



# BOARD OF GOVERNORS

## R E P O R T

N O V E M B E R 1 4 , 2 0 2 5

# DR. DEAN VAN GALEN

## PRESIDENT

### SENATOR ROY BLUNT VISITS CAMPUS



On October 15, former U.S. Senator Roy Blunt visited campus for a briefing and tour of the university's newest facility, the Roy Blunt Health Science Innovation Center. Blunt was pleased with the progress and gracious in his comments about the impact the facility will have on Missouri Southern and its students. He also presented the university with some memorabilia from his service as a U.S. senator, some of which will be displayed in the building.

### 2025-2026 WILLCOXON SCHOLARS ANNOUNCED



Supported by the generosity of **Dot and Bob Willcoxon**, the second cohort of seven Willcoxon Scholars met on September 8. These students presented plans for their undergraduate research to Dot Willcoxon, university leaders, and faculty mentors.

This year's Willcoxon Scholars are:

- **Kya Gibson** — Health Science Paramedic
- **Aleezah Mufti** — Biomedical Sciences MSSU-KCU Early Acceptance Program (MKEAP)
- **Mai Dorgham** — Biomedical Sciences MKEAP
- **Jayla Wyant** — Biomedical Sciences MKEAP
- **Saanvi Kohli** — Biomedical Sciences MKEAP
- **Gavin Wampler** — Biomedical Sciences MKEAP
- **Lillian Rand** — Biomedical Pre-Veterinary Medicine

Thanks go to Assistant Professor of Biology **Dr. Alicia Burris** for serving as director of the Willcoxon Scholars program. As part of this immersive learning experience, the scholars will present their research projects at the Willcoxon Innovation in Health Sciences Summit on March 27, 2026.

## PROMOTING THE STATEWIDE MISSION

The celebration of Missouri Southern's new statewide mission on September 5 resulted in a high level of media coverage, from local to global. The press release was picked up by 265 news outlets across the country and shared in 26 countries, reaching 3,200 views. In the coming months, the university will launch a multi-faceted campaign to raise awareness of its expanded statewide mission and strengthen donor and community support, while also driving student recruitment and enrollment. Audiences will include prospective students and families, donors, community and government leaders, educational partners, and our own faculty, staff and students.

## NEWS FROM THE MISSOURI COORDINATING BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION



The Missouri Coordinating Board for Higher Education met in September and then again virtually in October. Key recommendations for the FY2027 higher education budget that will be communicated to Governor Mike Kehoe include:

- 4% core budget increase for public universities and colleges
- \$34 million in maintenance and repair funds
- A ranked list of 31 approved MoExcels projects, totaling \$90.9M, to be forwarded to Governor Kehoe

Also, at the September CBHE meeting, Commissioner Ben Boggs and the board congratulated Missouri Southern on its expanded statewide mission.

## EDUCATION ABROAD OPPORTUNITIES



Over the past 30 years, more than 3,700 MSSU students have participated in study abroad programs worldwide. Students and alumni often say these immersive experiences are among the most impactful parts of their time at MSSU. The university continues to encourage and expand education abroad opportunities.

At a recent study abroad fair held in Billingsly Student Center, student interest was high. Looking ahead, the next themed semester will focus on Vietnam, including an exciting trip to the country. New programs are also in development to broaden global learning options for students.

## GRATITUDE



Missouri Southern can celebrate successes and look forward to a bright future because of its outstanding staff and faculty. With gratitude for their dedication to student success, we recognize that they help build the foundation of our continued growth and excellence.

**LIONS FORWARD. LIONS TOGETHER.**



# DR. LISA TOMS

## PROVOST / VICE PRESIDENT OF ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

### COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCE

#### Art and Design

The joint MSSU–ZISU International Art and Design Exchange Special Exhibition, featuring almost 30 typographic works curated by Associate Professor of Design **Ed Outhouse** and created by 24 MSSU design students and recent graduates, was on view Oct. 24–31, in the School of Arts Atrium Gallery at Zhejiang International Studies University in Hangzhou, China.



The Department of Art and Design hosted High School Art Day on Oct. 17 with 93 participants from nine regional high schools who took part in eight immersive learning workshops. On Oct. 24, 54 high school students visited campus for Fine, Performing and Media Arts Discovery Day.

#### Law Enforcement Academy

The Fall 2025 Law Enforcement Academy class achieved a 100% pass rate on the Emergency Vehicle Operation Course training.

#### Performing Arts

On Oct. 2, the Concert Band held its first performance with Visiting Director of Bands **Scott Schneider**, drawing an audience of about 200 people. Schneider and Director of Choral Activities **Dr. Derrick Bready** served as guest clinicians for the Ozark & Music Festival on Oct. 15—a great honor and recruiting opportunity.

On Oct. 17, theatre students and faculty collaborated with Connect2Culture for a performance of *Twelfth Night* featuring London's The Lord Chamberlain's Men troupe.

Haunted Harmonies, the first Concert Chorale concert with Dr. Bready, was held Oct. 23 to a standing-room-only crowd in the Bud Walton Black Box Theatre.

#### Social Science

On Oct. 22, students in HIST 202: Introduction to Public History traveled to Quapaw, Oklahoma, to visit the Quapaw Tribal Museum, meet with staff, and learn about the tribe's history and ongoing preservation efforts.

Social Sciences major **Christin Jamison** is interning with the MSSU Lion Co-op, working on a grant-funded project to create “break bags” for students who remain on campus during breaks when the cafeteria is closed. The first bags were distributed over Fall Break.

On Oct. 2, Social Work and Psychology collaborated on an immersive simulation designed to increase knowledge and connection with community members on the autism spectrum. Special thanks to Easterseals Midwest and its partners for helping make the event possible.

## COLLEGE OF BUSINESS, COMMUNICATION AND TECHNOLOGY

### Technology



LionHog Tech 2025 was a cross-institutional innovation hackathon that brought together high school and university students from Missouri and Arkansas to solve real-world problems using automation and artificial intelligence. With the theme “Automate,” the event aimed to raise awareness of developments in AI while encouraging creativity, STEM engagement and regional collaboration.

### Plaster School of Business

On Nov. 6, the Plaster School of Business (PSB) hosted its annual Business Gateway event, marking a record year in both participation and fundraising. **Dr. Dille** reported that this year’s event welcomed nearly 700 students from 27 schools, the highest registration in its history.

Students competed in a variety of business-themed events requiring live presentations and judging in categories including Business Law, Economics, General Business, International Business, Management, Marketing and Personal Finance. Advisory Board members, community partners and faculty served as judges, with School of Business students volunteering to assist throughout the day. The event concluded with an awards ceremony in the Taylor Performing Arts Center.

**Dr. Douglas** reported that the event was fully funded through generous private and corporate donations, raising just over \$10,000 to support supplies, logistics, prizes and promotional materials.

The Business Gateway aligns with the PSB’s mission to foster community engagement, experiential learning and strategic outreach to regional high schools and industry partners. It serves as a key recruitment opportunity for both MSSU and the PSB, while providing a dynamic, educational experience for high school students interested in business disciplines.

## COLLEGE OF HEALTH, LIFE SCIENCES AND EDUCATION

### Healthcare Administration



On Oct. 15, **Melinda Brown**, department chair of Healthcare Administration, was invited to speak at Careers & Conversations at Johnson County Community College in Overland Park, Kansas. She served on a panel and participated in roundtable discussions with students.

On Oct. 22, she presented to more than 80 juniors and seniors at Carl Junction High School, and on Oct. 24, the Bentonville Schools Ignite Professional Studies Program brought 31 students to campus to tour the cadaver lab with **Dr. Barry**, the Dental Hygiene Clinic, SIM lab and Healthcare Administration program. Ignite is a collaboration among education, business and community that provides students with immersive, hands-on experiences designed to produce adaptable, innovative leaders.

On Oct. 29, representatives from Healthcare Administration (Melinda Brown), Dental Hygiene (**Jill Pyle**), EMS (**Erin Taber**), Nursing (**Kim Herchenroeder**), Radiology (**Kimmie Matejcek**) and Respiratory Therapy (**Alyssa Taylor**) presented to more than 100 Joplin High School freshmen interested in health sciences.

### ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

#### Information Technology

To support ongoing digital transformation and prepare for the launch of the new Health Science Innovation Center next fall, campus internet bandwidth has been doubled from 1 Gbps to 2 Gbps. This upgrade enhances connectivity and ensures robust support for modern learning environments and emerging technologies.

#### Library Faculty Spotlight



The Missouri Library Association has named **Amber Carr**, assistant library director and marketing and outreach librarian, as the recipient of its 2025 Outstanding Professional Librarian Award. Carr developed a series of food preparation and nutrition programs that promote wellness and hands-on learning across campus, secured funding for a mobile kitchen to serve as a teaching tool, and transformed a study room into a fully functional cooking demonstration classroom.

### EVENTS AND OUTREACH

On Sept. 30, Provost **Lisa Toms** partnered with Student Senate to host the second annual "A Night of Hope" event kicking off Breast Cancer Awareness Month. Featured speakers were **Mary Van Galen** and **Michelle Wood**. The Student Committee organized activities and events throughout October to raise funds for Hope for You, the local breast cancer support group.

# LINDA EIS

## CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER

### AUDIT FISCAL YEAR 2025



Our annual financial statement audit is complete and will be submitted for board approval later in this meeting. The compliance portion of the audit is delayed as we await updated guidance from the annual federal compliance supplement, which covers federal grants and awards. Auditors have already reviewed our federal funding using last year's guidelines but will not officially present the compliance section until the new supplement is released and records have been reviewed based on any updated guidance.

The university is pleased to report an unmodified, clean audit with no findings. We acknowledge **Michelle Arwood**, director of accounting, for her significant contributions during the audit process. Achieving these results reflects the ongoing, collective efforts of campus staff throughout the year. We extend our appreciation to all team members involved in this accomplishment.

### ROY BLUNT HEALTH SCIENCE INNOVATION CENTER

The facility continues to change daily. Much of the exterior work on the building has been completed, and sidewalks and irrigation are in progress. The fountain has started to take shape and will be a beautiful addition to the entrance of the Welcome Center. Soon, construction will focus mainly on the interior, which is progressing as planned.

Faculty and staff had the opportunity to visit the facility during the October MOSO Connect series. Attendees learned about the building's features and how these spaces will influence students' experiences. The excitement continues to build with each day, each tour and each milestone.



## LEGGETT & PLATT ATHLETIC CENTER



The project is now in the phase where bleachers are being installed. As stated previously, the installation is expected to take about two to three months to finish.

## OPEN ENROLLMENT

Open enrollment for annual insurance selections took place in October. During this time, employees made their benefit choices for the 2026 calendar year. In response to employee feedback, pet insurance was introduced as an optional benefit for the first time this year.

## QUARTERLY COFFEE



Each quarter, we welcome new employees to our Quarterly Coffee event. The occasion provides an opportunity to formally acknowledge and introduce them to colleagues from across campus. Quarterly Coffee offers a welcoming and engaging environment where we express our appreciation for their decision to join Missouri Southern and highlight their contributions to making a difference for our students.

## EMPLOYEE APPRECIATION BRUNCH

At this time of year, preparations commence for the annual Employee Appreciation Brunch. The Human Resources team creates the theme and manages the logistical details. This occasion serves to formally recognize and celebrate employees for their years of service at Missouri Southern. The brunch also marks the kickoff to the winter break period.

## FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Presentation of the financial statements for the period ending October 31, 2025.

**LIONS FORWARD. LIONS TOGETHER.**

# MICHELLE WOOD

## INTERIM VICE PRESIDENT FOR UNIVERSITY ADVANCEMENT

### LIONS FORWARD CAMPAIGN – FUNDRAISING UPDATES



As of the end of Oct. 2025, the Lions Forward fundraising campaign raised a total of \$40,429,408 of our \$42.7 million goal. This represents 95% of the campaign's overall goal being received with one year and seven months remaining in the timeline.

#### Progress by Campaign Priority:

##### Enhancing Student Experience:

- Goal – \$15,000,000
- Raised – \$20,135,034
- 134% of Goal

##### Fostering Academic Excellence:

- Goal – \$8,000,000
- Raised – \$7,029,926
- 88% of Goal

##### Building the Campus of the Future:

- Goal – \$8,500,000
- Raised – \$7,130,525
- 84% of Goal

##### Undesignated Commitments:

- Raised – \$6,133,923

Cash, stock, and pledges represent 58% of the campaign dollars raised and the remaining 42% is estate gifts. We have 11 commitments of \$1 million plus, 305 commitments of \$25,000 plus, 3,164 individual campaign donors, and 509 major gift solicitations.

#### Director of Leadership Annual Giving



The Office of Development has welcomed **Sydney Crider, '20**, as director of leadership annual giving to support ongoing fundraising efforts. A proud alumna of MSSU, Sydney is excited to return "home" to the Office of Development—where her journey began as a student worker before graduating in 2020 with a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration, majoring in Marketing. Most recently serving as the membership and marketing director at the Webb City Area Chamber of Commerce, Sydney brings strong relationship-building skills and a passion for connecting people with purpose.

## ALUMNI AND DONOR RELATIONS UPDATES AND EVENTS

### Director of Alumni and Donor Relations



MSSU appointed **Abi Almandinger, '96**, as director of alumni and donor relations on Nov. 3. An MSSU alumna, Almandinger brings extensive experience in education, legal services, entrepreneurship, and leadership within non-profit and governmental organizations. Most recently, she served as director of Parks and Recreation for the City of Carthage, where she oversaw seven parks, a golf course, and major facility upgrades totaling more than \$5 million. She previously led Vision Carthage, advancing community revitalization and economic development initiatives.

### The Gipson Center for Applied Data Analytics Dedication

On Sept. 12, a dedication and ribbon cutting ceremony was held, providing a meaningful opportunity to recognize the generosity and impact of Bill and Tracy Gipson. The event received excellent media coverage and attendance, featuring tours of the new office and lab spaces.

### President's Game Day Gatherings

Five gatherings were held during home football games in the Ron Richard Athletic Center (RRAC), featuring themes including cross-country alumni, healthcare leaders, Lantern Society, Hope 4 You, Lionbackers, and Homecoming.

### Holiday Happenings Preparation

On Oct. 6, alumni, friends, and community volunteers began weekly decorating sessions at the mansion to prepare 11 themed trees and displays for the Dec. 4 Holiday Happenings event.

### Alumni Awards Dinner



On Oct. 24, the Alumni Awards Banquet at the RRAC honored alumni for leadership, service, and professional achievement. The following were honored with an award:

- Lion-Hearted Award – **Sallie Beard**
- Outstanding Alumni – **James Jordan**
- Distinguished Alumni – **Ryan Sprowls**
- Distinguished Alumni – **Mark Williams**
- Spirit of Service Award – **Rick & Sue Utter**
- Outstanding Family Award – **The Tupper Family**

## **Homecoming Weekend – “Once Upon a Pride”**

Homecoming Week featured events across campus under the “Once Upon a Pride” theme. The Advancement team managed parade logistics and float preparations for the Alumni Association and Lionbackers. More than 50 floats registered, including 10 marching bands and community entries. Unfortunately, the parade was canceled due to weather, though many businesses and MSSU groups and organizations have submitted entries digitally through photo and video submissions for judging by the Parade Committee.

## **Willcoxon Innovation in Health Sciences Summit**

- Planning is well underway for the Willcoxon Innovation in Health Sciences Summit, scheduled for March 27, 2026.
- The promotional strategy is currently in development, with targeted outreach to area students, regional healthcare professionals, partners, and community members.
- More than 50 students have already registered, reflecting strong early interest and engagement.

## **WEB & DIGITAL COMMUNICATIONS**

A major focus of recent efforts has been improving and modernizing Missouri Southern State University’s website. The Alumni section of mssu.edu has been visually refreshed to enhance user experience and engagement. A new Alumni Benefits page highlights the value of staying connected after graduation, and collaboration with the Alumni Association Board of Directors provided feedback that helped shape both the content and layout.

A similar approach is now being applied to donor-focused webpages to ensure consistency in tone, design and storytelling across all digital platforms. In partnership with Crescendo Interactive, the team is also relaunching the estate giving website, which will feature a modern design, improved navigation and clearer pathways for donors to explore legacy giving opportunities.

## **LIONBACKER REPORT**

### **2025–26 Lionbacker Campaign**

- Campaign Launch: August 1, 2025
- Current Membership: 169 members

Note: Membership numbers reflect a later start date than usual, with additional members expected as basketball season ticket sales continue.

### **Lionbacker Events**

- Football Team Feed – August 7, 2025
- Meet the Lions: Fall Edition & Rally the Pride – August 16, 2025
- Meet the Lions: Winter Edition – October 21, 2025

# DR. SHELLIE HEWITT

## ASSOCIATE VICE PRESIDENT OF ADMISSIONS AND ENROLLMENT

Missouri Southern's Admissions and Enrollment Services team continue to refine processes and strengthen recruitment and retention efforts. Below is an overview of current initiatives for the fall semester.

### STRENGTHENING THE RECRUITMENT FUNNEL



One of our goals is to stabilize freshman enrollment while expanding out-of-state recruitment to increase residence life occupancy. We're enhancing communication with prospective students and their families by collecting richer data to deliver personalized, meaningful messages—rather than transactional ones.

These communications highlight educational value, post-graduation outcomes, study abroad programs, and immersive learning experiences that prepare students for success. We are also promoting the vibrancy of our campus and surrounding community to attract students beyond the Four State region.

Recognizing that parents are key decision-makers, we are expanding opportunities for direct engagement to ensure they see MSSU as the best choice for their student.

### REFRAMING THE MSSU BRAND



We are aligning MSSU's mission and strengths with a brand that resonates with today's students and parents. Working with industry partners, we're refining messaging to emphasize **cost**, **value**, and **trust**.

A key focus is introducing affordability discussions earlier in the process—explaining total cost and comparing it transparently with competitors. To help families understand the

true value of an MSSU education, we are incorporating data on employment outcomes and earning potential, both with and without a degree.

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Likewise, we're creating communications and marketing strategies that convey educational excellence in the Four State region, reflecting upon our new statewide mission.

## INTEGRATING YIELD AND FINANCIAL WELLNESS



We have integrated yield strategies into all recruitment and retention efforts while aligning scholarships and aid policies with institutional goals.

To enhance student financial well-being, we expanded the former default prevention position to include a financial wellness component. The Department of Education monitors universities' loan default rates closely—sanctions occur if rates reach 30% for three consecutive years or 40% in any single year.

Our proactive approach now focuses on early financial education and responsible borrowing. By equipping students with the knowledge to make informed financial decisions, we aim to lower default risk, protect federal funding eligibility, and strengthen long-term student success.

Through these initiatives, Missouri Southern reaffirms its commitment to serving students and preparing them to become knowledgeable, responsible, and successful global citizens.

# ROB MALLORY

## DIRECTOR OF ATHLETICS

### TRICK OR TREAT SO OTHERS CAN EAT



Missouri Southern student-athletes recently completed the 17th annual "Trick or Treat So Others Can Eat" food drive, collecting canned goods and other nonperishable items from neighborhoods throughout the community. The donations support Souls Harbor, a local human services and homeless shelter in Joplin. This year's event was again very successful, bringing in 6,156 items for donation at a critical time for Souls Harbor.

### MSSU HOSTS NCAA DIVISION II CENTRAL REGION CHAMPIONSHIPS



For the seventh consecutive year, Missouri Southern hosted the NCAA Division II Central Region men's and women's cross-country championships on Nov. 9 on campus at the nationally recognized Tom Rutledge Cross Country Course. This marks the ninth time Missouri Southern has hosted the event in the 13 seasons following regional realignment in 2012, and the 13th time overall. It is believed to be the most regional championship hosted in cross country by any NCAA Division II institution. After a break in 2026, the event will return to the MSSU campus in 2027.

### JOPLIN AREA SPORTS HALL OF FAME INDUCTION



The **1999-2000 Missouri Southern men's basketball team** was inducted into the Joplin Area Sports Hall of Fame on Oct. 9. The Lions finished that season with a record of 30-3 and were crowned MIAA regular-season and tournament champions before advancing to the national semifinals, where they lost to Metro State 75-74 in controversial fashion.

Eight of the 11 team members, along with head coach **Robert Corn** and assistant coaches **Paul Lusk** and **Chris Lowery**, attended the induction ceremony. The following day, Corn and team members **Adam Babcock**, **Blake Bard**, **Brad Mann**, **Carlos Newberry**, **Osiris Ricardo**, and **Eddin Santiago** were featured guests at a Lion Pride Luncheon.