

WAKEFOREST

MAGAZINE

SUMMER 2026



A Legacy of Transformational Opportunity

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ON THE COVER

Cut paper art by Owen Gildersleeve

FROM *The* PRESIDENT

FIVE YEARS AGO, it was the honor of my career to join Wake Forest as the University's 14th President.

Much has changed since July 2021. We navigated out of the COVID-19 pandemic with compassion and thoughtful action and entered into a reinvigorated era of research, innovation and leadership, embracing bold ways to live into our Pro Humanitate motto. With all that is new and exciting about our University's momentum, we have also preserved and nurtured our most cherished traditions: our belief in the continued vitality of the liberal arts, our commitment to philanthropy and community, our culture of conversation powered by our hallmark friendliness and honor.

At this year's Founders Day ceremony, I shared my deepest wishes for the future of Wake Forest. I hope we remain a University passionately focused on purposeful excellence — driven not just to discover, but to do good. It is my wish that we stay forever open-hearted, seeking new ways to fully embody our sacred motto, while remaining honest and courageous as we write our next chapters.



I will forever be indebted to this unrivaled community. I am grateful for the students who inspired me daily, the faculty and staff who advocated for the institution they love, and the families, trustees and alumni who invested their time and talents in our shared success. Each of you has shown me what it truly means to live, learn and work for humanity. You are the heart of this University, and **you will** ensure that our mission endures, vibrant and world-changing.

And, as I prepare to transition out of this role and into the next, there is *still* no place I would rather serve than Wake Forest University. I remain as energized as ever for the future of Wake Forest — as we continue this journey of learning, discovery and new beginnings.

Sincerely,

Susan R. Wente, Ph.D.



Build ing on a Legacy of Opportunity

By Kelly Greene ('91)

Cut paper
art by Owen
Gildersleeve

The North Carolina Gateway to
Wake Forest extends a longstanding
tradition of financial support
for worthy students.

Last September,

Wake Forest made a life-changing promise: free tuition for North Carolina students whose families make less than \$200,000 a year.

An avalanche of response followed. Proud alumni praised their alma mater through email and social media, enthusiastically spreading the news to high school students in their orbits. Applications from North Carolinians soared more than 75% from the previous year.

The initiative is momentous, but the spirit behind it is nothing new to Wake Forest. Paving the way and paying it forward are among the University's longest running traditions.

Back in 1834, the very first Wake Forest students worked up to three hours a day in exchange for a tuition credit. While technically not a scholarship, this early "work-study" made education accessible for young men who otherwise could not afford it. For many decades, tuition was waived for ministerial students. The first Wake Forest students' access to opportunity came at the expense of others', with at least one early bequest including the sale of enslaved people.

Donors have created and funded more than 1,000 scholarships throughout Wake Forest's history —

and North Carolina students have disproportionately benefited. In the most recent academic year, the 16% of undergraduates who hailed from North Carolina received 32% of all scholarship dollars.

Now, the North Carolina Gateway could extend financial aid to more students in Wake Forest's home state than ever before. The biggest beneficiaries are students from middle-income families, who often don't have access to federal financial aid but who would have struggled to afford tuition on their own.

Expanding access to opportunity to all students has been a priority for President Susan R. Wentz since her arrival in 2021. She kicked off her inauguration by announcing the For Humanity scholarship initiative. The Gateway initiative "says clearly to students and families who may not have considered Wake Forest because of cost: 'Wake Forest is within your reach,'" Wentz said.

Here are some significant moments in the history of Wake Forest scholarships.



1834



THE WAKE FOREST MANUAL LABOR INSTITUTE starts holding classes on land bought by the State Baptist Convention in Wake Forest, North Carolina. Students are required to perform **three hours of manual labor a day to keep tuition low**. Students must be at least 12 years old, male and provide their own axe, hoe, sheets and towels.

1836

JOHN BLOUNT, a planter in Edenton, North Carolina, dies, leaving what's believed to be the first bequest to Wake Forest. His will provides an "endowment for the education, at Wake Forest

Institute, of 'poor and indigent young men destined for the ministry,'" according to the "History of Wake Forest College, Vol. I, 1834-1865." Blount's land and enslaved people are sold in 1860, after his wife's death, to fund that endowment. Most of the proceeds are invested in Confederate bonds, rendered virtually worthless after the Civil War.



An early view of the original campus



OLD BUILDING, WAKE FOREST COLLEGE, 1865-1888.

DAILY SENTINEL.

"I WOULD RATHER BE RIGHT THAN BE PRESIDENT."—Henry Clay.

VOL. I. RALEIGH, MONDAY, DECEMBER 4, 1865. NO. 100.

Wake Forest College.

THE EXERCISES OF THIS COLLEGE will be resumed on Friday, the 12th of January, 1866. Students of all grades—Academic as well as Collegiate—will be admitted. For circulars containing particulars, address

REV. W. ROYALL, Secretary of Faculty,
Forestville, N. C.

November 28-95-6w.

1875

JAMES W. DENMARK, a Civil War veteran and Wake Forest student, starts what is possibly the first **college loan fund** in the United States. "Mr. Denmark had come to know the need of such a fund from the difficulty he had and saw other young men having in their efforts to get an education," G.W. Paschal wrote in "A History of Wake Forest College, Vol. II, 1865-1905." Denmark rallies faculty, townspeople and students to make small contributions to aid needy students. The fund, an independent nonprofit, at first functions mainly as a revolving loan fund, since it has no endowment. In the 1950s, the fund's governing documents are amended to let it lend to women attending Wake Forest — and to formally limit its purpose to making loans, not grants. When Wake Forest shifts its financial aid to grants from loans in the 2020s, the fund's board of directors, largely made up of Wake Forest administrators, faculty and retirees, win court approval to expand its scope again.

They start providing scholarship support to Wake Forest undergraduates, update the name to the **James W. Denmark Loan and Scholarship Fund Inc.**, and, in the 2024-25 and 2025-26 academic years, grant 15 students a year scholarships totalling about \$355,000.



1920s

LOCAL FAMILIES and Baptist organizations start small, dedicated funds to support students entering the ministry or those from specific North Carolina counties.



1951

WAKE FOREST starts hosting a U.S. **Army ROTC** program, which pays tuition and fees in exchange for a commitment to serve in the military after graduation.

1954

COL. GEORGE FOSTER HANKINS (1902, LL.D. '52) of Lexington, North Carolina, dies, leaving an estate worth \$1 million (about \$12.5 million in today's dollars) to create a scholarship fund focused on students with need and merit. When President Harold W. Tribble (LL.D. '48, P '55) asks Hankins for a donation toward building the Winston-Salem campus, he says he would rather help educate students. In the 2025-26 academic year, 47 students receive \$392,794 in Hankins grants.





Nancy Susan Reynolds (L.H.D. '67), daughter of R.J. Reynolds, stands beside a portrait of Z. Smith Reynolds. Below, she receives the Medallion of Merit, the University's highest honor, at the 1980 Founders Day Convocation. Her son, Smith Bagley, stands behind her. Clara H. Carswell, below left, sits under a portrait of her husband, Guy T. Carswell (1922, LL.D. '62).

1966

GUY T. CARSWELL (1922, LL.D. '62), dies, leaving the University \$1.3 million to create the Carswell Scholarship program. During his lifetime, the Charlotte attorney and his wife, Clara H. Carswell, already had helped many individual Wake Forest students with the cost of their education. Starting in 1968, the scholarship at first pays students' full tuition; today, up to five Carswell Scholarships cover the full cost of attendance and summer grants.



1982

THE Z. SMITH REYNOLDS FOUNDATION announces a \$1.5 million gift to create the Reynolds Scholarship program to draw highly qualified students from across the country. Today's qualifications for **Nancy Susan Reynolds Scholars** read that they "must be not only excellent students and promising scholars, but also creative leaders who are able

to influence others in directions likely to benefit society. They will have achieved unusual distinction in the classroom and beyond." Up to five incoming students each year receive the full cost of attendance and summer grants. One of the first Reynolds Scholars that fall is Rogan Kersh ('86), who goes on to become provost, from 2012 to 2022.

Reflecting on Opportunity

By Rogan Kersh ('86)

Editor's note: Rogan Kersh ('86), one of the University's first Reynolds Scholars, went on to become its provost for a decade. He shared this piece, titled "In Retrospect: 'My Own Personal Wake Forest,'" in "The History of Wake Forest University, Volume V (1967-1983)," by Provost Emeritus Edwin Graves Wilson ('43, P '91, '93).

My first moments as a Wake Forest aspirant were spent in the inspiring company of President James Ralph Scales. It was February 1982: the first cohort of Reynolds Scholarship seekers was gathered in the Autumn Room, a small dining area down the hall from the Magnolia Room. I'd arrived a half-day late, owing to a high-school symphony competition, and slipped in anxiously to join my

fourteen fellow finalists. President Scales had just begun to address the group when I arrived, and paused as I clattered in, trailing my father's old suitcase.

As a college administrator myself now, I can readily imagine a number of reactions to a tardy, disheveled student's interruption: a light joke at the entrant's expense; irritation perhaps; or at best ignoring the intrusion altogether. Mr. Scales, as he later insisted I (and every other student he spoke with) call him, took none of these all-too-human routes. Instead he fixed me with a kindly, welcoming smile, just long enough to reassure me but not to mark the moment as disruptive. And then back to his talk, a moving account of what the University meant to him, and how he hoped we each would come to embrace "your own personal Wake Forest." He spoke without notes, as I recall, and was so absorbing that my apprehension and self-consciousness faded away completely. Talking informally afterwards, other finalists had the same experience: in a 15-minute transfiguration, Mr. Scales turned us all from a collection of nerve-wracked high schoolers into young men and women worthy of Wake Forest.

That at once powerful and gentle touch was sustained throughout the Reynolds interview weekend. Tom Phillips's constant encouraging



The first Reynolds Scholars, from left, are Jeannette Sorrell ('86), Brian Rollfinke ('86), Laura Novatny West ('86) and Rogan Kersh ('86).

good cheer, Ed and Emily Wilson generously opening their home to the lot of us for dinner, Peggy Smith guiding us patiently through Reynolda House's stunning American art collection, Jim Barefield pointing out the high notes of a WFU semester in Venice — on an immense map, displayed upside down (he blamed the map-holders — who, as a pair of hearty Wake juniors, seemed to us impossibly suave and sophisticated): all these encounters felt more like a family gathering than a scholarly inquisition.

Driving home to the Western North Carolina mountains, fond visions of Deacon-hood danced in my head. I had a Morehead Scholarship interview a week later in Chapel Hill; Wake Forest's Dean Tom Mullen, another warmly welcoming familial figure during the Reynolds interviews, suggested I stop by and say hello on the trip back from UNC. He and Bill Starling, the much-beloved admissions director, were standing on the Reynolda Hall steps as I pulled up. From somewhere Dean Mullen produced a clutch of farm-fresh eggs, further cementing my impression of Wake Forest as the most wonderfully intimate, personable institution of higher learning imaginable. We talked a half-hour, in that painterly late-afternoon Winston-Salem sunlight. "We hope you'll join us in the fall," Mullen said by way of parting; it seemed more a benediction than a recruitment pitch.

And so I did, to my lifelong benefit. For me the deal was sealed with Mr. Scales's smile — my version of 'you had me at hello.' The rest of the weekend, and indeed the four incomparably memorable years that followed, were an extended confirmation of that essential warmth, understanding, and instillation of confidence. Thus began my own, yes, "personal Wake Forest."



Wake Forest's original campus

1983

THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

starts a scholarship program using some of the funds received from North Carolina Baptist churches. They name it

for **William Louis Poteat (1877, MA 1889, P 1906)**, president from 1905-27. Poteat was a prominent Baptist leader and an innovative biology professor who helped defeat state legislation that would have prevented teaching evolution.

The University awards at least \$1,500 to one student from each of North Carolina's 11 congressional districts. Recipients must be active members of Baptist churches in North Carolina who are likely to make "a significant contribution to church and society." Donors go on to establish 17 other individual



scholarships to supplement the Poteat Scholars program. The award now goes to up to 20 students a year. (The University made a formal break from the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina in 1986; the Poteat Scholarship remains.)

1986

THE JOSEPH G. GORDON SCHOLARSHIP is awarded for the first time, providing the full cost of attendance and summer grants for up to five students a year who show exceptional

promise and achievement. The scholarship, established by the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation, is named in honor of Dr. Joseph G. Gordon, the first Black faculty member at what is now Wake Forest University School of Medicine.





Anita Ostrovsky ('13), right, was a Presidential Scholar in Theatre who also studied ballet. Presidential Scholar Martha Napier Nippert ('07), below, paints in a studio at Scales Fine Arts Center.

1987

TWO BROTHERS, Lewis R. Holding and Frank B. Holding ('52, LL.D. '09), create the **Robert P. Holding Scholarship** to honor their father and older brother, both of whom were Wake Forest alumni. The scholarship is established for North Carolinians, especially those from the eastern part of the state, in the hopes of their return to their community to make it a better place. Robert P. Holding Sr. (1916, JD 1917, LL.D. '57, P '48, '52) was a native of Wake Forest who built First-Citizens Bank & Trust Co. into a major regional financial institution. Robert P. Holding Jr. ('48, P '91), followed in his footsteps as the bank's chairman until his death in 1979 at age 54. Several of the patriarch's great grandchildren are continuing the

family legacy as Wake Forest alumni and are engaged with the Holding Scholarship. Led by Frank B. Holding Jr., a University trustee, the Holding family is adding contributions to their fund to support the North Carolina Gateway.

THE PRESIDENTIAL SCHOLARSHIP FOR DISTINGUISHED ACHIEVEMENT is created to attract about 20 students a year with outstanding talents, such as art, dance, theater, music and debate. Major gifts, including \$250,000 from the Annenberg Foundation in 2002, have supported the scholarship over time.



When President Harold W. Tribble (LL.D. '48, P'55) asks Col. George Foster Hankins (1902, LL.D. '52) for a donation toward building the Winston-Salem campus, he says he would rather help educate students.

1990

NEIGHBORING GRAYLYN ESTATE, now a historic hotel, establishes the **Graylyn Scholarship**, a merit-based award providing the full cost of attendance each year to one student demonstrating exemplary leadership and academic excellence.



2000

WILLIAM "KEITH" STAMEY ('59), president of Stamey's Barbecue Inc. of Greensboro, North Carolina, dies, leaving more than \$7.3 million to establish a need-based scholarship for students from North Carolina and adjoining states. As of 2025-26, nearly \$7.7 million has been awarded to more than 200 recipients.



2000

AN ANONYMOUS DONOR gives \$4 million to create the **Wake Forest Heritage Scholars**. This scholarship, based on merit and need, helps low-to-middle income students from rural areas

or small towns, or first-generation college students. The scholars receive up to three-fourths of total tuition and other expenses. Among their alumni are a Rhodes Scholar and three Fulbright scholars; one-third have earned advanced degrees. In 2021, after his retirement, Peter Weigl, professor emeritus of biology, and his wife, Ann Weigl (Ph.D. '80), reveal that they are the donors.

No person has been a more generous benefactor than Porter B. Byrum (JD '42), whose lifetime giving to Wake Forest totaled more than \$120 million.

2009

THE MAGNOLIA SCHOLARS

program is established, in part with a gift from Dr. Steven Scott (P '97, '00) and Becky Scott (P '97, '00) to provide first-generation students financial and academic aid. The program has since helped hundreds of students. Today, at least 28 endowed funds support Magnolia Scholars.



Porter B. Byrum (JD '42), above and right



2011

THE WAKE FOREST SCHOLARS

program begins as part of the “Wake Will Lead” campaign. It is designed primarily to help middle-income students.

CHARLOTTE ATTORNEY, BUSINESSMAN and philanthropist Porter B. Byrum (JD '42) makes a landmark donation to create the **Porter B. Byrum Scholarship** for undergraduates with financial need, along with athletic and law scholar-

ships. No person has been a more generous benefactor than Byrum, whose lifetime giving to Wake Forest totaled more than \$120 million. In 2011, he gives Wake Forest \$40 million, the largest donation in its history, with the sale of Park Road Shopping Center in Charlotte. Upon his death in 2017 at age 96, he leaves an additional \$70 million for scholarships. About 1,370 alumni have received undergraduate Byrum awards to date.

2013

THE STAMPS SCHOLARSHIP, made possible through the generosity of E. Roe Stamps IV, his late wife Penny and matching funds from Byrum, covers the full cost of

attendance, an allowance for books and personal expenses, and summer travel or study grants. Wake Forest's Stamps Scholars join a network of about 1,000 current undergraduates round the world.



Coleman Greene ('20) talks with Michael Lamb, senior executive director of the Program for Leadership and Character, outside Reynolda Hall in 2018.

2019

AS PART OF the University's Program for Leadership and Character, 10 incoming first-year students are named as the first class of **Leadership and Character Scholars**. They receive full scholarships, leadership and character programming and service opportunities.

2021

PARENTS' COUNCIL MEMBERS Kevin and Delia Willsey (P '22) make the lead gift to start the **1834 Scholars** program, providing access to students who have demonstrated academic excellence and financial need. The program becomes a philanthropic priority for the Parents' Council, with more than 20 families contributing more than \$6 million to date. The program provides support for 15 students across the classes of 2027, 2028 and 2029.



Nate French ('93, P '23) is executive director of First in the Forest and director of the Magnolia Scholars program.



Among Heritage Scholar alumni are a Rhodes Scholar and three Fulbright scholars; one-third have earned advanced degrees.

2022

PRESIDENT WENTE announces the **For Humanity Scholarship** initiative in her inaugural address. Funders commit more than \$190 million for scholarships and student aid, specifically

targeting students whose families do not qualify for Pell grants but still face significant debt.



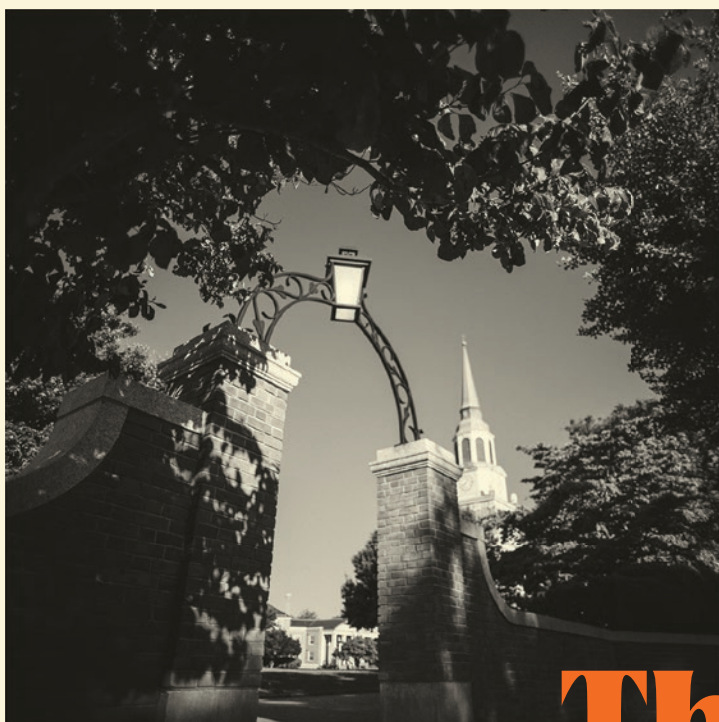
2025

THE NORTH CAROLINA GATEWAY TO WAKE FOREST UNIVERSITY

commits to providing free tuition to incoming undergraduates from North Carolina

whose families make less than \$200,000 a year. For students with family income under \$100,000, financial aid will cover the cost of standard living expenses in addition to tuition. Students in families earning \$200,000 to \$300,000 are eligible for financial aid covering half of their tuition. Vice President for Enrollment Eric Maguire sees the initiative as a way to “allow families to see and understand their likely out-of-pocket costs from the beginning. That level of assurance and transparency will help more North Carolina families envision Wake Forest as a possibility.”

Vice President for Enrollment Eric Maguire sees the North Carolina Gateway as a way to “allow families to see and understand their likely out-of-pocket costs from the beginning. That level of assurance and transparency will help more North Carolina families envision Wake Forest as a possibility.”



2026

FOLLOWING THE ANNOUNCEMENT of the North Carolina Gateway, applications from North Carolina students climb more than 75% from the previous year.

The Future

Historical photos throughout the timeline courtesy of Z. Smith Reynolds Library Special Collections & Archives, "The History of Wake Forest College/University, Vols. I-V" and Digital Forsyth.

COULD THE GATEWAY EXPAND to include neighboring states, or eventually all incoming students? If Wake Forest can hit certain fundraising targets, expansion is possible, according to Wentz and Maguire.



Livings

Scholarships made
Wake Forest possible
for these alumni
from North Carolina

BY KELLY GREENE ('91)

ILLUSTRATIONS BY
JENNY KROIK

Proof



Cy Fogleman ('18) grew up in unincorporated Union Cross, North Carolina, only 15 miles east of Wait Chapel. But he didn't set foot on Wake Forest's campus until his junior year of high school.

When he finally visited for the first time, "I fell in love with it, walking around and talking to the people here. ... I decided I didn't want to go anywhere but Wake." He meant it. He didn't apply to any other schools. But his elation when his early decision application was accepted was diminished by another hurdle: He had no idea how his family would pay for it.



They waited anxiously until that March, when they learned his costs would be almost completely covered by scholarships including the Porter B. Byrum Scholarship, created by a benefactor who was also born in Forsyth County, the youngest of five sons to a Baptist preacher.

Fogleman's younger brother, Joe, will start his first year at Wake Forest in August. This time around, the family knew they could afford it, thanks to the new North Carolina Gateway to Wake Forest, which waives tuition for in-state students with family income of less than \$200,000 a year.

Joe is "so blessed. He would never have been able to come here without that," says Kandis McNeil Fogleman ('19).

She can relate. The Wilkes County native said her acceptance to

Wake Forest didn't feel real until the day she received her financial aid offer. She and Cy met on the first day of a grueling chemistry lab in 2017. They bonded then over the difficulty of the work, and later over a desire to practice medicine in underserved areas like the ones where they grew up. They married in 2019.

The Foglemans are among thousands of students and alumni who have benefited from scholarships to Wake Forest based on merit or need. They experienced how that aid opened doors during their undergraduate years and beyond. And they may be the biggest fans of the North Carolina Gateway, announced last year, pouring out praise for the initiative through letters, social media comments and interviews, and sharing their excitement to see that access expanding more widely, while making it more transparent, for qualified students across the state.

"It's a life changer," says Bryson Rominger ('15), who grew up in Granite Falls, North Carolina, and received aid including the William K. Stamey Scholarship, designated for North Carolina students with financial need. Rominger went on to earn a doctor of dentistry degree from East Carolina University and is expanding the dental practice he bought 15 minutes from his hometown.

"I love Wake Forest, and you hardly ever run into anyone who went there around here," he says. "I hope that in 20 years I'm meeting many more Wake grads in small towns."

Alumni like the Foglemans and Rominger are living proof of the return on investment in North Carolina students. They are providing medical care in rural areas, reviving century-old homes in Raleigh and counseling Greensboro families through legal battles. One alum even returned to Winston-Salem and created a new scholarship at Wake Forest. **Here are a few of their stories.**

Mentoring a legacy

MARYBETH TORBET HAYS ('90, MBA '94)

M

ARYBETH TORBET HAYS ('90, MBA '94) is in her element in the sunny living room of Farrell Hall. She's strategizing with Maria Sanchez (MSM '26) about life after graduation and offering to make introductions to executives in Denver.

Sanchez is the latest recipient of Hays's eponymous scholarship, which she funded with \$1 million in 2019. The Hays Scholarship provides full tuition to a graduate business student each year with strong academic qualifications, often a first-generation college graduate. "I get to know the students, and they keep me current," says Hays, who has more than 25 years of experience in corporate management, board service and consulting in global retail, healthcare and consumer goods. She is also a Wake Forest Trustee and a member of the School of Business Board of Visitors. In May, at the School of Business graduate student hooding ceremony, she received an honorary Doctor of Business Administration degree.

Most Hays scholars have enrolled in the Master of Science in Management, a one-year program designed for students with undergraduate degrees in other fields to gain foundational business education.

Hays is coaching Sanchez on balancing preparation for her future career with a host of other priorities: a full-time courseload, working the third shift at a distribution center to send money to her family in Denver, and also helping to lead business school events.

That juggle is a challenge that Hays knows all too well. In 1986, the Charlotte native yearned to come to Wake Forest, but her parents could pay for UNC-Chapel Hill and no more. Hays chose Wake Forest anyway, and she was awarded a George Foster Hankins Scholarship, designated for North Carolina students who have "great aspirations without financial ability."

“My dream was to fund a series of scholars, mentor them and connect them with each other, in a chain reaching far into the future – first as a peer group and later as a powerful network of Business Deacs.”



“After my parents, Wake Forest has been the single most formative influence in my life,” Hays says, noting that she is the first woman in her immediate family to go to college. When her father went to NC State University, his twin sister stayed home.

Hays threw herself into sociology, women’s studies and campus life. She was student chair of Parents Weekend and Orientation. She helped start the Volunteer Service Corps, including the first Project Pumpkin in 1989. She not only belonged to Thymes Society but was also president of Inter-Society Council, the precursor to the National Panhellenic Conference. And she played the string bass in the University Symphony Orchestra. Hays envisioned a future as a professor researching criminology.

She also took out loans and worked in University Advancement, often writing thank-you notes to donors, and as a mother’s helper for a family she moved in with after graduating in three and a half years. “I couldn’t afford another semester,” she says.

Hays quickly found a job as an administrative assistant and discovered she loved working in an office. “This business thing might be what I want to do,” she remembers thinking.

So, she came back to Wake Forest to earn an MBA, receiving a scholarship named for Charles H. Babcock, who with his wife Mary Reynolds Babcock gave the 350 acres to move the University from Wake Forest to Winston-Salem. Hays also worked as a residence hall director, which provided a place to live and a small food allowance.

Business school provided her with the exposure she was seeking: “I was sitting in a presentation by an alum who worked for Kraft, and I heard what brand management was — and it was like a light bulb went off,” she says. “Then I turned to retail and merchandising, which is close to doing the same thing, working with customers and product.”

Even with the scholarships she earned, Hays left Wake Forest with significant debt from both degrees. She quickly paid it off while climbing through the ranks of several corporate household names. Hanesbrands Inc., her first employer after business school, paid her more than three times what she had made as an administrative assistant. In 2019, she completed her full-time corporate career at Walmart Inc. as executive vice president of two business lines overseeing 63,000 employees and \$85 billion in revenue.



She had planned to make a significant gift to Wake Forest from her deferred compensation plan at some point later in life. But when she left Walmart, she received a payout sooner than expected, spurring her to create a scholarship right away, allowing her to develop relationships with the students who received it.

“It wasn’t a windfall. It was hard-earned money,” she says. “But I got it at a different time than I expected to. So, this was math of the heart.”

As she shared in a 2024 speech at the School of Business: “My dream was to fund a series of scholars, mentor them and connect them with each other, in a chain reaching far into the future — first as a peer group and later as a powerful network of

“It wasn’t a windfall. It was hard-earned money. But I got it at a different time than I expected to. So, this was math of the heart.”

business Deacs. My promise to them is that as long as I am able, they will have one more person in their corner. And after I am not able, they will have each other. My amazing husband, Rick, joins me in mentoring these scholars, gamely pulling back the curtain on the self-described ‘old white guy executive’ culture.”

So far, seven women have received the scholarship. They are building careers in data analytics, product management, consulting and accounting. Hays gathers them through group texts and emails at the beginning of each academic year to welcome the newest scholar and share insights, favorite professors and articles.

She also occasionally hosts them at her Winston-Salem home — the same house where she once worked as a mother’s helper. She has stayed close to the family that sheltered her as a student and young graduate, so when the parents decided to move into a retirement community at the same time she was returning from Arkansas, it felt right to buy the house, she says.

The Hays Scholarship made the MSM program possible for Mikalia Jackson (MSM ’23), a business strategy consultant with Deloitte in Boston. Her father had died unexpectedly shortly after she graduated from Spelman College, changing her family’s financial situation.

“When I met Marybeth, it just felt like I was talking to a family friend. She’s so personable and honest and open,” Jackson says. “I got advice on what to do for the first week of classes, to treat your job search like another class — it helped me along the way. ... And I hope I can contribute to her scholarship fund in the future.”

Saving this old house

ROBERT COX ('09)

GROWING UP IN ASHEBORO, North Carolina, Robert Cox ('09) says that Wake Forest “was always in my life.” His father, Ricky Cox ('76, P '06, '09, '11), a first-generation student who grew up on a farm, came here, and Robert's older brother, Richard Cox Jr. ('06), was already an undergraduate.

Even though Robert Cox loved Wake Forest, he had known “from a really young age that I wanted to do architecture.” (Wake Forest offered architecture courses, but no major.) Cox was so committed to the field that he had taken AP Art History as an independent study in his high school, reading the textbook on his own and meeting with his teacher once a week. So, Cox applied to Wake Forest, because he loved it, but also to schools where he could major in architecture.

The day his Wake Forest acceptance came, Cox remembers sitting in his family's den, on the family computer, and getting a surprise: He had been chosen to receive the Robert P. Holding Scholarship, which is offered each year to one student from North Carolina showing strong academic talent and exceptional leadership — and would cover his tuition. “That made the decision for me,” he says. “It was an incredible opportunity.”

He also remembers the email from then-Dean of Admissions Martha Blevins Allman ('86, MBA '92, P '15, '19) “just saying, ‘Please come.’ It was just a nice, simple, welcoming gesture, just a lovely email. And it made me feel really good about this already easy decision.”

Cox says he doesn't have “the typical full-ride scholarship story.” His dad was a lawyer, and in Asheboro, they were comfortable. Still, “take that same income and plop it down somewhere else, and it would have been a very different story.” Plus, the scholarship meant he could follow his heart to Wake Forest — and still afford graduate school in architecture afterward.

“My parents were definitely ecstatic, and I was, too,” he says.

Cox threw himself into art history as his major, with studio art as his minor, quickly figuring out how to get to Casa Artom in Venice by the second half of his sophomore year and making a “business of art” trip to New York City, where he relished being there “as a grownup” and getting “to see behind all these doors of the art world,” he says.

Harold W. Tribble Professor Emerita of Art Margaret “Peggy” Supplee Smith (P '86) remembers Cox well, starting with his first semester as the

“I have some pretty deep country roots and just sort of a fascination with what the South is, what North Carolina is ...”

lone first-year in her modern architecture class. As she shared in his recommendation letter for graduate school: “He sat in the front row, raised his hand to answer questions at the drop of a hat, and displayed such evident enthusiasm for the topic that his classmates — older and more experienced in classroom reticence — rather quickly embraced him and decided, ‘What the heck, let’s have fun in this class and participate!’”

Cox also explored a wide range of subjects and interests, knowing that he would spend much of architecture school in studios. His favorite class, linguistics, was also the hardest, “but it was so cool and rewarding and fascinating,” he says.

After graduating, he moved home to spend a year applying to architecture schools, substitute teaching by day

and working on his portfolio at night in hopes of returning to New York.

Cox describes his architectural style as “centered in being where I’m from. I have some pretty deep country roots and just sort of a fascination with what the South is, what North Carolina is, and outside of typical notions of what Southern culture is.”

He got into the Columbia University Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation, graduating in 2013 and joining Robert A.M. Stern Architects. He worked on designs for high-rise condos in Manhattan before transitioning to the firm’s single-family studio to design Hamptons mansions for the financial elite. He lived next door to his office on 34th Street in a 1920s apartment building originally meant for department store workers.

He soon married, and North Carolina came calling. In 2018, Cox’s husband was offered the chance to relocate to Raleigh with Credit Suisse. “They made it easy, and I was feeling a little homesick, as much as I love New York,” Cox says. He joined a mid-size local architecture firm that specialized in larger scale work and settled in.

Then the COVID-19 pandemic hit. The couple’s meanderings extended to nearby neighborhoods, “and we kept walking past this house that was really great but obviously needed a lot of love,” he says. When a “for sale” sign went up in June 2020, they bought the 100-year-old home and spent six months doing a full renovation that Cox designed himself.

As friends and neighbors saw his work and started renovating and building their way through the pandemic, too, they clamored for his design help. His portfolio includes magazine-worthy homes from historic Raleigh neighborhoods to coastal communities, many referencing his rural heritage.

Now a parent of two, he went full-time on his own earlier this year. “It feels good to have some ownership in what I do,” he says.



BRYSON ROMINGER ('15) GREW UP IN tiny Granite Falls, North Carolina, northwest of Hickory, where “a lot of kids never applied to Wake Forest, because they couldn’t pay for it,” he says. “I debated it heavily. I visited campus when I was a junior, and I wanted to go there, and then I saw the price tag.”

His high school guidance counselor urged him to apply anyway, telling him, “You never know.” She was right: Most of Rominger’s costs were covered by scholarships for first- or second-generation students or those from North Carolina. Now, as a dentist in Hudson, the town next door, he’s making sure his employees know about the North Carolina Gateway, and he’s encouraging their children to apply.

For him, the advice and mentorship he received sets Wake Forest apart. Even before Rominger set foot in a classroom, a pre-orientation program tailored for students with need-based scholarships pointed him to opportunities he otherwise might have missed, he says. He learned that he could study abroad for about the same cost as a semester in Winston-Salem. So he signed up quickly for the Worrell House in London, expanding his horizons while knocking out three required classes. “I was 19, and I had never been out of my little bubble,” he says.

Next, a professor revolutionized the way he studied. After Rominger made the lowest score on an early test in a genetics class, he went to Pat Lord (Ph.D. '86), a teaching professor in biology who has since retired, for help. “She basically said, ‘If you can’t teach it to somebody else, you don’t really know it,’” he recalls.

Rominger took her advice to heart and revamped his studying strategy, using whiteboards from then on to draw what he was learning, essentially pretending he was leading a class. On the next test, he earned the highest grade.

He recalls moments of awkwardness along the way: Meeting the family who provided one of his scholarships — and realizing their son was his freshman hallmate. “I remember not even knowing where to put your napkin and your silverware,” he says. “There’s a bunch of donors in the room, and you’re feeling like, ‘Am I saying the right things? Am I wearing the right thing?’ ... But we were grateful to be a part of it and grateful that we could share our story,” he says. “Just having those different perspectives and different backgrounds helps a ton, and it’s motivating, in a way.”

He briefly debated between dentistry, which he saw as a way to provide care while using his hands, and teaching, which would allow him to coach basketball. When Nate French ('93, P '23), a teaching professor and executive director of First in the Forest, pointed out that Rominger could become a dentist and coach nights and weekends, the decision was made.

The small-town dentist

French also suggested that Rominger study something he enjoyed along with his pre-dental science requirements. Rominger gravitated to sociology, which led to his spending his senior year researching Medicaid access, including for dental care, in North Carolina counties.

And he discovered another scholarship, the Golden LEAF program. That paid for him to spend his summers shadowing doctors and dentists close to home — which he found much more rewarding than his previous summer job, harvesting blueberries.

He liked how the local dentists he assisted were involved in the community, treating patients from childhood through later life. One dentist he shadowed, J. T. Barker, even joked that when Rominger finished dental school, he should come back and buy Barker's practice in Hudson, next door to Granite Falls.

That's exactly what happened. When Rominger graduated from East Carolina University School of Dental Medicine in 2019, he joined Barker Family Dentistry and bought the practice the following year.

Rominger's doing his part to increase access to care, sparked by his sociology research, through annual mission trips to Guatemala and volunteer work at free local clinics, including in the aftermath of Hurricane Helene.

The best part of his job, he says, is watching his patients grow up. "I don't feel like I've been doing it very long, but there's a little girl who's not so little anymore — she's like 14 or 15 — and she was such a sweet patient," he recalls. "We had to do a couple of fillings on her, and she was brave. She just came in, and she's in high school. And her brother, who started with me in high school, is a teacher!"

At the other end of the spectrum, a 90-year-old patient recently told him, "I'm just happy to have the teeth I have, and he had 30 of his 32 teeth," Rominger says with a laugh. "It's a fun job, and it's really good to get to know entire families."



“I hope that in 20 years I’m meeting many more Wake grads in small towns.”

In dental school, Rominger met his wife Ashley, who grew up in Raleigh. Her grandfather, Bob Northcutt ('58, P '82), gave tours of Wake Forest's original campus and was thrilled to have a new Demon Deacon in the family. Ashley now practices in nearby Hickory, where they live with their 1-year-old son, Tate, whose nearby grandmother takes care of him most afternoons.

After Tate's bedtime, Rominger often spends winter weeknights helping to coach basketball with his former coach, now leading the team at his high school's archrival. Rominger spent more time analyzing film from home last season than at workouts, but he still managed to make it to most of the games.

And now that Wake Forest has expanded its financial aid for North Carolinians, he's cheering on more players to apply.

The family stotop

CY FOGLEMAN ('18) AND
KANDIS MCNEIL FOGLEMAN ('19)

KANDIS MCNEIL FOGLEMAN ('19) was a curious, accomplished student, but she didn't think about education beyond high school — no one in her family had gone to college. That only changed when her high school teachers started encouraging her. Even after she was accepted to Wake Forest, it didn't feel real until the day her financial aid package arrived.

She remembers going to the mailbox at her family's house in Millers Creek, North Carolina (population 1,931), and ripping open the envelope — then running to find her father, who was mowing. "I held the papers up and just stared at him, and he just started crying," she recalls, a tear escaping down her cheek as she recounts the story years later. Kandis had been named a Magnolia Scholar, a program for first-generation college students, and received other grants for students from Wilkes County, where she grew up and wants to return.

Her family wound up paying the equivalent of one semester at Wake Forest across all four years. Through the Magnolia Scholars program, she spent a summer at the University's Flow House in Vienna and went shopping for interview suits.

She and Cy Fogleman ('18) met on the first day of a four-hour-long lab for quantitative analysis. "We just struggled through that lab together, because accuracy mattered," Cy says.

They realized they shared a passion for rural medicine. Kandis wanted to be a doctor people could trust close to home. Cy wanted to reduce the need to drive long distances in emergencies. He saw his own mother fight for her life on the way to the hospital to deliver his premature brother. While visiting the NICU, Cy, then 12 years old, came up with the idea for a nonprofit called "Project Brotherly Love" that to this day provides care packages for families who weren't prepared for an early baby.

He continued his passion for emergency care in college, working for three years on the student rescue squad as an EMT and one year with Forsyth County EMS.

Meanwhile, Kandis pursued research, remembering the special interest she received from Lord, then a biology professor. "She was such a champion

“I held the papers up and just stared at (my dad), and he just started crying,” Kandis recalls, a tear escaping down her cheek as she recounts getting her financial aid package years later.



for people who were first-generation college students, people who she felt were maybe underserved,” Kandis says. “She was just like a mom to me. ... She gave us MCAT books, and she put in so much effort getting us into medical school and was always there for us.”

Lord recalls Kandis’s “diligence, her hard work, her commitment to research. ... It wasn’t like she was just doing this as a check-off so she could apply to medical school. She was totally sincere, saying, ‘I want to be the best doctor I can be. What do I need to do? What do I need to learn?’”

Two weeks after Kandis graduated in 2019, the future doctors married in Wait Chapel. Kandis started medical school at UNC-Chapel Hill that fall,

and Cy joined her a year later as part of the Kenan Rural Scholars program, which provided about two years’ tuition, experience working with rural primary care physicians and rotations in rural hospital settings.

“We feel that our God-given purpose is to truly serve a rural area,” Kandis says.

In between Kandis’s third and fourth years, she earned a master’s in public health degree with a focus on variables that encourage people to go into rural primary care as physicians.

“She is on a mission, and it’s a mission that we need more people to be committed to,” says Lord, the professor. “There are so many rural areas that do not have physicians or hospitals.”

Right before their fourth year, Kandis gave birth to the couple’s son, Rush, now a good-natured two-year-old happy to wander Reynolda Gardens in search of sticks.

When it came time to choose places to “match” for their family medicine residencies, they ranked Wake Forest School of Medicine first, both for its focus on rural medicine and also for its proximity to grandparents — and Wake Forest chose them, too. After graduation in 2027, they hope to land in Wilkes County, providing a full range of local medical care and building a network of support for some of the especially thorny problems they have seen in their rural rotations already, including mental health and addiction recovery and rehabilitation.

“We hope to have a lot to offer with our great training at Wake’s family medicine program and just providing the broadest scope we can, so people don’t have to drive down here as often,” Kandis says.

“Many students think they want to do family medicine or primary care, and their head gets turned by the procedures you can do as an orthopedic surgeon or the lifestyle of a dermatologist,” Lord says. “They have stuck to their intention. That’s Pro Humanitate.”



The debater turned Lawyer

ALEX WHITE ('22)

ALEX WHITE ('22) CAME TO Wake Forest for the first time as a Greensboro, North Carolina, high school student to compete with his debate team. He was invited back for the University's Summer Immersion Program, where he signed up for the Law Institute.

Those two experiences gave him a sense of belonging that he wanted to continue in college. "When I got my Wake acceptance, I was ecstatic, because this institution was like family for me," he says. "And when I got the financial aid package, I realized that I was going to have access to so many opportunities because of Wake — because they saw the potential in me." He started with a Byrum scholarship, earning more grants along the way.

Instead of spending his first year on campus, White went to Copenhagen, Denmark, as one of 16 first-year students in the yearlong "Global Awakenings" program (no longer offered, though semester and summer programs in Copenhagen are available for older students). They developed long lasting friendships while traveling far and wide together in Austria, Italy and Morocco.

The next year's start on the Reynolda campus came as a culture shock, White says, but he made the debate team, which helped him earn an additional scholarship.

White delved into "Kritik," a type of argument that challenges the underlying worldview of the opponent. "It opened my mind to a different way of thinking," he says. He also loved debating issues with professors in his major, politics and international affairs, and feels indebted to Associate Teaching Professor Jack Amoureux, who provided frank feedback on White's personal statement for law school applications.

Amoureux remembers first meeting White in the hallway of the politics department, where they struck up a conversation about political theory. That led to three courses together "and a mentoring relationship that I deeply value," Amoureux says.

White, an avid reader, once stopped by Amoureux's office to tell the professor that he had changed his mind about an opinion he had shared a year earlier after doing more reading and taking another class. "I was struck by how serious and enthusiastic he was about our ongoing conversations and his commitment to the belief that these ideas really matter," Amoureux says.

In White's revised law-school statement, he wrote that studying law was a way to honor his mother's own unfulfilled wish to become an attorney. "She gave so much for me and continues to give so much to me to help me realize my dreams, so I talked about that," he says.

He was accepted at UNC School of Law. He expected to go into corporate

"I wanted to be helping people, and what better way to help people than to focus on the bedrock of our society, which is the family?"

law, so he focused on transactional work in summer internships. But in year three, "I realized that I shouldn't shy away from the skills I developed through Wake, through law school, and just do transactional law," he says. "I wanted to be helping people, and what better way to help people than to focus on the bedrock of our society, which is the family?"



After graduating in May 2025, White joined Cape Fear Family Law in Wilmington, North Carolina. He passed the bar and, last fall, opened a branch of the firm in his hometown of Greensboro. He enjoys counseling clients through the legal process and has a passion for the technical puzzle of distributing assets, he says. "I really like the complexity behind that."

White still feels the pull of Wake Forest, especially the Summer Immersion Program. He stayed connected to it as an undergraduate, supervising students in the debate track. And he would like to go back in the coming years to talk to participants about his new profession. His main message: "It's a lot of work, but every single day, I'm helping people."



SCHOLARSHIP



superstars

When Wake Forest opened the gate, these students were off and running.

By Hatherine Laws Waters ('20)
Photography by Lyndsie Schlink

The day Wake Forest felt real for me came a few weeks after I was accepted, when I noticed an unassuming white envelope on the kitchen island. My hands shook as I opened the financial aid offer. I did the math, and a wave of relief washed over me.

My door to Wake Forest had opened.

Generations of deserving high school students have had versions of that moment – when scholarships unlocked the opportunities that come with a Wake Forest education. Many have gone on to fulfilling lives and careers, often giving back to their communities. Sometimes, their scholarships help them contribute even before they graduate.

Five scholarship students I met this spring have passions and experiences that run the gamut. But they share a sense of gratitude for the gift of time. With financial burdens relieved, they can explore future professions, afford graduate school or give back.

These MVPs have invested themselves in nonprofit work, volunteering with cancer patients and deepening relationships — all before leaving Wake Forest.

HOMETOWN

Colfax, North Carolina

MAJORS

African American Studies and Communication

BEFORE WAKE

A second-grade project about “the mouth” made her realize that many children lack basic necessities, like toothbrushes. So she started Chase’s Chance, a nonprofit that helps young people.

SCHOLARSHIPS INCLUDE

Porter B. Byrum and Zachary T. Smith Leadership scholarships

HOW THEY HELPED

She graduated from college debt-free.

ON CAMPUS

President of Black Student Alliance; President’s Aide; Tour Guide; Resident Adviser; Homecoming Queen; Studied in London and Greece; Host, “chase@wake” podcast

HIGHLIGHT

Clark had no idea how many students she had reached through her “chase@wake” podcast until several Black first-year women stopped her at an orientation event last fall. One told her: “I just wanted to say thank you, because I don’t think I would have looked at Wake (without the podcast).”

WHAT’S NEXT

A summer internship with Tiffany & Co. She also wants to revamp her podcast, continue her nonprofit work and apply to graduate school in hopes of becoming a professor.



CHASE CLARK

★ '26 ★

Finding her voice

From the questioning first-year student walking across the Quad, unsure of herself and her place at this University, to the woman standing before you today, I have found my voice, and I have used it to create a space that I now hold dear.

— Chase Clark’s winning Senior Colloquium oration, an adaptation of Maya Angelou’s (L.H.D. ’77) “I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings”



CLARA AMBROSE

★ '27 ★

Heeding a call to healing

From a young age I thought a lot about morality ... and also about healing and the different forms that healing can take.

— Clara Ambrose on being a pastor's daughter, something that connects her to Porter Byrum (JD '42), her benefactor, who attended Wake Forest tuition-free as the son of a Baptist preacher

HOMETOWN

Nashville, Tennessee

MAJOR

Interdisciplinary Studies in Medical Humanities and Bioethics; minor in Chemistry

BEFORE WAKE

At age 10, Ambrose accompanied her father, a minister, to perform last rites for a woman on her deathbed. It helped spark her interest in a health-care career. "There's just something powerful about being in a place where someone is suffering," she says. "I just felt called to be in those spaces again and just try and care for people."

SCHOLARSHIPS INCLUDE

Porter B. Byrum Scholarship

HOW THEY HELPED

She can apply to medical school with less stress about how to pay for it.

ON CAMPUS

Philanthropy chair for American Cancer Society's CARES program at Atrium Health Wake Forest Baptist; President of Women's Club Ultimate Frisbee; Leads "Dining Dilemmas" campus discussions about bioethics; Studied at the Flow House in Vienna; Researching Christian institutions' belief statements on divisive health issues

HIGHLIGHT

Through her work with the CARES program, Ambrose finds rides and meals for cancer patients. Sometimes, she accompanies them to medical appointments to help ask questions and take notes. That means she's with them when they get both good and bad news.

WHAT'S NEXT

Someday, she wants to open her own practice with discounts for needy patients.

HOMETOWN

Columbia, South Carolina

MAJOR (INTENDED)

Biochemistry and Molecular Biology; minors (intended) in Creative Writing or African American Studies

BEFORE WAKE

Started watching YouTube videos to learn biology in fifth grade

SCHOLARSHIPS INCLUDE

1834 Scholars

HOW THEY HELPED

He could attend a school that lets him take the humanities classes he considers key to developing “critical thinking and empathy” alongside pre-med requirements.

ON CAMPUS

He writes short stories and poetry on the Z. Smith Reynolds Library’s eighth floor. Recent works include a short

horror story inspired by the “Desperate Housewives” television series.

HIGHLIGHT

Writing 111. Teaching Professor Elisabeth Whitehead says she was struck by “Braylon’s flexibility and confidence as a writer. He approaches his writing as an exploration, giving his work great depth and nuance.”

WHAT’S NEXT

Shadowing doctors and researching with professors



BRAYLON WITCHER

★ '29 ★

Developing the head and the heart

I don't want my impact in the world to just be like: I lived, I did the job, and then I died. ... I want to have an effect on people's lives, help others and do good to the world.

— Braylon Witcher on what keeps him working toward a healthcare career



NICK CLARK

★ '26 ★

Returning the investment

I've been able to be a part of really cool things on campus and off campus because people gave in order for me to be able to come. ... My goal in life is not just to become the most wealthy 'finance person' I can possibly become, but also to use whatever gifts — if they end up being in finance or not — for the good of the world.

— Nick Clark's take on Pro Humanitate in his career

HOMETOWN

Gibsonville, North Carolina

MAJOR

Finance; minor in Entrepreneurship

BEFORE WAKE

Clark grew up going to almost every home football game with his family: dad William Clark ('96, MAEd '97), a Demon Deacons tight end; mom Holly Litten Clark ('97), a cheerleader; sister Emily Clark ('24) and younger brother Nathan.

SCHOLARSHIPS INCLUDE

Horton Family and Poteat scholarships

HOW THEY HELPED

He spent a summer studying in Salamanca, Spain, and two weeks hiking the Camino de Santiago with an entrepreneurship course.

ON CAMPUS

At football games, he and his buddies developed a ritual of showing up early to cheer from the front row, often painting their chests gold and black. He regularly invited friends, mentors and younger students to coffee and

lunch — something he says he had time to do since he didn't have to cram a job into his day.

HIGHLIGHT

A weekly coffee group of mostly retired faculty and staff, hosted by Bob Baker (P '00), a former senior associate vice president of University development. Clark soaked up their wisdom and stories of Wake Forest from decades ago.

WHAT'S NEXT

Working in Philadelphia for LLR Partners, the private equity firm he interned with last summer

HOMETOWN

Wilkesboro, North Carolina

MAJOR

Health and Exercise Science; minors in Biology, Chemistry and Psychology

SCHOLARSHIPS INCLUDE

Roena B. and Petro Kulynych, Albert and Elizabeth Butler and Vannoy Construction scholarships

HOW THEY HELPED

Higginbotham worked for two years to save up for college and remembers the feeling of instant relief that she wouldn't have to work in college to make ends meet.

ON CAMPUS

Alpha Phi Omega service fraternity. She has volunteered at the Habitat for Humanity ReStore, built beds for local children, donated blood and more. She is also a CNA in a local nursing home.

HIGHLIGHT

When she sees patients' faces light up when she walks in the room, it inspires her to keep working toward becoming a physician associate. "I just really want to be someone that people can rely on," she says.

WHAT'S NEXT

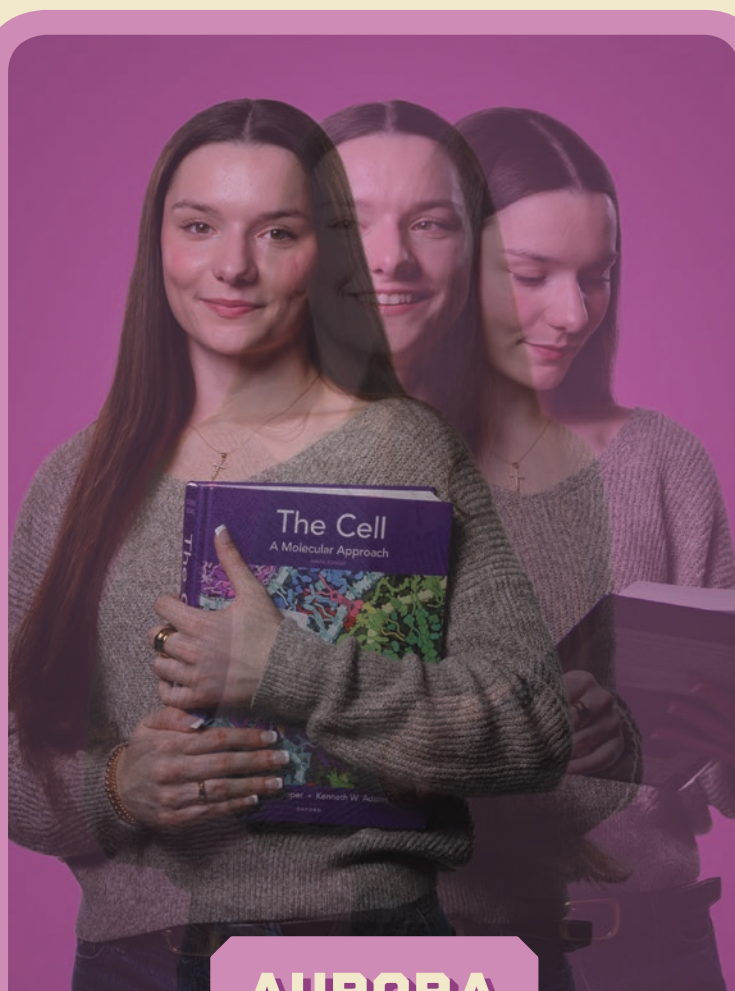
Studying at Casa Artom in Venice this fall



▶ Hear and watch more from the superstars.

The scholarships that I've received are why I'm here and why I feel like I'm doing so well. ... (Without them) I think I would've straight gone to class, done my homework, gone to work, gone to sleep, woken up, gone to class.

— Aurora Higginbotham on how scholarships afforded her time



AURORA HIGGINBOTHAM

★ '28 ★

Getting the gift of time

—
THE
—

PATH

—
SHE
—

WALKED

A scholarship made an undergraduate degree attainable for Wake Forest's first woman president, driving her commitment to increase financial aid and its transparency.

BY KELLY GREENE ('91)



T H R O U G H O U T

Susan R. Wenté's tenure as Wake Forest's 14th president, she has kept the University's focus on increasing access and opportunity for students with financial need.

It started with her inaugural address, when she rolled out the For Humanity scholarship initiative, which would raise more than \$160 million for student financial aid. Next in her tenure, the University launched an "early action" pathway for first-generation students. And in September, Wenté announced the North Carolina Gateway to Wake Forest, which waives tuition for North Carolina students whose families' incomes are less than \$200,000 a year — making it possible for nearby parents who thought the University was too expensive even to consider to send their children here.

For Wenté, also Distinguished University Professor of Biology and Biochemistry, the mission is personal. A scholarship tipped her decision to enroll at a four-year university instead of community college. A caring faculty adviser steered her to work in a research lab. She went on to become an acclaimed scientist studying the pathways between the nucleus and cytoplasm of cells and is the author or co-author of more than 100 peer-reviewed research articles. And in 2021, she became Wake Forest's first woman president.

Kelly Greene ('91), managing editor of Wake Forest Magazine, sat down in February with Wenté, who finishes her presidency June 30, to hear more of her reflections on the importance of access to opportunity in her own life — as well as her hopes and dreams for what it could mean for future generations of Wake Forest students.



K6: Tell me about your own college experience and how it shaped your view on the importance of access and opportunity.

SW: I grew up in a small town, and being able to go to the University of Iowa was not necessarily something that was a given. My dad was an educator. He was the only one of 11 (children) to get a college education and did it on the GI Bill. And so (he was) a nontraditional college student. And my mom went to a hospitalist-based nurses' training program. It was always that we were going to go to college, but there were many different paths that could be.

I was either going to go to the community college, or I was going to go to the University of Iowa. Those were really the only choices that I was con-

sidering when I ruled out that I wasn't going to be a nurse. But getting a scholarship convinced my family that this would be obtainable. I never thought about private schools or private colleges. It just was not even on my radar as an option because of knowing that I would be paying for my education. So I had a scholarship to Iowa that opened that door. I then had Pell Grants; I had loans. I worked multiple jobs the whole way through college.

And because it had become possible for me, I'm very passionate about ensuring that we at Wake Forest make it possible for students to see Wake Forest as an option, to see it as something that they can, no matter what their family's financial background or their family's educational background, that they can see that as an opportunity. I think that I would've had great



opportunities no matter where I went, but that opportunity, the University of Iowa, really opened the door for me.

KG: What were some of your jobs during college?

SW: Oh, the first job I had was in dining. And so I would get up at 4 o'clock in the morning to chop iceberg lettuce. It was the largest garbage can you can imagine, on wheels, full of iceberg lettuce heads. And then there would be

another garbage can lined with a clean bag and a chopper on top of it. So you take each head of lettuce in your hand, slam it down, take the core out, peel off the outside leaves, rinse them off, and then put them in the chopper and chop it. That went into the salad bars for the whole day. And then I would transition from that to doing toast at 7 a.m., where you were in front of this big toaster that went around like a carousel, and you loaded the bread in there, and then it would come out and you'd swab it with butter with a brush. (After

Wente lights a candle with her husband, geneticist Chris Hardy, Ph.D., at the 2024 Lovefeast in Wait Chapel.



I grew up where there was a very strong work ethic. I worked at the A&W restaurant from ninth grade on, detasseled corn, walked soybeans, babysat, mowed lawns. There was nothing you didn't do.

that I would go to) 7:30 a.m. Physical Chemistry or 7:30 Organic Chemistry.

When I was in the second semester of my sophomore year, I met with undergraduate major advisers from many different science departments. When I was meeting with the undergraduate biochemistry adviser, he told me all about the biochemistry undergraduate major program, but then he also took time to ask me about myself and kind of saw me and asked me what I did. And I told him, “Oh, I have a job in dining.” I had some other activities I was involved in, too. But he looked at me, he goes, “We can get you a job in a lab.” And he got up out of his chair, went outside to the bulletin board, pulled off the little paper tab with a phone number on it, called that phone number and said, “Hey, Jeff, do you still have that part-time technician position open in your lab? OK, I’m sending somebody over for you to talk to.”

I quit my dining job, and I started working as a part-time research tech in the lipid core lab for a professor named Jeffrey Field. That was my first opportunity to work on a research project in a lab, and I got paid for it. It was great. So that was my sophomore spring and summer, and I continued doing that. Also, my junior and senior year, I was an RA. And so that got me free room and free board and was wonderful.

I grew up where there was a very strong work ethic. I worked at the A&W restaurant from ninth grade

on, detasseled corn, walked soybeans, babysat, mowed lawns. There was nothing you didn't do. It was both that very strong work ethic as well as serving others, with my mother being a nurse and my dad being an educator. It was all to benefit the community, too.

K6: You unveiled the For Humanity scholarship initiative in your inaugural speech. Why did you lead off your presidency with access and opportunity as a priority for Wake Forest?

SW: One, it's my own personal passion. Two, in terms of my listening and learning about Wake Forest throughout that fall semester, and thinking about how Wake Forest could best position itself to continue competing for the very best students and offering them the very best opportunities, we needed to raise more scholarship funding.

It was something that I heard from listening to others — the passion to increase our representation across the socioeconomic landscape so that we were offering students from all different incomes the opportunity. From all my talks with alumni, from my talks with families, from my talks with students, from my talks with board members, there was such a tremendous enthusiasm for scholarship fundraising. And that's been true at Wake Forest for many, many years.

We attract students who have the talent, the potential, the drive to do good. And we know that the opportunity is not equitably distributed in access to higher education.

KG: You announced the North Carolina Gateway initiative in September. Why did you consider it important to focus on North Carolina students specifically?

SW: We've been talking about a program like this for several years. I'm a scientist, so we've done a lot of data collection analysis, kind of testing the model in regards to what's referred to as an income-guarantee program. We knew other institutions had launched these. We looked at those models to see what impact that had had.

Focusing on North Carolina, it is our home. ... I think we have this responsibility to our hometown, our home state, first. Because North Carolina's been so important to Wake Forest, it was very logical to start it here and ensure that it is successful. ... It's my sincere hope that we continue to raise scholarship fundraising dollars, and we'd be able to offer (this program) to students from any part of the country.

KG: What has the response been like so far?

SW: If I were to choose three words, it's really amazing. It's also very humbling and moving. There are just these really highly talented students with remarkable potential who never would have applied to Wake Forest, who had crossed Wake Forest off the list because the perception was that, from the sticker price, they would not be able to find a path here. And so with the transparency, with the income guaran-



tee, they know immediately what type of aid and what type of scholarship they're going to get.

The application numbers have been through the roof, but it's more the stories that you read in their applications. (Vice President for Enrollment) Eric Maguire shared with me 28 pages of different excerpts from applications where students talked about how learning about the North Carolina Gateway played that key role in terms of having them think about Wake Forest further and then apply.

Applications from North Carolina have increased over 80% over last year. We are incrementally growing enrollment with a strategic plan for thoughtfully expanding, so both of those things are combined.

Wente's presidential portrait, above, was unveiled during Commencement weekend. Wente and Vice President for Campus Life Shea Kidd Brown help greet first-year students and families during move-in in 2023, right.

I've long said, "You make the best discoveries, you are in the best learning environment, when all those who are gathered around the table are from a variety of different experiences."

KG: Were there any stories in the applications from future biochemists that struck you?

SW: I didn't see any in the sciences specifically, but I have met multiple students over the last several years who have said they learned that the president was a woman scientist, and that encouraged them, and I have had parents tell me that they encouraged their daughters to apply.

KG: How do you see need-based scholarships making a difference to the University as a whole?

SW: They're contributing to all the voices on campus, their diversity of perspectives, making the classroom conversations even more meaningful and more vibrant, and really pushing us to think differently about so many aspects of everything that we do. Outstanding students from any background are what we're seeking to bring to our campus. And I've long said, "You make the best discoveries, you are in the best learning environment, when all those who are gathered around the table are from a variety of different experiences."

By having that body of learners, you're going to be even more creative. And there's lots of research that shows teams that are made up of people from very different lived experiences are more creative teams. So one, we're putting those more creative teams in our classrooms and in our residence halls and across everything we do. But also, the faculty get to interact with those students and engage them in research and scholarship and creative expression. And that results in this ecosystem of creativity and innovation that would not be the same if everyone was from the same lived experience and the same background.

KG: How does the need for access and opportunity tie into your focus on expanding research at Wake Forest?

SW: The faculty want a classroom that is vibrant and engaged in many different ways. They're energized by that. Also, our students are partners with our faculty in the research and scholarship work. Some of the very best discoveries I've ever made were (from work) done by students in my research lab. ...

And so as we expand the talent pool from which we are recruiting our students, we are going to be really expanding that opportunity to do the



I do think Wake Forest is very team-oriented, whether that's in athletics or in academics, or even in philanthropy ... because we're focused on the greater good and the success of the greater good.

best scholarship and the best research. The two are intricately connected.

K6: Tell us about the other unique parts of Wake Forest that you have come to love. I'm told you've been a huge fan of the debate team.

SW: I do love the debate team. I think that participation in debate specifically, when you think about it, helps students continue to build so many skills that are fundamental to leading their future lives where they're going to be collaborating (and doing) critical thinking. (It provides) civic preparation. And we have an amazing debate program here. We've had the winningest team in school history during my time here as president. It's also not a secret that I was a high school debater, and it shaped so very much of who I was able to become. That was integral to my making that leap to college.

But I want to be sure that I also say that I love all our teams. I do think Wake Forest is very team oriented, whether that's in athletics or in academics, or even in philanthropy in terms of how we tackle so many challenges as a team, because we're focused on the greater good and the success of the greater good. And I think of Hit the Bricks and the teams that are organized around that. One of my favorite qualities of this community is bringing people together to really be catalysts for good.

K6: Turning to your immediate future, what are you looking forward to in the next year?

SW: I am really looking forward to taking a sabbatical. I plan to do some travel with family, but I also want to find time to really engage on topics that I haven't had as much time to dive into. For example, how to build trust in science and research. What are new partnerships that could be engaged in to ensure a new generation of discovery happens? I'm not going to go back and restart my research lab, which I had transitioned when I moved here





Wente, above, speaks on Aug. 30, 2023, at the Wake the Demons pep rally the night before the first home football game. She laps the Quad during Hit the Bricks on Oct. 1, 2025, left.

to Wake Forest, because I sincerely believe that we should be expending our resources on the next generation, so our assistant professors. But I'm looking forward in that sabbatical time to really thinking about how to really help the next generation of scholars and really think about the current context of trust in science and society.

I'm also very, very committed to helping, as needed, the University leadership transition, wanting to ensure that is as smooth as possible and that our momentum continues. That's been a high priority for me currently, but then also as I think about that road ahead, and then ultimately returning as a faculty member focused on mentoring, on leadership development and continuing my life's passion, which has been to create environments

where others can thrive and discover their passions. And so I'll be focused on how I can continue to play a role in doing that.

K6: What is your hope for future generations of Wake Forest students?

SW: I really hope that every generation of Wake Forest student takes what they learn here and uses it to not only pursue their individual passions, but to live a life of purpose-driven excellence. And that is always underlined by Pro Humanitate — that we graduate leaders with care for integrity and courage.

— *The interview was edited for clarity and brevity.*



Commencement 2026

Becoming Catalysts for Good

By **KELLY GREENE ('91)**

WAKE FOREST SENT the Class of 2026 into its next chapter with a unified challenge: To cultivate the same sense of belonging they felt here for others as they become leaders in the world.

Joseph Vargas ('26), who grew up in Winston-Salem, had 14 family members attending Commencement on May 18 in Hearn Plaza. He spent his time during the line-up before the ceremony reflecting on "all the people that I've met — my friends," he said. "And my family — all

the people it took for me to get here. I didn't do it alone."

President Susan R. Wentz encouraged the graduates to take care of "the most enduring part of your time at Wake Forest ... the relationships you have formed here. The friendships, the mentors, the people who have challenged and supported you most. These connections become foundational for the rest of your life, and these relationships will shape your life in ways that you may not yet see, sustaining

you as you step into what's next.

"You are leaving with the capacity and the responsibility to make a difference, to be catalysts for good, to confront injustice when you encounter it, to embrace the full breadth of our shared humanity and to use what you have learned not only to advance your own success, but in service to others as a commitment to Pro Humanitate."

Commencement speaker Misty Copeland, a ballet dancer, author and



philanthropist who made history as the first Black woman to become principal dancer at the American Ballet Theatre in New York, observed that “leadership is often talked about through achievements and milestones. But I think its deepest impact is measured in the spaces we create for other people to grow, to question, to become and to belong.”

Although her accomplishments are often heralded as groundbreaking firsts, “it rarely feels historic in the moment,” Copeland said. “Mostly it feels uncertain. It feels like showing up every day, wondering if you are enough, wondering if you belong, wondering whether there is room for you in a space that was not built with you in mind.”

She credits one teacher, Cynthia Bradley, who looked for children in communities lacking exposure to ballet — and found Copeland.

“I often think about how easily that moment could have not happened,” she said. “What if someone hadn’t believed kids like me deserved access to the arts? That is part of what Pro Humanity means to me: Using your gifts not only to advance yourself, but to widen the path for others.”

Copeland also noted that when she entered the ballet world at age 13, “my body was different, my background was different, my skin color was

different. ... But eventually I realized that my difference was not the obstacle. Pretending not to be different was,” she said. “You will enter rooms where you feel underestimated or pressured to conform. You may feel tempted to edit yourself in order to make other people comfortable, but the world does not need more people performing perfection. It needs people willing to live truthfully, and living truthfully does not mean you never evolve or grow. It means you stop abandoning yourself in order to belong.”

Wente received an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degree, Copeland received an honorary Doctor of Fine Arts degree and the Baccalaureate speaker, the Rev. Eugene Cho, received an honorary Doctor of Divinity degree. Recipients of honorary degrees at earlier ceremonies were Marybeth Torbet Hays (’90, MBA ’94), University Trustee, corporate board director and former Walmart EVP, a Doctor of Business Administration; and Dr. Julie Freischlag, who retired last year as CEO and chief academic officer of Atrium Health Wake Forest Baptist, chief academic officer and EVP of Advocate Health, and EVP of health affairs at Wake Forest, a Doctor of Science.

Cho, president and CEO of Bread for the World, a nationwide Christian advocacy organization working to end hunger, challenged graduates at the May 17 Baccalaureate service to focus not merely on what they will do, but also on who they are becoming, even as they enter adulthood “at a moment marked by profound challenges and exhaustion in our world,” including wars, polarization, economic anxiety, institutional distrust and artificial intelligence.

Nine graduating ROTC cadets marched onstage and were sworn in as second lieutenants in the Army, receiving a standing ovation.

Student Government President Amaya Williams (’26) said she’s emerging from Wake Forest understanding how the last four years changed her path from law to medicine. “Maybe that’s what these four years were truly about, not arriving as the people we thought we were supposed to be when we were 18 years old, but leaving here more open, more aware, more compassionate, more empathetic and more willing to keep becoming.”

Retiring Faculty

REYNOLDA CAMPUS

Polly W. Black (P ’21), Ph.D., MBA, Associate Teaching Professor of Communication, 16 years

Timothy Davis, J.D., Bess and Walter Williams Professor of Law, 28 years

Pat H. Dickson, Ph.D., Dale and Karen Sisel Professor and Professor of Strategic Management, 19 years

Susan E. Fahrback, Ph.D., Reynolds Professor of Developmental Neuroscience, 22 years

Steven J. Folmar, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Anthropology, 34 years

Joy Gambill, Teaching Librarian, 20 years

Mark A. Hall, J.D., Fred D. and Elizabeth L. Turnage Professor of Law, 22 years

Michael D. Hazen (MA ’71), Ph.D., Professor of Communication, 51 years

Joanne Inkman, Ph.D., Teaching Professor of Music, 32 years

Timothy R. Janke (MBA ’89, P ’07), J.D., LL.M., Professor of the Practice of Business Law, 18 years

Abdessadek Lachgar, Ph.D., Professor of Chemistry, 35 years

Leah P. McCoy, Ed.D., Professor of Education, 36 years

Jonathan P. Pinder (P ’28), Ph.D., Associate Professor of Quantitative Methods and Business Analytics, 35 years

Tim Pyatt, Librarian and Dean of Z. Smith Reynolds Library (2015-2025), 11 years

Dick Schneider, J.D., Professor of Law, 34 years

Margaret Taylor, J.D., Associate Dean of Academic Affairs and Professor of Law, 35 years

Olga L. Valbuena, Ph.D., Associate Professor of English, 30 years

COMMENCEMENT 2026

About **1,200** undergraduate degrees

And **785** advanced degrees

Graduates hailed from **20** countries

And **46** states

Plus Washington, D.C. and Puerto Rico

The class of **2026** was born at the start of the modern tech economy

And crossed the stage **250** years after the signing of the Declaration of Independence.

Opposite page: Commencement speaker Misty Copeland, bottom left; Student Government President Amaya Williams (’26), bottom right



Joseph Vargas (’26)

WAKE FOREST IN THE NEWS

Forbes recognized Wake Forest as one of America's **best large employers** (No. 59 out of 700) and separately as one of 10 schools with the **best "vibe,"** based on its social vibrance, climate-friendly location and selectivity.

The **German Men's National Team** chose Winston-Salem as its home base for the 2026 FIFA World Cup, training at Wake Forest's W. Dennie Spry Soccer Stadium and residing at The **Graylyn Estate**.

Sabin Center Fellow **Claudia Vega's** TED Talk on the hidden cost of buying gold was named one of TED's "10 Ideas Changing the World in 2026."

The **School of Business** was named the No. 13 overall best undergraduate business school and No. 14 for online MBA programs in the Poets & Quants 2026 list.

Nearly 86% of students who studied abroad received credit in the 2023-24 academic year and summer 2024, placing Wake Forest fourth on the list of leading doctoral universities, according to the **Institute of International Education's (IIE) Open Doors 2025 report**, a benchmark for global educational exchange.

Boosting a student's sense of belonging in college can significantly increase their likelihood of earning a degree, Associate Professor of Psychology **Shannon Brady** found in a recent study based on a survey of 21,000 undergraduates enrolled in two- and four-year colleges across the country. The relationship between belonging and graduation held "across different kinds of students and institutions," she says.

CAMPUS MOVES

Stacie Petter was named acting dean of the School of Business through the 2026-27 academic year. Petter is associate provost for Faculty Affairs, the Peter C. Brockway Chair of Strategic Management and professor of Management Information Systems. School of Business Dean Annette Ranft took an advisory role during the spring semester and is on academic sabbatical through the coming academic year.



WAKE FOREST ATHLETICS

Wake Forest and German Men's National Team officials gather at Spry Stadium, left. Students dance through Wake 'N Shake, below. Ecosystem scientist Alan Townsend will lead the Sabin Center, below right.



Nell Jessup Newton will continue serving as interim provost as needed through the 2026-27 academic year, providing continuity during the presidential transition.

Ecosystem scientist **Alan Townsend** was named executive director of the Andrew Sabin Family Center for Environment and Sustainability, starting July 1. Townsend wrote the 2024 book "This Ordinary Stardust" and was dean of the Franke College

of Forestry and Conservation at the University of Montana.

THE QUAD AND BEYOND

The **School of Law** and the **Program for Leadership and Character** received \$5 million from the Kern Family Foundation to expand the role of character-based leadership in legal education. The grant



Earvin "Magic" Johnson chest bumps kids during Face to Face.

will help sustain campus initiatives and pave the way for a network of law schools committed to leadership and character.

The University launched a **Neuroarts Lab** as part of the NeuroArts Blueprint Initiative, a global effort to integrate arts into mainstream medicine. The lab is focused on investigating ways engagement with the arts improves brain health, increasing interdisciplinary partnerships with faculty and developing programs with community and regional partners. Wake Forest has been a pioneer in the emerging field of neuroarts, largely through the work of its co-directors, Reynolds Professor of Dance **Christina Soriano** and Rebecca E. Shaw Professor and Memory Counseling Program Director **Christina Hugenschmidt (Ph.D. '08)**.

President **Susan R. Went**e said at Founders Day that the **University Board of Trustees** approved the next steps forward for a **campus memorial** honoring the enslaved people who worked for, or were sold to benefit, Wake Forest. Designed as an amphitheater and garden near the intersection of Wake Forest Road and Eure

Drive, next to the trail to Reynolda Village, the memorial is intended "to bring people together, to invite all in, to reflect on our past and to learn, to discern, how all can be founders for the future," Went

e said.

Starting in Spring 2027, the University will offer a study away program at **The Pearl** innovation district in Charlotte for sophomores and juniors. The program will integrate academics with professional experience, helping students explore the intersection of business and the liberal arts.

The **School of Law** and **School of Professional Studies** have launched a joint degree, the **Juris Doctor/Master of Health Administration**. The program combines legal education with comprehensive training in healthcare management and is designed for students interested in shaping the future of healthcare policy, administration and law.

The 21st annual **Wake 'N Shake**, a 12-hour dance-a-thon, raised \$353,147 for the Brian Piccolo Cancer Research Fund.

Earvin "Magic" Johnson, above, wrapped up the Face to Face speaker series' fifth season. Coming in the 2026-27 year: "Wicked" star **Cynthia Erivo**, documentary filmmaker **Ken Burns**, hit-show creator **Michael Schur**, chef and chef and restaurateur **José Andrés** and retired professional golfer and golf-course designer **Jack Nicklaus**.

The University Center for Private Business, which works with more than 230 privately owned businesses, has expanded to Asheville, with **Scott Fowler** joining the team as the Western North Carolina market manager.

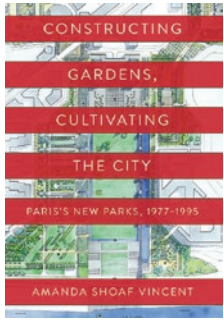
AWARDS, HONORS AND MILESTONES

Eli Leadham ('26) was named a Schwarzman Scholar, one of 150 students worldwide selected to pursue a fully funded master's program in global affairs at Tsinghua University in Beijing. A sociology major from Portland, Oregon, Leadham plans to spend the year advocating for transitional justice and human rights on a global scale.

Laura Malone Elliott ('79), who writes under the name L.M. Elliott, was inducted into the Wake Forest Writers Hall of Fame on Feb. 21 at WordsAwake5!, a daylong conference that featured panels of Wake Forest literati.

Harold W. Tribble Professor of Psychology **Eranda Jayawickreme** received an honorary doctorate from Rector Magnificus Wilco Hazeleger of Utrecht University in recognition of his exceptional contributions to science and society.

Associate Professor of French Studies **Amanda Vincent** won the 2026 Elisabeth



Blair MacDougall Book Award from the Society of Architectural Historians for “Constructing Gardens, Cultivating the City,” recognized as the most distinguished work of

scholarship in the category of the history of landscape architecture or garden design.

The American Society of Civil Engineers named Associate Professor of Engineering and Associate Engineering Chair **Tricia Clayton** a 2026 Fellow, recognizing her years of service shaping civil engineering education nationally.

Assistant Professor of Art **Nikki Moore** was awarded The Dedalus Foundation’s 2026 Senior Fellowship for her book, “Experts in the Fields: Art, Architecture, and Aesthetics at the Mexican Origins of the Global Green Revolution, 1924 – 1972.”

Thurman D. Kitchin Professor of Chemistry **Bruce King (P '20)** was named an American Association for the Advancement of Science Fellow, a lifetime honor.

WFDD, the public radio service of Wake Forest, won a National Edward R. Murrow Award for investigative reporting along with multiple regional awards and Public Media Journalists Association honors.

Wake Forest Magazine won CASE Best of District III awards for 2025 in two categories: General Interest and Single Topic/Special Edition. The magazine was specifically recognized for its Spring 2024 How To Issue and Fall 2024 Photography Issue.

Four statistical sciences faculty members were recognized by the American Statistical Association: **Staci Hepler** won the Caucus for Women in Statistics’ Michael Woodroffe Award; **Sarah Lotspeich** won the Caucus for Women in Statistics’ Societal Impact Award; and **Lucy D’Agostino McGowan** won the Committee of Presidents of Statistical Societies Emerging Leader Award; and **Nicole Dalzell** received the Mu Sigma Rho Early Career Undergraduate Impact Award. **Lotspeich** also was awarded the 2026 ENAR Dionne Price Early Career PIONEER Award in Biostatistics.

Associate Professor of East Asian Languages & Cultures **Qiaona Yu** was elected vice president of the Chinese Language Teachers Association, the largest U.S. organization dedicated exclusively to the study of Chinese language, culture and pedagogy.

Intercultural Center Director **Monique Gore**, Associate Director of Digital Fabrication and Maker Education **Paul Whitener (P '18, '22, '23, '27)**, **Eric Cisneros ('27)** and **Genesis Mark ('27)** were recognized with 2026 “Building the Dream” awards for fostering unity and leadership in Winston-Salem.

Professor of Theatre **J.K. Curry (P '27)** was named Volunteer of the Year by the Twin City Track Club for contributions spanning park cleanups to race-day support.

MEDALLION OF MERIT WINNERS

The Medallion of Merit, the University’s highest honor, was awarded on Founders Day to **Dr. J. Wayne Meredith (MD '78)** and **Dr. Julie A. Freischlag**, two trailblazing physicians who transformed healthcare in North Carolina and raised Wake Forest’s profile as a national leader in medical education and clinical practice.

Dr. Meredith retired in 2024 as chief of clinical chairs at Atrium Health Wake Forest Baptist and chair of surgery at the School of Medicine. During his 36-year University tenure, he started its trauma program and engineered a statewide trauma system, establishing a coordinated network of collaboration among state trauma centers and emergency medical service providers. His innovative approach to trauma-system management became a national model.

Dr. Freischlag retired in December 2025 as CEO and chief academic officer of Atrium Health Wake Forest Baptist, chief academic officer and executive vice president of Advocate Health, and executive vice president of health affairs at Wake Forest. She played a big role in creating a next-generation academic health system with Atrium Health and establishing the School of Medicine campus in Charlotte. Atrium Health Wake Forest Baptist opened a new adult emergency department tower named for her.



PHOTO COURTESY OF WAKE FOREST SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

DEMON DEACON SPORTS

The **men’s tennis team** captured the ACC Championship and made its third consecutive NCAA semifinal appearance. Head Coach Tony Bresky was named ACC Coach of the Year for the fourth time. Mees Rottgering earned ACC Freshman of the Year, and the team racked up five All-ACC teams selections.

A **pedestrian pathway** is under construction to connect Faculty Drive to The Grounds, Allegacy Federal Credit Union



WAKE FOREST ATHLETICS

The men's tennis team captures its fourth ACC Championship.

Stadium, the Lawrence Joel Veterans Memorial Coliseum and other athletic facilities. Working with the North Carolina Department of Transportation, the University is re-engineering the intersection at University Parkway and North Cherry Street to consolidate traffic into a single, signaled crossing with highly visible crosswalks.

Roper Osborne Halverson ('76) and **Herman Eure (Ph.D. '74, P '23)** received the 2025-2026 Trailblazer Award for the lasting impact they have made on Wake Forest. Osborne Halverson competed as a three-sport standout during the mid-1970s and helped create the women's golf program. Eure became the first Black faculty member in 1974.

PGA Tour professional **Cameron Young ('19)** and his wife Kelsey Young endowed a men's golf scholarship in March, shortly after he won the 2026 Players Championship.

The **Wake Forest Dance Team** and the **Spirit of the Old Gold and Black** marching band took top honors in January at the 2026 UCA & UDA College Nationals — Combined for Division IA Game Day LIVE (Dance and Band). And a **scholarship program** for the marching band is starting this fall with up to 50 merit-based awards



Marching band members can get merit-based scholarships starting this fall.

for continuing band members. The goal is to expand the band to 100 members in the next five years.

The **In Her Wake** initiative raised more than \$47.5 million from more than 2,140 donors for Wake Forest women student-athletes as of Feb. 7, its official two-year mark.

Steve Weinman, an NBA front office veteran, was named senior associate athletics

director for analytics and general manager of men's and women's basketball. He is also a School of Business executive affiliate, managing a partnership that aims to develop a sports analytics concentration in the Master's in Business Analytics program.



Read the online version with links to more.



Football great Bob McCreary ('61) turns his passion into a 'triple double' challenge for Wake Forest

By Elaine Tooley

WATCH ONE FOOTBALL GAME with Bob McCreary ('61) and you learn quickly what has driven him for decades. While he watches from the tower that bears his name, he stands, white-knuckling the railing near him, and holds his breath while every play unfolds. At the end of 60 minutes of regulation, he either experiences a searing pain or a pleasure that has him elated. And all of it — his dedication to the game, his investment in the players and his love for his alma mater — is driven by one word: passion.

It's almost an otherworldly passion. One that mixes steep competitiveness, intense focus, an inner drive, determination to improve and a depth of commitment to others. It is what took him from the grit of the gridiron at Wake Forest

to the upper echelons of the international furniture industry. And, it is what continues to inspire Demon Deacon athletics.

In December, Wake Forest announced a transformational \$20 million gift from McCreary to further elevate Wake Forest Football's competitive trajectory and reinforce the extraordinary momentum established in Head Coach Jake Dickert's first season. McCreary's new commitment — strategically designated to fund 10 current-use football scholarships and advance key football excellence initiatives — propels Wake Forest into a new era by expanding opportunities for student-athletes and strengthening the resources required to compete for championships.

"Bob McCreary's generosity and commitment to excellence have reset expectations — and the horizon of possibility — for 21st-century Demon Deacon Athletics," says Vice President and Director of Athletics John Currie ('93). "This monumental commitment strengthens our ability to recruit and develop exceptional student-athletes and positions Wake Forest for sustained excellence."

Coach Jake Dickert also understands what McCreary's investment can do.

"Bob McCreary embodies what it means to be a Demon Deacon," says Dickert. "His investment in our program isn't just financial — it's personal. His belief in our student-athletes and the direction of Wake Forest Football fuels everything we do. This gift elevates our ability to recruit, develop and compete at the highest level, and we are incredibly grateful for his unwavering support."

In tandem with this historic gift, Wake Forest launched the McCreary Triple Double Challenge — a bold and future-defining \$100 million initiative inspired by McCreary's passion for student-athlete success and competitive excellence. The mission is not a linear effort, but a circular vision that encompasses a holistic view of devel-

oping young men and women through a lens of character and excellence. In the new era of college athletics, the challenge will double down on the three key areas of athletics support: success on the field and in the classroom; personal development of student-athletes; and competitive funding opportunities.

The McCreary Triple Double Challenge seeks \$100 million in new philanthropic commitments by Dec. 31, supporting two primary goals: current-use scholarships ensuring that Wake Forest can attract, retain and support exceptional student-athletes across all sports; and sports excellence funds, powering coaching, recruiting, player development, sports performance, technology, mental well-being, nutrition and leadership programming.

To responsibly prepare for the new revenue-sharing model in college sports, Wake Forest made a significant up-front investment to initiate the challenge. That commitment immediately inspired leading athletics donors, resulting in \$45 million in new gifts to scholarships and excellence funds since July 1, 2024.

With McCreary's latest \$20 million investment — bringing total support for the initiative to \$65 million — he is calling on the Deacon Nation to join him in completing the challenge and helping to secure the remaining \$35 million by Dec. 31.

McCreary knows the importance of being on a team. He's been on great teams, and he's built great teams. Coming from a large family, making it as a Demon Deacon, playing for the Dallas Cowboys and starting his own successful company, he acutely understands what it means to rely on the person next to him, and he knows what it means to be the one relied upon. He has experienced firsthand that nothing worthwhile can be achieved unless everyone is involved — lending their talents, resources and skills to the effort.

"Now is the moment for all of us who love Wake Forest to rally together,

invest boldly and ensure that our student-athletes have the resources to compete for championships," McCreary says.

At its core, the McCreary Triple Double Challenge is grounded in a powerful belief: Competitive excellence and Pro Humanitate are inseparable. This initiative will strengthen endowed scholarships, expand excellence funds and fuel the holistic development of Demon Deacon student-athletes — ensuring Wake Forest remains nationally competitive while staying true to its values.

"The McCreary Triple Double Challenge provides another rallying opportunity for the Demon Deacon faithful, and we are profoundly grateful for the inspiration Bob provides us all," says Currie. "Bob's leadership and sacrificial financial support have inspired thousands of other Demon Deacon fans to bond together with gifts of their own and their physical presence cheering on Wake Forest student-athletes."



As it turns out, McCreary's passion isn't just focused on the wins and losses columns. His passion is looking out across Allegacy Stadium and seeing families, children, college students and the Demon Deacon community coming together to cheer on their team. It's listening to the vision and enthusiasm of coaches wanting to invest in the lives of student-athletes. It's reuniting with athletes after they graduate to hear about their adventures and success in life. More than anything, McCreary's passion is bringing people together — especially those who call Wake Forest home — and working side-by-side to achieve more than anyone could alone.

—
Learn more about Bob McCreary at bit.ly/manbehindthename. Learn more about Michele McCreary, Bob's late wife and avid Wake Forest supporter, at adobe.ly/3OhcIfM. To join the Triple Double Challenge, visit bit.ly/mccrearytriplechallenge.

CLASSNOTES



It's time to start gathering your friends for Homecoming & Reunion Weekend, set for November 6-8. Whether you're an alum, a Double Deac or a parent — or all three, like me — believe me when I say: You don't want to miss this.

First, a special shout-out for all of you whose class year ends in a "1" or a "6!" It's time to come home for your reunion, from your fifth to your 50th or beyond. Your reunion committee volunteers (thank you!) will be reaching out to you throughout the year, and I hope you use this opportunity to reach out to old friends you think of often but may not have talked to in a while. Now is the time to start reminiscing, and planning, for the weekend that will serve as what I hope will be a season of reflection on your life at Wake Forest.

The last time y'all would have had the opportunity to come together "in real life" as a class, of course, was 2021. Recognizing that some of you were still unable to travel as we came out of the pandemic, prepare to be amazed by the magical "Reunion Village" awaiting you on Friday night. Trust me on this — I had a blast last year at my 25th reunion! The joy in spending time with some of your oldest friends, surrounded by the

gorgeous campus we have all loved so much, is simply indescribable.

And if you possibly can, plan to get here early enough on Friday afternoon to mix and mingle on the Quad, tour Z. Smith Reynolds Library to see how it's evolved and stop by academic department open houses to visit with your favorite faculty members. (If you have the privilege of being a Golden Deac, meaning you graduated at least 50 years ago, there's a special photo opp and lunch for you in store at Benson University Center. It's a good idea to get there around 11 a.m.)

Whether or not it's your reunion year, absolutely go to Party So Dear, which kicks off at 4:30 p.m. on Friday evening on Manchester Plaza. In our Homecoming surveys, many alumni call out this relatively new addition to Homecoming Weekend as their favorite event. Every class, every generation of Demon Deacons, plus our accompanying family and friends, are all jumbled up together as we reconnect and also make new-to-us Wake Forest friends. The atmosphere is unrivaled.

And that leads to my main point: Homecoming weekend is not only for classes having reunions. It's for all of us. I live close to campus and have the pleasure of attending every year. But even my girlfriends who travel to be here have started coming back whenever they can with different, and I would say brilliant, strategies: For their reunion years, they come without their spouses and children, gorging on time with their Wake Forest friends. But after realizing how many events are now wrapped up in Homecoming Weekend — the Friday afternoon and evening parties, Festival on the Quad, Alumni Tailgate and multiple sporting events in addition to a big football game — they have started bringing their families in their "off" years.

LET US HEAR FROM YOU

Have a question? Contact the Alumni Engagement Office at 800-752-8568 or alumni.wfu.edu

Here's a pro tip: Maybe you graduated in 1990, but you had a lot of friends in the class of '91. You can sign up for a different class's reunion party, and I promise you will still get a warm Wake Forest welcome.

For those of you lucky enough to be in classes ending in "1" and "6" this year, let's get a little friendly competition going. If you want to top us "0"s and "5"s, here are our stats: Last year, more than one in every six alumni in reunion classes came to Homecoming, led by the 50th anniversary group of 1975 (27% attendance)! And check out our giving:

- **Wake Forest Fund:**
\$3,138,547
- **Total University Giving:**
\$30,652,431
- **The Class of 1975:**
\$8,668,878
- **Golden Deacs Scholarship:**
\$213,441

I remain grateful for the time and effort so many of you commit to coming together as a community — and for the many ways we continue to give back to Wake Forest. Homecoming and Reunion Weekend is a great time you can feel good about.

As always, Go Deacs!

— **Shelley Slaughter Holden ('00, JD '03, P '29)**, Winston-Salem President, Wake Forest Alumni Council



Pro Humanitate Days: By the Numbers

bit.ly/ProHumanitateDaysAlumni

Thank you to everyone who participated in Pro Humanitate Days, our annual days of service, March 21-29! Here's a look at what we accomplished this year:

350 Demon Deacons volunteered

AT 35 events...from grooming horses at a therapeutic-riding farm in Arizona to packing food for City Harvest in Brooklyn, New York, and everything in between

IN 22 WAKECommunities around the U.S.

OVERHEARD

What last year's Homecoming goes want you to know...

Our 50-year reunion ... was simply incredible. In many ways our class of 1975 came back to "home." For the briefest of time, we were back in the midst of the people we loved and who shaped our lives.
–Larry Chewing ('75)

An unforgettable and magical weekend. I will cherish forever the feeling of being 20-something again with all my best friends around me dancing to beach music, laughing and sharing stories that we hoped had been forgotten!
–Janice Kulynych Story ('75)

Never have I felt as welcome as I did for my 40th reunion! The reunion village is spectacular — beautiful, inviting and truly special. Not only was I able to comfortably gather with and catch up with my classmates, but I was able to visit and celebrate with all the other Homecoming attendees. It was an incredibly memorable evening!
–Kendra Beard Graham ('85)

Returning to Wake for our 35th class reunion in October was truly special. I always return with my

close crew of college girlfriends, but it was also wonderful to reconnect with classmates I had not seen since our time on campus. Catching up with the ladies from our freshman hall and many others made it a meaningful and memorable year to be back.
–Felecia Thompson Peebles ('90)

Reunion Weekend exceeded every expectation. I was initially hesitant about attending after so many years, but I am so glad I did! Reconnecting with classmates and rekindling old friendships at the reunion party and sharing the Wake Forest community with my family reminded me why this place holds such a special place in my heart.
–Audrey Young Johnson ('00, MA '02, MSL '21)

Homecoming is one of my favorite weekends of the year, and I have loved each class reunion I have attended since graduating. Wake Forest puts on a great party and it is so much fun to be back on campus, see all the exciting new things happening in Winston-Salem and connect with old friends. If you are on the fence about coming back this year, definitely do it. You won't regret it!
–Adam Parker ('10)

**Webb**
(’73)**Shouse**
(’77, MBA ’79)**Vocelle**
(’78)**Colliflower**
(JD ’79)**Cahill**
(’81)

1950s

William Hedrick (’54, MD ’57, P ’09) was honored by the North Carolina Department of Transportation and the city of Raleigh with the naming of a bridge on U.S. 401 in Wake County in his honor. A family doctor, Hedrick retired two years ago at age 91. He and his wife, **Merrie Hedrick (P ’09)**, raised four children and cows on land near the bridge, which the city of Raleigh later developed into Horseshoe Farm Nature Preserve. Hedrick drove across the bridge, over the Neuse River, countless times during his 61-year career.

1970s

Deborah “Debbie” Best (’70, MA ’72) received the 2026 Lifetime Achievement Award of the Society for Cross-Cultural Research, recognizing her contributions to cross-cultural research and impact on the field of psychology. Best, a psychology research professor at Wake Forest, retired as William L. Poteat Professor of Psychology in 2023 after 51 years as a faculty member at the University. She also chaired the psychology department and was Wake Forest’s first female dean of the College from 2004-2008. She has been a member of the Society for Cross-Cultural Research for more than 20 years and was its president. She was also president of the International Association of Cross-Cultural Psychology and editor-in-chief of its journal.

T.J. Perkins (’71) received the Master of Arts in Ministry Outstanding Student Award from Grace Theological Seminary in Winona Lake, IN, when he graduated, at age 76. He studied pastoral counseling.

Stephen “Steve” Little (’73, JD ’77) was re-elected to his fifth term as mayor of Marion, NC. He is an advocate for the return of passenger rail service to western North Carolina.

Janet Rucker Webb (’73) wrote a historical novel, “The Tentmaker: Paul the Apostle’s Witness to the Praetorian Guard.” The book imagines how Paul may have shared about Jesus with his guards during his first Roman imprisonment. Webb is a retired federal government personnel professional and corporate editor. She lives in Versailles, KY, with her husband, John Webb.

Reed Humphrey (MA ’76) retired after 40 years in higher education, including the past two decades at the University of Montana. He was a faculty member and chair in the School of Physical Therapy and Rehabilitation Science, dean of the College of Health and provost. Previously, he taught at Virginia Tech, Idaho State University and VCU’s Medical College of Virginia. Humphrey lives in Missoula, MT, with his wife, Kim Mize-Humphrey, and son Eliot. His older son, Reed, is a PhD student at the University of Washington.

Knox White (’76) received South Carolina’s highest civilian honor, the Order of the Palmetto. White has been mayor of Greenville, SC, for more than 30 years.

Sanford Archer (’77) received the Distinguished Alumni Award for Achievement from the Chicago Medical School. In 1988, Archer helped start what is now the Department of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery at the University of Kentucky College of Medicine. Archer also received the 2025 Pearse Lyons Champion of the Voice Award from OperaLex, a nonprofit that supports the University of Kentucky’s opera program, for his dedication to caring for the professional voice and student performers.

Douglas “Doug” W. Shouse (’77, MBA ’79) wrote “American Achilles: A Novel of the South and the Great War,” about a family’s triumphs and heartbreak at home and overseas on the Western Front during World War I. The book is a sequel to his first historical novel, “American Janus.” Shouse is the founder of Doug Shouse Marketing LLC and lives in Winston-Salem with his wife, Ruth.

Randy Carroll (JD ’78) wrote “True Crime Jury Verdicts,” a collection of stories from his experience as a prosecutor in North Carolina. Carroll spent nearly 27 years as an assistant district attorney in Guilford County and tried about 400 jury trials, including 75 murder cases. One murder he writes about in his book was featured in episodes of “Forensic Files,” “American Justice” and on Discovery ID cable network.

Louis “Buck” Vocelle Jr. (’78, P ’13) joined MediationWorks, an alternative dispute resolution company, as a mediator. He has four decades of experience as a civil trial lawyer. He lives in Vero Beach, FL.

Mike Colliflower (JD ’79) facilitated a panel discussion for the pre-law association at his undergraduate alma mater, St. John Fisher University in Rochester, NY. Panel participants shared their paths to a law career, how they chose their law school and best practices for success. Colliflower retired as counsel with CVS Health.

Laura Malone Elliott (’79) was inducted into the Wake Forest Writers Hall of Fame at Words-Awake5! in February. Elliott, known by her pen name, L.M. Elliott, has written more than a dozen young adult historical novels, including “Truth, Lies, and the Questions in Between,” “Under a War-Torn Sky” and “Hamilton and Peggy!,” as well as a collection of picture books. She received the 2024 Scott O’Dell Award for Historical Fiction for her novel, “Bea and the New Deal Horse.” More at bit.ly/HOFelliott

1980s

Ricky Allred (’81) is the chief credit officer of American Bank in Monroe, NC. Allred is active in local history programs in Randolph County (NC), where he grew up, and he has led the Walk Thru the Past through the Old Asheboro Cemetery since 2008. He recently wrote a book, “The Least of These: Caring for the Poor in Randolph County,” which traces the history of public assistance in Randolph County from colonial times to the 20th century. Allred and his wife, Sandra Allred, live in Concord, NC.

Ted Barringer (’81) organized a fundraiser last year among Kappa Sigma fraternity brothers from the 1970s and 1980s for Crossing Thresholds, a nonprofit founded by **Carter Via (’83)** in 2008 to build schools in the Kibera slum in Nairobi, Kenya. They received pledges of \$225,000 to build a junior high school for 150 students. The Kappa Sigma brothers have reunited annually in Winston-Salem for the last 10 years for golf, football and philanthropy. They previously raised \$40,000 for Wake Forest scholarships honoring deceased fraternity brothers **Dwayne Hall (’81)** and **Mark Pruitt (’85)**. More at bit.ly/CarterVia

Tony Cahill (’81) won his male age group and finished 16th overall out of 156 runners at the inaugural Wolf Creek Runs Wild 5K in Narrows, VA, in October. Cahill lives in Myrtle Beach, SC.

Wake Forest Magazine welcomes Class Notes submissions from alumni. There are three ways to submit information:



ONLINE:
magazine.wfu.edu/submit



EMAIL:
classnotes@wfu.edu



STANDARD MAIL:
Wake Forest Magazine
1834 Wake Forest Road
PO Box 7205
Winston-Salem, NC 27109-7205

Eric Spence (JD '82) was named to the 2026 edition of North Carolina Super Lawyers magazine in commercial real estate. He is of counsel at Ragsdale Liggett PLLC in Raleigh.

Mark Dirks ('83) was elected to a four-year term on the Kure Beach (NC) town council. He is celebrating 28 years with the company he co-founded, Beacon Technologies, a web technology and digital marketing firm based in Greensboro, NC, with offices in Wilmington, NC, that works with higher education and property management sectors. He has transitioned from managing partner to advisory partner to provide strategic consulting and sit on the board of directors. His wife, Tracy Dirks, now leads the business. Dirks has worked with clients to fund the building of preschools in Rwanda. *More at bit.ly/DirksWeavingHope*

Mark Holt ('83, P '18) is chair of the board of visitors of the Wake Forest School of Divinity. In 2025, he received the Thorp Pro Bono Service Award from the North Carolina Bar Association and the John B. McMillan Distinguished Service Award from the North Carolina State Bar. He and his wife, **Joanna Holt (P '18)**, have four adult children and one grandchild and live in Raleigh.

Carolyn Newsome Newton ('83) wrote her second novel, "Songs of the Dead Road," a tale of survival during Stalin's reign of terror. Her first book, "The Refugee's Daughter," is a historical novel about German children separated from their families during World War II. Newton and her husband, **Warren Newton ('81)**, live in Seneca, SC.

Bill Pollock ('84) was named to Business North Carolina magazine's 2026 Legal Elite list in litigation and the 2026 edition of North Carolina Super Lawyers magazine's lists of "Top 100 North Carolina Lawyers" and "Top 25 Raleigh Lawyers." He is a partner at Ragsdale Liggett PLLC in Raleigh.

Robert "Bobby" J. Higdon Jr. ('85, JD '89) was appointed to the North Carolina Post-Conviction Review Commission by Supreme Court Chief Justice Paul Newby. Higdon is a shareholder in law firm Baker Donelson in Raleigh.

Chris Leak ('85, P '11) was named a managing director at Morgan Stanley. His team, The Leak-Guelbert Group at Morgan Stanley, was recognized by Forbes as a 2026 Best-In-State Wealth Management Team. Leak lives in Winston-Salem.

Kurt Ribisl ('89) was named dean of Indiana University's School of Public Health-Bloomington. He previously spent three decades at UNC-Chapel Hill, most recently as Jo Anne Earp Distinguished Professor and chair of the Department of Health Behavior at the Gillings School of Global Public Health. He was also co-program leader for Cancer Prevention and Control at the UNC Lineberger Comprehensive Cancer Center.

Edwin Williamson (JD/MBA '89) retired after 13 years at law firm Hunton & Williams in Atlanta and 23 years with Eastman Chemical Company



Holt
('83)



Higdon
('85, JD '89)



Leak
('85)



Buchheit
('90)



Kemerait
(JD '91)



LaFrance
('91)

in Kingsport, TN, including five adventurous years in Shanghai. Williamson is a member of the Wake Forest School of Law Board of Visitors. His son, Cooper Williamson, is entering his third year at the law school. Edwin Williamson says he "remains grateful to the School of Law for providing him with a strong foundation for a successful and rewarding career."

Jonathan Yarbrough ('89) joined Pilot Travel Centers as director, employment law. He oversees all labor and employment matters in 44 states and five Canadian provinces. He lives in Knoxville, TN.

1990s

Thomas Buchheit ('90) wrote his first book, "Healing Joints and Nerves: Immune Stimulation and the New Science of Regenerative Therapies." Buchheit has been a physician for 30 years and founded a solo medical practice in Chapel Hill, NC, focused on regenerative medicine to treat chronic pain and degenerative conditions.

Patrick Flanagan (JD '90) was elected to law firm Cranfill Sumner's new executive committee. Flanagan is a partner at Cranfill Sumner LLP in Charlotte. He was named to Business North Carolina magazine's 2026 Legal Elite list in employment law.

Jeff Lamb ('90) created cartoons for the 2024 independent film, "Money Game." His cartoons helped pitch the movie concept to investors and film distributors, and his illustrations can be seen in Professor Gardner's classroom in the movie set. The movie won six best film awards. Lamb lives in Asheville, NC.

George Reasner ('90) moved into full-time teaching after 30 years in film and TV work in Los Angeles. He is cinematographer in residence at the Florida State University College of Motion Picture Arts. He leads the new virtual production soundstage at FSU's Torchlight Studios Center for Cinematic Innovation, as well as teaching camera and lighting courses to MFA film students.

Elaine Massey Loyack ('91) was named CEO of the Girl Scouts Carolinas Peaks to Piedmont council, which covers 40 counties in western and central North Carolina. She is a lifelong Girl Scout and earned the Gold Award, Girl Scouting's highest honor, in high school. *More at bit.ly/ElaineLoyack*

Karen M. Kemerait (JD '91) joined Fox Rothschild in Raleigh as a partner in the energy and natural resources practice group. She was previously chair of the North Carolina Utilities Commission.

W. Curt LaFrance Jr. ('91) was appointed chair of the Neuropsychiatry Commission for the International League Against Epilepsy, overseeing six global task forces to develop and coordinate neurologic and mental health care, research and education. LaFrance is professor of neurology and psychiatry at Brown University and director of the Department of Veterans Affairs' Mind Brain Program.

Jeff Malarney (JD '91) was named to Business North Carolina magazine's 2026 Legal Elite list in real estate law. He is founder of law firm Malarney & McCown PLLC in Kitty Hawk, NC.

Mit Shah ('91, P '25) received the 2026 Arne Sorenson Social Impact Leadership Award from the American Hotel & Lodging Association and Foundation. The award is named for the late former CEO of Marriott International and presented to a leading executive in the travel and hospitality industry. Shah was honored for his values-based leadership, industry impact and decades-long commitment to expanding opportunity and positive societal change. He is founder and CEO of Noble Investment Group in Atlanta and a member of the Wake Forest Board of Trustees.

Betsy Jensen Chapman ('92, MA '94) wrote a chapter for a new book, "Building Institutional Systems of Support for the Parents and Families of College Students." Chapman wrote about "How Institutional Communications Can Influence Parent and Family Behavior." She is executive director of family communications at Wake Forest and author of the Daily Deac email newsletter.

John Hackworth ('92) was named head men's soccer coach at the U.S. Naval Academy. He has 30 years of coaching experience and was most recently director of coaching and technical director of Major League Soccer's St. Louis City SC. He played soccer at Wake Forest and was an assistant coach in the mid-1990s.

Robert Ramseur ('92, JD '95, P '23) was named to Business North Carolina magazine's 2026 Legal Elite list and to the 2026 edition of North Carolina Super Lawyers magazine in real estate law. He is a partner at Ragsdale Liggett PLLC in Raleigh.

Keith Shackelford ('92, JD '96) was reelected to the town of Wake Forest Board of Commissioners and is mayor pro tem. He is a partner at



Taylor
(’94)



Werner
(’94)



Honaker
(’97)



Pocock
(’97, JD ’00)

law firm Warren, Shackleford & Thomas in Wake Forest, NC.

Sara Harrington (’94) is an attorney with Disability Rights North Carolina. She represented a North Carolina resident in a lawsuit against two nursing homes that denied him admission to their facilities due to his substance use disorder (SUD). The settlement required the nursing homes to develop and implement policies that prohibit blanket denial of admissions based solely on SUD or recent use. Instead, providers must consider each admission individually and apply reasonable judgment and objective evidence in making admissions decisions. Harrington lives in Chapel Hill, NC.

Eric J. Taylor (’94) was elected Berks County (PA) Court of Common Pleas Judge. He presides over family law cases.

Jennifer Van Zant (JD ’94, P ’29) helped launch the new complex business dispute mediation practice at Brooks, Pierce, McLendon, Humphrey & Leonard LLP. She is a partner in the law firm’s Greensboro, NC, office and has 30 years of experience focusing on complex litigation.

Nicole Werner (’94) founded and directs Costalegre Clínica de Maternidad, a nonprofit maternity clinic serving a largely rural and underserved region in La Manzanilla, Jalisco, Mexico. After an earlier career as a university professor in child psychology, she trained as a midwife and focused her work on expanding access to “respectful, evidence-based maternal care.” The clinic is developing a surgical center for obstetric services.

Dave Alexander (’96) created a patented dog leash, Lazy Leash!, which is compact, easy to clip

on and is designed to tow a 4,000 pound truck. Designs include a Wake Forest-themed leash. Alexander lives in Mount Pleasant, SC.

Graham Honaker (’97) was the first Indiana resident inducted into The White Rose Society, which honors non-Jewish individuals who are beacons of hope for Jewish people. He co-authored with Dr. Alex Kor a book about Kor’s life, “A Blessing Not a Burden: My Parents’ Remarkable Holocaust Story and My Fight to Keep Their Legacy Alive,” which is being adapted into a motion picture. Honaker is associate athletic director for development and NIL strategy at Butler University.

Dan Katzenbach (JD ’97) was named to Business North Carolina magazine’s 2026 Legal Elite list in construction law. He is a partner at Cranfill Sumner LLP in Raleigh.

Jeff Landau (’97) was named to the United States Tennis Association of New England Hall of Fame. Landau was a top player in New England and a high school All-American growing up in Ridgefield, CT. At Wake Forest, he earned MVP honors and won the 1994 United States National Amateur Singles Championship. After college, he played professionally and taught tennis in Connecticut, Indonesia and Jacksonville, FL. He is now a tennis professional in Ponte Vedra Beach, FL.





King
(’98, JD ’02)



Hairston
(’99)



Roe
(’99)



Crouse
(JD ’00)



Neal
(’03)

Mark Paccione (’97) is a founding partner of EQV Advisory, a wealth and investment management firm in Raleigh. He is former chief investment officer of Curi Capital and past president of the CFA (Chartered Financial Analyst) Society of North Carolina.

Don Pocock (’97, JD ’00) joined Baker Donelson law firm as a founding member of the Winston-Salem office. Pocock has been recognized in *The Best Lawyers in America* for construction law and commercial litigation, *Business North Carolina* magazine’s Legal Elite, and *North Carolina Super Lawyers*.

Stacy Landis Hackney (’98) wrote her first adult novel, “The Primrose Murder Society.” She previously wrote two books for children. Before starting her writing career, Hackney practiced law for 20 years. She lives in Richmond, VA.

Todd King (’98, JD ’02) became a member of the Trucking Industry Defense Association. King is a partner in law firm Cranfill Sumner LLP in Charlotte, where he focuses on trucking and transportation accidents, product liability claims and premises liability cases.

Amie Fonville Sivon (’98) was named to *Business North Carolina* magazine’s 2026 Legal Elite list and to the 2026 edition of *North Carolina Super Lawyers* magazine in appellate law. She is a partner at Ragsdale Liggett PLLC in Raleigh.

Elizabeth Ritter Trach (’98) was elected to a two-year term on the Newburyport, MA, city council.

Carlton Ward Jr. (’98) received one of National Geographic’s highest honors, the 2026 Eliza Scidmore Award for Outstanding Storytelling. The award recognizes his work using visual storytelling to drive conservation policy change to protect wildlife. Ward is a National Geographic Explorer photographer whose film about the endangered Florida panther, “Path of the Panther,” won a 2024 Emmy Award.

Melody R. Hairston (’99) was appointed general counsel for the North Carolina Office of State Human Resources. Hairston joined the office last year as special counsel after 18 years at the North Carolina Department of Justice, where she was a special deputy attorney general and supervisor for the Tort Claims section.

Kristen Beck King (’99, MSA ’00) and her husband, Chris King, lead Elevation Scholars in Orlando, FL, a program that supports high-need,

high-performing students from Central Florida through the college process while providing financial assistance. Two dozen Elevation Scholars have attended Wake Forest.

Andrea Malik Roe (’99) is president and co-founder of CRH Healthcare in Atlanta and president of the nonprofit Urgent Care Foundation. She received the 2026 Visionary Award honoring urgent care industry leaders at Experity’s Urgent Care Connect conference. CRH Healthcare was named to *Atlanta Business Chronicle’s* Pacesetter Awards Hall of Fame in 2025. Roe is a member of the Wake Forest School of Business Board of Visitors and chair of the development committee.

2000s

Jason T. Crouse (JD ’00) joined Travis Law Firm in Erie, PA, where he focuses on multi-county DUI and criminal defense cases and complex federal criminal defense litigation. He retired from the FBI in 2025 as supervisory special agent in charge of the Erie and New Castle, PA, offices.

Justin Kudela (’02) was appointed clerk for the Supreme Court of Ohio. He was most recently the court administrator and a magistrate at the Delaware, OH, municipal court. Previously, he spent 14 years at the Supreme Court as case management counsel.

Antwan Scott (’02) owns Eight Way Basketball, a nonprofit facility in New Bern, NC, that provides basketball courts, multipurpose spaces, fitness equipment, summer camps and homework space for children and youth. He played basketball at Wake Forest and professionally, including for the Harlem Globetrotters.

John Bowen “Bo” Walker (’02) joined Campbell University School of Law as an adjunct professor teaching trial advocacy. He is a partner at Ragsdale Liggett PLLC in Raleigh.

Katherine “Katie” Collins Neal (’03) is a certified executive coach, speaker and facilitator. She recently delivered a TEDx talk, “The Perfectionism Trap: The Hidden Cost of Doing It Right.” Neal is CEO of Katie Neal Coaching and Consulting in Lexington, KY. She was previously assistant vice president of news & communications at Wake Forest. She is also an alumni career adviser. She was featured in Season 2 and Season 4 of the Wake Women Podcast, wakewomen.alumni.wfu.edu.

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Hamlar ('04)



Coalson ('05)



Harrington ('05)



Furr ('06)



Metzger (JD '06)



Breece ('07)



Goodson ('07)

Walt Rapp (JD '03) was named to Business North Carolina magazine's 2026 Legal Elite list in construction law. He is a lawyer at McAngus Goudeock and Courie in Wilmington, NC.

Adam Rosenblatt ('03) was named partner at law firm Venable LLP in Towson, MD. He advises state and local government clients on land use regulations.

Michael Hamlar ('04) founded the Melrose Business Association to support and connect businesses along Melrose Avenue in Roanoke, VA. He is president and owner of Hamlar-Curtis Funeral Home & Crematory.

Amir Lowery ('04) received the Jerry Yeagley Award for Exceptional Personal Achievement at the United Soccer Coaches Convention in Philadelphia. Lowery played soccer for the Demon Deacons and then professionally for nearly a

decade. After going home to Washington, DC, he started the Open Goal Project to help talented youth from marginalized communities compete in high-level soccer. *More at bit.ly/AmirLowery*

Brad White ('04, MSA '05) was named defensive coordinator for the University of Florida football team. He spent the previous eight seasons at the University of Kentucky, most recently as defensive coordinator/outside linebackers coach. At Wake Forest, he was a three-year starting linebacker and a three-time Academic All-ACC selection. He and his wife, **Kate Holden White ('04)**, have four children.

Jenn Coalson ('05) was named partner at Krevolin & Horst LLC in Atlanta. She specializes in litigation of intellectual property, trade secrets and complex business disputes.

Emily Coulter Harrington ('05) was named a 2025 Christian Teacher of the Year by the Herzog Foundation for excellence in Christian education. She is a Bible teacher at Mount Pisgah Christian School in Johns Creek, GA. **Casey Watkins Liadis ('06, MSA '07)** and **Katherine Sanford Goodner ('08)** flew in for the awards gala in Washington, DC, where Harrington was one of 12 teachers from across the country recognized. Previously, Harrington received the Georgia Independent School Association Master Teacher award, presented by neurosurgeon and former U.S. Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Ben Carson.

Jamie Boscamp Trull ('05, MSA '06) is a financial literacy coach and profit strategist and the author of "Hidden Profit." She is a former corporate accountant and finance professional who launched her own company in 2018 to help small and medium-sized businesses. Trull was featured in Entrepreneur magazine for helping business owners take control of their finances. She lives in Franklin, TN, with her husband, **Kemper Trull ('07)**, and their two children.

Marc Villegas (MBA '05) was inducted into the Procter & Gamble Brand Mastery Society, the top honor for brand professionals at P&G. Villegas is vice president of brand building innovation and communications at P&G. He lives in the Cincinnati area.

Jonathan Furr ('06) was promoted to assistant director of the High Point (NC) Public Library. He lives in Winston-Salem.

In December, the U.S. Senate confirmed **Peter Metzger (JD '06)** as President Trump's nominee to serve as Assistant Secretary of the Treasury for Intelligence and Analysis. In this role, he leads one of the 18 components of the United States Intelligence Community and is tasked with providing global financial intelligence to the President, Secretary Bessent and the larger Intelligence Community. During President Trump's first term, Metzger worked in the White House on the staff of the National Security Council as a Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs.

Emily Hart Cobb Breece ('07) was promoted to partner at Parker Poe Adams & Bernstein law firm in Atlanta. She handles commercial real estate transactions including acquisitions, sales and commercial leases.

Emily Goodson ('07) wrote a memoir, "Dating Disability: 15 Stories of Dealing with the BS and Building Confidence." At 8 years old, Goodson

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Peck
(JD '08)



Woodard
(MDiv '08)



Salmon
('10)



Kempton
('11)



Leadem
('11, JD '15)



King
(JD '12)



Telarik
(JD '15)



Crispino
(JD '16)

experienced a brain injury that caused partial paralysis. Now, she works with organizations to educate and spark conversations around disability. In 2022, her Los Angeles Times essay, "I'm a Disabled Woman. Is That a Dating Deal-Breaker?," captured national attention. She was featured in Season 3 of the Wake Women Podcast, wakewomen.alumni.wfu.edu.

Christopher Greco (JD '07) received the Saint Francis Service Award from Catholic Renewal, a division of Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of New York, at an event that raised \$2.1 million to provide meals for New Yorkers in need. The award is presented to individuals who demonstrate integrity, humility and charity. Greco is a partner at Kirkland & Ellis LLP in New York and a member of the executive committee of the Wake Forest School of Law Board of Visitors.

Matt James ('07, MSM '08) was named chief executive officer of Oakbridge Insurance. He was previously executive vice president, chief financial officer and chief acquisition officer.

Frank Emerson O'Shea ('07) began a new career as a financial advisor with Edward Jones. He was a middle school and high school teacher for 16 years, including being named Darlington (SC) High School's Teacher of the Year in 2018-2019. He lives in Florence, SC, with his wife and their three children.

Chris Paul ('07), basketball legend and beloved Demon Deacon, has retired after 21 seasons in the NBA. Paul is a 12-time NBA all-star, two-time Olympic gold medalist and a member of the Wake Forest Sports Hall of Fame.

Kemper Trull ('07) is a recruitment consultant and cofounder with **Ethan Gelfand ('06)** of The Pool Boys, which provides custom office sports pools to improve employee engagement and retention. Trull lives in Franklin, TN, with his wife, **Jamie Boscamp Trull ('05, MSA '06)**, and their two children.

Frank Brown ('08, MBA '13) was named a winner in Atlanta Business Chronicle's 2025 Diversity in Business Champions Awards. He is director of diversity, equity and inclusion and community engagement at The Westminster Schools in Atlanta.

Drew Dickinson ('08) was elected chair of the executive committee of the National Legislative Program Evaluation Society, a national association for nonpartisan legislative staff. Dickinson is a chief legislative analyst at Virginia's Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission.

Toni Peters Peck (JD '08) joined Baker Donelson's health law group as a shareholder in the Raleigh office.

Beth Woodard (MDiv '08) is a chaplain and bereavement care coordinator with Suncrest Hospice in Virginia Beach, VA. She is also vice pastor for Faith Lutheran Church in Suffolk, VA, and a supply pastor for St. Timothy's Lutheran Church in Norfolk, VA.

Andrew G. Britt ('09) wrote "I'll Samba Someplace Else: A Spatial History of Race, Ethnicity, and Displacement in São Paulo." Britt is assistant professor in the Department of African and African Diaspora Studies at the University of Texas.

2010s

Beckie Bray Rankin (MAEd '10) was recognized for promoting French education and culture by the Chevalière des Palmes Académiques (Order of the French Academic Palms). She received the honor, one of the highest distinctions awarded by the French Ministry of National Education, from the consul general of Boston at the French Consulate in Boston. Rankin is a French teacher and exchange program coordinator at Lexington High School in Lexington, MA.

Carlos Salmon ('10) rang the Nasdaq opening bell on Feb. 23 in honor of Black History Month and the 25th anniversary of the Association of African American Financial Advisors. He is a partner and wealth manager at Wooster Square Advisors in New Haven, CT.

Joseph "Joey" Skelton (MS '10) wrote a book, "Your Child is Not Their Weight: Parenting in a Size-Obsessed World," to bring families closer together on their path to a healthier lifestyle, rather than turning parents into the "food police." Skelton is a pediatrician, professor and obesity medicine specialist at Wake Forest School of Medicine and founder and director of Brenner FIT (Families in Training). [More at bit.ly/JoeySkelton](http://bit.ly/JoeySkelton)

Caroline Hallemann ('11) wrote her first book, "The Kennedys & the Windsors: The Story of Two Dynasties, One Born, One Made." Hallemann is digital director at Town & Country magazine and lives in Nashville, TN.

Benjamin Kempton ('11) earned a PhD in business administration from UNC Greensboro. He also has a JD from Elon University and an MBA from UNC Wilmington. He is an adjunct professor

in business law at Pitt Community College and an NCAA eligibility specialist at UNC Wilmington. He and his wife, **Carie McElveen Kempton ('11)**, live in Wilmington, NC.

Evan Leadem ('11, JD '15) received the University of Portland's 2025 Spirit of Holy Cross Award, the highest honor for lay collaborators from the Congregation of Holy Cross, U.S. Province of Priests and Brothers. Leadem is associate vice president and chief of staff at the University of Portland, a Holy Cross institution. At Wake Forest, Leadem was the Demon Deacon mascot and a Wake Forest Fellow in the president's office.

Sean Farrell ('12) was promoted to partner at law firm Smith Currie Oles LLP in Atlanta. He represents construction industry professionals.

Katie A. King (JD '12) was named deputy chief of the civil division of the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of North Carolina.

Ryan Samuel (JD '12) was appointed county attorney for Arlington County, VA. He joined the county attorney's office in 2018 and had been deputy county attorney since 2022.

Palmer Holton (MFA '13) wrote a short story, "Inheritance," that appeared in The American Scholar. Holton is an adjunct assistant professor in the art and communication departments at Wake Forest and a writer and filmmaker whose work includes "When the King Held Court," a documentary about Elvis Presley's obsession with racquetball.

Kyle R. Kohler (JD '13) was elected partner at law firm Troutman Pepper Locke. He practices real estate law in Richmond, VA.

Dan Harrison Segall ('15) co-wrote a new song, "Son of Jolene," a sequel to Dolly Parton's 1973 hit, "Jolene." Parton liked the song so much that she recorded it with his co-writer, Belles. Segall is a Nashville-based singer-songwriter who writes and performs as Dan Harrison.

Alex Telarik (JD '15) was promoted to shareholder at GableGotwals law firm in Tulsa, OK. He advises clients on Oklahoma's oil and gas industry.

Jordan Ballard (JD '16) was promoted to special counsel at Cadwalader law firm in Charlotte. He is a fund finance attorney who represents banks and financial institutions.

Daniel Crispino (JD '16) was elected partner at Boies Schiller Flexner, where he is a member of

**Nyenhuis**
(JD '17)**Kaufman**
(‘20)**Vingi**
(‘21)**Mugele**
(JD '22)**Appleby**
(JD '25)**Bennerotte**
(JD '25)**McDuff**
(JD '25)

the firm's sexual misconduct and investigations practice in Fort Lauderdale, FL. He is a member of the Rose Council, Wake Forest School of Law's young alumni group.

Ryan James McIntyre (JD '16) was promoted to partner at Riemer Hess LLC, a long-term disability insurance law firm in New York.

Adam T. Nyenhuis (JD '17) joined Woods Aitkin LLP's litigation team, working with clients in the construction law and commercial litigation practice areas. He is based in Lincoln, NE.

Robert Botkin (JD '18) was promoted to partner at Parker Poe law firm in Charlotte. His practice areas include cybersecurity and data privacy.

Anna-Bryce Flowe Hobson (JD '18) was promoted to partner at Parker Poe Adams & Bernstein law firm in Charleston, SC. She practices construction law and litigation.

James Llewellyn ('18) is the manager for Southeast Asia and Oceania at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce in Washington, DC. "Thank you to my classmates, professors and the Wake Forest community for supporting my international pursuits and engagement with the world," he says.

Mike Stephens (JD '18) was promoted to partner at Bradley law firm in Nashville, TN. He is a member of the litigation practice group, focusing primarily on commercial litigation.

Cameron Young ('19) won The Players Championship at TPC Sawgrass in Ponte Vedra Beach, FL, in March. He won his first PGA title at the Wyndham Championship in Greensboro, NC, last summer. He received the Arnold Palmer Award as the PGA Tour Rookie of the Year in 2022. Young and his wife, Kelsey Young, have established an endowed scholarship, the Cameron Young Family Men's Golf Scholarship.

2020s

Natalie Alms ('20) was named a 2026 Paul Miller Washington Reporting Fellow by the National Press Foundation. Alms is a senior correspondent at NextGov/FCW, a federal technology news organization.

Erin K.T. Berry (JD '20) was named to Business North Carolina magazine's 2026 Legal Elite list as a "Young Gun." She is an associate at Ragsdale Liggett PLLC in Raleigh.

Lauren Kaufman ('20) joined Miami Cancer Institute at Baptist Health South Florida. She is a physician associate specializing in reconstructive plastic surgery.

Megan Feltham (JD '21) joined labor and employment law firm Morgan, Brown & Joy in Boston as an associate. She works with management and human resources teams.

Mary Kern ('21) and **Grace MacNeil ('21, MSM '22)** fulfilled their long-time dream of climbing Mount Kilimanjaro. They met freshman year through their sorority, Alpha Delta Pi. Kern lives in Atlanta and MacNeil lives in Chicago, but they stayed close by going on a number of hiking trips together, including at Grand Teton National Park and Yellowstone National Park.

Malone Vingi ('21) obtained a Certified Financial Planner certification and a Chartered Financial Analyst charter. He is a client performance analyst at Roseate Group of Wells Fargo Advisors in Charleston, SC. Forbes recognized his team on its 2025 list of America's Top Wealth Management Teams: Private Wealth. Vingi lives in Charleston with his fiancée, Caroline Miller.

Karen Siderovski Mugele (JD '22) was selected as a 35 Under 35 by Kappa Alpha Theta women's fraternity. Mugele is a family law and criminal law attorney in Mocksville, NC, and an adviser for the Zeta Omicron chapter of Kappa Alpha Theta at Wake Forest.

Lauren Appleby (JD '25) joined Fox Rothschild in Princeton, NJ, as an associate in the labor and employment department.

Marin Bennerotte (JD '25) joined law firm Robinson Bradshaw in Charlotte. At Wake Forest, she was a member of Order of the Coif and Order of the Barristers and an online editor of the Wake Forest Law Review.

Noah McDuff (JD '25) joined Fox Rothschild law firm in Greensboro, NC, as an associate in the corporate department.

Trent Nicholson ('25) and **Quincy Bryant ('26)**, former Wake Forest football players, co-founded Final Whistle Wealth, a personalized financial education service to help high-earning student athletes succeed during their careers and beyond their "final whistle." Bryant, CEO of the company, and Nicholson, COO, watched the college sports landscape transform during their playing years with the introduction of the name, image and likeness policy. They live in New York.

Jack Sellner ('25) lives in Buena Vista, CO, where he covers high school sports for five local newspapers, The Chaffee County Times, The Mountain Mail, the Herald Democrat, the Gunnison Country Times and The Pagosa Springs Sun. At Wake Forest, he covered the baseball team for the Baseball Prospect Journal.

Madelyn Strohm (JD '25) joined Bradley law firm in Charlotte as an associate and a member of the litigation practice group.

Marriages

Don Donelson (JD '08) and Carlos Guerra, 12/20/25 in Miami, where they live. The wedding party included Mark Draper (JD '93).

Lindsey Reinstrom ('12) and Justin Shelton, 11/8/25 in Knoxville, TN, where they live. The wedding party included Sreya Panuganti ('11).

Lauren Bussler ('13) and Codi Wilson, 11/16/25 in Charleston, SC, where they live. The wedding party included Katie Bradburn Wie ('13).

Addie Rodes Carr ('17) and **Brandon Baker (MBA '26)**, 9/20/25 in Williamsburg, VA. They live in Richmond, VA. The wedding party included Danielle Crane Barclift ('17, MSA '18), Elizabeth Chandler ('17, MSA '18), Taylor McElduff Lloyd ('17, MSM '18) and Mary Caroline Regan ('17, MS '19).

Emily Paige Adams ('18) and **Trenor Philbin ('19)**, 6/6/25 in Valley Forge National Historical Park, PA. They live in Phoenixville, PA. The wedding party included Lauren Bosway ('17), Lauren Sorgio ('18), Evan Bigley ('19), Paul Bourdin ('19), Katherine Cassidy ('19), Martin Tan ('19) and Cole Teander ('19).

Ben Scharmann ('18) and **Lily Morgan ('20)**, 11/1/25 in Atlanta, GA. They live in New York. The wedding party included Tim DeCampo ('18), Petey Fabian ('18), Steven Harokopus ('18), Abigail Anderson ('20), Elly Anderson ('20), Mary Katharine Barker ('20), Colson Streitmatter ('20, MA '22), Madeline D'Alise Vinson ('20) and Evvie Morgan ('28).

Thomas Adkins ('19) and **Lucy Drinkwater ('19)**, 11/8/25 in Key Largo, FL. They live in Charlotte. The wedding party included KJ Bruno ('16), Sara Cecere ('19), Austin Melville ('19), Kevin Olsen ('19), Hannah Ryan ('19), Margot Shaw ('19), Matt Veale ('19), Julia Purdy Wellener ('19) and Sarah Neely ('21).

Joth Bryant Gass ('19) and **Meghan Taylor Hurley ('19)**, 5/2/25 in Charleston, SC. They live in Charlotte. The wedding party included Sam Biermann ('19, JD '24), Marie Cahalane ('19), Sam Choice ('19), Finn Forshaw ('19), Mary Kate Gregor ('19), Haley Sawyer ('19), Catherine Seher ('19), Matthew Swimmer ('19) and Jack Trepp ('19).

Ryan Burger ('21) and **Bridget Ring ('21)**, 6/21/25 in Dorset, VT. They live in Chicago.

Karen Siderovski (JD '22) and Kevin Mugele, 3/28/25 in Winston-Salem. The bride is the sister of Peter (Siderovski) Sutherland ('14).

Max Kimo Miller ('24) and **Julia Rae Murray ('25)**, 7/5/25 in Winston-Salem. They live in Columbia, TN. The wedding party included Sidney Murray ('18), Elwyn Murray IV ('20), Elaina Roeder Buchanan ('22), Michael Kern ('22, MPM '23), Cameron Basnight ('23), Addison Berry ('24), Brooke Killingsworth ('24), George Sell ('24, MPM '25), Caroline Avinger ('25), Gavin Ellis ('25), Ella Geers ('25), Knox Greene ('25), Alice Hogan ('25), Zachary Igwebe ('25), Gwen Rippe-to ('25) and Mercer Webb ('25). The bride is the daughter of Elwyn Murray III ('89, MBA '94) and Wendy Lewis Murray ('89, MBA '94).

Basia Leighanne Scott ('24) and Max Jackson Heckman, 12/13/25 in Winchester, VA. They live

in Washington, DC. The wedding party included Rachel Koch ('23) and Kendall Woodall ('23).

Births

Kelly Jo Stroud Specter ('09) and Isaac Specter, Austin, TX: a son, Sanford "Sandy" Russell Specter, in January. He joined his sisters, Rosie (5) and Goldie Grace (3).

Alexandra Dalgliesh Pardue ('10) and **Joshua Carter Pardue ('10)**, Brentwood, TN: a daughter, Piper Jones Pardue, in March 2025. She joined her brother, Carter (6), and sister, Dowden (4).

Meredith Draughn Willis ('12) and Andrew Scott Willis, Greensboro, NC: a son, Theodore James Willis, in October.

Hannah Waddell Davis ('13) and Wayne Wilson Davis, Columbia, SC: a son, Wayne Lee Davis, in February.

Bridgitt Staudt Holbrook ('14) and **Hayden Scott Holbrook ('14, MD '18)**, Roanoke, VA: a daughter, Emily Jean Holbrook, in January.

Casey Orr Noyes ('14) and **Parks Noyes ('15, JD '21)**, Charlotte: a daughter, Willa Catherine Noyes, in November.

Hilary Squire ('14) and **Tom Squire ('14)**, Raleigh: a son, Woody Squire, in 2025.

Jack Klaus Haberl ('16) and **Samantha Liana (Boures) Haberl ('16)**, New York: a daughter, Julia Lauren Haberl, in December. She is the niece of Lauren Boures ('19).

Jackson Hubbell ('16) and **Melissa Milstein ('16, MSM '17)**, Bristol, UK: a son, Bennett Charles Milstein Hubbell, in January.

Caitlin Herlihy Hickman ('17, JD '20) and **Harris Walker Hickman ('17, MSA '18)**, Charlotte: a son, Henry "Hank" Wallace Hickman, in December 2025. He joined his brother, Walker (2). He is the nephew of Daniel Herlihy ('11), the great grandson of Wallace Walker Hickman ('52), the great-nephew of Holly Hickman ('82) and the second cousin of Zeph Hollenbeck ('26).

Shawna Marie Abbatiello (JD '19) and **Jordan Alexander Castoverde (JD '20)**, Jacksonville, FL: a daughter, Isabella Amalia Abbatiello Castoverde, in January.

Abby Windsor Gilbert ('19) and **Ben Gilbert ('20)**, Lexington, VA: a daughter, Lottie Ballantine Gilbert, in January. She is the niece of Peter Gilbert ('22).

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REINVENTING THE (HAMSTER) WHEEL

Ethan Haber ('21) is using his entrepreneurship education to invent, and sell, a new way to walk little pets.

By Katherine Laws Waters ('20)

On a sunny day in spring 2019, Ethan Haber ('21) couldn't resist taking his pet hamster to the Quad.

As he watched "Mooksie" roll around in an exercise ball, he noticed a woman walking her dog near the University Bookstore. Suddenly, he had an idea: What if you could walk a hamster?

Haber, a studio art major and entrepreneurship minor, took his idea to the Center for Entrepreneurship's Startup Lab, an on-campus program providing mentoring and initial funding to launch innovative products. That fall, he set up a limited liability company and figured out how to create a ring-shaped carrier that securely holds a specially-designed small-pet exercise ball. That way, the owner and pet can walk at the same time. He named the business Happy Habitats, and retailers from Amazon and Chewy to Petco now carry his products.

The hamster wheel and holder even sparked a tattoo. When a pet owner saw Haber's booth at a trade show in Orlando, "I off-handedly said, 'If you show up with the logo tattooed tomorrow, I'll give you our products for free,'" Haber recalls. "The next day this guy came back with the tattoo on his neck and a cart for his stuff."

Mooksie, the hamster who inspired the brand, made many Wake Forest memories of his own, including meeting the Demon Deacon and attending a printmaking class. Haber loved his hamster so much that he drove from Michigan back to North Carolina to retrieve Mooksie from his dorm room during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mooksie died during Haber's junior year, but he has loved caring for animals for as long as he can remember. "The bond you can build with a pet is pretty special," he says.

Greg Pool (JD/MBA '08), associate professor of the practice in the Center for Entrepreneurship, remembers picking Haber to join the Startup Lab from more than 80 applicants: "We want them to be coachable, and we want them to be somebody that has that passion and ability to actually see the thing through, and he certainly did."

Haber worked on his project with professors and classmates. His art experience helped "with creating a prototype to get something out of my mind and physically into the world," he says.



Vera Mudry ('20) and Haber were paired as accountability partners, working together each week to check off their goals. (Now an assistant manager of product development at Tarte Cosmetics in New York, she was working on a fashion-tape idea.) "You could tell it wasn't just a class for him," Mudry says. "It was ... what he wanted to create."

Haber started working back then with P9, an Edgewater, New Jersey-based design agency, to test the product, source materials and make prototypes in China. He continues to consult with P9 today.

His resilience was put to the test during COVID-19 shutdowns in 2020. Not only were his classes remote, but global port delays stalled his business. En route from China, the first set of exercise ball molds sat on a ship in Long Beach, California, for about a year. Finally, in March 2021, Haber debuted an early version of the walkable ball at a pet products show in Orlando. Happy Habitats began selling products in October 2022.

Today, he runs his startup in Manhattan, including operations, marketing and sales, with his father, Adam Haber, as partner and adviser.

Ethan Haber has won utility patents for two products: the Roam transparent exercise ball and its portable carrier. "If our product takes significant hold in the market, ... no one else can make it but us," he says. "It is like we added seat belts to the car," he says of his exercise ball. The product has a two-step locking mechanism to make sure the door doesn't come open.

He acknowledges how tough running a startup can get, and he has yet to turn a profit. But "I had a meeting with a big box retailer at their headquarters last week," he says. "I was on top of the world."

And, Haber adds, each success — whether it's winning a long-awaited patent or breaking into online markets — reminds him to keep pursuing his goal: making pets, and pet owners, happier.

GOLDEN DEACS GATHER OFF CAMPUS, TOO!

We love hearing about alumni creating their own reunions. This group got together at Well-Spring, a retirement community in Greensboro, North Carolina, in September. There's nothing like catching up with fellow Deacons!



Front row (left to right): Wally Freemon ('60), Murphy Townsend ('57, MD '61), Caroline Spratt Young ('65, P '93, '98), Nancy Young Madden ('62), Judy White Wicker ('68), Elizabeth Prickett Fisher ('58, P '84) and Norma Ashley Funderburk ('58, P '88). Back row (left to right): Judy McBee McGinn ('66, P '90), Ralph Walker ('58, JD '63), David Jackson ('69, MD '73, P '94), Ches Singleton ('55, P '80), Charlie Reid ('56, P '89, '91) and life trustee Kyle Young ('65, MD '69, P '93, '98).

WF AMERICA FROM THE FOREST

Read stories and studies from Wake Forest scholars past and present on the big ideas that formed the nation.



Obituaries

Erwin M. Jacobs ('45, MD '48), Nov. 27, 2025, Alexandria, VA. He was 100. He served in the U.S. Army and the U.S. Navy and was a neurologist and psychiatrist.

Hilda Austin Highfill ('47), Dec. 9, 2025, Raleigh. She was 102. She was an analyst in the fiscal research division of the North Carolina General Assembly and was active in her church. Survivors include son **David Highfill ('80)**. A member of the Legacy Society, she and her late husband, **William Lawrence Highfill ('43)**, established the Highfill Family Scholarship at Wake Forest.

Joseph "Joe" E. Stroud Sr. ('48), Nov. 4, 2025, Chapin, SC. He served in the U.S. Navy in World War II and co-owned a Pontiac-Buick car dealership. Survivors include his sister, **Doris Stroud Eller ('54)**. He was preceded in death by his son, **Joseph E. Stroud Jr. (JD '77)**, and brothers **Al Stroud ('40)** and **David Stroud ('49, P '76)**.

Billy Williamson Royal ('49, MD '58), Dec. 12, 2025, Chapel Hill, NC. He served as a medical corpsman in the U.S. Navy during World War II. He was a psychiatrist and faculty member at UNC-Chapel Hill and an advocate for mental health care in rural North Carolina. He was preceded in death by his siblings **Ammie Lee Royal ('50)** and **Kenneth Royal ('50)**.

Mary Katherine Marshbanks Spargo ('49), Feb. 13, 2026, Cary, NC. She helped run a medical practice with her husband, **John Pritchard Spargo (MD '55)**, who preceded her in death.

Howard T. Horsley Jr. ('50), Dec. 29, 2025, Denver, CO. He served in the U.S. Army Medical Corps, founded Denver Cardiology Group and practiced medicine in Colorado for 32 years.

Elmer Marcus Johnson ('50), Feb. 17, 2026, Raleigh. He served in the U.S. Navy. He worked in public health and with the North Carolina Department of Administration as assistant state planning officer and administrator of the policy development division.

Shirley Joan Wilkie Collins ('51), Nov. 16, 2025, Richmond, VA. She worked in medical technology and was a teacher for 20 years.

William Luther "Luke" King Jr. ('51), Jan. 10, 2026, Sunset Beach, NC. He played football and was a member of Kappa Alpha fraternity at Wake Forest. He served in the U.S. Army and was personnel manager for 32 years at Burlington Industries textile manufacturer.

Dewey Herbert Bridger Jr. ('52), Nov. 17, 2025, Bladenboro, NC. He was a member of Kappa Alpha fraternity at Wake Forest. He managed DH Bridger Farms and was a trustee emeritus of Wake Forest who had been on the board of trustees in the 1980s and 1990s. A member of the Wake Forest Legacy Society, he established the Dr. Dewey H. Bridger Athletic Scholarship in

honor of his late father, who helped fund construction in 1968 of the original Bridger Field House at what is now Allegacy Federal Credit Union Stadium. He was preceded in death by his wife, **Audrey Caison Bridger ('52)**. Survivors include his sons, **Dewey Herbert Bridger III ('76, MD '87)**, **Claude Caison Bridger ('80)** and **Dickson Butler Bridger ('82)**.

James Lester Johnson ('52), Feb. 9, 2026, Lumberton, NC. He ran his family business, Rowland Motor Co., in Rowland, NC. He was a Wake Forest trustee emeritus who had been on the board in the late 1970s and 1980s. Survivors include sons **Ted Johnson ('74)** and **Jerry Johnson ('76)** and grandchildren **Kelsie Johnson ('04)**, **Rebecca Johnson (MAEd '05)** and **Trevor Johnson ('06)**.

William Luther Moses ('52, JD '55), Jan. 29, 2026, Pinehurst, NC. He practiced real estate law. Survivors include his wife, **JoAn Mauney Moses ('56)**.

Nancy Priester Carpenter ('53), March 1, 2026, Albemarle, NC. She was a teacher.

Ramon Carroll Hoots ('53), Dec. 26, 2025, Winston-Salem. He worked in accounting for Piedmont Airlines for 36 years.

Nancy Craig Pennington ('53), Jan. 31, 2026, San Antonio. She was a first grade teacher.

Robert William Quinn ('53), Jan. 24, 2026, Raleigh. He played baseball at Wake Forest and worked in the food industry.

Arthur Franklin White Jr. ('53, MD '56), March 19, 2026, Prospect, KY. He served in the U.S. Navy and Navy Reserve and was an allergist.

Jasper Enid Drake ('54), Feb. 4, 2026, Louisburg, NC. He was the men's basketball coach at Louisburg College for 41 years.

Thomas "Tom" E. Simpson ('54, MD '57), Nov. 2, 2025, Winston-Salem. He was a surgeon and pilot who opened an opioid dependency clinic. Survivors include his wife, **Martha Ann Kilby Simpson ('75, PA '75, MD '88)**.

Coy Cornelius Carpenter Jr. ('55), Dec. 15, 2025, Winston-Salem. He served in the military and was an interior designer. He was preceded in death by his parents, **Coy Cornelius Carpenter (1922)**, longtime dean of what is now Wake Forest School of Medicine, and Dorothy Mitten Carpenter, and his brother, **Harry Mitten Carpenter ('49, MD '52)**.

Carl Boone Moore ('55), Dec. 3, 2025, Greenwood, SC. He served in the U.S. Navy and was a dentist.

Robert "Bob" Rash Blankenship ('56), Jan. 5, 2026, Massillon, OH. He was a member of Sigma Phi Epsilon fraternity at Wake Forest. He served in the U.S. Army and worked for The Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co.

NEW OBITUARY POLICY

Wake Forest Magazine is changing its obituary policy. In future issues, we will acknowledge the deaths of alumni, faculty, staff, students and friends by including their name, class year (if applicable), date of death and city and state where they lived. We will list the same information at magazine.wfu.edu and link to the full obituary when one is provided.

William "Bill" King Elliott ('56), Jan. 24, 2026, Boiling Springs, NC. He was a member of Theta Chi fraternity at Wake Forest. He was mayor of Boiling Springs, a businessman and a high school educator.

Hubert Chester McCleney ('56), Jan. 10, 2026, Chadbourn, NC. He was a high school teacher and coach for 38 years and later a pastor.

Stewart Albert Newman Jr. ('56), Feb. 27, 2026, Avon, CT. He served in the U.S. Navy and was a Presbyterian pastor.

Doug Adams ('57, MD '60), March 13, 2026, St. Augustine, FL. He served in the U.S. Air Force. He was a physician, professor and researcher who specialized in vascular and cardiac angiography, computer tomography, interventional radiology and MRI at Harvard Medical School. Survivors include his wife, **Eleanor Pohleven Adams ('56)**.

Billy Ray Barnes ('57), Dec. 31, 2025, Landis, NC. He played football and baseball at Wake Forest, becoming the first ACC football player to rush for more than 1,000 yards in a season and earning All-American and ACC Player of the Year honors. Barnes was also an All-ACC baseball player. As third baseman on the 1955 College World Series championship team, he recorded the last out of the final game to win the first NCAA Championship in any sport by an ACC school. After he was drafted by the Philadelphia Eagles, he became a standout halfback and three-time Pro Bowl selection during his nine seasons in the NFL. He was inducted into the Wake Forest Sports Hall of Fame and the North Carolina Sports Hall of Fame. After coaching football, he became a contractor.

Douglas Bernard Curtis ('57), Jan. 12, 2026, Climax, NC. He was a member of Pi Kappa Alpha fraternity at Wake Forest. He served in the U.S. Army and was president and CEO of his family business, Curtis Packing Co.

Roger William Herrmann Sr. ('57), Dec. 25, 2025, Lewisville, NC. He was a member of Sigma Phi Epsilon fraternity at Wake Forest. He served in the U.S. Army for two decades and had a second career as a vice president with Jefferson-Pilot Life Insurance Co. Survivors include son **Roger William Herrmann Jr. ('86)**.

William Donald Moricle ('57), Nov. 27, 2025, Charlotte. He served in the U.S. Army and was a port director at Charlotte Douglas International Airport.

Frank Branch Crump ('58), Dec. 26, 2025, Washington, DC. He was a retired U.S. Foreign Service officer whose posts included London; Lusaka, Zambia; Kisangani, Democratic Republic of Congo; Leningrad (St. Petersburg), Russia; and Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

Jefferson Bivins Helms Jr. ('58, MD '62), March 17, 2026, Winston-Salem. He served in the U.S. Navy and was an internist who co-founded Forsyth Internal Medicine. He was a member of the Wake Forest Legacy Society. Survivors include brother **Robert Helms ('63)** and grandchildren **Kristopher Keiser ('11)** and **Abby McCall ('16, MD '23)**. He was preceded in death by his wife, **Edna Freemon Helms ('58)**, and brother, **Tom Helms ('59, P '87)**.

Neil Davis McCurry Sr. ('58), Jan. 25, 2026, Bradenton, FL. He served in the U.S. Army and was a banking executive and real estate investor and operator. Survivors include his wife, **Bettye Knott McCurry ('58)**, and son **Neil Davis McCurry Jr. (MBA '94)**. He was preceded in death by a son, **John Steadman McCurry (MBA '93)**.

Olin Harvin Broadway Jr. ('59), March 2, 2026, Charlotte. At Wake Forest, he was captain of the basketball team and president of his senior class. He founded several technology companies for financial services and was executive in residence at UNC Charlotte's College of Computing and Informatics. Survivors include daughter **Katherine Broadway Ficca ('97)**. He was preceded in death by his brother, **James Wesley Broadway ('69)**.

Phillip Blackmon Harris Sr. ('59), Nov. 17, 2025, Fayetteville, NC. He was a member of Kappa Sigma fraternity at Wake Forest. He served in the U.S. Army and worked in his family tire business.

Holland Victor Moore ('59, MD '63), Dec. 3, 2025, Augusta, GA. He served in the U.S. Army and was a cardiothoracic surgeon who treated children with congenital heart defects. Survivors include his son, **John Moore ('99)**.

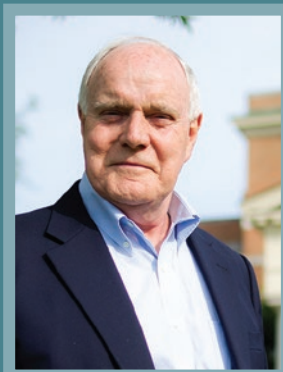
Phillip Ray Morrow Sr. ('59), Feb. 22, 2026, Catawba, NC. He was a Baptist minister and worked for Baptist Children's Homes of North Carolina for 26 years. Survivors include son **Phillip Ray Morrow Jr. ('90, MD '94)**, daughter-in-law **Patrice Slone Morrow ('95)** and granddaughter **Clara Morrow**, a junior at Wake Forest.

Lionel Francis Branscomb ('60), March 22, 2026, Winston-Salem. He worked at Colgate-Palmolive, and he was a member of the Presidential Scholarship for Distinguished Achievement committee at Wake Forest.

Michael "Mike" Elmo Cox ('60), Dec. 30, 2025, Roseville, CA. He was a minister.

DOUGLASS M. BAILEY ('60)

Retired Assistant Professor of Urban Ministry, School of Divinity



When the Rev. Doug Bailey joined the still-new divinity school in 2002, he brought with him a passion for serving the poor and marginalized, grounded in the gospel and Wake Forest's motto. "Pro Humanitate is for all of humanity, not just for a few," he once said.

Bailey, who retired in 2011, died Nov. 21, 2025, in Winston-Salem. He was 87. He is survived by his wife, Carolyn Lawson Bailey, and three

children and their families.

Bailey's fervent call to urban ministry and social justice shaped countless students. "His teaching was grounded in the belief that the gospel is most truthful when lived bravely," his family said in his obituary.

A native of Clarksburg, West Virginia, Bailey was recruited by Coach Bones McKinney ('56) to play basketball at Wake Forest. He earned his master of divinity degree from Virginia Theological Seminary and honorary doctor of divinity degrees from Virginia Theological Seminary and Rhodes College in Memphis, Tennessee.

Bailey was rector of Calvary Episcopal Church in downtown Memphis from 1978 until coming to Wake Forest. He revitalized the struggling church by reaching out to the community and building bridges across class, race and faith.

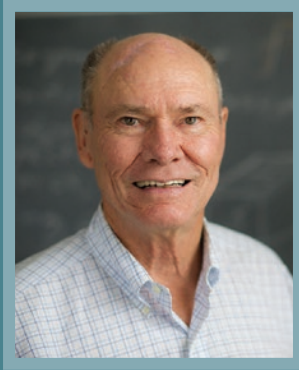
Under his leadership, the church started ministries for those experiencing homelessness, poverty, unemployment, mental illness and addiction. He founded the Center for Urban Ministry to build collaboration between churches and faith-based, urban nonprofits in Memphis and relocated the center to the divinity school when he joined the faculty.

Bailey received Wake Forest's Distinguished Alumni Award in 2001 and the divinity school's Bill J. Leonard Distinguished Service Award Pro Fide et Humanitate in 2011. He delivered the homily at the memorial service for Provost Emeritus Edwin G. Wilson ('43, P '91, '93) in 2024.

An urban ministry scholarship in Bailey's name was established in the divinity school in 2004 by Stephany P. Alphin ('59) and Robert L. Alphin ('59). "Doug's steadfast commitment to equity and justice shaped his life and ministry," said divinity school Dean Corey D. B. Walker (P '26). "Rooted in the gospel and guided by a vision of beloved community, he consistently championed the dignity of all people, particularly those pushed to the margins."

ROBERT J. PLEMMONS ('61)

Reynolds Professor Emeritus of Mathematics and Computer Science



Robert "Bob" Plemmons, a standout student-athlete at Wake Forest who became a world-renowned scholar and a Reynolds Professor, died Feb. 6, 2026, in Winston-Salem. He was 87.

Plemmons joined the faculty in 1990 as the Reynolds Professor of Mathematics and Computer Science. When he retired in 2013, he was recognized in a Commencement citation for his "excellence in teaching and thesis advising. Bob contributed

memorably to the undergraduate and graduate programs, never seeking recognition for these efforts, which he so richly deserved."

He is survived by his wife, Mary Jo Plemmons; children Greg Plemmons and his wife, Yuki Plemmons, and Theresa Plemmons Pauca (P '28) and her husband, Paul Pauca ('94, MS '96, P '28); and four grandchildren. He was preceded in death by a grandson, Victor Pauca.

A native of Old Fort in the North Carolina mountains, Plemmons came to Wake Forest after then-baseball Coach Gene Hooks ('50, P '81, '87, '89), later Wake Forest's athletics director, offered him a scholarship. Plemmons excelled as a student leader, in the classroom and on the baseball field, where he was an All-ACC pitcher for three years and Wake Forest's ACC Scholar-Athlete of the Year his senior year.

After graduating, he played four seasons in the Baltimore Orioles' minor league system, while pursuing a Ph.D. from Auburn University. He was chair of the computer science department at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, before founding and running The Center for Research in Scientific Computation at NC State University until joining the Wake Forest faculty.

After retiring from teaching, Plemmons remained an active researcher into his mid-80s. He wrote more than 250 articles and books on computational mathematics and lectured around the world. For decades, the Department of Defense funded his research on the use of applied mathematics in imaging and optics. He also received other grants from NATO, the Department of Energy and the National Science Foundation.

Plemmons maintained his ties to athletics as an ardent fan and by helping recruit student-athletes. "I enjoy being a role model for athletes because I feel I have been fairly successful," he said in a 1994 story on a research collaboration with football and basketball star Rusty LaRue ('96). "I may be living proof that a Wake Forest education will take you a long way in life."

OBITUARY

Everett Edward Freeman ('60), Nov. 20, 2025, Winston-Salem. He served in the U.S. Air Force and was a home builder.

James "Jim" Wilson Mackie ('60), Sept. 5, 2025, Bryn Mawr, PA, and Hilton Head Island, SC. He grew up in Wake Forest, NC, and began his career in the food industry at age 12 by building a "pop shop" near the original campus, where his father **George Mackie (1926)** was college physician. He worked for American Stores Co. for 38 years, including as a risk manager. Survivors include daughter **Jane Mackie ('86)**.

Emmanuel Poole Pegram ('60), Oct. 19, 2025, Raleigh. He was a minister for 50 years.

Gary Noble Simes ('60), Jan. 30, 2026, Winston-Salem. He served in the U.S. Army and was an insurance adjuster.

Sylvia Ransdell Thompson ('60), Dec. 1, 2025, Marlborough, CT. She was an educator.

Jimmy E. Conley ('61), Feb. 28, 2026, Greenwood, SC. He worked for restaurants, including Shoney's and Quincy's, for more than 40 years and established Greenwood's first homeless shelter.

Donald "Bruce" Filer ('61), Nov. 4, 2025, Hampstead, NC. He was a member of Sigma Chi fraternity at Wake Forest and served in the U.S. Army. He was a sales manager at Union Camp Corp. for 30 years. Survivors include son **Don Filer ('88)** and daughter-in-law **Cindi Meyer Filer ('87)**.

Kay Hood Gardner ('61), Dec. 18, 2025, Bremerton, WA. She retired after two decades with Kitsap (WA) Regional Library.

Louise "Lou" Littlefield Ogburn ('61), Feb. 17, 2026, Tallahassee, FL. For more than 50 years, she raised funds for the Tallahassee Museum.

Wilma "Jean" Metcalf Sinclair ('61, MAEd '95), Nov. 4, 2025, Weaverville, NC. She was a teacher in Winston-Salem and a square dancer.

Peggy Lee Lauten Younkins ('61), Jan. 9, 2026, Portsmouth, VA. She was a medical technologist in pathology.

James "Jim" Preston George ('62), Jan. 24, 2026, Smithfield, NC. He served in the U.S. Army and was a businessman and entrepreneur. He was a member of the Wake Forest Legacy Society and established the James P. George Award and Frank H. George Scholarship Fund at Wake Forest.

Mitchell Nesser ('62), Dec. 7, 2024, Mamaroneck, NY.

Johnny Bernard Overcash ('62), March 8, 2026, Ellijay, GA. He served in the U.S. Army in Vietnam and, for more than 40 years, owned his own business selling X-ray equipment to doctors and veterinarians. Survivors include his wife, **Judith Gainer Overcash ('62)**.

John Edwin Stanton ('62), Dec. 22, 2025, Amelia Island, FL. During his career with Capitol Records, he promoted albums for artists including the Beatles, Glen Campbell, Merle Haggard and Pink Floyd.

Thomas Camper Mundy Sr. ('63), Jan. 12, 2026, Williamsburg, VA. He was a member of ROTC at Wake Forest and served in the U.S. Army. He expanded a mattress company into a supplier of bedding across the Southeast. Survivors include sons **Matthew O'Neil Mundy ('00)** and **T. Camper Mundy Jr. ('94)** and daughter-in-law **Heather Ring Mundy ('95)**.

Jesse E. Shearin Jr. ('63, JD '78), March 6, 2026, Scotland Neck, NC. He directed church choirs, helped start a local hospital and wrote a newspaper column. Survivors include son **James W. Shearin ('86)**.

Richard "Ric" Lee Wilson ('63, MA '65), March 6, 2026, Atlanta. He was editor-in-chief of the 1963 *Howler*, which received an All-American rating. He taught English and history at Brevard College, Emory University and Georgia Institute of Technology before overseeing education initiatives with the Georgia Real Estate Commission.

Charles Stevens "Steve" Cathcart ('64), Dec. 5, 2025, Lexington, VA. He served in the U.S. Army and was a Presbyterian pastor in Virginia and North Carolina.

James Robert Connelly ('64), Jan. 20, 2026, Martinsville, VA. He played football at Wake Forest and served in the U.S. Army before returning to Martinsville to sell furniture abrasives with his father, **Mead Connelly (1929)**.

Rosefrances "Rose" Newsom Lasker ('64), March 7, 2026, Rock Hill, SC. She taught technology, mathematics, computer science and special education classes in Bluefield, WV, and was director of information services at Bluefield Regional Medical Center.

Edgar Winfield Parker III ('64), Jan. 26, 2025, Old Fort, NC. He owned and ran his family business, Parker Hosiery Co.

Howard Alonzo Rollins Jr. ('64), Feb. 2, 2026, Atlanta. He established the study abroad programs at Emory University, where he was an associate dean and professor of psychology, and at Georgia Institute of Technology, where he was associate vice provost of international programs. He was on the Wake Forest College

Board of Visitors. Survivors include son **John Douglas Rollins ('92)**.

Betsy Eubanks Wilder ('64), Feb. 23, 2026, Geary, OK. She was a teacher.

Robert Donald Worrell ('64), Oct. 29, 2025, Lynchburg, VA. He served in the U.S. Army and was a high school coach, teacher and principal.

Montrose Meacham Ballard ('65), Feb. 1, 2026, Shelby, NC. She was a majorette at Wake Forest. She was a real estate broker and an advisory board member at Gardner-Webb University. Survivors include her husband, **Lacy Ballard Jr. ('63)**, and children **Montrose Rebecca "Becky" Ballard Higgins ('90)** and **Lacy Henry "Hank" Ballard III ('95)**.

Stephen Wells Burnett ('65), Oct. 24, 2025, Sewanee, TN. He served in the U.S. Army in South Vietnam and was a consultant in municipal accounting and fleet management.

John Marion Carter ('65), May 2, 2025, Rockledge, FL. He was preceded in death by his wife, **Patricia Lundell Carter ('64)**.



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Donald Ray Hedrick ('65), Dec. 24, 2025, Roswell, GA. He was a member of the 1963 ACC Championship-winning golf team and a member of ROTC at Wake Forest. He served in the U.S. Army and worked in management information systems.

Peter Canby Hunt ('65), April 11, 2025, San Diego. He was a member of Pi Kappa Alpha fraternity at Wake Forest. During his career in the U.S. Navy, he graduated from the TOPGUN program and was commanding officer of Naval Air Station Atlanta. Later, he was a captain with United Airlines. Survivors include his sister, **Ann Hunt Leonard ('66)**.

Jane Burrell Kolar ('65), March 6, 2025, Barstow, CA.

William Frederick Marshall ('65), Dec. 24, 2025, Winston-Salem. He was a member of Sigma Phi Epsilon fraternity at Wake Forest. He served in the U.S. Navy and was a municipal bond broker at his own firm, First Winston Securities. Survivors include son **Bowen Marshall ('92)** and brother **Chris Marshall ('68)**.

Jack B. Spainhour Jr. ('65, MD '69), Jan. 15, 2026, Danville, VA. He practiced internal medicine and gastroenterology.

Robert T. Barnhill ('66), Oct. 2, 2024, Virginia Beach, VA. He served in the U.S. Navy and was an electrical engineer for 25 years.

Jerome "Jerry" Ray Davis ('66), March 7, 2025, Virginia Beach, VA. He built and ran his own advertising agency. Survivors include son **Brantley Davis ('89)** and daughter **Southard Davis Nowak ('98)**.

James "Jim" P. Eatman ('66), Jan. 2, 2026, Greenville, NC. He served in the U.S. Army and worked for U.S. Bank for four decades.

Douglas Hunt ('66), Jan. 7, 2026, Charlotte. He was a certified public accountant.

William "Bill" Howard Mangum Jr. ('66), Nov. 28, 2025, Harpswell, ME. He served in the U.S. Navy and started a tax and financial consulting business. Survivors include son **Thomas Oliver Case Mangum ('07, MSA '08)**.

Larry Starnes ('66), Dec. 8, 2025, Montgomery, AL. He served in military intelligence in the U.S. Army for 27 years.

William "Bill" J. Witt Jr. ('66), Nov. 3, 2025, Durham, NC. He was a United Methodist minister.

Beverly Joyce Burroughs ('67), March 3, 2026, Marietta, GA. She taught high school English in Atlanta for 30 years.

Earl Wilson Coleman Jr. ('67), April 20, 2025, Gastonia, NC.

Patricia Dianne Deal ('67), Dec. 1, 2025, Highland, NY. She worked for the Dutchess County (NY) Department of Community & Family Services for more than 30 years.

Thomas Robert Wright (JD '67), Jan. 16, 2026, Sewickley, PA. He served in the U.S. Army and was a lawyer in private practice and at U.S. Steel.

William L. "Bill" Burton ('68), March 27, 2025, Marietta, OH. He served in the U.S. Marine Corps and was an attorney.

Charles "Charlie" Clinton Caskey ('68), March 7, 2026, Washington, DC. He was a pastor for five decades.

Charles "Charlie" Preston Cowan Jr. ('68), Jan. 22, 2026, Victoria, TX. He played golf at Wake Forest, including in two ACC Championships, and became a PGA Golf Professional and golf teacher. He served in the U.S. Army.

Kenneth "Butch" Delma Henry ('68), Nov. 8, 2025, High Point, NC. He was the first Black student to receive an athletic scholarship at Wake Forest and one of the first Black players to desegregate a college football team in the South. Henry, who grew up in Greensboro, NC, led the Demon Deacons in receiving in 1965 and 1966 and was the team MVP in 1967. After graduating, he worked for airlines in Washington, DC, and San Francisco and was a nationwide truck driver. In 2021, Wake Forest honored Henry and his teammate **Bob Grant ('68)** by establishing the Robert Grant & Kenneth "Butch" Henry Trailblazer Award.

Henry Franklin "Lin" Holoman Jr. ('68), Dec. 8, 2025, Canton, GA. He worked in finance for four decades.

Randall Clark Sowell (MS '68), March 23, 2025, Madison Heights, VA. He was a college professor.

Edwin W. Welch (JD '68), Feb. 20, 2026, Norfolk, VA. He served in the U.S. Marine Corps for three decades, including as chief judge of the Navy-Marine Corps Court of Criminal Appeals. He was also a special deputy attorney general in the criminal division of the North Carolina Attorney General's office. He was a member of the Wake Forest Legacy Society.

Daniel Stelle Byrum ('69), March 6, 2026, Raleigh. He was vice president of Pi Kappa Alpha fraternity at Wake Forest, and he worked in the building materials industry.

Sharon "Sherrie" Dinsmore Ferens ('69), Feb. 20, 2026, Dayton, OH. She was a bookkeeper in Wright State University's School of Professional Psychology.

Laura Caton Hinshelwood ('69), Oct. 5, 2025, Germantown, TN. She was a computer programmer and tax professional.

Joel Van Tuttle ('70), Dec. 3, 2024, Welcome, NC. He was a laboratory technician, including at Wake Forest University Health Sciences, who had 10 patents on methods of treating various medical conditions.

James B. Vosters Jr. ('70), Dec. 16, 2025, Stuart, FL. He founded Vosters Insurance, specializing in

the floral and horticultural industries. Survivors include his wife, **Susan Powers Vosters ('70)**.

Stuart "Stu" D. Allen ('72), Feb. 8, 2026, Greensboro, NC. He was an economics professor at UNC Greensboro for 41 years and department head for 20 years.

Alan "Chad" Rodney Chadbourne ('72), Feb. 21, 2026, Walnut Cove, NC. He taught in Stokes County (NC) for more than 30 years and at North Carolina Governor's School.

James Lyle Dellinger Jr. (JD '72), Dec. 27, 2025, Denver, NC. He practiced law for 50 years and was district attorney for Stokes and Surry counties (NC) in the 1990s.

Rebecca Becky Primm Faine ('72), Oct. 18, 2025, Rome, GA. She was a case manager for the Babies Can't Wait program with the Georgia Department of Public Health. She was preceded in death by her father, **William B. Primm ('43)**.

Richard Bowman Johnston ('72), Dec. 28, 2025, Tampa, FL. He was a lawyer and real estate broker.

Robert Joseph Narucki Sr. (JD '72), March 6, 2026, Red Bank, NJ. He managed title insurance companies for more than 35 years.

William Davis Waters (MA '72), Jan. 2, 2026, Hillsborough, NC. He was a museum specialist with the North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources and site manager at Historic Edenton (NC) and Bennett Place historic site in Durham, NC.

John Porter Paisley Jr. (JD '73), Feb. 12, 2026, Burlington, NC. He practiced law in Alamance County (NC) for 52 years and chaired the Alamance County Board of Commissioners. Survivors include his wife, **Joyce Aldret Paisley ('71, MAEd '72)**.

Edward Anthony "Ed" Tupin ('73), Dec. 2, 2025, Indialantic, FL, and Rockville, MD. He served in the U.S. Army in radiation safety and was a subject-matter expert in radiological hazards for government agencies, including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Environmental Protection Agency.

Charlotte Louise Stumph Bennett (JD '74), Feb. 13, 2026, Moravian Falls, NC. She was the first dean of women at the University of North Carolina School of the Arts, in 1966, and a lawyer for more than 20 years in Wilkesboro, NC.

Charles "Charlie" Edward Wilson ('74), Dec. 3, 2025, Greensboro, NC. He was a missionary in Spain and China.

Thomas "Tom" I. Barrows (JD '75), Jan. 10, 2026, Charleston, SC. He practiced medical malpractice law, personal injury law and civil litigation.

Dwight Lowrance "Larry" Crowell III (JD '75), Jan. 21, 2026, Salisbury, NC. He practiced family law and was a member of the North Carolina Bar Association for 50 years. Survivors include his wife, **Betsy Shaw Crowell ('74)**.

Caroline "Carol" Bedsole Clark ('76), Dec. 8, 2025, Marietta, SC. She was a real estate home stager.

Thomas Talmadge Keener ('76, MBA '85), March 5, 2026, Lewisville, NC. He was founding upper school principal of Calvary Day School in Winston-Salem and retired as principal of Clemmons (NC) Elementary School.

Eugene "Gene" Roy III (JD '76), Dec. 21, 2025, Rockford, IL. He worked for the state of Illinois and later CNA Insurance Co. handling workers' compensation cases.

Mary Susan Anthony ('77, MS '95), Dec. 12, 2025, Thousand Oaks, CA. She was senior director of epidemiology at RTI Health Solutions in North Carolina's Research Triangle Park and a former faculty member at Wake Forest School of Medicine.

Bruce Edward Copus ('77), Feb. 15, 2026, Lathrup Village, MI. In addition to helping communities after storm disasters with FEMA, he was a Lathrup Village city council member and mayor pro tem.

Gerard "Jerry" Roche (MBA '77), Oct. 29, 2024, Cramerton, NC. He served in the U.S. Army in Vietnam and co-founded a commercial real estate firm.

George Heller Boudousquie Jr. ('78), Jan. 15, 2026, Winston-Salem. He was a lifelong learner.

Robert "Jack" F. Frye III ('78), Sept. 5, 2025, Winston-Salem. He served in the U.S. Army and was a salesman for Beechcraft.

Robert "Bob" Simpson III (MBA '78), Feb. 1, 2026, Cincinnati. He worked in auto insurance and co-founded American Risk Services. Survivors include brother **Glenn Simpson ('78, MBA '80, P '09)**.

Thomas J. Trott (MA '78), Jan. 13, 2026, Biddford, ME. He was a benthic ecologist and professor emeritus of biology at Suffolk University.

Lonnie B. Williams Jr. ('78, JD '81), March 15, 2026, Wilmington, NC. He was a lawyer for 40 years. Survivors include daughter **Diana Williams Johnson ('11)** and sister **Janice Williams Murdoch ('80, MA '82)**. He was preceded in death by his father, Life Trustee **Lonnie B. Williams Sr. ('51, JD '53)**.

Sue James Hendricks (MBA '79), Dec. 14, 2025, Winston-Salem. She was editor of a monthly education magazine for the Winston-Salem Journal and compiled the book "100 Years of Images: Capturing the Moment" of Journal photographs. She established the J. Edwin and Sue J. Hendricks Family Scholarship at Wake Forest. She was preceded in death by her husband, Professor Emeritus of History J. Edwin Hendricks. Survivors include sons **James Allen Hendricks ('81)** and **Christopher Edwin Hendricks ('86)**.

RHODA JEAN BRYAN BILLINGS (JD '66)

Professor Emerita of Law



Rhoda Billings, a pioneering student, professor, jurist and former chief justice of the North Carolina Supreme Court, died Dec. 29, 2025, in Raleigh. She was 88.

Billings was one of the few female students in the School of Law in the mid-1960s and the only woman in her graduating class. She returned to Wake Forest in 1973 as the law school's first female professor and taught constitutional law, criminal procedure and civil procedure

until retiring in 2003. She received the Medallion of Merit, the University's highest honor, in 2013.

In the mid-1980s, Billings was the second woman to serve on the state Supreme Court and the second woman to serve as chief justice. She was the first woman to serve as president of the North Carolina Bar Association.

Billings is survived by her children, Renee Billings Crawford and her husband, Robert Crawford ('81, JD '84), and Douglas Billings and his wife, Jenny Billings; four grandchildren; and one great-grandchild. She was preceded in death by her husband, Donald Billings.

Billings grew up in Wilkesboro, North Carolina, where her father was a lawyer. She was a debater and basketball player in high school and an English major at Berea College. She married a high school classmate, Don Billings, and they decided they would go to law school: Don to Duke University, and Rhoda to Wake Forest after the birth of their children.

She was the only woman in her first-year class of 56 students and one of only two women among the 161 students. She would go on to graduate first in her class, but her picture in the 1966 *Howler* appeared under the headline, "Third year men prepare for bar exams." Still, she once said, "Everyone treated me as they should have treated me, with neither deference nor prejudice."

She practiced law with her husband until she was elected in 1968 as the youngest and only woman in the first group of district court judges in Forsyth County, North Carolina, after the state established a district court system. She served four years before joining the Wake Forest law faculty.

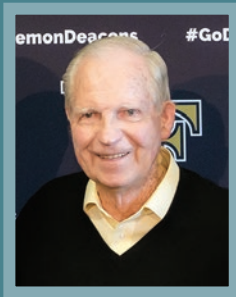
In 1985, North Carolina Governor Jim Martin (LLD '87, P '95) appointed Billings to the state Supreme Court and a year later named her chief justice. She was the first wife and mother to serve on the court. After losing her election bid to retain her seat, Billings rejoined the law school faculty.

She once said that her temperament and personality better suited teaching than practicing law or serving as a judge. Former students remembered her as a tough professor who could "scare the daylights out of a first-year law student," but also as a kind and caring person.

"If you earned a smile during the recitation of a case, you felt like you'd hung the moon," said Don Pocock ('97, JD '00). "She helped train years of excellent advocates, and she left the world a better place."

G. EUGENE HOOKS ('50, P '81, '87, '89)

All-American Turned Director of Athletics and Winner of Many Accolades



G. Eugene "Gene" Hooks, director of athletics at Wake Forest from 1964 to 1992, died April 6, 2026, in Winston-Salem at the age of 98.

Survivors include sons David Hooks, Dennis Hooks (MBA '81) and Michael Hooks, and his wife, Sara Houser Johnson Hooks ('60), and her sons, Frank Johnson ('87) and Mark Johnson (MBA '89). His first wife, Jean Knott Hooks ('51), predeceased him.

Hooks started his lifelong relationship with Wake Forest as an All-American baseball player. His trailblazing leadership through 36 years as an administrator, including 28 as director of athletics, made Hooks a Wake Forest Hall of Famer and Medallion of Merit winner, as well as a significant figure in the history of the Atlantic Coast Conference. He was named to the College Baseball Hall of Fame last year.

Hooks was a three-sport athlete at Rocky Mount (NC) High School before coming to Wake Forest. As an All-American third baseman in 1949 and 1950, he helped the Deacons to a runner-up finish in the 1949 College World Series.

After graduation, Hooks played for the Chicago Cubs for five years before earning his doctorate in education and physical education from George Peabody College. He returned to Wake Forest in 1956 as a physical education instructor and assistant baseball coach, becoming head baseball coach for three years before returning to teaching and being named athletics director in 1964.

Hooks oversaw the construction of Allegacy Federal Credit Union Stadium, Lawrence Joel Veterans Memorial Coliseum, Leighton Tennis Stadium, Arnold Palmer Golf Complex and Manchester Athletic Center. He played a pivotal role in integrating college athletics in the South, supporting the admission of Wake Forest's first Black student-athletes.

Athletic department revenues increased more than tenfold during his tenure, and the Deacons won three national championships and 21 ACC titles. The University named the baseball stadium in his honor in 1988.

Hooks retired in 1992 and received the Medallion of Merit, the highest award from Wake Forest, in 1993. He was inducted into the Wake Forest Sports Hall of Fame in 1994 and the North Carolina Sports Hall of Fame in 1999. He was the first executive director of the Division I-A Athletic Directors Association and helped found the Great Eight Basketball Festival. In 2007, Wake Forest created the Gene Hooks Lifetime Achievement Award, which recognizes an outstanding former Wake Forest athlete, manager, coach or administrator.

"Dr. Gene Hooks devoted his entire life to Wake Forest," said retired athletics director Ron Wellman (P '98, '01), who succeeded Hooks. "Wake Forest was able to stay in the ACC when we didn't have the facilities or resources that other ACC schools had because of Gene. He wouldn't consider leaving the ACC when others didn't believe we should stay. He was respected nationally for all that he accomplished while leading our program."

Catherine "Cathy" Goodloe Holland (MA '79), Feb. 15, 2026, Salisbury, MD. She managed a research lab and worked in quality control for Perdue. She was preceded in death by her husband, **Mark A. Holland (MA '79)**.

William "Scott" DeLoach ('80), Oct. 5, 2025, North Miami, FL. He was a project manager for an interior design firm. Survivors include his wife, **Dani Blair DeLoach ('79)**.

Peter James Kruyer ('82), Jan. 6, 2025, Raleigh. He was a member of the marching band and Sigma Pi fraternity at Wake Forest. Survivors include his daughter, **Sarah Kruyer ('13)**.

Mark Edward Bennett ('84), March 3, 2026, Wadesboro, NC. He was CFO of a lumber and supply company and owned a consulting firm.

Charles Gregory Hickman ('84), March 1, 2026, Kingsport, TN. He was a lawyer and hearing officer for the state of Tennessee.

James "Jimi" R. Hendricks ('85), Nov. 21, 2025, Vienna, VA. He worked for Freddie Mac and Wells Fargo for nearly 35 years. Survivors include daughter **Sara Hendricks ('15)**.

Beatrice Dombrowski Hair ('87), Dec. 29, 2025, Oak Island, NC, and Salisbury, NC. She founded and directed Salisbury Tutoring Academy for more than 30 years. At Wake Forest, she helped start a women's soccer team that eventually led to the varsity program. The Beatrice RD Hair Athletic Scholarship was established in her honor.

Kenji Seto ('88), Feb. 26, 2026, Houston, TX. He earned a doctorate from Texas A&M University.

Dianne Elizabeth Timblin ('88), Sept. 13, 2025, Durham, NC. She was a writer, poet and educator and most recently an editor at American Scientist magazine.

Robert William Mellbye (MBA '89), Feb. 1, 2025, Charlotte.

Cammie Harris Collier ('90), Jan. 30, 2026, Kernersville, NC, and Fuquay Varina, NC. She was a member of Thymes Society at Wake Forest. A singer and guitarist, she sang in hospitals and churches and at gatherings in her home and performed with bands. She was preceded in death by her former husband, **Benjamin Heath Collier ('81)**. Survivors include her husband, Mark Walker.

William "Will" D. Olinger III ('91), Jan. 15, 2026, Gainesville, FL. He was a member and social chair of Sigma Chi fraternity at Wake Forest. He helped lead Koss Olinger private wealth management company for three decades. Survivors include his wife, **Leigh Ann Young Olinger ('91)**.

Judy Diane Fungaroli (MAEd '96), Dec. 5, 2025, Lexington, NC. She was a licensed clinical therapist for the state of North Carolina.

Tiana Jonelle Herbin Boston ('97), Nov. 3, 2025, Winston-Salem. She managed vocational rehab consultants at Aflac.

George Maise Angle Jr. (MBA '00), March 5, 2026, Winston-Salem. He was a pilot in the U.S. Air Force for two decades and chief financial officer of Centurion Aviation Services.

Ronald "Chad" Ealy (MBA '00), Dec. 17, 2025, Newnan, GA. He worked in finance.

Michelle Theresa Hess ('00), Dec. 21, 2025, Brooklyn, NY. She was a lawyer and, at Lantern Community Services, chief compliance officer.

Sara Anne Linderman ('02), Nov. 30, 2025, Kirksville, MO. She earned an MBA from UCLA and later entered medical school.

Millie Kerr ('03), Jan. 12, 2026, San Antonio and London. She was a freelance journalist and wildlife photographer. Her 2022 book, "Wilder: How Rewilding is Transforming Conservation and Changing the World," was praised by Jane Goodall. "Often described as a force of nature, Millie was also a force for nature," her family wrote in her obituary. Kerr contributed articles to Wake Forest Magazine and was profiled in 2018: bit.ly/MillieKerr2018

Shannon Leigh Bachuss (MBA '07), Nov. 27, 2025, San Antonio. She was a revenue manager and an independent financial consultant.

Steven DeGangi (MDiv '07), June 30, 2025, Peterson, IA. He became a minister after a career at Union Carbide Corp. He was a member of the Wake Forest Legacy Society and established the Rev. Dr. Steven DeGangi Divinity Scholarship.

Domingo Alejandro Isasi (MBA '09), Jan. 6, 2026, Pfafftown, NC. He was co-owner of J&L Construction and Maintenance LLC in Winston-Salem.

Samantha Germano Hart ('11), Jan. 6, 2026, South Lake Tahoe, CA. She played soccer at Wake Forest and traveled extensively around the world with her husband, Ben Hart.

Anna Elisabeth Dowdy (JD '13), March 1, 2026, Monroe, NC. She was a lawyer with the Union County (NC) District Attorney's office and Public Defender's office.

Friends, Faculty, Staff, Students

Nancy Hall Cheek, Nov. 15, 2025, King, NC. She was an administrative assistant in the chemistry department for nearly two decades.

Ricky Alphonso Davis, Oct. 21, 2025, Winston-Salem. He was a custodial services supervisor who had worked at Wake Forest for 13 years.

James "Leon" Farrow Jr., March 12, 2026, Winston-Salem. He was a retired night auditor at Graylyn Estate for 12 years.

Joanne Bailey Federchuck, Nov. 15, 2025, Winston-Salem. She was a retired office assistant in the University's alumni office.

Mark W. Freidinger, March 8, 2026, Winston-Salem. Freidinger's passion for and knowledge of basketball and his signature line, "And that's another Dinger!" endeared him to Wake Forest fans for 35 years. Starting in 1990, Freidinger was a radio analyst for men's basketball games, first joining play-by-play announcer Mac McDonald. By the time he retired in 2025, he had called more than 1,000 games with Voice of the Demon Deacons Stan Cotten. Freidinger was also a scout for the NBA's San Antonio Spurs. At Wake Forest from 1981 to 1985, he was an assistant men's basketball coach under Wake Forest Sports Hall of Fame Coach Carl Tacy. He was an assistant coach at Kansas under coaching legend Larry Brown before returning to Winston-Salem. Freidinger grew up in southern Illinois and played baseball and basketball at Rollins College. After graduating, he was an assistant coach and then head coach for three years at Rollins. He was inducted into the Rollins Hall of Fame in 1982.

James Baxter Hunt Jr. (LLD '82), Dec. 18, 2025, Lucama, NC. He was the longest serving governor in North Carolina history, serving four terms from 1977 to 1985 and 1993 to 2001. He chaired the Wake Forest College Board of Visitors in 1989-90 and was on the board of trustees in the 1990s. Hunt was a force in North Carolina politics and public service for 60 years. He was elected lieutenant governor in 1972 and, four years later, at age 38, was elected governor. During his four terms, he focused on public education and economic development and led North Carolina's transformation from a rural, agricultural and industrial-based economy to one focused on research, technology and bioscience. Survivors include his wife, Carolyn Leonard Hunt, and four children, Rebecca Hunt-Hawley, James Baxter Hunt III, **Elizabeth Hunt Amigh ('90)** and Rachel Henderson Hunt, North Carolina's current lieutenant governor.

Carolyn Belle Beck Marshburn, Nov. 8, 2025, Clemmons, NC. She retired in 2014 from the Wake Forest School of Law after more than 30 years as a secretary and registrar assistant. Survivors include her daughter, **Judy Marshburn Sigmon ('93)**.

Russell "Russ" William Meyer Jr., March 4, 2026, Wichita, KS. He was an aviation leader, philanthropist and life trustee of Wake Forest. He was on the board of trustees for 16 years between 1985 and 2005 and was named a life trustee in 2006. As chairman of the board and CEO of Cessna Aircraft Co. from 1975 until 2003, Meyer helped shape the modern aviation industry and led the development of Citation business jets. His friend, **Arnold Palmer ('51, LLD '70)**, was the first customer to take delivery of a Citation X. Meyer helped launch the Special Olympics airlift, which for 40 years has flown athletes to national compe-

titions. After retiring, he was chairman emeritus of Cessna. A native of Davenport, IA, he graduated from Yale University. He was a fighter jet pilot in the U.S. Air Force and in the U.S. Marines Corps Reserve. After earning his law degree from Harvard Law School, he practiced aviation law until becoming CEO of Grumman American Aviation Corp. before joining Cessna. He is survived by his wife, **Helen Vaughn Meyer**, sons **Russell William Meyer III ('85)**, **Jeffrey Vaughn Meyer (MD '00)** and Christopher Matthews Meyer, and daughters Elizabeth Meyer Ferrari and Carolyn Louise Meyer.

Stephen Richardson, Sept. 4, 2025, Winston-Salem. He was an adjunct professor in the Wake Forest biology department in the 1970s and 1980s and a professor emeritus of microbiology at the School of Medicine. Survivors include daughter **Kristen Richardson Putnam ('85)**.

David Riffe, Dec. 25, 2025, Winston-Salem. He was a campus minister at Wake Forest during his 31 years of campus ministry and associate director of the Council on Ministries for Education in the Peninsula-Delaware Conference of the United Methodist Church.

Martha Doub Rainey Rokahr, Feb. 8, 2026, Winston-Salem. She retired in 2003 as an administrative assistant in the Center for Learning, Access and Student Success after 15 years at Wake Forest.

Thomas Griffith Turnbull, Jan. 7, 2026, Winston-Salem. He retired in 2022 after 25 years as an accompanist in the Department of Music.

DEACON DESTINATIONS AROUND THE WORLD

bit.ly/Deacontravel

There's still time to join fellow alumni on a journey this year:

National Parks and Lodges of the Old West
July 31-Aug. 8

Kenya Safari: The Big 5
Sept. 2-12

Around the World by Private Jet
Sept. 13-Oct. 3

Bordeaux to Lisbon
Oct. 1-12

Silk Road by Private Jet
Oct. 23-Nov. 8

Finally, walking with Yeats – and Provost Wilson

By Karen Richardson Dunn ('86, MDIV '11)

WE DROVE UP the western coast from Galway, my sons Dylan and Roan and I, to arrive in the maze of wind-blown, winding streets that comprise Sligo, Ireland. It was 4 p.m., when darkness descends in late November, and we had no time to lose. We continued on into the gloaming, growing quiet, watchful as the flatiron silhouette of Benbulbin rose before us in the distance, and just beyond it, a flash of the sea.

Then suddenly, a sign, an exclamation from Roan, and we were there — the graveyard of St. Columba's Church, the burial site of the Irish poet W. B. Yeats.

It had taken me 40 years to arrive.

In the rural North Carolina county where I grew up, my English courses heavily favored the classics of American and British literature, with only a smattering of poetry. My single foray into writing poetry itself occurred at age 9 when, deeply moved by an "ABC After-school Special," I wrote a four-line poem that I promptly hid — so overwhelmed was I by this "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings," as Wordsworth defined poetry. When I entered Wake Forest years later, haunted by and in love with words, I became a member of an increasingly vanishing species: an English major.

I signed up for then-Provost Ed Wilson's ('43, P '91, '93) course on the poetry of W. B. Yeats my junior year, and I still remember the moment when Wilson first walked into the room. A hush descended over the class as he moved to the podium. He had a presence both commanding and suffused with what I can only describe as a pure and quiet delight that he seemed to take in us. When he began to read the words of Yeats aloud, the only other sound to be heard was a bird trilling outside the windows of that classroom in Tribble Hall. I was stilled. I believe we all were.

I became so enthralled by the poetry of Yeats's painfully unrequited love for Maude Gonne, an Irish Republican revolutionary, that I snuck my long-distance

boyfriend into class one day so he could also "partake"; Provost Wilson looked to the back row where I had tried unsuccessfully to hide him and gave me only a single raised eyebrow and a slightly bemused, yet I believe understanding, smile. I remember, too, his sharing with us how, as a student himself, his own Yeats professor had thrown a young man out of class in a rage when he had made

a disparaging comment about Maude Gonne's beauty — and I had the sense Provost Wilson sympathized with the professor, not the student.

Then came the afternoon a classmate arrived to share the news that the spaceship Challenger had exploded. Provost Wilson had recently read to us Yeats's remembrance of his dear friend Robert Gregory, a fighter pilot who crashed



Karen Richardson Dunn visits Yeats's Tower near Coole Park.



Then-Provost Edwin G. Wilson teaches a class, above. Forty years after studying poet W. B. Yeats with Wilson, Richardson visits his grave in Ireland, right.

during World War I, in the poem “An Irish Airman Foresees His Death.” The poem, and Wilson’s reading of it, offered both beauty and solace, a pathway to a depth of meaning.

Ed Wilson transmuted the visions and mythology and histories of a man from County Sligo into a touchstone in my own life’s journey that continued beyond college. After I graduated and moved to New York City, I bought a thick collection of Yeats’s poems, which I took refuge in during that often turbulent chapter of my young adulthood.

Later, after I followed my longing for the beauty of creation to western North Carolina, I would sit on my front porch in the evenings, reading aloud to the mountains from my increasingly dog-eared Yeats collection. Later still, I read his Irish lullabies over my sleeping sons and to soothe myself to sleep — and “The Lake Isle of Innisfree” to wake myself up, when life turned gray and complacent. In 2020, the year my elder son Dylan began his first year of college, I wanted to give him something of immense value, of wisdom, as he began his own life’s journey. My Yeats collection, now more than 30 years old and my most prized possession, was my gift.

Forty years after my introduction to Wilson and Yeats — 40 years after I made



a vow that one day, I would visit Yeats’s grave — I stood at the foot of it, in the fading light. The epitaph on his grave marker read “Cast a cold Eye / On Life, on Death. / Horseman, pass by!” And I heard Wilson’s voice as it was those many years ago, filled with clarity and wonder and, yes, delight. I wasn’t able to attend his memorial service in May 2024. But now by the grave I listened, and remembered his teaching, his presence and the legacy that had brought me thousands of miles to the quiet and stillness of this place to honor a poet whose life has filled

my own with immeasurable richness, meaning and joy.

As Yeats wrote: “What other could so well have counselled us ... and all he did done perfectly.”

—
Karen Richardson Dunn ('86, MDIV '11) has worked for Wake Forest’s Food, Health and Ecological Wellbeing program and as a wellbeing counselor and meditation teacher in the Office of Wellbeing. She lives in Winston-Salem, but her heart remains in Ireland.

My big questions about the North Carolina Gateway, answered

Eric Maguire, who leads the office of enrollment, explains how the initiative was launched and where it could go from here.

By Chad Cheek (MBA '05), Editor-in-Chief

ILLUSTRATION BY NIGEL BUCHANAN

You're probably up to speed on the North Carolina Gateway to Wake Forest by this point in the issue. Students who enroll at Wake Forest from North Carolina with household incomes of \$100,000 to \$200,000 can expect their financial aid to cover tuition. And those with family incomes of \$200,000 to \$300,000 receive financial aid that covers half of their tuition.

I was thrilled about the announcement last fall. But by the time we were producing this issue, I had some lingering questions about how Wake Forest could make this happen and what it would mean. So this spring, I spent the morning with Eric Maguire, vice president for enrollment, and asked him those questions directly.

In our conversation, he described Wake Forest as the ideal of a modern university. "If you were creating an institution from scratch



today, it would look a lot like Wake Forest University," he said, ticking off the ingredients: A beautiful campus, a charming Southern city, rich traditions, small class sizes, dedicated faculty, Power Four athletics, career services, a strong alumni base and a unifying mission. "Very few institutions check all those boxes."

But despite efforts in recent years by the University to shore up scholarship availability, the dream school felt increasingly out of reach for many excellent students. So, spurred by President Wenthe's call at the beginning of her tenure to focus on affordability and access initiatives, Maguire and the financial aid office came up with what is now the North Carolina Gateway Initiative. While we will not have final admission numbers until the fall, the initial results in this year's admissions cycle were encouraging. Here are three highlights from our conversation.

1 North Carolina applications are way up

Interest in Wake Forest has ballooned in recent years, so it wasn't surprising that this cycle saw yet another record-breaking number of applications. But the most noticeable growth came from within the state.

"We saw over a 75% increase in applications from North Carolina this year," Maguire said. The most striking anecdote he cited: "We are receiving applications from schools in North Carolina that we haven't received an application in five-plus years from. And not only are they sending us some of their students for the first time in a number of years, but they're sending us their best and their brightest."

2 The University has been laying the groundwork for this for years

A frequent question I hear is about how Wake Forest can

afford to make this promise. Maguire said it took years of planning, and an increase in philanthropic support spearheaded by the University Advancement team, to make it possible. "So my thanks to our alumni and our parents and our friends at the University who've contributed over the last number of years," he said.

Prior to the Gateway's launch, "we were doing a good job of meeting family need and providing strong financial aid packages and reducing student indebtedness." Maguire said that meant that "a portion of these resources were already in place. But there are some additional costs that are associated with the Gateway. ... That delta was really filled with philanthropic support."

3 Expansion beyond North Carolina? It's possible.

Maguire and the team working on the Gateway considered applying the scholarship to the broader applicant pool. But ultimately, he said, it made sense to start with in-state applicants for a few reasons. One was to build philanthropic funding to support it. The second was to understand if it would work as intended.

"My hope is that over the next couple of years, we're able to really make sure that within North Carolina, the Gateway is achieving what we want to achieve, that it's improving access, improving affordability for our students. And then once we have some confidence in our ability to do that, then we can have that discussion about potentially scaling that more nationally," Maguire said.



▶ Watch a video of our full conversation at magazine.wfu.edu



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Welcoming Wake Forest's 15th President

The Board of Trustees appointed **Peter Rodriguez** as the University's 15th president. He starts July 1.

A distinguished economist and transformative academic leader, Rodriguez previously was the dean of Rice University's School of Business.

"I have long admired the distinct role Wake Forest plays in higher education," Rodriguez said as his hiring was announced in May. "The more I learn about Wake Forest, the more I appreciate the collective sense of duty to advance its mission and uphold its values."

Rodriguez brings decades of experience in international trade, economic history and public finance to Wake Forest and has made academic excellence, diversity and global engagement hallmarks of his storied career. At Rice, he led the Jesse H. Jones Graduate School of



Business to national prominence and started the Virani Undergraduate School of Business. He was named Poets&Quants' 2025 Dean of the Year. Before his time at Rice, Rodriguez was a professor, senior associate dean for MBA programs and chief diversity

officer at the University of Virginia's Darden School of Business. He holds an M.A. and Ph.D. in economics from Princeton University and a B.S. in economics from Texas A&M University.

Read more about Rodriguez at wfu.edu