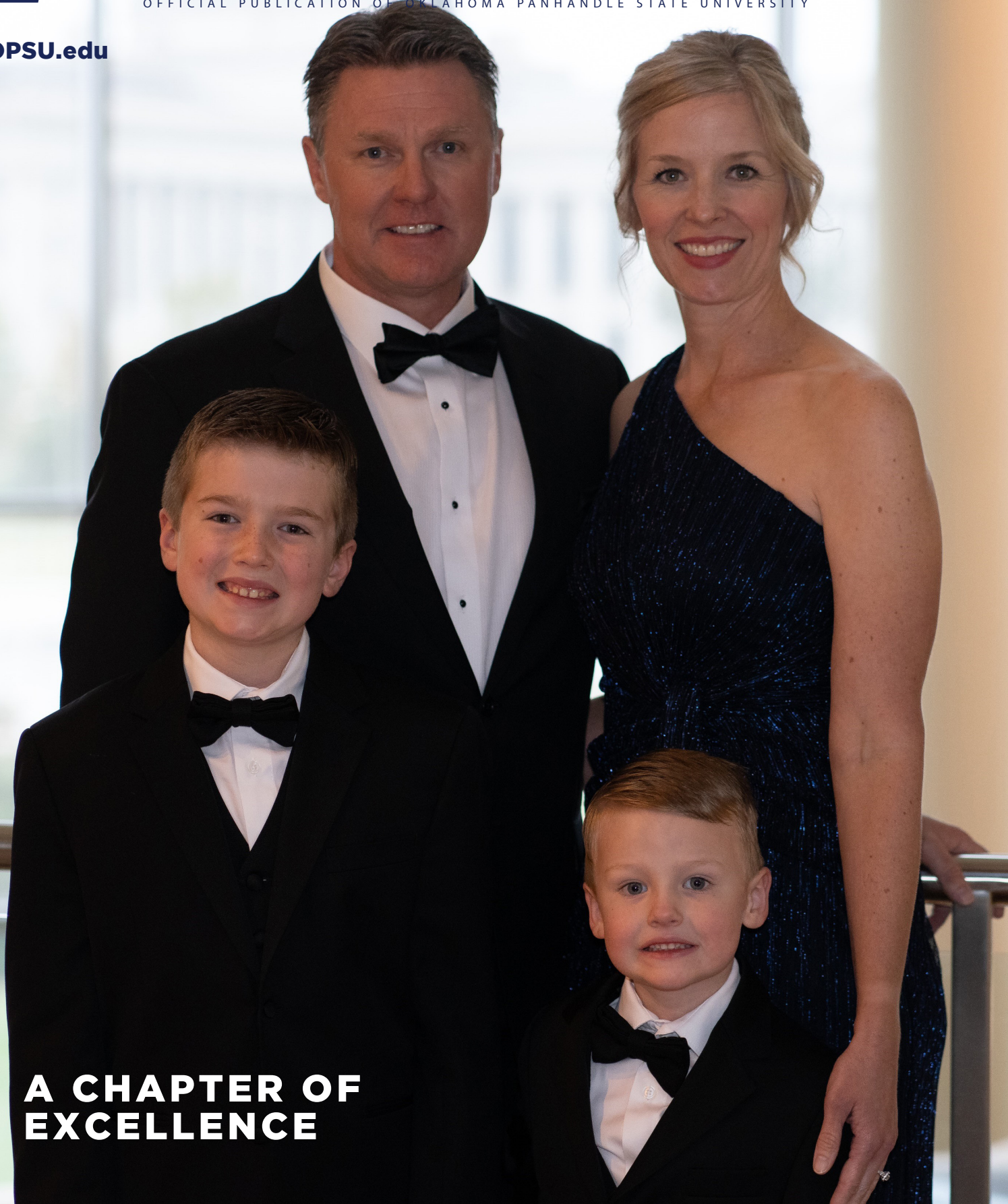


DECEMBER 2021

Panhandle

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF OKLAHOMA PANHANDLE STATE UNIVERSITY

OPSU.edu



**A CHAPTER OF
EXCELLENCE**



/ CAMPUS /

CELEBRATING NATIVE AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH AT OPSU

Oklahoma Panhandle State University is proud to celebrate Native American Heritage Month. This time will be taken to educate students, staff, and faculty about the 39 federally recognized Native American Tribes in Oklahoma and the challenges Native Americans have faced over the years.

Members of the Hispanic Student Center, El Centro, interviewed two leaders on campus about their stories and experiences of being in Native American Tribes.

Dean of Students Amber Glass is a member of the Muscogee Creek tribe. The Muscogee Creek were originally located in the southeastern part of the United States, but the federal government forced them to relocate to eastern Oklahoma. The tribe took the path known as the Trail of Tears. Many people died during this journey over a 10-year period.

Dean Glass' great grandmother was Annie Wilson Red Eagle, who was also enrolled in the Dawes Act. The Dawes Act of 1887 broke up tribal lands and assigned them to families in an effort by the federal government to force Native Americans to assimilate to "the American Way". This would force Native Americans into the agriculture business.

When asked what advice she would give to young Native American girls and women, Dean Glass promptly responded, "[They are] strong enough. Seek help when you need help and know you can do it; your ancestors have done it. Their obstacle was to come and survive. Our obstacle is to keep their memory alive."

University Provost Dr. Julie Dinger is a citizen of the Osage Nation. The Osage Nation's lands once stretched along the Mississippi River from Canada all the way to the Gulf of Mexico. The Osage Nation was forced to relocate several times by the Federal Government, with the final settlement being Osage County in Oklahoma.

When asked about the challenges she has faced as a Native American woman, Dr. Dinger responded, "The biggest challenge today is existence. We need to talk about native and indigenous people in the present tense. So many of us struggle to negotiate which parts of your history were ways our families learned to cope with being the target of assimilation and acculturation efforts. Many folks take for granted that native Americans still exist, the struggle for many is still very real and very pressing."

The Hispanic Student Center (El Centro) and the Office of Student Life will be hosting a series of documentaries throughout the month as well as hosting an article review covering the history of Native American tribes in Oklahoma. El Centro will also be taking up to 20 students to tour the First Americans Museum in OKC November 12-13 for an in-person experience. A schedule of all events will be posted to all university social media accounts. Events are open to all students, faculty, and staff. **P**

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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

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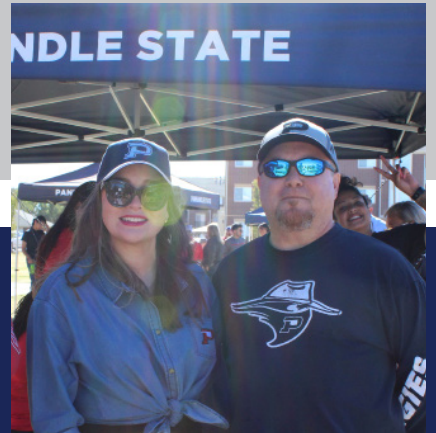
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/ CAMPUS /

EVENTS ON CAMPUS & IN THE COMMUNITY





A CHAPTER



“Panhandle State is on a better path now because of the leadership of Dr. Faltyn. He has created success and excitement for the university that has impacted the campus and region.”

— Elizabeth McMurphy
Associate Vice President of Fiscal Affairs

“Dr. Faltyn and his team have brought a renewed sense of pride for all alumni and friends. With the success and growth we have seen in 5 years, our alumni are excited and able to advocate even more for Panhandle State.”

— Chyanna Black
Director of Alumni Relations

“Our Athletic department has been provided more opportunities and has had success from those that would not have been possible without the leadership of Dr. Faltyn and his team the last five years.”

— Victor Esparza
Athletic Director

“The past five years have been a time of tremendous progress and growth for OPSU. Our expansion of Hispanic Student Services has made great strides in providing vital services to our students. The future of OPSU is bright, and its foundation for continued excellence and service in higher education for the Panhandle region is strong.”

— Dr. Brad Duren
Associate Vice President of Academic Affairs



“It has been fun watching OPSU become one of the most impressive Universities in not only the region but throughout the entire State of Oklahoma. Dr Faltyn included the local public schools in the transformation and gave our kids a head start in pursuing a college education.”

— Mike Ray
Community Leader

“I have known and worked with Dr. Faltyn since day one of his tenure here at OPSU. I’ve never been associated with a more enthusiastic, honest, and upright individual than Dr. Tim Faltyn. His contributions to this area have not gone unnoticed. I appreciate everything he has done. He will be missed!”

— Jack Strain
Texas County Commissioner



OF EXCELLENCE



“I appreciate the leadership and energy Dr. Faltyn has brought to Panhandle State. The Panhandle State Alumni & Friends Association has seen revitalized and increased participation and activities during the past 6 years.”

— Diane Murphey
Alumni Association President

“It was awesome getting to know President Faltyn and seeing what he did at OPSU. He always tries to be involved with student activities as much as possible, and wanted to see students succeed.”

— Affton Schlochtermeyer
Student Ambassador President

“The Hispanic community at Panhandle State University certainly has thrived the last five years. OPSU has truly become a university where dreams come true. Thank you, Dr. Faltyn for your countless hours of work and your commitment to making Panhandle State feel like home to our Hispanic students.”

— Valentina Allen
Director of Hispanic Student Center

“Dr. Faltyn’s energy has been contagious, and under his leadership and fundraising efforts, the university has not only seen growth, but it has also been strategically positioned for future success.”

— Sarah Greene
Dean, Academic Resource Center



“With Dr. Faltyn and his team as our leaders, we have been able to provide exceptional educational experiences to our students who otherwise would not have had the opportunity.”

— Amber Glass
Dean, Student Services



“With three years of growth and many stories of excellence at the time I joined OPSU, it felt like a veritable breeding club for success. Thanks to Dr. Faltyn for providing such environment.”

— Dr. Abbas Aboohamidi
Assistant Professor, Ag Business



LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

DR. TIM FALTYN

27 YEARS IN THE OKLAHOMA A&M SYSTEM

Life is lived in chapters, and those who are wise are not afraid to turn the page. The time I have spent at Panhandle State will always rank among the best times of my professional experience. The people, the region, the university and all that we have accomplished together are remarkable. I am fortunate to have been here and to have been a part of a chapter that is so special in the storied history of this university.

OPSU is a special place filled with special people who accomplish excellent work. I will always hold them near and dear to my heart. I am a better man and leader because of the time spent and the lessons I've learned.

After 27 years in the Oklahoma A&M System, 11 of those years as a president, I can unequivocally say that the Board of Regents and the people that I have worked with in the system have shaped me into who I am professionally. I cherish the opportunities and experiences that have been afforded to me by the Oklahoma A&M System.

I have the deepest level of gratitude possible for the people whose labor, commitment, and loyalty have made my chapter here at the university rewarding and successful by any meaningful measure. I believe that all things are made to work together for good.

My fondest memories of our time in the Panhandle include the birth of my son Rex and watching him crawl, walk, talk, and ride a horse for the first time, as well as being next to Max as he learned to read and write and rope from horseback. I look back and smile at the friends I've made that I now consider family. Professionally, watching so many students, faculty, and staff fulfill the promise of their potential in the classroom, in their activity, and in the community has been a blessing.

Our students, our faculty and staff, our communities, and our region have been through so much. They deserve the very best effort from a leader who will always put their well-being as the top priority and remain focused on the mission. I have said it at least one hundred times, we are better together than any one of us could be by ourselves. I wish for nothing but the best for this university and this region of Oklahoma. It's always a good day to be an Aggie. **P**



ACHIEVEMENTS & AWARDS

- ▶ FULBRIGHT-NEHRU IEA RECIPIENT IN INDIA (POSTPONED TO 2022)
- ▶ OKLAHOMA HIGHER EDUCATION HERITAGE SOCIETY HALL OF FAME INDUCTION (2020)
- ▶ NAIA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBER (2019-PRESENT)
- ▶ SOONER ATHLETIC CONFERENCE COUNCIL OF PRESIDENTS CHAIR (2018-PRESENT)
- ▶ OKLAHOMA STATE REGENTS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION COUNCIL OF PRESIDENTS CHAIR, FIRST EVER FROM PANHANDLE STATE (2018)
- ▶ BARBARA LYNCH COMMUNITY PARTNER AWARD (2019)
- ▶ HARVARD KENNEDY SCHOOL; PUBLIC LEADERSHIP CERTIFICATE (2019)
- ▶ HIGHER LEARNING COMMISSION PEER EVALUATOR (2004-PRESENT)



ACADEMIC SUCCESS

- ▶ RESTRUCTURED FIVE COLLEGES INTO THREE
- ▶ FIRST & ONLY HISPANIC SERVING INSTITUTION IN OKLAHOMA
- ▶ FASTEST GROWING UNIVERSITY IN THE REGION 4 YEARS IN A ROW
- ▶ \$2.8 MILLION TITLE V, DEVELOPING HISPANIC INSTITUTIONS GRANT
- ▶ HLC 10-YEAR ACCREDITATION OPEN PATHWAYS
- ▶ DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION COUNCIL ESTABLISHED
- ▶ EMPLOYEE SALARY PROGRAM ESTABLISHED
- ▶ EARLY COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOL PILOT PROGRAM STARTED IN 2018 CONTINUES AS PERMANENT PROGRAM
- ▶ INTERNATIONAL PROGRAM GROWS BY 40% AND ADDED 22 COUNTRIES
- ▶ HLC ACADEMY COMPLETION
- ▶ \$2 MILLION PANHANDLE PROMISE SCHOLARSHIP
- ▶ ONLINE COLLEGE ESTABLISHED
- ▶ DIGITAL DIPLOMAS AND UNOFFICIAL TRANSCRIPTS
- ▶ PAPERLESS ADMISSIONS
- ▶ CLASSROOM & FACULTY TECHNOLOGY UPGRADES
- ▶ ENHANCEMENT FOR STUDENT LIFE ACTIVITIES
- ▶ ONLINE BOOKSTORE





FACILITY IMPROVEMENTS

- ▶ ANCHOR D STADIUM TURFED AND UPGRADED
- ▶ UNIVERSITY HOUSE RENOVATED BANQUET HALL ADDITION
- ▶ ANCHOR D ARENA AND LOBBY UPGRADED
- ▶ ESTES E. FIRESTONE MEAT LAB USDA GRANTS
- ▶ CENTURY CLUB RESTORED SOWER AND HUGHES STRONG LOBBY
- ▶ WATER TOWER RENOVATION
- ▶ PARTNERED WITH CAREER TECH FOR THE PANHANDLE TECHNICAL EDUCATION CENTER
- ▶ 2 NEW STALLING BARNs FOR THE RODEO TEAM
- ▶ EL CENTRO ESTABLISHED
- ▶ ID SYSTEM UPDATED
- ▶ \$4.7 MILLION INVESTED INTO INFRASTRUCTURE & ROOFS
- ▶ BEEF PRODUCTION LAB IMPROVEMENTS
- ▶ NEW ATHLETIC COACH OFFICES
- ▶ WILDLIFE CONSERVATION BUILDING NAMED AFTER COMMISSIONER GROENDYKE
- ▶ ACADEMIC RESOURCE CENTER ESTABLISHED
- ▶ NEW BACKSTOPS AT BASEBALL & SOFTBALL FACILITIES
- ▶ SHOOTING SPORTS COMPLEX COMPLETED
- ▶ DEVICES FOR ALL FULL-TIME FACULTY & DIRECTORS
- ▶ DORM RENOVATIONS
- ▶ CLASSROOM FURNITURE UPGRADES





ACTIVITY SUCCESS

- ▶ RODEO TEAM WINS 4 NATIONAL TITLES IN 5 YEARS
- ▶ SHOOTING SPORTS TEAM PLACES FIRST AT CLASS A MEN'S AMERICAN TRAP
- ▶ PBL PLACES IN TOP 10 NATIONALLY 26 TIMES SINCE 2017
- ▶ 2 STUDENTS COMPETE ON COLLEGE QUIZ SHOW
- ▶ MEN'S AND WOMEN'S SOCCER PROGRAM ESTABLISHED IN 2019
- ▶ WOMEN'S VOLLEYBALL ALL-AMERICAN IN 2020
- ▶ MEN'S BASKETBALL ALL-AMERICAN IN 2019
- ▶ TRACK PROGRAM REINSTATED IN 2021
- ▶ NAIA CHAMPIONS OF CHARACTER GOLD STAR
- ▶ MOVED FROM NCAA TO NAIA DIVISION
- ▶ ATHLETIC LOGO WON THE 2020 NAIA LOGO WARS
- ▶ NEW ATHLETIC TEAM MEETING ROOM AND UPGRADED WEIGHT ROOM
- ▶ SHOOTING SPORTS TEAM ESTABLISHED
- ▶ WOMEN'S BASKETBALL ALL-AMERICAN IN 2020





COMMUNITY PARTNERS

- ▶ \$20.4 MILLION IN EXTERNAL FUNDING SINCE 2017
- ▶ MULTIPLE PARTNERSHIPS WITH LOCAL HIGH SCHOOLS
- ▶ ARENA AND STADIUM NAMED AFTER ANCHOR D BANK
- ▶ SOFTBALL FIELD NAMED AFTER JIM QUIMBY
- ▶ GAME DAY TAILGATE EXPERIENCE ENHANCED
- ▶ BASEBALL FIELD NAMED AFTER CARROLL GRIBBLE
- ▶ COMMUNITY PARK DONATED BY BANK OF THE PANHANDLE
- ▶ PARTNERSHIP WITH NASH SOCCER COMPLEX
- ▶ WALKING TRAIL LIGHTS DONATED BY TCEC
- ▶ PARTNERED WITH GUYMON CHAMBER DURING PIONEER DAYS
- ▶ HOLIDAY LIGHTS ACROSS CAMPUS



LEADERSHIP TEAM



DR. JULIE DINGER
PROVOST
 11 YEARS IN THE OKLAHOMA A&M SYSTEM



DR. RYAN BLANTON
VICE PRESIDENT OF OPERATIONS
 11 YEARS IN THE OKLAHOMA A&M SYSTEM



ELIZABETH MCMURPHY
ASSOCIATE VICE PRESIDENT OF FISCAL AFFAIRS
 13 YEARS IN THE OKLAHOMA A&M SYSTEM



DR. BRAD DUREN
ASSOCIATE VICE PRESIDENT OF ACADEMIC AFFAIRS
 22 YEARS IN THE OKLAHOMA A&M SYSTEM



VICTOR ESPARZA
ATHLETIC DIRECTOR
 12 YEARS IN THE OKLAHOMA A&M SYSTEM

OF PANHANDLE STATE



“It has been a fantastic 5 years for OPSU. President Faltyn’s leadership galvanized our community to work together to create this success. His vision for building a sustainable future will continue to create positive change for years to come.”

— Dr. Julie Dinger
Provost

“I am so proud of Tim and all of his accomplishments over the years. Being able to watch him become the man he is today has been so rewarding.”

— Doug Burns
Former Oklahoma A&M Board of Regent

“I am so proud to be part of the executive team during Dr. Faltyn’s chapter at OPSU. His leadership and investment in people has been transformative for the panhandle. I am thankful for his mentoring and friendship these past several years.”

— Dr. Ryan Blanton
Vice President of Operations

“Dr. Faltyn has been an exceptional leader on several campuses in the OSU system, a mover and a shaker who has made positive impacts at each institution he has served. This is a tough loss for our system, but we wish him the very best.”

— Dr. Trudy Milner
Chairwoman, Oklahoma A&M Board of Regents



“I have known Dr. Faltyn for the past 20 years and have been blessed to work with him as an academic leader and as a College and University President. His leadership at OPSU and within the Oklahoma A&M system will be truly missed personally and professionally.”

— Jason Ramsey
CEO, Oklahoma A&M Board of Regents

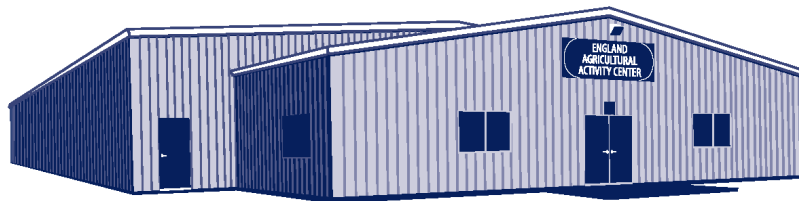
“Dr. Faltyn’s time at Panhandle State has brought the community and region so much success. The Oklahoma Panhandle is better because of his leadership.”

— Joe Hall
Oklahoma A&M Board of Regents



/ALUMNI/

ENGLAND CENTER ANNOUNCED AS 2022 CENTURY CLUB



ENGLAND AGRICULTURAL
ACTIVITY CENTER

Panhandle State is excited to announce that the 2022 Century Club will be designated to the England Agricultural Activity Center. It serves as a center for the Agricultural Department at Panhandle State, a multi-purpose facility that includes an arena and classroom space. This building holds area livestock sales, bull tests, showmanship clinics, and many other events for the Panhandle State and the community to utilize. It also serves as a practice arena for the OPSU Equestrian Team, among other teams and student events.

The facility, built in the 1980s, was named after Mr. Milton England, who taught at Panhandle A&M, later Panhandle State, for over forty years as the Director of Animal Husbandry. He established the first performance bull test in 1952, which became an annual event for the department, making it the oldest running bull test in the United States. February 28th, 2022 marks the 75th Annual Bull Test in the England Agricultural Activity Center and will be an opportunity to see the need for renovation.

The England Agricultural Activity Center has needed refurbishment and updating for quite some time. As the Century Club 2022 project, it is the hope to help make the England Center a more welcoming and modern facility for agricultural activities, not only for OPSU but for the Panhandle region.

The Century Club, a specially designated group of OPSU supporters who give \$100 or more annually, will make this restoration possible. With this campaign, we will provide a new life to the England Agricultural Activity Center. Donors who are part of the Century Club will receive a Century Club decal, a Sower lapel pin, and special recognition as a donor to the project. Century Club members will help make this vision a reality and highlight a true center of excellence at Panhandle State.

For more information about the Century Club and how to become an honored member today, go to centuryclub.opsu.edu or contact the Alumni Office at 580-349-1390. **P**

/CAMPUS/

OPSU HOSTS OVER 780 HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS AT FFA INTERSCHOLASTICS



Oklahoma Panhandle State University hosted over 780 students during the FFA Interscholastics Contest. There were 52 schools from 5 different states and 20 different contests for the students to compete in.

This event was hosted by the College of Agriculture, Science, and Nursing with the help of Sydney Wilkinson and Chance Kanode.

Sydney Wilkinson, Instructor of Animal Science, commented, "I'm so honored to have been part of this event again this year. Last year I had the privilege of putting on all the contests, and this year I got to pass the torch to Chance Kanode. I am so thrilled about the numbers we had this year and thought it was a total success. These students are so passionate and driven to better themselves through these contests and that is evident just by our entries. I think it was a total success, and Chance did a great job. My main responsibility was to put on our Livestock Judging contest which was the largest with almost 300 students! We were blown away by the number of students and the high quality. So thankful for the university for letting us continue this tradition again this year and supporting the youth and agriculture!"

Chance Kanode, Instructor of Agricultural Education, stated, "With this being my first FFA Interscholastic Contest, I was very pleased with how the event went. It was incredible to see the enthusiasm of FFA members from the five different states that attended. Students spent time developing their skills through quality contests. This event wouldn't be possible without the amazing OPSU faculty and students that took the time out of their schedules to make this contest possible. I am incredibly grateful for the support of the university to continue to put this contest on each year to help young adults better their skills to ensure success in their future." **P**



/ATHLETICS/

AGGIE MEN'S SOCCER END SEASON IN 2ND PLACE WITH FOUR ALL-SAC HONORS

Oklahoma Panhandle State University Men's soccer team finished the regular season in second place in the Sooner Athletic Conference (SAC). As a result, the Aggie's will host the university's first-ever conference tournament game for men's soccer. The Aggie men's soccer program has made the Sooner Athletic Conference postseason tournament three consecutive years in a row.

The Oklahoma Panhandle State Men's soccer team hosted Southwestern Christian University Eagles, the first round of the Sooner Athletic Conference (SAC). The game was full of action. Each team held each other to a 1 to 1 score through regulation time and in double overtime. Thus, resulting in a draw for the Aggies & Eagles, forcing the game to penalty kicks to advancements in the tournament. Southwestern Christian University Eagles were able to score 5-4 to the Aggies in penalty kicks.

Many of the underclassmen for the Aggies have been praised by SAC coaches, as many of them have earned end-of-season honors. First team All-Sooner Athletic Conference honors were given to sophomore goalie Hugo Dutour, freshman Ludwig Scherer, and freshman Liam Pritchard was also named the SAC Freshman of the Year. Sophomore Yannis Sapim would also earn himself a place on the All-SAC second team.

On the season Misuraca had to say, "I'm very pleased for all four of our men's soccer student-athletes that were recognized by the conference coaches. Each has played a role in our team success this fall and it is great to see them achieve recognition for their hard work." **P**

/ATHLETICS/

OPSU WOMEN'S RODEO TEAM DOMINATE AT LAST FALL RODEO



Panhandle State's rodeo team competed at Northwestern Oklahoma State University in Alva over the Halloween weekend. The women's team dominated by bringing home the first place title, and the men's team followed in suit by placing fourth overall for the weekend.

Freshman, Chaley Hext, has been making herself known in the Central Plains region all semester, but this weekend she finished strong. Hext made it back to the short round in all three of her events and was crowned the Women's All-Around Champion for the weekend.

Senior, TJ Schmidt, made a clean sweep in the Bull Riding. He won the long round with an 84-point ride and won the average.

Freshman, Grant Gansemer, wrote his ticket to the short go in the Steer Wrestling after splitting the win with a 4.1-second run, but a broken barrier left him to finish eighth in the average. Kersh earned his second appearance under the Saturday night lights with an eighth-place finish in the long go. He came back ready by making a 4.5-second run to win the short go and place fourth in the average.

OPSU Rodeo finishes the fall semester with both the men's and women's teams sitting third in the Central Plains Region standings. They will take this break to regroup, and be ready for the Kansas State University rodeo in February. **P**

/ATHLETICS/

AGGIE VOLLEYBALL FINISHES 6TH IN SOONER ATHLETIC CONFERENCE



The Panhandle State Aggie Volleyball Team completed regular season play for the Sooner Athletic Conference (SAC), with a 12-8 record and 20-11 overall. The Aggies went into the SAC Conference Tournament seeded 6th versus SAGU, who were seeded 3rd. This is the first time since 1976 that the Aggies Volleyball team has had such an amazing program record.

The Lions all but neutralized the Aggies at the net, shutting out the hitters and keeping the Aggies to a .037 on an entire night. Idalisia Agboasi led the Aggies with 2 kills on 4 attempts for .500 on the match. Setter Lesly Galarza had 10 assists and 9 digs.

Defensively, the Aggies struggled to lock down the Lions. With 2 players in double digits, the Lions clipped an overall .283 on the night. Libero Mckenna Coppock contributed 13 digs, and the Aggies overall had 4 total blocks.

Coach Allen stated, "This was a tough loss for sure. We had all of the right things in place, but we struggled to execute them. However, I will add that SAGU played a heck of a match. They were prepared for a fight tonight, and they wanted the win. I wish them luck in the next round of the tournament." Lastly, Allen shared, "I am proud of our Aggie Volleyball Team, it was an incredible season to be a part of, and I am thankful for our seniors helping build such a great foundation. I look forward to the upcoming year." **P**



/ATHLETICS/

CROSS COUNTRY FINISHES SEASON AT SOONER ATHLETIC CONFERENCE MEET

The Oklahoma Panhandle State men's and women's cross country team traveled to Oklahoma City to compete in the Sooner Athletic Conference meet. Running against all Sooner Athletic universities. Both Aggie teams would finish 7th in the meet.

The women's Aggie team would be led by Vanessa Gonzalez who finished 28th with a 22:22 time. Followed by Patti Gray and Annette Gandara with the former finishing in 24:33 and the latter in 25:22. To round out the meet for the women was Rayne Quinones with a 26:46 time and Veronica Ray in 29:12.

In the men's 8K, Panhandle State would see its first finisher in Carlos Flores who would place 42nd with a 34:35 time. Zack Madrigal would finish close behind Flores with a 36:30 time. The remaining Aggie runners would finish back to back as the meet was coming to a close. Nathaniel Lopez (39:36), Austin Jacobs (40:27), and Hayden Boyd (40:56) would bring up the rear of the runners as the Sooner Athletic Conference meet and the Aggie season came to a close. **P**



/ATHLETICS/

WOMEN'S & MEN'S BASKETBALL SEASON PREVIEW

Basketball season is underway here in the panhandle as both men's and women's basketball begins their home slated games. After coming off a COVID shortened season where both teams played less than thirteen games each, they're both ready to get a complete season in. Before the season, the Sooner Athletic Conference coaches voted on where they believed each team in the conference ranked. The Aggie men were picked to finish tenth this year while the Aggie women were picked to finish eighth.

Both Aggie basketball teams returned their head coaches for the 2021-2022 season. The women are again coached by Victor Esparza in his sixth season with Panhandle State and fifth year as head coach and Assistant Coach Lena Jaycox in her second year with the Aggies. While the men returned Head Coach Mark Laird, his third season as head coach, and they added Assistant Coach Elisha Boone to the staff for the coming season.

The Aggie men are poised for a breakout season as more than half the roster is full of returners and upperclassmen. Notable returners are DK Sumo, TC Ellis, Justin Pile, Jalen Thomas, Auston Chatman, Alfred Alkannama, Reese Seideman, Kaleb Stephens, Antanas Tamulis, and Garrett Richardson. They do have their work cut out for them as three teams in the SAC find themselves in the top 25 for receiving votes for all NAIA. Southwestern Assemblies of God University ranks 3rd, University of Science and Arts ranks 15th, and Mid-America Christian University is receiving votes.

The team and Head Coach Mark Laird are hardly daunted by the strength of the conference as he says he's "excited about the upcoming season. Having the number of returners that we have as well as some strong transfers is a real plus for us. While the preseason poll doesn't have much importance to us in the grand scheme of things, it does put us in a position to show what we're truly capable of."

The Aggie women find themselves in a similar boat as the men. The Sooner Athletic Conference boasts another three teams in the top 25 for receiving votes for the top 25. Wayland Baptist University ranks 8th and Oklahoma City University and University of Science and Arts are receiving votes. Having a handful of returners in All-SAC seniors Cassia McCaskill and Tateum Jones as well as Laky Samo, Johanna Quintero, Alie Parkhurst, and Morgan Williamson as well as adding eight new faces. The Aggies look to capitalize off the seniority and skill of McCaskill and Jones as both were leading contributors offensively both on the team and in the conference.

Head Coach, Victor Esparza shared, "We are excited to get this year started and play a full schedule. This group has been working extremely hard since August, and they are ready for the challenge."

As the season gets underway both Aggie teams are ready to make their presence felt in the Sooner Athletic Conference as well as create a winning culture here at Oklahoma Panhandle State University. **P**



Oklahoma Panhandle State University

AGGIE WONDERLAND

DECEMBER 1-JANUARY 3