



Loyalty **THROUGH TIME:**

Commitments of Past and Present Create
the Bright Future for Methodist University

*(The first of a three-part series showcasing
MU Loyalty through Time, Talent, and Treasure)*

INSIDE ➤ Medical School Building (sneak peek) • MU Profiles • Class Notes & More!



CAPE FEAR VALLEY HEALTH
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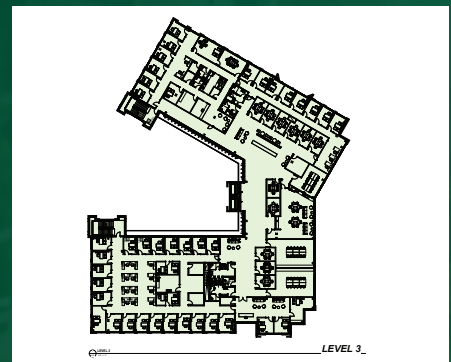
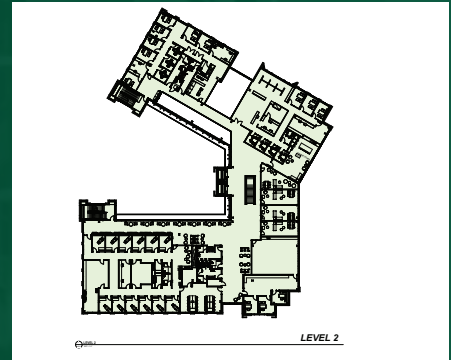
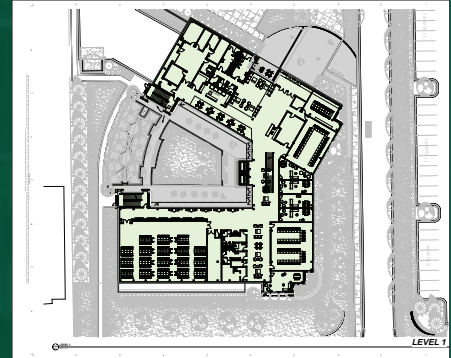
*To be located on the Cape Fear Valley
Medical Center Campus in Fayetteville, N.C.*

With construction expected to start this year (potentially as early as this summer), blueprints and renderings such as the interior courtyard of the facility (shown at right) are being finalized for the new **Methodist University Cape Fear Valley Health School of Medicine**.

This \$60-plus-million, state-of-the-art facility will be located on the campus of the Cape Fear Valley Health Medical Center in Fayetteville and by 2030 is expected to support more than 800 talented faculty, clinicians, administrators, technicians, and nearly 500 students annually.

The school aims to begin classes in 2026 pending approval by the Liaison Committee on Medical Education and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges. Together, Methodist University and Cape Fear Valley Health are taking a monumental stride to advance healthcare education and foster local talent for addressing the region's healthcare needs.

Be sure to follow the strategic growth of the school of medicine in subsequent issues of MU Today, and at methodist.edu/medicine.





A Message from Our President



Stanley T. Wearden, Ph.D.
President of Methodist University

Dear Methodist University Alumni, Students and Friends,

Loyalty can be expressed and experienced in many fashions. We can be loyal through our love, our prayers, our behaviors, our giving, our care, and our thoughts and actions in a thousand other ways. I'm unconditionally loyal to family and friends. Like many of you, I'm loyal to sports teams, especially the Methodist University Monarchs, the North Carolina Tar Heels, and all Cleveland professional sports teams. (I lived near Cleveland for 30 years.) I'm also abundantly loyal to, and thankful for the students, faculty, staff, alumni, Trustees, and friends of Methodist University, the place I call home.

In this Spring 2024 issue of "MU Today," and through the remainder of the three-part series in subsequent issues of our alumni magazine, we have the opportunity to learn about and celebrate MU Loyalty as it has been expressed through the time, talent, and treasure offered to this wonderful University by many supporters, from before the then Methodist College opened its doors in 1960 to today.

These stories will show examples of loyal members of our community – be they students, faculty, staff, alumni, or friends of MU – who represent so many who have built the foundations upon which we will continue to adapt, grow, and flourish.

I'm so thankful to those who remain loyal to MU through the amazing successes we're achieving each day. The countless hours and efforts that so many are putting forth in the classrooms and offices, on the athletic fields and courts, in the residence halls and cafeteria, in the library and campus grounds, and in our communities and homes is remarkable and paying off.

You can read about many of them, from individual to team to department accomplishments, in this issue alone. From our social media and via the news/features section of our website, you also can keep up daily with talented Monarchs learning, achieving, and thriving in countless ways.

It's important to remember, however, that great accomplishment is never easy. With fewer students attending colleges across the nation, just this fall it was imperative to make some strategic, yet difficult, business decisions at MU.

While restructuring is typically seen as a positive for a business – being forward-thinking and flexible

as necessary – the realities also can be difficult for everyone involved.

For us, the goal remains to be efficient and expand high-demand professional programs (Health Sciences, Business, Engineering, Psychology), while remaining true to our liberal arts tradition and mission through robust core curriculum and elective offerings. To do that, it was necessary to restructure some departments and programs that have had very low enrollment for many years (Music, Fine Art, Special Education).

Classes in Music and Fine Arts (as examples), and extra curriculums such as chorale and band, are continuing, both in the core curriculum and as electives, but in a few areas across campus we can no longer support the full staff and course loads required for a decreasing handful of students in low-demand major programs. It is crucial for us to be responsive to student demand and to invest our resources, which come from the hard-earned tuition dollars of our students and their families, in the program areas that are of interest to 21st century students.

Through the great joys of success we are seeing, as well as the ever-changing challenges we face to ensure successes continue in the future, we will continue to be grateful to the extremely loyal friends and colleagues who help make this all possible.

In this beautiful spring season, I hope you enjoy this issue of MU Today and take time to consider the great influence of your own loyalty to this premier private university in Fayetteville, N.C.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stanley T. Wearden".

Stanley T. Wearden, Ph.D.
President

We will continue to be grateful to the extremely loyal friends and colleagues who help make this all possible at MU."



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COVER STORY

In this first of a three-part series, MU Today offers a few examples of those (such as Terry Sanford, above center) who have shown their valuable MU Loyalty through “time.” In subsequent issues, we’ll focus on Loyalty through “talent” and “treasure.”

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MU *today*

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MONARCH

Minutes

MU News, Notes, and More

Community Takes a Swing (or 100) at Premier Facilities

Several dozen members of the greater Fayetteville community came together once again to play on Methodist University's distinguished on-campus tennis courts and golf course as MU hosted its annual Founders Council Golf and Tennis Pro-Am Tournaments. Lead sponsors this fall were Brown Advisory for golf and V Savvy Digital Marketing for tennis. MU's Founders Council aids, fosters and promotes the growth, progress and general welfare of Cumberland County and North Carolina while providing resources and financial support to the University. To participate or sponsor the 2024 events, contact the Advancement Office at 910.630.7200 or giving@methodist.edu.



Gronski Expands Leadership Role as MU Continues to Prepare Healthcare Professionals

The demand for healthcare professionals continues to grow and data shows Methodist University is at the center of providing top-tier education in the health sciences.

“U.S. News & World Report” recently published a list of the best healthcare jobs in the country in 2024 and Methodist University offers academic programs for five of the top-10 jobs listed by the publication – with another five high-ranking jobs that would become possible through the Methodist University Cape Fear Valley Health School of Medicine.

“Methodist University’s commitment to excellence in education, combined with its emphasis on values and community, make it the perfect institution for preparing individuals for a career in the healthcare sector,” said Dr. Meredith Gronski, recently announced as the new dean of MU’s College of Health Sciences & Human Services, and director and associate professor of Occupational Therapy. MU currently offers an academic program for the following healthcare jobs (and their ranking) named in the report:

1. Nurse Practitioner – Doctor of Nursing Practice (online)
2. Physician Assistant – Master of Physician Assistant Studies (on campus)
4. Occupational Therapist – Doctor of Occupational Therapy (on campus)
7. Physical Therapist – Doctor of Physical Therapy (on campus)
10. Registered Nurse – Bachelor of Science in Nursing (on campus) and RN-to-BSN (online)

Learn more about MU Health Sciences at methodist.edu/health-sciences



Dr. Meredith Gronski (left) and MU Occupational Therapy students learning their craft (above).



MU Community Attends and Sponsors MLK Prayer Brunch

More than a dozen students, faculty, and staff from the Methodist University community attended the 31st annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Prayer Brunch at Crown Expo Center in mid-January. “It is all truly put into perspective when being able to look around campus and see so much diversity, yet everyone can be treated equally and presented with the same opportunities,” said senior Aniyah Tate (top left).

Taking Care of Business in International Competition

Seniors Steven Downs (left) and Cole Hart recently competed in MikesBikes World Champs, an international collegiate business competition hosted by SmartSims Inc. of New Zealand that challenges students to run a simulated bicycle manufacturing company within a simulated industry. After a series of rounds, Downs and Hart placed fourth overall in the worldwide online competition. “It was an incredible learning experience that built off of what we were learning in the classroom at MU. We put our knowledge into practice,” said Downs, a Business Administration and Marketing major. The competition tasked students with everyday business decisions of a bicycle company, deciding key factors such as employee salaries, schedule of production, costs, marketing, distribution, and more.



GIFTS FROM THE HEART

MU raised nearly \$30,000 from donors and we received almost \$9,000 in matching funds from the Cumberland Community Foundation during #GivingTuesday – a national day of giving on Tuesday, November 28.



High Phi-ve as MU Honor Society is Recognized as Gold Standard

Methodist University is one of 74 universities – and the only one from North Carolina – to earn recognition for its well-regarded honor society. The Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi recently named MU a recipient of the 2023-24 Circle of Excellence chapter awards for promoting excellence on campus while engaging a community of scholars. MU was one of only 24 universities to be considered a “gold” chapter.

Monarchs Laser-Focused on Exhibit & Workshop

Methodist University hosted an art exhibit from Feb. 16-March 15, featuring master printmaker Brandon Sanderson. The show was featured in the Union-Zukowski Gallery and Sanderson also offered a laser-etching workshop to the community that several students were able to attend. Funding for this program was provided by The William Frederick Bethune Fund for the Arts of Cumberland Community Foundation, Inc.



MONARCH *Minutes* (cont.)



(L-R) First Citizens Bank Sr. VP (Commercial Banking) Tim Richardson, MU President Stanley T. Wearden, First Citizens Sr. VP (Charitable & Philanthropic Services) Hank Dunbar, and MU VP for Institutional Advancement R. Gregory Swanson.

A Foundation for Success

Methodist University’s renowned Nursing program received a \$25,000 donation from the Robert P. Holding Foundation. In December, a check presentation was held at MU’s Horner Administration Building – featuring officials from First Citizens Bank and MU. “The Robert P. Holding Foundation has a strong relationship with Methodist University and its Nursing program,” said Tim Richardson, senior vice president and manager of commercial banking at First Citizens Bank. “We believe this gift will provide a tremendous amount of benefit to our local community.”

Did You Know?

James Marshall – also known as Dalek – was commissioned to create a one-of-a-kind mural in the Trustees Building courtyard. It’s now a perfect spot for students to enjoy fellowship, study, and relax.



A Bridge Too Par: A new bridge in front of the Richard L. Player Center and 18-hole Downback Golf Course on the MU campus was lifted, lowered (and secured) in place while students were on break in January.

U.S. Mint to Honor Park Milbern '09

Stacey Park Milbern (1987-2020), who received her Bachelors of Arts degree from Methodist University in 2009, was a nationally renowned disability rights activist and is being honored in the 2025 American Women Quarters (AWQ) Program. She is one of only 20 remarkable American Women Honorees of the U.S. Mint’s four-year series. Other AWQ Honorees include Eleanor Roosevelt, Sally Ride, and Maya Angelou. The Stacey Park Milbern Quarter is scheduled to be issued in late 2025.



Above: Stacey Park Milbern '09 and some of the candidate designs for the quarter in her honor.



Career Fair Offers Students Direction for Connection

As MU students prepare to become future leaders in business, health, art, humanities, sciences, and more, many took the opportunity to network with employers in the greater Fayetteville area. In February, “Spring Connections Day” (embedded in MU’s CIRCUIT program) – brought hundreds of students and more than 40 businesses together for an on-campus career fair and networking event at Nimocks Fitness Center. NC Works and the Mid-Carolina Regional Council partnered with MU in organizing the event. “Though I don’t have a lot on my resume at the moment, this is a great opportunity for me to practice my interview skills and get to know people,” Azelia Ellis, a junior majoring in Management, said at the event.

Sweet Success for MU Alumna

Isis Diaz '22 has always dreamed of owning a dessert business and her experiences at Methodist University have her on path to make her dreams come true. As a student worker, Diaz crafted sweets in the Green & Gold Dining Hall and she was hired as baker shortly after graduation, making a variety of delectable desserts for students, faculty, and staff each day. Diaz says her education in the MU Management Program taught her several vital skills that every baker should utilize including planning, ordering supplies, and managing a budget. "I love seeing everyone's faces when they're eating my desserts," Diaz said.



Sounds of Spring

The North Carolina Symphony lived up to its prestigious name with an inspiring performance at Methodist University in February. Led by conductor Carlos Miguel Prieto, the collection of talented musicians delivered an all-strings performance to a large crowd at the Huff Concert Hall. MU also hosted a spring semester Friends of Music event with bassist/music director Carroll Dashiell Jr., and the Fayetteville Symphonic Band & MU Concert Band scheduled events for early March and April. Visit [Flickr.com/KingMonarch](https://www.flickr.com/photos/KingMonarch/) for event imagery.



MU President Featured as Visionary Leader

Higher Education Digest published a 13-page article in the fall celebrating Methodist University President Stanley T. Wearden as a "Most Visionary Education Leader" for 2023. Dr. Wearden's journey – spanning almost 40 years in higher education – transitioned from professorship to leadership roles (including director, dean, senior vice president, provost, and now president). The article states: "(Wearden's) story is not just about acquiring degrees; it's a narrative of how diverse disciplines have molded him into a visionary leader who excels at nurturing talent and guiding others toward success."



Online Time to Shine

MU Online continues to grow with some new programs launching in 2023-24. Online students now have options for a bachelor's degree-completion program in Advanced Paramedicine; a bachelor's in Exercise & Sport Science; master's degrees in Clinical Mental Health Counseling, Criminal Justice, and Educational Leadership concentrating in Instructional Technology; and a Doctor of Nursing Practice focused on Executive Leadership.

MU's Humble Healthcare Heroes

Multiple members of the Methodist University community were recognized for making an impact on the healthcare industry in the Fayetteville area during the Greater Fayetteville Business Journal's first "Health Care Heroes Awards." Two of the nine awards were presented to MU community members:

Innovation in Health Care

Dr. Hershey Bell (Dean, MU College of Medicine)

Volunteer

Dr. Rakesh Gupta (Chair, Board of Trustees)

"I'm truly honored and humbled," said Gupta, a retired gastroenterologist who volunteers at various local organizations.

The ceremony also recognized other members of the MU community through award nominations:

Nurse: Dr. Shannon Matthews (Director of Nursing)

Volunteer: W. Dickson Shaefer (Board of Trustees)

Unsung Hero: Franklin Clark III (Longtime MU Supporter)

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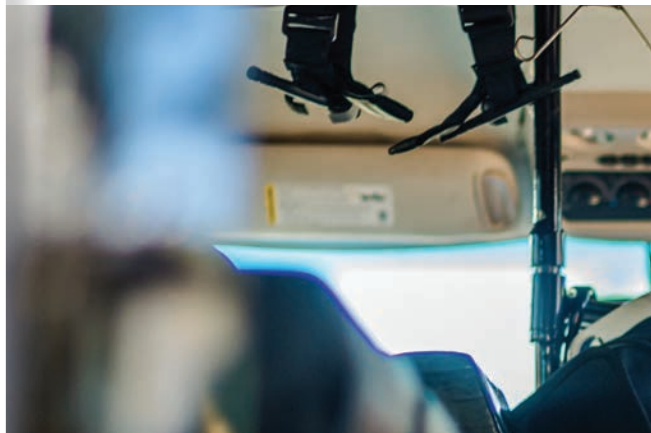
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Staff at Methodist University don't make me feel like an online student, they make me feel like a Monarch."

– Ryan Lucas



Revolutionary Education: Online Advanced Paramedicine Program Preparing Next Generation of Heroes

by Christian Naranjo

As U.S. Army critical care flight paramedic Ryan Lucas sits in his emergency vehicle on a drop zone in Fort Liberty, he is ready to address any number of emergencies that can arise as paratroopers fly through the sky.

But as opportunities allow on site, he is also able to crack open his laptop and study how to become an even more effective paramedic.

"I'm able to study anywhere," Lucas said. "Even when there's no internet connection, if I download course slides ahead of time, I can study anytime I have some extra time on my hands."

Lucas is one example of paramedics across the nation taking part in Methodist University's new and unique online bachelor's degree program in Advanced Paramedicine.

"To my understanding, this is the only degree program of its kind in the country," said Dr. Ginny Kaplan, chair and assistant professor of Health Care Administration at MU, who has been involved in emergency medical services for 24 years as both a credentialed paramedic and paramedic instructor.

Typically, the road to becoming a paramedic starts with completing continuing education (non-credit), an associate degree, or a bachelor's degree in paramedicine. Since many paramedics

take the continuing education or associate degree route, they are left with taking "bridge" programs (which often require an associate degree or prior college classes) if they are interested in obtaining a bachelor's degree – forcing paramedics to retake many of the initial paramedic concepts they have already learned.

However, Methodist University's Advanced Paramedicine program allows paramedics to use their time and money more wisely by expanding on their education.

"This program is designed to start where their school left off and move forward medically," Kaplan said. "For example, paramedics are taught about the physical aspects of aging, but not about the psychosocial aspects of aging and how that changes how a person might look at the world. We'll dive deeper into both here at MU."

MU's Advanced Paramedicine program is geared towards current paramedics. While the program does not require an associate degree, it does require proof of an active paramedic credential or military designation in a paramedic role – allowing students to qualify for a minimum of 36 (maximum of 93) hours of transfer credit and complete their bachelor's degree in just two years.



The new program welcomed its first group of 12 students in January, already featuring students from all over the map (New York, California, Georgia, and of course, North Carolina, as examples). The demand for this type of program is so high that 13 additional students (and counting) have registered for the upcoming semester already.

“Critical care paramedicine is an exploding field,” Kaplan added. “It’s primarily due to the primary care shortage. Paramedics are getting into a lot of different areas in healthcare that we really haven’t had before. The more educated you can be, the more prepared you’ll be for all of those areas.”

The program provides paramedics with an opportunity to pursue graduate medical education, like MU’s Physician Assistant Studies program and the planned Methodist University Cape Fear Valley Health School of Medicine.

It also allows paramedics to enter a new phase of their life. Lucas, a husband and father of three children, plans on retiring from the U.S. Army when he graduates from MU’s Advanced Paramedicine program at the end of 2025. After graduation, he plans on volunteering with rural organizations to provide routine medical care to the elderly.

“This Advanced Paramedicine program will teach me how to best utilize my skills to help my community and have an impact,” Lucas said.

Only a few months into the Advanced Paramedicine program, Lucas raves of the program’s online platform and the flexibility it allows him with his busy work and life schedule. In fact, he is so passionate about the program that he has already tried recruiting fellow paramedics to the program.

“I wish I could have done this earlier, but this is the first time there’s been a program like this,” he said. “I’m encouraging everyone in my flight paramedic community to jump on board. Even if you think you’re at the top of your game, you’re going to learn a lot in this program.”

Lucas looks forward to making his family proud with an accomplishment that is made possible by Methodist University’s revolutionary Advanced Paramedicine program.

“The Methodist University staff has been there every step of the way for me... and the professors are so responsive, even when it’s 10 or 11 at night,” Lucas said. “I’m grateful for everything that Methodist University has provided to me through this program.” ■

MU ATHLETICS *WHERE MONARCHS RULE*

MEN'S SOCCER SCORES LEAGUE TITLE



On the final game of the 2023 regular season in October, the Methodist University men's soccer team wanted to leave no doubt for the fans at Duggins Soccer Stadium that they were the rightful owners of the USA South Athletic Conference championship. One goal at the 12-minute mark. Another at 29. One at 38, one at 50, 60, and another at the 71st. A 6-1 victory and some hardware to add to the men's soccer trophy case.

That regular-season championship trophy is just the latest representation of the long-standing success of the program which has had conference, regional, and/or national tournament appearances as far back as the early 1990s (including a national runner-up finish in 1995).

Finishing the season with a 10-4-2 record (6-1-0 in the USA South), it was no surprise that when the all-conference team was announced this past fall that it was littered with Monarchs. In fact, Methodist University had a league-high seven awards, including **Justin Terranova '97** being named Coach of the Year (which is voted on by his counterparts), and freshman **Trey Gohr** (note graphic to the right) honored as Goalkeeper of the Year.

Making the all-conference first team with Gohr were junior midfielder **Casey Atwell** and junior defender **Miller Davis**.

Atwell recorded a career-best five goals (all against conference rivals) while also adding one assist. On defense, Davis played in all 16 matches, making 14 starts on a backline that conceded no more than one goal to any conference opponent during the regular season.

Three MU players named to the all-conference second team were sophomore midfielder **Matthew Manzano**, senior forward **Christopher Shoffler** and senior forward **Hudson Zeisman**. Representing the Monarchs on the league's all-sportsmanship team was sophomore midfielder **Harrison Broome**.



SHUTOUTS & SHOUTOUTS



While it takes a group of talented defenders for any goalkeeper to succeed, freshman **Trey Gohr** shined in goal for MU this season. The conference Goalkeeper of the Year allowed just four goals during the regular season while recording five solo shutouts and contributing to two more. He accumulated a record of 9-1-2 during his time in goal and recorded a league-best goals-allowed average of 0.37 during the regular season.



To stay up with the latest features, news, schedules and more from the MU Monarchs, visit our website at mumonarchs.com. Check in often to catch our latest live-streamed events. You can also catch us on our social media. [Twitter](#) [Facebook](#) [Instagram](#) [@mumonarchs](#)



HITTING THE HIGHLIGHTS



WOMEN'S BASKETBALL BACK TO CHAMPIONSHIP FORM

Ask any member of the 2023-24 Methodist University women's basketball team if they were satisfied with a USA South Conference regular-season championship, and you'll undoubtedly hear "no." And yet, this was a team that exceeded expectations in so many ways as it brought a long-awaited title to MU showing the dedication and talent necessary to earn their championship.

Heading into the season, USA South coaches picked the Monarchs to finish fourth in the league. It was a roster that had three times as many freshmen as seniors, a team that finished 12-13 the year prior, and it was a team that hadn't won a conference regular-season championship since the 2000-01 season.

But this was also a team that wouldn't accept "can't" or "won't." The end result was a team that "could" and "did."

Led by Head Coach **Cheryl McNair** – who stepped into the head coaching position in 2017 after serving 20 years as an assistant coach with the Monarchs – MU started its conference season with a loss to Southern Virginia, and then reeled off an astonishing 17-straight league victories and a share of the conference championship. With an overall record of 21-6 and a 10-1 record at home, Methodist University women's basketball fans were treated to a remarkable season.

For her efforts, McNair was voted Coach of the Year by her conference counterparts. She became the first MU women's basketball coach to be so honored since now Deputy Director of Athletics **DeeDee Jarman** received the title in the 1999-2000 season.

On the court, record-breaking senior **Aniyah Tate** (see right) was chosen to the all-conference first team, and garnering second-team status was senior **Jessica Drake**, who led the league with 58 three-pointers. Drake's shooting percentage from deep (37.7%) during the regular season ranked second in the USA South, and her all-around play resulted in 9.2 points per game, 82 rebounds, 60 assists and 35 steals in 25 regular-season games.



TATE THE GREAT

On Feb. 7, 2024, senior **Aniyah Tate** became just the seventh member of the MU women's basketball program to score 1,000 points in a career. The first-team all-conference forward also led MU to a magical season, breaking the Monarchs single-season record for field goals (184), finishing second in the league in scoring (17.8 per game, while shooting 54%), leading the team in rebounding (7.3 per game), and she added 46 steals, 30 assists and eight blocked shots.

MU ATHLETICS *WHERE MONARCHS RULE*



PLAY4KAY WEEK HAS MU PRETTY IN PINK

While MU Athletics wasn't the only department on campus heavily involved in the planning, execution, and/or fundraising for "Pink Week" at Methodist University (Feb. 12-17), the lights adorning the March F. Riddle Center and league-title-clinching women's basketball game were certainly the culminating events.

The Saturday morning 5K Walk/Run on campus – organized by the MU Physician Assistant Program – was a great success, as were the numerous Campus Engagement and other events (from a chilli cookoff to a dodgeball tournament).

This was MU's 18th annual Play4Kay event, and the amount raised – approximately \$20,000 for the Kay Yow Cancer Fund and the Cape Fear Valley Health Foundation's Friends of the Cancer Center – was a new record for the school.



Victories On and Off the Field

Eyes on the Sidelines

Moving into some of MU's head-coaching positions (since the Summer Issue of MU Today) and leading our Monarch student-athletes to successes in competition, in the classroom, and throughout our community, are **Brian Slater** (track and field, and assistant for cross country), **Kirsten McKay** (women's lacrosse), **Alicia Barto** (women's tennis), **Scott Handback** (interim for men's tennis), and **Angela Culver** (interim for cheerleading).

News and Notes

MU senior **Cameron Cappuzzo** has been named to the 2024 Ben Hogan Award Watch List, which recognizes the top men's DI, DII, DIII, NAIA or NJCAA golfer based on all events played the previous 12 months. The list includes just 40 golfers nationwide and Cappuzzo is the only student-athlete representing DIII.

The 2023-24 Methodist University cross country and track & field teams joined "Unity Pledge," a social justice initiative introduced by the NCAA in 2020. The campaign serves as a platform for student-athletes to articulate the importance of diversity, inclusion, and social justice.

The MU's women's soccer team spent three hours on three weekends in a row this winter being mentors and friends with some uniquely talented athletes. The Monarchs volunteered at "Buddy Ball," a Cumberland County Parks and Recreation sports league for children and adults with special needs.



Thank You, Brianne!

In the summer of 2022, **Brianne Coleman** was hired as Assistant to the Deputy Director of Athletics at MU. The two-year role was fully funded through the NCAA D-III Ethnic Minorities and Women's Internship Grant. Coleman has served the department and our students-athletes most admirably.



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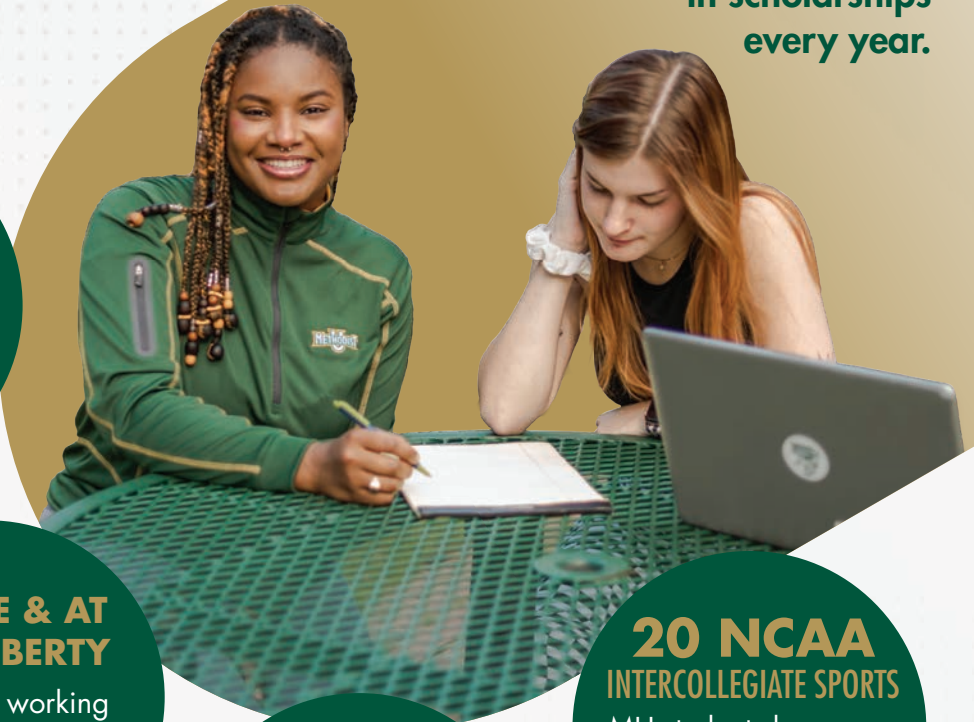
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Building DREAMS:

MU Transfer Scholarship Paves Way for First-Generation Engineering Student

by Christian Naranjo

Methodist University student Jonathan Gabino '27 is used to building from the ground up – both in life and in the world of engineering.

The St. Pauls, North Carolina, native grew up with a passion for academics and animals, but another subject quickly piqued his interest.

“From an early age, I knew academics were my forte,” said Gabino. “Originally, I wanted to become a vet tech, but when I started participating in engineering competitions, I knew that was what I was meant to do.”

Gabino attended an early college high school that allowed him to earn both a high school diploma and an associate degree from Robeson Community College (in Lumberton, N.C.) in five years. His stint at the college nurtured a joy for engineering – going on to earn a SkillsUSA state championship in mechatronics in 2022, fourth in the national competition that same year, among other awards.

“I love applying my knowledge,” he said. “I’m still learning how to improve my knowledge of engineering theories. But, if you give me a wrench, I’ll fix it.”

Gabino began exploring the possibility of a bachelor’s degree and one of his professors told him about a unique opportunity after meeting with Methodist University’s Assistant Provost of Transfer Initiatives, Keri Walters.

“I needed to find a school with a great engineering program that could also offer solid financial aid options,” he said. “After speaking to Keri Walters, I realized that Methodist University knocked it out of the park for me.”

Gabino was eligible to participate in MU’s “A to B” transfer scholarship that covers full tuition with the Federal Pell Grant and the North Carolina Need-Based Grant for students who graduate from one of the University’s partner schools – which includes Robeson Community College – and enroll in an on-campus degree program.



The scholarship allowed Gabino to transfer and enroll into MU starting in the fall of 2023, an opportunity he said he will be forever grateful for.

“I wouldn’t be at Methodist University without it,” Gabino said. “Being a first-generation college student from a single-parent household, the scholarship took a lot of weight off of my shoulders. Now, I’m able to receive an education that can change my life.”

Gabino has quickly fit into the MU community – participating in both intramural soccer and the chess club on campus, as examples. However, Gabino points to the classroom experience as the biggest stand out.

Not only has he had an opportunity to participate in fun projects such as the popsicle stick bridge building competition, but he’s been able to improve his theoretical knowledge.

“Since it’s a smaller university, I’ve been able to receive a lot of one-on-one instruction, which is how I learn best,” he said. “For the Engineering program, I’m learning so much from Dr. (Denise) Bauer and the other professors. I’m able to look at engineering from a different perspective because of them.”

In a short time, Bauer – MU’s founding director, chair, and professor of Engineering – has been impressed with Gabino’s passion for engineering.

“When I first met Jonathan, I could tell he was very excited and eager to start his Engineering degree at Methodist University,” said Bauer. “He’s already looking for ways to get involved and has formed connections with fellow students. His strong transition will carry him through the rest of the program.”

Gabino is set to graduate with a bachelor’s degree in Industrial and Systems Engineering



with a minor in Finance in 2027. Afterwards, he hopes to start a career as an industrial engineer, working in either manufacturing or defense.

As a proud Hispanic and first-generation college student, Gabino has great hopes that his story can inspire others to chase their dreams.

“My family is relying on me, and I can’t let them down, so I thank God that I’m here at Methodist University,” he said. “I’m a big believer in building up your community, especially the Hispanic community, so I hope people can see what I’m able to achieve and take it to the next level.” ■

A to B IS EASY
AT MU
Associate to Bachelor's
Full-Tuition Transfer Scholarship

MU’s unique “A to B” transfer scholarship covers full tuition in conjunction with the Federal Pell Grant and the North Carolina Need-Based Grant for students who graduate from one of our partner community colleges and enroll in an MU campus degree program.

To learn more, visit methodist.edu/A-to-B



William Bethune: A Legacy of Art and Education at Methodist University

by Wendy Hustwit

William F. Bethune's story is one of passion for both education and the arts, and a profound loyalty to Methodist University, where his generosity has left an indelible mark for generations of students past, present, and future.

Bill, as he was known to friends and neighbors, lived most of his relatively quiet life in Fayetteville's Kinwood neighborhood, just north of the University. After earning a Bachelor's degree from UNC and a Master of Science in Rehabilitation Counseling from the College of William and Mary, he had a long career in public education. He served 20 years as principal for the Dorothy Spainhour School in Fayetteville. From 1967 to 1987, Bethune directed the school's education programming for hundreds of children with learning and developmental disabilities.

Bethune never married or had children. His border collies were constant companions and he often housed international students enrolled at local high schools and the University. Bethune's family owned some parcels of land in Cumberland County, which he inherited upon his parents' passing but never developed.

As the son and grandson of painters, Bethune spent decades developing his own artistic abilities, mostly in oil painting. In 2006, at age 74, he enrolled in an MU art class.

While he was impressed by the quality of the faculty and instruction, he noted that the studio in the Reeves Fine Arts building was quite cramped.

Bethune fondly recalled the dedicated MU staff and faculty who left an enduring impression on him, shaping his perception of the University as a valuable community asset. He often visited Davis Memorial Library to check his email and access the internet.

It was after the painting class that Bethune seemed to really consider his legacy. "Living in North Fayetteville for most of my life, I've watched Methodist College become a university and grow into a strong institution of learning," he shared.

Bethune met with University officials and told them he envisioned a new art building on campus and that he would help pay for it. He sold his properties and donated more than \$1.1 million for the new art building.

Bethune explained his wishes for the gift. “It made a great deal of sense to me that, when I decided to make this gift to Methodist University, it would combine two of the most important things in my life – art and education.”

Bethune was involved in the planning and design of the building. At the 2009 groundbreaking ceremony, he shared his excitement for the future of arts education at MU with the audience, “I am a painter and work with oils, so it was important that this building have a traditional painting studio, but I also like that it will house a graphic design program.”

In 2010, Bethune’s vision became reality with the opening of the modern William F. Bethune Center for Visual Arts, holding studios, offices, a graphic design lab, and the David McCune International Art Gallery.

At the building’s dedication ceremony, he beamed, “I hope that there will be some outstanding artists and students here, and they’ll go on to make national headlines.”

When Bethune died in 2017, part of his \$8.5 million estate was divided into two funds for the arts at Methodist University. The Cumberland Community Foundation holds the William Frederick

Bethune Fund for Art Scholarships and the William Frederick Bethune Fund for the Arts. These provide financial support for MU students majoring in the arts and graphic design and they also fund innovative Art Department programming and exhibitions, year after year.

All MU undergraduate students complete at least one fine arts class to graduate. To earn the bachelor’s in graphic design, students complete classes in drawing, painting, photo media, printmaking, art history, and design.

William F. Bethune’s commitment to Methodist University was not formed as an undergraduate or as a graduate student. It was formed by his recognition of the University’s great value to students and to the community.

“I think a lot of this university,” Bethune once said. “There is no place in North Carolina like it.”

With powerful gifts from our neighbors and friends, Methodist University is making a difference for students, and for our community.

Stay tuned for future stories on the innovative, and exciting Bethune Arts initiatives at Methodist University. ■



While the Bethune Center and McCune Gallery have become synonymous with quality exhibits, the facility has thrived daily for years with MU students studying graphic design and more.

Cristina Ramsingh '27

Nsimbo Mponezya '25

Rachel Blanchard '26



Thank you for answering the phone!



We hope you will continue to answer the call and connect with a current MU student! Our students not only call to solicit gifts, but to thank you for your gifts, and invite you to upcoming events in your area.

Loyalty THROUGH TIME:

Commitments of Past and Present Create the Bright Future for Methodist University

(Part One of a Three-Part Series) by Christian Naranjo

Methodist University boasts a rich history of preparing students for a lifetime of meaning and purpose. MU alumni have gone on to become doctors, lawyers, educators, psychiatrists, first responders, social workers, business executives, and much more. Most of all, MU alumni are champions of change – making their community better through intellectual values and ethical principles such as truth, virtue, justice, and love.

None of the success would be possible, however, without one key ingredient – LOYALTY.

For nearly 70 years, members of the community – on campus and off – have put their faith in MU, creating a legacy of success for the students who walk onto the beautiful 617-acre campus or enter online programs from wherever they may be.

But *loyalty* is more than conviction; it leads to action. *Loyalty* can be displayed in many ways including through time, talent, and treasure.

This three-part series will highlight some difference makers of MU's past and present who have devoted themselves to the institution. This edition showcases three shining examples of difference makers who have shown *loyalty* to Methodist University through "Time."

From one of MU's founding fathers in Terry Sanford to devoted alumna Nona Fisher '88 to a champion of students in Dr. William H. Walker, it becomes clear that *loyalty* can come from many different places. All you need is some time and desire to make Methodist University an even greater institution.



As you explore the stories of Sanford, Fisher, and Walker, ask yourself: "How can you be *loyal* to Methodist University through your time?" To get started, visit methodist.edu/loyalty or scan this QR code.



Terry Sanford



A Visionary Who Brought Methodist College to Life

The fingerprints of the late Terry Sanford can be found all across North Carolina history in the mid-to-late 1900s – including his time as one of the founders of then-named Methodist College.

In early 1956, the Fayetteville attorney joined the “Fayetteville College Steering Committee” with hopes of bringing a new college to Fayetteville. As a master politician, Sanford prided himself on asking the community to become loyal to his mission of starting the school.

In a telegram to Dr. R. L. Pittman, chairman of the committee, Sanford had this message*:

“...Vision, courage, and sacrifice have been the beginning of every great school. I am proud to tell the church leaders out here they can look to the people of Cumberland County, North Carolina, for vision, determination, sacrifice, and leadership in founding this new great college. I know we will reach our financial goal. I hope that every family in Cumberland County will pledge something and become numbered among the founders of an educational institution which will bring centuries of enrichment to North Carolina.”

Sanford’s vision came to life in more ways than one. Not only did he help attain the land and money to secure a deal with the North Carolina Conference of the Methodist Church to bring the Methodist College (a name Sanford was first to suggest) to Fayetteville, but it has become a staple in the community ever since.

Methodist College was chartered by the state of North Carolina on Nov. 1, 1956 and Sanford was elected the first chairman of the Methodist College Board of Trustees (a spot he proudly held for 11 years). He was a Trustee until 1993.

Sanford went on to serve as governor of North Carolina (1961-65) and then U.S. Senator (1986-93).

Sanford never forgot his roots in Fayetteville, routinely visiting and speaking at Methodist College and even serving as honorary chair on the “Come of Age” and “Expanding the Vision” fund drives until his death in 1998.

Because of Terry Sanford’s steadfast loyalty – and the valuable and precious “time” he put into building the solid foundations of something the Fayetteville community both desired and needed – Methodist University continues to bring enrichment to the city, region, and state he loved.

**As published in “From Cotton Field to University: A History of Methodist University 1956-2006”*



Nona Fisher '88

An Alumna, Former Employee, Volunteer, 'Host Mom' and More

When Nona Fisher '88 visits Methodist University, it is easy to spot the joy she brings to faculty, staff, alumni, and current students – something that has come naturally to her since stepping foot onto campus in the mid-1980s.

Fisher transferred to then-Methodist College to pursue a bachelor's degree in Business Administration and Accounting with a minor in Economics and speaks glowingly about her entire experience as a student.

"I absolutely loved it here," Fisher said. "From the moment I got here, I just loved it. The professors were amazing. It led me to becoming proactive on campus."

After graduation, Fisher earned her first full-time job: Director of Human Resources at Methodist College. She also immediately joined the school's Alumni Board, where she later served two terms as president.

Although Fisher left her HR position in 1998 to become a managing partner of her own accounting firm, she has remained *loyal* to her alma mater – serving on both the Foundation Board (which has since merged with the Board of Visitors to become the Founders Council) and the Alumni Board's Homecoming Committee through the years.

In 2003, Fisher received the Outstanding Alumni Service Award and continues to be one of the most (if not *the* most) active volunteers for the Alumni Board more than 20 years later. Fisher even, typically, mentors one MU student per semester at her accounting firm, teaching them the ins and the outs of the business.

With all of the different ways Fisher has used her time to walk alongside Methodist University, she would tell you one of her biggest passion projects is providing a helping hand to MU's international students. She gives international students rides to and from the Fayetteville Regional Airport at the beginning and end of each semester. She then takes it a step further by becoming those students' unofficial "host mom" – checking in on the students throughout the semester and occasionally making campus visits to provide them with hugs.

"It's important because my grandfather came from Italy to Ellis Island when he was just 8 and had to make it by himself," she said. "For these international students, many of them don't have someone here that can just give them a hug, so I'm always here to give them that love. It's very important."

For Fisher, *loyalty* through time is a key aspect of her life as a Methodist University alumna.

"Something I ask the alumni is, 'What can you give? How can you give back? How can you make MU better?' All of us have a small way we can help the University to make it a better place for the students," Fisher said.

Dr. William H. Walker

A Champion of Students and Pioneer of Change

There are a lot of reasons why there is a sense of community among students at Methodist University, but one of the main reasons is Dr. William H. Walker.

Joining Methodist in 1997 as the Director of Residence Life, the Fayetteville native moved up the ranks and became the Vice President for Student Affairs and Dean of Students in 2011. Walker prides himself on removing as many obstacles as possible for students outside of the classroom.

Walker oversees several departments at MU including Residence Life, Health & Counseling, Student Belonging & Inclusion, Dining Services, Campus Engagement, and Campus Recreation. With Walker's 25-plus years at the school, he has experienced a lot of memories at Methodist University – including 2016 when Hurricane Matthew caused campus-wide damage.

“I remember I had tears in my eyes with the thought that students could be without power and water. But our staff worked all day and night to support our students to make sure they had what they needed,” he said. “Whatever obstacle has come our way, we get over it.”

Walker's devout *loyalty* and care for MU students is undoubtedly noticed by the students themselves. As a pastor of a local church, Walker is proud of the fact that he has officiated the weddings of several students he has built relationships with over the years.

One of the areas of improvement that Walker has noticed the most at Methodist University is diversity, equity, and inclusion. In fact, Walker became the first African American to sit on the MU President's Administrative Cabinet after becoming a vice president 13 years ago.

“I've seen a lot of growth in the University over the years,” Walker added. “We've seen more African American faculty and staff. Although there's more work to be done, I've seen a lot of growth among our students in this area. When I first got here, our students may have been diverse, but they stayed with their own groups. Now, when I go to the Green & Gold Dining Hall, I see a blend of students sitting and interacting together. I'm so pleased by it.”

In his valuable time at MU – 27 years since his first day on the job – Walker said his *loyalty* to Methodist University is due to the love and care from the community.

“This University has been so good to me,” he said, “and in return, my family has invested into this University.” ■

The next issue of MU Today will feature Part 2 of our three-part series on *MU Loyalty: Time, Talent, and Treasure*.



Cultivating Change: | Machokoto's MU Roots Leads to Sustainable Urban Farm



by Christian Naranjo

On most days, you can find Methodist University alumnus Rodney Machokoto '10 tending to his family-owned sustainable urban farm in Phoenix – growing tomatoes, cucumbers, onions, cabbages, broccoli, cauliflowers, and more.

But his most impressive crop is the community he is helping build up through his transformative farm, thanks in part to the education he received at MU.

Machokoto grew up in the streets of Harare, Zimbabwe, where his parents taught him how to garden and farm. He said he struggled academically at a young age, however.

“When I was in kindergarten, I couldn’t count from one to 10,” Machokoto said. “But from that point, my father spent at least an hour tutoring me each day for almost seven years, and it really helped me get on the right track.”

Machokoto’s grades drastically improved in school and he was accepted into one of the country’s most prestigious high schools. In 11th grade, he received financial assistance to finish high school at a United World College in the United Kingdom.

As he graduated, Machokoto considered attending several Ivy League schools, but Magda Baggett – the director of MU’s International Programs at the time – attended a college fair at the school and made a great impression on Machokoto.

“I met with Magda, and she did a great job of convincing me to attend Methodist University,” he said. “It’s in the perfect spot because it’s away from the cold weather of the north, but



“My education at Methodist University has allowed me, particularly with business law in accounting, to actually manage the farming I’m doing and launching into a business. It allowed me to understand the world of business.”

– Rodney Machokoto '10



Photos by Deanna Dent – ASU News



it avoids most of the danger from the Florida hurricanes. Also, the low student-to-faculty ratio was a big selling point for me to attend Methodist University.”

Machokoto landed in the United States in 2006 – starting four years of success at Methodist University.

“I was experiencing culture shock at first, but the connection I built with other students and the faculty was awesome and allowed me to thrive,” Machokoto said.

He went on to become the president of the Accounting Club and the Students in Free Enterprise Club, held multiple student worker positions in MU’s Accounting Department, and participated in several international student events like Pangea.

But to this day, Machokoto most cherishes his time in the classroom, eventually graduating with a bachelor’s degree in Accounting and minor in Business Administration in 2010.

Machokoto went on to earn a master’s degree in Accountancy from North Carolina State University and is pursuing his doctorate in Community Resources and Development from Arizona State University.

He spent time as a business consultant and auditor before moving with his wife, Daphine, to Phoenix in 2014. Machokoto’s passion for farming took off as he started experimenting with different crops that could thrive in the desert.

Four years later, they decided to start Machokoto Family Farms, a sustainable urban farm that focuses on building local food systems and making fresh food more accessible to food-insecure people. They partner with local food banks, the City of Phoenix, and other organizations to support disadvantaged families.

“We’re focusing on how we can grow the best quality produce that is grown organically without pesticides or harmful chemicals so we can bring it to those that are less privileged in our society,” he added.

His farm’s success has been noticed on a national level. Recently, Netflix featured Machokoto Family Farms in “Live to 100: Secrets of Blue Zones” (Season 1, Episode 4), while Machokoto was also named an acting chair of the USDA’s Urban Agriculture Committee.

“It’s been very humbling because the basic background of my life is someone who would not be great in life,” he said. “It goes to show that there’s hope to turn things around and make success out of it. It’s been wonderful to be on this journey with my family and have support.”

Now with three children – Thomas, 9, Michael, 7, and Daniel, 2 – the Machokotos hope to start building relationships with schools around the country so students can have access to fresh produce. After that, they plan to expand Machokoto Family Farms worldwide – a dream that wouldn’t be possible without Machokoto’s time at Methodist University.

“Methodist University really helped me understand the power of small,” Machokoto said. “It helped me realize that if you want to change the world, you have to start with your community. Then, you can start a movement and make a difference.” ■

HOME *away from* HOME



Generations of Students Have Come to MU from Across the Globe

While the first international students started coming to Methodist University in the early 1970s, starting in 1985, international students have presented flags to MU at their graduation, and those flags fly proudly in Berns Student Center.

Below (*and on the map in Gold*) are the countries that have been represented by MU international students during the commencement Ceremony of Flags.

- | | | | |
|------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------|
| 1. Afghanistan | 17. Cambodia | 33. Ecuador | 49. Iran |
| 2. Albania | 18. Cameroon | 34. Ethiopia | 50. Iraq |
| 3. Algeria | 19. Canada | 35. Federal Rep. of Germany | 51. Israel |
| 4. Argentina | 20. Chile | 36. France | 52. Italy |
| 5. Aruba | 21. Colombia | 37. Gambia | 53. Jamaica |
| 6. Australia | 22. Cornwall/Isles of Scilly | 38. Ghana | 54. Japan |
| 7. Bahamas | 23. Costa Rica | 39. Greece | 55. Jordan |
| 8. Bangladesh | 24. Cuba | 40. Grenada | 56. Kenya |
| 9. Barbados | 25. Czech Republic | 41. Guatemala | 57. Kosovo |
| 10. Belarus | 26. Denmark | 42. Guyana | 58. Kuwait |
| 11. Belize | 27. Dominica | 43. Haiti | 59. Laos |
| 12. Bhutan | 28. Dominican Republic | 44. Honduras | 60. Lebanon |
| 13. Bosnia-Herzegovina | 29. East Timor | 45. Hungary | 61. Liberia |
| 14. Botswana | 30. Egypt | 46. Iceland | 62. Lithuania |
| 15. Brazil | 31. El Salvador | 47. India | 63. Malawi |
| 16. Burundi | 32. England | 48. Indonesia | 64. Malaysia |

To learn more about Methodist University's Global Education programs, utilize the QR code here or visit methodist.edu/geo.



FAST FACT

MU currently has 93 international students from **59** different countries.

- | | | | |
|---------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 65. Mauritius | 81. Portugal | 97. Sierra Leone | 113. Tonga |
| 66. Mexico | 82. Puerto Rico | 98. Slovakia | 114. Trinidad and Tobago |
| 67. Mongolia | 83. Qatar | 99. South Africa | 115. Turkey |
| 68. Mozambique | 84. Rep. of China (Taiwan) | 100. South Korea | 116. Uganda |
| 69. Nepal | 85. Rep. of Ireland | 101. South Sudan | 117. Ukraine |
| 70. Nicaragua | 86. Rep. of Macedonia | 102. Spain | 118. United Kingdom |
| 71. Niger | 87. Rep. of Palau | 103. Sri Lanka | 119. Uzbekistan |
| 72. Nigeria | 88. Rep. of the Congo | 104. St. Vincent & Grenadines | 120. Venezuela |
| 73. Norway | 89. Rep. of Vietnam | 105. Swasiland | 121. Western Sahara |
| 74. Palestine | 90. Romania | 106. Sweden | 122. Yemen |
| 75. Panama | 91. Russia | 107. Syria | 123. Zaire |
| 76. Paraguay | 92. Rwanda | 108. Tajikistan | 124. Zambia |
| 77. Peoples Rep. of China | 93. Saudi Arabia | 109. Tanzania | 125. Zimbabwe |
| 78. Peru | 94. Scotland | 110. Thailand | |
| 79. Philippines | 95. Senegal | 111. The Netherlands | |
| 80. Poland | 96. Serbia | 112. Tibet | |

GREENSBORO, N.C.



UPCOMING EVENTS

Norfolk, Va. April 23

Washington D.C. May 16

Fayetteville, N.C. June 20

PINEHURST, N.C.



Join us as we continue to bring together alumni, parents, and friends of Methodist University to celebrate our shared connections.

These events are perfect for expanding social and professional networks, staying updated on campus news, and showcasing pride in your alma mater. Reflect on our past memories from Greensboro, Pinehurst, and Orlando, and anticipate the excitement of our upcoming spring events!

For more information about these events or to host one in your area, please contact Taylor Murphy, Director of Alumni Relations, at 910.630.7485, 800.488.7110 ext. 7485, or alumnioffice@methodist.edu.

PGA-SHOW



Inaugural President's Society Reception

MU hosted its first President's Society Reception Dec. 7, 2023, in downtown Fayetteville for alumni and friends who have given \$1,000 or more to the University in a fiscal year.

Top Left: Dr. Franklin Clark and Mac Healy

Middle Left: Sharon Lewis, Jo Beth Johnson, and Dr. Ken Lewis

Bottom Left: Dr. M. Elton Hendricks and Mary Lynn Bryan

Above: Ralph Huff, Deborah Davis, MU President Stanley T. Wearden, Mary Lynn Bryan, Linda Huff '74



Dr. Robert Vincelette, Jr. '69, is excited about his new opportunity with Walmart.



Roy "Ash" Philpott '76 has been promoted to manage the phase one oncology research group at the Winship Cancer Institute in Atlanta, Ga.



Col. Sheldon "Jim" Bathurst, USMC (Ret.) '77 and his wife, Nancy, celebrated 37 years of total bliss. Jim authored "We'll All Die as Marines: One Marine's Journey from Private to Colonel," edited by **Dennis Copson '76**.

Julia (Faircloth) Cooper '84 retired from NCDHHS-DSS, where she served as a Child Welfare Consultant for Safety. Prior to her state position, she retired from the Buncombe County Department of Social Services. With a total of 39 years of service in NC Child Welfare, she has commenced her role as a Policy and CQI Consultant with Allies for Outcomes.

Steven Faircloth '87 retired from Cumberland County Schools in Nov. 2023.

Brian Cole '91 accepted a position as sales manager for GeoSurfaces Midwest Division in Feb. 2024. GeoSurfaces, a national leader in sports surfacing, is owned by Tencase and offers a full line of track surfaces, turf, and sports lighting. Prior to this role, Brian spent 12 years as a sales manager with OSSTSport USA after a distinguished 26-year career in collegiate coaching.

Darren J. Thompson '96 was awarded the North Carolina Service Award by the Professional Photographers of North Carolina. The award was given during the annual Carolina Photo Expo Awards Dinner at the Marriott RTP last August. This award is given for distinguished service to the association over and above the call of duty and without regard for praise or thanks. Darren and his wife, Lisa, own and operate Thompson Photography + Design in Eastover, N.C.



LynnRae Dunn '97 was named director of development for the Scholarship Foundation of Santa Barbara. She has worked in education philanthropy for more than 20 years.



Bernadette Bogertey-Harvey '99 retired from Cumberland County Schools in North Carolina after serving as a school social worker for over 23 years. She transitioned to the position of director at a local non-profit that gives away bikes to children ages 0-15 who are at-risk. The program distributes the bikes every year for Christmas and has been in existence for 40 years.



Felix Sarfo-Kantanka, Jr. '99 was appointed to the Virginia American Revolution 250 Commission's (VA250) African American Advisory Council, the legislative commission planning a statewide commemoration that will be meaningful to all Virginians. Felix is an external affairs manager for Dominion Energy.



Johnny Wilson '99, president/chief executive officer of Fayetteville Urban Ministry, received the Public Service Award at the Greater Fayetteville Chamber's 2024 Annual Awards. He has been with Fayetteville Urban Ministry for more than 20 years.

Col. Manuel "Manny" Menendez '04 was promoted in the U.S. Army to the rank of Colonel and is currently serving as the Special Operations Command-North Surgeon at Peterson Space Base located in Colorado Springs, Colo.



Oleg Otten '05 of Robert Allen Law spoke at the Yacht Charter Seminar hosted by the International Yacht Brokers Association in Dania Beach, Fla., on Oct. 5, 2023. Oleg participated in the panel discussion “Yacht Charter and the Law.” The panelists discussed various legal issues affecting the private yacht industry. The event was the most well-attended charter summit in IYBA history and included exhibitors from several foreign countries.



Jeremy Belnap '07 joined the C Lazy U Ranch as general manager in November. With 20 years of experience in the hospitality industry, he joins the C Lazy U team after spending nearly a decade as a general manager at other top-rated luxury guest ranches.



Benson Hoyle '07M, former chief of police in Huntersville and Cornelius, N.C., received the Order of the Long Leaf Pine, recognizing his years of leadership in law enforcement. The Order of the Long Leaf Pine is presented to those who have made significant contributions to their communities through exemplary service and exceptional accomplishments.



Morgan Jewell '10 was named the 2024 PGA of America Merchandiser of the Year – Private Category at the PGA Show. The award recognizes PGA of America Golf Professionals who have excelled in business and merchandising in the promotion of golf. Morgan has been with Floridian National Golf Club since 2015.



Maj. Jose Martinez '12 was promoted to the position of Chief of Training for the United States Military Academy at West Point. This promotion comes with the incredible responsibility to manage all training for staff, faculty, service members, and contractors charged with training the Army’s future leaders.



Raul Wallace '13 of Divine Call Ministries Inc. was the recipient of the Fayetteville Cumberland County Human Relations 2024 Community Religious Leader Award. The award is given to a religious leader who promotes better human and race relations through activities and programs, which provide positive human relations; who is actively involved in attempting to resolve community problems; and who exemplifies a positive attitude toward improving human relations.

Lindsay (Tippett) Lang '15 was named one of the 2024 Triad Business Journal’s 40 Leaders Under 40. Lindsay is a tax manager for Gillian Bell Moser.



Faith McGee '18 was recently promoted to controller & compliance officer at Southern Regional Area Health Education Center (AHEC).



Jaime Logan '20 was crowned Miss Iredell County 2024 in Nov. 2023 and was voted Miss Congeniality by her fellow contestants. Jaime will represent the Iredell County area in June’s Miss North Carolina Pageant in High Point, N.C. while promoting her community service initiative, Everyone Belongs in Sports.

Jeff Kolbfleisch '22 recently accepted a position with Shilts, CPA as a forensic accounting and valuation associate. Jeff previously worked at PricewaterhouseCoopers as an assurance associate in audit.

SHARE YOUR NEWS

We want to hear what is going on in your life, additions to the family, engagements, and weddings. Simply fill out our form online at: methodist.edu/alumni/class-notes

Rachel Valentine '09 welcomed her daughter, Aria Amin, Sept. 8, 2021. Aria's proud grandfather, **Rev. Ken Valentine '74**, is also a graduate of Methodist

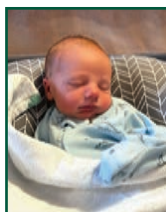
Emily (Huneycutt) Bruns '13 and **Robert Bruns '12** welcomed their second child, Brayden, Jan. 2, 2024.



Stephanie (Breitenbach) Carnes '14 and **Tanner Carnes** celebrated the birth of their son, Wesley, Dec. 3, 2023. Wesley weighed 8 pounds, 7 ounces and measured 22.5 inches long.



Alanna (Anderson) '18 and **Chris Giacomini '17** welcomed their third daughter, Delilah, Oct. 24, 2023. Delilah was born 8 pounds, 10 ounces and 20 inches long.



Taylor (Owens) Western '18 and her husband, Zach, welcomed their son, Waylon, Dec. 19, 2023. Waylon weighed 6 pounds, 15 ounces and measured 20 ¾ inches long.



Arika Bartlett '23 and her husband, Casey, celebrated the birth of their daughter, Bailey, May 10, 2023. Bailey weighed 6 pounds, 8 ounces and measured 21 inches long. Arika is an aftermarket expeditor for Gulfstream Aerospace Corporation.

Staying in Touch can Mean so Much

If you're a Methodist University alumnus, you have access to a number of benefits, which include the following:

- MU Alumni Association
- Alumni E-Newsletter
- Campus Parking Sticker
- Greatest Gift Scholarship
- Library Access
- Career Services
(First Year after Graduation)
- MU Today Magazine
- Alumni Events
- Nimocks Fitness Center Membership
- Varsity Tutors
- And More...!



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WEDDINGS & ENGAGEMENTS

WEDDINGS



Valerie Morris '89 married her best friend, Katie Millet, Oct. 22, 2022. Valerie is a retired teacher from Durham Public Schools and Katie is a teacher from Durham Public Schools. Valerie and Katie have two sons, Seamus, and Beckett.



Raevin Harvey '13 married Ashley Andrick Oct. 28, 2023. **Brooke Corley '13**, **Katherine Scheller '13, '15M**, and **Rachel (Chapman) Poston '14, '16M** were in the wedding party. Raevin works in medical records review for Southeastern Xray and Ashley is a physician assistant for QTC.



Alexander Jones '14 married Courtney Wilson Dec. 16, 2023. Alex is the assistant men's and women's golf coach at Denison University and Courtney is a brand strategist at Regions. **Dylan Edwards '13**, **Justin Roberto '14**, and **Connor Evers '19** were groomsmen.



Chris Ryan '15 married Mackenzie Helm Oct. 14, 2023. **Joshua Ryan '20** and **Caleb Ryan** were groomsmen and the late **Sean MacDonald '15** was an honorary groomsman. The wedding was full of alumni including parents of the groom, **Susan (Cox) Bucolo '90** and **Patrick Bucolo '05**, and father of the bride, **Berkely Helm '14**. Chris' aunt and uncle, **Jeanette (Cox) Terranova '98** and **Justin Terranova '97**, were also in attendance. Chris is the director of coaching for Charlotte Soccer Academy and Mackenzie is an architectural designer for Cluck Design Collaborative.



Beth Efirid '19 and Kyle Petrone were married Sept. 23, 2023. Beth and her husband both work in law enforcement for the Wilmington Police Department.



Joel Murphy '19 married Allison Pridgen Nov. 10, 2023. Joel is a golf instructor for GOLFTEC and Allison is the director of school advancement at Community Christian School. **Kevin Williams '18** was a member of the wedding party.

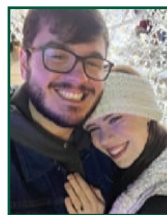


Luciana Forma '23 married **Henry Murray '22** Oct. 28, 2023. Alumni members of the wedding party included **Taylor (Jackson) Deutsch '21**, **Luke Laney '21**, **Harrison Bitzberger '22**, and **Spencer Kieft '22**. Luciana is a tennis professional at Royal Oaks Country Club and Henry is an engineer for Lockheed Martin.

ENGAGEMENTS



Jamaal Doran '14 proposed to Chrissi Austin in Nov. 2023.



Gillian Niesel '21 got engaged to Robert Petursson Dec. 8, 2023. Gillian is studying law at Marquette University and Robert is a plant scientist.



Romone Belk Jr. '24 proposed to **Madison Brunson '24** Nov. 5, 2023.

ALUMNI



Dewey “Eugene” Hester ’64, 81, of Hope Mills, N.C. passed away Jan. 24, 2024. A lifelong member of the Hope Mills Church of God, Eugene served as a former choir director and Sunday School Superintendent. As an educator in the Cumberland County School System, he made a lasting impact on countless young minds, inspiring generations at Brentwood Elementary and Hope Mills Middle School. Beyond the classroom, he also coached football.



James “Monk” H. Register, Jr. ’67, 82, of Clinton, N.C., passed away Jan. 2, 2024. James enlisted in the U.S. Army after high school and was stationed in South Korea, where he met his late wife. After being honorably discharged, James earned his degree in Business from MU.



James “Jim” Bizzell Darden III ’69, 76, of Clinton, N.C., passed away Nov. 17, 2023. He was inducted into the MU Athletic Hall of Fame in 2002. Jim married his college sweetheart, **Mary Nell (Watkins)**. Jim taught and served as chair of the Horticulture Technology Department at Sampson Community College for 25 years and owned Darden’s Nursery and Landscaping for 40 years. Jim also wrote and published two books. After retiring from SCC, Jim served as a full-time horticulturalist at MU for eight years.



Benjamin Ellis Moore ’73, 77, of Fayetteville, N.C., passed away Feb. 6, 2024. While stationed abroad during his early years of service in the U.S. Army, Ben had the opportunity to play in the Panamanian National League in Panama and for the oldest baseball team in Germany, the Mannheim Tornados. Ben continued his Army career as a Military Police Officer for 21 years until he retired.



Nora “Helen”(McLeod) Rogers ’73, 73, of Lillington, N.C., passed away Feb. 1, 2024. Helen was a dedicated elementary teacher for over 40 years. She also served as director for more than 25 years at pregnancy support centers across North Carolina, playing a vital role in establishing numerous centers, including one in South America. Her tireless efforts impacted over 50,000 babies and countless families through the ministries of these centers.



James V. Ricci III ’76, 79, of Wake Forest, N.C., passed away Nov. 26, 2023. Before embarking on a career in sales, Jim served his country in the U.S. Air Force. His service included a tour of duty in Vietnam.



Robert “Bob” H. Fair ’89, 82, of Cumberland, Md. passed away Dec. 29, 2023. Bob worked at Kelly Springfield Tire Co. in Cumberland and Fayetteville N.C. After retiring, he worked as a tourism guide in Cumberland and for the Parish of Our Lady of the Mountains. Bob was a faithful member of SS. Peter and Paul Catholic Church. He was a Past Grand Knight of Council #586, Knights of Columbus.



Michael “Mike” Kelsey ’89, 76, of Fayetteville, N.C. passed away Dec. 31, 2023. Before attending MU, Mike joined the U.S. Army and served as an x-ray technician and a nuclear medicine technician. He retired after 20 years of honorable service as a Sergeant First Class. Mike continued his life of service working for the Veterans Administration Hospital as a nuclear medicine technician.



Venus Lewis Woods ’90, 56, of Henrico, Va. passed away Dec. 8, 2023. She worked for Food Lion for 34 years, and in her most recent position as store manager of Food Lion in Glen Allen, Va., she volunteered her time to mentor and coach with a focus on the well-being of others.



Brendan Alexander Elwell ’95, 51, of Durham, N.C. passed away Jan. 7, 2024. He began working with Lumen Technologies (formally known as Century Link) in 2001 as a network technician. During his time, he earned numerous awards and promotions such as the Cisco Certified Network Associate technical Certification (CCNA) in 2017, then was promoted from a Level 2 technician to an Operations Technician (Level 3) in 2018.



Brenda “Kay” Karen (Jones) Tew ’96, 76, of Fayetteville, N.C. passed away Nov. 18, 2023. She dedicated 40 years of her life to Black and Decker and later spent four years at the Clinton Family Worship Center.

IN MEMORY (CONT.)



Kerry Gene Valderrama Allen '05, of San Antonio, Texas passed away Oct. 31, 2023. Kerry was a former airborne infantryman with the 82nd Airborne and served as a team leader in Afghanistan for Operating Enduring Freedom. He directed, produced, and wrote two award-winning feature films, numerous commercials, music videos, created a comic book series, as well as an award-winning screenplay “Memories of a Hundred.”



Rebecca “Becca” Marie (Fisher) Lewis '08, '10M, 47, of Fayetteville, N.C. passed away Feb. 11, 2024. Rebecca graduated summa cum laude with a bachelor’s degree in accounting and earned a master’s degree in business administration. Her professional career with 22 years of accounting experience included roles with increasing responsibility in the accounting and finance industry. Rebecca was most recently the senior accountant and corporate specialist at Bottom Line Accounting, owned by her mother, **Nona Fisher '88**.



James Carlton Williams, Jr. '11M, 54, of Greenville, N.C. passed away Jan. 29, 2024. Carlton spent the majority of his life serving Greenville and the greater Pitt County area retiring as a Captain with the Greenville Police Department with 32 years of service. He also served as a BLET instructor with Pitt Community College. Upon his retirement, he continued to serve as a reserve law enforcement officer.

FORMER STUDENTS



Gail D. Mitchell, 51, of Fayetteville, N.C. passed away Nov. 11, 2023. Gail was employed at Walmart for 20 years until she resigned due to her health. Gail enjoyed traveling, cooking, and entertaining her family and friends.

RETIRED FACULTY/ STAFF



Dr. Tryon D. Lancaster, 89, of Fayetteville, N.C. passed away Jan. 23, 2024. Tryon served Cumberland County Schools as a teacher, principal, and associate superintendent for more than 30 years. He also worked in the School of Education and Office of Church Affairs at MU before being voted faculty emeritus. Additionally, Tryon served as a pastor at Wesley Heights United Methodist Church and Saint Matthews United Methodist Church.



Dr. Narendra Pratap Singh, 68, former professor of chemistry and chair of MU’s Department of Chemistry & Physical Sciences, passed away Nov. 6, 2023. Singh joined the University in 1983 and helped establish and lead the Department of Chemistry & Physical Science. His favorite element was Nitrogen due to its immense value to humans on earth. He retired in May 2023 after 40 years at MU and will be missed by the entire University community.

Forever Loved, Forever Monarchs

One of the most moving and memorable traditions at Homecoming each year is when we gather in the beautiful Matthews Ministry Center on campus and remember alumni and friends who have passed away since we were last together.

We hope you can join us for Homecoming 2024 (Oct. 18-20) and the Candlelight Memorial Service on Saturday, Oct. 19.

For more information, please call us at 910.630.7485 or 800.488.7110 (x7485) or e-mail alumnioffice@methodist.edu.





Then & NOW

The original Fleishman Fountain was named for W. Ed Fleishman, one of the members of the first Board of Trustees of Methodist College. In this 1970 photo, it is viewed looking east toward the Quad and Berns Student Center. The fountain fell into disrepair during the 1970s and was demolished and paved over with concrete. In August 1987, President M. Elton Hendricks had a new, above-ground fountain built on the same site. A tree looming behind the fountain today (far right in this photo) is the Hendricks River Birch, which he planted during a campus-wide Show You Care Day during the early 1980s.



Save the Date
Homecoming
OCT. 18-20, 2024

