

SIGHTS and SOUNDS

MAY 2026



COLLEGE OF FINE ARTS & COMMUNICATION
LAMAR UNIVERSITY

in this issue...

PAGE
2

A Message from the Dean

PAGE
3

Our 2026 Graduates

PAGE
4

Department of Art & Design

Designing the Future

PAGE
5

Department of Communication & Media

Chasing Stories & Dreams

PAGE
6

Mary Morgan Moore Department of Music

From Songbird to Cardinal

PAGE
7

Department of Theatre & Dance

The Next Act Begins

PAGES
8-9

Dishman Art Museum

Creative Convergence

PAGE
10

KVLU

Cooking Up Conversations

PAGE
11

Can't Miss This! & COFAC Camps

Hello!

I am Golden Wright, privileged to serve as the Dean of the College of Fine Arts & Communication at Lamar University. Our college is a dynamic hub housing an array of talented individuals, including students, staff, and faculty. Through this monthly newsletter, we aim to shine a spotlight on the exceptional achievements of these individuals across various disciplines within the fine arts and communication fields.

Our college boasts an exceptional student body, each pursuing their passions in fields ranging from artistry to speech language pathology, interpretation, and performance. Student success will always be our core mission here in the College of Fine Arts & Communication. In this issue, we would like to take the opportunity to introduce some of our vibrant and talented students to you. These students represent come from an array of different areas and disciplines across our college.

At the heart of our college is the profound connectivity we foster among students, faculty, and staff through the common thread of communication. Each distinct area within our college relies on communication in its own unique way. Communication serves as the cornerstone of each departments' success within the college.

From the multifaceted realm of communication and media, utilizing mediums such as television, radio, social media, and newspapers to disseminate information, to the evocative storytelling of music majors who convey emotions and narratives through voice or instruments. From the invaluable contributions of speech and hearing sciences, enhancing our ability to communicate effectively, and improving our quality of life, to the empowering field of deaf studies, which enables individuals to serve as vital mediators in communication. The immersive experiences offered by theatre and dance provide an escape from reality through the interplay of movement and text. And lastly, the visual eloquence of art captures moments and places, transporting us to new dimensions and inspiring our imagination.

We hope this newsletter illuminates all of the possibilities that our College provides. We are immensely grateful for the unwavering support of our surrounding community, which generously provides funding for scholarships, new equipment, and invaluable learning opportunities. Thank you!

“THE BEST KEPT SECRET...”



Golden Wright
College of Fine Arts & Communication, Dean

CONGRATULATIONS!

OUR SPRING 2026 GRADUATES

GRADUATE

Erin Alexander Brown

Randy Reed Gummelt

Aerias Michael Hurd

Irasi Jimenez

Kelsey Elizabeth Johnson

Stephanie Acha Mwarabu

Amanda Micheal Toups

Victoria Clairee Wilkins

UNDERGRADUATE

Hunter S. Abate

Jordan A. Albert

Sara Elizabeth Alvarez

Marisol Elizabeth Arnold

Austin Jacob Balli

Eboni Bolton-Wooten

Josiah Zachary Boyd

Kassidy Breanne Boyett

Adam Corey Cardenas

Abigail Cardiel

Jennifer Chama

Johnesia Richelle Davis

Reagan Danielle Dearing

Elizabeth Rose Drago

Kami Kayana Greene

Sarah Beth Jester

Joshua Dewayne Jones

Karolína Krásová

Porter Rockwell Lapray

Cameren Large

Kevin Eugenio Lopez-Cardenas

Stasha Ann Marie Merz

Diana Iveth Miranda

Mehgan Joane Ortiz

Caraline Faith Otte

Veronica Marie Reyes

Bailee Celeste Richmond

Braylon James Robert

Maria Luisa Rodriguez

Christopher Michael Roland

Jayleeann Irene Roth

Ryan Jay Silverberg

Ashley Lauren Spates

Makayla I. Thomas

Mallory Kay Threadgill

Savannah Lee Trone

Kassandra Ventura

Kevin A. Wallin

Hailey Chinyere Waobikeze

Krystal Dawnye Watson

Alexia Leigh Whitworth

Emely Lissett Zamudio

Carlos L. Zuniga Herrera



Designing the **FUTURE**

Meet Alex! Alex Fenton is a graduate from Little Cypress Mauriceville pursuing a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Graphic Design.

She currently serves as the president of Artist Common, a student group that does live drawing demonstrations, hosts movie nights, makes buttons and other small works of art, and collaborates on larger scale projects.

Alex has also been a live demonstrator for Le Grand Bal and at a recent Friends of the Arts Board Meeting where she showcased her digital illustration skills. She was even commissioned by Dean Golden Wright to add some 50th Anniversary sparkle to his suit and his wife's dress for this year's Le Grand Bal.

"That was a really cool opportunity!" Alex shares. *"We talked about it and settled on the idea of golden frames and small ornate details."*

Between work, school and other responsibilities, Alex stays very busy. But she is looking forward to attending the Plein Air workshops this summer with Xenia Fedorchenko, Associate Professor of Color Theory, Drawing and Printmaking.

"All the professors have been so down to earth. We're all creatives and we can all meet on the same level and talk to each other," Alex says.

Looking toward the future, Alex hopes to attend graduate school at the California Institute of the Arts to study Animation.

We wish Alex the best of luck as she finishes up the next few years at Lamar University and look forward to seeing all of the beautiful work she is able to create!



CHASING *Stories & Dreams*



Meet Rayna! Rayna Christy is a graduate from Little Cypress Mauriceville High School and was encouraged to apply for the Reaud Honors College where she received a variety of scholarships during her time at Lamar University.

Rayna knew that the Department of Communication & Media would be a perfect fit for her. She has been an avid journalist since the age of fourteen and competed in a variety of UIL competitions and served as the editor of her high school paper.

"I love talking to people, and advocacy was a big route I wanted to take, and a degree in Journalism tied those two together," Rayna explains.

During her time at Lamar University, Rayna was provided with many opportunities under the University Press. She was first brought on as a contributor at the University Press and quickly worked her way up the ranks, moving from contributor to editor-in-chief in the span of a year: a testament to her dedication and talent.

"I'm more on the administrative side of things now. I still write, but I also do story assignments, run the meetings, layout, and more," Rayna says.

In addition to her time at the University Press, Rayna has also dedicated her time to many other areas around campus. This past summer, Rayna served as an orientation leader for the College of Fine Arts & Communication. In addition, she has served on the Cardinal Activities Board, currently serves as the Vice President for Philanthropy for her sorority Alpha Chi Omega, runs the University Press Radio Report for KVLU, 91.3 and is a Texas Leadership Scholar.

Recently, Rayna has also been brought on to freelance for the Beaumont Enterprise. This opportunity will provide her with a chance to see the world of professional news reporting.

Rayna would like to thank Andy Coughlan, Director of the University Press, and Stephan Malick, Instructor, for believing and trusting her as they helped her move up the ranks in the University Press. She would also like to thank the Department of Communication & Media.

"I've absolutely loved my time here. I'm not ready to graduate next year!" Rayna laughs.

All of us in the College of Fine Arts & Communication wish Rayna the best of luck as she finishes her time at Lamar University.



From Songbird TO CARDINAL



Meet Christopher! Christopher Roland is graduating this semester from The Mary Morgan Moore Department of Music with a Bachelor of Arts in Music.

After receiving an academic scholarship and attending orientation, Christopher realized he had found his flock.

"I loved orientation so much. They really changed my perspective on Lamar," Christopher says.

He was so inspired that he served as an orientation leader the very next summer.

Originally a pre-nursing major, Christopher was open about his struggle in the first year.

"I was spending 15 to 18 hours a week trying to study for these tests," Christopher explains. *"Something that was always really consistent for that first year – whether I was having a hard time academically or personally – was A Capella Choir."*

After receiving encouragement from Dr. James Han, Holmes Family Endowed Professor of Choral Activities, Dr. Serdar Ilban, Associate Professor and Director of Lamar Opera Theatre, and Dr. Michael McAndrew, Instructor of Collaborative Piano, Christopher was able to change his trajectory and join the Mary Morgan Moore Department of Music as a major.

During his time at Lamar University, Christopher has had a variety of opportunities, including the chance to perform for many Friends of the Arts events including Le Grand Bal, board meetings and social gatherings, serve on the student government, travel abroad to Korea, Bulgaria, and soon, Japan, join a barbershop quartet called "The Tenor and his Baris," serve as a Resident Assistant (RA), and serve as the Vice President for his fraternity, Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia.

"We had a really big rush class the year that I joined. So now I have 15 brothers that I can call my best friends," Christopher shares.

Christopher aspires to attend graduate school so he can become a professor and teach students just like himself.

Christopher would like to thank his professors, family, and his two best friends, Thomas and Peyton, for supporting him on his journey through higher education.

We wish Christopher the best of luck as he plans for his future! Congratulations on earning your degree!



The Next Act BEGINS

Meet Porter! Porter LaPray is graduating from the Department of Theatre & Dance this semester.

After attending a performing arts high school in Houston, Porter traveled to Des Moines, Iowa, for his first year of college.

"I was really into it, but I just wasn't ready for it," Porter explains.

Porter decided to take a break from school and moved to Los Angeles to pursue a career in acting, then found work on a cruise ship before heading back home to Beaumont.

Porter attended an AIMED Dance performance with his cousin, where he met his future mentor, Joel Grothe, Chair of the Department of Theatre & Dance. It was after a long conversation with Joel that Porter realized he had found a home at Lamar University.

You may recognize Porter from his acting roles in campus productions like, *Ugly Lies the Bone*, *Middletown*, *As You Like It*, and the world premiere of *The Self-Destruction of Emma James*.

Porter has had an extremely busy final semester here at Lamar University, as he has already been cast in his first professional production, *The Stranger*, at Unity Theatre in Brenham, Texas. He has spent nearly every weekend traveling back and forth for rehearsals all while staying on top of his schoolwork.

"I'm juggling everything well. I feel like I'm still able to commit and be present in both places," Porter explains. *"I'm really thankful for the opportunity."*

The opportunity presented itself through the power of networking, something Porter encourages all Theatre & Dance students to work on.

"It's really about what the faculty has been pouring into you and what you pour into the faculty," says Porter.

But he doesn't believe in networking with just faculty alone, he believes in putting effort and energy into every interaction.

"The more you pour into everyone around you, the more you talk to people like Janice, the lovely lady who runs the line at Panda Express, the more you will see that everyone's stories are different. And that helps you tell much better stories when you get on stage."

Porter would like to thank his professors Joel Grothe and Alan Brincks, Assistant Professor of Acting and Directing, for helping him reach his full potential. He would also like to thank his best friend and fellow student, Bailey Jenkins for always keeping him in check and being a constant confidant.

"Bailey has this amazing ability to be forward with people. You never have to wonder where you stand with him, not even for a second," Porter explains.

We wish Porter the best of luck as he finishes his last few weeks at Lamar University and moves onto his first professional role.



Creative Convergence

Every semester, the Dishman Art Museum partners with the Department of Art & Design to host the senior thesis exhibition. Dishman employees collaborate with artists and teach proper installation methods, furthering the educational experience that the thesis course offers.

Meet some of the artists who will debut their work at the Dishman Art Museum this month!

Meet Joshua! Joshua Jones is pursuing a B.F.A. in Graphic Design. His project, Deckwreck, is a fantasy trading card game that merged his skills in illustration, graphic design and game mechanics to create an engaging and interactive visual experience. Joshua is very excited to debut his work at the Dishman Art Museum. For this thesis, he created nine original trading cards and a poster advertising the game. The resulting works demonstrate cohesive visual identity characterized by bold color, clean brushwork, modern post-processing, and worldbuilding. Each card integrates essential gameplay information with visually compelling compositions, while the poster versions highlight the artwork completely and independently of function.

"It feels like a monumental accomplishment and step forward in my career and journey as an artist. I feel reassured that I've made good use of the past few years and improved to a level I can be proud of," he explains, *"It provides an outlet for me to share my work with others."*



CONTINUED ON PAGE 9...



Meet Johnesia! Johnesia Davis is pursuing a B.F.A. in Graphic Design. Her project, *Mythics*, is a playing card deck designed around both Greek and Chinese mythology. This project features 6 illustrations of popular characters from these respective cultures alongside a summary of their stories. Johnesia states that getting to showcase her work in the Dishman Art Museum is going to help propel her in the job market.

“Getting to exhibit in the Dishman is a very exciting opportunity for me. Having an exhibition to list on my resume before I even graduate is an amazing advantage in the job market,” she explains, *“I have also learned a lot about the process of displaying work in a museum, from framing the pieces to getting them up on the wall.”*

Meet Carlos! Carlos Zuniga Herrera is pursuing a B.F.A. in Studio Art – Drawing. His thesis, *Misplaced*, is a variety of silk screen prints divided into three inverse diptychs. *Misplaced* explores the feeling of being out of place by placing a figure in an environment that contrasts it stylistically and visually, reflecting both personal and observed experiences of social discomfort and alienation. Carlos is drawn to combining opposing elements and composing them in ways that create a sense of balance despite their differences. This visual language becomes a way to interpret and communicate the experience of displacement. Carlos is looking forward to exhibiting his work at the Dishman Art Museum and sharing his learned skills with the community.

“Being able to exhibit my work at the Dishman has given me the opportunity to share both my artwork and the skills I developed during my time at Lamar. This experience taught me how to professionally set up and install artwork. These are skills I plan to carry with me into my future career. It will also allow me to grow my audience and make connections within the art community with people who enjoy my artwork.”





COOKING UP CONVERSATIONS

Meet Adriana! Adriana Houston is a Fort Worth native pursuing a Bachelor of Science in Hospitality Management and Culinary Arts.

While doing research into culinary programs, Adriana was looking for a program that could provide her with top-notch culinary skills while still providing her with a full college experience.

"I love what I do here, and I'm glad I chose Lamar University over a culinary school," Adriana says.

You may recognize Adriana's voice as the host of the LU Loop at KVLU, 91.3. A casual run-in with their table at an event in the Setzer Student Center led Adriana to visit the studio and, ultimately, the LU Loop was born!

The LU Loop focuses on student-life, campus events, and more!

"I talk about the good, the bad, the stressful, everything!"

Adriana jokes. *"Currently, I'm working on a summer series about what college students do in the summertime when they're not on campus."*

Adriana's future goals include opening her own restaurant. She believes that her experience at KVLU has taught her how to promote herself, talk to guests, market her services, and more.

She is extremely grateful for the radio station for providing her with this wonderful opportunity.

"I want to thank the whole KVLU staff," she says, *"For allowing me into their space, letting me do my own thing, start my own show. It's been amazing."*

We wish Adriana the best of luck as she completes her degree at Lamar University. Tune in to the LU Loop during the LU Hour at 2:00 P.M. on Fridays at KVLU, 91.3.

CAN'T MISS THIS!

MAY
1-17

Creative Convergence

Dishman Art Museum

Closing Reception: May 15th, 6:00PM - 8:00 PM

HAVE A WONDERFUL SUMMER!
SEE YOU IN AUGUST, CARDINALS!

COFAC CAMPS.



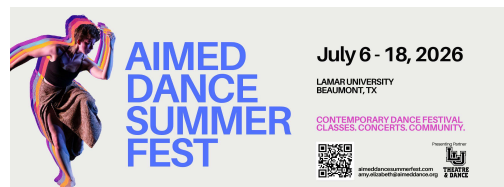
June 7-11, 2026

A tradition for more than 70 years, the LU Summer Band Camp offers a great opportunity for instrumental students to improve playing skills while having fun! A staff of outstanding band directors and instructors offer a variety of daily classes, including full band rehearsals, group lessons (master classes), electives and daytime recreation.



June 22-26, 2026

Summer in the Shadows is a weeklong camp dedicated to exploring light, shadow, texture, and natural materials. Each day campers will be introduced to new artistic processes, moving from observation and drawing to experimental photography techniques, printmaking, collage, and fiber arts. By the end of the week, students will have a collection of finished artworks and a handmade sketchbook to take home.



July 6 - 18, 2026

LAMAR UNIVERSITY
BEAUMONT, TX

CONTEMPORARY DANCE FESTIVAL
CLASSES, CONCERTS, COMMUNITY.



July 6 - 18, 2026

Committed to offering movement, theory, and design sessions that will take the movement artists to the next level, ADSF 26 offers two laboratory style tracks: choreography and performance. Dancers ages 14+ are invited to participate in the Pre/Professional Intensive for either one week or two full weeks. Artists enrolled in the performance and choreography labs will take the stage with Aimed Dance and special guests in the weekend Festival Concerts.



July 12-15, 2026

The 2026 Choir Camp will host students in grades 9–12 for a week of study under our guest clinicians: Deidre Douglas, Full Rehearsal Conductor; Amanda Robinson, Soprano; Thea Persinger, Alto; Sean Stultz, Tenor; and Cameron Carnley, Bass. The week will also feature a talent show and camp banquet, and will close with a concert for participants' families and friends.



COLLEGE OF FINE ARTS & COMMUNICATION
LAMAR UNIVERSITY

LAMAR UNIVERSITY
P.O. Box 10077
Beaumont, TX 77710



COLLABORATE - INNOVATE - CREATE

To support the College of Fine Arts & Communication, please visit
www.lamar.edu/cofac