

SEPTEMBER 2021

Panhandle

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AGGIES DO THEIR PART



/ CAMPUS /

PANHANDLE STATE RECOGNIZED FOR HIGHER LEARNING COMMISSION AWARD

Oklahoma Panhandle State University was awarded recognition after completing the Persistence and Completion Academy for the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) this past spring. The eight-person team consisted of members of the Executive team, Faculty, and Staff. The members included: Tito Aznar, Dean Sarah Green, Dillon Schoenhals, Dean Amber Glass, Laura Leiter, Brent Shoulders, Dr. Patrick Maille, and Provost Dr. Julie Dinger.

University President, Dr. Tim Faltyn commented, “I am proud of this team and how hard they worked to not only complete the Academy, but also how dedicated they were to showing how great Panhandle State University really is.”

HLC’s Persistence and Completion Academy provides participating institutions a structured, mentor-facilitated, four-year program aimed at evaluating and improving student persistence and completion rates. The Academy work included four detailed areas: data collection, community buy-in to data; data dissemination; and using data to further student success and improving student persistence and completion. OPSU successfully completed the Academy, and was a highlighted project during the Higher Learning Commission Annual Conference in spring 2021.

Assessment Coordinator and Project Lead, Laura Leiter said, “It is an honor to have received an award for the hard work that was put in from all of campus. We have grown immensely in the ways we gather, use, and disseminate data across shareholders. This project spurred new initiatives for helping and supporting students that we are grateful to this project for highlighting.”

Dean of Student Services, Amber Glass commented, “The work we were able to complete shows the dedication OPSU has to their students. We were able to help show what we already thought to be true; our students are some of the best and brightest.”

OPSU Provost, Dr. Julie Dinger stated, “We were honored to be selected into the program as an institution for the Persistence and Completion Academy in 2015. During our time in the Academy, we were provided the opportunity and pathway to demonstrate our shared commitment to student success. We appreciate HLC staff members, Academy Mentors, and content experts who helped shape our Academy project.”

The OPSU Persistence and Completion Academy project has led to new functions and groups on campus including the Persistence and Completion Committee, comprised of leaders from across campus who review data on initiatives and efforts to improve student success. **P**

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/ CAMPUS /

EVENTS ON CAMPUS & IN THE COMMUNITY







/ CAMPUS /

AGGIES DO THEIR PART FOR A SAFE RETURN TO CAMPUS

Oklahoma Panhandle State University is excited to be in person and on campus for a traditional fall semester. Students, faculty, and staff were all ready for classes to start on August 16th.

University President, Dr. Tim Faltyn stated, "We feel good about being in-person and starting on August 16th as close to normal as possible."

Provost, Dr. Julie Dinger commented, "When the Aggie Family works together there is no challenge we can't overcome. Let's work together to keep our community healthy and safe."

Panhandle State University's priority is to provide a safe and healthy experience for students, faculty, staff, and community. Masks are welcome but are not required. We ask that all be respectful of each other and those with underlying health issues while we continue to navigate the ongoing development of the pandemic.

Dean of Student Services, Amber Glass stated, "We are excited to welcome our Aggie family back to campus. If we are kind to each other and work together we can accomplish anything. Remember- it's always a great day to be an Aggie!"

For any student with concerns, please reach out to your advisor. In-person, hybrid, and online classes are offered to accommodate all students. **P**

/ FACULTY /

DR. CURTIS BENSCH RECEIVED NACTA JUDGING & STUDENT SERVICE AWARD



Professor of Agronomy at Oklahoma Panhandle State University, Dr. Curtis Bensch, received the North American Colleges and Teachers of Agriculture award for Judging and Student Service. The NACTA Judging and Student Service Award is presented to a faculty member who has provided exceptional service to students, with special emphasis on those coaching competitive judging teams who have participated in the annual NACTA Judging Conference.

Shawna Tucker, Dean of the Science, Agriculture, and Nursing commented, "Dr. Curtis Bensch does an excellent job at promoting not only the OPSU Crops Judging Team, but also the entire University. This award is well deserved and I am so thankful to have Dr. Bensch as a colleague."

Dr. Bensch advises approximately 30 agronomy majors and coaches several students on the NACTA team. Dr. Bensch has been involved with the NACTA Judging Conference for many years. OPSU Judging teams have participated in the crops contest every year, for the last 15 years. Under his leadership, the team placed fourth at the national contest in Spring 2021. **P**

/ CAMPUS /

DR. PATRICK MAILLE NAMED DEAN, COLLEGE OF ARTS & EDUCATION



Dr. Patrick Maille was named Dean for the College of Arts and Education. Although he was born and raised in upstate New York, Dr. Patrick Maille has worked at Oklahoma Panhandle State University for 15 years. Throughout his time at OPSU, he served as a Professor of History, Department Chair for Social and Behavioral Sciences, and the Faculty Athletics Representative.

As Dean, Dr. Maille will be responsible for leading the College of Arts and Education. The college generates more credit hours than any other college at OPSU. The college has several high profile majors and offers much of the general education curriculum that all students of OPSU complete.

Provost, Dr. Julie Dinger said, "I am confident in Dean Maille's ability to lead the College of Arts and Education and look forward to good things from the college as faculty and students work alongside Dr. Maille to continue the tradition of excellence at OPSU."

Prior to OPSU, Dr. Maille worked as a Pharmacy Technician in Lubbock, Texas. While being a Pharmacy Technician, he decided to start his college career. After deciding to pursue a major in history, Dr. Maille set his sights on earning his Bachelor's and continuing to graduate school.

Dr. Maille earned a Bachelor of Arts in History, a Master of Arts in History, and a Doctorate of History all from Texas Tech University. He was the first to graduate college in his family.

Since working at Panhandle State, Dr. Maille has seen many students grow and succeed in their professional fields. He stated, "After all, the success of the faculty and staff at OPSU is directly connected to the success of our graduates. It's amazing to look at our seniors and then think back about how they were as freshmen. It's even more amazing to see them take a place in the world where, like me, they can experience the luxury of getting to enter a profession you love while simultaneously helping others to better themselves, contributing something good to society, and continuing to grow."

Dr. Maille stated, "I want to make sure that I am contributing to the well-being of my university." He continued, "There is much to build on and OPSU already has been laying the foundation for this sort of work." **P**



/ CAMPUS /

CHARLA LEWIS NAMED ASSOCIATE DEAN, COLLEGE OF ARTS & EDUCATION

Charla Lewis was named Associate Dean for the College of Arts and Education. She has taught at Oklahoma Panhandle State University since 2013. Her roles include the Department Chair of Music, Director of Instrumental Music, Director of Music Education, and an Assistant Professor.

As Associate Dean, Lewis will support the Dean of the College of Arts and Education in guiding the college and its programs to assure academic innovation, excellence, and student success.

Associate VP of Academic Affairs Dr. Brad Duren says "Professor Lewis is one of our most dedicated faculty members. Her love for and support of her students is unparalleled. She brings a wealth of talent and education to the position of Associate Dean."

Charla Lewis received a Bachelor of Music Education with a vocal emphasis and an instrumental endorsement from OPSU, a Master of Music Education from Emporia State University, and is currently working towards a Doctorate of Education in Higher Education Leadership from Bradley University.

Lewis's career after undergraduate school started at Forgan Public Schools, where she taught band. After that, she accepted the position at Goodwell Public Schools in the same capacity. Before teaching at Panhandle State, Charla taught band, choir, and other music and drama activities at Liberal Public Schools in Kansas.

She has always been excited to be a Panhandle State Aggie. Lewis commented, "Everyone works hard to serve the students and be that support that they need while they are here. We watch out for each other and help the students stay on track. Even the students look out for one another! It's a special place!" **P**



/ STAFF /

KAREN BAUER

Originally from Enid, Oklahoma, Karen Bauer, has called the panhandle area home since 2003. She recently was promoted to Assistant Director of Financial Aid, and has been a vital member of the OPSU team while advocating CARES money to students.

Bauer moved to Guymon with her husband in 2003 where they have set roots down with their family. During the first few years in the area, she worked in the banking industry for several years before she decided to go back to school. She pursued a Bachelor of Science degree in biology which she graduated in 2008. It was during this time that she developed a desire to work for Panhandle State.

She commented, "After graduating in 2008, I worked a few different jobs, but I always wanted to work at OPSU. In 2020 a job opening in the Financial Aid department became available and I knew immediately it would be a position I would enjoy."

Bauer started with OPSU as a Financial Aid Counselor in the fall semester of 2020 before her promotion in July. In both positions, she assists students every day to help them with any financial aid questions.

When asked about her favorite thing about Panhandle State, she stated, "My coworkers and their willingness to help each other and the students."

When she is not helping students in her office, Bauer loves to spend time with her family. She has been married to her husband, Eric, for 14 years. Together they have 3 sons, Zeke, Murphy, and Miles. Zeke is 10 years old while Murphy and Miles are 5 years old. Karen has a passion for decorating, particularly decorating her home for all the different holidays. **P**



/ STUDENT /

MYA MARTINEZ

Originally from Hereford, Texas, Mya Martinez is a Junior at Oklahoma Panhandle State University. Mya is majoring in Animal Science, with dreams of working at a zoo or a wildlife rescue after graduating. "When I graduate my dream is to work with wolves or work at a wild life rescue center and if anything i would work at a zoo."

Mya is excited about her new role as Head Resident Assistant of Holter Hall. Mya is also on the Cheer Team and a member of the OPSU Band.

Mya stated, "As the head RA in Holter Hall, my job is to make sure that everyone is safe and in a comfortable environment since this is their home away from home. I also help those who are locked out of their room or in need of help in any way."

"The big reason I came to OPSU is because of the small and friendly community. I love that the professors are so friendly, and it's easy to find where I need to go!"

Mya's favorite thing about Panhandle State is that her teammates and friends make her feel right at home. "I enjoy all of the amazing people I get to meet every day."

Dean of Student Services, Amber Glass commented, "Mya has been such an asset to our team in the Housing Department. We are appreciative of all her hard work being a Head Resident Assistant."

Mya's favorite hobbies are playing the trumpet and playing video games with friends. She stated, "I also love watching all kinds of movies with my grandma and uncle when I'm home." **P**



/ FACULTY /

JULIE PRIOR

Born and raised in Whitby, Ontario, Canada, Dr. Julie Prior is one of the newest faculty members in the OPSU English department. She specializes in Shakespeare, British Literature, poetry, and composition.

Dr. Prior earned a Bachelor's degree from the University of Toronto, double majoring in English and History. She went on to earn a Master's degree in English from Western University in Ontario and a Doctorate Degree in English from the University of Toronto.

Dr. Prior spent three years teaching English at two universities in Saudi Arabia after her Master's degree and fell in love with teaching during that time. During her Ph.D., Dr. Prior had opportunities to continue teaching both composition and Shakespeare / British Literature, which solidified her passion for this line of work.

Prior stated, "I want my students to appreciate the importance of being able to think and write with a critical view on pressing issues in the world around us. Literature and writing are so important to being active and engaged citizens!"

Her favorite things about Panhandle State University are her colleagues and the close-knit community. "Here, students are not just numbers; our small class sizes mean that faculty and students alike have the opportunity to thrive. I am thrilled to be in a place where after just the first week or so of classes, I already knew my students by name." **P**



/ ALUMNI /

MORGAN WALLS

Morgan Walls, originally a Colorado native, now calls Elkhart, Kansas home. He is currently the CEO of Elkhart Coop Equity Exchange. Walls stated, "Elkhart Coop supplies farmers and the surrounding communities with grain handling facilities, fertilizers, and fuel. I currently operate 12 locations in Southwest Kansas, the Oklahoma Panhandle, and Southeast Colorado."

Walls grew up a few hours away from the panhandle area in Wiley, Colorado, but aware of the opportunity Panhandle State had to offer. It was the excellence compared to other four-year universities that made him enroll in classes. He graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree majoring in Agronomy in 2005.

Walls stated, "My favorite thing about OPSU was the small class sizes and the relationships with professors. This opportunity does not exist at larger Universities. You are a student as well as a person at OPSU, and not just another number in a class."

"One favorite memory is when a group of the Ag students were recruited to help teach the Freshman orientation class.," commented Walls.

Walls recently purchased a home with land in the Panhandle area for his family to be raised. He is the father of 3 boys, the oldest being four years old and two-year-old twins. According to his boys, when he is not working, he can be found spending time with family or checking cows. **P**



/ STUDENT /

PBL CONTINUES 10 YEARS OF NATIONAL SUCCESS

The 2020-2021 national theme for Phi Beta Lambda (PBL) was ASPIRE, and that's exactly what six Oklahoma Panhandle State University PBL members did at the National Leadership Conference. The six students competed in 11 different events, with four students earning a Top 10 placement in at least one event and one student earning Top 10 honors in both of his events.

University President, Dr. Tim Faltyn stated, "With 6 National Top 10 finishes, our team has shown that hard work pays off. PBL's determination and talent have kept Panhandle State at the top for ten straight years, so much to celebrate and feel pride about!"

The National Leadership Conference was held virtually for the second year in a row. OPSU PBL members competed in several events, including Computer Concepts, Contemporary Sports Issues, Cost Accounting, Cyber Security, Microeconomics, Networking Concepts, Organizational Behavior and Leadership, and Programming Concepts.

Jayden Valdez placed third in two separate events, Computer Concepts, and Networking Concepts, with Manuel Medina also earning a 7th place finish in Computer Concepts. Jasmine Puebla and Brian Martinez both earned 5th place finishes in their events, Accounting for Professionals and Cyber Security, respectively. Keiry Fernandez placed 9th in Cost Accounting to round out the list of students placing in the Top 10.

This competition marked the 10th consecutive year of OPSU PBL having at least one student place in the Top 10 at Nationals. The PBL national theme for this new year is Success Starts Here, and advisors Sara Hitch and Kim Smith have high expectations to help this year's members find their success through campus events, community service, and competitions. **P**

/ STUDENT /

COLLEGE OF BUSINESS & TECHNOLOGY HOSTS 4TH ANNUAL MULLET PARTY



The faculty in COBT hosted their 4th Annual "Mullet Party" in the parking lot behind Carter Hall. All majors within the college - accounting, business, CIS, and industrial technology are invited to attend the social. The event originated in the Fall of 2018 after the CIS department hosted a student social in Fall 2017 and saw many intangible benefits between students and faculty interacting outside of the classroom.

Dean, Davin Winger stated, "Just like a mullet haircut where it is "business in the front" and a "party in the back", here at Carter Hall when you walk in the front door we are all business, but we have a "party in the back".

Professor, Dr. Sara Hitch commented, "The Mullet Party is such a fun event that gives students and faculty the opportunity to interact in an enjoyable way in a non-formal setting. The interaction really helps build the student-faculty relationship, which helps the students see the faculty as more approachable, and that approachability can make a such difference for students in accomplishing their educational goals and successfully completing their educational careers."

Assistant Professor, Kim Smith stated, "It was exciting to have the PBL President, Jayden Valdez and Future Technology Professions (FTP) President, Loren Breon hosted the 'minute to win-it' games. Students and faculty both bring fierce competition to the table!"

The OPSU Meat Lab grilled hamburgers for the event. All COBT faculty donate their time and supplies to contribute to the meal provided during the event. **P**



/ STUDENT /

AGGIE RUSH WEEK AT PANHANDLE STATE

Aggie Rush was started to give students an activity each night to interact among peers and get to know the campus. This year Student Services, planned two full weeks for all students to join and have fun.

Dean of Student Services, Amber Glass stated, "Aggie Rush was a great way to welcome back our students. Hannah Hammack, Student Life Coordinator, along with many other departments, created fun and positive experiences our students will carry with them throughout their time at OPSU and beyond. We are looking forward to hosting many more events for our students this year. Welcome back, Aggies!"

Aggie Rush kicked off the first night of classes with S'mores and Lawn Games sponsored by the Panhandle State Association of Alumni & Friends. OPSU Baseball then hosted a Security Meet & Greet to help current students learn who to go to if they needed help. Students also received their free Aggie Rush t-shirts during this week. The first week of classes finished off with an Ice Cream Social hosted by the new Track and Field team along with the College of Science, Ag, & Nursing.

Once students got through the first week of classes, Aggie Rush hosted more activity events in the evenings. Student Life hosted Dodgeball and Ice Cream Sundaes. There was a Scavenger Hunt across campus that helped students to learn about all the different places around campus. While learning all the places to go to, the next day there was a Majors & Club fair to see all the unique ways to get involved. The OPSU Meat Lab cooked for the event. The week ended with a Watermelon Feed hosted by the Student Ambassadors and Faculty/Student Kickball presented by Softball.

Student Life Coordinator, Hannah Hammack commented, "Aggie Rush would not have been successful without the support of our other departments and clubs. I am so excited to be hosting events for our students and the relationships we get to have with them. I look forward to all of the activities we have planned for the Fall semester." **P**



/ DIVERSITY & INCLUSION /

OPSU STUDENTS TELL THEIR STORIES

Kobe Geter came to Panhandle State for the affordability as well as the opportunity to play football at a college level. The Irving, Texas native is a sophomore pursuing a degree in Industrial Technology while playing football.

Because of the different environment than he's used to in his hometown, Geter has had to adapt in his time at OPSU. He said, "Being on my own for the first time having to take care of stuff without a parent station it's very difficult to what I thought it was going to be, but I adjusted just fine."

With the opportunity that the college experience provides, he is involved and trying to make a difference. One of his passions includes a program called the Black Scholars of the World (BSOW). This is a group of students that came together to bring awareness to racial issues and that want to make a positive change in the world.

Geter was one of the founding students for the BSOW and assisted in the "I Stand" movement at Panhandle State. He commented, "I and some other colleagues had an experience where we had to deal with racism and it wasn't good, it wasn't fun, and I don't wish it on anybody to get harassed by somebody just because of your skin color, but the project I'm passionate about is the program that we built called BSOW." **P**



/ ATHLETICS /

ESSENCE WEST NAIA ALL-AMERICAN

For the first time for volleyball, Oklahoma Panhandle State University volleyball, outside hitter Essence West has been selected to The NAIA All-American Team as an Honorable Mention choice. West, a junior, is a native of Dallas, Texas; and came to the Aggies by way of Rowlett high school and Davis & Elkins college.

West was chosen top 5 in the Sooner Athletic Conference Volleyball Coaches as a premier outside hitter for the 2020-21 volleyball season. She was ranked in the nation top 40 for hitting percentage, number of kills and attempts. West, performed well in assisting her team in blocks per set, which the team was ranked 6th in the nation and 37th in the nation for total blocks on the year.

"Essence is no doubt one of the best at her position," Panhandle State Head Coach Julie Allen said. "She has proven herself to this conference as well as the nation that she can compete with any outside hitter, no matter what size." West is only 5'5" but has over a 36+ inch vertical; allowing West to capitalize as an attacker, which was shown when West in the 2020-21 volleyball ended ranked 38 in the nation for kills per set at 3.61.

Currently, this season West has performed in all 8 matches the Aggies have competed in. She has showcased an outstanding 3.57 kills per set, having a hitting percentage of .277, ranking her in the top in the nation in each respective category.

Essence chose OPSU for its excellent Athletic program. "I felt like it was the best fit for me and I would have the chance to grow in the right areas." In the Spring Semester, Essence was chosen for the Newcomer of the Year Athletic Award. **P**



/ ATHLETICS /

OPSU RODEO NATIONAL EXCELLENCE



Oklahoma Panhandle State University's rodeo team arrived in Casper, Wyoming to compete at the College National Finals Rodeo on June 13th with high hopes for their chance to bring home national titles. With some tough luck for some throughout the week and others in the final round, the men's team finished in the Top 15 in the nation!

Wyatt Murray and Whitt Crozier finished 6th in the nation for Team Roping. Jade Taton secured the title of 9th in the nation for Bareback Riding. TJ Schmidt took home 10th in the nation in Bull Riding. Sam Goings finished in the Top 20 in the nation in Steer Wrestling. Three athletes represented OPSU at the CNFR, but did not place: Cooper Slavin in Tie-Down Roping, Cooper Thatcher in Saddle Bronc Riding, and Hope Luttrell in Breakaway Roping.

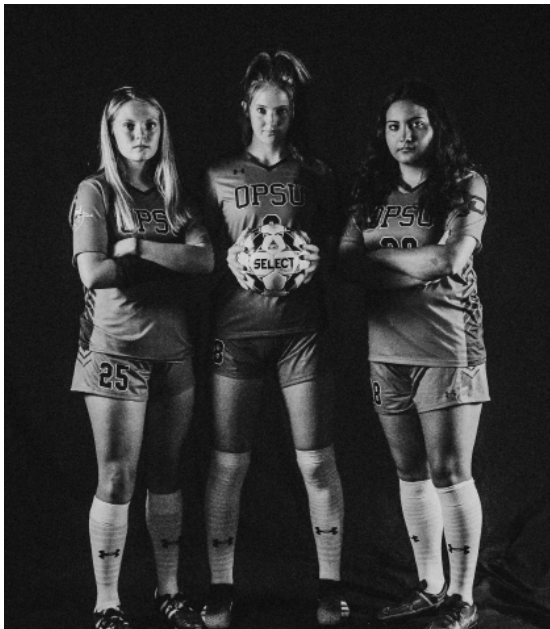
After the CNFR, Panhandle State's rodeo team was recognized for national excellence in the classroom. The National Intercollegiate Rodeo Association announced the 2021 Scholar American Honors list with 8 members from OPSU named.

Sydney Bottom, Kate Dickinson, Kelsey Hallin, Kayla Johnson, Beau Peterson, Wade Pettijohn, Wade Roberts, and TJ Schmidt were all named on this year's 2021 Scholar American Honor list.

These students were named for top honors among their peers across the nation. In order to be named for the Scholar American Honors awards, they had to meet four different criteria. A student-athlete had to earn points at a sanctioned NIRA rodeo in the 2020-2021 season, been in college for more than one term, cumulative 3.5 GPA, and be nominated by their coaches.

Assistant Women's Rodeo Coach, Shelbie Rose, commented, "We are very proud of the kids that have made the list. Success in the classroom is just as important to us as the success they have in the arena."

OPSU Aggies showed that their talents and determination are a priority to be successful in all areas of their lives. The rodeo team is gearing up for a great year both on and off the dirt. **P**



/ ATHLETICS /

WOMEN'S SOCCER DEFEATS NCAA DIVISION II PROGRAM

The Oklahoma Panhandle State (2-3) Women's soccer team continued their hot streak with a 3-2 win over Southern Nazarene University (0-1). The Aggies win today marks a few milestones for the program: First win over an NCAA Division II program, first home-field win since 8/24/2019 over Texas College 1-0, the second time in history, and the Aggies have had a winning streak.

Davis shared his thoughts after the game, "Wow, what a game! All three goals today were something special. I am so proud of this group and their willingness to grow and fight for each other! I love that we didn't give up today. This group continues to show an amazing amount of fight and desire every day. Hats off to SNU they are a solid team and exposed a few defensive issues we still need to work out, but I am thrilled with the current progress of our group! Thank you to everyone that came out to support us today. That extra energy from the stands today was big time! Go Aggies!" **P**



/ATHLETICS/

VOLLEYBALL WINS FIRST GAMES

The Oklahoma Panhandle State Volleyball team took on the Tabor College Bluejays last night in Anchor D. Arena. The Aggies came out firing on all cylinders but met an equal competitor in the Bluejays; Aggies having 12 kills in the first set verses the Bluejays also producing 12 kills.

The second set showed similar path of contested battle, great swings, poise and defense, that would not let a ball fall, to the finish. The Aggies were able to maintain control middle of the second set and hold the lead throughout the rest of the match.

Head coach Julie Allen stated, "The team did a great job playing together, staying comfortable in their goals set and finishing strong," she continues on, "Tabor is a well-coached team, and we (Aggies) knew we had to play a very disciplined defense and, have our hitters make great decisions."

Aggies were led in the Offense by Alanys Ruiz hitting .667 with 5 kills on 12 attempts, Essence West hitting .273, Ebony Dykes hitting .250. And, on the defensive side led by Gracie Soza with 3 service aces and 13 digs (4.33) on the night. Lesly Galarza produced 12 set assists and 7 digs for the Aggies. **P**

/ATHLETICS/

AGGIE MEN'S SOCCER WIN FIRST HOME GAME



The Oklahoma Panhandle State Men's Soccer team hosted Kansas Wesleyan University Coyotes tonight at Carl Wooten Field. The Aggies demonstrated great ball control, field vision and execution of plays. Pulling off an aggressive shutout against the Coyotes, the Aggies quickly moved into position to take an early lead and never looked back.

The Aggies out-shot the Coyotes, maintained control of the ball nearly 80% of the game and, finished the game with 4 goals to none.

The Aggies goals came off the feet of Jesus Sosa (2), Mohamed Bilal, and the head of Ntandoyenkosi Tshuma. Sophomore Goalie, Hugo Dutour showed strong athletic saves for the Aggies, leaving the Coyotes scoreless on the evening.

Head Coach Brandon Misuraca stated "the first home match of the season is always special. I am pleased to have been able to give minutes to practically all members of the match day roster and also keep a clean sheet." Misuraca continues "now the focus shifts to our next fixture on Sunday afternoon." **P**

/ATHLETICS/

JESSI JAMES NAMED HEAD TRACK & FIELD COACH



Oklahoma Panhandle State University Director of Athletics, Victor Esparza, has announced that veteran coach, Jessi James has been named as the program's head track & field coach.

"I want to welcome Jessi and her family to our Aggie family," Esparza said. "We had a great applicant pool and she emerged as one of the top candidates. When we spoke to folks in the track & field world, her name kept coming up as a person who is ready and capable of leading a program. And it is a bonus that she is already in our region and, has roots in the Panhandle."

James brings a lot of insight to the Aggies', as she is a lifetime resident of the Panhandle of Oklahoma. Including experience not only running collegiately for two Sooner Athletic Conference (SAC) schools, but she has also coached many young athletes and assisted them to get recruited to many schools in the SAC.

"I could not be more excited to be part of bringing track and field to OPSU, it has been a dream of mine and I'm ready to get the program off the ground" stated Jessi.

While guiding the Panhandle State Men's & Women's track & field team will be James' first college head coaching position, she takes on the task with over 10 years of experience. Most recently, James was the Head Track & Field Coach in Keyes, Oklahoma. In addition, James has been the Athletic Director for 5 years at Keyes Public Schools.

President Dr. Faltyn shared "I'm excited Coach James is joining Aggie Athletics. She has tremendous passion for teaching young people and track & field. She's already working with our Athletic Director to develop great plans for the program that will enable our athletes to compete, to grow and be successful students. Coach James is not only an excellent teacher of the sport and mentor to her student athletes, she knows the region as one of us who loves the Oklahoma Panhandle." **P**



/ATHLETICS/

DAKOTA HART NAMED HEAD CHEER COACH

Oklahoma Panhandle State University Director of Athletics, Victor Esparza, has announced that Dakota Hart has been named the Head Cheer Coach.

Esparza shared, "I am excited for Coach Hart to join the Aggies. Throughout the interview process, she rose to the top, her passion to teach young student-athletes, energy and drive to help grow a program. Coach Hart, will be an excellent coach and mentor for our Aggie Cheer Team."

Prior to Panhandle State, Dakota lived in Angola, Indiana. She received her Bachelors in Sports Management from Trine University. She has been cheering since she was in the 6th grade. Whether it was cheering in school, All-Star Cheerleading, or college cheer it has always been a passion of hers.

"I cheered the last two years at Trine University. I tried to take a break from it when I went to college, but I loved it too much to stay away. This past year, my team became the Open Small Coed National Champion Runner Up. This by far has been one of my greatest moments in both cheer and my life."

Dakota is excited to hit the ground running with her team. "My goals for the team this year is to compete and represent Panhandle State in the NAIA division. I know these kids have great talent and I cannot wait to show that off at competition this year."

"Everyone always wishes they could have a job where they have fun and get to do what they love, and I honestly can say I have that." **P**



HOMECOMING

SEPTEMBER 25