blanc grapevine cultivar, a hybrid of the Norton and cabernet sauvignon grapevines.

“We’re over joyful,” he said. “It’s one of the two most significant achievements we’ve made for society — the other being our former discovery of a new grape virus.”

William H. Darr College of Agriculture Dean Dr. Melissa Bledsoe said the discovery is an exciting development that supports the grape and wine industry in Missouri and beyond.

“This new grape is a great achievement of the unique breeding and evaluation work at the Fruit Experiment Station,” she said.

“Dr. Qiu’s efforts have paid off and we are excited to have this new option for growers.”

NORTON IS HARDY. CAB IS KNOWN FOR FLAVOR. NEW GRAPE COMBINES THEM

According to Qiu, the Norton grape survives and grows extremely well under high disease pressure and deep-freezing conditions.

Norton is the official grape of the state of Missouri and used in much of the area’s wine production.

Scientists wanted to introduce Norton’s good traits into a new grape that would combine the disease-resistance and cold-hardy traits, but have the favored flavors of cabernet sauvignon, the most widely grown grape.

Turns out, it was a 20-year process.

“We made the cross of Norton and cabernet sauvignon by pollinating Norton’s female flowers with cabernet sauvignon’s pollens in May 2005,” he said. “We planted 100 seedlings in 2006 and selected seven of them in 2011 for further evaluation. After five years, we found one new grape, coded as NC-6, that’s very promising. We made the first vintage of wine in 2016.”

Qiu said the researchers asked a small circle of friends and colleagues to taste the wine for four vintages — and they all liked it.

The team applied for the patent in September 2024, and it was granted just more than a year later.

“UNIQUE BERRY CHEMISTRY” LEADS TO GRAPE THAT MAKES WHITE WINE

Issued on Oct. 14 by the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office, the patent outlines the discovery.

It reads: “A new and distinct grapevine cultivar named Norton Blanc is provided. Norton Blanc was produced from a cross between ‘Norton’ and ‘Cabernet Sauvignon’ grapevines. ‘Norton Blanc’ produces a white berry that in turn is used to produce a unique and excellent white wine. Norton Blanc is distinguished by its production volume and consistency under the climate and soil conditions in the Midwest region of the United States, disease resistance, cold hardiness and unique berry chemistry, among other characteristics.”

The patent will expire Oct. 14, 2045. ■



▲ Dr. Cyren Rico (left) has a lab where he and his team explore new ways to accurately measure nutrients in crops that we eat. They examine levels of antioxidants, amino acids, sugars, lipids and other compounds. PHOTO BY JESSE SCHEVE

Professor uses innovative methods to measure nutrition in crops

Scientist aims to improve global food systems

Imagine going on a run one spring afternoon. You pass by a vibrant garden.

This flourishing scene is made possible by antioxidants and amino acids — essential nutrients that nurture not only our bodies, but also the soil on which we depend. These compounds support our immune systems, reduce inflammation and aid production of protein.

Unfortunately, recent changes in farming and environmental conditions, such as soil depletion and new emerging contaminants, have led to a decline in important nutrients in our crops.

To address this, Dr. Cyren Rico, the Roy D. Blunt Life Science Endowed Professor in the department of chemistry and biochemistry, uses state-of-the-art methods of measuring nutrients. His goal is to better assess and improve the nutritional quality of our food.

Rico focuses on accurately measuring antioxidants and amino acids in plants such as wheat and barley — even at very low levels. His research could change how we understand plant nutrition and food security.

“Precision in measuring these nutrients is crucial,” he said. “It helps us improve the nutritional value of our crops.”

Instead of measuring crop nutrition in a traditional way, which often involves soil testing for nutrient levels and plant tissue analysis, Rico’s lab studies how plants respond to pollutants. He and his team look at characteristics of plant growth and productivity, such as height, biomass and yield. They also perform tests that check chlorophyll content, enzyme activity and stress levels.

Rico has more than 50 publications to his name. His students have also been active in research.

Mary Fakunle, a chemistry graduate student, works in Rico’s lab. She has conducted hands-on work that has deepened her understanding of environmental chemistry.

“Dr. Rico pushes you to do something different and encourages you to achieve your best,” Fakunle said. “It’s one thing to have an advisor; it’s another thing to have an advisor who nurtures your curiosity and challenges your thinking.”

Rico also looks at the effects of pollutants by studying multiple generations of plants. Known as “epigenetics,” this area of research explores how parent plants influence their offspring.

“We aim to understand the long-term effects of contaminants on plants and how they recover from stress,” he said.

What drives Rico’s research: His desire to improve global food systems. Accurate data is essential for creating strategies to improve food and nutrition worldwide.

“Improving tests for plant metabolites (i.e., antioxidants, amino acids, sugars, lipids) could boost crop nutrition, helping to tackle global food security issues,” he said. “In areas with limited access to diverse, nutrient-rich foods, this research could lead to better food quality.”

Rico’s advancements mark an important step in agricultural science. He hopes to work with agricultural organizations and policymakers to apply his findings on a larger scale.

“Our work demonstrates how scientific progress can make a meaningful difference, ensuring better food quality and healthier lives.” ■



▲ Megan Bolen, Robert-Thomas Gumersell, Chandler Harris, Moira Lizarraga, Jessica Snare and Sam Wang with their awards. PHOTO BY KEVIN WHITE

Leadership, service, purpose: Six students named Citizen Scholars

From mentoring students with disabilities to running a nonprofit, Bears have shown why they are worthy of this year's Citizen Scholar award.

This is the highest award available to students. It recognizes those who exemplify academic success and the public affairs mission.

"Citizen Scholars represent the very best of MO State — leadership, service and purpose. They're true ambassadors of our university," said Dr. Dee Siscoe, vice president of student affairs.

2025-26 RECIPIENTS

Megan Bolen, junior, Springfield

A special education major, Bolen is an active member of Bears Lead, a college transition program for first-time college students. She has also served as a Bear Power ambassador, mentoring students with disabilities and helping them navigate college life. In addition, she is part of the Pride Band, Bear Mania and Concert Band. After graduation, she plans to teach in an elementary special education classroom, then pursue a master's degree in gifted education and eventually a doctorate in organizational leadership.

Robert-Thomas Gumersell, senior, Springfield

Gumersell is a senior majoring in communication studies. He has been active in the Student Government Association, serving as director of university affairs. He was also inducted into Tau Sigma, the national honor society for transfer students. Gumersell founded and runs the nonprofit R.T.'s Project Suitcase, which helps foster children about to age out of the foster care system. After graduation, he plans to pursue a master's degree, then begin teaching as a college instructor or professor. His long-term goal is to earn a doctorate in higher education and move into higher education administration, ultimately becoming a university dean or college president.

Chandler Harris, senior, Rogers, Arkansas

Harris is an entertainment management major who is also in the accelerated MBA program. Since his sophomore year, he has been president of the Entertainment Management Association. He runs his own freelance production company that includes clients such as Walmart and 21C Hotels. Additionally, he is a board member for Home for Dinner Inc., a nonprofit that helps veterans in northwest Arkansas. After graduation, he

plans to either work in operations management for an entertainment company or focus on growing his business.

Moira Lizarraga, graduate student, Santa Cruz, Bolivia

Before coming to Missouri State to study communication, Lizarraga was already an accomplished educator and public servant in Bolivia. She earned a Teacher of the Year award in 2020 and also served in municipal government in Santa Cruz. As a Graduate College graduate assistant, she worked as the bilingual liaison for the university's first master's degree program offered entirely in Spanish. In addition, she is a board member for the Ozarks Lyric Opera. Her next step after graduation is to pursue a PhD in communication.

Jessica Snare, senior, Warrensburg, Missouri

An Honors College student, Snare is double majoring in information technology-cybersecurity and IT infrastructure. She founded and directs the Information Technology and Cybersecurity Cyber Cubs Youth Technology Summer Camp program. She is also president of the Association for Business Information Technology Students and co-captain for Missouri State's Collegiate Cyber Defense Competition team. She will start an IT role at ConocoPhillips after graduation.

Sam Wang, senior, Springfield

An Honors College student, Wang is an anthropology major who serves on the SGA, where he is currently student body vice president and formerly chief of staff and chief sustainability commissioner. As an AmeriCorps member, Wang worked closely with the Bear Pantry on campus. During an internship with the Center for Ozarks Poverty Research, he ran the center's virtual reality poverty immersion program. After graduation, Wang plans to pursue a master's and PhD in applied anthropology, aiming to teach in higher education while staying active in the nonprofit sector. ■



◀ West Plains Chancellor Zora Mulligan started her new role in 2025. More than 1,900 students attend the university.

PHOTO BY KEVIN WHITE

New chancellor of West Plains takes helm

For Zora Mulligan, leading MSU-West Plains is more than a professional milestone — its a homecoming.



Mulligan

Zora Mulligan, a native of West Plains, Missouri, officially began her duties as the campus chancellor on July 1, 2025.

This summer and fall, she immersed herself in campus life. She met with faculty, staff, students and community leaders as she begins shaping the next chapter for the university.

“I’m thrilled to be back in a place that means so much to me,” Mulligan said. “West Plains is where my belief in the power of education began.”

Mulligan’s roots in the Ozarks run deep. She began her early education in Mountain View and South Fork before continuing in West Plains schools, graduating from West Plains High School.

From there, she went on to earn degrees from Drury University and the University of Kansas, including a master’s in education and a law degree.

Her professional path has taken her across a wide spectrum of higher

education and public leadership roles. She served as Missouri’s Commissioner of Higher Education, overseeing the Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development — a state agency with more than 300 employees and a \$447 million budget.

She later became executive vice president of Missouri State in Springfield.

Mulligan is focused on listening and learning at MSU-WP.

“We’re at a pivotal moment in higher education, with shifting demographics, evolving funding models, and increased scrutiny on the value of a college degree,” she said. “But MSU-WP is well-positioned to meet these challenges because of its greatest asset — our people.”

Her goals for the university include ensuring financial strength, fostering a vibrant student experience, supporting academic excellence, growing athletic success, partnering with local businesses and community organizations to meet workforce needs, and strengthening MSU-WP’s role as a cultural and economic hub for the region. ■



GRIZZLY ATHLETES CELEBRATED AT FALL PICNIC

Zora Mulligan helped MSU-WP and the Grizzly Club celebrate the 2025-26 athletic season at the annual Grizzly Club Fall Picnic, held Sept. 17, 2025, at the West Plains Civic Center.

Missouri State University President Richard B. Williams, as well as Grizzly coaches, were on hand to introduce teams and preview the upcoming seasons.

The Grizzly Club provides community encouragement and support for the MSU-WP Grizzly Athletics teams. Funds raised provide scholarships and other vital program needs.



PHOTO BY KEVIN WHITE

SCORING A DESIGN GOAL

Alumna's work will be featured this summer during FIFA World Cup.

WRITTEN BY TAYLOR LADD





Jadie Arnett designed Boulevard's beer garden at Kaufman Stadium in Kansas City, the home of the Royals. It's inspired by the brand's Space Camper IPA.

Jadie Arnett keeps up with a busy 5-to-9 after her 9-to-5. She comes home from work, allows herself an hour to decompress, then it's back to work, sometimes until midnight.

It's all part of the hustle to establish her name as a young graphic designer. And it's working.

Arnett, class of 2022, has a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Design degree with an emphasis in design and illustration. After graduation, she landed a position with Boulevard Brewing Co. in Kansas City.

Beyond Boulevard, Arnett is adding her name to some other major projects. One happens to be on a global scale: the FIFA World Cup.

DESIGN TELLS STORY OF MISSOURI AND KANSAS, WOVEN TOGETHER

Arnett was scrolling Instagram when she came across an open call for local artists.

It was a contest for a poster design to be used at FIFA World Cup events in Kansas City during summer 2026. The World Cup is among the most prestigious global soccer/football competitions, and is the most widely viewed and followed sporting event in the world.

Kansas City is a host city for the 2026 World Cup. Matches between at least seven teams from different continents will be played at K.C. venues between June 16 and July 11. There will also be major fan activities and a festival.

The design was meant to highlight both the Kansas and Missouri sides of the city. All that was required to enter was a simple concept sketch.

Arnett knew she would be going up against a large pool of entries, but that she would regret it if she didn't give it a shot.

"It's so hard to get your name out there as a designer. I moved to Kansas City knowing no one. Nobody is going to hire you if they don't know who you are," Arnett said. "That's why I do open calls."

K.C. has been dubbed the "Soccer Capital of America," so there was plenty of inspiration. Arnett thought about the Kansas City Current and Sporting Kansas City soccer games she had attended. She imagined fans wearing scarves that feature team logos, waving them in the air when a goal is scored.

"I felt like the scarf was a perfect composition because the material used to make a scarf is yarn being knitted together," Arnett said. "It's like Missouri and Kansas; they're woven together to make Kansas City."

The FIFA creative team selected artists. The chosen finalists worked with the Kansas City FIFA committee and the global FIFA brand to finalize their poster designs. From more than 100 submissions, Arnett's design — titled "Woven Together" — made the top five.

Each finalist was assigned a mentor, a member of the Kansas City committee. They were there to offer insight into what the FIFA team liked and wanted to adjust with each sketch. Arnett's mentor, Chandler Johnson, is art director at the Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce and president of AIGA Kansas City. He told her the team loved the scarf idea but wasn't sold on some of the iconography in her original submission.

"It was unique and great to be told exactly what they were wanting," Arnett said. "I was like, 'I'm fine with changing it. I am happy I'm here.'"

Johnson suggested they make the design tell a story.

"That's what you see in the final poster," Arnett said. "The top panel of the scarf is people traveling to Kansas City through Kansas, the middle panel is the momentum of the game happening, then the third is the celebration throughout Kansas City with more of those Missouri features."

WIN BOOSTS HER CAREER TRAJECTORY: "I WAS JUST IN SHOCK"

In true Kansas City fashion, Arnett was in Union Station when she found out she had the winning design.

"I was meeting with them, and they were nitpicking my poster. I remember thinking, 'This is normal, nitpicking always happens, but this should be when a poster is chosen. The winner should be dealing with this,'" she said. "After that meeting they told me I had won. I was just in shock."

Her poster is already being used to advertise the event. Elements of her design will be utilized by FIFA designers to produce merchandise, banners and other promotional materials.



Her coworker, also an alum, created art seen around Plaster Stadium

Wes Hamilton, a graphic design and illustration '11 graduate, is also a designer for Boulevard Brewing Co.

"I absolutely loved being in the art department," he said. "I feel like I was there at a unique time when there were a lot of really talented people learning and working and helping each other."

Hamilton is behind the packaging for Wild Cherry Charge, a hard seltzer flavor created in partnership with Missouri State. He designed items for the new Boulevard Brewing Deck on the east side of Plaster Stadium.

Fans can see Hamilton's work in several areas, including graphics on concourse walls, the entry floor, the elevator, upper deck railing, tables, bar-back signs, scoreboard signage and a photo frame.

"My instructors meant so much to me," Hamilton said. "I gained an attitude of trying to make something that no one has ever done before — trying to push yourself to do something that isn't your first idea."

It has been a career-altering milestone. Arnett won a large cash prize, and her work is paying off in more ways than one. Soon after her win, Arnett picked up a freelance project with J. Rieger & Co., a Kansas City-based whiskey house. She will design the label for their special edition World Cup whiskey.

She gets projects through her Instagram account and her own website.

"I would not be as successful as I am today had I not gotten the FIFA World Cup poster," she said. "I went from one or two freelance projects a year to at least one or two a month."

HER PORTFOLIO NOW RANGES FROM SOCCER PITCH TO PITCHERS OF ALE

If you enjoy Space Camper IPAs, a selection of Quirk seltzer flavors or other brewery bestsellers, you have probably sipped from a can featuring some of Arnett's artwork.

"I got the job at 21, so I really hadn't tried many beers before. I knew what an IPA was, but that was it," Arnett said. "I knew Boulevard because my parents always had it in the fridge. One time my mom was looking at the label on an Unfiltered Wheat and was like, 'You could do this one day.'"

Designing for a beer brand has unique challenges and creative quirks (no pun intended). Projects for new packaging designs begin at least nine months out from when a new beer will hit shelves. Often, the beer flavor isn't fully realized until the design is already complete. That means there's some guess work required.

"With Easy Orange, they knew it was going to be blood orange and a lager," Arnett said. "I ran with that, and it worked out because it stayed blood orange and

light on the ABV. The name I came up with and the design behind it was '90s sports and easy drinking."

But not all projects are Easy Orange. "Then there's beers like the very first one I ever did, Brewa Bunga Cove. They knew it was going to be a hazelnut coffee

flavor in a 16 ounce can. That's it," Arnett said.

Arnett was inspired by the feeling of a caffeine buzz. She channeled that energy into an illustration of a coffee water park.

"Nine months later, we're trying the beer and no one's really picking up on coffee," Arnett said. "The label looked great, so it worked. But is

it the most truthful towards how the beer tastes? No. It was a limited release, so not the end of the world."

Designs usually can't be adjusted after trying a new beer because of time constraints. By the time beers are ready to be sampled, packaging is already in the printing process.

Right now, Arnett has been focusing on exciting designs for two new beers dropping soon. The first is a limited-release Space Camper with a World Cup theme (not affiliated with her FIFA work). The second is a blood orange mimosa saison.

The challenge that comes with these rotating new releases is part of the appeal of this role for Arnett. She uses her own consumer habits for inspiration.

"I think being a designer at Boulevard is important," Arnett said. "As someone

who likes beer but has no idea what's going on with it, I just pick one with the coolest packaging. Then I find out if I like it or not."

SHE HAS ALSO PUT HER STAMP ON BASEBALL'S KAUFMAN STADIUM

Kansas City Royals fans can also see Arnett's work. She participated in creating a mural that transforms Boulevard's Kaufman Stadium Beer Garden into the Space Station.

The pop-up bar features large-scale artwork inspired by the universe of Space Camper IPAs to celebrate the brand's best-selling beer.

"I went with the Space Station theme, and was thinking of the Mos Eisley Cantina in 'Star Wars.' When you walk in, there are bars with our characters from previous limited-release IPAs," Arnett said. "I wanted it to feel like you were on a movie set or in this actual world."

BOTH OF HER COWORKERS ARE BEARS WHO STUDIED AT BRICK CITY

Arnett had help with character designs from her coworkers and fellow Bears,

Kjella Acosta '22 and Wesley Hamilton '11. Both also have BFA degrees.

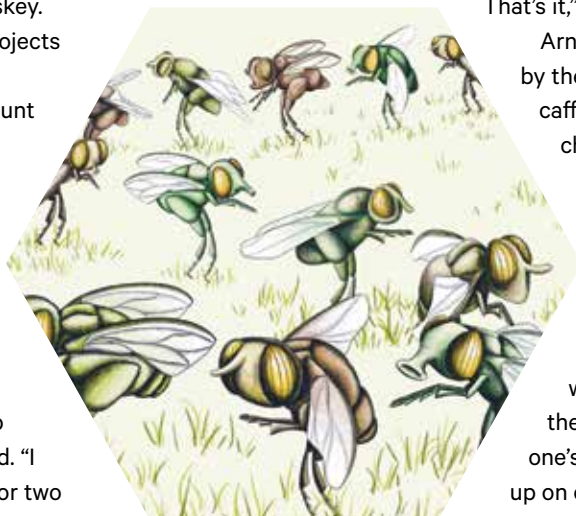
"I'm always impressed by how varied Jadie's style is," Hamilton said. "I think there's a through line of herself in it, but

she does a good job of dipping her toe into different types of illustration. Whether it's

a hand-drawn something or extremely clean vectorized icons, she really comes through on a professional level."

Boulevard's three-person design team has shared experiences that help them work together now.

"There's a community bond baked in, held together by recollections of wacky instructors (I'm not naming names!) and memories of on-campus life and local



haunts,” Acosta said. “We all speak the same ‘design language’ and have similar inclinations just because of our shared educational background — it makes it easy.”

FRIEND, FELLOW DESIGNER: “SHE’S SO HUMBLE WHILE BEING SO TALENTED”

So, what’s next for Arnett? One professional goal fueling her late nights is a passion project to publish two children’s books. The concepts for both go back to her time at MO State.

“My professor, Cole Closser, assigned a one-spread illustration based on the word ‘hum.’ I designed a line of flies leading up to a deviled egg and said the air was humming from their wings,” Arnett said. “I really loved how it turned out, and it was so fun drawing a bunch of flies and a deviled egg that I wrote an entire story about it.”

The second book is inspired by the relationships she made on campus.

Originally from Columbia, Missouri, Arnett sees her time at Missouri State as a formative part of becoming the artist she is today. This includes design exercises with tight turnaround times, preparation for client-facing internships and lasting friendships.

“My best friend, Claudia O’Steen, and I worked on everything together,” Arnett said.

O’Steen ’22, is a fellow design and illustration major.

“She pushed me; she made me better,” O’Steen said. “I pushed her; I made her better because we were able to have an honest dialogue. Having somebody you work well with, who motivates you and is also your friend is just the trifecta.”

Arnett and O’Steen both interned at Supper Co., a Springfield-based advertising agency.

“I have seen Jadie’s technical skills

get so strong. We worked together early on when we were both stumbling around trying to find our footing,” O’Steen said. “From then to now, she is just a workhorse.”

O’Steen said once you crack through Arnett’s shy exterior, she’s candid and warm.

“She’s really easy to get along with, but she also tells you like it is.”

Arnett views a combination of passion and work ethic as key to her success.

“I truly love design,” Arnett said. “I feel like to quickly get a job after college, you have to love it, because you have to be willing to put in the effort and sometimes work until midnight.”

Arnett also has a way to push through difficult concepts and projects that aren’t coming easily to her, O’Steen said.

“She’s so humble while being so talented,” O’Steen said. “It’s so cool to see someone you care about be that good at what they do. ... I’m glad she’s getting recognition for that.” ■



“Her college design work was polished. I always admired how delightfully weird and grubby some of her illustrations were. Her work now is still consistently interesting, playful with typography and encompasses a wide range of styles within her portfolio. She elevates every brand she touches.”

Kjella Acosta ’22

“Jadie hates to brag about herself, but she has so many things that are brag-worthy. I hope this adds necessary sparkle to someone who is a very sparkly person.”

Claudia O’Steen ’22

INSERTS: Jadie Arnett’s work ranges from illustrations to product packaging.



Bears reach the end zone of a spectacular season,
converting wins into our

FIRST-EVER

BOWL GAME

PHOTOS BY JESSE SCHEVE AND KEVIN WHITE

WRITTEN BY TAYLOR LADD



MANIFESTATION, LUCK OR JUST MEANT TO BE. MAYBE IT'S OUR VERSION OF FANTASY FOOTBALL.

Whatever you call it, making it to a bowl game wasn't originally in the plan for MO State football's first season in Conference USA.

But with a twist of fate, and a lot of hard work, it happened.

Since this was the team's debut season in the Football Bowl Subdivision, or FBS, the Bears started the season ineligible to play in a bowl game. However, after getting the six wins required, the university petitioned for a chance anyway.

Things worked out. There was a shortage of other teams eligible, and a waiver was granted for the Bears to make their FBS bowl debut.

"All the players and coaches really wanted a bowl game," senior quarterback Jacob Clark said. "There was a lot of uncertainty with that. Looking back, maybe we shouldn't have been so worried."

Shortly after the last game of the regular season, the Bears found out they would "go bowling." Just a few days later, it was announced they would be playing at the inaugural Xbox Bowl in Frisco, Texas. The team would face Arkansas State at The Star — The Dallas Cowboys' world headquarters.

The team traveled to Texas about a week before the Dec. 18 game to practice, get settled and hold media conferences.

Then-Head Coach Nick Petrino said "the players have practiced hard all week. I've been impressed with how they've handled all this. It's been business as usual for us."

Kanye Young, senior linebacker, agreed.

"This is a player-led team, so everybody knows the drill," Young said. "We know how to compete and get things moving."

They had time to play, too: Each Bear received his own Xbox Rog handheld console, and were welcome to play on other Xboxes set up in a hospitality room.

"I played Xbox growing up," Clark said. "That's the console I have at my parents' house. There's a lot of guys on the team who think they're really good at games."



▲ The Pride Band performed "Party in the USA," which became the unofficial theme song for events throughout the week.

WHEN THE GAMING MET THE GRIDIRON

The moment before the action started was like an Xbox “achievement unlocked.”

Master Chief, a character from the popular Halo game series, did the coin toss.

The Bears huddled and chanted as a group on the sidelines.

The team took the field in Ford Center, the 12,000-seat indoor stadium used as a training facility by the Dallas Cowboys.

Fans in the stands whistled and shouted for favorite players.

Music reverberated throughout the stadium as both university’s bands played classic collegiate songs.

Arkansas came out with an early lead, but the Bears clawed their way back.

“EVERYTHING HAS BEEN SURREAL”

A noticeable energy shift kicked in as MO State scored their first touchdown of the game.

During halftime, the Pride Band and Color Guard performed their routine “Renegade,” inspired by Styx classics.

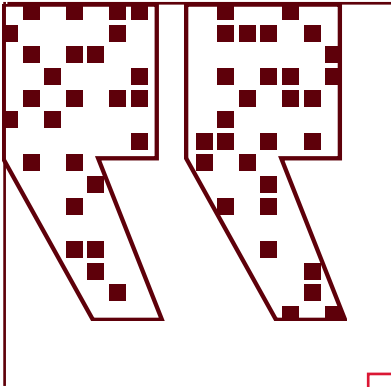
The team continued to recover points. They narrowed the score down to one possession in the fourth quarter, but ran out of time to complete the comeback as Arkansas took the game 34-28. MO State may have come up just shy of putting the winning points on the board, but it was still an unforgettable end to a stellar season.

“It’s been an experience — from the bus trip, to opening the Xboxes, to practices — everything has been surreal,” Young said ahead of the game. “Just being able to be with the guys for one last run, it’s been a blessing to be here.”



**MISSOURI STATE
SOLD MORE BOWL
TICKETS THAN ANY
OTHER TEAM
COMPETING IN FRISCO, TEXAS,
BOWLS THIS SEASON.**





SPECTATOR MODE: ALUMNI AND FRIENDS TRAVEL TO BE PART OF HISTORIC GAME

The fans were an important part of the quest as the Bears launched into their last game of an important season.



“This is a dream come true for me, having watched Missouri State sports since the '60s. I've been waiting for this for a long time.”

Dan Barnard,
Missouri State football and basketball stats keeper



“I never thought this day would come, so it's been awesome. I work with the Baptist Student Union on campus, and we work with the football team. It's great to get to know these guys.”

David Stone '95



“This is my 18th year with the university, and it's surreal to be in this situation. There is maroon walking all around this facility. This level of success and support for the football program and all they've accomplished is awesome to see.”

Dan Raines,
assistant director of athletics, academics and student services



“It's exciting to have three firsts for Missouri State: first time in Division I football, first year in Conference USA and now the first time ever competing in a bowl game. This is a great first, and I think the first of many.”

Terrell Barkett,
friend of the university and Bears Fund supporter



“Getting to experience this trip with the team has been so humbling. Seeing them rewarded for how amazing they played this season has been fun.”

Madison Orr '21,
academic counselor for Missouri State football



“Being here in Frisco with the whole Pride Band to perform at the university’s first bowl game feels very historic. It’s a special opportunity and one I’m proud to be a part of.”

Nathan Donley,
Pride Band member and computer science major



“The team making it to the FBS level and then making it to a bowl game is something we’ve looked forward to for a long time.”

Mark Nelson '82,
played on Missouri State football team 1978-82



“I have never seen such excitement about a game. These people will make history.”

Tom Strong '52



“I think it’s pretty special. We went to all the home games this season, and they were a lot of fun.”

Jana Boyde, '85

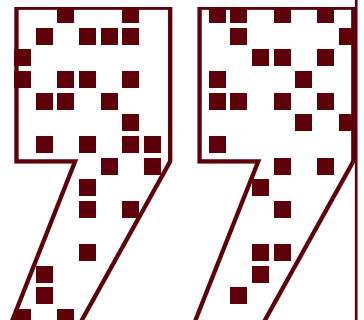
“It’s exciting for the first year in the conference, too. It’s been a while since we’ve had a such a winning team.”

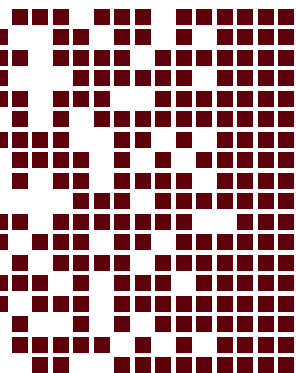
George Boyde, '86



“It feels fantastic. It’s even more fantastic to see the faces on our athletes. They worked so hard to get here; they’ve set goals, they’ve achieved those goals and now they are being rewarded for those efforts.”

Dr. Richard B. Williams,
president, Missouri State University





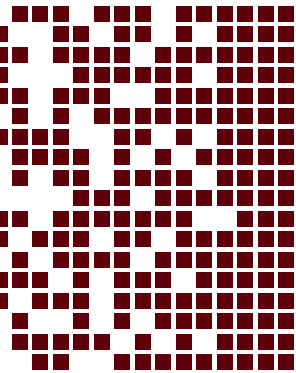
FANS GET PUMPED UP BEFORE GAME

Alumni, friends and fans of all ages were invited to several events.

- The night before the game, a party was held in a lounge at Dallas Cowboys headquarters.
- On the day of the game, fans rallied at the Omni Hotel rooftop pool. Sunset views of the Frisco skyline set a backdrop. Connor Skinner, a 2023 alum, traveled to support the team. "This is the start to something much greater, where we can really put not just Springfield, but Missouri State, and our collegiate athletes on the map."
- Later that day, Xbox held a fanfest. It featured gaming booths, popular characters and a Missouri State Spirit Squad performance.







A LOOK BACK AT THE SEASON THAT BROUGHT US HERE



TOP MOMENTS

Oct. 8, 2025

MO State trailed Middle Tennessee State University 20-19 with freshman quarterback Deuce Bailey at the helm. Bailey marched the Bears 56 yards on 10 plays to set up a game-winning, 29-yard field goal by Yousef Obeid to win 22-20.



Oct. 22, 2025

Missouri State met New Mexico State. In overtime, Jacob Clark's 7-yard touchdown pass to Ronnel Johnson proved to be the game winner.



PLAYER ACHIEVEMENTS

Nov. 8, 2025

In the most improbable comeback of the year, the Bears trailed Liberty University 17-14 after a series of plays led to a touchback with 1:49 to go. MO State used all three timeouts and had clutch tackles by Jared Lloyd and Thomas Anderson to force a Liberty punt. With only 27 seconds to go, the Bears took a 21-17 victory as Jacob Clark executed a four-play, 70-yard drive with a 13-yard touchdown pass to Tristian Gardner.



Quarterback Jacob Clark broke the career passing touchdown record with a third quarter touchdown pass to Jmariyae Robinson vs Florida International University.



Wide receiver Jmariyae Robinson caught his 15th career touchdown as Missouri State faced Louisiana Tech University, tying him for fifth all time at MO State.



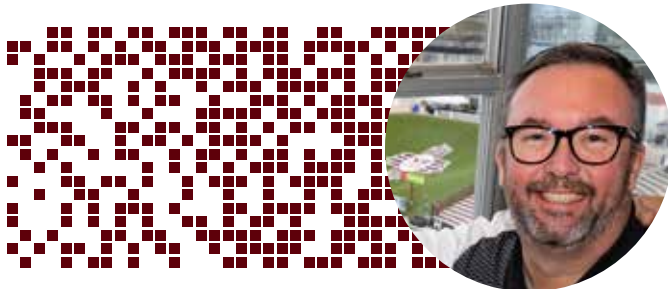
Running back Shomari Lawrence carried 16 times for 57 yards to end the 2025 season with 1,021 ground yards. He became MO State's first 1,000-yard rusher since Chris Douglas in 2010.



Nov. 15, 2025

Missouri State's Homecoming game was played against the University of Texas at El Paso. UTEP erased the Bears' lead in the third quarter. MO State then dominated the fourth quarter with Jacob Clark touchdown strikes to Tristian Gardner and Dash Luke for a 38-24 win.





VOICE OF THE BEARS SAYS:

“Likely the biggest college football game Missouri State has ever played”

Missouri State Director of Broadcasting Corey Riggs '99 reflected on what this game meant for the university before the team took the field.

“It’s not hyperbole to say this is likely the biggest college football game Missouri State has ever played in. This is a team that has only played in the month of December three times, and those were usually FCS (Football Championship Subdivision) playoff games. This is a completely different creature.”

He said all the people they encountered — from Xbox, the city of Frisco, the team’s hotel and the game venue — treated our players and staff like royalty.

“It’s been a remarkable experience that, especially these young men, are going to carry with them the rest of their lives — win, lose or draw. It’s a chance to continue riding this incredible, historic first chapter of this new era in Missouri State football.”



Katy and Michael Gullede

A PICTURE-PERFECT VIEW OF THE GAME

Two Missouri State alums had some of the best views in the house

Michael Gullede '13 and Phillip Jones '91 worked from the sidelines as freelance photographers for the St. Louis Post-Dispatch and other media.

“It was great to see the Bears go from where they were when I was a student to playing in a bowl game,” Gullede said. “To see them on a national stage like that, recognized around the country, it was a great intro to the FBS world.”

Jones has actually lived in Frisco, Texas, since 1999.

“I’m so excited to see my college football team here,” he said, “and be on the sidelines cheering them on.”





*Next season brings
a new coach*

ANOTHER ERA STARTS FOR MO STATE FOOTBALL

Casey Woods was announced as MO State's new head football coach the day after the Xbox Bowl.

Woods, who was previously based in Texas as Southern Methodist University's offensive coordinator and chief of staff, visited the Bears before the team left Frisco.

Not long after that meeting, Woods came to Springfield for a press conference on Jan. 5. When he arrived, he brought a bit of Texas with him by gifting Athletics Director Patrick Ransdell and President Richard B. Williams their own pairs of cowboy boots.

Woods said his first impression of Springfield was when Missouri State faced Southern Methodist for their first home game of the 2025 season. He noticed the electric spirit from the band, student section and large crowd despite the late summer heat.

"There is an energy here that has exceeded my expectations," Woods said. "You have our commitment to be a part of this community."

Woods and his wife, Lauren, have five children — Waverly Grace, Sawyer Davis, Adaline Leigh, Amelia Ann and Savannah Claire. ■

BEARS
DOING
BIG
THINGS



Alum honored for his work at NASA; he's now teaching Bears

Brandon Lentz '17 & '19 has contributed to NASA's most ambitious missions for nearly a decade.

In fall 2025, he received the NASA Exceptional Achievement Medal. One of the agency's highest honors, it recognizes significant contributions to science, operations and mission outcomes.

"It's more than a medal. It represents teamwork and dedication to something greater," he said.

Lentz grew up in Blue Eye, Missouri, and joined the U.S. Air Force at 18. After active duty, he joined the Air Force Reserve and returned to Missouri to continue his education.

He enrolled at Missouri State in 2012. He earned a bachelor's degree in logistics and supply chain management and a master's degree in project management.

While serving in the reserves and completing his studies, Lentz discovered a federal initiative that helps students and recent graduates begin careers in government service.

That opened the door for him to join NASA in 2018. He worked on projects like water extraction research on the moon and on Mars.

Lentz ended his tour as a senior contracting officer for the office of procurement, headquartered in Washington, D.C. He helped manage contracting efforts for a mission to bring rock samples from Mars back to Earth. His team completed eight research contracts in just 35 days, setting a record pace that pushed NASA's mission forward.

Family circumstances brought him back to Missouri in 2025.

He is now a full-time instructor in the College of Business, teaching logistics and supply chain management.

"When I was a student here, Dr. Patrick Sells, my statistics professor, told me, 'Go out into the world, learn something, get good at it and then give it back,'" he said. "That's what I want to do now."



Quantum Bears, including alums, among top 28 in global contest

The Quantum Bears team once again proved its strength in international competition.

The team is dedicated to a type of computing that uses the principles of quantum mechanics. This branch of physics deals with tiny particles like atoms and electrons — and the strange, often counterintuitive laws that govern the universe at these smallest scales.

Quantum computers can solve complex problems much more quickly than classic computers.

The Quantum Bears are led by Dr. Ridwan Sakidja, professor of physics, astronomy and materials science. The team includes students and at least two alumni, Matthew Bruenning '23 & '25 and Gaige Riggs '17 & '18. They both hold master's degrees in materials science.

The team participated in the 2025 Potomac Quantum Innovation Center Global Industry Challenge. It invites student innovators, entrepreneurs and industry teams from around the world to solve complex, real-world problems using quantum computing.

The Quantum Bears ranked in the top 28 out of more than 600 participants from 60 countries. The team earned finalist recognition across all four challenge sectors: financial services, infrastructure, life sciences and risk management/insurance.

"Although we didn't win the top prize, being named among the top 28 globally — less than 5% of all entries — strongly validates the Quantum Bears team approach and vision," Sakidja said.

This latest recognition adds to the team's growing list of international honors.

These successes support Missouri State's goal of embracing emerging technologies. The department of physics, astronomy and materials science launched Missouri's first degree track in quantum computing, now an option for students pursuing a bachelor's degree in physics.

—Story by Rina Chu

—Story by Emmy Dressler



Ag broadcaster inducted into a hall of fame

Janet Adkison '97, director of public affairs and advocacy for the Missouri Farm Bureau, has been a trusted voice for rural America for more than two decades.

In recognition, the National Association of Farm Broadcasting honored her as a 2025 Hall of Fame inductee. She was recognized at an event in late fall.

Adkison grew up on a family-owned beef farm in Houston, Missouri.

She graduated from MO State with a bachelor's degree in agricultural communications. She began a career in broadcasting and worked for media outlets across the Midwest.

In 2013, she joined the Rural Media Group in Nashville, Tennessee. She was a market reporter for Rural Free Delivery Television (RFD-TV) and Rural Radio on Sirius XM. The next year, she moved east to head the channel's Washington, D.C., news bureau, where she covered stories on the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the White House and the U.S. Capitol.

After two years, she transitioned to an anchor role for the Rural Evening News and Market Day Report. She held this position for nearly seven years at the studio in Nashville.

"I grew up in a rural agriculture community, and I see farm broadcasting as a chance to give back to those communities and the industry, by sharing information that helps them grow as we move into the future," she said.

In 2023, she started her current role at the Missouri Farm Bureau. Here, she continues to shape the future of agriculture.

—Story by **Abigail E. Addae**



Alumna named 2025-26 Teacher of the Year

Danielle O'Neil '14 has led physical education classes at Sherwood Elementary, part of Springfield Public Schools, or SPS, since 2021.

In 2025, she was named the SPS 2025-26 Teacher of the Year.

"O'Neil is dedicated to fostering a lifelong love of movement and wellness. Her influence is grounded in the belief that physical education is essential to students' physical, social and emotional development," the district said.

A native of Houston, Missouri, she transferred to Missouri State in 2012. She earned her bachelor's degree in physical education, and also has a master's degree from another university.

She has taught in schools around the Ozarks, joining Sherwood in 2022. She teaches kindergarten through fifth-grade physical education there, as well as fourth- and fifth-grade physical education through Launch Virtual Learning.

In only about 10 years in the classroom, she has earned state and national honors and attention.

"MSU gave me the foundation I needed. I was part of a close-knit program and the professors truly cared," she said. "We were placed in schools early on and that real-world experience built my confidence and shaped my path."

—Story by **Sewly Khatun**

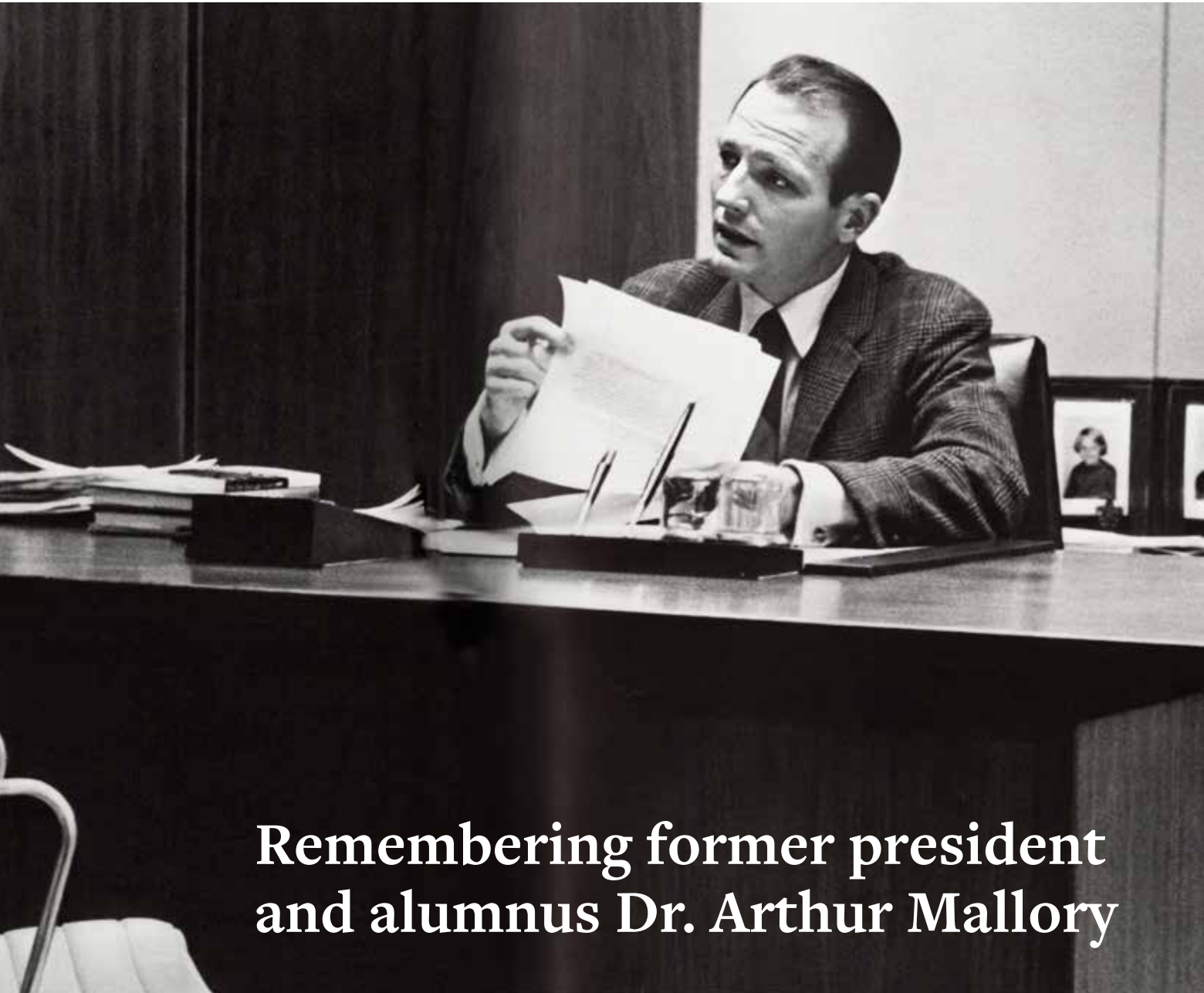
UPCOMING ALUMNI EVENTS

Bears can make meaningful connections at Alumni Association events. We hope to visit with you soon!

Discover all events and register to attend:

Alumni.MissouriState.edu





Remembering former president and alumnus Dr. Arthur Mallory

Dr. Arthur Mallory, the fifth president of Missouri State University, passed away Nov. 20.

Mallory served as president from 1964-71, starting when he was 31 years old — the youngest president to serve the institution in this role. His tenure ended when he was appointed as commissioner of education for the state. He served in the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education from 1971-87.

Mallory was a native of Buffalo, Missouri. He was a Missouri State

alumnus, earning a bachelor's degree in education in 1954.

Mallory led the institution during a pivotal time in history. The community, as well as colleges across the country, saw students, faculty and staff demonstrating about civil rights issues, the Vietnam War and free speech.

"Dr. Mallory was someone I had the privilege of knowing, and our conversations always reflected his deep commitment to Missouri State and the people we serve," said Missouri State

President Richard B. Williams.

"His leadership during a challenging time expanded opportunity for students and strengthened the university's commitment to dialogue and public service."

During this time, he is credited with expanding early childhood programs like Parents as Teachers, as well as advocating for special education and gifted programs.

Mallory returned to Missouri State as College of Education dean from 1991-94. ■

President Dr. Arthur
L. Mallory at his desk.

OZARKO YEARBOOK 1970

A quote from Mallory's official
inauguration, March 31, 1965

"I must admit that since student days on this campus, one of (my ambitions) has been to again be associated with this fine college. It is a distinct honor for me to stand before you today as president of Southwest Missouri State College. This is a most exhilarating moment for my family and for me. This college has played a significant role in my life. Every member of my immediate family was a student on this campus — my father, my mother, and more recently, my sister, my wife Joann and I. Truly, this college has contributed much to many people from this area — and we know it will continue to make a contribution to countless thousands in the future."

Excerpt from a letter he wrote
for The Standard, Nov. 20, 1970

The Standard has asked that I write a message to the student body upon my leaving Southwest Missouri State College as an employee of this institution. I am pleased for the opportunity to write the message, but I do so with mixed emotions inasmuch as I am looking forward to a new responsibility but regret very much that I will be leaving the employ of Southwest Missouri State College. The strength of this institution is not in its president or any other single individual, or even perhaps a group of individuals, but the strength of SMS lies with the fact that there permeates this campus a feeling of confidence in the faculty, concern for the student body and respect for one another. As I leave the college and reflect upon the past six years as an employee and my years here as a student, I can honestly say that my love for the college is very great and my love and admiration for the people are, so far as I am concerned, unmatched by any other person.

Mallory's legacy at Missouri State

During his time as president, the university achieved significant growth and change.

ACADEMICS

The university began offering **graduate programs** in 1966

First master's degrees:

history, English, education, mathematics, theatre

PHYSICAL CAMPUS

Campus footprint expanded from **38 acres** to **about 60 acres**

ENROLLMENT GROWTH

130%, from 4,317 to 9,930

(including students from more than 14 countries)

NEW FACILITIES

Greenwood Laboratory School

Craig Hall

Temple Hall

Taylor Health Center

(now Magers Health and Wellness)

Baker Bookstore

Woods House

Blair-Shannon House

FACILITY ADDITIONS

Memorial Library

Student Union

Wells House

Freudenberger House

In Memoriam

1940s

E. Louise (Young) Wright '47
Lancaster, Pennsylvania

August Boto '49
Austin, Texas

Dr. Charles E. Gray '49
Springfield

Mary J. (Boyle) Martin '49
Glastonbury, Connecticut

1950s

Olive H. (Marin) Detering '50
Vero Beach, Florida

Betty F. (Foster) Honey '51
St. Charles, Missouri

Paul McVay '51
Siloam Springs, Arkansas

Dr. Orin R. Robinson '51
Sherwood, Arkansas

Nora P. (Davis) Wieland '52
Las Vegas

Roy W. Herndon '53
Rogers, Arkansas

Betty Mae (Gladden) Patterson '53
Scottsdale, Arizona

Emalu Byrd '54
Fordland, Missouri

Betty S. Breshears '55
Belton, Missouri

Mona G. Decker '55
Ava, Missouri

Marianna G. Lee '55
Carthage, Missouri

Darleen A. (Gower) Anderson '56
Springfield

William C. White Jr. '56
Springfield

Diana L. (Tedrick) Duchscherer '58
Springfield

James Flahaut '58
Ottawa, Illinois

Marcella (Jones) Hoskins '58
St. Louis

Marshall Howard '58
Overland Park, Kansas

McCrory A. Phillips '58
Springfield

Perry L. Prewett '58
Benton, Arkansas

Mary Jo (Brewer) Taylor '58
West Plains, Missouri

Billy C. Vinson '58
Sarcoxie, Missouri

Dr. Daniel R. Atha '59
Harrodsburg, Kentucky

Donna J. (Dickerson) Mitchell '59
Springfield

John H. Walker '59
Anderson, South Carolina

1960s

Ronald Alexander '60
Marshfield, Missouri

Louise (Cotter) Atkinson '60
Clever, Missouri

Wilbur L. Brill '60
Springfield

Donald L. Greer '60
Fairview, Missouri

James F. Herndon '60
Ada, Oklahoma

William Kaczmarek '60
Salem, Missouri

Janice (Smith) Perez '60
Silver City, New Mexico

Mary Helen (Gann) Felin '61
Springfield

Sharon K. (Warden) Hoxie-Preciado '61
Sacramento, California

Freda M. Merideth '61
St. Clair, Missouri

Mickey G. Viles '62
Sesser, Illinois

Donna Sue (Vansandt) Womack '62
Anderson, Missouri

Keith E. Copeland '63
St. Robert, Missouri

Betty (Hirsch) Garrison '63
Myrtle, Missouri

Janet (Simmons) Hunter '63
Aurora, Missouri

Ltc. Robert M. Thomas '63
Annandale, Virginia

Mary E. (High) Toon '63
Chino Hills, California

Darlene Y. Blackmore '64
Nixa, Missouri

Kenneth E. Miller '64
Hamilton, Missouri

Linda K. (Lee) Galeener '65
Oceanside, California

Ltc. David E. Hamilton '65
San Antonio

Karen L. (Kistler) Smith '65
Springfield

Richard C. Squires '65
Joplin, Missouri

William A. Eccher '66
Cumming, Georgia

David L. Kelley '66
Springfield

Ronald L. Kennedy '66
Kansas City, Missouri

William A. Nesbitt '66
Springfield

Elmer L. Taylor '66
Buffalo, Missouri

Martha Mae Cox '67
Camarillo, California

Larry J. Nicholson '67
Buffalo, Missouri

John R. Follis '68
Cumming, Georgia

Ltc. Jerry C. Walsh '68
Helendale, California

William L. Bowler '69
Springfield

Ronnie D. Erven '69
Bolivar, Missouri

James D. Erwin '69
Carthage, Missouri

William O. Russell '69
Branson, Missouri

James J. Si '69
Advance, Missouri

Michael T. Vaini '69
Springfield

Cecil E. Wormington '69
Purdy, Missouri

1970s

Janet D. (Stafford) Appleby '70
Nixa, Missouri

T. Nadine Duncan '70
Miltonvale, Kansas

Glen E. Giboney '70
Springfield

James A. Hobbs '70
St. Louis

Pamela J. (Carleton) McSpadden '70
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

James A. Paden '70
Houston

Kathy S. (Fancher) Pettigrew '70
Rogers, Arkansas

Marilyn W. (Woody) Thomas '70
Nevada, Missouri

Allen L. Dennis '71
Marshfield, Missouri

Gary Y. Reynolds '71
Norman, Oklahoma

Kenny W. Tillman '71
Springfield

Jackie A. Vanhook '71
Springfield

Jerry L. Wheeler '71
Rapid City, South Dakota

Charles C. Youngblood '71

Carthage, Missouri

Nancy Rae (Davis)

Burgess '72

Springfield

Harold H. Cissell '72

O'Fallon, Missouri

Charles Lee Daniel '72

Arcola, Missouri

Sharon J. (Fisher) Fears '72

Duncanville, Texas

Denys Hansen '72

Springfield

Claude L. Howard '72

Golden City, Missouri

Jack J. Kaufman '72

Boise, Idaho

David L. Mitchell '72

Mansfield, Missouri

Richard W. Murphy '72

St. Louis

Margaret E. (Hedlund)

Pickett '72

Springfield

William D. Sheppard '72

Springfield

Janet C. (Longanecker)

Willia '72

Springfield

Robert C. Wise '72

Spring, Texas

Lazelle (Swensson)

Atkinson '73

Bella Vista, Arkansas

Ronald D. Ball '73

St. Peters, Missouri

Kirt F. Bopp '73

Longboat Key, Florida

Willis C. Mushrush Jr. '73

West Plains, Missouri

Steven L. Ogden '73

Lockwood, Missouri

Robert W. Perry '73

Mansfield, Missouri

Robert F. Quigg Jr. '73

Springfield

James D. Barnett '74

Rogersville, Missouri

Margaret A. (Martin)

Kasinger '74

Billings, Missouri

Lynda K. (Warren)

Mildren '74

West Plains, Missouri

Betty S. Olted '74

Springfield

Donna M. Scott '74

Lowry City, Missouri

Phyllis L. Chancellor '75

Neosho, Missouri

David L. Holmes '75

Springfield

Bruce A. Theissen '75

Mustang, Oklahoma

Mark A. Fogle '76

Moberly, Missouri

Laurie J. Hanlen '76

Springfield

Leanna K. (Schilling)

Jackson '76

Platte City, Missouri

Magdalyn Ames '77

Theodosia, Missouri

Jean M. (Murray) Garrigan '77

Springfield

Patricia (Winter) Glazier '77

Rogersville, Missouri

Steve A. McMillin '77

Paris, Tennessee

Mark R. Perry '77

Springfield

Carol S. Bounds '78

Carrollton, Missouri

Janet K. (Waller)

Brown '78

Springfield

Jerry L. Coleman '78

Jamestown, Kentucky

Donna M. Gresko '78

Gurnee, Illinois

David A. Harrell '78

Rosebud, Missouri

Darrell R. Jones '78

Republic, Missouri

Dennis D. Sloan '78

Mt. Vernon, Missouri

Everett L. Cowan '79

Walnut Grove, Missouri

Cecil R. Dillabough '79

Springfield

V. Michael Mullen '79

Wildwood, Missouri

1980s

Kenneth L. Gregg '80

Springfield

Robert D.

Bryson Jr. '81

Winter Park, Florida

Lola Mae Harryman '81

Bolivar, Missouri

Carl Dean Weant '81

Tipton, Missouri

Gregory N. Flesch '82

Frankfort, Illinois

Lisa C. (Holloway)

Lange '82

O'Fallon, Missouri

William R.

Markey Jr. '82

Lee's Summit, Missouri

Sandra J. (Irwin)

Washburn '82

Overland Park, Kansas

Craig L. Crocker '83

Springfield

Cindy L. Vondette '83

Willard, Missouri

Bruce L. Bax '84

Jefferson City, Missouri

Rodney K.

McFadden '84

Springfield

Becky Ann Carter '85

Cheyenne, Wyoming

Jack H. Neely '85

Springfield

Robert R. Bender '86

Dallas, Texas

Khanh H. Nguyen '87

Carthage, Missouri

Sharon Y. (McCullough)

Roberts '87

Springfield

Donna J. Vaughan '87

Huntsville, Alabama

Barbara E. Yates '87

Jefferson City, Missouri

Frederic B. Frerer '88

Joplin, Missouri

Daniel R. Rocha '88

Bolivar, Missouri

Jane E. (Sweet)

Schumacher '88

Springfield

Curtis W.

Anderson '89

Point Lookout, Missouri

George K. Blowers '89

Springfield

1990s

David W. Sallee '90

Fair Grove, Missouri

Paula J. (Everett) Schatz '90

Billings, Missouri

Dennis L. Jenkins '91

Lamar, Missouri

Robert Mark Pike '92

Springfield

Samuel D. Biggers '93

Brookline, Missouri

Joetta K. Wood '93

Plato, Missouri

Margene M. Clanton '94

Wentworth, Missouri

Kelly R. Davies '94

St. Louis

John R. Essman '94

Springfield

Marion A. Fuge '94

Mansfield, Missouri

Devin D. Lause '94

Union, Missouri

Amy N. (Simmons) Love '94

Argyle, Texas

Donovan K. Wheeler '94

Springfield

Lili C. Chiu '96

Springfield

Valdis L. Reid '96

St. Louis

Jeff L. Stone '97

Springfield

Robert L. Yount '97

Springfield

Brenda F. Gozia '98

Springfield

Bradley S. Logsdon '98

Branson, Missouri

Carri Shollenberger '98

Winter Springs, Florida

Tanya Hough '99

Bentonville, Arkansas

2000s

Ronald Keith Boaz '02

Springfield

Abigail D. Clements '03

Springfield

Isaac C. Allen '06

Sedalia, Missouri

Caleb B. Copeland '07

Washington, D.C.

Robert S. Reed '07

Springfield

Tracy Dean '08

Cabool, Missouri

2010s

Kayla Wingbermuehle '10

St. Louis

Andrew Gunnison

Cully '13

Clarksville, Tennessee

Kelsey T. Heckemeyer '14

Springfield

Jake Spraggins '17

West Plains, Missouri

Faculty/staff

Gilbert G. Adkins Jr. '79

Staff emeritus

Gloria Joyce (Smith)

Bowman '59

Faculty

Anita V. Brand '05

Faculty emeritus

Ellis D. Brewer

Staff emeritus

Delbert Hutchinson

Staff emeritus

Dr. Curtis P. Lawrence

Faculty emeritus

Dr. Marvin O. Looney '50

Faculty emeritus

Dr. Arthur L. Mallory '54

Faculty emeritus

Denise G. Ribas

Staff emeritus

Dr. Orin R. Robinson '51

Faculty emeritus

Dr. Burl E. Self Jr.

Faculty emeritus

Dr. Roland E. Sodowsky

Faculty emeritus

Jeanette G.

(Ottendorf) Wilson

Staff emeritus

CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

Parents or guardians: If this issue of Missouri State is addressed to your daughter or son who has established a separate permanent address, please notify us of the new address: 417-836-5654 or Alumni@MissouriState.edu

**THE MISSOURI STATE UNIVERSITY
ALUMNI ASSOCIATION**

invites you to the

APRIL 25, 2026

BEARS OF DISTINCTION

DINNER AND AWARDS CEREMONY

You're invited to gather this spring as we recognize exceptional alumni. Details, including names of recipients, will be online closer to the event date.

You can also nominate outstanding Bears for this honor in the future!

Alumni.MissouriState.edu