

BRONCO *PRIDE*

SPRING 2025



UNLOCK A NEW DIMENSION

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**INNOVATION
& IMPACT**



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BRONCO PRIDE

S P R I N G 2 0 2 5



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ON THE COVER

It's a new reality. Students Attaynek Jones and SGA President Johnae Walker learn through advance technology in FSU's new Immersive Learning Studio. Engage firsthand! **Photo by Ezekiel Best**

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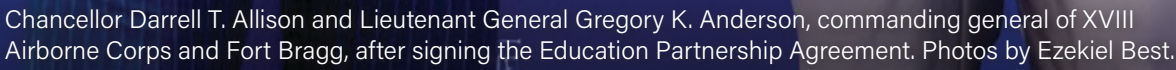
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THE FUTURE *has never been* BRIGHTER

A letter from Fayetteville State University's Chancellor, Darrell T. Allison, J.D.

Since my first day as the 12th Chancellor of this extraordinary institution, it was my priority to ensure Fayetteville State University is prepared to serve students and the larger community – not only right now, but into the future. It is why we coined our refreshed strategic plan, Ready for Tomorrow.

The innovation taking place on our campus will first impact our students, faculty and staff, alumni and community and then reach across the globe. Throughout this edition of the Bronco Pride Magazine, you will experience unique stories about campus innovation, cutting-edge research and how it all benefits our future. Innovation does not happen in a vacuum and ideas flourish when strengthened by partnership.

For the first time, FSU established an official Education Partnership Agreement with Fort Bragg's XVIII Airborne Corps in 2025. The partnership agreement is the first-of-its-kind between the institution within the UNC System, and highlights both organization's commitment to advancing education, research and innovation in critical areas related to national security and technological development. Signing the agreement alongside Lieutenant General Gregory K. Anderson, commanding general of XVIII Airborne Corps and Fort Bragg, fortified the groundbreaking partnership between FSU and the nation's largest military installation and served as a conduit to enhance the collaboration that we've worked to develop over the past three years.



A historic partnership.

What started as conversations with FSU's senior administrators, faculty, and staff, and led by the expertise of our Executive-in-Resident and retired Four-Star General Micheal X. Garrett and former Fort Bragg Commanding General Christopher Donahue, is now a pathway for FSU faculty and students to join innovating defense projects at the ground level. It will also give Fort Bragg soldiers access to education research, such as FSU's Military Tuition Scholarship, certifications and workshops. A perfect example is the Non-Commissioned Officer's (NCO) Academy hosted on our campus by the Gillis-Jones Institute of Ethics and Leaders, where 20 NCOs engaged with FSU's distinguished faculty.

This is just one instance of the innovative work taking place at FSU, which positions us for new endeavors and partnerships like the new regional hub for NCInnovation right here at FSU. The research our faculty, staff and students are involved in is at the cusp of major impact. FSU is steadily enhancing infrastructure, research capacity and talent – our future has never looked brighter. Enjoy how far we've come in innovation and impact as highlighted it in this magazine and join FSU as we chart a prosperous future. 🌐

Darrell T. Allison, J.D.

LEADERSHIP TEAM

Samantha Holmes

Vice Chancellor & Chief of Staff

Dr. Monica Terrell Leach

Provost & Senior Vice Chancellor
for Academic Affairs

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Administration and CFO

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& Military Relations

Wanda Jenkins

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Vice Chancellor for University
Advancement

Dr. Pamela Baldwin

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Enrollment & Student Success

Anthony "Todd" Bennett

Director of Athletics

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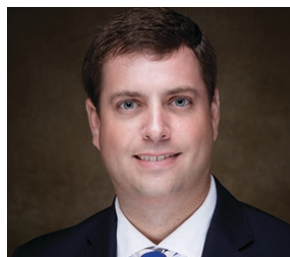
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Ms. Johnae Walker
SGA President
Ex-Officio 2024-2025



Mr. William R. Warner
North Carolina General
Assembly appointee
through 2025

the impact of **INNOVATION**

Student Mariana McCottry enjoys a new way to learn. Photos by Ezekiel Best.

Creating dynamic learning experiences is a passion at FSU

BY DEVON SMITH & KENDALL BALKNIGHT

Creating an environment for students to experience a dynamic learning environment is emphasized when walking into Fayetteville State University's Immersive Learning Studio (ILS). Using virtual reality to engage in course work is an additional method for faculty to connect with students. Innovations like the ILS is just one approach in FSU's commitment to provide the best university experience and preparing today's students to be future global leaders.

At the heart of these changes is a dedicated team, with **Provost Monica Terrell Leach** playing a key role. As the Provost and Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs at Fayetteville State University (FSU), Leach

brings a wealth of experience to the university. Before joining FSU, she held significant leadership roles at North Carolina Central University. Leach also spent nearly 18 years at North Carolina State University, where she took on roles such as Assistant Dean for Academic Affairs and Assistant Vice Provost for Enrollment Management. Over the past four years, she's been at the forefront of transforming FSU into a hub of innovation and progress. Her dedication to academic excellence, student success, and community involvement has put the university on the map and made it a place where students can thrive.

One of Leach's biggest accomplishments so far? Introducing data-driven strategies to help

students succeed. By using analytics, FSU can spot students who might need extra support early on, offering the right help at the right time. This proactive approach has boosted retention and graduation rates, showing just how great an impact implementing the right strategies can have.

Another priority for Leach was outfitting classrooms with up-to-date technology and enhancing the learning spaces on campus. Leach said the University spent about \$4.1 million upgrading classes “to meet the needs of the 21st Century scholar.”

But it’s not just about money and data. Leach believes in building strong connections—whether it’s with faculty, staff or community partners. She’s all about collaboration, and that mindset has led to new academic programs that reflect the needs of the job market around FSU.

Leach’s passion for helping students doesn’t stop at academics. She’s a big believer in taking a holistic approach to education. That means offering more support services and giving students hands-on learning experiences, so they leave FSU ready to tackle real-world challenges. Looking ahead, Leach sees even more possibilities for FSU. She’s determined to build on the university’s legacy while exploring new ways to grow. Her vision is all about keeping FSU moving forward, and she’s inspiring students, faculty, and the whole community to dream big right along with her.

RESEARCH ON THE RISE

In academia, research and innovation are interwoven. Where research happens, innovation follows, and innovation drives

the need for more research. Fayetteville State University emphasized expanding its research capacity under the leadership of Provost Leach. “Exposure is meaningful,” she said. “It was a critically important message during my conversations with faculty to expose our students to their work because it’s an opportunity for our students to gain more experience,” she added.

Exploring innovative solutions and responses to real-world problems serves as invaluable preparation for students as they enter their career industry. Lab skills, data analytics and conducting surveys and interviews are just some research skills that translate with practical training. Students also work with industry partners creating networking and real-world application to the activities they’re engaged in. Leach’s mission was enhanced with the addition of a key leader.

In 2022, **Dr. Ganesh Bora** joined FSU as the Associate Vice Chancellor for Research and Innovation and Chief Research Officer. He was a catalyst for the jump from \$16 million in sponsored research and programs in 2022 to nearly \$33 million in 2024. His role supported



Provost Monica Terrell Leach welcomes FSU stakeholders.



Dr. Ganesh Bora, Associate Vice Chancellor for Research and Innovation



Dr. Alison Beatty, Director of the NCInnovation HUB at FSU
Photo courtesy of Terrance Jones Photography.



Greg McElveen, Asst. Vice Chancellor for Strategic Initiatives and Exec. Director of the Research Corp

faculty and staff as a bridge between researchers and the best funding partner. Dr. Bora engaged in research as faculty and with a funding agency, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Institute of Food and Agriculture. With experience from multiple perspectives of the process, he excelled at enhancing opportunities for faculty to secure funding.

"There have always been a lot of researchers at FSU," said Dr. Bora. "I work with them to prepare funding proposals and explain the impact of the project—basically marketing their skills to the right funding source."

Increasing research funding placed FSU in rare company. The University was named a Research University by the Carnegie Classification, which places FSU among the most prestigious research institutions because of the notable R1, R2 or newly added Research College/Research designations.

"Receiving the Carnegie Designation is great for the university, not only because it's something to brag about, but it also is a signal of your research capacity to potential partners," Dr. Bora added.

FSU faculty leads research in biology, including patented pesticide (more on page 20), public health and community welfare, fintech, military history and defense-related technology to list a few. The impact of research capacity is the foundation of FSU becoming a NCInnovation HUB.

COMMUNITY PARTNERS & CAPACITY FOR IMPACT

NCInnovation (NCI) is a non-profit organization assisting North Carolina public universities with moving promising research developments to commercialization. FSU was named as a HUB during their recent expansion. **Alison Beatty**, director of the NCI HUB at FSU, said her vision is to build new and strengthen existing partnerships between educational and regional industry leaders, invest in technology development and startup support at FSU and provide resources and support for robust intellectual property protection. "This maximizes the return on investment that researchers, universities, and industry partners receive for creating incredible new technologies that will change the world," Beatty said.

The projects Dr. Bora and FSU faculty presented to NCI leaders were a major part of FSU's selection. "The faculty in my service area are brilliant," said Beatty. "I am excited about all of the projects I have seen so far at FSU because of their potential to promote economic development in North Carolina, bolster national security, and improve quality of life around the world," she added.

Assistant Vice Chancellor for Strategic Initiatives **Gregory McElveen** consistently seeks partnership opportunities that increase the University's capacity for community impact, like with NCI. McElveen improves the University's capacity to accommodate initiatives that support institutional priorities. While Dr. Bora is the primary conduit for research-related abilities, McElveen

serves as the Executive Director and the FSU Research Corporation, a non-profit entity created to further research and economic development activities within the state, fulfilling the University's mission to serve all North Carolina citizens.

INNOVATION DISTRICT

Community leaders and organizations are taking note. Fayetteville Mayor **Mitch Colvin** '13 is doubling down on FSU striving for more innovation. He's working with City of Fayetteville leaders to develop an Innovation District in the City.

"As we look to grow our community, an Innovation District brings key stakeholders to combine resources that result in better jobs," said Mayor Colvin. "We noticed FSU increasing their research innovation and we want to lean on that, especially with our partnerships with Fort Bragg and the defense industry," he added.

FSU's innovation spans from technology on campus to research and partnerships to community impact. And FSU students are benefiting the most from leaders working together to bring FSU into the future. 🌐



Fayetteville Mayor Mitch Colvin is an alumnus of Fayetteville State University.

INNOVATION INITIATIVES:

BY DEVON SMITH

Fayetteville State University offers an array of experiences and is committed to providing programs with pathways to successful careers in STEM, or Science, Technology, Engineering and mathematic related industries.

*4 endeavors
that deliver*
MAJOR IMPACT



CENTER FOR DEFENSE & HOMELAND SECURITY

For anyone interested in a cyber-focused career, the Center for Defense and Homeland Security (CDHS) is preparing the leaders in STEM, cybersecurity, national security and emergency management disciplines. The CDHS has two hands-on accelerated trainings within its cyber academy with direct pathways to information technology and cybersecurity industry jobs.

The Certificate in Cyber Foundations, which does not require any prerequisites, delivers CompTIA A+, Network+ and Security+ in about 30 days of class. It is an instrumental first step in a cybersecurity role. It is also the requirements for an advanced training, the Certificate in Cybersecurity, that leads to being a Cisco Certified Network Associate,

CompTIA Linux+ System Administrator, Certified Ethical Hacker and Packet Analysis with WireShark.

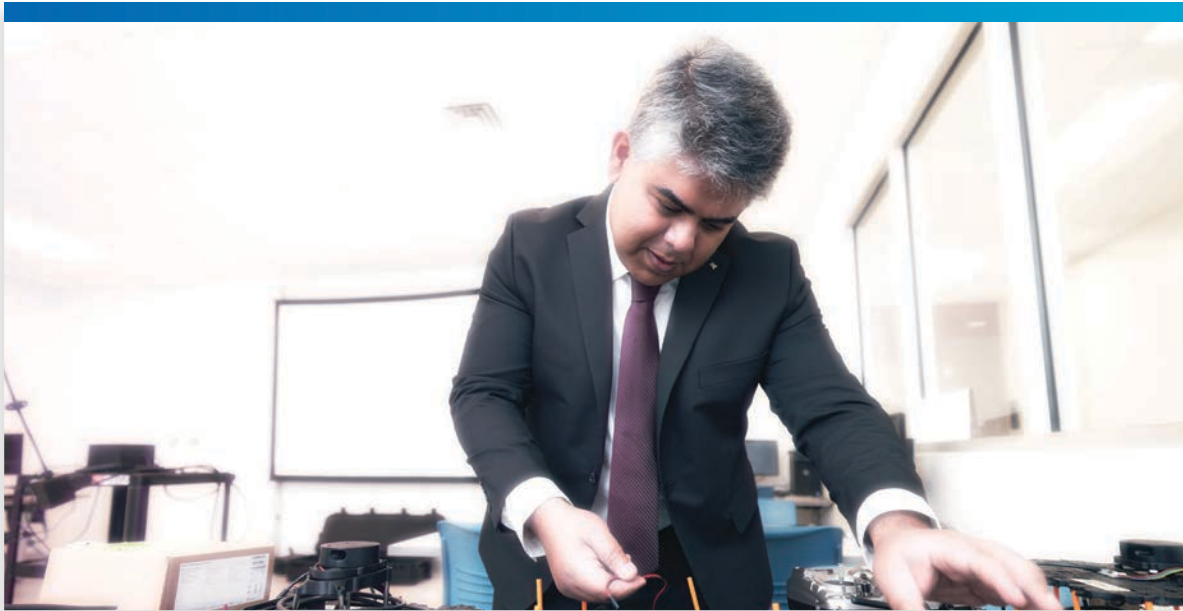
The CDHS is a result of collaborative partnerships with local, state and federal agencies to develop a pipeline into much need careers that are key to national security. Being less than 10 miles away from the CDHS, makes it a critical resource for workforce development to support the greater Cumberland region.



For more information about the CDHS' Cyber Academy, scan the code to visit the website.



CDHS Director John Bellamy leads cybersecurity instruction. Photos by Ezekiel Best.



Dr. Sambit Bhattacharya, Director of FSU's Intelligent Systems Laboratory

AI IN THE INTELLIGENT SYSTEMS LABORATORY

A research lab within FSU's Department of Mathematics and Computer science, the Intelligent Systems Laboratory (ILS) is exploring use-inspired data science, artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML), cybersecurity and multi-disciplinary collaboration in AI through funded research. The ILS's director, **Dr. Sambit Bhattacharya**, leads a team of 12 faculty and works with students on projects collaborating with national research labs, other universities and government agencies like the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) and National Security Agency (NSA).

The ILS continues cutting-edge work in developing algorithms to program AI with specific uses interesting the defense and national security agencies. Collaborating

with the Laboratory for Analytic Sciences at N.C. State University, the ILS is developing synthetic data for computers to detect rare and unique objects, which is supported by NSA researchers. Another project explores how to make AI/ML more efficient on computing devices that operate at the edge in a constrained network, with limited access to electrical energy from battery. It advances capabilities to collect data from autonomous devices in adverse environments like space.



For more information about the ILS's impressive list of projects, scan the code to visit the website.

DEEPENING CONNECTIONS THROUGH GEOSPATIAL SCIENCES

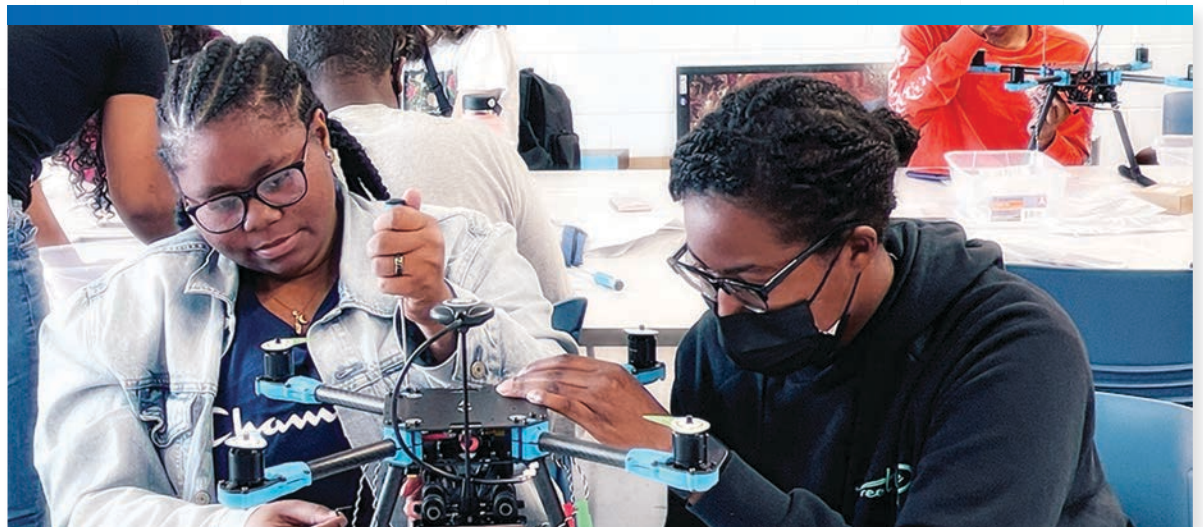
The Geospatial Sciences and Geospatial Intelligence (GEOINT) Department combines multiple STEM disciplines to discover information about the environment through imagery. The department is involved in innovative work via partnerships with NASA and the Department of Defense. In fact, the research in remote sensing led by **Dr. Tran Trung** is intended to be leveraged by unmanned autonomous vehicles, which is supported by a strong partnership with Fort Bragg.

The department also hosts a summer program introducing the science to high

school students widening its impact to the greater Fayetteville community. The GEOINT Certificate Program, accredited by the United States Geospatial Intelligence Foundation, is another impact leading to careers in an emerging field combining geospatial sciences and intelligence referring to national security.



For more information about the Geospatial Sciences and GEOINT Department, scan the code to visit the website.



GEOINT Department hosts summer learning program.

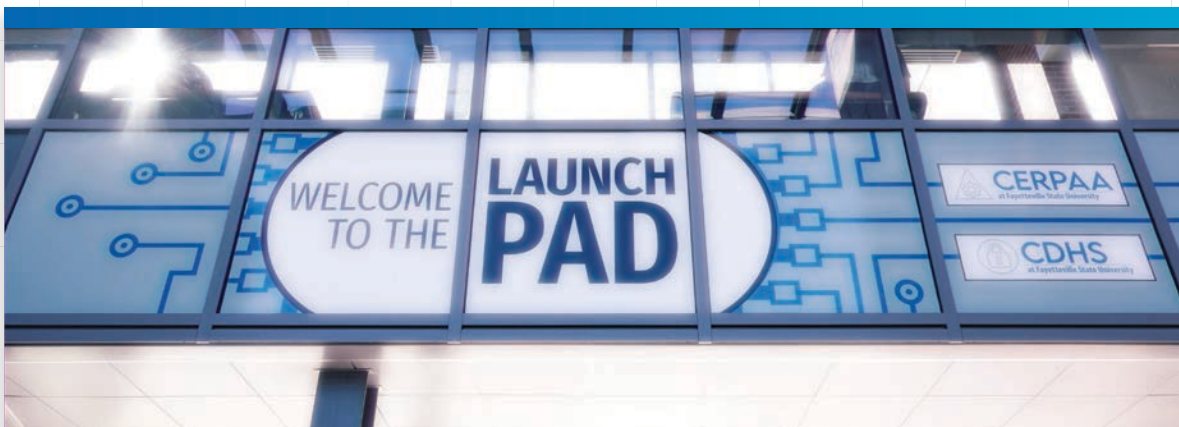
THE CENTER FOR ENTERPRISE RESOURCE PLANNING & ADVANCED ANALYTICS

Throughout the globe, organizations are seeking tools to make multifaceted operations more efficient while receiving and analyzing more data to inform future decisions. FSU's Center for Enterprise Resource Planning and Advanced Analytics is delivering access to the nation's top enterprise application brands, such as Amazon Web Services (AWS), IBM, Infosys, Microsoft, SAS and SAP, making FSU the first university in the southeastern region of the nation with an SAP Next-Gen Lab.

The program prepares participants for careers requiring ERP credentials in four months. The program's potential is evident, and the impact includes offering training to organization's leadership and an agreement with Fort Bragg to enhance supply chain management operations.



For more information about the Center for Enterprise Resource Planning and Advanced Analytics, scan the code to visit the website.



The Launch Pad is a collaborative learning environment.



RESEARCH INVESTMENT TRIPLES, FSU RECOGNIZED AS RESEARCH INSTITUTION BY THE CARNEGIE CLASSIFICATIONS

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Developing video analytics for rare object detection, creating AI curricula for national security, applying generative AI in intelligence, and building GPS- and bandwidth-independent AI remote devices.

Funding Agency: NSA / Naval Research / NSF / NASA
Faculty: Dr. Bhattacharya

BIO-TECHNOLOGY

Creating a patented non-toxic insecticide for agricultural and household pests, developing testing kits for periodontal disease, and studying the impact of environmental stressors on soil bacteria.

Funding Agency: NC Biotech Ctr / VentureWell / NSF
Faculty: Dr. Chao / Dr. Glackin / Dr. Nguyen / Dr. D. Graham



MATERIAL ANALYSIS

Partnership for Research and Education in Materials (IC-PREM) using Electron Probe Microanalyzer

Funding Agency: NSF
Faculty: Dr. Luo

DATA ANALYTICS & OPTIMIZATION

Methane monitoring platform and office location optimization.

Funding Agency: Piedmont Natural Gas / NC DOT
Faculty: Dr. B. Adivar



ADVANCED MATERIALS & DEVICES

Developing two-dimensional MXene nanoparticles with broad electronic applications (patent filed) and nanosensors capable of detecting molecules such as PFAS and enzyme-based disease markers.

Funding Agency: Dept of Energy / NSF
Faculty: Dr. Gautam / Dr. Autrey / Dr. Luo / Dr. Han



CRYPTOGRAPHY

Researching linear feedback shift registers and developing efficient access control systems for implantable medical devices.

Funding Agency: NSF
Faculty: Dr. Okunbar / Dr. Wu



GEOSPATIAL INTELLIGENCE

Partnership for Research and Education in Materials (IC-PREM) using Electron Probe Microanalyzer

Funding Agency: NASA / NC A&T
Dr. Trung



EDUCATION

Virtual simulation-based training to support AIDS education
Funding Agency: AIDS United
Dr. Campbell



bugging **OUT**

Dr. Shirley Chao is at the forefront of pesticide research

BY DEVON SMITH

If a chicken really crossed the road, most likely, it was because of the beetles. Not McCartney's Beatles, the pest. The darkling beetle to be specific, which is little insect known for doing major damage to poultry livestock and their facilities. See why the chicken might try to get away?

Fayetteville State University Biology Professor, **Dr. Shirley Chao** has dedicated her research to developing a non-toxic pest control composition and testing shows darkling beetles don't stand chance. She joined FSU

about 25 years ago and says she's always engaged in research surrounding pesticides.

"I focus on pesticide toxicology, primarily how pesticides negatively affect the environment, animals and humans," said Chao. Her lab's current mission is developing safer pesticides that target insect pests.

A NICE ACCIDENT TO HAVE

The project began over 10 years ago as an assignment for graduate students in her

entomology course. They were tasked with picking an insect and raising the colony by discovering “a really good formulation to feed the insects so they would thrive,” Chao said. “Any factor that would improve their animal’s growth and reproductions was the goal,” she added.

One student wanted to use hemp. “Of course, everybody laughed, and said, ‘that’s illegal. You can’t get hemp,’” Chao said with a chuckle. It turns out, she could order it for the student and what they found was unexpected. “His animals grew really well, like they were growing much bigger than anybody else’s,” added Chao.

However, Chao realized the hemp-fed animals started to die after the conclusion of the semester, but what she calls a “pure accident,” turned into the scientific exploration. Why did the animal revert from sustainable health to underdevelopment? She realized the animals grew large, but they never fully developed into adults or were deformed.



Dr. Shirley Chao, Professor of Biology

"I focus on pesticide toxicology, primarily how pesticides negatively affect the environment, animals and humans."

— Dr. Shirley Chao

"I want to pursue a career in crime scene investigation and working with Dr. Chao gives me experience in the lab using different tools enhancing the skills I need for my career field."

— Tia Long, Junior Forensic Science Major

There wasn't any literature about it at the time, so Chao started testing different variations of hemp and different formulations. "We found that it was a pretty good pesticide," she said. The student seemed successful during the semester, in the end they all the animals were dying out. "It was a nice accident," she said. "And that's what we started focusing on and how we developed our pesticide," added Chao.

THE PROBLEM WITH PESTS & PESTICIDES

Pest ruin a range of 20% to 40% of global crop production annually, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Invasive insects, as one form of pest, affect the global economy by an estimated \$70 billion, reported by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

Chao says there are multiple types of pests affecting farming, like bacteria, mold and fungi that ruin crops. "But insects are a huge problem!" she added. The insects feed on crops, which increase a chance of bacterial infection, they damage buildings, spread diseases and negatively affect livestock.

The current solution is farmers spraying pesticides to kill and repel insects. In North



Dr. Chao with students Victoria Williams (middle) and Tia Long (right).

America, insecticides were developed for agricultural use around 1940 based on a chemical compound, DDT, originally used for disease control, specifically malaria. It wasn't until environmentalist pushed for more research that the toxicity of pesticides was connected to human and environmental health effects.

While DDT was banned by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency or EPA in 1972, other insecticides were developed that are used today. These products are still toxic to other non-target organisms like fish, birds, bees and humans.

There is a need to protect crops and livestock from pest. "So, we want to develop pesticides that are safe but effective against the pest," Chao said.

BUGGING OUT IN CHICKEN COOPS ... NOT ALLOWED

In some cases, keeping snakes out the hen house is easier than keeping darkling beetles out of commercial poultry facilities. This invasive insect's life cycle is 40-100 days, and one female beetle can lay around 2,000 eggs over 5 days. Chao says the getting rid of the beetles aren't as easy because cleaning the

interior of the housing doesn't kill them, and current pesticides are too toxic to spray inside with the livestock.

"We collaborated with North Carolina State University and found that our pest control composition doesn't appear to affect chickens at all," Dr. Chao said, "And now it controls the beetles."

During the initial pilot testing, animal behaviors and reproduction have not been affected. This not only includes poultry, but the non-toxic, hemp-based compound was also tested on fish. While it's non-toxic to the animal's tested, it been extremely effective against more than darkling beetles, such as flies, cockroaches and other insect pests.

THE IMPACT

Dr. Chao's project has shown potential for commercialization. It must successfully navigate the EPA's registration process, which includes a comprehensive list of tests. On average from 2010 to 2014, bring a new pesticide to market cost \$286 million from discovery to product launch. "We don't have several millions of dollars," Chao said. "We want

to establish our pesticide as a viable product and partner with North Carolina companies to help bringing it to market," she added.

The North Carolina Poultry Federation says the poultry industry contributes more than \$39.7 billion to the state's economy and creates nearly 150,000 jobs. "We want to show this huge industry our pesticide is unique, safe and needed," said Dr. Chao.

NCInnovation, a nonprofit aiming to support applied research and commercializing research at public universities to stimulate the state economy, recently named FSU as one of its new regional hubs. Dr. Chao's research is among the projects under review for NCInnovation funding to help big the product to market.

"We don't often think about the effect of pesticides on human and environmental health," Dr. Chao said. "I hope our research contributes to improving human health and improve food production," she concluded. 🌱

Not a simple jar of seeds. The FSU research has global implications in agriculture.

"I'm planning to go to veterinary school. I intended to go into clinical discipline, but Dr. Chao's research exposed me to toxicology and industrial veterinary medicine and broadened my understanding of the field. I gained valuable lab experience."

— Victoria Williams, Senior Organismal Biology Major





Nicholas Robinson-Cater visits Bronco One Stop for resources and support. Nichol Photos by Ezekiel Best.



beyond **ENROLLMENT:**

Fayetteville State is Rewriting the Rules
of Student Success

BY KENDALL BALKNIGHT

Fayetteville State University (FSU) is leading the way in higher education innovation, implementing bold strategies to increase student retention and graduation rates while making college more accessible and affordable. By meeting students where they are, academically, financially, and personally, FSU has introduced dynamic programs that remove barriers and empower students to achieve their educational goals. From streamlining the enrollment process to offering free summer school and integrating artificial intelligence into student services, the university is creating a model for success that prioritizes academic excellence and student well-being.

EXPANDING ACCESS AND STREAMLINING ENROLLMENT

FSU's commitment to affordability and accessibility is evident in its enrollment trends. The university serves 7,107 students, including 952 new transfer students and 797 first-time freshmen. As a school that attracts students from diverse backgrounds, FSU continues to emphasize affordability through the NC Promise program, which offers tuition at just \$500 per semester. Additionally, the university is expanding efforts to increase international student enrollment and grow graduate programs, particularly in business and professional development.



Dr. Pamela Baldwin offers invaluable assistance to Army ROTC cadet Ali-Ann E. Mason.

To ensure more students have the opportunity to enroll, FSU has adopted innovative recruitment strategies that simplify and enhance the application process. Digital campaign improvements now include targeted outreach to parents, recognizing their role in the college decision-making process. Additionally, transfer and graduate student recruitment efforts have expanded, making guidelines clearer about transfer classification and ensuring students understand their pathways to enrollment.

A standout initiative is the Bronco Benefit Program, which allows community college graduates to apply as transfer students without an application fee and with guaranteed admission. This program eliminates financial and procedural obstacles, making the transfer process smoother and more accessible. FSU has also launched personalized follow-ups with applicants and implemented outreach campaigns targeting students who applied but never enrolled, encouraging them to reconsider. For high-achieving students, the

university is promoting the Carolina Connection Pilot Program, which simplifies the college application process for high school seniors, particularly those with a weighted GPA of 2.8 or higher, allowing them to apply seamlessly to participating UNC System universities and North Carolina community colleges.

THE 30-60-90 INITIATIVE: A BOLD APPROACH TO FOUR-YEAR GRADUATION

FSU is not only focused on getting students in the door but also ensuring they graduate on time. The 30-60-90 Initiative is a strategic effort designed to help students complete their degrees in four years or less by hitting key academic milestones, 30 credit hours in their first year, 60 by their second, and 90 by their third.

A critical factor in making this possible is FSU's status as a three-semester university, where summer school is an integral part of the academic calendar. To remove financial



"From the moment we start recruiting students until their graduation, we have taken steps at every stage to enhance their experience. Our goal is to support both students and faculty effectively so that students have a great experience and can graduate in four years or less."

— Dr. Pamela Baldwin

obstacles, FSU offers free summer school to all students, covering both tuition and room and board. This innovative approach has dramatically improved retention and graduation rates by increasing course availability, preventing academic gaps, and providing an intervention period for students to recover credits and stay on track.

Since the implementation of 30-60-90 in 2021, FSU has seen record enrollment, reaching 4,463 students, up from 4,100 the previous year. The initiative's success has also drawn financial support, including a \$750,000 donation from a private foundation to help further its goals. Additionally, retention and graduation rates have significantly improved, with the one-year retention rate for first-time freshmen increasing from 63.3% to 77.7% in Fall 2022.

Beyond academic success, the initiative also reduces student debt by allowing students to complete their degrees faster with fewer out-of-pocket expenses. By integrating free summer

faculty **SPOTLIGHTS**



Dr. Melissa Haithcox-Dennis
College of Education

"I ensure that students gain hands-on experience by facilitating their attendance at conferences, engaging them in research projects and offering opportunities to study abroad. I am most excited about finding new ways to empower students and equip them to become strong public health leaders who will drive meaningful change to improve equity and health outcomes for everyone."



Dr. Miriam DeLone
College of Humanities & Social Sciences

"I work to advance the strategic goals of both the university and the college by collaborating with internal and community partners. In my classroom and publications, I promote crime prevention from a public health perspective."



FSU awarded Military Friendly® School, 2025-26

courses into the educational experience, FSU is making higher education more financially sustainable while ensuring students are better prepared for the workforce upon graduation.

SUPPORTING MILITARY-AFFILIATED STUDENTS: A COMMITMENT TO THOSE WHO SERVE

As a gold status military-friendly institution, FSU is dedicated to providing exceptional resources and support for service members, veterans, and their families. Recognizing the unique challenges military-affiliated students face, FSU has developed specialized programs and services that ensure a smooth transition into higher education while maximizing affordability and academic success.

One of the university's most distinctive offerings is the Military Tuition Scholarship, a program designed to fill the financial gaps left by exhausted military benefits. What makes this scholarship particularly unique and impactful is its focus on military spouses and dependents, who often do not have access to their service member's education benefits. By providing financial assistance to these students, FSU ensures that military families have greater opportunities to pursue their

educational and career goals without undue financial strain.

To further support service members and veterans, FSU offers a dedicated Military and Veterans Lounge, a welcoming space where military-affiliated students can access a range of academic and personal resources. This lounge serves as a hub for students to complete their VA benefit certification process, study, meet with their military student organization, or simply relax with coffee, water, and a light meal or snack. By creating an environment that fosters both academic and social engagement, FSU helps military students build a sense of community while balancing their educational and professional responsibilities.

Additionally, FSU acknowledges the valuable skills and experiences gained through military service by offering Credit for Prior Learning (CPL). This initiative allows service members to convert their military training and professional experience into academic credit, reducing the time and cost required to earn a degree. CPL ensures that military students can leverage their expertise and accelerate their educational journey, making higher education more accessible and efficient.

Through these initiatives, FSU is reinforcing its commitment to the success of military-affiliated students and their families. By removing financial barriers, creating supportive spaces, and recognizing military experience for academic credit, the university continues to be a leader in serving those who have served their country.



DR. MITCH SEAL: LEADING INNOVATION IN MILITARY ACADEMIC AFFAIRS AT FAYETTEVILLE STATE UNIVERSITY

Dr. Mitch Seal, a recognized leader in military education and workforce development, has taken on the role of Associate Vice Chancellor for Military Academic Affairs at Fayetteville State University (FSU). In this position, he is pioneering initiatives that integrate military training with higher education, leveraging cutting-edge innovation to expand educational access and workforce readiness for service members and veterans.

BRIDGING MILITARY TRAINING WITH ACADEMIC PATHWAYS

Dr. Seal's leadership is reshaping how military-affiliated students transition into higher education and the civilian workforce. At FSU, he is spearheading efforts to evaluate and award academic credit for military

faculty SPOTLIGHTS



Dr. Whitney Wall

College of Humanities & Social Sciences

"I seek to not only impart knowledge, but to prepare students with the soft skills this new reality demands, such as flexibility, creativity, resilience, ethical leadership, and the ability to communicate confidently in both virtual and face-to-face settings. I am currently researching soft skills development particularly at HBCUs, and the growing importance of these skills in an AI-dominated world."



Dr. Rodney McCrowe

Broadwell College of Business & Economics

"I champion flipped classroom models, empowering our stakeholders to own their education. Collaborative research with esteemed colleagues explores the vital nexus of digital and critical thinking, transforming upskilling into powerful engines of success."

Under Dr. Seal's leadership, Fayetteville State University is transforming military education into a dynamic, tech-driven ecosystem that prepares service members for lifelong success.

education and training, ensuring that service members receive proper recognition for their skills and experience. This work builds on his extensive background in prior learning assessment (PLA), workforce credentialing, and military student success.

COLLABORATION WITH FORT BRAGG CHIEF OF INNOVATION & NC INNOVATIONS

As part of his strategic vision, Dr. Seal is actively collaborating with the Fort Bragg Chief of Innovation and NC Innovations to implement forward-thinking educational models that align with emerging military technologies and civilian career pathways. This partnership is driving:

- **AI & Machine Learning in Military Education Assessments:** Enhancing efficiency in translating military training into academic credit through automation and predictive analytics.
- **Workforce-Aligned Degree Pathways:** Developing programs that connect military expertise with in-demand civilian careers in cybersecurity, logistics, healthcare, and leadership.
- **Public-Private Partnerships:** Engaging industry leaders to support credentialing and job placement for transitioning service members.

DRIVING ECONOMIC AND EDUCATIONAL GROWTH

Dr. Seal's work is positioning Fayetteville State University as a national leader in military education innovation. His approach ensures that service members and veterans have clear, accelerated pathways to degree completion while also addressing workforce needs across North Carolina and beyond. By leveraging technology, collaboration, and innovative academic policies, FSU is setting a new standard for how higher education institutions support military-affiliated students.

THE FUTURE OF MILITARY ACADEMIC AFFAIRS AT FSU

Under Dr. Seal's leadership, Fayetteville State University is transforming military education into a dynamic, tech-driven ecosystem that prepares service members for lifelong success. His partnerships with Fort Bragg and NC Innovations highlight a commitment to adaptive learning, workforce-driven curricula, and expanded access to education—ensuring that military students can seamlessly transition from service to career.

As Dr. Seal continues to drive these innovations, Fayetteville State University is not just supporting military education—it is redefining it.

THE FUTURE OF INNOVATION AT FSU: AI-POWERED STUDENT SUCCESS

Looking ahead, FSU is embracing artificial intelligence (AI) to further enhance student success and engagement. AI-driven tools will play a crucial role in supporting students, improving retention, and streamlining operations, making the university experience more efficient and personalized.

AI-powered chatbots and virtual assistants will continue to provide 24/7 support, instantly answering questions from both prospective and current students. This innovation will reduce response times, improve engagement, and ensure students receive timely and accurate information about admissions, financial aid, course registration, and campus resources.

AI will also play a key role in predictive analytics for student success, helping FSU identify at-risk students earlier and provide personalized academic support and advising before challenges become barriers to graduation. Additionally, AI-generated insights will enable personalized recruitment strategies, allowing the university to better target prospective students who are the best fit for FSU.

Beyond recruitment and retention, AI will help streamline scheduling for critical student services such as advising, career services, and tutoring. Automated scheduling systems will simplify appointment booking and send timely reminders, ensuring students stay on track academically and professionally.

FSU'S COMMITMENT TO STUDENT SUCCESS AWARDED BY ELLUCIAN

Fayetteville State University's recent recognition as a recipient of the 2025 Ellucian Impact Award in the "Students First" category stands as a powerful testament to its unwavering commitment to student success. The award honors institutions that use technology to transform the student experience, and FSU earned this distinction through its innovative use of Ellucian solutions like Campus Communicator and Student Forms to streamline financial aid, improve communication, and remove barriers. By putting students at the center of every process, FSU continues to lead with intention, ensuring that every Bronco has the support and tools to thrive from enrollment to graduation. 🌐



1st hbcu to offer **CRITICAL SEXUAL ABUSE EXAMINATION TRAINING**

Program equips N.C. Forensic Nurses to Better Care for Survivors

BY DEVON SMITH

Many healthcare institutions struggle to maintain enough trained forensic nurses, leaving gaps in care that can hinder both medical and legal outcomes for survivors. FSU's Sexual Assault Nursing Examination (SANE) training program addresses this disparity by creating more opportunities for nurses to specialize in forensic examinations and victim advocacy.

Introducing the SANE training aligned perfectly with FSU School of Nursing's

commitment to address health disparities, improve patient care and strengthen community partnerships. 🌊



Learn more about FSU's SANE Learning Institute by scanning the code to visit the website.



Training forensic nurses. Photo by Ezekiel Best.



The Reading Clinic at FSU. Photo by Ezekiel Best.

teaching **THE TEACHERS**

Bold Strategies Transform Access, Retention and Graduation at FSU

BY KENDALL BALKNIGHT

For years, teachers have witnessed the same struggle inside their classrooms; a child hesitating over words and frustration building with each failed attempt to read a sentence. FSU's College of Education (COE) set out to implement a program that would not only train future educators to teach reading effectively but also empower communities to support literacy from an early age. The program is fully aligned with the UNC System Literacy Framework, a research-based approach designed to prepare teachers with the best instructional strategies in the science of reading.

For FSU, this achievement is a continuation of a legacy that began in 1867, when the University was founded as the Howard School, a school dedicated to educating Black children in the aftermath of the Civil War. At a time when literacy was denied to many, the Howard School stood as a symbol of opportunity. More than 150 years later, Fayetteville State University remains committed to that mission, ensuring that every child has access to the power of reading. 🌍



FAYETTEVILLE STATE PLANETARIUM

March 1 7:00 pm	Black Holes	E/T
March 22 7:00 pm	Deep Sky over Fayetteville	E
April 5 8:00 - 10:00 pm	Astronomy Day (free)	E
April 26 1:00-4:00 pm	NC Science Festival (free)	E
May 17 7:00 pm	Dark Side of the Universe	E/T
May 31 7:00 pm	Rocket Science	E
June 21 7:00 pm	Artemis to the Moon	E

SHOW
RATING

E

All ages

T

Technical -
teens and adults

E/T

Older children,
teens, and adults

education **EVOLUTION**

FSU's COO Powers Up Campus Technology

BY NIEEMA WILLIAMS

A unified thought amongst great minds on innovation is that it requires people. Innovation is more than just the next great idea; true innovation requires execution. As time passes, there is an instinctual need for change and relevancy in your business, schools, communities, and organizations. It compels people to do whatever is necessary to maintain the balance by finding new solutions and methods to reach the targeted goal.

Fayetteville State University has undergone impressive physical campus change in just a few years. New buildings, academic programs, resource centers, and study areas. New traffic patterns and routes to classes have

integrated themselves into our daily routines. As the campus changed, so did the need for enhanced information technology. Overdue for an upheaval in thought leadership, just meeting the mark regarding campus cybersecurity was not enough. FSU's Division of Information Technology Services began offering solutions that could transform how and what our students learned, how campus departments and areas could streamline daily functions, and develop new methods for leadership, faculty, and staff to communicate and collaborate across campus more efficiently.

Joining the mission and supporting the vision of FSU in January of 2022, **Dr. Hector Molina**,



Classrooms are evolving with the times.

FSU's inaugural Chief Operating Officer, has a longstanding passion for a career in Information technology. During the mid-90s, he was exposed to the rapid evolution of the internet. It was a transformative force that sparked his curiosity to learn more. "Its potential to connect people, revolutionize communication, and streamline operations was something I wanted to be part of. I witnessed firsthand how technology enhanced efficiency and security in the military, shaping how missions were executed. This exposure ignited my interest in IT, leading me to pursue a career focused on innovation, problem-solving, and leveraging technology to create impactful solutions." Over the years, Dr. Molina remained dedicated to staying ahead of technological advancements, ensuring that IT remained a tool for driving progress in higher education, cybersecurity, and organizational transformation.

FOSTERING A TECHNOLOGY RICH LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Reaching this level of efficiency requires support and collaboration. ITS is aligned with the university's goal of prioritizing technology.

The ITS Strategic Plan — Strategic Planning: Enabling Tomorrow.' is a carefully chosen set of priorities and goals working to integrate technology into our learning spaces, offices, social engagement areas, and campus business. "With an unwavering commitment to innovation, operational excellence, and user-centered services, ITS is not only shaping a technology-enabled ecosystem that empowers faculty and staff but also enriching the student experience in ways that elevate FSU as a leader in higher education." The three main priorities of the plan are as follows:

1. Foster a technology rich learning environment
2. Advance IT infrastructure and ecosystems
3. Collaboratively build a data culture that is informed and engaged

In just three years under Dr. Molina's guidance, remarkable progress has been made. Surpassing many of our peer institutions in key areas of technological advancement, we have modernized the campus network infrastructure, ensuring faster, more reliable connectivity across campus. Classrooms have

been upgraded with cutting-edge technology, creating a more interactive and engaging learning experience. "When I first arrived at FSU, the technological landscape faced significant challenges due to a longstanding lack of investment in campus network infrastructure and classroom technology. The network environment was outdated, with limited capacity to support modern educational and administrative demands. Classroom technology was inconsistent, and there was a general lack of maturity in managing the overall technology environment. These challenges resulted in inefficiencies, barriers to innovation, and a suboptimal digital experience for students, faculty, and staff."

ITS has made the following technology improvements under Dr. Molina's leadership:

- Adobe Cloud Campus Partnership
- Improved Network Connectivity and Bandwidth Speeds
- Improved campus wifi coverage
- Improved RESNET wifi in the Dorms
- Hybrid-Flex Classrooms
- Virtual Reality/Augmented Reality Immersive eLearning Studio
- Technology Support Center for Walk-In Support
- Implemented a 1:1 Device Program for incoming freshmen (Lenovo)
- Introduction of a High-Performance Computing Academic Cluster

ADVANCING IT INFRASTRUCTURES & ECOSYSTEMS

Access to adequate technology resources in college, like a Ti-84 graphing calculator, course software, laptops, and even VR goggles, can

increase the likelihood of student success. In December of 2022, FSU became an Adobe Creative Campus through a strategic partnership to enhance digital literacy and creativity among students and faculty. This partnership prepares future graduates for competitive careers, ensuring they master industry-leading digital content creation and storytelling tools. "The initiative was driven by FSU's commitment to equipping students with 21st-century skills, making Adobe Creative Cloud tools widely accessible. This collaboration empowers students to develop critical thinking, communication, and essential design skills. Faculty can also integrate Adobe tools into coursework, fostering innovation and engagement.

Additionally, providing students with the necessary computing devices is essential to their success in and out of the classroom. "Expanding access to technology can bridge the digital divide, empower learning, and create a more inclusive academic environment that supports every student's educational journey." During the Fall 2024 Freshman pinning ceremony, **Chancellor Allison** announced a partnership with Lenovo to provide laptops for all incoming freshmen classes over the next four years. "Digital accessibility remains a critical focus, and we must continue enhancing our technology to ensure that all students, regardless of ability, have equitable access to digital resources and learning tools."

Dr. Molina says that one of FSU's most innovative learning spaces is the VR/AR Immersive eLearning Studio located in the Charles W. Chesnutt Library. "This cutting-edge space integrates virtual and augmented reality to enhance student learning, providing



Sign of the times: Digital, bright and eye-catching. Photo by TopEndShoots LLC

hands-on, interactive experiences across various disciplines. From simulated labs for STEM courses to immersive healthcare experiences, the studio allows students to engage with content in ways traditional methods cannot. This technology fosters experiential learning, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills, ensuring that FSU remains at the forefront of digital transformation in higher education. The Immersive Learning Studio truly revolutionizes learning at FSU."

COLLABORATIVELY BUILD AN INFORMED & ENGAGED DATA CULTURE

Technology education and operational efficiency are essential pillars in advancing Strategic Priority #3 at FSU. To build a data-informed and engaged culture, faculty, staff, and students must have the knowledge and tools to effectively access, analyze, and apply data in decision-making. "We aim to empower stakeholders to interpret complex information,

leverage modern analytics tools, and drive meaningful institutional outcomes. At the same time, enhancing efficiency through automation and streamlined data processes will make insights more accessible, actionable, and impactful. A robust foundation in data literacy, paired with optimized technology utilization, will position FSU to foster innovation, strengthen engagement, and ensure long-term success in creating a sustainable, data-driven culture." In 2025, technology is ingrained into our lives. Everyone is "on the net" or better yet, "plugged in" to a cellphone, tablet, laptop, or television. Daily needs can be met with the ease of an app or with online ordering. One downside to technology is that it constantly changes, and one person's needs may differ from the next. The same can be said within higher education.

FSU is one of the most diverse institutions in the nation, with campus demographics that host traditional students, adult learners, transfers, veterans and military-affiliated



students. Amongst those classifications, and present in the faculty and staff, are interwoven generations of ages ranging from "boomers" and "Gen-X" to the generation described as innovators, Gen-Z. ITS strategically addresses the diverse technological needs of the mixed population using a multi-faceted approach. They ensure accessibility and inclusivity by offering tiered support services, user-friendly technology platforms, and tailored training programs. "We actively engage with varying levels of campus leadership, faculty, staff, and students to understand their unique challenges and opportunities. This proactive engagement helps us identify emerging trends, address pain points, and implement innovative

solutions. By maintaining an open dialogue, we ensure that our technology services are responsive, forward-thinking, and aligned with the evolving needs of the university. FSU ITS also provides student digital literacy workshops and robust help desk support to help bridge the generational technology gap and enhance the overall user experience". Other essential learning tools and resources that our community should utilize more include Microsoft 365 for collaboration, Canvas for online learning, LinkedIn Learning for skill enhancement, and cybersecurity awareness training to promote safe digital practices. 🌐

"From the moment we start recruiting students until their graduation, we have taken steps at every stage to enhance their experience. Our goal is to support both students and faculty effectively so that students have a great experience and can graduate in four years or less."

— Dr. Hector Molina, Chief Operating Officer

enhancing the **BRONCO SPORTS FAN EXPERIENCE:**

Digital solutions, social media are part of the mix

BY NIEEMA WILLIAMS

The buzzer sings out the sweet sound of victory, and the win is achieved. There's an overwhelming sense of pride and accomplishment when your team wins. Making my way through on-court celebrations following an impressive back-to-back CIAA Women's basketball championship title win, I pause to witness the raw excitement, emotional team celebrations, and cheering fans—this is what we came for. The scheduled matchup may have ended, but the buzzer is the start of an exclusive round for some. The uproar fades into the background as I zero in on the "5th quarter" happening center court.

On any given gameday, members of the press — photographers, videographers, content creators, announcers, commentators, statisticians, and scorekeepers— are locked into a tandem rhythm of creativity and storytelling. Every role is critical to the overarching production and can often be overlooked until you can relive the magic with a click or scroll. This is Sports Information. Keeping records of and sharing athletic news, updates, social media and website content, and press releases, aiming to increase the overall visibility of the University's athletic department and the individual teams. Meanwhile, it boosts



engagement by enhancing the online and in-person fan experience, supports recruitment efforts of prospective student-athletes, and even provides regular media exposure and training for the players and coaches alike.

Volunteering as a sports information intern during undergrad at FSU, my knowledge of any court or field was fundamental at best, but the learning environment was fast-paced and alive. Donning a headset and saddling up to a stationary camera meant it was time to lock in . . . nothing mattered more for the next few hours. Aside from the first rule you learn, "follow the ball . . . ", some lessons

were more challenging to forget; think outside the box, attune your senses and abilities to match the caliber of the event and space you're operating in, know every connection and how each part as well as the people behind them function individually and collectively.

Win or lose, the story must be told. There's often only one chance to capture unbelievable moments, initial reactions, and the raw energy of fans. Make no mistake, the pressure is on, and you must survive the frenzy to advance the brand. Those seasoned in sports information can appreciate this whirlwind; the plays are familiar. Choose an angle, find your subject, and visualize it. Know which players to watch, capture official presentations and photos, now the post-game interview. . . create, review, write, review, send, and post. . . breathe. Navigating this field requires dynamic leadership, consistency, and vision, among many other skills. Thankfully, FSU has just that in our Assistant AD for Media Relations and Sports Information, **Adrian Ferguson**.

March 1, 2025, and we're in the lower corridor post-game press conference room of the CFG Bank Arena. Following a historic team and division title win, Adrian Ferguson carved out some time for a sit-down with Bronco Pride Magazine to discuss his journey into sports information and how a passion for programming and computer information systems led to the creation of Bronco Sports Network (BSN). This unifying campus innovation enhances the overall Bronco fan experience globally.

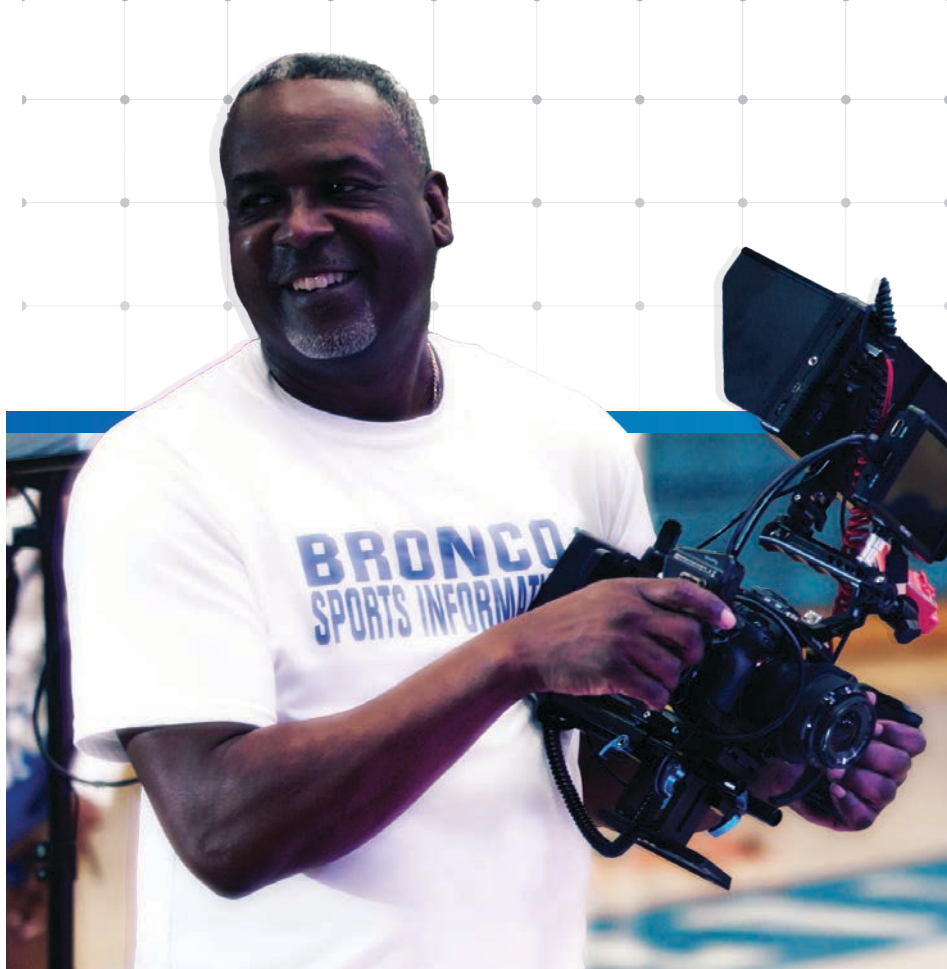
N.W: Hey, Ferg, thank you for agreeing to do this, it's obviously one of your busiest days this year, so let's jump in! Tell the readers about yourself and how that journey led to a career in sports information.

SID Ferguson: Growing up, my father was a master of all trades—carpentry, mechanics . . . I learned that from him. If anything was broken or didn't work as it should, I wanted to know why and fix it.

N.W: Everyone at FSU knows you are the man with the answers if you have a gameday question or need sports media information. What motivated you to pursue a career in sports information?

SID Ferguson: I played baseball and football in high school but earned a scholarship with my track ability; I attended Livingstone College in 1991 and majored in Computer Information systems. At that time, the Livingstone track coach was also the SID. I began volunteering my sophomore year and started traveling off-campus to football games. To date myself, they did stats by paper back then. The game would end, they cut the stadium lights off and everyone would be in the box calculating stats, passing yards, rushing yards, etc., . . . in the dark! Academically, computing and programming courses came naturally to me, and I excelled at them. When the first sports stats computing programs were developed, my combined knowledge of programming and sports information allowed me to be ahead of the curb and understand the software.

N.W: You've also worked at other four-year institutions, including FSU from 2008-2014



Adrian Ferguson has his eye on the sports prize.

and a brief stint with the CIAA from 2014-2016. When you returned to FSU in 2017, where do you say the changes that ultimately led to the creation of the Bronco Sports Network we recognize today began?

SID Ferguson: Working with the CIAA, I observed what was being done during televised games and what other schools were and were not doing when we traveled. That allowed me to imagine what could be possible at FSU. That upgrade created an opening when the video board in the football [Luther Nick Jerald's] stadium needed to be replaced. It came with updated equipment that expanded digital capabilities for all sporting events.

Also, the dying age of the printed newspaper due to the Internet created a chasm for regular and older fans looking for FSU sports updates



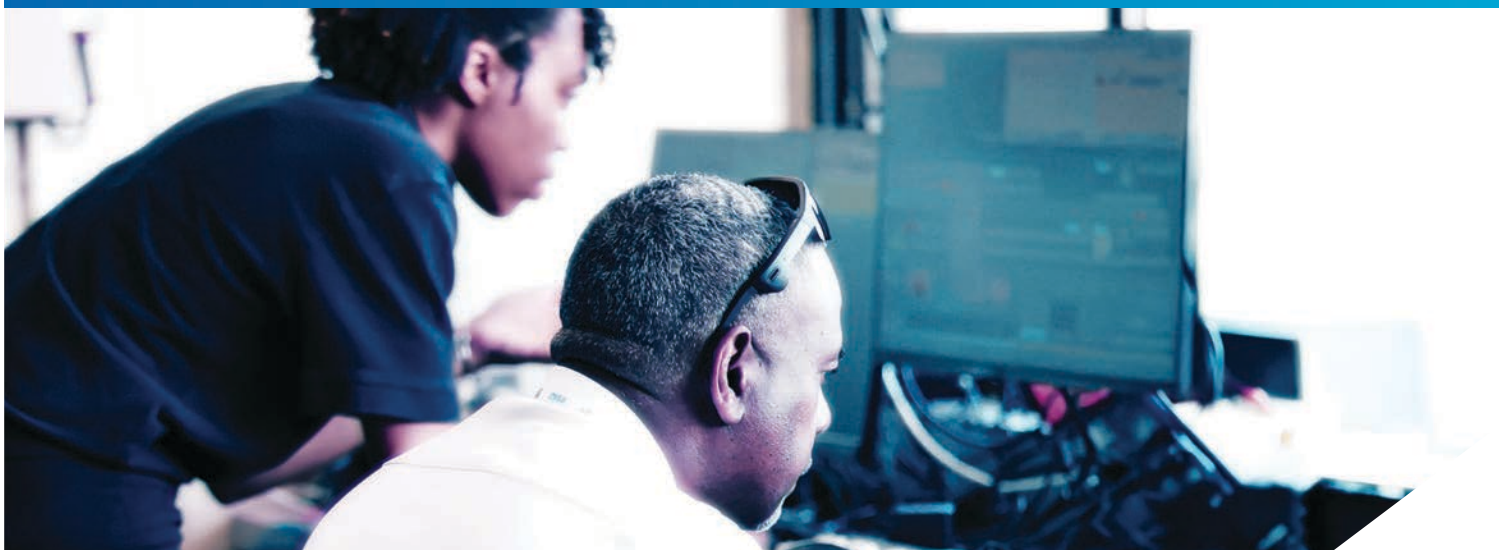
"I learned in real time how to do all the things I'm doing now. I wanted to offer that for students who would take it seriously and be open to trying new things in a fast-paced environment."

— Adrian Ferguson, Sports Information Director

in the local papers, but there was no guarantee that local media would show up and choose to report on our games. The goal of the SID then was to fill the void. I had to be the writer, update socials, do photography, record live stats, and more. Having done all that, I realized we could produce our own news. Our website could

become our own newspaper. Today, checking fsubroncos.com first is getting it straight from the horse's mouth. The next challenge would be maintaining this by consistently developing content for the site.

As technology continued to advance, Adrian continued to seize opportunities to reimagine what Bronco Sports Network (BSN) offered and how. Sports fans today want to see and feel as if they apart of the journey on the road to victory. The FSU Broncos app, powered by Sidearm Sports, provided easy access to all FSU athletic updates, live states and team rosters. Other digital enhancements include the YouTube channel and the gameday livestream platform powered by Hudl. Beyond reporting the facts, BSN could now consistently create organic content to engage with viewers, from 360-cams that display the newest team members during media day, to the latest Tik-Tok trends to find out if your favorite player prefers pancakes or waffles. Pig Skin Press Talk has become a fan favorite sit-down interview series during football season with the head coach and key players.



Jamilyn Wallace and Adrian Ferguson, behind the scenes.

N.W: A significant change I've noticed on social media is that each team now has its own profiles. That's at least eight additional accounts. What was your reasoning there?

SID Ferguson: I wanted to create individuality amongst the programs. Each team has its own personality and style. It's been extra work, but it plays a huge role in how athletes are being recruited. How can you be interested in a school or team if you can't see them in real time, not just when you visit the school during a tour? We are on all platforms, and even there, our audience engagement differs; Facebook for the alumni, Instagram for current students, and X (Twitter) for high schools and prospective students.

N.W: Home games in Capel Arena have been an upgraded experience. Digital display screens in both levels' corridors show updates and preview events. The student-athlete GPA recognition wall also shows team content, a new indoor Arena video board, a digital scorer's table, and other message boards for ads and sponsor information. It's all imposing, but what has been your favorite gameday innovation?

SID Ferguson: All the new boards and the starting lineup entrances. The addition of CO2 smoke and the fog machine, flashing and moving headlights on the truss, and creating new team hype videos for each home game.

Providing an all-inclusive perspective each gameday — loading the bus, pre-game warm-ups, quarterly and half-time social graphics to keep fans updated is no easy feat. Collegiate athletic seasons overlap like football and volleyball or run consecutively like basketball and bowling. An operation of this size is no one man show. FSU Sports Information interns can try their hand at a multitude of skills such as camera operator, instant replay, live stream operator, on-air commentary, pre and post-game interviewing, live stats, score keeping, social media content, in-game activations and hosting, no experience necessary. Several former interns have received jobs offers and even currently work in the CIAA. Even if a career in sports is not the goal, the learning experience is invaluable and transferable to all realms of news and media.

"I had a passion for sports media coming to FSU. As an intern Adrian emphasized not being a "one trick pony" so you could be an asset in multiple areas. It was hard work, but the opportunity meant everything"

— DJamilyn Wallace 23' - FSU Bronco Athletics Content Creator

N.W: Let's talk about your team. I see you have a lot more help these days. Professional staff members like— Assistant SID **Ronda Brown**, content creator **Jamilyn Wallace**, and technology specialist **Justin Rogers**— but you've broadly utilized student volunteers and interns to execute this vision over the years. I know first-hand that any student who takes the opportunity to intern with you walks away with an enriched experience and new skills. How have student interns impacted your overall workflow?

SID Ferguson: Coming into FSU and realizing everything I wanted to try, I knew I couldn't do it alone. Most interns are mass communications majors who need the hours for class credit. There could be as many as 12 interns per game. The number fluctuates as we move into spring sports. As a student, I never took any communications courses, but we just relied on each other in a small setting like Livingston. I learned in real time how to do everything I'm doing now. I wanted to offer that to students who would take it seriously and be open to trying new things in a fast-paced environment. We've set the standard, and people are watching, saying, "We want to do what Fayetteville State is doing."

N.W: Bronco Sports Network is still in its early years. Where do you see it heading? What is the big picture?

SID Ferguson: I would love for there to be a Bronco Sports Network content studio in Capel Arena so that we can create even more branded content. I want a dedicated space to make more shows like Pig Skin Press Talk. The challenge is utilizing other campus spaces like the Bronco TV studio, where scheduling around class times and clubs becomes an issue. Then, there is the branding of the space. Bringing "athletics" with me takes a lot of setup and breakdown time. Having a dedicated space always ready to film would be a dream.

N.W: That sounds great; I believe it can happen! Most of the innovations we just discussed were also once on a wish list!

This has been great; I appreciate you making time for this.

Thanks, Ferg! 🌊

Get connected to the Bronco Sports Network fan experience and join us on gameday!



Be a part of the Bronco Sports Network fan experience by visiting fsubroncos.com, downloading the FSU Broncos Sports app, or by following FSU Bronco Athletics on all social platforms.

capital ENDEAVORS

As leader of the DC-area alumni group, and involvement in myriad FSU initiatives, Maynard Smith '82 elevates Bronco power

BY JANET GIBSON

To say that **Maynard Smith** is a proud Bronco would be an understatement.

He is a walking, talking testament to the power of giving back to his alma mater – and creating opportunities for others.

Smith serves as President of the DC Metro Chapter of the Fayetteville State University National Alumni Association (FSUNAA), which makes scholarships a reality for many in-need students. He stays involved as a member of the FSUNAA, also leading the charge for scholarships and invaluable networking.

He is a new member of the University's Foundation Board, which promotes smart growth along the Murchison Road corridor – and he was recently spotlighted for his professional achievements.

In addition, Smith is the conduit in a new partnership between Fayetteville State and Prince George's County, Maryland, to provide paid internships to students. The range of opportunities is vast, from positions in marketing to information technology, and more.

Indeed, Smith – who works at a high-level position for Baltimore-based US Wind – is on a mission to boost Bronco Pride in and around the nation's capital. And beyond.

"There are thousands of Broncos living in the DC metro area," noted Smith. After he was elected by his peers to lead the alumni chapter in July 2023, he set an immediate goal to increase membership from less than 60 to a healthy 150. "We're three-quarters of the way there," he said. The chapter was founded in 1944.

A step toward fulfilling the membership goal occurred on April 12 with a special event: the Spring Fling Sowing Seeds of Success Gala at Martin's Crosswinds in Greenbelt, Maryland.

The event was created to bring more awareness and visibility to the alumni group, recruit new members and raise even more scholarship funds. Among those attending was **Omar O. Bell**, FSU's Vice Chancellor of University Advancement.

"I love the school," Smith said, "and anything to make it bigger and better, I'm going to do."

He credits Fayetteville State for helping him develop his passions for leadership and business. Smith grew up in Martinsville, Virginia, just across the North Carolina border from Mount Airy and the Triad. He was only five years old when his father passed away, leaving his mother to raise him and a brother.

Smith recalled that his high school principal and an FSU alumnus, **James Rountree '64**, took him as a senior under his wing and arranged a visit to the campus. Smith was immediately smitten. "It was a beautiful campus even back then," he said.

During his freshman year, Smith played football for the Broncos. He also joined the Epsilon Beta Chapter of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Incorporated, and still stays connected to his brothers, including Ulysses Taylor, Dean of the Broadwell College of Business and Economics.

When he isn't working to shine a light on FSU, Smith, who earned his MBA from Golden



Maynard Smith '82, BS Business Administration stays involved with his alma mater in multiple ways. He serves as President of the alumni's DC Metro Chapter, as a member of the National Alumni Association and the University's Foundation Board, and is instrumental in bringing both scholarship and paid internship opportunities to FSU students. His presence and support is also notable at many events where Broncos gather, including the CIAA Men's and Women's Basketball Tournament and Homecoming festivities. Photo by Ezekiel Best.

State University, is the Business Engagement Manager for US Wind. The company is building large-scale wind farms off the Atlantic coast to "fuel the future, naturally."

"To me, everything about this is exciting," he said. "It will lower our carbon emissions and is a part of the new green technology. Generations from now will set the standards for the U.S. It's thrilling." 🌍

forward **MARCH**

From basketball to business standout,
Bryan Chapman '03 keeps his eye on the ball

BY JANET GIBSON

It's ironic that we catch up with **Bryan Chapman** as he drives one of his two sons back home from basketball practice. Following in his dad's footsteps?

Chapman is perhaps best remembered as one of Fayetteville State University's all-time greatest basketball players. The forward/guard amassed a total of 1,559 points in his career, ranking him as one of the top scorers in program history. In 2021, Bryan Chapman was inducted into FSU's Hall of Fame.

Chapman's Fayetteville State journey began in 1999, when he was recruited as a star high school athlete out of New Jersey. Over the next four years, not only would he excel on the basketball court, but also in the classroom as a four-year Chancellor's Scholarship recipient. He graduated with Honors.



Bryan Chapman. Photo courtesy of Mr. Chapman.

"I came to FSU focused on playing ball and earning my degree," he said. "I left the University with a wealth of knowledge, lifelong friends and a confidence in myself of who I am and what I can accomplish in life."

With gratitude and passion, Chapman reminisces about first discovering the thrill of the HBCU experience as a shy and quiet kid. Indeed – combined with his strong Christian faith and a loving, supportive family – FSU was key to his growth. Now 43, he is a father, husband, son, brother, successful corporate leader and role model, giving back to both his alma mater and community.

After graduating from FSU in 2003, Chapman returned to New Jersey, worked in management positions and earned his MBA from Centenary College of New Jersey. But the lure of warmer weather – and the right career

opportunity – would bring him back to North Carolina in 2008.

He was offered a management position at VF Corporation, now Kontoor Brands, Inc., at their global headquarters in Greensboro. Kontoor is a maker of lifestyle apparel under the Lee, Wrangler and Rock and Republic brands.

Chapman has steadily worked his way up the ranks and is now Senior Vice President for Wrangler. Just like when he was captain of the FSU basketball Broncos, he is known for inspiring people, leading teams and driving results – and as a champion for inclusion.

Fayetteville State is never far from his mind.

"I am proud to see the growth in the University and the investments to upgrade facilities and curriculum that continue to promote innovative thoughts and ideas," Chapman said. "I encourage all FSU alum to support and give back to their alma mater."

"Think of your time in college," he continued, "and how today you can help a current student find their way. That little support can help these students leave FSU feeling like their college years were the best and most fruitful times of their life, as you did. I will always support Fayetteville State – and I am grateful for what the school has done for me. And always—ATTITUDE CHECK, BRONCO PRIDE!"

He makes time to give back to his adopted Triad hometown with his leadership involvement in the local community. Bryan serves on the Board of Directors for Big Brothers, Big Sisters of Central Piedmont; and as a Foundation Board member at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Bryan also continues

to have an impact in the sport that brought him to FSU as he just completed his 3rd season as the Boys Middle School Head Basketball Coach at Revolution Academy; where he's been able to coach his two boys.

Chapman is quick to point out that his foundations are faith, family, sports and FSU.

"My faith is extremely important to me." Chapman is an active member at his church, Calvary Christian Center. "I thank God for His blessings and favor. All glory goes to Him and I'm just overwhelmingly thankful for all He's done in my life," he said.

He is the proud son of Stanley Chapman, Jr and Francine Chapman, has three siblings, brothers Shawn and Kevin and sister Tianna. Bryan resides in the Greensboro area with his lovely and talented wife, Destiny, and their sons Bryce and Lance, who are both great athletes – and students.

Bryan Chapman's company, Kontoor, Inc., offers to college students a robust and paid summer internship program that touches on various aspects of the business – design, marketing, finance, sales and merchandising. "I can't wait to have more FSU students apply," Chapman said. 🌐



Flashbacks of FSU basketball days, 1999-2000. Photo courtesy of FSU Archives.

breaking BARRIERS



Dr. Mary Pohlmann '64, the first white student at FSU, zeroes in on donating \$100,000 to the University

BY JANET GIBSON

Dr. Mary M. Pohlmann, now and then.
Photos courtesy of Dr. Mary Pohlmann.

As an 18-year-old military bride, **Mary Pohlmann** marched up to the administrative office at then Fayetteville State College in August 1963 and asked matter-of-factly, "Do you accept white students?"

A woman working behind the desk was speechless. A man standing next to Pohlmann, unbeknownst to her, was President of the University, **Dr. Rudolph Jones**.

"Actually, under the circumstances, I don't see how we can say no," she remembers him responding.

It was the height of the civil rights movement. Black students had already staged sit-ins, including FSU students at a lunch counter

in downtown Fayetteville. By month's end, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. would deliver his "I Have A Dream" speech during the March on Washington.

Through tumultuous times, Mary Pohlmann found herself the subject of "integration" headlines in the local press, but only felt a caring community at Fayetteville State – and the support of her fellow biology students and professors. She made straight A's her fall semester. She also fulfilled a promise to her father.

An enlisted soldier who believed in the value of education, he wasn't pleased that the oldest of his five children had gotten married at 18 to a private in the U.S. Army. She had shown so much potential, graduating from high school

"I don't know where I would be had I not been able to finish my bachelor's degree at Fayetteville State."

— Dr. Mary M. Pohlmann, '64, BS Biology, who went on to earn master's, doctorate and medical degrees

at 16 in San Antonio, and having completed several college classes, but still had 41 credit hours to go. She vowed to finish her degree. In May 1964, Pohlmann earned her bachelor's degree in biology, the first in her family to go to college. She was nearly nine months pregnant.

"So I stood out in more ways than one," she quipped.

Pohlmann and her husband lived in a tiny duplex off Murchison Road, a bus ride to campus. "We took out a loan from the Fort Bragg Credit Union to pay for my books," she recalled. "I don't know where I would be had I not been able to finish my bachelor's degree at Fayetteville State."

After later moving to Missouri and then Illinois, she would encounter some resistance to being hired in biological labs, but remained undeterred. "I grew up in a time when women were asked if they could type," she said. Or they became teachers. Even though she didn't think she wanted a career in education, she ended up being a high school biology teacher – and enjoyed it – and also worked for a university.

She went on to earn her master's and doctorate degrees and enrolled in medical school at age 35 when her two daughters were teenag-



Flashbacks to Fayetteville State days, 1963–64.



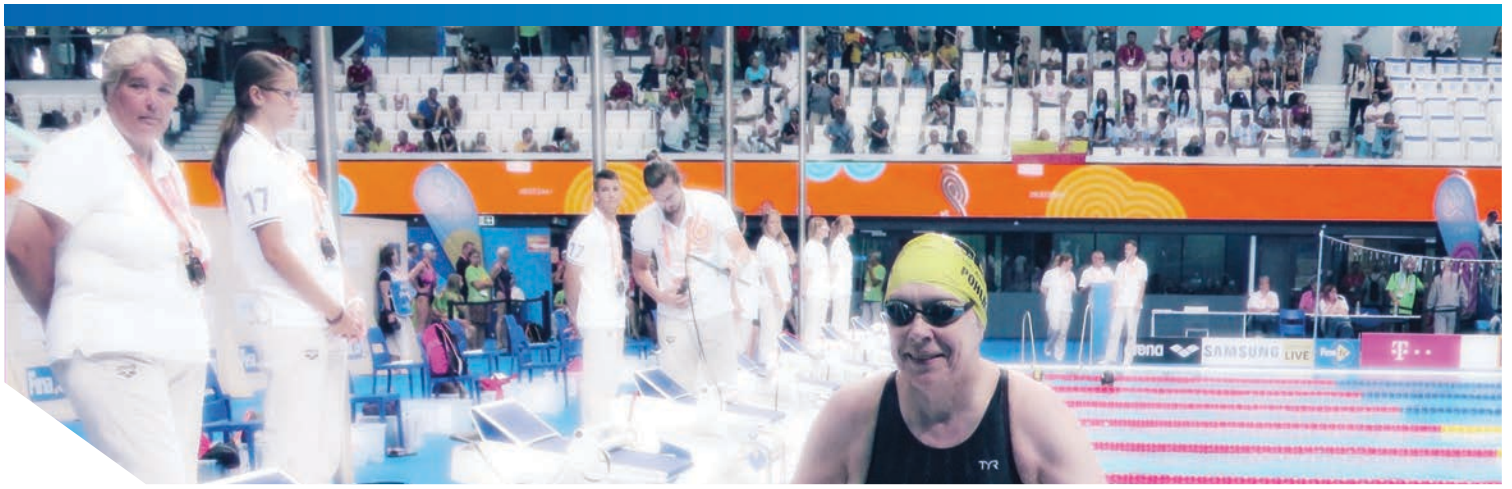
Pohlmann works alongside fellow biology students.

ers. She would practice medicine and direct a health center for some 22 years.

Dr. Pohlmann's gratitude to FSU for giving her the foundation extends far beyond words.

To date, she has personally given \$81,800 toward scholarships, with a goal to reach \$100,000 in donations. One of the scholarships honors and memorializes a biology professor who had a profound effect on her, **Dr. Joseph Knuckles**.

She first announced the establishment of the scholarship when she was the keynote speaker during Founders Day in 1999.



A swimmer since she was 9 months old and competing since age 5 – she is now 80 – Dr. Mary Pohlmann is still dedicated to the sport, competes and places nationally. She rises at 5 most mornings to swim in a pool at Southern Illinois University, near her Carbondale home, and was recently inducted into the Illinois Masters Swimming Hall of Fame.

“Dr. Joseph Knuckles taught me and his other students to expect greatness of ourselves,” she told the audience. “He set high standards with the expectation that we could achieve those standards. Even when we failed at our initial attempts, he urged us on. He never told us that the goal was easy, rather that the goal was achievable.”

More recently, in 2024, Dr. Pohlmann returned to campus for her class’s 60th reunion and Homecoming festivities. She is in awe of the growth and beauty of campus.

Still active and determined as ever, kind of like that 18-year-old girl so many decades ago, Dr. Pohlmann, now 80, is a nationally ranked swimmer, and past swimming instructor, who was recently inducted in the Illinois Masters Swimming Hall of Fame. She begins most days at the crack of dawn in the pool at Southern Illinois University. She lives nearby with her husband of 62 years, John, now a retired professor.

“We actually met at a swimming pool,” she laughs. “I mean, where else?” 🏊

MEMORY

THE DAY TIME STOOD STILL, NOVEMBER 22, 1963

“I’m sure you also remember where you were and what you were doing when you heard the news. . . . I was listening to my car radio, while eating lunch in my 1956 Chevy, parked behind the Taylor Science Hall. I couldn’t believe the news, and I went back into the science building where everyone was watching the television. When President John F. Kennedy was pronounced dead, we all went to the flagpole in front of the Administration building. I don’t know how we knew to meet there, but we all held hands and sang, ‘The Battle Hymn of the Republic.’ Without a doubt, that was one of the most moving experiences of my life.”

— Dr. Mary M. Pohlmann



CELEBRATE FSU'S FOUNDING LEGACY

Your \$250 Gift Makes Twice the Impact Through the **7 for 7 Campaign**

Fayetteville State University proudly launched the *7 for 7 Campaign*—a tribute to the visionary seven founders who laid the cornerstone of our beloved institution—along with the renaming of the buildings. With a minimum gift of \$250, donors will be personally recognized in a high-traffic area on campus, becoming a permanent part of FSU's living history.

More than a donation, your contribution helps propel FSU toward 7% alumni giving rate. At the writing of this Bronco Pride Magazine, alumni participation had already exceeded a record of 5 percent last fiscal year. Alumni participation represents the number of alumni who provide financial support to Fayetteville State University. So, if you have not given since June 30, 2024, your gift of any size will impact alumni participation. In addition to the necessary financial support your gift provides, it also informs potential supporters, such as foundations and corporations, that you believe that your alma mater is a worthy investment. While alumni participation is confined to a fiscal year, the *7 for 7 Campaign* will continue through Founders Day 2026.

Please make your gift now and take advantage of this opportunity to Celebrate the past. Support the present. Pave the future.



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