

SEPTEMBER 2020

Panhandle

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**CELEBRATING
EXCELLENCE IN A
PANDEMIC**



“This is sure to be a semester like no other we have experienced. It’s going to require a great deal of patience and flexibility from all of us on and off campus. ”

— Dr. Tim Faltyn,
University President

/ CAMPUS /

A SAFER START TO A NEW FALL SEMESTER AT OKLAHOMA PANHANDLE STATE UNIVERSITY

The Fastest Growing University in the Region is open for business, but that does not mean business as usual in the Oklahoma Panhandle. Oklahoma Panhandle State University is planning to open up safer after an unprecedented era in our nation’s history. COVID-19 changed the way things will be done in the Fall semester.

University President, Dr. Tim Faltyn commented, “This is sure to be a semester like no other we have experienced. It’s going to require a great deal of patience and flexibility from all of us on and off-campus.”

The COVID-19 Taskforce at OPSU has met and implemented measured planning during the pandemic based on guidance from the Centers for Disease Control, the State Department of Health, and the Office of Management and Enterprise Services. This group was designed to strategize and implement new protocols, signage, and, most importantly, how we plan to open up safe.

Faltyn stated, “We are working toward the day we bring our students back to campus on August 17. We are committed to ensuring a safe as possible environment for our students, employees, and community members.”

OPSU plans to have smaller class sizes, increased sanitization, and sanitizer dispensers around every corner of campus.

Dean of College of Agriculture, Science, and Nursing, Shawna Tucker stated, “We have carefully analyzed each classroom meeting space and adjusted class size limits accordingly to ensure safe distancing protocols can be followed.” She continued, “This means we have added more sections of smaller class sizes. This approach maximizes the beloved and critical “college experience,” while mitigating risk.”

Vice President of Operations, Dr. Ryan Blanton stated, “In the event that we have a positive case of the COVID-19 virus, we are better prepared having these procedures in place. Our team has not only worked for many months to better our campus experience, but to also consider all situations.”

Most importantly, students are ready to be back on campus.

Senior, Naomi Rodriguez commented, “I am extremely ready for campus to open back up and excited to be back on campus and meet my new fellow teammates and see all the new Aggie faces on campus.”

“I am also very curious to see how different or not so different everything will be this fall.” She explained, “Going online was not new for me, the majority of the classes I take are online, but I will say that they have taught me to be more responsible and on time with turning assignments in and knowing when something is due and when I need to get it done.”

Part of being open, but not open for business as usual, will lead to changes in our Athletic programs and the fan experience. OPSU Aggie Athletics plays a major role in student life. When the spring semester was interrupted, many sports were not able to finish their season, we are ready, and adapting to start back up again.

Athletic Director, Meghan Mulcahy stated, “We plan to continue with athletics this fall while following all NAIA, Sooner Athletic Conference, and State guidelines. Our student-athletes’ health and safety are our main priority, and we will take all necessary precautions.” If there are scheduling changes or fan seating adaptations put in place, we will communicate those and any changes to our game day operations as quickly as possible.

Throughout the pandemic we have seen that plans sometimes must change. Panhandle State promises to be adaptable, prepared, and ready to serve our students and community. **P**

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On the cover: Honor Grad Box



OKLAHOMA
PANHANDLE STATE
UNIVERSITY

P.O. Box 430 Goodwell, OK 73939
Tel: 580-349-2611 / Toll Free: 1-800-664-OPSU
Fax: 580-349-2302

ADMINISTRATION

Dr. Tim Faltyn — President
Dr. Julie Dinger — Provost
Dr. Ryan Blanton — Vice President of Operations
Dr. Brad Duren — Associate Vice President of Academic Affairs
Liz McMurphy — Assistant Vice President of Fiscal Affairs

PANHANDLE MAGAZINE

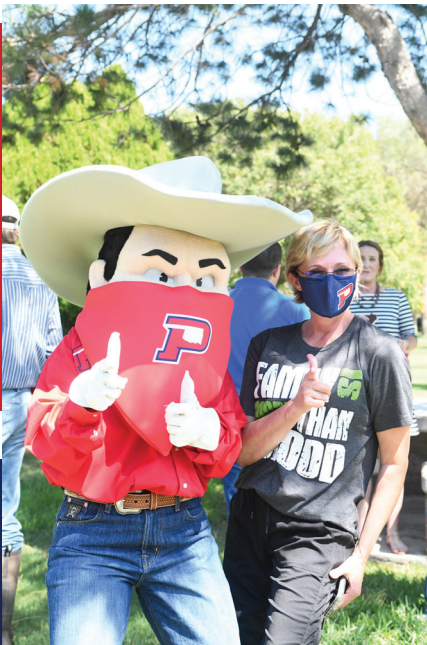
Natasha Eidson — Director of Campus Communications
Chyanna Black — Director of Alumni Relations
Dave Beyer — Sports Information Director

PHOTOGRAPHERS

Natasha Eidson — Chyanna Black — Amanda Tidwell — Brittany Smith — Camry Kane

/ CAMPUS /

BACK ON CAMPUS BACK IN THE COMMUNITY







/ STAFF /

NICK TUTTLE

Nick Tuttle, the Guymon native, has been the person behind the Panhandle State website for several years as the Webmaster. Tuttle is an OPSU graduate receiving a bachelor's degree in 2009 for Computer Graphics and Computer Information Systems in 2012.

Tuttle was recruited by Larry Hough for industrial technology, but always had an interest in computer graphics and design. While pursuing an industrial technology degree, he had a few mishaps that led him to switch to a computer graphics path. Tuttle commented, "After grinding a few knuckles down, catching my clothes on fire in welding, and cross-threading spark plugs in my car, I decided 3D modeling, graphics, and programming were safer for me."

Just before graduation in 2009, Diane Murphey encouraged Nick to apply for the Webmaster position. He pursued this position because it was an opportunity to work on a beautiful campus with so much history.

Nick has been involved in several organizations around campus. When asked his favorite part of Panhandle State, it was no surprise when he said, "The people that make it happen."

"It's so great to work at a place surrounded by knowledgeable people in various fields, all striving to do their best to help students from this area and beyond."

Although his position has kept him busier than usual during the pandemic, Nick enjoys making 3D designs and laser cutting projects. He also likes to tinker with radio control cars, drones, etc. When Tuttle is not updating the website, he loves spending time with his family. His skills allow him to help his wife in her cake business and teach his son and daughter necessary programming skills. **P**



/ STUDENT /

ZION BYRD

Zion Byrd is a student-athlete from Cedar Hill, Texas, striving to make a difference at Panhandle State. He is pursuing a degree in Psychology and is on track to graduate in 2021 while playing football for Coach Majeski.

There is no question that Byrd is passionate about football, so when he had the opportunity to play at the next level for an affordable price, Panhandle State was the best fit. He is an outgoing young man who has become involved as a leader for his team and around campus. He is a member of Black Scholars of the World, Student Government Association, and Oklahoma Intercollegiate Legislature clubs.

When asked who is role model is, he stated, "My high school offensive line coach, Luis Oubre. He taught me so many lessons on and off the field. He also kept me going when I didn't want to anymore." He continued, "He was the grandfather I didn't have growing up in Dallas."

Zion is the oldest of five children with three little brothers and one sister. He plans to make a difference in the world. His ability to be open-minded allows him to have thoughtful discussions of any topic with his peers and administrative leaders on campus.

"Seeing my elders in my family grind and hustle my whole life to make sure we were good inspired me to never give up and to keep going no matter what people say about you."

When asked his favorite thing about Panhandle State, he said, "The nice, caring people on campus."

Byrd plans to continue his football career as far as possible but would like to travel outside the United States. He enjoys traveling to embrace nature and site-seeing. After graduation and traveling, Zion plans to start his career as a Social worker in a big city to make a difference. **P**



/ FACULTY /

KRISTY CALLOWAY

Dr. Kristy Calloway, originally from Boswell, Oklahoma, started her time at Oklahoma Panhandle State University serving as an adjunct professor in 2019. She then took the reins as the Director of Nursing in April 2020.

As the Director, she oversees the nursing program and makes sure that OPSU is meeting ACEN accreditation standards by reviewing curriculum, policies, and evaluation methods. OPSU currently has over 240 nursing students enrolled in the program.

Dr. Calloway earned a Bachelor of Nursing from East Central Oklahoma University, a Masters in Nursing Education from the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center, and a Doctorate in Nursing Education from the University of Northern Colorado.

In 2009, Dr. Calloway started her teaching career at East Central University School of Nursing. She taught in the pre-licensure program and RN to BSN program. She then became the Program Coordinator for the Durant campus and Interim Director for Nursing for all three ECU campuses.

“My favorite thing about OPSU is that I feel part of a community even though I work in an online environment,” Calloway said, “From day one, everyone I have met has had the common goal of supporting the success of our students. I love that about OPSU!”

Kristy and her husband have 6 kids and 2 grandkids with one on the way. They just recently moved with their three younger kids to St. Thomas, Virgin Islands. She commented, “My husband works here as a paramedic and working online at OPSU made it possible for us to come here with him to live!” She loves the beach, but also loves visiting the mountains and snow skiing. She enjoys reading to her kids for an hour almost every weeknight. **P**



/ ALUMNI /

BUD BLACKMORE

Bud Blackmore, a Weston Lakes, Texas resident, has represented Oklahoma Panhandle State University well throughout his career. Since Bud grew up in Texhoma, Oklahoma, it made attending Panhandle State a natural choice. He graduated from OPSU in 1969 with a degree in Business Administration.

Blackmore entered the oil industry after graduation and spent the next 40 years in that field. He worked with Kerr-McGee Corporation in Oklahoma City and Houston for a total of 25 years, and his final position with the company was as Vice President of Marketing. Bud then moved onto a 15-year stint with Sinclair Oil Corporation in Salt Lake City where he retired as Senior Vice President of Marketing and Product Supply in 2010.

During his retirement, Blackmore was asked to serve on the Board of Directors of Innospec based in Denver, Colorado. He was appointed to the board in the spring of 2010 and has continued to serve as the Chairman since 2012.

Bud stated that Panhandle State has the ability to provide a degree that opened doors in a career while the smaller size lets you meet everyone, and that he developed lifelong friendships. Looking back on his favorite memories, Bud said, “Mandatory ROTC with drill time every Thursday afternoon and dances on the weekend with a local band led by Bill Handorf.”

Bud and his wife, Janet, recently celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary. Together they have two sons that have married and provided them with 4 granddaughters. While in retirement, he enjoys woodworking, golf, hiking, and spending the summers in their Utah home. **P**

STUDENT TESTIMONIALS

COMING BACK DURING COVID-19

“I was super excited for this semester to start again and to be back on campus after ending the last semester virtual! It’s been interesting to be going to college with all the new regulations but I’m thankful to see everyone in person again. My classes have been great so far and I hope we are able to continue to meet in person for the rest of the semester. It’s very difficult to not socialize as we normally would, but we just have to make the most of it!”

— Shay Kinsey, Senior



“I think my final year at Oklahoma Panhandle State, during the COVID-19 pandemic, will be a year I will never forget. I hope we can have our baseball season this coming spring and make it a good one!”

— Joseph Goetze, Senior

“The start of this semester was going great until we had to quarantine for ten days and let me tell you those were not fun! I will do my part in wearing a mask and staying in my own little bubble, so I don’t have to quarantine again. Other than that, I am excited to see how the rest of the semester goes. I am super happy that I will still be able to attend class and work in the financial aid office because I love being able to see people and socialize even if I have to wear a mask while being in class or in the office.”

— Naomi Rodriguez, Senior



“I am very impressed with how OPSU has handled all the changes and still made this as close to a normal year as possible for students! It is awesome to see teachers and staff work so hard to get students back face-to-face and bring everyone back together! I’m am looking forward to this fall and hope we get to continue moving forward on campus!”

— Affton Schlochtermeier, Junior



2020 HONOR GRADS



Benjamin Munoz
Nursing



Dustin Martinez
Art



Marely Saenz
Biological Science

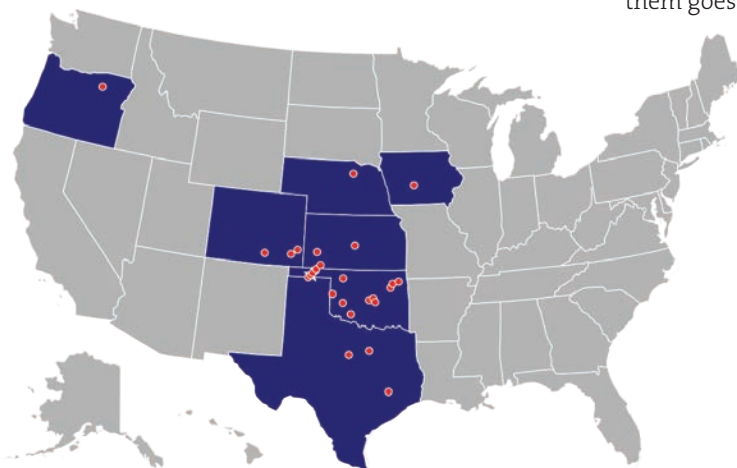


Samantha Allum
Education



Amanda Blanton
Computer
Information Systems

OPSU President, Dr. Tim Faltyn, drove over 3,000 miles to hand deliver the 2020 Honor Graduates their diplomas. Although this year's graduation had to be postponed, Panhandle State wanted to ensure this was a bookmark moment for our grads as they turn the page on this chapter. Each honors graduate was presented an honor box filled with their honor cord, diploma, special 2020 tassel, Class of 2020 lapel pin, alumni membership, and note from the president. "I have been inspired by our graduates with every stop I've made. It was an honor to visit with each graduate and their families where I heard the challenges they overcame, their plans for the future, and to see their confidence beam, as they opened their diplomas. I'm proud and excited to see where each of them goes in their bright futures." **P**



* 8 states represented by the 2020 Panhandle State honor graduates. **P**



Jena Konieczka
Social Studies



Krystal Hernandez
Biological Science



Kassandra Bengé
Biological Science
Business Administration



Rhonda Clemons
Nursing



Cameron Branch
Computer
Informations Systems



Rylee Higgins
Health & Physical
Education



Chet Adams
Animal Science



Marissa Soper
Nursing



D'Lanee Dolye
Agribusiness
Business Administration



Abby Gregory
Biological Science



Jessica Garrett
Nursing



Jasper Smiley
Health & Physical
Education



Levi Morris
Agronomy



Lacy Brewer
Nursing



Sydni Wiggins
Biological Science



Emily Worley
Biological Science



Lindsay Wallace
Nursing



Sam Ortiz Medrano
Art



Sarah Wood
Agronomy



Tanner Daniels
Computer
Information Systems



Sarah Smith
Accounting
Business Administration



Kaylee Rayl
Nursing



Kendra Butler
Biological Science



Hadleigh Summers
Chemistry
Biological Science

Grad Boxes to be delivered



Polly Alldredge
Nursing

Sierra Smith
Accounting

Kaylen Nguyen
Nursing

Linzie Van Horn
Biological Science

Kimberley Sanders
Nursing

Maygan Ward
Nursing

See you in December

<https://www.opsu.edu/Academics/Commencement/>

/CAMPUS/

GOVERNOR STITT TRAVELS TO GUYMON VISITS WITH TEACHERS, LOCAL LEADERS, BUSINESS OWNERS AND HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

Governor Kevin Stitt today traveled to Guymon where he joined state leaders in visiting with the local community to encourage Oklahomans to continue working together to slow the spread of COVID-19.

“It was great to be back in Guymon to visit with Oklahomans and see how they are responding to the impacts of COVID-19,” said Gov. Stitt. “Educating our children and protecting the health and lives of Oklahomans are both non-negotiables to me, so we wanted to visit with folks out here in the panhandle and make sure they have the guidance and resources they need.”

Gov. Stitt and Commissioner of Health Lance Frye, MD, started the day on a tour of Prairie Elementary with Superintendent Angela Rhoades where they visited with students, teachers and staff to learn about the protocols being implemented in order to safely reopen for in-person learning.

The governor and Dr. Frye then joined Secretary of Agriculture Blayne Arthur to visit Seaboard Foods where they toured plant operations and received an update on how the Oklahoma State Department of Health’s rapid response team was able to contain a previous outbreak and work to ensure production was able to continue safely and protect the food supply.

Following this, the governor met with community and businesses leaders, including local officials from Guymon, Goodwell and Hooker to answer questions and provide a situation update.

Governor Stitt and Dr. Frye also met with Dr. Gloria Cuadrado, a local physician, to get a ground-level perspective of how COVID-19 has affected Guymon and the surrounding communities.

The governor also visited Oklahoma Panhandle State University in Goodwell, where he presented a \$200,000 food supply stability grant, toured the university’s meat lab and shooting sports complex where he fired a 1,000-yard shot as well as a WWII-era rifle.

“I was so impressed with the great things that are happening at Oklahoma Panhandle State University,” said Gov. Stitt. “President Tim Faltyn and his team are doing an incredible job focusing on specialized programs that make their university unique. It’s easy to see why OPSU is experiencing tremendous growth despite a challenging national landscape for colleges.” **P**





“Liz McMurphy is one of the hardest working people I have ever had the pleasure to work with. She is always looking out for the University’s best interest. I am so excited to have her as part of the executive team to help Panhandle State strive for excellence.”

— Dr. Tim Faltyn,
University President

/CAMPUS/

LIZ MCMURPHY NAMED ASSISTANT VICE PRESIDENT OF FISCAL AFFAIRS

With the retirement of Vice President of Fiscal Affairs, Benny Dain, Liz McMurphy, was promoted to Assistant Vice President of Fiscal Affairs. McMurphy has worked at Oklahoma Panhandle State University for the past 12 years.

She began her career at Panhandle State in Accounts Payable before rising to the position of Purchasing Director. After spending two years as Purchasing Director, McMurphy served as Comptroller, where she worked closely with Benny Dain. She is a Panhandle State alum, where she earned a Bachelor of Business Administration in 2008. She went on to West Texas A&M University, receiving her Masters of Business Administration in 2009.

Dr. Tim Faltyn, President of OPSU, stated, “Liz McMurphy is one of the hardest working people I have ever had the pleasure to work with. She is always looking out for the University’s best interest. I am so excited to have her as part of the executive team to help Panhandle State strive for excellence.”

McMurphy has shown an enthusiasm to make the University the best that it can be. She played a vital part in the construction process of the new Shooting Sports Complex.

McMurphy stated, “Panhandle State changes lives and is integral to the surrounding communities and region. It’s an honor to be part of an institution that can serve individuals and the region in such a way and work with the people on a daily basis who are making these great things happen.”

This new position is among many transitional positions at the University during the COVID-19 crisis. Dr. Ryan Blanton has transitioned into the position as Vice President of Operations from his role as Vice President of Outreach. This position is new to the University, a combination of both the Outreach and Fiscal Affairs position. This transition sets the University on a path to be sustainable and flexible in moving into the future. **P**

/ CAMPUS /

DR. DUREN NAMED ASSOCIATE VICE PRESIDENT OF ACADEMIC AFFAIRS



Oklahoma Panhandle State University selected Dr. Brad Duren as the Associate Vice President of Academic Affairs. He assumed the position on July 15. Before accepting this position, he served as the Dean of the College of Arts and Education, where he will continue this role in his new position.

President Dr. Tim Faltyn said, "Dr. Duren will serve our University well in this new role. I believe in him and his capabilities to meet the needs of our students and faculty."

Dr. Duren will be responsible for leading all areas of academic support across campus, under the direction of the Provost, Dr. Julie Dinger.

Dr. Dinger stated, "Dr. Duren's experience and approach was the right fit for this role. He brings a vision and leadership style that I am grateful to integrate into the leadership team to build a brighter future for OPSU."

Prior to his 21 years of service at Panhandle State, Dr. Duren taught US History, Philosophy, and Humanities at Oklahoma Missionary Baptist College. He then taught three sections of freshman US History while serving as a Teaching Assistant during his Ph.D. work at Oklahoma State University. Then an adjunct History professor at Redlands Community College, the University of Central Oklahoma, and Rose State College.

Dr. Duren commented, "I am honored to be chosen for this position. For over twenty years, OPSU has been my home. This University has been great to me, and I look forward to the challenges this new opportunity affords me." **P**



/ CAMPUS /

TYE STEPHENS NAMED DEAN OF ONLINE COLLEGE

Tye Stephens has been selected to serve as Oklahoma Panhandle State University's Dean of Online College. Before accepting this new position at Panhandle State, he was the Director of Criminal Justice and an Instructor of Psychology.

University President, Dr. Tim Faltyn stated, "It is with great pleasure that we announce this promotion of Tye Stephens. His excitement and drive to reach students virtually are why he will be great for this position."

Mr. Stephens will be responsible for enhancing the online learning environment and student experiences, under the direction of the Provost, Dr. Julie Dinger.

Provost, Dr. Julie Dinger, stated, "Stephens is a rising star in academia with a bright future both academically in his field and as a lead on campus."

Before his career at Panhandle State, he was a Forensic Psychotherapist in Arvada, Colorado.

Mr. Stephens commented, "In this position, I intend to support and bolster our existing virtual programs while bringing new courses and degrees into the online realm." He continued, "This program will provide opportunities for students to attend our high-caliber courses, even if they may not be able to physically move to Goodwell. I am eager to open doors for new students from all different walks of life." **P**



/CAMPUS/

ODAFF GRANT FOR THE OPSU MEAT LAB

The Estes E. Firestone Meat Lab at Oklahoma Panhandle State University will receive a \$200,000 Grant from the Oklahoma Agriculture Enhancement and Diversification Program. As part of the CARES Act funding for the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, this grant is to be used for the growth of Oklahoma's meat processing capacity through investment in new or expanding meat processing facilities in Oklahoma.

University President, Dr. Tim Faltyn commented, "This grant will allow OPSU to enhance what is already a center of excellence for us in a way that will better serve not only our students but our community as well."

Meat Lab Director, AJ Ingo, Instructor of Animal Science, Darn Stephens, Director of Campus Communications, Natasha Eidson, and Vice President of Operations, Dr. Ryan Blanton, all worked on finding the best way to take advantage of this opportunity.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Estes E. Firestone Meat Lab has been able to help the community in many ways. While meat production in the area slowed down due to the pandemic, the Meat Lab was able to continue their harvesting and processing of meat animals for regional customers.

Blanton stated, "This funding provides us an opportunity to be a better economic partner in the regional agricultural community by strengthening our processing capacity."

AJ Ingo stated, "I am extremely excited about the opportunity this grant is offering us. We have worked hard to provide quality products for many years with equipment that had fallen behind current industry standards."

"This money," Ingo added, "will allow us to replace some of our key pieces of equipment to provide an even more consistent product to our valued customers in less time. It also will provide a safer work environment for our student employees and students in meat science classes."

The Estes E. Firestone Meat Lab, built in 1982, has had minimal upgrades to the facility and equipment. Oklahoma Panhandle State University will use these upgrades to enhance students' learning experience, making them more marketable in the modern workforce.

Daren Stephens, Instructor of Animal Science, commented, "From an educational view, the Firestone Meat Lab provides a very Hands-On learning experience for students. These monies will allow students to use and experience more current and Advanced Machinery, processing technology, and techniques. The laboratory experiences for courses will be richer and more diverse." **P**

/ CAMPUS /

OPSU RECEIVES CERTIFIED HEALTHY OKLAHOMA AWARD OF EXCELLENCE



Dana Collins, Stacy Nordquist, Amber Fesmire, Rene Ramon, Calandra Rose

Oklahoma Panhandle State University continues to work diligently at being a Certified Healthy Campus. This year, OPSU received the Certified Excellence Award for being a Healthy Campus.

University President, Dr. Tim Faltyn stated, "This is one of the many ways Panhandle State seeks to be better and do better. This group of individuals strive to bring new ways for us all to stay healthy. Especially during these unprecedented times."

The Panhandle State Wellness Committee members are Dana Collins, Amber Hollis-Fesmire, Calandra Rose, Stacy Norquist, and Rene Ramon. They work together to coordinate efforts each year to provides services and activities geared toward campus well-being, which is directly related to Certified Healthy Oklahoma

Director of the Noble Center, Amber Hollis-Fesmire commented, "I am extremely proud of our campus and the ongoing effort to provide opportunities aimed toward living healthy lifestyles and personal well-being. Providing resources that focus on both physical and mental aspects are essential for maintaining personal health and in turn we are creating a well-rounded atmosphere for our students, employees and area communities."

Director of Human Resources, Dana Collins states, "OPSU has participated in the Certified Healthy Oklahoma program since 2009. It has been my dream for OPSU to be recognized with the Certified Excellence Award. The Excellence Award shows the hard work the Wellness Team has done to move the University to the next healthy level. I'm happy to have an environment that encourages healthier faculty, staff, students and visitors."

Panhandle State is continuously looking for ways to improve campus, and it all starts with individuals like this who want to make a difference. **P**

/ CAMPUS /

AKADÉMOS

A NEW KIND OF BOOKSTORE FOR PANHANDLE STATE STARTING FALL 2020

Oklahoma Panhandle State University has partnered with Akademos to better serve students with a new experience for book rentals and purchasing.

Starting with the Fall 2020 term, OPSU will launch a new online bookstore for all textbooks and course materials. Selecting and ordering books will be entirely done through the Online Bookstore system, and students will have their course materials shipped to them on an individual basis.

The Online Bookstore will streamline the adoption process for faculty and administrators, making it easy to select and adopt course materials for class. It will save students money and offers an easy way to order their books in less than five minutes. **P**

OPSU PBL STUDENTS PLACE TOP 10 AT THE NATIONAL LEADERSHIP ONLINE EXPERIENCE

“To some of the students, I bet it seemed impossible, but now they know that nothing is impossible... to me, that is a great educational victory. We are so proud of who you are, how you are, and what you have accomplished!”

— Dr. Tim Faltyn,
University President

This year’s traditional National Leadership Conference was converted to an Online Experience format due to COVID-19.

Panhandle State students adjusted and preserved through the new challenge of competing virtually. The competitions consisted of 100-question multiple-choice tests except for two divisions. These two divisions required our students to sign an honor code policy and submit recorded material for judging. The Panhandle State PBL team represented the university well, with a total of 10 students that competed. Amanda Blanton, Cameron Branch, Kaley Conner, Keiry Fernandez, Emily Westeman, Lupita Jimenez, Thein Mway, Jasmine Puebla, Madison Reed, and Catarina Tum all participated in the National Leadership Online Experience. In the end, we had four students finish in the Top 10 in the nation. Amanda Blanton finished 9th in Networking Concepts. Keiry Fernandez and Emily Westeman, as a team, finished 10th in Accounting Analysis and Decision Making. Jasmine Puebla finished 4th in Networking Concepts and 5th in Cost Accounting. Emily Westeman finished 6th in Cost Accounting.

University President, Dr. Tim Faltyn stated, “CONGRATULATIONS to the OPSU PBL students and advisors! 4 students placed Top 10 in the Nation at the National Leadership Conference. To some of the students, I bet it seemed impossible, but now they know that nothing is impossible...to me, that is a great educational victory. We are so proud of who you are, how you are, and what you have accomplished!” **P**



Keiry
Fernandez



Amanda
Blanton



Emily
Westeman



Jasmine
Puebla

VICTOR ESPARZA TO STEP IN AS INTERIM ATHLETIC DIRECTOR



Victor Esparza has been named as the Interim Director of Athletics for Panhandle State. Esparza assumed the role after the departure of former A.D. Meghan Mulcahy for a similar position at Northeastern State University.

“I am excited to be able to lead the athletic department and build on the momentum and success that Meghan has created,” Esparza said. “I am thankful to Dr. Faltyn for giving me this opportunity. It is a dream come true for me.”

University President, Dr. Tim Faltyn stated, “Victor Esparza is a great asset to OPSU. During this time of transition, he will do a great job as Interim Athletic Director.” A national search committee will be formed in early spring. **P**



/ ATHLETICS /

OPSU BASEBALL EARNS SAC “TEAM OF CHARACTER” AWARD

The Oklahoma Panhandle State University baseball team has been named as the Sooner Athletic Conference men’s Team of Character award winner for 2019-20, it was announced by the league office. It marks the first time since joining the SAC that an Aggies’ program has earned the prestigious honor.

The annual award recognizes a conference team that best exemplifies the core values of the NAIA Champions of Character program: integrity, respect, responsibility, sportsmanship and servant leadership. As the SAC’s representative, Panhandle State Baseball is now eligible to be considered for the NAIA’s national Team of Character award to be announced in the coming days.

First-year Head Coach Shawn Joy made campus and civic engagement a top priority for his program, along with on-field performance and academic success. Joy’s Aggie team racked up better than 300 hours of campus and community volunteerism in diverse areas of involvement during the year.

“We are truly humbled for OPSU Baseball to have earned this great honor,” Joy said. “I’d like to thank our administration for nominating us and the SAC – especially Commissioner (Stan) Wagnon – for selecting us. The traits of the NAIA Champion of Character are things we believe should be a hallmark of our program and are things we would do whether or not there was a Team of Character award. We want Aggie Baseball to always be viewed as doing it the right way, which includes giving back in the community and working hard in the classroom.”

Some of the team’s activities included: putting on a youth clinic for the Texas County YMCA (as well as its own on-campus camps and clinics); having Reading Days at both Goodwell and Guymon elementary schools; regular Recess Playtime at Guymon schools; sponsoring its annual “Sports Day” for special needs children and their families; participating in “Clean-up Guymon” at Sunset Lake; shopping for Christmas presents for families in need and participating in the Goodwell Halloween street event. The team also had regular game nights with the seniors at Dunaway Manor nursing home

On campus, the Aggie team volunteered to work tickets and concession stands at fall and winter athletics events, while also doing set-up and takedown of OPSU’s tailgate area for football Saturdays. Other on-campus events included; a bat boy/girl program for local youth; having special game days for military, first responders and pediatric cancer awareness; supporting fellow Aggies by becoming regular fixtures at other OPSU sporting events, and; supporting other on-campus organizations with individual team members running in a 5K race and entering a jalapeño eating contest.

Panhandle State baseball also got it done in the classroom. The Aggies’ team grade point average of 3.24 was the second-highest among SAC baseball teams. OPSU baseball recently garnered a total of 45 academic-based awards from the SAC for 2019-20, including status as a SAC Scholar-Team award winner. **P**



/ ATHLETICS /

BASEBALL ALUMNI REUNION

Oklahoma Panhandle State University Head Baseball Coach Shawn Joy has a strong belief in making sure past Aggies know that they are an integral part of the program’s history. That was demonstrated on Saturday, August 22 when he hosted an Alumni Batting Practice before the Pioneer Days activities later that evening, drawing two dozen former OPSU players back to Goodwell.

And the Aggie alums had great day of showing off their swings and fielding skills, all while catching up with old friends and teammates. As a special treat, OPSU Athletic Hall of Fame former player and coach – Carroll Gribble – was on hand to meet-and-greet the younger alumni, as well.

“It was just a fantastic way to reconnect,” Joy said. “These alumni are the foundation as we build for the future with today’s team. We want the alumni to know that they are ‘Forever Aggies’ and that they have a home in Goodwell.” **P**

