

APRIL 2023

# **P**anhandle

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF OKLAHOMA PANHANDLE STATE UNIVERSITY

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NATION**



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# AGGIE CAREER CONNECTIONS

**The Aggie Career Connections event allows seniors to network and explore potential job opportunities. The event brought together 26 businesses and over 70 students.**

The Academic Resource Center hosted the event on April 3. The goal was to create an opportunity for students to connect with potential employers and explore the job market in their respective fields. The participating businesses represented a wide range of industries, including healthcare, education, agriculture, and finance.

“I am proud of the work that the Academic Resource Center has done to build this networking event to all that it is today. This event is a great opportunity for our students to see what career possibilities there are after graduating,” said University President, Dr. Julie Dinger.

The students who attended the event learned about the job market and the various career opportunities available to them. They also had the opportunity to meet with potential employers, ask questions, and make connections that could lead to future employment opportunities.

Many students who attended the event shared positive feedback and were grateful for the opportunity to network with potential employers. The participating businesses also praised the event for providing a platform to connect with talented and motivated students.

MaKenze Anderson stated, “We are thankful for the tremendous support of our employers, students, faculty, staff, and administration over the last four years of Aggie Career Connections. We look forward to a bright future for our students, and we are grateful that we can provide them with this opportunity. Thank you to everyone involved.”

Aggie Career Connections allows businesses to connect with talented and motivated students who could be valuable additions to their teams before graduation. The event will continue to be a highlight of the OPSU Career Services calendar in the coming years. **P**



**“I am proud of the work that the team in the Academic Resource Center have done to build this networking event to the success it is today. This event is a great opportunity for our students to connect with workforce and take the next step toward their future career.”**

**— Dr. Julie Dinger, University President**



Oklahoma Council of Teachers of English

# STUDENT

## VERONICA RAY RECEIVES GERALDINE BURNS AWARD

**Veronica Ray, a senior at Oklahoma Panhandle State University,** was honored with the prestigious Geraldine Burns Award for Excellence in English Studies on April 15, 2023. The award is given to an outstanding student who demonstrates exceptional proficiency in English and is nominated by the English department faculty.

In addition to her academic achievements, Ray is also a recipient of the Panhandle Promise Scholarship and is part of the Oklahoma Inspire to Teach program. These accomplishments reflect her commitment to academic excellence and her desire to impact her community positively.

Dr. Charla Lewis, Director of Teacher Education, stated, “Veronica works hard to excel in everything she does. She is a pioneer in our English Education program and has set the bar high. We’re excited that she was awarded this honor but not surprised because Veronica is the personification of what it means to be an Aggie.”

The Geraldine Burns Award is a testament to Ray’s hard work and dedication to her studies. It recognizes her outstanding writing skills, critical thinking abilities, and her commitment to learning. As a recipient of the award, Ray joins the ranks of other exceptional students who have made significant contributions in their fields.

Instructor of English, Tito Aznar, spoke highly of Ray, “Veronica is very much deserving of this award. She is a hard-working student who has excelled in our program. Her passion and drive don’t go unnoticed. I can’t wait to see all the wonderful things Veronica will accomplish as an English teacher. Everyone in our department is very proud of her accomplishments.”

The Panhandle Promise Scholarship is a program designed to provide financial assistance to high school graduates in the Oklahoma Panhandle area who wish to pursue higher education.

The Oklahoma Inspire to Teach program is a statewide initiative designed to encourage students to pursue a career in education. The program provides financial assistance to students who plan to become teachers and offers mentoring and support throughout their academic journey.

Ray just recently completed her student-teaching internship at Hooker High School. “The classrooms and cooperating teacher I student taught with were wonderful to work with, and I learned so much from each of them,” Ray said. “I was also grateful to observe the other English teachers at the school to see the similarities and differences in teaching styles and help me find activities and strategies I hope to use in my future classroom.” **P**



# ALUMNI HALL OF FAME INDUCTEES

**The Panhandle State Association of Alumni and Friends is proud to announce the induction of three outstanding individuals into the 2023 Alumni Hall of Fame: Bryant Riffe and Wayne and Gin Manning.**

The induction ceremony will take place on April 22, at 5 PM in the Student Union Ballroom.

“Mr. Riffe and Dr. and Mrs. Manning are exceptional alumni, and I am so pleased we are honoring them this year. Mr. Riffe is a leader in our community and has always supported Panhandle State and our students,” Dr. Dinger, University President, stated. “With 50 years of combined service to OPSU, Dr. and Mrs. Manning laid the groundwork for our success today. We are grateful to them for their leadership and dedication to Panhandle State.”

Bryant Riffe is a 1998 graduate of OPSU, where he received a Bachelor of Science degree in Agribusiness. Riffe is a successful farmer and businessman known for his dedication to the agricultural industry and his community. He has served on several boards and has been recognized for his leadership and service to the industry.

Wayne and Gin Manning are both 1980 graduates of Panhandle State, where they met and fell in love. The Mannings are known for their outstanding contributions to the education field, having served as teachers and administrators in several schools across the country. They have also been active in their community, volunteering for various causes and organizations.

Mr. Riffe has owned and operated the Goodwell car wash since its beginning thirty years ago and has directed nearly all profits from the business to scholarships for OPSU students. His recognition of the importance of education leads him to devote these profits to education and make a tradition of hiring college students to work. He engages these students during their college years at the Goodwell Elevator, which he has managed for forty years. Bryant encourages these students in every way and always prioritizes the students' educational needs over demands at work. Bryant has been involved in the city and community, giving in many ways. He has served on the Goodwell city council for

many years and served numerous terms as Mayor. His servant's attitude and his appreciation of OPSU make him a true ambassador to be inducted into the Hall of Fame.

Dr. and Mrs. Manning spent their time in Goodwell, involved in as many activities as possible. Mrs. Manning started at OPSU, where she served as a recruiter. She worked in different departments during her 19 years of service and ended up serving as the nursing department's administrative assistant. Dr. Manning started with OPSU in 1985 with the ROTC program. Later, he served as Dean of the School of Business, Interim Athletic Director, and Interim President. He ended his 31 years of service at OPSU as the Vice President of Academic Affairs and Outreach. They were always a couple to count on when the time came to buy tickets for drawings or events to support OPSU and its students.

“We are honored to recognize Bryant Riffe and Wayne and Gin Manning as this year's Alumni Hall of Fame inductees,” said Shawn Joy, Director of Alumni Relations. “Their achievements and dedication to their professions and communities are truly inspiring. We are proud to call them Panhandle State alumni.” **P**



# RAYQUAN

“I’m extremely honored to receive the 2023 Travis Grant Award. He was an exceptional player, so being associated with someone in that category is a career highlight for me. Leading the nation in scoring wasn’t a goal that I set. I wanted to win games and be a leader for my team.” — Rayquan Elliott

Photograph courtesy of: Aaron Witt Photography



# 2023 TRAVIS GRANT AWARD RECIPIENT, RAYQUAN ELLIOTT

**Rayquan Elliott**, an Oklahoma Panhandle State University senior, has been making headlines as he was named the 2023 Travis Grant Award recipient, presented annually to the player with the highest point-per-game average in all college basketball divisions.

The Travis Grant Award is one of five awards named after legendary HBCU players, highlighting the top players at all levels of college basketball. The objective is to acknowledge the top student-athletes in college basketball and bring attention to some of the best players ever to play the game.

Elliott’s success on the court is no surprise to those following his career. He has always had a natural talent for the sport and has worked tirelessly to hone his skills over the years. His hard work and dedication have paid off, and he has become one of the most respected players in the country.

Elliott averaged 30.6 points a game while shooting 48% from the field. Elliott had a career-high on 11/11/22 when he scored 51 points, going 17-24 from the floor and 5-8 from the three-point line. Elliott recorded three 40-point games and finished with 1,280 points in his two years as an Aggie.

“I’m extremely honored to receive the 2023 Travis Grant Award. He was an exceptional player, so being associated with someone in that category is a career highlight for me. Leading the nation in scoring wasn’t a goal that I set. I

wanted to win games and be a leader for my team,” said Elliott. “It took mental strategy and creativity with the ball to keep scoring. I studied a lot of film, read the defense, worked to get my defenders in foul trouble, and got to the line. Coach Laird and my teammates trusted me with the ball and allowed me to score. I couldn’t have done it without them.”

Elliott’s success can be attributed to many factors, including his impressive athleticism, strong work ethic, and unwavering commitment to the sport. He is a natural leader on and off the court, and his teammates look up to him as a role model and mentor.

“I wanted to impact the younger players by showing them the work ethic it takes to play college basketball. I would go to class, and my professors would talk to me about the game and give me advice and encouragement. I’m grateful to God for the opportunities and abilities he gave me and my years at Panhandle State.”

As Elliott continues to lead the country in scoring, it is clear that he has a bright future ahead of him. Elliott’s leadership, athleticism, and commitment to the sport make him a role model for young athletes everywhere. Elliott is making his way through the process of playing in a basketball league overseas. He will inspire others to pursue their dreams and reach for greatness as he continues to excel on the court. **P**



# NATIONAL COMPETITIONS FOR THE SHOOTING SPORTS TEAM



Freshman **EMILY ROBERTSON** shot 100/100 in skeet and won high overall female at NCSSAA.

### **The OPSU Shooting Sports team competed in two separate National Competitions in March.**

The first competition was through NCSSAA (National Collegiate Shooting Sports Athletic Association) in Las Vegas, and the second was through the ACUI Clay Targets Program in San Antonio.

At the NCSSAA Competition in Las Vegas, the team competed in skeet, double skeet, trap, sporting clays, and super sporting. Freshman Emily Robertson shot a 100/100 in skeet and won high overall female. She also shot a 99/100 in trap and was the second high overall female.

“Walking into Nationals, I was very excited and a little nervous, but the opportunity to qualify and compete in Las Vegas was truly so much fun,” said Robertson. “In skeet, I ran 100/100, placing me as a National Collegiate Champion for Division 4 Skeet. In trap, I ran a 99/100, tying me for first place with three other girls. After a long shoot-off, I came out winning 2nd place.”

After traveling two weeks and nearly 3,200 miles later, Coach Dixon was proud of the accomplishments and efforts of the 2022-2023 OPSU Shooting Sports team. “I know the difficulties and hard work of being in their place and the excitement behind every PR since I have been there. From the beginning of last semester to now being done with nationals, I can say the team has made great progress.”

Senior Rylee Brock shared, “The last two years of my shooting career at OPSU have been the most rewarding. Watching my teammates grow and building relationships with younger shooters has been the highlight of my shooting career.”

Coach Dixon has worked hard to prepare the team, take them to competitions, and recruit for the following year. Big things are coming for the future of the Oklahoma Panhandle State Shooting Team! **P**



## FUTURE TECHNOLOGY PROFESSIONALS COMPETE AT NATIONALS

**Oklahoma Panhandle State University's Future Technology Professionals (FTP) Club** competed nationally at the United States Information Technology Collegiate Conference (USITCC) in Plano, Texas. The conference hosted over 20 colleges and universities from across the United States, including Ball State University, the University of Iowa, Texas State University, and Missouri State University, among others. With over 200 attendees, the conference offered eight IT competitions over two days, including Microsoft Office Solutions, Systems Analysis, Database, Network Design, Application Development, PC Troubleshooting, Network Security, and Business Analytics.

Representing OPSU, eight students took part in the competitions: Hunter Harris, Jayden Valdez, Avery Evans, Julie Johnson, Nora Castillo, Alan Anchando, Ryan Sinclair, and Daniel Byers. Hunter Harris put up a brilliant performance to secure the third-place honor for the PC Troubleshooting contest.

OPSU had three students move on to the final round of the network security competition, which also had over 80 competitors. Julie Johnson, Jayden Valdez, and Hunter Harris demonstrated their expertise in the qualifying exam and advanced to the two-hour capture the flag security challenge. Senior Jayden Valdez was awarded an honorable mention, finishing 4th, Hunter Harris finished 11th, and Julie Johnson finished 16th, showcasing their excellent skills in network security. **P**



# OPSU PBL

## EARNs 11 STATE CHAMPIONSHIPS

**Panhandle State's Business Club, Panhandle Business Leaders (PBL)** members participated in the State Leadership Conference (SLC) on March 25 at the University of Central Oklahoma in Edmond, Oklahoma, hosted by FBLA Oklahoma.

OPSU PBL students earned eleven state championships, eight second-place finishes, seven third-place finishes, and three fourth-place finishes at the competition.

OPSU PBL Adviser Kim Smith said, "We are really proud of our students' accomplishments at State and look forward to the National competition in June!"

Jayden Valdez, OPSU PBL President, commented, "I was honored to represent the University in this year's State Leadership Conference, and it was an unforgettable experience to enjoy working alongside my classmates to bring home state titles and championships. I hope to learn from this experience and bring even better results from the National Leadership Conference. I am thankful that we have had the support of the university and the community, and I am thankful for the many Faculty and Advisors that have helped prepare us for this."

Ryan Sinclair, computer information systems major from Elkhart, Kansas, shared, "It not only felt good to put some skills I have learned in the classroom to the test, but also placing in my events and being able to go to nationals!"

Nine students qualified for the National Leadership Conference, and FBLA Collegiate National Competition is set for Atlanta, Georgia, in June 2023. **P**

A portrait of Kelly Fuller Gordon, a woman with long, wavy, light brown hair, smiling warmly. She is wearing a black and white checkered blazer over a dark top. Her right hand is resting near her chin. The background is a solid, light beige color.

# ALUMNI

## KELLY FULLER GORDON NAMED TOP 100 INNOVATORS & ENTREPRENEURS

**Alumna Kelly Fuller Gordon was featured in the Top 100 Innovators & Entrepreneurs Magazine.**

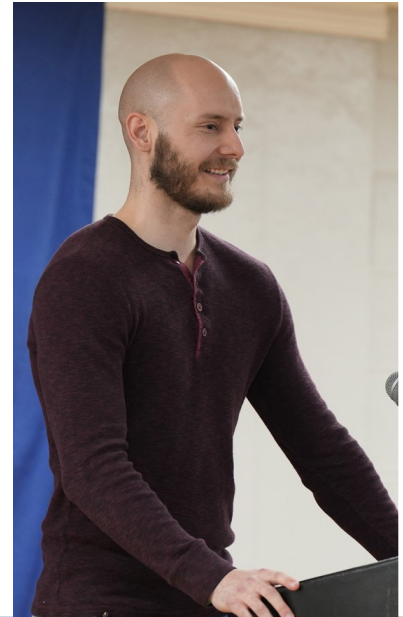
An entrepreneur with over 25 years of experience in the areas of technology, risk management, cyber security, and compliance, Gordon has been part of the information security discipline since its onset.

Gordon graduated summa cum laude with a Bachelor's in Computer Information Systems from Oklahoma Panhandle State University. She holds CISSP, CISA, GLEG, GPEN and GLSC certifications.

As someone who has dedicated her career to helping other organizations navigate and implement cyber and data protection frameworks, she understands the subtle nuances of the ever-changing landscape. A regular panelist and speaker at technology-focused events, she's made a name for herself working on the front lines, having been part of the first FISMA assessment for NASA back in 2009.

Now, Gordon brings all of it to bear with her own business venture, RisX LLC. Headquartered in Florida, the boutique cyber-compliance, and IT advisory firm does everything from defining risk management program strategy to conducting cyber compliance assessments, providing virtual CISO services, and even performing vendor risk management evaluations.

"From the time I started my career, there's been a few principles that have been instrumental in creating my experiences," she states. "The first, while women may be overlooked and underpaid in a male dominated industry, this will not be true for me. Second, I'll always be in the right place at the right time. Third, everything happens for a reason and is working for my highest and best good." **P**



# ATHLETICS

## THREE NEW HEAD COACHES JOIN AGGIE NATION

The Panhandle State Athletics Department welcomes three new head coaches to the staff. **Charles Belt** as Head Men's Basketball Coach, **Cory Miller** as Head Football Coach, and **Nicholas Serowski** as Head Volleyball Coach.


Belt has spent the last four seasons as the head coach at William Woods University. Before that, Belt was an assistant coach at Northern Michigan University and Beloit College.

Belt expressed his excitement about the opportunity to lead the Aggie basketball program. "God's timing and God's plan are amazing! I am extremely excited and blessed to be entrusted with the New Era of Aggie basketball at Oklahoma Panhandle State University! I am floored by the hospitality of everyone involved in the process and the constant reminders that I am "THEIR GUY."

Miller most recently served as the Head Coach at Minnesota State CTC, where he helped lead the team to a successful season. Prior to that, he spent time as a Defensive Coordinator at Dakota State University.

Miller expressed his gratitude for the opportunity and eagerness to lead the Aggies. "I am honored and excited to be named the new head football coach at Oklahoma Panhandle State University. I am committed to leading this program with integrity and building a winning culture. I look forward to working with the players, coaching staff, and the entire OPSU community to achieve our goals."

Serowski brings with him a wealth of experience and expertise in coaching, and the OPSU community is excited to welcome him as the new leader of the Aggies volleyball program.

"I am honored and excited to join the Oklahoma Panhandle State University family," said Serowski. "I look forward to working with our student-athletes to build a culture of excellence both on and off the court and to continue the tradition of success that the Aggies volleyball program has established over the years." 

OKLAHOMA PANHANDLE STATE UNIVERSITY



2023

"Doc" Gardner Memorial Rodeo

Hitch Pioneer Arena in Guymon, OK

April  
27  
7pm

April  
28  
7pm

April  
29  
2pm

