Welcome to the inaugural edition of The Chimes. Built in 1969, the iconic chimes tower has witnessed generations of Norsemen pursue the dream of a college education. Like the chimes tower itself, this publication was created to give a bird’s-eye view of the exciting accomplishments of our alumni and students today.

Whether it’s been five years or almost 100 years, there is no denying the many changes at Northeastern Oklahoma A&M College – yet some things have stood the test of time. As alumni have experienced in the past, students on campus today are taking the first step toward a better future. Whether they are just starting out, starting over, or getting a head start on a better future.

As alumni and supporters of NEO A&M College, we are all bound by the Norse legacy. A college deeply rooted in tradition, NEO remains a national leader in both education and athletics. Despite continued drastic cuts in state funding, this is a campus dedicated to serving the needs of our students. As we continue to make improvements and advancements, our students continue to prove that the Norsemen are a force to be reckoned with—in the classroom, on the field, and across the nation.

In our first edition, you will get a small glimpse of life at NEO today. You can always stay up-to-date at www.neo.edu, follow us on Facebook and Twitter, or if you would like to see firsthand, I encourage you to call the NEO Foundation Office at 918-540-6250 to schedule a tour. The welcome mat is always out.

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Since 1983, NEO's Development Foundation has been committed to providing scholarships to deserving students. Last year alone, the Foundation gave $135,000 in scholarships to students and endowed six new scholarships with principal funds of $115,000. The Foundation currently has 18 board members who dedicate their time and work closely with Dr. Jeff Hale, President of Northeastern A&M College, to raise funds from the public to support future scholarships.

Oklahoma legislators have cut appropriations to NEO A&M College a staggering $3 Million over the past decade, with $2 Million of the cuts occurring in the last three years. On July 1, 2017, Oklahoma legislators announced a cut in appropriations of nearly $500,000 for this fiscal year. Dr. Jeff Hale continues to meet the challenge and burden caused by these cuts head on. The importance of NEO's Development Foundation is more critical today than any time in our college's history. NEO needs your support to continue the good fight.

NEO's student body core group continues to come from the counties of Ottawa, Delaware, and Craig counties in Oklahoma. However, we have students in attendance from a total of 62 counties in Oklahoma, 35 states, and 15 countries outside the United States. NEO's reputation for success in a student's chosen field of education is exceptional! We have become a multi-cultural college in the northeast corner of Oklahoma that enhances our students' college experience.

On November 2, 2017, the Foundation held its annual fundraising gala. The event was well attended and nearly $70,000 was raised. The success of this event is attributed to the individuals and businesses that donated items to the auction, the individuals and businesses that purchased tables for the banquet, and all the attendees who purchased the donated items. Northeastern Oklahoma A&M College and the NEO Development Foundation thank you.

DAVID THOMAS
NEO Development Chair
A PLACE TO CALL HOME

NEO has officially opened the new student housing for the fall 2017 semester and the building reached full capacity within days. Built as a mid-range priced alternative to the dorms and suites, the student rooms have two living units that share a private restroom. Each living unit houses two students and features storage space beneath raised beds, personal locked closets, and personal climate control.

Before the construction of the new unit, campus housing would reach near capacity each year, and nearly 90% of these facilities were outdated. With nearly 1,000 students living on campus, new housing is a critical factor in NEO’s ability to recruit students. For this reason, Dr. Jeff Hale ensured that new students housing was an institutional strategic goal during the 2015 planning process.

As part of NEO’s 2015 strategic planning process, the Information Technology goal team highlighted the extreme need for a complete fiber-optic network overhaul.

“This we had many problems with it,” said Matt Westphal, director of IT. “In several places, it was direct buried [meaning there was no shielding or protection for the cable], it was buried too shallow, or we didn’t know where all of it was. This meant that grounds work with a shovel in the wrong place could have potentially knocked out the internet for two or three buildings.”

The $1.7 million fiber-optic upgrade came in nearly $800,000 under the original cost estimates and boosts local internet speeds from 1 gig to 10, while extending connectivity to Synar Farm, Red Robertson Field, and the Carter House. Aside from the nearly 33,000 feet of fiber, NEO IT installed twice the amount of Wi-Fi switches to extend wireless access. The improved access means more students can connect and browse at faster speeds.

Not only did the fiber-optic upgrade improve internet access on campus, it laid the groundwork to triple the amount of security cameras on campus to improve student and employee security. These cameras feature face recognition, vehicle tracking, and motion tracking capabilities, with a vast improvement of video resolution.

While NEO began the planning process two years ago, the IT Department was ultimately forced to reset.

“Our a year ago, we rebooted whole fiber optic program, started from scratch,” Westphal said. “We started working with Chickasaw Telecom and Telco Supply on the project and I don’t think we could have picked better partners. They helped us tremendously from start to finish.”

The new fibre-optic network project has established a foundation that will allow future-proof growth and new technology becomes available. It is also an example of how NEO is dedicated to providing a safe and modern learning experience.
VISIONARY LEADERSHIP FOR TEAM NEO
A conversation with Dr. Jeff Hale, President of NEO.

In 2007, floodwaters jumped the banks of Tar Creek and caused massive damage to the campus of NEO. In the years following, officials took the devastation as an opportunity to breathe new life into the aging facilities, dwindling residence capacity, and stagnant community engagement. During the past decade, NEO has undergone over $50 million in campus improvements, produced record enrollment growth, increased its number of graduates by over 50 percent, implemented workforce ready degree programs, expanded co-curricular and intercollegiate programs for students, and grown the NEO Foundation assets from $750,000 to over $6 million.

The era of massive growth is thanks in large part to the visionary leadership of Dr. Jeff Hale, now entering his tenth year as the president of NEO A&M. Dr. Hale came to NEO with a desire to redefine the college as a two-year school where students didn’t have to miss having a “college experience.” His desire to make NEO a cultural, educational, and athletic hub in rural Oklahoma has produced nationally competitive athletic programs, internationally recognized academic organizations, and co-curricular teams that bring participants from all around the country.

NOT MANY PEOPLE KNOW THAT YOU ATTENDED A TWO-YEAR COLLEGE AS A FIRST GENERATION STUDENT. HOW DOES THAT SHAPE YOUR VIEW OF THE VALUE OF A TWO-YEAR EDUCATION?

As a first generation college student I gained an early appreciation for how foreign and difficult the transition to college can be for most young people. My own experience included several challenges that I was not prepared to handle. Ultimately, I think my own background has made my time at NEO so important and rewarding. I can relate to many challenges that students face as the first in their family to go to college.

WHEN YOU CAME TO NEO, THE COLLEGE WAS A BLANK CANVAS. WHAT WERE YOUR GOALS WHEN YOU STEPPED ON CAMPUS?

My primary goal was to be an effective college president. I needed to listen to the wishes of people who cared most about NEO. The students, faculty, staff, alumni, community, and regents all had plenty of great suggestions, which have created ten years’ worth of work and much more to do.

SPEAKING OF TEN YEARS’ WORTH OF WORK, DO YOU HAVE AN ACCOMPLISHMENT THAT MAKES YOU THE MOST PROUD?

I’ve never really looked at work accomplishments as individual achievements. The progress we’ve made at NEO has been a team effort. I’m one person. I can’t be in the science lab, Synar Farm, Red Robertson Field, and Ables Hall all the same time. I’m most proud of how Team NEO has been committed to building a college that we can all be proud of.

LAST YEAR, THE DONORS RAISED OVER $55,000 TOWARD THE HALE FAMILY SCHOLARSHIP. FIRST, WHY DO YOU THINK SCHOLARSHIPS ARE SO IMPORTANT TO NEO STUDENTS AND SECOND, WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO YOU AND DONNA THAT THE NEO ALUMNI COMMUNITY HAS SO MUCH LOVE AND TRUST IN YOUR FAMILY?

Scholarship support has become one of our greatest challenges. Rising costs have made it virtually impossible for students to “work their way through college.” Even though many students still work and go to school, you can’t work enough part-time hours to offset the costs. The honor that Donna and I received through the endowment of the Hale Family Scholarship is absolutely the nicest thing that has happened in my life. The NEO Foundation, community folks and faculty, students, and staff made the entire evening a very humbling experience.

FINALLY, NEO HAS UNDERGONE SOME TREMENDOUS CHANGES OVER THE LAST DECADE. WHERE WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE NEO GO IN THE NEXT TEN YEARS?

I’m really excited to see how far our young, emerging campus leaders can take the college experience at NEO. We have added a lot of new, talented professionals over the past several years, and I believe their hard work and leadership will make NEO the premier two-year college in America! We are on that path right now and we have the talent and desire to take it to the next level.

We sat down with Dr. Hale to discuss his upbringing, his time with NEO, and his vision for the future.

“Team NEO has been committed to building a college that we can all be proud of.”

- DR. JEFF HALE
President, NEO A&M College
Students enjoy the annual tradition of turning the fountain blue during the Homecoming kick-off.
During the 2017 Homecoming celebrations at NEO, the 1967 championship football team gathered to celebrate their golden anniversary. Ten alumni attended the annual Alumni Awards Luncheon and were honored during the Homecoming game. It was on Saturday, September 9, 1967 when the Golden Norsemen Football Team of NEO opened their season with a victory over the Oklahoma Military Academy in Claremore. This was the beginning of a great tenure for first year Head Coach Chuck Bowman.

The Norsemen finished the regular season with an 8-1 record and on November 29, NEO captured the 1967 NJCAA National Championship. The Norsemen defeated Lees-McRae, N.C., 35-13 in the fifth annual Shrine Bowl in Savannah, Ga., and completed the year with a 9-1 record.

NEO was led by All-American Quarterback Doug Mathews and All-American Linebacker Ronnie Lowe who both earned Most Valuable Player awards. Defensive Back John Pell also received All-American honors.

Assistant Coaches for the 1967 Team were John Tiger, Bob Maxwell, Jack Wallace, and Gary Howard.

NEO crowned the 2017 Homecoming Royalty during the homecoming game that saw the Golden Norsemen defeat the Cisco Wranglers 42-9. Ms. Morgan Smith was crowned as the 2017 Homecoming Queen and Mr. Marcus Trevino as the 2017 Homecoming King.

Smith is a sophomore Natural Science/Graphic Design double major from Welch, Okla., and represented the Norse Stars. She is the daughter of Kevin and Tammy Smith. Trevino is a sophomore Nursing student from Mineral Wells, Texas, and the son of Jose and Aracely Ibarra. He represented the Nursing Class. The candidates won based on their references, electronic portfolios, and pageant performance.

“The competition was tough and the judges really had their work cut out for them. Every person was an amazing candidate and it could have been anyone’s crown,” said Morgan Smith, 2017 Homecoming Queen.

“There were so many other great candidates and I’m honored to be representing our great campus. I am excited to do my part to make sure future generations succeed at NEO,” added Marcus Trevino, 2017 Homecoming King.
“I work hard from 8 to 5 so that I can play hard with my wife and kids.” Marcel Walther has every iron in the fire managing Security Bank and Trust in Miami during the work day, but catch him outside of his day job and you’re likely to find him at a community activity with his nine-year-old daughter Avery and seven-year old son Lane.

“We have something going on pretty much every night during the week, whether it is coaching softball, baseball, or gymnastics, they are getting involved in a lot of different extra-curricular activities.”

Marcel and his wife of sixteen years, Jill, juggle work, kids, and community events, but it’s Marcel’s continued dedication to his community and alma mater that earned him this year’s Outstanding Young Alumnus Award. Joining the ranks of the most distinguished young professionals to graduate from Northeastern Oklahoma A&M College, Marcel has spent the last sixteen years in professional finance building an impressive resume.

Growing up in the Miami area, attending NEO was an easy decision for Marcel. Apart from being an affordable option, his familiarity with the college was a critical part of his college success.

“NEO was the perfect transition for me from high school into college. Having grown up in Miami, having familiarity with the faculty and staff, and being in a class where the teacher actually knows your name gave me a good start as I headed into my college years.”

Following NEO, Marcel transferred to Oklahoma State University, where he earned a Bachelor’s Degree in Business Management with an emphasis in Finance. After graduation, Marcel began work with Haliburton Energy Services as an accountant. After a few years in the energy industry, Marcel transitioned to financial services and banking and worked with the Arvest Bank Group.

In 2012, the former president of Security Bank and Trust branch in Miami offered Marcel an offer that he couldn’t pass up: a chance to step into the top spot at the bank.

As a local business, Security Bank and Trust has the opportunity to support several programs through financial support. Events and programs like the “Daddy and Princess Autumn Ball,” “Miami FestiFALL,” and dozens of NEO programs receive support from Marcel and Security Bank.
In 1976, Dean Kruithof enrolled at Northeastern Oklahoma A&M College; and by his own admission, he had never planned on attending. The son of Rev. Dr. John and Marjory Kruithof, Kruithof had intended to attend a four-year university, but following his father’s passing, he chose to remain close to family.

While at NEO, Kruithof met his future wife Cynthia Allen while performing “Fiddler on the Roof,” and the couple married a few years later. As Kruithof neared the completion of his program at NEO, he began meeting with Dr. Bruce Lehman to discuss his academic future. Through Dr. Lehman’s mentorship, Kruithof selected a program at Oklahoma State University.

At OSU, Kruithof completed a bachelor and master’s program in Public Administration with emphasis on Business Management. After graduating from Oklahoma State University, Kruithof began his career in Wichita, Kan., before returning to Stillwater, Okla., to serve as the Assistant City Manager. During the next three decades, Kruithof developed an impressive resume of city management in Pittsburg, Kan.; DeKalb, Ill.; Fort Smith, Ark.; and Branson, Mo.

Before accepting his current position in Miami, Kruithof had just begun to settle into the life of a retiree. Following recruitment efforts in both Joplin, Mo., and Miami, Kruithof ultimately decided to re-enter public administration in 2014, when he became the city manager of his hometown. Over the past few years, he has worked with community leaders to make Miami an active partner with NEO, the Miami Regional Chamber of Commerce, Tribal and County governments, and business leaders to improve economic development opportunities in the region.

Kruithof and Cynthia currently live between Miami and Bentonville, Ark. They are the parents of a son, Marshall, living in Chicago, and a late son, Ross.

“My family and I have been blessed in more ways than I could have ever dreamed.”

Jerry Crawford is living every aspiring entrepreneur’s ambition. His dedication to hard work has led to his role as the President and CEO of Jani-King International, Inc., one of the world’s largest franchise systems.

Born in Miami, Crawford and his family moved as his father attended Oklahoma Baptist University before being called to ministry in Grove, Okla., while Crawford’s mother worked as a fourth grade teacher. While an athlete at Grove High School, Crawford also worked at Hurst Grocery Store in order to pay for his first car.

After graduating in 1971, Crawford’s family moved to Miami, where his father served as pastor of the Southern Hills Baptist Church. In that year, Crawford chose to attend Northeastern Oklahoma A&M College. While enrolled, Crawford participated in student activities, including attending Golden Norsemen football games, and continued his commitment to hard work by working at Farrier’s Grocery.

Following NEO, Crawford attended Central State University (now University of Central Oklahoma, UCO) majoring in Computer Science with a minor in Marketing. While in Edmond, he continued to build his resume by working at both Greenhaw’s Grocery and Tinker Airforce Base.

In 1987, Jani-King Founder Jim Cavanaugh selected Crawford to be a regional director. After only a year in the position, Crawford was promoted to the corporate office and he began to climb the corporate ladder. Now the CEO and President of Jani-King International, Inc., Crawford has been at the forefront of franchise development in both the United States and abroad for the past three decades.

Along with his position overseeing the day-to-day operations of the more than 12,000 franchisees in 17 countries, Crawford serves as a member of the International Franchise Association (IFA) Board of Directors, a position that he has held for over a decade.

Crawford and his wife Mary have been married for 29 years and he has 6 daughters and 11 grandchildren. With what little free time he has, Crawford enjoys flying his plane, playing golf, attending Sooner Football games, and traveling with his family.

“My family and I have been blessed in more ways than I could have ever dreamed.”

“It is an honor to recognize Dean Kruithof as this year’s Outstanding Alumnus for the School of Liberal Arts,” said Jennifer Walker, Executive Director of the NEO Development Foundation. “Dean has successfully dedicated his career to civic leadership and service and has made the cities he’s worked for better places to live, work, and play. The City of Miami is fortunate to have his leadership today.”

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School of Human Environmental Sciences

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“My family and I have been blessed in more ways than I could have ever dreamed.”
Few young professionals have experienced a meteoric rise like the one enjoyed by Dr. Shannon Cunningham. As a freshman from Shady Springs, West Virginia, Cunningham came to Northeastern Oklahoma A&M College to join the Agriculture program. A dedicated Aggie, Dr. Cunningham served as a member of the Equine Club, the Aggie Society, and was selected as a member of the Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society. She was also a member of the National Championship Equine Judging Team.

After graduating from NEO in 2000 with an Associate of Science in Agriculture, Dr. Cunningham left for Stillwater to join the OSU Cowboys and complete her bachelor’s degree. In 2003, she returned to NEO and over the next five years, she worked as an Agriculture faculty member and Equine Judging Coach. Along with creating the Ag Ambassador Club and developing Agriculture degree curricula, Dr. Cunningham led the Equine Judging Team to three straight American Quarter Horse Association (AQHA) World Show Championships.

While serving as Department Chair, Cunningham was selected as the Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs in 2012. She earned the Oklahoma FFA Honorary State Degree in 2012 and two years later, she earned the National FFA Honorary American Degree.

In 2017, she was selected by Richland College in Dallas, Texas as the Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs and Student Success.

“In my free time, she is a voracious reader, enjoys running and the outdoors, and traveling whenever she can.”

“Dr. Shannon Cunningham
School of Agriculture and Natural Sciences

Dr. Maxine Cornwell joined NEO in 1971 as part of a state home economics grant to establish a childcare lab school on campus. Likely, she did not know that she would help to build one of the most instrumental programs on the campus.

While at NEO, the success of the lab school program was based on the trust that the Miami community placed in NEO, Dr. Cornwell, and her students.

“The people in Miami were gracious and generous. That made working with each of those children so memorable. I still remember the cute things the toddlers said and did.”

Many of those children, now adults with children of their own, still keep in regular contact with Dr. Cornwell. She also noted that the close ties she made with her fellow faculty and staff members and the support she received during the tenure of Dr. D. Dayle Creech made working at NEO a wonderful experience.

Cornwell married NEO Maintenance retiree Marvin Cornwell following her retirement from NEO. The couple remained in the Miami area until Marvin’s passing. She now lives in Magnolia, Texas, with her daughter and after a brief adjustment to Texas culture, became involved in several social groups. Along with being an avid reader - which she identifies as the key to childhood development - Cornwell took up quilting and meets with a group each week.

“I’ve always been a supporter of education and learning, even now,” said Dr. Cornwell. “I try to read as much as I can and try new things to keep my mind sharp. Learning is one of the joys of my life.”

“I’ve always been a supporter of education and learning. [It’s] one of the joys of my life.”
Anna Milligan has been the driving force within the Development Foundation since 2009. As a member of the Foundation, Milligan has served as the chair of the Charles Banks Wilson Committee and was instrumental in the completion of the Charles Banks Wilson Gallery in Kah-Ne Hall. Thanks to her leadership, Foundation assets have nearly double from just over $3 million to more than $6 million, which included the largest gift in the history of the College - a $1.1 million estate gift from Charles Banks Wilson. Through this enormous growth, scholarships have nearly tripled, with annual funding reaching $135,000.

Milligan grew up in Miami, and graduated from NEO in 1959 with a Business Education degree. Following NEO, she went on to earn a Bachelor of Science and a Master of Arts degree from the University of Tulsa and a Library Science Certification from Oklahoma State University. From 1969 to 2005, Milligan served as the director of college counseling at Holland Hall School, a private Episcopalian school in Tulsa. During her tenure, she also served as a college consultant. Following her retirement, Milligan joined the NEO Development Foundation in 2009, where she has served as the chair since 2014.

Milligan and her late husband Marshall have two sons and she currently resides in Tulsa. She remains very active in the First Presbyterian Church of Tulsa and several community and civic organizations.

“It was a privilege to recognize Anna Milligan with the Award of Merit honor,” said Jennifer Walker, executive director of the NEO Development Foundation. “Anna has been a loyal ambassador for NEO and has given generously of her time, talents, and resources to her alma mater. For eight years, she has served on the NEO Development Board of Trustees, including serving the past three as chairwoman. She has been very dedicated to raising money for student scholarships and academic programs and her efforts have helped many students realize the dream of a college education.”

“‘It’s so encouraging to see how much a scholarship can make a difference in a student’s life.”
**Students to Watch**

**COOPER SECKER**
Cooper Secker is an Agriculture Business Major from Waterloo, Ill. He is a wrestler and an officer for the Young Farmers and Ranchers Club on Campus. After NEO, he plans to pursue an Agriculture Leadership degree.

**GRACE VOLKMANN**
Grace Volkman is a Nursing Major from New Franklin, Mo. After NEO, she plans on attending a four-year institution to earn a bachelor's degree so she can pursue the dream of helping and caring for others.

**GRANT HUBBARD**
Grant Hubbard is an Agriculture Business and Animal Science Dual Major from Miami, Okla. He is also a member of the livestock judging team. After NEO, he plans to earn a bachelor's degree in Agriculture Law.

**ADDEE CARDER**
Addee Carder is a General Agriculture Major from Miami, Okla. She is also a member of the NEO Rodeo Team. After NEO, she plans to pursue a four-year degree from OSU.

**JEFF TRUSSLER**
Rear Admiral Jeff Trussler was recently assigned as the Director of Future Plans at the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations in Washington, D.C. Trussler graduated from NEO in 1983 with a Pre-Engineering degree.

**SHANE KASTLER**
Shane Kastler is a Baptist Pastor in Lake Charles, La. He was recently honored by the Tennessee State Legislature for his book “Nathan Bedford Forest’s Redemption.” Kastler graduated in 1994 with a General Physics degree.

**CADENCE MILLER**
Cadence Miller is a musician and actress performing in Branson, Mo. She was recently selected for the Abba/Beach Boys Tribute Show at the Hamner Variety Theater. Miller attended NEO in 2011 pursuing a Music degree.

**ANDY BINGHAM**
Andy Bingham is the Vice President of Hutchinson Salt Co. The family-owned salt mining company is one of the largest salt mines in the Midwest and is celebrating 25 years of family ownership. Bingham graduated in 1994 with an Art degree.

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**CROWNING MISS INDIAN NEO**

The American Indian Center for Excellence (AICE) and the Native American Student Association (NASA) at NEO A&M College recently crowned Ravyn Whitebird (Comanche, Quapaw, Choctaw, Eastern Shawnee, and Blackfoot) from Indianahoma, Okla. as the 2017 Miss Indian NEO.

The competition, in its sixth year since its re-introduction to campus, was open to female NEO students who met GPA requirements. Whitebird was selected for her involvement in NASA and her academic success. Along with the title and the chance to compete in the national competition, the President’s Partners from NEO contributed a $200 scholarship to Whitebird.

“Receiving the title of Miss Indian NEO was an enormous honor and it comes with so many responsibilities,” said Whitebird. “I feel very humbled to represent not only NEO, but my tribes and my family as well. I hope to promote communication. I want to establish a better understanding of our culture and traditions to the public and work with the Native community to be more open and accepting of the mistranslations and the miscommunications and recognize this as an opportunity to teach others. I want to be used as an example to reach out to our Native youth and show them the importance of seeking a form of higher education to encourage future generations to succeed.”

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“I feel very humbled to represent not only NEO, but my tribes and my family as well.”

- RAVYN WHITEBIRD
2017 Miss Indian NEO
"My grandfather always knew that NEO was a beacon in Ottawa County and northeast Oklahoma," said Mick Wilson, grandson of Charles Banks Wilson, as he handed a $1.1 million check to NEO officials. "He would tell me about how this was the hub and how proud he was to have started the art department. I appreciate how good NEO has been to our family and my grandfather is smiling down today."

In April 2017, the Charles Banks Wilson Trust distributed the million-dollar gift to support arts education and establish scholarships for art students while at NEO. Wilson created the NEO Art Department in 1946 and served as its chair for fifteen years before retiring to full-time studio work.

The gift has been used to immediately establish five scholarships: two in the visual arts, one in band, one in music, and one in music-theater. Freshman Band Student Morgan Fleming from Miami, Okla., Freshman Art Major Evelyn Miller from Delaware, Okla., and Freshman Art Major Wendy Brown from Fairland, Okla., were the first five recipients of the Charles Banks Wilson Scholarship. Freshmen Music-Theatre Major Cheyenne Sanchez from Riverton, Kan., Freshman Art Major Evelyn Miller from Delaware, Okla., and Freshman Art Major Wendy Brown from Fairland, Okla., were the first five recipients of the Charles Banks Wilson Scholarship. Students received $1,000 toward their NEO education.

"In spite of reductions in state appropriations, NEO and its staff and faculty remain dedicated to art education," said Dr. Jeff Hale, NEO president. "There will always be a place for artists and the arts on the NEO A&M Campus. We can see the impact that our artists have had on our campus in the past and this gift will ensure that future artists can grow and develop their craft."

Former NEO Development Foundation Chair Anna Milligan accepted the gift on behalf of NEO, and it was under her leadership that NEO dedicate the Charles Banks Wilson Gallery in his honor in 2013.

"The sun is shining on NEO today. This is truly a wonderful and historic day."

NEO Theatre Experience

In 2015, a combination of faculty retirement, low graduation rates, and appropriations reductions led to the elimination of the Theatre Arts academic program at NEO. While Music Theatre remained a program option, students wanting to participate in plays and musicals had to search off-campus for opportunities.

However, two community directors have stepped up to ensure theatre remains an integral part of the NEO A&M College experience. In the wake of success with a previous partnership with NEO, Directors Aaron Smith and Phillip Shamblin have formed the NEO Theatre Experience. This initiative allows NEO students and alumni the chance to participate once again in plays and musicals on campus.

Freshman Band Student Morgan Fleming from Miami, Okla., Freshmen Music Major Michaela Haddox from Lenapah, Okla., Freshmen Music-Theatre Major Cheyenne Sanchez from Riverton, Kan., Freshman Art Major Evelyn Miller from Delaware, Okla., and Freshman Art Major Wendy Brown from Fairland, Okla., were the first five recipients of the Charles Banks Wilson Scholarship.

Aaron Smith said in an interview with the Miami News Record, "Working with NEO in the past, I realized how important performing on campus was for the students. It was something the administration wanted and we worked together to make it happen."

"We wanted to make sure that the students who show an interest in theater have the opportunity to perform while at NEO," said Vice President for Academic Affairs Dr. Bethene Fahnestock. "Both Aaron and Phillip are extremely talented and enthusiastic directors, and we are pleased with the work that they have produced with the students."

Dr. Jeff Birdsong, Communication and Fine Arts Department Chair noted that the history of theatre on the NEO campus is robust and the NEO Theatre Experience continues that legacy.

"We want the community to see what is being developed and to come out and enjoy the plays and musicals. NEO’s young actors have incredible talent and drive, and it’s something the community will want to experience and support."

"NEO’s young actors have incredible talent and drive, and it’s something the community will want to experience and support."

- DR. JEFF BIRDSONG
Chair, Liberal Arts Department
The Norwegian Legion

NEO’s community favorite band continues their tradition of excellence

“...organized in 1928 under the direction and supervision of Mr. Charles Parker. The personnel and equipment consisted of seven members: two cornets, a high pitch alto, one upright bass, two drums, and a piccolo.

“The musical library was very small, consisting of one set of beginners’ band books and a light overture entitled ‘Success.’”

The humble beginning of the Norwegian Legion was documented in “The Viking” student annual in 1935, but music has been a tradition at NEO since the founding of the college. Even at the first commencement ceremony in 1922, the School of Mines Girls Chorus presented “A Maying” as Willett Warne, Zella Donahue, and Waren Van DeGriff received their diplomas as the first graduates of the Miami School of Mines.
The college orchestra soon formed under the direction of Mrs. Beulah Parker before coming under the direction of Mr. Charles Parker. However, it was in 1931 when the band purchased its first uniforms that it earned a lasting identity.

According to the current Drum Majorette Chelsea Landrum, uniforms give legitimacy and community to band members.

“It sounds simple, but something like new uniforms doesn’t just encourage more people to join the Norwegian Legion, but it also shows that we value and take care our band members.”

After nearly two decades, that legacy was in jeopardy as enrollment had diminished and a permanent director was necessary to rebuild the program. Robert (Doc) Swanson took over in 1955 and was left with just a few old instruments. Over the next thirty years, he embarked on a campaign of growth that would define the Norwegian Legion.

From its height of nearly 70 members at the end of Doc Swanson’s tenure, the band slowly dwindled for the next twenty years.

In 2005, a new era of reconstruction began. Following years of low interest, Physical Therapist Instructor Danny Compton encouraged his son Adam to apply for the band director position at NEO. Up for the challenge, Compton immediately began researching the Norwegian Legion tradition in order to build upon the legacy.

“When I started studying and learning about the history of our program, we had a proud history and we had a band program that was pretty solid for a long time, but that wasn’t really the case when I got here.

“Our numbers were in the teens, the facilities were pretty shabby, the equipment was pretty rundown, and we used polo shirts and wind suits when I got here. I remember the kids were excited when we got matching polo shirts. We started from the ground and have been working our way up slowly, but surely.”

Much like Doc Swanson before him, Compton sees the opportunity that playing in a college band provided students.

“This program helps students adjust, because coming to college is an adjustment no matter who you are or where you’re from. I love watching the students interact with each other, because we get kids from all backgrounds. We get kids from small schools and small programs and we get kids from 6A schools where their programs are massive. It’s really neat to see how they interact and mesh when they all have that love of music and love of band.”

In 2007, Compton again took a page from history to legitimize the Norwegian Legion. Working with administration, Adam designed and purchased brand new uniforms for the three dozen students who were part of the band at the time.

“When we finally got the uniforms during the 2007-08 school year, it was an instant change in the persona of the band.”

Since 2005, Compton has returned the program to record-high domestic student numbers. In addition, the Norwegian Legion is one of the top recruiting tools for international students attending NEO. This includes students like Kenneth Sweeting, from the Bahamas.

“When I graduated from high school, my band teacher was actually in contact with Mr. Compton. I sent him a video and to my surprise, he replied! I said ‘Whoa, I got a scholarship!’ I was really nervous, but I was so excited that I started packing up three months before I was even supposed to come.”

“It’s really neat to see how they interact and mesh when they all have that love of music and love of band.”

- ADAM COMPTON
Director of Bands, NEO A&M College
Compton attributes much of his success to the relationships that he has built with high school band directors throughout northeastern Oklahoma and beyond. These relationships are absolutely critical to continued growth due to the high turnover rate of two-year band students.

“I plan on losing about half the band every year and that’s really a double-edged sword. On one hand we can start fresh all the time, but at the same time, you invest two years training someone for a university somewhere else. That’s just part of the challenge and joy of working at a two-year college. Knowing that I have an administration willing to support the arts and support the band is crucial.”

“I know that the administration wants to see growth just as much as I do. They realize that it takes tools to make that happen and they are willing to help provide those tools. They help provide scholarships, equipment, and more.”

Some of the tools required to grow the band program involve replacing the uniforms purchased in 2005. Aside from being a decade old, the Norwegian Legion has grown so much that there aren’t enough uniforms to go around. While the total cost for new uniforms will run $50,000, donors at the annual NEO Development Foundation Gala raised nearly $30,000 toward the purchase.

Compton notes that the uniforms will aid his number one goal for the NEO band to continue a pattern of growth.

“My main goal is to see continued growth in the program, both in size and quality. We are going to continue to bring in more and better musicians.”

“Too many kids don’t feel like they have the opportunity to go to college because they don’t fit in a certain mold, whether that is finances, academic ability, or more, but band provides that opportunity to get kids involved in something. Once they’re here, we can help them grow and build and move on to bigger and better things. Year after year, we send students off to universities of all sizes, all over the country, and that makes me proud to know that we can make a difference in these kids’ lives.”

“I know that the administration wants to see growth just as much as I do. They realize that it takes tools to make that happen and they are willing to help provide those tools.”

-ADAM COMPTON
Director of Bands, NEO A&M College
EXCEEDING OKLAHOMA’S HEALTH CARE NEEDS

One of Oklahoma’s fastest growing job sectors is healthcare and in 2015, employers posted over 4,700 nursing positions per month. This enormous demand is paramount in the minds of NEO nursing faculty as they prepare RN students for careers. Along with work-ready certifications, NEO nursing students rank #1 statewide for Pre-BSN program completion among associate degree programs.

In order to best prepare students, Program Director Debbie Morgan and the NEO Nursing faculty completed a 2017 curriculum revision process, while also earning re-accreditation through the Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing (ACEN).

“We seek to produce the best nurses and have revised our nursing curriculum to match current national best practices,” said Morgan.

NEO produces a diverse group of nurses, with Diverse Issues in Higher Education recognizing NEO as the national leader in producing Native American associate degree RNs and top-5 in associate degree health professions. Native American nursing students benefit from the cooperation between the Program and American Indian Center for Excellence (AICE).

“The Nursing Department kept me in my books and AICE provided a great place to study. I practically lived in the AICE building through my first year of nursing school,” said former Native American Student Association Vice-President and Program Graduate Lindsey Haas.

The NEO Nursing Program accepts up to 64 students in the traditional program and up to 20 for the Fast Track LPN/Paramedic option, and produces 70 graduates each year. As the nursing industry continues to grow, NEO students will continue to be its leading edge.

“We seek to produce the best nurses and have revised our nursing curriculum to match current national best practices.”

- DEBBIE MORGAN
Director of Nursing, NEO A&M College

SERVING UP FRESH IDEAS

NEO Love’s Cup Business Team Earns Third Place

The experience of dining at “The Social Niche” sounds like a scene from a science fiction movie, but the idea comes from the minds of a group of NEO student-entrepreneurs and earned them the $5,000 third prize at the 2017 Love’s Entrepreneur’s Cup competition Cup.

NEO competed in the Small Business Division against thirty other entries, including those from OSU-OKC, Oral Roberts University, and the Oklahoma Christian University. This marks the third time in five years that NEO has placed in the top three and the first top three finish for Instructor Calvin Becker.

While many restaurants feature big-screens, “The Social Niche” would display social network feeds on screens. Guests order their food through an app, which would allow for a custom sit-down meal or a grab and go wrap.

“The team had to give their presentation and pitch to two sets of judges and had to field some tough questions, but they hit a grand slam,” said Becker.

Sophomore Travis Hins, from Miami, Okla., led the team. He was joined by Sophomore James Bowman of Kansas, Okla., Mike Ferry of Miami, and Hannah Stephens from Vinita, Okla.

Entries were judged by a panel of investment and business experts. Eight teams were selected to give oral presentations and only six teams were selected to compete for the top three spots.

“It wasn’t just some hypothetical problem,” said Bowman. “We were running actual projections and focusing on profit and expansion.”

The students came away with valuable experience, credits toward completing their degree, and equal share of the prize money.
The Cream of the Crop

The Top Ten Freshmen honors are presented each year to the ten sophomores who set themselves apart during their first year. A committee of faculty, President’s Partners representatives, and student activities representatives select honorees. Students receive scholarships as well as the opportunity to participate in leadership development activities.

During this year’s ceremony, Upward Bound Director Elsie Grover delivered the keynote address and encouraged the students to persist and remain committed to seeking excellence.

The Cream of the Crop

HUNTER BOHN
Hunter Bohn is a Natural Sciences major from Columbus, Kan. He is a member of the PTK Honor Society and has also been recognized on the President’s Honor Roll with a 4.0 GPA.

BRANDY BROGDON
Brandy Brogdon hails from Grove, Okla., and is majoring in Accounting. She serves as the Vice President of Service for the PTK Honor Society and has earned both President’s and Dean’s Honor Roll recognitions.

CARLOS DIAZ
Carlos Diaz hails from Houston, Texas and is a Business Administration major. He is in PBL, the Christian Student Fellowship, and is the President of the Investment Club. He is on the President’s Honor Roll and maintains a 4.0 GPA.

LYNDESY HARVEY
Lyndsey Harvey is an Agriculture Business major from Claremore, Okla. She has maintained a 4.0 GPA and is a member of the Equestrian and Horse Judging teams, the PTK Honor Society, Ag Ambassadors, and Student Ambassadors.

KARSON MAPLE
Karson Maple is a Natural Sciences major from Cashion, Okla. She is member of the PTK Honor Society, STEM Club and Student Ambassadors, and has been recognized on the Dean’s Honor Roll.

BRIANNE NELEN
Brianne Nelsen is an Agriculture Business major from Fredonia, Kan. She has maintained a 4.0 GPA and is an active member of the NEO Student Ambassadors, Aggie Society, and Forestry Club.

JONNI NIGRO
Jonni Nigro is a Nursing major from Miami, Okla., She is a member of the PTK Honor Society, holds a 4.0 GPA, and has been recognized on the President’s Honor Roll.

RYAN PERRY
Ryan Perry is a Pre-Engineering major from Miami, Okla. He served as a supervisor for the SMART program and works for the NEO CASA.

MAGGIE PORTER
Maggie Porter is an Agriculture Business major from Kansas City, Mo. She has been on the President’s and Dean’s Honor Rolls and is a member PTK, Ag Ambassadors, and senator for SBG.

KRISTIN STRONG
Kristin Strong is a Natural Science major from Maysville, Mo. She is a member of the PTK Honor Society, NEO softball team, and has been recognized on the Dean’s Honor Roll.
The full-time faculty consisting of Alisen Anderson, Amanda Burrows, Taylor Graham, and Chase Fairweather support Nygren. Anderson teaches Agronomy, pasture and range, leadership, and NEO FYE/CLS courses. Before NEO, she served as the NEO student body government president before receiving her Master’s degree in Agriculture Education. She is the Agriculture Education Club Sponsor as well as the Hog Herdsman.

Amanda Burrows teaches Equine courses and coaches both the Horse Judging and Equestrian teams, which has recently had tremendous success. After graduating from NEO, Burrows received a Bachelor’s degree from OSU and later a Master’s degree in Equine Nutrition from West Texas A&M University.

Taylor Graham joins Burrows in the coaching sphere. Graham graduated from OSU with a Master’s degree in Meat Science and serves as the cattle expert, teaching Beef Reproduction, Meat Animal and Carcass Evaluation, and Farm and Ranch Management courses. He also serves as the Beef Herdsman and Livestock Judging coach.

Newest among the full-time faculty is Chase Fairweather. Following the retirement of Mike Neal, Fairweather took the reins of the Natural Resource and Ecology program. After his education at NEO, Fairweather transferred to OSU to earn a degree in Natural Resource Ecology Management. He is currently completing his Master’s degree work at Southwestern Oklahoma State University. Each of the faculty members is dedicated to not only upholding, but building on the NEO Aggie tradition.

“Since its inception, NEO A&M College has been dedicated to preparing a skilled and knowledgeable workforce,” says Nygren. “While industry demands have changed over time, the need for qualified graduates has not. The Aggie tradition guides our daily work and serves as a beacon for students and the community.”

“Since its inception, NEO A&M College has been dedicated to preparing a skilled and knowledgeable workforce.”

-MCKENZIE NYGREN
Department Chair, Agriculture

Over the past decade, the Agriculture Department at NEO has experienced tremendous growth. Building on the groundwork laid by their predecessors, a new generation of instructors have taken the reins. Affectionately referred to as “The Young Guns” by President Hale, the five full-time faculty members have an average age under 30 years old. However, to Department Chair McKenzie Nygren, the tradition of highly qualified, young, enthusiastic faculty in the Ag Department is nothing new.

“More than three decades ago, a young group of professionals ascended in the NEO Agriculture Department; they would later become legends at NEO. Our faculty makes daily sacrifices to teach and lead the next generation of agriculturalists. Because we are part of that generation, we bring a new perspective and the latest science to the classroom. With the challenges we have as an industry, it is imperative that we move forward with optimism and pride.”

Among the faculty, four of the five are NEO alumni, a fact that adds to the tradition built into the program. Nygren began as interim director in 2015 and has since assumed the permanent position. Under her leadership, the department has forged new partnerships, including a groundbreaking agreement with the Grand River Dam Authority. As part of that program, the department recently initiated its very first undergraduate research project focused on winter wheat production.
Agriculture students are getting more hands-on training with sheep, cows, and hogs in the brand new indoor/outdoor Animal Science Building at Synar Farm. NEO and State officials, along with student representatives hosted a ribbon cutting for the Animal Science Building at the eighth annual Founders’ Day in March 2017. The new facility was put into use during the Fall 2017 semester.

“Synar Farm at NEO has six decades of rich history,” said Dr. Hale during the event. “This new Animal Science Lab will ensure that the next generation of students at Northeastern Oklahoma A&M College will continue to build on that history through excellence in agriculture education.”

“Buildings like this are an investment cost in our students,” added Taylor Graham, NEO Agriculture instructor and head livestock judging coach. “Students will receive modern, hands-on education. The lab will also serve as a valuable recruiting tool that complements our already broad agriculture curriculum.”
NEO ATHLETICS

When Dr. Hale came to NEO in 2007, he challenged each athletic program to be nationally competitive. In the last decade, NEO has met that challenge and athletes have produced tremendous results. Of the most recent accomplishments, Golden Norsemen Football earned a SWJCC Regional Championship, the Equestrian Team produced the National Champion Rider, and NEO Wrestling has consistently earned individual and team National Championships.

Led by Athletic Director Coach Dale Patterson, the Athletic Department has expanded its borders to include basketball, baseball, softball, soccer, football, wrestling, volleyball, equestrian, equine judging, livestock judging, rodeo, cheer, and Norse Stars. Each program is coached by dedicated experts and includes athletes who are dedicated to excellence.

Since the first football players and basketball players sought to "perpetuate and maintain enthusiasm within the school and to assist and direct the lower classmen to their proper station," NEO athletics has served to promote sportsmanship and excellence at the two-year college level.

While athletic excellence is paramount within the department, NEO coaches recognize the importance of a well-rounded student. Each year, dozens of student-athletes transfer to four-year programs with classroom confidence they might not have possessed when entering NEO. Through study halls and team building exercises off the field, court, or arena, athletes leave NEO as leaders.

Through the constant support and encouragement of NEO alumni, this pattern will continue. Following the example of the NEO alumni who have remained engaged in program excellence, NEO student-athletes will continue to support their alma mater and act as an example of excellence in not only athletics, but also academic and personal excellence. Coach Red Robertson coined the phrase "Once a Norseman, Always a Norseman" with this goal in mind and NEO athletes continue to bear that torch today.

CREATING A NEW DYNASTY OF WRESTLING CHAMPIONS

One of the most talked about names on the two-year wrestling circuit is the 6’ 2”, 165 pound powerhouse Wyatt Jordan. The sophomore Agr-Business Major from Collinsville, Oklahoma made waves last year with a 39-9 record and his 5-0 finish at the National Championship.

Along with his National Title, Wyatt’s 2016-17 season was explosive. He finished champion at the West-Central District Qualifier, champion at the Golden Norse Open, champion at the Newman University Jet Invitational, and runner-up at the Maryville University Kaufman/Brand Open.

His season record was 39-9 against all opponents, but a staggering 25-3 against two-year college opponents, accumulating 19 falls. It all culminated with the National Championship in Council Bluffs, Iowa. Wyatt put together an impressive tournament, going 5-0 and racking up two falls and a 6-2 decision in the final match. Jordan attributes much of his success to Wrestling Head Coach Joe Renfro.

"Renfro gives you a mental edge. I doubted myself in high school when I went up against kids who had won a state title or had more 'fame,' but coach makes sure you have it in your head that you're the baddest dude out there. He really changed my perspective."

Renfro also believes that improvement in self-confidence has transformed him into a key leader of the NEO squad.

"Wyatt is a proven leader," said Renfro. "Anyone can preach what needs to be done, but Wyatt practices what he preaches. Having a great young man like Wyatt on the team is truly a benefit and blessing for not only the Coaching staff, but the entire team."

Red-shirt freshman Physical Education Major Shawn DeShazer joined Jordan in earning a National Title. DeShazer won the 133-pound class with a 10-6 division over Iowa Central’s Zak Hensley.

Jordan remains at NEO and has already earned several top finishes for the 2017-18 season. Coach Renfro is confident Jordan will continue to succeed if he works hard.

"We won't be placing undue stress on him, but he still has to better himself as a student and an athlete. If he continues to work hard, he'll be fine," said Renfro. "My expectations of Wyatt are for him to do his best in class, wrestling, community projects, and more. That is our overall expectations from every member of the NEO wrestling team, year in and year out."
The NEO Golden Norsemen claimed the Southwest Junior College Football Conference Championship with a 26-10 rout of Trinity Valley Community College.

“Our motto since last spring has always been ‘All the Way Up’ as a team,” second-year NEO head coach Clay Patterson said. “These kids were working every day to earn a conference championship and I am very proud of their success.”

Along with field goals of 29, 26, and 33 yards by Riley Hathhorn, the Golden Norse defense held TVCC to just 10 points.

“Our defense played superb the entire game, but especially in the second half,” Patterson said. “All year long we’ve relied on them. First year defensive coordinator Dustin Landry and his staff have done a great job getting their groups ready.”

Following the championship, NEO was selected to face off against Independence Community College in the inaugural Midwest Classic Bowl. Despite a terrific run game by Sophomore Running Back Darwin Thompson and the high-flying talent of Sophomore Tight End Jace Sternberger, NEO ultimately fell 20-30 during the exhibition game.

Mr. Spencer Tillman spoke at the NEO Legends Banquet on September 16, thanks to the support of Crossland Construction Company, Inc. Tillman spoke to boosters and athletes about the importance of preparing to compete, not only on the field, but also in life.

“The Red Zone in football is a physical location on the field, but it is also a set of circumstances that you should apply to your life. By training yourself to perform when obstacles are formidable, options are limited, and success is critical, you will be able to emerge as a leader.”

Spencer Tillman made his name at the University of Oklahoma, where he was an All-American running back. He captained the 1985 championship team and was named UPI Player of the Year of the Big Eight Conference in 1982, Big Eight Football Newcomer of the Year in 1983, and the MVP of the 1987 Orange Bowl.

After OU, Tillman was drafted in the fifth round of the 1987 draft by the Houston Oilers, where he remained for two seasons. He earned a Super Bowl ring with the San Francisco 49ers in Super Bowl XXIV and transitioned into broadcasting following the completion of his playing career with the Oilers in 1994.

NEO began hosting the Legends Banquet in 2015 as a way to bring legendary sports names to the Miami community.

“NEO Athletics was very excited to continue our Legends Series by bringing Spencer Tillman to our Campus and Community,” said Dale Patterson, NEO Athletic Director. “His experiences at OU, professional football, and sports broadcasting were entertaining and enlightening. He is a terrific role model for our student athletes.”
NEO ALUMNUS COACH IVerson LEADS A TEAM EFFORT

At the helm of two powerhouse women's athletic teams is Coach Eric Iverson. As head coach of both the softball and volleyball programs, Iverson has driven each to be nationally competitive. He notes, however, that success stems from a network of alumni, family, and athletes.

“Both of my programs have been blessed with so much support from former players. When an alumna shows up to campus or at a game, our players get to see firsthand what “Once a Norseman, Always a Norseman” really is all about. Neither program would be where they are without our alumni.”

Iverson is nearing his 1000th win with the NEO softball program, a benchmark that he is likely to hit this season. The milestone will be a first for an NEO softball coach, but Iverson doesn’t see the accomplishment as his own.

“This is a special moment in my career and it is very significant to me, but I recognize every day that my wife and daughters have made sacrifices to help me get here. Honestly, this is a program accomplishment. This is all about current and former players, not just me. I wish there was a way to express to every single player that has come through this program that they are part of this achievement, and that they are the reason our program has done so well.”

Through his leadership, both the volleyball and softball teams have become regulars at the national tournament. Over the last six years, Iverson has coached eight National Tournament teams between softball and volleyball. As the programs continue to grow and develop, NEO fans are eager to see the results that Coach Iverson will continue to produce.

NEO Women’s Basketball is experiencing a golden era thanks to the leadership of Coach Jim Rowland. Under his direction, the Lady Norse have won the OCAC conference four years in a row and have earned back-to-back regional titles. The team built a record of 58-7 during the 2015-16 and 2016-17 seasons, and much of that success was due to Maria Delgado, a 5’9” guard from Bucaramanga, Columbia.

“Maria made a tremendous impact to our team,” said Coach Rowland. “She was an incredible player for NEO. She played hard, had a good attitude, was a great student, and gave 100% all the time. I am very proud of Maria as an athlete, a student, and an individual.”

Dr. Jeff Hale awarded Delgado with the Profile in Success Award before she graduated in 2017. The award is given to students who overcome adversity and display extraordinary courage. Delgado lost her mother, Esperanza Delgado, and her grandmother, Flor Suarez de Delgado, while playing at NEO.

“Maria lost her mom and her grandmother while playing for us and every game she played, she dedicated to them,” added Rowland.

In spite of adversity, Delgado was selected as the first Lady Norse First-Team All-American of the modern era. During the most recent season, she shot an impressive thirty-eight percent from behind the arc and she averaged sixteen points, four rebounds, and two assist per game. She was also named as the 2017 All-Region Player of the Year.

Delgado is currently a junior playing for the Lady Techsters at Louisiana Tech under Coaches Brooke and Scott Stoehr.
CHANGING LIVES THROUGH GENEROSITY

Without a scholarship from the NEO Development Foundation, Jordan Heesse isn’t sure he would have received a college education.

“Raised by a single parent, our income was slightly too high to qualify for financial aid; yet not enough to cover the rising cost of tuition,” recalls Hessee. “On top of that, our house burned down one month before my high school graduation, so a scholarship was my best chance of attending college.”

During Miami High School’s senior awards assembly, Hessee was honored with a donor-funded scholarship through the NEO Foundation. The two-year scholarship paved the way for an associate’s degree.

“My life was changed because of a generous donor,” he adds.

Founded in 1983, more than $2 million dollars in scholarships have been awarded by the Development Foundation. Led by an enthusiastic Board of Trustees and supported by alumni from across the state and nation, the NEO Foundation has experienced dramatic growth over the past three decades. By focusing investments on long-term growth while balancing the wishes of donors and the needs of the college, the Foundation’s portfolio has grown to more than $6 million in assets.

“From academics to athletics and the arts, the NEO Foundation Board of Trustees are fiercely dedicated to supporting student scholarships, faculty development, building projects, and campus initiatives at NEO,” said Jennifer Walker, executive director.

In 2009, the NEO Foundation implemented the President’s Partners annual giving program. To date, members have contributed more than $450,000 and generously supported programs including the Top Ten Freshmen scholarship program, study abroad opportunities for students, ACT prep classes for future students, textbook loan program, campus beautification projects, athletic travel to national competitions, and other worthwhile initiatives.

Last year, the NEO Foundation secured its largest gift to date - the $1.1 million estate gift from Charles Banks Wilson. Deeply committed to enhancing the arts on campus, the Foundation is proud to have played a major role in the dedication of the Charles Banks Wilson Art and Cultural Education Center in Kah-Ne Hall.

As public funding for higher education shrinks, the NEO Foundation has risen to the challenge. To make a tax-deductible gift or learn more about the President’s Partners program, please contact the NEO Foundation Office at 918-540-6250.

NEO DONORS STEP UP TO SUPPORT STUDENTS

NEO calls on the community each autumn to dress their best and enjoy a night of fun at the annual Development Foundation Fundraising Gala. The event offers a plated meal, cocktails and wine, and the opportunity to take home fabulous gift packages, while supporting NEO scholarships.

This year, NEO hosted the “Unmask a Dream” masquerade gala and raised nearly $70,000, with $27,000 supporting the purchase of new uniforms for the Norwegian Legion Marching Band.

“We had an amazing night, thanks to the generous support of so many people who believe in the mission of NEO,” said Jennifer Walker, executive director of the NEO Development Foundation.

“With the funds raised, the NEO Foundation will help students realize the dream of a college education and provide financial support to campus programs and initiatives.”

Buffalo Run General Manager and NEO Foundation Trustee Steve Bashore served as the emcee for “Unmask a Dream,” and during dinner, a jazz ensemble of NEO students from the Bahamas provided entertainment.

The total amount raised during the auctions and scholarship drive was nearly $70,000, bringing the two-year total to nearly $150,000. The funds from the event benefit NEO students through scholarships and student services.
NEO seeks to be a national leader in rural, two-year college education by providing outstanding academic programs, co-curricular learning experiences, intercollegiate athletics, and campus life.