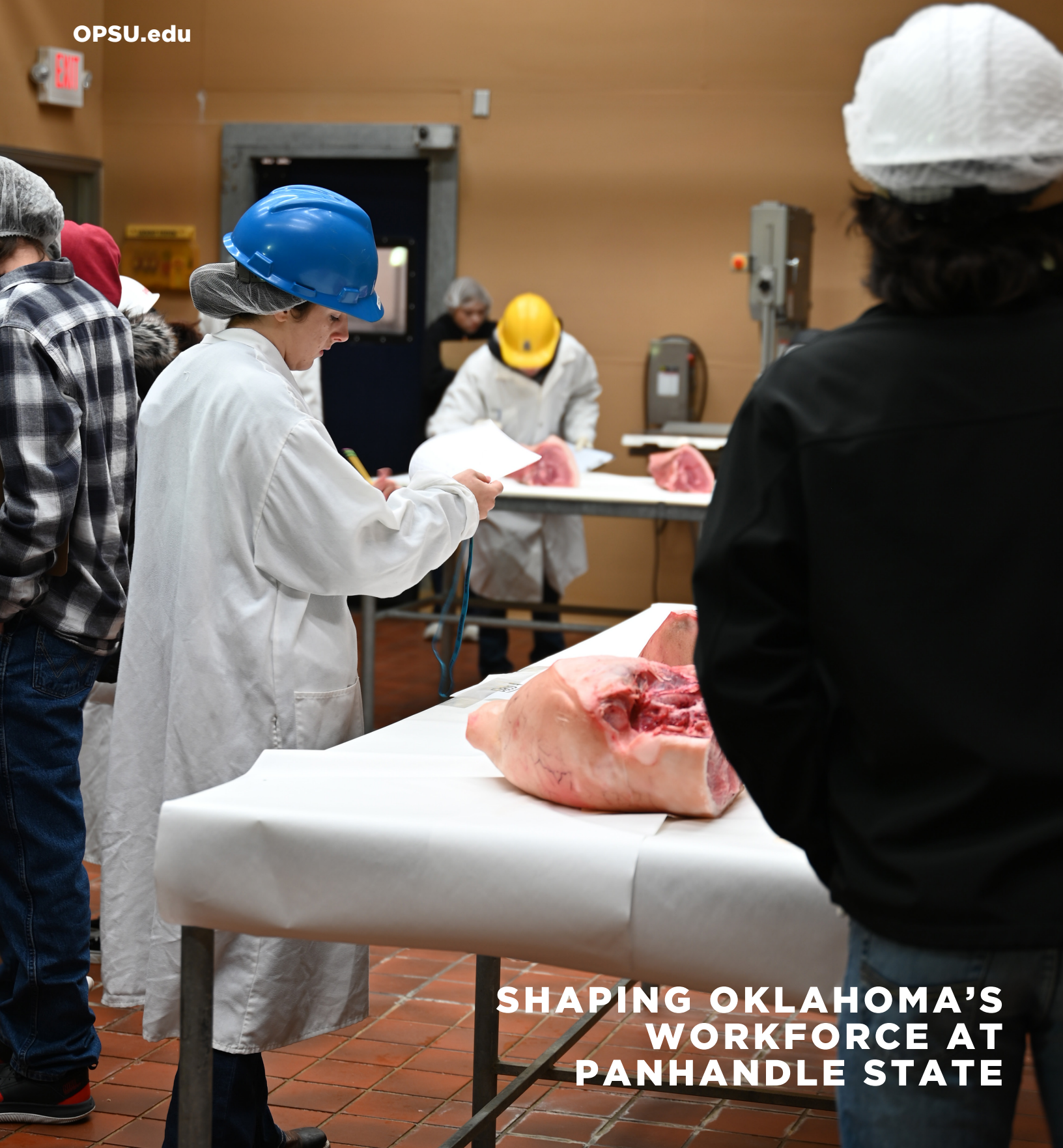


FEBRUARY 2023

Panhandle

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF OKLAHOMA PANHANDLE STATE UNIVERSITY

OPSU.edu



**SHAPING OKLAHOMA'S
WORKFORCE AT
PANHANDLE STATE**



/UNIVERSITY/

PANHANDLE STATE NAMED 2022 GREAT COMPANIES TO WORK FOR



Oklahoma Panhandle State University is proud to announce that it has been recognized as one of the “Great Companies to Work for” in the Oklahoma Magazine.

This prestigious honor is a testament to the hard work and dedication of the OPSU faculty and staff, who are committed to providing an excellent educational experience for students and fostering a positive and productive work environment.

University President Dr. Julie Dinger stated, “OPSU is honored to be included among the top companies in Oklahoma and is dedicated to providing a great place to work for its faculty and staff. The University is committed to fostering a culture of excellence and supporting its employees in their professional and personal growth.”

The Great Companies to Work for program is designed to recognize organizations that have a strong commitment to their employees and offer a range of benefits and opportunities for growth and development. To be considered for the award, companies must demonstrate excellence in areas such as employee engagement, work-life balance, and professional development.

Director of Human Resources Dana Collins stated, “OPSU strives to retain and support faculty and staff. It’s amazing to work with dedicated and hardworking colleagues and to be a part of the Panhandle team.”

The Staff Association at Panhandle State continues to help recognize those that work hard to make this honor possible. The members work throughout the year to give back around campus, and are looking forward to starting

more initiatives to build on this.

Chyanna Black, Staff Association President, said, “We are always looking to recognize our outstanding people, and this year we are excited to work on an initiative for all staff to benefit from.”

This recognition reflects the hard work and dedication of all the employees who strive to make the University a great place to work, learn and grow. **P**

“OPSU is honored to be included among the top companies in Oklahoma and is dedicated to providing a great place to work for its faculty and staff. The University is committed to fostering a culture of excellence and supporting its employees in their professional and personal growth.”

—Dr. Julie Dinger,
University President

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PANHANDLE MAGAZINE

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/UNIVERSITY/

COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE, SCIENCE, & NURSING SHAPING OKLAHOMA'S WORKFORCE

The College of Agriculture, Science, and Nursing at Oklahoma Panhandle State University plays a critical role in building the state's economy by building reputable academic programs and producing top graduates. With each program, the college prepares students for careers in agriculture and related industries by providing practical, hands-on projects and learning from top faculty members with proven experience in their fields.

With Oklahoma being the country's fifth largest cattle producer, a significant need for animal science graduates, who are knowledgeable in areas such as genetics, reproduction, and nutrition, exists. Therefore, OPSU's animal science program is designed to prepare students to meet these industry needs. Students dive deep into these subject areas by engaging in labs, internships, and research projects, while also making industry connections with business leaders.

The college has made a significant impact on the state's economy by working with the cattle industry. OPSU has partnered with Five Rivers Cattle and CSS Farms to ensure our students have the skills to move their businesses forward successfully. By bridging the industry and the classroom, students graduate with an in-depth understanding of solving industry problems.

In addition to animal science, the college's RN to

BSN program meets the state's demand for healthcare professionals. The program emphasizes the advantages of earning your bachelor's in nursing to increase earning potential, expand career opportunities, learn beyond the clinical setting, and positively impact patient outcomes. BSN-prepared nurses have knowledge and skills beyond the clinical setting and can seek job opportunities in management settings and leadership roles.

The College of Agriculture, Science, and Nursing at OPSU continuously serves the Panhandle region by identifying problems they can solve in their educational programs. For example, the college will launch the first Panhandle Teaching and Learning event on Friday, February 24, in the McKee Library Auditorium. The main topic focuses on how we increase food production in the Great Plains by addressing specific issues such as water drought, pest control, food security, sustainability, etc. Panhandle Teaching and Learning aims to build an ecosystem of faculty, staff, students, alumni, businesses, and nonprofits to cross-collaborate so we can develop innovative solutions together to achieve progress.

Driven to serve Oklahoma's economy, the college consistently develops innovative practices to help students succeed, support faculty, and make significant contributions to our communities. **P**

OPSU TACKLES STATEWIDE TEACHER SHORTAGE WITH INCENTIVE PROGRAMS

Oklahoma Panhandle State University is committed to addressing the statewide teacher shortage in Oklahoma alongside the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education in support of the Oklahoma Future Teacher Scholarship and Employment Incentive Program, also known as “Inspired to Teach” established by the House Bill 3564.

This bill, passed during the 2022 legislative session, helps bridge the gap between the ongoing shortage of certified teachers in the state, leading to many classrooms needing fully qualified teachers. OPSU is working to tackle this issue by removing the financial barrier and offering an incentive for residents that helps attract and retain highly skilled educators to the field. Along with the Inspired to Teach Program, OPSU launched a similar scholarship in 2019 called the Panhandle Promise Scholarship.

The Panhandle Promise Scholarship addresses the desperate need for highly trained educators in the panhandle public school district’s classrooms. This is a two-year commitment from the student to teach in one of 16 Oklahoma panhandle public school districts. This scholarship pays the expected out-of-pocket costs for tuition and fees a student would face after federal and state aid and all other scholarships the student receives are applied. Panhandle State also funds up to \$2,000 per year in tuition waivers for each eligible student.


“OPSU is committed to helping solve the statewide teacher shortage by empowering our students with the tools and resources they need to become highly effective educators,” said Dr. Julie Dinger, President of OPSU. “The Panhandle Promise Scholarship and the Oklahoma Inspired to Teach program are just two of the many ways we are investing in the future of education in Oklahoma.”

The Panhandle Promise currently has ten students receiving

the scholarship. Students who graduate from the teaching education program at Panhandle State see a high percentage of job placement within their field.

OPSU has a long-standing reputation for excellence in teacher education and is dedicated to creating a pipeline of highly qualified teachers for Oklahoma. By providing comprehensive support and financial assistance, OPSU is helping ensure that every student in Oklahoma has access to a highly qualified educator.

“The Panhandle Promise scholarship reflects the high value that OPSU places on education and the people who deliver it in this part of the state,” stated Dr. Patrick Maille, Dean of the College of Arts and Education. “We want to invest in those people and in the future of the Panhandle.”

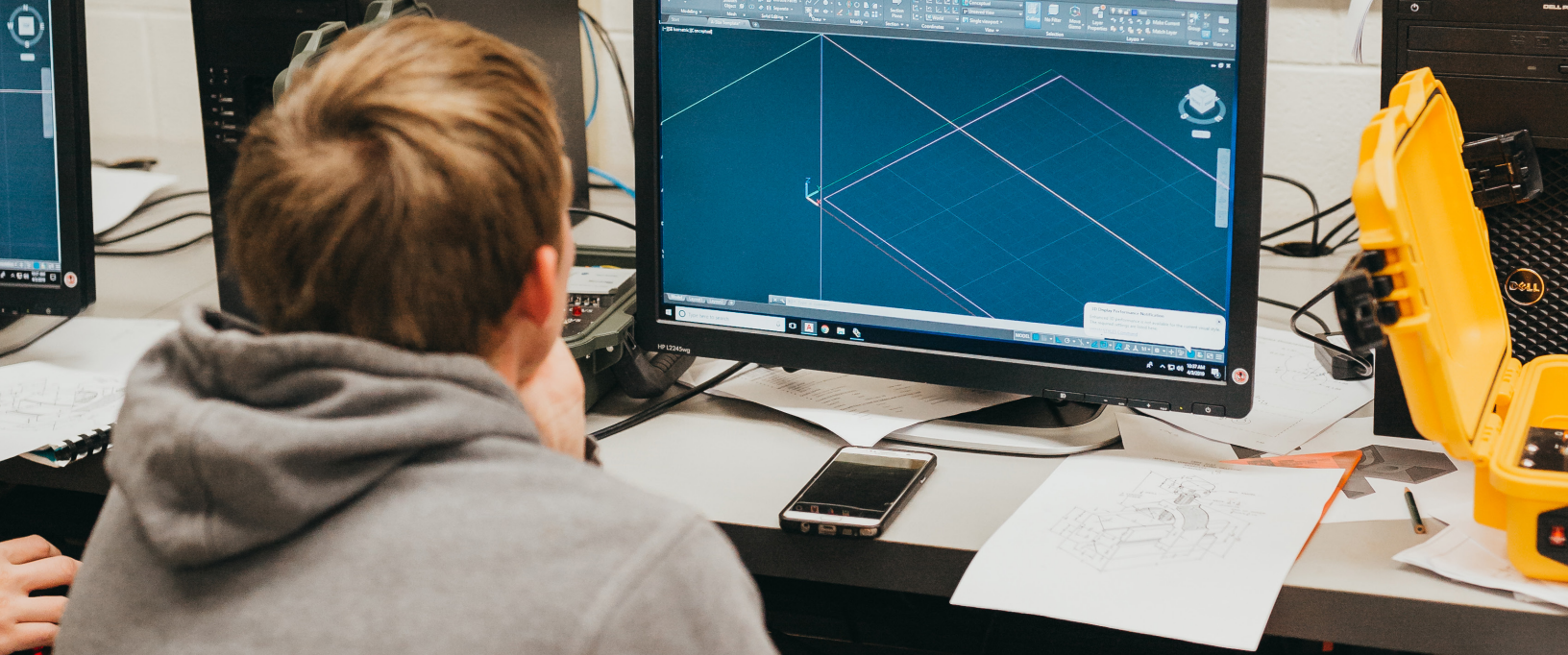
The deadline to apply for the Panhandle Promise Scholarship is June 1, 2023. Information about the Panhandle Promise Scholarship can be found online at panhandlepromise.opsu.edu 

“The Panhandle Promise Scholarship reflects the high value that OPSU places on education and the people who deliver it in this part of the state.”

— Dr. Patrick Maille

Dean of College of Arts & Education





/ UNIVERSITY /

STEM DEGREES THAT PRODUCE QUALIFIED INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY PROFESSIONALS

The State of Oklahoma needs qualified IT professionals, and the College of Business and Technology at Oklahoma Panhandle State University is making significant contributions to this field with a Computer Information Systems program. This program addresses the need for qualified IT professionals in the workforce by offering a curriculum that covers application development, database, web development, networking, and cybersecurity. Students in the program are well-prepared for careers in the rapidly evolving field of technology.

The Computer Information Systems program at OPSU is designed to build a solid foundation based on the five components of an information system: hardware, software, data, procedures, and people. Students develop these skills through courses focused on hardware and software, networks, databases, programming, web design, security, operating systems and virtualization, and systems analysis. The faculty promotes a passion for critical thinking and life-long learning and find inspiration in Marvin Minsky's quote, "What I see as being my job is teaching people not particular things for some job they will have someday, but teaching them how to think so that they can do anything they want to do."

In addition to its strong curriculum, the university's Computer Information Systems program also offers internships, cooperative education opportunities, and regional and national IT competitions to help students gain practical experience and make connections in the industry. Students have achieved over 140 top-ten finishes in regional and national competitions since 1998. Most recently, OPSU senior Jayden Valdez took top honors at the regional USITCC Cybersecurity competition of undergraduate and graduate students. These opportunities often lead to job offers upon graduation, ensuring this program has one of the highest job placement ratings on campus.

"The demand for STEM-educated workers is growing in

"STEM degrees are helping fill this need as the OPSU graduates of this program have a better opportunity to pursue higher-paying jobs, which can help boost the economy in Oklahoma."

— Karen Goosen

Dean of College of Business & Technology

Oklahoma, as the state's economy shifts from traditional industries to more technology-driven ones," said College of Business and Technology Dean, Karen Goosen. "STEM degrees are helping to fill this need as the OPSU graduates of this program have a better opportunity to pursue higher-paying jobs, which can help boost the economy in Oklahoma."

Technology has always been important in fields such as science, engineering, math, and business. It also finds strongholds in medicine, agriculture, manufacturing, and many more. Many graduates of OPSU's Computer Information Systems program have chosen to double major in accounting, business, or agriculture and are well-prepared to meet these diverse needs. They have a strong foundation in technology and their chosen field, making them valuable assets to employers in these various industries.

OPSU's Computer Information Systems program produces well-prepared graduates to help build Oklahoma's STEM economy. Founded on a strong curriculum, passionate faculty, and hands-on opportunities, the Computer Information Systems program will continue to build on its foundation of success to help build a brighter future for Oklahoma. **P**



“My heart is to serve students in whatever capacity I can. I’m thankful for the opportunity to continue to serve OPSU’s student body in the role of Registrar.”

— Erin Moore, Registrar

/ STAFF /

ERIN MOORE NAMED PANHANDLE STATE REGISTRAR

Previous Director of Financial Aid, Erin Moore, has been named Panhandle State’s Registrar. Erin Moore, originally from Biloxi, Mississippi, served as the Director of Financial Aid since June 2019. She has been a part of the Panhandle State family since 2018 when she started as the Assistant Director for Financial Aid.

University President, Dr. Julie Dinger, commented, “Ms. Moore is a standout leader in our community. After modernizing and transforming the student experience in Financial Aid, I am confident that her leadership will bring Academic Records to an exceptional level for students, faculty, and staff.”

Moore received a Bachelor of General Studies from Fort Hays State University, and is in the Master of Education, Higher Education Student Affairs program at Fort Hays State University.

In this position, Moore will also serve as the International Student Coordinator. OPSU’s international student population has continued to grow with the amount of students on the campus. “I’m excited to be part of the growth and to find new ways to support those students who choose to study in the states at OPSU,” Moore stated.

“My heart is to serve students in whatever capacity I can. I’m thankful for the opportunity to continue to serve OPSU’s

student body in the role of Registrar,” she said. “When I started in Financial Aid in 2018 I had clear goals on how to make the student experience better in that department. I’m proud to have accomplished many goals while in that role and am pleased to be trusted with a new set of challenges in the position of Registrar.”

Vice President of Academic and Student Affairs, Dr. Theresa Billiot, stated, “Erin is a go-getter who truly believes in serving our students. She consistently shows a dedication to improving the Aggie student experience. We have immediately seen positive impacts from her once she stepped into the roles as Registrar and as our International Student Coordinator.”

“Our office is fortunate to help students with some of the most exciting aspects of being a college student: acceptance to the university and graduating with a degree. We want to ensure the student experience is exceptional from start to finish,” More stated. “We have begun and will continue to evaluate our processes to ensure the best student experience is delivered through the most efficient and effective means possible. We hope students will experience the Panhandle difference in our office.” P



“Dasha is detail-oriented and a research-driven individual. I am confident that Dasha will help us identify new ways to connect scholarships with boosting retention efforts.”

— Dr. Theresa Billiot,
Vice President of Academic &
Student Affairs

/ STAFF /

DASHA SMITH, PANHANDLE STATE DIRECTOR OF FINANCIAL AID

Dasha Smith has been named the Director of Financial Aid at Oklahoma Panhandle State University. She is originally from Keyes, Oklahoma, but has called Guymon home for many years. Smith graduated from Panhandle State in 2009 with a Bachelor of Science in Psychology. She is currently in a Master’s Program at Northwestern Oklahoma State University.

As the Director of Financial Aid, Smith will ensure that the financial aid process complies with federal guidelines, packaging the student aid, disbursing, and notifying students according to federal guidance, among other duties.

“I know from experience how important financial aid can be in higher education. It can seem like a giant roadblock in many cases,” Smith stated. “I wanted to be a part of the team at Panhandle State that helps students with this part of college, and then it will be a personal sense of accomplishment.”

Smith brings a wealth of experience, having worked in the Office of the Chief Clerk at the Oklahoma House of Representatives, serving as an administrative specialist for Hitachi Computer Products, and working in payroll at Quality Integrated Services, a pipeline inspection and construction management company.

“I have loved this university ever since I was an undergraduate here, and I wanted to be a part of this university professionally,” said Smith. “I look forward to building great relationships with the students, staff, and faculty.”

Vice President of Academic and Student Affairs, Dr. Theresa Billiot, stated, “Dasha is detail-oriented and a research-driven individual. I am confident that Dasha will help us identify new ways to connect scholarships with boosting our retention efforts.”

Smith commented, “My favorite thing about this college is the people. Everyone is friendly, and there is a familial atmosphere that cannot be replicated in a larger university.”

Smith and her husband have three beautiful children who love outdoor activities like hiking.

Please welcome Dasha Smith to the Panhandle State family as the Director of Financial Aid. **P**



/ STUDENT /

SGA & PBL CROWN THE 2023 MR. AND MS. PANHANDLE STATE

On February 2nd, Oklahoma Panhandle State University hosted the annual Mr. and Ms. Panhandle State Scholarship Competition at the Hughes-Strong Auditorium. The competition, organized by the Student Government Association and the Panhandle Business Leaders, showcased eight outstanding students.

The winners of this prestigious event were Kenley Yocom from Ralls, TX, and Carlos Flores from Texhoma, OK. Kenley, a Junior majoring in Psychology and a talented softball player, and Carlos, a Junior majoring in Finance and Management, impressed the judges with their poise, confidence, and exceptional answers to the on-stage questions.

University President, Dr. Julie Dinger, stated, "Congratulations to Kenley Yocom and Carlos Flores on being named Mr. & Ms. Panhandle State for 2023. This Scholarship competition awards the recipients a \$2,000 scholarship each. Thank you to the Student Government Association and PBL for holding this event. I know that Kenley and Carlos will continue to represent Panhandle State well."

Kenley's favorite thing about Panhandle State is the community. "They make me feel at home even if you are hours away from your family. While here, I have made many lifelong friendships that I will forever cherish," she stated. After graduation, Kenley plans to become a guidance counselor for children in school while also being a softball coach.

Carlos serves as Vice President for three organizations, including the Student Government Association, Panhandle Business Leaders, and Student Athlete Advisory Council. His favorite thing about Panhandle State is "the ability to grow professionally on a small campus as well as the relationships made with fellow students, faculty, staff, and community."

The competition judges were Hannah Johnson, Kaly Smith, and Manuel Medina, who evaluated the contestants based on their resumes, interviews, on-stage questions, casual wear, and evening wear. The competition was a true testament to these students' incredible talent and ambition.

"We are thrilled to announce Kenley and Carlos as the winners of this year's Mr. and Ms. Panhandle State Scholarship Competition," said Kim Smith, SGA Advisor. "Their achievements and dedication to their academic and extracurricular pursuits make them excellent ambassadors for our university, and we are proud to have them represent Panhandle State."

Panhandle State congratulates Kenley and Carlos on their achievements and wishes them continued success in their academic and personal endeavors. **P**

PANHANDLE STATE ALUMNI, JAY MILLER, EMPOWERING COACHES TO SHAPE FUTURES

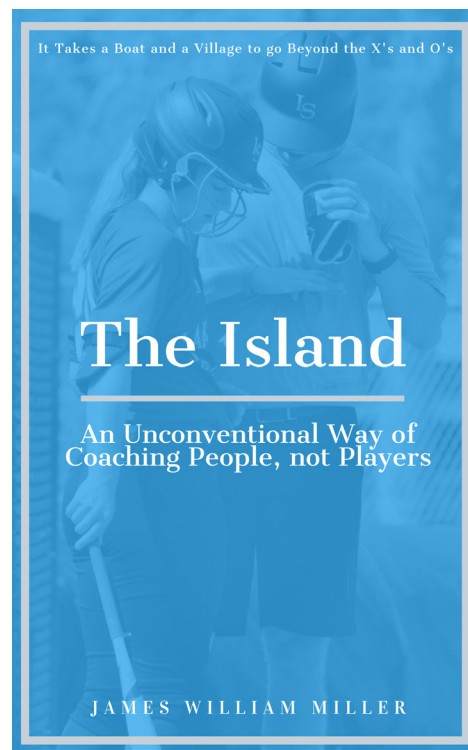
Panhandle State Alumni Jay Miller's book, "The Island," has become a must-read for coaches and athletes alike, particularly those who want to create an unconventional but effective coaching culture. Miller's book details his unique coaching approach that focuses on building a positive team culture rather than just winning games.

For Miller, it's not winning and losing that keeps him up at night. "It's wondering if my kids (players) are fed, have a roof over their head, and know they are loved."

Miller's approach is one that he learned from his own experiences with coaches, including his former head coach, Steve Appel, who was hard on his players but also had an open-door policy that allowed Miller to walk in and share his life's problems with him. Miller credits former OPSU softball coach Rachel Bureson, who mentored and coached his wife, Candace, who also graduated from OPSU. Miller also credits athletic trainer Brian Lankford, who taught him about injury prevention in baseball and softball.

It wasn't just the coaching staff that impacted Miller's life. Miller is grateful for the lifelong friendships he made at OPSU and believes that these relationships helped him become the coach and mentor he is today. He also speaks highly of OPSU's professors, who invested in their students individually and helped him find his path to graduate school.

Miller's approach to coaching has resulted in some impressive achievements. In 2015, when he took over the softball program at Lake-Sumter State College in Leesburg, FL, the team had only won an average of 11 games per year over the previous decade. Since then, the team has won a conference championship, and four of his former players have become college softball coaches.



He focuses on building relationships with his players individually and as a team. He also stresses the importance of communication and honesty, encouraging his players to be open and honest with each other and with him.

When Miller's second son, Maddux, was born in July 2019, he was life-flighted to a hospital just days after his birth. As Miller and his family were dealing with the overwhelming emotions of the situation, Miller's phone began to ring with calls. The outpouring of support and love from his players and colleagues made Miller realize how much he had accomplished in his three years as coach.

During this time in the hospital, Miller felt compelled to share his coaching approach with others. He realized that he had a story to tell and what better way to share it than through a book? "The Island" was born out of this experience and serves as a testament to the power of positive coaching.

"To be honest, I didn't know then who I was writing for; I just felt this overwhelming need to put what we were doing into words," Miller said about his book. "Anyone who had heard me speak at a conference would come up to me and tell me how innovative our actions were. To my coaching staff and me, it was the only way we knew how to do it."

"My wife, who had just come home from the hospital for a second time with our newborn, got the first-ever copy on Christmas Day in 2019," Miller shared. "For four months, we would go to bed together, and then when she was asleep, I would get back out of bed and write. I'd send the chapters to my dad, cousin, aunt, and our amazing athletic trainer for proofing and ideas. I never wanted to burden my wife to schedule a time to write, so I did it when everyone was sleeping."

Looking back now, Miller sees his mission and the path the book started him on. "Mental health in college athletics is now at a breaking point," he said. "It is more imperative now to make sure that coaches understand their true power when dealing with their student-athletes and their future. You don't have to be a jerk of a coach to get your athletes to compete at their best, and the damage being done by some coaches is irreversible."

Miller advises coaches to "coach your players hard, but love them as people even harder."

Miller's story has inspired hundreds and will continue to impact the lives of coaches and players. We are proud of Coach Jay Miller, 2012 Panhandle State Alum. **P**



Left to Right: Carlos Flores, Dr. Dinger, Jesus Mesta, Faith Cook, Kenley Yocom, Kyrsten Cook, Jake Matte, Abryann Montalvo, Libby Ojeda, and Dean Laura Hutchinson

/ UNIVERSITY /

HIGHER EDUCATION DAY AT THE CAPITOL

Students from across Oklahoma gathered at the State Capitol in Oklahoma City to attend the annual Higher Education Day on February 14th. The event brought together students, educators, and policymakers to discuss the importance of higher education and advocate for increased funding for higher education in the state.

Eight students attended from Oklahoma Panhandle State University. They had come to the state capitol to speak directly to their representatives and senators about higher education's impact on their lives and communities. These students shared personal stories and statistics about the benefits of higher education, highlighting how increased access to education can improve economic opportunities, community development, and overall quality of life.

The students spoke to legislators about the importance of investing in higher education in Oklahoma. They emphasized that investing in higher education is critical to addressing these issues and building a stronger, more prosperous future for Oklahoma.

"Higher Education Day was an overall great experience. Getting to spend time at our state's capitol with other students who value higher education was really motivating," said student Kyrstan Cook. "Since being at OPSU, I have a new appreciation for college and the work that goes into getting a degree."

Education is the key to success and stability in a rapidly changing economy. The importance of higher education in Oklahoma cannot be overstated. Yet, many Oklahoma

students need help accessing higher education, including increased tuition costs and limited financial aid.

Student, Carlos Flores commented, "Getting to attend Higher Education Day at our state's capitol and seeing the students, legislators, and leaders collaborate together really brings into perspective the impact that Higher Education has in the State of Oklahoma."

The students who attended Higher Education Day demonstrated a deep commitment to improving their communities and investing in their futures. Speaking directly to their representatives and senators, they could advocate for policies that would make higher education more accessible and affordable for all Oklahoma students. The event was a powerful reminder of the importance of investing in education and the critical role that students can play in shaping the future of their state. **P**





/ ATHLETICS /

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL DEFEAT CENTRAL CHRISTIAN COLLEGE

The Aggies Women's Basketball Team hosted Central Christian College in a Sooner Athletic showdown. Prior to the game, the last time the Aggies faced the Tigers was on December 8th, when the Aggies beat the Tigers 88-57.

Both teams kept the game close in the first quarter of action, not giving up a lead. With seven seconds left in the game, Senior Tateum Jones made a layup giving the Aggies a 17-16 lead into the second quarter.

In the second quarter, there was a constant battle between both teams. The score was tied three times, and the Aggies took the lead three times as the Tigers took four lead changes. The Aggies would be down 28-30 going into the half.

Junior Bianca Camello scored back-to-back three-point shots in the third quarter to get the Aggies up by eight, 50-42. The Aggies won the game 59-47. As a team, the Aggies had 40 rebounds and ten steals. **P**

/ ATHLETICS /

BASEBALL SEASON STARTS FRESH



The Aggie Baseball Team played a double-header against Peru State University, falling short in the first game 9-7 but taking the second game win 6-5 in a wild finish.

The Bobcats would seize on the Aggies quickly with four runs in the top of the second inning.

Junior Jeremy Dibartolomeo got the first run for the Aggies with a deep home run shot, cutting two more additional runs in the inning, pushing the score 4-3. The Aggies endeavored a comeback in the bottom of the 7th inning and wouldn't prevail. Junior Braeden LeJarraga started on the mound for the Aggies; LeJarraga tossed five and two-thirds giving up seven hits, seven earned, and stuck out five.

For the second game, junior Kiebert Medina started on the hill for the Aggies and pitched the complete game allowing six hits and finishing with one strikeout.

The Aggies tied the game in the fifth inning, and Junior Jhonn Cabrera hit a triple to score freshman Connor Pritchett giving the Aggies a 4-4 tie, and Senior Tucker Bond would close the game with a fly out to the outfield. **P**

PANHANDLE STATE

SPRING RODEO SCHEDULE



FEBRUARY 17-19

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY



MARCH 10-12

FORT SCOTT COMMUNITY COLLEGE



MARCH 31 - APRIL 2

GARDEN CITY COMMUNITY COLLEGE



APRIL 13-15

SOUTHWESTERN OKLAHOMA
STATE UNIVERSITY



APRIL 20-22

FORT HAYS STATE UNIVERSITY



APRIL 27-29

OKLAHOMA PANHANDLE
STATE UNIVERSITY
DOC GARDNER
MEMORIAL RODEO