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Panhandle

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**FOUR GENERATIONS
OF AGRICULTURAL
EXCELLENCE**



“We continue to make OPSU a pathway to success and a University students are seeking to come to. This increase in our summer enrollment shows that we have an awesome team of faculty and staff members encouraging student to keep choosing us. ”

— Dr. Tim Faltyn,
University President

/CAMPUS/

OKLAHOMA PANHANDLE STATE UNIVERSITY SUMMER ENROLLMENT INCREASE FOR 2020

Oklahoma Panhandle State University sees an amazing summer enrollment increase during this very uncertain COVID-19 situation. There is a 79% increase in credit hours and a 32% increase in headcount, compared to last summer.

University President, Dr. Tim Faltyn stated, “We continue to make OPSU a pathway to success and a University students are seeking to come to. This increase in our summer enrollment shows that we have an awesome team of faculty and staff members encouraging students to keep choosing us.”

Two summer sessions are available. The first eight-week session started April 27 and the last day of classes is June 21. The second eight-week session starts June 22 and ends August 16.

Vice President of Academic and Student Affairs, Dr. Julie Dinger, commented, “It is exciting that OPSU is able to serve students year round in implementing these two summer sessions. We could not do this without the hard work and dedication from our faculty and staff.”

Director of Admissions, Jade Houtz, stated, “We are proud to be able to offer these summer sessions for students, and excited that the students are taking advantage of this resource. By continuing to offer summer courses we are able to provide that sense of normal that everyone is missing in this crazy time.” In addition to the summer courses, OPSU is still planning to host the National ACT Exam on June 13.

Dean of Academic Resource Center, Sarah Green, stated, “We are working with both ACT and the OPSU administration to make it as safe as possible for all testers and the OPSU testing staff. Testers will be spread out in as many rooms as necessary to maintain appropriate distancing guidelines, and masks will be required for both the testers and the testing staff.” **P**

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Kenneth Mason



Curtis Bensch



OPSU Rodeo

On the cover: Lee Mason, Todd Mason, and Kenneth Mason



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/ CAMPUS /

OPSU FALL SEMESTER PLAN

The first summer session is underway with classes in session online, and the phased reopening of the university has begun. Since March, faculty worked tirelessly to make sure the student experience was a good one as we moved all instruction online for the spring.

President Faltyn said, “their care and attention to our students’ needs made all the difference. Our faculty have led the way in making sure students and meeting their academic needs remain the central focus at a time of so much uncertainty.”

As our university community turns our attention to the fall semester, Deans and Department Chairs have laid the foundation for welcoming students back to campus with comprehensive planning for the fall semester. The group has been hard at work developing and adopting measures to ensure we proceed with the traditional on-campus experience in as safe a way as possible without negatively impacting student learning.

In addition to a return to traditional courses delivered in person, OPSU has confirmed that we have the capacity and expertise to create excellent online educational opportunities. The 2019/2020 academic year saw tremendous growth and success in our flagship online programs such as Nursing, with plans to bring Agribusiness, Business, and Arts and Education options to the same level of excellence in the future. Together with the unprecedented move online this spring we have decided to invest in a state of the art College of Online Programs to continue to expand online educational opportunities for students.

A comprehensive plan for the fall semester to resume on campus is in its final stages. The fall academic plan dovetails with university-wide planning, including cleaning and disinfection protocols, social distancing, and other public health measures as advised by the CDC, the State Health Department, and OMES. As with all planning in this era of COVID-19, this comprehensive plan is a living document and will evolve as the situation changes or guidance is revised.

There will be several key changes taking place for our on-campus classes to promote public health and provide exceptional learning experiences. Any changes to an already scheduled course will be communicated to students through their Aggie Scholars learning management portal. These adaptations include:

All on-campus courses will adopt a hybrid course delivery model with content available on the university Learning Management System. All course information will be announced on their course page in Aggie Scholars.

In-person class meetings will be limited to 30 students. Courses that were initially larger than this limit will observe a hybrid meeting schedule, with smaller groups of students meeting in person and the rest of the class meeting virtually.

Some classes will meet synchronously online, with the course meeting at the scheduled time, but in a virtual classroom environment.

To ensure that students travel between classes without high traffic and congestion and to allow ample time for cleaning and disinfection protocols: Some course start and end times will be altered. Other courses may be reassigned by building and floor to new locations. Any changes will be announced on the class Aggie Scholars page. Additional sections of courses will be available online when appropriate. **P**



/ CAMPUS /

OKLAHOMA PANHANDLE STATE UNIVERSITY REFUND TO STUDENTS

Oklahoma Panhandle State University understands that the disruption to daily life caused by COVID-19 includes financial hardships for many in the Aggie Family. OPSU has finalized refunds in room and board costs and select fees to students for the spring semester. Eligible students have been contacted regarding their refund. OPSU refunded \$163,524 to students, with an average fee refund per student of \$40, and an average housing & meal plan refund of \$397.

In addition to refunding students, OPSU is also able to provide some financial assistance to our students who have been economically impacted by this global pandemic through the federally funded CARES Act.

Student eligibility for financial assistance through the Panhandle State CARES Student Aid Grant is determined by the U.S. Department of Education. Degree seeking students who took at least one “in person” class in the Spring 2020 semester are encouraged to apply. Students not eligible for Title IV funding as set forth by the Higher Education Act, as amended, and concurrently enrolled students are not eligible for the CARES Grant. **P**

/ CAMPUS /

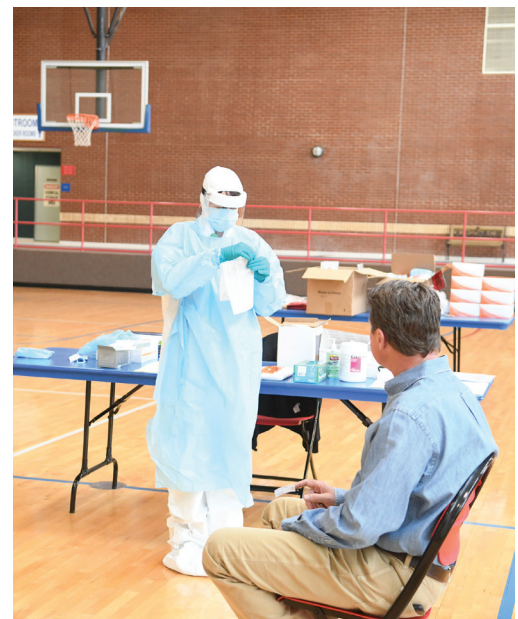
OSU MEDICINE PARTNERS WITH OPSU FOR FREE COVID-19 TESTING ON CAMPUS

Oklahoma State University Medicine partnered with OPSU to provide free, voluntary COVID-19 oral swab testing for all employees, staff, and students. This testing occurred on June 9, 10, and 11.

University President, Dr. Tim Faltyn stated, “Thank you to OSU Medicine for making this testing possible for our people and the community. We truly are better together than we would ever be alone.”

President of the Alumni Association, Diane Murphey commented, “I am grateful that Panhandle State was able to provide COVID-19 testing through Oklahoma State’s medical lab. The test was easy, results returned in 24 hours, and gave me a sense of relief that my possible exposure was negative.”

This free testing was to help assist in the safe reopening of campus for summer and fall sessions. **P**





/ CAMPUS /

FOUR GENERATIONS OF AGRICULTURAL EXCELLENCE

Mason Family Farms, who placed first at the 2019 Commodity Classic with a corn yield of 292.7, is well known in Oklahoma for their agricultural excellence. The Commodity Classic is America's largest farmer-led, farmer-focused agricultural and educational experience. Mason Family Farms was well over the average corn yield in the United States, which is at 176.6.

With four generations of farming in the Oklahoma panhandle, they are building a long-lasting legacy. Todd Mason was born and raised in the Goodwell area, where he has since built a strong farming operation with his brother, Lee, and son, Kenneth.

Todd commented on their success factors with their corn crop, "Fertilizer. Not only the kind of fertilizer but timing. We apply fertilizer at different times throughout the growing season. Some we apply before we plant and some with the planter. Then we spread fertilizer after the planter and some through our pivots."

With 40 miles of farmland across the Oklahoma Panhandle, the Mason Family has built their home here. When asked what makes this area unique to them, all in unison, they stated, "It's where we were raised." Todd adds on to say, "This is where God put us. This is where we are supposed to be."

With their successful farm operations, this is a true statement to where they are today. They have farmed several crops ranging from corn, wheat, sunflowers, and cotton to oats, barley, and alfalfa. Their favorite plant being corn.

Todd and Lee's dad, Kenneth, moved from Missouri in 1949, where he accepted a farm manager position in the Goodwell area. In many ways, Kenneth has been in the agriculture industry his whole life. Raising his family with his wife, Margaret, Kenneth instilled a passion for farming in Todd and Lee at a very young age. Never scared to try something new, they grew up wanting to learn and educate themselves on the ever-changing ways of farming.

Lee is the family crop consultant, as Todd says, "the expert at fertilizer." This team dynamic is what helps them thrive in this ever-changing economy.

Todd, Lee, and Kenneth, Todd's son, all graduated from Goodwell High School and furthered their education at Oklahoma Panhandle State University. Todd graduated with a Bachelor's in Ag Business, where he gave credit to Professor Woodward, Linda Tapp, Mindy Dougherty, and Sam Collins for all that they taught him. Lee graduated with a Bachelor's in Agronomy and Industrial Technology.

The family celebrated both brothers as they walked in the same

graduation ceremony in 1994. Todd's son, Kenneth, followed in his footsteps majoring in Ag Business and graduating in 2018 with a Bachelor's degree.

When asked what OPSU meant to him, Todd stated, "This is home. This is where we grew up, where we graduated, and where my kids graduated."

Todd lives out that dedication by serving on the Foundation Board at Oklahoma Panhandle State University. Todd believes the Foundation to be "very important to the University."

Todd has also served on the Goodwell Public School Board for the past 14 years. When asked why he serves, it was apparent the community is the reason he does it. He said, "If we do not have the school volunteers, emergency volunteers, and partnerships within the community, we will not thrive."

He explained that partnerships within the community are a critical reason for success. He stated, "The partnership with Dr. Faltny and Dr. Blanton and the whole OPSU community has helped us succeed. We love our town. The only way to keep it going is to make it great, and OPSU is doing that."

University President, Dr. Tim Faltny stated, "I am proud to call Todd Mason a friend. He and his family have truly shaped the way farming is done in the Oklahoma panhandle. OPSU is proud to have the Masons as Alumni, and we are grateful for everything they do for our community."

The Mason Family Farms is noted for hiring OPSU college students. When asked what advice they would give a college student wanting to go into the farming business, each of them had key points to add. Todd stated, "It is a hard business to get into without help. We were so thankful for the help from our dad and his well-known name in the community that helped us get here." Lee and Kenneth explained how the long hours and seasonal time frame could make it hard to start from the ground up.

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected many businesses from all sides of the economy. When asked how this pandemic could affect the farm, Lee said that he was worried about the commodity prices going down. Todd talked about his worries for their employee's health in terms of them contracting the virus. They have already experienced the side effects of the illness, as parts are unavailable for much-needed equipment to keep their business running smoothly.

During one of the worst wind storms in early June, Todd Mason's farm lost nearly 300 acres of corn and 25 percent of their wheat crop. Todd stated, "God doesn't give you anything you can't handle." This type of mindset is one that is needed in the ever-changing industry of farming. **P**



Todd Mason placed first in Oklahoma in top yield for corn at the Commodity Classic in 2019.

“We love our town. The only way to keep it going is to make it great and OPSU is doing that.”
 — Todd Mason



Todd Mason

“I am proud to call Todd Mason a friend. He and his family have truly shaped the way farming is done in the Oklahoma panhandle. OPSU is proud to have the Masons as Alumni, and we are grateful for everything they do for our community.”

— Dr. Tim Faltyn,
 University President



Kenneth Mason



Lee Mason



/ STAFF /

CHYANNA BLACK

Chyanna Black is a 2016 Oklahoma Panhandle State University graduate from Hudson, Colorado. Her story started in the fall of 2012 when she accepted a rodeo scholarship that would factor in her long-term future here at Panhandle State. She graduated with two Bachelor of Science degrees in Animal Science and Agribusiness.

After graduating, Chyanna returned to Colorado, where she continued to grow her work ethic and gain experience in different industries. Still, she knew that Goodwell was where she wanted to be. The University left a significant impact on her while she was a student, and she was eager to be back on campus as staff. Chyanna said, "Although I grew up in Colorado, it never felt like home after being in Goodwell." Chyanna took the reins as Director of Alumni Relations in November of 2019.

Vice President of Outreach, Dr. Ryan Blanton, commented, "Chyanna is a great addition to the Alumni Department. She is eager to engage and reconnect with Alumni and is always willing to help where she can."

Chyanna's favorite thing about Panhandle State is the students and the community. "People of the community are very welcoming and supportive, which is who I get to work with the most as the Alumni Director." She continued, "Students being excited about events, alumni/community showing up to support, and faculty/staff making impacts is what keeps the university growing."

Alumni President, Diane Murphey stated, "Chy's energy, organizational skills, and dedication to Panhandle State will help keep our alumni connected and informed."

Chyanna has two dogs, Target and Brisco, who keep her on her toes. She also loves to ride the empty pastures with her four horses. A previous rodeo team member, Chyanna, said, "Anytime I get to rope, I'm grateful." When she is not planning events for Alumni, she is typically traveling on the road to see friends and family. **P**



/ STUDENT /

HANNAH HAASE

Hannah Haase, a Newman Grove, Nebraska native, has made Panhandle State her home away from home. She was drawn to OPSU for its size and offering a bachelor's degree in Agribusiness. Haase commented, "Coming to OPSU gave me this opportunity, plus striking out on my own in a new state."

She is on track to graduate in the Spring of 2021 with degrees in Accounting and Agribusiness. Hannah's bright personality has made an impact on campus life by being involved in clubs. She is currently the Student Government Association President as well as a member of FFA and PBL.

Kim Smith, a Professor and Student Government Advisor stated, "Hannah is awesome to work with both in the classroom and around campus on various projects. She truly is an advocate for the student experience and represents the student body well as President. Her strong work ethic will take her anywhere she wants to go in life."

Haase continues to leave her mark on all faculty, staff, and students. "My favorite thing about Panhandle State is the people I have met within the three years I have been here. These friendships are ones I hope to maintain long after graduation."

On the topic of COVID-19, Hannah talks about it has affected her family. "COVID-19 has not affected me a lot. I am considered an essential worker, so I was able to still go to work. I am currently working for an ag consultant company, managing the chemical warehouse. However, both my mom and sister are in the nursing field and it has truly changed their lives."

When Hannah is not busy with campus activities and working on her degrees, she enjoys traveling and floating the river as much as she can. As her time comes to a close next spring, she plans to stay in the Panhandle area. **P**



/ FACULTY /

SHELLY WISENER

Shelley Wisener, originally from Lubbock, Texas, is and Assistant Professor of English at Oklahoma Panhandle State University. She graduated from Panhandle State in 1992 with a Bachelor of Art degree in English and Speech Education and a minor in art.

Wisener went on to Texas Tech, where she earned a Master of Interdisciplinary Arts in Curriculum Instruction and Educational Leadership with an emphasis in English. After earning her masters, she developed her teaching skills from 7th grade through higher education in Oklahoma, Kansas, and Texas. Some of the many classes she’s taught included English composition, literature, art, speech, and leadership.

Although she enjoyed the several places that she taught, her goals were always to return to her alma mater. Wisener stated, “I remember sitting in Dr. Sara Jane Richter’s office on the first floor of Hamilton Hall and talking to her about returning to work for her. My first full-time year on campus happened to be the year Sara Jane was to retire. It has been bittersweet. She is like a member of our family, and we love her dearly.”

Shelley met her husband at Panhandle State, and they will have been married for 30 years in August. She reflected on being back on OPSU’s campus, “When I look around, I see places we walked and classrooms we frequented, so OPSU holds many happy memories for us.” Wisener loves to crochet, embroider, read, research, and work in the yard. She and her husband have two sons, Dean and Shayne, and one dog, Maggie, who has a great personality.

Wisener strives to make her students time at Panhandle State the best that it can be. She declared, “My goal is for students to know that when they attend OPSU, they are not a number. This university is unique, so are its professors and students. We care about each other.” **P**



/ ALUMNI /

ANYSSA BARBOSA

Anyssa Barbosa, originally from Uvalde, Texas, spreads her enthusiasm for Oklahoma Panhandle State University everywhere. She started her college career here when she was recruited to play softball by Rachel Burleson and Meghan Mulcahy. Barbosa graduated in 2017 with a degree in history.

After leaving Panhandle State, Anyssa started pursuing her law degree at Texas Tech. She was given the opportunity of a lifetime in the form of an internship with NCAA at their national office in Indiana. Barbosa was not shy to share her Aggie spirit during her internship and used her time as an OPSU athlete to fuel her experience.

Since finishing her internship, she has returned to Lubbock to complete her final year of law school and Master’s in Sports Management at Texas Tech. Barbosa commented, “I will serve as the Sport and Entertainment Law Society president while working in compliance for Texas Tech Athletics. After law school, I plan on sitting for the bar exam and becoming a practicing attorney.”

Anyssa is the oldest of four, and her little brother plays football for OPSU, which gives her extra reason to visit each year for Homecoming. She stated, “My favorite thing about Panhandle State is the welcoming and familial environment. When you decide to be a part of Panhandle, you gain so much more than an affordable education; you gain a support system that carries through the rest of your life.”

She continues to recognize her time at Panhandle State through her journey. Anyssa reminisced on her time at OPSU and said, “In my four years at OPSU, I made so many memories that it’s hard to pick just one. Whether it was playing softball with my teammates who became my best friends or becoming a Hispanic Serving Institution through the efforts of the Hispanic American Leadership Organization, the memories I made at OPSU are always with me.” **P**



/ CAMPUS /

OPSU AGRONOMY PROFESSOR RECEIVES THE NACTA EDUCATOR AWARD

Dr. Curtis Bensch, Professor of Agronomy at Oklahoma Panhandle State University, was elected to receive the 2020 North American Colleges and Teachers of Agriculture Educator Award.

Dr. Bensch received his B.S. degree in Agronomy from OPSU in 1991, an M.S. degree from Oklahoma State University in 1993, and a Ph.D. in Agronomy from Kansas State University in 2001. He taught agriculture courses at Murray State College in Tishomingo, Oklahoma, from 1993 to 1997 before attending Kansas State University, where he earned his doctorate and taught the undergraduate Weed Science course as well as coached the collegiate Weed Science judging team. Dr. Bensch returned home to the Oklahoma panhandle and has been teaching at Oklahoma Panhandle State University for 18 years, where he serves as Department Head of Agronomy.

NACTA is a national professional society that focuses on the scholarship of teaching and learning agriculture at the postsecondary level. NACTA strives to recognize those individuals whose efforts represent the very best in agricultural higher education. The NACTA Educator Award is a criterion-based award reviewed by a committee of NACTA members.

Dr. Bensch was nominated for the 2020 NACTA Educator Award by Dr. Kevin Donnelly, Professor of Agronomy from Kansas State University. Dr. Donnelly is a distinguished educator who has been a mentor to Bensch both at Oklahoma State University and then Kansas State University. The presentation of the award will be at the 2020 NACTA Conference (June 16-18), which will be a virtual conference this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Dr. Bensch says, "I am honored to receive this award and to have been nominated by an agronomy professor of such distinction. I appreciate all that the NACTA society does and how they promote and reward instructional excellence in agriculture."

University President, Dr. Tim Faltyn stated, "We are so proud of Dr. Bensch and the work he has done as an expert in the field of Agronomy. He is a major force for success as chair of the Department of Agronomy. Curtis and his passion are what make Agronomy at OPSU the best in the nation, this award is well deserved."

Vice President of Academic and Student Affairs, Dr. Julie Dinger commented, "Dr. Bensch sets the bar for excellence in teaching and learning Agronomy. His reputation for being tough but fair in the classroom and as a coach are legendary among his current and former students."

Dr. Bensch teaches numerous courses, including Plant Science, Soil Science, Plant and Seed Id, Mathematical Applications in Agriculture, Soil Fertility, Weed Science, Grain Oilseed, and Pulse Crops, Biotechnology, Integrated Pest Management, Range Management, Plant Physiology, and Pasture and Forage Management. He advises approximately 30 agronomy majors at the university and coaches the collegiate NACTA Crops Judging team, which has been very competitive at the national contest.

Dean Shawna Tucker stated, "Dr. Bensch is an exceptional professor of Agronomy, as well as an excellent, award-winning Crops Judging coach. He has the heart of a true educator. He demands rigorous, quality work from his students, but he is willing to do his part and put in an extraordinary amount of work to ensure their success. He delivers lessons in a way that makes the material interesting, relevant, and fun. Those of us in the College of Agriculture, Science, and Nursing are very proud to call him a colleague and friend. Congratulations on this prestigious award, Dr. Bensch!" **P**

/ ALUMNI /

GARRETT NOKES RODEO COACH OF THE YEAR

BY MID-PLAINS COMMUNITY COLLEGE



Garrett Nokes, an Alumni from Oklahoma Panhandle State University, was named Rodeo Coach of the Year. Garrett Nokes graduated from OPSU in 1998. He is currently the Mid-Plains Community College Rodeo Team Coach.

The coaches and captains from every team in the region vote for a Coach of the Year at the end of every season. It's the first time Nokes has received the recognition.

"It's a big honor," Nokes said. "One of the things I love about my job is that coaching in this region is pretty unique. Our environment is the most positive environment I've ever been around in college rodeo. All of the coaches want their kids to win, but there's not a coach in the region that won't help a kid from another school if asked."

It's important to him that his own team develops a strong work ethic and that members take away as much from outside the arena as inside.

"I want them to learn that if they want it, they have to work for it. Then, the sky's the limit. That's true for life in general," Nokes said. "I will help them get to wherever they want to go, but I also want them to get an education to fall back on. In this business, it's never 'if a rodeo career is over' – it's when."

His convictions stem from a lifetime spent in the rodeo industry – experiencing its ups and downs – in addition to his own experience as a college rodeo athlete at OPSU. He was on the university's first two national championship teams in 1997 and '98.

"College rodeo prepared me for both professional rodeo and life after because I was surrounded by good mentors," Nokes said. "My coach during my first two years of college [Dr. R. Lynn 'Doc' Gardner] had never been in a rodeo arena but ended up being one of the most influential guys in my life. I'm thankful for him every day."

Gardner died when Nokes was a junior – about the time Nokes' professional career was taking off.

"That next year, I was contemplating leaving school without a degree," Nokes said. "What prompted me to stick around and finish was a friend and our team secretary [Lynette Frueh Harbin]. She told me that if I left without a degree, Doc would roll over in his grave. That really hit home, and I decided to stay. I just hope that someday I can have that kind of impact on someone else."

A member of the Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association since 1996, Nokes currently has \$740,032 in PRCA career earnings. That includes winnings from the 2005 Wrangler National Finals Rodeo where he competed in steer wrestling and placed fourth in the world standings.

Later on, in 2017, Nokes won the Ariat World Series of Team Roping in Las Vegas, beating out more than 500 other teams for a spot in the final round.

Nokes has also been highly involved in "the greatest sport on dirt" at the local level. He won the Nebraska State Rodeo Association's "Rookie of the Year" title in 1996 and was the all-around champion in 2011 and 2014. He was the organization's tie-down champion in 2011, '13 and '14.

A state to the south, Nokes was named the Kansas Professional Rodeo Association's all-around champion in 1996, 2010, '12 and '14, steer wrestling champion in '96 and tie-down roping champion in 2011, '13 and '14.

Additionally, Nokes is a three-time Prairie Circuit steer wrestling and all-around champion and was the tie-down roping champion in 2007.

He has won numerous all-around titles at major rodeos such as the National Western Stock Show in Denver in 2005 and Cheyenne Frontier Days in 2006.

He took home the all-around title and was co-champion in the team roping, alongside Matt Wilken, at the Buffalo Bill Rodeo in North Platte in 2012. He also won the calf roping at the Buffalo Bill Rodeo in 1997 and steer wrestling in '98.

Nokes currently lives on a farm south of McCook with his wife, Laura, and sons, Trevor and Parker. Together they raise crops, cattle and performance horses. Garrett is also a crop insurance agent for First Crop Insurance, LLC. **P**



/ CAMPUS /

OKLAHOMA PANHANDLE STATE UNIVERSITY HLC QUALITY INITIATIVE PROJECT A SUCCESS

Oklahoma Panhandle State University is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission, a regional accreditation agency recognized by the U.S. Department of Education. The last comprehensive evaluation for accreditation occurred in 2010. As part of its reaccreditation the university is on what the commission calls the Open Pathway. The Open Pathway program is one of three options that an institution has for maintaining its accreditation with HLC. The Open Pathway's 10-year cycle is focused on quality assurance and institutional improvement appropriate to the University Mission. In the final year of the cycle, the institution undergoes a comprehensive evaluation to ensure that it is meeting the Criteria for Accreditation, pursuing institutional improvement and complying with certain requirements set by the U.S. Department of Education. Rooted in "Progress through Knowledge," OPSU is committed to promoting excellence in the preparation of students for success in a global community. To learn more about the University, read our Strategic Plan.

OPSU officially launched its Quality Initiative project in the fall of 2015 focusing on improving student retention and graduation. This initiative focused on building our institutional capacity to evaluate and analyze student data to improve the complement of student support programs and interventions for student success. This initiative helped the university make student success central to the Strategic Plan and Scorecard. The project also resulted in major gains in graduation rates, with total annual graduates up 51% since the start of the initiative. Another major area for growth in the initiative came through improved course pass rates in developmental education by 17% for English and 10% for Math.

University President, Dr. Tim Faltyn stated, "The Quality Initiative has been a driving force for keeping student persistence and completion central to the university's decision making. I appreciate the efforts of all of those who have served on this initiative, it has been a difference maker for OPSU."

OPSU is in its 9th year of the accreditation cycle, and will undergo a comprehensive evaluation in the fall of 2020, with peer reviewers coming to campus on October 19, 2020 to confirm that the university is continuing to meet the Criteria for Accreditation, is pursuing institutional improvement, and complies with requirements set by the U.S. Department of Education.

Vice President of Academic and Student Affairs, Dr. Julie Dinger commented, "Seeing the success we have through this initiative has been the most gratifying aspect of the Quality Initiative process. We have helped thousands of students achieve their full academic potential and supported faculty in the process."

In 2021, the Higher Learning Commission staff will review reports from the 2020 Assurance Review, Quality Initiative project, and Comprehensive Evaluation. The overall assessment will be forwarded to the Commission's Institutional Actions Council (IAC) of the Higher Learning Commission. The decision process will include Commission action regarding reaffirmation of accreditation and determine the University's future Pathway eligibility. Visit <https://www.opsu.edu/About/Accreditation/> to learn more about the upcoming reaffirmation of accreditation. **P**



/ATHLETICS/

OPSU MASCOT IS THE 2020 NAIA LOGOWARS CHAMPION

After a gauntlet of on-line voting that lasted nearly two months, the Oklahoma Panhandle State University mascot has emerged as the 2020 NAIA LogoWars Champion. The Aggies gained more votes than Dordt University in the championship match-up. The contest was sponsored by the site @NAIAFBall, one of the premier sources for NAIA football information.

"We did it!" Panhandle State President Dr. Tim Faltyn said. "We've been winners for 110 years and thanks to the Aggie Nation - the support of all of our friends, family and fans - we win again in LogoWars! The OPSU mascot has been voted the best in the NAIA across America! Thank you Aggie Nation!"

The head-to-head between the Aggies and Dordt had all the makings of a wild race from the outset of the five-day voting window, as both universities came in with a history of strong fan support in the contest. Once the initial onslaught of votes came in early on Wednesday, the two schools stayed within 50 votes of each other the majority of the next four days. In the final six hours of voting on Monday, however, OPSU faithful made a massive surge. The Aggie Nation pushed a precarious lead of less than 7 votes (0.2%) to an advantage upwards of 300 votes (7%), all in a window of two hours down the stretch.

The final LogoWars voter tally was a tribute to both institutions' fan base, which generated a record 4,854 combined votes in the championship. For its part, Aggie Nation amassed a single school record vote of 2,597.

On the road to the virtual national championship in the LogoWars contest, Panhandle State topped, in order: Valley City State University, Doane University, Northwestern College, Southern Oregon University, Dakota State and McPherson College, prior to its victory over Dordt in the finale.

"In a time where there is so much distraction and fear with COVID-19, this contest has caused us to focus on the positive," Dr. Faltyn added. "Anyone who followed the voting could clearly see that we have a tremendous and diverse fan base. It proves it's always a great day to be an Aggie." 

TOP 10 ATHLETIC MOMENTS OF 2019-2020

1

Rodeo dominates the NIRA Central Plains Region final results

After COVID-19 forced cancellation of the CNFR in 2020, both the Aggie men's and women's rodeo teams were leading the National Intercollegiate Rodeo Association's (NIRA) Central Plains Region standings by comfortable margins and declared champion of the region. The OPSU men amassed 2,857.66 points, leading runner-up Fort Scott (1,977) by 880.66 points. The Aggie ladies were equally dominating with 2,048.50 points, out-distancing second-place Southeastern Oklahoma State University's 1,282 (a margin of 766.50 points). **P**



2

Pounds weighs in with second-consecutive NAIA All-American honor

For the second-consecutive season with Oklahoma Panhandle State University football, linebacker Diamante Pounds was selected to the NAIA All-American Team. In the NAIA national leaders, Pounds ranked No. 6 in TFL per game and No. 7 in total TFL. He was also 18th among all NAIA defensive players for tackles per game. In his two years with OPSU, Pounds amassed 161 tackles (8.1 per game) and 14.5 sacks (0.8 per game played). **P**



3

Kendra Butler makes a record career at OPSU

From 2016 through 2019, Butler posted some of, if not the, best numbers in the history of the Aggies' program. First and foremost, she never failed to answer the bell for the Aggies, helping her team to back-to-back Sooner Athletic Conference post-season berths her junior and senior year. Butler, a middle blocker, played in all 111 matches during her career. During that span, the Aggies had 385 total games and Butler played in all of them. **P**



4

Shayna Glover's All-SAC cross country run

Women's Cross Country student-athlete Shayna Glover – a native of Goodwell, Oklahoma – ran to an All-Sooner Athletic Conference finish, helping the Oklahoma Panhandle State University team to fifth place finish at the 2019 SAC championships. The all-conference award capped a fantastic season for Glover and also made some history along the way. Glover became the first OPSU female runner in more than two decades to earn an all-conference award in cross country for the Aggies. **P**



5

D.K. Sumo was grand for OPSU men's basketball

When opponents took on OPSU's men's basketball team, many may have felt like summoning the local police to report a "211 in progress," even though there was not actually a robbery - in non-law enforcement jargon - afoot. But when junior guard D.K. Sumo IV was on the floor, there was a better-than-average chance that the Aggies' "master thief" was going to get his share of steals. Sumo, a third-year Aggie, finished the 2019-20 campaign ranked No. 5 in the entire nation in steals per game at 2.44. Sumo was also No. 20 in the NAIA for total steals - at 56 - after playing in 23 of the team's 29 games. **P**





6

Men's Soccer Flourishes in Inaugural Season

OPSU men's soccer – which made its debut (along with women's soccer) on campus as an intercollegiate sports in the fall of 2019 – generated an air of excitement and success right out of the blocks. The Panhandle State men would go on to finish with a record of 9-6-2. The Aggies also reached an important pinnacle by earning a berth in the Sooner Athletic Conference post-season tournament in their very first campaign, as well. **P**

7

Softball's Kaylor Battiest tosses a no-hitter in season opener

In the OPSU softball season opener on February 1, senior pitcher Kaylor Battiest started the 2020 campaign in the best way possible: by no-hitting the University of the Southwest. Battiest was dominating on the road in Hobbs, N.M., in the Aggies' 12-0 victory. Battiest was the NAIA saves leader in 2019, with 10. She was also an all-Sooner Athletic Conference pick last season. **P**



8

Chris Schraer walks it off versus Kansas Wesleyan University

On Tuesday, March 10, the Panhandle State Baseball team took on the Kansas Wesleyan Coyotes in a mid-week double header that set the stage for a dramatic moment from senior outfielder Chris Schraer. In the bottom of the seventh, after a single in the seventh by Jose Santiago, Coach Shawn Joy elected to bring in Hayden Boyd to pinch run. Boyd stole second and then a ground out moved him over to third to set up the situation perfectly for Schraer. On a 1-0 pitch, Schraer hit a frozen rope to left field easily scoring Boyd with the winning run from third on the walk-off hit. **P**

9

Markus Bracey Leap Day victory

Baseball pitcher/shortstop Markus Bracey sure made the most out of the extra day provided by Leap Year – February 29, 2020 – in having a dream doubleheader at Central Christian College. In game one, Bracey threw a complete-game shutout – the first by OPSU of the season – and scattered five hits. He also struck out seven Tiger batters in Panhandle States 7-0 victory. With the bat, Bracey's line for the day was equally impressive: 4-for-8, with two doubles, a home run, scored five runs and drove in four more. **P**



10

Women's Soccer Earns United Soccer Coaches Team Award

United Soccer Coaches announced its 2019 Team Ethics and Sportsmanship Award recipients for college soccer programs, tabbing Oklahoma Panhandle State University Women's Soccer among its honorees. The Aggie ladies – playing their inaugural season this past fall – were the lone representative on the USC list from the Sooner Athletic Conference. Panhandle State's Silver Award is also the highest accolade from among the three Oklahoma schools to be honored. **P**



WE'LL SEE YOU IN DECEMBER!

2020 COMMENCEMENT

DECEMBER 12

