

LANDER

UNIVERSITY MAGAZINE



At the Heart of Hands-On Care

PG. 28

SPRING 2026

A Campus That Keeps
Growing PG. 5

Our Roadmap
for Success PG. 8

Step Into Lander
Virtually PG. 18

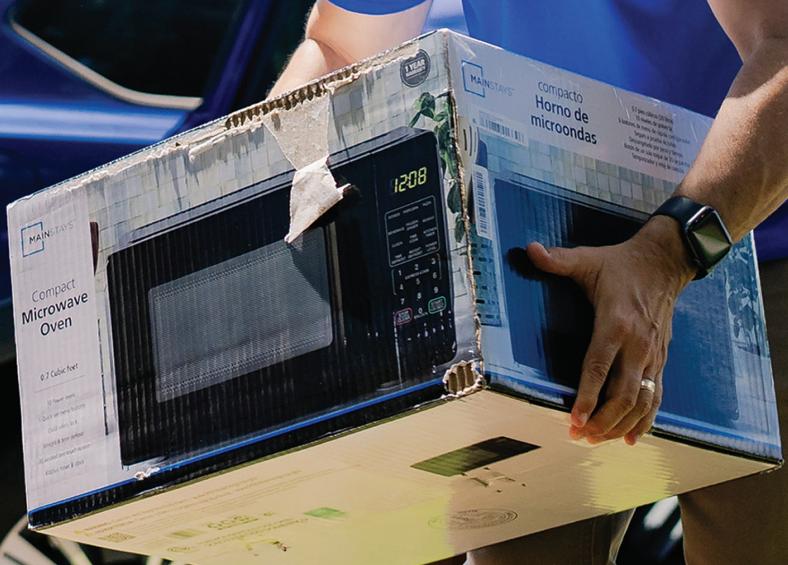
Bearcat Athletes Reel in a
Big Year PG. 42



FIRST THINGS FIRST

Freshman Move-In Week always provides a steady stream of new students, parents and, most importantly, *stuff*. The kind of stuff that turns a dorm room from four walls and a bed into a home. Among those helping welcome our newest Bearcats during move-in was a new Bearcat himself—Dr. Stephen Bismarck, who joined Lander in July as dean of the College of Education. Read more about our record-setting freshman class on pg. 7.





FROM THE PRESIDENT



“Our new strategic plan lays out a clear vision for Lander’s future—one that builds on our strengths, focuses on student success and ensures we continue to rise with purpose and direction.”

DEAR ALUMNI AND FRIENDS,

As we step into a new semester, and a new year, there’s a renewed sense of momentum at Lander University. The weeks ahead bring fresh opportunities for our students, new achievements to celebrate across our campus and continued progress on the initiatives that are shaping the University’s future.

In the pages ahead, you will find stories that highlight the remarkable growth we experienced in 2025, as well as the thoughtful planning that is guiding our next chapter. Our new strategic plan lays out a clear vision for Lander’s future—one that builds on our strengths, focuses on student success and ensures we continue to rise with purpose and direction.

Our cover story shines a spotlight on one of the most dynamic areas of our campus: our nursing program. With construction nearing completion on a brand-new, state-of-the-art building—the third facility dedicated to nursing education on our campus—we are expanding both our capacity and our impact. As communities across the country face a growing need for highly trained nurses, Lander is proud to be a part of the solution. Our graduates are stepping into hospitals, clinics and care

centers with the skill, compassion and confidence their profession demands.

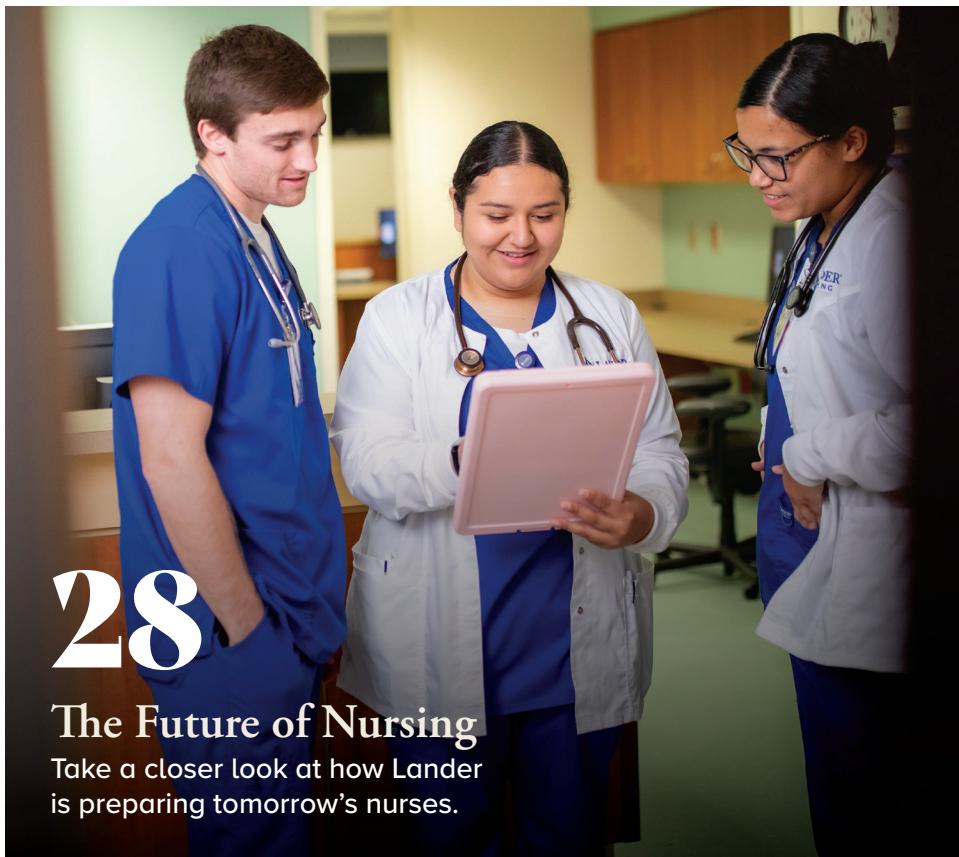
You will also meet our incredible students, faculty and alumni whose achievements reflect the very best of who we are. Their work in classrooms, laboratories, clinics, studios and communities near and far reminds us that Lander’s impact extends well beyond our campus boundaries. Their successes are not only individual accomplishments; they are a testament to the supportive and ambitious environment that defines our institution.

I hope as you turn the pages, you feel the same sense of pride and optimism as I do. Lander is growing, rising and preparing boldly for the future. Thank you for being a part of that journey, and I hope you enjoy this new chapter of telling Lander’s story.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rich Cosentino".

Richard Cosentino, President



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The Future of Nursing

Take a closer look at how Lander is preparing tomorrow's nurses.

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Here We Grow Again

Welcoming the largest enrollment in Lander's 153-year history.

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LanderCraft

Video game theory students build the entire Lander campus in Minecraft.

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"Leveling Up" education with Lander's five-year Strategic Plan.

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LANDER

UNIVERSITY MAGAZINE

SPRING 2026

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COMMUNITY EVENTS - SPRING 2026



Join us for an evening of incredible music as the Lander Wind Ensemble performs Feb 24, at 7 p.m. in the Abney Cultural Center (CC) Auditorium, or enjoy one of our many enriching cultural events this spring.

Jan. 20

The Revolution of Values Today: On Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s Legacy
LC 300, 3:30–4:30 PM

Jan. 26–Feb. 17

Student Juried Exhibit
Lander Art Gallery;
Reception Feb. 5, 5–7 PM

Feb. 3

Community Lecture Series — A Homeless “Crisis”? Understanding the Roots of and Policy Approaches to Homelessness in the U.S.
Arts Center of Greenwood, 5:30 PM;

Presented by Lander Criminology Professor Dr. Brian Pitman

Feb. 6–7

Homecoming & Alumni Weekend

Feb. 12

Founder's Day & Give Day

Feb. 23–Mar. 24

Kelley Pettibone: Peace by Pieces
Lander Art Gallery;
Reception Mar. 12

Feb. 24

Wind Ensemble
CC Auditorium, 7 PM

Feb. 26

Piano Ensemble
CC Auditorium, 7 PM

Mar. 10

Community Lecture Series — Home: The Unique and Vulnerable Landscapes of South Carolina
Arts Center of Greenwood, 5:30 PM;
Presented by Lander Art Professor and Photographer Jon Holloway

Mar. 24

Collage Concert
CC Auditorium, 7 PM

Mar. 30–Apr. 9

MAT Exhibit
Lander Art Gallery;
Reception Apr. 9

Apr. 7

Community Lecture Series — “It Is a Calamity Not to Dream”: Life Lessons from the Words of Dr. Benjamin E. Mays
Arts Center of Greenwood, 5:30 PM;
Presented by Lander History Professor Dr. Kevin Witherspoon

Apr. 19

Choral Concert
CC Auditorium, 7 PM

Apr. 20–May 6

B. Des. Exhibit
Lander Art Gallery;
Reception Apr. 23

Apr. 21

Chamber Orchestra
CC Auditorium, 7 PM

Apr. 23

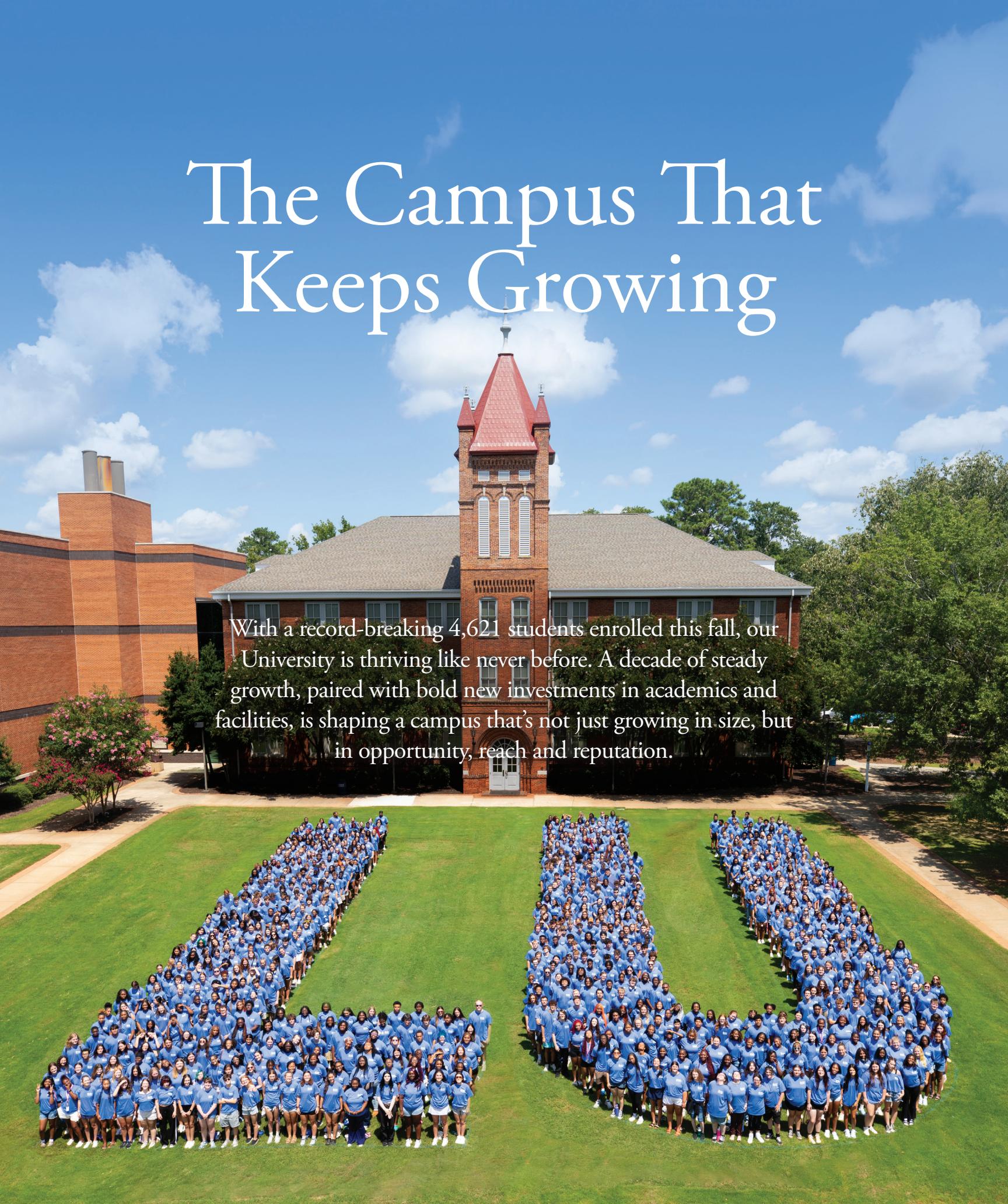
Wind Ensemble
CC Auditorium, 7 PM

Apr. 28

Community Lecture Series — Better, Faster, Stronger? How Technology is Changing the Limits of Athletic Performance
Arts Center of Greenwood, 5:30 PM;
Presented by Lander Sport Management Professor Dr. David Zinn

SEE A FULL LIST OF EVENTS AT WWW.LANDER.EDU/EVENTS

The Campus That Keeps Growing



With a record-breaking 4,621 students enrolled this fall, our University is thriving like never before. A decade of steady growth, paired with bold new investments in academics and facilities, is shaping a campus that's not just growing in size, but in opportunity, reach and reputation.

On a bright morning in 1872, thirty-three young women gathered in a room of the then-Williamston Female College, notebooks in hand and dreams of a brighter future in their hearts. Fast forward to August 2025, and the campus energy was just as vibrant, though on a much larger scale. Nearly 1,000 new students filed into Finis Horne Arena during Lander Launch, our freshman and transfer welcome event, marking the largest incoming class in our 153-year history.



At 4,621 total students, Lander's enrollment expanded more than 5 percent over last fall, and first-time freshmen are up 21.7 percent. It marks 10 years of consecutive growth, but that growth has never come at the expense of what makes Lander special. It's deliberate, steady and rooted in student success. "The strategic growth we have experienced over the past decade reflects Lander University's reputation for delivering an exceptional education and student experience," said President Richard Cosentino. "More students than ever are choosing Lander for our dedicated faculty, innovative programs and supportive community."

MEET LANDER'S NEWEST CLASS

This year's freshman class is the largest in Lander's history, yet each student brings a unique story. They come from 307 high schools, 28 states and 12 countries, carrying ambitions as diverse as the paths they've traveled to reach our campus. From small towns in South Carolina to bustling cities across the U.S. and around the globe, they're here for one reason: to be part of a university where scale never dilutes connection.

GROWTH IN NUMBERS. GROWTH IN FACILITIES.

Our growth extends to the opportunities our students receive. To meet rising demand, our University is investing millions into campus facilities, including the new Nursing Experiential Learning Center, opening in Fall 2026, and the upcoming Information Commons, breaking ground this spring. These spaces are designed for hands-on experience, collaboration and exploration, ensuring that as Lander grows, every student still finds space to thrive.

Supporting students doesn't stop at buildings. Nearly 30 new full-time faculty members joined Lander this past fall, and an academic restructuring over the summer better aligns colleges and departments for career-focused education.

"Attending Lander affords students access to top-notch academics, plus a vibrant student life. And, our Trustees' commitment to keeping tuition frozen over the last decade means that experience is accessible to more and more students," said Dr. Todd Gambill, vice president for Enrollment and Access Management. "It's exciting to see our largest-ever class of freshmen taking advantage of all that Lander has to offer."

THE ADVENTURE CONTINUES

Students choose Lander not because it's the biggest, but because it feels large enough to open doors, yet intimate enough that those doors never close on anyone's potential. Everyone's journey here is individual, but no one walks it alone, and that's the heart of what makes our growing community so special.

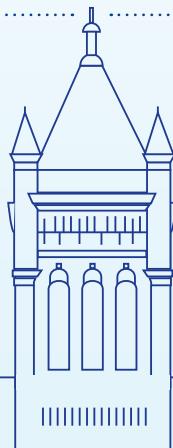
It's impossible not to think back on those first 33 women, beginning their own journeys toward higher education more than a century ago. Though the classrooms and campuses have changed, their belief that learning could be a bridge to something greater remains. Lander's story will continue to grow, and through it all, we will carry forward the legacy of a university that dreams as big as its students do.

BY THE NUMBERS

Year after year, more students are choosing Lander, making us the fastest-growing public four-year university in South Carolina. Here's a closer look at what that growth looks like for Fall 2025.



FROZEN TUITION SINCE
2016



59000
MILES TRAVELED
BY OUT-OF-STATE
FRESHMEN TO
REACH CAMPUS

7th
STRAIGHT YEAR OF
RECORD ENROLLMENT

1,031
FIRST-TIME FRESHMEN
(+21.7% FROM LAST YEAR)

4,621
TOTAL STUDENTS
+71% From 2016

10th
CONSECUTIVE
YEAR OF GROWTH

88,000
MILES TRAVELED BY
INTERNATIONAL
FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS
TO REACH CAMPUS



681
HIGH SCHOOLS

Top majors for freshmen:



NURSING



BUSINESS



EDUCATION



BIOLOGY



PSYCHOLOGY





The Roadmap for Success and Growth

Over the last decade, Lander University has experienced a transformation few institutions can claim.

Enrollment has surged by 71 percent since 2016, new academic programs have been created and millions of dollars in new and enhanced facilities have reshaped the physical landscape of the campus. However, growth alone doesn't define a university. What matters is how that growth is shaped, sustained and channeled into long-term impact.

With the launch of our five-year Strategic Plan, Lander University is charting a bold path forward, guided by six pillars that work collectively to level up education, research and service.

"This plan positions Lander to harness the momentum of the last decade, while preparing us for the road ahead," said Lander President Richard Cosentino. "Level Up reflects who we are: a university that keeps reaching higher, keeps pushing forward and keeps delivering for our students and the state of South Carolina."

The plan's pillars, shaped by thoughtful evaluation and collaboration with stakeholders across the University, form the foundation for a future-focused institution that honors its mission while evolving to meet the demands of a rapidly changing world.



Our Guide to Moving Forward

❖ ADVANCING ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

The story of Lander's exponential growth begins in the classroom. Increased enrollment demands innovative instruction, strong academic support and exceptional faculty talent. **Pillar 1: Academic Excellence in Teaching, Scholarship and Service** responds directly to this reality.

The teacher-scholar model remains central. Across campus, faculty are encouraged and empowered to merge their passion for teaching with meaningful research and community service. The result is a learning environment where students do more than just absorb information. They apply it, question it and build upon it.

Strategies woven into this pillar expand experiential learning opportunities, modernize facilities and strengthen faculty development. These investments elevate education by ensuring academic programs remain relevant and responsive to market demands. They also impact research, giving faculty resources and opportunities to push boundaries within their disciplines.

Lander University's commitment to academic excellence means fostering an environment where faculty can ignite curiosity, drive innovation and contribute to the greater good. This ensures students are not only well-educated but also prepared to make an impact beyond the classroom.

❖ EMPOWERING STUDENT SUCCESS

Amid exponential growth, Lander has preserved what makes us distinctive: our close-knit community and student-centered culture. **Pillar 2: Student Success** safeguards that identity by ensuring students continue to receive personal attention and support, even as enrollment climbs.

At the heart of this pillar is a simple truth: success requires structure. Lander is enhancing academic pathways, strengthening community building initiatives and improving navigation tools so students can stay on track academically and graduate on time.

This pillar fortifies education by enhancing the student experience, from Day One to Commencement. It also strengthens service because graduating students fully prepared to launch their careers is the ultimate service a university provides to its region and state.

Success is a journey, not a destination. By empowering our students with the resources they need at every stage of their Lander experience, we ensure they stay on track academically, graduate with valuable skills and step into the workforce with confidence.



Lander University's value is reflected in the achievements of our students, the dedication of our faculty and staff, and the impact of our alumni. Sharing these stories in a meaningful way helps connect our community and inspires continued support from those who believe in the power of higher education.

❖ SHARING LANDER'S STORY

Even the strongest university can go unnoticed without powerful, effective storytelling. That's where *Pillar 3: Share the Lander Story* comes in.

A well-told story strengthens relationships with alumni, donors, educators, legislators and future generations of students. It also supports education by ensuring academic achievements and student success reach audiences who can champion the University.

This pillar focuses on raising Lander's visibility throughout the region by building a cohesive, strong brand identity, enhancing communication channels and investing in data-driven marketing practices.

STRIVING FOR CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Constant refinement. It's a culture that defines the best institutions, and it's something that Lander is formalizing through **Pillar 4: University Culture and Environment of Continuous Improvement**.

This pillar focuses on infrastructure expansion, transparent budgeting, process optimization and robust professional development. The emphasis is on working smarter and maximizing existing resources while strategically investing in future needs. This ensures that every resource is aligned with Lander's mission.

Constant evaluation and improvement are the cornerstones to excellence. By investing in our talent and optimizing our resources, we create an environment where every dollar, every square foot and every individual has a meaningful impact on our mission.

This pillar levels up service by creating an efficient, responsive university for students and employees. It also strengthens education by ensuring the University has the facilities, technology and processes necessary to support high-quality academic experiences.



Artist rendering of Lander University's Information Commons, which will break ground this spring.



LEADING STATEWIDE PREVENTION EFFORTS

One of the most innovative components of the Strategic Plan is **Pillar 5: Develop the Institute (South Carolina Institute for the Prevention of Sexual Violence on College Campuses)**.

The Institute positions Lander as a state leader in addressing interpersonal violence—an issue that affects campuses nationwide. Through research partnerships, prevention grants, education initiatives and statewide reporting, the Institute represents a groundbreaking intersection of research and service.

Guided by its mission to address a serious challenge faced by higher education, the Institute is empowering South Carolina's colleges and universities to stand united in creating campuses where every individual can feel safe, supported and respected.

This pillar extends Lander's influence beyond our campus, positioning the University as a leader in advocacy, public service and social impact. It is a "level up" in the truest sense, one that transforms not only Lander, but the broader higher education landscape.



“When we said we’re leveling-up education, we meant it.”

— PRESIDENT RICHARD COSENTINO



A DATA FRAMEWORK FOR THE FUTURE

In a world driven by analytics, the ability to gather, interpret and apply data is essential. **Pillar 6: Data Readiness Framework** ensures Lander has the tools and processes needed to make informed, strategic decisions across every area of campus life.

High-quality data, accessible systems, interoperable platforms and clear data provenance all contribute to a campus ecosystem where information becomes *power*.

This pillar strengthens the University’s capacity for research by improving the accuracy and availability of information. It also supports service by ensuring transparency and precision in our reporting to campus members, stakeholders, the public, and state and federal government.

Data is the foundation of informed decision-making, and Lander University is setting the standard for a powerful, comprehensive data readiness framework. When information is accessible, reliable and versatile, it becomes more than data. It becomes a catalyst for strategic decisions that drive the University’s success.

A Plan Built for Momentum

With six strategic pillars supporting three powerful values—research, education and service—Lander University is poised for its next bold chapter.

“Whether we’re equipping students to thrive in today’s workforce, launching a groundbreaking institute or amplifying Lander’s reputation throughout the region, this plan empowers us to **Level Up** in every area of our mission,” said President Cosentino. “I invite our faculty, staff, students, alumni and partners to embrace this vision with energy and purpose as we write the next chapter in Lander’s story—one defined by our progress and driven by lasting impact.”

And, if the past decade is any indication, the next one will be even more extraordinary.



LEARN MORE

Take a closer look at how Lander is Leveling Up at www.lander.edu/levelup



Ushering In THE NEW Roaring Twenties

*A century after it first opened, one of
our most storied buildings has been
reimagined for the next generation.*

The first thing you notice is the light. It glimmers off a gold ginkgo-leaf chandelier, spilling through the front doors of Chipley Hall and dancing across the bronze-hued ceiling tiles. The space feels alive, equal parts vintage charm and modern warmth, as if the walls themselves remember what it was like to open for the very first time a hundred years ago.

Standing in the center of it all is Melissa Herriott, an award-winning Charlotte-based artist and interior designer who led the building's summer renovation. She smiles as she takes in the room. Around her are soft taupe and rose tones, while the deep purple accents and the round table are tucked into the corner for study groups. She reflects on Chipley Hall's rich history as inspiration for her design.

When the 100-bed residence hall first opened in 1925, the United States was caught up in the spirit of the Roaring Twenties. The era was defined by optimism, creativity and bold design. Art Deco was everywhere, from skyscrapers to train stations to the fabrics in people's homes. At Lander College, then an all-women's institution, that same sense of promise filled the air. Students were chasing new opportunities and redefining what women could do with a college education.

"The 1920s were a remarkable time of budding freedom and artistic expression," said Herriott, who was featured last year on HGTV Canada. "The era was marked by glamour. We wanted to bring that into our design, along with a sense of comfort and welcoming."

EMBRACING AN ERA OF OPTIMISM

Capturing this sense of prosperity, Herriott chose materials and colors that nod to the past while feeling fresh and current. Bronze ceiling tiles now stretch through the foyer and down the first-floor hallway. The walls are painted in soft, feminine hues that shift with the light. Stained glass lamps with ornate bases cast a warm glow across the gathering room. Statue busts and greenery remain tucked into corners. Chairs and sofas feature geometric throw pillows, a quiet wink to the Art Deco patterns that defined the decade.

"It's a space that feels elegant yet grounded," she said. "We added seating for gathering, for studying and spaces that encourage connection. Everything we did harks back to the 1920s, but with today's students in mind."

Nearby, a gallery wall—curated with help from Vice President for Finance and Administration Joe Greenthal and staff from the Jackson Library—tells another part of the story. Greenthal and team recovered numerous photographs of Lander women through the decades, which now adorn the hall's living history.



The lobby features a warm color palette and nods to Chipley's history.

"The renovation of Chipley's first floor has been carefully planned, not only for consideration of updating the existing area but also to celebrate the century of women who have been part of Lander University's incredible story of education and excellence," said Greenthal. "We look forward to the generations of Chipley Hall residents yet to come and the new chapters they will help write in its history."

A century ago, the Roaring Twenties ushered in a new age of opportunity. Today, the echoes of that era live on at Chipley Hall. Students will study here, celebrate here and live out the most formative years of their young adult lives. And now, with a renewed place to grow.

Out in the Community, Class is Still in Session



Pictured above: About 300 area high school students attended Lander's Workforce Development Day, providing an opportunity to connect with representatives from the University and regional businesses and industries.

LANDER TEAMS UP WITH EATON FOR A JOB SHADOWING PROGRAM

Lander's School of Business has partnered with Eaton Corporation, a global power management company headquartered in Ireland, to launch a new Job Shadowing Program for business students. The program aims to connect classroom learning with real-world experience while providing Eaton's Greenwood facilities with talented students interested in production supervision roles.

"Eaton has long supported our students," said Dr. Gail Moore, associate dean for the School of Business. "This Job Shadowing Program offers hands-on learning that goes beyond the classroom and gives students the practical skills they need for business careers after graduation."

Students will apply for placement based on their degree program, career goals and application strength. Once there, they will receive individualized mentorship from Eaton professionals and guidance from Lander faculty, connecting workplace experience with classroom lessons. Successful completion of the program offers college credit and potential future employment with Eaton.

"Workforce preparation is at the core of what we do at Lander."

**DR. LLOYD WILLIS DEAN OF THE COLLEGE OF
BUSINESS AND TECHNOLOGY**

"Eaton is an exciting company that plays a pivotal role in our local, regional and state economies, and we are excited about this opportunity to place our students in Eaton facilities," said Dr. Lloyd Willis, dean of the College of Business and Technology. "There is no better way to learn about this industry and the opportunities that exist within it than becoming a part of it in an experience like this one."



Lander's Career Fairs give students the opportunity to meet with employers from a wide range of industries, including business, communication, government, healthcare, criminal justice and more.

Students Network Their Way to Careers

Lander University hosted three specialized career fairs that brought together students and 140 recruiters from schools, state agencies, healthcare providers, businesses and industries searching for new talent.

Among that talent was Messiah Carter, who talked with recruiters from the Department of Probation, Parole and Pardon Services. The event he attended was an opportunity "to know the possible careers available for my major," Carter said.

A political science major, Carter said the department has a focus on rehabilitation for those who have been imprisoned. "This is an interesting side of law enforcement," he said. "We hear many stories about how difficult it is for people to succeed after being released from prison. Having opportunities to help people get back on their feet and become productive members of society is important. I appreciate that."

Before the career fairs began, Lander's Office of Workforce and Career Development opened the Professional Clothing Closet so that students could select gently used or new items to help them prepare for meeting recruiters and having on-site interviews. The office served 130 students and provided more than 200 items, including clothing, shoes, ties and even scrubs for nursing students.

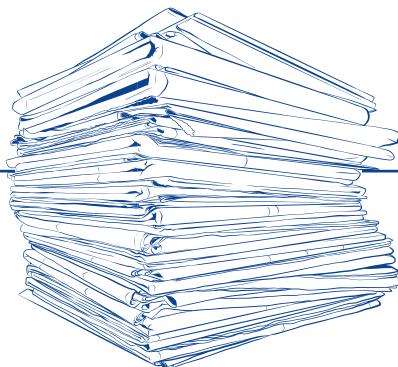
More than 215 students also took advantage of free professional headshots taken at the PopCam photo booth. "By providing these services, we were able to help students build confidence and present themselves professionally as they engaged with potential employers and had headshots taken," said Casey Cline, director of Lander's Office of Workforce and Career Development.

"We had many employers comment on how well-dressed and prepared students were with resumes and professional attire," she said. "We were impressed by the level of engagement from both students and recruiters, as well as the variety of career paths represented."

The fairs were organized by career path rather than industry, providing flexibility for students to explore opportunities across multiple fields. Cline noted this approach drew the largest number of employers and students to date.

Education majors benefited as school districts in South Carolina and North Carolina sought out future teachers for their schools. Dr. Stephen Bismarck, dean of Lander's College of Education, said the fair enabled students to meet individually with school districts to learn about their employment needs and the salaries they can earn. "This is an opportunity to dispel any myths about teaching, including pay," he said, noting that the minimum salary for a starting teacher in South Carolina is \$42,500, and "state incentives are pushing salaries up."

Students pursuing business, healthcare and other fields were also connected with local employers, including Self Regional Healthcare and Lonza. Cindy Kinney, Self Regional Healthcare vice president and chief nursing officer, said the hospital is eager to recruit Lander nursing majors. "We love our Lander graduates. We seek to recruit the best, and Lander has top students. They are well-prepared, and they have experience doing clinical care in our hospital."



BEARCAT BABBLE TAKES OVER THE INDEX-JOURNAL

Have you ever read an article in the *Index-Journal* and spotted a Lander byline? That's *Bearcat Babble*, a monthly column written by Lander students. It's where aspiring writers share what's happening on campus, around town, and everywhere in between.

Recent contributors include English major **Autumn McDonald (below left)**, who plans to pursue library science, and **Armani Canty (below right)** a professional writing major and editorial assistant in Lander's Office of University Marketing and Communications. One example is Canty's column that explored weekend activities in Greenwood for students on a budget. Her personal favorite pastime, she says, is catching a movie at Greenwood's 25 Drive-In or Premiere Lux 10.



YOU CAN FIND Bearcat Babble in the *Index-Journal* every second Wednesday of the month.



WELCOME TO



LANDERCRAFT

SOMEWHERE IN THE MINECRAFT
CYBERSPACE EXISTS AN ENTIRE
RE-CREATION OF LANDER UNIVERSITY,
FROM EVERY BUILDING AND TREE TO
THE CENTRAL FOUNTAIN.
AND IT WAS ALL BUILT BY STUDENTS.

ENTER THE PORTAL

Students in Dr. Walter Iriarte's video game theory course spent a whole month constructing a fully playable, 3-D pixelated version of campus as their end-of-semester project.

What started as a lesson in game mechanics quickly evolved into a fully realized digital world that anyone could step inside.

VIDEO GAMES MEET LESSON PLANNING

When President Richard Cosentino posed the question, "How can we use virtual reality to enhance teaching and learning," Iriarte answered the call, proposing a course where students could explore the theories behind video games and then put those theories into practice.

"Video games have played an important role in computer technology," Iriarte said.

WHY MINECRAFT?

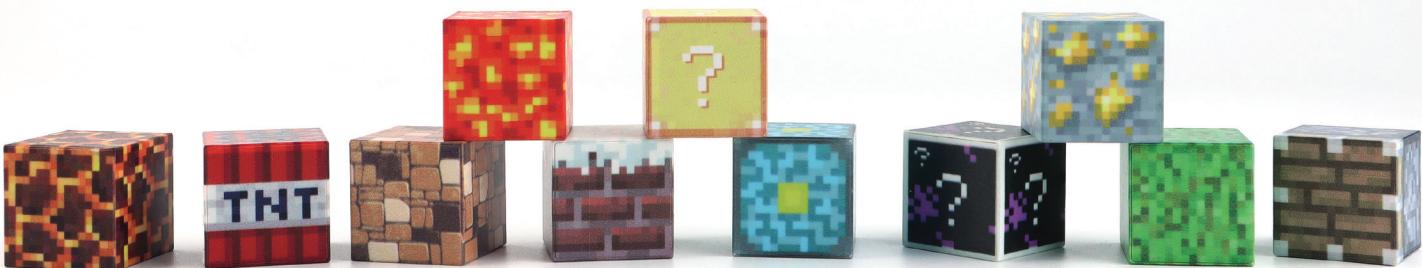
Minecraft's universal appeal makes it the perfect platform. Unlike fleeting trends, the game remains a top-selling classic more than 15 years after its release. It's affordable, easy to access and widely embraced as a game for creativity—from smartphones to consoles to computers, anyone can log in and explore the same world together.

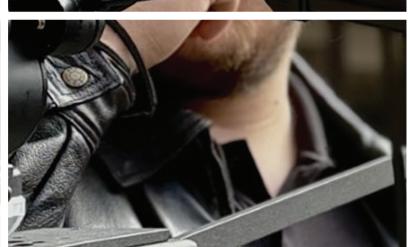
"Minecraft is relatively easy to figure out. And even once you do, there are so many Easter eggs you can find to keep the game going," Iriarte said. "No matter what your social status is, no matter if you classify yourself as a pro gamer or a newbie, it doesn't matter."

LEARNING BY DOING

Students became both architects and designers, mapping real buildings, selecting blocks that mimic materials, photographing interiors and coordinating with classmates to create a cohesive campus. They even hid Easter eggs—or fun surprises—and built mini-games to make the world more interactive.

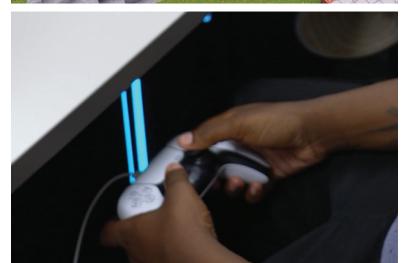
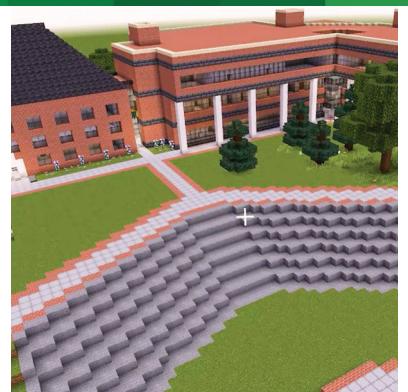
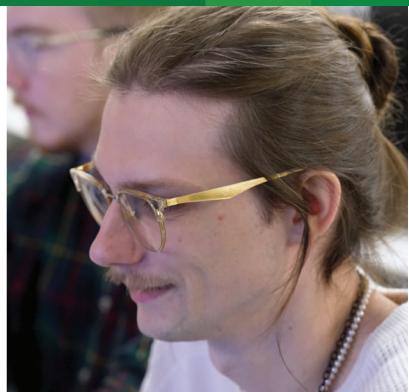
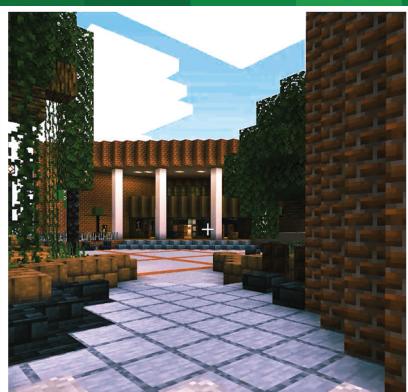
"One thing is for sure, when it comes to understanding concepts, especially in my course, it was a great way for them to apply these theories and make them more tangible, make them a lot more understandable," Iriarte said. "I've noticed in my students that they've been able to articulate these heavy theories that usually you learn in graduate school, and I'm bringing it down to a level that's a lot more comprehensible."





**"PROJECT-BASED LEARNING IS A HUGE FACTOR
WHEN IT COMES TO TEACHING ANYTHING.
NOWHERE IS IT MORE
RELEVANT THAN IN MINECRAFT."**

— DR. WALTER IRIARTE
ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF DIGITAL MEDIA





EACH STUDENT'S PIECE OF THE PUZZLE

Every student was assigned a building to re-create in Minecraft and had to demonstrate one of the theories they studied during the semester. Together, their builds materialized into a digital mosaic of campus life.

For Kimberly Duclos, who played Minecraft growing up, the assignment felt like coming full circle. "I was very excited to start building Lander in Minecraft because the first thing I always did was rebuild stuff. I rebuilt my house in Minecraft, I rebuilt my whole neighborhood, so this isn't the first time I've done something like this," she said.

Duclos took on Jackson Library and the surrounding landscape, carefully matching every detail from the greenery to the windows. "I was very excited to build again after so many years," she said.

Meanwhile, Haylee Gower approached the PEES building with a vision in hand. With her camera, she walked around snapping photos to get a sense of the inside so she could later recall its details when building. She discovered that

trying to replicate the gym equipment with blocks was challenging, but it helped her think creatively about how to represent real-world shapes.

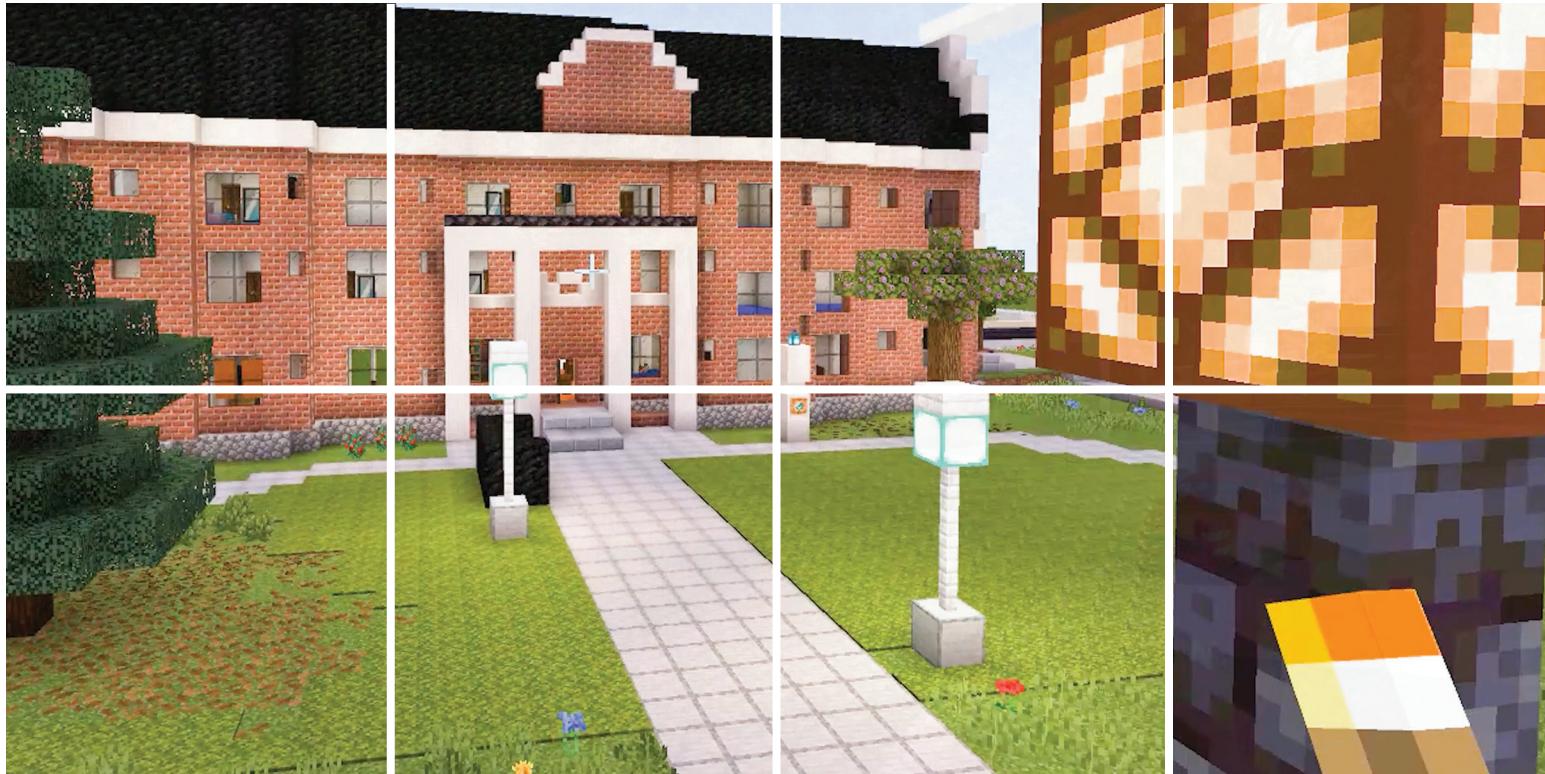
Not everyone came into the course with Minecraft experience. For Brooks Grayson, the project required a crash course in crafting.

"I spent a lot of time researching the platform itself," she said. "It's a great way for people to realize there are so many different ways to learn or express yourself."

Her takeaway from the project is that learning can look different for everyone.

"Not only did we create Lander on Minecraft, but in it, we applied theories, so we're able to take what we're learning and apply it practically. It's a great way for people to see there are a lot of different ways to learn in college."

WELCOME TO



THE “PICKAXE” USED TO MINE CONNECTION AND GROWTH

Like the pickaxe mines for resources, this course in video game theory extracts precious learning opportunities and applications.

“I think the Minecraft world is going to impact Lander in some pretty big ways,” student Sage Cameron said.

The world can be used to get some younger people in the door, he continued, especially those who may be open to exploring colleges but not yet to the point of booking in-person tours.

“More and more people are playing video games, regardless of whether they’re a boy or girl, or a young person or old person,” Gower added to this sentiment. “I think it’s something really vital for us to connect with and start using to get as big of an audience as possible for Lander, because I think Lander is a really good school and more people should go.”

Iriarte recognizes that the campus is changing. A handful of buildings are going to be under construction in the next few years, and they will be built in the Minecraft world once finished.

“I’m really looking forward to seeing how this project grows,” Iriarte said.

And it will grow. This digital Lander now belongs to everyone. For alumni, it will exist as a nostalgic walk down memory lane. For current students, it’s a chance to flex their video game theory knowledge. And for future students, it’s a chance to peek inside life on campus from anywhere in the world.



READY TO STEP INSIDE?

Take a virtual tour of Lander by scanning the QR code.

LANDERCRAFT



OUR STUDENTS

Beyond the classroom, Lander students are building their futures with unstoppable momentum, earning national honors and landing dream jobs right out of school. Their achievements prove that ambition knows no bounds.

Crossing the Threshold of Education

From research labs in California to global business internships, Lander students are making moves.





City Fox, Country Fox.

A summer in California gives a greater understanding of wildlife for Keegan Finnerty.

Traveling more than 2,600 miles from Lander University to UC Davis, the environmental science major spent his summer studying the diet of endangered California foxes. Interning with the Mammalian Ecology and Conservation Unit, Finnerty collected fecal samples and used DNA metabarcoding to uncover what these foxes eat in urban versus natural habitats.

"Throughout the summer, I had primarily dealt with samples from an urban population," Finnerty said. "Being back at Lander, I've continued working for the lab remotely to see how the diets of the urban versus natural populations compare."

Between days in the field and late nights in the lab, Finnerty learned to extract, tag and amplify DNA, analyze data and present his findings, all in just seven weeks. "Most importantly, though, I was able to really gain an understanding of what it is like to work in a research lab," he said. "Through my own project and the projects of others within the lab, I was able to gain a lot of knowledge on the use of genetic tools for wildlife conservation, an area I knew very little about going into this experience."

His time at UC Davis confirmed that he wants to pursue graduate school and a research career.

Making Every Move Count Earns Student Top Honors

Lander University senior Luke Boyce earned the Southern Tier Region Outstanding Future Professional Award from the National Association of Health and Physical Literacy (NAHPL)—one of the organization's top honors.

"I am grateful for this honor," Boyce said. "NAHPL fights for health and physical literacy for people of all ages. This award shows that the many hours I've spent studying, planning lessons and teaching were all meant for something greater than a grade. This award lets me know that the little things matter in everything you do."

Boyce credits Dr. Gina Barton, professor emerita and past chair of Lander's Department of Physical Education and Exercise Science, for helping him find his purpose. "Early on, I was not a motivated or responsible student," he said. "With Dr. Barton in my corner, I've reached new heights in my education that I never dreamed of. This major has not only given me a work ethic that benefits me in all aspects of life, but also a job that will never feel like work."

Dr. Sarah Hunt-Barron, former dean of Lander's College of Education, said Boyce's national award reflects the strength of the college's faculty and programs.

"Lander's excellent programs in education and innovative opportunities for students, which extend beyond the traditional classroom, coupled with the dedication of the faculty, are integral to the success of future education professionals," she said.

Boyce plans to work as a physical education teacher after pursuing a master's degree in sport psychology and a doctoral degree in physical education.



25 Years of Growing Strong Educators in Our School Districts

For more than two decades, Lander's Teaching Fellows Program has helped shape classrooms across South Carolina. And this fall, with 97 Fellows enrolled, the program celebrates its largest cohort in school history.

Students selected for the prestigious program receive up to \$6,000 a year from the state-funded Center for Education, Recruitment, Retention and Advancement (CERRA) for their studies. In return, they commit to teaching in a South Carolina public school one year for every year that they receive the fellowship.

These alumni help address teaching shortages in South Carolina, especially in rural and high-need

areas, said Dr. Tamara Pack, chair of Lander's Department of Teacher Education and director of the University's Teaching Fellows Program.

"Lander's Fellows have become award-winning teachers, school leaders, mentors and advocates for education," Pack said. "The program not only prepares them for the classroom but also encourages them to stay in-state and make a lasting impact in their communities."

Now in its 25th year at Lander, the program's influence has reached classrooms far beyond campus—where skilled, passionate teachers continue to make a difference within local school districts.



Scholarships, Internships and Next: The Big Four

A classroom visit during her sophomore year changed Elizabeth Bradley's college path—and her future career.

When the CEO of the South Carolina Association of Certified Public Accountants (SCACPA) spoke to her business accounting class about the association's scholarships, Bradley took her advice and applied. She's now a two-time scholarship recipient and a two-time intern at Deloitte, a global professional services network, where she started full-time work in October.

"These scholarships have really helped me during my college career, not only because of the aid for my tuition fees, but they have also helped me build my network and develop critical skills," Bradley said.

Her first internship in Minneapolis was about learning how to network and step outside her comfort zone. "I met so many people," she said, "but I also gained connections across the entire Deloitte practice." Her second internship helped her discover which part of the firm fit her direction best.

"I really learned the importance of asking questions," she said. "Before my internships, I worried about whether my questions were stupid, but I learned that no question is stupid if it helps you do your work better."

Dr. Gail Moore, associate dean in Lander's College of Business and Technology and professor of accounting, noted that the SCACPA scholarships are a recognition of Bradley's commitment to excellence.

"Elizabeth is an outstanding student who has fully embraced the opportunities available through the College of Business and Technology," Moore said.

"She secured a multi-semester internship at a Big Four accounting firm, which has since led to a full-time position. In addition to completing all coursework required for her accounting emphasis, she pursued additional classes in financial services to further strengthen her expertise in the field."



2025 Campus Engagement Awards

This ceremony honors Lander students, organizations and advisors who have made a meaningful impact on campus and in the community through their dedication and leadership.

President's Award –

Emily Anne Beiers

Samuel Lander Man of the Year –

Jonathan Walker

Laura Lander Woman of the Year –

Rida Hirani

Betty Williams Unsung Hero –

Kimberly Sipanla

James "Curtis" Harkness

Diversity Award –

Lonniesha Grant-Guyton

Greek Leader of the Year –

Rosalee Faison & Dominick Hodge

Graduate Student Leader Award –

Katherine Walenceus

Transfer Student Leader Award –

Dylan Evans

New Student Leader Award –

Maria Ibarra

CAB Member of the Year –

Faith Bassey

Community Impact Award –

Council for Exceptional Children

Organization Advisor of the Year –

MaryKate Leggieri

Student Organization of the Year –

Peer Educators

Excellence in Programming –

Saturdaze Weekenders Club

SGA Leader of the Year –

Amelia Beasley

RA of the Year –

Alix Kundinger

Ambassador of the Year –

Andrea Williams

Intramural Athlete of the Year –

Cooper Strange

Student Worker of the Year –

Jake Richardson

Intramural Team of the Year –

SPICY MARG

2025 Hall of Leaders Inductees

This honor recognizes a select group of seniors for their outstanding involvement in campus life and extracurricular activities.

Darby White

Amaria Alston

Cheyenne Straub

Kimberly Sipanla

Madison Pigford

Jaheim Hardy

Fe Batoon

Joslyn Byrd

Rosalee Faison

Amari Isom-Green

Lucia Solano

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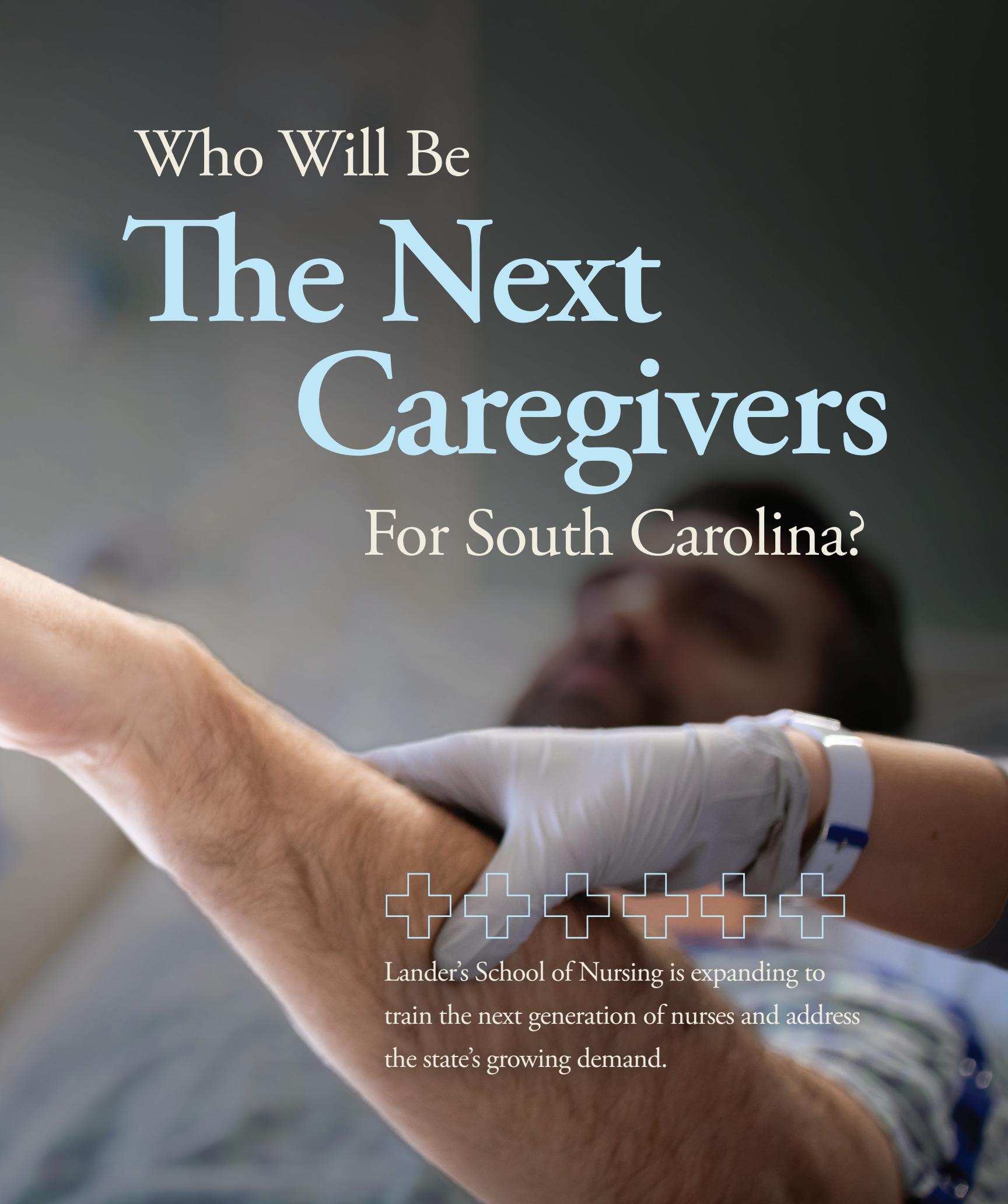


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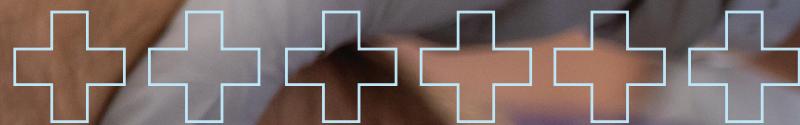
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Who Will Be The Next Caregivers For South Carolina?



Lander's School of Nursing is expanding to train the next generation of nurses and address the state's growing demand.

T

The year is 2036. You've been sitting in your doctor's waiting room for nearly an hour, but it feels like an eternity. A nurse opens the door to call your name, exhaustion lines her face. She's on her third double shift this week. Patients continue filing in one by one, and she knows she won't be leaving until every last one is seen.

This isn't a far-fetched future. It's a glimpse into what South Carolina's healthcare system could look like if the state's nursing shortage continues to grow. And it's predicted to do just that. In March 2025, the federal Health Resources and Services Administration reported that by 2036, South Carolina could face the seventh-largest shortage of registered nurses in the country, with one in five positions unfilled, for an estimated 13,600 vacancies statewide.

Preparing the next generation of nurses in such a short timeframe is no small task. Over the last decade, Lander has steadily expanded its capacity to meet this moment. Since 2015, enrollment in the nursing program has grown by 77 percent, making it one of the most in-demand majors on campus. The program's success has spurred major investments, from Lander's Nursing Skills Simulation Center in 2022 to the forthcoming Nursing Experiential Learning Center in 2026, each designed to accommodate more students and produce more practice-ready nurses for South Carolina's healthcare systems.

There's a clear demand for the University's career-ready education. Hospitals realistically can't wait for new graduates to spend months in extended clinical rotations before they feel confident in critical care or other specialties. That learning curve can slow their entry into a workforce that's already stretched thin. With new facilities, cutting-edge tools and hands-on learning models, our College of Nursing, Human Performance and Health Sciences is giving students the space they want and need to make an impact sooner rather than later.

+ A NEW HOME FOR A VITAL MISSION

On May 6, 2025, shovels hit the dirt on the University's new Nursing Experiential Learning Center, commemorating National Nurses Day in the ceremonious groundbreaking. Joined by President Richard Cosentino, Lander's Board of Trustees and long-standing partner Self Regional Healthcare, the University launched a project that honors nurses and addresses South Carolina's growing demand for them.

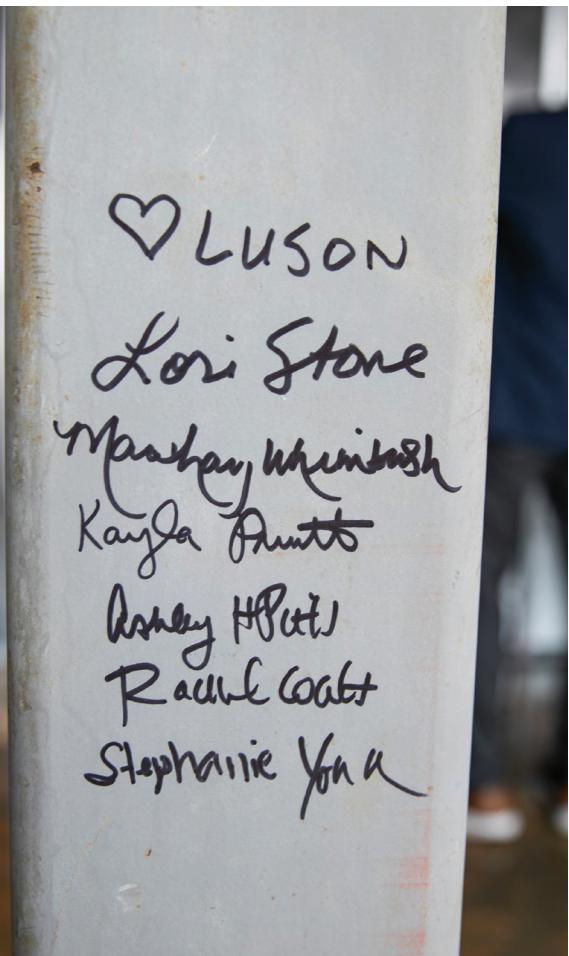


***LEAVING THEIR MARK:** Lander nursing faculty placed their signatures on the steel beams of the Nursing Experiential Learning Center, following a tour of the construction site. The building, located across from Laura Lander Hall, is slated to open later this year.*

THE NEED:



By 2036, South Carolina may see an estimated 1 in 5 nursing positions unfilled
13,600 TOTAL VACANCIES



A CAMPUS COMMITTED TO CARE. Lander is transforming its campus into a central hub for nursing education, giving students hands-on opportunities to learn, practice and thrive. With two nursing buildings already shaping tomorrow's healthcare workforce, the addition of the Nursing Experiential Learning Center (top) shows Lander isn't slowing down in its mission to power the nursing industry. Also shown is Barratt Hall (bottom right) and the Nursing Skills Simulation Center (bottom left), which opened in 2022.

Designed by Compass 5 Partners and built by J.M. Cope Construction, the 14,000-square-foot facility is set to open its doors in Fall 2026. Through its large, rectangular windows lining the building's modern façade, the space exudes an open presence, welcoming nursing students who are eager to turn classroom learning into real-world skills.

Inside, five high-fidelity simulation suites, two 60-person classrooms, monitoring rooms and collaborative study areas give our nursing students the opportunity to practice and build confidence in their professions, among their peers and mentors.

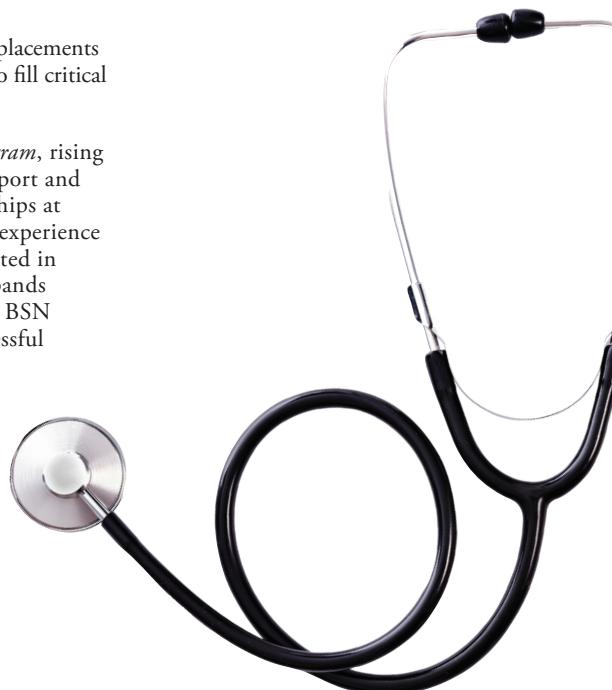
+ STRENGTHENING HEALTHCARE, TOGETHER

The new Nursing Experiential Learning Center marks the latest step in a partnership with Self Regional Healthcare that spans more than 70 years. It all began in 1955, when the Self Family Foundation helped launch Lander's nursing department to support the hospital's need for more trained nurses.

Since then, this collaboration has evolved into one of South Carolina's strongest academic-healthcare partnerships. Together, Lander and Self Regional have

created scholarships, externships and clinical placements that educate, train, support and guide nurses to fill critical local healthcare roles.

Through initiatives like the *Self Scholars Program*, rising junior nursing students receive financial support and spend their senior year in immersive externships at Self Regional, gaining invaluable real-world experience before graduation. The CARE Program, created in collaboration with Self Regional, further expands mentorship and workforce opportunities for BSN nursing students, helping them launch successful careers in local and regional healthcare systems after graduation. In 2022, the partnership expanded further with the opening of the Nursing Skills Simulation Center, giving students the chance to practice in realistic healthcare environments. But as enrollment continued to climb, the University saw the need for even more space to accommodate our growing program.





“Our nursing program is growing at an exponential pace, and this new space helps us give more students hands-on experience so they can enter their fields faster and support the healthcare needs of South Carolina.”

— DR. RICHARD COSENTINO LANDER UNIVERSITY PRESIDENT



"If you walk through Self Regional's halls, you will see a Lander graduate almost anywhere that you look."

DR. MATT LOGAN, PRESIDENT AND CEO OF SELF REGIONAL HEALTHCARE



+ HERE, LEARNING REPLICATES REAL LIFE

As soon as you step inside the Nursing Experiential Learning Center, you will notice the line blurring between classroom and clinic. Students will rise beyond merely sitting at their desks and listening to lectures. In the simulation suites, students will check charts, administer medications, practice bedside manner and respond to emergencies, as if they're already on clinical rotations in a hospital. Lifelike manikins stand in for real patients, capable of breathing, blinking and responding to actions performed on them, mimicking the realities nurses might face on the day-to-day in their career.



"Sim labs make everything click for our students."

DR. HOLISA WHARTON DEAN OF THE COLLEGE OF NURSING, HUMAN PERFORMANCE AND HEALTH SCIENCES

Each simulation suite houses a different story in the life of a patient, from the first cry of a newborn in the obstetrics lab to the critical moments of life-saving intervention in the critical care suite. Alongside three other labs—pediatric, medical and surgical—these spaces allow future nurses to experience the full continuum of care in one building.

As exercises wrap up, students and instructors break out into adjoining debrief rooms to reflect on the lesson. It's where they ask: *What went right? What went wrong? What could be better next time?* These discussions between mentor-mentee bring textbook lessons to life. It's the type of memorable experiences that help students start thinking like nurses who are ready for anything.

"The sim labs make everything click for our students. They can practice procedures multiple times without affecting real patients," said Dr. Holisa Wharton, dean of the College of Nursing, Human Performance and Health Sciences. "That experience helps our nursing majors feel more prepared and confident when they perform clinical rotations."

It also sets them up for success on the National Council Licensure Examination (NCLEX). Over the last five years, Lander's nursing majors have had a 98 percent first-time pass rate on the exam.

"Simulation builds muscle memory that carries over into real hospital settings, where every decision counts. Employers want nurses who won't hesitate when a patient's condition suddenly changes," Wharton said. "When our nursing students graduate, they don't just know what to do, but they're ready to do it."

With the Nursing Experiential Learning Center, we're raising the standard for nursing education by preparing nurses that South Carolina and the entire country can rely on. Generations of nursing students will take their first steps here. Then, they'll go out to do remarkable work elsewhere and help build stronger healthcare for us all. So one day, when you're sitting in your doctor's office, you won't have to wonder, *"Where is the nurse?"*



LEARN MORE

Explore our nursing program and how the journey to a stronger community is shaping up at lander.edu/nursing



ON THE PATH TO MAKING NURSING STRONGER

Jameah Killingsworth, from Abbeville, transferred to Lander University eager for a more personal, hands-on nursing experience that would help her move quickly toward her dream role. "I like caring for people," she says. "As a nurse, I can help people feel better. I have a purpose."

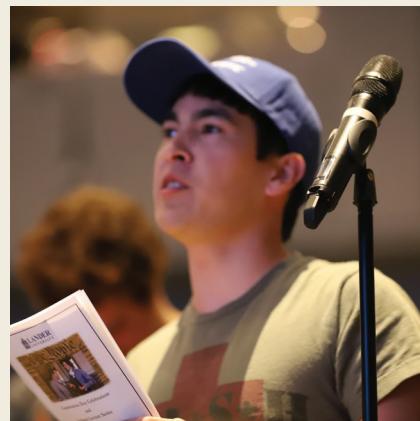
As a scholarship recipient through the Self Regional Scholars program, Jameah sees it as a stepping stone toward her career goals. "I've always wanted to work at Self Regional," she explains. "I realized I would have good networking opportunities at the hospital through my studies at Lander."

Balancing classes, work and study time keeps her busy, but it's all part of the path toward her ultimate goal as a nurse anesthetist or labor and delivery nurse. "Nursing is demanding, you must be very dedicated, but I know it will pay off in the end," she says.

CONSTITUTION DAY 2025

LIBERTY, FRIENDSHIP AND THE POWER OF DISAGREEMENT

HOW CONSTITUTION DAY BROUGHT
JEFFERSON AND ADAMS TO LIFE,
AND REMINDED STUDENTS THAT
RESPECTFUL DEBATE IS
THE HEART OF DEMOCRACY.



As the stage lights dimmed, Thomas Jefferson and John Adams took their places. Voices rose firm, witty—occasionally sharp, but always respectful—as two of America’s most influential Founding Fathers clashed once again, this time before an audience of Lander students. The performance, *A Visit with John Adams and Thomas Jefferson: We Disagree as Rational Friends*, was the centerpiece of Lander’s Constitution Day observance, sponsored by the Jackson Lecture Series.

For an hour, history came alive. Steven Edenbo and Peyton Dixon, both from the American Historical Theatre, brought Jefferson and Adams to life as they debated the meaning of liberty, the reach of government and the fragile balance between unity and independence.

The theme of the performance, civil disagreement in pursuit of the common good, anchored the event’s message. As Dr. Ryan Floyd, chair of Lander’s Department of History and Philosophy, explained, Jefferson and Adams “were both passionate revolutionaries and worked together to move the colonies toward independence. However, they had differing views on what that new nation should look

like.” Jefferson favored a weaker central government; Adams believed stability required strength at the top.

Like the young nation they helped shape, the friendship between Adams and Jefferson was tested by politics and pride. Once revolutionary allies, the two became political adversaries who drifted into an unrelenting silence after Adams won the presidency in 1796, and Jefferson unseated him four years later. Yet in 1811, they reconciled their friendship—a testament, Floyd said, to “how people with differing viewpoints could still find common ground and be civil with each other.”

That lesson remains central to our University’s mission, according to Dr. Lucas McMillan, dean of the College of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences. Constitution Day is both a federal and state requirement under the South Carolina REACH Act, but for Lander, it’s also a point of pride, he added. “The University’s vision is for students to be broadly educated, well-informed and equipped for responsible participation in the civic lives of their communities,” McMillan said. “For this reason, we are committed to teaching about the founding documents of our nation.”

**“IN A TIME OF POLITICAL
POLARIZATION, WE WANT OUR
STUDENTS TO SEE EXAMPLES OF
CIVIL DISCOURSE, A TRADITION
THAT GOES BACK TO THE
DEBATES ABOUT THE WORDS
AND IDEAS EXPRESSED IN THE
DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE
AND THE U.S. CONSTITUTION.”**

— DR. LUCAS MCMILLAN DEAN OF THE
COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES, ARTS AND
SOCIAL SCIENCES



Lander Around the World

From the icy peaks of Antarctica to the historic streets of Europe to the classrooms of Asia, Lander students, faculty and alumni are leaving their mark beyond campus. They're studying, researching, teaching, exploring—and bringing along a little bit of Bearcat pride. Meet the individuals who are representing Lander around the world and showing that wherever Bearcats go, they bring Lander's spirit with them.

1 Honors College students explored Glacier and Yellowstone National Parks and Salt Lake City on a study tour examining the rhetoric of nature, discovering how national parks tell America's story.

2 Nursing alumnus and bariatric surgeon Dr. Tashina Musonza '10 is making a difference at Colorado Springs Surgical Associates.

3 Drew Mattison is a freshman business major and Lander Wrestling standout, joining us from St. Louis, Missouri.

4 Citlali Avila-Cabrera '24 returned to the Organization of American States in Washington, D.C. for her first post-college role, building on the internship that launched her career.

5 After a semester in Madrid, Spain, Maria Rubio '24 brought Lander to New York City, to speak on the impact of study abroad.

6 Maria Jose Zarza is a junior financial services major and member of Lander Women's Tennis from Asuncion, Paraguay.



7 Graphic design major Sylvia Dobbe spent Fall 2025 abroad in Winchester, England.

8 Associate Professor of Psychology Dr. Shana Southard-Dobbs traveled on sabbatical to Wolfenbüttel, Germany.

9 Financial services major Will vanVollenhoven studied abroad in Verona, Italy, exploring the city's rich history.

10 Kimberly Sipanela is a junior medical biology major, Honors College student and Mufuka Scholar from Harare, Zimbabwe.

11 Chemistry major Leah Ruiz made her way to Thailand in Spring 2025 for an enriching semester abroad.

12 Palak Patel, a senior healthcare management major, spent a summer studying at Kyungpook National University in Daegu, South Korea.

13 Sophomore business major and Lander Men's Golf member Cody Brenner joins the campus from down under in Melbourne, Australia.

14 Business alumnus Cameron Dorn '10 conquered Mount Vinson, Antarctica's tallest peak, in -15°F conditions.



Dear Alumni, Supporters & Friends,

As winter settles in and the next semester begins, I find myself reflecting on how far Lander University has come—and how bright our future continues to look. The energy on campus is invigorating. Students are creating projects and preparing for new adventures, faculty are pursuing innovative research and the spirit of community that defines Lander is as strong as ever.

This past year brought exciting growth and momentum. We were able to introduce new programs, like our Career Compass Mentorship Program, to prepare our students for emerging careers, improve our alumni engagement, and strengthen our partnerships across South Carolina and beyond.

“Together, we’re building a future that honors our past while opening new doors for the next generation of Bearcats.”

It's your generosity, pride and commitment that help us take great leaps forward. Every scholarship helps a deserving student cross the finish line at graduation. Every volunteer strengthens our Bearcat network by sharing their time and talent. Every word of encouragement reminds us why Lander feels like family. You are an essential part of our story, and your engagement helps ensure that future generations of students experience the same sense of belonging and purpose that shapes the Lander community.

As we enter 2026, I invite you to stay connected. Join us for Homecoming (February 6–7), attend a regional gathering or simply visit our beautiful campus to see what's new. There's so much to celebrate and collaborate on as partners, as we take Lander to the next level together!

Wishing you and your loved ones a joyful winter season and a wonderful start to the new year. Thank you for being a vital part of the Lander legacy—past, present and future.

With gratitude,

Taylor L. Cook

Taylor L. Cook
Vice President for University Advancement
Executive Director of The Lander Foundation



The Power of You

A single gift can open doors, spark opportunity and transform a student's path. When you support Lander University, you make education more accessible, strengthen academic excellence and help fuel the experiences that empower tomorrow's leaders.

Every contribution makes a real and lasting impact.

That's the power of you.

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Greenwood, SC 29649



LANDER UNIVERSITY



Pinned for Greatness

A testament to hard work and perseverance, our alumnus Ed Moore celebrates a milestone promotion to Lieutenant Colonel.

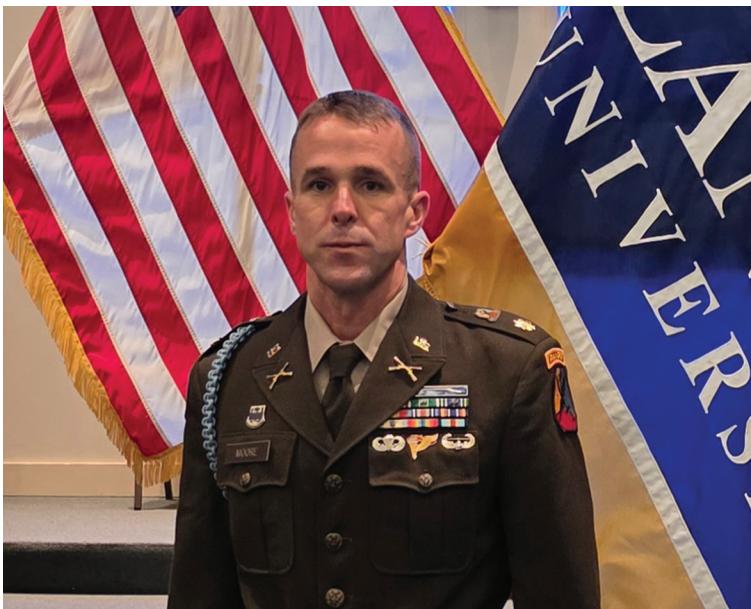
There's pride in every salute, but for Lt. Col. Ed Moore, this one cemented a special moment. A 2007 sociology graduate of Lander University, Moore reached a milestone in his distinguished military career with his promotion to Lieutenant Colonel in the U.S. Army. The promotion ceremony, held at Greenwood Presbyterian Church, where his father is the minister, brought family, mentors and military leaders together to honor Moore's service and achievements.

"It is my great honor to serve my nation," Moore said during the event, thanking his family as well as his parents, Archie and Glenda Moore, and in-laws, Mr. and Mrs. David Hjalmer, of Greenwood.

Humble in his promotion, Moore credits his success to the opportunities he embraced along the way. "I am not special. I have just been given special opportunities," he said.

Those opportunities began at Lander, where he joined the South Carolina National Guard as an Army ROTC cadet in 2006. Commissioned as an infantry officer in 2007, Moore has served at military bases across the United States, gaining experience and skills that would shape his leadership for decades.

His professional training spans the Infantry Officer Basic Course, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, and multiple specialized courses, complemented by master's degrees in executive leadership and operational studies. Among his decorations are the Meritorious Service Medal, Army Commendation Medal, and prestigious badges including the Ranger Tab and Expert Infantryman Badge.



Above: Ed Moore, a 2007 Lander alumnus, was recently promoted to Lieutenant Colonel in the U.S. Army. Left: The Army Lieutenant Colonel (LTC) pin is a silver oak leaf insignia worn on the uniform.

TRAINING LEADERS FOR LIFE AND SERVICE

Maj. Gen. Jeff Jones, the 29th Deputy Adjutant General of South Carolina, presided over Moore's promotion ceremony. He is second in command of the South Carolina Military Department, which includes the Army National Guard, Air National Guard, South Carolina State Guard and South Carolina Emergency Management Division.

Through programs like the Highlander Battalion ROTC and Lander's Office of Military and Veteran Services, the University supports service members with the tools and guidance they need to succeed on campus, in the military and after.

Retired Maj. Adrian Chen, Lander assistant professor of military science, highlighted the ROTC program's rigorous training. "The Lander ROTC program, as part of the Highlander Battalion, provides our cadets with leadership and critical thinking skills to help them navigate the complex reality of the world they are entering," Chen said.

"They will be charged with leading our nation's soldiers as officers, and the

training they receive in the program, both physical and tactical, is critical to their success on future battlefields," he said. "The ROTC program is able to put cadets in high-stress leadership situations that force them to develop resiliency and mental toughness, allowing them to rise to any challenge they may face in the future."

THE STRENGTH BEHIND EVERY LEADER

Leadership is built in the classroom and the field, but it's strengthened through the people who stand beside you. Moore credits his family's support as critical to his success. His wife, Melissa Moore, a 2009 Lander graduate, and their three children, Mallory, Hudson and Tess, pinned his official Lieutenant Colonel insignia, a silver oak leaf, during the ceremony—a symbol of strength.

Moore also praised his time at Lander for preparing him for the military and his career, signing off with an enthusiastic, "Go Bearcats!" His journey is a reminder that with the right preparation and support, our students can turn into leaders ready to serve and excel.

On The Rise

Lander's quality academics and student experience have earned the university high ranks in the *U.S. News & World Report's* 2025-26 Best Colleges List.

No. 2

BEST COLLEGES FOR VETERANS REGIONAL COLLEGES (SOUTH)

Proudly Designated a 2025-2026 Military Friendly Gold School and Military Spouse Friendly School.

No. 4

TOP PUBLIC SCHOOLS REGIONAL COLLEGES (SOUTH)

No. 12

BEST REGIONAL COLLEGES (SOUTH)

CONSISTENTLY RANKED AMONG THE TOP FIVE PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS IN THE REGION

WE GOT YOUR BACK-TO-BACK

In July, Bearcat Anglers Garrett Smith, left, and Andrew Blanton did something no other college fishing team has ever done before—winning back-to-back national championships in the Bassmaster College Series. In a sport where conditions can shift in an instant, consecutive wins are as rare as they are impressive.







BEARCAT ATHLETICS:

A Year-in-Review

2024-2025

From record-breaking victories on the water to dominant performances on the court, our student-athletes had a season to remember. They excelled in their sports, aced their academic coursework and gave back to the Greenwood community in a big way. Here's a closer look at the highlights that defined this historic year.



WINNING BIG NATIONALLY AND REGIONALLY

Wrestling took home a conference and tournament title, with David Hunsberger claiming his second-straight national title in 2025. Bearcat Wrestling was also named NCAA Super Regional Champion, placing 4th nationally.

Bass Fishing Athletes Garrett Smith, Andrew Blanton and Anderson Jones also brought home national titles.

STANDOUT ATHLETES

Beyond team victories, Bearcat athletes brought home individual conference titles, as well:

Michael Balkman (Indoor and Outdoor Track)

Tymia Willis and Jamia Clark (Outdoor Track)

Ashlyn Shively, Rhianna Philcox, Madison Owens, Casey Sutherland and Riley Wolters (Acrobatics & Tumbling)

3.317
AVERAGE GPA



7 “ELITE 18” WINNERS

Recognizes the highest individual GPA among students participating in their respective conference championships.



ALL-AMERICAN SPOTLIGHT

Ten Bearcats earned All-American honors, recognized as some of the nation's best in their sports. Highlights include Autumn Huskey, the first in program history to achieve All-American status in Women's Lacrosse; wrestlers David Hunsberger, Isham Peace, Christian Davis and Marvelous Rutledge; and athletes Kasja Lindqvist (pictured, Women's Golf), Grant Sherrod (Baseball), Carter Wilcox (Men's Lacrosse), Jack Kinney (Men's Lacrosse) and Katie Miller (Women's Volleyball). Their achievements brought Bearcat pride to a national stage.

PLAYERS OF THE YEAR

Some athletes took honors even further.

Christian Davis (Wrestling) earned Freshman of the Year and NWCA Rookie of the Year.

Karson Browning (Volleyball) was named Freshman of the Year.

Grant Sherrod (Baseball) and Jake Larson (Baseball) were named Southeast Region Players of the Week.

Six Bearcats were named Conference Players of the Year: David Hunsberger (Wrestling), Katie Miller (Women's Volleyball), Lauren Dow (Women's Volleyball), Autumn Huskey (Women's Lacrosse), Carter Wilcox (Men's Lacrosse) and Jack Kinney (Men's Lacrosse).

ALL-STAR COACHES GUIDING THE WAY

Behind every victory, great coaches make the difference. This year, three coaches earned Conference Coaches of the Year honors: Jeff Reynolds (Women's Volleyball), Tony LePore (Men's Lacrosse) and Bob Dachille (Women's Lacrosse).

Their recognition emphasizes the important role that coaches play in the athletic development and professional growth of student-athletes while they are in college.

BEST IN CONFERENCE

The Bearcats dominated in the Peach Belt Conference in 2025, capturing regular-season titles in Volleyball, Baseball and Men's Lacrosse (left). They also took home tournament championships in Baseball, Wrestling and Women's Golf.

BEARCATS IN THE COMMUNITY

Beyond the scoreboard, our student-athletes made a difference in Greenwood, working in community trash pickup days and giving more than 2,000 hours of donated time to countless service opportunities. The Greenwood City Council recognized our athletes and coaching staff for their efforts in the community trash cleanup, where they collected nearly 300 bags of litter scattered throughout the area.

55
PLAYERS OF
THE WEEK

60
ALL-CONFERENCE
PLAYERS





Pictured, from left: Bearcat anglers Garrett Smith, Anderson Jones and Andrew Blanton.

REELING IN THE WINS

In the world of college bass fishing, the Bearcat Anglers know how to reel 'em in.

In March, Anderson Jones clinched the title in the Bassmaster College Classic after a stellar performance on Eagle Mountain Lake in Fort Worth, Texas. Jones won the one-day tournament, held annually alongside the Bassmaster Classic—the largest event in professional bass fishing—by bringing in the heaviest bag of any angler to cross the stage, professional or amateur.

Just a few months later, Garrett Smith and Andrew Blanton made college Bassmaster history, winning their second consecutive College Series National Championship at Cherokee Lake, Tennessee. The duo became the first team ever to claim back-to-back titles and the first to earn multiple championships overall. After catching 15 fish totaling 43 pounds, 3 ounces, over three days, a penalty for a dead fish forced a tie, leading to the tournament's first sudden-death fish-off. Just six casts in, Blanton landed a 17-inch bass to clinch the title. Both anglers were named Bassmaster All-Americans and earned tickets to compete in the 2025 College Classic Bracket in September, with Garrett finishing in 4th place and Blanton taking home 5th place honors.





Lander's First PBC Tournament Title in 11 Years

Bearcat Baseball players captured their first Peach Belt Conference Tournament title in 11 years this past spring, defeating Columbus State 8-3 at Dolny Stadium. Adam Love's bases-clearing triple gave the Bearcats the lead, while Connor Droze hit his 50th career home run, earning Tournament MVP honors. Lander finished the season 42-13, with a 26-3 home record, marking one of the best seasons in program history. The victory secured an automatic bid to the NCAA Division II Southeast Regional, the University's first NCAA Tournament appearance since 2016. While the Bearcats' run ended in the opening round of the double-elimination tournament, the season as a whole showcased one of the most dominant stretches in program history. Key contributors included Jagger Jefferis, Kurt Rogers, Tyler Bowen and All-Tournament honorees Droze, Garrett Chun, Zach Cowart and Evan Wickeri. Bowen and Richie Cortese also became the 12th and 13th players in program history to be selected for the Major League Baseball Draft, both going to the Philadelphia Phillies.

"We're proud of our student-athletes and their accomplishments. We know they'll carry their hard work, determination and sportsmanship into the workforce."

— BRIAN REESE DIRECTOR OF ATHLETICS



HUNSMERGER AND DAVIS WRESTLE TO THE TOP, EARNING NWCA SUPER REGION II WRESTLER AND ROOKIE OF THE YEAR AWARDS

David Hunsberger, pictured, and Christian Davis dominated the mat for wrestling this year, earning the NWCA Super Region II Wrestler and Rookie of the Year awards, respectively. Hunsberger, the two-time 165-pound national champion, recorded a third straight 30-win season with bonus points in 73 percent of his matches and set program records, including the fastest pin of the season. In his debut season, Davis posted 34 wins—the most ever by a Lander freshman—placed third at the NCAA Championships and won the Midwest Classic. He also became the first Bearcat freshman to win the Midwest Classic and was named the Conference Carolinas Freshman of the Year.

THE GAME



THE GAME

From the sidelines to the action, sport management students gain real-world experience at the nation's largest sporting events.

In the middle of the roaring crowd at Super Bowl LIX in New Orleans stood five students, ready to put their sport management skills to the test. Amani Melendez, Charlie Beiers, Olivia Dow, Gracie McCoy and Jackson Pare worked in Fan Experience and Game Day Operations, acting as ambassadors to thousands of fans.

"It was transformative," said Melendez, who manages the Women's Basketball team. "We worked alongside industry professionals who mentored us during downtime. It was an opportunity unlike any other, exposing us to the very environment we aspire to be part of in our future careers."

Melendez's experience reflects what makes Lander's sport management program so distinctive. Students aren't limited to textbooks—they gain real-world experience at major events across the country.

Charlie Beiers, a business major and member of Lander's golf team, has seen it all. "I've worked PGA Tour events, Peach Belt Conference Championships, a Southern Conference Volleyball Championship, an NCAA Division I Golf Tournament, and most recently, Super Bowl LIX," he said. "Being able to learn through experience is what makes Lander's College of Business and Technology, and the sport management program so special."

The hands-on learning extends beyond the field. In Atlanta, Lander students Sebastian Augustave, Grant Loniero and Grayson Allen competed in the National Collegiate Sports Sales Championship, presenting mock

sales pitches to industry professionals from over 75 universities. Allen, a senior business major, said, "I was able to build rapport and sell a custom season ticket package to a buyer and judge as if I was actually making the sale. Dr. (David) Zinn ensures we get the best experience from volunteering with professional teams and being able to work at tournaments."

Over the past three years, our students have volunteered at more than 20 major sporting events, participated in the *Breaking Into Sports* job fair at Bristol Motor Speedway, and completed week-long internships at tournaments like the RBC Heritage PGA Golf Tournament. In 2025 alone, sport management students collectively completed approximately 4,800 hours in internships and experiential learning activities.

Dr. David Zinn, assistant professor of sport management, said these experiences are central to the program's rapid growth, which has more than tripled enrollment in three years. "Graduates of sport management programs can work in various roles—sport marketing, event management, sport and media communications, sport finance, athletic administration, parks and recreation, sports information and more," he added.

For students like Melendez, Beiers and Allen, the sport management program turns passion into practice. The sidelines of a Super Bowl or the floor of a national sales championship are just the beginning of their careers in the big leagues.

"I've worked PGA Tour events, Peach Belt Conference Championships, a Southern Conference Volleyball Championship, an NCAA Division I Golf Tournament, and most recently, Super Bowl LIX."

CHARLIE BEIERS, LANDER UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF BUSINESS & TECHNOLOGY



(Pictured, from left): Lander students Avery Cottingham, MacKenzie Legg, Grant Loniero and Amani Melendez attended the Breaking Into Sports job fair at Bristol Motor Speedway in Tennessee.



FRONT ROW WITH DR. ZINN

Dr. David Zinn watches from the stands of Super Bowl LIX in New Orleans, as the Philadelphia Eagles face off against the Kansas City Chiefs in front of thousands of fans and millions at home. He's not there to cheer for a team—he's there with his students, guiding them through the fast-paced, behind-the-scenes work of one of the world's biggest sporting events.

For Zinn, moments like this are what teaching is all about: giving students a front-row seat to real-world experiences they'll carry into their careers. This hands-on approach earned him the 2025 Mary Frances Poole Alston Award, recognizing his dedication as assistant professor of sport management in preparing Lander students for careers by taking them beyond the classroom and into the heart of major sporting events.

Longtime SCETV host Rowland P. Alston established this award in honor of his grandmother, a 1914 graduate of Lander. Zinn said it was an honor to accept the award on behalf of his students. "I'm so appreciative to work at an institution that values education, that values teaching and that values the experiential learning activities that we provide for students."



OUR FACULTY

Lander's faculty are accomplished scholars and dedicated mentors, shaping the academic experience through award-winning teaching, research and service. Their expertise and energy keep our students and our university moving forward.

Elevating the Standard

From global research partnerships to transformative mentoring moments, Lander's faculty are setting the pace and inspiring the next generation.





Making a Difference in the Classroom and Community

Zach Rubin, associate professor of sociology, honored as the 2025 Distinguished Professor

When asked, nearly 100 percent of his students say they would take another class with Dr. Zach Rubin, associate professor of sociology. It's not just charisma that earns him such unanimous praise, or that earned him Lander University's 2025 Distinguished Professor of the Year. It's the way Rubin makes sociological theories tangible, relatable and—most importantly—actionable.

Since joining the faculty in 2019, Rubin has changed the way students learn to see the world. "People should major in sociology because they want to be problem solvers," he said. "Sociology equips you to think abstractly, critically and empirically. Our majors learn to look beyond themselves, understand others' experiences and think systematically about social problems."

Rubin's classroom is built around applied learning. He redesigned courses so students could practice gathering real-world data, from researching the Greenwood area to conducting food and housing insecurity surveys of the Lander student population. Students also partner with local nonprofits, giving them hands-on experience addressing community needs. "It is gratifying to see students producing really fantastic pieces of work that wouldn't exist ordinarily," Rubin said.

Colleagues say his gift is helping students connect theory to life.

"Application of this difficult material is crucial for students," said Dr. Franklin Rausch, chair of the Distinguished Professor Committee. "Dr. Rubin's willingness to do this shows his dedication to student success."

Beyond the classroom, Rubin has built an impressive record of scholarship. He has produced nine peer-reviewed journal articles, four teaching resources, and multiple book reviews and magazine pieces on topics including intentional communities, food insecurity and disaster response. He has also presented at nine academic conferences and organized the 2023 Carolina Undergraduate Social Science Symposium at Lander, giving students a platform to share their own research.

Rubin credits his support system for his success.

"I was lifted up by supportive colleagues, great students and a loving partner. People don't accomplish great things alone, and this award reflects that."

ABOUT DR. RUBIN In His Own Words

I DESCRIBE MY TEACHING STYLE AS:

Community-based. We want to connect sociological theory to real-world problems and give students hands-on experiences, like analyzing social issues in their own communities.

I WANT STUDENTS TO:

Leave my classroom with the ability to apply what they've learned to solve problems that extend beyond themselves.

OUTSIDE OF THE CLASSROOM:

I spend my time in the community. I'm a board member of the Communal Studies Association, associate editor of **TRAILS** (the Teaching Resources and Innovations Library in Sociology), and a volunteer at Bear Necessities Food Pantry on campus.

MY ADVICE FOR STUDENTS THINKING ABOUT STUDYING SOCIOLOGY:

If you want to understand the world beyond yourself and help make it better, you'll love it.



2025 Faculty Awards

Every student success story starts with a faculty member who believed in them. At Lander, our professors go beyond teaching. They're empowering students, encouraging discussion and turning lessons into lived experiences.

This year's honorees exemplify that spirit and remind us that education is most powerful when it's personal and purposeful.



Fostering Compassion in the Classroom

Zachary Wilson '15 blends teaching with mental health advocacy, creating a classroom where students feel seen and supported.

A lecturer of psychology and human services at Lander, Wilson is a founding member of Lander's Honors College and a licensed professional counselor. At the end of his classes, he encourages his students to look around and say to one of their neighbors, "I'm glad you were here today." He's heard repeatedly that this simple practice has made students feel supported and noticed.

Wilson's compassionate approach earned him the **Junior Faculty Teaching Award**, recognizing his creative ways of fostering connection in the classroom. He was also named a Professor for Affordable Learning in 2023 by PASCAL for using materials that are low- or no-cost for students. "I strive to leave a mark on students' minds with my activities, lectures and assignments, but they also leave my courses knowing they have a place in the world and matter as a person."

Making Calculus Approachable

Dr. Chase Worley believes math should inspire, not intimidate.

Since joining Lander in 2021, the assistant professor of mathematics has taught everything from Calculus I to upper-level courses, always aiming to make materials affordable and accessible for students.

Worley's dedication to teaching earned him the **Junior Faculty Teaching Award**, highlighting his inclusive classroom environment and mentorship of student research.

"Teaching is my main calling in higher education," he said. "I endeavor to cultivate an inclusive and engaging learning environment within my classroom...By fostering an atmosphere conducive to open dialogue and inquiry, I aim to ignite students' passion for mathematics."

His work extends beyond the classroom, with research published in peer-reviewed journals and several projects currently in progress.

Preparing Students for Meaningful Careers

Heather Bennett is inspiring the next generation of professionals in psychology, counseling and human services.

Bennett discovered her love for teaching while working with internships and assistantships during her undergraduate and graduate studies. A licensed professional counselor and forensic interviewer, Bennett brings real-world experience into her classroom, helping students prepare for careers that support others.

Bennett's dedication earned her the **Moore Award for Excellence in General Education Teaching**, as well as recognition from PASCAL for keeping course materials affordable.

"Working with the population of college students has inspired me, and it continues to deepen my love of teaching and helping provide guidance to students as they enter the professional workforce," she said.

Since joining Lander in 2020, Bennett has bridged education and community service, teaching both at the University and throughout Greenwood.

A Warm Welcome

Lander University extends a warm welcome to the newest members of our faculty and staff.

THE FIRST EXECUTIVE-IN-RESIDENCE ON CAMPUS

Few people know how to turn vision into impact like **Kay Self**, Greenwood business leader and executive director of VisionGreenwood. This year, she joined Lander's College of Business and Technology as the University's first full-year executive-in-residence, mentoring students and bringing decades of economic development experience to campus.

Through partnerships like the Propel Business Lab, Self is helping connect our University's academic expertise with community innovation and give aspiring entrepreneurs real tools to build sustainable businesses in the Lakelands region.

"I look forward to learning from the students—their fresh perspectives, their energy and their vision for the future."

KAY SELF, LANDER COLLEGE OF BUSINESS AND TECHNOLOGY'S EXECUTIVE-IN-RESIDENCE

"What I value most about this role is the opportunity to share real-world experiences with students at Lander University and help them discover how their talents can shape the world around them," she said. "At the same time, I see this as a two-way exchange: I look forward to learning from the students—their fresh perspectives, their energy and their vision for the future."

Dr. Lloyd Willis, dean of the College of Business and Technology, said, "With her involvement in economic and workforce development, entrepreneurship, and collaborations between public and private

partnerships, Kay Self's expertise is unlike that of anyone in our college."

Through her previous service on the Self Regional Healthcare Foundation, Self has had the opportunity to impact the education of nurses at Lander. She views the growth at our University over the past decade as transformational.

"The University has grown both in enrollment and academic strength, while also deepening its connection to the community," Self said. "I'm especially impressed with how Lander University has managed to expand and innovate while remaining focused on its student-centered mission."

Looking ahead, Self said that she hopes to continue using her experience to guide Greenwood and the Lakelands toward an even more vibrant future—"supporting innovation, fostering collaboration and helping the next generation of leaders see the value of investing in their communities."

AN EDUCATION DEAN WITH AN EYE ON THE FUTURE

The next chapter for Lander's College of Education began with the arrival of **Dr. Stephen Bismarck** as dean.



A longtime educator and leader at the University of South Carolina Upstate, Bismarck brings a deep commitment to preparing classroom-ready teachers for South Carolina schools.

"Lander has a strong reputation for producing exceptional educators," Bismarck said. "I'm proud to help shape future teachers for rewarding careers in education."

A former high school and middle school math teacher, Bismarck understands the challenges and rewards of the classroom firsthand. His leadership is already reinforcing the University's reputation as a hub for excellence in teacher preparation and continuing our mission of service and impact across the state.

BUILDING PATHWAYS WITH WORKFORCE AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Casey L. Cline has a gift for helping people discover their calling. Now, as our newest director of workforce and career development, she's turning that gift into an opportunity to help guide students toward internships, experiential learning and professional success.

Cline brings an extensive background in counseling and higher education. She joins our staff after serving as director of career and professional development at Newberry College, where she was also an adjunct professor, and holding career service positions at Midlands Technical College and Columbia College.

Cline is leading efforts to expand employer partnerships, alumni connections and internship opportunities to build a stronger network to support students' professional success. Her goal is to further close the gap between classroom learning and career readiness.

"As director, I see a unique opportunity to make a direct impact on student outcomes by bridging the gap between their educational experiences and career goals," she said.



COMMUNITY LECTURE SERIES:

We Welcome Curiosity

From colonial taverns to modern mixology, Dr. Andrew Jameson has traced America's spirited past—one cocktail at a time.

Jameson, an associate professor of English, presented his findings during a community lecture in the fall, which explored how drinks and drinking culture have reflected the nation's evolving social, political and economic identity.

Lander's Community Lecture Series is offered in partnership with the Arts Center of Greenwood, providing local residents with the opportunity to hear from Lander's expert faculty on a wide variety of interesting topics, including (but not limited to) fairy tales, the psychology of memory, southern linguistics, and Korean history and politics.

To see upcoming Community Lecture Series events and topics, visit lander.edu/events.



Walking Into
the Next Chapter



Across Spring and Fall Commencement, Lander honored the accomplishments of graduates who have grown, persevered and prepared for what comes next. As they stepped forward to receive their degrees, each student closed one chapter and opened another, carrying with them the skills, resilience and determination shaped here on campus. The University celebrates their achievements and sends them into the world with pride.



FAMILY TIES READY FOR THEIR INDIVIDUAL JOURNEYS

Graduating college is a big moment, but for Charlie and Emily Anne Beiers, it was a full-circle family event. Not only are they two-thirds of a set of triplets, but they were also proudly following in their mother's footsteps, a Lander alumna, across the commencement stage.

Lander's close-knit community quickly became part of their family's legacy. Both found ways to make their mark through golf, service on the student advisory board for the College of Business and Technology and membership in Beta Gamma Sigma. Charlie worked with Lander Athletics and the Sport Management Association, while Emily Anne was a sorority member and presidential ambassador.

"We've both carved our own paths at Lander, but to get to share the moment of graduating...is an emotional moment," Charlie said.

Emily Anne is returning for her MBA, and Charlie is heading into the workforce.



William H. Floyd, III, the executive director of the South Carolina Department of Employment and Workforce, below, pictured on right with President Richard Cosentino, gave Lander graduates a "Career Checklist" as part of his keynote address during the University's Spring 2025 Commencement Ceremonies.



SPRING '25 THAYER AWARD

Rebekah Logan, a graduate of the spring Class of 2025, was honored with the Thayer Award, bestowed upon the graduating student with the highest grade point average (GPA). Logan earned a B.S. in Biology and a B.S. in Music, and now attends the Dental College of Georgia at Augusta University.

The Thayer Award was established in 1986 to pay tribute to the legacy of Dr. Henry K. Thayer, a civic leader and former president of Thayer's, Inc., of Greenwood. A U.S. Army major during World War II, Thayer passed away in 2006.



DECEMBER 2025 COMMENCEMENT

Dr. Zach Rubin, Lander's 2025 Distinguished Professor, pictured below, addressed graduates at the Fall 2025 ceremonies in December.



FALL '25 THAYER AWARD

Receiving the Thayer Award for the fall Class of 2025 was nursing graduate Shae Baldwin. A member of the women's soccer team, Baldwin became heavily immersed in numerous Lander organizations, including the Presidential Ambassadors, Student Alumni Association and Student Nurses Association. She has accepted a job at MUSC's Shawn Jenkins Children's Hospital, where she will work in the pediatric heart center.





A JOURNEY THAT STANDS OUT

With humor and a challenge to be boldly original, keynote speaker Dr. Zach Rubin urged graduates at Lander's 172nd commencement, held in December, to resist blending in and instead stand out from the crowd.

As the University's nearly 480 fall graduates prepared to embark on careers and new goals, Rubin, an associate professor of sociology and Lander's 2025 Distinguished Professor, said, "You'll be so much happier if you just be yourself ... You are all that you need to be, especially now that you've got the degree."

For graduate Ronald Magnus-George, pictured, earning his MBA from Lander was the next step in his dream of making meaningful contributions to healthcare on a global scale. A Ghana native, he arrived in Greenwood with a bachelor's degree in biomedical engineering already in hand. Lander's MBA program offered him the opportunity to focus his graduate studies in healthcare management and business analytics.

An internship in Self Regional Healthcare's operational efficiency and performance improvement department "became one of the most defining parts of my experience," he said. "I was trusted with projects that shaped how teams delivered care, and that experience helped me understand healthcare operations in a practical way. It also taught me how to think differently, how to lead and how to handle complex problems with confidence."



OUR ALUMNI

From their first steps on campus to their biggest accomplishments beyond it, Lander alumni continue to elevate the University's legacy. Their achievements showcase a commitment to excellence that endures long after graduation.

Carrying On the Lander Legacy

Our alumni continue to make an impact long after they leave campus—excelling in their careers, shaping communities and inspiring other students.



2025-26 Alumni Award Winners



J. ADAM TAYLOR '87 – GRACE ILER NORMAN AWARD

J. Adam Taylor earned his bachelor's in business administration from Lander in '87 and parlayed his ROTC experience into a commission as Second Lieutenant, eventually rising to Captain in the South Carolina National Guard. He is now Lander's vice president for strategic initiatives and chief of staff. A former state representative and 20-year State Farm veteran, Taylor has helped secure funding for major campus projects, including the Nursing Experiential Learning Center, Information Commons and Jackson Library renovations. Taylor is the recipient of the Order of the Palmetto, the state's highest civilian honor, and was previously named a Distinguished Alumnus of Lander.



JAMES MCCOY, JR. '82 – DISTINGUISHED ALUMNUS

A first-generation college graduate, James "Jim" McCoy, Jr., earned a bachelor's in political science while playing on Lander's first collegiate soccer team. A longtime higher education leader, he spent 19 years as senior vice president of operations at a multi-campus university and now serves as campus president of South College, advancing healthcare education and student success. Together with his wife, Kristin, he established an endowed nursing scholarship at Lander to support future generations of nursing students and to honor the institution that helped shape both his professional and personal journey.



RAPHAEL COLEMAN '13 – YOUNG ALUMNUS

Raphael Coleman '13, a Lander graduate in business administration with an accounting concentration, is a trailblazing leader in public service and community development. Beginning his career in voter registration, he became Abbeville County's youngest and first African-American male deputy treasurer and was appointed county treasurer in 2024. Coleman has held leadership roles with the Abbeville County Election Board, the Heritage Preservation Foundation and Operation Impact, advancing leadership, education and youth initiatives throughout his community.

Macy Sinner '21, '23 Helps Communities Prepare for Natural Disasters

Macy Sinner credits the close mentorship she received at Lander University for shaping her path into emergency management. As a double major in criminology and sociology with a minor in homeland security, she developed the communication and problem-solving skills essential to managing real-world crises.

Encouraged by Dr. Matthew Malone, associate professor of political science and homeland security, Sinner went on to earn a master's degree in emergency management and began her career with the South Carolina Emergency Management Division, gaining hands-on experience in disaster response and infrastructure coordination.

Today, she serves as Infrastructure Coordinator for Pinellas County, Florida, helping coastal communities prepare for hurricanes and flooding—applying the education, guidance and service-minded mindset she developed at Lander.



2024-25 ALUMNI AWARD RECIPIENTS

Last February, Lander celebrated our 2024-25 alumni award recipients with a special luncheon as part of Homecoming and Alumni Weekend. The honorees were:

Katherine Ramsey Foxworth '97, '00 (Grace Iler Norman Award), a longtime educator and literacy advocate.

S.C. Senator Billy J. Garrett, Jr. '78 (Distinguished Alumnus Award), honored for a career in law and public service.

Sara Hix McAda '16 (Young Alumna Award), recognized for her leadership in business, education and community engagement.





BRUSH STROKES OF CHANGE

Every artist has a question that won't leave them alone. For Lander alumna Molly Ott '17, that question was, "Why do we accept systems without questioning them?"



Molly Ott, an artist and educator, has spent years examining the U.S. system of mass incarceration. This journey took her into adult prisons and juvenile halls. She recently showcased life behind bars through her exhibition, "Better Questions," which brought those stories and symbols back to where her artistic journey began.

After graduating from Lander in 2017 with bachelor's degrees in visual art and Spanish, she traveled to study sculpture at Virginia Commonwealth University and later moved west to teach and complete her MFA at the University of Colorado Boulder. It was during that time she volunteered on a farm, which opened her eyes to a new reality.

"I witnessed a 'prison town' for the first time," Ott said. "Most of the local economy was centered around the prison, and its dysfunction and darkness had a noticeable effect on the community. It was here I learned that prison hurts everyone."

That realization sent her down a new path. She began writing to incarcerated people, hearing their stories and becoming a student of their experiences. Their letters introduced her to prison arts programs hosted by Denver University, where she later began teaching. She recently moved to Los Angeles to learn from California's long history of prison activism and arts programming.

"Better Questions," which ran on campus through the first week of November, showed the evolution of that work. Ott shared the exhibit with Christian Branscombe, a formerly incarcerated painter who spent more than a decade teaching and managing an art room at Lancaster State Prison in California. Alongside their art, the show featured pieces from currently incarcerated people—voices and perspectives often absent from gallery walls.

"Each piece in this exhibit is an invitation to ask better questions about the structures we take for granted in the United States, like mass incarceration," Ott said.

Her newest work explores the reality of "life without parole" sentences. Through watercolor paintings inspired by stories from an elderly woman in prison, someone she describes as deeply influential, Ott questions the assumption that people cannot change over time. "This is a common type of sentencing (1 in 6 people in prison) that ignores the rehabilitation of individuals who have changed," she said.

Branscombe's latest pieces, which were displayed alongside Ott's, grapple with his friend Richard's terminal cancer diagnosis while still serving a life without parole sentence.

For Ott, returning to Lander with this work feels like a milestone marking the start of a new decade of her life. "I just began my thirties, and this opportunity feels like the gift that opens and sets this new decade on a trajectory of interconnection," she said. "I am most excited to build a stronger connection between my home state and my new home across the country."

At the exhibit's reception, Ott met with Lander students and shared candid advice about navigating life after college.

"I hold the title of being an artist at the top of my identity because when working with socially motivated goals, an artist is able to be flexible and responsive in ways that other job titles cannot," she said. "I believe being an artist is to choose a life more in sync with the natural rhythms of the world, which can welcome a more relevant life."

Her hope is that through honest conversations, her experiences can help the next generation of artists find their own guiding questions and the courage to follow where those questions lead.

Graphic design major Brianna Sanaa Skeete was among the many students who attended the reception for Lander alumna Molly Ott's recent exhibit at Lander University.

"I am most excited to build a stronger connection between my home state and my new home across the country."

MOLLY OTT '17



When Wellness Gets to Work

Lander alumnus Cameron Dorn '10 turned his endurance feats into a business, and a lesson for future business leaders.

Cameron Dorn doesn't just talk about pushing limits. He lives it as an endurance athlete, holding three Guinness World Records for high-intensity challenges. Dorn returned to his alma mater in the fall to speak to students and guests for the College of Business and Technology's Business Week, which focuses on helping students learn about life after graduation.

He carried with him a well-worn and well-traveled blue suitcase, given to him by a friend's mother who filled it with snacks when he lost a competitive race in Majorca, Spain. This suitcase inspired him to found his business, Suitcase of Courage, to help workplaces provide personalized, innovative wellness solutions for their employees and support a healthier, happier workforce.

His desire to give back has been a hallmark of his success, both professionally and personally. One notable example: In 2023, Dorn, who has competed in the Boston Marathon for 10 uninterrupted years, undertook a marathon of the heart when fellow Lander alumnus Mike Hudson '04 asked him to run the Marine Corps Marathon in Washington, D.C., on his behalf. Hudson, who became paralyzed after his military service, had always dreamed of being part of the marathon. Dorn accepted, and the pair completed the 26.2-mile race in less than four hours, earning second place in the wheelchair division.

It's no wonder Dorn, who has traveled the globe to undertake grueling adventures as varied as the Running of the Bulls and climbing the world's highest summits, was named by *Men's Health* as one of "15 Ultimate Guys."





Such could have been the case for alumnus Daniel Harris '13, who entered foster care when the death of his father led to a disruption in the family's life. Yet, Harris beat the odds through supportive educational role models and foster care families who encouraged him to succeed.

"I was very fortunate," Harris said. "I had a high school basketball coach and a guardian ad litem who cared about me. I was not alone."

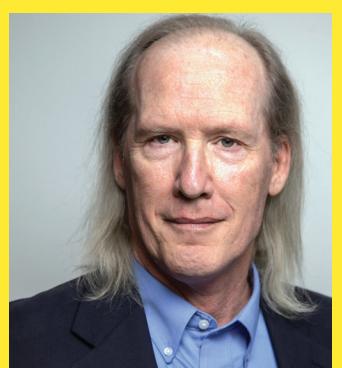
Knowing firsthand the challenges facing foster youth, Harris and his wife, Kate, founded the nonprofit organization Winston Rhea Scholars in 2021. The goal of Winston Rhea is to extend a "safety net" to current foster care youth in the New Orleans area who are aging out of foster care. Each academic year, the organization accepts two new scholars into the program, where they receive four years of consistent funding, individual mentorship, financial literacy counseling, career coaching and community support.

THE ODDS ARE STACKED AGAINST THOSE AGING OUT OF FOSTER CARE

1 IN 4
end up homeless
within six months.

1 IN 5
young men is likely to be
incarcerated before 25.

<3%
will earn a college
degree.



LIGHTS, CAMERA, LANDER!

When the cameras rolled on the set of *Forrest Gump*, few realized that Steven "Stevie" Griffith '83, whose memorable role as the supporting character, Tex, had strong connections to Greenwood, South Carolina. Those acting skills were honed at Lander University as a theatre major.

Griffith brought his Southern charm and authenticity to the Oscar-winning classic, carving out a special place in film history. During one of the most dramatic scenes of the movie, Gump, portrayed by legendary actor Tom Hanks, rescues several of his platoon mates during an ambush in the Vietnam War. One of those characters was Tex, the first soldier Gump rescued.

Plugging Into Local Priorities

Dr. Robert Stevenson brings a community-first voice to Duke Energy's advisory board.

For more than 35 years, Dr. Robert Stevenson '88 has been a steady presence at Lander and in the community. It's that trusted local perspective that earned the Lander alumnus a seat on the Duke Energy Regional Advisory Board for Upstate South Carolina.

Board members like Stevenson help Duke Energy understand regional energy needs and community priorities. From power reliability to local concerns, their insights guide the company in making decisions that affect everyday life for South Carolinians.

"I am honored to have been nominated by area community leaders to receive an invitation to serve on the Duke Energy Regional Advisory Board for Upstate South Carolina," Stevenson said. "Civic engagement is very important to me, and I look forward to serving."

For Stevenson, serving on the board feels like a natural extension of his work. As a journalism professor, he has not only taught students to think critically and report thoughtfully, but he's also brought the community along with him through initiatives like the Greenwood Calendar, which has become a hub for local events and news.

His work guiding Lander students through programs like Experience Your Education and the annual Film Festival has always been about connecting people to ideas and to each other. Joining the advisory board gives him a new way to bring local perspective, insight and a commitment to the Upstate community to the decisions Duke Energy makes every day.

**READ MORE OF THESE AND OTHER ALUMNI STORIES
AT LANDER.EDU/NEWS**





A REAL-LIFE CRIME DRAMA

Destiny Opotzner's fascination with forensic science started at Lander, where she created the campus's first True Crime Club. The club explored everything from blood spatter analysis to handwriting forensics—activities that acted more as a stepping stone to her career in criminology and public safety than as a hobby.

After graduating with a degree in forensic chemistry in 2024, Opotzner joined the Greenville Department of Public Safety as a forensic evidence technician. She collects fingerprints, retrieves DNA samples and performs detailed crime scene work, describing it as "just like television, but on a local level." Her education at Lander prepared her for the hands-on, investigative work she now does daily, and inspires her lifelong love of learning.

Opotzner is now continuing her professional growth by pursuing a Master of Science in Criminology and Criminal Justice at Lander. She began working at a local detention center to expand her understanding of public safety and will undergo training at the South Carolina Criminal Justice Academy.

"It's humbling work, but it's helping me build skills for a career in law enforcement. Ultimately, I hope to work in a coroner's office or with the FBI," she said.

With more women entering forensic science and criminal justice, Opotzner is part of a growing wave inspiring the next generation of female forensic scientists and law enforcement professionals.



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Passing Out the Bear Necessities

On a busy Monday morning, MBA student Devon Watson moves through the aisles of the Bear Necessities Food Pantry on Lander's campus, stocking shelves with everything from ready-to-heat meals to hygiene items like shampoo and deodorant. It's a scene that's become familiar over the past five years, but one that continues to make a difference in students' lives.

When the pantry first opened in September 2020, it was hailed as "a dream come true" by University officials and the community. Five years later, that dream has only grown thanks to the many individuals and organizations who keep its shelves full and its mission alive. What began as a small collection of pantry staples has evolved into a campus-wide effort to make sure no Bearcat goes hungry. Through Amazon wish lists, volunteer shifts and local partnerships, the Lander community has helped the pantry serve nearly twice as many students each week as it did in its first year.

BEING WELL-FED IS ESSENTIAL FOR LEARNING

The food pantry doesn't just help feed students. It allows them to focus on their assignments and courses instead of their growling stomachs.

"It allows students to put more time in their studies and not worry about where their next meal is coming from, especially for those students who do not have full meal plans or live off campus," said Dr. Chase Worley, who chairs the Committee on Student Needs.

Food insecurity on college campuses is not unique to Lander. A 2019 study conducted by Dr. Zach Rubin, a Lander sociology professor, found that nearly 26 percent of students

surveyed had gone an entire day without food in the past month. With those findings, Rubin worked closely with former Lander education professor Dr. Chris Sacerdote, the Food Bank of the Lakelands, University administrators, faculty and alumni to create the Bear Necessities Food Pantry.

COMMUNITY DONATIONS PAVE THE WAY

Food arrives through monthly deliveries from the Food Bank of the Lakelands, University purchases and donations from local stores. "Some goods are purchased directly from Aramark at Lander, while others are purchased from stores such as Food Lion directly with funds made available by the University," Worley said.

"A student who is hungry cannot study. We are helping students do better both in college and in life."

**DR. CHASE WORLEY ASSISTANT PROFESSOR
OF MATHEMATICS AND CHAIR OF THE
COMMITTEE ON STUDENT NEEDS**

Community members can support the pantry directly through donations or an Amazon wish list managed by the Committee on Student Needs. Churches and local organizations have contributed in the past as well, so that students always have access to essential resources.

As the pantry marks five years of service, it's clear Bear Necessities has become an important resource for students on campus and will continue finding ways to help them thrive both academically and personally.



It's because of the generosity of all Bearcats and people like you that we can continue to provide this valuable resource to those who need it most.

Bearcats can't focus on studying with growling stomachs or when their bare necessities are unavailable. Please consider donating to our pantry directly or visit our Amazon wish list to drop off items in need.

SCAN TO SEE OUR WISHLIST





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LIGHTING THE WAY

Under a sky shimmering with fireworks, thousands of students, families and community members gathered on Lander's front lawn and plaza for the University's Holiday Spectacular in November. The evening—one of Lander's most anticipated events of the year—featured a variety of festive activities and entertainment, culminating with the lighting of the campus tree and fireworks show, pictured. Find all of the night's best photos and more at lander.photoshelter.com.

