

Volume 3

The Chimes

NORTHEASTERN OKLAHOMA A&M COLLEGE | ALUMNI MAGAZINE



CENTENNIAL ISSUE

1919-2019

WELCOME BACK

As our centennial year begins to come to a close, there has never been a better time to be a Norseman! This year we have reflected on a century of tradition and excellence that has made NEO A&M College what it is today – a national leader in both education and athletics.

In 1919, the Miami School of Mines opened its doors to a handful of eager students with the intent to train workers for the booming mining industry. Since then, NEO has helped thousands of students realize the dream of a college education and our scope of service evolved to provide a comprehensive education with several degree programs, online classes, workforce ready certificates, state-of-the-art technology, competitive athletic teams, and a campus life environment comparable to any four-year institution.

Just as important as celebrating our past, this year has also focused on preparing for the next 100 years. As part of our centennial campaign, we raised funds to endow scholarships to ensure funding well into the future for our best and brightest students, restored the iconic Odin statue that stands boldly on the

administrative lawn, and dedicated an outdoor centennial classroom for future generations to enjoy.

In this issue of *The Chimes*, you will get a small glimpse of some of our most accomplished and notable alumni, including one of our oldest, Mr. Charlie Fergus. The Norsemen featured on the following pages have made significant strides with their professions and communities and are proof of the Norseman legacy.

You can always stay up-to-date at neo.edu, follow us on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, or if you would like to see firsthand, I encourage you to call the NEO Foundation Office at 918-540-6250 to schedule a tour – because once a Norseman, always a Norseman!



JENNIFER WALKER
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, NEO FOUNDATION

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FROM THE CHAIRMAN

NEO A&M was established in 1919. For 100 years students have become educated, formed lasting friendships, and made beautiful memories at NEO. In February of 2019, we kicked off the celebration of our 100th birthday with a series of festivities throughout the year.

Today, NEO is a vibrant campus of approximately 2,000 students majoring in degrees of Agriculture, Nursing, Computer Science, Fine Arts, Athletics, Sciences, and more.

Student dorms house greater than 700 students on the NEO campus. These students not only attend classes, the campus is their home. I was once told the “E” in education stands for ENDURANCE. However, I feel the “E” in education also stands for EXPERIENCE. Our students have the opportunity through scholarships awarded by the NEO Foundation to make the experience with us the most rewarding of their educational journey.

Our annual gala is an opportunity to raise funds for scholarships awarded to our students.

To celebrate NEO’s 100th birthday the foundation set a never reached goal of raising \$100,000 for scholarships. In the beautiful setting of the Calcagno Ballroom the loyal supporters of NEO raised \$103,000 for future student scholarships. We thank everyone who gave to our most important cause.

NEO, along with most other schools of higher education, has absorbed cut after cut from state funding. We have been blessed in 2019 with endowments and gifts from individuals totaling \$655,663. We also sold a property in our possession for an additional \$375,000.

The foundation works hard to make it possible to keep NEO at the top of the top in a two year college environment. The foundation’s work is evolving as we look to the next 100 years. We are proud to work closely with the 9 area tribes of Native Americans that also call NEO their home and look forward to expanding our relations with community leaders and individuals.

Row, Norse, Row,

DAVID THOMAS
NEO FOUNDATION CHAIR



"Eleven years ago, the OSU A&M Board of Regents gave my family and me the opportunity of a lifetime and since 2008, the NEO students, faculty, staff, and alumni gave us memories that will be with us forever"

A JOB WELL DONE

PRESIDENT JEFF HALE ANNOUNCES
RETIREMENT AFTER 11 YEARS OF SERVICE

Following one of the most dynamic decades in college history, Northeastern Oklahoma A&M College President Dr. Jeff Hale announced his retirement. Dr. Hale stepped down from official duties on July 31 after 11 years of service.

"Eleven years ago, the OSU A&M Board of Regents gave my family and me the opportunity of a lifetime and since 2008, the NEO students, faculty, staff, and alumni gave us memories that will be with us forever," Hale said. "Their work ethic, motivation to excel, and strong personal character motivated me to do my best each and every day. My wife Donna and I have a combined sixty-five years of service to public education in Oklahoma. We are grateful for all the help and support that we've received across the state, especially during our days in Miami, Norman, and Durant."

Arriving on the NEO campus following a devastating flood that damaged much of campus in 2007, Dr. Hale set out to rebuild and shape the college into the premier two-year institution in the United States for academic achievement, athletic accomplishment, and co-curricular engagement. During his tenure, NEO cemented its reputation as the largest two-year residential college in the state of Oklahoma.

NEO achieved new academic heights under Dr. Hale's leadership with the introduction of the Center for Academic Success and Advising. CASA, along with many other student support programs, allowed Hale's administration to raise average graduation rates from just under 300 each year, to nearly 450 every spring. The growth occurred as the Oklahoma legislature cut funding to higher education by more than 30%.

Along with growth in academic programs and improved student completion measures, Dr. Hale cultivated a culture of nationally competitive athletic teams. Since reintroducing the wrestling program to the NEO campus in 2013, student-athletes have claimed three team national championships and ten individual national titles. As the only two-year public college in Oklahoma with a football team, NEO has claimed regional and conference titles and recently had three alumni selected in the 2019 NFL Draft.

Competitive agriculture teams have also flourished under Dr. Hale, including the Equestrian National Champion Brittany Abernathy in 2017. Horse and Livestock judging teams consistently place in the top-ten nationally under Hale-era coaches, and the NEO Rodeo Team sent two competitors to the College National Finals Rodeo. In all, NEO's nine intercollegiate athletic teams and four competitive agriculture teams answered Dr. Hale's call for national success.

Perhaps what Dr. Hale will be most known for after his decade at NEO is his dedication to campus improvement and renovation. Working with business partners and regents, Dr. Hale led over \$70 million in campus improvements, beginning with the Carter Student Union renovation. Improvements continue today with the recent completion of the NEO Soccer Locker Rooms and the renovations of Copen Hall. Over a dozen

buildings were constructed or renovated during Dr. Hale's tenure, including two new housing buildings, the NEO Suites and Milligan Hall.

Dr. Hale also focused on creating a fiscally stable institution through a combination of fundraising and thoughtful spending. As Oklahoma reduced support to higher education, Dr. Hale encouraged scholarship growth and increased revenue streams to support the college's mission. He partnered with the NEO Development Foundation to bring assets from around \$750,000 in 2009 to more than \$7 million today. This growth in funding allows NEO to award 66 scholarships producing a record \$140,000 each year in student support.

An alumnus of El Reno Junior College (now Redlands Community College) in Reno, Okla., Dr. Hale earned his B.A. and Ph.D. from the University of Oklahoma. After teaching in the Mustang Public School System, he began his higher education career at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio. He soon was selected to be the first director of the Center of Student Life at the University of Oklahoma, where he spent ten years. In 2000, he became the Vice President for Enrollment Management and Marketing, and Director of the Intercollegiate Athletics Department at Southeastern Oklahoma State University in Durant, Okla.

"Dr. Hale has provided outstanding

leadership to NEO during his 11 years as president,” said Calvin Anthony, Chair of the A&M Board of Regents. “On behalf of the entire Board, I want to thank Dr. Hale for his service to Northeastern Oklahoma A&M College, its students, faculty, and staff. As we all know, considerable budget challenges have marked the past several years. In spite of these challenges, Dr. Hale has ensured that NEO continues to provide outstanding educational opportunities for its students. We commend him for a job well done and wish him and Donna the very best in the years ahead.”

“Oklahomans need and deserve a system of higher education that prepares them for a highly competitive 21st century world and I’m hopeful Governor Stitt and legislative leaders will value their opportunity to invest in the next generation of young learners,” Hale concluded.

The Hales have relocated to the Oklahoma City area to be close to family.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM DR. HALE’S TENURE:

- Over \$70 million in **CAMPUS IMPROVEMENTS**
Milligan Hall
NEO Wrestling Building
NEO Suites
Soccer Locker Room
Osborn Lab/Science Building
Student Union Renovation
Red Robertson Field Renovation
Ivan Crossland Senior Football Complex
Kah-Ne Hall Renovation
Cunningham Hall Renovation
Copen Hall Renovation
Animal Science Building
Synar Farm Improvements
- Installed 32,000 feet of fiber-optic cable and massive **SECURITY UPGRADE**
- Secured over **\$10 MILLION IN FEDERAL GRANTS**
- Received the **LARGEST SINGLE GIFT IN NEO HISTORY** at \$1.1 million
- Established **PRESIDENT’S PARTNERS PROGRAM**
- Re-introduced **MISS INDIAN NEO PAGEANT**
- Established the **AMERICAN INDIAN CENTER FOR EXCELLENCE**
- Introduced the **TOP TEN FRESHMAN PROGRAM** to recognize outstanding students

- Created the **NEO HONORS PROGRAM**
- Oversaw the creation of the **NEO/GRDA CROP RESEARCH FARM**
- **ATHLETIC SUCCESS**
20 Oklahoma Collegiate Athletic Conference crowns: (6 softball, 5 women’s basketball, 2 football (SWJCFC), 2 men’s basketball, 2 men’s soccer, 2 baseball and 1 women’s soccer)
14 Region II Championships: (6 softball, 3 women’s basketball, 2 men’s basketball, 2 men’s soccer and 1 women’s soccer)
14 Finished season ranked in the NJCAA Top 20: (6 softball-2nd in 2015, 3 women’s basketball-8th in 2011-12, 2 men’s basketball-10th in 2015-16, 2 football-8th in 2017)
Reintroduced Norse Stars Dance Team and Wrestling
Introduced Men’s and Women’s Soccer
- **AGRICULTURE SUCCESS**
Equestrian: Three Regional Championships, 2017 Individual National Champion, 15 National Qualifiers
Equine Judging: 20 competition championships
Livestock Judging: 30 Top Ten Finishes
Rodeo: 10 College National Finals Rodeo qualifiers

UNDER NEW LEADERSHIP

DR. KYLE STAFFORD SELECTED
AS 16TH PRESIDENT OF NEO
A&M COLLEGE



The Oklahoma State University Board of Regents selected Dr. Kyle Stafford as the sixteenth president of NEO A&M College. Dr. Stafford comes to NEO after serving the past five years as the Vice President for University Advancement at Southeastern Oklahoma State University. In that role, he was responsible for managing the \$28.7 million Southeastern Foundation and reversed a six-year decline in enrollment by increasing new freshman enrollment by 26% since 2015.

Dr. Stafford earned his bachelor and master’s degrees at SEOSU and earned his Doctorate in Education with an emphasis on Higher Education Leadership from Northcentral University in San Diego, Cal.

“The A&M Regents are thrilled with the selection of Dr. Stafford as the next President of NEO,” said Tucker Link, OSU A&M Board Chair. “His leadership role at Southeastern Oklahoma State University has prepared him well for this position. We look forward to the

continued success and growth of NEO under his direction and guidance.”

Dr. Stafford met his wife, Kim, in graduate school and the couple have two daughters. In addition to his role at Southeastern, Dr. Stafford has been active in his community. He has served on the Kiwanis Club Board of Directors, the Kiamichi Technology Center Administrative Advisory Committee, and as a Presidential Partner at Southeastern.

During the interview process, Dr. Stafford and his wife spoke with several stakeholder groups, including students, faculty, staff, and community members. Dr. Stafford noted that he is a proponent of the concept that everyone on campus can be a champion and recruiter for the college.

Dr. Stafford will officially begin his duties as president on January 6, 2020.



CENTENNIAL OVERVIEW

In the early 1900s, Ottawa County Oklahoma was the center of the world thanks to the mineral boom of the Tri-State Mining District of Oklahoma, Missouri, and Kansas. Millions of tons of ore and slag were being pulled out of the ground and Senator J.J. Smith and Representative James Mabon representing northeastern Oklahoma recognized that the people of their districts needed training to ride the mining boom. With Senate Bill 255 in the seventh Oklahoma legislature, the Miami School of Mines was established in Miami, Oklahoma.

Since its earliest days, NEO has been instrumental in providing practical workforce education for the area, but it has also been adaptive to students' needs. Just five years after its establishment as a school for mining education, NEO became Northeastern Oklahoma Junior College and students and faculty alike were prepared to create an experience previously reserved for four-year institutions.

To prepare for the next 100 years, NEO will continue to adapt. Already, renovation on classroom buildings has begun and will continue throughout the next decade.

The classrooms on campus will not only be brought up to date, but future-proofed with new technology and cutting edge teaching tools. Campus will be safer and more secure with security improvements so students and parents alike will have greater peace of mind.

New emphasis has been placed on developing work-ready and online programs and NEO will ensure that its graduates are the most qualified and well-trained candidates for the most in-demand careers. To stabilize tuition, the college aims to distribute \$1,000,000 in scholarship support.

NEO will hold true to its roots, tip its hat to the past, and use that momentum to propel the college past every two-year institution in the nation and continue toward the vision of becoming a national leader in rural, residential community college education by developing nationally competitive programs in academics, intercollegiate athletics, co-curricular activities, student development and campus facilities.





NEO OFFICIALLY KICKS OFF CENTENNIAL YEAR

NEO officially kicked off its centennial year by hosting the Oklahoma State University A&M Board of Regents, Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education Chancellor Glen Johnson, and hundreds of guests in the Calcagno Family Ballroom for a night of celebration and entertainment by the “Pianist to the Presidents,” Mr. David Osborne.

During the event, Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs Dustin Grover and Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs Elsie Grover introduced the nine “Power Partners” who have had the most influence on NEO over the last century. Included among

the honorees were founders Rep. James Mabon and Sen. J.J. Smith, Nellie Dobson, the City of Miami and Ottawa County, Miami area business partners, INTEGRIS Miami, Miami Public Schools, Tribal Partners of the Intertribal Council and the Cherokee Nation, Crossland Construction, and the NEO Development Foundation.

Faculty Senate President Alisen Anderson gave a powerful testimonial and introduced Chancellor Johnson. Anderson shared how the staff and faculty of NEO supported her throughout her education, even when she was on the brink of going home to Indiana. Anderson later became

the NEO student body government president before completing a bachelor’s and master’s degree. She joined the NEO Agriculture faculty in 2013. As well as faculty senate president, Anderson serves as the sponsor for the Agriculture Ambassadors and the Young Farmers and Ranchers Club.

“Mrs. Anderson can I take you with me the next time I go to the Capitol?” joked Johnson as he took the stage. “Stories like those prove how our two-year colleges make a difference in so many students’ lives. To hear your passion and to know that you are sharing that with students is incredibly encouraging.”

Along with the presentations, the incomparable David Osborne performed for guests at the event. Osborne, a Miami native, learned to play by ear at four and began playing professionally at thirteen when he traveled the four state area. He has been invited to play for Presidents Reagan, George H. W. Bush, Clinton, George W. Bush, and Obama, and Osborne continues to play as the Artist in Residence at the Bellagio Resort and Caesar’s Palace in Las Vegas.

At the conclusion of the evening, Representative Ben Loring and Senator Micheal Bergstrom from the Oklahoma State Legislature presented a proclamation from Governor Stitt congratulating NEO on its centennial year.

“Donna and I could not have been more honored to have celebrated this historic occasion with so many alumni, students and friends of NEO A&M College,” said Dr. Jeff Hale. “Our kickoff gala established a high bar for the rest of our Centennial year.”





Officials from NEO and student representatives hosted a groundbreaking for the NEO Women and Friends Outdoor Centennial Classroom at the tenth annual Founders' Day on March 29, 2019. The new classroom will provide a comfortable outdoor learning or meeting location for students, faculty, and staff.

"The design creates an environment where students engage face-to-face rather than just seeing the backs of each other's heads," said Alisen Anderson, Agriculture Instructor and NEO Women and Friends member. "NEO Women and Friends has been working toward this as a Centennial project for over a decade, so it's satisfying to finally break ground."

"Truly this year's Founders' Day celebration highlights the amazing impact women have had on the history of NEO," said Dr. Hale during the event. "I may be biased, but I think one of the most influential women has been NEO First Lady Donna Hale. She jumped in with both feet when we came to Miami and I am incredibly proud of what she has

accomplished as the president of NEO Women and Friends."

Senator Micheal Bergstrom and Representative Ben Loring also delivered a Legislative Citation congratulating NEO in celebration of its centennial. Senator Bergstrom noted that as an educator in Bluejacket, he would often recommend NEO and continues to support rural two-year colleges as an affordable education option that supports local economies.

In addition to the outdoor classroom, NEO built a new soccer locker room facility and hosted a ribbon cutting on April 27, 2019. The new facility provides modern dressing rooms for athletes, along with direct access to their new practice field. An additional piece of the project, NEO dug new irrigation and laid sod for the soccer practice field, which now sits on the banks of Tar Creek.

For a full album of the event, visit Facebook. com/gogoneo.



THEN AND NOW

"THEN AND NOW: A PICTORIAL HISTORY OF NEO A&M" RELEASED TO COMMEMORATE CENTENNIAL

NEO commemorated its centennial year with the release of "Then and Now: A Pictorial History of NEO A&M." The book features over 200 pages of high-quality archival photos side-by-side with their modern version. Former Director of Library Services Sloane Arana compiled the book as an extension of her four-volume history of NEO entitled "From Lead and Zinc to Blue and Gold."

and realized how powerful photographs are as a medium for telling stories," said Arana. "NEO has such a rich tradition to draw from that it was easy to share that story by contrasting photos from the past and the present. The message of this book is that NEO's history, is a long, conversation between generations."

Copies of "Then and Now" are available for \$36.95. For shipping, please contact the NEO Foundation at 918-540-6115.



"We'd been working on collecting and sharing the history of the college for almost a decade

BRINGING ODIN BACK TO LIFE

NEO UNVEILS REFURBISHED STATUE OF ODIN

NEO unveiled the newly refurbished "Odin the Magnificent" on April 6, 2019. NEO retirees raised funds to restore the iconic statue as well as fund a scholarship. The group has raised \$15,000 to date.

Mrs. Carol Calcagno and her son Gary joined Dr. Hale in unveiling the statue, designed by the late Dr. Nick Calcagno. Originally erected in 1982, the statue was in dire need of maintenance and repair. In her

remarks from the family, Carol noted that Nick would have been extremely honored to see such care taken of his creation.

"The saying 'Once a Norseman, Always a Norseman' has been the mantra of our college for over 70 years," said retired Athletic Director Dale Patterson. "I am proud to call the Norseman our mascot and am honored that our retired staff and faculty decided to take on this project."



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2019 ***OUTSTANDING ALUMNI***

Each year, Northeastern Oklahoma A&M College opens nominations for the Outstanding Alumni Awards. An outstanding honoree is selected from the School of Liberal Arts, the School of Agriculture and Natural Sciences, and the School of Human Environmental Sciences. Along with the three awards to specific schools, NEO also presents special awards to the Outstanding Young Alumni, Outstanding Retired Faculty Member, and the Award of Merit.

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

This year, we honored two motivated young professionals, a criminal justice innovator implementing virtual teaching techniques, a CIA officer, a former representative and vet who still makes house calls, a former instructor who continues to shape young minds, and an alumna whose work with the NEO Development Foundation makes a difference in student's lives.

The 2019 class of Outstanding Alumni exemplify community service and leadership within their industries and they represent the ideal Norsemen.



Outstanding Young Alumnus ***DR. BRIAN ARNALL***

Growing up between Miami and Wyandotte, Dr. Brian Arnall was familiar with agriculture, but his first substantial interaction with area farmers was his high school job hauling hay.

“I originally got involved in agriculture in high school because a friend of mine convinced me to join the land judging team,” said Arnall. “I fell in love with FFA and was pretty good at judging, but still wasn’t sure what I wanted to do as a career.”

While many of his friends were picking majors in business or livestock, Dr. Arnall chose to complete the agronomy program.

“I was one of two or three people in the program and its recent reintroduction to campus is a testament to the agriculture faculty today,” he said. “Both Roger Fent and Pete Smith always pushed me and were such amazing mentors. They pulled me out of my comfort zone and I attribute a lot of my career success to how they shaped me at NEO.”

Following NEO, he transferred to Oklahoma State University where he attributes much of his success to taking advantage of opportunities that presented themselves.

“A lot of the success in my life has been about opportunity,” he noted. “I went to NEO because it was affordable and close to home. Even though I knew I was going the OSU, I had an opportunity to work in the soil testing lab because of a connection I had made while working at Ken’s Farm and Home.”

After finishing his bachelor and master’s degrees, he was

convinced by Dr. Bill Raun to work for him as his technician.

“I was responsible for a lot of the field operations and led his graduate students,” said Dr. Anall. “He sent me to Mexico, China, and Uzbekistan to implement his technologies and train local farmers.”

This ground-level work has become the hallmark of Dr. Arnall’s career. After earning his Ph.D. in Soil Fertility in 2008, he was offered his dream job as a professor and Extension Precision Nutrient Management Specialist. As an extension specialist, he is tasked with delivering research outcomes to area farmers to improve the quality and yield of their crop.

He also has the opportunity to bring the issues of producers into the classroom to promote practical student learning. Since being named an associate professor in 2014, Dr. Arnall has also increased research output. He has published over 50 academic journal articles, written four book chapters, created nearly 200 extension tools, and taught over 1,200 students.

Dr. Arnall and his wife Courtney live in the Stillwater area and have two children who are active 4H members. When he is not working, he enjoys spending time outdoors with his family and cross-country running.

As for his advice, Dr. Arnall encourages future college students to learn from his experience.

“Make connections with your fellow students and keep them close to you. So many of the doors that were opened to me came from the friends that I made in college.”



Outstanding Young Alumnus ***CHAD DAVIS***

Chad Davis was originally born in Miami, but grew up in Picher, Okla. Although many young people chafe as growing up in a small town, Davis notes that it was key in shaping who he became.

I never let the idea of growing up in a ‘small town’ affect what I wanted to do,” he said. “Growing up in Picher was hugely influential on me. I had family, friends, and teachers who were hugely influential to me.”

After graduating from Picher High School, he earned a scholarship from Eagle Picher, where his father worked. After NEO, he began working at Thermo-Fisher and managed a team of 40. However, he was invited to join the coaching staff of Donnie Bigby in 2009, and he served as a Assistant Football Coach and Student Activity Center Coordinator.

“It was huge,” he noted. “It really hit the reset on my career. It really pushed me to continue my education and develop this path. It was one of the most important and fun parts of my life.”

Shifting to a career in sports and leisure, he completed a B.S. in Physical Education at Pittsburg State University in 2011 and continued to complete a M.S. in Sports Management in 2013.

In 2014, he became the Director of Football Operations, a position he held until 2017. While working at NEO, Davis earned a reverse transfer Associate of Arts in General Studies and Associate of Science in Physical Education from NEO.

Davis shifted to become the Director of Athletics for Miami Public Schools (MPS) in 2017, where he is tasked with athletics management for 17 programs in grades 6-12. His responsibilities include management of nearly three dozen coaching staff members

“One of the big reasons I wanted to make the move was that I wanted to prioritized my time. It really freed up my time to be a dad and that can be hard when you’re working seven days a week.”

As Director of Athletics, he noted that it was his responsibility to facilitate the daily operations and allow coaches and students to grow.

Along with his position at MPS, he is also active in regional athletics and has led fundraising for Miami Wardog Athletics, served as the vice-chair of the Wardog Legend Committee, and has been the Game Day Manager for the Midwest Classic Bowl. He was inducted into the Oklahoma Eight Man Football Coaches Association Hall of Fame in 2014.

Davis and his wife Amanda, also an NEO Outstanding Alumni Award recipient, live in Miami with their children, Seth and Sayler. When he is not working, he enjoys spending time with his family at after school activities.

“You have to dream big. I am a small town boy from Picher, but you can get to wherever you want,” he said. “It takes hard work, personal character, and integrity.”



Outstanding Alumnus **DR. BRIAN RENEGAR** SCHOOL OF AGRICULTURE

Dr. Brian Renegar has always had a passion for animals. However, he also learned at an early age the importance of quality veterinary care.

“In high school I was heavily involved in FFA. I had a hog project that I had contracted to sell to an incoming freshmen before I graduated,” said Dr. Renegar. “In the fall of my senior year, I bought a hog and didn’t realize that it had [the infectious disease] erysipelas.”

“A local vet had misdiagnosed it as a calcium deficiency. Instead of prescribing an antibiotic, he had me put calcium in my feed and within about 60 days, my entire herd was wiped out.”

Upon graduating high school, Dr. Renegar chose to attend NEO in 1969 after a visit with Harry Synar.

“I was really impressed by Harry Synar. That visit overwhelmed me and I knew NEO was where I wanted to go, even though I wasn’t sure what career I wanted to pursue yet.”

It was at NEO where he met Jerry Hollis, an NEO science instructor who would become a life-altering mentor.

“I had a mental block with math and chemistry,” he explained. “But Jerry convinced me that if I could pass history and government, then I could use those same study skills to pass chemistry and math. His advice probably had more influence on my life than any of my instructors in vet school.”

After earning 36 hours over two semesters, he transferred to Northeastern State University to be closer to home.

Dr. Renegar was then accepted into the OSU Doctorate of Veterinary Medicine Program.

He later learned that his perseverance despite his devastating herd failure in high school played a major role in his acceptance into the program.

After graduation from OSU, he purchased and operated a practice in McAlester, Okla., for nearly four decades.

In 2007, Dr. Renegar decided to run for office after becoming frustrated with state politics. Over the course of 12 years, he served as the District 17 Representative to the Oklahoma House of Representatives in addition to running his vet clinic.

“I was most proud of my ability to protect southern Oklahoma’s water from Texas and make it a felony to practice veterinary medicine without a license, as well as prevent several bad bills.”

Now retired, Dr. Renegar splits his time between operating a mobile vet clinic and doing surgery at a local humane society. He and his wife Theresa have four children and eight grandchildren and live in Angel Fire, New Mexico, with their adopted grandson, who is a sophomore at the local high school.

When asked what advice he had for young people choosing their career, he shared what has made his life’s work so enjoyable.

“It’s important when deciding on a career to not think about the money. Pick a vocation you have a passion for and you will always enjoy your work.”

Outstanding Alumnus **CHARLENE LEUBECKER** SCHOOL OF HUMAN ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES



Each day, Charlene Leubecker goes to work in one of the most classified fields in the United States. As the Chief Clandestine Information Technology Officer for the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), she is understandably tight-lipped about her daily duties, but is more than willing to share the thrill of working in a rapidly evolving field with a highly skilled and technically diverse team.

“It’s kind of fun to do the impossible and know that I am working every day to make a positive mission impact,” said Leubecker. “There are a lot of misconceptions about what we do in the CIA and what type of skills our officers have. Many people would be surprised to learn that we have employees from several different areas of expertise—from engineers to graphic artists.”

A self-professed math nerd, Leubecker enrolled in concurrent math courses at NEO during her senior year at Grove High School. Under the guidance of Grove Teacher Ray Lomax and NEO Hall of Fame Instructor John Lomax, she pursued a degree in computer science.

“I always think of my time at NEO as a great transition from being at home to college life,” she noted. “I had to learn to manage my time and prioritize, but the community was still small enough that you didn’t get lost.”

After graduation, Leubecker transferred to Oklahoma State University (OSU) where she continued her computer science and mathematics studies and was active in intermural sports.

“I was definitely a Cowboy through and through, so it was natural for me to go to Oklahoma State after completing my studies at NEO,” she said. “It was far enough from home for me to be on my own but close enough to come home for

a weekend and I was able to afford the tuition through a National Merit Scholarship.

However, it was when a CIA recruiter attended an OSU recruiting fair that Leubecker’s future career began to take shape. The recruiter appealed to her desire to travel the world and to support a mission like no other.

“I have family members who served in the military and my parents instilled a desire to give back, so it was natural for me to seek out this kind of opportunity.”

For over three decades, she has been dedicated to the protection of the CIA’s internal computer systems and was named one of Washington, D.C.’s Top Women in Technology in 2015.

“For most of my career I have been involved in computer security or cyber security. As the technology and data industry changes we have to anticipate new threats that stem from those changes and try to stay one step ahead. It’s a field where it is important to be open to new challenges and address them from many diverse perspectives.”

Leubecker and her husband have one son and live in the Washington, D.C. area. When she is not working, she enjoys taking cruises, anything Disney, and is a voracious reader.

“I am a huge Disney fan and Walt Disney said ‘if you can dream it, you can do it,’ and it’s my life’s motto.” I have enjoyed my career and tacking new challenges every day. Going to college can be a challenging new experience, but the only limitations you have are the ones you put on yourself.”



Outstanding Alumnus ***DR. PAUL KROUTTER*** SCHOOL OF LIBERAL ARTS

As the head of the Criminal Justice Department at the University of Arkansas, Dr. Paul Kroutter notes that criminal justice has been a lifelong interest.

“I originally planned to study to become a lawyer when I first came to NEO, but after completing a degree in criminal justice I decided I really enjoyed the enforcement side.”

Growing up in the Tulsa area, Dr. Kroutter chose to attend NEO after he was awarded an academic scholarship. While at NEO, he enjoyed hunting and fishing with his dorm mates, but found a mentor in NEO Law Enforcement Instructor Leon Manning. He graduated from NEO in 1974 before entering the workforce as a welder.

“I did some welding out of college to support my family, but part of that messed up my lungs,” he recalled. “That led to some money from the Department of Rehabilitative Services, which allowed me to go back to school.”

The opportunity to continue his education led Dr. Kroutter to Northeastern State University, where he completed a bachelor’s degree and graduated as part of the first class of the Master’s Degree in Criminal Justice program at Northeastern State University in 1981.

Over the next several years, Dr. Kroutter worked as an educator and held a variety of positions with the

Broken Arrow Police Department. During his tenure, he completed his Ph.D. in Education from Oklahoma State University and served as a detective, sergeant, captain, and acting major at Broken Arrow.

“I did pretty much every facet of police work at Broken Arrow,” he noted. “With my criminal justice degrees, I was temporarily assigned to the detective division for about 8 or 9 years before it was made permanent. I was the first slick-sleeve (unranked) detective because I had the education and that opened the door for many of the detectives who work there today.”

Since 2012, Dr. Kroutter has worked with the University of Arkansas – Fort Smith as well as teaching adjunct and certification courses throughout the region. Dr. Kroutter is nationally recognized for his work in virtual reality and simulation learning in a variety of public service and health occupations.

“Students are able to retain the information when they get hands-on experience,” said Dr. Kroutter. “My main goal is to put together a criminal justice program that is one of the best in the country. Hands-on experience is a major part of ensuring students get the experience that they can apply.”

Dr. Kroutter has three children and two stepchildren and he and his wife Jan live in Fort Smith. When he is not working, he enjoys working on and fishing at his cabin in Mountain Home, Ark., on North Fork Lake.



Outstanding Retired Faculty ***JEROLD GRAHAM***

On the banks of Cass Lake in the Leech Lake Reservation in Minnesota, you may find Jerold Graham spending the summer mentoring young men at Camp Chippewa or carving on a carefully selected piece of driftwood.

“I started out at the camp when my brother’s track and field coach, Otto “Capp” Endres mentioned he needed some kitchen staff at a boys’ camp he owned in Minnesota,” Graham recalled. “I started as a dishwasher, but by my second year I was a camp counselor. I learned a tremendous amount about canoeing and led canoe trips to Canada for about 20 years. It was through the camp that we purchased 10 acres near the Hook Island Fishing Camp on Rainy Lake where I spend my summers and lead fishing trips.”

During the spring and fall, Graham earned his bachelor’s degree at the University of Tulsa. While pursuing a Master’s Degree in Sculpture, Graham decided to join the Army in 1958. While deployed in Germany, Graham served in the records office and volunteered as an administrator for the American Youth Activities Program for children of service members.

Following his military service, Graham spent the next 8 years at McLain High School as the head of the art department. Following the 1968 construction of the NEO Fine Arts Center, Graham and McLain stagecraft instructor Carl St. Clair joined the NEO Division of Communications.

“We would paint huge backdrops for theatre productions,” said Graham. “I was amazed by how dedicated my students were. They weren’t afraid to

work and some nights we would be building sets late into the evening and they would make their 8 a.m. classes the next morning.”

While at NEO, Graham recalls being tasked by Dramatics Instructor Don Nichols to construct a life-sized elephant for a production. Graham responded by creating an elephant with an articulating trunk that he would puppeteer from within.

“I haven’t worked a day in my life,” he noted. “We had a lot of fun and I was so lucky to be a part of that experience. I have photos from every set I ever built and I am amazed by what we did. It could only be accomplished because of the quality of student we had.”

After retiring from NEO, Graham spent the next 15 years working on the restoration of the Coleman Theatre in Miami.

“We’re so fortunate to still have the Coleman Theatre in Miami. It is such a benefit to the community.”

When asked to share some wisdom with young people, Graham did not hesitate.

“Enjoy your work, whatever it is,” he said. “I’ve said before that I’ve never worked a day in my life and I mean it. I have enjoyed every second of what I have done.”



Award of Merit **SONDRA HOLT**

Sondra Holt knows that getting a college education can be an expensive proposition. As the oldest of three sisters in a single parent home, Holt didn't think that college would be an option for her.

"I was spending time during the summer after high school at the home of [late NEO Financial Aid Director] Jack Wallace because I was friends with his daughter. He asked where I planned on going to college and I said we probably couldn't afford it," recalled Holt. "A few weeks later I received a notice in the mail that I had received a scholarship to NEO and that changed my life."

Holt, who had graduate from Miami High, attended NEO from 1967 to 1969. While on campus, she was heavily involved as a member of the legendary Norse Stars dance team, member of the Business Club, and was a Homecoming Queen Runner-Up in 1969.

"I always tell young people to take advantage of the experiences and relationships you form in college," said Holt. "I met one of my best friends at NEO and we continue to spend time together. I lived at home, but still made a point to get involved in activities."

Following graduation, Holt went to work for AT&T in Miami and worked for twenty-nine years in five locations during her AT&T career. She took advantage of a tuition payment plan to complete her bachelor's and master's degrees. After accepting an early retirement offer, she transitioned to the

energy sector and worked for the Williams Company and WPX Energy in Tulsa where she retired after fifteen years in management. Holt joined the NEO Development Foundation Board in 2017.

Holt attributes most of the success of the NEO Foundation to students, noting they are passionate about accomplishing their educational goals and are willing to put in the work. She also notes that the Foundation is able to accomplish its mission thanks in large part to the leadership and support during the tenure of President Emeritus Dr. Jeff Hale and First Lady Emeritus Donna Hale, as well as the dedication of Jennifer Walker and staff.

Holt and her late husband Joe have two children and two granddaughters and she currently resides in Tulsa. Holt currently is an Adjunct Professor at NSU Broken Arrow teaching management courses, is an avid OU fan, and serves as a mentor for the Street School program through Tulsa Public Schools. She hopes her experience can guide students as they prepare for college.

"Get as many college credit hours as you can in high school," she urged. "If students don't know what they want to do, because some people really don't know, they should start taking general education courses and pick a few courses that really interest them. Doors can open from there."

WHY I GIVE



"NEO has given generations of students the opportunity to realize their dreams of a college education and a better quality of life. The personal touch given by the NEO administration, faculty and staff to NEO students is unique in today's higher education institutions. Many of the successes in my career can be related back to my experience as an NEO student."

Bill Osborn
President - Osborn Drugs, Inc.

WAYS TO GIVE

For donors like the Osborn family, they believe attending college can change the trajectory of a student's life. That's why the NEO Development Foundation is dedicated to breaking down financial barriers so students can focus on learning. Giving comes in many different forms, but always has a positive impact on a student's life. There are many ways to give to NEO and help a student gain a new path forward.

JOIN PRESIDENTS' PARTNERS

The NEO Presidents' Partners program allows donors to support campus projects that directly support students, staff, and faculty. From our textbook bank to staff appreciation night, the Presidents' Partners show alumni support campus-wide.

RECRUIT NEO STUDENTS

Every student who attends NEO has a \$20,000 annual economic impact in our area. Encouraging a student to consider attending NEO can be just as valuable as a monetary donation. By building an alumni network who encourages attendance at NEO, we can improve the economy both on campus and in the community.

ATTEND NEO EVENTS

Showing support to students is critical in the success of our extracurricular and co-curricular programs. A \$5 admission fee to a theatre production or volleyball game has a tremendous impact when alumni come out to support our programs. We truly are strong when we row together.

To join our alumni network, visit [NEO.edu/Foundation](https://neo.edu/foundation) and help us create the next generation of NEO alumni.



THE NEO LEGACY

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY CHIEF MARK WALL
SHARES A SPECIAL NORSE FAMILY CONNECTION

When NEO Department of Public Safety Chief Mark Wall makes his campus rounds, he sees an institution that has held a special place in his family for nearly 100 years. Wall's grandfather, Milton Floyd served as the president of NEO from 1924 to 1931 and as a child, he remembers spending time on campus.

"We lived out by the B.F. Goodrich Plant, but my grandparents grew up just a few blocks from the college," recalled Wall. "I remember running around here as a small kid. I guess you could say I grew up on this campus."

It was during his final years of high school that Wall caught the law enforcement bug. He had the opportunity to meet some deputies in dual credit classes at NEO and began to go on ride-alongs. After completing his degree at NEO and Missouri Southern State University, he went to work for Eagle Picher as a security inspector.

Over the course of his career, Wall has worked his way up to Chief of Police at Grove, sold real estate, ran auctions, and served as the mayor of Jay, Oklahoma. But when the opportunity came up to work at his alma mater in 2013, he couldn't pass it up.

"I enjoyed working in an education setting," said

Wall. "We have an opportunity to work with students and get them started on the right path."

Wall was named Director of the Public Safety Department in 2015 and since then has continued to be his focus on the personal development of students.

"Sometimes the students we deal with need a chance to get back on the right path. I always think of a young woman who we dealt with several years ago.

"We were able to work with her and she was able to overcome the issues she was having and earned her degree. I take so much pride in being able to help students like her improve their situation in life."

For Wall, his goal is to be the example to students that his grandparents were for him.

"My grandfather had such determination and drive and he loved this campus," he said. "And my grandmother was a dorm parent here at NEO and I always took note of the kindness and attention she showed to the students. I want to be that person who helps a student be the best person they can."



CHARLIE FERGUS

NEO HONORS ONE OF THE OLDEST KNOWN LIVING ALUMNUS

One of the oldest known living NEO alumnus celebrated his 98th birthday in April 2019. Charlie Fergus of Tulsa, was born in Grove and raised in Miami on the banks of Tar Creek. Living just a mile from campus, he recalls attending football games. After graduating high school, Fergus worked in the Miami area before attending NEO to study business in 1947 and 1948.

"I studied at NEO because it was available and it was affordable," said Fergus. "I knew some of the professors from high school and was able to work a part-time job while I went to school."

Fergus lived at home while attending NEO, but was still active on campus. He served as the student council president, chairman of the student union, president of the Phi Sigma Nu leadership fraternity, and the associate editor of the Norsewind student newspaper.

While in Miami, Fergus became friends with renowned artist Charles Banks Wilson, who was a year older. Fergus recalled going to Wilson's studio above a craft supply store across from the Coleman Theatre.

"I knew him from growing up in Miami and he was always working in his studio," recalled Fergus. "I would go up and visit him in his studio. I had no talent in art, but I certainly had an interest."

A prolific art collector, Fergus still has many pieces by Charles Banks Wilson in his room. He has also donated some of his collection to the Charles Banks Wilson Gallery on the NEO campus. However, his most prize piece is a surrealist work by famed Spanish artist Joan Miró.

After leaving NEO, Fergus went to work as an accountant for Eagle Picher. He would later continue his education at the University of Tulsa, where he met his wife, Clair. Fergus worked with Tyler Dawson Supply Co. for the next two and a half decades and had the opportunity to attend business seminars at Harvard University.

After leaving Tyler Dawson Supply Co., Fergus, Claire, and their two children Conner and Bill, bought a home in Tulsa where they lived for most of their lives. Fergus now lives at Saint Simeon's Senior Care Center, where he recently celebrated his birthday with Conner and Bill.

"College really opened the door to so much in my life and that is important. Students need to be exposed to different students and training that they might not otherwise participate in. NEO was a good place to start and I am grateful for that."



RECORD BREAKING FUNDRAISER

The NEO Development Foundation hosted its record-shattering 18th Annual Fundraising Gala on November 7. Foundation officials challenged attendees to raise over \$100,000 to celebrate NEO's Centennial, and they answered the call raising \$103,000. Last year, NEO distributed nearly \$150,000 in student scholarships, thanks largely to donations raised during the annual Foundation gala. Partnering with GiveSmart, NEO again offered mobile bidding technology to allow those who weren't attending the gala to have a chance to win nearly 250 silent auction items.

"We want to give a special thanks to our business community, alumni, and friends who helped us set an event record," said Jennifer Walker, Executive Director of the NEO Development Foundation. "The \$103,000 will help fund scholarships and support the NEO Ag Department's effort to build a greenhouse for educational instruction and community projects. As our centennial year winds down, it is exciting to end on such a positive note."

The NEO Agriculture Department Greenhouse was selected as this year's special project and guests enjoyed the theme "Evening at the Derby." NEO Agriculture is one of the oldest departments on campus and features education areas including Livestock, Forestry, and Agri-Business. In 2018, NEO announced the introduction of an Agronomy program at the Soybean Research Field Day.

To support the development of the program, the Agriculture Department raised \$40,000 at the Gala to purchase an Agriculture Research Greenhouse that will allow students to conduct hands on research year-round.

To see photos from the evening, visit [Facebook.com/gogoneo](https://www.facebook.com/gogoneo), or to donate, visit [NEO.edu/Foundation](https://www.NEO.edu/Foundation).



AGRICULTURE AT NEO A&M

For over 75 years, the NEO Agriculture Department has offered students a wide range of disciplines to study. Programs are designed to either prepare students for transfer into a bachelor's degree program at a four-year college or to enter directly into the agriculture workforce. The 200-acre Synar Farm offers students the chance to get hands-on experience in a variety of agriculture disciplines, from livestock management to event coordination, and more!

In the classroom at one of several on-site research fields, students are learning from experts in a variety of agriculture disciplines. In addition, students have the opportunity to participate in agriculture-oriented competitive teams, including Rodeo, Livestock Judging, Discussion Meets, and more. NEO Aggies are "Branded in Tradition," and we ensure that our graduates are prepared to step in as the next generation of agriculturalists.



DR. MARY BOOTH NAMED NEO AG DEPARTMENT CHAIR

The Administration at NEO College announced that Dr. Mary Booth has been named chairperson of the NEO Agriculture Department. Dr. Booth has extensive experience in higher education, farm and ranch management, and agriculture finance. She joins NEO after serving as the Vice President of First National Bank & Trust Company of Miami, where she specialized in agricultural lending.

"I am excited to welcome Dr. Mary Booth as the new chair of the Agriculture Department," said Dr. Bethene Fahnestock, Vice President for Academic Affairs. "Dr. Booth is committed



to maintaining the strong traditions of the NEO Agriculture Department and to creating a vision for the future of the Agriculture Department as a national leader. I look forward to working with Dr. Booth as the leader of NEO agriculture programs."

Dr. Booth grew up in Madison, Minnesota, and attended college at South Dakota State University in Brookings, South Dakota. Upon completion of her Bachelors in Animal Science with a Business option in 1983, she began a master's program. During the program, she agreed to serve as the head coach of the livestock judging team and complete her doctoral degree. She received her Ph.D. in Animal Science and Swine Nutrition in 1990 and served for five years as an Assistant Professor of Animal Science, livestock judging team coach, and as a recruiter for the agriculture department.

In 1995, she married C.K. Sonny Booth, a purebred livestock and real estate auctioneer, who is a member of the NEO Alumni Hall of Fame and the NEO Agriculture Hall of Fame. For the next several years, Dr. Booth traveled with her husband to auctions, raised their daughter Rachel, and managed the family's 80-acre cattle farm.

In 2004, she became the principal/teacher at Green County Christian School in Miami. For the past 8 years, she was the Vice President of First National Bank & Trust Company of Miami. Dr. Booth's broad experience in agriculture is matched by her enthusiasm for higher education and the future of the Agriculture Program.

"Since I left South Dakota State University, I've missed the culture of college life and being involved in the education process," said Dr. Booth. "My first priority is to continue recruiting strong students and getting those students in front of our business and community groups. I also want to provide strong academic transition leadership in order to best prepare our students who transfer. We have a chance to build some strong team unity with the new faculty arrivals and I aim to continue developing the nationally-known tradition of agricultural excellence at NEO."

Dr. Booth is active in several area organizations, including Bright Futures - Miami, Miami Kiwanis, Leadership Miami, Miami FFA, and Ottawa County 4-H among others. She and her husband live in Miami.

NATIONAL AGRICULTURE COMPETITORS



NEO RODEO SENDS TWO TO COMPETE AT COLLEGE NATIONAL FINALS

NEO Rodeo sent Sophomore Tie-Down Roper Ethan Griffin and Freshman Dawson Turner qualified to ride in the College National Finals Rodeo in Casper, Wyo., in June, 2019. Over the course of each season, riders earn points in the hopes of qualifying for the CNFR, held each year in Casper. This year Turner, a freshman from Sidney, Ark. and Griffin, a sophomore from Jay, Okla., secured spots by finishing in top-three in the region.

Turner gathered 440 points on the season in tie-down roping, giving him a third-place finish. Griffin finished comfortably in second place after picking up 465 points as a team-roping header. In order to help defray the cost of participating, President's Partners David Thomas and Charles

Stoner presented \$1,750 in funding to Coach Kolby Ungeheuer and the athletes.

At the tournament, Turner made it through the first three of the four rounds of competition and finished 13th in the nation. Luck was against Griffin, who posted three "no starts" and finished top-50 in the nation.

"I'm very proud of all of these young men and women this year, they have all worked very hard and have continued to accomplish more each and every week as the season progressed," said Head Coach Kolby Ungeheuer. "It has been a great year for NEO Rodeo and we were very excited to get two qualified for the CNFR!"



The Equestrian Team made history as the first NEO team to compete in the International Horse Show Association (IHSA) national show in Syracuse, NY, in May. The team finished fourth in the nation as the only two-year college to qualify. In addition to team success, four riders earned five individual qualifications to compete. The competing students earned numerous top-ten finishes, while Sophomore Carla Carfora placed second in the nation in the Team Open Horsemanship Division and Freshman Anna Woolsey was second in the nation in Individual Open Reining.

The IHSA encompasses 40 regions in eight zones and includes over 400 member colleges. At the event, NEO competed against four-year institutions like Ohio State University, the University of Nebraska Lincoln, and Oregon State University.

NEO earned their qualification after being named Reserve Champions at the Intercollegiate Horse Shows Association (IHSA) Western Semi-Finals at the University of Findlay, Ohio, in March.

"I am so proud of how well NEO was represented at the 2019 Western Semi-Finals. This team has a very unique dynamic and they lifted each other up through the entire competition," said Amanda Jones, Equestrian Head Coach. "Our goal was to leave it all out in the arena and ride every step!"

The team that earned the National Championship qualification included Freshman Anna Woolsey, Sophomore Carla Carfora, Freshman Ariana Horton, Sophomore Baily Summers, Freshman Katelyn Cates, and Freshman Derek Strawn.

EQUESTRIAN RESULTS

CARLA CARFORA
Reserve National Champion - Team Open Horsemanship
5th - Individual Open Horsemanship
10th - Individual Open Reining

ANNA WOOLSEY
Reserve National Champion - Team Reining

EMMA KEMP
3rd - Individual Beginner Horsemanship

KATELYN CATES
5th - Team Intermediate Horsemanship

KAYLA BURNS
5th - Individual Beginner Horsemanship

ARIANA HORTON
5th - Team Advanced Horsemanship

DEREK STRAWN
6th - Team Beginner Horsemanship

BAILY SUMMERS
6th - Team Novice Horsemanship

SIERRA MCCULLOUGH
9th - Individual Novice Horsemanship



NATHANIA MCKENZIE

NEO STUDENT REPRESENTS
OKLAHOMA AT NATIONAL YOUNG
FARMERS AND RANCHERS MEET

Sophomore Nathania McKenzie won the Collegiate Discussion Meet in Norman, Okla., at the annual meeting of the Oklahoma Farm Bureau. McKenzie is an Animal Science major from Gravette, Ark., and she is a member of the Equestrian and Horse Judging Teams at NEO.

"I would like to thank Farm Bureau for the opportunity to compete in the discussion meet," said McKenzie. "This is a great opportunity to learn and grow as an individual and with a group."

The Young Farmers and Ranchers Discussion Meet is a panel-type discussion in which members are judged on their ability to express ideas and opinions on the hottest issues in agriculture. Participants attempt to influence each other by posing and answering questions with the goal of reaching a solution to a stated agricultural problem.

"Nathania has been working extremely hard to achieve this goal," said Alisen Anderson, NEO instructor. "She is an instrumental part of our Agriculture Department and we will see her do some great things in her career. We are so proud of all she has accomplished!"



A NEW LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

NEO recently expanded its agriculture offerings by launching a new Agronomy program in 2018. To introduce the program, NEO held soybean and wheat events to showcase the partnership between NEO and area producers that created the NEO Agricultural Research Station, an outdoor research field for the production of various crops. This was made possible through a partnership with the Grand River Dam Authority (GRDA), along with the support of Anders Farm's, 3-F Farms, VO Morgan, Rich Falkenstein, and Oklahoma State University.

While the Agricultural Research Station has been home to seeding rate and nitrogen student research, research projects are largely dictated by the seasonal crops and weather conditions. As the special project of this year's NEO Foundation Gala, the Agriculture Department began raising funds to construct a greenhouse on Synar farm.

By having a climate controlled, 1,800-square foot research greenhouse, NEO students will be able to conduct year-round crop and soil research. As

a result, NEO will be able to research a variety of small-scale batches of plants and soil types, which will support courses in Botany, Horticulture, Plant and Soil Science, Soil Science, Applied Plant Science, Chemistry, Biology, Environmental Science, Entomology, Construction Management, and many more.

Along with the principle educational benefit, the greenhouse will facilitate a new fundraising source for NEO. Students will be able to engage in plant sales, marketing and labeling, and advertising, among other product distribution education.

By 2050, the human population of earth will reach approximately 10 billion people, a number which leads many researchers to speculate many food shortages may occur. The inclusion of the greenhouse to campus will spark these long-term conversations among students to become a generation of reduced waste and increased yield.



2019 TOP TEN FRESHMEN CEREMONY

Officials at NEO celebrated accomplished student leaders during the Tenth Annual Top Ten Freshmen ceremony on Monday, March 25, 2019.

First celebrated in 2009, the Top Ten Freshmen ceremony is co-sponsored by NEO's President's Partners and the Center for Academic Success and Advising (CASA). The keynote speaker was Admiral Jeff Trussler, the director of future planning for the United States Navy. Admiral Trussler encouraged students to seize opportunities and go through open doors. He also told students they couldn't be passive and wait for opportunities to arrive, they must also work to create opportunities for themselves.

All honorees are now sophomores and

were selected by a committee of faculty, President's Partners representatives, and student activities representatives. Students received scholarships as well as the opportunity to participate in leadership development activities.

The Centennial Year event also served as the ten-year reunion for the Top Ten Freshmen honorees. Following the ceremony, attendees enjoyed a dinner catered by Sodexo Food Services.

"Since 2009, the Freshman Top Ten program has become one of NEO's treasured traditions," said Rachel Lloyd, Center for Academic Success and Advisement director and program coordinator. "We were thrilled to welcome back several alumni honorees for the program's 10th anniversary."

THIS YEAR'S HONOREES INCLUDE

GAVIN BOHN

Gavin Bohn is a General Studies major from Columbus, Kansas. Gavin is an active student leader on campus. He currently serves as the President of NEO's Mu Chapter of Phi Theta Kappa and the Secretary Treasurer of NEO's Sierra Club.

ELI CHENOWETH

Eli Chenoweth is a Miami native majoring in Business Administration. Eli is a young business owner who has used his business as a platform to raise funds to help community members.

ANELIZABETH HENRY

AnElizabeth Henry is from Riverton, Kansas and is a Pre-Engineering major. An is a member of the Norwegian Legion Marching Band, Golden Blues Jazz Ensemble, Berserker's Basketball Band, Concert Choir, and Chamber Choir.

HANNAH JENKINS

Hannah Jenkins is an Agriculture Education major from Ozark, Missouri. Hannah is a member of the Agriculture-Education Club and has worked to build and shape the Young Farmers and Ranchers Club for future Aggies. Hannah is a member of the Horse Judging Team, the Honors Program, and is a student tutor on campus.

KYLE LUKASIEWICZ

Kyle Lukasiewicz is from Centennial, Colorado and is a Construction Management major. As a member of the NEO Men's Basketball Team, Kyle is a leader both on and off the court. He is a member of the Phi Theta Kappa and has been recognized on the President's Honor Roll.

AMBER OERLY

Amber Oerly is an Agriculture Business major from Boonville, Missouri. Amber is a student ambassador, President of Young Farmers and Ranchers, and member of the Agriculture Education club, and Student Body Government.

ROBBIE PHILLIPS

Robbie Phillips is a Social Sciences major hailing from Coweta, Oklahoma. As a freshman, Robbie was elected to the Reporter position of Student Body Government. Robbie now serves as the Student Body Government President.

TYLER SILVA

Tyler Silva is a Business Administration major from Cambridge, Ontario, Canada. He is a member of the NEO Baseball team and has been a member of Phi Beta Lambda and is active in the athletic bible study. He has been recognized on the President's Honor Roll.

REGHAN TREASE

Reghan Trease is from Commerce, Oklahoma and is a Natural Sciences major. Reghan is a member of the NEO Cheer Squad. She is a member of Phi Theta Kappa and has been recognized on the Dean's Honor Roll.

DULCINEA WENZEL

Dulcinea Wenzel is a Miami native majoring in General Studies. She has served as the Student Body Government Representative for the Masquers Club and as vice President of Fellowship for Phi Theta Kappa. Dulcinea is a member of the NEO Concert Choir and NEO Chamber Singers.



NEO HONORS PROGRAM GRADUATES INAUGURAL CLASS

The NEO Honors Program celebrated its first class of graduates during a ceremony preceding NEO's 98th commencement exercises. NEO Instructor Dr. David Loving gave the keynote address at the ceremony and six students were recognized for completing the program. In addition, Hannah Jenkins was recognized as the Outstanding Research Award recipient, Jordyn Miller was recognized as the Outstanding Service Award Recipient, and Albana Baftiri was recognized as the Honors Program Distinguished Graduate.

Beginning in spring 2018 with 18 students, the program now boasts 39 students for fall 2019. Fourteen of those students are returning, while 25 are incoming freshmen who were recruited into the program. Students are recruited based on their academic excellence and receive access to advanced courses, presentation and conference opportunities, service-learning opportunities, and more.

"We're excited to continue building the program as we move into the new school year," said Keeley Adams, Honors Program Director. "As the program grows, we plan to continue adding opportunities to further their exposure to new

experiences both inside and outside of the classroom."

As part of the program, students can participate in "honors-only" course sections, which allow students and instructors alike to engage in innovative methods of learning. Dr. David Loving, instructor of the "honors-only" Western Civilization course, noted that teaching this course has been one of the best experiences he's had as an instructor.

"This has been my favorite class to teach bar none," he said. "The students are engaged and motivated to learn. That lets me use activities that are outside of the norm and introduce nontraditional modes of learning."

INAUGURAL HONORS PROGRAM GRADUATES:

Hannah Jenkins
Jordyn Miller
Albana Baftiri

Amber Oerly
Nicholas Hughlett
Kassidy Fletcher

For more information or to donate to the NEO Honors Program, contact Adams at Keeley.Adams@neo.edu.



COMMENCEMENT 2019

NEO held its 98th commencement exercise on May 9, on Red Robertson Field. Representative Ben Loring, District 7 Representative in the Oklahoma Legislature, delivered the keynote address to a packed stadium at the event. Along with Rep. Loring, Mr. Rick Davis of the OSU A&M Board of Regents congratulated Dr. Hale and the graduates for making NEO an outstanding institution that is uniquely suited to serve northeastern Oklahoma.

"We are emotional beings, physical beings, mental beings, and spiritual beings," said Rep. Loring during his address. "We've been given wonderful gifts and it's our job to protect and cherish those gifts. Some of the greatest things we can do are to love and serve others, support our community, and continue to learn. You've all likely found out that one of the greatest things you accomplished here at NEO was learning how to learn. Don't ever stop that learning process."

NEO also honored three outstanding graduates from the schools of Liberal Arts, Agriculture and Natural Sciences, and Human Environmental Sciences.

Chair of the Math and Science Department Steve Dixon honored Amber Oerly, an Agriculture Business graduate from Booneville, Mo.

Chair of the Business and Technology Department Ms. Joy Bauer honored Kristi Roach, a Business Administration and Art major from Fairland, Okla.

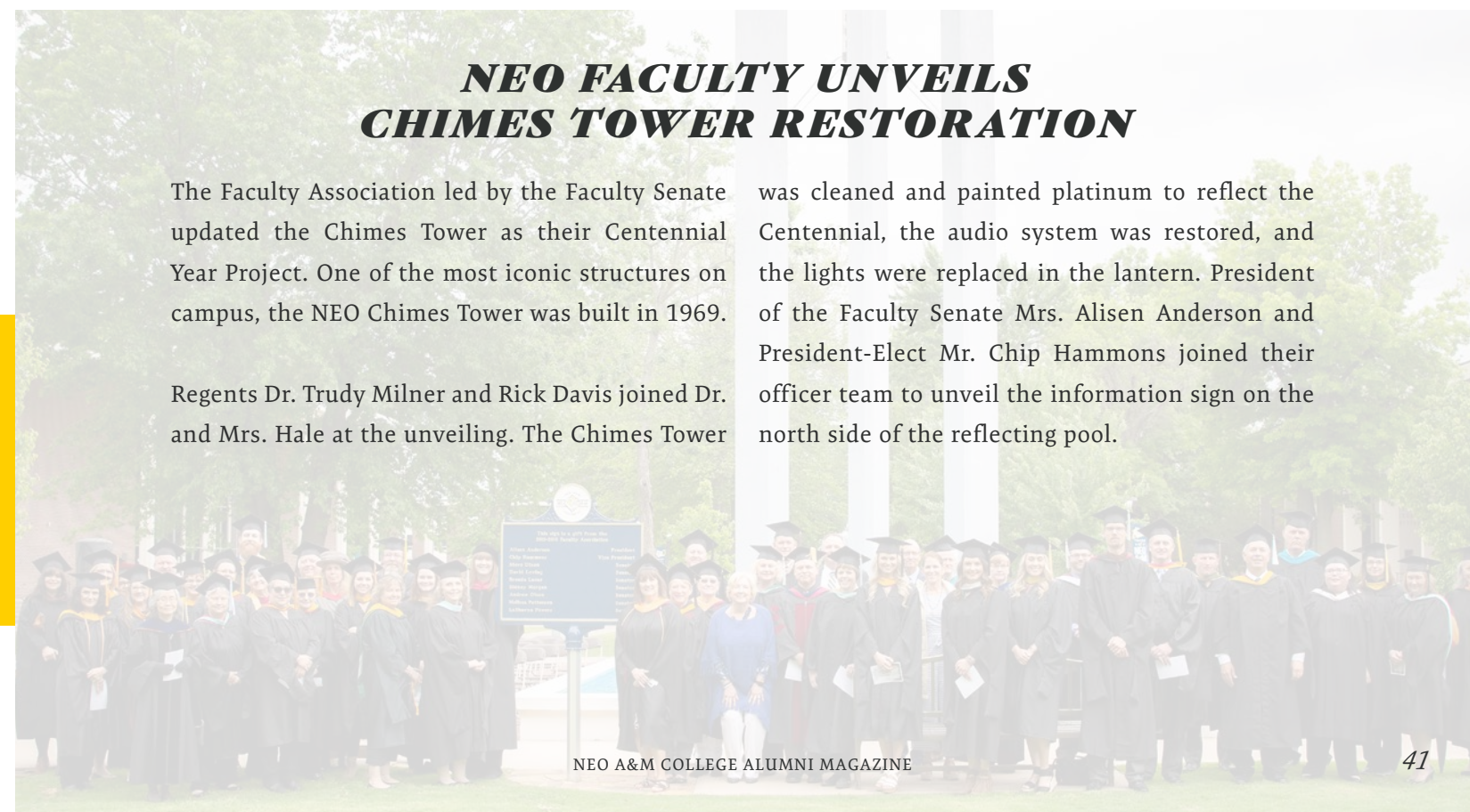
Finally, Chair of the Liberal Arts Department Dr. Jeff Birdsong honored Colten Shockley, a Pre-Music Education graduate from Riverton, Kan. To see photos of the evening, check Facebook. [com/gogoneo](https://www.facebook.com/gogoneo)

NEO FACULTY UNVEILS CHIMES TOWER RESTORATION

The Faculty Association led by the Faculty Senate updated the Chimes Tower as their Centennial Year Project. One of the most iconic structures on campus, the NEO Chimes Tower was built in 1969.

Regents Dr. Trudy Milner and Rick Davis joined Dr. and Mrs. Hale at the unveiling. The Chimes Tower

was cleaned and painted platinum to reflect the Centennial, the audio system was restored, and the lights were replaced in the lantern. President of the Faculty Senate Mrs. Alisen Anderson and President-Elect Mr. Chip Hammons joined their officer team to unveil the information sign on the north side of the reflecting pool.





GOLDEN NORSE ATHLETICS

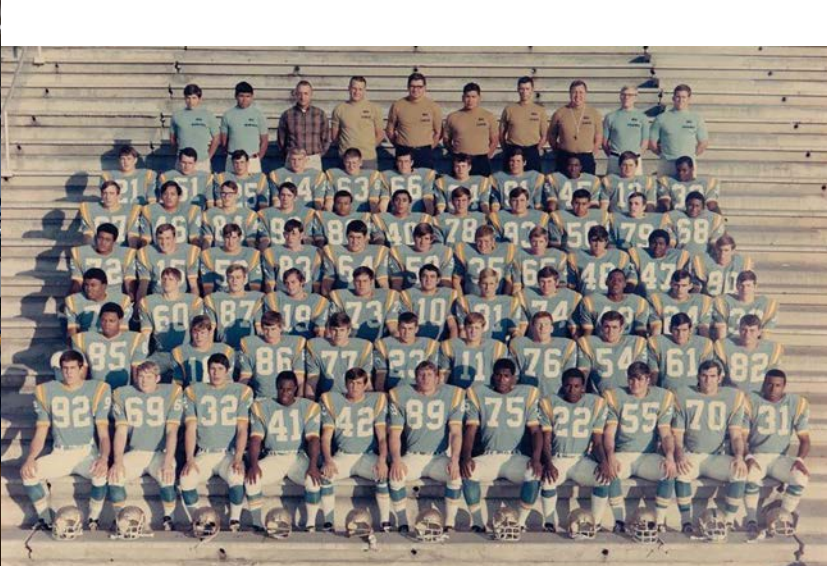
Over the past decade, NEO athletic teams have each striven to become nationally competitive. Whether on or off the field, NEO athletes pursue excellence and continue to collect district, regional, and national championships, as well as All-American and Academic All-American honors. Led by Athletic Director Joe Renfro, the Athletic Department offers students the chance to compete in twelve programs on campus; which includes men's and women's soccer, cheer, and men's and women's basketball among others.

This year, NEO saw several coaching changes and established a new generation of leaders. Following Dustin Grover's selection as Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs, assistant coach Jeremy Jackson stepped in to the head coaching spot. During the 2018-19 season, he took advantage of the opportunity, finishing 27-7 overall and winning the OCAC Conference, the Regional Title, and making an appearance at the National Tournament, marking the first time that the team has won a conference and regional title in the same year since 1991. Jackson was also selected as both Region and Conference Coach of the Year.

Along with Jackson, Jalee Dollarhide stepped into the top role for NEO Volleyball following Head Coach Eric Iverson's "retirement." Iverson continues to coach the NEO Softball Team, which finished as the runner-up at the 2019 regional tournament. Dollarhide led the team to a winning record and a rocking 7-1 record at home.

As the Centennial Year concludes, it is clear that NEO A&M is an institution with athletics in its blood. Since the first student-organized tennis club to our powerhouse athletic teams today, NEO student-athletes build grit and determination through competition. These students also carry their dedication to the classroom. Each year, dozens of student-athletes transfer to four-year institutions possessing study skills and confidence that they might not have had before stepping on an NEO field.

Through the support of alumni and donors to NEO, this tradition of excellence will continue. Alumni have tread a path that the student-athletes of today can follow, not only on the field, but also in study halls and classrooms. "Once a Norseman, Always a Norseman" is our rallying cry to continue laying the path for the next century.



1969 FOOTBALL TEAM

As part of the Centennial Homecoming Celebration, NEO honored the 1969 NEO National Championship Football Team. The 1969 Norse were inducted into the NEO Athletic Hall of Fame in 2014, while Coach Chuck Bowman and several of the players and coaches on the '69 team also have been inducted individually. During the luncheon, the team conducted an emotional roll call to the members of the 1969 team who have passed on.

"This '69 bunch had more talent than any team I have ever coached," said Chuck Bowman, who had also guided NEO to a national title in 1967. "They came from everywhere. Many walked on and we never knew they were coming. Some came after we had started fall practice over a week, the doors closed at the D-1 level leaving

them no place to go except a junior college."

The Golden Norsemen earned their title with a 10-0 record, capping the season with a 20-6 victory over Arizona Western in the Shrine Bowl at Savannah, Georgia.

Bowman said his greatest fan was NEO President Dr. Bruce Carter. Dr. Carter wrapped up his 26-year tenure at the end of that school year and called the 1969 team "the greatest NEO A&M team I have seen in my 26 years with the college."

The 1969 team remains in close contact and many members of the team and cheerleading squad attended the homecoming event.





NEXT LEVEL NORSE

THREE NEO ALUMNI PICKED UP DURING 2019 NFL DRAFT

NEO recently received a bit more representation in the National Football League (NFL) as three alumni players were picked up during the 2019 NFL Draft. Tight End **JACE STERNBERGER** went to the Green Bay Packers in round 3, Running Back **DARWIN THOMPSON** was drafted by the Kansas City Chiefs in round 6, and Tight End **MIK'QWAN DEANE** initially signed a free agent contract with the Seattle Seahawks and has since been picked up by the Cleveland Browns.

All three are alumni of the #staygolden class of NEO football. Deane played under Coach Ryan Held in 2015 and then Coach Clay Patterson in 2016. Thompson played under Patterson in 2016 and 2017, while Sternberger joined Thompson in 2017.

“It’s a testament to where our program has been going over the past several years,” said Booster President Jim Rexwinkle. “We’re so proud of Jace, Darwin, and Mik’Qwan and the entire coaching staff of NEO. These three athletes are the most visible right now, but we are extremely proud of the several dozen student-athletes who transferred to division I and II universities.”

Deane made an impact at NEO as a team leader and motivator. Starting in 2015, he picked up three touchdowns in nine games. However, Deane flourished under the offense-heavy style of Coach

Patterson in 2016, averaging nearly 15 yards per reception on 22 receptions.

Darwin Thompson exploded on to the scene in 2016, picking up over 1,000 yard rushing and nine touchdowns in his first year. In his second year, he led the nation in all-purpose yards, picking up 1,619 yards on 185 carries and 13 receptions. While at NEO, he earned Second-Team All-American, First-Team All-Conference, and Southwest Junior College Football Conference Offensive MVP honors.

Sternberger played a year at NEO and earned First-Team All-Conference in 2017. On 21 receptions, he averaged 16 yards per catch and totaled 336 yards for the season.

Golden Norse Football under Head Coach Zach Allen looks to build on its success as 2018 Conference Co-Champions and continue to develop top-level athletic talent as student-athletes receive outstanding classroom instruction at NEO.

“We’re going to continue building on the traditions already established at NEO,” added Rexwinkle. “We’re going to enhance relationships with our incoming players and our alumni to show them that NEO is one of the best colleges in the nation to develop athletic talent and well-rounded young men.”



THE LASER

RAMON LAUREANO MAKES WAVES DURING HIS FIRST FULL MLB SEASON

The Oakland A’s have a new star in NEO Alumnus Ramon Laureano. Playing at NEO in 2013 and 2014, Laureano was drafted to the Houston Astros in 2014, but was traded to the A’s in 2017. He got his first taste of major league ball in 2018, making 48 appearances, but 2019 was his breakout year.

“We were very excited for the success he had this season,” said NEO Head Baseball Coach Roger Ward. “He’s obviously an incredibly talented athlete and he fits really well into the A’s system.”

An Outfielder from Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, the 24-year old has made headlines with his big swing and mighty arm. In a “2019 Year in Review” for the A’s, Laureano claimed the top two spots. At number two, Laureano picked off Red Sox Shortstop Xander Bogaerts at home from center field. At number one, Laureano added insult to injury by picking off Bogaerts again. This time, he snagged a rebound off the back wall and threw a bullet to third base. The stop safeguarded an A’s lead and led to a 1-0 victory.

“He has an absolute Death Star superlaser in center field,” wrote Athletics Nation Editor-in-Chief Alexa Hall. “And if he ever spiked the ball directly into the ground then I fear the Earth might explode like Alderaan.”

After a brief August injury, Laureano bounced back and finished the season in the number two batting spot. During the 2019 season, he posted at .288 batting average and racked up 125 hits, 24 homeruns, and 67 RBIs.

Earning a Wild Card spot by finishing second in the American League West, the A’s played the Tampa Bay Rays in the post season. Losing 1-5, Laureano brought in Shortstop Marcus Semien in the third inning for the A’s only run of the game.

It’s clear that the future is bright for Laureano as he settles in to the A’s program. Keep your eyes peeled, because if you blink, you might miss him picking off Bogaerts yet again.



NEO THEATRE EXPERIENCE

The NEO Theatre Experience performed the inaugural “Shakespeare on the Steps,” and selected William Shakespeare’s, “The Tragedy of Julius Caesar” for the first production. Held on the steps of the NEO Fine Arts building portico, guests were invited to sit around the fountain and up close to the cast. In addition, food was provided for attendees. In spite of the rain, the performance was well attended, with over 200 community members present.

Set in Rome in 44 BC, the play depicts the moral dilemma of Brutus as he joins a conspiracy led by Cassius to murder Julius Caesar to prevent him from becoming dictator of Rome. Following

Caesar’s death, Rome is thrust into a period of civil war, and the republic the conspirators sought to preserve is lost forever.

With two productions left in the academic year, NEO Theatre Experience Season Passes are still available and hold special benefits, such as unlimited attendance. Pass holders are also essential to the success of the NEO Theatre Experience.

To purchase an NEO Theatre Experience Season Pass, visit theatre.neo.edu/tickets.

JULIUS CAESAR CAST & CREW

Eric Mahurin – *Marcus Brutus*
 Dylan Stackle – *Caius Cassius*
 Logan DeVore – *Mark Antony*
 Johnathan Boyd – *Caesar, Ghost*
 Anna Seat – *Casca, Fourth Plebeian, Messenger*
 Mackenzie Stackle – *Portia*
 Heather Moss – *Decius Brutus, First Plebeian, Pindarus*
 Ryland Asher – *Octavius, Cinna the Poet, Popilius, A Carpenter*

Tyler Lloyd – *Messala, Marullus, Cinna*
 Kaeli Maxwell – *Lucius, Young Cato*
 Trinity Pruitt – *Servant to Caesar*
 Gray Wellman – *Lucilius, Artemidorus, Titinius*
 Matthew Johnstone, Jr. – *Flavius, 2nd Soldier*
 Morgan Labatt – *Calphurnia*
 Sabrina Mott-Jenkins – *Third Plebeian*
 Phillip Shamblin – *Metellus Cimber, Director*

Aaron Smith – *A Soothsayer, Director*
 Nick Nienhuser – *First Soldier*
 Alexandria Griffin – *Cicero, Publius, Clitus*
 Isaac Anariba-Reyes – *Trebonius, Lepidus, Another Poet, Volumnius*
 Annamaria Thomas – *Caius Ligarius, Strato, Claudius*
 Dustin Warner – *A Cobbler, Third Soldier*
 Goldie Snow – *Octavius’ Attendant*
 Zachary Thomas – *Labeo, Dardanus*



NEO CHOIR

NEO CHOIRS PERFORM WITH FOUR-TIME GRAMMY NOMINEE

NEO Choirs were selected to perform back-up vocals for Gospel Music Association Hall of Fame Honoree Steve Green. The four-time Grammy nominee and seven-time Dove Awards recipient performed a September concert in Rogers, Ark.

“We were fortunate to get the opportunity of working and performing with a well established artist such as Steve Green,” said Dr. Tatiana Taylor, director of NEO Choirs. “The students did a wonderful job as shown and Steve Green’s team asked to work with us again

whenever they are in the area.”

The opportunity provided students the chance to perform with a professionally touring artist. Students were also able to experience working with professional recording engineers, musicians, and event personnel.

To view the performances, visit facebook.com/NEO-Choirs or for more information on NEO Choirs, contact Dr. Taylor at Tatiana.e.Taylor@neo.edu.



NEO SEEKS TO BE A NATIONAL LEADER IN RURAL, TWO-YEAR COLLEGE EDUCATION BY PROVIDING OUTSTANDING ACADEMIC PROGRAMS, CO-CURRICULAR LEARNING EXPERIENCES, INTERCOLLEGIATE ATHLETICS, AND CAMPUS LIFE.



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