T his issue of Cadence is different from others you may have read in the past as it is shaped by a collective experience no one could have foreseen for 2020. As you well know, COVID-19 has affected all of us, some more than others. This issue focuses on just a few of the many stories to unfold throughout our community during this time. Lamar University’s alumni, faculty, staff and students have tried to find solutions and be proactive in the face of uncertainty.

One of the things we are thankful for is being a leader in online education. This provided us an advantage when 100% of our classes went to an online delivery system during the last semester. LU faculty, such as those featured in this issue from the College of Fine Arts and Communication, had the opportunity to showcase their unique and creative teaching methods while our digital learning platform helped K-12 educators across the nation to continue teaching during the pandemic. These alumni who are also educators, Alina Ayala, Sara Gutierrez and Barbara Ybarra, describe how they translated face-to-face learning into a digital environment.

Other areas on campus are assisting our community. LU’s Small Business Development Center is working with struggling local small businesses. Alumni are likewise engaged, in Southeast Texas and beyond, helping in different industries affected by the quarantine. Lauren Martin is in event management at The Lanes in Beaumont and is guiding couples whose plans were altered or postponed. Megan Mittie works at Buckner Calder Woods senior care home and plans activities to keep all of the residents busy, especially in the face of social distancing. Nutrition and Senior Services’ CEO Janice Kimball maintained food needs for their clients by providing a drive-through service while Mary Beth Jones and Fred Antoine ran a sack lunch ministry out of St. Anthony Cathedral Basilica. Justin McCullough used e-commerce to create Curb-to-Car, an application that delivers food and various goods to individuals.

Our alumni also are serving others through their careers as nurses, police officers and emergency medical technicians, among other professions, and developing products to help early testing and monitoring but also for doing critical work in contact tracing for those who are sick. Cassandra Jenkins as director of the Port Arthur City Health Department. Her work not only contributed to early testing and monitoring but also for doing critical work in contact tracing for those who were positive with the virus. Articles in this issue also feature students making masks through 3-D printing, staff like Keiley Beden who keeps spirits high as Lamar University’s cheerleading team coordinator and alumni such as Daniella DeLauré who volunteered in the Peace Corps before being evacuated as a result of COVID-19. I encourage you to read these interesting and timely stories as well as find out more information about how the Cardinal Emergency Fund positively affected two of the many students for whom your support was key.

Enjoy the sneak peek on the back cover of our new Welcome Center Webspace, and as we go to press with this issue of Cadence, I wish each of you and your loved ones continued health and happiness.

With Cardinal Pride,

Kenneth R. Evans, President

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At Lamar University, challenges identified are challenges met, as our friends, alumni, students, staff and faculty know well. Throughout hurricane response and recovery, economic downturns and coronavirus response, we have gathered as a community, identified actions to take and ultimately, successfully, overcome the obstacles. This issue of Cadence shares some of the stories of our Cardinals and how they responded with heart and hand when called.

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Cardinal Cadence

| FROM THE PRESIDENT |

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The magazine of Lamar University

LAMAR UNIVERSITY FOUNDATION

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SUMMER 2020

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Cardinal Cadence

Red + White Together

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Lamar University’s more than 20 years of an overall 25-year effort to provide education delivered directly to the student has played a critical role in transforming the industry and ensuring a continuity of learning during the pandemic.

In 2005, with a few years of experience in the online space, the university was positioned to build a robust online program when Hurricane Rita disabled the physical campus. “We were one of the early pioneers in the concept of providing a critical and value-added dimension to higher education by delivering curriculum to students at their location,” said Kenneth Evans, LU president. “The reason many universities across the country and K-12 schools in Texas were able to flip a switch, transforming their campuses to virtual classrooms during the COVID-19 crisis is because early pioneers like Lamar University, through experience and thorough investigation and implementation and continuous analysis, developed systems that have now been disseminated across the industry.”

In 2007, LU launched three online master’s degree programs in the College of Education and Human Development with huge success. Since that time, the University has expanded its online degrees to include programs in criminal justice, school counseling, computer science, cybersecurity, communication, nursing, business and a Bachelor of Science in technology.

In fact, since launching into the online space, 21,741 students have earned degrees online—2,593 bachelor’s degrees, 18,592 master’s degrees and 556 doctorates.

“We now have 18 undergraduate programs, 21 master’s, one doctoral program and six certifications online,” said Brenda Nichols, interim provost and vice president for academic affairs. “We have 4,000 graduate education students online across eight different areas and another 3,500 graduate and undergraduate students totally online. LU’s communication platforms for admissions as well as the ongoing student experience are streamlined. Online students have access to the same learning aids as on-campus students, including library-enhanced learning platforms, tutoring, coaching and advising.

“The same faculty members who teach on-campus classes also instruct the online students,” said Nichols. “We don’t use teaching assistants to teach courses, and we try to maintain small class sizes in order to meet the needs of our students.”

As a result of LU’s now vast experience in the online curriculum space and its students’ exposure to alternative learning methodologies (Many of LU’s on-campus students also take online courses Pre-pandemic, approximately, 5,000 of the 8,000 on-campus students take at least one course online.), the university was able to move to a comprehensive online program in the face of the pandemic. Now every student is taking online courses, from music to mechanical engineering.

“The beauty of the platforms for digital learning environments is they are now being used by universities and colleges across the globe in response to the global pandemic,” said Evans. “Our early efforts were to make this transformative offering available for students in the format that works best for them, never considering that a day would come when online education was the only option, as has been the case during the pandemic.”

LU’s educational faculty and alumni assume leadership roles during pandemic

When 90% of the world’s schools closed in 185 countries and 1.6 billion children were sent home to finish the school year via alternate instructional methods, Lamar University’s education leadership faculty and its education alumni assumed a leadership role more than 20 years in the making.

After a near seamless transition to a comprehensive online platform during the COVID-19 pandemic, LU’s educational faculty began supporting educators across the country, and LU’s alumni became leaders in their districts.

Krystal Hinerman, clinical assistant professor of educational research; Ken Young, associate professor of educational leadership in the Center for Doctoral Studies of Educational Leadership; and Cindy Cummings, assistant professor of educational leadership, represent more than 30 years’ experience in both PK-12 and higher education online teaching, course development and program planning. They led the cause to help individual educators and entire districts transition to online platforms.

“The training we have received and the years of experience teaching online has prepared us for providing support in these unique times,” said Hinerman. “We’ve looked at this as a statewide effort in response to needs specifically for school districts but have addressed specific requests also, and all remotely.”

Hinerman, Young and Cummings offered free webinars to demonstrate how to teach online using streaming video tools and provided tips on how to set-up and conduct instruction with students in an interactive format. Dozens of Lamar University educational leadership faculty joined the effort to support educators across the nation and developed additional webinars based on feedback from teachers and districts.

“It is in this spirit that we felt compelled to do what we could to support them in a manner that would not burden them or their institutions financially or otherwise,” said Young. “We’re not doing this as consultants for money or notoriety, but because we care about them and the success of the students they teach. In our opinion, it is a practical way to bridge the university and communities we serve to make a positive difference in our state and beyond.”

Since the initial webinar, the team has developed additional webinars based upon the feedback they’ve received. They have deployed links to recorded meetings and tutorials to anyone who requests them. They are curating resources to support Texas educators and administrators and to be made available to whomsoever needs them.

“Of course, we’re supporting Lamar University’s faculty, our students and alumni as many of them make this transition to online teaching and learning, but we’re also continuing to support the community members who are reaching out to us individually regarding support and resources for this process,” said Young.
Small Business Development Center: Taking care of business amid coronavirus pandemic

by Shelly Rodriguez

Just a few weeks ago, the World Health Organization declared the rapidly spreading coronavirus a pandemic, causing a paradigm shift in businesses across the globe. David Mulcahy, director of the UH Small Business Development Center, says only those business owners who have planned well in advance will come out on top.

“As a business owner, even before a disaster, you need to have at least six months of operating cash just in case something happens. Those who do not will be in trouble,” Mulcahy said. “About 60% of businesses have survived, and 40% are out there trying to figure out what’s going on and how they can get out of this situation.” Those businesses that have financially prepared will have easy access to money, capital and other resources because, according to Mulcahy, they are healthier companies. For those businesses that are struggling significantly from the social disruption, the SBDC offers funding options and relief resources.

The SBDC provides the road map for current and future business owners with free consultations, daily webinars on U.S. Small Business Administration Recovery Assistance as well as low-cost training programs and seminars. The center also serves as a link between the SBA and the consumer with the main goal of relaying information from the legislature and providing future business owners with current information so that they can act appropriately.

According to the SBA, capital access is among the top common issues that small businesses will face during this time. To combat this, on Mar. 27, President Donald Trump signed into law the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act, which contains $576 billion in relief for American workers and small businesses. The SBA has developed the Paycheck Protection Program, Economic Injury Disaster Loan Emergency Advance and SBA Express Bridge Loans and provides SBA debt relief for small businesses in economic distress. Sam’s Club, Google, LiftFund, and Gevorg Sargsyan, professor of economics at the University of Houston, believe the coronavirus will have a dire impact on businesses, most business owners have developed a wait-and-see approach. “Like the rest of the nation, coronavirus has resulted in lower demand for goods and services across the economy. The Southeast Texas community relies heavily on oil and gas, construction and real estate sectors,” he said. “Coronavirus has created an unprecedented situation and activated all three threats against our economy on a large scale in a long-term basis.” According to Sargsyan, this will be a major test of the resiliency of all small, medium and large enterprises in the area.

For small business owners most in need of immediate assistance, Mulcahy said there are more funds and resources ahead. “The SBDC plans on extending its hours to ensure that customers can come see us. We have funding from the CARES act coming in and virtual meetings available. I’m also bringing in a bilingual counselor to serve the Hispanic population here in the Southeast Texas community,” he said. “We’re here to get the consumer the information they need so they can weather the storm, whether it be this one or the next.”

For more information on resources and funding for small businesses affected by coronavirus, visit sbdc.uh.edu.

Kristy’s Korner Framing

Despite coronavirus shutdowns, for one mom and pop shop, it’s been business as usual. For early two decades, Beaumont-based business Kristy’s Korner Framing has served the Southeast Texas community and beyond. Owners, Kevin and Barbara Couron ’80 believe that it’s their “old school” business tactics that have kept their business afloat during the pandemic.

“We run our business in an honest and trustworthy manner,” Kevin said. “We offer a good product at a good price while implementing a caring customer service program.” While they weren’t classified as essential, the pair continued to work amid shelter-in-place orders, taking custom orders via phone and email. They also relied on commercial accounts they’ve landed throughout the years, one being ExxonMobil, to maintain their workload. “When you’re a ma’ and pa’ shop, your customers become like family. We build a relationship with our customers and they learn quickly that they can count on us,” Kevin said. “It is those relationships that are priceless and can ultimately determine the success of your business.”

Aside from customer service, another tactic that has worked for this small business is budgeting and cutting unnecessary costs. The pair said that they “tightened the belt” years ago in hopes of one day retiring. “We didn’t need to use any SBA loans and that’s mainly in part to us living within our means,” Kevin said. “That’s the key—live within your means and prepare for tragedy tomorrow.”

While most business owners have relied on social media and online distribution to keep their businesses afloat during the shutdown, Barbara suggests reaching out directly to your customer base. “Check on them and let them know that you are thinking of them and ask if there’s anything that you can do for them,” she said. “Think outside the box on how you can help them. That’s the way Beaumont operates; we help each other out during times like this.”

As shelter-in-place orders begin to lift, Kristy’s Korner Framing is among those businesses that have officially reopened their doors. Kevin and Barbara said that they will continue to sanitize their work areas and wear protective masks, and, not surprisingly, they will continue to be here when the community needs them.
E-Commerce evolution: Curb-to-Car application keeps buyers and goods connected in pandemic and beyond

by Casey Ford

n a time when we are all missing human interaction, technology might seem a cold solution for connection. But our phones and computers have, of necessity, replaced hugs and handshakes, so technological innovators have sought out warm, fuzzy solutions to keep us connected to the people—and foods, goods and services—we love and that make us feel normal.

Justin McCullough ’02 and his team at FSG SmartBuildings, based in Round Rock, Texas, have used their “down-time” since the pandemic began to stimulate e-commerce with their Curb-to-Car application. The app is not only keeping businesses connected to their homebound customers—and customers connected to their favorite stuff—but it also is evolving virtual commerce, as it allows for simple interactivity, convenience and safety. It may seem ironic that technology would have significant interest in the happiness and safety of human beings, but it makes much more sense when we meet entrepreneurs like McCullough and understand the heart that beats beneath the interface.

For most of his childhood and adolescence, McCullough thought everyone was like his dad—surely everyone owned a business and had two beepers and multiple offices. As he speaks about his father, McCullough tears up—in 2007, he lost the man who taught him that “you can change where you live, where you work, but you cannot change your name; and the McCullough name means something.” A successful business owner in petrochemical shipping, this father encouraged his young son to make his own path in business, so by the time McCullough graduated from Orangefield High School in 1996, he was set on a path toward technology entrepreneurship. It would lead him to Lamar State College-Orange, where he would meet Renear, his wife of now 20 years, and then to Lamar University and a B.B.A. in management information systems.

McCullough jokes that back then, before there were names for “what he is,” he thought of his studies ambiguously as “half-computer science, half-management,” but what he really learned during his MIS time at LU was that his big passion was people. To earn a living during his studies, he built a business designing and hosting turnkey websites for some of the most recognizable business names in Southeast Texas. Feedback from his early customers validated that McCullough’s professional purpose was focused on others. For him, entrepreneurship has always been less about financial success and more about innovating to serve and lead.

When Hurricane Harvey aftermath moved McCullough and his family away from Beaumont and out to Central Texas, he assumed his role at FSG Smart Buildings, Beaumont hand back together,” and today in their Round Rock offices, McCullough works with several LU alumni, including his vice president of product, Adam Haynes ’09, his lead architect, Chris Allen ’09; lead software engineers, John Tyler ’14, and software engineers Zeb Barnett ’13 and Matt Williams ’15.

Because of the ways the pandemic immediately changed their own day-to-day business routines, McCullough and his team realized early on that they had an opportunity to think about how they could make something immediately deliverable and useful to businesses that might be struggling to adapt and thrive. He compared it to the way a shoe company transitions to mask-making or a distillery converts to hand sanitizer production—the culmination of past e-commerce experiences and efforts in building an IoT—Internet of Things—platform for smart buildings. They were able to leverage this system architecture into the creation of an app in a moment of exigency to help business owners back into business with curbside pickup capabilities. Curb-to-Car is a contactless pickup application usable by any goods-providing business. Some Austin businesses using it successfully include coffee companies, bookstores, other retailers and restaurants, including those of the world-renowned Hai Hospitality Group. When asked if he thinks the world will ever go back to the old way of buying stuff, McCullough said, philosophically, he thinks not.

“The customer is like water,” he said, “seeking the path of least resistance in its inevitable course downhill. It’s my mission to follow the customer and help cut that path for them—technology is the cutting tool, a virtual river moving through all manner of obstacles to make commerce easier for customers.”

During the pandemic, people have largely had no choice but to opt for curbside pickup or delivery, but once this all resolves, McCullough thinks many people are not going to want to go back into the store as often. Curb-to-Car is just one way that technology can make it easier for businesses to give customers what they need and want—removing impediments between buyers and goods.

McCullough acknowledges that it can be difficult today to find a niche in technology. Consumers are discerning because they have endless options. A concept can seem world-changing, but then people must understand it and use it if the way it was intended, and it has to propagate in beneficial ways long-term. The key to this kind of success, then, would seem to be an understanding of what people want and need and then caring enough about them to give them access. McCullough and entrepreneurs like him are innovating for connection in a world looking for ways to heal itself and move into the future.
New Cardinal Success Coach meets challenges
With student success and retention among its top priorities, the College of Business named Kristie Helm as its new Cardinal success coach. The New England native relocated to Southeast Texas in early February of last year to serve as a career consultant for the College of Fine Arts and Communication. “Thinking back to when I was a college student, I really valued the mentors that I had in my life, and I just wanted to give back like my mentors had given to me.”

Helm assumed her new position just one week after Tropical Storm Ida hit the Southeast Texas community last fall, and it was her first lesson in understanding the importance of her role. “I spent countless hours speaking with students and trying to help them to meet their basic needs and discuss how they could successfully move forward in the semester,” she said. “From that experience, I really feel more connected to our students and the university.”

On the heels of that challenge came university closures and shelter-in-place orders brought on by COVID-19, and again students had a semester other than the one they anticipated. But Helm says it’s times like these when her role matters most as she works with at-risk College of Business students, connecting them to campus resources and communicating with faculty. “During such an emergency, retention is key,” she said. “From spotty WiFi and academic distress to financial need and health concerns, Helm said, “It’s hard to know that students will potentially drop out because they can’t afford future semesters, or they don’t have access to basic necessities.”

When the university initially moved to online learning, Helm knew that she had to act fast in order to ensure that business students adapted successfully. She reached out to College of Business deans, directors and department chairs for assistance in pinpointing which students might be in most need of resources. She then collaborated with Craig Reacmill, executive director of retention and student success, on university calling campaigns to both online and on-campus students.

“I take so much pride in that—there’s so much value in a student learning from a real person asking what they need and if they are okay,” she said. “It was through these calls that we were able to get feedback ultimately that changed how we were serving our students.” One change the calls generated was the establishment of two additional WiFi locations on campus for those students who lacked the resources for internet access.

Helm says working specifically with College of Business students pushes her professionally “because they are such driven students. They are always willing to do more to ensure their success, so it makes me do more. Through this role, my hope is that I can help these students find their way.”

...Continued...
Collaborate, innovate, create.

That’s the motto for the College of Fine Arts and Communication at Lamar University. Never has the faculty had to live this more than in the pandemic time of COVID-19. As classes began their work through online meeting, the question abounded, how do you live and teach the fine arts through a Zoom call? In this article, we discuss some innovative ways students lived and practiced the arts, as well as how a Beaumont Independent School District principal had to implement new learning strategies overnight.

For Travis Prokop, assistant professor of dance in the Department of Theatre and Dance, he knew he needed to adjust accordingly and fast. He began filming dance combinations that he could send to his students and researched different forums to connect through like Zoom and Microsoft Teams.

“My biggest worry was how to do an online dance class. We play off of each other’s energy in person, and I didn’t know how that would work through a computer screen. I knew this would be the largest pitfall to overcome,” said Prokop. “The next obstacle to overcome was what our dancers focus on with the space they were working with.”

Prokop decided to be realistic and choose one goal—to keep connections established. He wanted to also focus on his students’ mental health and know dance was what they needed as a distraction and a way to cope.

“What I’ve enjoyed the most through this situation is seeing people dance and do choreography more on social media. More people are enjoying the arts, and everyone is realizing they can become an artist,” mused Prokop.

For Zenia Fedorchenko, associate professor in the Department of Art and Design, panic planning and experimentation is what got her and her art students through this difficult time.

“Normally we teach our art students in an amazing facility with access to labs, studios, ink, paint, rollers and many other media that are very accessible to our artists. Suddenly, we were in a situation where we had to be very creative and experimental,” said Fedorchenko. “We went back to the Renaissance age and used the same materials artists used hundreds of years ago.”

Fedorchenko had to utilize her entire house to set up different classrooms. For her printmaking class, she set up her kitchen island to have room to experiment printing with ladles, spoons, a stone egg and other materials she had. The class used rolled up fabric as a dabber and leather as a stamper. Other kitchen essentials used were spices such as turmeric, cinnamon and vegetable oil to make ink. For her Alternate Fibers class, Fedorchenko set up in a different room to make paper and had to experiment with different chemical reactions to see what they could create. The class made paper from using grass and okra slime instead of the typical lye that would have been used at school.

“I believe this group of students will be more resilient and stronger critical thinkers and creative problem solvers because of how they have had to adapt to COVID-19,” said Fedorchenko.

For Belinda George, ’03, ’08, ’15, principal of Homer Drive Elementary in BSD, going virtual for her wasn’t scary. The hardest part was knowing her students couldn’t interact with her or their teachers.

“I created a Q and A from the state mandate of the school closure for the teachers and created Zoom meeting trainings for my faculty and staff. I had to learn how to present information virtually, but by the third week we had our rhythm down,” said George.

To connect with her students, George started virtually reading books to her students and their families on the Homer Drive Facebook page. Because this was such a success and seemed to connect with her families, George started reaching out to the authors of the children’s books she was reading and invited them to participate in Zoom meetings with the students.

“Not only did our students love getting the chance to meet the authors of their favorite children book, the authors enjoyed it as well,” said George. “We were able to ask them questions and find out what inspired their stories.”

George would like to keep some of the new learning instruments in place when life returns to normal. She would like to see some of the Zoom meetings for students who are absent and to also have PowerPoint presentations available with clickable links to lessons.

“It has been so precious to see my students learning technology and interacting through different ways,” said George. “Who knew doing jumping jacks through Zoom P.E. could be so fun?”

One of the highlights for George during this phase was planning a parade for her students to see their teachers and for the faculty and staff to celebrate the students. As they were riding through the neighborhoods of their students, she heard one student exclaim, “I knew my principal would be here. I knew she would show up!”

Colleagues in the Mary Morgan Moore Department of Music hit all the high notes of collaboration, striking an innovative chord and creating a harmony of instruction, practice and ultimately learning.

Immediately, many of the faculty began recording short videos and posting them in order to conduct asynchronous teaching on various platforms, including Zoom. Brian Shook, the chair of the department, focused on updating his YouTube channel, a resource for LU faculty as well as faculty across the country.

“By and large, we had no dramatic problems. Professors came up with alternative assignments that still focused on objectives of the courses and the
overall spirit from the faculty remained positive,” said Shook. “It’s stressful, but everyone understands the situation and everyone has a can-do attitude.”

Shook, and many of the LU faculty, turned to a Facebook group created to discuss teaching higher education music. The 10,000-member group shared tips, tricks and techniques for teaching music using alternative modalities.

Jack Benson, an instructor teaching music appreciation and theory, started his own discussion board to get his students’ feedback about the best approach to teaching online. “I didn’t want them to feel pressured or frustrated and wanted to get a feel for their perspective,” said Benson. “They were very kind with suggestions, and I made adjustments to the syllabus.”

Benson had been teaching music theory online for years but not his other classes that require students to listen and discuss music. He opted to use Zoom to create a live classroom setting at the time students were used to attending class. Benson expected attendance to decline, but he was surprised. “Most days we were right 100%,” said Benson. “I was in awe they were so faithful, but this generation of students is very tech driven.”

Brielle Frost, assistant professor of flute who also conducts the flute class. Benson expected attendance to decline, but he was surprised. “I didn’t think it would go as well as it did,” said Frost. “We finished our 2019 camp with more than 200 students in attendance. Cetty Morris served as the camp director and a great team of instructors taught the camp. We had a wonderful experience. We are looking forward to continuing the tradition.”

“Communication and Media recognized by intelligenc.com”

The Department of Communication and Media, led by Dr. Thomas Bibow, has been awarded top ranking status by intelligenc.com, recognizing it as one of the best communications degree programs in the nation. This student-focused, comprehensive research university offers the assessment of 1,604 accredited colleges and universities. Each program was evaluated based on curriculum quality, faculty reputation, post-graduate employment.

“Holtzhausen’s Strategic Communication to be translated and offered in paperback”

Dulina Holtzhausen, dean of the College of Fine Arts and Communication, has been recognized for her international book, The Routledge Handbook of Strategic Communication, with a translation into Chinese and the textbook being offered in paperback.

“Strategic Communication, first published in 2015, was released as a hardback book of 386 pages, the book will be released in a paperback edition. The publication, with a reputation for national and international research on postmodern principles in communication, is cited weekly on an international basis.”

Tackling tinnitus

Vineya Manchaiah. In May, Endowed Professor in the Department of Speech and Hearing Sciences, began a tinnitus research project this past November: He is looking for research volunteers who have tinnitus (ringing or buzzing in the ear) to volunteer for an eight-week internet-based program. Tackling Tinnitus. Tinnitus, which affects more than 30 million people in the U.S., can be very bothersome and disrupt many aspects of daily life. “Although there is no cure for tinnitus, research has identified strategies that can help people manage their tinnitus,” said Manchaiah. “This program shares these strategies.”

This free program runs during an eight-week period with more than 20 modules providing strategies for individuals with the condition. The information can be read online, downloaded or listened to. It is structured in a way to make it easy to read and includes videos and worksheets to track progress. The intervention is available in both English and Spanish for a variety of people with tinnitus with access to the internet. Spanish speaking individuals with tinnitus are highly encouraged to participate.

For more information about this program, to register as a participant or to learn more about the researchers involved, please visit tacklingtinnitus.org.
Cardinals Esports hits the ground running
Cardinals Esports was founded in October of 2019 by Interim Associate Dean Tim Reden and computer science professor Judah Roden. In the five months since Cardinals Esports started, the organization has added 42 full-fledged members and has over 150 students in their discord channel. Cardinals Esports—a form of sport competition using video games—currently supports multiple teams.

Of the teams, Overwatch, Rocket League, Fortnite, and League of Legends competed in full-fledged collegiate seasons throughout the 2019-2020 fall season. All competitive teams have made great strides and promise to be top contenders in collegiate sports. Team Overwatch recently hit a milestone over 150 students in their discord channel. Cardinals Esports is currently accepting new members for the Overwatch program.

Cardinals Esports founder and president Tommy Nguyen is a competitive gamer and that it was proof of what is possible. He was one of three mathematics educators in the nation to receive the Henry L. Alder Award for distinguished excellence in undergraduate mathematics.

“Education has created many opportunities for me, and Lamar University’s role in my success has been paramount,” said Couch. “It feels great to be able to parlay LU’s investment in me to the benefit of others, and I hope that this recognition can help me create more opportunities for more people.”

As a faculty member, Couch has founded the MaPP Challenge for high school students, has displayed a passion for undergraduate research, is a part of the Key Communicators initiative with Beaumont Independent School District and an active member of the Lamar University Greater South Park Neighborhood Partnership.

Stinson receives prestigious community service award
Cyndi Stinson, chair of the Juevon Gay Dickman School of Nursing, has been honored as the 2019 Julie and Ben Rogers Community Service Award recipient. Although Stinson has served at Lamar University for 25 years, she’s been a Cardinal much longer. She received her bachelor’s degree from LU in 1988 and then continued her education at other Texas institutions.

The Julie and Ben Rogers Community Service Award was established in 1979 to acknowledge the members of Lamar University’s faculty and staff who make a lasting impact on the Southeast Texas community through an outstanding record of service and volunteer work. Individuals from LU, Lamar Institute of Technology, Lamar State College – Port Arthur and Orange are chosen.

Stinson combines her vocation with her life experience through service leading. She serves on the Board for the Pink Power Support Group, organized “Cancer Crusaders,” and formed the collaboration between the Gift of Life and Dickman School of Nursing to teach high school students about the dangers of tobacco and risks of cancer. Not only has she served on many committees and in organizations at Lamar University, but she continues to present on numerous topics to community members outside of the classroom on topics such as health and disease, treatment and caregiving.

Students within the School of Nursing average around 6,000 hours of community service to local agencies each year, largely attributable to their service-oriented leader, Stinson.

Tommy Nguyen
Cardinals Esports

Cyndi Stinson
2019 Julie and Ben Rogers Community Service Award recipient

UNFINISHED BUSINESS: Alumna Daniella DeLaRue ’03 evacuates from Tonga
By Daniel Houston

Earlier this year on March 15, more than 7,300 Peace Corps volunteers in 60 countries were forced to retreat in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic, leaving behind students, friends, families and the country in which they’d dedicated so much time. Daniella DeLaRue ’03, a Peace Corps volunteer stationed in Tonga and former director of the Lamar University McNair Scholars Program, was discussing plans for college with one of her students when the email arrived that would ultimately send her and her fellow volunteers back home.

“I remember trying to figure out just how quickly it was spreading,” said DeLaRue, recalling the days and weeks leading up to the exodus. “Because of the communal nature of Tonga’s culture, I knew how quickly a virus like that would spread.”

With 55 volunteers living among four island groups, DeLaRue pondered the implications of not only these members evacuating their posts, but also those of Peace Corps posts around the world.

“This is completely unprecedented—like so many things with the pandemic—that every volunteer was evacuated back to the U.S.,” said DeLaRue. “In the midst of packing and giving out all the hugs I could to everyone before I left, it was difficult to process.” Two days later, DeLaRue and her fellow volunteers would be on a flight back to the U.S. “It was simply heart-wrenching for everyone.”

With the current education project underway, DeLaRue was an English literacy facilitator on the main island of Tongatapu, and the program manager for their learning center and library. She also managed the American Center, which the U.S. Embassy in Fiji sponsors, and provided resources such as free internet access and guidance for students wanting to study in the U.S., as well as events for the public like the Saturday morning reading club that DeLaRue and her staff also conducted.

“Everything has been disrupted,” she said. “I had a feeling we would be evacuated for safety reasons, but I had hoped it wouldn’t be this soon. We could not predict how quickly this would consume resources and shake infrastructures in travel and healthcare.” DeLaRue remains in touch with the school in Tonga and supervises the staff from a distance. She has plans to remanent as soon as volunteers are cleared to return to finish her service.

“I like so many others, really feel I have unfinished business there,” said DeLaRue.

DeLaRue describes the connections she had with the Tongan people as crucial to her understanding and appreciation of their culture. “The best part of my service in Tonga had to have been the relationships I built, whether it was with my host family, teachers at my school, the students I taught, vendors in the market, other volunteers in my cohort, or other friends I made,” said DeLaRue. “I miss the feeling of home I felt, even thousands of miles away from Southeast Texas.”

Judah Roden ’18
Texas A&M University

Daniel Houston
Cardinals Cadence

CARDINAL CADECE | Red + White Together | SUMMER 2020

CARDINAL CADECE | Red + White Together | SUMMER 2020
DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC, Judith Smith ’79, an inaugural graduate of LU’s nursing school, became the manager and spokesperson of the coronavirus testing center at Jack Brooks Regional Airport. Overnight, Smith, the director of the Port Arthur City Health Department, was thrown into the media spotlight and expected to be the expert on testing for the novel communicable disease.

No doubt Smith was the most qualified candidate for the testing center’s lead role. During her 36 years in public health, she has tested, treated and educated the public about contagious diseases. After working in the hospital setting for several years, Smith began her public health career in 1983 as the sexually transmitted disease and immunization nurse for the Port Arthur Public Health Department. While continuing that role, Smith also became the tuberculous nurse and was on the frontlines of a measles outbreak in the community in 1985. During a syphilis epidemic, Smith and her team conducted ‘night blitzes’ into bars to provide community outreach. With the same tenacity and compassionate care, Smith served the community through HIV and H1N1.

“The nurses are the real heroes. Every one of them accepted and said they wanted to go out and help. They did an amazing job. It ran very smoothly. Patients were satisfied. There were no complaints, and no one had to wait.”

COVID-19 was the ‘big one’ Smith and her team anticipated but hoped would never happen. However, they had a pandemic plan in place. They also had experience with drive-in testing. In 2005, under Smith’s direction as the newly appointed director of the Port Arthur Health Department, a drive-through flu clinic was established.

“We were familiar with drive through, so the county used our idea. We could show them how it should be done where people called if they are symptomatic and make an appointment. It all fit into the CDC guidelines.”

Jefferson County provided the funding for Smith and the department’s 11 nurses to run the makeshift center. For four weeks, the health department was shut down so that Smith and her team could conduct all of the testing. Smith, a cancer survivor, didn’t hesitate for a minute to take the assignment. However, because many of her nurses have small children or elderly parents at home, she gave them the option of not working at the center to guard their personal health.

“The nurses are the real heroes. Every one of them accepted and said they wanted to go out and help. They did an amazing job. It ran very smoothly. Patients were satisfied. There were no complaints, and no one had to wait.”

Not only did Smith and her staff conduct testing, but the staff also gathered all of the information from each patient. When test results were returned, the department communicated outcomes to patients and counties.

“Our epidemiologist made sure that each county was contacted and contact tracing initiated. The big focus became contact tracing, and we had a team set up for that when results were positive. We made sure that contacts were notified and told to quarantine according to the CDC guidelines. We called a lot of people.”

As challenging as closing the department was and moving to a makeshift center, wearing layers of personal protective equipment and delivering bad news to people was, the media spotlight was the most overwhelming aspect of Smith’s leadership role.

“I watched how hard the staff worked and then to hear and read the critique from media was the most challenging. It [COVID-19] was new, and we just didn’t know everything, but media continually called and wanted to spin something that we didn’t do or overlooked. To read something unfair or taken out of context, especially during this time when we should be giving each other an encouraging word, was the most challenging part.”

Smith has seen a lot of changes during her stint in public health. It wasn’t that long ago that gloves became a part of the testing center’s lead role. During her 36 years in public health, she has tested, treated and educated the public about contagious diseases. Smith continues to lead her expanding team (funding has been granted for more people to help with COVID-19 contact tracing) at the Port Arthur Health Department to meet future new public health challenges.

“We don’t visit in the office as much as we used to because of the virus, so I just try to encourage people by sending out texts and emails telling them, ‘you’ve done a good job’ or ‘this is going to be a good day.’ I have fun and laugh a lot, I respect each employee and encourage everyone to have the same respect to one another.”

“The nurses are the real heroes. Every one of them accepted and said they wanted to go out and help. They did an amazing job.”

—Judith Smith
Lamar University Cheerleading Team Coordinator Kelsey Baden exemplifies never-ending spirit and passion. While most people on campus recognize her work through Cardinal Athletics, it’s Baden’s off the field (and court) leadership and positivity that make a difference during this global pandemic.

Baden arrived at LU in June 2018 from Southern Illinois University, with previous stops at UT-Tyler and St. Louis University in Missouri. She grew up cheering competitively, beginning at age nine, and continued at her alma mater—Webster University, where she studied communications. She also cheered professionally in the NFL for the St. Louis Rams, so she knows what it takes to compete at the highest level.

Baden never envisioned coaching for a living, but Baden arrived at LU in June 2018 from Southern Illinois University, with previous stops at UT-Tyler and St. Louis University in Missouri. She grew up cheering competitively, beginning at age nine, and continued at her alma mater—Webster University, where she studied communications. She also cheered professionally in the NFL for the St. Louis Rams, so she knows what it takes to compete at the highest level.

Baden never envisioned coaching for a living, but while she and the team have tried their best to remain connected, it’s hard to imagine taking a different path. She and her cheerleaders share a tight-knit, family bond, their love for each other is equal to their love for LU. “We all talk frequently, either through our GroupApp or through conferences on Zoom or FaceTime.”

With COVID-19 halting sports and gatherings, Baden and her team are working creatively to maintain their bond, activity levels and enthusiasm. “We’re pretty good with staying connected,” Baden said. Team members encourage one another. “If somebody does a new skill, everybody responds. “If somebody does a new skill, everybody responds. If somebody does a new skill, everybody responds.

“For the second time in program history—and the second time in just four years under head coach Steve Holoman—LU soccer won the Southland Conference regular season title and tournament titles to advance to the NCAA Championships. Big Red posted a 16-7 (.696) overall record—the second-best win total in program history— and dominated the conference with a 10-1 (.909) league mark.

“The virtual tryout worked really well. We were able to look at videos, schedule interviews on Zoom and choose our team in about four days. We are anxious to finally get together as a team and begin practicing for the new year,” Baden said.

“When asked her favorite thing about coaching, she describes watching her athletes grow and “seeing not just the cheerleaders, but the type of people they become.” Baden talks of the growth in one of her cheerleaders as he went from timid and never having cheered before to being named a captain his senior season in 2019.

In describing her “LU moment,” Baden doesn’t hesitate to talk about the exciting experience of coaching her team as the Cards went to the playoffs her first football season in 2018. She recounts being on the sidelines with her cheerleaders for the LU vs. Texas A&M football game in 2019. “It was pretty wild! It was kind of like they did not even know what to do with themselves. It was a once in a lifetime experience for all of us.”

Baden and the LU Cheerleading Team can naturally make not-so-great situations fun and maintain the same energy regardless. They’ve well versed in “pumping up energy” in the crowd, engaging with current and prospective students, alumni and Cardinal fans to make people smile. An exciting new tradition Baden is proud of is having alumni cheerleaders ring the bell at football games.

While she and the team have done their best to remain spirited during the COVID-19 pandemic, Baden looks forward to getting back to what they love—cheering on the Cards and bringing positivity and pride to the LU community when it is needed most!
Lamar University announces Center for Midstream Management and Science

In an effort to support Southeast Texas’ greatest petrochemical expansion in decades, Lamar University recently awarded the mantle of responsibility to the Center for Midstream Management and Science. Approved and funded by the 86th Texas legislature, the Center for Midstream Management and Science will be dedicated to discovering solutions to distribution and storage modalities, environmental, workforce, and training issues facing the midstream industry.

The new center will serve as a bridge between LU and local industry, connecting breakthroughs in oil and gas to the economic benefits in refining and liquefaction technologies.

“The center was established to provide a multi-industry/university collaboration that advances in midstream capacity, efficiency, environmental compliance and safety,” said Brian Craig, dean of the College of Engineering. “The center will develop advanced education, training and solutions for the midstream industry, such that technology gaps related to capacities, distribution, storage, optimization, reliability, inspection, safety, environmental compliance, and new and emerging markets, and future business opportunities. These solutions can then be broadly distributed to the industry, workforce, policymakers, students and scholars.”

The Center for Midstream Management and Science will support student and faculty members, labs and post-doctoral fellowships across Lamar University’s emphasis on applied research that is vital to the midstream industry. Additionally, the center will provide training for the midstream community by hosting events and seminars. The center also supports the development of academic courses and collaborative programs at LU to train the next generation of midstream professionals.

“John Philip Sousa’s musical legacy continues to encourage them to read. Soon afterwards, Evans helped organize LU education majors to apply for community relations and founding member of the South Park Neighborhood Association. After 35 years in Beaumont, Evans recently noted as a Top 20 “rising star” institution in the country by Firetail, a UK-based company that provides higher education rankings.

Proksch is a member of the American Society for Engineering Education’s (ASEE) 2019 class of Distinguished Faculty Laureate. Proksch is a recipient of the Siemens Professional Achievement Award, the ASEE Excellence in Teaching Award, and the ASEE Examination Development Award. He is the author of A Sousa Reader: Essays, Interviews, and Clippings, a unique collection of videos that reveal fascinating information about Sousa.

Westgate receives the distinguished TSUS Regents Professor Award

James Westgate, professor emeritus of earth and space sciences, has been awarded the Texas State University System Regents’ Professor Award, which honors college professors for their outstanding professional excellence and significant educational contributions on the national, international and local levels.

Since joining LU in 1989, Westgate has been principal investigator or co-principal investigator for more than $1.7 million in science, education and research grants and garnered more than 20 research awards aimed at providing scholarships and opportunities for teacher graduate students.

Lin named associate provost for Research

Prof. Jerry Lin has been selected as associate provost for research, serving a five-year term. Lin is a long and productive research-oriented career at LU, his understanding of the world of funded and competitive research and his long-standing membership in the university community industry recommended him for the position.

The award, initiated in 1987, is one of the highest honors accorded a Lamar professor. In selecting the recipient, the award committee considers factors such as the number of research grants, professional recognition and the contributions made to the university.

Proksch named 2019 Distinguished Faculty Laureate

LU professor Bryan Proksch, associate professor of music, has been named a Distinguished Faculty Laureate. Proksch is the faculty member selected by the University’s Teaching, Learning, and Sponsored Programs Committee to recognize and honor outstanding teaching and scholarship.

Proksch’s lecture, “Music and Oil in Beaumont: John Philip Sousa and Magnolia Petroleum Band,” included the music of Sousa performed by students from the Mary Morgan Moore Department of Music. Proksch’s research and scholarship by the Texas State University System Regents’ Professor Award, which honors college professors for their outstanding professional excellence and significant educational contributions on the national, international and local levels.

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Lamar University has 90,000 alumni and 12,000 of these are in education. These educators assumed leadership roles during the pandemic to ensure children across the nation were able to continue their educational pursuits despite the challenges.

LU initiated online courses in 1995 in the College of Education and Human Development. Therefore, most of LU’s educational alumni are familiar with online learning platforms. These alumni either were enrolled in online courses at LU or they were taught online tools in their educational curriculum.

“Our educational alumni across the nation are well-trained in online education, and many of them are now available leaders at this time in our nation’s history,” said Robert Spina, dean of the College of Education and Human Development. “These alumni have not only moved their teaching, mentoring and student connections to digital formats, but their experience and knowledge base has been a critical part of the success of moving the entire district online.”

Here are three LU alumni who have ensured the transition from face-to-face education to online platforms and who have provided the greatest pedagogical value along with the teacher-student connection so important in K-12 environments.

Barbara Ybarra '16
Associate Superintendent of Teaching and Learning

Bryan Independent School District, Bryan

Bryan ISD, a district that generally serves a lower socioeconomic status demographic where 76% of the population receives free and reduced cost lunch, implemented a learning management system in place when the pandemic hit.

The first week of the pandemic, the district purchased Schoology, a program that automatically integrated with the district’s student information system. They trained more than 3,200 teachers in a 48-hour period and were completely launched and teaching students online within two weeks.

“We had been researching systems for several years and planned to bring the top companies back this spring for implementation in 18 months,” said Barbara Ybarra, associate superintendent of teaching and learning. “We got the system purchased within the first week and had it enrolling students by the second. Five weeks in, we have 95.5% of 16,000 students online.”

The district created a lead trainer program to train teachers district wide, all virtually, through Google Hangouts. Through slide deck and on-demand video series, the teachers were fully immersed.

“Teachers did incredibly great,” said Ybarra, who earned her doctorate in educational leadership from LU in 2016. “We said to the teachers, ‘This is what you’re faced with now, we’ve got to keep going.’ They actively rose to the occasion.”

The district did provide content for courses in a starter kit and provided a consistent structure for all courses, which Ybarra had learned from her work at LU was essential in helping parents and students navigate in the new online platform.

“First and foremost, I was a student in an online program, and I know what worked for me and really appreciated how courses were structured and the consistency from one course to the next,” said Ybarra. “One of the courses I took at LU was about developing online. I’m thankful I learned how to develop a quality online course that is easily accessible.”

Bryan ISD, like many schools, has a significant digital divide between students who have access at home and those who don’t. The district has distributed more than 5,000 Chromebooks to meet the students’ needs.

The district also made sure that every student, including those with special needs, were accommodated through the virtual learning platform. Special education courses are occurring on video conferencing and through teletherapy. Some online courses are modified for students with vision impairments and dyslexia but submitted with everyone else’s assignments, and those students are included in discussion boards.

“For example, if a student is supposed to receive preferential seating in a classroom, we are presenting it to the parents and determining where the best place for that student to work in the home is,” said Ybarra. “Our special education and accommodations are continuing through the virtual platform.”

Bryan ISD’s pandemic experience is documented on Facebook at #ybaran and Twitter @ybaran.

“There are great stories and little wonderful moments, but what’s been the most wonderful, incredible thing to watch is what can happen when an entire team is completely behind getting kids what they need,” said Ybarra.

Alline Ayala '18
Digital Graphics 1 and Gateway to Technology/Engineering 1

Hudson Bend Middle School
Lake Travis Independent School District, Austin

Alline Ayala’s school went on spring break March 11 and then extended the break another two weeks, giving teachers time to plan lessons and prepare for an online learning experience. The district coordinated all curriculum through Schoology. All assignments were consistent for every subject in every grade, assigned the same day with the same due date. Teachers were then asked to offer “office hours” for students to attend via Google Meet.

“A few schools and educators began reaching out to me mid to late February asking for help on designing their emergency plans for teaching and learning,” said Ayala. “Knowing that I had the preparation and knowledge to be able to support them was very helpful in my own journey to make sense of this situation. Contributing to their efforts and giving back to a profession that has given me so much has been an integral part of my own self-care process.

“Teachers in Ayala’s school and the entire district have worked together using their strengths. Those with more experience with online learning have taken the lead on the structures for lesson creation and instruction, and others with video production skills have created videos for the rest of the teams to use.”

Ayala, who received her doctorate in educational leadership from Lamar University in 2018, said the doctoral research she conducted, titled “Perceived motivations of educators applying and volunteering in EdTech ambassador programs within McClelland’s Achievement Motivation Theory,” applies to the current pandemic situation.

“The doctorate program, prepared me to be open to the unexpected and trust the process, and that has really been helpful in navigating the uncertainty of the times,” said Ayala.

“During the program I participated in research around online learning, teacher personal learning networks, micro-credentialing with badges and achievement motivation. My understanding of these topics has deeply shaped the way I am approaching the process of teaching and learning with my students during this crisis.”

She has valued her experience as an online learner because she can appreciate what her students are now going through. “Much of what is published is modeled from my experience as an online learner. Our multi-week project started with an introduction similar to a course syllabus, in which we share what the topics and tasks are for each week. I also have modeled much of my feedback strategies to those I had received from my professors (clear, specific, actionable). I feel much more confident about myself when in front of the camera and can manage the calls well with muting others and using my strengths.”

Ayala created the presentation, “Supporting Continuity of Teaching and Learning During an Emergency: Conversation Guide and Quick Start Recommendations” for other teachers and districts.

“…Whatever happened when an entire team is completely behind getting kids what they need.”

--BARBARA YBARRA ’16

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Before school was to start again on Monday, Guthrie sent an email to the semi-affluent school community, comprising 1,800 students, explaining the situation and what was going to happen. He also sent a Google form for kids to respond.

“I’m currently working on my doctorate, I knew we had to implement communication, which is big anytime, which drew heavily on his experience in the LU doctoral program when implementing an online program for his school. The announcement about the pandemic came on Thursday of the school’s spring break, which gave Guthrie and his teachers a few days to prepare the “Bush Family” for an alternative learning system.

In coming weeks, Guthrie remained focused on building strong personal connections and staying in touch with his faculty, students and parents. He consistently informed how he could be part of the solution where parents arose, assuming parents’ children would not fall behind, and just listened to parents who needed to talk. The school issued Chrombooks and laptops where there was need and slowly implemented the online program for all students.

“As a result of being an online student at LU, I got a keen communication and concise, made all assignments phone friendly in the beginning and didn’t get fancy until we had everyone going in the right direction,” said Guthrie.

“I’ve received good feedback from our community with how we rolled out our distance learning.”

In week five of the pandemic, Bush Middle School Half had 100% of its 1,800 students connected and working online, and Guthrie said teachers were able to stretch kids in their assignments and give a little more.

“Initially, we stuck with one app or interface,” said Guthrie. “We still hit the highlights of the material we’re presenting and leave out the fluff, but I’ve told the teachers now is the time you can start to test the boundaries and ramp up the rigor a little bit.”

Guthrie continues to communicate and interact with students. He recently hosted a Zoom lunch, where he went into the school cafeteria with food from a local restaurant owned by a Bush family and kids popped in on Zoom. They talked about their food, their dogs, their families and the crisis.

The Bush pandemic experience is documented on Twitter: @StuGuthriewe.
Laurin Martin '03, B.S. interior design, is a designer at The Laurels, a family-owned and operated wedding venue in Beaumont. She has made a career of helping couples plan the dream wedding many have imagined for years. But what happens when that perfect day falls in the middle of a pandemic?

“A lot of our couples had to change plans,” Martin said. “We had to cancel all of March, April and May, and for the ones coming up, we’re having to reduce numbers. But we are able to reschedule them all.”

From changing dates to cutting guest lists, the coronavirus pandemic has certainly had an effect on weddings. Under the first social distancing guidelines, gatherings of more than 10 people were banned. This meant that some couples who chose to get married had to reduce a large guest list of loved ones down to about eight people.

“One couple had a really small ceremony with just immediate family, and then we rescheduled the reception for next year, so it’ll be like their one-year anniversary,” Martin said. “We’re trying to be flexible, work with them, meet their needs and still make it special for them.”

In any situation, Martin reminds clients that the most important part of a wedding is the couple’s love, and that reassurance is especially needed today.

“I just tell them at the end of the day, the only thing that matters is that you’re married to your best friend. You’re going to look back at this in 50 years and laugh about it,” Martin said. “You’re going to go through a lot of things in your marriage. Just know that if you can get through this, you can get through a lot in your marriage.”

Ensuring seniors are healthy, happy
by Madison Franco

Egan Mistric ’13, now “Miss Sunshine,” as her residents sometimes call her, began volunteering at her grandmother’s senior living home when she was only 10 years old. Since then, senior care has become her lifelong passion.

“I fell in love instantly, and I have continued with it every single day,” Mistric said. “I just tell them at the end of the day, the only thing that matters is that you’re married to your best friend. You’re going to look back at this in 50 years and laugh about it.”

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Through it all, Kimball, a 1991 graduate of the College of Fine Arts and Communication, coordinated the delivery of life-sustaining meals and critical services, such as transportation, to area seniors.

Already tested by water and fire, Kimball and the 350 employees and volunteers of Nutrition and Senior Services adapted quickly in the face of a global pandemic. The recipients of their services are among the most vulnerable to COVID-19, and many of their volunteers are seniors, as well. “We recognized immediately the need for alternations,” Kimball said. “We had to adjust the way we were operating in order to keep residents safe.”

Lunch Ministry continues to fill the need where it can every Sunday. Currently, Jones and other long-time members of the group, including Fred Antoine ’78, are operating under a COVID-19-specific protocol that involves a smaller team in the kitchen, increased sanitation and an altered delivery method. As businesses reopen and the desire to recapture old routines grows stronger, Jones admitted that the return to normal operations might not be immediate. Acknowledging the uncertainty but never forgetting the original mission, she remarked, “We will try to encourage social distancing and we will follow the guidelines that are put into place. Right now, we are all just feeling our way, and trying to continue our mission of feeding the hungry.”

Supporting struggling community members
by Grayson Meek ’10, ’17

Through it all, Kimball, a 1991 graduate of the College of Fine Arts and Communication, coordinated the delivery of life-sustaining meals and critical services, such as transportation, to area seniors.

Alison Messner ’90, B.S. nutrition and dietetics, and Lauren Martin ’03, B.S. interior design, are among the the residents at Buckner Calder Woods senior care home, keeping residents happy and loved is part of her job. Normally, that might include organizing activities such as group events and family visits, but with the risk of COVID-19, Mistric has had to get creative.

From Mother’s Day Zoom calls to “noodle ball” (hallway hockey with pool noodles), Mistric makes sure that residents and staff are always having fun while social distancing. She has helped organize a drive-by parade, asked local dancers to perform outside residents’ windows, and goes above and beyond to keep residents happy and safe at the same time.

“We’re constantly cleaning, constantly social distancing, constantly wearing face masks. We’re just trying to keep our residents safe and show them love as much as possible.”

Her efforts to entertain and protect residents at Buckner Calder Woods are too many to list, but even outside of work, Mistric keeps the wellbeing of her residents in mind.

“When I go out in public, I wear a face mask. I constantly wash my hands. I have hand sanitizer in my pocket,” Mistric said. “Outside of the building, I take every precaution. I’m just trying to do what’s best for my residents and family members and just try to keep as much calm and peace and happiness as possible.”

In a troubled time of changing circumstances, Mistric responded to stress with compassion and creativity to meet the needs of the residents she calls “family.”

There are seniors, as well. “We recognized immediately the need for alternations,” Kimball said. “We had to adjust the way we were operating in order to keep residents safe.”

Lunch Ministry continues to fill the need where it can every Sunday. Currently, Jones and other long-time members of the group, including Fred Antoine ’78, are operating under a COVID-19-specific protocol that involves a smaller team in the kitchen, increased sanitation and an altered delivery method. As businesses reopen and the desire to recapture old routines grows stronger, Jones admitted that the return to normal operations might not be immediate. Acknowledging the uncertainty but never forgetting the original mission, she remarked, “We will try to encourage social distancing and we will follow the guidelines that are put into place. Right now, we are all just feeling our way, and trying to continue our mission of feeding the hungry.”

Supporting struggling community members
by Grayson Meek ’10, ’17

The St. Anthony Cathedral Basilica Sack Lunch Ministry, begun in 1997, always had a clear mission. Mary Beth Jones ’10 became a parishioner around that time and recalled that the group emerged to fill a specific need in the community. When Some Other Place, an initiative of Nutrition and Senior Services started, the ministry decided to step in to help,” said Jones. The need is a little greater now, and the future cannot be foreseen, but the Sack Lunch Ministry continues to fill the need where it can every Sunday. Currently, Jones and other long-time members of the group, including Fred Antoine ’78, are operating under a COVID-19-specific protocol that involves a smaller team in the kitchen, increased sanitation and an altered delivery method. As businesses reopen and the desire to recapture old routines grows stronger, Jones admitted that the return to normal operations might not be immediate. Acknowledging the uncertainty but never forgetting the original mission, she remarked, “We will try to encourage social distancing and we will follow the guidelines that are put into place. Right now, we are all just feeling our way, and trying to continue our mission of feeding the hungry.”

Adapting quickly to meet demand
by Grayson Meek ’10, ’17

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To donate or volunteer with Nutrition and Senior Services, visit them on the web at seniormeals.org, find them on Facebook or contact them by phone at (409) 892-4455.
In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, Morgan Mitcham wanted her friends and family to have comfortable fitting masks with high-quality filters, so the Lamar University senior mechanical engineering major created her own.

With two 3-D printers, printer filament and a few items from the hardware store, Mitcham, who plans to graduate in December, crafted a mask that is comfortable, meets CDC filtration standards and comes in a variety of colors.

“I basically found a design online that I made my own,” said Mitcham. “I added a little more comfort to the existing design to accommodate different nose sizes and also removes the strain from the ears.

Another ‘Mitcham distinction’ is the comfort of her masks. She super-glues insulation foam that is used to secure window unit air conditioners in windows. The memory foam-like product easily adheres to the edges of the mask that come in contact with the face providing cushion. She also prints ear straps using a flexible rubber material that is adjustable for different head sizes and also removes the strain from the ears.

“I have made about 30 masks for family, friends and medical professionals I know personally,” said Mitcham. “They are working really well, and it’s something I can do to help in this situation.”

In between her LU course work—two classes and a senior design project—Mitcham makes her masks. Each mask takes about eight hours to produce and assemble and costs a little less than $5. Mitcham hasn’t charged for her masks, but she’s put about 100 hours into the project.

“It’s been really fun making them and now I’m making them in different colors which is more fun than solid white,” said Mitcham. “I’ve got colorful filament for ear savers like turquoise and yellow.”

To support her new project, Mitcham has joined a Facebook group—COVID HomeBrew Mask Relief. The group communicates about the availability of filament, which is in high demand, and where masks are needed all over the country.

“It’s exciting just knowing I have two printers going all the time, and I’m helping people to stay healthy,” said Mitcham. 
Brenna (Gordon) Rodriguez ’04, regional director of Harbor Healthcare System, helped spearhead a Hometown Heroes Lunch for Christus, organized by Harbor Foundation, in addition to her daily work of keeping hospice residents healthy and comforted. With the money left over in the budget from canceled events at the Junior League of Beaumont, Sharita Gardner ’12, who is a business development representative for MobileID Credit Union and is the COVID-19 Response Ad-Hoc Committee for the Junior League, organized a team of members to use the funds to show appreciation through meals to frontline healthcare workers. She purchased thank you boxes of girl scout cookies to send to the hospitals, helped with a Hometown Heroes lunch at Christus, delivered meals to healthcare workers at the Southeast Texas Regional Medical Center, and ordered yard card signs for Nurses Week May 6-12 for Christus and Baptist Hospitals to boost morale. She also delivered meals with her credit union team to medical professionals at local hospitals.

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\[\text{Lamar University Alumni Board members Sharita Gardner (Gordon) Rodriguez ’04 and Tea (Nguyen) Do ’08 organized projects with their work and Junior League of Beaumont to assist the community. Tea (Nguyen) Do ’08, who owns a Farmers Insurance Agency, personally saved hundreds of cloth face masks for Baptist Hospital. She also sent care packages of cleaning supplies and toilet paper to her customers and provided treats for their clients to pick up outside her business for Easter.}\

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The global pandemic did not interrupt Buna Elementary teacher Vince (Norris) Clark’s creativity and connections with his students for a second. Clark’s tenants to them several nights each week in her bedroom zoom time. She even created a “foot night” zoom where they both list for their classmates. She thrives in any environment, and her social media posts are evidence she is changing the lives of her students one day at a time. She makes a difference by helping them learn to be fun for her students and by bringing topics in that are relevant. She is the type of teacher her students will remember for years to come.

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\[\text{For this year’s Teacher Appreciation Week in May, Wendy (McBryde) Lapeyroserie ’98, a senior high school teacher at Hardin–Jefferson High School, created an “Adopt a Teacher Appreciation Week” Facebook page as a place for Southeast Texas teachers to be acknowledged and thanked for their hard work.}\

“Usually every year, the English departments I’ve worked for will always have their students write all the teachers a letter of appreciation,” she said. “This year, the letters were priceless to us. When it turned out we would have a tough year already, so I needed to do something to try and make everyone’s day a little bit better.”

Lapeyroserie posted the page publicly on April 29, expecting about 200 participants. The community group was at more than 4,000 by Monday morning.

“When COVID-19, people are having to teach from home and it’s really hitting their eyes to what we really do on a daily basis,” she said. “Teachers have been doing a tough job, and it’s amazing to see people reaching out to say thank you. Some teachers request just prayers, others smiles and wish lists. Port Aransas Elementary Kindergarten teacher Marisa Phillips’ ‘09 wish list was fulfilled last week. She received numerous goodies for her classroom, including pencils, mounting tape, carpet markers and more. “More than anything, I’m so happy to see how many people love and appreciate teachers, myself included,” she said. “This has been a trying time for everyone, and I think the realization that this is much more than a job for teachers has become apparent. We long to be back in our classroom with our children, I would give anything for just one more day with my babies.”

Groves Middle School sixth-grade teacher Ashley Nicola Vickey ‘18 received books, school supplies, bookmarks and games. “Some of these items were bought by friends and family, but what was even more touching were the items purchased by complete strangers,” Vickery said.
50s
Mike Clark ’61, B.S. geology, was recognized as “Shenigon Mountain’s Hang Gliding Ecologist” and was awarded a medal for geologic work on the Shenigon Mountain geology.

Cardinal Cadence
whereabouts of a lost alumnus,
If you have news to share—a
| CLASS | events and make sure you get
| NOTES |

Alumni Affairs

Gerald Ford ’61, B.A. English, also won a B.A. and Ph.D. in English and was inducted into the Texas Literary Hall of Fame in March 2019 by the friends of the Fort Worth Public Library. Gerald has taught at many interesting places during his career, including University of Exeter, Vanderbilt University, University of Georgia, Louisiana State University, Rhodes College and University of Delaware. He lives in Lebanon, Ill. with his wife, Patricia.

Edward Metcalfe ’61, B.A. electrical engineering, who after serving as an environment and safety manager at Phillips Petroleum and Oil in Bakersfield, Calif., where he lives with his wife, Carol.

David Shepard ’55, B.S. biology, holds master's and doctorate degrees in physiology and taught biology, archaeology and geology at Lamar University, Sulphur Springs College and Northeast Texas Community College. He was a 28 years of Southeastern Louisiana University. He is currently a county attorney and coach for the SU Rugby Club. He and his wife, Cathy, live in Pearland.

V.J. Harpur II ’61, B.B.A. general business and his wife, Cheryl, served on mission trips through the years. They now reside in Fort Worth, Texas. In June 2018, the FBI arrested him on federal charges of drug trafficking. He was subsequently released on bond. They are parents of two sons, Evan and Jared.

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and has two grown children, Laura and Jamie.

Travis Cormier ’97, B.B.A. general business, is the managing director of financial services for the City of Beaumont. He lives in Grand Prairie with his wife, Rhonda.

Rhonda Cormier ’97, B.B.A., accounting, married her husband, John, in 2018. In addition to her career, she holds an M.Ed. in educational diagnosis, lives in Grand Prairie, and they have two children, John and Joc.

David Elliott ’97, B.S. industrial technology, holds an M.S. in administration and is the superintendent of Groves school district. Throughout his 35-year career, Chris served as a bus driver, taught science, coached football, led as an assistant principal and principal, and worked his way to the role of superintendent. He and his wife, Susan, a fellow educator, have been married for 35 years. They have four grandchildren. They live in Oglesby.

Wade Armer ’97, B.A. business administration, is a financial advisor of Cure and Associates, P.C., and a financial advisor of technology, holds an M.Ed. in mathematics, is a second-grade teacher at Christus St. Elizabeth Hospital to Dana (Henderson) Kyler ’82, B.A. business, is the managing director of technology, holds an M.Ed. in accounting, married her husband, Chris. She and her husband, Robert, live in Bridge City.

Steve Armer ’96, B.B.A. business, is a trial attorney at The Williams Firm, P.C. They live in Livingston.

Donna House ’95, M.Ed., school administration, is the interim principal of Beverly Place Elementary School in San Antonio. She lives in Fort Worth.

Rebecca Cawley ’94, B.A.A.S. applied arts and sciences, 92, M.F.A. public administration, holds a PhD in public policy and public administration and is the deputy commissioner for Regions 2 and 10 for the Texas Office of Court Administration.

Antoine Kelly ’91, B.S. psychology, wrote a master’s thesis, which ran from July 27 — Aug. 12, 2019, which was nominated for the Community Players Sallye Awards for the Best Featured Actress in a play. Antoine is a master’s candidate for Burns for America of Southeast Texas, for which he lives in Orange.

Kim Redmon ’90, B.S. social work, holds a master’s degree in social work, is a licensed social worker and lives in Orange.

Calmie Rice ’90, B.S. sociology, holds a master’s degree, and is principal of South Port Middle School in Beaumont. She and her husband, Nikinka, live in Vidor.

Donna (Powell) Prudhomme ’89, B.B.A. criminal justice, holds a master’s degree in criminal justice and lives in Groves.

Dana Fontenot ’13 and Ken Mazzu ’92 — LU Alumni Homecoming Pre-Game Party will celebrate their 50th anniversary of their graduation.

Michelle Cessac ’98, B.A.A.S. applied arts and sciences, 92, M.F.A. public administration, holds a PhD in public policy and public administration and is the deputy commissioner for Regions 2 and 10 for the Texas Office of Court Administration.

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Brenda (Wolfe) nursery, '04, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, is the director of Business Development and Quality Assurance at Tellus in Friendswood, Texas. She is raising her two sons, Jack and Luke.

Jessica (Bres) Prince, '04, B.S. mechanical engineering, '05, B.B.A. management, is the executive director at the分立的 and development at the University of Houston-Downtown. A 2017 Jerger Future Leader by the American Academy of Audiology, Chris is the director of Business Development and Quality Assurance at Tellus in Friendswood, Texas. She is raising her two sons, Jack and Luke.

Laura (Stoll) Salas, '02, B.S. communication, '05, M.Ed., is a principal in the Houston Area Alliance of Black School Educators Assistant Principal for Ohmstede Ltd. They live in College Station school district. She and her husband, Michael, live in Beaumont.

Heidi Reif, '08, B.A., is the director of advising and counseling in developmental education. She previously served as director of academic advising and enrollment at Lamar State College Port Arthur. Felicia McAdams lives in Beaumont.

Michaela (Macias) Medina, '00, B.S. history, and her husband, Mark, have twins, Aria and Owen, who were born in 2017. They live in New Braunfels.

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Natalie (Grabowski) Allred, '08, B.A., is a financial advisor at Edward Jones. Her husband, Devin, in 2011, and her son, Reid, have a son, Finn, who was born in 2018. They live in Nederland.

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Hillary (Dean) '12, B.B.A. general business, and '12, B.B.A. entrepreneurship, and Jarrod Deady '14, B.B.A. nursing, have a one-year-old son, Elliot Thomas, and they live in Pearland. They are the couple who were married in 2018.

John Large '12, B.B.A. finance, '14, M.B.A., is an ERP consulting lead at Deloitte in Pearland. He is the proud husband of Ashley Large, and they live in Broomfield with their two-year-old daughter, Stella. They live in Beaumont.

Nancy (Wenzel) Robinson '12, B.S. finance and management, and her husband, Thomas, have a two-year-old daughter, Mali, born in Feb. 2019. They live in Beaumont.

Alex Dryer '13, B.B.A. biology, has an M.D. from the University of Texas Southwestern Medical School in Dallas. With his wife, Meridith, they live in College Station. In January 2020, he signed a contract with the Philadelphia Eagles of the NFL. The couple married in Fort Worth, in Nov. 2019.

Mallory (Wiggins) '14, B.S. nutrition, works as a dietitian at Memorial Hermann Northeast. She and her husband, Jay, have a one-year-old son, Deuce, born in Aug. 2018, and they live in Port Neches. They live in Nederland.

Trey Daigle '14, B.S. nursing, have a one-year-old son, Elliot Thomas, and they live in Houston. They live in Houston.

Lori (Wenner) Stratton '11, B.S. nursing education, is a nursing instructor in the Lamar University Nursing Department. She married her husband, Gary, and they live in Port Arthur.

Eric Aguilar '15, B.S. nursing, and Johanna (Figlia) '15, B.S. psychology, have a one-year-old daughter, Stella. They live in Groves.

Johnathan is a senior creative artist for M.D. Anderson Cancer Center’s Social Media team. He is a proud husband of Anna Ortiz, and they live in Houston. They live in Houston.

Dr. Larry Rose '65, who served as a captain in the U.S. Army Dental Corps, gave the keynote address. He is a dentist at Edgerly Dentistry in Nederland. She works at Westwood Fine Future Financial, and they live in Houston.

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October 2019. She is the store manager at Mathew’s Jewelers in Beaumont and Mid-Country, and they live in Beaumont.

Dave Bennett | B.A.A.S. applied arts and sciences, is director of technology for the Galena school district and he and his wife, Tara, live in Galva.

Ryan Blanchette | B.T., nursing, and Dawn Nemo | B.T., nursing, married in July 2018. Ryan is a student at Lamar University in Mid-Andy and Dawn is a nurse at Methodist Hospital St. John in Beaumont.

Jennie (Denton) Dillon | B.T., business management, married her husband, Jason, in January, 2018. She is a human resources scheduling coordinator at Wolfram in Beaumont.

Lauren Furse | B.T., computer and information sciences, is a systems analyst at St. Luke’s in Beaumont, and she lives in Orange.

Sahithi Gedde | M.T., chemistry, is an analytical quality control chemist at Ansell Pharmaceuticals and lives in Coastal Mid, N.Y.

Deanna Karlson | B.S., nursing, is a school nurse for San Benito Valley Unified School District in San Juan, Calif., where she lives.

Dani Sanders | B.S., political science, is in her last year of law school at Baylor. She recently graduated with a B.S. in Mathematics and received a gold competitive recognition.

Lissa Smith-Williams | B.S., education, leads United Way of Coastal Beaumont, is principal of operations at DDA. Public Broadcasting System in Austin, where she lives with her husband, Brandon.

Sarah (Vasavbhakti) Steinkes | B.T., nursing, is a life skills nurse at San Antonio Elementary School in Port Arthur. She lives in Port Neches with her husband, Nik.

Morgan (Dallison) Summell | B.T., nursing, is a nurse at Memorial Hermann Hospital in Houston. Her husband, Tyler, B.T., is in communication, works as a public relations coordinator and communication specialist at Academy Sports and outdoors in Katy. They live in Cypress.

Kenny Lee Mitchell | West (Cleveland) | B.S., psychology, is a mental health counselor at Insight Center. She and her husband, Julian | M.T., live in Beaumont.

Lyndsey (Dumont) Weaver | B.S., interdisciplinary studies, is an assistant teacher at Lee Elementary School, is a B.S. in Criminal justice, works for the Travis County District Attorney’s Office. She lives in Leander.

Lauren (Rugg) | B.S. Family and consumer sciences, and Aaron Zepeda | B.S. mechanical engineering, married in Jan. 4, 2020, and they live in Northgates.

Yael Alcina Garcia | B.S., nursing, is a nurse at University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston, and lives in La Marque.

Jordan Anderson | B.B.A., business management, is a coordinator at St. Mary’s High School.

Dominique Southern University. She married David Petrie in 2016. They live in Orange.

Danae Baker | B.S., medical intern, is an intern at Memorial Hermann Hospital in Midland, and she lives in Corpus Christi.

Jasmine Brumley | B.A.A.S. applied arts and sciences, is the administrative coordinator for the Vietnamese American Language and Cultural Center in Houston, and she lives in Jacksonville.

Cindy Colella | B.A.A.S. art and sciences, is the administrative coordinator for the Vietnamese American Language and Cultural Center in Houston, and she lives in Jacksonville.

Shana Escobedo | B.B.A. accounting, is the manager of information technology at Community Foundation of Southeast Texas.

Mark Farley | B.B.A. administration, is a social studies/ electives teacher at Collin County Juvenile Justice Alternative Education Program. He is a co-founder of a non-profit started by the Collin County Juvenile Probation Department and Mc Kinney school district, where she lives.

Joy Garcia | B.S. school counselor, is a counselor at Judson High School, and he lives in Corpus Christi.

Isaiah Gerald | B.S., industrial engineering, is a continuous improvement engineer at Dow Chemical Co. He lives in Deer Park with his wife, Tara.

Zara (Killman) Holmes | B.S., interdisciplinary studies, and her husband, Mark, welcomed their son, on Feb. 11, 2020. She is an English teacher and coach at Port Neches-Groves High School. They live in Nederland.

Success Reagon | B.S. mathematics, is a systems engineer at Intel Corporation in Chandler, Ariz. She and her husband, Kyle, live in Chandler, Ariz. They have two young children.

Trent McGee | B.S. music, is the assistant band director in the Fine Arts Department for both Kountze Middle School and Kountze High School, and he possesses permission instruction, the KHS and KHS Bands. Trent lives in Lumberton.

Stephanie Messina | B.S. studio arts, education, is an art teacher at Follett/Frisco Elementary School in the Beaumont school district, where she lives.

Rebecca Racca | B.T., digital learning and teaching, is an art teacher at Brist Halt-Middle School in Oakland, Calif., and lives in Oakland.

Kalli (Kilchrist) Reddix | B.S.A.S. applied arts and sciences, is a vice president of education and staffing at Advanced Health Education Center in Houston and lives in Richmond.

Christin Reaves | B.E. engineering administration, is the principal of Enterprise Elementary in the Midland school district, where she lives.

Jessica (Koch) Salomon | B.S. mechanical engineering, married her husband, Tyler, in 2010. She works as an engineer at Samson United Austin Executive Airport, and they live in Austin.

Abel Sanchez | B.S. criminal justice, is a community supervision officer for San Patricio County. He lives in Portland with his wife, Yadira.

Amy (Cary) Says | M.T., education, is a fourth-grade teacher at Sportsman’s Park Elementary School in Friendswood, and she lives with her husband, Jared.

Ayman Shreem | B.E. civil engineering, is a project manager at Dresser Ingalls in Spring, and he lives with his wife, Lamia.

Susana Tablada | B.S. educational technology leadership, is a teacher at Churchill High School in North East school district, and she lives in San Antonio.

‘I had to quickly move all my things into storage and leave the U.S.,” said Alessia Trebbi-Tindall. “It made me feel worried about what may happen in the future and how bad this could get.” While trying to get home after cancelled flights and the risk of going into busy airports and planes while surrounded by thousands of people and the pandemic was a constant for her as well. “The Cardinal Emergence Fund helped towards the costs that I ran into from the coronavirus,” said Trebbi-Tindall. “It helped me be able to ship most of my important belongings with me on my flight and faced with the cost of storing items I could not take with me. I feel like my situation is a lot better now but I was able to get home and with my family and isolate there. That was the main need. I was scared that I wouldn’t be able to do things as normal and was scared that it would affect my university and never be able to go. But the Cardinal Emergence Fund helped towards the costs that I ran into from the coronavirus.”
March 12, Lamar University hosted a groundbreaking ceremony for its new Welcome Center to be constructed on the southeast corner of Rolfe Christopher Drive and Jim Gilligan Way. The center will be a one-story 6,300-square foot building featuring a spacious two-story lobby with comfortable seating areas for visitors, a refreshment counter and a self-service kiosk for prospective students. The lobby and a side gallery will include a variety of media to “tell the LU story.” A 40-seat theater for structured presentations will be located adjacent the lobby and designed to lead visitors to the gathering area for campus tours.

“The Welcome Center will be the first stop on campus for prospective students, family members, alumni and other visitors,” said Tracie Craig, center director. “It will be the first building people see as they approach campus on Cardinal Drive. We will provide information about the campus, LU’s history, academic programs, athletics and student activities. It also will be the starting point for campus and housing tours.”

To ensure a holistic design for the campus, LU developed conceptual designs of the new south campus entrance and will implement site features as funding becomes available.

The building materials will be primarily brick, with cast stone elements, metal wall panels and a storefront glazing system. The storefront system will provide transparency for a visual connection between the main entrance on the east, the interior lobby and the back side on the west of the building, which will contain an outdoor event space.

The interior finishes will include porcelain floor tiles at the lobby, theater, gallery spaces and restrooms. All light fixtures will be energy efficient LEDs, and the building is planned to achieve LEED Silver accreditation.

The landscape design includes improvements to the surrounding site and landscape elements for visual connection between the building and the site.

“We placed an emphasis on plants that have low-water requirements, quick establishment periods and manageable growth, and that require minimal long-term maintenance,” said Katherine Miller, assistant vice president, planning and construction.

An evapotranspiration-based, automated irrigation system that can be programmed to minimize water waste will be installed. The system is capable of efficiently delivering the required water needed for plant establishment and development as well as making seasonal adjustments.

Projected to be completed in one year, the site will house office space for admissions counselors and the center director, a workroom for student LU Crew members and other support spaces and will include visitor parking, bus drop-off, outdoor gathering areas, a public art sculpture by Paul Kittelson and Carter Ernst and an iconic “photo op” monument sign.