The Chimes
NORTHEASTERN OKLAHOMA A&M COLLEGE
ALUMNI MAGAZINE
Volume 2

2018 OUTSTANDING ALUMNI
WELCOME BACK

One hundred years ago, the Miami School of Mines opened its doors with the intent to train workers for the booming mining industry in Northeast Oklahoma. The school was initially located in the Mining and Exchange building on Main Street in Miami, Oklahoma, where 26 students began classes in the fall of 1919. Two years later, the first graduating class was comprised of three students, with dozens more enrolling each semester.

Over the next century, the school grew, first evolving to become Northeastern Oklahoma Junior College in 1924, before joining the Oklahoma Agriculture and Mechanical college system and rebranding as Northeastern Oklahoma A&M College in 1943. Now the largest residential two-year college in the state of Oklahoma, NEO has expanded its mission to promote excellence in learning, service and leadership in a global society.

Today NEO is a national leader in both academics and athletics, offering more than 50 academic programs, ranging from certification courses to associate degree programs within five academic departments. Nearly 3,000 students enroll in NEO classes each fall and NEO is highly regarded as an institution that has stood the test of time.

While a lot has changed over the course of a century, many things have endured and grown stronger. As you will see in this issue of The Chimes, Norsemen from all generations are making a difference in their professions, in their communities, across the state and around the world.

There has never been a better time to be a Norseman! As our centennial celebration quickly approaches, I urge you to connect and get involved with your alma mater. You can always stay up-to-date at www.neo.edu, follow us on Facebook and Twitter, or if you would like to visit us in person, please call the NEO Foundation Office at 918-540-6250 and schedule a tour. The welcome mat is always out.

JENNIFER WALKER
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, NEO FOUNDATION

TABLE OF CONTENTS

FOUNDATION BOARD 4-5
A DECADE OF SUCCESS 6-7
NEO PRESIDENT - DR. JEFF HALE 8-9
HOMECOMING 2018 10-21
STUDENTS/ALUMNI TO WATCH 22
SOCCER FACILITY 23
MILLIGAN HALL DEDICATION 24-25
AGRICULTURE 26-35
ADMIRAL JEFF TRUSSLER 36-41
ATHLETIC HALL OF FAME 42-51
PHI THETA KAPPA 52
HONORS PROGRAM 53
RODNEY SPRIGGS 54-55
WHY I GIVE 56-57
NEO THEATRE EXPERIENCE 58-59

ADMINISTRATION

Dr. Jeff Hale
PRESIDENT

Dr. Bethene Fahnstock
V.P. - ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

Dr. Mark Rasor
V.P. - FACULTY AFFAIRS

Amy Ishmael
V.P. - STUDENT AFFAIRS

CREDITS

COPYWRITING/EDITING
Jordan Adams

PHOTOGRAPHY
David Frazier, ICG, & Jordan Adams

DESIGN/LAYOUT
David Frazier

EDITING
Jennifer Walker

PRINTING
Sooner Printing
Miami, OK
FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Dear NEO Alumni and Friends,

Reaching the honored age of 100 years is an amazing achievement for any person, business, or institution. On March 17, 2019, NEO will achieve this esteemed age. This calls for acclamation, celebration, and reflection.

ACCLAMATION: From humble beginnings as a School of Mining, NEO has grown into a college that meets the needs of students who excel in mathematics, sciences, agriculture, arts, nursing, and athletics, etc. After high school, NEO is the ideal place for progression of students who will one day be our movers and shakers...tomorrow’s leaders.

CELEBRATION: The mere fact that NEO has endured many hardships is amazing. NEO was established at the beginning of the Great Depression and has lasted through times of recession, wars, cutbacks, and other hardships. We have cause to celebrate, not only its endurance, but also the fact that NEO has continued to survive throughout its history. We also have reason to believe, with your help, this success will continue into the far future.

REFLECTION: Reflecting on past successes, we are filled with many emotions: Humility - That we have been given the opportunity to be a part of the future of this great school, Hope - That we can live up to the actions of our predecessors; and Optimism - That working together we can help NEO grow into and achieve its great potential.

These are exciting times for NEO A&M! As chairman of the Foundation, I avidly look forward to working under the leadership of Dr. Hale, working with each one of you who support our school, and, most importantly, working and mingling with the students who are the ones who truly make this school great. Hopefully, in another one hundred years, our future leaders will look back with appreciation on our efforts we are now making.

GO GO NEO!

DAVID THOMAS
NEO FOUNDATION CHAIR
Established in 1983, the NEO Development Foundation has been committed to advance, through philanthropy, the success of NEO A&M College. In the past ten years, the NEO Development Foundation has experienced tremendous growth, including an increase in assets from $700,000 to more than $7 million. The work of the NEO Foundation funds hundreds of student scholarships each year and supports countless campus programs and projects.

In January of 2015, the NEO Foundation embarked on a feasibility study to determine alumni and community support for a capital campaign to celebrate NEO’s centennial.

Since then, more than $4 million has been raised to support four areas: Student Access and Success; Facilities Improvement; Oklahoma Workforce Needs; and Instructional Innovations and Excellence. The NEO Foundation will join NEO A&M College during the Founders’ Day Celebration in March of 2019 to formally kick off the centennial campaign.

In the past ten years, the NEO Foundation has increased endowment funding by more than 800%. Today the NEO Foundation boasts over $3.1 million in endowments that support scholarships to deserving students, worthwhile academic programs and intercollegiate activities on campus. Thirty-eight new endowments have been established since 2008, totaling more than $2.8 million dollars.

During the past decade, the NEO Foundation has also awarded more than $700,000 in scholarship funding to deserving students — many of whom would not have been able to realize the dream of a college education without scholarship assistance.

Funded by generous donors through endowments and contributions to the general scholarship fund, hundreds of students have benefited from NEO Foundation scholarships.

As the volatility in state funding for Oklahoma public colleges and universities continues, private support from donors becomes vital to NEO’s efforts to provide an affordable education to students. With a tax deductible donation, you can be a part of our students’ success and help today’s Norsemen become the leaders of tomorrow! For more information, contact the NEO Development Foundation Office at 918-540-6250 or give online at: neo.edu/foundation.
LOOKING FORWARD TO THE CENTURY TO COME
A CONVERSATION WITH DR. JEFF HALE, PRESIDENT OF NORTHEASTERN OKLAHOMA A&M COLLEGE

Dr. Jeff Hale came to NEO following a devastating flood in 2007. Over the past decade, he has ushered in a new golden age of NEO as one of the premier two-year colleges in the country. We had a chance to sit down with Dr. Hale and discuss the upcoming centennial year, his greatest successes and challenges, and what NEO has meant to him and his family.

NEO IS PREPARING TO CELEBRATE ITS CENTENNIAL YEAR. WHAT EVENTS DOES THE COLLEGE HAVE PLANNED TO MARK THE OCCASION?

“I could not be more honored to serve as NEO’s 15th president during its centennial year. We will kick off our centennial celebration on February 28 and March 1, when the A&M Regents come to town for their board meeting. The last week in March, we will celebrate Centennial Week, around Founders’ Day, with a variety of faculty, staff, student, retiree, and alumni events. We’ll launch a Centennial Campaign seeking to raise important dollars for student scholarships, and we will host nationally known speakers throughout the 2019 calendar year.”

NEO HAS GONE THROUGH SEVERAL ERAS OF GROWTH, ONE BEING THE PAST DECADE SINCE YOU BECAME PRESIDENT. WHAT ARE THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS YOU ARE MOST PROUD OF?

“I think the one thing I’m most proud of is the collective effort from our students, faculty, alumni, donors, staff, and the community of Miami. We’ve had a front row seat to watch the campus be transformed with nearly $70 million worth of campus improvements; we’ve seen the emergence of several new programs, including Process Technology, Construction Sciences, NEO Equestrian, and NEO Wrestling; we’ve revitalized several existing programs, including NEO Nursing and the Synar Farm; and in 2012 and 2013 we were recognized as one of the fastest growing rural colleges in the country. I believe history will show that the decade leading up to the centennial was filled with excitement, widespread success, and a collection of partnerships that helped move the college in the right direction.”

WE’VE CONTINUED TO SEE CONSTRUCTION TAKING PLACE ON CAMPUS. WHAT IS THE FIVE YEAR PLAN FOR CONTINUING TO IMPROVE NEO?

“Our focus has clearly shifted to deferred maintenance. It’s very exciting to celebrate a centennial, but that means we have 70 - 80 and 90-year old buildings with 40 - 50 and 60-year old heat and air systems, old roofs and windows, poor lighting, and security measures from the 20th century. If NEO is to remain a competitive, rural, residential campus going forward, we must re-equip our older classroom buildings in a modern and safe fashion. Only three times in the 112-year history of Oklahoma have Oklahoma leaders provided bond funds to maintain older buildings on college campuses. Many states provide capital funding every year. There is no greater physical challenge going forward.”

AS NEO BEGINS ITS SECOND CENTURY, WHAT ARE YOUR GREATEST CONCERNS?

“Massive funding cuts to public colleges and universities in Oklahoma have brought about great instability to our rural colleges. My greatest fear is that Oklahoma’s leaders will continue to walk away from rural Oklahoma. As our population flocks to the Tulsa Metroplex, the OKC Metroplex, and the Lawton area, I think we will continue to see small, rural colleges targeted for closure or consolidation. More pressure is likely to be applied to regions and communities to support public colleges much like the public schools. It will take great effort and political strength for schools like NEO to be around for another 100 years.”

YOU’VE SERVED AS THE NEO PRESIDENT FOR 10% OF ITS LIFE. WHAT DOES NEO MEAN TO YOU?

“NEO has blessed me and my family beyond our wildest expectations. When we moved to Miami ten years ago, we displaced two teenagers and left over 50 family members in the OKC area. We moved to a town and a campus where we knew no one and had no previous connection to the college. A decade later the Hale family has received nothing but kindness, support professionally and personally, and generosity and have been inspired by all the wonderful traditions and people who have played a role in making NEO A&M College one of the truly special Oklahoma treasures.”
NEO CROWNS 2018 HOMECOMING ROYALTY

NEO crowned Dulcinea Wenzel and Hayden Matthews as the 2018 Homecoming Queen and King during “May the Norse Be With You” Homecoming Week. The coronation ceremony took place on the afternoon before the “Norse Wars” homecoming football game, which saw the Golden Norsemen defeat Tyler Junior College 40 to 35. Child attendants to the Homecoming Court were Dominic Conrad and Joslyn Stovall.

“T’was absolutely honored to represent NEO, a college that is constantly aiming for excellence,” said Wenzel, a sophomore general studies major from Miami, Okla. “I’m thrilled to have been chosen as queen, and I hope to inspire my fellow students to strive for success, both academically as well as personally.”

Wenzel represented the Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society and is the daughter of Kim and Kathy Wenzel. She was joined by King Hayden Matthews, a nursing major from Grove, Okla., who represented the Nursing Class.

“A whirlwind of emotions happened on Saturday, from thinking I was too old to be a part of the homecoming coronation, to hearing my name called for King and being presented the scepter,” said Matthews, a non-traditional student. “I’m honored and privileged to have been a part of such an amazing tradition and I will forever be proud to call myself a Norseman! Row, Norse, Row!”

King and queen honorees were selected by a panel of judges based on their references, electronic portfolios (LinkedIn profiles), and pageant performance. This year, judges were Ms. Carmen Couch, Representative Ben Loring, and Mrs. Kristi McClain.

As part of their responsibility as King and queen, Matthews and Wenzel will represent the college by attending important events held on campus and sponsored by the college throughout the year. They also both received a $250 Foundation scholarship.

First runner-up for king was Derek Straw, an agriculture education major from Columbia, Mo., representing the Young Farmers and Ranchers. Lennia Skye, a nursing major from Cushing, Okla., was selected as first runner-up for queen. She represented the Nursing Class.

Second runners up were Nicholas Hughlett, a general studies major from Miami representing the Honors Program, and Libby Thomasson, a General Studies major from Baxter Springs, Kan., representing the Masquers Club.

Mr. and Ms. Norse Spirit were selected by student body popular vote. The winners were Gideon Jackson and Chynna Settles. Mr. and Ms. Congeniality were voted on by the royalty candidates. Jeremy Carney received the Mr. Congeniality Award and Amber Oerly received the Ms. Congeniality Award. The runners-up and Norse Spirit honorees were each awarded $100 Foundation scholarships.
Each year, Northeastern Oklahoma A&M College opens nominations for the Outstanding Alumni Awards. An outstanding honoree is selected from the School of Liberal Arts, the School of Agriculture and Natural Sciences, and the School of Human Environmental Sciences. Along with the three awards to specific schools, NEO also presents special awards to the Outstanding Young Alumni, Outstanding Retired Faculty Member, and the Award of Merit.

These awards represent the highest honor that NEO bestows on alumni, former faculty, and dedicated supporters of the college. To deserve the title of Outstanding Alumni, the recipient must be a leader in his or her field, an involved community volunteer, or an ardent NEO supporter.

This year, we honored two innovators in higher education, one of the first physician’s assistants in Oklahoma, one of the youngest presidents in the history of the INTEGRIS system, an alumna who became instrumental in the growth of the NEO Development Foundation, and an instructor who dedicated three decades to bringing undergrad students to success. The 2018 class of Outstanding Alumni exemplify community service and leadership within their industries and they represent the ideal Norsemen.

OUTSTANDING YOUNG ALUMNUS

JONAS RABEL

Jonas Rabel, President of INTEGRIS Miami Hospital, was walking onto the campus of NEO less than 20 years ago. Since then, he has worked his way through the INTEGRIS system by ensuring the best care for his patients and the best environment for his staff.

“I always want to make sure our doctors and nurses feel like they are valued so we can deliver the highest quality care each day.”

Rabel grew up in the area and graduated from Miami High School. But when he arrived at NEO, he wasn’t even sure what his future would hold.

“I thought I was going to be a chemical engineer, but wasn’t sure,” he said. “My father and grandfather were both pastors, so I knew I wanted serving others to be part of my career.”

First attending NEO concurrently in 1999 and as a freshman in 2001, he was an active member of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes and Baptist Collegiate Ministry (BCM).

Under the mentorship of Tammy McNeil and Julie McFerron, Rabel completed the program in 2004 and became a staff nurse in the cardiovascular intensive care unit at St. John’s Regional Medical Center in Joplin, Mo.

He joined INTEGRIS at the Grove Hospital in 2010 as a team manager, and within a year was promoted to the clinical director of the emergency department in Grove.

Rabel later returned to school at Oklahoma Wesleyan University to complete a Bachelor of Science in Nursing. Following his graduation, he was promoted to Regional Clinical Director.

“I took the advice of my boss at the time and finished my MBA in Finance in 2015,” said Rabel. “She left that same year, so there was an opening that I was able to apply for.”

Rabel was just settling in when Jordan Cash, president at Miami at the time, transferred to Oklahoma City. Rabel was soon selected to be the next president in 2017.

Jonas and his wife Erin have three children, Eli, Addi, and Olivia, and when he’s not working or spending time with his family, he enjoys playing bass guitar and endurance running.

Rabel noted that doing what you love is likely the most important decision when it comes to selecting a career and encourages students to follow their heart.

“Do something that you love and that you have a passion about,” he said. “If you love what you do, you’re not going to go wrong.”
Earl Dunkleberger came to NEO in 1961 as a senior visiting for a livestock judging competition. His agriculture instructor wanted to give his students a taste of competition, and Dunkleberger was hooked.

“I looked over to my friend and said, ‘I think I just found the college that I’m going to,’” he said.

Once a student, Dunkleberger was heavily involved in activities and competed with agriculture teams and participated in theatre productions.

With America in the throes of the Vietnam War, Dunkleberger enlisted in the Navy as a hospital corpsman following his graduation in 1964. On Christmas day in 1967, Dunkleberger was on a river patrol when they discovered a North Vietnamese propaganda float.

“We approached the float and figured that it was probably booby trapped,” he recalled. “We attempted to destroy it, but a piece of shrapnel buried itself in my left arm.”

Dunkleberger earned the Navy Commendation Medal for Valor for his actions during a Vietnamese ambush. Just a month later, Dunkleberger had his closest brush with death.

In April of 1968, just a month before he was scheduled for rotation out of Vietnam, Dunkleberger was on a night patrol.

“I was always the last one to take off my helmet,” he noted. “As he laid down, the Viet Cong tossed a grenade into our camp. Of the three of us injured, one didn’t survive, and I took shrapnel in the head and shoulder.”

Following Dunkleberger’s two Purple Hearts, Navy Commendation, and return home, he decided to continue his work in the medical field. He wanted to become a physician’s assistant, but there were few programs in the nation at that time.

In 1970, Dunkleberger applied to the University of Oklahoma’s newly created physician’s assistant program.

“When I started the program, there were nine of us in the class. We graduated with seven members and the number of my license was five.”

Following graduation, Dunkleberger went back to his hometown of Wakita, Okla., and after eight years, he took a position in Holdenville, Okla., where he spent the rest of his career. Dunkleberger also published three books.

Dunkleberger and his wife Judy live in Holdenville and have two sons and several grandchildren. When he is not chasing the grandkids, he enjoys writing, riding his Honda Goldwing motorcycle, and woodworking.

“I always encourage students and young people to work hard, love your country, love your family, and thank God for all of your blessings.”

Dr. Baser grew up in Miami and his father was the pastor of the First Assembly of God in Miami. Driven to be an actor, Dr. Baser was a first generation college student and found NEO to be a warm and welcoming environment. The culture of care became a foundation for Dr. Baser’s educational philosophy.

“A caring and competent staff and faculty is critically important,” said Dr. Baser. “It takes that caring philosophy in order to give students the opportunity for success, and that was instilled in me at NEO.”

Dr. Baser majored in theatre and found a mentor in Gerald Graham, the theater’s technical director. Following his dream, Dr. Baser transferred to the University of Arkansas and later the University of Science and Art of Oklahoma in Chickasha.

Following his undergraduate education, Dr. Baser decided to pursue a graduate degree, first at the University of Arkansas and eventually graduating from Oklahoma State University.

Dr. Baser developed a robust speech and debate team at Coffeyville Community College in Coffeyville, Kan., as a speech instructor. While at Coffeyville, Dr. Baser was recruited back to USAO to serve as a faculty member, but over the course of eight years, Dr. Baser held thirteen titles, eventually moving into the administrative sphere.

Following his doctoral program, Dr. Baser was offered a position at Seminole State College, but was quickly recruited to Rose State College.

Following an eleven-year tenure at Rose State and a six-year stint at Tulsa Community College, Dr. Baser was selected for the presidency at Northwest Vista College in 2014. Dr. Baser has been relentless in his push to graduate a higher percentage of students and create a better learning experience. During his tenure, Dr. Baser and his team have produce astonishing growth, nearly tripling the three year graduation rate.

“A year before I came to Northwest Vista, the three-year graduation rate was 11.1 percent,” said Dr. Baser. “This still makes us one of the top two-year programs in the state, but our 2017 cohort is graduating at 29.3 percent. That’s what causes me to do backflips.”

“I think what this proves is that we have a central focus on campus,” he added. “My job is to make sure everyone is pulling in the same direction and it is working.”

Dr. Baser met his wife Kari at OSU and they have been married for 36 years, and the couple enjoys spending time with their granddaughter Kennedy.
In 1983, a Coweta Tiger came to the NEO campus with the intent to play Division I college football. Over the course of the next two years, Dr. Kenneth Sewell would embark on a journey that would reshape his life.

“I had aspirations of playing Division I, but was being heavily recruited by two-year schools,” said Dr. Sewell. “I decided that NEO was my best path to allow me to pursue that dream.”

Once at NEO, however, instructors Pat Maynard and Dr. Doris Snyder ignited a spark for research that would eventually lead to Dr. Sewell’s current position at the Vice President of Research at Oklahoma State University.

“I had the opportunity to participate in activities that gave me a new sense of direction,” he said. “As I continued my education, research became something that I wanted to continue.”

After attending NEO, Dr. Sewell transferred to Kansas State University, where he played Division I football. Dr. Sewell received his M.A. and Ph.D. from the University of Kansas. He later took a faculty position at the University of North Texas as a psychology instructor.

Dr. Sewell served for more than a decade as the director of the doctoral program in clinical psychology at UNT before transitioning in the positions as the associate vice president and later interim vice president for research. Following a period as the vice president for research and economic development at the University of New Orleans, Dr. Sewell jumped at the homecoming opportunity provided when OSU began its search for a vice president of research. Since 2015, Dr. Sewell has overseen the policies, officers, and service units that support and promote research, scholarship, and creative artistry at OSU.

Dr. Sewell and his wife Beth live in Stillwater and enjoy their full and fun life as empty-nesters and grandparents. The couple has two sons, a daughter, and three grandchildren. Reflecting on his time at NEO, Dr. Sewell encouraged future students to make the most of their college experience.

“Don’t look at college as a set of classes, but instead as a set of experiences that let you engage your future career and livelihood. I had good experiences in the classroom, but my involvement in PTK, athletics, and volunteer work has had as much impact on my life as any course I took.”

NEO has always been a part of John Lomax’s life. Lomax was on campus from the time his father attended college, so NEO was a simple choice. Lomax studied math and physics from 1963 to 1965 before he transferred to Northeastern State University, where he earned his Bachelor of Arts in math education.

After spending a year teaching high school math in Joplin, Mo., Lomax enlisted in the Navy from 1968 to 1972. A perfect fit for his education, Lomax developed new skills in the military that would later influence his educational style. Following his military service, Lomax filled a position as a math instructor at NEO.

Over the next three decades, Lomax had “millions and millions of great experiences,” as an NEO faculty member. While he formed lasting relationships with his colleagues, Lomax always kept the student first in his mind.

“Some of my greatest successes and memories were made when I was able to work with the underdog student,” he recalled. “When you can take an underdog and make them academically successful, it’s very fulfilling.”

When he was appointed to the position of Dean of the School of Agriculture and Natural Sciences, he implemented the same “student first” philosophy. He also encouraged his faculty to adapt to the newest standards and best practices, an ability that is crucial in math and science.

“The changes in technology between when I arrived at NEO in the seventies and when I left in 2011 have been monumental,” he said. “Math and science instructors often understand better than most that you have to adapt once a technology is proven. It’s really an industry where you adapt or perish.”

Lomax and his wife Sarah, a pharmacist at Osborn Drug, stressed the importance of education to their children as well. The couple has three children, John Jr., Cynthia, and Ashley. All three work in the fields of science or mathematics.

Now retired, Lomax enjoys fly fishing, photography, and playing guitar. He believes education is the key to improving lives.

“I encourage students to choose a college that they are comfortable with; in my case that was NEO,” he said. “NEO was small enough to be intimate, but offered the same quality content that was available at universities.”
AWARD OF MERIT

ANNETTE BLACK

On the island of Kauai in Hawaii, Annette Black is often preparing for a morning tee time at one of the island’s many beautiful golf courses. Even before attending NEO in 1964, Black adopted a mantra of “work hard, play hard.”

“I’ve worked since I was a freshman in high school,” Black said. “I worked at our family-owned restaurant, a dress shop my mother managed, and even cleaning the showroom floor of Rose Lumber.”

At NEO, she worked for legendary NEO Coach “Red” Robertson. While working for Robertson, Black had the opportunity to interact with mentors who would open doors for her future career.

After working at the Oklahoma Department of Human Services, she was offered a position with New Mexico State Senator Bob McBride in his legal office. She continued working in the legal field, earned her paralegal certification, and eventually moving to Kauai.

Returning to Oklahoma in 1998, Black became the executive assistant to Peoria Chief John Froman. During the next 16 years, she combined her legal acumen with her love for golf during the development of the Peoria Ridge Golf Course.

In the meantime, Black noticed that there was a new era dawning at NEO A&M College under the direction of President Hale.

“I call him our Norseman with a shining shield,” said Black. “I was so impressed with his vision for the college that I couldn’t refuse the chance to work with the NEO Development Foundation Board.”

Over the next several years, Black helped the Foundation produce enormous growth in assets. She was tasked with coordinating golf tournaments at Peoria Ridge that raised over $100,000 for NEO.

Black is also a steadfast supporter of the President’s Partners program and served as a native student mentor in the American Indian Center for Excellence following her retirement.

She recently moved back to Kauai to be with the love of her life, Creighton, who is also retired. While golfing remains her number one hobby, she enjoys quilting, sewing, scrapbooking, and sharing her island with friends and family.

For students who are about to make their college decisions, Black had a few pieces of advice.

“Apply for as many scholarships as possible and watch those deadlines,” she said. “When you get to campus, study hard, don’t be afraid to ask for help from your instructors, and be active in activities.”
STUDENTS TO WATCH

ELI CHENOWETH
Eli Chenoweth is a Business Administration Major from Miami, Oklahoma. He is the owner of The Frozen Elephant shaved ice business in Miami. Eli plans to continue his business education at OSU or University of Illinois.

AMBER OERLY
Amber Oerly is an Agriculture Business Major from Bransonville, Missouri. She is involved in the NEO Honors program. After NEO, she plans to earn a law degree and focus on Agriculture Policy to protect farmers and ranchers.

GAVIN BOHN
Gavin Bohn is a General Education Major from Columbus, Kansas. He is the current president of the Mu Chapter of Phi Theta Kappa. After NEO, he plans to pursue a degree in film and television directing and writing.

RAVYN WHITEBIRD
Ravyn Whitebird is an Art Major from Indianaoma, Oklahoma. She is currently serving her second term as Miss Indian NEO and plans to pursue further education toward a career as a Disney animator after NEO.

ALUMNI IN THE NEWS

JACE STERNBERGER
Jake Sternberger is currently a junior tight end at Texas A&M. In his first season after transferring from NEO, he is one of the top tight ends in college football and was a semi-finalist for the John Mackey Award.

DR. BILL OSBORN
Bill Osborn (PharmD) is the president of Osborn Drugs, Inc., in Miami. He was recently named the president of the National Community Pharmacists Association.

MATTHEW BEESE
Matthew Beece, deputy city attorney for Muskogee, was recently appointed to the Oklahoma Bar Association’s Board of Governors to represent Supreme Court Judicial District 7.

JULIE RIEGER
Julie Rieger, Head of Media at 20th Century Fox, has released The Ghost Photographer, which has cracked the top 10 on Amazon’s “Ghosts & Hauntings” bestseller list.

Following the demolition of the defunct soccer facility for the construction of the Milligan Hall student housing project, Dr. Hale saw a critical need to address. NEO soccer teams were without a practice field and without locker room space. While the teams were content to adapt, Dr. Hale found the situation unacceptable.

“Our soccer coaches are incredibly humble, but they have built really great programs in the last ten years,” said Dr. Hale. “These teams have not only won regional and conference titles, but have produced more All-Tournament and All-Region Players than we have time to count.”

In order to address this issue, NEO broke ground on the NEO Soccer Locker Room during the annual Founders’ Day event, which celebrated NEO’s 99th year in operation. The most recent in over $70 million in campus improvements, the new facility, adjacent to the NEO Nursing Building, will provide modern dressing rooms for athletes, along with direct access to their new practice field. An additional piece of the project, NEO dug new irrigation and laid sod for the soccer practice field, which now sits on the banks of Tar Creek.

“This facility shows our continued support for these highly successful programs,” added Hale. “I’m proud of what these teams have accomplished, and I am excited for all they will continue to produce in the years to come.”

The Soccer Locker Room is scheduled to be open for fall 2019 and will feature two locker rooms, one for each team, and a multimedia-enabled common space to analyze game film, strategize, and prepare for upcoming matches.
PAYING IT FORWARD

AT THE MILLIGAN HALL DEDICATION, ANNA MILLIGAN ENCOURAGES STUDENTS TO DO GOOD WORKS AND IMPROVE THEIR COMMUNITY

Anna Milligan grew up in Miami and was a first generation college student. Her parents, Madeline and Bill Hall, felt strongly about the importance of her having a college education. It was because of a scholarship from NEO that she was able to attend college. She earned a Master of Science in Guidance and Counseling and a Library Science Certification and spent 36 years as the Director of College Counseling at Holland Hall School in Tulsa. In 2009, after her retirement, Anna joined the NEO Development Foundation. She served as chair from 2014-2016. She also served as the chair of the Charles Banks Wilson Committee and was instrumental in the creation of the Charles Banks Wilson Gallery in Kah-Ne Hall.

Dr. Marshall Milligan grew up in Missouri and earned a Ph.D. in Economics and Statistics from the University of Iowa. Marshall served as a Naval Officer during World War II and continued to serve as a reserve officer for many years. Marshall taught at the University of Oklahoma and the University of Tulsa, where he met Anna. Over the years, their gifts have supported NEO students through the NEO Development Foundation.

Most recently, Anna endowed a gift to fund students scholarships, cultural experience, and student success resources. In honor of this gift, NEO named the newest residential building on campus Milligan Hall in honor of Anna and Marshall.

“Anna Milligan and her family continue to support NEO A&M faculty and students in a generous and impactful way,” said President Hale. “Her donation will endow scholarships for students residing in Milligan Hall for generations to come. All of us at NEO are so grateful to Anna for her kindness, generosity and encouragement.”

“NEO gave me so many opportunities and I have been very fortunate in my career,” said Anna at the dedication ceremony. “For students today, it’s important to do good works and improve your community, but also remember those who helped you along the way. When you have resources later in life, you can pay it forward by supporting programs at NEO.”

Through the endowed gift, the $1,000 Milligan Family Distinguished Scholarship will be presented to a freshman student, Milligan Hall residents will be able to take part in cultural excursions, Milligan Hall residents will participate in an Annual Day of Giving within the community, and residents will receive a student success care package and notes from Anna throughout the year.
GETTING THEIR HANDS DIRTY
STUDENTS GET HANDS-ON EXPERIENCE RESEARCHING CROPS IN NEWLY INTRODUCED AGRICULTURE RESEARCH FIELD

The NEO Agriculture Department hosted its first ever Research Field Days during 2018, with winter wheat research in the spring and a soybean harvest in the fall. During the first event, NEO welcomed Secretary of Agriculture Jim Reese, Grand River Dam Authority (GRDA) Representatives, area producers, and NEO President’s Partners to meet with students as they shared their findings. The second event featured a full soybean harvest planted through a partnership with Chock Scammon from DekaLb Genetics Corporation and the Bartlett Co-op and collected with a John Deere S780 Combine equipped with a Flexdraper Soybean Header available through a partnership with Legacy Farm and Lawn.

“This research project is a testament to how incredibly generous our community businesses, local producers and students are at NEO,” said Allison Anderson, agriculture instructor and project liaison. “It has always been a dream of our department to conduct industry research in Agriculture, and this year it became a reality.”

The NEO Agricultural Research Station has been made possible through a partnership with the GRDA, along with the support of Anders Farm’s, 3-F Farms, VO Morgan, Rich Falkenstein, and Oklahoma State University.

“I was so excited when Dr. Hale came to me with this partnership, especially because the NEO Agriculture Faculty have been so good about bringing producers in on the project,” said Secretary Reese. “Crops are a $25 billion industry in Oklahoma and even though much of the agricultural focus is on livestock, I am very excited to see programs like this focus on plant science. I’m very excited to see this project continue to grow.”

During the Wheat Research Field Day, students set up research stations involving soil temperature, composition, and compaction, and students in the NEO Honors Program completed undergraduate research projects that involved seeding rates and fertilization.

Sierra McCullough and Amber Oerly conducted seeding rate experiments for their Plant and Soil Science Systems Honors Contract, where they measured three separate densities of seed distribution. Through their research, they found that while more densely spread wheat can increase early growth, the wheat would begin to crowd and suffer as the season progresses.

Hannah Jenkins completed her spring Honors Contract in Introduction to Soil Science. Her project focused on nitrogen fertilization by building on McCullough and Oerly’s research. She split each of the three seed densities into two strips and applied nitrogen fertilizer to each strip. Through her research, she was able to present the positive effects of nitrogen fertilization, but also the danger of over-fertilization, which leads to nitrogen burning. Jenkins also conducted Honors Contract research on the fall soybean harvest, measuring the quantity, quality, and growth of the different soybean varieties on the plot.

“As an instructor, the best part of this project is the knowledge that our students have gained,” added Anderson. “That is what it’s all about!”

NEO Agriculture Department Chair McKenzie Conner noted that the Agriculture Research Station has raised nearly $20,000 for the program and that its success has opened new doors for the department.

“Thanks largely to what we have accomplished in the research field, we will be able to introduce an agronomy program option for our incoming students,” said Conner. “This addition ensures that our students are receiving the most relevant and hands-on education for their future careers.”

“It’s so important that our students have the opportunities to engage with local producers and suppliers,” added President Hale. “We want NEO to be among the best aggie schools in the nation. That starts with creating quality partnerships and giving our students hands-on experience. With these new programs, we plan on continuing our tradition of excellence.”
NEO AGRICULTURE HALL OF FAME

There is a long tradition of agricultural excellence in the history of NEO. A tradition that is based on doing good work, feeding the people, and educating young minds. Since the establishment of the Synar Farm, NEO Agriculture has continued to make strides in implementing the most modern hands-on techniques, introducing the newest equipment, and leadership in both academics and athletics.

NEO Agriculture is able to succeed thanks to the culture of support among its alumni and supporters. Folks like Jary Douglas, who came back to NEO to teach for nearly 40 years, and Roger Fent, who changed lives when he stepped into a classroom. Every NEO Aggie is singularly focused on improving our students’ lives and preparing them to take up the work that their elders pass on. These students graduate and become the champions and mentors for the students who follow them.

At the Outstanding Ag Alumni Banquet held in the summer, the Ag Department recognized the newest members of the NEO Agriculture Hall of Fame. Their dedication to agriculture and support of the college ensures that this tradition of excellence continues.

Mr. C.K. Sonny Booth is a graduate of Miami High School, NEO, and OSU, where he was a member of the livestock judging team at all three institutions. Booth earned high individual at the National Western Stock Show in 1963 and led his OSU team to win the contest. In 1967, Booth attended auction school and established Booth Auctions and CJ Real Estate Auctions.

For half a century, Booth has auctioned cattle, horses, and real estate throughout the U.S. and Canada. Along with serving as the president of the North American Limousin Foundation and sitting as a board member for eight years, Booth has donated his time selling many benefit auctions, including the Ottawa County Auction for over 40 years, Tulsa State Fair Livestock Premium Auction for 30 years, and the Miami Arts and Humanities Art Auction for over 20 years.

In 2015, he was inducted into the Limousin Hall of Fame, the sixth person to ever receive the honor. He was also named the OSU Graduate of Distinction, Oklahoma Limousin Breeders Association Lifetime Achievement Award, and was named as an NEO Outstanding Alumnus for the School of Agriculture and Natural Sciences.

Booth continues to conduct auctions throughout the United States and spends about half of the year travelling. Sonny and his wife Mary have three daughters and three grandchildren.
Joe Clapp was born in Miami to Clark and Mildred Clapp in 1945. After graduating from Wyandotte High School in 1963, Clapp spent the next two years at NEO. While on campus, Clapp competed on the Livestock Judging Team and was named the Outstanding Student in the Agriculture Department during the spring of 1965. He served as the “Sergeant-at-Arms” for the Aggie Society and earned second-high individual at the Southwestern Livestock Expo in Fort Worth.

After NEO, Clapp decided to pursue studies in agriculture education at Oklahoma State University and would eventually earn a bachelor’s and master’s degree. Clapp’s first education position was teaching vocational agriculture in Wheaton, Mo. He held this position from 1967 until 1970, when Oklahoma called him back. Over the next decade, he taught Vocational Agriculture at Fairland High School, before beginning his career as the principal. Clapp would spend nearly 20 years as principal, until his retirement in 1996.

In addition to his lifetime of dedication to agriculture education, Clapp also has a love for auctioneering. In 1986, Clapp and his brother Dale started Clapp Auction Service and he called auctions until June 2018.

Jarold Callahan has red dirt in his blood. Born and raised on a farm and ranch in Welch, he came to NEO as an agriculture major. He then transferred to Oklahoma State University to pursue a Bachelor’s of Animal Science Degree, where he graduated as one of the top 10 seniors for the College of Agriculture. Following his undergraduate education, Callahan served as an instructor at NEO, while completing his master’s degree from the University of Arkansas.

In 1981, he joined the OSU faculty until 1991, when he became the executive vice president of the Oklahoma Cattlemen’s Association and later joined Express Ranches as their chief operations officer. He now serves as the president of Express Ranches and is active in numerous cattle industry leadership roles including the Oklahoma Beef Council, serving as its chairman, as well as a board member and past president for the American Angus Association. Express Ranches has been recognized as the nation’s largest seedstock producer for the past five years and hosts seven production sales on an annual basis. Along with his work at Express Ranches, he currently serves on the OSU A&M Board of Regents.

Callahan and his wife Jennifer also own and operate their own cattle operation located in Oklahoma and Craig Counties as well as Xcel Feedyard in Wistons. They are very active in agriculture advocacy and promote youth involvement in the cattle business by supporting scholarship programs and junior shows.
RODEO
Coach Kolby Ungeheuer has been building the NEO Rodeo Program into a powerhouse over the last two seasons. The men’s and women’s teams are currently in the top-ten nationally, and NEO has ten riders in the top fifteen in their events. Leading the team is Dawson Turner, a freshman from Sidney, Ark., who currently sits in fourth place in Tie-Down Roping, followed closely by Rush Hodges, a freshman from Coweta, Okla., who sits in fifth. It’s safe to say that NEO Rodeo is continuing its rise.

EQUESTRIAN
Continuing their dominance, the NEO Equestrian Team finished undefeated in their six show fall season. Each fall, NEO competes at four shows at Missouri State University and two shows at NEO. This year, NEO had multiple riders qualify for the regional show in the spring. The spring season offers another chance for riders to qualify, and coaches Amanda Jones and Josi Reed are ready to repeat as Regional Champions.

LIVESTOCK JUDGING
Multiple top-ten finishes characterized the fall season for Coach Taylor Graham and the Livestock Judging Team. Chief among the successes were the High Individual Finishes of Abby Spindle, a sophomore from Stanley, New Mexico, and Mattie Haynes, a freshman from Jay, Okla. The pair earned their titles at the Akaraben Stock Show, where both the freshman and sophomore teams earned top-five finishes.

EQUINE JUDGING
The Equine Judging Team under coaches Amanda Jones and Josi Reed finished their fall season by being named Champions at the All-American Quarter Horse Association (AQHA) Congress and Reserve Champion at the 2018 AQHA World Show Intercollegiate Horse Judging Contest. At both events, Cheyanne Detherow, a sophomore agriculture business major from Ozark, Mo., finished as the Reserve Individual Champion, and NEO had nearly fifty top-ten individual finishes.
While always an advocate of agriculture, Parker developed a new set of skills while attending NEO. Working with the Agriculture Ambassadors, Parker met with local FFA chapters and potential students to advocate on behalf of the program. She and her peers would also volunteer at area agriculture events to share NEO with families. Before graduation, she earned her National FFA American Degree, was on the dean’s honor roll, and was selected as an NEO Agriculture Graduate of Distinction.

Parker continued on to the University of Arkansas and completed her Bachelor’s Degree in agricultural education, communication, and technology. While at the U of A, she served in a variety of agriculture organizations, including the Agriculture Communicators of Tomorrow. After her graduation, she returned to NEO to work as the administrative assistant for the Agriculture Department from 2017-2018. Her true passion, however, is BC Photography, the business she started in 2009.

“I got my first camera for Christmas when I was five, but when I got a DSLR camera when I was 16, my passion really took off,” recalled Parker. “I took pictures everywhere I could, and I had a mentor who helped me really learn the ropes of wedding photography.”

Once Parker arrived at NEO, she had the opportunity to photograph her classmates from around the country. She also worked with public relations and agriculture staff to photograph events on campus. As she continued her education at the U of A, she took a leap during her senior year.

“During my senior year, I had the opportunity to do an internship, but I chose to do mine as an entrepreneur through my photography business, so that was really unique. I had a client base in the area and the marketing, advertising, and customer service skills I was learning in class were really shaping how my business was growing, so it was a good fit.”

As her business grew, Parker decided that it was time to implement more agriculture and education into her portraiture. In January 2017, she was struck with inspiration while driving down the road. She made a plan to create a book of short stories and photos highlighting farmers and ranchers in the four-state area.

“I’m so thankful for the families and producers who volunteered their time and stories to help me make this book come to life. I could probably write another book just about the things I learned from the producers.”

Parker says that there aren’t any current plans for another book, but she does want to continue educating and advocating for the agriculture industry.

“I plan to keep photographing full-time and growing my business. I always said photography wouldn’t be my career, but I just can’t imagine doing anything else.”

“NEO was the perfect fit for me. I was involved in Aggie Society and Ag Ambassadors, but the one thing I remember most was the family-like atmosphere within the Ag Department and campus-wide.”
Jeff Trussler is a member of an incredibly exclusive group. As the Director of Future Plans for the United States Navy, he is one of about 300 admirals in a 330,000 strong Navy. He is tasked with helping determine what the Navy will look like 30 to 50 years into the future from his Pentagon office.

“I’m addressing questions that are going to impact how the Navy operates for decades,” said Admiral Trussler. “Will our ships and aircraft still be manned? If so, what is the right mix between manned and unmanned vessels? What are the weapons systems we are going to need and how do we counter the adversary’s weapon systems? These are the situations that we address every day.”

Since he was commissioned as an officer in 1985, Admiral Trussler has acquired the training and skills to operate the most advanced undersea military hardware in the world and at times has been operating in a manner so covert, that not even his bosses knew where his vessel was operating.

Before becoming one of the top naval officers, Admiral Trussler recalls how daunting the college enrollment process was.

“I remembered the day I enrolled at NEO, I didn’t even know what my major options were,” said Admiral Trussler. “I was asked what major I wanted to enroll in, and I had always had a knack for math and science, and I had heard engineering might be interesting; that’s how much of a rube I was.”

Even if he was unfamiliar with the process, Trussler was familiar with NEO. Growing up in Miami, he attended Miami High School and remains a proud Wardog alum. He also considers NEO part of the fabric of his life and recalled riding his bike to campus to have adventures as a child and playing basketball, in the stadium, or swimming in the gymnasium as he grew older.

“I don’t think that I ever considered going anywhere else other than NEO. It was a natural decision,” he noted. “Once I got into classes, I had the opportunity to learn under John Lomax, Doc Rock (Sam Wells), and even Coach Dale Patterson. But a great mentor of mine was Rod Kramer. He told me once at a track meet as a freshman in high school, “Give yourself a chance and get up there with the front of the pack!’”

Admiral Trussler was heavily involved in the Baptist Student Union, which he considers critical in the establishment of his foundation of faith. He also met lifelong friends attending ministry meetings with Steve “Stubb” Whitesell. When he transferred to Oklahoma State University (OSU) in 1983, Admiral Trussler felt more than prepared to step into his classes.

“I remember some of my pre-engineering classes at NEO had only five to ten people in them,” he recalled. “My first class at OSU was in an auditorium with about 150 people on ‘Fluid flow and heat transfer’. I was a little intimidated at first, but I had no problems. NEO prepared me well.”
Once at OSU, Admiral Trussler entered the Navy’s Nuclear Propulsion Officer Candidate (NUPOC) program. Upon graduation from OSU in 1985, he began the intensive officer training program, which included officer candidate school, classroom training at the Naval Nuclear Power School, field experience at a power plant site in Idaho, and submarine school in Connecticut.

“All that training just to realize that when you show up to your first ship, you still know nothing,” Admiral Trussler joked. “I was 24 years old when I met the USS HONOLULU in the Philippines for my first deployment as a Division Officer, and I was working with a chief petty officer and about 15 enlisted sailors who had an average of six to eight years of experience!”

“But that is one of the great things about working on a submarine,” he added. “You’re always working with people who are as smart or smarter than you are.”

During his time on the HONOLULU, Admiral Trussler filled roles as a Reactor Control Assistant, Auxiliary Division Officer, and as Sonar Officer, eventually earning his Submarine Warfare insignia, or “Gold Dolphins,” in 1988. His position as Executive Officer (XO), or second-in-command, came on the USS COLUMBUS.

“The saying goes that as an XO, you’re responsible for everything, but in charge of nothing,” joked Admiral Trussler. “Obviously it’s more complicated than that, but as an XO, it was my job to take care of the day to day operations of the ship so that the Commanding Officer can focus on large scale decision making. One of the most valuable things I learned was how to take care of your crew; that’s something you have to learn through experience.”

It was also a lesson that he implemented when he took command of the USS MARYLAND, a 560-ft, four story, Ohio-class, ballistic missile submarine that was tasked with operating as a “survivable strategic deterrent.” As opposed to some of the fast attack submarines Trussler had served on previously, whose mission was to patrol enemy waters and provide engagement support, the MARYLAND is given sea area the size of a few states and remains completely undetected on deployment.

“It was glorious,” said Admiral Trussler, reflecting upon finally taking command of a vessel. “We were operating in a way that the Navy didn’t even know where we were, and our main job was to be able to respond within minutes to an order from the President. I chuckle when I see portrayals of that process in film and television, but we had to be prepared at all hours.”

After his service aboard HONOLULU, TENNESSEE, and COLUMBUS, Admiral Trussler focused on the development of his team while aboard the MARYLAND.

“It’s not like the Starship Enterprise where there is always one ‘A-Team’ operating at all times,” he noted. “We have teams rotating in and even though we did have that great ‘A-Team,’ I wanted to ensure we had the best all around team and that anyone else filling in those roles was well-prepared and well-trained. We have a very tight and responsive system, but it requires solid teamwork.”

At the conclusion of his service onboard the MARYLAND, Admiral Trussler was named Commander of TASK FORCE 69 out of Naples, Italy, where he coordinated submarine and undersea warfare operations from the North Pole to the Antarctic in waters around Europe and Africa and the Mediterranean and Baltic Seas. While serving in this role, he was awarded the 2008 Executive Excellence Award by the American Indian Science and Engineering Society.

Admiral Trussler became a flag officer in 2015 with his promotion to Rear Admiral Lower Half. His first assignment as an admiral was to establish a new organization out of Groton, Connecticut, often called “The Submarine Capital of the World.”

In establishing the Undersea Warfighting Development Center, Admiral Trussler work with a team of nearly 300 people based throughout the United States to make sure that the Navy’s undersea warfare tactics, capabilities, and systems were in alignment.

“It doesn’t matter how great our technology becomes; it’s still all about the people. It’s all about our sailors, how well they’re trained, how well they’re taken care of; and when they’re motivated and they’re trained well, that’s when we’re going to perform our mission and be successful,” said Admiral Trussler in an interview for The Day newspaper, out of New London, CT.
It was during this assignment that Admiral Trussler was able to participate in one of his most memorable service activities. In 2016, he travelled to Ice Camp SARGO on the Beaufort Sea 200 miles north of Deadhorse, Alaska, to participate in the Navy biennial submarine ice exercise called ICEX. These exercises include a series of training transits, ice breaches, and data collection exercises. Admiral Trussler was one of the 50 or so occupying the ice camp.

“It was my responsibility to brief and escort Secretary of the Navy Ray Mabus to the ice camp,” he recalled. “It was an exciting experience to be so far north, and I even had a chance to get a picture sporting a Miami War Dog sweatshirt at the camp. It was 20 degrees below zero, so we had to suit up with our cold weather gear directly after.”

His most recent assignment came in 2016, when he was called to the Pentagon to serve as the Director of Future Plans, where he is tasked with preparing for what the Navy will look like in 30-50 years. Not only is he looking for how technology will change and advance, but he is also planning on what happens when technologies aren’t available.

“I get to work with analysts and specialists to best plan for the how the Navy should operate,” he explained. “What weapons systems will we need to counter those of our adversaries? When I was in training, we learned to navigate based on the stars, how do we prepare for situations when our modern global positioning systems aren’t available? What’s the right balance of training to ensure that our sailors can respond in that situation?”

He also noted that the changing geopolitical and physical landscape is changing how we must operate.

“The Arctic is opening up, and that could be one of our biggest areas of vulnerability or opportunity. We need to be able to respond as the world moves into the Arctic. Whether it’s shipping, search and rescue, or energy expansion, it’s critical that we be able to work with our allies to ensure the most effective security environment.”

Recently promoted to Rear Admiral Upper Half (2 star) in August, Admiral Trussler is thriving at the Pentagon and is encouraged by the work continuing to be done at Future Plans. He and his wife Kirsten have been married for 25 years and try to visit family in Miami at least once a year. Over the last decade, he noted that new information coming out of NEO has been encouraging.

“When I would come back in the 90s, I noticed changes that seemed to be a lesser version of NEO than I had remembered,” he lamented. “But I have been really impressed with all of the improvements and pride in NEO that Dr. Hale has led. It’s a truly impressive campus to visit now, and I enjoy keeping up with the activities through the regular alumni updates.”

When asked what piece of advice he could give to students wanting to emulate his success, Admiral Trussler wasn’t hesitant.

“Just like Rod Kramer told me, I tell people to give yourself a chance and never shut a door on yourself. Sometimes you even have to push through and open some doors. No decision or path you might take is permanent; you can always try again or try something different. You are never going to move up or have new opportunities unless you take a chance on yourself.”
2018 ATHLETIC HALL OF FAME INDUCTION CEREMONY

From the earliest days of NEO, there has always been a desire among students to compete. Students drove the formation of intermural football and tennis, and throughout the years, students have continued to drive NEO Athletics. Now with nine athletic teams, cheer and dance teams, and agriculture sports, NEO offers an unrivaled experience for student-athletes in Oklahoma.

Every two years, the Athletic Hall of Fame Committee has the privilege of selecting a new group of individuals and teams to receive the highest athletic honor that NEO bestows. From basketball stars, to championship teams, to major contributors, NEO Athletics is committed to honoring the Norse Tradition.

This year’s group excelled in examples of leadership, longevity, and accomplishment. They exemplify our traditions and the Norse commitment to excellence. In all, eight individuals and one team entered the NEO Athletic Hall of Fame and such will be remembered by athletes for decades to come.

The tradition of NEO holds that we are building on the groundwork laid by those who came before us. For athletes, this is especially true, as they follow the lodestar of the athletes who set the standard. In the words of Athletic Director and National Champion Coach Joe Renfro, “success begets success.”

ATHLETIC HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE - FOOTBALL
RONNIE LOWE

Mr. Ronnie Lowe grew up in Thomaston, Georgia, and graduated from R.E. Lee Institute, where he was a four-year starter for the Rebels football team. He led the team to the Region 4 AAA Championship in 1965 and was named to the Georgia All-State Team.

At NEO, Lowe was a captain of the Golden Norsemen Football Team, which won the NJCAA National Championship in 1967 in the Shrine Bowl in Savannah, Georgia. He was named an All-American by the NJCAA and the Most Outstanding Lineman in the Championship game.

Coach Chuck Bowman called Lowe the “most dedicated football player I have ever been associated with.”

Lowe received a football scholarship to Florida State University, where he lettered in 1969 for Coach Bill Peterson’s Seminoles. After graduation from FSU, he was a successful high school coach and administrator and was named to the Thomaston-Upson Hall of Fame in 2005.

Now retired, Lowe lives with his wife Teresa in Thomaston, Georgia. They have three children and nine grandchildren.
ATHLETIC HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE - BASKETBALL

DALLAS KIRK-LEWIS

After graduation from Broken Arrow High School, Lewis became a member of Coach Rose Wilkins’ Lady Norse Basketball Team in 1975-77. During her two years, NEO won 27 games and Dallas led the team in rebounding, with nine rebounds per game and an average 8.2 points per game.

After NEO, Lewis transferred to the University of Missouri at Rolla to continue her basketball career. At UMR, she had a career average of 20.5 points per game and 14.8 rebounds per game. In 1978-79, she pulled down a record 309 rebounds. She finished her career at UMR with 778 points, and was named the Missouri-Rolla “Female Athlete of the Year” in 1979. The Milwaukee Does in the Women’s Professional Basketball League later drafted her.

Lewis was the first women inducted into the Missouri-Rolla Hall of Fame in 1994 and became a member of the Broken Arrow Hall of Fame in 2002.

ATHLETIC HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE - BASEBALL

MIKE BUTCHER

Mr. Mike Butcher came to NEO from East Moline, Illinois, to pitch for Coach Mike Clark’s Golden Norsemen Baseball Team in 1983. He compiled an overall record of 17-11 and posted a 3.24 earned run average with 56 strikeouts from 1983-85.

Butcher was drafted by the K.C. Royals in the second round of the 1986 MLB draft and spent four major league seasons with the California Angels from 1992-96. He had a career record of 11-4, with nine saves.

He began his coaching career with the Tampa Bay Rays in 2006 and later became pitching coach with the Angels in 2007, and his starters led the American League with 590 wins during his eight-year tenure. Butcher was hired as the pitching coach of the Arizona Diamondbacks in 2015 and currently is in his fourth year. Under Butcher, the Diamondback pitchers set a club record with 1,482 strikeouts in 2017.

Butcher and his wife Tami have three children and have been married 22 years.
ATHLETIC HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE - BASKETBALL

TERRY BROWN

Mr. Terry Brown graduated from Clyde-Savannah Central High School in New York, where he finished his basketball career with 2,360 points and became the 2nd All-Time scorer in N.Y. state history. He was recruited to NEO by Hall of Fame head coach Larry Gipson.

During his NEO career, Brown led the Norsemen to the 1989 NJCAA National Championship, where he was the National Tournament MVP. He was also named an NJCAA All-American in 1989, and finished his NEO career as the 2nd All-Time scorer with 1,007 points and 22.1 points per game.

“Downtown” Terry Brown was recruited by the University of Kansas in 1989. In 1991, he became the KU single season three-point leader, with 111 baskets. In only two seasons, his 200 three pointers rank him 5th on KU’s all-time three-point list. Brown finished his college career by playing in the NCAA National Championship game against Duke.

Brown successfully operated his own freelance graphic arts business for several years and now works for a major sports jewelry company.

ATHLETIC HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE - SOFTBALL

KAYCE ODLE-GRIGG

Mrs. Kayce Grigg was raised in Kansas, Okla., and attended NEO from 2003-2005. She was a pitcher on the Lady Norse softball team and was named Region 2 Pitcher of the Year in 2004 and 2005. Grigg was not only an Academic All-American, but also a two-time NJCAA All-American Pitcher. She won the NEO Carl Rigney Award as the top female scholar-athlete in 2005.

After graduation from NEO, Grigg transferred to the University of Arkansas, where she received a Bachelor of Science in nursing. She later earned a Master of Science in advance practice nursing from Maryville University.

Grigg is now a board certified family nurse practitioner with over ten years of experience. She currently practices in Tulsa, working in pain management. She lives in Inola, Okla., with her husband Tucson and son Travis.
ATHLETIC HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE - FOOTBALL

BILL YOCUM

After graduation from Bartlesville High School, Yocum attended NEO from 1969-1970, where he played football for Hall of Fame Coach Chuck Bowman. Yocum was a member of the 1969 National Championship Football Team and was the captain of the 1970 team. He was named NJCAA and Gridiron All-American and was selected as one of the Outstanding College Athletes in America in 1970. After NEO, Yocum lettered at Texas A&M University.

Yocum returned to NEO as head wrestling and assistant football coach from 1977-80, where his 1978 wrestling team had a Top 10 finish at the NJCAA National Tournament and the 1980 Football Team won the NJCAA National Championship with a perfect record of 10-0. He is one of only two NEO athletes to play and coach on a National Championship Football Team, and his NEO record as a player and coach is 51-7-1. Yocum is retired and resides in Lewisville, Texas.

ATHLETIC HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE - CONTRIBUTOR

JIM ELLIS

Mr. Jim Ellis graduated from NEO in 1973, where he was the sports editor of the student newspaper, the Norse Wind, for two years. After graduation from Northeastern State University, Ellis became the sports editor of the Miami News Record in 1977.

During his 40-plus career as sports editor, Ellis has not only covered hundreds of sporting events at NEO, but also many other college activities. He also covers eight area high schools with photography and feature stories.

Ellis is a member of the Oklahoma Journalism Hall of Fame, Miami High School Hall of Fame, and the Eight-Man Football Coaches Association Hall of Fame. He also serves on the Midwest Bowl Classic Committee.
ATHLETIC HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE - CONTRIBUTOR

BENNIE CROSSLAND

Mr. Bennie Crossland began his association with NEO as a young boy, when his father, Ivan, loaded the family in their station wagon and brought them to NEO football games on Saturday nights at Red Robertson Field. Crossland later attended NEO and Missouri Southern State University before serving our country in the Marine Corps from 1975-78.

Crossland returned home to work in his father’s new construction company, where he worked his way up, becoming President of Crossland Construction in 2002 and assuming the role of Chairman of the Board in 2016. Crossland Construction has grown to be one of the Top 100 Construction Companies in the USA.

Crossland and Crossland Construction have donated over $500,000 to athletic facilities on the NEO campus, including the Ivan Crossland Football Complex, the Multi-Purpose Wrestling Facility and Red Robertson Field renovations. NEO Athletics would not be a national leader in two-year college athletics without the generosity of Bennie and Crossland Construction.

Crossland has never been too busy to give back to the community. He has several philanthropic affiliations and has served on several boards and foundations. He lives in Columbus, Kan., with his wife Shonda.

1986 FOOTBALL TEAM

Establishing a perfect 11-0 school record during the 1986 football season, Head Coach Glen Wolfe guided the Golden Norse to an unprecedented 7th National Football Championship.

The Norsemen finished the undefeated 1986 season with a 38-7 victory over Montgomery, Maryland, during the second annual Mid-America Bowl in Tulsa. During the game, Freshman Keith Denson, of Cincinnati, Ohio, was named the offensive player of the game, after rushing for 147 yards on 27 carries and three touchdowns. Denson was joined by Sophomore All-American Mark Rice, of Mustang, Okla., who was selected as the defensive player of the game.

The Norse were led by All-Americans Rice, John Boisvert, Tom Bolyard, and Steve Hill.

Assistant Coaches were Mack Butler, Dale Patterson, Don Hendrix, Bruce Scott, Greg Wolfe, Willie Webster, Rod Mathewson, and Terry Jamison.
NEO HONORS

PROGRAM CELEBRATES INAUGURAL YEAR SUCCESS

The Honors Program is celebrating its first program year and has already made an impact both on and off campus. Over 30 students are currently in the program, and Director Andrew Olson and Assistant Director Keeley Adams are focusing on strengthening the program for the years to come.

“Our students made an immediate impact in our community,” said Olson. “The courses allow them to build skills, knowledge, and gain experience for their future. We’re excited to graduate our first students this fall and are looking forward to graduating many more in the spring.”

“Through their contract projects, students can work hands-on in the fields they are pursuing,” added Adams. “Outside of class, we’ve seen exceptional growth in areas of service and leadership.”

Students in the program are required to enroll in “honors-only” course sections or engage in honors contracts with instructors. To date, over 30 contracts have been arranged, with projects ranging from physics simulations in a two-dimensional window like the project of freshman Daniel Jacobs to fertilization and growth analysis at the NEO Crop Research Farm by sophomore Hannah Jenkins.

“Honors-only” courses are course sections only available to honors students. Instructor Dr. Lesli Deichman and Adams recently co-taught a section of general psychology, which included General Psychology course requirements and outside projects for students to apply broad concepts. Dr. David Loving, instructor of the “honors-only” Western Civilization course, noted this has been one of his best teaching experiences.

“This has been my favorite class to teach,” he said. “Students are engaged and motivated to learn, which lets me use activities that are outside of the norm.”

The program has also focused on community engagement. Most notably, members have volunteered with the Boys and Girls Club of Ottawa County, which Olson and Adams are encouraging to provide advocacy and support for disadvantaged youth in the area.

For complete information or to donate to the program, visit www.neo.edu/honors.

LEADING THE WAY IN PHI THETA KAPPA

The NEO Mu Chapter of Phi Theta Kappa International Honor Society is the oldest operating chapter outside the state of Missouri and has been incredibly active under the direction of NEO Instructor LaShawna Powers. There are 42 active chapters in the OK/AR Region of Phi Theta Kappa, and the Mu Chapter consistently ranks in the upper echelons. In March of 2018, the Mu Chapter was designated the Most Distinguished Chapter at the Oklahoma/Arkansas Regional Convention. The Chapter was also recognized as a Five-Star Chapter, as they have for the past several years.

Part of their success is due to highly motivated leadership teams’ willingness to tackle tough issues. Their research into human trafficking earned them a Most Distinguished Honors-in-Action Project award and their work with campus safety issues earned a Top-Five College Projects award.

Another contributing factor is the push from Powers to encourage new members to become active. The Chapter was designated a Reach Rewards chapter for exceeding the international standard in membership acceptance. Each semester, dozens of new students complete the requirements to become members and under Powers’ guidance, a new and highly motivated leadership team emerges.

Along with chapter recognitions, alumnus Mu Chapter Vice-President of Leadership, Clint Howard, was named one of the Top Five Chapter Officers for the region, and alumna chapter member Stephanie Gilbert was named one of the Top Five Chapter Members.

As the program continues to grow, President Hale and NEO administrators are dedicated to ensuring the tradition of PTK is well-supported and students have the opportunity to continue their involvement with this prestigious organization.
A PERSONAL TOUCH IN A MULTIMEDIA ENVIRONMENT

RODNEY SPRIGGS IS USING LIFE LESSONS LEARNED AT NEO TO LEAD A MULTI-MILLION DOLLAR RETAIL CHAIN

In 2016, Rodney Spriggs was selected as an NEO Outstanding Alumnus for his work as the President and CEO of Vintage Stock, a multimedia retailer with 58 locations across the Midwest. In the past two years, Spriggs has continued to grow and progress, modifying their business plan as the media landscape changes.

“People think that our competitors are places like traditional retail stores, but I don’t think that’s the case,” he said. “Sure, we are selling products, but our competitors are battling us for time. We’re going up against social media platforms like Facebook to try and get a slice of our customer’s time.”

This approach is born out of the realities of the sales landscape. While online shopping seems to dominate the retail market, Spriggs notes that it only makes up about 13-15% of all retail sales and that growth is slowing. In response, he said that his company must provide an experience that customers are looking to find.

“Retail shopping is something that people like to do,” he said. “We like to go out, get some food, shop for a bit, and spend time interacting with people. So we try to make our stores cool. We carry classic game systems like Atari and Nintendo, not because they are the cutting edge in graphics and gameplay, but because they are ‘cool’ and people like to relive their experiences with those systems. When people talk about brick and mortar stores dying, it just isn’t going to happen.”

Following high profile bankruptcies of retail stores like Toys-R-Us and Sears, Spriggs noted that it’s not the downfall of physical retail sales, it’s failure to adapt and innovate that sinks businesses.

“The stores you see going under are basically the stores that have done the same exact thing for the last two decades,” said Spriggs. “You can’t keep doing the same old thing and expect people to come to you. One of the biggest parts of that innovation is offering unmatched customer service.”

He noted that it can be difficult to standardize customer service across 58 locations, but it’s worth it to invest in training because it shows their commitment to improving the communities they are in.

“We try to operate like a mom and pop store,” Spriggs said. “We don’t boast that we do $80 million in retail sales across all our locations, because we want to focus on the fact that we are community minded. We give every community our attention. That means being involved, giving back to schools, and treating our customers like family.”

According to Spriggs, that also relates to how you operate in life. A self-declared introvert, he noted that it takes getting out of your comfort zone in order to grow.

“I hate speaking in public, but I’ve worked to the point where I can do it, and I am better for it,” he said. “I teach that to our employees to make that engagement with our customers. People remember that personal touch.”

He said the best example comes from his days at NEO, and it’s one that he plans to continue sharing into the future.

“I took one tennis class from Mrs. [Carol] Calcagno, but she always remembered everyone’s names and greeted you in the hallway. She always seemed like she wanted to be there, and that makes all the difference.”
“NEO HAS BEEN A FOUNDATION OF OUR FAMILY’S LIFE. THREE GENERATIONS HAVE KNOWN THIS PLACE AS HOME. GIVING BACK IS WHAT WE’RE CALLED TO DO.”

-DR. CLARK McQUIGG

WHY I GIVE

Dr. Clark McQuigg is one of three generations of the McQuigg family to be involved with NEO. The son of retired Physics Instructor Dr. Clark McQuigg II, Clark attended NEO and all three of his children attended NEO. Clark is a regular contributor to many events and initiatives on campus and chooses to give back because it’s what he’s called to do.

Join Clark today by supporting future students through the NEO Development Foundation.
STRIVING FOR THE GREATEST STORY EVER TOLD

ACTING ARTISTIC DIRECTOR AARON SMITH IS FOCUSING ON STUDENT GROWTH AS THE NEO THEATRE EXPERIENCE GROWS

“When a show wraps, I want students to feel like they’ve just done something bigger and better than they thought they could.”

NEO Acting Artistic Director Aaron Smith has high expectations for the NEO Theatre Experience and spent the first full year creating an environment that pushes students and creates an environment of learning. Having spent many years involved with community theatre, he noted that the students were surprisingly pliable when it came to introducing shows that were meant to push their limits.

“In community theatre, the show is very important,” he said. “But when you are engaged in theatre on a college campus, the shows we choose are meant to advance and challenge students. For the first year, we took into account the students’ needs and made the show fit them, rather than the other way around.”

Reintroduced as a student organization and now an official co-curricular activity on campus, the NEO Theatre Experience came about following years of appropriations reductions, faculty retirements, and low graduation rates. Now halfway through the 2018-19 season, Smith is encouraged by the growth he has seen in students and community participation and has set his sights high for the future.

“The NEO Theatre Experience will continue to grow and hopefully the community sees that the students are passionate about the show that they are performing, and I hope that becomes contagious” said Smith. “We’ll build community support one at a time by going out and letting them know about what we’re doing. We’re willing to take risks for the sake of the students, and they want to take those risks too. All we need is the community to take that risk with us. Maybe that means coming to see a show you’ve never heard of or maybe even a show you’ve seen before but didn’t like. I like to think that there is a possibility that the greatest story ever told could be told by our students, and the community won’t know unless they come and see it.”
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.