

# Link

THE MAGAZINE OF  
HOWARD PAYNE UNIVERSITY  
FALL 2025

## A DIFFERENT KIND OF CLASSROOM



**Experiential learning  
expands HPU students' education**

## GREETINGS FROM DR. CORY HINES '97, HPU PRESIDENT



God is good and His mercies are evident across our university! The 2024-2025 academic year was filled with growth in many areas including enrollment, giving and facility improvements. We are thankful for God's continued blessings and look forward to what is in store this year.

This edition of the *Link* magazine focuses on experiential learning and how HPU students are able to gain valuable educational experiences beyond the classroom. I have been connected with the university for more than 30 years and I can personally attest that the campus has never looked more beautiful. Generous alumni and friends provide resources to invest in our campus grounds and facilities, which are maintained by our hardworking Facilities team. These HPU personnel are featured in this issue and truly embody the university's core value of Committed to Excellence. Several students and alumni are also highlighted.

As you read this magazine, I pray that God prompts you with specific ways to pray for our administration, faculty, staff and students. I also hope you will be inspired and encouraged through the stories and news shared. God is at work here and I know the best is yet to come.

Blessings,

Cory Hines, Ph.D.  
President

DR. HINES PHOTO BY HEATHER NIX; MABEE UNIVERSITY CENTER PHOTO BY REBEKAH STERLING '18



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## HPU announces two new degree offerings available starting fall 2025

Howard Payne University has announced two new programs, Bachelor of Arts in worship ministry and Associate Degree in general studies, that began in the fall 2025 semester. The addition was finalized following the HPU Board of Trustees meeting early in the spring 2025 semester.

Students earning a Bachelor of Arts in worship ministry will be trained in theology, music, leadership and ministry. The program is a collaboration between the School of Christian Studies and the School of Education and Fine Arts. The courses offered provide students with opportunities

to consider the biblical and theological background and the purpose of worship as well as provide the students with practical application. The program is designed to prepare



Two new degree programs are offered at HPU beginning in the fall 2025 semester.

worship ministers to be proactive in the education and application of music in the modern church.

HPU also now offers an Associate Degree in general studies. This degree is designed to provide a broad, general program for personal enrichment. It facilitates completion of a post-secondary degree and prepares students for successful study toward a baccalaureate degree. The Associate Degree in general studies program provides a direct pathway to the Bachelor of Applied Arts and Sciences in general studies degree program at HPU. Courses may be selected from across academic

disciplines to prepare for baccalaureate degrees, careers in specific industries or completion of prerequisites for licensure/certificate programs.

### More than 500 HPU volunteers serve Brown County during Community Impact Day

Howard Payne University students and personnel participated in the fourth annual William B. Dean Lecture Series and Community Impact Day on Wednesday, March 26. More than 500 volunteers served at 27 site locations across Brown County, marking the largest participation since the event began in 2021.

“It is a blessing for the HPU family to serve our local community through this annual day of service,” said Dr. Cory Hines '97, university president. “We were thrilled to have so many volunteers spread across Brown County who were able to give back to many local non-profit organizations and churches who faithfully serve others.”

The William B. Dean, M.D. Lecture Series featured HPU alumna Leesa Stephens '80, director of Good Samaritan Ministries in Brownwood. Stephens spoke at HPU's



HPU personnel and students pose for a photo at Brown County Memorial Building and Park.

Wednesday morning Chapel service and addressed HPU personnel at a luncheon prior to the service projects.

PHOTOS BY REBEKAH STERLING '18 AND BEN SARTAIN '23 EXCEPT FOR GOLD AND BLUE PARTNERSHIP PHOTO, WHICH WAS PROVIDED

## HPU forms Gold and Blue Partnerships with high schools for automatic acceptance, other benefits

Howard Payne University recently formed Gold and Blue Partnership programs with a wide range of high schools, providing automatic acceptance for students from each school who graduate within the top 50 percent of their respective classes and have a 3.5 GPA. The Gold and Blue Partnership Scholarship, valued at \$60,000 over eight semesters, will also be provided to graduates in the top 50 percent of their classes from each school.

Participating schools to date include all the high schools in Brown County, Comanche High School, Liberty ISD, Carroll ISD in Southlake and Santa Fe Christian School in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

All students from participating schools will also be offered free application to HPU. Additionally, students whose academics meet other merit scholarship levels will be afforded those opportunities. HPU will provide ongoing support to students through financial aid, admissions, degree counseling, work-study mentorships and peer mentoring.

HPU is interested in forming more Gold and Blue Partnerships with school districts and Christian schools to ease the application process and provide opportunities for scholarships for deserving students.

“The Gold and Blue scholarship allows Howard Payne University to partner with aspiring school districts around our area, throughout Texas and with schools in other states,” said Dr. Ben Martin '04, associate vice president



Representatives from HPU and Carroll ISD joined together to sign the Gold and Blue Partnership agreement. Pictured are (left to right) Dr. Ben Martin '04, associate vice president for enrollment management at HPU; Dr. Cory Hines '97, HPU president; Cameron Bryan, CISD trustee; Renee Bottom, CISD trustee; and Dr. Jeremy Glenn, CISD superintendent.

for enrollment management at HPU. “This gives students an exceptional scholarship starting point, which starts the conversation about how bright their future can be with a Howard Payne University degree.”

Administrators interested in forming a Gold and Blue Partnership with HPU can contact Dr. Martin by calling 325-649-8020 or emailing benmartin@hputx.edu.

### HPU hosts 51st Band Leadership Camp



Students in HPU's 51st Band Leadership Camp practice percussion in Mims Auditorium.

HPU hosted its 51st Band Leadership Camp in June. This year's event was one of the largest in years, with over 400 in attendance from 42 schools. HPU's Dr. Jonathan Kraemer led the camp, which focused on the marching arts and student leadership. The camp featured six unique tracks: Band Member, Squad Leader/Officer, Drum Major, Marching Percussion, Color Guard and even a Band

Director/Sponsor track that offered professional development opportunities for music educators.

Dr. Kraemer serves as director of bands and assistant professor of music at HPU.

“One of the things that really sets us apart from other camps around the state is the emphasis that we place on cultivating student leadership,” Dr. Kraemer said. “In addition to having some of the best music education staff in the field, we are also very fortunate to be able to partner with SASI: The Leadership People, the premier student leadership training organization in the country. This wonderful combination allows us to train up future student leaders who immediately have a positive impact within their respective band programs.”

Next year's camp dates are June 8-12, 2026. For more information about the Band Leadership Camp, visit [www.hputx.edu/bandleadershipcamp](http://www.hputx.edu/bandleadershipcamp), where details will be featured as they become available.

# HPU dedicates new Mieth Outdoor Pavilion and Martin Volleyball Courts

Howard Payne University held a special dedication ceremony and ribbon cuttings on April 26 for the new Ben and Bertha Mieth Outdoor Pavilion and Woody and Miki Martin Volleyball Courts on campus. The two new facilities are located between Veda Hodge Hall and the J. Howard Hodge Memorial Bell Towers.

“We are so grateful for the Mieth and Martin families and their investment in the student experience at HPU,” said Dr. Cory Hines ’97, president. “These state-of-the-art facilities on

our campus will allow for wonderful gatherings for students, alumni and the community, as well as provide competitive space for our new beach volleyball team.”

Ben and the late Bertha Mieth gave the lead gift for the pavilion. The couple were married for 71 years and devoted their lives to serving the Lord. Ben is the founder of International Commission, an organization that has reached millions for Christ since its founding in 1972. They have three children, six grandchildren and 11 great-grandchildren.

Key features of the new 8,700-square-foot Mieth Pavilion include space for a gathering of up to 300 people; technology



**Pictured at the dedication of the Ben and Bertha Mieth Outdoor Pavilion are, from left, Deaven Connelly, HPU student; members of the Mieth family including Charis Mayton, Rodney and Debra Cavitt, Ben Mieth, Miki ’80 and Woody ’80 Martin and Sarah Martin; and Brylee Awbrey, HPU student.**

with 10 outdoor televisions and a 12' x 16' video wall; commercial-grade kitchen with gas grill, sinks and refrigerators; a storage area; restrooms; and a serving area for food.

Woody ’80 and Miki ’80 Martin gave the lead gift for the new sand volleyball courts connected to the pavilion. Miki is the daughter of Ben and Bertha Mieth and played volleyball at HPU during her time as a student. The Martins are both alumni of HPU and retired educators who spent their careers in teaching, coaching and administrative roles. They have two children and three grandchildren.

The three NCAA-regulation beach volleyball courts will be used for the launch of beach volleyball at the university in the fall of 2025 with competition beginning in the spring of 2026. The courts are also available for intramurals, student events and community gatherings. HPU recently hired alumna Micah Taylor ’16 to serve as the university’s first beach volleyball coach.

The project was built by Brasher & Co., a local outdoor specialist company based in Early.



**Participants in the dedication of the Woody and Miki Martin Volleyball Courts include, from left, Dr. Cory Hines ’97, HPU president; members of the Martin family including Rylan, Leander, Woody ’80, Miki ’80, Sarah, Brinson, Ashley and Dr. Ben ’04 Martin; Melinda Hines, HPU first lady; and Micah Taylor ’16, beach volleyball coach.**

## Administration updates



**Emily Attaway ’09**, certified public accountant, now serves as chief financial officer and vice president for financial affairs. In her new role, Attaway oversees the business office, financial affairs, financial aid, human resources, university events and facilities. She is a member of the Texas Society of Certified Public Accountants and the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants. While serving at Howard Payne, she has been director of external reporting and special projects, and assistant vice president for finance and administration.



**Adam Bright** has been named the new director of athletics. Bright brings almost 20 years of leadership experience to the role with a background in athletic administration, coaching and business. He joins the HPU staff after serving as associate athletic director at D-I Sam Houston State University.



**Dr. Nathan Lane** recently joined the university’s administration as the new vice president for academic affairs. Dr. Lane brings more than 20 years of higher education experience to the position in faculty and administrative roles. He previously served as the associate provost and dean of the Catherine T. MacArthur School at Palm Beach Atlantic University in West Palm Beach, Florida.



**Dr. David Lowrie** has been named dean of the School of Christian Studies. He brings more than 43 years of ministry experience and leadership to the role and began serving in the position in August. Dr. Lowrie has served as senior pastor of First Baptist Church of Decatur for the last eight years. His career in ministry spans four decades and encompasses rural and urban settings, as well as church planting and mission work.

PHOTOS BY REBEKAH STERLING '18 AND JULIA CATLETT '21 EXCEPT FOR DR. LANE PHOTO WHICH WAS PROVIDED

# HPU unveils new Athletics Hall of Fame

Howard Payne University hosted members of the Athletics Hall of Fame in Brownwood on May 17 for several memorable events including the unveiling of a new HPU Athletics Hall of Fame at the Brownwood Coliseum.

HPU alumnus James Williamson ’70, a member of the Hall of Fame inducted in 2018, gave the lead gift for the new wall of honor in the Coliseum. Additional donors contributed to the project, which includes new zinc plates for each of the 143 Hall of Fame members, as well as a digital interactive display with photos and biographies for the athletes. The Brownwood Coliseum is the primary facility for HPU basketball and volleyball games.

“We are thankful for the generous donors who gave to support this project and celebrate these distinguished athletes,” said Dr. Cory Hines ’97, university president. “The Athletics Hall of Fame honors the best of the best and we are proud of this new display that gives visible recognition to their accomplishments. The Hall of Fame weekend was a wonderful time of celebration for the HPU family and we look forward to this event continuing to grow.”

A banquet was held at the Brownwood Event Center to induct three new members into the Athletics Hall of Fame: Lowell Bishop ’63, track; James Hall, basketball; and Dr. Larry Nickell, administrator. The new Yellow Jacket Club was also introduced as a board to support athletics at HPU. The officers are President Tim Brasher ’95, a member of the Hall of Fame inducted in 2015, and Vice President David Grooms.



**A ribbon cutting was held for the new HPU Athletics Hall of Fame at the Brownwood Coliseum on May 17. Pictured (left to right) are Gregg Fisher; Vicky Fisher; Dale Fisher ’61, Hall of Fame member; Dr. Cory Hines ’97, university president; and James Williamson ’70, Hall of Fame member.**

DURING THE 2024-2025 YEAR,  
1,413 ALUMNI AND FRIENDS GAVE

**\$12,396,104**

– THE MOST GIVEN IN ANY YEAR  
OF HPU'S HISTORY. THANK YOU!



HOWARD PAYNE FUND  
**\$341,850**



ACADEMIC PROGRAMMING  
**\$822,121**



CAMPUS IMPROVEMENTS  
**\$5,993,942**



SCHOLARSHIPS  
**\$4,218,514**



ATHLETICS  
**\$248,978**



STUDENT EXPERIENCES  
**\$34,652**



ALUMNI ASSOCIATION  
AND CHAPTERS  
**\$34,660**



OTHER  
**\$702,385**



CAMPUS PHOTO BY REBEKAH STERLING '18; DR. GIL PHOTO COURTESY OF DR. ADRIAN GIL; DR. FERGUSON PHOTO BY BEN SARTAIN '23

**HPU El Paso Center Highlights**



**By Dr. Adrian Gil, assistant vice president for the El Paso Center**

In the fall of 2024, our center welcomed its '24-'25 **Alumni Association El Paso**

**Chapter officers:** Eva Gutierrez '11, president; Omar Rivera '23, vice president; Ileri Gutierrez '14, treasurer; and Beatriz Munoz '23, secretary.

In December, the El Paso Center took the opportunity to **pray over students** during final exams week. This took place at our End-of-Semester Christmas Celebration and was held in conjunction with a 135-Year Anniversary Event and Alumni Reunion. Dr. Dale Meinecke '98, vice president for advancement, joined us onsite in praying for our students. During that same season, GivingTuesday also took place. We received more donations, via more donors, than in any previous year, raising **nearly \$5,000** for the center's activities, scholarships, and Alumni Association. Shortly thereafter, we received **\$16,000 in scholarship funding** from two local foundations.

Our center **hit the ground running in 2025**, experiencing another semester of enrollment growth. In March, the Alumni Association El Paso Chapter led our Community Impact Day service project, during which students, faculty, staff, alumni

and friends provided nearly 900 items, such as socks, toothpaste, toothbrushes, deodorant, hand sanitizer, water, and other similar goods to bag and share with migrants and homeless in the area surrounding our center. We are blessed to be a blessing!

In May, we celebrated our **El Paso Center Graduate Recognition Ceremony**. The message to graduates was provided by Dr. Donnie Auvenshine '75, the then vice president for academic affairs, and the invocation was provided by Emily Attaway '09, vice president for financial affairs. We were also excited to celebrate Dr. Auvenshine's forthcoming retirement. We congratulate our summer '24, fall '24 and spring '25 graduates: AMIN – German Juarez; BAAS – German Juarez, Michelle Senclair Anaya, Elizabeth Brilliant, Fernando Fernandez, Heriberto Franco and Andres Gil; MBA – Arturo Senclair.

Lastly and most recently, in June, our center hosted the monthly lunch meeting for one of our community partners, the **Downtown Church Connection (DCC)**. The DCC is a network of more than 60 churches and community organizations within the immediate area of our center. The purpose of the DCC is to share information, advocate for one another and collaborate together, when/where possible. Sting 'em!

**HPU New Braunfels Center Highlights**



**By Dr. Cynthia Ferguson, assistant vice president for the New Braunfels Center**

The New Braunfels Center is proud to celebrate the accomplishments of our **eight 2025 graduates**. May 2025 graduates were Caley Arias (BAAS, Business Administration), Zachary Dauer (Master of Business Administration), Charles Motz (BAAS, Criminal Justice) and Sarina Saunders (BAAS, Criminal Justice). August 2025 graduates will be Lindsay Bare (BAAS, Criminal Justice) and Woodrow Jones (BAAS, Criminal Justice). December 2025 graduates will be Helena MacCrossan (Master of Business Administration), Addison Svartz (BAAS, Business Administration) and Kaylyn Williford (BAAS, Business Administration). We are so proud of their dedication to education over the years and pray for them in their next stages.

This fall, HPU expanded academic offerings at the New Braunfels Center to include **Computer Science (CS) and the new Associate of General Studies (AGS) degree**. Computer Science is serving the ever-growing interest in cybersecurity, computer information services and technical communication. The Associate of General Studies degree opens HPU-NB's doors to serve a new student population.

Two-year degrees provide students opportunities for career advancement, academic exploration and a direct pathway to bachelor's degrees in a variety of fields.

HPU-NB kicked off our 2025-2026 recruiting season at the Texas Homeschool Expo in San Antonio on June 20-21. This event welcomed 2,200 parents, students and education professionals from primarily the South-Central Texas Region. Information about HPU was shared with parents and students of all ages, especially about our **Dual Credit and Early College programs**. Megan Proctor, assistant director of admissions, joined us at the Expo to share her expertise on the homeschool-to-college journey!

On September 10, Karen LaQuey, director of financial aid, presented **"FAFSA: The Essentials"** for area high school (public and private) and homeschool families. This is one of HPU-NB's annual community-outreach events focused on assisting area families' transition from high school to higher education.

On November 6, HPU-NB will host a booth for the second annual **Youth CareerQuest**. This event exposes over 600 area middle school students to the wide breadth of careers available to them in preparation for selecting endorsements in high school. HPU-NB's booth will inform attendees about the role education plays in reaching career aspirations.



Numerous improvement projects have taken place on campus as well as throughout Brownwood.

## Building on success: Transforming Brownwood and Howard Payne University

**By Marshal McIntosh '15 and MBA '16  
City Manager, City of Brownwood**

As an alumnus of Howard Payne University and currently serving as the city manager for the City of Brownwood, I've had the privilege of witnessing the remarkable transformation of both my alma mater and the surrounding community. The positive changes taking place on the campus of HPU are a direct reflection of the growth and revitalization efforts taking shape throughout Brownwood. From the continuing development on campus to the visual capital projects in the community, the future is bright for both HPU and the city as a whole.

On the HPU campus, the focus on modernization and aesthetic enhancement is evident. Recent capital projects at HPU, such as the beautiful upgrades to facilities, residence halls and campus green spaces, are a testament to the university's commitment to providing a dynamic, modern learning environment for students. These improvements not only elevate the student experience but also align with the broader goal of fostering a campus that reflects both the rich traditions of the university and its forward-thinking vision. As a former student, I am proud to see HPU continually investing in the campus infrastructure, ensuring that it remains a vibrant, welcoming environment for future generations of students.

This same spirit of growth and renewal is happening across the City of Brownwood. As we work to revitalize our downtown, the progress being made further complements the improvements on the HPU campus. The completion of the Brownwood Event Center Complex marks the largest investment in downtown since the Brownwood Coliseum was built and is a prime example of the city's vision for the future. This new venue is a space for large-scale events, concerts, conventions and local gatherings. It is a testament to the city's drive to create an environment where both residents and visitors can experience something new and exciting. The event center not only draws attention to the physical capital investments happening in our community but also builds upon the sense of pride that exists in both Brownwood and on the HPU campus.

In parallel to these efforts, the City Council has invested in a vision of future downtown revitalization, creating a new downtown master plan.

Like the projects happening at HPU, downtown Brownwood is expected to see updates and enhancements designed to improve the experience for residents and visitors alike. Sidewalk and streetscape improvements, new lighting and the beautification of public spaces are all part of this larger effort. The collaboration between the city and local businesses to make these changes a reality is laying the

foundation for a more vibrant downtown. This revitalization will not only strengthen the heart of our city but will also enhance the relationship between Brownwood and HPU, creating a thriving environment in which students and the broader community can come together. Whether it's for the Homecoming parade, Family Weekend or other HPU events, downtown can compliment the university.

Equally exciting are the improvements taking place at Riverside Park. As the community's central hub for outdoor activities, Riverside Park has always been a place for individuals to connect with nature and one another. Now, with the enhancements underway, it's becoming an even more inviting and accessible location. New walking trails, upgraded recreational facilities and expanded green spaces will not only enhance the park's beauty but also serve as a space for our community to enjoy and celebrate. The work at Riverside Park, like the upgrades on campus at HPU, is a reflection of a commitment to creating spaces that foster connection, leisure and well-being.

The ongoing projects across both the HPU campus and the City of Brownwood demonstrate a clear synergy between education, growth and community development. The improvements on campus have long been a point of pride, and we are seeing that same level of investment extend to the broader community. As someone who has experienced both the academic and professional sides of Brownwood, I am thrilled by the collective energy that is driving us forward. These projects not only reflect the vision of progress that defines Brownwood but also honor the values of community, collaboration and excellence that are at the heart of HPU.

As we continue to invest in Brownwood's future



Riverside Park recently reopened after the completion of extensive upgrades.

— through the Brownwood Event Center, downtown revitalization, Riverside Park enhancements and projects on the HPU campus — we are ensuring that our community remains a place where opportunity, growth and pride can flourish. This exciting time of transformation is one that builds upon the past while shaping a future filled with promise. I look forward to seeing how these visual capital projects continue to positively impact our city, the university and all who call this place home.



The Brownwood Event Center hosts a wide range of activities throughout the year.

PHOTOS BY REBEKAH STERLING '18

# Alumni Association Spotlight

## Chapter updates

By **Lindsay Badgeley '09**  
Director of Alumni Relations

### African American Alumni Chapter

The African American Alumni Chapter hosted a Black History Luncheon in the spring semester that included three panelists from the chapter, Reverend Ernest Kirk, Otis Fields and L.J. Clayton, Jr. '78. Over 150 students, faculty, staff and alumni attended the luncheon that was hosted in the Newbury Family Welcome Center. Students were urged to face challenges that come their way with courage and to not take the easy way out. "Stay true to who you are and be good at what you do," Fields said.

### El Paso Alumni Chapter

The El Paso Alumni Chapter participated in the fourth annual William B. Dean Community Impact Day by assembling ministry bags filled with snacks, hygiene products and Bibles.

Members of the African American Alumni Chapter speak at the Black History Luncheon.



Items for these bags were collected by students from the El Paso campus. The chapter, along with students from the El Paso campus, also participated in cleaning a nearby park and offered prayer to community members who were there.

### Hispanic Alumni Chapter

The Hispanic Alumni Chapter partnered with the student organization Amigos Unidos at Spring Family Reunion in April to serve mangonadas to students, families and alumni who stopped by their booth. This partnership was a wonderful way for the alumni chapter and the student organization to come together to serve the university.

### Jacket Alums in Ministry

Some of the main priorities for Jacket Alums in Ministry (JAM) include prayer for HPU, promoting the university to others and helping provide resources for the university's operations and development. One of JAM's most recent initiatives was the Bible Project, designed to provide a Bible to every incoming student at HPU. This year, JAM was able to raise \$5,000 to purchase leather-bound study Bibles to deliver in the fall of 2025 during move-in day.



The Hispanic Alumni Chapter partnered with the student organization Amigos Unidos at Spring Family Reunion.

### Music Alumni Chapter

The Music Alumni Chapter was created in the spring of 2025. With over 200 charter members, this alumni group was formed to help reconnect the music alumni community and find ways for the alumni to get involved on campus through events and with the student body. The Music Alumni Chapter's goal is to foster relationships with music students on campus by providing events and gatherings in hopes that, as they graduate and become alumni, they will continue to serve the university with their time and resources.

### Young Alumni Chapter

The Young Alumni Chapter attended Spring Family Reunion that was held on campus in the spring and served nachos to students, families and alumni who visited the chapter's booth. The Young Alumni Chapter had several members who served that day and were able to make connections with alumni who stopped by campus to join in on the festivities. Members also talked to current students about how they can join the chapter and stay connected to HPU once they graduate. ■



JAM's Bible Project helps put a Bible in the hands of every new student at HPU.



For more information  
on joining an alumni chapter,  
contact [alumni@hputx.edu](mailto:alumni@hputx.edu).

PHOTOS BY BEN SARTAIN '23 AND JULIA CATLETT '21

# HOWARD PAYNE UNIVERSITY ARTIFACTS

**DATE** : 1960s to present

**TYPE** : Event t-shirts

by Dr. Robert Mangrum, professor of history and government and university historian



There are numerous ways to identify and document an institution or corporation. One of easiest is through logos or trademarks. When it comes to HPU there are a myriad of such examples. The most overlooked would be artwork on t-shirts. This issue will examine just a few examples of over 400 shirts housed in the University Archives.

The gold shirt with HPC emblazoned on the front dates from the 1960s when many college students could only afford one college shirt. Probably purchased from the campus bookstore on the first floor of Jennings, it served the student through four years at HPC.

The blue shirt with the railroad locomotive was the official shirt for Homecoming 2017. Worn by volunteers both faculty and staff as well as students and alumni helping with the weekend, it helped set the official theme of Homecoming.

The shirt emblazoned "Midnight Madness" marked the moment, at midnight, when the varsity basketball teams could officially begin organized practices. At one time this was a major event, with the student body, band and fans in general showing up for a party at the coliseum to watch the first practice. This shirt most likely dates back to the early-to-mid-1990s.

The last shirt, with the stylized motel sign, was created for summer camps hosted on campus in 2000. The shirt was designed with a vacation theme to set the tone for summer fun at HPU.

Dr. Robert Mangrum published an account of HPU's history titled *For Howard Payne My All: 125 Years of Christian Higher Education and Service, 1889-2015*. The book, which took 17 years to write, celebrates the university's history since its founding in 1889 and is available for \$30 on DVD or USB flash drive. Contact Dr. Mangrum (rmangrum@hputx.edu) for details. All proceeds from the book's sales support an academic scholarship at HPU.



HOWARD PAYNE UNIVERSITY



DR. MANGRUM AND ARTIFACT PHOTOS BY JULIA CATLETT '21



The Guy D. Newman Hall of American Ideals, known simply as Newman Hall, was built in 1974. It was named in honor of Dr. Guy D. Newman, former Howard Payne president and creator of the Douglas MacArthur Academy of Freedom. The building primarily houses classrooms and office space for the School of Education and Fine Arts, and the School of Business.



# Guy D. Newman

## Hall of American Ideals



Initially constructed as an extension of the Douglas MacArthur Academy of Freedom, Newman Hall has housed the School of Business since the early 1980s. The School of Education and Fine Arts was added to Newman in 2006, when the Girling Center for Social Justice led to the relocation of the School of Social Sciences (renamed Humanities).

Today, Newman Hall serves as a multipurpose building with students from more than five academic programs utilizing the facility.

Each summer since 2021, Newman Hall has undergone renovations. This has included updates to existing lecture halls, classrooms and bathrooms, as well as the addition of study spaces and communal areas. The current phase of remodeling was completed in the summer of 2025.

To contribute toward ongoing improvements of HPU facilities, visit [hputx.edu/give](http://hputx.edu/give). ■



**HPU STUDENT CATE GRAMLING WORKS WITH A HONDURAN CHILD AT ABUNDANT LIFE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL IN GRACIAS, LEMPIRA.**

# *A different kind of* **CLASSROOM**

## **EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING EXPANDS HPU STUDENTS' EDUCATION**

One week in March, the classroom looked a little different for 10 Howard Payne University students. The familiar walls and desks were replaced by the tall pine trees and mountains of Gracias, Lempira, in Honduras. No longer were they in HPU's Newman Hall, Winebrenner Hall or Thompson Academic Complex. Instead, their classrooms were a soccer field, a village high in the mountains, a farm and the open-air classrooms of Abundant Life Christian School.

During Spring Break 2025, this group of HPU students traveled to Honduras to serve alongside 61 Isaiah Ministries. The team consisted of five students from the International Missions Practicum class along with two education majors, one social work major and two student-athletes there to help with soccer camp.

Throughout the week, a few students spent time at Abundant Life Christian School leading a soccer clinic and working on a service project. The two education majors taught in the classrooms of Abundant Life. Some students spent time serving in a local village while others worked on a farm. The students made meaningful connections with the people they met while developing their gifts.

PHOTO BY JULIA CATLETT '21

*By Julia Catlett '21*

**HPU STUDENT LEXI EWEN '25 PARTICIPATES IN A PRAYER WALK AT ABUNDANT LIFE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL.**



“Sitting in class and having experiences within social work has taught me so much about myself and others,” she said, “and being able to go to a different country and experience the same was incredible.”

**W**hile at HPU, Lexi (Gonzalez) Ewen '25 of Brownwood majored in social work with a minor in cross-cultural ministry. She spent the trip experiencing Honduras through the lens of social work.

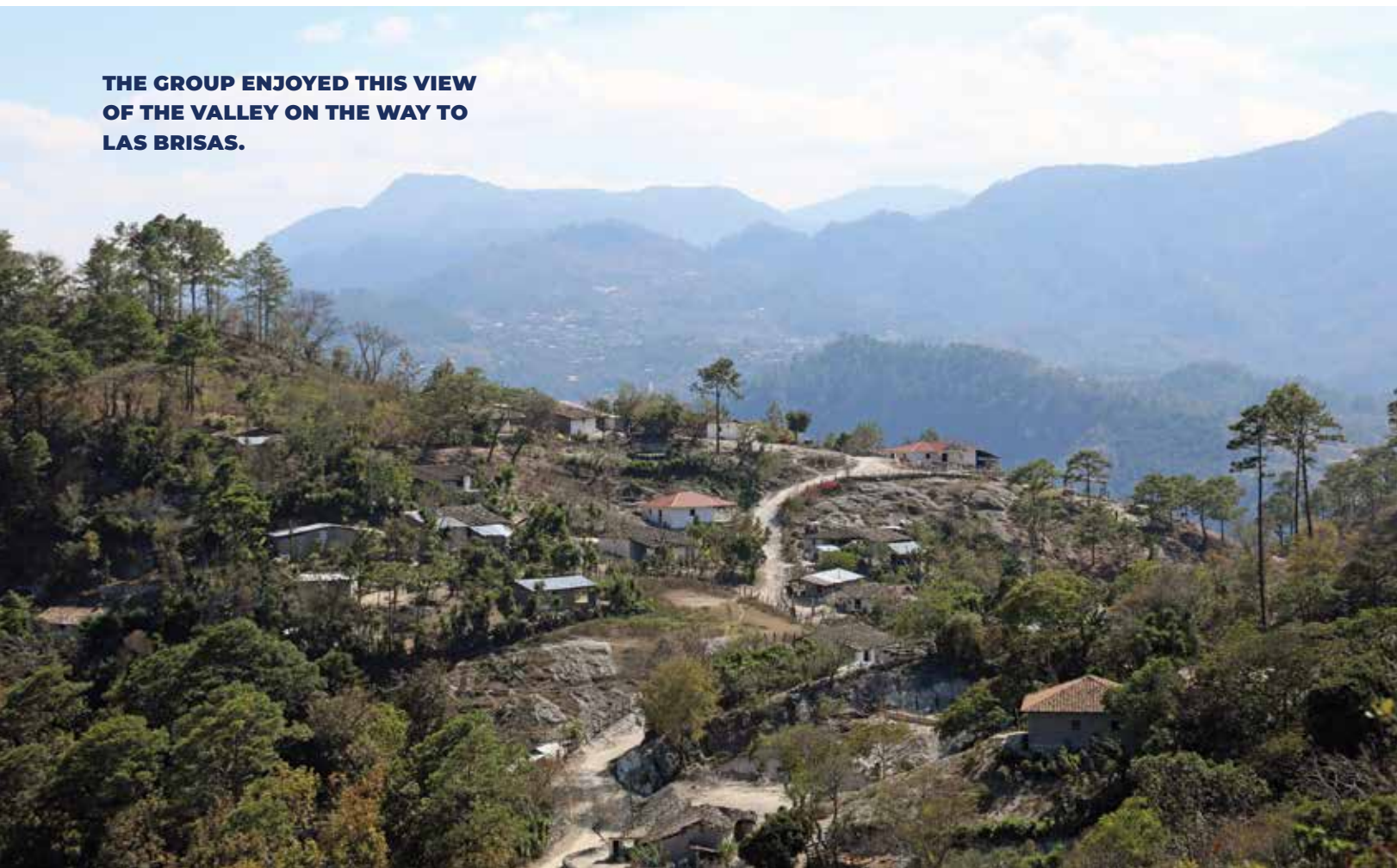
During the week, she spoke with school administration about the way Honduras approaches social work and mental health.

Lexi knows that understanding the complexities of someone's social environment is important to her profession and is grateful to experience another culture outside her own.

“In social work, we work with people who are a part of numerous cultures and backgrounds,” Lexi said. “We must be competent in their cultures so we can help provide appropriate resources to them. We are taught how to see people within their system and environment, and we got to see a lot of that in Honduras.”

In class at HPU, Lexi learned the importance of empathy and understanding someone's background. In Honduras, she was able to apply these principles.

**THE GROUP ENJOYED THIS VIEW OF THE VALLEY ON THE WAY TO LAS BRISAS.**



PHOTOS BY JULIA CATLETT '21

**“GOING TO HONDURAS HAS HELPED ME TO CONTINUE IN LEARNING TO TRULY LOVE GOD WITH ALL MY HEART, SOUL, MIND AND STRENGTH AND TO LOVE MY NEIGHBORS AS MYSELF.” – DIONDRAY PARKER**

**C**ate Gramling is a junior from Rowlett double-majoring in elementary education and practical theology at HPU. Throughout the week, she spent time in the classrooms of Abundant Life Christian School where she taught while substituting for teachers who were attending a professional development seminar.

At first, the language barrier proved to be a challenge for Cate. She learned quickly that she would need patience and flexibility to clearly communicate to her students.

“Pursuing an education degree is unique in that you can learn all about educational theory,” said Cate. “When it comes to a classroom of 22 unique students, though, it requires adjustment and adaptation.”

One day, plans changed and the subject Cate had prepared to teach was not the subject that was needed at that time. She relied on her HPU training to adjust.

“Things that I had gone over in my classes at HPU came to mind,” she said, “and, in order to best serve the students, there

were times when I had to alter or change completely what I had planned on doing.”

The trip reminded Cate why she is pursuing an education degree and that God has gifted her to work with kids.

“There were many moments on the trip,” she said, “when all I could do was take a deep breath and think, ‘This is what it's all for! Thank you, Jesus!’”

**D**iondray Parker is a senior from Portland, Texas, double-majoring in youth ministry and kinesiology. He helped with the soccer camp and spoke at the chapel service at Abundant Life.

Diondray has never been comfortable with public speaking, but he remembered advice Dr. Rusty Wheelington gave in class back at HPU. Dr. Wheelington told Diondray that the point of speaking at Chapel wasn't to entertain a crowd, but to express how much Jesus has changed his life.

“Even though I do not enjoy talking in front of people,” Diondray said, “I love talking about Jesus, so my love has helped me grow in sharing the gospel.”

Throughout the week, Diondray noticed that the students in the soccer camp were very similar to the students he serves as an intern at First Methodist Church in Brownwood.

“The kids in Honduras do a lot of the same things my students do, make a lot of the same jokes and struggle with a lot of the same things,” Diondray said. “This experience has taught me that, even though we are in different countries, people are people, people are hurting and people are in need of Jesus.”

The mountains of Honduras may not be a traditional classroom, but the lessons learned were valuable to the educational experience of each student. What once was theory became tangible as they played soccer, taught students, spoke at Chapel and got to know the people of Lempira.

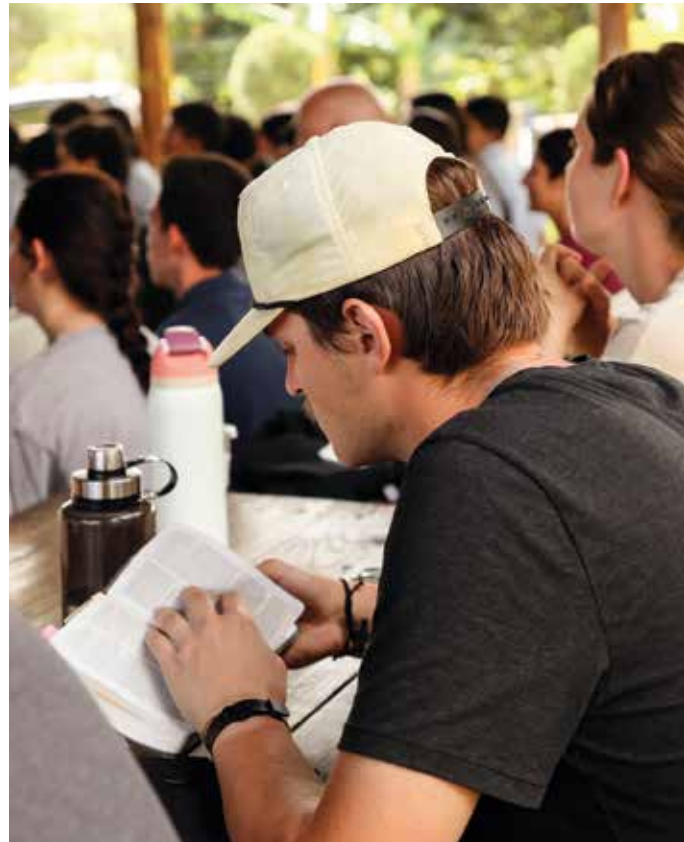
“This experience has had an impact on not only my education but on my life,” Diondray said. “Going to Honduras has helped me to continue in learning to truly love God with all my heart, soul, mind and strength and to love my neighbors as myself.”



**HPU STUDENT DIONDRAY PARKER SHARES DURING A CHAPEL SERVICE.**



**ABOVE:** HPU STUDENTS JULIE IVY (LEFT) AND BETHANY BLAIR (RIGHT) MOVE FERTILIZER AT THE FARM. **RIGHT:** HPU STUDENT LUKE MOSS ATTENDS CHAPEL AT ABUNDANT LIFE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL.



**THE HPU GROUP POSES FOR A PHOTO AT ABUNDANT LIFE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL.**

The students on the Honduras trip in March 2025 included Bethany Blair, junior from Zephyr; Lexi (Gonzalez) Ewen '25 from Brownwood; Cate Gramling, senior from Rowlett; Julie Ivy, junior from Brownwood; Luke Moss, senior from Brownwood; David Newman, sophomore from Brownwood; Diondray Parker, senior from Brownwood; Sydney Tate, junior from Royse City; Kendall Watkins, sophomore from Rockwall; and Katie Whitson, senior from Frisco.

HPU faculty, staff and alumni on the trip included Brandon Badgeley '09 and MBA '20, head women's soccer

coach; Christian Barnett '22; Brandy Blair '00, administrative assistant for the graduate programs for the School of Christian Studies; Kelsa Blair '00, assistant professor of education; Julia Catlett '21, news manager; Brenden Hough '22 and MATM '23, assistant director of admissions; Kylie Johnson '21, 61 Isaiah staff member in Honduras; Dr. Lauren Kirk, former associate professor of education; Alex Lemus '15; Mark Sisemore '22 and MAYFM '24, assistant to the president; Sidney Sisemore '21; and Dr. Rusty Wheelington, professor of Christian studies.



**ABOVE LEFT:** A GROUP PREPARES TO VISIT PEOPLE IN THE VILLAGE OF LAS BRISAS. **ABOVE RIGHT:** HPU STUDENT SYDNEY TATE PRAYS OVER A CLASSROOM AT ABUNDANT LIFE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL.



**ABOVE LEFT:** HPU COACH BRANDON BADGELEY AND HPU STUDENT KENDALL WATKINS DEMONSTRATE A DRILL AT THE SOCCER CAMP. **ABOVE RIGHT:** HPU STUDENT DAVID NEWMAN HELPS MOVE FURNITURE AT THE FARM.



PHOTOS BY JULIA CATLETT '21

**HPU STRIVES TO CONNECT STUDENTS' GIFTS AND TALENTS WITH WHAT THEY CHOOSE TO STUDY.**

The trip to Honduras was one of the many ways in which students were able to practice the things they've learned in class. Other opportunities such as Model United Nations, internships, study abroad, work-study and class trips are among the ways students can enrich both their educational experiences and spiritual development at HPU.



**MAGALY CERVANTES  
EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING OPPORTUNITY:  
JOINT ADMISSION MEDICAL PROGRAM  
(JAMP)**

I chose HPU because its Christian values aligned with my desire to grow in Christ while still pursuing my education. HPU also has classroom sizes that allow students to have personal connections with their professors and a more engaging experience.

Of all the sciences, biology has always been the science that interested me most. I am fascinated by how the body functions and understanding the reasons behind its complex processes. My goal is to become a pediatrician or OB/GYN so I can provide compassionate, impactful care to women, children and families in rural areas. I'm passionate about medicine and treating those in rural areas that are often overlooked. I want to make an impact by supporting others

through some of the most important stages of life.

JAMP is an excellent program that supports students who have the determination and capability to attend medical school but may lack the resources to go through the competitive admissions process of medical school. JAMP will build on what I've learned in the classroom by providing early exposure to the medical field through shadowing and having hands-on experiences. These experiences will provide a stronger foundation for my understanding of the medical profession and how to apply my knowledge to real-world situations.

Being a biology major at HPU gives me a strong foundation in the sciences and, being in the JAMP program, I have helpful medical school preparation and a clearer understanding of the medical setting. Together, both experiences will provide knowledge, hands-on opportunities and guidance that will help me grow as a future health-care professional.



**MICHAEL ECKERT '25  
EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING OPPORTUNITY:  
ACADEMIC TRAVEL**

I loved the Christian atmosphere at HPU and the promises of forming relationships with people at the college. I also was excited to take part in many opportunities such as travel abroad programs and intramurals.

Through my Austria trip, I wanted to experience the world and try to learn about other cultures outside of Texas. I wanted to take the opportunity to travel at a lower cost and explore other countries.

Ten out of the 12 weekends I took the opportunity to either travel to other countries or other major cities in Austria. I got to go on excursions for class that helped me experience history and culture in Austria at a more engaging level.

While in the Guy D. Newman Honors Academy, I have learned about other points of view and how to see others through a more open lens. During my trip, I was able to apply

this mindset to my life while living with my host family and meeting different people in other countries across Europe.

It was an amazing way to spend my last semester as a Yellow Jacket. It just goes to show that everything HPU promises, it can make happen if you take advantage of the opportunity.



**GERSON MENDOZA  
EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING OPPORTUNITY:  
WORK-STUDY PROGRAM**

I chose HPU because of God, family and the Honors Academy. I have a brother who is graduating this year, and he was a big part in why I chose HPU. Another factor was that HPU is a Christ-centered university and a place where you can grow spiritually.

My job at Latch Key is a part of the work-study program at the university. Latch Key is a non-profit, after-school program for kids who come from low-income families and whose parents are working or going to school. Latch Key is a licensed daycare with the state of Texas that is free to all the families that are a part of Latch Key. The ages range from pre-K to sixth grade.

My career goal is to be a family physician. Latch Key has helped me build communication skills, manage a classroom and work with families, and it has provided insight on working with kids, something that will come in handy as a family physician. This work-study option is a great opportunity for people who are looking to go into teaching or any field that works with kids.

My experience at Latch Key has helped me to realize a need in my community while giving me the opportunity to serve my community and build relationships, not only with my coworkers but also with the families who are a part of Latch Key.



**SADIE WILLIE '25  
EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING OPPORTUNITY:  
MODEL UNITED NATIONS**

The leading factors in my decision to attend HPU were the Honors Academy, the scholarship opportunities and the university's focus on the spiritual development of their students.

I was allowed to sit in on a Model UN class on my first day at HPU to see what kind of co-curricular activity I might want to pursue through the Honors Academy. In that class I recognized that my love for public speaking, my competitive spirit and my interest in international relations would all be fulfilled in the program. I registered for the class that same night.

Model United Nations is a full simulation of different committees within the actual UN. Students are assigned a country and a topic to discuss within the scope of an actual UN body. They are then tasked with speaking publicly and working collaboratively with students from other schools to write and vote on resolutions that become theoretical examples of the international law developed in the UN to solve the assigned problems.

Model UN has taught me how to advocate for my interests in a diplomatic way, which is a skill that I will take with me forever, but my favorite experience has been getting to travel with my friends. We went to Amsterdam my junior year, my first time outside of the United States, and there was plenty of time built in to explore the city. I have also attended multiple conferences in the Pacific Northwest; my time in those cities was so formative that I plan to settle there post grad school.

Because Model UN has so many areas and strategies to adapt to, many of my classes at HPU have helped me in my success at competitions. Similarly, my Model UN experiences have positively impacted my grades in many of my classes.

When I look back at my time at HPU, I will remember getting to see new cities with my friends and competing in Model UN, which has changed my perspective on the world around me. ■

PHOTOS BY JULIA CATLETT '21 AND KYLE MIZE EXCEPT FOR MICHAEL ECKERT AND SADIE WILLIE PHOTOS, WHICH WERE PROVIDED



# Thursday morning miracles

**God uses Christian club started by teacher Mark Olgin '94 to minister to middle school campus**

**By Kyle Mize**

Thursday mornings at Themer Middle School in Forney are enlivened by even more energy and activity than usual.

Before the first bell rings, more than 200 students have already gathered for donuts, heard a brief gospel message and shared a time of prayer. Howard Payne University alumnus and Themer teacher Mark Olgin '94 organized the club, called Fellowship of Christian Students (FCS), and he coordinates the weekly meetings that begin at 7:55 a.m.

Olgin's Thursday mornings begin quite a bit earlier than that, but he doesn't mind.

"Thursday is my favorite day of the week," he said. "It never fails – the Lord wakes me

up on Thursday mornings about 4:30 and I start praying for FCS, covering it in prayer."

Themer Middle School's FCS is open to the entire student body. The club's students lead the meetings and invite local youth pastors to speak at the gatherings. Donuts are provided for students to enjoy before starting class for the day.

"I welcome the students," Olgin said. "I'm in the back, just pushing this thing forward and letting God do amazing things."

Olgin served in bi-vocational church ministry for 30 years before becoming a full-time schoolteacher. Eight years ago, at the school where he was teaching at the time, he was asked by a student to help start a Christian club, which they decided to call Fellowship of Christian Students. Last year, Forney opened Themer Middle School, and Olgin felt the Lord's leadership to transfer there to teach Principles of Human Services and U.S. History as well as start an FCS club.

The group outgrew Olgin's classroom in two weeks, subsequently moving to the theater room before eventually meeting in a courtyard on campus. By the end of this past school year, the group was running an average of 224 students on a campus of 650. Olgin has been amazed and humbled by the results – not just the numbers but the way God has used the group's events to minister to students.

"It's cool to see what God does when we step out of the way – like the day He led 32 kids to commit their lives to Christ," Olgin said. "We were blown away. I could hear kids on the other side of the classroom crying and I was thinking, 'We're not even at camp!' [laughs] There's no soft music playing in the background with the lights down – it's just that God showed up and, boom, it happened. We are now working to make sure those kids are connected to a local church."

Olgin credits his principal – Molly (Nickols) Purl '00 – and other administrators for creating a campus environment where the FCS club is welcome.

"I'm grateful to be in a school district that allows me to start a club like this and to allow posters about it to be up on the walls," Olgin said. "I love being at this school. I love my

**"It's cool to see what God does when we step out of the way – like the day He led 32 kids to commit their lives to Christ."**

principal. The way she supports and leads on this campus – I know it's because of Jesus in her heart.

"In recent years, public schools have received a bad reputation, so it has been amazing to see what God can do when a few turn their hearts to Him, even in a public school. These kids are missionaries on their campuses. Nobody is making them do that."

Olgin said the club has spread to other middle schools in town, the freshman center and even the high school as students from Themer have moved on, carrying FCS with them. He has seen the club have a positive impact on his school's environment – "A strong Christian presence makes a huge difference on a campus" – and he is eager to help other Christian educators start this type of ministry in their school districts.

For Olgin, who majored in Bible at HPU, his alma mater provided not only a foundation for ministry but also a clarifying perspective on the ministry opportunities God provides.

"I loved my time at HPU," Olgin said. "HPU helped me to see ministry takes place daily in whatever place God has placed me – and my mission field is the public school." ■

**Mark Olgin '94 and his wife, Shannon (Porter) '97, have three children: Sara '20, who also teaches in Forney ISD; Caleb, an intern at Sky Ranch; and Micah, a senior in high school. The family is based in Rockwall, a short drive from Forney.**



**Olgin values the support and leadership of his school's principal, Molly (Nickols) Purl '00.**

PHOTOS BY KYLE MIZE

Among Shadia Herrera's many avenues of campus involvement is serving in Amigos Unidos, a student organization that celebrates and shares Hispanic culture with HPU students.



# Friends united

Shadia Herrera prepares for her calling through engagement with the HPU community **By Ben Sartain '23**

For Shadia Herrera, caring for others is all about seeing their faces, hearing their stories and seeking to meet their needs as she enters into relationship with them. This passion for being a friend to all has been central to her time at HPU.

Herrera is a sophomore from Azle majoring in allied health science with a minor in biology. She has dreamed of working in medical missions since she was 13 years old. After she finishes at HPU, she plans to go on to a graduate physician assistant program and ultimately work in international medical missions serving those who don't have access to medical care.

"I read *Kisses from Katie* [by Katie Davis Majors] when I was 13," said Herrera. "Katie helped kids [in Uganda] with their English who couldn't read or write. I wanted to do something like that, but I'm really passionate about learning the anatomy of the body. So, I thought I can do that but with medical care. This became my dream."

At HPU, Herrera is moving toward this dream as she grows in many dimensions of her life – academically, spiritually, in service and relationally. Academically, she's taking classes that will prepare her for more advanced coursework. A favorite class has been Comparative Vertebrate Anatomy, taught by Dr. Chelsea Miranda, assistant professor of biology.

"I love Dr. Miranda because she incorporates the Bible and her faith with science," said Herrera. "Some people think science and faith are completely separate things but, if you see instances in the Bible speaking of creation and then you look at the science, they go together."

Spiritually, Herrera recognizes integration of faith in Christ as essential for medical work.

"The reason why I can have compassion for someone I've never met is because the Lord has shown compassion to me," said Herrera. "It's kind of like a chain – it started with Jesus, and he's passing that on to his children so we can help others."

For Herrera, service isn't just a part of her distant dreams for the future. During her time at HPU, she has served the local community through volunteer work at the Corinne T. Smith Animal Shelter and the Christian Women's Job Corps annual dinner. On campus, she has been a worship vocalist for the Heritage Chapel Band and raised money for Go Now Missions with the Baptist Student Ministry.

Additionally, she participates in Amigos Unidos, a student organization that celebrates and shares Hispanic culture with HPU students. Her service to the group includes a recent tenure as president.

"I just love to serve others," she said. "But I wouldn't love to serve others unless Christ gave me that love."

Herrera was also instrumental in the Amigos Unidos partnership with HPU's Hispanic Alumni Chapter to serve together with a shared booth at the university's 2025 Spring Family Reunion.

"It was nice to be supported by people who care about the club and want to see it flourish," she said. "It was a blessing to have their help and partner together."

Herrera's involvements have helped her build many relationships on and off campus. She attends Iglesia Nueva Vida (New Life Church) and is a member of TriBeta national biological honors society and HOSA-Future Health Professionals. She also acted in the Department of Theatre's Homecoming 2024 production of *Hispanic Tales* and ran the spotlight for *Anastasia: The Musical*, also presented by the Department of Theatre in 2024. She loves participating in HPU traditions like Pancake Supper and Spring Sing.

"HPU is definitely a once-in-a-lifetime community," she said. "You'll have long-lasting relationships with people you meet here."

Another connection Herrera made was with Dr. Juan Andrade '70 in the fall of 2023, who encouraged her to apply for the Dr. Juan Andrade Scholarship for Young Hispanic Leaders. In 2024 she was one of 23 recipients of the scholarship, which was presented in Chicago at the United States Hispanic Leadership Institute National Conference.

With the support of HPU friendships, Herrera is steadily moving closer to the dream of medical missions that she's envisioned for so long. This dream's central motivation is service to Christ and love for others, which she's living out right now as an HPU student.

"The Lord provides the right people for your edification and growth," she said. "Good friends will invest in you, and they will encourage your growth and watch you grow. Professors prepare you professionally and spiritually, and your friends walk with you and watch it all happen." ■

PHOTO BY BEN SARTAIN '23



# GOOD WORKS

## FACILITIES TEAM SERVES GOD AND OTHERS AT HPU

BY REBEKAH STERLING '18



### IN THE BEGINNING,

God created a gardener. An odd choice, one might think. The Garden of Eden was perfect – why would anyone need to work to maintain it? Shouldn't Adam have been kicked back under a shade tree, enjoying paradise? But, upon second thought, it really isn't strange at all. The first chapters of the Bible show God Himself at work – crafting an incredible world out of chaos, and then planting a beautiful garden. God works and calls it good. So humans, His image-bearers, reflect God's very nature through work.

Although no longer limited to gardening, the work being done today at Howard Payne is no exception to this. Staff and faculty are caregivers of the university, regardless of position, just as Adam and Eve were in Eden. There are so many jobs that are instrumental in both keeping the university functioning day to day and ensuring HPU is here for future generations. Perhaps the most foundational to operations that help “keep her colors ever floating” is the work done by those in Facilities.

Facilities at HPU is divided into three main sections: custodial, grounds and maintenance. With more than 30 buildings, 82 acres and four sport fields, the team members stay busy, but they are also known for their positive attitudes and team mentality. Roger Dewell, director of facilities, oversees the department.



PHOTOS BY REBEKAH STERLING '18

## THE FACILITIES TEAM:

### ADMIN.

Roger Dewell  
Dora Larrea

### GROUNDS

James "JC" Churchill  
\*Aaron Diaz  
Garrett Drummond  
Allen Fisher  
Tracy Hull  
Johnny LaQuey  
Chandler Noble  
Marcus Williams

### MAINTENANCE

B.J. Anderson  
Jonathan Burcham  
\*Ben Childers  
Brandon Mair  
Ray Tassin

### CUSTODIAL

Julie Allred  
Imelda Cervantes  
\*Diane Hackney  
Vici Henry  
CJay Huerta  
\*Renee Hull  
Neftali Mendoza  
Kaneesi Peek  
Leslie Redfern  
Emma Rodriguez  
Margarita Rodriguez  
Juanita Sanchez  
Juan Vasquez  
Trina Whinery

\*Supervisor role

"Every member of our team believes in what they do and are very skilled at what they do," he shared. "We firmly believe that what we do not only improves and impacts the lives of the faculty/staff here at HPU, but most importantly the lives of our students. I believe that the Lord has called each of us here to do what we do for the amount of time that He has allotted for us to be here."

For the Facilities team, that calling often means being the first to arrive on campus, the last to go home and being on call in case of an emergency. The job can be as unpredictable as the weather, as the team deals with power outages or downed trees from storms, preps sidewalks for freezing weather and keeps buildings cool in the heat of summer.

Custodial work begins at 4 a.m. and includes cleaning, sanitizing, removing trash and maintaining custodial supplies and equipment. In the summers, the custodial team deep-cleans residence halls to prepare for summer camps and the upcoming semester. Trina Whinery, custodian team lead, shared how they stay motivated to get the job done.

"The custodial team is family," she said. "We have good and bad days, but we all communicate with each other and work



things out to accomplish our goals."

The grounds crew oversees landscaping, lawn-mowing, irrigation, tree-trimming and more. Almost daily, mowers and weed-eaters can be heard humming as the team beautifies campus.

"I want the campus to look the best it can," shared James "JC" Churchill, groundskeeper. "Because all of this belongs to who? The Father. So, I'm happy to do it."

Maintenance oversees electrical work, lighting, mechanical work, construction, painting, plumbing and other general maintenance tasks. The group responds to maintenance requests throughout the year in addition to whatever is already on the to-do list. They can go from changing out light bulbs to repairing a roof or assembling furniture in the span of an hour. Regardless of the type of work, the team knows it's all important.

"It all gets the same attention to detail because we want excellence out of what we do," explained Brandon Mair, general maintenance. "It's not about what makes me look good – it's the Kingdom as a whole. When we do a good job it reflects that we care."

In spite of the large task at hand, the Facilities team holds tightly to its vision to be "committed to providing a positive,



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**"IT'S NOT ABOUT WHAT MAKES ME LOOK GOOD — IT'S THE KINGDOM AS A WHOLE. WHEN WE DO A GOOD JOB IT REFLECTS THAT WE CARE."**

family work environment centered on Christ, called to serve, and focused on excellence while providing established maintenance, custodial, and grounds processes that support the student experience and the HPU community."

From the very beginning of time, God has called men and women to be like Him in the way they work. Humans are designed and equipped by God to make the world beautiful, functional and orderly. At HPU, this takes place campus-wide. The task assigned to the first gardener remains within all God's people, along with the chance to reflect the Creator and to point others to the completed work of Christ. As Paul states in Ephesians 2:10 (NIV), "For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." ■

This article is dedicated to the memory of Johnny LaQuey, who passed away on July 27, 2025.



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1. Vici Henry, a member of the custodial team, works to clean a dorm room following the end of the spring semester. 2. The facilities team poses for a photo before the Spring 2025 Faculty/Staff Professional Development Day. 3. B.J. Anderson, maintenance, repairs flooring in Jennings Hall.

# STUDENT-ATHLETE SPOTLIGHT: AMADA MENCHACA '25

By Abram Choate '98 and M.Ed. '17,  
assistant director of athletics for athletic  
communications

Amada Menchaca got what she was looking for at Howard Payne University. She did not go far from her hometown of Blanket but was able to get a college experience in her own backyard. Amada was involved in many things in high school and was able to translate that to her college experience as well.

The May 2025 graduate was a four-year letter winner with the Howard Payne women's golf program and was involved with the HPU cheer team for the past two years.

This interview was conducted during her final semester.

**Being from nearby Blanket, what was it like to go to college so close to home?** **A.M.:** It was great because I could just go home when I needed to. I lived at home so I didn't have to move in and move out, but I still got to make all these friends. I did enjoy getting to come home for family meals, good food and no grocery bill. I like being able to stay near my family and all my friends from high school. My fiancé went to Blanket and he also goes to Howard Payne. It was great being able to go through college together, like we went through high school together.

**What types of things were you involved with in high school?** **A.M.:** I was a part of NHS, FFA, FCCLA, golf, cheer, track, cross country, tennis and basketball.

**How did that influence the choices you made to get involved with at Howard Payne?** **A.M.:** It was actually a huge influence because I knew that I was able to balance fun, academics and student life. Going to a small high school, you are involved in pretty much everything that they offer. Not because they don't have anybody, but because it's just what there is to do. It helped me pick what I wanted to do. I came to Howard Payne to play golf, and it was close, so it was a win-win, I think. The small school atmosphere and being able to balance all the things on my plate made it easier for me to pick what to do here, so I could balance it out with sorority life, golf and cheer.

**What are some of your favorite memories at Howard Payne? And I know this might be more than one.** **A.M.:** One of my favorite memories at Howard Payne is Spring Sing, a great tradition. I love the Pancake Supper during finals. It is so great – I love pancakes for breakfast and for dinner. Also, all the students get together and we just have a great time. It's nice to see everybody on campus.

**How do you feel your experience at HPU will influence your future?** **A.M.:** I think my experience at HPU will influence my future because I've had a Christ-centered education and I grew up in a Christ-centered home. All this put together will lead me to live a Christ-centered life. As a future educator, it'll help me set a basis and ideals for how I want to teach my students and how I want to be a role model. I think HPU helped me because you have to take Bible classes. They're fun and educational, so it's not like a chore. I think HPU also helped me because it is a smaller school, so you get to meet all sorts of people.

**If you had one thing to tell a prospective student who was thinking about HPU, what would that be?** **A.M.:** I would say if you want a community-based school and you want to plug in, then Howard Payne is the place to be. It's great if you want to know everyone, if you want to be in the community and if you want to get involved. You're also getting the best education you could pay for.

**After graduation, what are your plans?** **A.M.:** I plan to teach Spanish at Goldthwaite High School, and I will be getting my master's degree through the Sport and Wellness Leadership program at Howard Payne. I would like to coach in the future, but for my first year I'm going to focus on settling in with teaching and furthering my education. ■

***“If you want a community-based school and you want to plug in, then Howard Payne is the place to be ... You're also getting the best education you could pay for.”***



PHOTO BY REBEKAH STERLING '18



Howard Payne University has become way more than just a college; it feels like a place I can call home. I still remember my first moments stepping on campus – scared, nervous, mind racing with thoughts and even doubts – but the combination of people, the small town and the school really set me up to grow to be the person I want to be and got me to where I am today.

One thing I love about Howard Payne is how close and personal the people are. It's not as big as many campuses around the world but it has its pros. For instance, in your lecture class you are not just a random number to your professor. Your professor actually takes time to get to know you and help you if you are struggling in class or want to catch up. For example, in my 6 a.m. yoga class with Dr. Arreola, she knew how hard it was to get up at that hour and gave us multiple opportunities to help us catch up and get on track. She even let some students help lead the class if they were shining in yoga. She is always positive and welcoming and gives you that boost you need to get through your day.

Being on the football team is one of my biggest blessings at Howard Payne University. It teaches me leadership,

discipline, courage, commitment and how to balance my school life and athletic life. One of my favorite traditions the team has is the Bible study. We are sitting with our teammates, opening up about life and sharing our faith, which brings us together not only as a team but as a family. Also, it teaches us everything is not just football 24/7. We hold ourselves accountable, so we can become better men on and off the field.

Campus life at Howard Payne University is fantastic. The new intramural field has been a huge boost to things to get out and do. It's already had some legendary moments like bubble soccer – putting on a bubble inflatable, running full speed and trying to kick the ball in the goal before you get run over. It's hilarious and so fun! Events like that on the intramural field bring life to our campus and bring everyone together to meet new people, relax and just have some college fun.

Another key aspect of how Howard Payne University feels like home is Brownwood. It might not be a huge city, but that's actually what makes it special. The community is tight and super-friendly. I've spent a lot of time around

the city by going to downtown Brownwood and exploring, going on late night runs to Sonic to get ice cream or even going to some parks to play some pickleball, etc. There's a sense of community and peace that's hard to find in bigger cities. Even small things like seeing the same faces when you go shopping at Walmart or Dollar General or seeing a stranger wave at you across the street prove how welcoming Brownwood is.

Looking back at my time at Howard Payne University, I realized how much Howard Payne shaped me. I've grown not just as a student-athlete but as a person, a friend and a person with faith. I've experienced growth and maturity during the small, everyday moments I went through like my early-morning yoga classes and the fun bubble soccer game, or quality time with teammates coming together to do a Bible study. The best part is I still have an amazing two years left to enjoy more time here.

Choosing Howard Payne University was one of the best decisions I've made. It's a school that gives you so many opportunities to succeed but also helps you build relationships and experiences that make life worth living. ■

MAIN PHOTO BY REBEKAH STERLING '18. OTHER PHOTOS PROVIDED

**"I'VE GROWN NOT JUST AS A STUDENT-ATHLETE BUT AS A PERSON, A FRIEND AND A PERSON WITH FAITH."**

**ELIJAH DILLARD IS A SOPHOMORE FROM CARROLLTON MAJORING IN SPORTS MANAGEMENT.**

# In Memoriam

Howard Payne University sadly lost the following alumni and other members of the HPU family between the dates of October 16, 2024, to July 31, 2025. To notify HPU of the passing of individuals with connections to the university, please email [development@hputx.edu](mailto:development@hputx.edu).

## HOWARD PAYNE UNIVERSITY ALUMNI/FORMER STUDENTS

### Jeannette (Horne)

**Alexander '57**, Oct. 16, 2024

**Terry Lynn Alldredge**, July 5, 2025

**Robert D. Anderson '61**, April 11, 2025

**Wesley W. Atchison**, Jan. 10, 2025

**Robert Howard Beckett '73**, April 6, 2025

**Rex A. Bessent '67**, March 18, 2025 (Former member of the Guy D. Newman Honors Academy Board of Directors)

**Steve Blake '98**, April 2, 2025

**Virginia A. Brooks '66**, Dec. 20, 2024

**Jean Cain '56**, March 4, 2025 (Former faculty/staff member)

**Mary (Johnson) Campbell '49**, June 4, 2025

**Willis C. Cash '56**, March 4, 2025

**Ernest F. Castro Jr. '54**, Oct. 24, 2024

**Cindy (Walters) Chitwood**, June 20, 2025

**Vera M. (Morris) Clack '56**, Jan. 23, 2025 (Former member of the Board of Trustees)

**Richard W. Clark '69**, May 25, 2025 (Former member of the Board of Trustees)

**Sharon L. (Mills) Cloud '71**, Jan. 18, 2025

**Otis W. Coffey**, Nov. 30, 2024

**Cedric Leon Cole '81**, May 18, 2025

**Bobby L. Cooke '63**, Oct. 18, 2024

**Virgil Lee Courts '75**, July 6, 2025

**Jeanette (Rayburn) Covington '64**, March 27, 2025

**Rosemarie A. (Quinlan) Cowling '91**, Nov. 26, 2024

**Theresa T. (Glidewell) Crosier '65**, Nov. 4, 2024

**Fred Culbertson '81**, Jan. 25, 2025

**Patsy R. "Pat" Darwin '49**, Feb. 23, 2025

**Kyle W. "Baby" Davis '84**, March 28, 2025

**Peggy L. (Taylor) Davis '84**, Oct. 16, 2024 (Former faculty/staff member, Athletics Hall of Fame)

**Reba L. (Whittle) Davis '61**, May 14, 2025

**Dr. Gerald T. Deviney '63**, Jan. 10, 2025

**Marie B. Dewees**, Jan. 16, 2025

**Dr. Everett M. "Rick" Donowho Jr. '63**, Jan. 25, 2025

**Anthony D. "Tony" Dunn '71**, Jan. 1, 2025

**Uriel E. Dutton '47**, June 10, 2025

**Rev. Marshall Fair '55**, Jan. 8, 2025

**James Ferguson**, July 23, 2025

**Hon. Paul F. Ferguson '54**, April 23, 2025

**Lesley G. Fisher**,

Oct. 25, 2024 (Former faculty/staff member)

**Dr. Dwane C. Gale '58**, Feb. 15, 2025 (Former faculty/staff member)

**William Grimes Goree '47**, July 20, 2025

**Dr. Randall D. Grooms**, April 27, 2025 (Former member of the Board of Trustees)

**Susan K. Gustafson '93**, May 4, 2025

**Joe Gwathmey '63**, March 12, 2025

**John Ross Hale Jr.**, Nov. 24, 2024

**Howard B. Henry**, April 12, 2025

**Arvil E. Holt '52**, Feb. 10, 2025

**Catherine A. "Cathy" (Hamilton) Horneman '90**, Jan. 8, 2025

**Mary S. (Roddy) Howard**, Dec. 12, 2024

**Dr. Esther C. (Crawford) Huckaby '55**, Oct. 29, 2024

**Mary R. "Ruth" (Maxfield) Hull '50**, March 7, 2025

**Mildred Jean (Richardson) James**, June 20, 2025

**Joseph E. "Ed" Johnson Jr. '68**, Dec. 9, 2024

**M. Ray Jones**, Nov. 17, 2024  
**Joyce E. (Ray) Joyner '54**, Dec. 7, 2024

**Margaret Jean (Reigert) Lane '74**, May 6, 2025

**Billie M. Loop**, Oct. 31, 2024  
**Cynthia A. (Mabray) McClure '81**, April 7, 2025

**Mary Margaret (Haygood) McGee '50**, July 28, 2025

**Sharon A. (Scott) Montagna '69**, April 27, 2025

**Gayle T. Moring '72**, Feb. 3, 2025 (Former member of the Board of Trustees)

**Willborn D. "Willie" Myers '60**, Feb. 15, 2025

**Dr. Richard W. Nassar '15**, July 31, 2025 (Honorary Doctor of Humanities degree recipient)

**Meredith E. (Wootton) Nisbet '69**, April 20, 2025

**Richard Carroll Osborne '63**, Feb. 2023

**Ruth E. (Wilson) Parker '47**, Dec. 24, 2024

**Bobby Peters**, Jan. 12, 2025 (Former faculty/staff member)

**Mary E. (Watson) Pringle '63**, May 1, 2025

**Rev. Michael Privitt '78**, Feb. 24, 2025

**Robert Rachuig '61**, Dec. 19, 2024

**Bennie G. Reese '75**, Feb. 26, 2025

**Eddy Rice**, April 1, 2025

**Aaron Michael Richardson '69**, March 16, 2023

**Robert Richter '59**, Dec. 30, 2024

**Annie B. "Beth" (Brian) Roby**, Jan. 23, 2025 (Former faculty/staff member)

**Sylvia (Rundell) Rogers '56**, Dec. 15, 2024

**George L. Ross '57**, Jan. 27, 2025  
**Anita M. (Sorrells) Salge '81**, April 1, 2024

**Stanley R. Sims**, Feb. 15, 2025

**Clyde L. Somers '67**, May 19, 2025

**Scott W. Stephens '75**, Jan. 7, 2025

**Bobbie J. (Sims) Stewart '64**, May 29, 2025 (Retired faculty/staff member)

**Edward Alvis Stewart '49**, Nov. 23, 2022

**Bobby G. Stuart '65**, Feb. 13, 2025

**Gary D. Teague '84**, Oct. 31, 2024

**Joan Teague**, Dec. 1, 2024  
**Johnnie R. Tharp**, Jan. 5, 2025

**Don D. Treadwell '71**, Jan. 23, 2025

**Dixon L. Turner '52**, Jan. 2, 2025

**Keith R. Vaughn**, Feb. 22, 2025

**Rev. Andrew H. Villarreal '66**, Dec. 22, 2024

**Mary A. "Ann" (Murray) Weedon '56**, Dec. 10, 2024

**Orvell Thomas "Tom" Wells Jr. '71**, March 20, 2025

**Arlen White '57**, Oct. 25, 2024 (Former Member of the Alumni Association Board of Directors)

**Roger H. White '78**, Jan. 27, 2025

**Travis S. Winn '69**, March 1, 2025

**Thomas L. "Tommy" Womack Jr. '65**, Oct. 20, 2024

**Daryl Worley '89**, Feb. 1, 2025

**Robert Zarate '70**, March 31, 2025

## ADDITIONAL HPU FACULTY, STAFF, BOARD MEMBERS AND FRIENDS

**Virginia N. Carter**, Jan. 20, 2025

**Dr. Jack Ehrke**, March 18, 2025

**Johnny LaQuey**, July 27, 2025 (Faculty/staff member)

**Hon. Bert V. Massey**, Nov. 13, 2024

**Melinda B. (Brooks) Massey**, Dec. 11, 2024

**Thomas L. McMillan**, Jan. 27, 2025

**Larry L. McNeeley**, Feb. 22, 2025

**Bertha W. Mieth**, April 9, 2025

**Linda Porter**, May 28, 2025

**Krista Thiele**, Oct. 21, 2024

# Alma Mater



PHOTO FROM HPU ARCHIVES

*High above old Bayou's waters,  
out on Center's heights  
Stands our noble Alma Mater,  
towering in her might  
Keep her colors ever floating,  
sing her praises due  
Hail to thee our Alma Mater,  
hail the Gold and Blue*

**HOWARD PAYNE**  
UNIVERSITY

P.O. Box 2369  
Brownwood, Texas 76804

**STUDENT PERSPECTIVE**

This photo was taken by Maddie King,  
a senior from Abilene majoring in  
strategic communication and the  
Guy D. Newman Honors Academy.

