



LIONS FORWARD CAMPAIGN PRIORITY: FOSTERING ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

A hallmark of a Missouri Southern education has always been the quality of instruction received while at MSSU. This focus on outstanding teaching will never change, which is why one of the seven priorities of the Lions Forward Campaign

is "Academic Excellence." This priority is an investment in current and new academic programs. In this edition of the Lions Forward newsletter, we focus on donors who have chosen to support our pursuit of academic excellence.

NEW GRADUATE PROGRAM IN DATA ANALYTICS

Upon joining Missouri Southern as Provost and VP for Academic Affairs in 2022, Dr. Lisa Toms was intent on adding new high-demand degrees to MSSU's academic offerings. "Data analytics is the fastest growing graduate field in the world," said Dr. Toms. Unlike comparable degrees in the region, the new program at MSSU stands alone as a degree rather than a certificate. The introduction of this new graduate program, and eventually a bachelor's degree, addresses both employer demand and student interest.

When the university sought private funding to help facilitate the launch of this program, graduates Bill and Tracy Gipson were enthusiastic about contributing. Bill, a '85 MSSU graduate, is the retired president/CEO of Empire District Electric Company and a past chair of the MSSU Board of Governors. His wife Tracy, a '79 graduate of dental hygiene and business, is retired from the United Way of Southwest Missouri. "Southern provided us an education that opened doors," said Bill. "We're happy to be able to help Missouri Southern continue to transform lives and to graduate educated global leaders who will invigorate industry and grow our communities."

"The gift from Mr. and Mrs. Gipson allowed the program to launch with the resources needed to be successful immediately," said Toms. Contributions from donors like the Gipsons play a transformative role in turning ambitious possibilities into new realities.



First-year graduate student Elena Rodgers earned her accounting degree from MSSU in 2023 and returned this fall for the Data Analytics program. Originally from Marionville, Rodgers stayed in Joplin to work and complete her degree.

"I'm a staff accountant at a firm in town," said Rodgers. "The accounting field is moving rapidly towards a more analysis-based profession, and I wanted to get ahead of the curve and focus on the part of my job that I love most by getting my master's in data analytics."

"I returned to MSSU since I was comfortable with the school and its professors," said Rodgers. "The data analytics program is a great addition. It offers opportunities for those wanting to invest in this skill. With my degree, I plan to earn my CPA license and continue working in the area."

SPORTS AND RECREATION MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

The inaugural cohort of 10 students began their studies in the new Sports and Recreation Management degree which launched in the fall of 2022. This program is a collaboration between the College of Business and the Kinesiology Department, offering a curriculum spanning 120 credit hours. Currently, 56 students are enrolled in the program.

This bachelor's degree equips students to apply business, coaching, and physical education principles to the organization, administration, and management of athletic programs, facilities, sport recreation services, and related fields. The curriculum covers program planning, finances, marketing, event management, facilities oversight, and more.

Rod Anderson, a '76 graduate of MSSU and former member of the Board of Governors, reflected on his educational journey. "I chose MSSU because it was a great value at the time, and still is. I've stayed very connected to Missouri Southern ever since then." A native of Monett, Anderson believes MSSU is vital in serving a large area of SWMO.

Anderson's long-standing interest in this degree spurred his determination to contribute to its success once the program launched. His support materialized into the Rod Anderson Sports and Recreation Management Symposium. This year's theme will explore the power of sports in small communities, featuring keynote speaker Dr. Jay Coakley, author of the widely used "Sports in Society" textbook.

Anderson's impact will be felt well in to the future as he has

BIOLOGY & ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH UNDERGRADUATE DEGREE

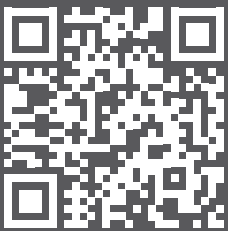
The Biology & Environmental Health program bridges the realms of life sciences and environmental health, offering students a unique opportunity to delve into the intricacies of life while actively contributing to the preservation of the environment. Currently, this program includes 68 degree-seeking students with an additional seven students pursuing various certificates.

Dr. John Messick and wife Nancy are both retirees of MSSU. John began at MSSU in 1983, serving in a variety of roles including professor, Department Head, Dean of Arts & Sciences, and eventually Vice President for Academic Affairs. He was granted Emeritus status upon his retirement in 2013



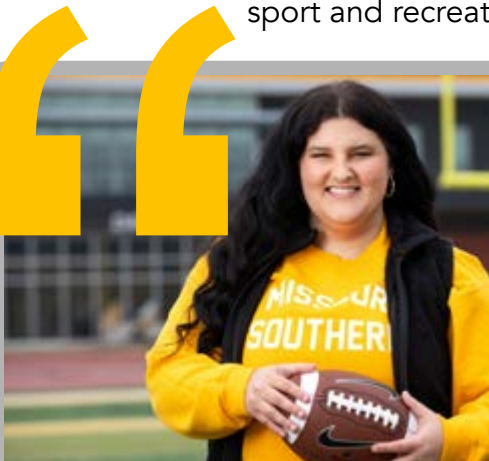
Dr. Jim & Brenda Jackson

DR. JIM & BRENDA JACKSON HAVE ALSO CHOSEN TO SUPPORT THE CAMPAIGN.



Scan here to learn why!

also documented an estate gift that will continue his support. Dr. Zach Beldon, program director, is grateful for the support, "Rod Anderson's generous gift greatly enhances our capacity to offer students exceptional educational opportunities and will significantly enrich the educational journey of students in sport and recreation management program.



Students enrolled in the new program like senior Haylee Smith are passionate about their degree.

"Since I was a little girl, I have always loved talking about and playing sports," said Smith. "When I heard that we were getting this program, I knew I had to pursue it."

The El Dorado Springs native explains that MSSU offers so much for their students and that earning her degree here will help her reach her career goals.

"Students can get hands-on experience and build a network profile before graduation," she said. "This is an amazing opportunity and I am very much looking forward to this year's symposium."

After graduating this spring, Smith hopes to work for a sports media team.

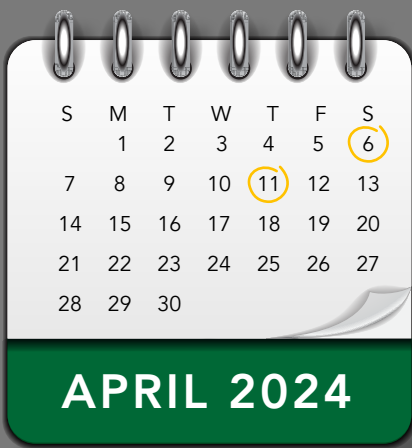
and he continues to be an adjunct instructor. Nancy served as an administrative assistant at the department head and vice-presidential levels, and later as the assistant to President Julio León. The Messicks have created an endowment for the program with a current gift and by including MSSU in their estate plans. This endowment will provide perpetual budgetary support and will play a pivotal role in providing students with the most up-to-date equipment and resources.

The Messicks explained their motivation to give. "It's a belief to always give back for what you are given," they said. "Missouri Southern has been a good place to work, build friendships, and as retirees we appreciate staying connected to the University."

CAMPAIGN PROGRESS

8 Commitments of \$1 million +
172 Commitments of \$25,000 +
1,986 Individual campaign donors

UPCOMING EVENTS



April 6th- Campaign Kick Off Event

April 11th- Health Science Innovation Center Groundbreaking

FORVIS ENDOWED PROFESSORSHIP



FORVIS (formerly BKD) has demonstrated a recognition of the vital connection between the community, the university, and their firm. Mike Gray is a '92 graduate of Missouri Southern and Partner at FORVIS. "Our commitment to giving back to the communities we serve, including our collaboration with MSSU, reflects our belief in the transformative power of education," he said.

Established with the financial support of two dozen current and former employees of the firm, the Professorship provides perpetual revenue which is used to attract and retain top-quality accounting instructors. "Investing in the endowment is an investment in the future of MSSU, ensuring the program continues to be a leader in education," commented Gray.

The firm has hired numerous MSSU graduates over the years, with several alumni rising to become partners and industry leaders within FORVIS. Gray notes, "Our goal is to hire the best students, and MSSU has consistently provided us with exceptional talent that has contributed significantly to our firm's success. We are proud to have been able to help establish this endowed professorship."

Dr. Lucas Dille, CPA, currently holds the FORVIS Endowed Professorship. He acknowledges its profound impact, particularly in accounting data analytics. "With the support of the endowment, I equip students for success not only in passing the CPA exam but also in flourishing as professional accountants once they enter the workforce," said Dille.

THANK YOU LEADERSHIP DONORS* :

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*From January 1 - September 30, 2023

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LIONS FORWARD NEWSLETTER: ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

HEALTH SCIENCE INNOVATION CENTER TO BREAK GROUND

Thanks to the commitments of many generous donors, exciting progress has been made on the new Health Science Innovation Center (HSIC) project at MSSU. While fundraising efforts are still underway, Missouri Southern is pleased to announce that the groundbreaking ceremony for this transformative project is set for April 11, 2024.

The new 65,000 square foot facility with an estimated completion date of July 2026 will transform the Missouri Southern campus and equip students with essential tools and simulated experiences to prepare them for successful careers in health sciences. Within its walls, a cutting-edge simulation hospital, a virtual reality lab, an expanded cadaver lab, and a skills lab will provide immersive learning experiences.

Acting as the campus's new front door, the welcome center will house the Office of Admissions, welcoming prospective students and campus visitors. The welcome center will include a 160-seat conference space, intended to act as a hub of collaboration and innovation. This groundbreaking initiative aligns with Southern's expanded state-wide mission as endorsed by the Missouri Coordinating Board for Higher Education.

The Lions Forward Campaign is shaping the future of health sciences education and immersive learning experiences at MSSU. Your support remains crucial in bringing this transformative vision to life. Join us on April 11 at the groundbreaking of this exciting endeavor as MSSU builds a legacy of innovation and progress at the heart of campus. The Health Science Innovation Center will be named in honor of Senator Roy Blunt who spearheaded significant federal support for the project.



**34,000+ sq. ft. ADDITIONAL
IMMERSIVE LEARNING SPACE!**