

BELHAVEN UNIVERSITY TARTAN

FALL 2025

**Hitting
new
ENROLLMENT**
highs!



LETTER FROM The President

In the 1940s, Hollywood Presbyterian offered a small discipleship group for promising young leaders. Over time, one of those members became the Chaplain of the United States Senate, another the pastor of National Presbyterian Church in Washington, DC, and a third became pastor of the most influential church in California, where Ronald Reagan was an active member.

The fourth of these young leaders, Bill Bright, along with his wife Vonette, founded a ministry in 1951 called Campus Crusade for Christ, now called Cru, which became the largest evangelism ministry in the world, now with 30,000 staff working in 190 countries.

Bill and Vonette were wonderful mentors and influential friends to me. And when they launched The Jesus Film on a global scale in the late 1980s, Bill asked me to lead their campaign to raise \$2 billion to fund it, which was an unheard-of goal back then.

At the same time Bill was talking with me about that responsibility, I was contacted by a small Presbyterian college in central Kansas to be a candidate for their presidential search. I was only 34 and wondered who would want such a young and inexperienced president.

As MaryLou and I went through that decision process, I vividly remember standing with Bill on the lawn outside their retreat headquarters in Arrowhead Springs, California. Bill was pushing me to come with him to The Jesus Film, but he was also a mentor, so I needed his counsel about taking the Christian college presidency route.

Bill said that if you are driven by evangelism, what we do with The Jesus Film will be much bigger. On the other hand, if it is deep-level discipleship that drives you, it will be lots slower and probably take generations, but your Kingdom reach may go further in a college than here – if you stay committed to discipleship as your highest calling.



That was 37 years ago. Beginning at Sterling College, and now these 30 years at Belhaven, I've been privileged to team with faculty, coaches, administrators, and staff to create a robust learning environment committed to discipleship that has reach and impact I never imagined would be possible.

Today, Belhaven is going to the nations:

- **Serving online masters and doctoral students in China.**
- **Offering hybrid graduate degrees for students from India working for major corporations in America.**
- **Equipping a record number of traditional campus and online students to become people of significant influence in the "nations" of the arts, education, health care, business, pastoral and missions ministry, public service, social work, counseling, athletics, law, technology, and engineering.**

Here at Belhaven University God has called us to participate in the Great Commission by being both faithful and dependent on Him for the outcome. In this calling, I'm often reminded how true Bill Bright's words have proven over the years: the opportunities for discipleship in a college are deeply, humbly, thrillingly satisfying. I'm so thankful that at this corner of Peachtree and Pinehurst we are committed to long-haul Kingdom building, engaging in discipleship wherever and whenever God opens a door. 🙏

***Go and make disciples of all the nations ...
And be sure of this: I am with you always,
even to the end of the age.***

Matthew 28:19-20 | 2025-26 Verse of the Year
BELHAVEN UNIVERSITY - Our Standard is Christ

THE TARTAN

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FEATURE:

Dr. Roger Parrott's THREE DECADES of Leadership

PAGE 4



FEATURE:
PAGE 10

Hitting new ENROLLMENT highs!



FEATURE:

Shared Legacy OF SOUND

PAGE 14



FEATURE: PAGE 12

Belhaven's First Miss Mississippi

CATEGORIES:

- 16 ATHLETIC NEWS
- 20 CAMPUS NEWS
- 28 ARTS NEWS
- 33 ALUMNI NEWS
- 36 ALUMNI UPDATES
- 38 IN MEMORIAM



Dr. Roger Parrott's **THREE DECADES** *of Leadership*

I have never been more energized about the future of our University. While the campus is focused on the 4,500 students currently enrolled and the opportunities ahead, this 30th year milestone as Belhaven's president is an appropriate time to look back and reflect on all God has done.

We cannot measure the most critical work of Belhaven – students' lives equipped, energized, and transformed

by God. But an overview of advances and resources the LORD has provided is a visible demonstration of His work across the campus.

God has graced Belhaven University with opportunities far beyond our wildest dreams: 17 new buildings or major renovations, 25 new undergraduate academic programs, 16 new master's degrees, 3 new doctoral-level programs, 7 new sports at the NCAA DIII level, thousands and

thousands of graduates, and more good memories than we could ever count this side of heaven.

As you study the following pages, I pray that you'll be filled with thankfulness for all the LORD has done through students, faculty, administrators, coaches, staff, board members, alums, and friends of Belhaven. Truly the LORD has blessed this "dear green hill" far beyond what any of us could have ever imagined possible. 🍷



LEGACY OF LEARNING
ROGER PARROTT
PRESIDENT OF THE UNIVERSITY

1995

NO EYE HAS SEEN, NO EAR HAS HEARD, NO MIND HAS CONCEIVED,
WHAT GOD HAS PREPARED FOR THOSE WHO LOVE HIM.
1 CORINTHIANS 2:9

NO EYE HAS SEEN . . .

NEW ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

UNDERGRADUATE

Sports Medicine, 1998
 Sports Management, 1998
 Communications/Public Relations, 1998
 Worldview Curriculum Core, 1999
 Creative Writing, 2004
 Theatre, 2006
 Business Management, 2007
 Accounting, 2008
 Dance (*major*), 2008
 Graphic Design, 2010
 Social Work, 2011
 Nursing, 2014
 Engineering, 2016
 Film Production, 2016
 Human Resources, 2018
 Finance, 2018
 Public Administration, 2018
 Cybersecurity, 2019
 Data Science, 2019
 Hospitality Management, 2020
 Digital Media, 2021
 Sales Management, 2021
 Supply Chain Management, 2021
 Actuarial Science, 2021
 Fashion Merchandising, 2023

MASTERS

Teaching, 1999
 Curriculum and Instruction, 1999
 Public Administration, 2007
 Dance, 2011
 School Leadership & Administration, 2012
 Reading Literacy, 2012
 Ministry Leadership, 2018
 Health Administration, 2018
 Biblical and Theological Studies, 2019
 MBA in Entrepreneurship, 2020
 Information Technology Management, 2020
 Computer Information Systems, 2023
 Data Science, 2024
 Counseling, 2024
 STEM MBA, 2025
 Applied Artificial Intelligence, 2025

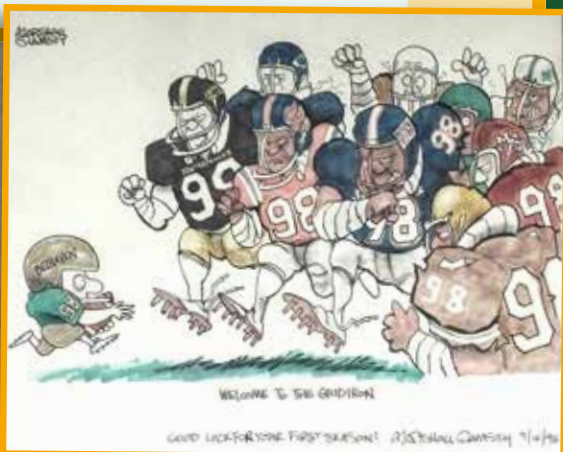
DOCTORATE

Education, 2017
 Education Specialist, 2017
 Business Administration, 2020



NEW INTERCOLLEGIATE ATHLETICS

Women's Soccer, 1996
 Softball, 1996
 Men's Golf, 1996
 Volleyball, 1996
 Football, 1998
 Blazer Marching Band, 2008
 Men's & Women's Track & Field, 2014
 NCAA Division III Member, 2015





When I look back on my years of leading Belhaven University, I count success by watching students whose lives were dramatically transformed as they captured God's best for their future, and faculty who have deeply invested in developing insightful worldview thinking and Christ-like mentoring and grace.

I also see chapel services during which the LORD spoke to us all in deepening ways, athletic teams and residence halls living that purposely built character, and God-centered racial reconciliation lived out every day in every interaction. Those successes don't show in graphs or charts, but they are how God looks at the value of our university.

Chapter 2 – "Are You Simply Going Through the Motions" – page 32 | Moody Publishers, 2022



BELHAVEN PRESIDENTS



GUY T. GILLESPIE
1921–1954 | 33 years



ROGER PARROTT
1995–present | 30 years



HOWARD CLELAND
1961–1978 | 17 years



LEWIS FITZHUGH
1893–1904 | 11 years



NEWTON WILSON
1986–1995 | 9 years



VERNE KENNEDY
1978–1986 | 8 years



MCFERRAN CROWE
1954–1960 | 6 years



J. R. PRESTON
1904–1910 | 6 years



R. V. LANCASTER
1911–1918 | 7 years



W. H. FRAZIER
1918–1921 | 3 years

NEW FACILITIES



Lakeview Residence Hall, 1998



Irby Complex Classroom Addition, 1998



McCravey-Triplett Student Center, 2002



Center for the Arts, 2002



Bettye Quinn Center, 2002



Bitsy Irby Visual Arts & Dance Center, 2006



Entergy Pavilion, 2008



Heidelberg Gymnasium Addition, 2009



Fitzhugh Hall Science Wing, 2013



Newt and Becky Wilson Hall, 2014

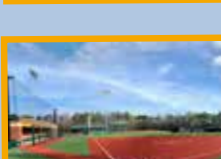
Dudley & Robbie Hughes University Village, 2015



Belhaven Bowl Stadium, 2016



Billy Kim International Center, 2016



Track & Field Complex, 2021



Parking Garage, 2023



Jimmy Hood Welcome Center, 2023

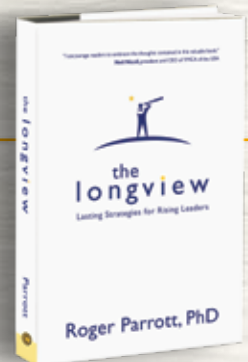
McLeod Field Softball Stadium, 2024



“

One of my most satisfying moments as a leader came when we brought to Belhaven a film crew to capture the essence of our college mission and experience. After a short planning session, we set them loose on the campus to interview anyone who looked interesting—faculty, staff, students, and constituents. After the first day of shooting they came back with a stressed look on their faces and declared they had found a serious problem. They were convinced we had told the campus what to say if interviewed because, as they reported, “We are getting the same words and ideas from everyone.”

They were shocked to hear we didn’t even tell the campus that a film crew was coming, much less coach them on what to say. The videographers were hearing the message – preparing students academically and spiritually to serve Christ Jesus in their careers, relationships, and the world of ideas - had so permeated every aspect of the campus we were knitted together.



Chapter 10 - “Shepherding The Vision Without Scaring Away the Flock” – page 178
David C. Cook Publishing, 2009

THEN



SAME VIEW TODAY



FOR THOSE WHO LOVE HIM .
1 CORINTHIANS 2:9



Hitting new ENROLLMENT

highs!

Belhaven University is celebrating record enrollment this fall, with approximately 4,500 students enrolled across its traditional, online, and graduate programs. The growth marks a significant increase from 4,005 students in 2024 and continues a steady five-year trend of rising enrollment.

University President Dr. Roger Parrott, who has led Belhaven since 1995, noted that the numbers have not only rebounded from last year's dip but reached new heights in the institution's history.

"When I began as Belhaven's president 30 years ago, we had around 800 students," Parrott said. "Today, I'm overjoyed with the number of enrollment highs we

have reached because it represents our effectiveness in serving students with a quality, Christ-centered education. Our record growth reflects the strength of our academic programs, and the quality of our faculty, coaches, and staff. Belhaven's service-focused environment draws students from every background to this university."

This fall, Belhaven welcomed nearly 1,050 traditional undergraduate students, surpassing the 1,000 mark for the first time since 2018. In addition, the university enrolled approximately 625 online undergraduate students, and 2,600 students in online graduate and doctoral programs.

Since 2021, Belhaven's total enrollment has increased by 4%, while the freshman population has grown by 22%. Retention has also shown strong gains, with the university's retention rate rising 49% compared to last year.

Parrott noted that the university's efforts to strengthen both the arts and athletics have continued to shape the student experience, with growing numbers in the arts and an expected increase in students who are involved in neither athletics nor the arts.

Parrott credited the record-breaking numbers to Belhaven's ability to adapt to student needs while staying rooted in its mission. "Our enrollment growth is also the result of academically staying ahead of where the career market is headed," he said. "Whether it's launching cutting-edge programs like our AI



The growth in enrollment is exciting—it shows that students, whether on campus or online, undergraduate or graduate, clearly recognize the value of a Belhaven education.

- SUZANNE SULLIVAN -

master's degree or ensuring our students are well-supported on campus, we've been intentional about adapting to career demands of the future, while never wavering in our Christ-centered mission."

Vice President for Enrollment and Marketing Suzanne Sullivan said the growth demonstrates Belhaven's strong reputation and community spirit. "The growth in enrollment is exciting—it shows that students, whether on campus or online, undergraduate or graduate, clearly recognize the value of a Belhaven education. With so many options available, we are truly honored when students choose to join our community. At a time when many schools have faced closures, achieving a 4% increase in total enrollment in the last five years is a blessing. It takes not only the enrollment and marketing teams, but the whole campus working together to be successful." 🍎

1,000+
Traditional Students

STUDENTS FROM 37 STATES

3,400+
ONLINE Students

80
UNDERGRADUATE AREAS OF STUDY

20 Masters & 3 Doctoral DEGREES



4,500
TOTAL STUDENTS

13:1 STUDENT FACULTY RATIO



NEWEST PROGRAM
MASTER'S IN Applied AI



38%
Student Athletes
17 NCAA Division III Sports

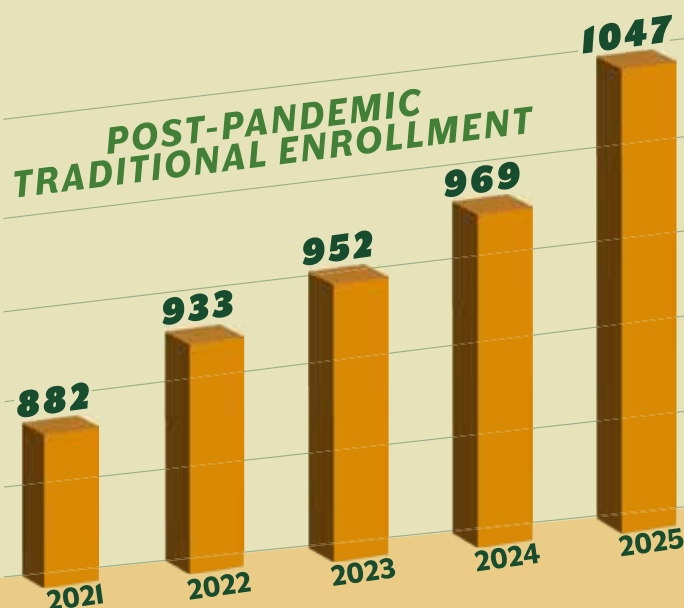


ONE of 39 SCHOOLS
Accredited in All **Four** Areas of the Arts



AVG. ACT: 21

AVG. GPA: 3.5





Belhaven's First

Miss

When she first arrived in Mississippi at age 11, Anna Leah Jolly didn't know a word of English. Her solution? She turned to the magic of Disney movies, watching them over and over until the words began to make sense.

"Disney movies gave me my first English lessons," she laughed. "I'd watch the same movies again and again, memorizing lines and picking up the rhythm of the language. It was my way of finding belonging in a place that felt so new."

That determination—to learn, to adapt, to belong—would ultimately lead Jolly to the Miss Mississippi stage, where this summer she made history. The Belhaven University dance student was crowned Miss Mississippi 2025, becoming not only the first Belhaven student to ever earn the title, but also the first foreign-born contestant to do so. She also represented the state at the Miss America pageant in September at the Walt Disney Theater in Orlando and placed in the Top 11.

Jolly's story began in Ukraine, where she spent her childhood in an orphanage before being adopted by a Mississippi family at 11 years old. Her early years shaped a deep compassion for children navigating the foster care system.

"I was adopted from Ukraine not knowing the language, the culture,

THE REMARKABLE JOURNEY OF ANNA LEAH JOLLY

Mississippi

or what my future held,” Jolly said. “That journey—from orphan to advocate—is what led me to become Miss Mississippi.”

Out of her experiences, she launched Limitless, an initiative that helps foster children build emotional wellness and healthy connections. She also authored *Theodore: The Little Bear with Big Feelings*, a children’s book distributed through CASA to help kids process their emotions.

“It was never about being seen—it was about being heard,” she said. “That’s why pageantry spoke to me. It gave women a platform and a voice, a way to advocate for things that truly matter.”

As Miss Mississippi, Jolly now serves as an ambassador for the state, traveling to schools, churches, and civic organizations to share her story. She also advocates for foster care reform and promotes her Limitless initiative.

“I want to use this year to amplify the message that every child is worthy of love, safety, and connection,” she said. “This title isn’t just a crown—it’s a calling.”

Jolly credits Belhaven University with shaping her both personally and professionally.

“Belhaven has given me more than an education—it’s given me a community that believes in me,” she

said. “The scholarships I’ve received through the Miss Mississippi Organization have made it possible for me to attend Belhaven. The support from faculty and classmates has strengthened both my faith and my confidence, preparing me to lead with grace and purpose.”

She is pursuing a dual degree in dance and business



Belhaven has given me more than an education—it’s given me a community that believes in me.

-ANNA LEAH JOLLY-

administration, the perfect match for a student who is both artist and entrepreneur. Alongside her studies, she owns Studio A Dance Company, a children’s dance studio housed within Courthouse Gymnastics.

“Dance has always been a part of me, but so has leadership,” she said. “I love that my studies at Belhaven allow me to explore both.” When her year of service ends, Jolly plans to return to Belhaven

to complete her studies. Beyond graduation, her ambitions are as bold as her journey: expanding her studio, growing Limitless into

a national nonprofit, publishing more children’s books, and one day serving in public leadership.

“Long-term, I want to use my voice to create lasting change for the next generation,” she said.

Belhaven University President Dr. Roger Parrott called Jolly’s achievement a historic and inspiring moment for the campus community. “Anna Leah is a living testament to courage, creativity, and calling,” Parrott said. “She will be a wonderful ambassador for both Mississippi and Belhaven University.”

From Disney subtitles to the Miss Mississippi crown, Jolly’s story is one of perseverance, faith, and the transformative power of community. As she steps into the limelight of being Miss Mississippi, she carries with her not just a crown, but the hopes of countless children who see themselves in her story. 🌟

Shared Legacy of Sound

Belhaven's lasting connection with the MSO blends tradition, mentorship, and innovation.

When the Mississippi Symphony Orchestra (MSO) takes the stage, chances are strong that Belhaven University is also present—through its faculty, alumni, and students. The two institutions have been intertwined since the orchestra's founding, and their partnership continues to shape Mississippi's cultural and educational life today.

The connection between Belhaven and the MSO stretches back to the orchestra's earliest days in the mid-1940s. For decades, the orchestra kept its offices on the Belhaven campus, with rehearsals and performances held at the university. That foundation supported the orchestra until it eventually grew into a self-standing nonprofit organization.

"Belhaven had always been entwined with the history from the Mississippi Symphony," said MSO Music Director and Conductor Crafton Beck. "It has been quite natural, therefore, for a close relationship to develop."

Over the years, that relationship grew stronger as Belhaven invited MSO musicians to join its music faculty. Chief among them is violinist and professor Xie Song, whose teaching has shaped a generation of string players. Beck credits Song's influence with sustaining the symphony's high standards.

"Quite simply, without the numerous superb violinists who moved to Jackson specifically to study with Professor Song, I cannot imagine how the MSO would have managed to maintain such a high level of performance," Beck said. "An orchestra without a violin section is not an orchestra."

Today, the impact of Song's studio is unmistakable. In a recent rehearsal, Beck asked all violinists who had studied under Song to stand—nearly half the section rose.

"Mr. Song is a phenomenal teacher and violinist," said Dr. Stephen Sachs,

longtime Belhaven professor and MSO pianist. "The shared legacy between MSO and BU starts with him."

Sachs, reflecting on a group photo taken after a Bravo concert that captured Belhaven alumni, faculty, and students alongside Beck, called it "a dream come true" to see so many Belhaven-trained musicians central to the symphony's sound.

Another milestone in the Belhaven-MSO relationship came more than a decade ago, when Beck and Professor of Music Dr. Andrew Sauerwein launched the MSO Composers' Reading. The program, now directed by Sauerwein, invites composition students from Belhaven, Mississippi College, Jackson State University, and Mississippi University for Women to hear their works performed by the symphony.



PHOTO BY
LINDSAY MCMURTRAY



“The MSO Composers Reading is designed to give students a rare opportunity to hear readings of the short orchestral works they have composed and discuss them with Crafton and the orchestra members, most of whom are music educators,” Sauerwein said. “The experience and feedback students receive are tremendously valuable to their artistic growth and cultural understanding. It is not a competition or a marketplace; rather, composers and performers—and listeners—involved in the reading can give one another beautiful gifts of musical design, feedback, and insight.”

Beck calls the reading “an extraordinary opportunity” that

preparing him for his career. For percussionist Daniel Jones, who also came through Belhaven’s program, the bond was just as formative. Belhaven gave him the skills and the stage.

The collaboration benefits both the orchestra and the university. For Belhaven students, the opportunity to study with professional musicians and perform alongside them elevates their training. For the MSO, the relationship provides a steady stream of talented young players.

Beck believes the partnership also strengthens the musicians themselves. “Just about every musician in the MSO is a teacher,” he said. “By working with younger generations, older professionals continue to grow. Younger generations remind us to adapt and discover new repertoire, new ways of thinking, and new ways to make music.”

The connection between Belhaven and the MSO reaches beyond the campus and the concert hall. Events like the MSO’s annual “Mozart by Candlelight” performance at Belhaven’s Center for the Arts have become highlights of Jackson’s cultural calendar.

Beck sees the partnership as vital not only for training musicians but also for enriching Mississippi’s cultural landscape. “The many out-of-state and international students who choose to study at Belhaven represent an extraordinary mixing of experiences and cultures for us all,” he said.

The legacy of partnership rests on excellence and commitment, Sachs said, and its continuation depends on both institutions staying strong.

From its beginnings nearly 80 years ago to today’s shared stages and classrooms, the bond between Belhaven University and the Mississippi Symphony Orchestra remains a defining force in Mississippi’s cultural life—ensuring the next generation of musicians will continue to thrive. 🍌

Belhaven had always been entwined with the history from the Mississippi Symphony. It has been quite natural, therefore, for a close relationship to develop.

- CRAFTON BECK -

deepens the bond between the university and the orchestra while cultivating the next generation of composers.

Alumni continue to carry that legacy into professional life. Zak Joyner, now teaching and performing, credits the Belhaven-MSO connection with

“Both benefit from this collaboration,” Sachs said. “MSO benefits from having Belhaven faculty and students participate, and Belhaven benefits by offering another performance opportunity. Everybody wins.”

BELHAVEN ATHLETICS WELCOMES THREE NEW COACHES

BOOMER ROBERTS

becomes the 12th Men's Basketball Head Coach in program history, joining from Purdue Northwest, where he led the team to four GLIAC tournament appearances and its first-ever postseason berth. Prior to that, he engineered a major turnaround at Trinity International, winning 30 games and earning Coach of the Year honors in 2016-17. He also helped Vanguard University capture an NAIA national title in 2014.



"We're excited to welcome the Roberts family to Belhaven and for Boomer to lead our young men," said Scott Little. "Our program has had a lot of success recently, and his career achievements in a variety of settings are an ideal match for our future goals."

Roberts brings a reputation for building winning programs and developing student-athletes on and off the court. Known for emphasizing discipline, teamwork, and community engagement, he has consistently helped players achieve academic success while competing at a high level. Belhaven officials say his leadership will strengthen the team's competitive edge and foster a culture preparing players for life beyond basketball.

PATRICK ROBEY joins Belhaven as the Head Baseball Coach after 10 seasons at Madison Central High School, where he led the Jaguars to three state championships, most recently the 2025 MHSAA 7A title at Trustmark Park. In 2021, his team was named Baseball America's High School Team of the Year, and he was named National High School Baseball Coaches Association Coach of the Year.



Robey also coached at Lafayette County and South Panola high schools and held assistant roles at Delta State and East Central Community College.

"I've followed and respected Patrick's work for years, both his track record with player development and his competitive success," said Vice President and Director of Athletics Scott Little.

Robey brings a reputation for cultivating both talent and character, emphasizing discipline, teamwork, and academic achievement alongside athletic success. Belhaven officials expect his leadership to strengthen the baseball program's competitive edge while fostering a supportive environment where student-athletes can grow on and off the field. His proven record of developing players at every level makes him a key addition to the university's athletics leadership team.



JOSEPH DENDY joins the Belhaven Blazers as the new Head Men's Golf Coach. In addition to his role at the helm of the Blazers' golf program, Dendy will also serve as the department's Director of Game Day Operations.

Dendy joins the Blazers' staff from Hinds Community College, where he has served as a Volunteer Assistant Coach for the Eagles' golf team as well as an Assistant Golf Professional for the school's golf course facility since September 2024. Dendy helped the Hinds program to a trio of top-six finishes across the 2024-25 campaign.

"I am happy to welcome Joseph to Belhaven as our new Head Men's Golf Coach and Director of Game Day Operations," said Director of Athletics Scott Little. "His background and experience will serve us well in leading our young men and giving administrative direction to event hosting across our eighteen sports programs."

Prior to his time at Hinds, Dendy was an instructor at Clear Creek Golf Club in Bovina, Mississippi where he served as a swing coach for eight collegiate golfers and two playing professionals. He also spent time at Bay Pointe Golf Club in Brandon where he assisted with the club's junior camps.

Ellie Jones

COLLEGIATE CONFERENCE
OF THE SOUTH

WOMAN of the YEAR



Ellie Jones, standout softball player and recent Belhaven University graduate, has been named the 2025 Collegiate Conference of the South (CCS) Woman of the Year, honoring her excellence in athletics, academics, leadership, and service. A four-year star for the Blazers, Jones becomes the second consecutive Belhaven student-athlete to receive the award, following Kennedy Carruth in 2024.

“It is truly a privilege to honor this year's CCS Man and Woman of the Year recipients. Their success both on the field and in their communities sets a powerful example for others,” said CCS Commissioner Beth Vansant.

A recent Belhaven graduate, Jones excelled in all areas of student-athlete life. She set single-season records in batting average (.519), slugging percentage (.939), and on-base percentage (.571) in 2025, also leading the league in slugging. Over her career, she ranked in Belhaven's top five for home runs (34), RBIs (159), total bases (377), batting average (.397), runs (143), and hits (227). In 2024, she helped lead the Blazers to their first NCAA Division III Women's College World Series, finishing as national runner-up. Jones was named 2025 CCS Player of the Year, earned All-Region honors twice, was a 2022 NFCA All-American, and claimed 2022 Freshman of the Year.

Academically, Jones graduated summa cum laude, earning Academic All-American honors in 2025 and the

Matthew 20:28 Award for service and character. She made the Dean's and President's Lists and was active in the American Chemical Society, serving as both a member and officer.

Her service extended throughout the community, volunteering with the Mississippi Children's Museum, We Will Go, the Mississippi Agriculture Museum, and the Mississippi Museum of Natural Science. She also served as a tutor for the math and biology departments, coached youth softball, and assisted with Belhaven camps.

“My athletic career has been one of the greatest opportunities for growth in my leadership capabilities. I truly came to understand leadership without a title,” Jones said.

“Ellie will be remembered in the record books as one of the best to ever play softball at Belhaven,” said Head Coach Kevin Griffin. “Her accomplishments on the field speak for themselves, but I am more proud of who she is off the field.”

Jones has begun her next chapter as she pursues a dentistry degree at the University of Alabama at Birmingham School of Dentistry. 🍌

“
**Ellie will be
remembered in the
record books as one of
the best to ever play
softball at Belhaven.**

-Coach Kevin Griffin-



WESLEY
BLOODWORTH



EBONY
GAYDEN



JORDAN
MARSHALL

A BANNER YEAR *for* BLAZER

BLAZER ATHLETICS DELIVERED ONE OF ITS MOST REMARKABLE ALL-AROUND SEASONS IN SCHOOL HISTORY.

MEN'S SOCCER: CONFERENCE CHAMPIONS & NCAA CONTENDERS

Belhaven Men's Soccer enjoyed a breakthrough 2024–25 campaign that rewrote program history. Projected as a solid contender, the Blazers instead surged into the spotlight with resilience and timely scoring. Forward **Wesley Bloodworth** paced the attack, adding 18 points to the overall Blazer season. Anchored by a disciplined defense and standout goalkeeping, Belhaven produced several dramatic wins that built confidence and energy on campus. Their momentum carried into the postseason, where the Blazers showcased composure and chemistry. The magical run peaked in the CCS Championship, as Belhaven shut out Covenant 2–0, capturing the first league title in school history and earning the program's inaugural NCAA Division III Tournament berth—a landmark achievement that set a new standard for the future.

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL: RISING TO THE OCCASION

Women's Basketball enjoyed a standout season that exceeded preseason expectations. Picked just fifth in the CCS poll, the Blazers instead soared into contention. They finished 15–9 overall and an impressive 12–4 in conference play – the best league record in school history. Along the way they knocked off the league's top teams (Piedmont and Asbury) in thrilling home games, becoming only the third team to beat every conference opponent at least once during the regular season. Senior standouts powered the run. **Ebony Gayden** became just the 16th player in Belhaven women's history to reach 1,000 career points, hitting the milestone in the CCS quarterfinal victory over Huntingdon. Her offensive spark, and others, carried the Blazers to the CCS tournament final. Belhaven held its own for an early lead in the championship game but ultimately fell 64–51 to top-seeded Piedmont.

MEN'S BASKETBALL: PROGRAM RECORD HIGHS

The Blazers finished the regular season as CCS co-champions (11–1 conference) alongside Maryville, earning their first-ever CCS title share at the Division III level. Their 21–4 overall record was the program's best in 15 years, featuring a school-record 16-game win streak from December through mid-February. The team led by Senior **Jordan Marshall** gained 395 points for the Blazers this season. By season's end the Blazers had secured a No. 2 seed and a bye in the conference tournament. In the semifinals, though, the magic finally paused. Belhaven fell 78–66 to No. 3 Huntingdon in a hard-fought game. Despite the loss, the 21–5 final mark represented one of the winningest seasons in program history, and the effort earned the Blazers consideration for an NCAA at-large bid. With Coach Boomer Roberts having joined the team as Head Coach, he is setting a new standard for success giving fans much anticipation for the upcoming season.

KADE
MAYELLIE
JONESKIMONA
HAYNES

ATHLETICS

BASEBALL: A HISTORIC FIRST

The Belhaven Blazers made history in 2025 with a breakout baseball campaign. They finished with an impressive 34-15 overall record, the best winning percentage since joining NCAA Division III in 2016. The team earned its first-ever NCAA Regional appearance—sweeping through the Webster Regional by defeating Rhodes, nationally ranked Webster, and MSOE—and advanced all the way to the Super Regional round of the NCAA Division III Championship. With pitcher **Kade May** leading the charge, in their Super Regional matchup, the Blazers faced a tough No. 2 Denison squad. The team fell short, bringing their historic season to a close. Belhaven's 2025 season marked a major milestone, setting a new standard for excellence in program history. As the Blazers look ahead to building on this success, Coach Patrick Robey has joined as the new head baseball coach. Robey brings a strong reputation for leadership and player development to guide the program into its next chapter.

SOFTBALL: BLAZERS REACH NCAA TOURNAMENT

Belhaven Softball capped another historic season adding the 2025 season amongst the ranks of many recent successful years. With a 32-9 overall record and a 14-2 mark in Collegiate Conference of the South play, they captured the CCS Tournament championship and earned their fifth straight NCAA Tournament berth (blazers.belhaven.edu). The Blazers opened the NCAA Marshall Regional with a dominant run-rule victory before falling in the semifinals, closing one of the most successful seasons in program history. Senior first baseman **Ellie Jones**, who delivered one of the finest individual seasons ever for Belhaven softball. Jones shattered program records with a .519 batting average, .939 slugging percentage, and 13 home runs, earning recognition as a First Team NFCA All-American. Together, the 2025 Blazers and Jones set a new standard of excellence, giving Belhaven fans a season to remember.

TRACK AND FIELD: SPEED, STRENGTH, AND CHAMPIONSHIPS

Belhaven Track and Field built momentum throughout the 2024-25 campaign, producing championship performances across both men's and women's squads. On the men's side, **Neal Terry** claimed league titles in the high jump, long jump, and triple jump on his way to being named CCS Field Athlete of the Meet and Overall Athlete of the Year, while relay teams added crucial podium finishes to secure a third-place team standing. The women's team delivered its own fireworks, highlighted by **Kimona Haynes**, who swept the CCS sprint titles in the 100m, 200m, and 400m, while also starring on winning relays. Haynes earned the rare trifecta of Track Athlete of the Meet, Overall Athlete of the Meet, and Athlete of the Year, cementing her place among the conference's elite. With multiple All-Conference honors, record-setting times, and strong postseason results, the Blazers confirmed their rising status as a track and field powerhouse.

Welcoming NEW FULL-TIME FACULTY



Dr. Kaye Wilson-Anderson, a Mississippi Delta native, is a Professor of Nursing and Director of Pre-licensure BSN in the School of Nursing. She holds a D.N.S. from Louisiana State University, an M.S.N. from the

University of Mississippi, and a B.S.N. from Delta State University. With expertise in women's health, she has practiced nationally and internationally, leading healthcare teams. Her scholarly work focuses on trauma-informed nursing practices, and she has developed the "Memory Book" tool for children dealing with trauma. She previously taught at Mississippi College, the University of Mississippi Medical Center, the University of Portland, and George Fox College.



Dr. Wendy Celoria is an Assistant Professor of Counseling. She holds a B.S. from William Carey University, dual M.A. degrees from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, and a Ph.D. from Liberty University.

A Licensed Professional Counselor and Board-Certified Supervisor in Mississippi, Dr. Celoria brings two decades of experience in intensive inpatient care, specializing in addictions, eating disorders, trauma, and body image work. She is also highly skilled in family therapy and actively supervises future counseling professionals while maintaining her clinical practice.



Ms. Zoey Ainsworth is a Specialty Instructor of Fashion Merchandising in the School of Business. She holds a B.S. and M.S. in Fashion Design and Merchandising from Mississippi State University.

Ainsworth earned third place for her Sustainable Smart Textiles Personal Protective Equipment project, demonstrating her innovative approach to functional fashion design. Her teaching philosophy emphasizes project-based learning and real-world application. She aims to cultivate a Christ-centered program that nurtures students professionally and spiritually.



Dr. Robert Channell is an Associate Professor of Biology. He holds a Ph.D. from Jackson State University and M.S. and B.S. degrees from the University of Southern Mississippi. Before joining Belhaven, he spent

over two decades at Copiah-Lincoln Community College teaching biology courses while coaching multiple sports. His coaching excellence earned him NJCAA Regional Coach of the Year (2019) and the Howell Garner High Performance Award (2016). Dr. Channell teaches Anatomy and Physiology and General Biology, emphasizing God's creation through biological principles.



Dr. Willie Benson is an Assistant Professor and Chair of Information Technology in the School of Business. He holds two bachelor's degrees (Jackson State University and American InterContinental University),

a master's from American InterContinental University, and a Ph.D. from Jackson State University. With over 30 years of IT experience, including military service as an Information Systems Officer, Dr. Benson has held executive roles like Chief Information Officer and IT Director. He also manages the International Graduate Program, which has grown to over 700 students.



Dr. Katrina "Miki" McCann is an Assistant Professor in the School of Education. She holds an Ed.D. in Educational Administration from William Carey University and multiple degrees from Delta State University. Dr. McCann brings over

25 years of public education experience, including 17 years as Principal of Bovina Elementary School in Vicksburg, Mississippi. Under her leadership, the school was repeatedly recognized as Warren County's "Best Elementary School" and earned Lighthouse and Legacy School status from Franklin Covey. She was named District Administrator of the Year three times and received the Governor's Award of Distinction.



Dr. Zonzie McLaurin serves as Professor and Chair of the Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) program in the School of Business. She holds a D.H.A. from the University of Mississippi Medical Center, an M.P.H. from Walden University, and a B.H.S.A. from Baker College. With over three decades of healthcare leadership experience, Dr. McLaurin secured over \$54 million in funding during her 28 years at the University of Mississippi Medical Center. As CEO of her consulting firm since 2020, she has generated over \$20 million in revenue growth. Dr. McLaurin has delivered 500+ speaking engagements and hosts the internationally-recognized podcast "Powerful Purpose."



Dr. Jean Marks, Ph.D., R.N., AGPCNPBC, is an Associate Professor in the School of Nursing with an impressive career spanning nursing education and practice. She earned her Ph.D. in Nursing Leadership from the University of Southern Mississippi in 2020 and multiple post-master's certificates as a nurse practitioner. Marks has extensive teaching experience at several Mississippi universities, including the University of Southern Mississippi and Belhaven University. She uniquely began her career as a music therapist with a Bachelor of Music degree before being called to nursing in the mid-1990s while caring for a terminally ill friend. Her research focuses on character traits that facilitate exemplary nurse formation, and she has received multiple teaching excellence awards throughout her distinguished career.



Dr. Jarrod Mau is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Mathematics and Computer Science. He earned his Ph.D. and M.S. in Mathematical Sciences/Mathematics from Utah State University and his B.S. from Weber State University. His research focuses on Neural Networks, Differential Equations, Machine Learning, and Optimization. Previously, he taught at Weber State University and USU while participating in interdisciplinary research projects. At Belhaven, he teaches undergraduate mathematics and computer science courses, emphasizing applied mathematics, programming, and machine learning.



Dr. Mariana Sá is an Associate Professor in the Biology Department. She holds a B.S. degree in Biological Sciences from the Federal University of Paraiba and earned both master's and doctorate degrees from the Federal University of Rio Grande do Norte. She specializes in fungal biology, taxonomy, and proteomics. Her extensive teaching experience includes seven years at the University Center of João Pessoa, covering cellular and molecular biology, biochemistry, microbiology, immunology, and genetics. She completed postdoctoral fellowships at Mackenzie Presbyterian University and the University of Guelph in Canada.



Dr. Brittany Singleton is an Assistant Professor of Education in the School of Education. She holds an Ed.D. from Tennessee State University, an Ed.S. and M.Ed. from Mississippi College, and a B.A. from Tougaloo College. Dr. Singleton is a prolific contributor to educational discourse through numerous blog posts, podcast appearances, and webinar presentations on topics like professional development, change management, and inclusive learning. Her expertise spans curriculum design, culturally responsive teaching, and technology integration, strongly focusing on creating inclusive, faith-based learning environments.



Dr. Sabrina Song is an Assistant Professor of Accounting and Director of the China Programs. She holds a D.B.A. from Belhaven University and an M.B.A. and B.S. in Accounting from Mississippi College. With nearly a decade of professional accounting experience across public firms, corporations, and state government, she bridges theory and practice in her teaching. Dr. Song is a licensed CPA in Mississippi and continues serving her community with accounting and tax guidance while fostering global perspectives in business education through international program development.



Dr. Ben Wiggershaus is an Assistant Professor of Biblical Studies who earned his Ph.D. from Asbury Theological Seminary, an M.A. from Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, and a B.A. from the University of Cincinnati. He brings expertise in Old Testament studies, pastoral ministry, and Reformed theological faith to the Biblical Studies and Ministry Department. Dr. Wiggershaus teaches Old and New Testament studies, hermeneutics, and Christian doctrine. Previously serving at Palmetto Hills Presbyterian Church (PCA) in South Carolina, he is pursuing ordination with the Presbyterian Church in America.

Future Educators Gain Flexible Path to Mississippi Classrooms with Belhaven's New Online Program



Belhaven University is impacting Mississippi's teacher shortage with the launch of a fully online K-6 Elementary Teacher Education Preparation Program. This new option gives future educators across the state a flexible, high-quality path to the classroom without the need to attend on-campus classes.

Created in response to Mississippi's ongoing teacher shortage and rising demand for online learning, the program mirrors Belhaven's traditional on-campus offering and includes strong academic support and local field experience opportunities.

"Our goal is to remove barriers for individuals who feel called to teach but need a more accessible path," said Dr. David Hand, Belhaven University's Dean of the School of Education. "We are confident that this innovative online Teacher Preparation Program will play a vital role in addressing Mississippi's elementary teacher shortage. It also opens the door for individuals who are unable to attend a traditional campus-based program."

Belhaven University created the online program in response to Mississippi's teacher shortage, a new partnership with the state's community colleges, and the increasing demand for flexible, remote teacher preparation options among prospective educators across the state.

Hand points out that a degree in elementary education can open the door to a variety of rewarding careers in the field of education and beyond. Graduates of Belhaven's online bachelor's program are prepared to become licensed K-6 classroom teachers, shaping young minds in Mississippi's public and private schools.

Beyond traditional teaching roles, this degree also provides a strong foundation for careers such as reading specialists, curriculum coordinators, education consultants, instructional coaches, children's ministry, nonprofit education programs, and more.

The program is available exclusively to Mississippi residents. Belhaven will partner with local school districts, principals, and clinical educators to facilitate the required field and internship experiences in each candidate's community.

This new offering builds on the university's success with its online Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) Alternate Route program. According to Hand, it has already helped hundreds of teachers enter the profession. "Our experience and success with the MAT Alternate Route program have demonstrated the effectiveness of online education, and it serves as a supportive model for our new undergraduate offering," observed Hand. 🍌

Our goal is to remove barriers for individuals who feel called to teach but need a more accessible path.

-DR. DAVID HAND-

For more information: gobelhaven.com/elementary-education-online



BELHAVEN UNIVERSITY LAUNCHES APPLIED AI MASTER OF SCIENCE & GRADUATE CERTIFICATE



Mississippi's first fully online Master of Science in Applied Artificial Intelligence and a new Graduate Certificate in Applied Artificial Intelligence have been launched by Belhaven University, giving professionals flexible pathways to gain cutting-edge AI skills and leadership training. The initiative is supported in part by a \$389,600 grant from Governor Tate Reeves' Mississippi AI Talent Accelerator Program (MAI-TAP), underscoring the state's commitment to growing its AI workforce.

Both programs come at a pivotal moment as artificial intelligence reshapes industries and Mississippi makes historic investments in AI education and workforce development.

"Artificial intelligence is reshaping our world, and these programs couldn't come at a more pivotal time," said Dr. Brett Andrews, dean of the School of Business at Belhaven University. "Instead of being replaced by AI, our graduates learn to lead with it—staying relevant, competitive, and confident in the future of work."

Master of Science in Applied Artificial Intelligence

The 10-course master's program prepares students for high-demand careers in technology, healthcare, finance, manufacturing, and beyond. Students gain hands-on experience with industry-standard tools such as Python, TensorFlow, PyTorch, OpenCV, and scikit-learn. A capstone project allows them to apply these skills to real-world business challenges.

Graduates will be equipped for careers including AI specialist, machine learning engineer, natural language processing engineer, and business intelligence analyst. The program welcomes students from diverse backgrounds such as business, computer science, engineering, and data analytics.

"As Mississippi makes landmark investments—over \$37 million in AI education grants, an NVIDIA partnership to train 10,000 residents, billions of dollars in data center construction, and targeted state policies—it's clear we're laying the foundation for the next generation of tech leaders," Andrews said.

Graduate Certificate in Applied Artificial Intelligence

The four-course, 12-credit graduate certificate provides a fast-track option for professionals who want to strengthen their resumes with an AI credential but may not have a programming background. Courses apply directly toward Belhaven's master's degrees in Applied Artificial Intelligence and Data Science, giving students the flexibility to continue their education.

Students learn how to integrate generative AI into daily workflows, manage organizational transformation, and evaluate the ethical impact of AI adoption. Graduates position themselves as leaders guiding teams through technological change while demonstrating responsible AI leadership.

By offering both a graduate certificate and a master's program, Belhaven equips professionals at every stage of their career to thrive in an AI-driven economy.

"With these programs, students aren't just preparing for successful careers—they're stepping into roles shaping the future of AI in Mississippi and beyond," Andrews said. Applications are now open for both the Master of Science in Applied Artificial Intelligence and the Graduate Certificate in Applied Artificial Intelligence. 🍌

“
INSTEAD OF BEING
REPLACED BY AI, OUR
GRADUATES LEARN
TO LEAD WITH IT—
STAYING RELEVANT,
COMPETITIVE, AND
CONFIDENT IN THE
FUTURE OF WORK.

—Dr. Brett Andrews—

SCAN
TO
LEARN
MORE!



gobelhaven.com/appliedai

BELHAVEN WELCOMES TWO NEW DEANS



DR. TANGIE HALES
PROFESSOR AND DEAN OF THE
SCHOOL OF NURSING

Dr. Tangie Hales, an esteemed scholar and leader, plays a transformative role in the realm of nursing education. Dr. Hales earned her Ph.D. in Nursing Leadership from the University of Southern Mississippi in 2015.

Since joining Belhaven University in 2021, Dr. Hales has assumed the pivotal role of Director of the Traditional Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) Program and then on to Dean of Nursing. With over 20 years of diverse nursing experience, including 13 years dedicated to nursing education, Dr. Hales is not only a seasoned professional but a passionate and innovative nurse educator. Her expertise, situated at the nexus of medical-surgical nursing and research, is marked by a dedicated focus on addressing health disparities, demonstrating her commitment to advancing healthcare equity.

Dr. Hales is an alumna of Leadership Mississippi (2018) and the Mississippi Nurses Leadership Institute (2018), showcasing her commitment to leadership development. In 2023, she achieved the distinguished title of National League for Nursing LEAD Fellow, a testament to her exceptional leadership in nursing education at a national level. Highly recognized for her unwavering dedication to advancing nursing practice, education, and leadership, Dr. Hales, as a trailblazer, aspires to inspire the next generation of nursing professionals at Belhaven University and beyond. 🌟



DR. CLAY NORTON
DEAN OF FACULTY
FOR THE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

Dr. J. Clay Norton, a Belhaven University alumnus and respected educator, joined the university this fall as Dean of Faculty for the School of Education. Norton brings over 20 years of experience in K-12 and higher education, along with deep ties to the Belhaven community.

A 1994 graduate with a B.S. in Mathematics, Norton has served as an adjunct professor at Belhaven since 2017. He holds an Ed.D. in Educational Leadership from Mississippi College, with research focused on risk management in high school athletics. His career spans roles as a teacher, coach, and athletic director.

“Clay’s commitment to academic rigor, program growth, and servant leadership aligns perfectly with our mission,” said Belhaven President Dr. Roger Parrott. “We’re excited to welcome him in this new capacity.”

Dr. Audrey Kelleher, Provost and VP for Academic Affairs, added, “Dr. Norton brings a unique blend of practical experience, scholarly insight, and spiritual maturity. His leadership will help prepare educators who lead with excellence and purpose.”

A National Board-Certified Teacher, Norton is also a frequent conference speaker and author on topics of coaching and leadership. He writes about personal growth and integrity in his blog, The Book Chamber. 🌟

BELHAVEN UNIVERSITY EARNs NATIONAL ACCOLADES



Two Generations, One Story

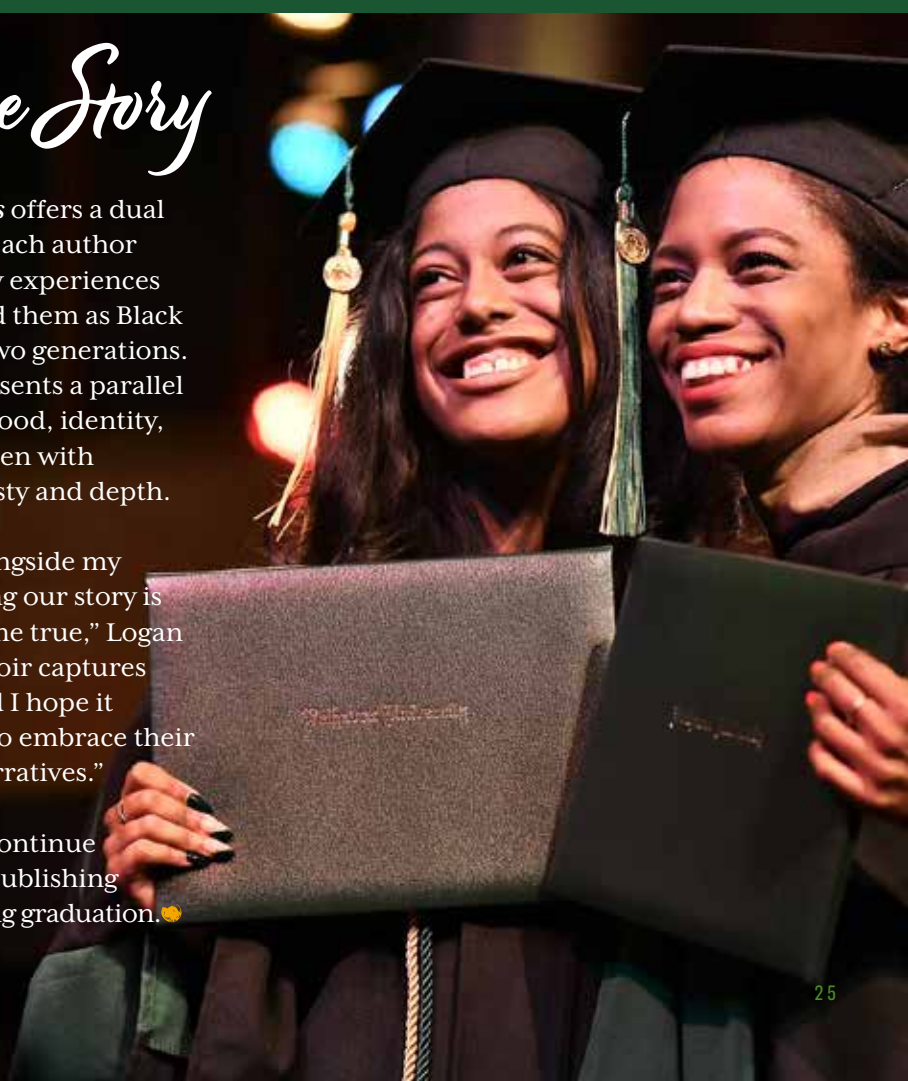
Belhaven University awarded degrees to mother and daughter Olivia Omega and Malia Logan during its spring commencement. The pair marked the occasion by launching their co-written memoir, *Through Her Eyes*.

Omega, 46, received her Master of Business Administration in Entrepreneurship. She previously earned a marketing degree from the University of Colorado Boulder. Logan, 22, graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Creative Writing. She is an Angie Thomas Writers Scholar and the author of four fiction titles.

Through Her Eyes offers a dual narrative, with each author reflecting on key experiences that have shaped them as Black women across two generations. The memoir presents a parallel look at motherhood, identity, and legacy, written with emotional honesty and depth.

"Graduating alongside my mom and sharing our story is like a dream come true," Logan said. "This memoir captures our journey, and I hope it inspires others to embrace their generational narratives."

Logan plans to continue working in the publishing industry following graduation.



DR. STACEY DONALDSON ELECTED VICE PRESIDENT OF AMTESOL



Dr. Stacey Donaldson, associate professor and director of the TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) program at Belhaven University, has been elected vice president of the board of directors for AMTESOL (Alabama-Mississippi Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages).

Donaldson has served on the AMTESOL board for the past two years as a Mississippi Member at Large, presenting at conferences, reviewing proposals, and participating in board meetings. In her new role, she will co-chair the 2026 AMTESOL Conference in Flowood, Mississippi, at the Sheraton Refuge Hotel.

“This opportunity allows me to contribute to the professional growth of educators who work with English learners while representing Belhaven in the wider TESOL community,” Donaldson said.

Donaldson joined Belhaven in 2022 to establish its TESOL program. Working with an advisory team of adjunct professors, she developed the five-course curriculum and authored its Intercultural Competence and Assessment course. The Mississippi Department of Education approved the program in 2023.

In addition to her work with AMTESOL, Donaldson recently represented Belhaven at the National Teacher Leadership Conference in Orlando, Florida, presenting “Demystifying Culturally Responsive Teaching.”

“Congratulations to Dr. Donaldson for being named vice president of the AMTESOL Board of Directors,” said Dr. Audrey Kelleher, provost and vice president for academic affairs. “Her leadership and dedication to advancing TESOL education are truly inspiring.”

Donaldson earned her Ph.D. in Education from Walden University, an M.A.T. from William Carey University, and a B.A. from the University of Southern Mississippi. A National Board-Certified Teacher, she has published and presented widely on teacher leadership, culturally responsive teaching, and educational technology and served in leadership roles in multiple

professional organizations. She is also a Make-A-Wish Ambassador and a member of Golden Key International Honour Society. 🍌

DR. BRANDON MAGERS NAMED MERIC CHAIR

Dr. Brandon Magers will lead a new statewide council focused on expanding research opportunities at Mississippi’s emerging universities.



The Mississippi Emerging Research Institution Council (MERIC) elected Magers as its inaugural chair during its first conference on July 24 at the University of Mississippi. He will serve a one-year term.

“It’s an honor to serve as the inaugural chair of MERIC and to represent Belhaven University in this collaborative initiative,” said Magers, professor of chemistry

and chair of Belhaven's Department of Chemistry and Physics. "This role gives me the opportunity to help shape the research culture at institutions like ours and ensure that our faculty and students have access to the support they need to elevate their work and impact."

MERIC represents 11 of Mississippi's four-year universities, excluding the state's four largest—Mississippi State, Ole Miss, Southern Miss, and Jackson State—which are part of the Mississippi Research Consortium (MRC).

MERIC aims to strengthen research efforts at institutions where research is not the primary mission. The council supports faculty and students by sharing resources, creating collaboration opportunities and advocating for research engagement across disciplines.

Magers said MERIC's mission aligns with Belhaven's commitment to academic excellence. "Belhaven students benefit directly from MERIC's work because it opens doors to new research opportunities, interdisciplinary collaborations, and grant support that wouldn't otherwise be available," he said. "As chair, I'm especially excited to create pathways for undergraduate students in Mississippi to engage in research."

Magers brings many years of experience leading undergraduate research efforts and faculty-driven initiatives at Belhaven. Under his leadership, MERIC plans to build a stronger foundation for innovation

and collaboration across the state's emerging research institutions. 🍌

DR. RANDALL SMITH AWARDED EDITOR'S CHOICE AWARD



Dr. Randall Smith, chair of Belhaven University's Creative Writing Department, has been awarded the Editor's Choice Award for Fiction by *Relief: A Journal of Art and Faith*.

Smith's short story, "Big John, Mary, and the Ruby of Great Price," was recently published in *Relief*, a national literary journal. Founded more than a decade ago, *Relief* publishes writers and artists who chronicle the mysteries, meanings, and complexities of human experience from a faith perspective.

"The Editor's Choice Award for Fiction is such an encouragement to me," Smith said. "I've always

thought of myself as a poet—not a fiction writer. Aaron Housholder's gracious praise has strengthened my resolve to keep working on the short story collection I started this past year."

Aaron Housholder, fiction editor of *Relief*, described Smith's winning story as a narrative masterpiece. "It could be said that every good story casts its own sort of magical spell, that indeed, a story isn't a story until it does so," Housholder said. "I was enchanted by no piece more than by my Editor's Choice this year: Randy Smith's 'Big John, Mary, and the Ruby of Great Price.' The language folds over on itself in surprising, sometimes startling fashion; the narrative voice dances with artful whimsy and ancient sincerity. The story not only survives but thrives within its own playful, brilliant conceit. And better: it makes me want to pick up pen and paper and try to write a whimsical and weighty story of my own. I can give no higher praise."

Smith has taught at Belhaven University for more than two decades, mentoring generations of young writers in poetry, fiction, and creative nonfiction. His award-winning work reflects the university's commitment to the intersection of faith, imagination, and the arts. 🍌





MISSISSIPPI ARTS COMMISSION AWARDS GRANTS TO THREE BELHAVEN ART & DESIGN FACULTY

The Mississippi Arts Commission has awarded grants to three faculty members in Belhaven University's Art and Design Department, recognizing their creative excellence and impact on the state's arts community.



Brittany Davis



Nate Theisen



Amelia Key

Belhaven's nationally-accredited Art and Design Department prepares students for successful creative careers by uniting technical skill, conceptual depth, and a Christ-centered perspective. With a strong emphasis on mentorship, professional development, and

The commission awarded Assistant Professor Brittany Davis and adjunct faculty member Amelia Key a 2026 Artist Fellowship Grant. Associate Professor and Co-Chair Nate Theisen received a 2026 Artist Mini-Grant. These grants support artists of high artistic merit and help fund the creation of new work and foster professional and artistic development.

"These awards highlight the extraordinary talent within our department," said Dr. Audrey Kelleher, Belhaven University's Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs.

"Brittany, Nate, and Amelia exemplify the creative excellence, dedication, and Christ-centered vision that define Belhaven's Art and Design program. We are proud to see their artistry recognized and celebrated across Mississippi."

The Mississippi Arts Commission is a state agency that supports artists and arts organizations through grants and services. Its annual artist awards encourage creative growth and recognize the cultural contributions of artists across Mississippi.

innovation, the program equips graduates to make meaningful contributions to the arts community regionally, nationally, and globally. 🍌



See their art and others' like it at Bitsy Irby Gallery! Scan to follow exhibition schedule at Belhaven!



ANGIE THOMAS WRITERS SCHOLARSHIP AWARDED TO OWEN JARVIS

Renowned author Angie Thomas surprised high school senior and aspiring writer Owen Jarvis with a full-ride scholarship to her alma mater, Belhaven University. The emotional moment was recorded during a Zoom call with Thomas, Dr. Randall Smith, chair of Belhaven's Creative Writing Department, and admission representatives.

Named in honor of best-selling author and Belhaven alumna, the Angie Thomas Writers Scholarship covers tuition, room, and board at the university. The scholarship was created by Belhaven University to help young aspiring writers who need extra support to make their dreams of authorship a reality.

Jarvis, from Pelham, Alabama, believed he was in the final round of interviews

when Thomas appeared on screen with good news. "I was blown away – it was quite the ambush," said Jarvis. "I was expecting an interview and was worried. I couldn't be more relieved when Angie told me I won. It was depending on the scholarship because my family can't afford most major colleges. I'm just so thankful. This scholarship is a true blessing!"

Thomas responded, "I have to say, I was that student too. My family couldn't afford much, and we struggled a lot, even during my time at Belhaven. It's truly an honor to know that this need has been met for you."



Jarvis was selected because of his creative writing submissions. His work was reviewed by both Thomas and Smith. Thomas said, "I read your submission, and it was wonderful! I have no doubt that the creative writing department is gaining a wonderful student. I can't wait to see what you do."

Smith highlighted his writing and said, "Owen is exactly the kind of writer we want in the BFA program. His stories—where setting, situation, and character are unique and intertwined—are a testament to a writer who has accomplished much already and who holds much promise for the future." 🍷



BELHAVEN UNIVERSITY 93rd ANNUAL *Singing* CHRISTMAS TREE

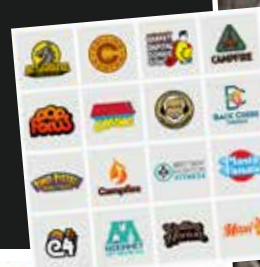
DECEMBER 5 & 6, 2025
FRIDAY & SATURDAY
AT 7:30PM

THE ICONIC ART OF

McKinney, an Atlanta-based freelance artist and Belhaven graduate, presented a dynamic collection of movie posters he designed, including imaginative takes on cinematic giants like Star Wars and Indiana Jones. His bold illustrative style, rich color palettes, and eye for storytelling gave fresh perspective to these legendary franchises, offering viewers both nostalgia and new discovery.

The exhibition opened with a gallery talk on August 22, where McKinney shared insights into his creative process and career journey. He also led an interactive masterclass for aspiring artists, highlighting how design can both serve the film industry and inspire broader audiences. Visitors gathered for an opening reception on August 23, celebrating the power of visual art to connect generations through iconic stories.

The exhibition highlighted McKinney's growing reputation across the Southeast. For McKinney, creativity is more than craft—it is, as he notes, “a way to enrich lives and make the world more enjoyable.” 🍌



BELHAVEN THEATRE ^{2025 - 2026} Schedule



SEPTEMBER 18-27, 2025

The Drowning Girls

by BETH GRAHAM, CHARLIE TOMLINSON
& DANIELA VLASKALIC

OCTOBER 30-
NOVEMBER 8, 2025

Seussical



by STEPHEN FLAHERTY
& LYNN AHRENS
BASED ON THE WORKS
of DR. SEUSS



FESTIVAL of SHORTS

November 19-20, 2025

12



^{FEB. 19-28, 2026} ~~ANGRY~~ JURORS

Adapted by Sherman L. Sergel
Based on the Emmy Award-winning
television movie by Reginald Rose

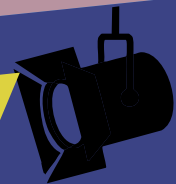


A DOUBLE-BILLING OF ONE ACT PLAYS:

Bags & Relative Strangers

Bags by Annie V. McGravie | Relative Strangers by Sheri Wilner | March 25-28, 2026

A Night of **BROADWAY**



APRIL 17-18, 2026

For ticket info and show times contact: boxoffice@belhaven.edu
CENTER FOR THE ARTS | BLACKBOX THEATRE
gobelhaven.com/theatre-25

Belhaven hosts

Project Dance JACKSON

Dancers from across the U.S. descended upon Belhaven University for a three-day conference called Project Dance Jackson. The culmination of the conference was a free outdoor concert held October 4th at The Den at LeFleur's Bluff Playground by the Mississippi Children's Museum.

The day-long performance drew an enthusiastic crowd and showcased ballet, jazz, modern, hip-hop, and tap by Open Sky Arts Collective (Dallas), Ad Deum Dance (Houston), Enoch Contemporary Ballet (Athens, TN), Glorify Performing Arts (PA), Ballet Magnificat! (Jackson), Belhaven University, and others. Audience

members described the event as both entertaining and deeply moving, with artists using dance to communicate messages of hope and encouragement.

The conference also included master classes, an industry expo, auditions, networking, and inspirational sessions, offering dancers the chance to refine their craft while connecting with peers and professionals. Jackson joined more than 30 international cities—including London, Singapore, Sydney, and New York—that have hosted Project Dance.

Krista Bower, Belhaven's dean of the School of Fine Arts, said the weekend

accomplished its goal of community-building. "The experience was life-changing for many participants," she reflected. "It reminded us that dance can unite people of different backgrounds while celebrating the joy of creativity and faith."

Participants left Jackson inspired, carrying with them not only stronger technical skills but also a renewed sense of purpose in their artistry. Many expressed hopes that Project Dance will become an annual tradition in the city, further establishing Jackson as a hub for creativity and cultural exchange. 🍌



BELHAVEN ALUMS DEBUT KIDNEY DONATION DOCUMENTARY

Belhaven alums Ashley and R.D. Chisholm ('14) are using storytelling to save lives with their newly-released documentary *Clear the List*.



After Ashley received a life-saving kidney transplant in 2019, the couple founded Pioneer Productions and turned their personal journey into a broader mission: to shine a light on the urgent need for living kidney donors in Mississippi.

Through a deeply personal and faith-driven lens, *Clear the List* captures the raw and moving stories behind a historic 14-person kidney exchange at the University of Mississippi Medical Center—the largest living donor chain in the state's history. With a minimalist crew and an extraordinary level of trust, the Chisholms were granted rare access into hospital rooms, prayer circles, and the hearts of patients, families, and medical staff alike.

Premiering to a sold-out crowd in Jackson, the film is already sparking change. *Clear the List* doesn't just

document—it advocates. By highlighting disparities in access, especially in Black communities, the Chisholms are helping to “clear the list” of those waiting for life-saving transplants.



More than a film, it's a call to action rooted in service, faith, and the belief that every story has the power to save a life. 🍎

ALUM IJANEE NETTER ACCEPTED TO PRESTIGIOUS TIN HOUSE

Belhaven University is proud to announce that recent graduate Ijanee Netter ('25) has been accepted into the highly-selective Tin House Summer Workshop for Fiction, one of the most prestigious writing programs in the country.

The workshop, which accepts only about 10 percent of applicants (roughly 140 out of 1,400), is by invitation only. Writers must submit samples of their work as part of the competitive application process.

Netter, who earned her Bachelor of Fine Arts in Creative Writing at Belhaven, has also been waitlisted for the New York University graduate program in creative writing and is currently awaiting decisions from several other top graduate schools.

Dr. Randall Smith, Chair of the Creative Writing Department at Belhaven, praised Netter's talent and promise as a writer. “She is

one of the most gifted writers I have taught in the BFA in Creative Writing at Belhaven University over the past twenty-five years,” said Smith. “In terms of her ability to



craft memorable characters and compelling plot structures, Ijanee reminds me of one of our most famous graduates, Angie Thomas.” Smith added, “Ijanee also creates lyrical prose in her fiction (akin to the work of Jesmyn Ward) which complements her already fantastic, urgent, and believable characters set on inevitable arcs toward crisis and change. Ijanee does all of this in a seemingly effortless way. I don't think she really knows how gifted she is as a writer, but that innocence and her natural humility also make her very teachable.”

In addition, Netter is a bright scholar, consummate reader, and dedicated member of the writing community at large. During the fall of 2023, Netter attended the Fiftieth Anniversary Phillis Wheatley Poetry Festival at Jackson State University where she listened to and learned from writers such as Alice Walker, Sonia Sanchez, Jesmyn Ward, and Angie Thomas, among others.

Belhaven University celebrates Netter's accomplishments and looks forward to her continued success as a writer and scholar. 🍎

BELHAVEN ALUM DESIGNS U.S. MINT MEDAL FOR NATION'S 250th ANNIVERSARY



Belhaven University alumna Kathryn Hudson ('07) has been selected as a lead designer for the U.S. Mint's upcoming 250th anniversary coin and medal set, set to release in 2026.



Hudson, a member of the U.S. Mint's Artistic Infusion Program, designed the silver medal included in the limited-edition Best of the Mint Coin and Medal Set. Her initials, KH, appear on both sides of the medal, which honors a defining era in American history—1916 to 1945—with powerful symbolism.

For Hudson, the project is a milestone in a career shaped by her time at Belhaven. Born in the Mississippi Delta, Kathryn went on to achieve her B.A. from Belhaven University where she graduated with honors. She then went on to receive her master's in illustration from Savannah College of Art and Design in 2007.

Kathryn and her husband moved to Atlanta, Georgia, in 2013, where she landed a job as a character designer for Floyd County Productions, working on the show *Archer* among other projects. 🍷

ALUM IMPACTING JACKSON THROUGH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Gabriel Prado ('13) is one of the entrepreneurs fueling Mississippi's momentum. In 2021, he launched Pracon Global Investments, a firm focused on undervalued assets and transformational companies across Real Estate, Agriculture, Technology, Energy, Finance, Healthcare, and Automotive.

Gabriel came to Belhaven from Mexico in 2007, encouraged by his father, Don Gabriel. After college, he spent more than five years with the Mississippi Development Authority, working with the Governor's office to build relationships with businesses worldwide. That experience gave him the tools to lead Pracon's wide-ranging ventures.

One of his most visible accomplishments has been bringing the first Topgolf to Mississippi. Many doubted the project, yet it became the company's fastest build nationwide. Gabriel credits Mississippi's business-friendly culture and



strong community values for making such projects possible.

Family remains central to his work. Before his father passed, he shared a dream of owning small family stores. Inspired, Gabriel began purchasing closed convenience stores across Jackson and in small towns throughout Mississippi. Today, his "Don Gabriel Markets" number more than 20, revitalizing neighborhoods

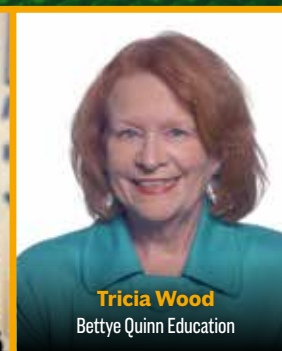
and supporting local economies.

"Mississippi is a great friend to business," Gabriel says. "Where it might take two years to open an ice cream shop in California, here local leadership bends over backwards to help. Everything is done with an eye on families, and business relationships are treated like family, too."

Through Pracon and his ventures, Gabriel Prado is proving Mississippi's growth story is just beginning. 🍷

BELHAVEN UNIVERSITY

ALUMNI *Award* RECIPIENTS



**SCAN TO LEARN
MORE ABOUT THEIR
ACCOMPLISHMENTS!**

Ten outstanding Belhaven University alumni were honored at the annual Alumni Awards Reception during the week of Homecoming and Family Weekend.

The 2025 Alumni Awards recognize graduates who exemplify the University's mission, "to serve, not to be served," across a variety of categories. Honorees were recognized in three key groups:

•**University Mission Awards:** Alumnus/Alumna of the Year, Young Alumnus of the Year, and Spirit of Belhaven Award highlights those who demonstrate exceptional achievement, servant leadership, and dedication to Belhaven's values.

•**Marketplace Excellence Awards:** Bettie Quinn Education, Business Success, Ministry Influence, Scholarship Excellence, STEM Distinction, Entrepreneurial, and Arts Excellence honors alumni who make significant contributions through their professional fields.

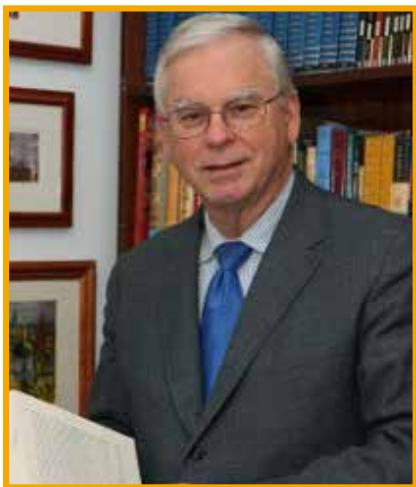
•**Service Awards:** World Service, Church Service, and Community Service recognize alumni whose Christian faith inspire meaningful service locally and globally.

1960

Dr. Bobby Penny ('66) retired in 2022 after 10 years with African Bible College Uganda. He still preaches at pastorless churches almost every Sunday. **Adrienne Penny** ('67) continues custom watercolors.

John Rollo ('68) retired in 2014 after 42 years in missions, preceded by five years of teaching high school math. He resides in Braselton, GA.

Dr. Larry Roff ('69) was honored at the 2024 PCA General Assembly for having served for 50 years as Grand Assembly organist at each year's national meeting.



1970

Mr. Clint Rotenberry ('75), living in Mendenhall, MS, continues his work in real estate and investments while cherishing time with his three daughters and three grandchildren. Though he has eased up on work, he enjoys travel, good friends, and plenty of laughter. These days, he counts his blessings—especially the fond memories of his time at Belhaven.

1980

Dr. Deanna Kuiper Noyes ('83) has dedicated over 25 years to teaching at Dallas Baptist University, where she currently serves as a Professor of Biology. After earning her Ph.D. from the University of Southern Mississippi, she began her teaching career in physics before shifting her focus to environmental biology. Her passion for service led her to take students on mission-based scientific trips to Bangladesh and Jamaica, combining environmental research with outreach efforts. Though a serious accident prevented her return to these areas, she continues to inspire students to use their scientific knowledge to meet the physical and spiritual needs of the people they meet.

Karen (Blankenship) Collins ('85) has been married for 41 years to **John Dexter Collins** ('85). Together, they have five children—three of whom are married—and two proudly serving in the U.S. Navy. Their family continues to grow, now including seven cherished grandchildren.

Karen is a Licensed Clinical Mental Health Counselor (LCMHC) and National Certified Counselor (NCC) with her own practice, Karen



Collins Counseling, PLLC, in Black Mountain, NC. She also gives back by volunteering as a counselor at annual retreats hosted by Thrive Ministry, supporting global women. In addition to her professional and volunteer work, she finds joy in spending time loving on her mother.

Dr. James “Jim” Spiegel ('85), after three decades in higher education teaching philosophy at Taylor University and Hillsdale College, he began work as Executive Director of the Kalos Center in Columbus, Ohio. The Kalos Center is a multi-faceted teaching ministry featuring classes, public forums, and a podcast.



1990

Heather Bradley ('95 and '16) is proud to announce her new role as Senior Development Manager for the American Cancer Society, overseeing initiatives across south Mississippi. Bringing her background in leadership and community engagement to this impactful organization, Heather is eager to strengthen partnerships and drive efforts that support cancer patients, research, and lifesaving programs. She looks forward to working with local communities along the Gulf Coast to make a lasting difference in the fight against cancer.

Toni Otts ('99) has built a dynamic career since graduating from Belhaven with a Bachelor of Arts in 1999. She balances her work at Oceaneering International with life as an artist, singer, and co-owner of an HVAC business with her husband, Scott. Inspired by Belhaven's Christian values and enduring friendships, Toni recently earned a master's in I/O Psychology and was quickly promoted to Leadership Development Specialist after designing and leading several leadership courses. She credits Belhaven for laying the foundation that helped turn her goals into reality.

2000

Roy Thompson ('06 and '09) was awarded AFCA Assistant Coach of the Year in NCAA Division II football and named head coach at Arkansas Tech University, a DII school in Russellville, AR.



In addition to being an alum, Roy has also served as coaching staff for the Belhaven Blazers.

Robin Hayes ('08), thanks to her degree from Belhaven University, has found the ideal pre-retirement PT position as office coordinator for the Florida Federation of Garden Clubs. She manages garden clubs across the state, working alongside dedicated volunteers in a beautiful environment.

2010

Nancy Dickens ('11), in addition to working as a Licensed Professional Counselor in private practice in Madison County, MS, is also a published children's book author and was featured at the 2024 Mississippi Book Festival. *Twinkle the Grand Canyon Mule* book series is available on Amazon and features 4 books which take place in the Grand Canyon and Painted Desert National Parks. These chapter books for young readers instill love of country, problem solving, developing friendships, and finding resilience during difficult situations while learning about our American heritage in our beautiful national parks.



Angela Shannon ('11) joined Trustmark as an Assistant Vice President and Human Resources Business Partner.



2020

Rev. Matt Johnson ('21) recently had his first book, *Shattered but Heard: Five Honest Prayers from Scripture's Deepest Valleys* published and was fortunate to see it rise to become a number one best seller in three different categories. In addition to being a new author, Matt is a minister, leader, speaker,



and educator. He lives with his wife and four children in Arkansas.

Dr. Jemarquise Newell ('21) has successfully defended his dissertation research on Organizational Citizenship Behavior and Intention to Leave in Retail Technology Companies. He resides in Snellville, GA.

Mr. Jesse White ('24) recently celebrated his first year of marriage with **Kaylee (Floyd) White** ('24). He is starting his second year of law school at Mississippi College Law School this fall. They reside in Ridgeland, MS.

Alumni, do you have good news or a life update? We'd love to hear about it!



SCAN THE CODE
AND FOLLOW THE LINK.

THE PASSING OF *Belhaven Family*

ALUMNI, FACULTY, STUDENTS, AND FRIENDS OF BELHAVEN

Thelma Turner Holland, '39
7-30-24

Larry Mills, '61
8-3-24

Gordon Moore, '76
4-20-25

Margie Harrison Buchanan, '48
4-13-25

W. Wilson Benton Jr., '63
1-26-25

Danny Wallace Ross, '78
9-23-24

Maxine McDowell Wilson, '49
7-4-25

Tim Geske, '66
4-10-25

Stephen McCown, '78
10-30-24

Tommie Sue Eaves Hubenthal, '51
2-14-25

Wayne Herring, '68
3-11-25

Gail McAdams Grice, '80
11-27-24

Norma Shafer Gregory, '54
1-22-25

Gale Crawley Hooker, '69
6-17-25

C. Timothy Rich, '80
9-7-24

Peggy Ferguson Phillips, '55
12-5-24

Robert Mahaffey, '71
2-7-2025

Kathy Morris Wakeland, '82
7-19-24

Zelma Blackwell Kennon, '56
9-9-24

Dianne Tinkler Faulk, '72
7-5-25

Curtis Caylor, '83
12-10-24

Jeffie Garrett Hill, '57
1-28-25

Carolyn Gower Stagg, '72
10-18-24

Jane Finley Cavaness, '84
5-30-25

Betty McClendon Braddock, '57
10-14-24

Bruce Harris, '74
3-20-25

Lisa Hibbard Bodkin, '88
2-13-24

Florence Richardson Scott, '60
9-9-24

Dianne Vance Waldron, '74
9-21-24

Kristie Craney Ainsworth, '93
10-9-24

Sally Poole Mills, '61
6-23-25

Sadler Beale McLemore, '75
4-29-25

Cyndi Raney Savage, '93
11-3-24

Jennifer Burrell Richards, '95
12-24-24

Annie Hitsman, '02
9-18-24

Ivadelle Heidke, '02
3-30-25

Laura Hebbler, '03
11-26-24

Charles Thomas, '04
11-27-24

James Ambrose, '06
9-12-24

Lyndsey Moore, '06
7-9-24

Mollie Gratz, '10
8-29-24

India Fowler, '10
7-13-25

Dorothy Daniel, '14
9-17-24

Remembering **Dr. Verne Kennedy, Former President of Belhaven University**

Dr. Verne Kennedy, former president and longtime trustee, entered the LORD's presence on February 28, 2025, at the age of 83. A proud graduate of Belhaven University in 1963, he went on to earn his M.A. and Ph.D. from Louisiana State University before returning to Belhaven as president in 1978. At just 36 years old, he led the University for eight years, leaving an indelible mark through his vision, leadership, and commitment to Christian higher education. Most significantly, he established Belhaven's enduring emphasis on a Christian Worldview—a foundation that continues to define the University today.

Known for his love of photography and outdoor adventure, Dr. Kennedy combined intellect with warmth, inspiring students, faculty, and alumni alike. His dedication to education and mentorship extended far beyond his presidency, continuing throughout his service as a trustee and friend to the Belhaven community. In recognition of his legacy, the University dedicated the Dr. Verne Kennedy Plaza in 2018, a cherished space at the heart of campus featuring Belhaven's signature fountain.

Alumni and friends gathered with his wife, Martie, and the Kennedy family on March 9, 2025, at the Dr. Verne Kennedy Plaza to honor and celebrate his remarkable life, sharing memories and the lasting impact he had on the Belhaven community.



Natalie Black, a vibrant and talented sophomore track and field athlete at Belhaven University, passed away unexpectedly on March 1, 2025, at the age of 19. A native of Terry, Mississippi, Natalie was known for her infectious smile, boundless energy, and unwavering positivity. She was a standout in the triple jump having achieved a personal best of 11.01 meters the Mississippi College Spring Cleaning Classic, where she earned second place.



A special chapel service was held for the campus to talk about Natalie's sudden passing, and a candlelight vigil at the Belhaven track gathered teammates, family, and friends to celebrate her life and legacy.



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