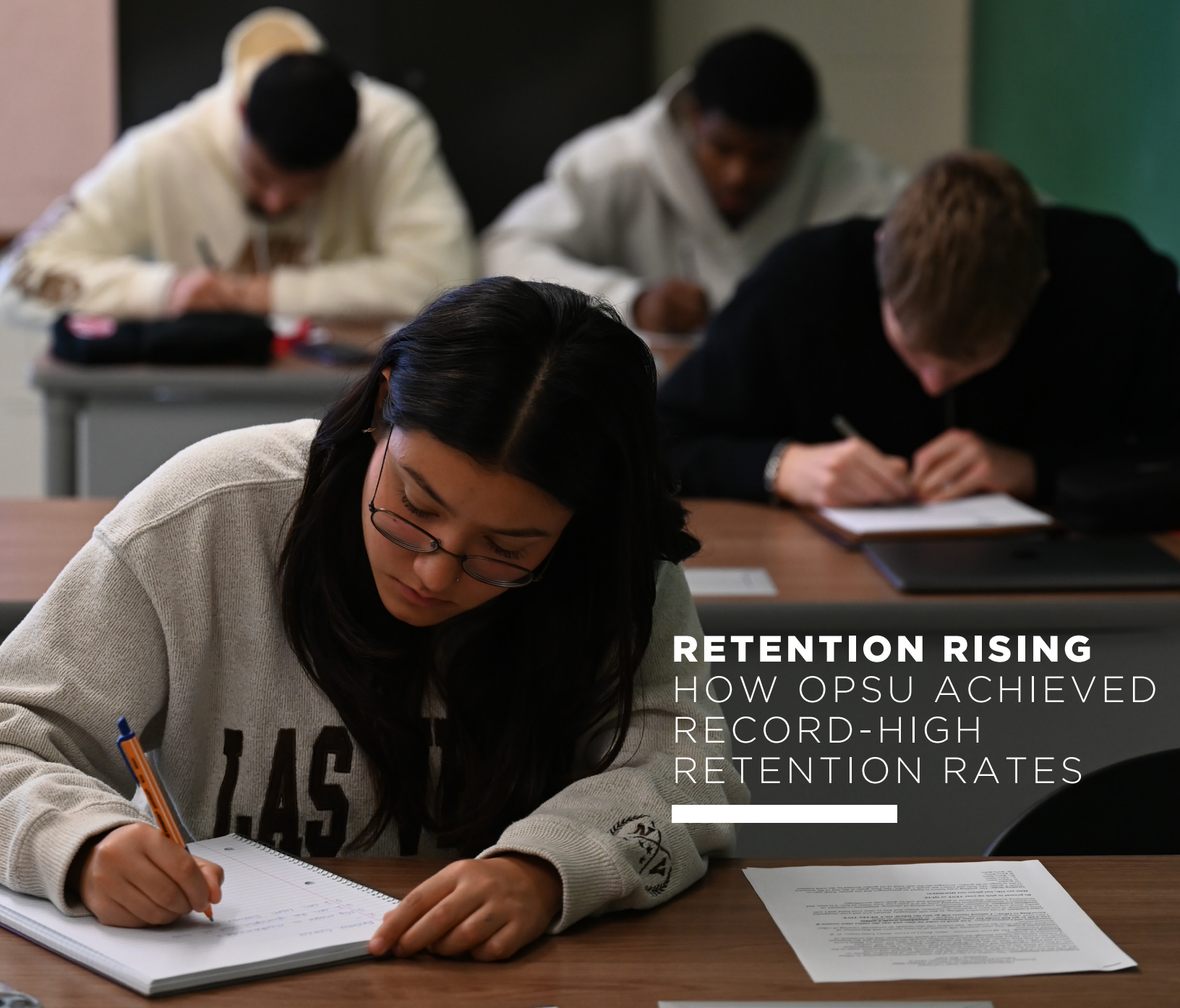


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RETENTION RISING
HOW OPSU ACHIEVED
RECORD-HIGH
RETENTION RATES



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MENTION

RETENTION

HOW OPSU ACHIEVED RECORD-HIGH RETENTION RATES

At Oklahoma Panhandle State

University, student success is at the heart of everything we do. Improvements in the first-to-second-year retention rate have risen by 15 percentage points over the past two years, reaching a record 62% in 2023/2024. This data proves the university's dedication to fostering a supportive and engaging academic environment.

Retention at OPSU is not just about keeping students enrolled; it's about preparing them for meaningful futures. Studies show that bachelor's degree holders experience significantly lower unemployment rates and higher earning potential. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, in 2023, individuals with a bachelor's degree had an unemployment rate of 2.2%, compared to 3.9% for those with only a high school diploma. OPSU's focus on retention aligns closely with its mission to drive economic prosperity for its students and the region, ensuring they are equipped to contribute to the workforce and achieve lasting success.

"When we invest in retention, we invest in our students' futures, equipping them to contribute to their communities and achieve their dreams," said Dr. Julie Dinger, OPSU President. "Retention is a key performance indicator for our strategic plan and reflects our ability to provide an environment where students feel supported and empowered to succeed academically and professionally."

Reiley Opitz-Waller, a senior at OPSU originally from Turpin, Oklahoma, faced challenges common to many college students, including adapting to a new environment, managing coursework, and balancing multiple responsibilities. Pursuing a Health and Physical Education degree with a minor in Elementary Education, Reiley learned the importance of prioritizing academics while balancing her athletic career, work, and personal life.

"As it is, starting college can be tough because you are in a new place surrounded by people you have never met. Additionally, the coursework is more difficult. The hardest thing for me, I believe, was learning time management skills and juggling work, sports, and school. I found it difficult to understand that you should prioritize your schoolwork before anything else," Reiley explained.

Despite these challenges, Reiley found encouragement and support through OPSU's resources and mentors. She highlighted the Academic Resource Center (ARC) as a cornerstone of her success, where she accessed the testing center, mentors, and tutors.

"Since I've been here, I've made great use of the ARC's resources. One of my favorite things about OPSU is that everyone is always willing to lend a hand when you need it. But if I had to choose one person who has helped me get to where I am now, it would be Laci Unruh. She has always encouraged me to be my best self, to keep going when things get hard, and to see the bright side of things."

"When it comes to overcoming the obstacles of academics and personal development, asking for help can make all the difference. This kind of support, whether it comes from a professor giving helpful feedback on an assignment, a tutor helping to explain complex ideas, or a mentor offering advice on a challenging subject, can make students feel more competent and confident. Additionally, using campus resources like the ARC offers valuable support, helping students in managing stress, growth of skills, and motivation. Sometimes all it takes to get through difficult times and focus on long-term objectives is the knowledge that there are people who care about a student's success."

Dr. Charla Lewis, Vice President of Academic Affairs stated, "We want every student to feel like they belong here and have the resources to succeed. Our approach combines proactive support with personalized care, ensuring students can overcome challenges and stay on track."

Students like Reiley exemplify the resilience and determination OPSU fosters in its students. From day one to graduation, OPSU's commitment to student retention is evident through its tools, resources, and community support to help students overcome challenges and achieve their goals. Initiatives like Dropout Detective, personalized advising, dedicated faculty mentorship, and engagement opportunities such as the Hispanic Student Center and Writing Center ensure that students feel supported and empowered to thrive academically, personally, and professionally, contributing to OPSU's record-high retention rates. **P**



ADVANCING OKLAHOMA'S VISION

OPSU'S COMMITMENT TO BLUEPRINT 2030

Oklahoma Panhandle State University is proud to be at the forefront of achieving the BluePrint 2030 Strategic Plan, established by the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education. Anchored on four key fundamentals—producing workforce-ready graduates, growing the student pipeline, focusing on student success, and improving system efficiency and effectiveness—the plan provides a comprehensive roadmap for strengthening Oklahoma's higher education system. OPSU remains steadfast in aligning its initiatives and resources with these goals, ensuring a brighter future for students and the region.

OPSU prepares students for careers in high-demand industries, addressing the state's workforce needs. By focusing on nursing, teaching, agriculture, business, and education, the university ensures that its graduates are ready to step into critical occupations and STEM-related fields, contributing to the state's goal of producing 100,000 degrees and credentials in these areas by 2030. Scholarships such as the Nursing Scholarship and the Alternative Teaching Certification Scholarship directly support students pursuing careers in healthcare and teaching, two critical fields with growing demand. These scholarships not only reduce financial barriers but also align with workforce priorities. Advisory boards established within each OPSU college are composed of industry leaders who guide curriculum development to ensure alignment with workforce needs. This collaboration bridges the gap between education and employment, producing graduates who are prepared to lead.

"At OPSU, we are committed to preparing our students to lead and succeed in high-demand industries," stated Vice President of Academic Affairs, Dr. Charla Lewis. "By fostering strong connections with industry leaders through our advisory boards and continuously aligning our programs with workforce needs, we ensure that our graduates are not just ready for the future—they are shaping it."

Expanding access to higher education is a key priority for OPSU. The university is actively growing the student pipeline and supporting statewide strategies to connect more students with higher education by simplifying transfer processes, improving affordability, and strengthening outreach efforts. OPSU has developed seamless transfer agreements with Connors State College, Northeastern Oklahoma A&M College, and Lamar Community College, enabling students to transfer credits effortlessly and continue their education without disruption.

High school students across the region benefit from OPSU's concurrent enrollment programs, which allow them to earn college credits and gain a head start on their academic journeys. OPSU remains committed to serving rural and first-generation students through focused outreach initiatives, ensuring these key populations have the resources and support needed to succeed in higher education.

OPSU prioritizes student retention and success through innovative tools, centralized advising, and enhanced academic support. Central Advising supports students during their first 16 credit hours, offering consistent communication and early intervention. Programs like Instructor Insight, Dropout Detective, and APlus Attendance enable faculty to monitor student engagement with learning materials in Canvas and identify those in need of additional assistance. Students requiring extra support are connected to services such as the Academic Resource Center for mentoring, the Hispanic Student Center for tutoring, counseling services, and academic coaching. OPSU has also standardized the Canvas homepage and syllabus format, introducing a Common Syllabus to ensure clarity and consistency across all courses, making it easier for students to navigate their academic experience.

The university has also improved system efficiency and fostered collaborations that benefit students and the community. Partnerships with Panhandle Telephone Cooperative, Inc. (PTCI) and Tri-County Electric Cooperative (TCEC) exemplify this commitment. PTCI's sponsorship of the E-Sports team and naming of the PTCI E-Sports Lounge have enriched the student experience. At the same time, TCEC's Collegiate Advisory Board provides students with hands-on experience in cooperative business models, governance, and leadership, equipping them with essential skills for future careers. OPSU has also embraced digital tools and innovative technologies to enhance learning and streamline administrative processes, ensuring a modern and efficient education for all.

University President Dr. Julie Dinger emphasized the importance of this alignment, stating, "BluePrint 2030 provides a transformative vision for higher education in Oklahoma, and OPSU is proud to play an integral role in achieving its goals. From expanding access and affordability to prioritizing student success and workforce readiness, we remain dedicated to empowering students, strengthening communities, and building a brighter future for our state."

As OPSU continues to align its initiatives with BluePrint 2030, the university remains focused on its mission to produce workforce-ready graduates, grow the student pipeline, prioritize student success, and improve institutional efficiency. By focusing on these core fundamentals, OPSU meets the state's strategic goals and creates transformative opportunities for its students and the community. **P**

OPSU ENHANCES

ENERGY EFFICIENCY AND STUDENT COMFORT WITH SMARTSTAT TECHNOLOGY

Oklahoma Panhandle State University is leading the charge toward sustainability and operational efficiency by installing SmartStat technology in the Aggie Apartments. This impactful project, funded by deferred maintenance allocations from the Oklahoma state legislature, highlights OPSU's efforts to improve the student experience while advancing environmental responsibility and energy efficiency.

According to Liz McMurphy, Vice President of Fiscal Affairs, the deferred maintenance funds were allocated to maximize impact. "We made significant efforts to support the student experience by upgrading our technology infrastructure and classroom technology. At the same time, we prioritized energy efficiency and projects that mitigate potential risks, such as freezing winter temperatures, which have caused operational disruptions in the past. Our goal was to reduce future operational costs and make visible, meaningful improvements for students," said McMurphy.

This funding also builds on years of planning to improve campus infrastructure. McMurphy highlighted the strategic alignment, noting, "This deferred maintenance funding has enabled us to make huge strides in plans we've had in place for years but lacked funding to execute until now."

SmartStat technology, provided by Harrison Energy, is designed to optimize energy usage through advanced automation, including ambient temperature monitoring and operational adjustments. The system is projected to save over 100,000 kilowatt hours annually and extend the life of HVAC equipment, thereby reducing material waste and the environmental impact of equipment replacement.

"The project exemplifies leadership's forward-thinking approach to meet long-term goals, both financially and sustainably," said Matt Mier of Harrison Energy. "Using proven technology like SmartStats, OPSU is reducing energy usage, mitigating risks such as pipe freezing, and ensuring comfortable living spaces for students."

The environmental benefits go beyond utility savings, encompassing



reduced material usage, minimized construction impact, and extended infrastructure lifespan. These efforts align with OPSU's broader goals of sustainability and operational efficiency.

The installation of SmartStats has already improved student comfort and operational efficiency in the Aggie Apartments. By reducing help tickets and minimizing downtime, OPSU's maintenance teams can focus on long-term planning and campus-wide improvements.


"We have seen a significant reduction in help tickets with the HVAC upgrades made over the past two years," said McMurphy. "These energy savings allow us to reinvest in operations and other sustainability initiatives, furthering our path to long-term sustainability."

This initiative's success was made possible through the sustained efforts of state leaders, including Speaker Pro Tempore Kyle Hilbert and campus leadership, who advocated for deferred maintenance funding.

"The funding we received has enabled significant progress toward our sustainability goals," McMurphy said. "However, continued investments are critical to address additional infrastructure needs, such as replacing windows and utility lines."

As OPSU continues to prioritize sustainability, future projects include further replacing aging windows and utility systems to enhance energy efficiency. These efforts reflect the university's dedication to creating a safe, comfortable, and sustainable environment for students, faculty, and staff.

With the SmartStat project setting a new standard for campus living, OPSU remains committed to educating students and improving lives through forward-thinking investments in infrastructure and technology.

For more information about OPSU's energy efficiency initiatives, please contact Liz McMurphy at liz@opsu.edu. 



CELEBRATING TWO REMARKABLE INDIVIDUALS AT THE 2025 OPSU ALUMNI AMBASSADOR HALL OF FAME INDUCTION

At Oklahoma Panhandle State University, the Alumni Ambassador Hall of Fame is more than just recognition; it's a tribute to individuals whose passion, dedication, and legacy continue to shape the fabric of the university and its community. This year, OPSU is proud to honor two extraordinary individuals who have left a lasting impression on the university and the Panhandle region: Bill Newman and Mark Freeman.

For Bill Newman, it all started with a spark at South Plains College. A 1964 graduate of Perryton High School, Bill initially rodeoed at South Plains before his friends, Dale Johnson and Bob Crill, persuaded him to transfer to Panhandle Agricultural and Mechanical College (PAMC), now OPSU. It was there, under the mentorship of rodeo sponsor Lynn Gardner, that Bill found not only a competitive outlet but a family and a future.

It was also at OPSU that Bill met the love of his life, Virginia (Vee) Eddy, from Lamar, Colorado. The couple met at a Rodeo Club meeting in the fall of 1969, and Bill fondly recalls his first impression, "Holy cow, she was the prettiest thing I'd ever seen." Just a few months later, they were engaged, and on June 7, 1970, they married. Together, they have supported OPSU's rodeo program in every way possible, from participating in the Top Hand Auction to making countless contributions to ensure that the next generation of rodeo athletes has the resources they need to thrive. Under the sponsorship of Bill E Newman Real Estate, Bill and Vee have also supported numerous cowboys in pursuing their PRCA careers, helping young athletes achieve their dreams on the national stage.

Their contributions have gone beyond OPSU, showcasing their enduring commitment to the rodeo community.

Mark Freeman's story is one of devotion—devotion to family, community, and his beloved Panhandle. Born in Guymon, Oklahoma, and raised in Texhoma, Mark's deep roots in the region are a testament to his commitment to the people and land that shaped him. After graduating from high school in 1972, Mark pursued a Bachelor of Science in Agriculture at Oklahoma State University, returning home to the Panhandle to build his life and career.

In 1978, Mark began his professional journey at Anchor D Bank (formerly First National Bank of Texhoma), where he would serve for more than four decades. As president of the bank, Mark played a pivotal role in securing Anchor D Bank's naming rights for OPSU's basketball arena and football stadium—marking a landmark partnership between the bank and the university. Mark's contributions to OPSU didn't stop there, though. His passion for the Panhandle led him to invest not only in his career but in the region itself, where he made his home on the family ranch, raising cattle and quarter horses alongside his father, Jack Freeman.

Beyond his work in banking and ranching, Mark was a civic leader. He served as Mayor of Texhoma for 20 years and was deeply involved in the community, earning accolades such as Rotarian of the Year. He was also a dedicated member of organizations like the Stratford Area Foundation and Goodwill Hilltoppers. His kindness



defines Mark’s legacy, commitment to community service, and devotion to the Panhandle region, a legacy that will continue to inspire all who knew him.

Sadly, Mark Freeman passed away on Tuesday, November 19, 2024, surrounded by family, but his legacy lives on through the countless lives he touched and the lasting impact he made on OPSU and the community. Though we mourn his loss, we celebrate his extraordinary life and the remarkable contributions he made to the Panhandle region.

Bill Newman shared heartfelt words about his friend, saying, “Mark was a good friend, and he always asked about my family. It wasn’t a general family ask—it always was, ‘How’s Vee? How’s Nikki? How’s Chad?’ He knew everybody by their name. He was a good person.”

Dr. Julie Dinger, President of Oklahoma Panhandle State University, remarked, “Bill Newman and Mark Freeman exemplify the grit, resilience, and strong sense of community that define the Oklahoma Panhandle. Bill’s steadfast dedication to supporting our rodeo program and nurturing rodeo athletes is truly inspiring. Mark’s visionary leadership and unwavering commitment to the Panhandle community have left a profound and lasting legacy. I am so grateful that the Alumni Association has chosen to recognize these two outstanding men by inducting them into the Hall of Fame.”

Shawn Joy, Director of Alumni Relations, expressed, “We are

honored to induct Bill Newman and Mark Freeman into the OPSU Alumni Ambassador Hall of Fame this year. Both have exemplified what it means to be an Aggie and dedicated to their community, families, and university. While we mourn the passing of Mark Freeman, his legacy will live on through the countless lives he touched. Bill’s ongoing contributions and involvement with OPSU further embody the spirit of excellence we celebrate in our alumni. It is with pride that we recognize their remarkable achievements and lasting influence.”

This year’s induction is a testament to two lives well lived, to two individuals whose passion and dedication will continue to inspire the OPSU community for years to come. **P**

“Bill Newman and Mark Freeman exemplify the grit, resilience, and strong sense of community that define the Oklahoma Panhandle. I am so grateful that the Alumni Association has chosen to recognize these two outstanding men by inducting them into the Hall of Fame.”

— Dr. Julie Dinger, University President

INNOVATORS IN EDUCATION:

OPSU EMPLOYEES LEAD WITH EXPERTISE AND VISION



Oklahoma Panhandle State University employees gathered for the Spring 2025 Welcome Back In-Service event, focused on professional development and fostering a culture of growth. The day was marked by presentations from university leaders and experts in their fields, highlighting approaches to student success, technology integration, and organizational improvement.

"As we enter this new year, I am filled with gratitude for the incredible faculty and staff who lead the way in professional development and exemplify expertise in their fields," stated Dr. Julie Dinger, University President. "These sessions show our dedication and shared commitment to continuous growth. The future of AI is here, and we must face it head-on. I am confident that our team is prepared to embrace and leverage these advancements to enhance our mission of delivering exceptional education and support to our students."

Jerome Ortiz, Director of Information Technology, provided insights into the transformative potential of artificial intelligence (AI) in the workplace and higher education. As a member of the AI committee for the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, Ortiz shared emerging trends and OPSU's plans to integrate AI tools into academic and administrative practices, ensuring the university stays at the forefront of technological advancements. Additionally, Associate Professor of Computer Information Systems, Steve Martin explored integrating AI tools to enhance internal operations. He demonstrated how AI generators can assist employees in streamlining duties, improving efficiency, and fostering innovation across campus functions.

These technological advancements align seamlessly with OPSU's focus on improving student retention and success. Erin Moore, OPSU Registrar, led a session on nonattendance reporting and dropout detection. By identifying and supporting enrolled students who do not attend classes earlier in the semester, OPSU aims to reduce barriers to student success, providing timely interventions and resources that keep students on track toward graduation.

Complementing these student-focused initiatives, Cheyenne Hetzel, Director of Human Resources, emphasized the importance of organizational growth and leadership development. She presented a new Core Competency Model that will strengthen job recruitment, role identification, and employee development, ensuring OPSU's organizational structure evolves alongside its educational innovations.

Andy Ramirez, Chief of Campus Police, hosted a vital training session on the "Run, Hide, Fight" protocol, delivered by Keith Stewart, Southeast Regional Manager of the Oklahoma State School Institute (OSSSI). This training ensures employees are prepared to respond effectively in emergencies, reinforcing OPSU's commitment to campus safety.

The Spring 2025 In-Service set a collaborative and forward-thinking tone for the semester, emphasizing OPSU's dedication to student success, employee development, and operational excellence. As the semester unfolds, these initiatives will continue to shape the university's commitment to innovation and growth. **P**

CONNIE OWENS

AND THE HISPANIC STUDENT CENTER TRANSFORM ESL EFFORTS IN THE PANHANDLE

Connie Owens, Director of the Hispanic Student Center at Oklahoma Panhandle State University, is making a difference in the Panhandle region. Leveraging her experience from Wichita State University, Owens has hit the ground running at OPSU, expanding the center's outreach and fostering meaningful relationships to empower the community. One of her initiatives includes leading the English as a Second Language (ESL) program in Goodwell, a project that embodies her mission to bridge educational gaps and promote inclusion.

The ESL program, held Monday evenings at the Baptist Collegiate Ministry (BCM) from 6 to 8 p.m., offers participants an opportunity to learn from a diverse team of instructors. The program features three senior OPSU students—David Vargas from Colombia, David Perez from Spain, and Mauricio De Santiago from Mexico—who serve as tutors and bring unique perspectives from their respective cultures. Together, they provide a rich blend of Spanish dialects and firsthand experiences to make language learning engaging and effective.

David Vargas, who speaks two languages, shared how moving to the U.S. transformed his perspective on the importance of learning English. "In Colombia, it wasn't mandatory to learn English, but once I came here, I realized how critical it is to listen, read, write, and understand English grammar. Learning English opens your mind and opportunities," he said. David Perez echoed this sentiment, highlighting the hope the program inspires in the community. "Seeing the community members learn English with us gives them confidence. They know their English can be as strong as ours one day. The key to learning English is wanting to learn it."

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— David Perez, OPSU Senior

The program, which launched in September 2024, has seen attendance grow to 15 participants weekly, with community members traveling from as far as Texhoma and Hooker. Connie Owens, who initially joined as a volunteer before taking over leadership, credits the program's success to collaboration and dedication. "When I started, it was just me teaching, and I realized we needed more perspectives and resources. That's when




I brought in the three students from the HSC, and their contributions have been incredible," Owens said.

Owens' commitment extends beyond the ESL program. She has also collaborated with Guymon High School on initiatives like the "Reality Check" program, which helps seniors prepare for life after graduation by teaching practical skills such as budgeting, banking, and navigating real-world challenges.

"This program is a shining example of how Connie Owens is fostering growth and connection through the Hispanic Student Center," said Laura Hutchinson, Dean of Student Affairs at OPSU. "Her dedication to supporting local programs like the ESL initiative not only strengthens community ties but also creates pathways for engagement and inclusion within the HSC, benefiting both our students and the wider region."

As the Hispanic Student Center continues to grow as a hub for learning and support, Owens remains dedicated to serving the diverse needs of the Panhandle. She believes that helping the community grow alongside OPSU will drive enrollment and strengthen the university's mission to serve as a resource for all.

For more information about the Hispanic Student Center or how to get involved with its programs, please contact Connie Owens at connie.owens@opsu.edu. 



OPSU PROGRESS

ON DEFERRED MAINTENANCE PROJECTS

Oklahoma Panhandle State University is making strides in its campus improvement initiatives, funded through deferred maintenance allocations provided by the Oklahoma Higher Education Legislature. These projects reflect OPSU's ongoing dedication to enhancing campus infrastructure, improving the student experience, and advancing operational efficiency.

Among the most significant achievements is the revitalization of a critical component in the university's heating system, Boiler 2 in the Haynes Power Plant. After an estimated 20-year break in service, OPSU's Physical Plant Director, Robby Johnson, and partner in campus HVAC service, Harrison Energy Partners, collaborated in this critical repair work returning Boiler 2 to operation. The fully operational boiler provides redundancy, efficiency, and reliable heating to the entire campus. This upgrade ensures a comfortable environment for students, faculty, and staff, particularly during the harsh winter months, while reducing energy usage and future maintenance costs.

"The maintenance upgrades needed for Boiler 2 were at the top of the priority list when we received this funding to maintain a safe and comfortable learning environment," said Liz McMurphy, Vice President of Fiscal Affairs. "This project addresses immediate needs and supports our long-term sustainability goals by increasing energy efficiency and reducing operational costs."

Deferred maintenance funding has also allowed OPSU to prioritize other essential projects, including upgrades to technology infrastructure, classroom technology, and energy-efficient systems like SmartStats in the Aggie Apartments. These improvements already show measurable benefits, including fewer maintenance requests, enhanced comfort in

student housing, and significant energy savings.

"Deferred maintenance funds have enabled us to tackle projects that directly impact the student experience and the university's operational resilience," said McMurphy. "These efforts ensure that OPSU remains a vibrant and sustainable institution for years."

The success of these projects would not have been possible without the support of the state legislature. Oklahoma House Representative Mark McBride and Senator Adam Pugh authored critical bills that facilitated the funding for higher education deferred maintenance, with additional contributions from an Interim Study authored by Representative Anthony Moore. Their efforts have enabled the university to address longstanding infrastructure needs and invest in its future.

"We are deeply grateful to the House and Senate leadership for recognizing our campus's critical infrastructure needs," said Dr. Julie Dinger, OPSU President. "Their investment in deferred maintenance funding has allowed us to make transformative improvements that benefit our students, faculty, and staff."

OPSU continues to focus on addressing additional infrastructure needs as funding opportunities arise. Future projects include replacing aging windows and updating utility systems to enhance energy efficiency and sustainability.

"These projects are just the beginning," Dr. Dinger added. "As we move forward, we remain committed to creating an environment that supports learning, growth, and innovation for everyone who calls OPSU home."

With each completed project, OPSU strengthens its foundation for continued success, ensuring that the university remains a leader in higher education and sustainability for future generations. **P**

FROM THE PANHANDLE

TO THE NATIONAL FINALS RODEO, ALUMNUS JOSH FROST IS THE WORLD CHAMPION BULL RIDER



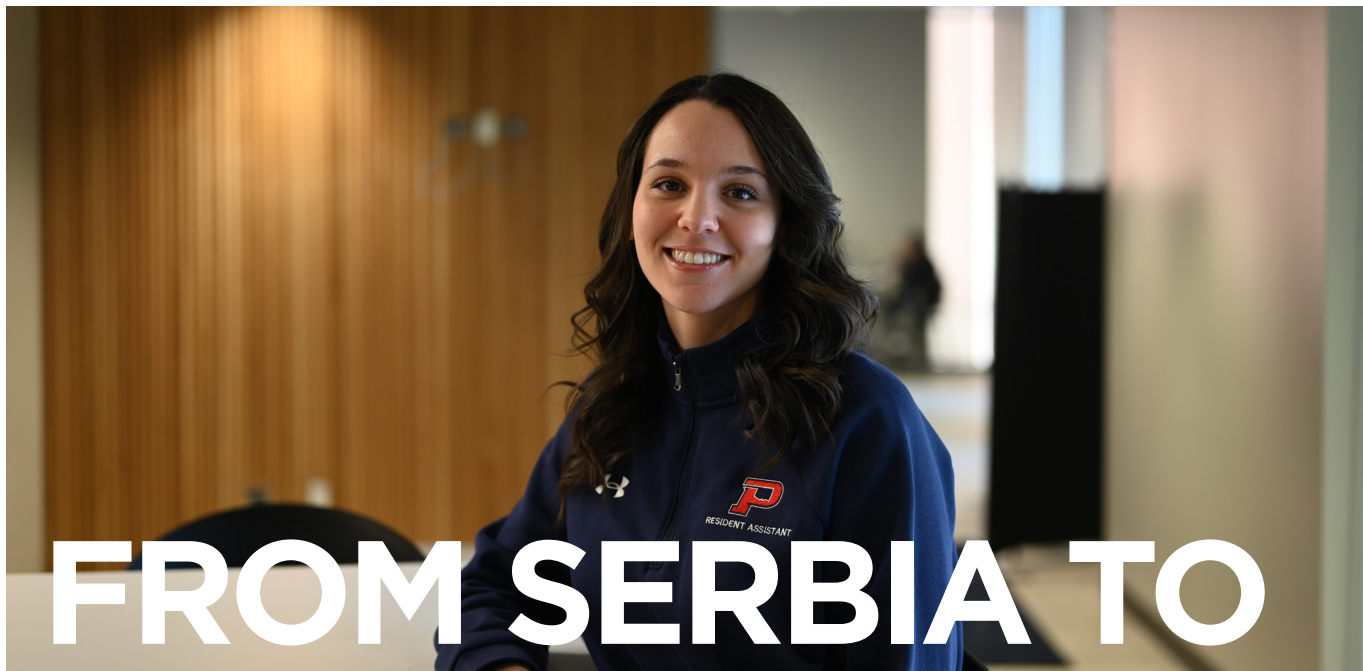
Josh Frost, an alumnus of OPSU has achieved a milestone in the rodeo world by clinching the 2024 World Champion Bull Rider title at the Wrangler National Finals Rodeo (NFR). Winning a PRCA world championship is the most coveted title in rodeo, and Frost's achievement embodies the "winning tradition" of the OPSU rodeo team. "This recognition is something we always strive for," said Frost. "Panhandle State Rodeo played a significant part in my rodeo career. Getting to rodeo for Craig Latham and Robert Etbauer helped me improve my skills and mental outlook and taught me what it takes to win. Robert has been a great mentor and friend during my career."

Born and raised in Randlett, Utah, Frost grew up with a deep passion for rodeo. Following his older brother, Joe Frost, he attended OPSU, a university renowned for its strong rodeo program, to challenge himself and pursue his dream of earning a gold buckle. Frost's decision proved fruitful as he thrived under the mentorship of Craig Latham and Robert Etbauer. While at OPSU, Frost's contributions to the university's rodeo legacy were extraordinary. He placed third in the nation in bull riding in 2015, helping the men's team secure the reserve national championship. The following year, he repeated his third-place finish individually and contributed to the men's team, placing third overall in the nation. In 2017, he finished seventh in bull riding, and the men's team won the national championship.

Frost's professional career has been exceptional, marked by early successes and challenges. He qualified for his first NFR in 2019 but faced adversity, bucking off all ten bulls and finishing 15th in the world standings. That same year, he won his first Linderman Award, a prestigious honor given to cowboys excelling in roughstock and timed events. Although injuries prevented him from qualifying in 2020, Frost returned stronger, winning his second Linderman Award in 2021 and claiming his first NFR average title. He finished as the reserve world champion that year, a title he repeated in 2022 and 2023, winning his third and fourth consecutive Linderman Awards.

In 2024, Frost's relentless determination culminated in his World Championship title and an NFR average championship. His season was filled with victories at notable rodeos, including the Cowtown Rodeo in New Jersey, the Cody Stampede Xtreme Bulls in Wyoming, and the West of the Pecos Rodeo in Texas. He also claimed wins at the George Paul Memorial Xtreme Bull Riding in Texas, the Wilderness Circuit Finals Rodeo in Utah, and the Colorado Stampede. His achievements extended beyond bull riding, with all-around wins at the Mackey Rodeo in Idaho, the San Juan Stampede in Utah, and the Ute Mountain Round-Up in Colorado.

Frost's career earnings have surpassed \$1.5 million, with highlights including four NFR qualifications and a Wrangler NFR Average Title in 2021. His journey has been defined by resilience, hard work, and a commitment to ride. Reflecting on his time at OPSU, Frost credits the university for setting him on the right path and fostering the skills that propelled him to the pinnacle of his sport. His story inspires the next generation of rodeo athletes and is a testament to the enduring legacy of Oklahoma Panhandle State University. **P**



FROM SERBIA TO THE PANHANDLE

A JOURNEY OF GROWTH AND COMMUNITY

Jana Radovanovic, a senior business administration major and student-athlete from Serbia, has made a lasting impact at Oklahoma Panhandle State University. As a member of the women's basketball team, a head Resident Assistant (RA), and a housing office employee, Jana is the epitome of leadership and dedication. Her story highlights the rich diversity, support, and opportunities that define the OPSU experience.

When asked why she chose OPSU, Jana said, "Basketball brought me here, but the people and the sense of community made it feel like home. The diversity on campus has allowed me to connect with students from all over the world, making this a truly unique and enriching experience." Jana's journey from Serbia to the Panhandle demonstrates the global connections fostered at OPSU.

Jana's daily routine is nothing short of impressive. Balancing early morning classes, basketball practices, RA responsibilities, and housing office shifts requires exceptional time management. "Being busy keeps me focused and motivated," she said. "I've learned how to handle challenges, whether it's supporting a resident in need, leading on the court, or excelling in my academics."

One of her most memorable moments as an RA involved comforting a resident going through a difficult time. "We sat down, talked it out, and worked together to find a solution. Seeing them feel better and more confident afterward was incredibly rewarding," Jana shared. Her ability to connect with and support others has made her a cornerstone of the OPSU residential community.

As an international student, Jana knows the challenges of being far from family, especially during holidays. She credits her support system at OPSU, particularly her mentor and boss, Keyonna Morrow, who leads the housing office, for helping her feel at home. "Keyonna has been like a second mom to me, guiding me through challenges and encouraging me to grow," Jana said.

Keyonna praised Jana's leadership, saying, "Jana is an extraordinary leader who has made a significant impact on her residents and the housing office team. Her work ethic, compassion, and dedication set a standard of excellence for all our RAs."

As Jana prepares for graduation in May, she plans to pursue the Optional Practice Training (OPT) program for international students, which will allow her to gain real-world experience in the U.S. "My goal is to enter the marketing field and grow professionally while maintaining the meaningful relationships I've built here at OPSU," she said.

When asked to describe her OPSU experience in three words, Jana chose "growth, community, and opportunity." She added, "This university has pushed me to grow in ways I never imagined. The community has been incredibly welcoming and supportive, and the opportunities I've had will stay with me for a lifetime."

Jana's advice to incoming students, especially international ones, is simple, "Get involved and don't be afraid to reach out. The support you'll find here is unmatched."

Jana's story reflects the broader OPSU commitment to student success. Laura Hutchinson, Dean of Student Affairs, highlighted this commitment. "Keyonna Morrow has built an exceptional team of student leaders, like Jana, who truly embody the mission of OPSU. Our focus on creating a supportive environment ensures every student has the opportunity to thrive academically, socially, and personally," stated Dean Hutchinson.

If Jana's story inspires you, consider joining the OPSU Resident Assistant team. Open positions for the Fall 2025 semester are available, offering students the chance to make a difference on campus while building leadership skills and meaningful connections. Students eager to follow in Jana's footsteps are encouraged to email panhandlehousing@opsu.edu for more information. **P**



OPSU LIVESTOCK

SHOW TEAM EARNS TOP HONORS AT 2025 NATIONAL WESTERN STOCK SHOW

The Oklahoma Panhandle State University Livestock Show Team showcased their exceptional skills and dedication at the 2025 National Western Stock Show in Denver, Colorado, held January 9–12. Widely regarded as the “Super Bowl” of livestock shows, this prestigious event draws competitors from across the country, making OPSU’s remarkable achievements a testament to their hard work and expertise.

Students representing OPSU included Jorja Juenemann, Kreslyn Smith, Marci Kopf, Bronk Embry, Alya Arana, Ashlyn Eisenman, Adriynne Sparkman, Sydney Carey, Ben Woodward, and Rylee Sprague. The team competed with skill and determination, achieving numerous championships. The honors OPSU achieved were Supreme Overall Champion Ram and Champion Hampshire Ram with “Firestone”, Champion Hampshire Ewe, Reserve Champion Hampshire Ewe, Champion Hampshire Lamb Flock, Champion Hampshire Pair, Champion Pair of Hampshire Ewes, Champion All Other Meat Breeds Ram with “Raise the Bar”, Champion All Other Meat Breeds Lamb Flock, Champion All Other Meat Breeds Pair, Champion All Other Meat Breeds Pair of Ewes

Coach Cassidy Tolle praised the team for their outstanding performance. She said, “This level of success at such a competitive event speaks volumes about the dedication of our students. Their hard work, preparation, and teamwork truly paid off, and I couldn’t be prouder of what they accomplished on a national stage.”

Dean of Agriculture, Science, and Nursing, Tracy Kincannon, stated, “The results at the National Western Stock Show reaffirm the excellence of our livestock program at OPSU. These students represented our university with pride and showcased the strength of our agriculture programs and our commitment to hands-on learning and leadership development.”

The National Western Stock Show is renowned for its rigorous competition and is a benchmark of excellence in the livestock industry. OPSU’s success at the event highlights the university’s commitment to fostering a culture of achievement and preparing students for leadership roles in agriculture. Congratulations to the team for their incredible accomplishments. **P**

OPSU AGGIES

SHINE WITH ALL-CONFERENCE ACHIEVEMENTS FOR FALL SEASON



PANHANDLE STATE UNIVERSITY

All-Conference Achievements

Draylon Roberson

Aaron Acosta-Lewis

Brandon Stephens

William Rodriguez

Taylore Alsaid

As the fall season concluded, Oklahoma Panhandle State University proudly celebrated the exceptional achievements of its student-athletes who earned All-Conference honors. Representing football and volleyball, these athletes showcased outstanding talent, dedication, and perseverance throughout the season.

Draylon Roberson, who was named to the All-Conference First Team for Special Teams, leads the OPSU Aggies football team in accolades. Roberson's exceptional contributions on the field also earned him the prestigious title of Special Teams Player of the Year, highlighting his pivotal role in the team's success. Aaron Acosta-Lewis is joining Roberson on the All-Conference First Team, who delivered a dominant performance throughout the season as a defensive powerhouse. His relentless energy and ability to disrupt opposing offenses earned him well-deserved recognition. Brandon Stephens and William Rodriguez were honored with All-Conference

Honorable Mentions for their stellar performances. Stephens consistently demonstrated his skill and resilience, while Rodriguez's versatility and leadership significantly impacted the Aggies' season.

The Aggies volleyball team celebrated individual success, as Taylore Alsaid earned an All-Conference Honorable Mention for her standout contributions. Alsaid's ability to excel under pressure and lead her team on the court did not go unnoticed, solidifying her status as one of the conference's top players.

These All-Conference honors reflect the hard work, determination, and sportsmanship of Oklahoma Panhandle State University's student-athletes. As the Aggies look forward to future seasons, the accomplishments of Roberson, Acosta-Lewis, Stephens, Rodriguez, and Alsaid set a standard of excellence for all OPSU athletes. Congratulations to these outstanding individuals on their well-earned recognition. **P**

EQUESTRIAN TEAM

SECURES RESERVE HIGH POINT TEAM TITLE AT WTAMU SHOW



The OPSU Equestrian Team made an impressive showing at the last show of the fall season at West Texas A&M University, traveling with a team of 12 riders who competed in 30 classes. Despite challenges with practice and weather conditions the team's resilience and determination paid off as they brought home 25 class placings, including the coveted Reserve High Point Team title. Strong Individual Performances Lead to team success.

Among the standout performances was Eva Johnson, who claimed first place in the Open Reining class with an impressive score of 71.

Paige Pearson, competing in her third ever Rookie Horsemanship class, earned a second-place finish with a pattern score of 72, showcasing her progress after moving up from the Beginner Horsemanship division.

Katelynn Skinner secured second place in the Level 1 Horsemanship class, impressing the judges with a pattern score of 76. Additionally, Kayla Johnson contributed another second-place finish in Level 1 Horsemanship with a pattern score of 72.5.

Other key contributors to the team's success included Jolina Demann and Abigail Young, who both competed in Beginner Horsemanship; Ashlyn Eisenman and Nahomy Corral-Olivas, who competed in Rookie Horsemanship; Kayla Rhoads, who competed in Level 2 Horsemanship and Ranch Riding; and Mitchell Ullom, who competed in Level 2 Horsemanship and Reining.

Coach Kacey Ward expressed immense pride in the team's performance, despite the setbacks from the weather. "The team had an incredible show this weekend, and I couldn't be more proud of their hard work and dedication, it paid off," said Ward. "A huge thank you goes out to Susan Tullock for all of her hard work and help with the team. We couldn't be this successful without all of her support and added knowledge."

The OPSU Equestrian Team's outstanding results at WTAMU reflect the dedication and perseverance of its riders, coaches, and supporters. Their performance is a testament to their commitment to excellence. With the Reserve High Point Team title in hand, the team looks forward to continued success in upcoming competitions next spring. **P**



TOP HAND AUCTION



SATURDAY
FEBRUARY

7

AT PICKLE CREEK
DOORS OPEN AT 5:30PM

featuring

SILENT & LIVE
AUCTION

DINNER &
DANCE

FREE ADMISSION
MEAL PROVIDED BY HUNNY'S

PROCEEDS GO TO SUPPORT OPSU'S RODEO TEAM