VIBRANT AND VITAL:
The Economic Engine of Southeast Texas and Beyond
Lamar University is proud of the impact we have within our community of Southeast Texas and beyond. We are a socio-economic hub for our largely industrial-based area not only with the thousands of career-ready graduates we produce each year but also for the research our faculty and students do that is timely and often locally-focused. LU also contributes greatly to the arts within the region through the College of Fine Arts and Communication and the Center for the History and Culture. This issue of Cadence concentrates on everything from healthcare, banking and retail to restaurants and culture, and along with faculty, staff and students who influence and connect LU to the rest of our region, state, country and global community.

The university’s new 8,000-square-foot Science Technology Building, our first fully-accredited-focused facility built on campus in almost five decades, opened in April. It consists of seven instructional and 14 research labs, a large project instruction room, and a maker’s space where students can fabricate ideas they develop into product prototypes. The building will begin by housing four interdisciplinary research teams covering topics such as natural remediation solutions, rural healthcare, automated device development and technology education. It also features a representative of the state of Texas, particularly within the sciences and technology space. Within healthcare, LU has numerous programs supporting this burgeoning industry, such as our pre-med curriculum, the Joanna Gay Doshman School of Nursing, one of our most highly-sought after majors at the university; and our audiology and deaf studies programs which are among the top in the country, as well as the work we are doing in speech and hearing sciences.

Within healthcare, LU has numerous programs supporting this burgeoning industry, such as our pre-med curriculum, the Joanna Gay Doshman School of Nursing, one of our most highly-sought after majors at the university; and our audiology and deaf studies programs which are among the top in the country, as well as the work we are doing in speech and hearing sciences. One of the articles in this issue of Cadence focuses on healthcare in Southeast Texas, and one showcases some of our students accepted into an innovative and highly selective program called the Joint Admission Medical Program. In addition to the exceptional work we do in the healthcare arena, LU has a long legacy of preparing some of the best engineers in the state of Texas. This also is true of bankers, restaurateurs, business owners and more as our alumni often cite their practical-based learning at LU as preparing them better than their competitors in the job market. Along with a short article on this hands-on learning approach within the College of Engineering, this issue also features a few of these highly successful graduates, including Pat Parsons, Tony Nguyen and the Walters brothers – Aaron, Brent and Clint.

The cultural offerings are exemplary year-round through the many museums, art shows and festivals as well as the Symphony of Southeast Texas, but the events held during the holidays, such as LU’s annual Messiah concert, are some of my personal favorites. We are proud of the art exhibited at our campus’ Doshman Art Museum and the area’s historical legacy on display at our Spindletop Gladys City Boomtown Museum. Additionally, LU’s new Center for History and Culture has held numerous programs since its inception in 2017 and during the past year created these center fellow positions. Each of these faculty represent a different area of study and have students accepted into an innovative and highly selective program called the Joint Admission Medical Program. In addition to the exceptional work we do in the healthcare arena, LU has a long legacy of preparing some of the best engineers in the state of Texas. This also is true of bankers, restaurateurs, business owners and more as our alumni often cite their practical-based learning at LU as preparing them better than their competitors in the job market. Along with a short article on this hands-on learning approach within the College of Engineering, this issue also features a few of these highly successful graduates, including Pat Parsons, Tony Nguyen and the Walters brothers – Aaron, Brent and Clint.

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I hope you enjoy your summer, and thank you for taking a moment to learn more of what is currently going on at your university.

Sincerely,

Kenneth R. Evans
President

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Cover photo by Daniel McLemore
Cover art by Amanda Toups

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VIBRANT AND VITAL: The Economic Engine of Southeast Texas and Beyond

Through a rigorous curriculum, enriching extracurricular programs and abundant undergraduate research opportunities, as well as internships and externships organized and managed by an attentive faculty, students are career and graduate school ready upon graduation—ready to compete, ready to contribute, ready to succeed early. Our alumni affirm that preparedness, while employers recognize and value it. The socio-economic influence of Lamar University—through its preparation of talented employees, visionary entrepreneurs and skilled professionals—is vital, far reaching, calculable and indispensable.

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This past April, Lamar University opened the first fully academic building to its campus in 40 years. The 83,000-square foot building has been long awaited since construction began in May 2017.

“Lamar University is a diverse research institution,” said President Ken Evans. “Part of the university’s mission is to provide the means and opportunity to the university community for game-changing research, which this building is intended, in part, to facilitate.”

The building includes seven instructional labs, 14 research labs and a large project instruction room upstairs that overlooks a greenhouse. Among these facilities is a “makerspace,” housing 3D printers and drill presses, where students and faculty members can bring their projects, designs and products to life.

The facility will incubate four research projects by faculty across the campus. These projects investigate solutions to global challenges such as environmental damage from floodwater, coastal degradation, rural healthcare, the development of technology for the future of technology, and educational techniques to meet the demands of our technologically connected society.

The building also contains spaces where students can relax, including a lounge, patio, several breakour rooms and a self-serve, micro-market. Additionally featured throughout the building are breathtaking pieces of art inspired by the beauty and biodiversity of the Southeast Texas region.

Walking on Water Goes Viral

For years, Ajit Patki has taught fluid mechanics. Every year, for extra credit, Patki encouraged students to participate and demonstrate their enthusiasm for a non-Newtonian fluid and make it fun and exciting. Rising to the challenge, a group of students maintained a project that involves using a mixture of cornstarch and water inside a platform. Giving someone the ability to walk on water.

“I’ve been looking forward for this extra credit project for some time now after seeing a video on YouTube as a freshman,” said Chou, a senior mechanical engineering student. The video he referenced was made three years ago and has garnered more than two million views on YouTube. The video became an even bigger viral sensation as media outlets and social media stars began sharing another video that contained the original LU-curated content, increasing views to 40 million in a few short weeks. "With the success of the project and videos, some of us had the idea of starting up our own version of the success of Walk on Water,” says Gobel. “We began to float the idea of bringing this project to the masses, so we built a reusable platform.” The group has been putting in and the performance at competition.”

SAE Mini Baja Wins Senior Design and Competes in Oregon

Senior Design is the culmination of the undergraduate engineering experience. It challenges students to practice what they have learned during their time as a student. One team in particular is given the extraordinary task of designing and building an all-terrain vehicle capable of withstanding the most rugged ground.

Ten mechanical engineering students were brave enough to tackle the task of not only building a vehicle and representing LU in competition but also finishing their degree. “It became almost a daily struggle to maintain plans for the project while finding the time to study for tests,” said Jennifer Hoang, co-captain of the team. “This project not only gave us insight into what it is like to be an engineer but also taught us how to function as a team and work within the confines of being limited on most resources so we really had to think outside the box on a lot of things,” said Mason Simmons, co-captain.

LU has competed in the Society of Automotive Engineers Mini Baja competition for more than a decade now, each year giving a new team the opportunity to test their skills. The 2018 competition was held in Portland, Ore., where more than 150 universities from North America converged to compete in several off-road competitions. The team passed all spec tests (something 1 in 4 did not do), and while they did not win the competition, they were able to compete in every competition category.

In its third year, the Senior Design Symposium saw more than 40 teams compete for best project. The SAE Mini Baja won best project within the Mechanical Engineering Department and eventually took home top prize. “Finishing first in the Senior Design Symposium became the icing on the cake for what turned out to be one of the most difficult, yet fulfilling years as an engineering student,” said Hoang.
Humans are the courses where you work on yourself and figure out where you belong in the world,” says Jim Sanderson, department chair of English and modern languages and professor of creative writing and literature. His 30-year tenure of teaching and directing writing programs at Lamar University, in addition to his career as a fiction writer, has helped hundreds of students find their calling through the study of writing, literature, languages and philosophy. Literature and writing are where Sanderson found his calling, teaching and publishing novels, essay collections, short story collections and textbooks on writing. His creative writing works, novels and stories set in a contemporary Western landscape with hard-boiled detective and reckless outlaw types are hard to pin down to a genre, however.

“I have an essay called ‘Getting Hyphens’—the more hyphens you have the better you are, and it is other people that give you these hyphens. For example, I’ve been called a ‘darkly-comic-literate-Texas-mystery writer’,” he says. “One year, my novel won a contest for Best Southwestern Rural Fiction, and I became a cowboy. When the press published this novel, the editor called it a ‘mystery’ and I became a mystery writer. I have also been called a ‘Texas’ writer, and someone else said I write ‘grit lit’.

“More correctly, what I am is a traditional American realist because the realists took on social issues, so I think that the mystery genre, the hard-bitten, private eye, noir-ish mysteries in America have been the place where American literary realism has gone to hide or die.”

Two of his earlier novels, El Camino del Real from 1998 and La Mordida from 2002 have received recent attention by Brash Books, an America crime story publication whose editors republished Sanderson’s works in 2016 and 2018 respectfully. Even with a full schedule balancing administrative duties and teaching, Sanderson always is writing and is currently working on his next novel. Additionally, one of his courses this fall is a novel writing class.

Sanderson’s engagement with multiple facets of the humanities enables him to lead a diverse department of English, French, Spanish and philosophy students with courses that not only enrich their individual lives but also their professional futures.

“We don’t have majors; we have converts,” he says. “Students get here and then they see something that they like in the department. One reason someone may major in creative writing or foreign languages might be because it is fun but also because they can experience themselves growing smarter.”

In the past, Sanderson says, most students would go on to become teachers in the community. Today, many students still continue on to teaching jobs but also find employment in other fields such as editing, publishing, web design, mid-level management, non-profit administration and even the Peace Corps.

“Today, students studying English, French, Spanish or philosophy are not only learning content from their respective areas but also the skills of critical thinking and communication,” he says. “These skills make our students great employees, and our graduates get jobs by being adaptable and applying what they learned from reading John Milton to the real world and developing and practicing these skills.”

While his specialty within the department is fiction, writing at LU does not include just fiction and poetry, Sanderson says. Under his leadership, the department has developed classes that meet different student needs such as professional writing for students in fields as diverse as engineering, psychology and health. Also, in the past ten years, the department has developed a variety of popular rhetoric courses and an ethics and literature course for business majors.

Another important project spearheaded by Sanderson and of other faculty members is the successful Lamar University Literary Press—the only academic press in the country solely devoted to literary works—which has continued to sustain itself in a time where other academic presses in the state have been facing difficulties.

Sanderson’s love of storytelling, educating others and the humanities have been important guiding principles since childhood, he says.

“My father always said that I should go to college because ‘they’ can’t take it away from you,” he says. “There is something in that statement that says that, despite whoever opposes you, you have something that can’t be taken away. In the humanities, we provide this defense against ‘they’.”
A recent study concludes Lamar University’s economic impact on the Southeast Texas community is more than $263 million a year. LU’s most significant contributing factor to the local economy is the consistent supply of work-ready individuals to local businesses. For nearly a century, Lamar University has promoted the overall economic health, sustainability and stability of the region by providing a qualified workforce.

While each of LU’s degree programs produce quality candidates in specific fields by incorporating didactic as well as applied learning, LU’s distinction as a work-ready educator is exemplified by the College of Engineering’s commitment to an “operations-focused” approach to teaching.

“Some universities focus on teaching their students for positions in research at graduate schools, other research organizations or design positions,” said Victor Zaloom, interim dean of engineering. “We do teach design, but our primary focus is design for more efficient operations because that is what our alumni and employers of our graduates say is needed most.”

LU’s engineering curriculum is tailored for local industry while also meeting the requirements of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, and the Engineering Accreditation of the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology. As a result of the close working relationship between industry and educators, LU offers a robust co-operative work program. Julee Rodriguez graduated from LU in 2009 with a Bachelor of Science in Mechanical Engineering and Mathematics. She participated in LU’s co-op program working at ExxonMobil throughout her college career and was offered a job at the multinational oil and gas corporation before she graduated.

“I was a nontraditional student who graduated from high school, worked several years to save money so I could attend college and then chose to attend LU because it was affordable and because the College of Engineering had a co-op work program,” said Rodriguez, who currently works for ExxonMobil in Spring as the company’s global marketing excellence advisor.

LU graduates with experience from co-ops also are extremely important to BASF, says Greg Masica, vice president and site manager. The company, with two facilities in the Golden Triangle area, recruits Lamar University students from all engineering degree programs.

“LU students are often seeking employment in this region, and LU grads receive a solid education,” said Masica, who is also a member of the College of Engineering Advisory Council. “Many have had intern or co-op opportunities that provide them valuable work experience prior to graduation.”

Another distinction that helps prepare students for the real world of engineering is regular interaction with practicing engineers. Zaloom says the College of Engineering diligently and purposefully networks with alumni and employers to gain insight about their needs and trends in the industry. Faculty and department chairs interact with company representatives at the college’s career fairs, and an “industrial partnership” between companies and the university sponsors multiple short courses each year on topics of interest to the companies. These activities give faculty and students the opportunity to better understand the most relevant challenges in the industry.

“These interactions are a major strength of LU’s Engineering College and one reason why our graduates are highly sought by local industry. Industry knows that our graduates are ready to produce results for them right away,” said Zaloom.

Rodriguez volunteers as an ExxonMobil recruiter at Lamar University and is a member of the LU Mechanical Engineering Advisory Council. Advisory groups for every engineering discipline, each comprising alumni and employers, meet each semester to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of graduates, which then directs curriculum. “I enjoy giving back and like the idea of giving someone an opportunity like I was given,” said Rodriguez. BASF believes in giving back to the local communities and encourages employees to serve as advisors and ambassadors for Lamar University, according to Masica. “Our hope is that we can share critical feedback about the curriculum that will ready students for careers in the petrochemicals industry,” he said. “Our employees attend career fairs at LU and assist student organizations with résumé-building activities. We also participate in training workshops hosted by LU where BASF employees serve as panelists to address questions by LU professors and area teachers.”

Zaloom says operation-focused teaching also includes skills beyond technical calculations and formulas. “We work very hard with alumni and employers to ensure students learn the technical, teamwork, communication and other skills necessary for a practicing engineer,” said Zaloom.

Rodriguez says she’s grateful for these additional skills gained at LU because in her current capacity, the technical skills are not as critical as the softer skills of engineering.

“At LU, I learned how to solve problems and to work in teams,” said Rodriguez. “During our engineering design project, we engineered, designed and manufactured a project over the course of a year. During that interaction, we not only used the fundamentals of engineering but put into practice all of the other things—team work, problem solving, economic assessment and gave a presentation to peers and industry. That is simulating, on a small scale, what your career is like.”

Rodriguez says an added benefit of attending LU was not expected was receiving a “private-like experience for the price of a public institution.”

“I was able to interact with professors. If I had gone to a big school, I might not have had that. That’s important because it enhances the education that you get,” said Rodriguez. “It’s a value asset that other schools don’t have.”
The Joint Admission Medical Program was created by the Texas Legislature to provide economically disadvantaged students with a pathway to a career in medicine. Funded through the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, the program provides its highly qualified entrants with internships, scholarships, MCAT preparation, mentoring and guaranteed admittance to one of the nine partnered medical schools as well as funding to attend. JAMP connects students from its 66 four-year undergraduate member schools to nine prestigious medical programs across the state of Texas. These schools include Baylor College of Medicine, Texas Tech Paul L. Foster School of Medicine at El Paso, Texas Tech Health Sciences Center School of Medicine, Texas A&M Health Science Center College of Medicine, University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston Medical School, UT School of Medicine at San Antonio, UT Medical Branch at Galveston, UT Southwestern Medical Center and University of North Texas Health Science Center. Further information about the program can be found at texassjam.org and about LU’s pre-professional programs at lamar.edu.

**JAMP PROGRAM**

**provides path to MEDICAL SCHOOL**

By Daniel Pemberton

Lamar University has long been a first step for students pursuing a career in medicine. The College of Arts and Sciences’ many pre-professional healthcare concentrations and the Joanne Gay Dishman School of Nursing are two of the most comprehensive and acclaimed programs the university offers. LU contributes to advances in medicine and healthcare through all the medical exposure I was able to get in my time here. Plus, all of the volunteering and leadership opportunities that LU has given me will refine me as an applicant and make me a stronger job candidate," said Shaaban.

"I was lucky enough to be part of Dr. Terry’s research lab over the summer. These professors are also good mentors who will tell you what you need to improve upon or what to expect for the future," Vu said. "I would like to graduate top of my class in med school, start my own practice and be the most well-known internist in my area. I am grateful for this opportunity, and I cannot wait to serve the community one day. That is all I could ever ask for."

Senior Yves Kenfack came to LU from Allen, Texas. He said that medical school has always been in his sights but he had begun to consider changing his degree to nursing because his dad thought it would be a better fit. Then he discovered the JAMP program.

"I found out about the program in my high school pharmacy technician class when a representative of JAMP came to speak," said Nguyen. "By the end of the presentation, I had made up my mind. They provided an internship that allowed me to have preceptorships, anatomy and physiology classes, and lectures that help me grow as a person." Aziz Shaaban is a junior from Nederland who has been convinced of his future in the medical field since the age of six. He learned of the JAMP program the summer before attending LU, and says that although the program has helped him an enormous amount, it is his time at Lamar University that gave him the tools to succeed in his career. "Lamar University has prepared me for my future career in medicine through all the medical exposure I was able to get in my time here. Plus, all of the volunteering and leadership opportunities that LU has given me will refine me as an applicant and make me a stronger job candidate," said Shaaban.

"I have gone from someone who for the most part kept to myself and lectures that help me grow as a person." said Joe Nordgren, acting associate provost and JAMP faculty director. "JAMP provides everything from scholarships and MCAT preparation to summer internships, all of which are essential to success in any medical program. We are incredibly proud of our students who have been accepted." Tran Nguyen, a junior from Houston, made the decision to apply to the JAMP program in high school.

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CYCLICAL STRENGTH

FROM SEARCHING STUDENT TO SUCCESSFUL BANKER TO THOUGHTFUL PHILANTHROPIST AND DISTINGUISHED ALUMNUS

by Krista Salter

One of the wonderful things about being the functioning socio-economic engine that is Lamar University includes being privy to the successes of born-on-the-road Southeast Texans. Proof that if you start here, you can finish here lies in the story of Pat Parsons ’71. Looking back, Parsons laughed when he thought about the time soon after he graduated LU, referring to them as the “old days” and admitting he had no idea what he was going to do.

Now, in 2019, Parsons can say he did well as one of the original five founders of CommunityBank of Texas. Today, he sits as vice chairman of the board, but has done everything from leading the helm to getting the bank on a national stage in the stock market. “It’s still a wonderful thing for Beaumont,” Parsons said. “We’re still headquartered in Beaumont, and our board of directors is predominantly from Beaumont.

“At the time we began, we felt that if Beaumont wants to be all it can be, it needed to have a locally owned bank,” Parsons said. “We can take care of requirements for small businesses but also handle very large locally owned businesses.” Parsons added, “We lend money to people in the community who make a living taking care of our plants and their workers.” CommunityBank has seen exceptional growth since it was founded. Parsons and his team started buying banks throughout Southeast Texas and the eastern edge of Houston and opening new branches, eventually growing in size and assets. 

In 2017, the bank went public and ended up with around 200 local people who own stock in CommunityBank of Texas, Parsons said. “I’m proud of it,” he said. “One of the principal things we can do is helping the community,” Parsons said. “We take their money and pay them interest for it, and refeed it into this community to build and invest in the future.”

“We help everyone,” he explained, “from the snowcone stand on the side of the road to the large, locally owned businesses. A locally owned bank is important, according to Parsons, because banking is a person-to-person business and vital to the socioeconomic growth of a community.”

“We employ over 500 local people,” Parsons said. “That’s important to me. We’re proud to provide meaningful, well-paying jobs to 500 people.”

“We’re from here, and our kids grew up here,” he said. “The future of the Golden Triangle is critical to the success of CommunityBank, and vice versa.”

Considering Parsons has been inducted into LU’s College of Business Hall of Fame, it’s humorous now that he had no clue what he wanted to do. After receiving his degree in accounting from Lamar University, he went on to receive his MBA in Houston before returning home:

“I got a very good education in accounting at LU,” Parsons explained. “You’re exposed to things, and develop an idea of what you want to do, but you never really know. “During the courses I took, I decided I liked the idea of being a banker and working with people, building community and reinventing the future,” he said. “Lamar and my education there was an excellent foundation for me to build upon.”

After all this time, Parsons has continually found ways to give back to the university. Aside from his Hall of Fame recognition, the Lamar University named Parsons a distinguished alumnus. He is a founding member of Lamar University President’s Circle and serves as the treasurer of the Lamar University Foundation.

Now, Parsons is bringing his successes back to LU with an internship and training program meant to entice graduates into banking. “We see the start of this apprenticeship program, meant to feed into a training program, as a way to bring young people into banking,” Parsons said. “There are not enough young people having the opportunity to pursue careers in banking because there are no front door training programs like this anymore.”

He added, “We’re looking to attract well-qualified students and show them what banking can be; thereby hopefully attracting the next wave of managers and owners into this bank.”

CommunityBank accepted its first student into its Officer Development Program from LU last summer. Parsons reflected on one lesson he learned in a really tough accounting class at LU and how it has stuck with him until this day. “The first day we were in that class,” Parsons said, “the professor told us to look to our left and right. He said half of us wouldn’t be there at the end of the course, and he was right.”

“The takeaway from that is this: life is serious. Keep up with your work, and take advantage of the opportunities in front of you.”

CommunityBank of Texas and Lamar University partnered in 2018 to offer students a unique opportunity to intern in an effort to create well-rounded, experienced future bankers and leaders.

Candidates chosen for the program become familiar with various aspects of banking through rotating departmental training before moving on to the credit department. The program is taught in class and on the job by professionals and bankers, while structured to give interns hands-on experience working alongside the bank’s leaders.

“It is a great way to experience the corporate culture at CommunityBank of Texas, to familiarize yourself with various banking departments and to better position yourself for future employment opportunities,” said Jason Sirkel, executive vice president and regional CEO of corporate banking with CommunityBank.

Recent LU accounting graduate Irqa Masood joined CommunityBank’s Officer Development Program in Houston this past January, while several other top students made it through the interview process.

“(Masood) is a bright, positive and resourceful young lady, and I know she will represent Lamar University well as she progresses through her career with CommunityBank of Texas,” said Sirkel. Sirkel also stated that Lamar University students interviewed particularly well compared to students from other universities.

Throughout the 10-12 week program, candidates achieve a solid foundation in banking, career development, working relationships with upper management, credit skills and the application of those skills through projects, mock presentations, live deals and continued hands-on experience.
The Latin words Mater Ecclesia, followed by Porta Caeli, flank the entrance of the well-known mother of the Church and Heaven’s gates. The aptly titled Soul of the City Concert Series has provided a cultural mainstay for the community for more than four years. Year after year, as the angelic music from the production fills the backdrop for the “Messiah,” one does indeed feel they are being transported through the proverbial heaven’s gates.

“Messiah,” from start to finish, is a beautifully unfolding drama. Every bit of it, from the overtures and “Comfort Ye My People” all the way through “Worthy is the Lamb,” is by itself a piece of exquisite beauty. Every moment drives the story further. Because of the intensity of the performance, the Lamar University choirs diligently prepare from the end of one season to the next. Han has been able to share this message of hope, through music, on an annual basis to a full house audience of wonderful people,” said Han.

It has been proven that arts and culture make considerable and necessary contributions to the well-being of a community. The cultural contribution of this specific concert cannot necessarily be counted in dollars, but in the fact that each year, in the standing room only venue, patrons come back year after year to experience this oratorio, a sort of currency in its own. Whether it’s a Latin phrase over a doon, an Italian opera or the “Messiah,” music is a universal language that has the ability to unite us all, no matter what season.

Deaf studies & deaf education add two designated interpreters

The Department of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education added two new designated interpreters to their growing department: Designated interpreters address a critical need in the fields of deaf professionals in academic, community, medical and combined interpreting. Designated interpreters address a critical need in the fields of deaf professionals in academic, community, medical and combined interpreting. Designated interpreters address a critical need in the fields of deaf professionals in academic, community, medical and combined interpreting.

Speech & Hearing Sciences awarded NIH grant

The Department of Speech and Hearing Sciences awarded NIH grant to Dr. Manisha Balsekhar, an assistant professor, and Jo Moya Endowed Chair of the Department of Speech and Hearing Sciences, has been awarded a grant from the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders for $397,800 to study relief efforts for tuberculosis in the United States. In his proposal, Manishah will develop an online therapy intervention called Behavioral Therapy via the internet as a guided self-help program. This ICTB can be customized to meet individual needs both in terms of language and access.

A highlight of the evening was the performance of dancers from Taiwan, who also unintentionally became the inspiration for the theme of the event. During the planning process, the committee realized the dancers would be visiting the Department of Theatre and Dance during the same time as the bal. This inspired the Asian theme carried throughout the special event. The performance piece, which included a dragon made up of dance piece, which included a dragon made up of the dancers, marked the entrance of the highly anticipated building. The new back-drop of the art bash proved to be a good move as the event sold out to a crowd of more than 450 people.

The Department of Music presents their annual Messiah concert, that has captured the heart and soul of the Lamb,” is by itself a piece of exquisite beauty. Every moment drives the story further. Because of the intensity of the performance, the Lamar University choirs diligently prepare from the end of one season to the next. Han has been able to share this message of hope, through music, on an annual basis to a full house audience of wonderful people,” said Han.

University Press has record-setting year

The University Press, the student newspaper of Lamar University, set a new record with 76 awards in competitions for work published in 2017.

Every year the newspaper enterers in at least four major press club contests—the Press Club of Southwest Texas, Society of Professional Journalists, Houston Press Club and Texas Interscholastic Press Association. This past year, the student publication won various awards from first place to honorable mention in every single event in categories including news stories, feature stories, photos, layouts and videos.

“With this number of awards speaks to the quality of the work the students produce, and the hard work they put in,” Andy Coughlin, University Press media advisor, said. “The University Press aims to reproduce a professional work environment where students have hands-on experience that prepares them for a career—whether that is in print news, broadcast, public relations, advertising or any media. I think these awards indicate that this sort of experiential learning pays off.”

Le Grand Bal sets records

This past spring, Le Grand Bal made a grand entrance when the fundraiser, hosted as the event of the year at Lamar University, was held. The bal set new records and heralded new highs in its long-standing tradition of more than 40 years.

“This year we raised more than $124,000 for the College of Fine Arts and Communication,” said 2018 Chairperson Sandra Clark. “An amount that well surpassed our goal!”

Another first for the event was a change in the venue. Planners decided to move Le Grand Bal from its longtime Montagne Center to the newly renovated Setzer Student Center, making the event the unofficial opening of the highly anticipated building. The new back-drop of the art bash proved to be a good move as the event sold out to a crowd of more than 450 people.

The evening’s honoring was Albert Nolan, Beaumont rector, retired educator, newspaper columnist, and well-known supporter of the arts in Southwest Texas. The featured artist was renowned photographer and Department of Art Professor Keith Carter.

Because of the overwhelming support of the community, the Mary Morgan Moore Department of Music will present Handel’s “Messiah” again this Christmas season. The event will be held December 6 at 7:30 p.m. at the School of the City Concert Series at St. Anthony Cathedral Basilica. Admission is free of charge.
As someone who has been in the game for more than 40 years, Norman Bellard knows a thing or two about the socio-economic climate within the Golden Triangle. “We are one of the main socio economic hubs in the city as well as southeast Texas. LU grants support the petrochemical industry, as well as small and large businesses in cities throughout Southeast Texas. We positively affect the economies within the Golden Triangle through the number of students we educate and the number of faculty, staff and senior administrators that we employ.’’

Beyond the education and training of successful professionals, is the Center for Innovation, Commercialization, Industrialization and Entrepreneurship on Lamar University’s campus. “Through the center we offer job training,’’ says Bellard. “With this petrochemical boom and expansion, one of the main concerns we hear from company executives is the need for employable skilled labor ready to go. It’s a challenge and one we are meeting to the benefit of southeast Texas residents and employers, so they are not having to go outside the Golden Triangle to secure those employees.’’

Student athlete, community advocate and family man, Norman Bellard has always had a home at Lamar University. Bellard started his time at LU in 1975 while earning his bachelor’s degree in accounting. “The memory I cherish the most is what we were able to accomplish and the successes that we were able to achieve on the basketball team,’’ Bellard said. “We were undefeated at home for a total of six consecutive years, starting in my junior year—a total of 80 home games in a row, which was one of the longest consecutive winning streaks in the nation at the time.’’ This winning streak was in part a result of the team’s Coach Billy Tubbs and his philosophy that if you pass the ball more than three times, it’s a stall. “He will never call a stall,’’ Bellard said, “so you shoot the ball.’’ The Cardinals averaged almost 80 points a game and were fifth in the nation in scoring.

Bellard said that while he was a full-time student and athlete, he was able to build life-long friendships with both his teammates and professors. “We were a very close-knit family and until this day we are still a very close-knit family. And when I first got back to Lamar University in 2000, some of those professors that taught me between 1975 and 1979 were still here, and it looked like it was stress free,’’ he jokes. “It looked like they had not aged, so I said well, maybe I need to try it.’’ After a 20-year career as a chief financial officer and regional vice president, Bellard headed back to LU to become the assistant vice president of student affairs in 2000, and in 2015, ‘’President Evans said he needed my help on something,’’ he said. “Being a former athlete, when the coach calls the play, the player runs to play.’’ Currently Bellard is the assistant to the president for community relations, economic development and athletic programs liaison.

When President Evans asked him to help with community relations, Bellard recalls, “Evans said, ‘you know a lot of people.’ I said, ‘Yes, sir’ He said, ‘but a lot more people know of you.’ It’s always been that way because I’ve been around and involved for 40 plus years.’ Bellard, founding member of the Greater South Park Neighborhood Partnership, recently teamed up with community partners and Teresa Simpson, the special assistant to the dean for student success and clinical instructor for educational leadership in the College of Education and Human Development, to create an Innovative Learning Lab for students at Pietzsch-MacArthur Elementary School. The group has plans to create six more in Beaumont elementary schools and one in South Park Middle School.

After his well-remembered athletic career and as a beloved 40-year Beaumonter, Bellard continues to make a memorable and meaningful influence at Lamar University and in his surrounding community. “I’m not native to Beaumont, but this is my home.’’

“As someone who has been in the game for more than 40 years, Norman Bellard knows a thing or two about the socio-economic climate within the Golden Triangle.

“We positively affect the economies within the Golden Triangle through the number of students we educate and the number of faculty, staff and senior administrators that we employ.’’ —Norman Bellard

by Hannah Carlson

Our stories are your stories. Your support enables us to continue to tell them.

LU ATHLETE & COMMUNITY ADVOCATE

“ We positively affect the economies within the Golden Triangle through the number of students we educate and the number of faculty, staff and senior administrators that we employ.’’ —Norman Bellard

CARDINAL CADENCE | LU—Socio-economic Engine | SUMMER 2019
NURSING
Cynthia Sisson '75, '80, chair of the JoAnne Gay Dishman School of Nursing, says, “with both undergraduate and graduate programs, we have approximately 700 students in the nursing school. Applicants come from across the country with some of the most intelligent and brightest minds.” LU has received commendations from the Texas Board of Nursing for outstanding pass rates on the national qualifying exam for nurses for the past five years, scoring 92-97% when the state and national averages have been 88% or below. “We believe in holistic education with hands-on learning, critical reasoning and clinical judgment,” Sisson said. The students obtain this holistic experience with their laboratory experiences, the simulation lab, practicum experiences and community-based service learning. The High Fidelity Simulation Lab is one of the top simulation labs in the state—a 14-bed simulated hospital with robotics and mannequins that talk and breathe with standardized heart rates. As part of nursing students’ education, people from the community come in as actors with scripts to simulate real-life clinical scenarios.

All of LU’s nursing students also are required to complete 120 hours of community service, called community-based service learning hours. Students work with a coordinator to determine where they are needed in the community, staffing rape and suicide hotlines or working with organizations like Julie Rogers Gift of Life at local health fairs. Post-graduation surveys indicate that students continue to volunteer in the community after they graduate.

Both students and faculty have won state awards. Senior Hailey Zampini led a student nursing organization to the 2019 Texas Nursing Student Association State Convention and received the Dynamic Kernel Module Support award for testing students to find a match for stem cell donation or bone marrow transplants. “I love nursing school, and I’m very sad to leave in May 2019. It’s a bittersweet moment for sure,” Zampini said. “I can’t brag enough on our faculty and our nursing instructors, they care and they push you to be the very best you can be.” Zampini graduated in May and is working at CHRISTUS Southeast Texas.

Most students have a job in hand upon graduation. CHRISTUS Southeast Texas offers a fully accredited residency program from the American Nurse Credentialing Center for new nurses to help make the transition into nursing. Paul Guizdour, ’01, chief nursing officer at CHRISTUS describes the residency “as an opportunity to spend a full year with a nurse so that we could help them with that transition from student nurse to novice nurse. The whole goal is to make sure that transition is nurtured.”

“It’s a continuing effort to keep up with the amount of nurses needed in healthcare,” says Guizdour, and he calls this wave the “graying tsunami.” “We have a lot of baby boomers who are all on the verge of retirement. We may hire a new nurse and simultaneously be losing a nurse to retirement after working for 30-35 years. That’s what makes this accredited nursing residency program so important. We want to make sure that the choice of where they want to go to work has been well thought out and we have the type of program that helps nurture them into practice. We are going to continue to see that nursing shortage will go to 2025 and there are only so many new graduates each year.” Other Hospitals in the area, including Baptist Hospital and the Medical Center of Southeast Texas, offer excellent transition programs for new graduates.

Nurses graduating from the Dishman School of Nursing are employed all over the world in a variety of areas including, but not limited to, acute-care, long-term care, rehabilitation, public health, community health, administration, education, school nursing and research. Many of these graduates have obtained advance degrees.

DEAF STUDIES AND DEAF EDUCATION
LU’s Department of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education is the third-largest program in the country. The program began in 1979 and now has undergraduate and graduate degrees along with an Ed.D. in deaf studies and deaf education. Students prepare to become American Sign Language teachers and interpreters, teachers of Deaf children from early childhood to secondary levels, professors and administrators.

The department has developed partnerships with state schools for the Deaf, mainstreamed programs in the public schools, community colleges, universities and research labs in order to give students a state-of-the-art curriculum and rich intern experiences. “If you have taken a high school American sign language class, you most likely have met one of our alumni,” said Mary Clark, department chair. We are the only program in the state of Texas that prepares K-12 ASL teachers. High Schools across the state contact us frequently to try to hire one of our ASL teachers, as most of them have already hired one of our former students. This year’s graduate all had jobs prior to graduation. We are proud of our alumni and the work they do as they touch the lives of deaf and hard of hearing people. Masters-level students become teachers in ASL/English bilingual deaf education programs, touching the lives of young deaf children and working to help families find services their deaf child needs. In addition, Clark said, “Our doctoral students engage in research to improve the lives of deaf people in terms of education, identity development and language acquisition. They advocate for effective programs for mental health as well as progressive education policies.”

SPEECH AND HEARING SCIENCES
An ongoing shortage of speech-language pathologists and audiologists means that typically 100% of LU graduates find employment within their field and work in a variety of medical, rehabilitation and educational settings, including hospitals, clinics, home health agencies, physicians’ offices, nursing homes, schools and early childhood centers.

Students train by working alongside accomplished faculty to treat both children and adults with developmental and acquired disorders in LU’s Speech-Language Pathology Clinic, Voice Lab and Vocology Clinic, and Audiology Clinic while obtaining the skills to prevent, diagnose, monitor and treat communication disorders.

**JOANNE GAY DISHMAN SCHOOL OF NURSING**

Katelyn Meaux, Pre-Med; Emily Street ’19, RN—CHRISTUS St. Elizabeth; Garrett Ames ’19, RN—CHRISTUS St. Elizabeth; Nicholas Nolen, Pre-Pharmacy

**DEPARTMENT OF DEAF STUDIES AND DEAF EDUCATION**

*by Jennifer Wyse*

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**DEPARTMENT OF DEAF STUDIES AND DEAF EDUCATION**

*by Jennifer Wyse*
Cathy Butler ’80, a speech pathologist at Advanced Pediatric Healthcare says, “We made lifelong friends with students and professors.” She and Diane Bass ’80, an audiologist and owner of Advanced Pediatric Care, both studied together and worked full time in the speech and hearing center.

LU was and is on the leading edge of the field. Bass recalls, “It was the birthplace of the profession. We weren’t even a licensed profession when I started in the field of audiology. It was a brand new profession. Speech pathology had been around a while but was not a graduate-level profession. You could still work with a bachelor’s degree. Through the growth of Dr. Peterson and Dr. Mosulton the graduate programs in speech pathology and audiology They added the doctorate.” Bass recalls traveling, “We went all over the country and Mexico for the deaf-ed program. We watched as Dr. Mosulton took this program out into the world; he took it to the professional level where many of these programs are now.”

LU offers nine pre-professional program in health sciences to help prepare future health professionals for medical school. According to Eileen Burch, pre-professional adviser, more than 400 students study in these programs currently: pre-dental, pre-medical, pre-professional, pre-optometry, pre-pharmacy, pre-physical therapy, pre-physician assistant, pre-professional, pre-veterinary. “Lamar University is higher than the state average for acceptance rates into medical school and dental schools,” Burch says. She meets with these students each semester to review medical school requirements and to check on each student’s progress. She encourages, guides and ultimately wants to make sure the students have the correct resources. Burch encourages her students to do their shadowing and observation hours early on so that she and the doctoral faculty are able to make sure to the field is like and to make sure the medical field is right for them.

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Dr. John Scott ’79—Serves on the board of directors of the Cypress College Foundation and the Cypress College Foundation’s Early College High School & Career Ready Program, recently served on the Texas Medical Review Board District 3 Review Committee and now serves on the Texas State Board of Physician Assistant Examiners. He and his wife, Louelle, live in Keller.

Anesthesiologist Dr. John Scott is chief marketing officer and chairman of the board of All Care Physicians Group. A graduate of the University of North Texas College of Science and Medicine, Scott is currently and future pre-medical students to work in the healthcare field and find out a doctor’s role. “That’s how you can really determine if this is what you want to do,” he said. “The ASSB took it all really put me above other students. The big benefit was to have the guidance and friendship of professors, to have that resource and to have someone to talk to who can give you more than anything else—that’s what I got from Lamar University.”

Dr. Mark Toup’s 73—Began medical information searches at the bedside in the early 1980s, taught at Parkland Hospital, he takes an active interest in LU’s pre-medical students and invited senior pre-medical students to attend the “Festival of Caring,” which focuses on the human side of the medical field and attracts the attention of nine earth science majors and some geology majors as they spent two weeks exploring and camping in the Chihuahuan Desert where they camped high in the Chisos Mountains and in an exfoliation dome. The group was amazed while seeing the different layers of sandstone, limestone and earth. The group was amazed while seeing the different layers of sandstone, limestone and earth. The group was amazed while seeing the different layers of sandstone, limestone and earth.

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Hamza helps other heal

by Daniel Pemberton

Each year, Lamar University graduates a class of highly equipped students who will either enter the job market or choose to continue their education in graduate or professional school. While many will secure jobs or graduate school placement across the U.S., others will choose to work and live in the Southeast Texas region. Regardless of their choice, these students contribute to their chosen community as LU alumni, and in this way the university has consistently been one of the most powerful economic and cultural engines for the region. LU also is a necessary resource for many academic fields, exporting its talent around the globe. One of LU’s best examples is the work of M.K. Hamza, professor of clinical mental health counseling, who joined the faculty in 2007.

As a former forensic neuropsychologist and researcher, Hamza is world-renowned for identifying Human Devastation Syndrome while working with young children in Syria. The term describes the collective and complex human trauma symptoms of which millions of Syrian refugees suffer, particularly children and youth. While displaced populations and refugees continue to suffer the humiliation, agony and pain of ethnic cleansing and wars, children who endure repetitive exposure to traumatic events seem to suffer the deepest of all psychological injuries," Hamza said.

Between 2011 and 2017, there were 198-chemical weapon attacks, including sarin and chlorine gas. Faced with continual bombardment and starvation, communities shatter, families fragment and children are unable to find footing to cope. Stunning atrocities shook the world.

“While displaced populations and refugees continue to suffer the humiliation, agony and pain of ethnic cleansing and wars, children who endure repetitive exposure to traumatic events seem to suffer the deepest of all psychological injuries.” — M.K. Hamza

Hamza describes human devastation syndrome as PTSD on steroids. “Usually in PTSD, you are exposed to a traumatic event and then you have time to cope,” he said. “But we are talking about eight years of repeated, systematic injuries. Those who receive the most psychological injuries are the children.”

Hamza currently chairs the Syrian American Medical Society’s Mental Health Committee, which has become one of the most active groups of doctors working in Syria since the advent of the war. Hamza’s work in this area makes him among the most accomplished clinicians in the region. LU has been highly supportive of his work, which continues to position the university as an important institution in the field of mental health counseling.

His three children attend or are graduates of Lamar University. The oldest, Ayah Hamza, earned her bachelor’s in dietetics and now attends medical school at the Texas College of Osteopathic Medicine in Fort Worth.

Omar Hamza is a pre-medicine/psychology major and chemistry/biology minor and founder of the Lamar Muslim Association. He is a recipient of the Beck Fellowship, which will fund his research on Human Devastation Syndrome in Jordan.

Ali Hamza studies political science with an interest in working law after graduation. Following in the footsteps of his older sister, Ali is involved in the newly reorganized LU Model UN team.

Their dad was the 2018 LU Distinguished Faculty Lecturer. He spoke of his experiences to open a window of awareness, understanding and commitment to address psychological traumas and injuries so that refugees can find methods to survive, move on and triumph.

In 2017, Lamar University launched the Center for History and Culture. That first year, the fellows’ work celebrated aspects of Southeast Texas musical influences and featured recorded histories of prominent Beaumont figures. This year, the 2018-2019 fellowship projects add new scholarship and creativity to further the center’s mission “to support the creation, preservation, and transmission of knowledge about Southeast Texas.” Through their distinctive lenses on art and graphic design, filmmaking and historical-cultural exploration, each fellow is mining the past to cultivate awareness, empathy and inclusiveness among Lamar University and the broader Southeast Texas community that is our home. Each project spins uniquely humanizing and regenerative threads that weave Lamar University into the fabric of the local and global socio-economy.

LU RE-ENVISIONS BEAUMONT: 3-D VISUALIZATION AS A LEARNING TOOL FOR PUBLIC HISTORY

Richard Salimi, associate professor of art and design, in situing the architectural history of downtown Beaumont, has discovered what seems to have been a “city within a city” that existed when Beaumont was segregated by Jim Crow laws. Initially, he set out to revitalize lost architecture of the city using Sunborn maps and 3-D computer modeling. In his exploration, Gachot discovered a building on Park and Forsythe that was an African-American area of downtown.

Mahmoud Salimi, assistant professor of film and television, looks back to events of the late 1800s toward the turn of the century to explore the cultural and economic significance of local oil discovery in 1901. His ideas for the project originated from his own experience as “an outsider coming in” to the dichotomy that is Southeast Texas—wealth and poverty in juxtaposition. Salimi finds such contradictions interesting and worthy of close study. Working with a LU student researcher and crew members, Boom Days will feature dramas and re-enactments, many of which will be shot at Spindletop on the Lamar University campus. Salimi’s work on this film evokes his ethos as a storyteller. He encourages his students to notice the stories of the human condition that are all around. He says to them, “Don’t write the zombie movies—you are sitting in the middle of history.”

LU REMEMBERS BEAUMONT ON THE WORLD STAGE: BOOM DAYS, A DOCUMENTARY FILM

Mahmoud Salimi, assistant professor of film and television, looks back to events of the late 1800s toward the turn of the century to explore the cultural and economic significance of local oil discovery in 1901. His ideas for the project originated from his own experience as “an outsider coming in” to the dichotomy that is Southeast Texas—wealth and poverty in juxtaposition. Salimi finds such contradictions interesting and worthy of close study. Working with a LU student researcher and crew members, Boom Days will feature dramas and re-enactments, many of which will be shot at Spindletop on the Lamar University campus. Salimi’s work on this film evokes his ethos as a storyteller. He encourages his students to notice the stories of the human condition that are all around. He says to them, “Don’t write the zombie movies—you are sitting in the middle of history.”

LU RECLAIMS LOST HISTORY: BEAUMONT LATINA/O ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Miguel Chavez, assistant professor of history, specializes in U.S. and Chicana/o history and his fellowship project captures and reclaims a missing narrative—that of the Latina/o—their experiences from the turn of the century to the present. Chavez’s work in this area of research brings a unique perspective to the field of history and his oral histories project will address the cultural diversity of the city’s history and the importance of remembering the past.

2018-19 CENTER FELLOWS

By Casey Ford

In that year, the fellows’ work celebrated aspects of Southeast Texas musical influences and featured recorded histories of prominent Beaumont figures. This year, the 2018-2019 fellowship projects add new scholarship and creativity to further the center’s mission “to support the creation, preservation, and transmission of knowledge about Southeast Texas.” Through their distinctive lenses on art and graphic design, filmmaking and historical-cultural exploration, each fellow is mining the past to cultivate awareness, empathy and inclusiveness among Lamar University and the broader Southeast Texas community that is our home. Each project spins uniquely humanizing and regenerative threads that weave Lamar University into the fabric of the local and global socio-economy.
WE'RE IN THE
people
business

by Krista Salter

In the early 2000s, three brothers graduated from Lamar University full of entrepreneurial spirit and looking towards the future. Though they didn’t realize it then, the lessons they learned at LU—both in life and academics—would afford them much success individually and together down the line.

Paths to Success

The Walters brothers attribute much of their accomplishment to the professors who guided them, not only academically but also personally. Not often do you find a university so tight-knit that graduates keep in touch with the professors who were so influential on the future careers of their students. Clint said one of the most important things he learned from his professors during his time at LU was something he collectively refers to as an “emotional intelligence,” or connecting with and ultimately helping people, a tool he used during the process of finding his own path and that his brothers adopted.

Maintaining connections to LU, their professors and the lessons they learned proved essential to the Walters brothers as they each started their own careers. Brent explained that it was management and marketing Professor Brad Mayer, a teacher of his when he studied accounting and finance, who guided him through a decision that would ultimately determine his future just after graduation. The young graduate, 21 at the time, was offered the chance to buy out the insurance company he had worked for through his college days, and then later, along with his brother Clint, the pair purchased a neighboring laundromat.

Fast forward to today, Brent operates the largest group of AllState insurance agencies in the country, with 12 offices across Southeast Texas and parts of Houston. “During the process of buying that business, I had to do what I was doing, no clue,” Brent said. “My professors literally helped me with everything, and I couldn’t have done it without them helping me. They walked me through everything.”

“They contributed to that, LU contributed to that,” he said. “They went above and beyond, and you don’t see that elsewhere.”

Clint took a similar path. While he attended LU, he worked as a part-time teller at a local bank and started his business ventures alongside Brent shortly after graduation when they bought the laundromat together. Eventually, Clint took a job as branch manager of Mobil Oil Credit Union after working his way up to assistant vice president at the bank where he began career. He said he advanced through the chain of command to where he is today, senior vice president and chief operating officer of Mobil Oil Credit Union.

Both the twins and their elder brother are a testament as to what can happen when LU nurtures and supports individual growth. Lamar University leads graduates to successfull contributors to their communities. In turn, the community and future LU students continue to benefit from their success and generosity.

Lessons learned

The Walters brothers said an essential key to their success was learning to apply real-world skills at LU that they then transferred into their careers. That’s why, when looking back on their days at LU, the brothers remember not only the academic lessons learned but also the genuine life-skills and insights Lamar University provided.

“LU taught me how to be a man,” Brent said. “I had to go to school and go to work, and it taught me to be responsible. I’m appreciative of that because I paved my own path and keep going.”

“A strategy I have is that I always need to ‘look the role,’ and I became a more persistent person,” he explained. “I learned it’s okay to fail, and I try to raise my kids the same way—to fail on something so they can learn how to rise and learn from it. Failing at some things makes you a better person. LU taught me all of that.”

Clint agreed, adding that his college career was essential in providing key experiences.

“One of the major takeaways that’s helped in my career is learning how to network and be resourceful, use teamwork and time management,” he said. “In the business world, we’re actually in the people business. You could be the smartest person in the world, but if you don’t have the people factor you won’t be as successful.”

A collaborative venture

In 2009, when the Walters brothers had a chance to collaborate they took it and ran. They created the retail fashion boutique, Altar’d State, with Aaron serving as CEO and chairman of the company’s board of directors.

Starting out with one storefront, Aaron’s brainchild has blossomed to more than 100 retail stores offering women’s apparel at malls and shopping centers throughout the country, as well as online. “I went to LU for a business management degree,” the eldest brother explained. “I’m one of those people who is using my degree because I really am doing that.”

But, Aaron said the thing that excites him most about Altar’d State is that they’re a “give-back” company. So far, the organization has built five schools in Peru, while 14 more are currently under construction. The organization also gives back a large portion of their profits to charities every month—more than $10 million in total to local and global communities. And, Aaron said they hope to bring a storefront home to Beaumont in the coming years where they can continue to give back to this community.

“The professors I worked with always gave real-life examples, and my experience was outstanding,” Aaron said. “I gave it the foundation and basis to go start my career.”

“We’re a young, vibrant company, passionate about developing and growing future leaders,” Aaron explained. “It’s humbling, and I’m appreciative.”

The brothers have all had a hand in making sure Altar’d State continues to not only run but also build steam. With Clint and Brent on the board, the brothers make decisions about venues of philanthropy and provide support in their areas of expertise.
Brent added, “We’ve always had an entrepreneurial spirit. But Aaron made the right decision, because he killed it!”

“Sometimes we pinch ourselves at how well we’ve done,” Clint added. “The emotional intelligence aspect we gained became one of our core values within Altard State. Our give-back component and loving on our customers has enabled us to grow.”

Full circle

The entrepreneurial spirit alumni leave with magnifies LU’s socio-economic impact in the community and beyond. More proof lies in the alumni who go into the working world prepared, and eventually find their way back to the university seasoned and passionate, ready to help prepare the future workforce.

The Walters brothers are a perfect example. Brent added, “We’ve always been surrounded with helping people, and I like to be in a position where I can give back to the university and community, not only financially but with my personal time, which I like to think matters most. “To be able to come back to the school of business and tell our story about how LU has helped us is rewarding.” Clint added. “It’s an opportunity to give back, because with the personal growth Lamar has given us, we want to be the alum who can give back. We’re just getting to that stage now.”

“Lamar University helped me understand the people business.” Clint said. “They did an awesome job bringing in people to speak, who had real experience. Then, we all had the chance to go back and speak at LU about our success.”

All three brothers returned to campus last fall to share their experiences in management and entrepreneurship as participants in the Michael G. Weinert Entrepreneurship Lecture Series. Aaron returned to deliver the keynote address during the College of Business commencement in May 2019. “It’s very humbling,” Aaron said when asked how it felt to know that he and his brothers still impact and standout at the university. “I never dreamed 20 years ago that I’d be giving the commencement speech at LU,” he said. “I’m looking forward to it. Twenty years ago I was in that crowd. It’s so humbling, and I’m so appreciative.”

Clint concluded: “I have no intention of moving out of Beaumont, ever. We will continue to be involved with the community, and Lamar University.”

Mobil Oil Credit Union

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Stand out for good

Vivek Natarajan wins Distinguished Educator Award

Vivek Natarajan, associate professor of marketing, was the three-progression mission of College of Business faculty members—service, research and teaching—as “mutually reinforcing.” His experience in these areas garnered national recognition this year when he was awarded the 2018 Federation of Business Discipline Distinguished Educator Award by the Association of Collegiate Marketing Educators.

“Good teaching helps you do good research. Good research helps you in the classroom,” Natarajan said. “Good teaching provides inspiration from the classroom for service through sharing knowledge at professional conferences.”

The Association of Collegiate Marketing Educators, one of 10 professional associations that together form the Federation of Business Disciplines, has been a beneficiary of Natarajan’s service for many years. He served as an officer for five years, including program chair in 2015 and president in the following year. With his service on the brand complete, Natarajan said he was honored to be recognized by his peers with the Distinguished Educator Award.

“I feel satisfied because it recognizes my work in the classroom, as well as my work in research, teaching and service,” he said. Natarajan continues his work with the Federation of Business Disciplines and served as general program chair for the organization’s major conference in Beaumont this past March. “It’s very hard work, but I enjoyed the challenge and the result.”

Information Systems and Analysis introduces new master of science in MIS

Lamar University’s new Master of Science in Management Information Systems, which began this spring, is a 30-hour STEM program that will take one year to complete for full-time students. The program will be offered entirely online.

“We thought there was a gap here between the programs offered and the student demands that we can fill,” said Kahali Bandyopadhyay, professor and chair of the Department of Information Systems and Analysis. “We will differentiate ourselves from other regional universities in the state by offering a master’s in MIS that is mainly focused on Enterprise Resource Planning.”

Current courses teach the leading business software SAP for enterprise resource planning, which is used throughout the Southeast Texas and Houston region by major employers such as Exxon Mobile, Total, Dupont, Chevron Services and others. “This region has the demand and looks for people with this knowledge,” Bandyopadhyay said. “That way, we have an advantage.”

More than 404,000 customers in more than 180 countries use SAP applications, which means this College of Business program will prepare students to compete for careers around the globe in positions such as data analysts, systems analysts, enterprise resource planning consultants and business intelligence designers.

Johnny Cupcakes Visits Lamar University

In 2018, the College of Business hosted Johnny Earle, founder of Johnny Cupcakes, “The World’s First T-Shirt Bakery,” as part of the Michael Weinert Entrepreneurship Lecture Series. Earle shared the story of how, at the age of 19, he took his t-shirt brand from the trunk of his rusty car to some of the world’s most sought after retail locations.

Johnny Cupcakes has been featured in FORBES, NPD BusinessWeek, INC Magazine, Wall Street Journal, WIREED, New York Times, The Boston Globe and Los Angeles Times and seen on MTV, Bloomberg TV, MAKER, Attack Of The Show, The Food Network and WWDC. After the lecture, attendees were able to buy an exclusive Johnny Cupcakes Lamar University T-shirt at Johnny’s pop-up shop.

College Snapshot: BUSINESS

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Cardinal Cadence recently sat down with Natalie (Sarver) Smith, who played volleyball for Lamar University from 1999 through 2002 and became the first LU volleyball student-athlete to have her jersey number retired on Oct. 5, 2018. The living legend shared with us some of her favorite memories at LU, advice she’d give to current and future student-athletes, and what it felt like to have her jersey retired.

**Q:** What are some of your favorite memories from your time at LU?

**A:** Coach Barnes signed three freshmen for the 1999 season along with me. I remember reporting to the dorms my freshman year a little nervous to meet everyone and wondering if I would even get to play that year. I spent the next four years on the volleyball court with Ali, Shanda and Shandra. We all bled to compete. My favorite memory is winning conference championships in 2000 and 2001. Our team was stacked that year, and it was Coach Barnes last year at LU. It was such a great season!

Off the court, I remember the team would pile into a few cars on off days and head to my parent’s house for the best home cooked meals! Gumbo was everyone’s favorite.

**Q:** What advice would you give to current and future volleyball student-athletes?

**A:** If I had to give advice to current and future student-athletes, no matter the sport, it would be to have fun, go to class, work hard, practice hard, learn from each loss and enjoy every win. At the end, you will walk away with only what you’ve earned, which is hopefully a conference championship and a diploma, some of the greatest memories and so many life lessons.

**Q:** What did it mean to you to have your jersey retired by Lamar University this past fall?

**A:** The retirement of my jersey this past fall means so much to me. This accomplishment is one I share with so many others that made my career at LU amazing. I share this with each of my teammates from 1999-2002, my coaches, my parents, family and supporters. It’s a true honor to be the first retiree and I am so proud to represent LU Volleyball!

**Smith was named the 2002 Southland Player of the Year and took home the 2002 Babe Zaharias Award. Her contributions in the postseason also were notable, earning her all-tournament honors in 2000 and 2002. She ranks among the best to ever wear an LU uniform in several statistical categories, including second and 10th, respectively, in single-season kills, first and fifth, respectively, in single-season attacks, and third and 10th, respectively, in single-season digs. She holds the Big Red record for career kills with 1,906 and career attacks with 5,053, and the record for digs with 1,613. Additionally, Smith holds the Cardinal record for kills in a game with 34, a number she achieved twice.**

**Crow Wins NCAA Regional Championships**

Senior outside hitter Jamie Crow became the first Cardinal in program history to record an NCAA South Central Region individual title. The Glasgow, Scotland native clocked a time of 31:36.3—one of the top finishes by a Scottish runner on the Texas A&M course in the past decade—to win the title.

Crowe began to make his move toward the podium at the 6.3k split, reaching first and fifth, respectively, in single-season attacks, and third and 10th, respectively, in single-season digs. She holds the Big Red record for career kills with 1,906 and career attacks with 5,053, and the record for digs with 1,613. Additionally, Smith holds the Cardinal record for kills in a game with 34, a number she achieved twice.
Their favorite memory while attending LU was getting to enjoy a cooking class together, participating in an internship and spending time with a new family. "It was a lot of fun," Melissa said. "We got to know each other and our families."

Since their graduation, Melissa and Lauren have been catching up on all the yearly doctor’s appointments they miss while finishing their last year at LU. Melissa said, “By fives, I get into a cookie business. It’s just weird how things come into your life. I give cookie classes teaching people how to decorate. I do it right out of my home; we decorate and sell them for graduations and birthdays.” While Melissa is starting her own business, Lauren is considering a return to LU to earn her master’s degree in nutrition.

Online M.S. in nutrition

In 2013, in response to inquiries about a graduate degree in nutrition, the Department of Family and Consumer Sciences, under the leadership of Amy Shares, professor, and director, and Jill Killough, department chair, proposed a new online program—Masters of Science in Nutrition. This 36-hour program proposal became reality when the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board approved the program in May 2015. Rising concerns to combat obesity in children and adults, increasing interest in healthy eating, and an aging population signal growing opportunities in a variety of fields for graduates with expertise in nutrition. The new online degree is designed to meet the expanding need for graduates with level education in the nutrition field, bridging the gaps between formal education and professional practice as it programs graduates to successfully address challenges in their fields. The course, developed by Shows, Killough, Associate Professor Connie Bula and Assistant Professor Sheryl Sawyer, is an interdisciplinary online course that registered dietitian nutritionists and members of the graduate nutrition faculty—reflect evidence-based nutrition guidelines and have a community nutrition focus.

Strategic plan

The College of Education and Human Development recently completed its five-year strategic plan. With a committee comprised of faculty, staff and students from within the college, Members met as a collective group five times, and each committee member served on a task force to identify opportunities and advance recommendations. The committee developed a comprehensive plan, including a new resolution statement: The College of Education and Human Development at Lamar University generates a community of collaboration through innovative curricula, scholarship and service learning to inspire our diverse student population and to positively impact their lives and others in Southeast Texas and beyond. The college also committed to the values, including: diversity and multicultural competence, equity, innovation, community and economic development, and quality. A leadership group drawn from the strategic planning committee will steward implementation of the plan this year and ensure that every student, faculty and staff member as well as our partners in the community understand the benefits of the plan and how they can contribute to the college’s success.
Afer graduation, Tony Nguyen ’01 packed up his dual degrees in biology and chemistry and left LU for ExxonMobil—and not long after that, for medical school in Fort Worth. In North Texas, he had a friend who owned a sushi restaurant, and Nguyen fell in love with this food subculture.

As one of seven children in a poor Vietnamese-American family, Nguyen says he was practically born a foodie. His mother was passionate about food, and out of necessity, she cooked every meal, every day, for her husband and children. She loved her family through her love of food, and her son Tony inherited her passion. Family is what brought the Port Arthur native back home from medical school; his father was ill and needed his children to help run his 35-year-old tax and accounting business. Nguyen and his siblings are first-generation Americans and first-generation college students. Their parents emigrated from Vietnam in 1975 and, starting from absolutely nothing, built a family and a business in Port Arthur.

They saved every extra penny—never eating out, never taking the kids to the movies—to buy a house in Nederland so that their children would attend good schools. They put seven children through college without acquiring debt, and they passed their principles and discipline to Nguyen and his siblings. Nguyen says this is the reason that Vietnamese-American business owners in Southeast Texas are successful—they have watched their parents build lives from scratch through sacrifice and hard work. Nguyen credits much of his success as a business owner to his parents and to the time he spent learning accounting from his father. His sister eventually took the reigns of the business so that her brother could follow his own entrepreneurial path.

Nguyen wanted to bring sushi to Beaumont in a way it hadn’t yet seen. Other sushi restaurants in the area offer fusion cuisine—he jokingly compares it to Tex-Mex—but not necessarily the real fusion cuisine—he jokingly compares it to Tex-Mex—but not necessarily the real fusion cuisine. He says, “We have a menu that offered more authentic Japanese cuisine with a modern twist. He admits it was a risk. He understands the reality that people in less metropolitan areas aren’t statistically as willing to take gastronomic risks—they like what they like, and they want to use forks. He also believes, however, that Southeast Texans should have access to this food subculture. He has shown that some Southeast Texans are interested in new culinary experiences. He says, ‘Some people mistakenly confuse sushi as healthy, but it’s actually very high in calories.’ He also believes that Southeast Texans should have access to this food subculture. He has shown that some Southeast Texans are interested in new culinary experiences.

The food at Koi is not only adventurous, but artistic. Nguyen calls sushi an art form like sculpture, but instead of appealing to only the visual and tactile senses, as sculpture does, the experience of sushi appeals to all five. To hear Nguyen tell it, the Japanese may be the true progenitors of the truth to materials principle, as it certainly applies to sushi, which epitomizes simplicity and a focus on the finest raw ingredients.

The rice is the thing, according to Nguyen, though quality seafood and the way they’re prepared are also paramount. He says, ‘Sushi is not just about the fish, it’s about the presentation.’ He believes the restaurant business is, the endeavor will not be successful if its caretakers do not understand the neuroscience behind the delivery of the product to the customer. Nguyen says that if his restaurant were just about the ‘food,’ it would not last.

Nguyen feels confident that Lamar University is creating entrepreneurs and other professionals who understand this demand for cross-pollination, and he marvels at the growth of the business programs on campus and online. He says that he is proud to say LU growing past its role as a regional commuter school into an institution that draws in students from far beyond Southeast Texas said that this growth more firmly secures LU as a socioeconomic hub—not only locally but internationally. He sees LU students as highly competitive and talented, and he is proud to bring them onto his staff. Nguyen brags that Joey Chavez ’11, LU culinary arts graduate who apprenticed at Spago, worked at the French Laundry in California and was recently nominated as Baltimore’s Best Chef, began his highly successful culinary career at Koi. He encourages his student workers to study in their downtime at the restaurant, and he has had many students who have worked for him throughout their time at LU.

Nguyen’s success as a local restaurateur gives credence to the impact that Lamar University alumni have on the cultural, economic and educational diversity and well-being of Southeast Texas. His aesthetic and acumen, his dedication to hiring and supporting students, and his remarkable food are a testament to Nguyen’s commitment to making Southeast Texas a beautiful and interesting place to live. His rosewater martinis aren’t bad, either.
We hope you enjoy reading about former classmates. If you have news to share—position announcement, milestone, achievement, wedding, baby—or know the whereabouts of a lost alumna, we want to hear from you.

SEND US YOUR NEWS: Cardinal Cadence P.O. Box 1001 Beaumont, TX 77711 e-mail alumnialamar@lamar.edu or call (409) 880-8921

YOU & LU A lifelong relationship. Update your information so we can keep you up-to-date on what’s happening at the university, invite you to special events and make sure you get to all the perks of being a Cardinal.

CARDINAL CADENCE | SUMMER 2019

CARDINALS | SUMMER 2019
Class of 1968 Reunion—Last October, Class of 1968 Lamar State College of Technology graduates gathered to celebrate the 50th anniversary of their graduation.

Bala Chaitanya Gottimukkala '18, B.S. materials science and engineering, received the prestigious American Institute of Chemical Engineers 35 under 35 award. He was recognized as one of 35 outstanding students who have made significant contributions to the field of chemical engineering and the organization. He lives in Manhasset.

Courtney King '09, B.A. corporate communications, is the associate director of marketing with Today's New York City, N.Y. He lives in Houston.

Laura Terry-Brown '09, B.A. interdisciplinary studies, married Hadi Hashemian '09, B.Engr. electrical engineering, a 2018 Fellow, conferred upon a person with an outstanding record of accomplishments in the IEEE fields of interest. He holds two other doctorates, one in nuclear engineering and applied physics and one in electrical and computer engineering, and is founder president and CEO of Analytical Measurement Services Corp. He lives in Nederland.

Angela (Odem) Brown '16, B.B.A., marketing, is a real estate agent for SFG properties. She lives in Port Neches with her husband, Dylan '15, B.A. applied arts and sciences.

Robert Balentine '09, M.Ed. administration, is principal of the Academy of the Arts at Bramson Elementary School. He lives in Manhasset.

Raymundo Charles '08, B.S. kinesiology, have been married since 2010 and have two children. They live in Richardson.

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Erik Camacho | B.A., chemistry, 17, M.B.A., business administration, is a chemist at Armona Inc.

Melissa (Neal) DeSantis | 16, B.A.A.S. applied arts and sciences, is a teacher in the Anahuil school district, where she lives.

Katie (Sherman) Doubert | 14, B.A., general studies, is a supervisor with Southeast Texas OB/GYN Associates.

Lauren Robinsson | 14, psychology, works for the The Harris Center and lives in Houston.

Elizabeth (Burnell) | 15, B.A.S.P., speech and hearing sciences, taught part-time at Lamar University.

Sophia (Gove) | 15, B.A., management information systems, earned her master’s degree in management information systems.

Cristina Walker | B.S., communication disorders, earned a master’s in communication sciences and disorders for speech pathology. She created a Stick’n Talk website and a social media presence to promote signs awareness.

Christopher Puga | 15, M.Ed., administration, is principal of Capitola elementary school and lives in El Lago.

Mary (Riggs) Tuton | 15, B.A., management information systems, is a sales account manager at Go To Coffee Company. She and her husband, Blair Tuton, 16, B.A., management information systems, live in Fort Worth with their child.

Jessica Beck | 18, B.A., human resources, works and lives in Houston where she is a benefits analyst with norbuilt.

Magen Collins | 15, B.S., political science, M.M.A., public administration, is an instructor of political science at Lamar University. She lives in Nederland.

Melanne (Hargrave) Fife | 16, B.A.S.P., applied arts and sciences, teaches kindergarten in the Kosse school district. She lives in Kosse with her husband, Brian.

Christopher Hagner | 18, B.S., mathematics, is a business intelligence analyst for the University of Houston.

Paul Martin | B.S., exercise science and fitness management, married Emily Niles in February 2017. They live in Fort Worth.

Krist (Wood) Meuwes | 16, B.S., educational leadership, is a project director for a federal school improvement grant in the Chaffoteaux County school district, Charlotte, S.C., where she lives.

Mae (Reeves) | 16, B.S. biology, and...
LU Birdwatching—The Office of Alumni Affairs partnered with LU Athletics and the Marketing and Communications Office on a “pop-up” opportunity for students to take selfies with Big Red. The students received “good luck” gifts ofEraser and pencils for finals week, along with Big Red gum and Big Red soda. Students pose with Big Red.

Homecoming Pre-Game Party—Alumni celebrated homecoming at the Montagne Center before the LU vs. SFA football game last September. Homecoming Pre-Game Party

Brock Payne ‘17, M.Ed educational leadership and administration, is a teacher and coach at Northeast school district and lives in San Antonio.

Chase Pinder ’17, B.S. chemical engineering, and Caylin Poulet ’17, B.S. corporate communications, married in November 2017. They live in Port Neches.

Michelle Rosales ’17, B.G.S. general studies, is branch operations specialist for Raymond James & Associates in El Paso where she lives.

Pamela Sable ’17, B.A.A.S. applied arts and sciences, is works advisor II with the Texas Health and Human Services Commission. She lives in Beaumont.

Amanda Prince ’16, left, and Marisol Lua-Figueroa ’17 volunteer to do face painting. Students pose with Big Red.

Brian Roberson ’09, ’10, with his son Brian III and wife, Jocquelyn.

In Memoriam

Elvis Leonard Mason 1933 – 2018

LU distinguished Alumnus Elvis L. Mason died Dec. 24, 2018, after a long battle with Parkinson’s disease and heart disease, which he faced with his great sense of humor and optimism. Joan Frances Baker Mason, his wife and devoted caregiver, was by his side when he passed away peacefully at home. He was 95 years old.

Born in Vivian, La., Mason rose to the rank of captain in the Army. After being honorably discharged, he earned an undergraduate degree in economics from Lamar University, where he was president of his local fraternity, was elected president of the student body and graduated with honors. Chosen for a Rotary Fellowship to study at Rhodes University in Grahamstown, South Africa, Mason completed graduate studies in international economics. He graduated from the Stonier Graduate School of Banking at Rutgers University. In 1982, LU awarded him an Honorary Doctor of Laws degree.

Upon returning from Africa, Mason married Joan Baker in Houston, and they were happily married for 57 years. Mason began his banking career upon accepting an offer in Beaumont to become assistant to the president of 1st Security National Bank. John E. Gray had been president of Lamar University when Mason was a student there and became a mentor to Mason in his banking career. Mason would later found, and serve as chairman of, the John E. Gray Foundation and the John E. Gray Institute at LU.

In 1974, Mason was named vice chairman of 1st International Bancshares, and the family moved to Dallas. He served as president of 1st National Bank and, ultimately, chairman of the board and chief executive officer of InterFirst Corp., then the largest banking organization in Texas and the nation’s 15th-largest commercial banking organization, with 65 subsidiary banks in Texas and total assets of more than $21 billion. The board of directors of the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas elected him to represent the Eleventh Federal Reserve District on the Federal Advisory Council of the Federal Reserve System.

Mason helped steward LU as a regent from 1974 to 1979. He served numerous communities through many organizations and civic activities, including serving as honorary chair of “Investing in the Future: The Campaign for Lamar University, the university’s first comprehensive campaign which exceeded its original $100 million goal, achieving an unprecendented $132 million finish.

The family held a memorial service and celebration of life Feb. 2, 2019, and accepted donations to the Elvis L. Mason Scholarship Lamar University.

In Memoriam

Elvis Leonard Mason 1933 – 2018

LU alumni celebrate anniversaries—Three Cardinal couples, and longtime friends, celebrated their wedding anniversaries by cruising to Alaska.

from left, T. Nelson ’66, B.S. electrical engineering, and Jo Cat (Busceme) Bruce ’65, B.S. elementary education, married for 51 years; Ronald V. A, B.S. biology ’72, M.Ed. secondary education, and Jo Ann (Messick) Studdert ’65, B.S. elementary education, married 52 years; and Ray Wright ’65, B.S. secondary education, and Vivian (Hodges) Shroff in November 2017, they live in Flower Mound.

Secretary, is police chief of the Denton Police Department. He lives in Cleveland.

Rene (Gutierrez) ’18, B.S. family and consumer sciences, and Elle Pompa ’16, B.S. family and consumer sciences, were married in 2018 and live in Port Arthur.

Michelle Rosales ‘17, B.G.S. management, is an assistant manager with Walgreens. He lives in Beaumont.

Reyna (Gomez) Tippetts ’17, M.B.A. business administration, is a division operations specialist for Lone Star College–North Harris. She and her husband, Roscoe, live in Splendora.


Michelle Rosales ’17, B.G.S. general studies, is branch operations specialist for Raymond James & Associates in El Paso where she lives.

Pamela Sable ’17, B.A.A.S. applied arts and sciences, is works advisor II with the Texas Health and Human Services Commission. She lives in Beaumont.

Amanda Prince ’16, left, and Marisol Lua-Figueroa ’17 volunteer to do face painting.

LU Birdwatching—The Office of Alumni Affairs partnered with LU Athletics and the Marketing and Communications Office on a “pop-up” opportunity for students to take selfies with Big Red. The students received “good luck” gifts ofEraser and pencils for finals week, along with Big Red gum and Big Red soda.

1. Students pose with Big Red.

2. Big Red wishes students good luck for finals week.

3. How to show her Cardinal Pride!

4. Brian Roberson ’09, ’10, with his son Brian III and wife, Jocquelyn.

5. Amanda Prince ’16, left, and Marisol Lua-Figueroa ’17 volunteer to do face painting.

6. Elvis Leonard Mason

7. LU alumni celebrate anniversaries—Three Cardinal couples, and longtime friends, celebrated their wedding anniversaries by cruising to Alaska.

from left, T. Nelson ’66, B.S. electrical engineering, and Jo Cat (Busceme) Bruce ’65, B.S. elementary education, married for 51 years; Ronald V. A, B.S. biology ’72, M.Ed. secondary education, and Jo Ann (Messick) Studdert ’65, B.S. elementary education, married 52 years; and Ray Wright ’65, B.S. secondary education, and Vivian (Hodges) Shroff in November 2017, they live in Flower Mound.

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The idea came to be in 2005, while the building was undergoing renovations. Jordan introduced the idea of a mineral exhibit as a way to display or feature some of the department’s most impressive minerals. The idea was popular, and with the help of alumna and Houston Museum of Natural Science supporter Bryan Dyer ’57 along with museum president Joel Bartsch, who orchestrated the permanent loan of rare and unique specimens, the exhibit was made complete.

When it came to installing the exhibit, faculty and students constructed the cases and designed the placement of the minerals themselves. Among Jordan’s personal favorites is a piece of pyrite, notable for its natural cube shape. “It grows into that shape if given the freedom. It is rare to find them displaying their natural form,” Jordan said. “People always ask me if it is real.”

#MUSEUM EXHIBIT: Unique to LU just as LU is unique to Southeast Texas

By Daniel Pemberton
After 18 months of renovations, university officials unveiled the new Setzer Student Center April 12, 2018. The building, a part of LU’s campus since 1969, was completely reorganized, redesigned and rebuilt to meet the needs of the university’s students, reimagined to bolster student life and provide resources for the more than 150 student-led organizations on campus.

Every addition to the building was made with students in mind, from the 18 meeting rooms sporting an max occupancy of 13 to 80, to the Student Organization Workroom which gives groups a space to work on projects and store supplies. Office space was also created for the Student Government Association, Event Services, Student Organization Services, the Cardinals Activities Board, New Student and Leadership Programs, the dean of students, and the vice president of student engagement. These changes transform the center into the hub for student life and organizations on campus. New amenities in the meeting rooms, such as audio-visual enhancements, video conferencing and upgraded wi-fi allow organizations to hold productive meetings as they prepare to make their mark on campus.

The Setzer Student Center is not all about work, the new student lounge is a perfect spot for meeting with friends. From here students can step out onto the veranda, snag a rocking chair and enjoy the weather and a great view of the Quad. On the first floor is a dedicated game room where students can relax and play a video game or compete in a tournament with friends. Nearby is the wellness room, designed as a private area for nursing mothers or others with special needs. Along with improvements to meeting spaces and student areas, the space also includes many new dining options including Chick-fil-A, Panda Express and Jason's Deli. The Setzer Center Market is the place for students looking to grab a quick bite, while the Barnes & Noble Bookstore is the go-to for LU apparel, textbooks and school supplies.

These additions help the Setzer Student Center uphold its mission to provide programs that enhance personal, social and leadership development to compliment the educational growth of Lamar University students. It serves as the center of campus life and provides a shared home for the university—welcoming students, faculty, alumni, staff, parents and guests.