

FRONTIERS

SPARTANBURG METHODIST COLLEGE

smcsc.edu/frontiers

FALL 2024



SMC
LAUNCHES
ONLINE
DEGREE

*to Re-Engage
Stopped Out
Students*





New Years Bring New Opportunities

Every new school year brings opportunity. Opportunity for students to begin or continue their college education. Opportunity for faculty to impart their knowledge to a new group of students. Opportunity for SMC to nurture and develop future leaders and captains of industry.

This year, we are embracing and providing opportunities at a higher level. In this issue, you'll read about numerous opportunities experienced or expected for the SMC community.

First is our partnership with the Spartanburg Academic Movement and OneSpartanburg to provide county residents who started college but never finished the opportunity to complete their degree through the Re:Degree initiative.

Next is our jump into the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA), moving to four-year athletic programs. This move gives our student-athletes the opportunity to finish their bachelor's degree right here at SMC without giving up their athletic careers.

This issue also highlights exciting new opportunities for our bachelor's degree students, with five new B.A. degrees being added.

You'll also read about senior Mauricio Mendoza's summer internship studying the human brain at the Medical University of South Carolina.

We also highlight the great work and accomplishments of our outstanding alumni and incredible faculty. I'm sure you'll enjoy your opportunity to read all about the latest from our SMC community.

Enjoy this year's issue of Frontiers, and thank you for your continued support of SMC.

Sincerely,

W. Scott Cochran
President

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FRONTIERS

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LEARN, LEAD, SUCCEED

for year 24-25

LEARN

SMC offers six innovative bachelor degree programs that incorporate six courses of professional development coursework.

LEAD

All bachelor-seeking students complete a leadership course. There are over 30 student organizations on campus where students gain and leverage leadership skills.

SUCCESS

To graduate, students must complete an internship and present a capstone project during an on-campus competition. These experiences prepare them to enter the world of work well-ahead of their peers.



SMC STUDENTS

65%

of Students Are
Pell Grant Eligible

90%+

Employment Rate
After Graduation

30%

of Incoming Class Has
GPA of 4.0 or Higher

At SMC we believe success is much more than a degree. We prepare students for life after graduation by providing professional development and internship opportunities.

Faculty, Staff Members Recognized for Contributions to Campus Community



Dr. Dalicia Raymond



Dr. Judy Mirick



Dr. Kim Duckett



Christian Bryant



Jamie McCoy

Three faculty members and two staff members were honored this year for their dedication to providing an incredible atmosphere and experience for our students.

Each year, SMC's faculty members choose recipients for three prestigious awards, the Archie Vernon and Margaret Wannamaker Huff Faculty Award, the South Carolina Independent Colleges and Universities (SCICU) Excellence in Teaching Award, and the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHEM) Exemplary Teacher Award winner.

Dr. Dalicia Raymond was selected as the Huff Award winner for her commitment and dedication. She is an English professor who began teaching college in 2011. Dr. Raymond is also a previous winner of the SCICU Excellence in Teaching Award. She has two bachelor's degrees and a master's in English in literature and culture from Oregon State University and a Ph.D. in English, Medieval Studies, from the University of New Mexico. The Huff Award honors an SMC faculty member who exemplifies outstanding professional qualifications and teaching ability. It was founded in 1970 as an endowed fund by Dr. A.V. Huff, Jr., a former member of the SMC Board of Trustees, and his wife, Kate, in memory of his parents, Archie Vernon and Margaret Wannamaker Huff.

Dr. Judy Mirick was named this year's SCICU Excellence in Teaching Award winner and has been with SMC's science department, teaching physics and physical science, for five years. She earned her Ph.D. in curriculum and instruction, and her master's and bachelor's in physics, all from Clemson University. Dr. Mirick brings more than 20 years of teaching experience to the College. The SCICU Excellence in Teaching Award recognizes leading faculty members at each of the organization's member schools. SCICU is a charitable organization that represents 20 liberal arts institutions in South Carolina, providing fundraising, scholarship funds, and research.

SMC faculty awarded Dr. Kim Duckett the GBHEM Exemplary Teacher Award. She has been a biology professor at SMC since 2019. She earned her Bachelor of Science in Biology from the University of Akron and her Ph.D. in Physiology from Kent State University. Prior to joining SMC, she taught science at the Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC) in Charleston, Wofford College, and Spartanburg Day School. The GBHEM Exemplary Teaching Award recognizes excellence in teaching, civility, and concern for

students, institution, and the community. GBHEM is the leadership development agency of the United Methodist Church.

Two staff awards, voted on by SMC staff members, recognize non-faculty members for their contributions to the SMC campus and community.

The Dr. James S. Barrett Memorial Award was presented to Director of IT Services and Operations Christian Bryant. The award recognizes individuals who go out of their way to assist or support fundraising efforts. Barrett was a past president of SMC who organized the first fundraising campaign for the school and encouraged the practice of professional fundraising to help support the mission.

Dining Services Operations Manager Jamie McCoy earned the J.L. Geddis Award.

The award recognizes a staff member who has been at SMC for three years and displays excellence in creativity, leadership, teamwork, initiative and who makes special contributions to the institution. Geddis served many roles at SMC in his 41-year career, including business manager, vice president for business affairs, faculty member, and men's golf coach. ■

SMC ART PROFESSOR EARNS *National Eagle Scout Award*

By Baker Maulsby, Contributing Writer

Art professor Kris Neely is deeply committed to SMC's mission to prepare students for life with a broad-based liberal arts education, enriching practical experiences supporting career interests, and driving passion for making the world a better place.

Each day he works with students, Neely thinks of how seamlessly this mission blends with another activity he has devoted his talent and energy to: The Boy Scouts.

Neely has been involved with the Scouts for most of his life, achieving the rank of Eagle Scout and helping others to do the same. Neely recently received the National Outstanding Eagle Scout Award for all his contributions to the Scouts. He is one of two recipients from the Palmetto Council, which serves more than 3,000 youngsters in Spartanburg, Chester, Cherokee, Lancaster, Union, and York counties.

"The learning-by-doing capstone opportunities infused in our curriculum, as well as the civic engagement we foster at SMC — I relate all of this to my experience as a Scout," Neely said.

Neely grew up in a family of Scouts. His father, Rev. Dr. Kirk Neely, and three older



Kris Neely (top right) leads a group of Scouts through an art project.

brothers also achieved the rank of Eagle Scout, and he followed in their footsteps. As an adult, he has mentored Eagle Scouts — including his son, Michael — and led two church-based troops.

In late February, Neely's father presented him with the Eagle Scout Award in a small ceremony. He will be recognized at a Scout banquet in Rock Hill on March 10.

"I don't feel like I deserve this honor, but I know it took the patience of many to make it possible," Neely said. He recognized numerous supporters and made special mention of his father and siblings.

"My family was very involved in Scouts," he said. "I'm the fourth son in my family. My father and three brothers were

all Eagle Scouts, so I kind of joke that I didn't have an option — it's just what we did."

Neely said that even his sister, Betsy, the youngest of five siblings, was also brought into the fold.

"Mom said she didn't like that Betsy wasn't getting the same opportunities as her brothers," he said. "So, Dad helped her complete the basic parts required for Eagle Scout, even though she couldn't receive it officially. He even presented Betsy with her own little Eagle pin."

When Boy Scouts of America grew to include girls, Betsy and Kris worked together to build a troop at St. Christopher's Episcopal Church. They named it Troop 67 — the number their late brother Erik

wore as a football player at Spartanburg High School.

Neely is passionate about working with Scouts at all levels, but seeing a young person achieve Eagle Scout status is incredibly gratifying, he said.

"Completing everything to become an Eagle Scout is rare," he said, noting that only about four percent of those who begin the Scouting program reach the Eagle rank.

To become an Eagle Scout, a young person must earn numerous merit badges, take on leadership roles, and demonstrate outdoor skills. He or she must also conceptualize and complete a community service project based on their interests.

The basic tenets of the Eagle Scout program — setting goals, developing a work ethic, and managing and completing projects — direct Neely's approach to teaching students at SMC.

"I always lean back on my Eagle Scout experience," he said. "It's so important to be able to come up with a vision for a project, work with partners, find solutions, and take each step to complete it. It's a process you must learn, and Scouting is a great place to start. I'm grateful for that." ■

"The learning-by-doing capstone opportunities infused in our curriculum, as well as the civic engagement we foster at SMC — I relate all of this to my experience as a Scout."

SMC Professor Publishes Paper Exploring Incarceration's Impact on Politics, Racism

By Radhika Vaid, Staff Writer

Dr. Michael Haggerty



SMC Professor Dr. Michael Haggerty's new book explores the question of whether the United States' reputation as the land of the free has its limits through a study of the history of incarceration in New York City.

Dr. Haggerty's recent paper, "The Blackwell's Island Candidate: Mike Walsh and the Politics of Incarceration in

Antebellum New York," published in "New York History," is the result of almost ten years of dedicated research. What started as a seminar paper in graduate school grew into a comprehensive study of 19th-century incarceration in New York City.

"I was inspired by the vast number of historical documents in the city's archives, especially arrest records showing the large number of people imprisoned during that time," Dr. Haggerty said. "The tremendous research material made me question who gets to be free and what that really means."

However, his research wasn't easy. He had to make repeated trips to New York City to access different archives, which was time-consuming and expensive. Fortunately, he received funding from various institutions, including the New York Historical Society and the New York Public Library, to support his work. Additionally, revising the paper based on feedback from different readers was a challenging but essential part of the process.

"I hope the paper will help people understand the diverse experiences of incarcerated individuals throughout history and how incarceration has influenced urban politics and racism," Dr. Haggerty said.

Dr. Haggerty is currently working on another paper about how New York state officials allowed the enslavement of incarcerated people in the mid-19th century.

Dr. Haggerty has been teaching history at SMC since the fall of 2023. Before that, he taught at the University of California, Davis, where he earned his Ph.D. in History. Dr. Haggerty also taught in prisons, including a course at SCI Huntingdon through Penn State's Restorative Justice Initiative. At SMC, he focuses on teaching U.S. history, covering the U.S. survey, the American Revolution, and African American history.

"I hope this work can shed a little light on a forgotten aspect of history and contribute to our understanding of the past when it comes to the impact of incarceration," Dr. Haggerty said. ■

NEW FACULTY

KRISTIN BIRKEY-ABBOTT, *Professor of English (Adjunct)*

Dr. Kristin Berkey-Abbott brings more than 30 years of English teaching experience to SMC for the new semester. She has a background in teaching at multiple accredited universities and colleges including Nova Southern University, the University of Miami, the University of South Carolina, and many more. Dr. Berkey-Abbott has written and published several poetry books. She has a bachelor's degree in English and Sociology from Newberry College, a Master of Arts Degree from the University of South Carolina, and received her Ph.D. from the University of South Carolina.

CHELSEA ENSLEY, *Assistant Professor of English*

Dr. Chelsea Ensley brings more than a decade of teaching experience to the SMC faculty. Dr. Ensley has received many awards and fellowships throughout her academic career. She earned her bachelor's degree in English at the University of North Carolina at Asheville; a Master of Arts in English and Appalachian Studies at Appalachian State University; a Master of Arts in English from Western Carolina University; and a Ph.D. in Rhetoric and Composition from the University of Cincinnati.

KALEIGH LAIRD, *Assistant Professor of Criminal Justice*

Kaleigh Laird joins the SMC faculty as a professor of criminal justice. Laird previously taught at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. She has a Bachelor of Arts degree in Criminal Justice from the University of Southern Mississippi, a Master of Science degree in Criminal Justice from the University of North Texas, and is receiving her Ph.D. in Criminology and Criminal Justice from the Indiana University of Pennsylvania this August.

MELISSA L'HEUREUX, *Assistant Professor of History*

Dr. Melissa L'Heureux joins SMC as a professor of history. She holds a Ph.D. in Classical Studies from Duke University, where her dissertation explored the monumental infrastructure of Claudius and its impact on Rome. Dr. L'Heureux has a distinguished academic background with degrees from the University of Reading and the College of Charleston.

ROBIN MCCARTER, *Professor of Business (Adjunct)*

Dr. Robin McCarter is a seasoned educator and professional with a strong foundation in Christian Ministry and Business Administration. She earned her Doctor of Ministry (DMIN) in Christian Ministry in 2023 and a Master of Arts in Christian Ministry (MACM) in 2019 from North Greenville University. Additionally, she holds an MBA in Business, Finance, and Human Resources and a BS in Business Administration. Dr. McCarter has extensive teaching experience at North Greenville University, where she taught courses like Introduction to Business and Business Communications. Her professional experience spans over 15 years in roles such as Senior Associate and Human Resource Manager, where she managed academic records, financial services, and student accounts.

SMC EXPERIENCE, MEMORIES LURE MARCUS BROWN '90 BACK *for* LONG-AWAITED BACHELOR'S DEGREE

By Kristen Drum, Contributing Writer

Marcus Brown



Marcus Brown has plenty of education. He graduated with an associate degree from Spartanburg Methodist College in 1990. He then attended mortuary school in Atlanta, as well as Greenville Tech. He always knew he wanted to get his bachelor's degree too, but the years rolled by, always with the promise that "maybe I'll go back next year."

For the past three decades, life just didn't provide the opportunity to pursue that dream. Owning and operating his own business took up most of his time. When Brown heard that his long-ago alma mater, SMC, now offers four-year degrees, he knew his time had come.

"When SMC got the bachelor's program, I

said, 'Wow, it'd be nice to go back to MY college and get a bachelor's where I got my associate degree from,'" he said.

Brown's final convincer was that he could get his degree from SMC online. Without SMC Online, he wouldn't be enrolled in a BA program. It would still be a dream for another year.

"When SMC started their BA program, because of the great experience I had there 36 years ago, I knew there was no other school I wanted to attend. That was the handwriting on the wall, asking, 'What is your excuse for not obtaining that BA?'"

Being a working professional and a college student isn't always easy. Brown has owned and operated Marcus D. Brown Funeral Home in Anderson for 21 years and is in the process of opening a second location, all while taking online classes. The flexibility of SMC's online degree program allows him to work toward the degree he's always wanted while still being able to care for his business. Still, online classes are no cakewalk.

"I find myself spending five to six hours a day on schoolwork and working full time," Brown says modestly. "What I don't

think people realize is that regular classes are 16 weeks. We do the same amount of work in eight weeks."

This type of dedication to furthering his education wouldn't be possible without being able to take classes and complete schoolwork on his own schedule. "We still have deadlines," he laughs. "It's go at your own pace, but we still have deadlines."

Brown credits his professional development classes with helping both his business and helping him excel in his studies.

"[Running a business and going to school] has been very challenging. When I first started, I had to learn to organize. I found myself working until midnight on Saturday evening and then submitting schoolwork on Sunday at 11:30 p.m.," he said. "I had to regroup and get myself together. The professional development classes have really, really helped me, especially in my business and in my studies, regarding organization."

Brown has stayed on the Dean's List since he returned to college and uses his superb grades to playfully compete with his daughter, a college student at Lander University.

He is working toward his BA with concentrations in Psychology, Business, and Professional Development. He hopes to semi-retire from the funeral homes and focus on providing therapy to children in the foster system, as well as working with at-risk youth. As a former foster father to several children, he knows firsthand the existing need. He plans to graduate in the summer of 2025.

Brown smiles as he sits in the business he has built and grown for two decades and thinks about his future.

"My true calling is to assist in the community, schools, and other areas." ■

"When SMC started their BA program, because of the great experience I had there 36 years ago, I knew there was no other school I wanted to attend."

SMC STAFFER'S BOOK EXPLORES '*Wisdom Christology*' in *Portrayal of Jesus*

By Radhika Vaid, Staff Writer

SMC's Public Services and Research Manager Dustin Smith has published his first book, supporting a more historically accurate portrayal of Jesus.

Smith's book, "Wisdom Christology in the Gospel of John," looks at the scholarly portrayal of Jesus and aims to help readers understand Jesus within his historical and cultural context.

"First, I observed that the scholarly literature on the Gospel of John kept talking about this thing called 'Wisdom Christology' – the Christological portrayal of the person of Jesus Christ that portrays him with the traits, roles, and characteristics formerly belonging to the personified wisdom of Israel's God," Smith said.

However, when he talked to non-scholars who study the Bible, they had no concept of this portrayal. In effect, academic experts all seemed to know something that was not being communicated to the average adult reader of the Bible. Smith wanted to make this information available, understandable, and accessible outside academia.

"I'm convinced that this scholarly portrayal of Jesus is a more historically responsible reading of the Gospel of John, which was written toward the end of the first century CE," Smith said. "The popular interpretation of the Gospel of John, common in churches and on the internet, is to begin with the highly developed understanding of God and Christ from the fourth- and fifth-century church councils and to read those views back into the Gospel of John."

Modern historians rightly note that this sort of reading is historically inaccurate. First-century documents must be read in their first-century context; otherwise, the meaning gets distorted. Smith's volume sets the Gospel of John in its first-

century Jewish setting and makes that reconstruction accessible to average readers of the Bible who do not have scholarly training.

Despite the rewarding nature of the project, Smith faced challenges, including addressing the amount of scholarly work on the topic. The book's bibliography includes more than 350 entries and balancing thorough research with accessibility was a significant task.

"There is just so much scholarly material on the topic of Wisdom Christology in the Gospel of John, even though the average reader of the Bible has never heard of it," he said.

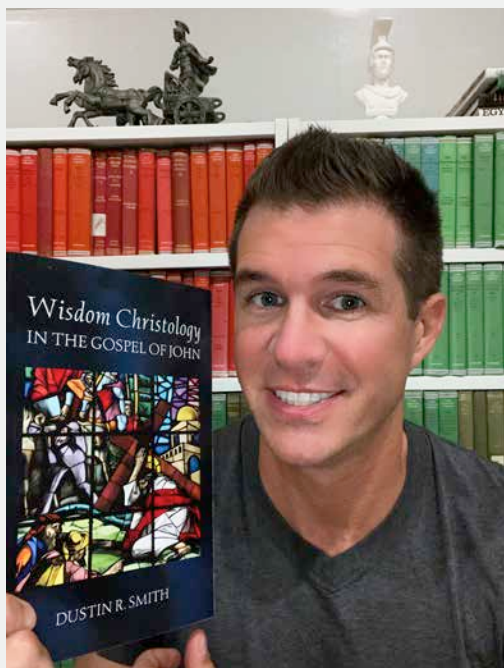
"I hope that readers will have a better appreciation for the need to understand the person of Jesus as a Jew who must be set in his first-century Jewish context, including Jewish literature in which the God of Israel uses his personified wisdom to interact with creation. Jesus embodies this wisdom and functions as the wise human agent of God's life-

giving purposes throughout the narrative of the Gospel of John," Smith said.

The book has been well-received, quickly achieving the number one spot in its category on Amazon within 24 hours of its release. Smith spent 10 years researching and writing the book and says he's certainly open to another book project if the right subject comes along.

"If you do it well, writing books is difficult. I only write when I have a subject I am passionate about, and this book certainly fits that description," he said. "I was surprised to learn that the book was far more highly anticipated than I realized. If I find another subject that fuels my passion to help others understand it better, I will certainly write another book." ■

Dustin Smith



"I'm convinced that this scholarly portrayal of Jesus is a more historically responsible reading of the Gospel of John, which was written toward the end of the first century CE."

SMC ADDS SIX NEW DEGREES *to* ACADEMIC MENU

By Jeremy Handel, Staff Writer

Following its mission to empower students to pursue their future confidently, Spartanburg Methodist College continues to expand its academic offerings, adding five new bachelor's degrees and an associate degree in the coming year.

"These new fields of study will give our students more career path options," said Dr. Curt Laird, Provost and Executive Vice President at SMC. "Combined with our Camak Core professional development program, our graduates get the education and hands-on experience they need to enter the workforce with the skills and confidence to succeed."

The new degree options open paths to some new and popular careers, provide stopped-out students an opportunity to finish their degree without starting over, and create a foundation for pursuing an existing SMC bachelor's degree.

SPORT MANAGEMENT

Sports is a booming industry with numerous career options, and today's digital landscape provides seemingly endless opportunities for students with outstanding writing and content creation skills.

Students in the new sport management program will learn the intricacies of the business of sports, like contracts, event management, liability and risk, and communications and marketing. With the tools they gain, graduates can move into jobs in professional or college sports, youth and recreation programs, arena management, and more.

NEW SMC DEGREES

- **Bachelor of Arts in Sport Management** – Fall 2024
- **Bachelor of Arts in Professional Writing and Communications** – Fall 2024
- **Associate in Religious Studies** – Fall 2024 (online only)
- **Bachelor of Arts in Business Administration in General Business** – Spring 2025
- **Bachelor of Arts in General Studies** – Spring 2025 (online only)
- **Bachelor of Arts in Humanities** – Fall 2025

PROFESSIONAL WRITING

The bachelor's in professional writing and digital communications teaches best practices in writing and integrating art, music, and digital elements into content. Blending these skills will best prepare graduates to become social media content creators, journalists, technical writers, public relations professionals, and more. Content creation is essential in almost all careers, and SMC graduates will be ready to step into any industry and succeed.

In addition to these new subject areas, the College is launching a degree program to help stopped-out students return and finish their degrees.

GENERAL STUDIES

The all-new Bachelor of Arts in General Studies will help OneSpartanburg, Inc.'s Re:Degree initiative re-engage the thousands of adults in Spartanburg County who have taken some college classes but never finished. Both efforts are part of the Movement 2030 Cradle to Career campaign by the Spartanburg Academic Movement (SAM).

"We're very excited to work with SMC on this effort to increase adult degree attainment. Data shows that those with

completed degrees have higher social and economic mobility and increased pay opportunities in their careers. This General Studies program can make a substantive difference for some of those people in Spartanburg County with some college experience but no degree,” said Dr. Erin Smith, OneSpartanburg, Inc. director of adult degree re-engagement.

The General Studies degree offers a fully online, flexible educational experience with a comprehensive curriculum focused on providing the essential skills sought by employers. To further ease the transition back to college, SMC also allows interested students to earn

“These new fields of study will give our students more career path options.”

Dr. Curt Laird

college credit for their work and life experiences and any previous classes they have taken. Through its credits for prior learning program, students can earn credit for specialized work experience, professional certifications, and military or law enforcement service.

“Many adult learners are nervous about returning to finish their degree because they don’t want to start over,” said Dr. Laird. “Earning credit for work and life experiences will help them complete their degree faster and reduce the cost as well.”

ADDITIONAL SUBJECTS

SMC is adding a bachelor’s degree in general business to its business administration curriculum. The degree focuses on the broad skills and knowledge to tackle various business roles or move on to graduate school to specialize further.

A new Associate in Religious Studies provides a two-year online course that matches its current on campus program

Finally, a bachelor’s in humanities incorporates the fine arts into a degree program for the first time at SMC.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

With SMC’s unique Camak Core professional development program, students will get the career-readiness skills they need on top of their academic knowledge to succeed. Employers continue to identify professional talents like communications, problem-solving, collaboration, and leadership, which are lacking among college graduates. The Camak Core is a required part of all SMC bachelor’s degrees, providing hands-on training in these critical skills.

“SMC was established as a work-study institution dedicated to educating local workers to provide them with the skills and knowledge to improve their future,” said SMC President Scott Cochran. “These new degree programs carry on that mission, providing our graduates the opportunity for a better future.” ■



SMC STUDENTS GET HANDS-ON with INTERNSHIPS

While classroom learning is helpful in teaching workplace skills, nothing is better than hands-on, on-the-job training. SMC students must complete a professional internship as part of the Camak Core. This provides them with a real-world look at just what it's like in the working world.

"I have no doubt my internship has equipped me with so much knowledge and important skills for my future career. I learned how to manage people, manage my time efficiently, and embrace creativity. My internship taught me how to think critically but also creatively, and how every little task is a part of a big puzzle. It's so rewarding."

Georgia Roberts

Several SMC students shared their experiences from the internships they completed in the spring and summer. Some of our students shared their experiences.

Abby Arnold

Bachelor of Arts with Concentrations in Psychology, Business, and Professional Development
Human Resources Intern
Fehrer Automotive

What was your role and what did you work on during your internship?

I helped in the human resources offices with paperwork and special projects like I-9 completion, working on job descriptions, updating employee files, and helping on-board new employees.

What was the biggest lesson you learned?

To always speak from data. In HR, you're going to have times that people will try to throw everything they have at you, but when you speak from data, it will speak for you.

Abby Arnold



How will this experience prepare you for your future career path?

My experience at Fehrer prepared me not only to be in an office environment, but also gave me the opportunity

to learn about what it takes to be in HR. I've gotten the hands-on experience you just can't get from reading about it. Lastly, I feel that since I had this amazing opportunity, I feel more confident about going into HR in the future.

Alea Drummond



Alea Drummond

Bachelor of Arts with
Concentrations in Criminal
Justice, Psychology, and
Professional Development
Campus Safety Intern
*Spartanburg Methodist College
Campus Safety Office*

What was your role and what did you work on during your internship?

My role was to answer phone calls and attend to students and staff if they were locked out. I was also able to make identification cards and provide parking passes for faculty, staff, and students.

What was the biggest lesson you learned?

From working and talking with the officers, I was able to learn more about criminal justice systems, including laws, codes, and different ways to handle a crisis. I was able to gain insight from their careers and the situations they have had to handle.

How will this experience prepare you for your future career path?

This experience helped me develop better communication skills and gain knowledge about how to deal with conflicts that I may come across later in my career.

Georgia Roberts

Bachelor of Arts in
Business Administration
– Marketing and Sales
Marketing Intern
Spartanburg Methodist College

What was your role and what did you work on during your internship?

My main roles were to create graphics for the SMC Instagram feed and help plan, produce, and edit video and photo shoots. I was able to do other fun projects, like manage social media pages, help with SMC events, conduct social media research, and really dive into creative projects as well.

Georgia Roberts



What was the biggest lesson you learned?

I learned how many people it takes to run a marketing department and how important it is that everyone pitches in and completes their tasks. From the social media manager to the photographer to the analytics specialist to the marketing communications director, everyone has a hand in everything that happens.

Everyone plays a different role, and there is so much that goes on behind the scenes. It's not just creating a graphic and posting it to Instagram. You also have to consider planning, scheduling, photo selection, timing, and more. Marketing is everywhere, but it takes so many people to make it happen.

How will this experience prepare you for your future career path?

I have no doubt my internship has equipped me with so much knowledge and important skills for my future career. I learned how to manage people, manage my time efficiently, and embrace creativity. My internship taught me how to think critically but also creatively, and how every little task is a part of a big puzzle. It's so rewarding.

Dajohn'na Wilson



Dajohn'na Wilson

Bachelor of Arts with
Concentrations in Business,
Criminal Justice, and
Professional Development
Education Intern
Spartanburg Preparatory School

What was your role and what did you work on during your internship?

My main role was to job shadow with various departments to learn as much as I could about the school and its operations. I was able to help students and answer questions they had as well.

What was the biggest lesson you learned?

The biggest lesson I learned is you must know how to talk to students and learn how to meet in the middle to come to an understanding.

How will this experience prepare you for your future career path?

This internship will prepare me to know what to expect from kids and how to handle situations and help them succeed. ■

Class of 2024 has **BIG PLANS**

More than two dozen new graduates received their bachelor's degrees from SMC this past spring and fall. They've achieved a major milestone in their lives and are ready to move on to the next step. With well over 90 percent of SMC's BA graduates moving on to grad school or their first big job within six months of graduation, it's a safe bet you may see them in the professional world soon.

Some of our graduates gave us a little insight into what their plans are and some of their greatest memories of their time at SMC shortly after graduation.



Jalen Bennett

"I'm interviewing with various organizations to find the right place to start my career. I have a lot of good memories of SMC. I will say that getting to be taught by the amazing faculty and learning a lot from them is a memory that I will always carry with me."



Hannah Brown

"I plan to attend Anderson University's master's program in public service and administration and hunt for a job in state or local government. I've spoken with some Congressional and Senatorial offices about internships and job opportunities as well."

"I can't think of a single memory, but I have enjoyed the close-knit relationships I've grown with my professors and peers. The professors are so caring and supportive, and I have greatly appreciated their help and encouragement."



Charles Dalton

"I plan to continue working with the alumni and fundraising office at SMC while also attending Converse University to pursue my Master in Management in Professional Leadership degree. I also plan to start teaching SMC 101 to incoming freshmen."

"My greatest memory is of President Cochran bringing me my associate degree diploma during graduation in 2022. I'd recently had knee surgery and couldn't walk at the time. Jill Johnson allowed me to sit in the front row. I'm extremely thankful that Jill and Scott still allowed me to be a part of graduation."



Olivia Jackson

"I will be joining Behaviors A Go-Go where I will be a Registered Behavior Technician working with children with autism.

I have so many memories that I will cherish. My top three are falling in love with learning again in Dr. Neil's class during my first year. I'll also remember going to events with my friends and presenting on stage at the APEX Showcase."



Zach Jennings

"I'll be entering the workforce after graduation. I'm still working on lining up my first job, but I'm confident that with the preparation SMC has given me that I will find a position soon after graduation.

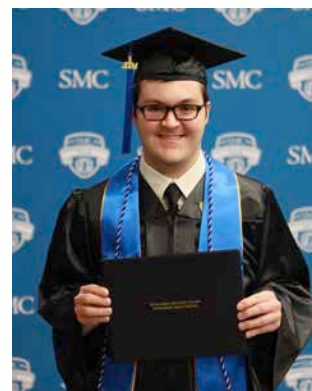
My greatest memory from SMC would have to be attending the late-night breakfasts or studying late nights in Ballard with friends. I even enjoyed just watching movies in Ballard with friends."



Davon Johnson

"I will be attending graduate school and continue working in the South Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice, working with at-risk youth and their families. I will be attending Grand Canyon University, pursuing a master's degree in social work and licensure for clinical work.

My greatest memory while attending SMC was the initial welcome and love I received from all the SMC Online advisors and financial aid staff while getting adjusted to a new school and a new state."



Michael Thomas

"I will be attending graduate school to pursue a Master in Management in Professional Leadership degree at Converse University. I am also currently searching for a job in higher education.

My favorite memory from my time at SMC would be attending campus events with my friends, especially late-night breakfast!"

2024 Commencement Ceremony





2024-2025 Alumni

Plan to join us for these exciting Alumni & Friends Events and Fundraisers.

More details at www.smcsc.edu/resources/alumni-and-friends/alumni-organization/alumni-events/.

Save the Date



FRIDAY
NOV 15
2024

An Evening of Dueling Pianos

SMC Campus, Spartanburg, South Carolina

Live Music and Auctions to support SMC Students

6:30 – 10:00 pm



FRIDAY
DEC 6
2024

Christmas Cocktails

Blue Moon Bodega - 220 E Daniel Morgan Ave, Spartanburg, South Carolina

Join us for Christmas Cocktails: Festive Sips and

Holiday Cheer Await! Casual Dress, Cash Bar

5:30 – 7:30 pm



THURSDAY
FEB 13-14
2025

Pioneer Give Day

Open doors and unlock opportunities for students during this 24-hour virtual giving event



SPRING
2025

Alumni Day

SMC Campus, Spartanburg, South Carolina

Reunions, Games, Campus Cookout

More details to follow



SMC Senior Spends Summer Studying the Brain at MUSC Research Program

By Kristen Drum, Contributing Writer

When it comes to summer break, most college students are filling their phones with selfies at the beach or pictures by the pool. Mauricio Mendoza, a rising senior in psychology, leans forward in his chair, eager to show off his summer break photos. He shows off the million-dollar microscope he's been working with, then scrolls to the impossibly thin slices of mouse brains he cut that morning.

Mendoza isn't your average college student. Instead of enjoying Charleston's beaches, he applied for and was accepted into a 10-week Summer Undergraduate Research Program (SURP) in Neuroscience at The Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC). To speak with him, you wouldn't know this wasn't a vacation.

"I could be doing a research program in Nebraska," he laughs. "I'm very happy I'm here in Charleston."

The idea for applying for a research program came from post-doctoral students he spoke with on a recent tour of a graduate school. They suggested he consider a research program for the summer to learn lab etiquette, conduct research responsibly, and get hands-on experience to show how serious he is about his plans. Dr. Karla Reed, a psychology professor at SMC, was eager to help.

"She's an incredible professor, and she's helped me out a ton at SMC," Mendoza says, his eyes shining with admiration. "She's very wise, very informative."

"I first met Mauricio when he approached me during a seminar [at SMC] to inquire about the research methods class I teach and to express an interest in conducting research. So, it was a real full circle moment to have the opportunity to write a letter of recommendation for him to participate in the MUSC Program," said Reed.

Mendoza spends his time attending classes with various professors, a weekly seminar, and working with his mentor, Dr. Paula Zamudio-Bulcock, on how alcohol affects changes in

Purkinje cells of the brain. He puts in full days working closely with graduate students Seth Hester and Abigail Blasczyk.

"They've taught me so much. It's usually 40-to-50-hour work weeks, but I'm not complaining. It's incredible here," Mendoza said.

At a MUSC employee engagement meeting over the summer, Mendoza also got an opportunity to see how employees interact with each other. He was also able to ask some questions about the organization. Chief among them were questions about how

MUSC is reaching out to lower-income neighborhoods and making these opportunities available to those who live there. As an SMC Senator in the Student Government Association, Mendoza feels compelled to take advantage of the opportunity he earned and help his fellow students pursue similar research programs.

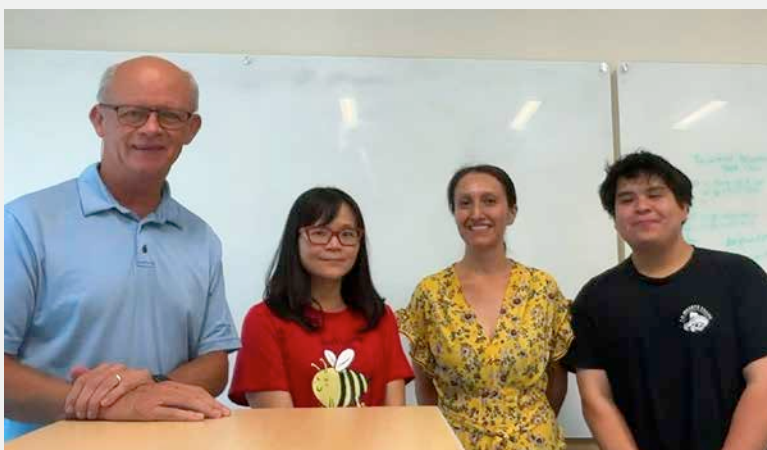
At the end of his program, Mendoza and other program

students must each write and present a 10-page research paper based on the studies they conducted with their mentors. It's another opportunity to network and gives greater insight into the ins and outs of work-life as a researcher. There is another potential perk, though Mendoza admits it's a bit of a long shot.

"If you work hard enough and put in the effort, you could get your name on a published scientific paper. It's not a guarantee, but that's something that can go on a resume and an application. It's permanent," he said.

Mendoza grins when asked if his SMC classes will be a breeze after the intensive summer program.

"SMC feels a little more challenging than this. SMC is theory and what-ifs and textbook learning. It's a different kind of education. [At SMC] I learned about lab etiquette, but here I'm spending the whole day slicing brains and putting them on slides," he said. "When I do the symposium, it's public speaking skills and lab skills. It's a culmination of everything I've learned [at SMC] and put into practice here." ■



SMC student Mauricio Mendoza (right) with professors from his internship at the Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC) from left: John Woodward, Ph.D.; Sudanat Nimitvilai-Roberts, Ph.D.; and Paula Zamudio-Bulcock, Ph.D.

SMC SENIOR JUANA SILVA '24 WINS 2024 APEX SHOWCASE

By Jeremy Handel, Staff Writer

Juana Silva's grandmother was an entrepreneur and always dreamed of someone else in her family starting their own business. Silva dedicated herself to becoming the one to make that dream come true. Her new business, Decals by Silva, not only lived up to her grandmother's wishes but also earned her first place in the 2024 APEX Showcase at Spartanburg Methodist College.



"I was very excited and blessed, and it was an incredible moment that I will cherish forever," Silva said of being named the winner. "I'm grateful to everyone who supported and helped me through this project."

The APEX program is the culmination of SMC's Camak Core professional development program, featuring students presenting the results of their senior Capstone project. This year, the APEX Expo featured 32 students presenting their projects. The top three moved on to the finals, presenting to a panel of professional judges and a packed house at SMC's APEX Showcase in the Gibbs Auditorium.

Decals by Silva is an Etsy-based business that allows customers to personalize various objects with custom-made vinyl decals. Silva used the six-week Capstone project at SMC to

grow her business through targeted marketing efforts to students and online customers. Ultimately, she exceeded her goals for increased orders and revenue during the project.

"Juana's drive and passion from day one of her Capstone and her confidence and poise in presenting her results to the judges set her apart from the other contestants this year," said Dr. Courtney Shelton, Vice President for Student & Professional Development at SMC.

Silva plans to invest the \$1,000 first-place prize into her business and expand her product line with custom t-shirts and a broader selection of colors and designs for her decals.

"I am very excited to expand my business," she said. "I feel like I'm honoring my



grandmother's wishes, and she would be very proud of me."

The other two finalists were Olivia Jackson-Shaw '24, who claimed the \$500 second-place prize, and Bryan Herrera '24, who finished third and earned \$250. Jackson-Shaw established a support group to help young parents based on her own experience. Educated Young Parents of the Upstate provided weekly group meetings to provide parents encouragement, fellowship, and direction. Herrera chose the entrepreneurial route with his new business, BH

Virtual Solutions. He provided administrative and social media consulting services to his client and plans to expand to more clients.

Silva credited the faculty and staff and the Camak Core for helping her accomplish her goals with her business.

"The professional development classes helped me develop and grow the skills I needed to succeed," she said. "The Capstone project was the perfect challenge to put those skills to the test, and I'm very grateful for the lessons I've learned." ■

United Methodist Church Scholarship Opportunities Help SMC Students Thrive

By Kristen Drum, Contributing Writer



When it comes time to start thinking about college, many students and their families also start thinking about cost and how they are going to afford it. One key tool that many hope to take advantage of is scholarships. As a United Methodist affiliated college, SMC students affiliated with the church have the opportunity to take advantage of several United Methodist scholarships.

In 2024, seven SMC students received Methodist affiliated financial awards. These scholarships were awarded from the United Methodist Higher Education Foundation (UMHEF), the United

Women in Faith (UWF) scholarship, and the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHEM). Students receiving scholarships were:

- **Aziyah Bell** – UWF scholarship
- **Kennedy Broyles** – GBHEM scholarship
- **Victoria Freeman** – UWF, GBHEM, and UMHEF scholarships
- **Brittany James** – UWF scholarship
- **Jeniya Outten** – UWF scholarship
- **Taylor Wade** – UWF scholarship
- **Dakota Wheeler** – UWF scholarship

Rev. Timothy Drum II, the Chaplain at SMC, knows the importance of education to the United Methodist Church and how much of an advantage the scholarships can be to students.

“During my time at Duke Divinity School, I walked under an arch inscribed with the words of Romans 12:2 – ‘Be transformed by the renewing of your minds’ – regularly. United Methodists have held a firm commitment to higher education from the beginning,” Drum said. “Two of our most faithful partners in the work are the UMHEF and the UWF. The funds they provide for United Methodist

students are invaluable to removing barriers to education and helping our young people thrive.”

The UMHEF, UWF, and GBHEM scholarships all require an affiliation with the Methodist church, though the qualifications vary a bit.

Kyle Wade, SMC’s Director of Financial Aid and Enrollment Services, sees firsthand the difference these financial awards make in the lives SMC students and works to help make sure they can get those advantages.

“Scholarships are incredibly helpful for our students,” Wade said. “We’re happy to help in any way we can, from posting scholarship deadlines, to answering questions, to making sure students know what opportunities may be available to them, to help our students earn those scholarships.”

To earn the UMHEF scholarship, the applicant must be an active, full member of a select group of denominations, including the UMC, for at least one year before applying. A strong preference is given to students who are enrolled or are planning to enroll in a full-time degree program (graduate or undergraduate) at a regionally accredited United Methodist-related college, university, or seminary in the United States.

The UWF scholarship is available to women who are members of the South Carolina UMC and have met all Presidential Scholarship Standards set by the United Methodist Women (UMW) of the South Carolina Conference (SCC). Applicants must be able to show active participation in programs and service activities of the church and UMW. Finally, the student must have at least a 2.5 GPA in either high school or college.

The GBHEM scholarship requires a GPA of at least 2.5, as well as a minimum of one-year active membership in the UMC.

“As members of United Women in Faith, we recognize the value of a solid foundation. Nelson Mandela once said, ‘Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.’” Wanda Chandler-Flowers, the Communications Coordinator for the South Carolina UWF, said of the group’s commitment to education. “We put a lot of effort into giving scholarships to students so they can help bring about that change. Over the years, we have had the good fortune to work with some truly remarkable honorees, many of whom were students at Spartanburg Methodist College. Because of who we are and what ties us to the SMC community, it is special when the recipients are attendees of SMC.” ■

UMC Scholarship Recipients In Their Words

Spartanburg Methodist College students have expanded opportunities for scholarships through the College’s affiliation with the United Methodist Church and its various organizations. In 2024, seven students were able to take advantage of those scholarships. Two of those students shared what that meant to them.

Brittany James, Senior Bachelor of Arts in Business Administration

United Women in Faith Scholarship

What made you choose SMC?

After graduating high school in 2008, I chose Spartanburg Methodist College (SMC) for my initial college experience. Over the years, after that didn’t work out, I lost touch with the developments at SMC. Then, in 2022, when I decided to further my education with a bachelor’s degree, I revisited SMC’s website. To my pleasant surprise, I found they had introduced bachelor’s degree programs. This discovery prompted me to apply, and I commenced my bachelor’s studies there the following semester.

What career path are you on, and what is your ultimate goal?

I’m currently employed at a credit union where I’ve had the opportunity to work in various positions. My ultimate goal is to advance into a management role within the organization.

How did you find out about this scholarship? Was there something that stood out about it that made you think wow, that really fits with me?

I discovered this scholarship through SMC. Growing up in the Methodist church and having a closely-knit church family made this scholarship particularly resonate with me.

Victoria Freeman, Freshman

Associate in Science

*United Methodist Higher Education
Foundation Scholarship
General Board of Higher Education
and Ministry Scholarship*

What made you choose SMC?

I chose SMC because I graduated high school a year early, then studied abroad in Belgium for a year as a Rotary exchange student. I had a very atypical high school experience, and SMC gave me the opportunity to transition back into my American life seamlessly while working on rebuilding my study habits.

What career path are you on, and what is your ultimate goal?

I am on the career path to being a National Park Ranger. In August 2025, I plan on transferring to University of Alaska Southeast (in Juneau, AK) to major in outdoor studies with a minor in environmental science.

How did you find out about this scholarship? Was there something that stood out about it that made you think wow, that really fits with me?

I found out about this scholarship through my church. My father is a Methodist minister, and his knowledge of these scholarships, as well as his knowledge of SMC-based scholarship opportunities, gave me the resources I needed to apply for the scholarships and choose SMC.

“SMC has been the right choice for me personally because it opens so many doors for my future. I am incredibly grateful for the scholarships awarded to me because they alleviate the financial burden of attending college so that I can focus on my studies without having to worry about how I will pay for it. It gives me the freedom to work towards my degrees and gives me the skills I need to become a more efficient student and leader in my community,” Freeman said.

SMC LAUNCHES ONLINE DEGREE

*to Re-Engage
Stopped Out
Students*

By Jeremy Handel, Staff Writer



Spartanburg Methodist College's mission promises to "empower students to confidently pursue the future they've imagined for themselves." For some, that future gets put on hold as they navigate life. SMC keeps that promise for all students, no matter when they decide it's time to finish college.

To help deliver on that promise to those stopped-out students, SMC is launching a new online degree focused on providing a clear, flexible path to a college degree.

The Bachelor of Arts in General Studies is part of a partnership with OneSpartanburg, Inc.'s Re:Degree program focused on re-engaging the thousands of adults in Spartanburg County who have taken some college classes but never finished. SMC developed the new degree with help from an investment by Spartanburg Academic Movement's (SAM) Movement 2030 initiative to increase college attainment in Spartanburg County.

"SMC was established as a work-study institution dedicated to educating local workers and giving them the skills and knowledge needed to improve their future. Our work with Movement 2030 and Re:Degree fits right into the core of our mission," said SMC President Scott Cochran. "This new degree is the perfect option for students who want to return and finish their degree to improve their career prospects."

The General Studies degree, which launches in January 2025, offers a fully online, flexible experience with a comprehensive curriculum focused on providing the essential workplace skills sought by employers. Rather than a specialized, narrow discipline, the new degree gives graduates a broad education in several key areas, including English

and the humanities, business and social sciences, and math and natural sciences.

"We're very excited to work with SMC on this effort to increase adult degree attainment. Data shows that those with completed degrees have higher social and economic mobility and increased pay opportunities in their careers. This General Studies program can make a substantive difference for some of those people in Spartanburg County with some college experience but no degree," said Dr. Erin Smith, OneSpartanburg, Inc. director of adult degree re-engagement.



Re:Degree was established to re-engage those some college, no degree adults in Spartanburg County by removing obstacles and barriers to degree completion. They recruit students to return to college and help them every step of the way, including filling out applications, applying for financial aid, obtaining transcripts, and even signing up for classes. Re:Degree is also made possible by Movement 2030 and is spearheaded by OneSpartanburg, Inc. and SAM

To further ease the transition back to college, SMC also allows interested students to earn college credit for their work and life experiences and any previous classes they have taken. Through its credits for prior learning program, students

can earn credit for specialized work experience, professional certifications, and military or law enforcement service.

"Many adult learners are nervous about returning to finish their degree because they don't want to start over," said Dr. Curt Laird, SMC's provost and executive vice president of academic affairs. "Earning credit for work and life experiences will help them complete their degree faster and reduce costs."

Many stopped-out students feel they are too far removed from college to return.

Knowing they can keep many of the credits earned before and get credit for their work and other experiences since they stopped helps make the decision to return easier.

The General Studies bachelor's degree will teach students to demonstrate mastery in writing, reading, and critical thinking; develop a robust skill set in analytical and creative thinking and problem solving; demonstrate a broad knowledge of physical, social, and cultural worlds; and apply their interdisciplinary

knowledge to develop innovative solutions to complex challenges.

The degree prepares graduates to advance in their current careers or pursue a new career in various fields, such as communication and media, business and management, healthcare administration, technology and innovation, and more.

SMC is proud to partner with Movement 2030, a county-wide initiative in Spartanburg, to improve school readiness, post-secondary attainment, and neighborhood outcomes to create the conditions for children and families to succeed. The initiative is driven by the guiding belief that everyone can thrive here. ■

"Earning credit for work and life experiences will help (adult learners) complete their degree faster and reduce costs."

Dr. Curt Laird

Dr. Charlotte Lindler Ellis *A PROMISE KEPT TO ‘MAKE THE WORLD A BETTER PLACE FOR OTHERS’*

By Jerry Salley, Contributing Writer

Dr. Charlotte Lindler Ellis admits that she did not know much about Spartanburg Methodist College before she went on a blind date in 1999. She started learning about it soon enough, however, because the man she met that evening was the Rev. Dr. Edgar H. Ellis.



SMC's newest academic building, Dr. Edgar H. Ellis, Jr., Hall was dedicated and opened in 2012. Edgar was one of the largest donors for the construction of the building.

Rev. Dr. Edgar H. Ellis and
Dr. Charlotte Lindler Ellis

A proud 1956 graduate of the school then known as Spartanburg Junior College, Rev. Ellis had recently retired after 37 years as a minister in the South Carolina United Methodist Conference and had kept the college close to his heart.

“He cared a lot about this school,” said Dr. Ellis.

As they began dating, she heard how Edgar, one of eight children from a poor family in Sumter, South Carolina, arrived in Spartanburg with not much more than he could carry in an old leather suitcase with one broken strap. He told her about College President Rembert B. Burgess, who personally cosigned a loan at a downtown Spartanburg bank for his initial tuition. She listened to his memories of the hard labor he performed in a campus-work study program scraping red clay off old propane tanks for Freeman Gas to pay back the loan.

“Ed Ellis was a self-made man,” Dr. Ellis said, reflecting on his humble beginnings and his progress through St. Andrews University, Duke University, and McCormick Theological Seminary to become a minister. “SMC had a great purpose in that it was a jumping-off point for young people to expand and further their education. It was a wonderful start to his career.”

Ed also told Charlotte how he had courted fellow student Iris Clardy on campus and remained her husband until her death in 1996. He also shared memories of his daughter, Loraine Ellis, who died in 1998, and discussed the scholarship he established at SMC in memory of both women.

As their own relationship bloomed, so did Charlotte’s admiration for her future husband’s alma mater.

“Ed and I married a year after we met, and we vowed that we would make the world a better place for others,” she said. “I’ve loved and admired SMC’s mission since Ed introduced me to the school.”

Eventually, Dr. Ellis retired after more than 30 years practicing pediatric medicine in Columbia, South Carolina,

to spend more time with her husband. She was there when he joined SMC’s Board of Trustees in 2003 (she would become a Trustee herself in 2014), and she saw the opening of the school’s Dr. Edgar H. Ellis Jr. Hall in 2012.

And when Rev. Ellis died in 2020, Dr. Ellis was determined to keep the promise they had made to each other and continue a legacy of support for SMC. Her recent estate gift will fund the Dr. Edgar Ellis and Dr. Charlotte Lindler Ellis Endowed Chair in the Sciences. The gift will also expand SMC’s faculty development fund to increase opportunities for faculty attending conferences and other learning experiences.

“I truly believe the sharper the faculty, the more diverse the faculty, the better we can advance our students and get them to where they figure out what their interests are,” she said. “One of the most important things we can do is pass on positive things to our young people – keep them interested, keep them learning, keep them positive.”

Her own legacy of philanthropy is by no means limited to SMC.

A graduate of the University of South Carolina and the Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC), she has contributed annually to both schools. She has established a scholarship endowment at MUSC and faculty fellowships in biology and chemistry at USC. A longtime friend of USC women’s basketball coach Dawn Staley and “superfan” of the Lady Gamecocks who attends nearly every home game – and has traveled as far as Paris to cheer them on – Ellis contributed to the team’s Enhancement Fund to support its mission of professional development for student-athletes.

As a physician, she mentored fellow doctors through the Columbia Medical Society, and she volunteers regularly at Shandon United Methodist Church in Columbia. For these and other efforts, she was recognized with the 2023

Outstanding Philanthropist Award by the Central South Carolina Chapter of the Association of Fundraising Professionals.

By supporting institutions that have helped shape her past – a commitment she shared with her late husband – Charlotte Ellis hopes to help today’s young people shape their futures.

“I’ve always felt very strongly that if we can get young people educated and in the workforce that our world would be a better place,” she says. “Our young people represent everything that’s going to happen in the world, and I think the sky’s the limit. I always felt that way, and so did Ed.” ■

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SMC TRUSTEE JOHN MOORE INHERITED HIS FATHER'S PASSION *for* THE COLLEGE

By Samantha Sorenson, Contributing Writer

SMC Trustee John Moore was seemingly born into a role of supporting and advocating for Spartanburg Methodist College. His father's passion for his alma mater led to a family's commitment to supporting and growing it.

Moore's father, William "Bill" Moore, attended SMC back when it was known as Spartanburg Junior College. While the institution's name was different, the heart and mission of the College remained the same – reaching students who needed a unique path to higher education and helping them build the necessary foundation to succeed in the world beyond.

"My father always credited SMC with providing him the boost he needed to complete his four-year degree at NC State," Moore said. "After college, he became a textile executive for the Reeves Brothers organization before eventually purchasing and running Sally Foster Gift Wrap."

Bill Moore was committed to giving back to his community and the College that helped him grow. He served on the

John Moore



Spartanburg Methodist College Board of Trustees for years and was passionate about helping students achieve. For some people, passion is a personal focus, but for

explains. "He asked me, just prior to his passing in 2005, if I would continue the tradition of Board service, and I agreed."

He welcomed the opportunity when asked to serve in 2014. What might have started as a father's passion quickly became the son's.

"Spartanburg Methodist College is unlike so many other places. The faculty and staff truly live out the College's mission to equip students with the knowledge, skills, virtues, and mindset needed to thrive personally, create positive change in their communities, and lead purposeful lives," he said. "It's deeply rewarding both to work with dedicated people and to see SMC's impact on students' lives."

That impact only grew during Moore's tenure on the Board. When he started serving as a Trustee, he was unconventionally young, only 32. His age, however, wasn't viewed as an impediment, and he quickly became involved in one of the most essential things a college board can do – searching for and appointing a new president.

Bill and the Moore family, it has become a way of life.

"My father wanted our family to continue our involvement in SMC after him," Moore

“Spartanburg Methodist College is unlike so many other places. The faculty and staff truly live out the College’s mission to equip students with the knowledge, skills, virtues, and mindset needed to thrive personally, create positive change in their communities, and lead purposeful lives... It’s deeply rewarding both to work with dedicated people and to see SMC’s impact on students’ lives.”

For a young professional new to Board service, the experience was educational and invaluable. Dr. Penny Fisher, the Board Chair at the time, nominated Moore to be on the search committee. Throughout the lengthy process, the committee members narrowed their selection to Scott Cochran, a former business executive making waves in higher education. This decision marked a turning point for the College.

Since then, Moore has rolled up his sleeves and worked alongside the College’s leadership to strategically transform SMC from a two-year school struggling with enrollment to a four-year school offering bachelor’s degrees, online classes, and membership in the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA) alongside other four-year institutions. He has also been appointed Chair of the Audit and Finance Committee and elected Chairman of the Board.

“We’ve grown rapidly in the past decade, but the moves the college has made have been well-thought-out and planned,” he explains. “The decision to offer bachelor’s degree programs, for instance, wasn’t made lightly, and there was a lot of debate around the topic. Ultimately, it’s been a great move for the College.”

The decision to offer four-year athletics and join the NAIA followed suit.

“Our four-year degree programs have allowed students to stay at the college they love and graduate with a bachelor’s degree. Our four-year athletics programs allow students to continue at SMC without having to give up their athletic career,” Moore said. Both moves have exponentially increased SMC’s impact, allowing the College to serve students better.

For Moore, board service has been a rewarding endeavor for various reasons. He’s gotten to continue his father’s legacy at a deserving college. He’s experienced personal and professional growth under the mentorship of senior Board members. And he’s been a part of multiple historic moments for the College – from announcing its first bachelor’s degree programs to surviving and even thriving through the global COVID-19 pandemic.

Moore passes the Chairman of the Board position to Reverend Jerry Gadsden this year and serve as the Immediate Past Chair. He’s confident that the excellent work SMC has started will continue, and he’s proud that, during his time of service, he’s seen the College balance its commitment to helping students thrive with its commitment to financial stability and expansive growth.

When considering what comes next for SMC, several things come to Moore’s mind.

“We’re entering a time when industry and education are working together to promote education,” he shares. “Spartanburg Academic Movement’s new Movement 2030 program is committed to helping increase the college graduation rates in our community. We’re excited to be a part of that movement.”

Outside of his Board service for SMC, Moore is the President and Chief Compliance Officer of MTM Investment Management and actively serves on the Board of Trustees for Gibbs Cancer Center. He is also a member of the President’s Advisory Board of Wofford College, his alma mater.

Moore is also excited about selecting new Board members. Since he has experienced the tremendous personal growth that comes from serving, he’s hopeful that younger Board members will have the same growth opportunity.

He’s hopeful that the current Board will be instrumental in choosing members committed to “leaving the college better than they found it.” ■

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SMC Board of Trustees Welcomes New, Returning Members

By Jeremy Handel, Staff Writer

One new member and two returning members joined the SMC Board of Trustees after their appointments were approved by the South Carolina Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church. Elizabeth Jeter Hrubala, CFP®, joins the Board, and Dr. Frank Lee and John Ramsey, who previously served as Trustees, return to the Board.

“We are excited to welcome Ms. Hrubala and welcome back Dr. Lee and Mr. Ramsey to the Board of Trustees,” said John Moore, chairman of the board. “We are all committed to making SMC the best College possible, and these members will bring great perspective to doing just that.”

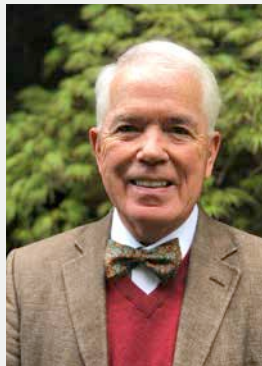
SMC Trustees serve a three-year term beginning on July 1.

“Our Board provides outstanding direction and support for everything we do here at SMC, and we are privileged to have such dedicated members,” said SMC President Scott Cochran. “To have two members return to new terms just shows how much they want to see the College and our students succeed.”

Hrubala is the president and owner of Jeter Hrubala Wealth Strategies, a wealth management company with offices in Spartanburg and Isle of Palms, SC. She is a certified financial planner and was named to Forbes’ 2024 Top Best-In-State Women Wealth Advisors and their 2024 Best-In-State Wealth Management Teams. Before beginning her own firm, she built a successful wealth management career at Morgan Stanley and Merrill Lynch. Hrubala graduated with honors with a BA in business/economics and French from Wofford College and earned her Master of International Business from the University of South Carolina. In addition to the SMC Board of Trustees, Hrubala also serves on several community boards and organizations.



Beth Hrubala



Dr. Frank Lee



John Ramsey

Dr. Frank Lee is a retired pediatrician who spent 35 years treating patients in private practice and in hospitals. He also provided teaching and mentoring for students in several disciplines and levels of clinical medicine. In addition, Dr. Lee spent 20 years as an educational lecturer on advances in infant nutrition and childhood development. He earned his bachelor’s and master’s degrees at Clemson University and his Doctor of Pharmacy and Doctor of Medicine from the Medical University of South Carolina. Dr. Lee is an active member and treasurer at St. Stephens Episcopal Church in Charleston, SC, and serves on the state advisory board for Audubon South Carolina. He has strong family connections to SMC and previously served on the board from 2011 – 2023.

John Ramsey is the CEO of Darlington Veneer Company, a leader in wood products in the southeast. He has served on numerous boards and commissions in his hometown area of Darlington and across the Carolinas.

He is the chair of the Darlington County Airport Commission and a member of the Charleston-Southern Board of Visitors and Genesis HealthCare, Inc. board of directors. Previously he served on the board for McLeod Hospital, South Carolina Electric & Gas Regional, and Bank of America Regional, as well as the Florence Chamber of Commerce, Darlington County Ambulance Commission, and the McLeod Foundation. Ramsey previously served on the SMC Board of Trustees from 2010 – 2022.

The Conference also renewed Trustees Charlita Moss, Phil Buchheit, Marilyn Murphy, and Harriet Rucker for another term. ■

Pediatric Care Professional Credits SMC for Driving Career Success

By Baker Maultsby, Contributing Writer



Carson Moore, a pediatric care professional in Boiling Springs, has numerous diplomas framed on the wall of his office. He says his favorite is the first one he got from Spartanburg Methodist College.

“SMC holds a special place in my heart,” said Moore, who came to SMC in 2010 from Summerville, South Carolina.

“When I was graduating from high school, I was looking for high-quality but affordable options for school,” he recalled. “I had a few friends who had gone to SMC and absolutely loved it. (With) the tuition scholarship for my GPA, it was a no-brainer.”

While the decision may have been easy, Moore’s academic start at SMC was not.

“I failed my first ever test in Dr. (Cole) Cheek’s history class,” Moore noted.

“He was such an amazing lecturer – I remember sitting in class mesmerized by the way he told the story of history, and I forgot to take notes!”

With help from his professor, it didn’t take long for Moore to get on track, and he ended up getting an ‘A’ in Dr. Cheek’s class. His journey at SMC went more smoothly after finding his stride in study habits.

“Really, every class at SMC was awesome,” he said. “Every professor at SMC seemed like they loved their job.”

Moore didn’t plan to go into medicine when he was a student at SMC. He earned an Associate Degree in General Studies and then a bachelor’s degree at USC-Upstate and took a job in sales after graduation. He enjoyed the work but wasn’t sure it would be a fulfilling long-range career.

Healthcare had intrigued Moore since he was a child. After discussing career possibilities with his wife, Amy, he returned to school to become a physician assistant (PA). Today, he co-owns a pediatric urgent care facility and is a PA.

“I love being a PA,” he said. “It is so much fun meeting the needs of our community and providing high-quality care to so many amazing kids.”

Running a business has presented Moore with plenty of challenges and learning opportunities. He credits his time at SMC with providing essential leadership skills and perspective.

Specifically, working as a resident assistant was a formative experience. Since SMC offered only a two-year degree at the time, Moore was offered opportunities as a first- and second-year student that would only be available to upper-level students at many schools.

“My experiences at SMC learning how to be a leader were integral in preparing me to manage the urgent care practice,” he said.

In addition to his work with urgent care patients and caregivers, Moore teaches in the College of Allied Health at the University of North Greenville. As he helps students prepare for careers in health care, he thinks back to the talent and dedication of professors like Dr. Cheek at SMC.

“I strive to be the professor to my students that I had at SMC – caring and committed to their success,” he said.

Moore is excited that SMC now offers a four-year degree track. He’s proud to stay engaged and provide support for the college.

“It is really fun to see all of the great things going on at SMC,” Moore said. ■

SMC GAVE ATTORNEY HIS VOICE

By Mackenzie Syiem, Contributing Writer

Yaro Radtsevich



Although English was not his first language, Yaro Radtsevich's '13 determination and resilience led him to a successful career as an attorney in New

York City. As an alumnus of SMC, Radtsevich's story is a shining example of how SMC provided him with the necessary tools and support to overcome challenges and pursue his dreams.

Growing up in South Carolina after immigrating from Belarus, Radtsevich's parents instilled in him the value of hard work and self-reliance. They made it clear from an early age that he would need to finance his own education. As his senior year of high school approached, Radtsevich found himself searching for the best financial fit for his college experience. While many of his peers were headed to larger universities, Radtsevich's path took an unexpected turn when he was offered a wrestling scholarship and a chance to join the team at SMC.

His experience exceeded his expectations. Initially, he was apprehensive about the smaller class sizes and the contrast between SMC and the larger university he had initially envisioned. However, he soon realized that SMC offered a supportive and tight-knit community that fostered personal connections and academic growth.

The small class sizes allowed him to develop strong relationships with professors, such as Dr. Mark Gibbs, who became an influential mentor.

"Dr. Gibbs was the first teacher I felt like I could relate to and who inspired me to change my world view," Radtsevich said. "He was also the first person who pushed me not only to be interested in learning but to strive for higher goals and not just do the bare minimum."

One of the significant challenges Radtsevich faced during his early academic journey was a language barrier. English was not his first language, and, as a child, he was often frustrated when he couldn't express himself or understand the lessons. However, his perseverance and unwavering spirit led him to gradually improve his English skills. And although he mastered the actual language while he was a child, it wasn't until SMC that he really felt like he grew in his communication skills.

"It was SMC that helped me find a voice for all the words I had inside of me. They gave me the safe place and the confidence to express that voice," Radtsevich said.

During his time at SMC, he embraced various opportunities for personal and academic growth. He actively participated in extracurricular activities, including being a Pioneer Peer and a member of the wrestling team. These experiences not only enriched his college journey but also helped him build connections

and expand his network. Radtsevich credits these incremental steps and the supportive environment at SMC for shaping his confidence and pushing him toward higher aspirations.

As he navigated his post-graduation path, Radtsevich found himself drawn to the legal field. He recognized that pursuing a career in law would allow him to make a significant impact and fulfill his desire to help others. With advice from mentors at SMC, such as Dr. Gibbs and Dr. Mary Jane Farmer, and through networking and reaching out to professionals in the field, he found the guidance and support he needed to navigate the complexities of the legal profession.

Today, Radtsevich is a successful attorney in New York City, making a meaningful impact in his chosen field. His advice to students facing similar challenges is to set incremental goals, be relentless in your pursuit, and to never be afraid of stepping outside your comfort zone. He also expressed his willingness to be a resource and mentor for any current SMC students who are interested in pursuing similar paths.

Radtsevich's story exemplifies the incredible potential that lies within each individual. By embracing the opportunities provided by institutions like SMC, students can overcome obstacles, discover their true potential, and forge a path toward a future filled with success and personal fulfillment. ■

"It was SMC that helped me find a voice... They gave me the safe place and the confidence to express that voice."

Love of Aircraft, Drive to Serve Fuel

SMC Alum's Engineering Career

By Leigh Thomas, Contributing Writer

Caleb Pupo '14 is passionate about aircraft and helping others succeed, channeling both into an impressive career in aerospace engineering. His education at SMC was the first step on his path to GE Aerospace. His father's military career and visits to the military base inspired the native of Columbia and sparked his interest in aircraft.

"As a child, I wanted to become a doctor, but I'm better with numbers than biology. When I saw those planes, I knew I could help people in a different way," he said.

Pupo moved to the United States in 2006 and quickly became interested in the STEM fields during high school. He earned his Associate Degree in Science from SMC, followed by his Bachelor of Science in Mechanical Engineering and Master's Degree in Aerospace Engineering from the University of South Carolina (USC).

Pupo's experience at SMC profoundly influenced his career path, particularly the connections and relationships forged with other students and professors.

"SMC was an amazing first step in my education and career," he said. "It set the tone for what I wanted to be and how I wanted to get there. It gave me good connections and relationships that I still have with both professors and students."

One of those connections is to former SMC Assistant Professor of Chemistry Brian

Caleb Pupo



Gloor, who inspired Pupo to further his education.

"Caleb stood above all others with unprecedented dedication and intellect on the academic lines," Gloor said. "Since graduating, he has continued to grow in his engineering training and career. His remarkable achievements stand as a testament to his unwavering passion and relentless pursuit of success."

As a graduate student at USC, Pupo participated in a research study on composite materials for GKN Fokker in The Netherlands, a subsidiary of GKN Aerospace. Upon completing his master's, he accepted an opportunity as a global graduate engineer, and his dream of working

with aircraft came to fruition. During a two-year rotation across two U.S. sites, he supported the build of military aircraft and trained and recruited front-line leaders for GKN North America.

Pupo moved on to GKN Alabama Field Systems, where he developed and tested aircraft fuel tanks for combat situations, followed by GKN Advanced Composite Structures, where he supported the design and build of military and commercial aircraft and confidential missile programs.

Throughout his young career, Pupo has been involved in the planning, engineering, and building of parts for multiple military and civilian aircraft. One principle that

has remained constant is his focus on Lean manufacturing, for which he has earned numerous certifications. The Lean methodology emphasizes continuous improvement and respect for people in producing quality products.

"After I graduated from the GKN leadership program, I jumped into Lean because it was the most direct way I could impact people's lives in my factory," Pupo said. "It gave me the tools to communicate with people about their pain points, understand how an operator interprets an engineering drawing, and bridge that concept to implementation. The result is consistently good products for aerospace engineering applications."

In February, Pupo accepted a new role as a Lean Manufacturing Manager for GE Aerospace in Auburn, Alabama, implementing Lean principles in the company's production of engine blades and 3D printed fuel nozzles for its GE90, GENx, CF-6, CF-34, and newly-introduced LEAP engines. It is the most recent in a series of accomplishments spanning the decade since he left SMC, an experience for which he remains grateful.

"SMC gave me the tools I needed for the next step and to reach where I am today," Pupo said. "With its size and the way everyone is so personable, it touched my life in a way that no other school could have. It was the best first step I could have taken." ■





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FORMER LIBRARIAN'S FAMILY HONORS LEGACY *with* SCHOLARSHIP FUND

By Amber Armstrong & Becky Kirkland, Contributing Writers

Sybil Price



One could compare the timelines of Sybil Price's '44 life and the history of Spartanburg Methodist College and surmise that, like a well-written

piece of literature or a historical event with obvious synchronicities, she and the College were destined to be associated.

As a career librarian, she surrounded herself with books of all types in her personal and professional lives. She immersed herself in great stories that opened one's imagination and fancied a tall tale or humorous plot twist. She loved books about history and travel because she was curious about the world far beyond her quiet Southern hometown.

She truly loved getting lost in books of all types. She recognized that reading opened one's mind to new ideas and information. Books brought parts of the world where she may never plant her feet into the palm of her hands.

Price was born in 1909, just two years before the founding of the Textile Industrial Institute, which would later become Spartanburg Junior College (SJC) and then SMC. She was born into a family of meager means but deep fortitude. She and her five siblings lived a life of hard work, helping her father tend crops and animals and taking care of household duties after her mother died when she was only 13.

Price always had a keen desire to attend school, and her father encouraged her and her siblings to finish high school even though they lived in the country, and transportation and time away from the farm often made attending school difficult. Price knew she wanted to continue her education after high school, which was not an easy task. She worked for the next 13 years to save enough money to attend Spartanburg Junior College.

After earning her associate degree from SJC in 1944, she attended Lander and then earned her Bachelor of Arts in Library Sciences from Emory University in 1949. After graduating, Price started her lifelong commitment to books as the county librarian in Augusta, GA.

Soon after starting her job, she launched the county's Bookmobile program, bringing reading to the community. In 1954, she returned to Spartanburg and was the bookmobile librarian there. Eventually, she returned to SJC as its librarian.

Price had a special connection to ensuring that rural residents who might not have access to libraries could access books and other library services. The tenacity she summoned in her slight frame to drive the large bookmobile vehicles over rural Georgia and South Carolina roads was an inspiration to many.

Price, known as Aunt Sybil to her family, was always eager to read to young children and have them read to her. Whether once or ten times, Aunt Sybil's lap never tired of reading a good book to a child. She kept shelves of books on

many topics in her living room, which were never off-limits to anyone visiting.

Price embodies the Spartanburg Methodist College mission of personal drive and excellence that seeks to make positive change in one's community and striving to lead a purposeful life. She exemplifies how one can rise above harsh circumstances and create a bright future for oneself and others if one is willing to work and study hard.

The Sybil Inez Price Endowed Scholarship honors this forward-thinking and hard-working woman to help future Spartanburg Methodist students rise above harsh circumstances and achieve higher education. Price's family hopes that students benefiting from her scholarship will not only read many great books but will write their own stories of excellence. ■



Sybil Price (left) was a big proponent of reading and served as one of the early bookmobile librarians in Spartanburg County.

Adversity, Achievement Drive SMC Grad to Success

By Baker Maulsby, Contributing Writer

Jabaree Ackbar '23 is no stranger to overcoming obstacles. Despite battling family instability and poverty as a child, he stayed focused, applied himself academically, and went on to find success both in college and after.

Jabaree Ackbar



Ackbar said Spartanburg Methodist College played a big part in that success, where he experienced “an amazing ride that I never wanted to end.”

College life, of course, does come to an end, but while he feels a sense of longing for his undergraduate years, he is happy with how things are going now in his mid-20s.

“The start to my career has been fantastic,” Ackbar said. “I’m gaining amazing experience and adding new skills to my toolbox, and I am loving every minute of it.”

Thanks in large part to his SMC education, he is several years into a promising career in finance. Following a stint working in accounts receivable for a collections company, he’s now an anti-money laundering investigative analyst for TD Bank.

In both roles, Ackbar has been like a sponge, soaking up as much knowledge and perspective as possible.

Ackbar’s path has not always been smooth. His home life was a difficult one. He was a good student, but his family’s instability meant that he was frequently on the move.

“It affected my ability to make friends, maintain relationships, and trust people,” he said, adding that what many considered normal was absent in his upbringing. “I have never been on any family vacations or been in any family portraits. I never had my own room or anything like that. I wasn’t dealt the best hand.”

Looking back, he believes those hardships strengthened his character and sharpened his resolve.

“Changing schools and neighborhoods so often gave me a leg up on understanding and relating to people because I met different types of people from all walks of life,” Ackbar said. “And with so many younger siblings, I had the responsibility of being a leader my entire life.”

Ackbar graduated from Byrnes High School, where he was an honors student.

As he weighed college options, he recalled a visit he’d made several years earlier to the SMC campus.

“I can remember as a 12-year-old kid touring and visiting SMC for the first time and telling myself that I would end up there,” he said.

At SMC, he was in the first cohort to graduate with a Bachelor of Arts in Business Administration in Accounting and Finance. Along the way, he valued friendships with classmates – a group he described as diverse, with a wide range of life experiences, attitudes, and ideas. They pushed each other to learn, grow, and think critically.

“The professors did an amazing job of teaching the material in a unique way that made the experience not only fun but also meaningful, impactful, and direct,” Ackbar said. “I learned terminology and concepts that I use daily in my career.”

The college’s Camak Core professional development program was an incredibly formative part of his college experience.

“It helped me generate a lot of confidence and a sense of calm in my ability to be professional, to interview well, and to solve various situations in the workplace,” he said. “SMC was tremendous. It was a great foundation for success.”

Ackbar is now pursuing a Master’s in Accounting. Looking ahead, he hopes to own his own business – possibly launching several ventures – and to have his mom on salary so she will never have to struggle to make ends meet again.

His determination to give back extends to his community, including to his alma mater.

“I am always a Pioneer, and I’m committed to helping pioneer the growth of SMC in the future,” Ackbar said. “I hope one day I will be remembered not for selfish ambition but for the impact on the lives God has called me to serve.” ■

“The professors did an amazing job of teaching the material in a unique way that made the experience not only fun but also meaningful, impactful, and direct.”

Transforming Spartanburg: *THE WALKING SPARTAN PROJECT*

By Radhika Vaid, Staff Writer

Livingston Hawkins '23 has launched the Walking Spartan project in the heart of Spartanburg. Inspired by his passion for walking and a desire to improve the city, Hawkins hopes to help make Spartanburg more pedestrian-friendly.

"I really do prefer to walk when possible. In Spartanburg, I often walk to coffee shops and the public library to do work, and I find it very rewarding," Hawkins said. "With this project, I want to show folks that integrating more walking and biking into our lifestyles is possible."

The Walking Spartan project launched earlier this year to raise awareness about the benefits of walking and biking. Hawkins embarked on a journey to document and promote the pedestrian experience in Spartanburg to achieve that goal.

The Walking Spartan project is not just about promoting walking and biking; it's about transforming Spartanburg into a more walkable city for all. The project is making significant strides through advocacy, community engagement, and collaboration with local stakeholders. It aims to educate and empower individuals to embrace walking as a viable mode of transportation, thereby improving health, reducing traffic congestion, and enhancing the overall quality of life in the city.

"With this project, I want to show folks that integrating more walking and biking into our lifestyles is possible."

Recently, Hawkins spoke at SMC alongside librarian Susan Myers and work-study student John Wilson. Together, they organized an event titled "A Discussion on Walkability & Community Engagement." The event focused on engaging college students in discussions about walkability, considering them potential early adopters of active transportation systems. Hawkins shared his experiences and insights on community engagement and leadership, emphasizing the relevance of walkability to college campuses.

"One thing I discovered on a walk was an empty Little Free Library in the Denny's Plaza, which I was able to refill with the help of Chaplain (Tim)

Drum and Dr. (Dalia) Raymond," he said. "I never would have noticed this if I was passing by in a car."

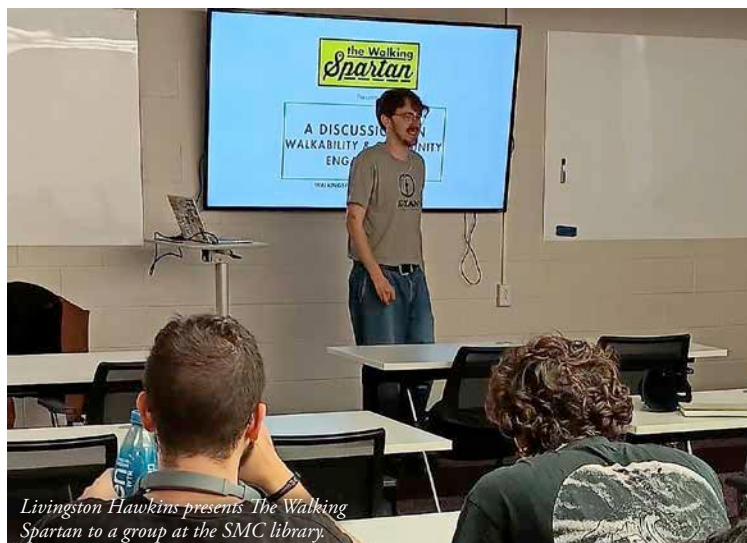
The Walking Spartan project has earned support from the community, forming partnerships with organizations like PAL Spartanburg, which is dedicated to trail development and enhancing walkability. Hawkins has been asked to provide input at a meeting of the city's Pedestrian and Cyclist Committee and has joined the local nonprofit Keep OneSpartanburg Beautiful board.

"I appreciate the support of PAL Spartanburg. They oversee the Daniel Morgan Trail System and the great strides we have made towards walkability in the city," said Hawkins.

Ned Barrett, the Trail Development Director at PAL, attended the SMC event alongside Hawkins and contributed insights about a future trail connecting the Daniel Morgan Trail System to SMC.

"I am thrilled about the impactful work PAL undertakes," said Hawkins. "I'm hoping to develop similar relationships with colleges like SMC to encourage students to join the walkability movement."

For more information about the Walking Spartan project and upcoming events, visit walkingspartan.substack.com. ■



Livingston Hawkins presents The Walking Spartan to a group at the SMC library.

SMC Moves to NAIA for Four-Year Athletics

By Jeremy Handel, Staff Writer

Starting this fall, SMC Pioneer teams will join the ranks of four-year athletics as the College moves to the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA).

“This is such an incredible time for SMC and our student athletes. Making the jump from junior college to the NAIA is an amazing opportunity, and we look forward to the challenge,” said Megan Aiello, SMC’s Athletic Director.

Following SMC’s launch of four-year bachelor’s degrees, it became evident that it was also important to pursue a path to four-year athletics. This would allow student athletes to get their bachelor’s degree at SMC without giving up their athletic careers.

“It’s exciting to add four-year athletics at SMC,” said SMC President Scott Cochran. “Our students come to SMC for the small, welcoming environment and quality education. It’s great to give our student athletes the same opportunity to stay in that environment for their education, while continuing to play all four years.”

The SMC Athletics department worked for several months on a bid to join the new league, showing officials from the NAIA that the Pioneers would be a great addition. After providing detailed information about



the College and its athletic programs and history, followed by visits to campus from various league officials, SMC was notified in October 2023 they were accepted.

“It was great to get that call,” Aiello said. “Our coaches were able to start planning and recruiting new student athletes based on our new status as a four-year program.”

For the 2024 – 2025 season, the Pioneers will participate in the Continental Athletic Conference, a collection of independent schools in the NAIA, before jumping to the Appalachian Athletic Conference as a full-time member for the 2025 – 2026 season.

SMC has a storied and successful history in junior college athletics. The Pioneer programs have accumulated dozens of Region 10 and division titles in the National Junior College Athletic Association and made several national championship appearances. Athletes from SMC have gone on to four-year programs at various levels and even on to professional sports careers. ■

NJCAA Recognizes SMC Athletic Director Megan Aiello for Contributions to Athletics

By Jeremy Handel, Staff Writer

Megan Aiello



The National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA) awarded the 2024 Mary Ellen Leicht Service Award to Spartanburg Methodist College (SMC) Athletic Director Megan Aiello.

“It’s an incredible honor to receive this award,” Aiello said.

“To have my name added to the list of greats who have received it is humbling, as well as being associated with Mary Ellen Leicht.”

The Mary Ellen Leicht Service Award is the most tenured honor bestowed by the NJCAA annually. It is given to those – most often not athletes – who have significantly contributed to two-year college athletics nationally for an extended period. It is named for the Association’s first female executive director and the first female chief executive of any national collegiate athletic organization.

“Megan is a tremendous advocate for college athletics and student-athletes, and her influence on our students is evident in their continued success on and off the field,” said SMC President Scott Cochran. “She gives 100 percent to everything she undertakes, and her work with the NJCAA is no exception.”

Aiello was recognized for her commitment to advancing two-year college athletics through her service. She has served in several capacities for the NJCAA, including as Chair of the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Council; Women’s Region 10 Director; the Region 10 Sports Committee Chair for six sports; and more. She has been the athletic director at SMC since 2018, overseeing 14 sports.

Before taking the Athletic Director position, Aiello served two stints as the head women’s volleyball coach at SMC and as assistant athletic director/director of compliance and head women’s volleyball coach at Huntingdon College in Montgomery, AL. She holds a Bachelor of Science in physical education from Anderson University in Anderson, SC, and a Master of Arts in Education from Bluffton University in Bluffton, OH. In addition to her athletic duties, Aiello also serves as an adjunct professor at SMC.

Aiello received the NJCAA honor in the school’s final season in the association. She will lead the College through its transition to four-year athletics in the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics in the fall of 2024.

“We’re so excited to transition to the NAIA, and I look forward to continuing to lead our programs to success at the next level,” Aiello said. ■

SMC BASEBALL COACH IN TOP 5 *for* WINS AMONG ACTIVE COLLEGE COACHES

By Jeremy Handel, Staff Writer

Tim Wallace



SMC Head Baseball Coach Tim Wallace has had a long and successful career, racking up numerous accolades over the years. One other thing he's piled up is wins; enough, in fact, to be ranked among the top 5 active coaches with the most wins in college baseball at any level.

According to the Society for American Baseball Research (SABR), Wallace ranked fourth among active coaches following the 2024 season with 1,351 wins over the course of his 33-year career. His total placed him third for active coaches in junior college at the time.

"I consider myself fortunate to have had the opportunity to coach the guys I did and appreciate the fact that they bought into the same vision for the program that I saw," Wallace said of his success over the years. "I get credit for the record, but the kids did all of the work."

In addition to wins, Wallace has earned several accolades during his career, including 12 NJCAA Region 10 titles, eight Region 10 Coach of the Year awards, six Eastern District Coach of the Year awards, and seven trips to NJCAA Division I JUCO World Series, including three in a row from 2012 - 2014.

Wallace said his most important achievement has been the quality young men who have come through the program. He's proud to have helped them succeed both on and off the field. Under his coaching, 18 players were named NJCAA All-Americans, hundreds have gone on to NCAA Division 1 programs, and more than 150 have signed professional contracts, including four-time all-star Orlando Hudson.

As SMC transitions to the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA) and four-year athletic programs, Wallace said he is excited for the change. He thinks the baseball program will benefit greatly from the move to four-year athletics.

"The change and uncertainty do bring a renewed sense of excitement, and we're looking forward to the challenge," he said. "I believe we've pulled together a quality team that will represent SMC well, both on the field and in the classroom and community."

With the move to the NAIA, Wallace leaves behind a strong legacy at the junior college level, including induction into the NJCAA Baseball Coaches Hall of Fame in 2014. Wallace is also a member of SMC's Hall of Honor. Prior to coaching, he also enjoyed a successful playing career, including seven years in professional baseball. He is also a member of the Wofford College Hall of Fame for his years playing for the Terriers.

"It's been a tremendous time so far, and I look forward to continuing to coach and teach the great young men who come through this program," Wallace said. ■

"It's been a tremendous time so far, and I look forward to continuing to coach and teach the great young men who come through this program."

"I consider myself fortunate to have had the opportunity to coach the guys I did and appreciate the fact that they bought into the same vision for the program that I saw... I get credit for the record, but the kids did all of the work."

ATHLETICS RECAP

2023-2024



WOMEN'S SOCCER

The Pioneer women's soccer team posted a 9-4-2 record in 2023 on its way to receiving multiple post-season honors, including NJCAA Region 10 Coach of the Year, Kyle Campbell, and Region 10 Player of the Year, Gwen Orr. For Campbell, it is his second Coach of the Year honor. The efforts on the pitch saw SMC post a 5-0-1 record in the region en route to a regional title as the Pioneers hosted the region championship. As the starting goalkeeper, Orr recorded four shutouts and made 98 saves to lead a SMC defense that allowed only 15 goals in 15 games. Also on the all-region first team were Logan Harvin, Krystal Martinez, Caitlin Lagos, Evelyn Garcia, CJ Hawkins and Camila Moscoso.

MEN'S SOCCER

The SMC men's soccer team reached the semifinals of the Region 10 Tournament before losing to eventual regional champion, Richard Bland College. The end of the season also marked the end of the coaching era of David Cox, who stepped aside in January 2024. Leading the program will be former assistant coach, Doug Smith.

CROSS COUNTRY

The SMC men's and women's cross country teams picked up regional titles to secure berths at the NJCAA Division I Championships. Five men earned all-region honors including Luke Kochanowicz, who won the individual title at the Region 10 Championships. Sophia Outhous led four all-region selections with a second-place overall finish and was the top finisher among Division I competitors. Both men's and women's programs took home the Region 10 Championship. The Pioneers' head coach Peyton Shelton was named the Region 10 Coach of the Year for his efforts.

VOLLEYBALL

SMC volleyball coach Makalya Castro had a very successful first season as the Pioneers head coach. She led SMC to a 21-14 overall record and a Region 10 title with a perfect 11-0 mark. Castro was named the Region 10 Coach of the Year as the Pioneers were led by Region 10 Player of the Year Aurora Aho, who also earned first team all-region accolades. First team honors also went to Kendall Meinders, Hana Vucinic and Tayla Reini to go along with a second team selection - Callie Wzorek. By virtue of winning the Region 10 title, SMC advanced to the NJCAA Atlantic District A Championship in Fort Myers, Fla.

MEN'S BASKETBALL

First year head coach Patrick Moynihan led the Pioneers to a 20-12 mark and a fourth-place finish in the region. The Pioneers reached the regional semifinals led by the play of a pair of first-team all-region performers, Khalon Hudson and Major Freeman. Second team all-region honors went to JaJuan Nichols.

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

The SMC women's basketball team captured the Region 10 Championship for a fourth-straight year. The Pioneers ended the season with a 20-6 overall mark. Region 10 Player of the Year, Yasmine Cook, led SMC en route to all-region honors along with Grace Ikenegbu, Destiny Middleton and Layla Wall.

BASEBALL

The SMC baseball program wrapped up its NJCAA era with a 39-16 overall record under veteran head coach Tim Wallace. The Pioneers finished third in the region and fourth at the Region 10 Championship. SMC had five first team all-region selections - Schley Gordy, Blake Martin, Kai Tullios, Davis Wright, and Kemper Nix. Three Pioneers - Ethan Wilson, Brooks Mauro, and Hunter Fryzowicz - were selected second team.

BEACH VOLLEYBALL

The three-year old beach volleyball program finished fifth at the Region 10 Championship.

MEN'S GOLF

The SMC men's golf team earned an at-large bid to the NJCAA Division I Championship where they finished 24th. The Pioneers earned a berth after a fifth-place performance at the District Championship and a Region 10 title. One of the top golfers on the team was Wyatt Harrill, who was the co-medalist at the district championship and a 118th individual national ranking.

WOMEN'S GOLF

Lindsey Greene who won her second-consecutive Region 10 championship to lead the SMC women's golf team. Teammates Joy Outhous and Melanie Meridith joined her on the all-region team. Outhous and Greene finished in the top 15 at the district championship. For both Greene and Outhous, it was their second all-region honor.

SOFTBALL

Region 10 Pitcher of the Year, Bailey Kiser, who pitched 121.1 innings and struck out 104 on her way to a 2.40 ERA, led the SMC softball team under first year head coach Kimberly Braxon. Kiser was joined on the all-region first team by McKensleigh Parnell and Maddie Handy.

IN MEMORIAM:

BELOVED FACULTY, STAFF REMEMBERED

SMC marked the loss of three beloved members of the Pioneer community. Former faculty members Dr. Katherine Cann and Dr. Paul Lofton and former counselor and staff member Charles Middleton, Jr., all passed away in the past year.

Dr. Katherine Cann

Dr. Katherine Cann was a history professor and taught at SMC for 34 years. The Greer native also served as the social science division chair for 10 years at SMC. Dr. Cann earned her bachelor's from Lander College, master's from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and Ph.D. from the University of South Carolina. She was an accomplished scholar with many published articles. She also published a definitive history of SMC, "Common Ties: A History of Textile Industrial Institute, Spartanburg Junior College, and Spartanburg Methodist College." Dr. Cann passed away in May 2024.

Dr. Paul Lofton

Dr. Paul Lofton was also a history professor who taught at SMC for 30 years and served as chair of the social sciences division for 27 years. He was born in Ninety Six where he grew up on his family's dairy farm. He earned his bachelor's degree from Wofford and attended Duke University Divinity School before going into the Peace Corps. After returning, he earned his master's from Duke and Ph.D. from the University of Texas. Before coming to SMC, he also taught history at Newberry College. Dr. Lofton passed away in September 2023

Charles Middleton, Jr.

Charles Middleton, Jr., was a beloved counselor at SMC for several years in the 1970s. He was a reassuring presence for many students from that era and provided direction and support to them all. He was also a professional singer who often performed on campus in the Spartanburg community. Middleton passed away in September 2023.

In Memoriam

Mrs. Ruth Boyter Mundy '42
of Norfolk, VA, died May 28, 2024.

Mrs. Betty Swann Royster '45
of Anderson, SC, died June 20, 2024.

Mr. James R. Lambert, Jr. '49
of Pacolet, SC, died June 28, 2024.

Mr. John Thomas Vehorn '49
of Boiling Springs, SC, died May 23, 2024.

Mrs. Faye Renfro Crocker '54
of Spartanburg, SC, died April 7, 2024.

Ms. Vera Waldrep Langston '54
of Boiling Springs, SC, died August 28, 2023.

Ms. Augusta Cash High '55
of Chesnee, SC, died June 30, 2023.

Mr. Bates L. Scoggins, Jr. '56
of Jonesville, SC, died December 10, 2023.

Mrs. Eula McFadden McMahan '57
of Mooresboro, NC, died February 11, 2023.

Mr. George B. West, Jr. '57
of Camden, SC, died December 25, 2023.

Mrs. Mary Ellen Myers Neely '58
of Spartanburg, SC, died November 8, 2023.

Mr. Douglas W. Underwood '58
of Chesnee, SC, died May 18, 2024.

Mr. Willie A. Alman '59
of Gastonia, NC, died April 14, 2023.

Mr. Grady Cole Pittman '60
of Ridgeway, SC, died November 5, 2023.

Mr. Jerry A. Burnette '61
of Hendersonville, TN, died December 13, 2023.

Mr. Robert N. Hughes '62
of Taylors, SC, died October 7, 2022.

Mr. Grady L. Cotton '62
of Spartanburg, SC, died November 16, 2023.

Mr. Duane L. Turner '62
of Spartanburg, SC, died August 14, 2023.

Mr. Gerald N. Abraham '64
of Spartanburg, SC, died October 14, 2022.

Mrs. Juanita Brandon Kennedy '64
of Winder, GA, died April 3, 2024.

Mr. Jimmy G. Thompson '64
of Greenville, SC, died June 1, 2024.

Mr. Michael L. Yelton '64
of Edisto Island, SC, died July 1, 2023.

Mrs. Patsy Waddell Burrell '65
of Greenville, SC, died March 23, 2023.

Mrs. Donna Turner Melton '65
of Chesnee, SC, died June 26, 2023.

Ms. Janice Palmer Moss '67
of Spartanburg, SC, died March 27, 2024.

Mr. Olin Christus Shull, Jr. '67
of Columbia, SC, died March 3, 2024.

Mr. Ronald L. Roberson '68
of Inman, SC, died August 22, 2023.

Mr. Frederick R. Seale '68
of Florence, SC, died March 3, 2024.

Mrs. Marsha Kay Caldwell Alverson '69
of Chapin, SC, died October 4, 2023.

Mr. Stanford W. Dawsey '70
of Aynor, SC, died April 18, 2024.

Ms. Pamela Arnette McKissick '71
of Gaston, SC, died November 9, 2023.

Mrs. Vonda Cole Barnwell '72
of Inman, SC, died September 30, 2023.

Mr. Thomas W. Owens '72
of Roebuck, SC, died January 20, 2024.

Mr. James Leon Simpson, Jr. '73
of Rock Hill, SC, died November 19, 2022.

Mr. Cecil Brown Abrams '74
of Spartanburg, SC, died January 24, 2024.

Mr. Roger Allen Janney '76
of Yemassee, SC, died January 12, 2024.

Mr. Doctor M. Sims II '76
of Hopkins, SC, died February 1, 2024.

Mr. David Neal Charping '77
of Harrison, MI, died February 19, 2023.

Mr. Paul G. Sherbert '85
of Inman, SC, died March 1, 2024.





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