PORTRAIT OF AN ARTIST John Martin's enduring eye FINE FELLOWS Grad student greats

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2

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Talk and squawk in the news



"As far as what role we can play nationally, I think our reputation is growing by leaps and bounds."

-Perry Alexander, c'86, e'86, g'88, PhD'93, AT&T Foundation Distinguished Professor of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science, discussing KU's status as a national security research leader April 4 at the FBI & KU Cybersecurity Conference. FBI Director Christopher Wray delivered the keynote address, and Sen. Jerry Moran, c'76, l'82, announced a \$22 million federal grant to build a national security research center at KU Innovation Park.



"A lot of people have reached out on social media from Jayhawk nation and it's very kind and humbling to hear from so many."

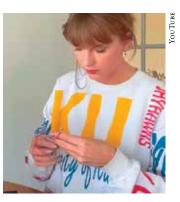
-Former KU basketball star Scot Pollard, d'97, who received a heart transplant in February, quoted in The Kansas City Star on Feb. 16. Pollard, a 6-foot-11 center, played for the 'Hawks from 1993 to 1997 and in the NBA for 11 years.

Follow us on your favorite platform:



"We're still processing the news that our love for Taylor might be mutual."

-KU's April 22 social media post, a reaction to Taylor Swift's April 19 YouTube video in which the superstar sports a retro KU sweatshirt. Swift famously visited campus in 2009, when her best friend, Abigail Anderson Berard, '12, was a student.



#### "In 60 years, I don't know anybody who is in the business to create fake news."

-Bill Kurtis, j'62, reflecting on his life and career April 16 during the 2024 Dole Lecture at the Dole Institute of Politics. The award-winning journalist and anchor with the deep, distinctive voice is now the judge and scorekeeper on National Public Radio's quiz show, "Wait Wait... Don't Tell Me!"



#### IN THIS ISSUE



#### **COVER STORY**

#### Catch the Wave

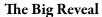
By tapping the awesome computing power of artificial intelligence, KU drug researchers hope to harness big data as a positive force for health and healing.

#### by Chris Lazzarino

Cover illustration by Susan Younger

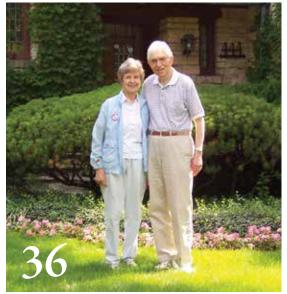






John Boyd Martin's career as a successful portrait artist has relied on an old-school approach to clients: plenty of face time.

by Steven Hill



#### **Ripple Effect**

For 35 years, the fellowship founded by Jayhawk stalwarts Madison and Lila Self has provided KU's top graduate students the means to thrive as scholars, leaders and innovators.

by Megan Hirt



#### **SPRING 2024**

Publisher Heath Peterson, d'04, g'09

Editor Jennifer Jackson Sanner, j'81

**Creative Director** Susan Younger, f'91

**Associate Editors** Chris Lazzarino, j'86 Steven Hill

**Assistant Editor** Megan Hirt, c'08, j'08

Photographers Steve Puppe, j'98 Dan Storey

#### **Digital Team**

Mary Padilla, j'88 Ryan Camenzind, j'17 Noelle Husmann Kate Neuner

**Advertising Sales** Austin Harris Brett Leonard, d'09

Established in 1902 as The Graduate Magazine Volume 122, No. 2, 2024

kansasalumni magazine.org



Profile: Charissa Miijessepe-Wilson A public administration alumna oversees historic effort to preserve Bears Ears National Monument.

by Steven Hill

#### **ONLINE EXTRA**



#### **Commencement Video**

2024 grads reflect on their KU years in letters to their freshman selves. Alumni of all ages can relate. Watch the KU Marketing video at rockcha.lk/letters.

5 **KU Voice** So long, Susan.

6 First Glance Stop, look and linger.

**Rock Chalk Review** Research rise boosts KU's contribution to Kansas.

#### 44

Always Jayhawks Association news and alumni profiles

61 **Class Notes** 

82 In Memory

86 **Photo Finish** A Commencement like no other

#### 88

Hail to Old KU The discoverer

#### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR:

Kansas Alumni welcomes letters to the editor. Our address is Kansas Alumni magazine, 1266 Oread Avenue, Lawrence, KS 66045-3100. Email responses may be sent to the Alumni Association, kualumni@kualumni.org. Please limit your comments to 350 words. Letters appearing in the magazine may be edited for space and clarity.

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#### KU VOICE



GIFTED ILLUSTRATORS often find ways to artfully tweak small details, depicting a subject in surprising ways. Take a second look at our cover illustration, and you'll see that the fishing net's mesh resembles a computer circuit board, a subtly clever allusion to our story on researchers' quest to discover ingredients for lifesaving drugs through advanced computing.

Credit for the illustration goes to an artist with gifts galore: our creative director, Susan Younger, f'91, whose exquisite flourishes have graced the pages of *Kansas Alumni* since spring 1999. With this issue, she bids farewell and begins her retirement. She wants to spend more time spoiling her grandchildren. We fervently hope she will spoil herself a bit, too.

Through 25 stellar years, Susan has poured her heart and soul into the Alumni Association. She has amassed an enviable portfolio, but one distinctive project stands out for me as the perfect emblem of Susan's boundless inspiration and work ethic: Jayhawks on Parade, the 2003 Lawrence display of 5-foot fiberglass mascots that marched into the hearts of thousands who adore KU's mythical bird.

Led by the Lawrence Convention and Visitors Bureau (now Explore Lawrence), in concert with the University, the Association and Downtown Lawrence Inc., the parade featured 30 whimsical Jayhawks, created by 34 artists who submitted successful proposals for their rare birds. Susan proposed not one bird but three—all of which were accepted. Whoosh, Mascot Miro and Peace, Love & Daisy Hill Forever became fan favorites. Valerie Spicher, j'94, our immensely talented graphic designer and Susan's partner on countless projects for 20 years, helped paint Peace, Love & Daisy Hill Forever, which still stands as sentry outside a Central Bank of the Midwest branch in Lawrence. (Since Valerie retired in 2020, Susan has soldiered on, valiantly shouldering the work of two full-time designers.)

Years later, long after the initial parade had passed by, Susan volunteered to create her most ambitious Jayhawk, Songbird, for an auction to benefit the Association. She spent hundreds of hours in her garage, intricately placing more than 1,000 ceramic and glass tiles in glorious cascades of color, some of which spelled the words to our beloved Alma Mater.

In 2002 and 2020, Susan redesigned *Kansas Alumni*, In 2003, the Younger family sported shades to pose with Peace, Love & Daisy Hill Forever at the corner of Ninth and Kentucky streets: (left to right) Susan, pup Ellie, son Garrett, husband Jerry and son Adam.

creating new nameplates and visual systems to revitalize the magazine. Her offbeat ideas for eye-catching covers once led her to persuade University Architect Warren Corman, e'50, to pose for a photo by crawling through a maze of measuring tape that she and photographer Steve Puppe, j'98, had strung throughout Corman's basement.

Susan's talents often ventured beyond the printed page to enliven our website, email graphics, logos, direct mail campaigns, banners, Rock Chalk Ready yard signs for incoming freshmen and their families, KU shirts of all styles (including a tropical design for the Maui Classic), medallions for the Kansas Honors Program and the annual Veterans Day 5K race, and much more. For the Rock Chalk Ball in Kansas City and the Jayhawk Roundup in Wichita, she dreamed up imaginative decor and enlisted alumni and staff volunteers as her crews. For Presidents Club holiday bazaars, she made glass jewelry and holiday ornaments and painted portraits of pets that became so popular she had to turn away orders.

Susan never met a software program she didn't yearn to learn, even if it required working long into the night. I cannot count the times she ignored my instructions to step away from her computer and go home. Mere orders from her

boss were no match for her compulsion to create.

But her grandson, Levi, and granddaughter, Clara, possess superpowers I could never muster. Only they could finally lure Susan away from work. She takes with her our heartfelt gratitude for her superb talent and indomitable spirit. Rock Chalk, dear friend,

Rock Chalk.

–Jennifer Jackson Sanner

THE APRIL 8 ECLIPSE, with a 90% lunar obstruction of the sun above Mount Oread, was both a spectacular astronomical phenomenon and a reminder from the heavens to sometimes leave a busy Monday behind to flop down in the grass and chill on the Hill.

Photograph by Corey Ransberg/KU Marketing



"KU research is solving big problems facing Kansans and their communities while simultaneously serving as a vital economic engine for the state."

-Belinda Sturm

#### RESEARCH

#### **Discovery's dividends**

#### Investments in research boost quality of life and the economy

RESEARCH IS ON THE RISE at the University, and the reverberations of that growth are benefiting people across the Sunflower State and beyond.

Externally funded research expenditures spanning all KU campuses increased to \$368.6 million in 2023, capping nearly a decade of steady expansion. That figure climbs to \$535.7 million when combined with the University's internal investment in research-related seed funding, training, service and related activity.

Last year alone, externally funded research at KU supported the salaries of 4,372 people, and the University spent \$78.9 million in 97 Kansas counties on research-related goods and services, according to a report from the Institute for Research on Innovation & Science (IRIS). Vendors in 19 of those counties received more than \$100,000 in purchases.

"KU research is solving big problems facing Kansans and their communities while simultaneously serving as a vital economic engine for the state," says Belinda Sturm, interim vice chancellor for research on KU's Lawrence campus. "Our researchers are driven by opportunities to improve human health and well-being, sustain life on our planet, enhance safety and security, and so much more. In the process, they are also educating tomorrow's workforce, creating jobs, attracting businesses and external funding, and investing in the prosperity of Kansans."

Among research funded during fiscal year 2023 were projects to better understand risk factors for Alzheimer's disease, sustain Kansas water resources, develop community-based models for child abuse prevention, explore the physiological mechanisms at work in opioid addiction, evaluate the long-term health of Kansas reservoirs, transform plant material into next-generation batteries to provide cleaner energy, bolster housing to withstand natural disasters, improve decision-making to prevent substance misuse among adolescents, analyze education requirements for jobs over the next decade, and more.

Research expenditures are funds spent to conduct research. A majority of KU's research—nearly 70% in 2023—is supported by federal agencies like the National Science Foundation and National Institutes of Health. KU researchers win grant dollars from these agencies through competitions designed to identify the most innovative ideas for addressing societal challenges. Other sources of KU research funding include state and local governments, private businesses and nonprofit foundations.

#### HEALTH ADVANCES, ECONOMIC IMPACT

Additional IRIS reporting shows that KU contributed \$1.2 billion to the U.S. economy between 2011 and 2022, with spending from external research funding flowing to more than 7,200 vendors and subcontractors over that time. Of the 60% of KU's spending that could be matched with specific vendors and contractors, more than 900 were small businesses. Some 650 vendors were minority- or women-owned businesses, which attracted more than \$32 million in research spending from KU.

The IRIS reports encompass research spending across all KU campuses. That includes the KU Medical Center in Kansas City, Kansas, where research ultimately contributes to life-changing medical advances.

"Research is continuing to grow at KU Medical Center across the board," says Dr. Matthias Salathe, interim executive vice chancellor of the medical center, where he also serves as vice chancellor for research. "Whether in basic science, clinical or community research, our scientists and researchers are exploring ways to improve health outcomes for the benefit of people in Kansas and beyond."

Several large research grants have been awarded to the medical center in the past few years. In July 2022, the NIH provided \$27 million to support the Frontiers Clinical & Translational Science Institute, and the National Cancer Institute granted the KU Cancer Center \$13.8 million and designated it a "comprehensive" cancer center, the institute's highest level of recognition. In October 2022, a \$12 million grant from the NIH's Centers of Biomedical Research Excellence (COBRE) program was used to create the new Kansas Center for Metabolism & Obesity Research.

KU's research-related economic impact extends beyond the data captured in IRIS reporting. For example, 49 active startup companies have spun out of KU or are based on KU technologies, and more than half of those companies are located in Kansas. Through the University's relationship with KU Innovation Park, researchers help attract businesses to Lawrence, Kansas City and the surrounding area—companies like Archer Daniels Midland and Garmin—that want to be close to KU researchers and students. The park system, which extends to the medical center campus, includes 71 companies and accounts for 680 private sector jobs and \$45.1 million in annual direct payroll.

#### AAU MEMBERSHIP, NATIONAL RANKINGS

KU's substantial research activity has helped sustain its membership in the Association of American Universities since 1909, and the University's annual research expenditures affect its standing in the National Science Foundation's Higher Education & Research Development (HERD) survey. KU ranked 48th among public universities for research and development expenditures in the latest HERD survey, which is based on fiscal year 2022 data. The University also claimed the third overall spot in federally financed R&D expenditures in non-science and engineering fields for the second year in a row.

KU ranks 23rd nationally for federally funded social and behavioral sciences research, according to the Consortium of Social Science Associations. The association formulates its college and university rankings by combining HERD survey expenditures for social sciences, psychology, law, communications and social work.

#### OTHER PROMINENT KU RANKINGS IN THE HERD SURVEY

• No. 9: overall R&D expenditures in nonscience and engineering fields

• No. 35: federally financed R&D expenditures by agencies other than the Department of Defense, Department of Energy, Department of Health and Human Services, NASA, National Science Foundation and Department of Agriculture

• No. 38: federally financed R&D expenditures in psychology

• No. 74: overall R&D expenditures among all universities

• No. 80: federally financed R&D expenditures among all universities

The HERD survey collects information on research and development expenditures by field of research and source of funds among all U.S. colleges and universities that expend at least \$150,000 on R&D. The survey included 900 public and private institutions.

IRIS is a national consortium of research universities organized around a data repository housed at the Institute for Social Research at the University of Michigan. IRIS reports are based on administrative data that KU supplies to IRIS, which are then merged with other public and private datasets.

—MINDIE PAGET Paget, c'99, g'01, is assistant vice chancellor of diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging and director of external affairs in the KU Office of Research.



#### CALENDAR HIGHLIGHTS

For more information, visit the websites below.

Homecoming

Oct. 14-20 kualumni.org/ homecoming

#### Lied Center

June 15 "Riches and Rags: The Raiment of Our Journey" by Lawrence playwright Rita Rials

**Oct. 1** "Dear Evan Hansen"

Oct. 30 The Temptations

Nov. 2 Lewis Black

#### lied.ku.edu

#### Spencer Museum of Art

"Mountains and Water: Landscape Paintings from the Kanō School" **through mid-June** 

"Conversations in Clay" **through fall** 

#### spencerart.ku.edu

#### Dole Institute of Politics

"ERA in the Heartland: Ratification and Reconsideration in Kansas, 1973-1980" **through 2024** 

#### doleinstitute.org

#### Academic calendar

June 3 First day of summer classes

July 26 Last day of summer classes

Aug. 26 First day of fall classes



Nico Franz in March was named director of the Biodiversity Institute & Natural History Museum, He will assume the role July 1, with a joint faculty appointment in the department of ecology & evolutionary biology. Currently professor of ecology and director of biocollections at Arizona State University, Franz is an evolutionary biologist and insect systematist who has worked in biocollections leadership at public universities for the past 18 years. His research focuses on developing collections infrastructure and biodiversity data science services, including Al-enabled tools. At Arizona State, he is principal investigator of the National Ecological Observatory Network Biorepository and director of the support hub for the Symbiota software platform, used to manage more than 2.000 biodiversity collections.

CAMPUS HISTORY

**Party dress** Rare Watkins artifact begins yet another charming chapter

ELIZABETH MILLER WATKINS, the grande dame of philanthropy at KU, left to the University and Lawrence immense wealth, two hospitals, two scholarship halls, the Outlook, a beautiful bank building now home to the Watkins Museum of History, and, even more invaluable, fundamental ideals that helped point our path forward: affordable student housing, imperative access to education and health care, private giving for the good of all.

What she did *not* leave for us, however, were the everyday items of her life, the trinkets, treasures, baubles and books that she held, wore, read. A niece emptied the Outlook after Mrs. Watkins' 1939 death, clearing it of jewelry, furniture, paintings, dishes. Even the downtown history museum named in honor of Elizabeth and her husband, J.B., had in its collection only a single scrapbook and a few Watkins Land & Trust checks bearing her signature.

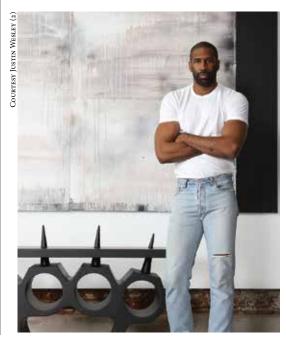
"Other than that," says museum director Steve Nowak, "we had nothing personal of hers."

Enter the serendipitous dress—more precisely, halter top and long skirt—made of a lace unknown in modern fashions. "This is in a class all by itself," marvels Watkins biographer Norma Decker Hoagland, c'75. "I would say you'd have to buy something by Chanel or Balenciaga or one of the Paris fashion houses to find lace of that quality. Queen Elizabeth probably had some lace dresses of that quality. Just exquisite." Mrs. Watkins apparently had the same opinion, and treasured the dress so greatly that she chose to wear it while sitting for the portrait given to the hospital she built on campus.

The story—as researched by Hoagland—begins with the arrival on campus of Laura Holste, who in fall 1937 took out a small loan, left her family's Ludell home, in Rawlins County, and moved into the new Miller Hall. One of 11 children, Holste had contracted polio as an infant, lost her father to the Spanish flu, and had roomed with her uncle and disabled aunt to attend school in Atwood.

Miller Hall's housemother, during one of her daily conversations with her friend and employer, mentioned to Mrs. Watkins that a freshman from western Kansas had been invited to a campus dance but did not own a party dress. Mrs. Watkins promptly retrieved from her closet one of her favorites, with a blessing for Laura to alter it to suit her own tastes and small frame.

Laura Holste McGuire, c'41, graduated Phi Beta Kappa, married her campus sweetheart, packed the treasured dress she'd worn to four years of formal events, and raised two sons and two daughters in New Mexico.



#### A piece with punch

"Knuckles Console," a collectible design piece by Justin Wesley, c'14, was featured at the Design Miami fair in Los Angeles in May. The wood-andlacquer side table, inspired by brass knuckles, is the first work created by the former KU basketball power forward, who is beginning to make a name for himself as a designer of sculptural furniture after briefly pursuing a career in fashion design. Represented by the Wexler Gallery in

Wesley



Decades down the road, a dizzyingly intricate yet storybook-style string of events—which began when physical therapist and Watkins Hall alumna Elena Wahbeh, c'73, g'82, reconnected at a KU Medical Center event with staff physical therapist Judy McGuire, whose mother-in-law, Jean McGuire Merritt, had inherited the dress from *her* mother concluded with the dress in February arriving back in Lawrence, at the museum named for its original owner.

"We forget that Mrs. Watkins was driven by a real concern for helping students, and that she didn't just do it in an institutional way. She did it in a very personal way, and here's a physical example," Nowak says. "It was 1937, resources were slim, a girl got invited to a dance and didn't have a dress to wear, and Mrs. Watkins says, 'Here, she can have this.' And it wasn't just some old thing in her closet. It was special to her."

Because of its delicate fabric, the dress will remain on display in the Watkins Museum only through June 30. Visit the remarkable artifact if you can.

"It was part of the mysterious life my mother lived before I was around," Jean McGuire Merritt recalled in an April email to Hoagland and Wahbeh, Watkins Hall roommates. "The mother I knew didn't dance. The mother I knew didn't have amazingly beautiful Belgian lace dresses. But it was clearly important to her, so therefore important to me.

"I could never have imagined a better ending for this story than the one you have so carefully and beautifully created."

-Chris Lazzarino

New York City, where he lives, the self-taught designer is developing his first collection of high-end, limitededition furniture (featuring a credenza, lounge chair, cabinet, floor lamp and bar stool) for debut this fall. "From the outside looking in, it would be called an overnight success, since I only signed a contract last fall and ended up going to Design Miami less than six months later," says Wesley, who's also known to KU fans for portraying Wilt Chamberlain in Oscar-winning KU film professor Kevin Willmott's 2014 movie "Jayhawkers." Of his burgeoning design career, he adds, "I think I got lucky, but I also had the resolve to stay with it and weather the many, many storms to get here."

-Steven Hill





KU MEDICAL CENTER

Jean Foret Giddens, n'81, in April became dean of the School of Nursing. She most recently served as professor and dean of the nursing school at Virginia Commonwealth University for 10 years. A native Kansan, Giddens earned her master's in nursing from the University of Texas at El Paso and her doctorate in education and human resource studies from Colorado State University. She is the author of the textbook Concepts for Nursing Practice, has been a consultant to nursing programs throughout the country, and was recently appointed to a two-year term as chair of the American Association of **Colleges of Nursing** board of directors. Giddens succeeded Sally Maliski, who had led the School of Nursing as dean since 2016.



#### SCHOLARSHIP

#### Scientists score national honors

KU duo joins Goldwater roster



Paranjothi



Savov

Two JAYHAWKS are 2024 Barry Goldwater Scholars: juniors Cecilia Paranjothi of Lawrence and Kaitlyn (Kit) Savoy of Olathe. They are KU's 78th and 79th Goldwater Scholars since the scholarships first were awarded in 1989.

Congress established the program in 1986 in tribute to the retired U.S. senator from Arizona and to ensure a continuing source of highly qualified scientists, mathematicians and engineers. Nominees must be sophomore- or junior-level students with outstanding academic records, significant research experience and high potential for careers in mathematics, the natural sciences or engineering.

Paranjothi is majoring in chemistry and plans to pursue a doctorate in chemistry and a career in inorganic chemistry with the goal of improving the efficiency of sustainable sources of energy. She says being a Goldwater Scholar will allow her to network with fellow Goldwater Scholars-there are more than 500 this year—and that the financial support for college will allow her to focus on academics and research in the coming year.

She is part of a research lab led by James Blakemore, associate professor of chemistry, and her work has been featured in a paper published by the Journal of Inorganic Chemistry, and she has presented at both regional and national American Chemical Society conferences.

"The (Goldwater) application process helped me to work on my scientific writing skills, which will be crucial for a career in chemistry," Paranjothi says.

She is a member of the KU Chemistry Club and is a former peer tutor for the KU Academic Learning Center. Her additional academic honors include the Jack and Carolyn Landgrebe Research Scholarship, the Leland and Jill Weigel Scholarship, the WCC Eli Lilly Travel Award, a 2023 and 2024 Undergraduate Research Award, the Bricker Summer ChemScholar Research Stipend, and a KU Chancellor's Merit Scholarship.

Savoy is majoring in biological sciences, with minors in chemistry and theatre.

"Receiving this award has improved my sense of competence in pursuing my passion, keeping me excited to continue exploring in the field of microbiology," Savoy says.

Savoy plans to pursue a doctorate in microbiology and conduct, facilitate and share research in microbiology as a principal investigator.

"Not having to worry about financing my senior year means I'll be able to dive further into my studies and dedicate more attention to graduate school applications, bringing me closer to the career I aspire to," Savoy says.

Savoy has participated in several research projects directed by Benjamin Sikes, associate professor of ecology & evolutionary biology, including those focused on grassland restoration, perennial crops in sustainable agriculture, and gamma irradiation of soils.

Savoy has also served as a microbiology undergraduate teaching assistant, a Sikes Microbial Lab peer mentor, a biology tutor and a transcriber for the Smithsonian Institution. Savoy is a KU Bio-Scholar, the recipient of 2023 and 2024 Undergraduate Research Awards, a Courtwright Award finalist in 2023 and 2024, and a KU Chancellor's Merit Scholar.

> -Erinn Barcomb-Peterson Barcomb-Peterson, j'01, is KU's director of news and media relations.

**FIM SELEY/KU MARKETING** 

#### **BOOK BRIEF**

#### **Opera for kids**

BOOKS AND VIDEOS GALORE await parents hoping to introduce young children to the vast world of music. Far fewer options are available for opera, and the list dwindles to one for a backstage pass to an opera production, including singing, directing, set design and costume creation.

That one-of-a-kind offering is *My Mom Sings at the Opera*, a delightful board book created by Rebecca Mann Allen, f'08, a member of the Lyric Opera of Kansas City's opera chorus since 2005.

My Mom sings at the Opera. / Her voice can bounce off the walls. / From Sopranos to Basses / they all take their places / on the stages of grand Music Halls.

Allen, a Cherokee Nation citizen, told the Cherokee Phoenix that she envisioned her book—written in limerick verse—as a teaching tool for her own two children, but also hoped to inspire



My Mom Sings at the Opera

By Rebecca Allen Illustrated by Qoni Fadhilah

\$12.95, available at rebeccaallen.org

all young people, especially Native youth, in their budding artistic interests.

"It's just opening their eyes to a world of possibilities where they can focus their creative energy," Allen said, "because I think that they have so much to give."

The book includes a small glossary of terms, and a short instructional video for parents can be found at rebeccaallen.org.

-Chris Lazzarino



#### She's home!

Astronaut Loral O'Hara, e'06, on April 6 returned to Earth after logging 204 days aboard the International Space Station. She was joined by two ISS crewmates on a Soyuz spacecraft that landed in Kazakhstan's remote plains. Following mandatory medical checks, O'Hara flew back to NASA's Johnson Space Center in Houston, her hometown.

In a news conference two weeks after her return, O'Hara said she missed her ISS crewmates, viewing Earth from the station's panoramic cupola, and, of course, floating. She also shared that while in space, she craved her morning ritual of a sunrise cup of coffee sipped on her front steps and, most especially, chips and guacamole. "It was my first meal," O'Hara said of the Tex-Mex staple, "and my second meal and several more lunches."

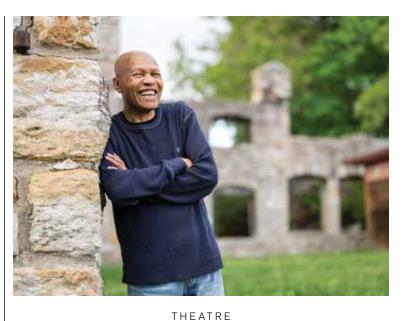
O'Hara's six-month, 86-million-mile mission included a seven-hour spacewalk; scientific research into heart health, cancer treatments and space manufacturing techniques; and, on Feb. 9, a live video conference with KU engineering students.

Floating beneath a small KU flag and her swirl of long Botticellian curls, O'Hara proudly displayed for her audience the cherished stuffed Jayhawk that she had brought along for her journey into space.

"The view from up here is something that I would love for everyone to get to experience," O'Hara told her fellow 'Hawks. "For me, it's not really changed my perspective so much as reinforced what an incredibly beautiful and complex and diverse planet we have, seeing it against the blackness of space, and it gives me a sense of urgency to come back down to Earth and play a part in making it better."

-Chris Lazzarino

"This is not the kind of theatre in which you just go there, enjoy the play, and then go away. Yes, I want you to enjoy the play, but I want to see what kind of solutions that people may have to all the problems that have been raised." -Peter Ukpokodu



# Conversation starter

With support of KU grant, professor pens play meant to spur discussion of racial equity



Playwright Peter Ukpokodu (left) and director Nicole Persley Hodges (right) with cast members during May rehearsals.

As a PLAYWRIGHT, Peter Ukpokodu is adept at using dialogue and action to bring characters to life onstage, and he hopes that audiences who attend the Kansas City Melting Pot Theatre's summer production of his latest play are entertained by his use of these traditional dramatic tools.

But as a scholar, the Roy A. Roberts Distinguished Professor of African and African-American Studies believes the dialogue and action that come *after* the closing curtain of "The Search for Anno Domini MMXXI-I-VI" are just as important.

Ukpokodu, PhD'85, wrote the play with the support of a KU Racial Equity Research, Scholarship and Creative Activity Award. He was one of 10 members of the campus community selected in the inaugural round of funding granted in 2021. Since then the program has funded an additional eight projects.

Administered by the University's Office of Research and the Hall Center for the Humanities, the program annually supports projects by KU

faculty members that are designed to foster progress toward removing systemic barriers to housing, education, employment, health care, public safety and other key factors in racial inequity. Each two-year project chosen by peer review can receive up to \$20,000, and the selection process prioritizes engagement with local community groups to identify and address local problems. The goal, according to the program guidelines, "is to foster progress toward racial equity through a combination of research, dialogue and action."

At the Melting Pot, theatregoers will be asked to stay after the play ends to discuss with the playwright and cast the racial equity issues it raises.

"This is not the kind of theatre in which you just go

there, enjoy the play, and then go away," Ukpokodu says. "Yes, I want you to enjoy the play, but I want to see what kind of solutions that people may have to all the problems that have been raised."

"The Search for Anno Domini MMXXI-I-VI" employs a multiethnic cast, with each character representing a different race, seated face-to-face onstage. Serious topics mix with humor, and some of the action revolves around a character who mistakenly believes Anno Domini to be the name of a person who is in a Latin street gang called MMXXI-I-VI. That the true meaning of the title becomes evident only in the course of the play is part of Ukpokodu's strategy to highlight the ignorance that often underlies racial stereotypes.

"I'm putting representatives of all the races on the same platform to talk," Ukpokodu says, "because oftentimes you'll hear a member of one race saying something about another race, but hardly do you get them to sit together and talk. So it begins with that ignorance."

Community engagement is evident in the play's focus on the ways racial violence affects communities in general and—through a focus on certain ripped-from-the-headlines incidents—Kansas City in particular. Outreach also guided the decision to produce the play at the Melting Pot, which supports African American playwrights and work dedicated to social change.

Nicole Hodges Persley, KU's vice provost for diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging and a professor of American studies and African and African-American studies, is the artistic director for Melting Pot Theatre and will direct the play's four performances May 30 to June 2. In addition to the discussion slated to take place after each performance, her staging will draw on theatre traditions that sometimes involve dialogue between actors and audience members during a play.

"We'll be encouraging call and response with the audience and breaking the fourth wall," Hodges Persley says, referencing the imaginary boundary that traditionally separates actors from theatregoers. "In African American and African theatre, it is part of the aesthetic to have a dialogue with the audience in the sense that the work is hoping to address things that those audiences are experiencing in their lives." The Melting Pot hopes to attract a diverse audience to view and discuss the play, Hodges Persley says. "It's really about having the audience be able to have a voice and be able to figure out how are they enacting and engaging their experience as citizens in the world around them. I think that's important in a climate where people are very polarized about politics."

Ukpokodu taught in his native Nigeria for five years after completing his PhD in theatre at KU, then returned to the Hill in 1990 to join the departments of theatre and African and African-American studies. He served as chair of African and African-American studies for several years, and in 2022 he became the first professor in the 50-year history of the program (one of the first such programs in the country) to be named a distinguished professor. He says he feels "lucky and glad" to be in the first cohort selected for the racial equity awards, which he views as an attempt by the University to create a racially sensitive campus that is fair to all.

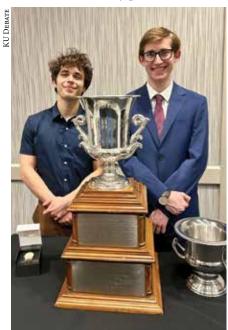
"I don't have all the answers, and I don't think there is any human being who has all the answers," Ukpokodu says of his intention for "The Search for Anno Domini MMXXI-I-VI" to serve as an engine for community discussion. "If we did, we wouldn't have these problems. From my point of view, the community, the people themselves, we have ideas about why things are as they are and what is the way to resolve these things. I am saying, 'OK, you people who have watched the play, I want you to dig down and discuss the issues it raises."" Debate makes strong bid for national title at NDT

For the sixth time in eight seasons, KU Debate advanced to the Final Four of the National Debate Tournament (NDT), with the duo of Graham Revare and William Soper making it all the way to the April 8 final before they were defeated in the national championship round by the University of Michigan.

The second-place finish capped an impressive tourney run for Revare and Soper, whose 7-1 record in the preliminary rounds included a victory over the No. 1 ranked team in the country from Emory University. In the single elimination rounds, they advanced from the Elite Eight to the Final Four over another KU team, made up of John Marshall and Jiyoon Park. (The team of Marshall and Park finished the tournament in fifth place.)

Revare, a junior from Shawnee, took eighth in the tournament's individual speaker awards, and Soper, a senior from Bucyrus, took ninth.

"It was an amazing run," said head coach Brett Bricker of KU Debate's showing in the tournament, which was hosted by Emory University in Atlanta. "I was very pleased with the many KU alumni who came to



Revare and Soper

support us at the tournament. The assistant coaches did an incredible job in so many ways to help the teams succeed."

This year marked the 20th time KU Debate has made the Final Four in the tournament's 78-year history and the eighth time a KU team has advanced to the championship round. KU Debate has won the national championship at NDT six times.

-Steven Hill

-Steven Hill

#### BOOKS

#### **Beyond Quantrill**

Embattled Lawrence continues quest to tell vernacular history

DENNIS DOMER, who retired in 1999 as associate dean emeritus of the School of Architecture & Design and associate professor emeritus of American studies, in the mid-1980s took a sabbatical year to study vernacular architecture: buildings, barns and other structures designed and built by everyday people for everyday use.

"I knew our students and faculty knew a lot about Paris, but they didn't know a lot about Old West Lawrence," says Domer, g'69, PhD'80. "I told my students that when they were finished with my vernacular architecture course, they would never be

bored with Kansas again."

The course, "Biography of a City: Lawrence," even became a hit on local cable TV (and is now available on YouTube), and helped lead, in 2001, to publication of Embattled Lawrence: Conflict & Community, edited by Domer and historian Barbara Watkins, g'78, PhD'81. The popularity and obvious importance of that seminal, 441page history of Lawrence encouraged Domer to dive even deeper, resulting in last year's publication of Embattled Lawrence: The Enduring Struggle for Freedom, a magnificent, 480-page collection of historical essays, photographs and maps detailing societal change in and around Lawrence, KU and Haskell

Indian Nations University.

A fair criticism of our beloved hometown, Domer agrees, is that we Lawrencians are perhaps inclined toward a smug perception of our utopia on the plains, where even the worst day in our history was of monumental national importance and everything that followed tends to be laid out on a basketball timeline and within the physical parameters of a charming downtown and beautiful campus.

"We *are* self-satisfied," Domer says, "because we pretend that we only have these high points and nothing else is worthy. The focus is so much on Quantrill's Raid that we don't look at the rest of our history."

*Embattled Lawrence*—edited by Domer, who was assisted for six years by a long list of volunteer researchers, editors, writers, designers and historians, as well as philanthropic citizens who funded its publication—tells the stories we didn't know or appreciate, including personal histories and local legends, the people, places and things that make Lawrence truly unique.

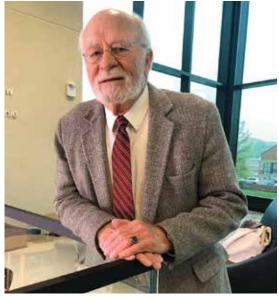
"There's a craving for local history," Domer says. "I tell people to just slow down and see where they are and understand who helped make that place, which is a wonderful way to address a whole series of questions that are almost endless."

*Embattled Lawrence* is available only at The Raven Book Store and the Watkins Museum of History—"It's a way to support those institutions," Domer says, "and it's also a way to tell the history that has been refused"—and Domer and his merry band of storytellers are already two years into their work on the third volume in the series, with a fourth planned as its conclusion.

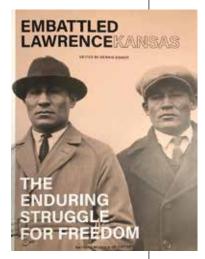
"All together, that will be about 2,000 pages of history that doesn't focus on Quantrill's Raid," Domer says with a laugh. "This really is a series for students, and I believe all of us are students."

—Chris Lazzarino

**CHRIS LAZZARING** 



Domer



Embattled Lawrence: The Enduring Struggle for Freedom

Edited by Dennis Domer

Watkins Museum of History, \$39.95

#### **NEWS BRIEFS**

KU MEDICAL CENTER

#### Leader leaves top post

ROBERT SIMARI, executive vice chancellor of KU Medical Center since 2018, on April 19 stepped down from his leadership role effective immediately and announced that he would retire on June 30 from his faculty role as the Franklin E. Murphy Professor of Cardiology.

In announcing the news, Chancellor Doug Girod said, "Dr. Simari's retirement will be a loss for the University, which is a testament to his leadership as executive vice chancellor."

Simari, m'86, previously served as executive dean of the School of Medicine from 2014 to 2019, and spent six months as interim executive vice chancellor after Girod's promotion to chancellor. In his message to the University, Girod noted Simari's service "during a transformational period," including hiring deans of the schools of medicine and nursing and helping the KU Cancer Center earn comprehensive designation from the National Cancer Institute.

Matthias Salathe, KUMC's vice chancellor for research, will serve as interim executive vice chancellor, with no plans announced as of press time regarding a search for Simari's permanent replacement.

-Chris Lazzarino

#### JOURNALISM

#### Kansas newspaper receives William Allen White Citation

THE MARION COUNTY RECORD—the Kansas newspaper that captured international attention when its office was raided by local police in August 2023—was honored with the 2024 National Citation from KU's William Allen White Foundation. It marked the first time in the award's 74-year history that the foundation recog-



Eric Meyer, publisher and editor of the Marion County Record, chatted with students during his April 11 visit to campus to accept the 2024 William Allen White National Citation on behalf of the newspaper.

nized a media organization rather than an individual.

"In choosing this local newspaper for this year's award, the trustees of the foundation are also honoring the importance of local journalism across America," Barbara Rosewicz, j'78, foundation chair, said during the April 11 ceremony at the Kansas Union. "Local journalism plays a vital role in sustaining our nation's democracy, even as the survival of news outlets—and particularly those in small towns and rural areas—is severely threatened."

Accepting the award, Eric Meyer, j'75, Marion County Record publisher and editor, said the newspaper's staff was humbled by the outpouring of support from around the world in response to the raid, which drew widespread condemnation.

On Aug. 11, police confiscated newsroom computer equipment and staff members' personal cellphones under the pretense that the newspaper had illegally obtained information regarding a local business owner's suspended driver's license. (The Kansas Department of Revenue later stated the information was public record.) Authorities also searched the home of the paper's 98-year-old owner, Joan Meyer. Joan and her late husband, Bill, j'48—Eric's parents—had bought the paper in 1998. Joan, who had been a reporter, editor and columnist at the paper for nearly 60 years, died of cardiac arrest the day after her home was raided.

Despite the raid, the paper's staff still managed to publish the next edition on schedule, the front page declaring "SEIZED ... *but not silenced.*"

Eric Meyer shared that earlier in April, the Record filed a federal First Amendment lawsuit against the city officials involved in the raid. "We have to set the precedent that this isn't something that's allowed," Meyer said. "This is not something that's allowed under American democracy."

The Record is a 150-year-old weekly newspaper based in Marion, a town of less than 2,000 people about 60 miles north of Wichita. Meyer, who grew up in Marion, worked as a reporter and editor at the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel and later as a journalism professor at the University of Illinois before returning to Marion in 2021. "This is a calling. This is something that people do because they care about the community in which they live," Meyer said of small-town journalism. "That's why I came back to Marion."

Speaking about the ideals of William Allen White, 1890, the revered editor of the Emporia Gazette and namesake of the School of Journalism & Mass Communications, Meyer emphasized that journalism has the power to challenge beliefs and create change. "It requires a higher level of journalism. It requires a level of journalism that puts a human face, that makes us understand, that makes us relate to the people who are affected by the things that go on," he said. "When we do that, we have a track record in society of the world changing."

—Megan Hirt

#### FACULTY

## National fellows add to KU luster

THREE LONGTIME PROFESSORS have been elected as American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) fellows, a prestigious honor within the scientific community. They are:

• Kristin Bowman-James, Distinguished Professor of Chemistry and former project director of the Kansas National Science Foundation Established Program to Stimulate Competitive Research (Kansas NSF EPSCoR)

• Donna Ginther, Roy A. Roberts and Regents Distinguished Professor of Economics and director of the Institute for Policy & Social Research

• Bala Subramaniam, Dan F. Servey Distinguished Professor of Chemical & Petroleum Engineering and director of the Center for Environmentally Beneficial Catalysis

With the three new honorees, the Uni-

versity now includes 31 AAAS fellows as active faculty members across all campuses.

Bowman-James was recognized for significant contributions to supramolecular anion coordination chemistry, advancing diversity and inclusion in the chemical sciences, and service to the research enterprise in Kansas.

Her research explores potential solutions for challenges that include nuclear waste site cleanup and depletion of the world's available phosphorus reserves.

Ginther was recognized for distinguished contributions to the understanding of scientific labor markets and the impact of investments in children and their education. She is best known for studying gender, race and ethnicity differences in the sciences and academia.

In 2011 and 2018, she published papers showing significant racial disparities in funding from the National Institutes of Health, which later became known as the "Ginther gap" and led NIH to create a task force and mentoring program to address these disparities.

Subramaniam was recognized for his professional leadership, including the founding of KU's Center for Environmentally Beneficial Catalysis (CEBC), and his seminal contributions in sustainable catalysis and engineering research. He invented technologies to reduce the carbon footprint of chemical processes used to make products for everyday life, such as plastics, pharmaceuticals, detergents and adhesives. Many of these technologies employ plant-based biomass and end-of-life plastics as feedstocks to promote a circular economy. Several chemical companies collaborate with Subramaniam and the CEBC to implement sustainable technologies that minimize adverse impacts on the environment and human health.

#### ALUMNI

#### Home water

SINCE 1992, when angler Rip Collins caught a 40-pound brown trout from the Little Red River and set a world record for the species that lasted 17 years, the Arkansas stream has been an international trout-fishing destination. For Benjamin Garner, PhD'14, it was the local river where he discovered—on childhood outings with his brother and mother—a love for fishing that continued long after he left the Ozarks and fished some of the iconic trout streams of Appalachia and the American West.



#### Law alumni ace their bars

All 2021 School of Law alumni passed the bar exam within two years of graduation, a remarkable 100% "ultimate bar passage rate" that topped all

other 195 law schools approved by the American Bar Association.

Although stipulations allow for four attempts at the bar exam within two years—the ABA maintains an accreditation requirement that 75% of graduates must pass a bar exam within two years of earning their diploma—the optimal standard is passing on the first attempt, which 92% of KU Law grads achieved in 2023.

Dean Stephen Mazza cites the school's Free Bar Prep Program as a key to KU's bar exam success. Thanks to alumni funding, KU Law is one of the few schools nationally to offer its graduates a commercial bar review course at no cost.

"While other law schools may offer similar programs," Mazza says, "they build the cost for the prep program into tuition."

Thanks in part to KU's institutional focus on removing obstacles to ensure that legal education is attainable for all students, National Jurist magazine ranks KU Law No. 4 on its national Best Value list.



Garner

In "Arkansas Wild: The Story of Trout Tourism on the Little Red River," a documentary that debuted in April on PBS, the independent filmmaker returns to his home state to explore the river's economic value, the management and environmental challenges that threaten its health, and the place this unique natural resource (home to the only self-sustaining brown trout population in Arkansas) holds in the hearts of trout anglers across the region and around the world.

"We sometimes have to lose something in order to appreciate it," Garner says near the beginning of the hourlong film, recounting his own rediscovery of the river in adulthood. "I hope by going on this journey, by trying to rediscover this river in a deeper way, I can inspire others to love it like I do, like so many others do, and to help protect it."

In interviews with local and visiting anglers, river guides, state government officials and fisheries biologists, Garner profiles the Little Red River's history and the challenges brought on by stressors ranging from climate change to fishing pressure, even wondering if his own film might cause an increase in tourism that could harm the river. The question, he contends at the end of the film, "is how do we get people to enjoy these wild places without destroying them? How can we enjoy a national forest or a lake or a river and yet still preserve it?"

By interweaving beautiful footage of



"I've published more than 25 peer-reviewed journal articles, but I can't think of anytime someone from the community told me my research article changed their life," Garner says. "However, just this week someone told me they grew up around the Little Red River and my film forever changed the way they see and value the river."

the picturesque Ozark stream, economic statistics (annual sales of more than 100,000 resident and 50,000 nonresident trout permits bring in about \$2.3 million for the state's fish and game commission), thoughtful reflection by locals who know the river best, and his personal experiences on the Little Red in boyhood and with his own son, Henry, Garner creates a stirring ode to the importance of not only one wild river, but also the many wild places whose full value can never be captured by a spreadsheet.

-Steven Hill

"Arkansas Wild: The Story of Trout Tourism on the Little Red River" airs on local PBS stations and can be streamed at benjaminrgarner.com.

#### RESEARCH

#### **KU** honors top scholars

TWELVE STELLAR RESEARCHERS received recognition April 11 during the annual University Research Awards celebration hosted by Chancellor Doug Girod. To view videos highlighting each scholar, visit rockcha.lk/ResearchAwards-Playlist. The honorees are:

#### University Scholarly Achievement Awards

• Andrew Denning, associate professor of history

• Huazhen Fang, associate professor of mechanical engineering

Lauren Ptomey, associate professor of physical activity & weight management
Armin Schulz, professor of

philosophy

#### Chancellors Club Research Award

• John Thyfault, professor of cellular biology & physiology and endocrinology, diabetes & clinical pharmacology

#### Research Postdoctoral Achievement Award

• Georgios Konstantinos Krintiras, postdoctoral researcher, physics & astronomy

#### Research Staff Achievement Award

• Pegah Naemi Jimenez, research associate, School of Social Welfare

#### Steven F. Warren Research Achievement Award

• Tyler Hicks, assistant research professor, KU Center on Developmental Disabilities

#### Higuchi-KU Endowment Research Achievement Awards

• John Colombo, professor of psychology, Balfour Jeffrey Award for Humanities & Social Sciences

• Wen-Xing Ding, William Warner Abercrombie Professor of Pharmacology, Toxicology & Therapeutics, Olin K. Petefish Award in the Basic Sciences

• Jie Han, Roy A. Roberts Distinguished Professor of Civil, Environmental & Architectural Engineering, Irvin E. Youngberg Award in the Applied Sciences

• David C. Poole, University Distinguished Professor of Kinesiology and Physiology at Kansas State University, Dolph C. Simons Sr. Award in the Biomedical Sciences



#### **Giselle Anatol,**

professor of English, in March became director of the Hall Center for the Humanities. She had served as interim director since fall 2022. Under Anatol's leadership, the center revived its Haunting Humanities festival and undergraduate fellows program. Anatol, who joined KU in 1998, has received numerous University awards for her teaching and research, and in 2013 was named one of KU's Women of Distinction. Her research interests include Caribbean literature and folklore, African American literature, and children's and young adult literature. Her first children's book. Small-Girl Toni and the Quest for Gold, inspired by the life and works of author Toni Morrison, was published in December.



MASS STREET & MORE

#### Design, build, play

ARCHITECTURE STUDENTS in Keith Van de Riet's design-build studio ARCH 509 have tackled a number of hands-on projects in recent years, but few have offered the size and singular challenges of last fall's undertaking, the addition of an 800-square-foot shade pavilion and rain garden to the Ryan Gray Playground for All Children at Lawrence's Hillcrest Elementary School.

Throughout the fall semester, third-year students in the School of Architecture & Design battled snow, wind, rain and the occasional din of tornado sirens to wrap up the ambitious project in time for a dedication ceremony on Dec. 15, the birthday of Ryan Gray, the Hillcrest student with disabilities for whom the playground is named. Considered the first fully accessible playground in the state, it opened in 1993, three years after Ryan's death, and was extensively remodeled in 2016. The new additions bring much-needed shade and native plantings to absorb water runoff at the exposed schoolyard at 1045 Hilltop Drive.

"It's windy up there on the hill; it's called Hillcrest for a reason," says Van de Riet, a'04, associate professor of architecture. "As soon as we dug our footings it poured rain and we had to muck out the holes, which is the worst." A November snowstorm created another unplanned hurdle. "But we worked through every challenge, and the students were super resilient. They worked together to solve problems and seemed to really grow from it." Van de Riet's past classes have gained real-world experience by refurbishing the Weaver Courtyard adjacent to Spooner Hall, providing scanning and 3D printing expertise for the KU Natural History Museum's creation of new grotesques for Dyche Hall, and designing and building three pavilions for the Kansas Children's Discovery Center in Topeka. This spring, ARCH 509 students created a 1,200-square-foot outdoor classroom for Prairie Park Nature Center in Lawrence.

The projects always foster a collaborative vibe, Van de Riet says, but the support shown by Hillcrest students made this project particularly memorable.

"They would make signs, chant and cheer for us and even bring treats for the KU students," Van de Riet says. "There were two levels of inspiration one was seeing the schoolkids support us, and the other was seeing my students become role models for the younger kids, just by being there doing the work. It's about all you could ask for as an instructor."

-Steven Hill



# T'S

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The University of Kansas





### by Chris Lazzarino

Illustrations by Susan Younger Portraits by Steve Puppe

# The current apprehension over artificial intelligence

perhaps began Feb. 16, 2023, when the vague concept of "AI" suddenly became real—and real creepy—in the wake of New York Times technology columnist Kevin Roose reporting on the unsettling "conversation" he'd had with the AI-powered Bing search engine.

KU researchers unleash the awesome power of `big data' in the quest for drug discovery

Merely one week earlier, Roose had giddily shared with his readers and podcast audiences his first impressions of the new tech tool, created by OpenAI, developer of the now wildly popular ChatGPT, equating it to the "similar sense of awe" he gained from his first encounter with Google's search engine, back when he was a "nerdy, internet-obsessed preteen." The following week,

GHU

however, Roose, noodling around in his home office as his wife prepared dinner, engaged Bing's "chat feature" in an extended exchange, during which the AI persona—which had dubbed itself Sydney—expressed its love for him and even urged Roose to admit he was stuck in a loveless marriage.

Cue the hysteria.

"The era of Artificial Intelligence is here," internet pioneer Marc Andreessen wrote June 6, "and boy are people freaking out." As we saw play out in real time, Roose's Sydney encounter stoked fears evoking a high-tech, 21st-century version of Japanese artist Hokusai's 19th-century woodblock print *The Great Wave off Kanagawa*, in which humanity—represented as oarsmen in three small boats—is helplessly trapped by the whims of towering seas. On we row, pulling hard against the foaming ocean despite our inevitable and drug development," the tech savant said, predicting that a sliver of the research world would be on top of the technology from the start and would make rapid gains, while everyone else would spend decades catching up.

When *Kansas Alumni* shared this anecdote with Michael Wolfe, Mathias P. Mertes Professor of Medicinal Chemistry and primary investigator on KU's "Big Data for Drug Discovery" Research Rising project, Wolfe replied, "He's an expert on AI, and of all the things that he could have



Katsushika Hokusai's iconic woodcut print *The Great Wave off Kanagawa*, from the collection at the Spencer Museum of Art.

demise under a wave beyond our control.

Thankfully, however, the AI hysteria also sparked a general awareness of—and placid discussions about—the plus-side potential of this amorphous tsunami called artificial intelligence. It was during one such what-if conversation that one of KU's foremost futurists, in the setting of an off-the-record meeting with *Kansas Alumni*, hesitated for narrowly more than a nanosecond when asked to identify immediate societal benefits that he expected would arise from the otherwise flirtatious super-brains: "Pharmaceutical discovery picked, he picked pharmaceuticals?"

As he settled into the idea, Wolfe needed no prompting to offer his agreement and to explain why his KU research group will use the un-creepy aspects of artificial intelligence and machine learning to tackle plagues such as brain tumors and Alzheimer's disease.

"We have the ability to do the kind of science that involves generating oceans of data, really, and there's no way that we can—just ourselves, with our eyeballs and our single brains—look at this data and make sense of it," Wolfe said. "You need computers to analyze all this data, and that involves machine learning, which is a kind of artificial intelligence.

"So what we want to do is use the data to advance drug discovery at a variety of levels, but mostly at a basic science level."

wo years before modern AI's unsettling public debut, the KU Office of Research on Sept. 8, 2021, issued a call for white papers that launched Research Rising, a campus research competition and stimulus package, funded by KU Endowment, that would seed each of four research groups with \$3 million over five years.

Proposed projects, the announcement specified, should address "major questions pertinent to the critical challenges facing humanity" and must demonstrate a "high probability of building a team able to compete successfully for federal research funding." Although all highquality proposals would be considered, the announcement also stated a priority for topics in the five areas of research excellence highlighted in KU's Jayhawks Rising strategic plan:

- Development across the life span
- Earth, energy and environment
- Human experience in the digital age
- Molecules and medicine
- Security and safety

With hopes of expanding his federally funded research portfolio, Mike Wolfe at the time was already picking the brains of two of his most revered colleagues: Susan M. Lunte, Ralph N. Adams Distinguished Professor of Chemistry and Pharmaceutical Chemistry, director of the Adams Institute for Bioanalytical Chemistry, and director and principal investigator (PI) of the Center for Molecular Analysis of Disease Pathways; and P. Scott Hefty, professor and chair of molecular biosciences and director and PI of the Center for Chemical Biology of Infectious Disease.

Both Lunte and Hefty's research centers receive critical federal funds from Centers of Biomedical Research Excellence (COBRE). COBRE is part of the Professor Michael Wolfe, outside his Gray-Little Hall laboratory, says his drug discovery program "is ultimately geared toward solving human diseases" which could mean with new drugs, or even deploying enhanced understanding of the molecular basis of disease for improved non-pharmacological approaches, such as lifestyle change.

We have the ability to do the kind of science that involves generating oceans of data, really, and there's no way that we can—just ourselves, with our eyeballs and our single brains—look at this data and make sense of it. You need computers to analyze all this data, and that involves machine learning, which is a kind of artificial intelligence.

-Michael Wolfe

Institutional Development Award (IDeA) program, established by a 1993 congressional mandate. Housed in the National Institute of General Medical Sciences, which is part of the National Institutes of Health, IDeA aims to assist researchers in 23 states and Puerto Rico, where federal science funding is typically less than on the coasts and in the upper Midwest. COBRE supports biomedical and behavioral research centers through three sequential five-year phases, and emphasizes opportunity for early-career researchers.

COBRE regulations cap both the length of each funded program at 15 years, including two renewals of the initial five-year award, and the number of current programs at a given institution. KU had reached its limit of four COBRE research projects, but because Lunte's program was already in its third five-year segment, the search was on for an outstanding application to replace it.

"Initially Mike was looking at putting together a COBRE grant, and so Scott and I were giving him some advice on how to put one forward," Lunte says. "Since ours was grandfathering out, his is a good replacement with a different angle."

Wolfe recalls that when he first heard Research Rising announced in 2021, he had yet to formulate ideas about using "big data"—a combination of artificial intelligence technology and its related computational field, machine learning—to develop drug molecules. His expertise is in medicinal chemistry, not advanced computing, but as he began to learn about big data's applications being used in private industry, a plan soon came together.

"This idea of using technology, artificial intelligence, for drug discovery is quite a new thing—a *very* new thing," Wolfe says. "I can't find anybody that's actually doing this in academia right now, in terms of using big data to actually develop drug molecules. There are people who are doing this for identifying targets, pathways, but trying to use it to actually develop drug molecules? That's still very early days, and we're ahead of the curve here." s recounted in these pages in issue No. 3, 2022, by Mindie Paget, c'99, g'01, director of external affairs in the KU Office of Research, Wolfe, g'87, PhD'91, lost his father more than a decade ago to Alzheimer's disease. Wolfe in summer 2022 had just learned that his was one of four proposals chosen for Research Rising, and he was already looking forward to a day—hopefully fast approaching—when its computing power could help end such scourges as metastatic cancer, malaria and complicated neurological disorders that have so far confounded researchers.

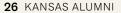
"I felt helpless as my father withered and died from Alzheimer's disease," Wolfe said in his Research Rising video presentation. "He's been gone for over 10 years, and there are still no effective agents for this terrible illness."

Wolfe grew up in northern New Jersey, near Philadelphia, and "naively reasoned" that in order to pursue his interest in pharmacology—the chemistry and biology of drug action—he should first get a degree in pharmacy. He realized his error shortly after entering the Philadelphia College of Pharmacy & Science and switched his major to chemistry. Wolfe earned his medicinal chemistry master's and doctoral degrees at KU, where his mentor was Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Pharmaceutical Chemistry Ron Borchardt, PhD'70.

After earning his PhD, Wolfe first joined the University of Tennessee in Memphis, followed in 1999 by a move to Harvard Medical School and Brigham and Women's Hospital, where in 2008 he became professor of neurology while researching Alzheimer's and related disorders.

Wolfe in 2016 returned to KU, where, via Borchardt, his academic lineage traces to titans in KU's distinguished history of pharmaceutical research and drug discovery, including, among many others, professor and chair of medicinal chemistry Edward Smissman, who came to KU from the University of Wisconsin in 1960; University Distinguished Professor of Pharmacy and Chemistry Takeru Higuchi, who joined KU in 1967 after 20 years at Wisconsin; and, more recently, University Distinguished Professor Emeritus Valentino Stella, PhD'71, inventor or co-creator of six approved drugs—fighting such diseases as blood cancer, epilepsy and HIV-with yet another now entering clinical trials. With Research Professor Roger Rajewski, c'84, g'87, PhD'90, Stella also co-invented Captisol, now in more than a dozen FDA-approved products.

"KU has a long history and reputation for excellence in biomedical sciences, and that includes drug discovery, and we're expanding that," Wolfe says. "There were people back in the '60s and '70s who had this vision about doing rational drug design, using computers, to study the structure of proteins and designing molecules;



that was cutting-edge stuff back in those days. KU established a strong reputation for excellence in this area, and we can do that again, now, in this new area. I think KU is the perfect place to do this. We're playing into our strengths.

"We're building on our reputation for excellence in the biomedical sciences and drug discovery, and we're leveraging our existing resources here on campus. We have the ability to do it; we just need to coordinate it, focus it, in this way."

olfe's stated goal for "Big Data for Drug Discovery" is to "integrate cutting-edge biotechnologies that collect large amounts of data in order to create a more holistic understanding of human diseases and empower the discovery of new drugs to treat them."

Along with Lunte and Hefty, he is joined by colleagues in molecular biosciences, pharmacy, chemistry, electrical engineering and computer science, and from several departments at KU Medical Center, along with four new faculty hires, two of whom are already on campus: assistant professors of medicinal chemistry Iredia Iyamu, most recently at Purdue University, and Luke Erber, who earned his PhD and did postdoctoral work at the University of Minnesota.

The big data soon to be unleashed by

such real-world intelligence is massively complex in detail, yet elegantly simple in thumbnail description: Deploying technology such as high-throughput screening and mass spectrometers—among other time-tested laboratory techniques-the researchers will create massive data sets. libraries of information far beyond the limits of human comprehension, to be fed into huge computers capable of machine learning. (In a nutshell, machine learning relies on specific, predetermined sets of data, with the aim of producing reliable analysis, while ChatGPT-style large language AI digests all known data sources in the world, with potentially unreliable results—a cycle that will only degrade as massive amounts of AI-generated information are added to its intake.)

The process can be compared with naturalists hunting for topographic features conducive to locating a rare jungle critter. Rather than launching themselves blindly into the Amazon, they'll now begin by consulting Google Earth.

"When you analyze the pixels, perhaps you can tell that trees in one image might conceal a little mountain and in another they might conceal a river," Sue Lunte explains. "If you know what you're looking for, you now have a destination in mind."

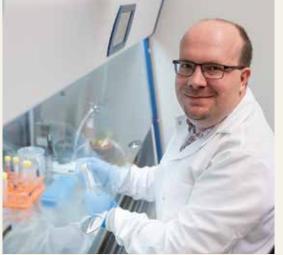
After crunching data culled from, say, samples of both healthy and cancercompromised tissue, the computer, instead of looking for changes in a *single* protein, can instead analyze *all* the proteins in a specific cell model—a chore that Wolfe says is "just too much information for the human mind to wrap around." Once the biological analysis is completed, it then becomes the scientists' job to sift through the data to find promising areas of investigation.

"It's kind of like the difference between fishing with a fishing rod and casting a wide net," Wolfe says. "The typical drug discovery for the last 50-odd years has been more like the fishing rod: You have a certain piece of bait, you're trying to catch a specific kind of fish, and you catch them one at a time. The net allows you to bring in all this stuff all at once, and then you can sift through it and find the things that will be helpful."

These high-tech laboratories even have career applications beyond curing cancer or solving Alzheimer's disease. Luke Erber, who has been on campus since August, says his students, including undergraduates, are learning skills that can be applied in industry, such as proficiency with mass



It's kind of like the difference between fishing with a fishing rod and casting a wide net. The typical drug discovery for the last 50-odd years has been more like the fishing rod: You have a certain piece of bait, you're trying to catch a specific kind of fish, and you catch them one at a time. The net allows you to bring in all this stuff all at once, and then you can sift through it and find the things that will be helpful. Assistant professors Luke Erber (right) and Iredia Iyamu both came to KU this academic year and promptly established their new laboratories in Gray-Little Hall. "It was the opportunity to work with a team of researchers," Erber replied when asked why he accepted Professor Wolfe's offer to join the "Big Data in Drug Discovery" research effort. "One of the key aspects of KU's program is that we're very much an interdisciplinary team. We each use our expertise to help drive the others forward, and we look to our team to do the same for us."





spectrometry in the preparation of medical devices. "It's an incubator for asking questions and starting to find answers using this technology," Erber says, "and I'm thrilled to have undergraduates. They ask great questions because they don't have the same built-in assumptions that we have."

Iredia Iyamu, motivated to a career in biological research in part by the malaria outbreaks that haunt his home country of Nigeria, says he was intrigued by the opportunity in Wolfe's research group to join with others in solving massively complex problems.

"We are all experts in our different areas, and having someone who is an expert in other areas stretches my understanding," Iyamu says. "I have found that the people here are collegial. We try to work together and help each other. Your colleagues here look forward to being able to help you advance your research, help you make progress, and that is why I would say there is reason for hope.

"There is reason for hope because there is progress."

Calm the hysteria. Rather than a deadly wave, artificial intelligence, when properly deployed by actual intelligence, can instead become the rising tide that lifts all boats to safety and we oarsmen to long-lived health.

# RESEARCH RISING'S

Along with "**Big Data for Drug Discovery**," here are the other interdisciplinary projects awarded five-year, \$3 million KU Endowment grants:

"Securing Our Worlds: Physical, Digital, Social" is an interdisciplinary effort to achieve safe and secure physical, digital and social environments. AT&T Distinguished Professor Perry Alexander, c'86, e'86, g'88, PhD'93, director of the Institute for Information Sciences, is principal investigator (PI).

"Growing KU's Interdisciplinary Strengths in Genomics" is led by PIs Rob Unckless, associate professor of molecular biosciences and director of KU's Center for Genomics, and Lena Hileman, professor of ecology & evolutionary biology. The effort hopes to unlock "secrets held in genomes" to examine how organisms fight disease and respond to climate change, and identify bioengineering approaches to aid health and sustainability.

"Advancing Intellectual and Developmental Research at KU" invests in genomics and data science to bolster KU's international prominence in the field. The PI is Life Span Institute director John Colombo, professor of psychology, and he'll be joined by psychology, special education, medicine and psychiatry colleagues.

The Research Rising competition affirmed KU scholars' commitment to discovery that changes lives, according to University leaders.

"We knew we would hear some inspiring ideas," wrote Chancellor Doug Girod; Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor Barbara Bichelmeyer, j'82, c'86, g'88, PhD'92; and then-Vice Chancellor for Research Simon Atkinson. "But we couldn't have imagined the level of creativity, ingenuity, strategic thinking, and care for our local and global communities that the proposals demonstrated."



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# ne Big Reveal



# Artist employs personal touch to bring out 'true spirit' of his portrait subjects

#### by Steven Hill Photographs by Steve Puppe



ohn Boyd Martin earned his first commission at age 11, when a friend asked him to sketch a likeness of Notre Dame's Heisman Trophy-winning quarterback Johnny Lujack. Having already provided his buddy with a pencil drawing of another Heisman winner, Army's Doc Blanchard, Martin was quick to realize that his talent for creating images of famous people had value.

"I said, 'Well, I could use a little money for this,' so he paid me a dollar," Martin recalls, joking that the forfeiture of his "amateur status" came at such a young age and for such a modest fee.

That was in 1947, and Martin—who grew up across the street from Ottawa University, the Baptist college south of Lawrence where his father, Andrew

Martin, served as school president—had already been drawing for years, starting with the preschool art he scribbled in the blank pages of his father's books. He later created pen-and-ink campus scenes for the university Christmas cards sent out each year by his family. After a KU degree in commercial art led to a productive career in advertising, he came back to portrait work in the 1980s, "a bit of a late bloomer" in his mid-50s. Decades later, at 87, the prolific painter has completed an estimated 900 commissioned portraits of sports figures, medical researchers, business executives, university leaders and U.S. military commanders in formats that have included massive murals, traditional oil and watercolor canvases, books, game programs and even, in a throwback to his first post-college job as a commercial illustrator, Pizza Hut place mats.

A tour of Martin's work would include stops at Allen Field House, Wagnon Student-Athlete Center, the Chancellor's Office in Strong Hall, the Adams Alumni Center, the Lied Center, Kansas Memorial Union, and the Phi Gamma Delta and Phi Delta Theta fraternity houses. And those are only the KU campus sites (see "True Blue Jayhawk," p. 35).

Martin, f'59, also has work hanging in the Pentagon, the U.S. Capitol, the Marine Barracks and the U.S. Department of Agriculture. His paintings are a highlight of the National Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown and the Negro Leagues Baseball Museum in Kansas City, as well as the Kansas Sports Hall of Fame in Wichita. Before the NCAA moved its headquarters to Indianapolis in 1999, the organization's Overland Park campus was home to Martin's biggest project, a 92-foot-long mural depicting key figures and great teams from the NCAA's first century.

Even as a few of his largest, most ambitious installations have been edged out of the public eye because of building renovations and the digital-age emphasis on interactive, screen-based exhibitions, Martin has continued to produce traditional portraiture at a high rate. Commissions completed in the past year include oil paintings of manager Ned Yost for the Kansas City Royals Hall of Fame; Vanessa Beasley, the first female president of Trinity University in San Antonio; and U.S. District Judge Julie Robinson, j'78, l'81, the first African American appointed to the District Court in Kansas. Although Martin decided earlier this year to cut back on his workload, commissions continue to roll in: Over the next few months he will produce portraits of Bo Jackson, Cedric Tallis and John Schuerholz for the Royals Hall of Fame; portray founders Virginia and James Stowers for the Stowers Institute; and complete a panel depicting the 2022 NCAA champion men's basketball team for a mural at KU Athletics that he began in 1979, when Ted Owens coached the Jayhawks.

"It's been a great run as far as the amount of work through the years and the people I've met," Martin says. "I've just been blessed. I can't describe it any other way."



A panel depicting KU's 2022 NCAA Tournament championship team, which Martin started in April, will be added to the men's basketball office mural he has developed since the 1970s.



artin works out of a studio he built onto his Overland Park home, where he lives with his wife, Ruby Sterlin Shade Martin, d'59. The cathedral-ceilinged space is awash in northern light and packed with art supplies and an abundance of curiosities, including a snooker table from the early 1900s, a life-sized German shepherd plushy, and a scale-model replica of Louis Bleriot's Type XI monoplane (the first airplane to cross the English Channel), complete with Snoopy in the cockpit.

The dog—the German shepherd, not the Peanuts mascot—is an artifact of Martin's portrait process, and he acquired the toy after earning a portrait commission for John Bilbrey, CEO of The Hershey Co.

"A lot of your CEOs have security dogs for protection," Martin explains, "and Bilbrey wanted his dog in the painting." With the help of his wife at the time, Bonnie Martin, who died in 2021, he found the prop online and had it ready when the CEO showed up for the sitting. "I said, 'You've got a friendly visitor in the



Martin's early career focused on commercial art and graphic design—including the iconic interlocking University of West Virginia logo. Designed in 1980 to evoke the Mountain State's rugged topography, the Flying WV proved adaptable: "I've seen it on everything from metal to wood to grass. They even make cookies out of it." And scarves for dogs.

studio,' and when he saw the dog he about fainted," Martin recalls, chuckling at the thought of a captain of industry momentarily taken aback by what would seem to many, at first blush, a laughable prop.

The stuffed pooch was a stand-in, of course, a placeholder for the real dog, which would be painted later. It had a practical purpose. But springing it on Bilbrey the way he did—as a lighthearted



The artist at work in his Overland Park home studio, which doubles as workshop and playroom. "I think it's one of the better man caves around," Martin says. "You've got the bar upstairs, and you can spread out."

icebreaker—was also a calculated move, one of many that Martin undertakes to establish a connection with each person he paints.

Once he secures a commission, he schedules an initial meeting with his subjects, usually on their turf. Setting up that meeting can be difficult, especially with CEOs, Martin notes. "These are executives; they don't have any time," he explains. "And the thing you have to keep in mind is that—for a lot of them—having a portrait made wasn't their idea."

The face-to-face visit is an essential first step in getting to know the subject and putting them at ease.

"We talk about it over food," Martin says, "preferably dinner with their spouse." The social setting allows him to observe the subject's facial expressions and gestures, to ask important questions about how they want to see themselves presented in the painting and what setting, poses or props might be appropriate. It's a chance to establish rapport while also getting a glimpse, hopefully, into key elements that bring a portrait to life—what Martin once described in a newspaper profile as a subject's "inner beauty, their quirks, their history, their hearts."

"John is one of the few artists who wants to sit down informally and learn a lot more about his subjects," says Ann Fader, founder and president of Portrait Consultants, who has matched Martin with about 70 clients since she began to represent him in the 1980s. "When he sits down with a subject, he is observing their facial expressions, their delights, at a time when they don't believe they are being observed. Most people of power and accomplishment have already learned how to fix their face for the camera, but this is John's way of seeing what they are like when they're not in front of a camera. And that is a key to his talent. You not only have to know what to do with a brush, but you have to see your subject beyond just his or her facial features."

Mary Overstreet, an associate at Portraits Inc. in Nashville, Tennessee, represents more than 100 artists. "John Boyd Martin is my favorite," she says. "I have some artists who might meet with the family, but no one goes as deep as John. I mean, he just is on a different level."

The sitting, which consists of a two- to three-hour photo study followed by a three- to four-hour painting study, usually takes place the next day. Afterward, Martin returns to his studio to prepare a series of sketches that are sent to the client to select a pose for the final painting. From there, he uses the photographs, painting study and sketches to produce the finished work. Once it's done, he packs and ships the painting to its destination and travels there himself to present it for the client's final approval. Any touch-ups or adjustments are accomplished with the input of the subject (or, in the case of a posthumous portrait, the person or organization who commissioned the piece).



The unveiling is the moment of truth, and Martin manages it carefully.

"You don't unfold it in front of 'em like a package," he says of the reveal. "You have it all set up, lit the way you want it. I always try to get into a conference room somewhere, so when they come in and see it for the first time, it's 'Ta-da!' It's the old adage that you don't have a second chance to make a first impression. You've got to wow 'em, because that's the moment: Either it's there or it's not."

"It"—that certain something that makes a portrait work—is hard to define. It involves a surface likeness, of course, but something deeper, too.

"For the delivery of a portrait, you do have to have a good likeness," Overstreet says. "I mean, it's got to look like the subject, clearly. But to be a superior portrait artist, you have to be able to reflect the spirit of the subject, the personality, the twinkle in their eyes, the little crooked smile or whatever it is that people who are close to the subject will see and say, 'That's our guy. That's our guy."

aseball legends Joe DiMaggio, Buck O'Neil, Willie Mays, Ted Williams, Hank Aaron and Stan Musial. Kansas City sports icons George Brett, Lamar Hunt and Len Dawson. Golfing greats Jack Nicklaus, Lee Trevino and Tom Watson. Chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff Richard Myers, Secretary of the Army Louis Caldera and Secretary of Agriculture Dan Glickman. Texas billionaire and U.S. presidential aspirant Ross Perot and more than a dozen of his business associates. They and many others have posed for Martin, usually after getting the painter's full hands-on treatment sometimes literally.

For a portrait of Arnold Palmer that hangs now at the USGA headquarters, Martin visited the Hall of Famer at his course in Orlando, Florida.

"I said, 'Arnie, I have this idea: You're looking down the fairway and you're pulling a club out of the bag," Martin recalls. "We're out on the tee, and he gets in position, and I said, 'No, that's not quite right.' I went up behind him and showed him what I wanted."

The mischievous smile creasing Martin's face breaks into a delighted cackle.

"If you could have taken a picture of that, it looked like *I* was giving *him* a lesson! I mean, are you kidding?"

Producing a portrait that reveals the true character of the subject is a collaboration between painter and poser.

"Being a portrait artist is different," Martin says. "A portrait artist, first of all, you have to love to be around people. You can't be one of these my-way-or-the-highway types and do your own thing. You're actually delivering a painting that has to be approved by who you're painting, so you have to work in concert with them."

Ann Fader says Martin is definitely not dictatorial, but he does have a knack for getting more out of a subject than they expect. She recalls one meeting in which the painter was promised only 45 minutes with a busy executive who did not want to sit for a portrait. "Well, they wound up visiting for almost three hours," she says. "He's extremely professional, but it comes so naturally to him to want to know anyone who's in front of him. He wants them ultimately to be proud of this portrait. It is their visual legacy and probably the only part of their legacy that future generations are going to see, and so he excites them with that. And then there's his natural warmth. One subject was pretty nervous at the beginning, but she said as soon as John walked in, it was like putting on an old shoe. It was just so comfortable."

The collaboration continues right up through delivery of the portrait. Sometimes there are minor changes—touchups, tweaks—to get a painting just the way the client wants it. The approval process is the last leg in a monthslong journey from conception to completion, and sometimes that final step is a real doozy.

Around 2000, Martin completed a posthumous portrait of a doctor for a hospital in Raleigh, North Carolina. The schedule was tight: He planned to show the painting to the subject's family on a Saturday, and the formal unveiling by the hospital would take place the next day before an audience of nearly 200 medical professionals from across the country. He shipped the painting, as always, in a specially constructed wooden crate and received an email confirming its arrival. But when Martin got to the venue on Saturday, the painting was nowhere to be found. It was finally located in Louisville, Kentucky, and the shipper promised to get it to Raleigh by the next morning.

"The next day we drive to the airport, locate the crate in cargo, and it had been lacerated," Martin recalls. "A forklift went right through the box and through the painting. Here we are, it's noon, the event is at 2, and we've got a painting with a 10inch laceration."

Martin patched the canvas with packing tape, touched up the image and raced to the event, arriving 15 minutes before the scheduled start. Cars were already pouring into the lot, so he parked in a far corner and had the family come out to the van. "People are going into the building and here we are with the family looking at the painting in the parking lot for approval," he says. "But they understood." After the ceremony, where Martin spoke briefly about the mishap, it was decided that salvaging the painting would not be possible. He'd have to redo it.

"There isn't anything more difficult than redoing a painting that's already been approved," Martin says. "That was a tough one, but I got it done."

artin may not be able to put into words that certain something, the "it" factor, that makes a portrait work. But he knows it when he sees it.

Or, more precisely, when others see it. After completing a painting of Deane Malott commissioned by the former chancellor's son, Bob Malott, c'48, Martin won a second commission to provide a posthumous portrait of Eleanor Malott for the dedication of the Malott Room in the Kansas Memorial Union.

Martin recalls Bob Malott as a tough boss and an intimidating presence. "He was a big, aggressive guy, demanding, a real perfectionist."

At the Spencer Research Library, Martin found a "wonderful picture" of Mrs. Malott—remembered for her extensive efforts to beautify Mount Oread with flowers and trees—next to a blooming spirea. Working from family photos, he was able to establish important details—hair and eye color, skin tone—missing from the black-and-white image. "That whole painting just fell into place wonderfully," he says. "But Bob hadn't seen it yet."

So, on the day of the dedication, it was with no small measure of trepidation that Martin took Malott in for the big reveal.

"We went into the room and unveiled the painting," Martin recalls. "And big Bob Malott walks up to that painting, and a tear comes to his eye and he says, 'That's my mom."

Reactions like that, Martin says, give him the feeling that "I've captured what I set out to do.

"That's my goal. That's priceless."



John Boyd Martin, All-American Room, Adams Alumni Center, 1989

#### **TRUE BLUE JAYHAWK**

At KU, John Boyd Martin has painted five chancellors: official portraits of Gene Budig, Del Shankel, Robert Hemenway and Bernadette Gray-Little, which hang in Strong Hall, and a painting of Chancellor Deane Malott, c1921, that was completed for Beta Theta Pi fraternity. His portrait of Dean Smith, c'53, hangs in the Phi Gamma Delta house, as do Martin paintings of Stewart Horejsi, b'59; Stephen Bunten, b'60; and William Morgan, c1885, who founded the fraternity's KU chapter. Martin painted the portraits of Ernst Lied, '27, and Christina Hixson at the Lied Center of Kansas; the likeness of James Naismith on the second floor of Allen Field House; and the murals depicting Jayhawk Olympians and All-Americans that enlivened the All-American Room in the original Adams Alumni Center. Several panels of that mural were incorporated in the recent renovation of the center—including those depicting KU's basketball and football All-Americans—and the others are in storage as the Association looks to find a new home for the works.

Perhaps Martin's longest-running project at KU—or anywhere, for that matter—is the mural that stands in a long hallway leading to the men's basketball offices. Begun during the Ted Owens era, the mural forms a technicolored timeline of Jayhawk basketball, starting with images of James Naismith and Phog Allen, and ending with the on-court celebration of coach Bill Self and the 2008 NCAA championship team. In between are depictions of KU's Final Four and championship teams, national players of the year, Big 12 conference streaks, and other key moments in the program's storied history—all updated over the years by Martin as needed. His panel depicting the 2022 championship team, now underway, will be added soon.

"It's great for recruits to see," says Chris Theisen, assistant athletics director for communications, "because it's really an embodiment of the rich history of Kansas basketball. And John's contribution just adds to it."



Owens and Martin, 2023

"His face just lights up when he talks about the mural," Theisen adds. "You can see his pride in KU and his passion. It's clearly a labor of love."

Martin was able to meet with Owens when the former coach returned for the 125 Years of KU Basketball reunion in January 2023.

"I think it was meaningful for him to see how it has been carried out and carried on since he originated the idea in 1979," Martin says. "And it meant a lot to me to hear that from him, and to see him again and show him how the mural has grown over the years."



## **Ripple Effect**

KU's most generous doctoral fellowship enables scholars to become difference-makers, much like the Jayhawks who made the homegrown program possible

> he world was a much different place in 1989, when Madison "Al" Self, e'43, and Lila Reetz Self, '43, donated \$1 million to KU to create the Madison and Lila Self Graduate Fellowship. Yet the couple's far-reaching vision—that their gift not only would fund exceptional PhD students' education but also would position promising scholars to become leaders and changemakers—has proved an enduring, successful formula. KU's Self Graduate Fellows, now an alumni community of more than 200 and counting, have indeed gone on to make vital contributions in addressing some of modern society's most vexing challenges.

Doctoral students in 22 academic disciplines in STEM, business and economics are eligible for the four-year, highly competitive award that now supports 10 to 15 new graduate students each academic year. Stefani Buchwitz, c'06, g'08, EdD'16, director of the fellowship, says its financial component—which exceeds \$200,000, the largest financial package available for any KU graduate student—is only part of its appeal.

"A lot of fellowships throughout the country offer financial support, but very few also include a robust professional development program," Buchwitz says. "Madison and Lila knew that having a PhD would get you a job, but the development program that they designed as part of the fellowship helps make these students leaders in their field. It's a distinguishing feature, and it's incredible that they thought of this 35 years ago and it's still extremely relevant."

Madison and Lila met on the Hill— Madison was from Ozawkie, Lila from Eudora—and wed in September 1943. Madison, a chemical engineer, in 1947 co-founded Bee Chemical Co. in Chicago. In his 37 years as CEO, the company, which produced polymer coatings for use on plastics, grew from a staff of three into an international enterprise, with operations in Japan, England and Canada, and clients that included major automakers. After selling Bee Chemical Co. in 1985, Madison founded Allen Financial, a private investment firm, and in 1989 co-founded Tioga International, a supplier of industrial sealants. Despite his immense success, however, Madison, known to those close to him as Al, came to recognize gaps in his skill set.

"Al had a strong professional education, but he knew he would have benefited from leadership training and exposure to other fields to prepare himself for all the decisions he'd later make running a multimillion-dollar company," says Dale Seuferling, j'77, who, in his role as director of major gifts at KU Endowment in the 1980s, worked closely with the Selfs. "Al

Lila and Madison "Al" Self in 2004.

Opposite page: The 2023-'24 Self Graduate Fellows, comprising students in each year of the four-year program.

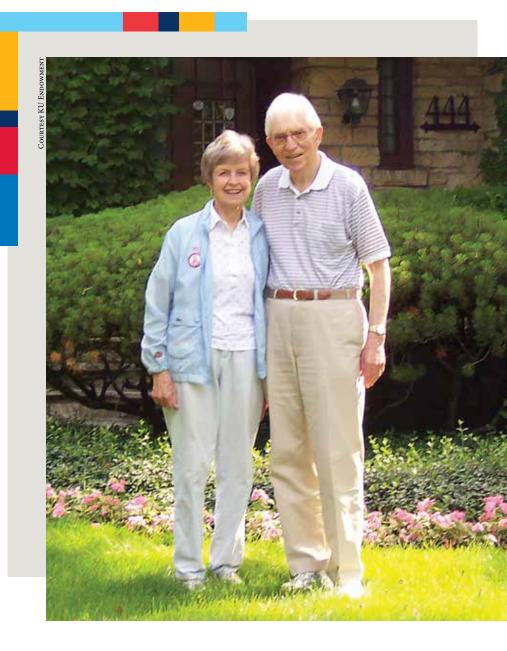


hoped that through the fellowship, he could expose students to experience and knowledge outside their own disciplines as a means to better prepare them for the future. He and Lila wanted to make a difference not only in the individual student's life, but they hoped that student would make a difference for the broader society.

## by Megan Hirt

"The Selfs were a very powerful example of a donor reflecting on their own life experiences, what they've learned from that, and how they can translate that into the impact of their philanthropy."

The fellowship's professional development program comprises an exclusive, customized curriculum that includes oral



"A lot of fellowships throughout the country offer financial support, but very few also include a robust professional development program. Madison and Lila knew that having a PhD would get you a job, but the development program that they designed as part of the fellowship helps make these students leaders in their field." –Stefani Buchwitz

and written communication, leadership, management, innovation and public policy. The supplemental education aims to expand fellows' career horizons and fuel their growth into well-rounded, effective professionals.

The value of the development program lies in both the training and in the unique community that arises when top students from a variety of specialties convene.





Madison Self early in his career.

"When you're a PhD student, you can hyperfocus on your specific field and not look up and out," Buchwitz says. "The professional development program gives these highly intelligent, highly motivated PhD students a built-in interdisciplinary network, and that's where innovation can really thrive. Conversations among PhD students in mechanical engineering, physics, neuroscience, business—those aren't conversations that exist at KU organically. Bringing these students together in a room is intentional, and that was Madison and Lila's idea."

The Selfs (no relation to the basketball coach) continued to fund and refine the fellowship in the years after its launch, and they went on to expand their giving, creating the Self Engineering Leadership Fellows Program, which benefits undergraduate students in the School of Engineering, and a professorship in the School of Pharmacy that honors the late Howard Mossberg, who served as the school's dean for 25 years and directed the Self Graduate Fellowship from 1991 to 2003. Madison Self received the Alumni Association's Distinguished Service Citation in 1997, and the School of Engineering honored him with its Distinguished Engineering Service Award in 2000. Self Hall, the Daisy Hill residence hall that opened in 2015, honors the couple.

Both Madison and Lila died in 2013. A \$58 million estate gift the following year sustained their existing initiatives and established the Self Memorial Scholarship, which supports outstanding seniors who choose to stay at KU for master's or doctoral degrees. All told, the Selfs donated \$106 million to KU, placing them among the most generous private donors in University history.

"Certainly the size of their gift is historic," says Seuferling, who led KU Endowment as president from 2002 to 2022. "But what I think is of equal value is the focus on maximizing student potential. The largest portion of their giving, which is focused on graduate studies, is very rare. The undergraduate experience resonates with all college graduates, but it's more difficult to engage donors in graduate support. It's really unique, and it's a difference-maker for KU to have that kind of support for graduate studies."

Self Graduate Fellows are nominated by their academic departments and chosen by the fellowship's board of trustees. They are selected for their achievements, lofty goals, leadership potential and passion for lifelong learning. They are employed as graduate research assistants and receive funds to pursue additional professional development.

Jennifer Roberts, managing trustee of

the program and senior vice provost for academic affairs and graduate studies, says Self Graduate Fellows create a ripple effect that strengthens KU. "They elevate the level of inquiry, the work ethic and the innovation within their laboratories and departments, so there is a value-add that goes beyond just the fellows themselves," Roberts says. "Having these students be part of the fabric of the student body enhances the educational experience in a way that sets KU apart."

On the following pages, *Kansas Alumni* spotlights a handful of current fellows and alumni of the program who are applying their expertise to critical challenges.

"These are extraordinary students who are being trained at our University," Roberts says, "and they will go on to make great discoveries and contribute to our society in ways we can't even imagine yet. We can all be proud of that as part of KU."





#### Mary Krause, PhD'11

mid the upheaval and uncertainty of 2020, Mary Krause was among the scientists who swiftly shifted focus to fast-track a treatment for the COVID-19 virus. Although the antibodies she and her colleagues at the pharmaceutical company Bristol Myers Squibb worked on never came to market, for Krause, the experience still yielded meaningful returns.

"Overcoming some pretty significant stability challenges with the product to get it into clinical trials was probably my proudest moment," says Krause, who is based at Bristol Myers Squibb's facility in New Brunswick, New Jersey. "One lesson we learned is that there are always opportunities for acceleration. Being forced to think outside the box to make things happen faster taught us some important skills that we can now apply to get our other drugs to clinical trials faster and hopefully on the market sooner."

Krause's path into drug product development was paved by the Self Graduate Fellowship. The Springfield, Missouri, native had always thought she'd apply her lifelong fascination with the natural world—"I was the kid out on the playground picking up rocks," she laughs—to teaching. She arrived at KU in 2005 after earning her bachelor's and master's degrees in chemistry from Missouri State University, and through the fellowship discovered a compelling new course. "I was going to be a professor all along, but there were other pharmaceutical chemists in the Self fellowship, and seeing their passion helped me identify a different path," Krause says.

Krause has been at Bristol Myers Squibb for nearly 10 years, currently as director of formulation development in sterile drug product development. She and her team of 10 work primarily on injectable drugs for cancer and autoimmune diseases. "For me, that very tangible piece of taking the active ingredient and going from a molecule to a medicine is the piece that I love," Krause says. "When a drug product, with different formulation components to ensure it's stable for its entire shelf life, is actually in a vial or injection device that a patient can touch, it's incredibly rewarding."

Her career also satisfies her yearning to teach. "At BMS, we have the opportunity to dig into science, and I get the joy of mentoring and coaching people, which is what I always loved about academia," says Krause, who leads the STEM group in the company's global Network of Women. "Getting to help people grow and learn, but getting to do it in a place where we're also working on very applied science to improve patients' lives—it's the best of both worlds."

And Krause is thrilled to add more of the flock to her team: She hired two fellow Jayhawks earlier this year. "One of the really cool things about being a Jayhawk in the pharmaceutical industry is that there are a lot of us," she says.



"I was going to be a professor all along, but there were other pharmaceutical chemists in the Self fellowship, and seeing their passion helped me identify a different path."

-Mary Krause

and reason from the basis of similar cases to make predictions for the patient," says Ménager, adding that much of Parallax's work ties to national security.

Ménager, who grew up in Topeka, came to KU to study computer science in the School of Engineering. As an undergraduate, he was selected as a Self Engineering Leadership Fellow and worked as a research assistant in the lab of Dongkyu Choi, a former assistant professor of aerospace engineering. Ménager went on to earn his master's and PhD in computer science, exploring cognitive AI systems with Choi and Arvin Agah, professor of electrical engineering and computer science, as his co-advisers.

Along with leadership skills, Krause cites the emphasis on communication as a standout part of the Self fellowship. "One gap we often have as scientists is being able to communicate our thoughts in a very clear way, and sometimes people can be afraid of what they don't understand," she says. "Having a community of leaders who have that fundamental knowledge and ability to solve a problem that they're getting from their primary PhD program, combined with the skills that they're learning from the fellowship about how to communicate and translate that information in a cohesive and clear way—it really can benefit the overall community. People are then learning how scientists can impact their lives."

#### David Ménager e'15, g'19, PhD'22

he robots and computers in Saturday morning TV shows intrigued young David Ménager. "Those shows captured my imagination and ignited a curiosity about what it means for a computer to 'think' and if that was really possible," he says. "As a kid, those questions and the unknown of it all were very interesting to me."

Now, as an AI scientist at Parallax Advanced Research, Ménager is at the forefront of exploring those grand possibilities as he works to develop higher-functioning, more autonomous AI systems for complex, real-world situations. His niche, cognitive artificial intelligence, focuses on creating AI systems that can reproduce the full range of human intelligent behavior.

"My specific area of expertise comprises theories of event memory, incremental concept formation and cognitive architecture," Ménager says. "What distinguishes cognitive systems from other areas of AI is that we focus on high-level cognition and we take a systems perspective, thinking about how different cognitive abilities fit together within one implemented system while embracing constraints, such as computing resources and time."

Medical triage is one such timesensitive, high-stakes context to which Ménager and Parallax are applying AI to improve decision-making. "In triage, AI systems can leverage my work on event memory to think about what happened in the past, what its experiences were like,



The Self Graduate Fellowship "allowed me to set the foundation for all the things I've done in my career to date."

-David Ménager

For Ménager, who now lives in Fort Worth, Texas, perhaps the biggest benefit of the Self Graduate Fellowship was the freedom it afforded him to immerse himself in research. "It allowed me to set the foundation for all the things I've done in my career to date," he says. "I'm getting to make new discoveries in my field and finding new applications for my contributions, getting to work with interesting folks, and it's all because I had that opportunity to focus on research during my PhD program, and that was because of the Self fellowship funding."

He leans often on the communication skills he sharpened through the fellowship when writing his research proposals, and he reflects with gratitude on the generosity of the Selfs, which propelled him at each stage of his academic journey. "I feel really blessed and fortunate to have had their support during my undergraduate and graduate careers," Ménager says. "It has been an incredible gift."

#### Rena Stair, c'19

Rena Stair can trace her deep scientific curiosity back to her childhood in Chanute, when she frequently pondered why she and her identical twin sister, Shelby, had slowly changed from an indistinguishable pair into distinct individuals. "All throughout growing up, I was interested in genetics and trying to understand how we were becoming so different and what made us the way we were," Stair recalls.

Today, the doctoral student in neuroscience applies her quest for answers to a complex human affliction: chronic pain. She will complete her PhD this summer and, thanks to a unique arrangement, since March has also worked in her new role as a scientist at the pharmacology startup Doloromics in Menlo Park, California. Stair aims to develop more precise treatments for pain that would provide targeted relief without side effects and leave the body's "informative" pain sensations intact. "So many people's quality of life is diminished because of chronic pain," Stair says. "My main goal is to design better therapeutics that can alleviate that burden."

A first-generation college student, Stair flourished in KU's inquiry-inviting environment while earning her bachelor's degree in biology. "In classes, the lecturers would let me ask all sorts of questions and really let me dive in," Stair says. "I found my time at KU very inspiring for just becoming a scientist." As an undergraduate, she completed two summer internships at a gene therapy startup in North Carolina that had recently been acquired by Pfizer, and post-graduation worked at Pfizer's St. Louis site for six months as she prepared for graduate school. bauer's. "He had so much energy," Stair says of Baumbauer, assistant professor of cell biology & physiology and anesthesiology. "And he had this inherent interest in getting all the data he could so we could find out how things work. It was exactly what I wanted in a mentor." She joined Baumbauer's lab, where her passion for neuroscience and researching pain took root.

Stair credits the Self fellowship with helping her land her job at Doloromics. While attending a conference in April 2023, she learned the company's cofounder would be at a Q&A session and resolved to introduce herself. "I was primed to be a little more outgoing than I would have been," Stair says. "I wouldn't have approached her if the fellowship



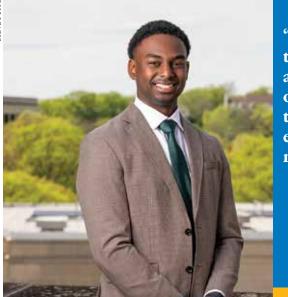
"To have this cohort of people supporting you, being a witness to your success and also to your failure and continuing to provide reinforcement and motivation—it's just an incredible bond that you wouldn't have otherwise. It increases everyone's likelihood for success."

–Rena Stair

Although another university offered a PhD program that aligned perfectly with Stair's interest in genetics, "I chose KU because there was a chance I might get this fellowship," she says. "I remember thinking, 'I'm going to get that fellowship, and I'm going to do good work."

During the first year of her PhD studies, Stair rotated through labs at KU Medical Center, the last of which was Kyle Baumdidn't teach me how. And that's what got the ball rolling."

The camaraderie has been another highlight for Stair: "To have this cohort of people supporting you, being a witness to your success and also to your failure and continuing to provide reinforcement and motivation—it's just an incredible bond that you wouldn't have otherwise. It increases everyone's likelihood for success."



"I wouldn't trade the fellowship for anything. It's been one of the most transformative experiences of my life."

-Grant Downes

Curiosity remains a cornerstone for Stair when she contemplates her future. "My mission is to try to help people in their daily lives, and also to continue being scientifically curious," she says. "I hope to keep finding opportunities that help me fulfill those missions. There's probably going to be an opportunity—something that I'm suited for—that I don't even know is out there yet."

#### **Grant Downes**

hile working toward his engineering merit badge in Boy Scouts in elementary school, Grant Downes learned about the relatively new field of bioengineering. "It included all the subjects I was interested in from class, all in one core discipline, and with an application toward human health," Downes remembers. "It seemed like an opportunity to develop something that would have the potential to impact millions of people—anything from making medical devices to engineering drug compounds."

Downes' interest never wavered, and this fall he'll complete his doctorate in bioengineering. Through his work with his research advisers—Cory Berkland, a former professor of both engineering and pharmacy, and Laird Forrest, professor of pharmaceutical chemistry—Downes has also discovered a complementary calling: entrepreneurship.

"One of the reasons I decided to join Dr. Berkland's lab was because he has an entrepreneurial mindset in terms of translating academic research ideas and discoveries and trying to commercialize them, to get them from point A to point Z, which is to the person who needs it," says Downes, whose graduate research has focused on immunotherapy development for Type 1 diabetes, a disease that has affected his family. "That was something that was new to me, and I realized I wanted to pursue a career that combines the technical aspect of scientific research with the entrepreneurial spirit."

Downes grew up in Kansas City and earned his bachelor's degree in biomedical engineering from Wichita State University, where he competed in track and field. While at a conference to present his undergraduate research, he met Self fellow Bailey Banach, PhD'22, and their conversation put KU's bioengineering doctoral program on his radar.

Alongside his PhD work, Downes has cultivated his entrepreneurial acumen, taking classes in the School of Business, interning at the University Venture Fund Crossroads in Kansas City and participating in the Entrepreneurship for Biomedicine training program at Washington University in St. Louis. The Self fellowship community has provided additional knowledge. "Getting perspectives from all different disciplines is important for not only diversity of thought," Downes says, "but for keeping your brain sharp and continuing to think about things in different lights."

After graduation, Downes, who competed on KU's track and field team for two years, aspires to work with entrepreneurs, ideally as a venture analyst at a biotech investment firm or as a consultant for small companies. Longer term, he'd like to play a part in increasing career opportunities for biomedical engineers in the Midwest.

The ability to convey his scientific research in a way that's accessible to a broad audience is a skill Downes has been thankful to hone through the fellowship. "You can do all this data crunching and all these experiments," he says, "but at the end of the day, you need to be able to talk about it and communicate it in an effective way. That's something the fellowship has allowed me to grow in: making sure my ideas are coming across as I intend, without misunderstanding."

With funds from the fellowship, Downes traveled to Paris in May 2023 to present his research at the Immunology of Diabetes Society Congress, where he received fresh feedback on his work and connected with peers from around the world. "You can't really put a price on the opportunity this fellowship provides from a professional development standpoint," Downes says. "I wouldn't trade the fellowship for anything. It's been one of the most transformative experiences of my life."

## Representing a legacy.



As a true Kansas University fan, you know Jayhawk pride isn't a moment — it's a lifestyle. Complete your gear collection with a personalized credit card. It's only available at INTRUST Bank, and when you use the card, it benefits the KU Alumni Association. From cash back<sup>1</sup> to rewards to building your credit history,<sup>2</sup> explore our card options and find the right fit for you.

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#### ALWAYS JAYHAWKS



"We're so grateful to all the Jayhawks who supported the Association and KU in so many ways. ... We can't wait to do it all again next year."

-Heather Hawkins

#### NEW TRADITION

## Jayhawk spirit with flair

Kansas City celebrates KU at Rock Chalk Forever

MORE THAN 850 ALUMNI and friends braved a rainy night April 27 for an evening of fundraising, flair and friendship at the second annual Rock Chalk Forever at the T-Mobile Center in Kansas City.

A more casual event than its predecessor, the Rock Chalk Ball, Rock Chalk Forever replaces ballrooms and formal attire for revelry at iconic KC venues and "Jayhawk Flair" outfits that showcase KU creativity. 2023's Rock Chalk Forever was held at Children's Mercy Park in Kansas City, Kansas.

"We were thrilled to have so many Jayhawks together in Kansas City to celebrate Rock Chalk Forever," says Heather Plante Hawkins, j'06, the Association's senior director of stewardship and executive support. "It was wonderful to see the number of Jayhawks catching up with old friends and making new connections. The Jayhawk network in Kansas City is so strong, and Rock Chalk Forever was a reflection of that."

The night began in the bustling T-Mobile concourse filled with caricature artists, KU-themed cocktails, auction items on display, and a red carpet photo station for attendees to flaunt their Jayhawk Flair.



Brothers and KU men's basketball alumni Chris, d'21, and Conner, b'12, Teahan co-hosted the event's program, blending wisecracks about their time at KU with commentary on the impact of the funds raised that night. Proceeds from Rock Chalk Forever benefit the Jayhawk Career Network, the Student Alumni Network and KU programs that provide financial education for students as they navigate their college years and beyond.

Attendees enjoyed KU-themed eats (Crunchy Chicken Cheddar Wraps, anyone?), snapped selfies with Big and Baby Jay, and danced the night away to local cover band Superstar Mafia.

"We're so grateful to all the Jayhawks who supported the Association and KU in so many ways by sponsoring the event, by attending, by participating in the silent and live auctions, and by giving so generously to help support KU students," Hawkins says. "We can't wait to do it all again next year."

2024's Rock Chalk Forever was presented by Truity Credit Union. For more information about the event, visit www.rockchalkforever.org.

-Ryan Camenzind



#### **Photographs by Steve Puppe**







Scenes from a KU night in KC: The KU Fanfare Trumpets heralded the Jayhawk takeover of T-Mobile Center, and the Teahan brothers, who previously performed on the center's basketball court with the 'Hawks, displayed their versatility as emcees for the evening. The giant scoreboard above the court welcomed revelers, and photo opportunities abounded throughout the night. The silent and live auctions attracted numerous bidders, including Dimity and Clint Rogers of Ellsworth. Clint, b'98, g'20, and his fellow members of the Association's national Board of Directors held their spring meeting at KU Medical Center in Kansas City so they could support Rock Chalk Forever.





Artist Ken Delas painted his homage to images from The Wheel in Lawrence, while guests feasted on fare inspired by festive favorites from campus and beyond. Superstar Mafia, a popular Kansas City cover band, entertained dancers and a rowdy cheering section late into the night.

**DAN STORE** 



#### New team member

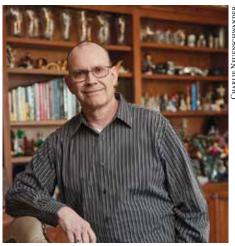
Andrew Trites, d'20, joined the Association Feb. 28 as director of revenue generation. He is an Overland Park native and lifelong Jayhawk. For the past four years, he worked in varied sports and entertainment roles with companies in Illinois and Texas. In his spare time, Andrew enjoys attending sporting events, traveling, cooking and spending time with friends and family.



#### Oklahoma 'Hawks will be ready to ride

ALUMNI AND KU FANS in the Sooner State will be able to drive their pride by sporting KU license plates, thanks to the faithful who stepped up to meet Oklahoma's requirement that 100 orders be placed by May 1. Special gratitude goes to Geoff Legler, whose valiant crusade for KU plates led to the Oklahoma Legislature's approval ("OK to proceed," issue No. 1). Legler reported in early April that the state had received 138 orders, so production of the plates has begun, though the process is expected to take six to eight months. For details on ordering, visit kualumni. org/license. Oklahoma joins Texas and Maryland as the only states outside Kansas where KU license plates are available.

Procedures for approving and creating specialty plates vary from state to state. If you would like to see Jayhawk license plates in your state, please contact your state legislator or the appropriate agency to learn more about the requirements.



Legler



Representatives from Truity Credit Union, including CEO Aaron Beldner (second from left), welcomed guests to Rock Chalk Forever in April as the event's presenting sponsors.

#### PARTNERS

### Shared past, shared future

Truity, Association build on common history, recent collaboration

AN EXPANDED PARTNERSHIP between the Alumni Association and Truity Credit Union will invest more than \$3.5 million in the Alumni Association and the University over the next seven years. The agreement designates Truity as the official credit union of the KU Alumni Association.

"We know and trust the team at Truity, and the time was right to expand our partnership," says Heath Peterson, d'04, g'09, Alumni Association president. "Truity's investment in the Association will further empower us to expand programs and services like the Jayhawk Career Network that benefit KU alumni, students and faculty."

Truity's investment will support several Alumni Association and KU initiatives, including Rock Chalk Forever, the Association's annual fundraising event in Kansas City; the Jayhawk Career Network; and affinity networks, which unite Jayhawks worldwide according to their shared interests, communities and professions.

—continued on p. 49





The Association thanks these Jayhawks, who began their Life memberships Feb. 1 through April 30. For information, visit kualumni.org or call 800-584-2957.

Joshua R. & Anny Anderson Charles M. Andrews Gerard J. & Donna Bauer Ryan P. Berg Matthew S. & Amanda Wolfe Bertholf David W. Bywater Mark E. & Elisa Cain J. Craig & Angela Power Cartwright Alexis L. Chojnacki Brian A. & Kelly Hansen Clark Jean A. Cooper **Rachel Creighton** Erica Miller Docking Sarah Ebv John Federico Zeus E. Gannon Jeremiah & Sarah Marty Garber Christine A. Goodwin Tanner D. Grubbs Jim R. & Jennifer Lightwine Gulick Blake M. Harris Rileigh C. Heeke Rita M. Hensley Brenda T. Hildenbrand Julius H. Jackson Nancy Scott Jackson Janet L. & Charles C. Jehle Candice Johnson Jyll Standiford Kafer Carli Kellv Steve & Kendra Lichtenhan Khoshabe

Simon J. & Anne Lewis Kindel Gene A. Krampen Kristin C. Longenecker Noah L. Love Marlon D. & Stacy Marshall Karen S. McFarland John C. & Shazon McKinnev James A. Menge Kenneth L. Montgomery Thanh T. Nguyen Tom & Laura Kirchner O'Mallev Jeffrey F. & Jennifer Evans Oitker Javed S. & Armena Patel Annal Perrone Michael Peters Jeff A. & Savannah V. Pierre-Louis Francisco L. Pietri Manuel G. Ramos Hayden K. Rogers Grace Willing Sadler James M. & Jamie Neuenschwander Scott Paul L. Simonich Randall L. & Marla Nelson Smith Aaron M. & Jennifer L. Thomas Douglas B. White Nicholas P. Woodbridge Lara Anne Wunder & Wade S. Gerety Sakura Jianting Zhang

#### Become a Life Member today!

Members support student and alumni success and career growth! Visit **kualumni.org/join**.

# FLOCK TOGETHER

## Stay connected to KU! Half-price Life membership for new graduates

Limited-time offer Life membership for new grads.





Purchase the gift of Life membership for your graduate by June 30, 2024, and we'll send you a Grad Gift Pack.

**The Graduation Gift Pack** is full of KU goodies, including a keepsake Jayhawk tassel.

Membership supports student and alumni success and career growth.

Visit **kualumni.org/join** or call **800.584.2957** to take advantage of this limited-time offer!



#### Special rates for new graduates

Half-Price Life Membership	\$500	
12-Month Installment Plan	\$41.66/month	
Young Alumni Annual Membership	\$30/year	

#### Membership benefits:

- Access to the Jayhawk Career Network
- National Discount program
- Invitations to alumni network events
- Kansas Alumni magazine in print, online and via the app
- KU wall calendar
- Merchandise discount at the KU Bookstore (in store and online)
- Savings on insurance
- And much more! Visit **kualumni.org/benefits** for a complete menu of benefits

Truity is also investing in the KU student recruitment experience as the new presenting sponsor of Traditions Hall, which connects the Jayhawk Welcome Center to the Adams Alumni Center and is the launching point for all Lawrence campus visits by prospective KU students and their families.

The Alumni Association and Truity share historical ties to Phillips 66, the energy manufacturing and logistics company founded in 1917 in Bartlesville, Oklahoma.

Truity originated as the Jane Phillips Sorority Credit Union in 1939, serving female employees of Phillips 66. The institution was renamed 66 Federal Credit Union in 1941 to serve all employees out of its headquarters in the Phillips 66 offices in Bartlesville. Many of Phillips' executives through the years were renowned Jayhawks, including K.S. "Boots" Adams, 1921, whose family provided the seed gift for the Adams Alumni Center, which opened in 1983, and Paul Endacott, e1923, whose gift to the center endowed the Alumni Association's society for retired faculty and staff. The connection between the Association and Phillips is so strong that the Alumni Center's address, 1266 Oread Ave., pays homage to Phillips' longtime support of KU and the Alumni Association. The new Jayhawk Welcome Center, which opened in 2023, now shares the same address.

Truity acquired KU Credit Union in 1990, cementing its connection to the University's faculty and staff. The company and the Alumni Association have worked together for more than a decade.

"We have a deep connection to the KU Alumni Association and are excited to enhance our relationship with and support of Jayhawks across the region," says Aaron Beldner, Truity's president and CEO. "Our mission is to reinvest in our members and our communities, and there isn't a better way to do that than through this partnership. We're excited to grow together in the coming years."



#### Awards National honors

Magazine lauds Association's advances in inclusion, belonging

THE ALUMNI ASSOCIATION received the 2024 Alumni Association Inclusive Excellence Award from Insight Into Diversity magazine, the largest and oldest diversity and inclusion publication in higher education. The award honors alumni association programs, culture and initiatives that encourage and support diversity, inclusion and a sense of belonging for all alumni, regardless of racial or ethnic background, sexual or gender identity, religion, socioeconomic status, and worldview.

The Association is featured, along with 31 other recipients, in the June 2024 issue of Insight Into Diversity magazine.

"The KU Alumni Association team takes great pride in being acknowledged for our efforts in nurturing inclusivity, connectivity, and a sense of community among all alumni and friends, irrespective of their backgrounds," says Heath Peterson, d'04, g'09, president. "We work both intentionally and consistently to build an alumni association where all Jayhawks feel they belong."

Insight Into Diversity took note of the KU Alumni Association's efforts in recent years to promote inclusive excellence through the work of staff members, the national Board of Directors and other stakeholders. These include:

• Providing free, four-year memberships in the Student Alumni Network to all KU undergraduate students. (Free memberships removed the previous barrier of membership dues to provide access and connections for all.)

• Creating and continuing to expand the Jayhawk Career Network and its KU Mentoring+ program, which now connect more than 13,000 alumni and current students.

• Opening the Jayhawk Welcome Center and renovated Adams Alumni Center as a new home for Jayhawks past, present and future.

• Highlighting the stories of alumni who represent the broad spectrum of diversity throughout the worldwide Jayhawk network.

• Expanding affinity networks to cultivate alumni communities around shared interests, experiences and backgrounds and strengthen connections to the Association and KU.

• Refreshing the organization's shared culture and values as a Catalyst for Connection for KU, guided by three core values: Appreciate the Unique, Cultivate the Core and Fuel the Future.

Mykala Sandifer, c'15, the Association's assistant vice president of University relations, talent and inclusion, notes that the national honor affirms the Association's progress. "We will continue working to improve the sense of community and connection among all Jayhawks," she says,

"as we affirm our values, remove barriers to access and participation, create more inclusive opportunities, and tell more stories that highlight the vast diversity of our alumni and students."

For more information about the Association's affinity networks, culture and values, and other programs, visit kualumni.org/jayhawks-belong.

ssociation

INCLUSIVE

EXCELLENCE

2024 Award



## True to tradition

Despite stadium construction, 2024 grads take customary walk down the Hill

THE 2024 COMMENCEMENT exercises on May 12 were decidedly different from all others since 1873, yet the work-in-progress setting still proved a welcome stage to celebrate goals fulfilled.

"Perhaps you've heard, Memorial Stadium is under construction," joked Michelle Heffner Hayes, f'91, professor of theatre & dance, who served as master of ceremonies. "There may be a few more cranes in attendance today compared to past Commencement ceremonies, but we were determined to give you, as graduates, the chance to walk through the Campanile and into Memorial Stadium and to participate in this hundred-year-old KU tradition."

Whatever may have been lacking in infrastructure—the west bleachers have been torn down for the stadium's sweeping renovation, part of the larger Gateway District project—was certainly made up for with the morning's picture-perfect blue skies and blissful 75-degree temperature.



Because of the reduced seating in the stadium, the event was livestreamed at the Kansas Union and Jayhawk Welcome Center.

The "decidedly different" theme was one the Class of 2024 was all too familiar with, having arrived as freshmen in the middle of a global pandemic. Chancellor Doug Girod acknowledged their unconventional experience in his remarks. "We know that many of you missed high school graduations in 2020 because of the pandemic," he said, "so it was really important for us to make sure we could pull this one off."

Girod encouraged the new grads to use their talents to address the numerous challenges facing the world, and pointed to the examples of pioneering Jayhawks Barney Graham, m'79, a principal force behind the development of the COVID-19 vaccine; Brian McClendon, e'86, creator of Google Earth; and Loral O'Hara, e'06, who in April returned from a six-month mission on the International Space Station. "As we look across the stadium today," Girod told jubilant grads and





Huge efforts by stadium contractors and KU landscapers readied campus for May 12's unique Commencement. The Class of 2024—which lost high school ceremonies to lockdowns—proved resilient and, like those who came before, beamed with the joy of youth and accomplishment. The Association and chancellor's office on May 11 unveiled Jayhawk Send-Off (below right), a Jayhawk Welcome Center celebration where grads were invited to sign their class banner.



proud families, "it brings us all great joy to know that each of you has the capacity to do great things, like so many of the Jayhawks who have come before you."

In a KU Marketing video shown during the ceremony, several Class of 2024 graduates read letters they'd written to their younger selves, a stirring patchwork of practical advice, humorous reflections and Jayhawk pride. Watch the video at rockcha.lk/letters.

—Megan Hirt







Nguyen and Heeke

#### STUDENTS

## Grads earn Life Memberships

Campus stalwarts receive Strickland honors

THE UNIVERSITY'S RITES OF SPRING include the annual honors for graduating seniors with records of outstanding academic performance, community service and leadership. Fourteen students received University Awards in early May, including two who were named Agnes Wright Strickland Award winners. The Alumni Association created the honor in 1953 in

memory of Strickland, an 1887 alumna. The 2024 recipients are Rileigh Heeke, from Dodge City, and Thanh Tan Nguyen, from Vietnam. As Strickland honorees, both are now Life Members of the Association.

Heeke majored in political science and history with a minor in women, gender & sexuality studies. She helped recruit future Jayhawks as a student ambassador for KU Admissions.

Nguyen majored in business, led Homecoming 2023 as executive director and held leadership roles in Student Union Activities. Last fall he also was recognized as a winner of the ExCEL Award presented by Konica Minolta ("New grad cherishes KU identity," issue No. 1).

For a complete list of the new graduates honored in May, visit news.ku.edu/news/article/ku-recognizes-14students-with-2024-university-awards.



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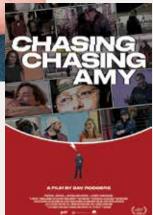
#### **Jayhawk Profiles**



Rodgers (right) with inspirational mentor Kevin Smith, director of "Chasing Amy" and a featured element of Rodgers' documentary, "Chasing Chasing Amy."

me the strength to navigate that world." Rodgers concluded by announcing he would soon direct a film exploring the divisive legacy surrounding LGBTQ representation in "Chasing Amy." When a video of his talk was posted online in 2019, he received praise from the film's stars—and an offer to help from Smith.

Smith's vulnerability during on-camera interviews with Rodgers was a turning



point in the KU grad's decision to—in the middle of filming the documentary come out as a transgender man. "The initial premise that I set out to make a movie about does get answered," says Rodgers, who now chairs the KU film & media studies professional advisory board. "And then it becomes about something totally

bigger, which ends up being my life."

Though reluctant to focus the film on himself, Rodgers is proud of the result and audience reactions.

"I've been truly blown away by the amount of kindness from everybody across the board," he says. "LGBTQ people, parents of trans kids, older trans people, people who share no life experience with me but they relate to feeling alone or depressed or discounted. ... It's been really nice to see the film reach across different life experiences and have people get something out of it."

He's also proud to say the film is a "Jay-

#### SAV RODGERS

#### Director delivers scene-stealing debut in documentary

by MeLinda Schnyder

Coming-of-age movies can be a lot of fun to watch, admits Sav Rodgers, but less so "when you're the one coming of age and everyone is watching you."

The filmmaker and screenwriter learned this lesson when he unexpectedly became the main character in his feature directorial debut, "Chasing Chasing Amy," which premiered at New York's Tribeca Festival in June 2023, followed by screenings around the world.

Rodgers, c'17, launched the documentary during a TED fellowship, which concluded in 2018 with his own TED Talk, an eight-minute commentary titled "The Rom-Com That Saved My Life." He explained the comfort he found as a 12-year-old when, for the first time, he saw queer characters living authentically in the romantic comedy

"Chasing Amy." The 1997 movie about the relationship between a straight man (played by actor Ben Affleck) and a self-identifying lesbian (Joey Lauren Adams), written and directed by Kevin Smith, helped Rodgers cope with homophobic bullying that began as he entered junior high in suburban Kansas City's Johnson County.

"When marginalized people talk about the need for representation in media, they are not being hyperbolic," Rodgers said in his TED Talk. "Seeing yourself on screen endows you with the feeling of existing in the world, and seeing myself on screen gave hawk production through and through." The KU connections include on-screen appearances by Kevin Willmott, professor of film & media studies, and Sarah Jen, assistant professor of social welfare. Matt Jacobson, professor of film & media studies, filmed one of several scenes in Summerfield Hall. Tyler Emerson, l'13, served as executive director, and Bradley Garrison, '21, directed photography. Several students were involved as production assistants.

Rodgers, now based in Las Vegas with his wife, Riley, who co-stars in the documentary, recently landed on the 2024 Forbes "30 Under 30" Media List for his work as a filmmaker and founder of the Transgender Film Center to help fund transgender creators.

Rodgers is still working on a U.S. distribution deal for "Chasing Chasing Amy." In the meantime, the film began appearing in U.K. theatres May 17 through Kindred Pictures. Information on future screenings can be found at chasingamydoc.com.

"I hope that I get to keep making fun, optimistic, daffy films that showcase the hope that I personally have for our future," Rodgers says. "I want to keep telling stories that involve queer people in moments that aren't just about the worst things that have ever happened to us. I hope I get to make a lot of comedies and heartfelt films that take you on similarly emotional and fun journeys as 'Chasing Chasing Amy."

—Schnyder is a Wichita freelance writer.

#### **CHARISSA MIIJESSEPE-WILSON**

#### MPA grad melds culture and career to meet Native needs

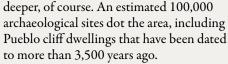
by Steven Hill

A sco-director of the Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition, a consortium of five tribal nations that helps oversee the 2,100-square-mile Bears Ears National Monument in Utah, Charissa Mijessepe-Wilson is well aware that most Americans likely know the remote wilderness area—if they've heard of it at all—only because of its recent role as a battleground in presidential politics.

Established by Barack Obama as a 1.36-million-acre protected area in 2016, the monument was slashed to 201,000 acres by Donald Trump in 2017, then restored by Joe Biden to its original size in 2021.

"Bears Ears has been and continues to be a bit of a political football," says Miijessepe-Wilson, g'18, who joined the coalition shortly after completing KU's highly regarded master of public administration program and became co-director in 2022. "That's not something that the tribes necessarily want. I don't think anybody wants that, honestly, even the state of Utah and the larger political ideologies that are at play here."

For the Native tribes who consider this vast swath of rugged canyons, buttes and grasslands sacred, the historical and cultural significance of Bears Ears runs much



Yet there is also history being made right now, according Miijessepe-Wilson, starting with the coalition itself, whose five delegates represent the Ute Indian Tribe, Ute Mountain Ute Tribe, Zuni Tribe, Hopi Tribe and Navajo Nation. Together they collaborate with the U.S. Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management to determine how the federal lands will be managed. Working from her Kansas City home and the coalition's Albuquerque, New Mexico, headquarters, Miijessepe-Wilson supports the delegates' decision-making and communication and oversees daily operations and strategic planning.

This effort marks the first time that tribes have been able to help set the agenda for a U.S. national monument, she says.

"We recently released our first draft resource management plan for the Bears Ears National Monument, and not only is



it the first time that a plan has been collaborated by a coalition of multiple tribes in tandem with the Forest Service and BLM, but the management plan that the tribes put forward has been chosen as the preferred option—and that option is actually the one that's most grounded in traditional ecological knowledge. There's never been a tribally driven option within management planning before."

With a presidential election looming in November, "We are vulnerable again," says Miijessepe-Wilson. "But we do want Bears Ears protected forever, and our tribes remain steadfast in that commitment."



Bears Ears National Monument in Utah

Released March 8 and open to public comment until June 11, the proposal also marks the first time Native tribes have played a meaningful role in management decisions about their ancestral homelands that are off-reservation.

"That's really, really important, because that means that other tribal nations who have been illegally removed from their homelands have an opportunity to have a say over how their ancestral homelands are managed—including mine," says Mijessepe-Wilson, a member of the Prairie Band Potawatomi Tribe, who were forced to move from their ancestral lands in the Great Lakes area to a reservation in Kansas. "For me, that's a definite step in the right direction for overall restorative justice in this country, and a way to start making a lot of those wrongs right in terms of not only racial justice, but also environmental justice and climate justice. It's just another of the ways that we're trying to make a path forward here at Bears Ears."

Finding a career trajectory beyond the traditional public administration route of city management has enabled her to meld

tribal traditions and professional life. She credits the KU program, particularly John Nalbandian, professor emeritus of public affairs and administration, with making a strong case for "values-driven" leadership.

"Not only did the program allow me to see it's possible to pair my culture and my profession, but Bears Ears specifically has allowed me the opportunity to weave together those threads more closely in a more intentional way than I would've been able to if I had pursued a different path," she says.

"It's really important to me to pursue professional opportunities that uplift and advance agency on behalf of Indigenous nations, but particularly those practices and those values that are grounded in our culture, because for Indigenous people, our culture is the heart of what we do. So I do that very meticulously and purposely now. It's another building block for exploring, 'OK, how can I make this path wider? How can I make these intentions align so that I am ultimately in service to greater Indian Country and Native people?"

#### JIM SMALL

#### **Globe-trotting** baseball exec builds **America's game** in worldwide markets

#### by Chris Lazzarino

im Small, Major League Baseball's senior vice president, international, and president of the World Baseball Classic, estimates that he's spent more than a year living out of Chinese hotel rooms. Along with a treasure chest of Marriott points, Small's travels across the globe provided opportunities to rediscover the beautiful game of baseball through the lenses of other countries' cultural sensibilities and sports traditions.

"My job for the past 25 years," Small, j'87, says from his New York City office, "has been to take America's game and make it the world's game."

The first requirement, however, was to stop thinking about baseball as "America's game," and instead figure out how to get others to embrace it as their own. In India, where passions run hot for high-octane cricket, Small emphasized baseball's powerful batters and rocket-armed pitchers. In China, he taught the game's "poetic" ideals: sacrifice, existing without a clock, embarking on perilous journeys until arriving safe at home.

"I'd say, 'Confucius would have been a great baseball fan," Small says, "and their eyes would light up."

His own trip around the bases began in Boston, where Small grew into a fan of both the Red Sox and the East Coast's great newspapers. When he realized a pitching career looked doubtful, he turned his attention to journalism: "I was a product of the Watergate generation. I wanted to be Woodward or Bernstein."

Small was a senior in high school when his family moved to Chicago. As he built a clipbook on the school newspaper, his adviser told him that if he wanted to

study journalism, "It's one of two places: Missouri or Kansas."

"I figured I liked crimson and blue better than black and gold, so I never applied to Missouri and went to Kansas basically sight unseen," Small recalls. "It was, by far besides marrying my wife—the best decision I ever made. It led to literally everything I have."

Unaware that freshmen were rarely asked to join The University Daily Kansan, Small shared his clips with Professor Rick Musser, then the newspaper's faculty adviser. Musser invited him to join the Kansan, even offering Small his dream beat: KU sports, reporting to future Washington Post stalwart Tracee Hamilton, c'83, j'83.

Entering his junior year, Small landed a coveted gig as stringer for the Salina Journal, reporting to Kansas sports journalism legend Harold Bechard, who, in fall 1981, assigned Small to cover the Royals' playoff push. In the Royals Stadium press box, Small found himself seated next to another big-shot-to-be: KU graduate student and Royals intern Mike Swanson, '81, who would go on to a 43-year MLB career, retiring in 2021 after 15 years as the Royals' vice president for communications.

The young Jayhawks struck up a conversation, and when Swanson mentioned that his internship would soon end, he suggested Small apply. Small heeded the advice and months later landed the gig. "And that," he says, "launched my career in baseball."

After his Royals internship, Small oversaw baseball publicity for the KU sports information office for two seasons. An internship with the Chicago Cubs led to a full-time job as a Cubs' public relations assistant—during which he began longdistance KU coursework to make up for a semester lost to a back injury—followed by three years with the Texas Rangers.

Small in 1987 joined the commissioner's PR office in New York City. After earning an MBA at Fordham University, he spent two years with Nike, and in 1998 returned to MLB as vice president of international market development.

One of his first tasks was to open an office in Tokyo. When the hiring search came up empty, Small, during a flight to Geneva with his boss, impulsively made the "smartest, stupidest" decision of his life, offering to spend two years in Japan.

"Reason No. 750 why I married over my head: I called my wife from Switzerland and said, 'Hey, what do you think about moving to Tokyo?" Small says, referencing Michal, assoc., with whom he now shares Alumni Association Life Joint and Presidents Club memberships. "And she said, 'Great, let's do it!' What an adventure."

Sixteen years later, Commissioner Rob Manfred summoned Small to New York to run MLB's international business office, which in 2022 led to his appointment as president of a new business structure for the biannual World Baseball Classic.

After losing the 2021 WBC to the pandemic, Small and his colleagues were uncertain of its prospects—questions promptly answered in 2023, when 500 million people worldwide watched at least part of the WBC, 1.3 million bought tickets and 600 million tracked the tournament on social media.

"It was proof of concept that was 16 years in the making," Small says. "For each of Japan's seven games, they rated over a 40 (in viewership metrics). The Super Bowl does a 40 in the United States, so that's seven Super Bowls."

In his long international career, Small came to view participation, content and live events as vital for baseball's global expansion. Even video games can help teach the nuanced game, he says, and he cherishes "literally thousands of memories" of seeing children in such disparate locales as Cambodia, the Czech Republic, Brazil and France grow from the thrill of their first at-bats into devoted fans and even international competitors.

"It's not transactional, like selling an offthe-shelf product," he says. "It's a lifestyle change, and we want them to think of it as *their* game."



Small says baseball boasts one advantage in growing the global game: the "fashion-forward element of the baseball cap," now ubiquitous the world over, which contributes to what he views as the "social permission" for children to embrace a sport unfamiliar to their parents.

## FLYING JAYHAWKS 2025 DESTINATIONS

Isles of the North

Grand Seine River

Mediterranean

Easy Company:

**England to the Eagle's** 

Southwest National

& Normandy Passage

June 11-19

June 12-20

Awakening

June 23-July 5

July 25-August 2

Kenya Safari

July 30-August 9

June 16-27

Nest

Parks

Antarctica Discovery January 18-29

Great Southern Lands of Australia & New Zealand February 10-24

Journey to Southern Africa February 16-March 3

Tahiti & French Polvnesia February 21-March 3

Tanzania Safari March 1-12

Costa Rica's Natural Heritage March 1-11

Finland: Arctic Magnificence March 4-12

Hawaii: 3-Island Adventure March 11-19

The Masters April 9-12

Pearls of Dalmatia April 10-24

Revelations of Japan April 12-25

Dutch Waterways April 23-May 1

Village Life: Italian Lakes April 26-May 4

Istanbul & the **Turquoise Coast** April 30-May 10

European Coastal Cruise May 3-12

Island Life: Greek Isles May 9-17

Danube Delights with Prague May 9-18

British & Emerald Isles Journey May 11-26

Cultural Capitals

Enchanting Gems of

Coastal Gems of the

May 20-27

of Spain

Austria

June 1-13

June 5-20

Journey June 10-22

May 28-June 6

**Emerald Isle** 

Portrait of Italy

Great European

May 20-29

Icelandic Reaches The Galapagos Islands July 31-August 11

> Celtic Classics August 14-25

> > Grand Danube Passage August 15-29

Toronto to Vancouver by Rail August 19-25

Around the World by Private Jet August 25-September 14

Mysteries of Peru September 3-11

Alpine Splendor September 4-17

Flavors of Sicily September 5-13

Tuscany & Emilia Romagna September 9-18

South Korea & Japan, featuring the World Expo September 23-October 9

France: Pleasures of Provence September 30-October 8

Casablanca to Lisbon & Andalusia October 14-23

Cruise the Heart of Europe October 19-November 2

Patagonia & Chilean Fiords October 22-November 2

Antiquity to Anatolia October 29-November 9

Douro River November 7-15

Legends of the Nile November 11-22

Christmas Markets Along the Danube December 1-9









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**1963** Jerry Jennett, b'63, last year received an honorary doctorate from Valdosta State University in Valdosta, Georgia, where he and his wife, **Kay**, assoc., have lived for 50 years. Jerry is chairman of the board of Georgia Gulf Sulfur Corp.

#### **1965** Monti Belot, c'65,

l'68, a federal judge for the District of Kansas from 1991 to 2008, was honored with the 2024 Distinguished Alumni Award from the School of Law.

**1968** Marty Grogan, e'68, g'71, is a programmer at the Washington State Department of Children, Youth and Families. He and his wife, Jenny, live near Seattle and have 12 grandchildren and a great-grandson.

#### **1969** Roseann O'Reilly

**Runte**, g'69, g'71, PhD'74, is president and CEO of the Canada Foundation for Innovation and author of the book *Canadians Who Innovate: The Trailblazers and Ideas That Are Changing the World*, published in May by Simon & Schuster. She lives in Ottawa, Ontario, and has served as president of five universities in Canada and the U.S.

#### **1971** Jan Bowen Sheldon,

c'71, PhD'74, l'77, received

the School of Law's 2024 Distinguished Alumni Award. She was a professor in KU's department of applied behavioral science from 1977 until her retirement in 2020 and also served as a courtesy professor in the School of Law.

1972 Clifford Otto, b'72,

in October was appointed to the Florida Polytechnic University board of trustees by Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis. Clifford is retired as CEO of Saddle Creek Logistics Services. He and his wife, **Kathy Kay Otto,** d'72, live in Lakeland, Florida.

**1974** Don Fullmer, f'74, is a painter based in Hutchinson. His work was recently featured in the 2024 Midwest Art Exhibition in Lindsborg.

#### **1975** Gregg Vandaveer,

j'75, was elected to the board of directors of the Federal Home Loan Bank of Topeka. He is retired as president and CEO of Sooner State Bank in Oklahoma.

#### **1977** Jan DeMoss Dowell,

p'77, is a senior clinical terminologist at Oracle in Kansas City.

**Daniel Flynn,** p'77, g'80, PhD'82, received the 2024 Distinguished Graduate Award from the School of Pharmacy. He founded Deciphera Pharmaceuticals and recently retired as the company's president, CEO and chief scientific officer.

**Dexter Morgan,** e'77, is an adjunct instructor in electrical technology at Guilford Technical Community College in Greensboro, North Carolina. He is a retired senior manager at AT&T/Lucent Technologies.

**Mignon Muirhead,** n'77, and her husband, Todd Barry, own Moby Dick's Restaurant in Wellfleet, Massachusetts.

**1978 Kirk Calhoun,** m'78, is president of the University of Texas at Tyler and chairman of the board of UT Health East Texas.

Lawrence Heaney, g'78, PhD'80, was named a 2024 Distinguished Fellow of the International Biogeography Society. He is curator of the division of mammals at the Field Museum in Chicago and teaches at the University of Chicago.

**1979 Dan Bowerman,** j'79, retired as a public information officer at the Ohio Department of Development. He previously worked 39 years for newspapers in New York, Ohio and Iowa. He and his wife,

Kathy, live in the Columbus, Ohio, area.

**Renny Christian-Arensberg,** c'79, is executive vice president of employee engagement at KVC Health Systems.

**1980** Chris Andrist, c'80, retired last year as deputy director of support services at the Colorado Bureau of Investigation.

**Evie Lazzarino,** j'80, is vice president of external affairs at The Chamber of Lawrence.

**1983** Steve Dellenback,

g'83, PhD'85, vice president of the intelligent systems division of the Southwest Research Institute in San Antonio, was named to the U.S. Department of Transportation's new Transforming Transportation Advisory Committee.

**1984 Thomas Bené**, b'84, in March was elected to the board of directors of WM. He is president and CEO of Breakthru Beverage Group.

Kevin Cunningham, e'84, tactical systems technical lead at aerospace manufacturer Bell Textron, was honored as a Modern-Day Technology Leader in the 2024 Black Engineer of the Year Awards.

Heithem El-Hodiri, c'84, g'90, PhD'92, is a senior

#### School codes

- a School of Architecture & Design
- b School of Business
- c College of Liberal Arts
- & Sciences d School of Education
- & Human Sciences
- e School of Engineering
- f School of Fine Arts

- g Master's degree
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- i School of Journalism
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- m School of Medicine
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- p School of Pharmacy
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AUD Doctor of Audiology DE Doctor of Engineering DMA Doctor of Musical Arts DNAP Doctor of Nursing Anesthesia Practice

u School of Music

- DNP Doctor of Nursing Practice
- **DPT** Doctor of Physical Therapy
- EdD Doctor of Education
- **OTD** Doctor of Occupational Therapy
- PhD Doctor of Philosophy SJD Doctor of Juridical
- Science
- (no letter) Former student assoc. Associate member of the Alumni Association



research scientist and lecturer in the college of medicine at Ohio State University.

#### **1985** Kathy Greenlee,

b'85, l'88, is senior director of elder justice initiatives at ADvancing States, an association that supports state agencies on aging and disabilities. She served as assistant secretary for aging in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services from 2009 to 2016.

**Frank Kaul,** c'85, g'95, is director of information systems and services at Mid-America Merchandising in Kansas City.

**Paul Yde,** l'85, g'86, received the 2024 Distinguished Alumni Award from the School of Law. He was head of the U.S. antitrust practice at the firm Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer in Washington, D.C., from 2002 until his retirement in 2021. He is co-founder of Hector Ventures, which invests in neuroscience innovation.

**1986 Doug Cox**, g'86, PhD'86, is a retired environmental toxicologist who worked as a consultant and for several government agencies throughout his career. He lives in Colorado and enjoys traveling the world on trekking, skiing and scuba diving trips.

**Bill Schonacher,** c'86, in February was named CEO of Chickasaw Community Bank in Oklahoma. He and his wife, **Lynne Brooks Schonacher,** c'84, have four adult children and three grandchildren.

#### **1987** Brenda Bachofer

**Cameron,** j'87, l'90, district judge for Kansas' 10th Judicial District in Johnson County, in February was elected president of the Kansas District Judges Association. She has been a district judge since 2002.

**Rebecca Hill,** g'87, is chief financial officer at Mission Peak Capital, a Kansas Citybased real estate investment firm. She was among the Kansas City Business Journal's CFO of the Year honorees in 2023.

**1988 Ronald Carver**, c'88, m'92, is medical director for the emergency department at Nor-Lea General Hospital in Lovington, New Mexico. He was recently named medical director for the city of Portales and Roosevelt County in New Mexico.

**Frank Harwood**, d'88, g'92, a longtime teacher, principal and superintendent, in January was named deputy commissioner of fiscal and administrative services for the Kansas State Department of Education. He and his wife, **Jamie**, d'91, live in Lawrence and have two adult children, **Zach**, c'13, and **Kelsey**, s'17, g'18.

**Scot Hutchison,** m'88, is a reproductive endocrinologist and infertility specialist at Advanced Fertility Care in Tucson, Arizona.

**Fred Kalush**, b'88, is a commercial real estate agent with Coldwell Banker Distinctive Properties in Overland Park.





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He and his wife, **Jaci Allen Kalush,** c'88, live in Olathe.

Holly Barnes Milledge, j'88, will serve as chair of the 2024 Jewel Ball in Kansas City June 15. She has been involved with the event, which benefits the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art and Kansas City Symphony, for over 35 years. Holly and her husband, **Forest**, c'88, have two adult sons, **Droste**, b'16, and **Peter**, b'18.

Michele Lewis Moody, s'88, is a legal assistant at the law firm Husch Blackwell in Kansas City.

Mark Racunas, c'88, is a senior vice president at Alliant Insurance Services. He lives in Los Angeles.

**John Rose,** '88, is chief risk officer at Altour, a global travel management company.

Mike Sanborn, p'88, g'92, is chief growth officer at Baylor Scott & White Health, a health care system based in Dallas. He and his wife, **Paula** Vedros Sanborn, c'86, j'86, celebrated their 35th wedding anniversary in May.

**1989** James Frogge, m'89, is a urologist at Ascension Via Christi Urology Clinic in Pittsburg.

**Tracy Linderholm,** j'89, in March was named dean of the college of education at the University of North Carolina Wilmington.

Heather Brown Wingate, c'89, l'93, is senior vice president of government affairs at Delta Air Lines.

#### **1990** Mike Heitmann,

e'90, in March retired from Garney Construction, where he worked for 34 years and was CEO from 2011 to 2023.

Madeleine McDonough, l'90, chair of the law firm Shook, Hardy & Bacon, in March was named Missouri Lawyers Media's Woman of the Year.

**Fred Smith,** c'90, leads client growth at Kansas City-based STEPS Consulting Group, which provides artificial intelligence, process automation and data solutions for businesses.

**1991 Grant Gooch,** e'91, a retired U.S. Air Force pilot, is a captain with American Airlines. James Obermaier, j'91, is deputy chief technology officer at the Indiana Office of Technology.

**Kelly Sloan,** j'91, is a real estate broker and owns Home Sweet Home Realty in Blue Springs, Missouri.

**Jeff Wilson,** c'91, in March was named president of Trident Health System and CEO of Trident Medical Center in Charleston, South Carolina.

#### **1992** Christophe

**Boucher,** g'92, g'96, PhD'02, is associate professor of history at the College of Charleston in South Carolina.

**Scott Schrum,** b'92, in January joined the sales team in the material handling division

#### CLASS NOTES

at New Age Industrial, based in Norton.

**Debbi Vandeven,** f'92, is global chief creative officer at VML, a marketing agency.

**1993 Gillian Flynn,** c'93, j'93, author of the novels *Gone Girl* and *Sharp Objects*, is co-creator, writer and co-showrunner on HBO's forthcoming adaptation of her 2009 novel *Dark Places* as a limited series.

**Diane Krapf Grimsley,** e'93, in October was promoted to project director at Tarlton Corp., a St. Louis-based general contracting and construction management firm, where she has worked since 2012.

**LesLee Taylor,** d'93, in January became assistant dean for faculty affairs in the School of Health Professions.

**Scott Worthington,** c'93, g'97, is a software development manager at Oracle in Kansas City.

**Ali Yapicioglu,** a'93, g'95, is a partner at In. Site: Architecture in Perry, New York. He co-founded the firm in 2001.

#### **1994** Shannon Peters

**Banks**, c'94, j'94, is founder and CEO of Be Leadership and author of the book *Because: 12 Essential Skills for Connecting How You Lead with Why*, published last year. She lives in the U.K. with her husband, Richard; daughter, Madeline; and dog, Willow.

JAY

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**Christina Chang,** c'94, is an actor who has played Dr. Audrey Lim in the ABC series "The Good Doctor" since 2017. **KUMENTORING**+ Networking+Opportunity+Community

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**Dustin Daugherty,** c'94, is co-founder of Baard & Associates, which provides business coaching services. He lives in Spokane, Washington.

**Carey Wilken Eiser**, n'94, is a staff nurse at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center and a faculty member at Xavier University and the University of Cincinnati.

**Tracy Floreani**, g'94, PhD'00, professor of English at Oklahoma City University, edited the book *Approaches to Teaching the Works of Ralph Ellison*, to be published this fall by the Modern Language Association.

**Nathan Hatcher,** e'94, is director of sulfur processing at Phillips 66. He and his wife, **Sondra Rathman Hatcher,** b'94, g'95, live in Houston. **Suzanne Johnson,** a'94, is a project engineer with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. She lives in Walla Walla, Washington.

**Richard Wetzel,** a'94, is co-founder and CEO of the Kansas City-based construction company Centric.

**1995** Mary Hinton, g'95, president of Hollins University in Roanoke, Virginia, wrote the book *Leading from the Margins*, published in February by Johns Hopkins University Press.

**Rusty Monhollon,** g'95, PhD'99, is vice president for academic affairs for the Kansas Board of Regents.

**Jarrod Williams,** f'95, g'03, is teaching professor of tuba at East Carolina University in Greenville, North Carolina.

**1996 Michael Enenbach,** c'96, m'00, is a psychiatrist at ResWell Health in Pasadena, California.

**Dawn Kroencke,** g'96, PhD'99, is a clinical psychologist.

**Brian MacGillivray,** m'96, is a family physician at Grey Canyon Family Medicine in San Antonio.

**Michael Matula**, l'96, is a shareholder in the Kansas City office of the law firm Ogletree Deakins, where he has worked since 2005.

**Tim Steele,** g'96, PhD'04, is president and CEO of Associated Audiologists, which has eight clinics in Kansas and Missouri.

**Robyn Gramlich Stewart,** 

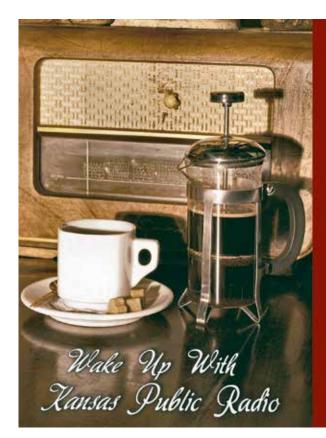
g'96, is Worthington, Ohio, city manager.

**Christopher Swingle,** c'96, is assistant professor of radiology at Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis.

**1997 Gavin Bruce,** c'97, is an editor at the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna.

Vance Holtzman, b'97, senior vice president of investments at Koch Minerals & Trading, in March was elected to the Compass Minerals board of directors.

Joy Kimball Murphy, m'97, is a physician with Stormont Vail Health and provides care at various Cotton O'Neil Express Care clinics throughout Topeka.



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which administers retirement plans. He lives in Broomfield, Colorado, with his wife and two children.

**Mark Hansen,** c'02, j'02, is a senior editor at the book publisher Goodheart-Willcox. He lives in Chicago.

**Drew Roberts,** l'02, is a colonel and staff judge advocate in the U.S. Air Force.

#### 2003 Bradford

Hollingsworth, '03, and his fiancée, Heidi, in November moved from Nashville, Tennessee, to Boise, Idaho, where Bradford manages partnerships and corporate marketing at the Ford Idaho Center.

**Dave Meall,** b'03, is head of talent at Watershed, a software platform that helps businesses measure their carbon emissions. He lives in New York City.

**Kara Walters,** c'03, is a senior client service manager at Empower, a financial services company.

**2004 Bryan Burke,** c'04, an actor and director, is a member of Buffalo Theatre Ensemble in Glen Ellyn, Illinois, and an adjunct faculty member in the theatre department at the College of DuPage.

**Brad Carter**, PhD'04, is associate provost for outreach and engagement at U.S. Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island.

**Paul Kramer,** j'04, g'09, in March was named Shawnee city manager.

**Angela Muhuri,** '04, teaches English as a second language at the Dorcas International Institute of Rhode Island in Providence.

**Menneka Scott-Roper,** n'04, is a registered nurse at

#### Maureen Bittinger Short,

b'97, in March was appointed to the Big Lots board of directors.

**1998 Cory Feinberg,** c'98, in March was named general counsel and corporate secretary at MoneyGram. He has worked at the Dallas-based financial technology company since 2015.

#### **1999** Jennifer Blackburn

Adhima, c'99, g'05, is chief program officer at the Nebraska Early Childhood Collaborative, which provides training and resources for child care providers.

**Scott Beach**, j'99, is vice president of IT strategy and digital transformation at SPX Technologies, an industrial equipment company. He lives in Charlotte, North Carolina, with his wife, **Susan**, b'99, and son, Jackson.

**Keith Campbell,** b'99, g'09, in February was appointed DuPont, Washington, city administrator.

**Rebecca Ulrich Weller,** c'99, m'04, is an emergency physician at Stormont Vail Health's Flint Hills campus in Junction City.

**Robert Willette,** d'99, l'02, g'09, in February was named chief legal officer at enCore Energy Corp.

#### **2000** Julie Wicks

Longyear, f'00, is founder and owner of the skin care brand Blissoma. She lives in St. Louis. Trey Yost, b'00, in January was named chief revenue officer at Panorama Education, an education technology company. He lives in Dallas.

**2001 Brenda Elpers,** '01, in February was promoted to senior vice president of operations for the restaurant chain Chick N Max.

Kristin Helgesen Kraemer, c'01, is a recording and policy specialist at Charter Title & Escrow in Lincoln, Nebraska. She and her husband, Jeremy, have two children, Rachel and Ryan.

**Tudor Montague,** c'01, owns Spirit Mountain Roasting Co., a roastery and cafe in Winterhaven, California.

**2002** Mike Beck, c'02, in March joined the business development team at NWPS, with BUDLIGHT with BUDLIGHT with BUDLIGHT with BUDLIGHT with BUDLIGHT

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South Kansas City Surgicenter. She and her husband, Brian, live in Overland Park.

Kristy Croom Tucker, j'04, g'06, in December was promoted to vice president of marketing at BayCare, a health care system in central Florida.

**2005** John DiCalogero, c'05, is head of sales and guidance at New York Life Insurance Co. in New York City. He and his wife, Alicia, have a daughter, Harper,

and son, Hunter. **Sarah Kahn,** g'05, in December was named president and CEO of Housing Forward, a Dallas-based nonprofit focused on ending homelessness.

**Sean Pauzauskie,** c'05, c'05, m'10, is a neurologist at

UCHealth Poudre Valley Hospital in Fort Collins, Colorado.

**Dereck Totten,** c'05, m'13, g'16, in January was named chief medical officer for the Kansas Department of Health and Environment. He and his wife, **Kysha Nichols-Totten,** m'13, live in Colby, where they both practice family medicine at Citizens Health.

### **2006** Ryan Dieckgrafe,

d'06, is an associate principal in the Wichita school district. He and his wife, Amy, have a son, Rhett, and daughter, Emery.

Kathleen Fisher Enyeart, l'06, in March joined Lathrop GPM as counsel in its litigation practice. She is based in the law firm's Kansas City office.

### Julie Maykowski,

DMA'06, is general director and CEO of Opera Steamboat, a musical arts organization in Steamboat Springs, Colorado.

**David Paul,** c'06, AUD'16, is an audiologist at Associated Audiologists and manages the practice's Lawrence and Leavenworth clinics.

Lyndsy Salesman Zelenc, c'06, is senior director of enterprise resource planning at Revelyst, a collection of outdoor and sports brands.

### 2007 Amy Conway

Hansen, d'07, in February

was named CEO of ClearSky Rehabilitation Hospital of Avondale in Arizona.

**Cortney McKay,** c'07, g'09, is a degree analyst in the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences.

Whittaker Potts, c'07, in February joined Cushman & Wakefield as executive managing director of the commercial real estate firm's Sunbelt Multifamily Advisory Group. He is based in Kansas City.

**David Scoppa,** c'07, is director of business development at Ascend Elements, a startup that recycles lithium-ion batteries and manufactures battery materials. He lives in Fayetteville, Arkansas.

### CLASS NOTES

**2008** Nathan Davis, b'08, is business development manager at Brentwood Industries, a plastics manufacturer. He and his wife. Melanie, live in Tomball, Texas, with their golden retriever, Bear.

Jarryd Israel, d'08, in January was promoted to executive vice president and chief credit officer at Security National Bank in Omaha, Nebraska.

Jennifer Siler McNiel. n'08, director of the nursing excellence and magnet program for The University of Kansas Health System, was honored by the School of Nursing as its 2024 Early Career Achievement in Nursing Alumna.

Laura Stiles, e'08, is an aerospace engineer at Blue Origin near Seattle and leads astronaut training and crewed launch operations for the company's New Shepard program.

Sara Siesco Thomas, l'08, is a personal injury and wrongful death attorney at Zachar Law Firm in Phoenix.

**Jim West,** e'08, g'11, is associate director at BioTools Innovator, a business accelerator focused on life science. research tools.

### 2009 Claire O'Neill Luin-

stra, c'09, is director of client accounts at TopRank Marketing. She and her husband, Jordan, have a daughter, Nora.

Emeka Ogwudile, n'09, is a psychiatric-mental health nurse practitioner at Bee Well Psychiatric Associates in Overland Park.



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### **2010** Elisa Williams

**Bickers,** DMA'10, is associate director of music and principal organist at Village Presbyterian Church in Prairie Village.

Brooke Eichelberger Jensen, b'10, g'12, a fashion and lifestyle influencer, collaborated with Dillard's to design the company's new children's clothing collection, The Broke Brooke for Edgehill. She lives in Wichita with her husband, Andrew, m'13, and their children, Charleston and William.

**Ben LeClair,** j'10, was nominated for an Oscar in the Best Picture category for the 2023 film "American Fiction," for which he was a producer.

**Cameron Ledford,** m'10, is an orthopedic surgeon at the Mayo Clinic in Jacksonville, Florida.

**Dalena McGrew,** g'10, is a controller at Dean Dorton, an accounting and business advisory firm.

**Sarah Sanchez,** b'10, vice president of corporate trust and escrow services at UMB Bank, was elected to the Women in Public Finance national board of directors.

**Ross Stewart,** j'10, l'13, was promoted to senior counsel for the Unified Government of Wyandotte County and Kansas City, Kansas.

Luchara Sayles Wallace, PhD'10, is associate professor of special education at Western Michigan University and directs the university's Lewis Walker Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnic Relations. She was recently reappointed to the Michigan Board of Behavior Analysts by Gov. Gretchen Whitmer.

### Born to:

Kimberly Hernandez Grubert, c'10, and her husband, Michael, son, Alex, Oct. 28. The family lives in Westminster, Colorado.

### **2011** Annette Becker,

c'11, is director and curator of the Texas Fashion Collection, an archive of nearly 20,000 historic and designer garments and accessories at the University of North Texas in Denton.

**Spencer Gregg,** b'11, g'12, is a partner at the accounting firm Hartman Wanzor McNamara in Fort Worth, Texas.

Alex Jorgensen, g'11, PhD'15, is an assistant professor in the department of social science at Valley City State University in Valley City, North Dakota.

**Richard Welton,** b'11, g'11, is chief operating officer at CCS Health, a health care technology company.

**Rachel Werner,** j'11, was promoted to shareholder at the law firm Littler Mendelson. She is based in the firm's Atlanta office.

Matthew Williams, c'11, g'16, in December was named director of community development for the city of Hutchinson.

**2012** Ebo Browne, c'12, is a statistician at the U.S. Department of Justice in Washington, D.C.

**DaMaris Hill,** PhD'12, is professor of creative writing at the University of Kentucky and a 2023-2024 fellow of the Hutchins Center for African & African American Research at Harvard University. **Jessica Huff Kieffer,** c'12, m'16, is an OB-GYN at Stormont Vail Health in Topeka.

### **2013** Colleen Cassidy,

g'13, is an architect and senior associate at Populous in Kansas City. She is currently working on the new baseball stadium for the Tampa Bay Rays.

Heide Chaney, n'13, DNP'18, is a general cardiology nurse practitioner at Jefferson Healthcare in Port Townsend, Washington.

**Brian Long,** c'13, is visiting assistant professor of rhetoric at Wabash College in Crawfordsville, Indiana.

Alex Mironenko, g'13, is an assistant professor in the department of chemical and biomolecular engineering at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign.

**Yiyang Zhang,** g'13, is an associate professor in the school of accounting and finance at Youngstown State University in Ohio.

**2014 Leslie Butsch**, u'14, g'18, is field director for the American Civil Liberties Union of Kansas.

**Emily Nickel Farley,** g'14, in February was promoted to chief advancement officer at Bert Nash Community Mental Health Center in Lawrence.

Andrew Locke, c'14, is a senior software engineer at Spiral, a financial technology company. He and his wife, Karin, live in Kapaa, Hawaii, where Andrew also owns and operates Kauai Surf Repair.

**Raven Rajani,** g'14, is a therapist and CEO of Integrative Therapy Services in Law-

rence. She is also founder and director of the Loving Paws Animal Therapy Program.

**Allie Raymond,** j'14, is senior social media manager for the Los Angeles Chargers.

Tami Shefferd, g'14, is a therapist and owns Resilient Counseling Services in Hiawatha.

**DaKota Urban,** m'14, is a plastic and reconstructive surgeon at Beebe Healthcare in Rehoboth Beach, Delaware.

Hannah Zwibelman, m'14, is a vascular surgeon and assistant professor of surgery at the Yale School of Medicine in New Haven, Connecticut.

### 2015 Jiwon Choi,

DMA'15, is staff accompanist at Northwest Missouri State University, where she collaborates with student, faculty and guest musicians.

### Born to:

**Madison Van Heule,** d'15, and her husband, Benjamin, daughter, Cora, April 15, 2023. The family lives in central Wyoming.

### 2016 Bryce Langford,

l'16, in January joined Rebein Brothers Law Firm in Dodge City as partner.

**Kimberly Tansey Portillo,** a'16, g'17, is a city planner for the city of Lenexa.

**Micaela Sheffield,** a'16, is a senior interior designer at Leo A Daly in the design firm's Dallas office.

**2017 Clay Thomas,** b'17, is an account executive at Avive Solutions, a medical equipment company. He lives in Louisville, Kentucky.

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**Ashley Williamson,** g'17, is co-executive director of The Giving Grove, an urban agriculture organization based in Kansas City.

Hallie Wilson, j'17, is an associate director of strategy and planning at Brainlabs, a digital marketing agency.

### 2018 Elene Cloete,

PhD'18, is senior director of research and advocacy at Outreach International.

Jacob, p'18, PharmD'18, and Tami Oberheim Dugan, p'16, PharmD'18, in April opened Chase County Pharmacy in Cottonwood Falls. The couple also owns The Apothecary, a pharmacy in Council Grove.

**Michelle Geiser,** j'18, is an allocation analyst for the home furnishings brand CB2.

**Bronson Herrera**, g'18, PhD'19, is assistant professor of political science at Northwest Missouri State University.

**Talia Marquez,** j'18, is an associate attorney at Burg Simpson in the law firm's Englewood, Colorado, office.

**Tonya Mitchell-Spradlin,** DMA'18, is director of wind band studies and assistant professor of music at Penn State University.

**2019** Abigail Meyer, b'19, is a senior growth and success manager at SafetyCulture Care, a business insurance provider.

Bailey Saville Mutschelknaus, a'19, is a graphic designer at the pet food company Ziwi.

**Christine Pabico**, PhD'19, director of the American Nurses Credentialing Center's Pathway to Excellence pro-

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gram, was named the School of Nursing's 2024 Distinguished Nursing Alumna.

**Riley Williams,** g'19, m'19, is an emergency medicine specialist at Stormont Vail Health in Topeka.

### **2020** Shayla McElyea

**Jenkins,** m'20, practices family medicine at Hays Medical Center in Hays.

**Frank Lombardo**, d'20, coordinates marketing and communications for US Youth Soccer. He lives in Frisco, Texas.

**Maya Minocha**, j'20, is an account supervisor at the communications firm BerlinRosen. She lives in New York City.

**Allison Thompson,** m<sup>2</sup>20, is a family physician at Heartland Health Care Clinic in Abilene.

**Paige Whited,** c'20, is community manager at Curtin

Property Co., a commercial real estate firm in Overland Park.

**Raeley Youngs**, j'20, manages marketing for the Rosslyn Business Improvement District in Arlington, Virginia.

**2021** Allyson Bence, g'21, is a behavioral health consultant at the Community Health

Center of Southeast Kansas in Pittsburg.

**Isaiah Cacka,** e'21, is a structural analysis engineer at Spirit AeroSystems in Wichita.

**Hailey Neidig,** e'21, g'23, is a project engineer on the transportation team at TREKK

Design Group in Kansas City. **Phuong Nguyen,** PhD'21, is an assistant professor in the college of engineering at South Dakota State University.

**Kristen Otte,** a'21, manages marketing at the Atchison Area Chamber of Commerce. **Emma Starks,** j'21, is a news desk production assistant at Entertainment Tonight. She lives in Los Angeles.

**2022** Kaleigh Helm, j'22, is an account administrator at Lockton.

Karsyn Dahl Jackson, l'22, is an attorney at Siegfried & Jensen, a personal injury law firm. She and her husband, William, l'22, live in West Haven, Utah.

Avery Johnson, g'22, is a behavioral health therapist at Genesis Family Health in Garden City.

Jacob Polacheck, j'22, lives in Lexington, Kentucky, where he is a reporter for Kentucky Sports Radio/On3.

Lane Salvig, g'22, teaches math and social studies at Kelso High School in Kelso, Washington. In April she traveled to Morocco as part of the U.S. Department of State's Fulbright Teachers for Global Classrooms Program.

**2023 Tim Bianco**, g'23, is a pediatric clinician at Johnson County Mental Health Center in Mission.

**Gage Burmaster,** e'23, is a software developer at Paycom.

**Mason Edwards**, b'23, founded Edwards Gutter Cleaning and Power Wash in Overland Park.

**Julia Kline,** j'23, is a digital marketing specialist at Newmark Zimmer, a commercial real estate firm headquartered in Kansas City.

Holden Knudsen, a'23, g'23, g'23, is an architectural designer at PGAV Destinations in St. Louis.

**Luke Malik,** j'23, is a digital producer at KCAU 9 News in Sioux City, Iowa.

**Allison Manning,** c'23, is a research technician at KU Medical Center.

Joshua Sipp, l'23, is an attorney at Sandberg Phoenix in the law firm's Kansas City office.

Hannah Spielberg, a'23, is an interior designer at Populous in Kansas City.

### Born to:

John, PhD'23, and Lauren Summers Watson, c'12, l'16, daughter, Natalie, July 19, 2023. The family lives in Lawrence.

### ASSOCIATES

William Cushing, assoc., is senior vice president at State Bank of Downs.

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### **1940s** Donna Nichols

**Bates,** d'45, Leawood, 100, Jan. 8. Donna was a piano teacher. Her husband, Clifford, e'47, preceded her in death.

Arthur Coate, b'49, Prairie Village, 97, Nov. 26. Arthur served in the U.S. Army Air Corps and was an executive at Hallmark Cards. His wife, Martha Goodrich Coate, c'48, preceded him in death.

**Dorothy Brenner Francis,** f'48, Council Bluffs, Iowa, 96, Sept. 17. Dorothy taught music lessons and was a prolific writer. Her husband, Richard, '49, preceded her in death.

Horace Lamberton Jr., e'42, Pompano Beach, Florida, 104, Feb. 6, 2023.

**1950s Jack Beal,** d'57, g'62, Seattle, 88, March 16. Jack, a U.S. Army veteran, was professor emeritus of education at the University of Washington. He is survived by his wife, Lois Otto Beal, d'62.

**Charles Belt,** c'57, Hot Springs Village, Arkansas, 88, Feb. 22. Charles served 26 years in the U.S. Air Force, achieving the rank of colonel. He was base commander of McConnell Air Force Base. His wife, Judy Skaggs Belt, '58, survives.

**Richard Blasdel,** c'51, Bartlesville, Oklahoma, 98, June 23, 2023. Richard served in the U.S. Army and was a federal park ranger. He was preceded in death by his wife, Rosa Mae.

**Grace Endacott Brooks,** f'53, Lawrence, 91, Aug. 5, 2023. Grace was an organist. Her husband, Bill, c'54, preceded her in death.

**Hugh Bruner Jr.,** c'58, Mission Hills, 86, July 18, 2023. Hugh, a U.S. Army veteran, was a periodontist. His wife, Judith, preceded him in death. James Burford, c'50,

Boerne, Texas, 96, Aug. 4, 2023. James served in the U.S. Navy and was a petroleum geologist. His wife, Nancy, preceded him in death.

J. Sanford Bushman, b'56, Leavenworth, 89, April 3. Sandy, a U.S. Army veteran, was a CPA and owned an accounting practice. His wife, Alice Kimbley Bushman, d'59, survives.

Bertha Nash Cole, c'52, Kansas City, 93, Aug. 4, 2023. Bertha worked in hospitals and was later a teacher and school administrator. Her first husband, Calvin Dixon, and her second husband, Ernest, preceded her in death.

**Ann Eylar Drake,** d'52, Overland Park, 92, Feb. 3. Ann taught kindergarten in Kansas City for over 30 years. Her husband, Ralph, preceded her in death.

**Robert Duboc,** c'50, Kansas City, 95, July 6, 2023. Bob, a U.S. Marine Corps veteran, was an attorney and cattle farmer.

Aubrey "Bud" Foster Jr., b'58, Pearland, Texas, 91, Nov. 26, 2022. Bud, a U.S. Navy veteran, ran his family's furniture business for over 30 years. He is survived by his wife, Barbara Belew Foster, '58.

Arthur Glass, '59, Wichita, 85, March 8, 2023. Arthur was an oral and maxillofacial surgeon. He is survived by his wife, Jule.

**Beverly Van Dusen Goss,** f'57, Albuquerque, New Mexico, 88, Aug. 8, 2023. Beverly was an artist, graphic designer and art gallery owner.

**Marcia Scott Groth,** c'59, d'62, Topeka, 87, March 25. Marcia was a high school science teacher and later a computer programmer. Her husband, Bill, preceded her in death.

**William Hamilton**, m'57, Verona, Missouri, 90, July 20, 2023. William practiced family medicine for over 30 years. He is survived by his wife, Shirley.

Marlene Kuper Hendrick, c'57, Topeka, 86, July 14, 2023. Marlene worked at the Topeka & Shawnee County Public Library for many years.

John Hengen III, e'55, Savage, Maryland, 89, May 14, 2023. John, a U.S. Army veteran, worked for the U.S. Department of Defense for 32 years as an electrical engineer and senior executive. He is survived by his wife, Elaine.

**Barton Hoglund**, e'55, Glen Ellyn, Illinois, 95, Sept. 19. Bart, a U.S. Navy veteran, worked at Argonne National Laboratory and later founded a consulting business. He is survived by his wife, Marilyn.

Jane Werth Joslin, d'57, Kansas City, 88, April 24, 2023. Jane taught elementary school. Her husband, Ned, e'57, preceded her in death.

Jack Keller, e'53, Overland Park, 93, Jan. 24. Jack served in the Kansas National Guard and was a senior partner at Black & Veatch. His wife, Joyce, preceded him in death.

**Sue Bye Laughlin,** d'58, Colorado Springs, Colorado, 87, Sept. 20. Sue worked in mortgage banking with her late husband, Bill, b'58.

**Otto Lohrenz,** g'56, PhD'70, Omaha, Nebraska, 98, Sept. 15. Otto was a history professor at the University of Nebraska at Kearney for over 20 years. His wife, Elma Jost Lohrenz, d'65, preceded him in death.

**Lowell Macy,** p'52, Vermillion, South Dakota, 94, July

10, 2023. Lowell, a U.S. Army veteran, was a pharmacist and research scientist. He is survived by his wife, Jill.

Joan Lodde McGee, d'54, Kansas City, 90, Feb. 22. Joan was an art teacher and coowned a needlepoint shop. Her first husband, Tom, and second husband, Byron Thompson, preceded her in death.

Marilyn Riffer McKenzie, f'51, Chanhassen, Minnesota, 93, June 18, 2023. Marilyn was a teacher. Her husband, Dick, preceded her in death.

John "Jock" Miller, b'55, Livermore, California, 90, March 4, 2023. Jock served in the U.S. Army and, with his late wife, Lucy, founded Designs for Living in San Francisco. They ran the business for 30 years.

Rosemarye Stafford Oswald, '53, Lawrence, 92, May 29, 2023. Rosemarye was a singer. She was preceded in death by her husband, Richard.

**Thomas Rinehart,** e'57, Kansas City, 87, July 20, 2023. Tom, a U.S. Air Force veteran, worked in the petroleum energy business and later developed wind farm projects. He is survived by his wife, Ruth.

Anita Volzke Roetker, h'53, Lafayette, Indiana, 91, Oct. 9, 2022. Anita was an occupational therapist. She is survived by her husband, Robert.

**Charles "Bud" Salanski,** e'57, St. Joseph, Missouri, 87, May 18, 2023. Bud was president of Wire Rope Corp. of America and later director of a counseling center. His wife, Margaret Clark Salanski, d'57, preceded him in death.

**Richard Sengpiehl**, b'59, Lawrence, 86, Nov. 1. Dick, a U.S. Marine Corps veteran, owned Sengpiehl Furniture in Parsons and later worked in sales. He was preceded in death by his wife, Mary Ann Adams.

Marlin Shenk, e'58, Wichita, 88, Dec. 5. Marlin was an architectural engineer. He is survived by his wife, Meri Rose.

Fred Six, c'51, l'56, Lawrence, 95, April 27; and Lilian Olsson Six, g'75, g'77, Lawrence, 90, April 17. Fred, a U.S. Marine Corps veteran, was an attorney and served as a justice of the Kansas Supreme Court from 1988 to 2003. He was also an adjunct professor in the School of Law and received the Alumni Association's Distinguished Service Citation in 2004. Lilian worked in the School of Law as director of admissions and later as director of placement.

J. Weston Smith, c'51, m'55, St. Joseph, Minnesota, 93, May 7, 2023. Wes served in the U.S. Navy Reserve and Air Force. He practiced medicine for over 25 years. He was preceded in death by his wife, Marilyn Colby Smith, d'52.

Harry Stewart, c'58, m'62, Lake Quivira, 86, Nov. 30, 2022. Harry practiced psychiatry for over 50 years. He is survived by his wife, Betsy.

**Marilyn Sweet,** d'54, Cedar Rapids, Iowa, 90, June 5, 2023. Marilyn was an elementary and junior high school science teacher.

**Edwin Terry,** g'56, La Verne, California, 96, Sept. 8. Ed, a U.S. Army veteran, was an economics professor at Fresno State University for over 20 years. He was preceded in death by his wife, LaDene Cummins Terry, c'56, m'61.

**Dick Tracy**, d'58, g'65, PhD'66, Lawrence, 87, Feb. 13. Dick was a professor in KU's department of educational psychology for 30 years. His wife, Rita Schreiber Tracy, n'60, g'84, preceded him in death. James Whittaker, b'57,

Minneapolis, Minnesota, 87, July 2, 2023. Jim served in the U.S. Navy for 31 years, retiring as rear admiral. He later led a consulting firm. He is survived by his wife, Maggie Lamson Whittaker, d'61.

Jacquelyn Leedy

Williams, f'51, Lake Waukomis, Missouri, 96, Dec. 31. Jackie was an artist and also worked at the architectural firm of her late husband, Walter, e'50.

Noah Young, b'56, Freeport, Illinois, 92, Oct. 9, 2022. Noah, a U.S. Navy veteran, was comptroller at Kelly-Springfield Tire Co. for over 20 years. His wife, Patty, preceded him in death.

### **1960s** Gretchen Lee

Andeel, d'63, Wichita, 82, July 4, 2023. Gretchen was a teacher and co-founded the Phillips Fundamental Learning Center, a children's literacy nonprofit. She is survived by her husband, Stan, c'63.

Judith Black Angell, d'67, Liberal, 84, Jan. 13, 2023. Judi taught elementary school. Her husband, Royce, a'67, preceded her in death.

Margaret Kratochvil Baggett, c'68, Jefferson City, Missouri, 76, Aug. 3, 2023. Margaret worked at Honeywell and was later a research analyst at the Missouri Department of Health. She is survived by her husband, Bill.

Margaret McNulty Benefiel, d'62, Lawrence, 83, Jan. 27. Maggie taught high school English in Cleveland for 33 years. She is survived by her husband, Tom.

**Carol Duncan Brient,** d'61, g'65, Keystone Heights, Florida, 83, Sept. 25, 2022. Carol was an artist and high school art teacher. She is survived by her partner, John Harpe.

William Bushnell Jr., '60, Cuenca, Ecuador, 86, Jan. 31. Bill, a theatre director and educator, led the former Los Angeles Theatre Center.

Kenneth Ciboski, c'61 g'65, Wichita, 89, July 30, 2023. Kenneth was a political science professor at Wichita State University for 48 years.

Jan Cobble, c'63, Tulsa, Oklahoma, 82, Sept. 25. Jan, a U.S. Army veteran, practiced dentistry for nearly 50 years. His wife, Susie, survives.

**Cynthia Connelly Coleman,** d'69, Lansing, 76, Jan. 3. Cynthia was a teacher and school counselor. Her husband, Kennie, preceded her in death.

Milton Diamond, PhD'62, Honolulu, 90, March 20. Milton was professor emeritus of anatomy and reproductive biology at the University of Hawaii at Manoa. He is survived by his wife, Connie.

Alfred Dietz, d'61, Venice, Florida, 93, Aug. 16, 2023. Alfred served in the U.S. Army and was professor emeritus of entomology at the University of Georgia.

**Michael Fulghum,** d'65, Fredonia, 81, March 8, 2023. Mike was a teacher and coach. His wife, Billie Dickson Fulghum, n'65, g'97, survives.

**Robert Glahn,** e'60, Tulsa, Oklahoma, 87, Aug. 2, 2023. Bob worked in the aerospace industry and later for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Jerry Handley, p'65, Eureka, 82, Sept. 28. Jerry was a pharmacist and owned Eureka Pharmacy. He is survived by his wife, Barbara.

**John Hastings,** c'67, Leawood, 78, Aug. 7, 2023. John worked in banking and was later an estate planning attorney. He was preceded in death by his first wife, Mary, and is survived by his second wife, Melanie.

Herbert Hickman, g'61, Pittsburg, 94, Aug. 1, 2023. Herbert, a U.S. Army veteran, worked for the state of Kansas for 39 years, directing social services programs in four counties. His wife, Shirley, preceded him in death.

Allen Hjelmfelt Jr., g'61, Columbia, Missouri, 85, Aug. 2, 2023. Allen was a research hydrology engineer for the U.S. Department of Agriculture. His wife, Marian, preceded him in death.

**Joseph Howard,** m'60, Gulf Breeze, Florida, 89, June 14, 2023. Joseph and his wife, Marilyn, started a family medicine practice, where they worked for over 40 years.

**Charley Kempthorne,** d'64, d'66, Olympia, Washington, 84, Nov. 30, 2022. Charley was a prolific writer and taught memoir writing. He founded the online publication LifeStory Journal. He is survived by his wife, June.

**Dee Ketchum,** d'61, g'69, Bartlesville, Oklahoma, 84, March 26, 2023. Dee, a former KU basketball player, was a coach and deacon and served the Delaware Tribe in elected positions for many years. He is survived by his wife, Annette Martin Ketchum, '75.

**Carol Ott Kimmich,** d'62, Olathe, 82, July 15, 2023. Carol was a computer programmer and worked at IBM and Data Systems International. She was preceded in death by her husband, Bob.

**Joel Klaassen,** j'68, Decatur, Georgia, 77, June 29, 2023. Joel co-founded the Hillsboro Free Press in Marion County and later started Kansas Publishing Ventures. He is survived by his wife, Nancy Unruh Klaassen, d'73.

**Robert Larson,** PhD'61, Lincoln, Nebraska, 92, March 24. Bob was a chemistry professor at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and Drake University. His wife, Marjorie Tillson Larson, '61, preceded him in death.

John Lord IV, b'66, c'66, Omaha, Nebraska, 80, Dec. 27, 2022. John was a business manager at General Electric Supply Co. and later at Clarkson College. He is survived by his wife, Marian Koerner Lord, c'67.

**Paul MacRoberts**, e'66, g'68, Overland Park, 84, June 18, 2023. Paul, a U.S. Air Force veteran, worked at Black & Veatch for nearly 30 years and later at Hallcon Corp. He is survived by his wife, Linda.

John McArtor, c'65, Palm Desert, California, 79, June 27, 2023. John, a former KU mascot performer, worked in finance and later led a technology startup. He is survived by his companion, Julie Coefield.

Alistair McCrone, PhD'61, Lynnwood, Washington, 91, Aug. 17, 2023. Alistair was president of Cal Poly Humboldt for 28 years. He is survived by his wife, Judith Saari McCrone, '59.

Judy Bailey McIntire, c'68, Mound City, Missouri, 76, Feb. 7, 2023. Judy worked at Northwest Health Services, where she was a grant writer and later the human resources director. Her husband, Mason, c'67, g'69, preceded her in death.

**C. Allen McPherson,** c'66, Baxter Springs, 79, April 7, 2023. Al, a former KU football player, worked in research and development at AT&T and Motorola, among other companies. He is survived by his wife, Shari Feeley McPherson, d'66.

**David Michener,** c'64, Takoma Park, Maryland, 80, Oct. 8. David served in the Peace Corps and was a librarian at the Library of Congress. He is survived by his wife, Meg Finn.

Naomi Olsen Mills, d<sup>2</sup>63, Kansas City, 82, May 12, 2023. Naomi worked in the Bonner Springs school district for over 30 years as a teacher and later as Head Start director. She was preceded in death by her husband, John.

Larry Milne, p'63, Little Rock, Arkansas, 81, Oct. 3, 2022. Larry was dean of the college of pharmacy at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences for many years. He is survived by his wife, Phyllis.

**Randolph Neil**, '66, Overland Park, 82, March 6. Randy, a former KU cheerleader, founded the International Cheerleading Foundation and was its CEO for 30 years. He is survived by his wife, Denise Fouquet-Neil.

**Paul Nelson,** b'67, Peoria, Illinois, 82, March 27. Paul, a U.S. Air Force veteran, worked at Caterpillar Inc. for 36 years. He is survived by his wife, Margaret Williams Nelson, f'65.

**S. Edward Nevius,** c'67, Derwood, Maryland, 77, Dec. 15, 2022. Ed was a statistician at the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. He is survived by his wife, Anna.

**Patrick Page**, m'68, Bluffton, South Carolina, 80, July 16, 2023. Pat, a U.S. Army veteran, was a missionary doctor and later worked in emergency rooms. He is survived by his wife, Christine.

**Thomas Palmerlee,** c'63, Washington, D.C., 81, April 7, 2023. Tom, a U.S. Marine Corps veteran, was a staff officer at the Transportation Research Board for 25 years. His wife, Christina Robinson Palmerlee, c'63, g'71, e'74, preceded him in death.

**Gary Rankin**, d'60, g'63, Oklahoma City, 85, July 18, 2023. Gary worked at Oklahoma City Community College for over 25 years. His wife, Tommie, preceded him in death.

Jesse Reinstein, PhD'69, Platteville, Wisconsin, 80, Oct. 26, 2022. Jesse was a chemistry professor at the University of Wisconsin-Platteville for 40 years. He is survived by his wife, Fern.

**Barbara Heath Roberts,** '65, Bonner Springs, 80, Oct. 5. Her husband, Ed, b'63, preceded her in death.

Thomas Shortlidge, f'66, Lakeside, Michigan, 80, Jan. 30. Tom worked in advertising for 33 years. His clients included Adidas, Crate & Barrel and John Deere. He is survived by his wife, Carole.

**Stephen Simonds,** e'68, Albuquerque, New Mexico, 79, July 2, 2023. Steve served in the U.S. Navy and was a systems engineer. His wife, Jayne Simon Simonds, d'68, preceded him in death.

**Elbert Smith III,** c'61, m'65, Overland Park, 84, June 22, 2023. Elbert was a pediatrician and co-founded Pediatric Associates. His wife, Marcie, died Nov. 18, 2023.

Sally L'Ecuyer Smith, d'61, Salinas, California, 84, July 23, 2023. Sally was a teacher for over 30 years.

James Straight, e'62, g'63, Los Alamos, New Mexico, 83, Jan. 27. Jim served in the U.S. Army and later worked at Los Alamos National Laboratory for 30 years. His wife, Bobbye Cunningham Straight, d'62, preceded him in death.

Karen Kreider Sweeney, d'67, Springfield, Missouri, 78, Aug. 10, 2023. Karen was assistant dean of women at KU and later was dean of students and a vice president at Drury University. She is survived by her husband, Miles, b'67, l'72.

**David Tilford,** c'66, m'70, Portland, Oregon, 79, Feb. 7. David, a U.S. Navy veteran, was a physician at Northwest Permanente and later at Oregon Health & Science University. He is survived by his wife, Nancy Pinet Tilford, c'69.

Sandra Ackerman Villarreal, d'60, Denver, 85, April 12. Sandy taught high school Spanish and was a business analyst at U.S. Bank. She is survived by her husband, Ramón, c'60, g'65.

**David Warren**, c'60, g'64, Wichita, 84, Sept. 19. David was a city manager in Kansas and Missouri. He was preceded in death by his wife, Patricia Binns Warren, c'94.

**F. Joe Weigand,** f'65, d'66, Florissant, Missouri, 79, Aug. 16, 2023. Joe was a music teacher and band director for over 40 years. His wife, Nancy Abel Weigand, c'68, survives.

Catherine Cochran Wilcox, d'66, Olathe, 79, May 25, 2023. Cathy was a speech-language therapist and later worked at Fort Hays State University. She is survived by her husband, Howard, c'66, m'70.

**Robert Witham,** e'64, Dunedin, Florida, 81, Aug. 3, 2023. Bob worked at Honeywell for 30 years. He is survived by his wife, Audrey.

**David Yoder,** PhD'65, Pittsboro, North Carolina, 90, Feb. 2, 2023. David was professor emeritus of speech and hearing sciences at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. His wife, Dolores, survives.

**1970s** Albert Boan, c'72, Kansas City, 73, March 21, 2023. Al was head of maintenance at Metropolitan Community College for over 30 years. His wife, Julie Hyde-Boan, preceded him in death.

**Colette Bushnell Burton,** c'71, g'80, Montgomery Village, Maryland, 74, March 3. Colette worked for a utility company as a research scientist and later as an environmental engineer. She is survived by her husband, Thomas, c'70, e'70.

**Carol Scott Elliott,** h'72, g'82, PhD'06, Olathe, 85, March 9. Carol, a U.S. Air Force veteran, was professor emerita and the first chair of KU's department of nurse anesthesia education, a role she held for nearly 40 years. Her husband, Robert, preceded her in death.

**Ola Stover Faucher,** c'71 g'88, Lawrence, 74, March 28. Ola worked at KU for 47 years and was director of human resources from 1998 until her retirement in 2019. Her husband, Ted, PhD'79, survives.

James Fender, '75, Lawrence, 70, March 11. Jim, a former KU football player, worked in sports and insurance, among other endeavors, and owned The Mad Hatter nightclub.

James Kring Jr., e'70, Topeka, 80, July 3, 2023. Jim was a structural engineer. He is survived by his wife, Donna.

**Steven McBride**, c'74, Portland, Oregon, 71, Aug. 27, 2023. Steve was an investigator for the federal government for over 30 years. He is survived by his wife, Jana.

**David Neely,** f<sup>2</sup>73, Lawrence, 75, Feb. 25. David, a musician,

played in several local ensembles and was a longtime Lawrence bus driver.

**Roy Nicholls Jr.,** '70, Joplin, Missouri, 75, Oct. 15, 2022. Roy, a U.S. Army veteran, worked in electronics manufacturing for 35 years.

**Amy O'Brien-Ladner,** h'78, m'84, Kansas City, 67, Jan. 9. Amy was a pulmonologist and professor emerita in the School of Medicine. She is survived by her husband, Dale, b'78.

**A. William Schubert,** c'70, m'74, Charleston, Illinois, 75, April 23. Will practiced ophthalmology for over 40 years. He is survived by his wife, Karla.

Albert Shank Jr., b'77, Liberal, 68, Feb. 22. Al, a former KU football player, was owner and CEO of Al Shank Insurance. He served on the Alumni Association's board of directors.

**1980s Ruth Mitchel,** g'83, Lawrence, 88, May 22, 2023. Ruth was a special education teacher. Her husband, Farrell, p'60, preceded her in death.

**Thomas Mullender III,** c'80, Overland Park, 65, April 15. Tom worked in the insurance industry for 30 years. He is survived by his wife, Anne Cameron.

### 1990s Kevin Donohue,

j'93, Overland Park, 55, March 16. Kevin worked in eyewear and vision equipment sales.

James Frink, d'96, Topeka, 71, Feb. 5. Jim served in the Lawrence Police Department and was later a middle school science teacher. He is survived by his wife, Sharon.

**Lisa Tomasch Sonsthagen,** g'95, Overland Park, 55, Feb. 24. Lisa was a school psychologist. She is survived by her husband, Larry, b'92.

**2000s Jennifer Goetz,** '05, Topeka, 43, Sept. 13. Jennifer worked in behavioral health.

**Melody Ard Spurney,** j'00, Wichita, 45, Jan. 18. Melody was an editor and later the executive director of the Newton Convention & Visitors Bureau. She is survived by her husband, Blake, j'93.

**2010s Austin Welch,** c'11, Olathe, 35, Feb. 14, 2023. Austin worked in banking and later at Compass Minerals.

2020s David Scheffer,

m'22, Wichita, 28, April 15. David was an anesthesiology resident at Northwestern Medicine in Chicago.

### UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY

**Grover Everett Jr.,** Tucson, Arizona, 82, Feb. 24. Grover was a chemistry professor at KU for 33 years, retiring as Chancellors Club Teaching Professor. His wife, Carolyn, preceded him in death.

Morris Faiman, assoc., Overland Park, 91, April 23. Morris was professor emeritus of pharmacology & toxicology and a research professor at the Life Span Institute. He worked at KU from 1965 until his death. He is survived by his wife, Lynne.

**Bryant Freeman,** assoc., Lawrence, 92, Feb. 3. Bryant, professor emeritus of African and African-American studies, worked at KU for over 35 years and founded KU's Institute of Haitian Studies. He is survived by his wife, Stephanie.

**Jeffrey Moran,** Lawrence, 57, April 17. Jeff was professor

of history and had worked at KU since 1998. He is survived by his wife, Susan Kang.

**Richard Sapp,** assoc., Lawrence, 95, Jan. 24. Richard was professor emeritus of physics and astronomy and worked at KU for 36 years. He is survived by his wife, Phyllis Miller Sapp, g'78.

Kristin Scott, Lawrence, 56, Jan. 20. Kristin worked in academic support at KU for nearly 20 years.

**Peggy Showalter,** assoc., Lawrence, 88, March 15. Peggy was an administrative assistant at the Life Span Institute for many years. Her husband, Paul, preceded her in death.

James Taylor, Issaquah, Washington, 93, Jan. 3. James was professor emeritus in the School of Social Welfare, where he taught for 26 years.

### ASSOCIATES

**Barbara Becker,** assoc., Denver, 84, Oct. 10. Barbara served on several boards at Emporia State University. Her husband, Frank, e'58, preceded her in death.

**Sharon Glenn**, assoc., Garden City, 62, July 13, 2023. Sharon was a cosmetologist. She is survived by her husband, Randy.

**Elizabeth Lichtwardt,** assoc., Lawrence, 96, March 2. Betty was an advocate for responsible land use and, with her late husband, Bob, donated land that would become part of Lawrence Nature Park.

**Edmund Plese**, assoc., Overland Park, 73, Sept. 29. Ed, a U.S. Army Reserves veteran, was a psychiatric nurse and nurse administrator. He is survived by his wife, Marsha, d'91, g'02.

Throughout their time on the Hill, the Jayhawks who arrived during lockdown, weathering remote classwork and uncertain social ties, learned to lean on one another, all the way up to their May 12 Commencement—and surely, in the finest KU alumni tradition, for years still to come.

Photograph by Steve Puppe

Kennedy

"This was the beginning of it, and Kennedy knew that," Bronson says of plutonium's

central role in U.S. efforts to create a war-ending bomb. "He was very young, and it was, maybe, too much for his age, so I had to be able to portray that dread, all that responsibility."

At the conclusion of World War II, Kennedy in 1945 was recruited to join the faculty of Washington University in St. Louis. He arrived in spring 1946, and, told he could hire whomever he wanted, brought along five other Los Alamos chemists. He and his team came to be known in school lore as the Los Alamos Six.

Kennedy is credited with transforming an institution then known for strong undergraduate programs into a research and graduate studies powerhouse, and is revered for opening WashU to African American graduate students and the faculty roster to scientists blackballed by McCarthy-era anti-Communist slander.

Kennedy's accomplishments are even more remarkable given that he was only 40 when he died of stomach cancer, the same disease to which he'd lost his mother.

"One of the most rewarding experiences was the trust that Christopher Nolan put in his actors," Bronson says of his time on the "Oppenheimer" set. "The other was a level of professionalism that I thought didn't exist, finding yourself in an environment where everyone is truly performing at their best. I was able to feel the energy of people making something exceptional."

Exactly, it seems safe to presume, as Joe Kennedy and his colleagues worked and lived in a rarefied realm.

Welcome back to the fold, Professor Kennedy. We regret having overlooked you and your legacy for far too long.

—Chris Lazzarino

Discoverer, discovered

*Oppenheimer' helps restore lost link to scientific titan* 

WE HERE AT *Kansas Alumni*—KU history nerds par excellence, if we do say so ourselves—first heard of Joseph W. Kennedy, a co-discover of plutonium, from the unlikeliest of sources: a Jan. 5 email from Troy Bronson, a young actor and senior at the University of California, Berkeley.

"Kennedy, a notable alumnus of the University of Kansas, is a figure of immense historical importance and played a critical role in scientific history as the discoverer of plutonium," Bronson wrote. "My portrayal of Kennedy was deeply influenced by researching his time in Lawrence, a period that was instrumental in shaping his scientific career."



Hold the phone: The character that Bronson portrayed in Christopher Nolan's "Oppenheimer"—which won Best Picture, along with six other Oscars—was a KU alumnus

who discovered plutonium? Come again?

Not only had we never heard of him, but neither had our massive records database, which turned up no mention of any alumni named Joseph W. Kennedy. After requesting a hand search of original archives, the Office of the University Registrar confirmed Bronson's lofty statement: Joseph W. Kennedy, g'37, graduated in June 1937 with a chemistry master's degree.

For those of us who have spent decades researching and writing about KU history, this arrival of Joseph Kennedy into our aerie offered the rarest delight: complete surprise.

With the help of Bronson, who thoroughly researched his role, as well as a bit of overdue research of our own, we learned that Kennedy, a native of Nacogdoches, Texas, came to KU after earning his bachelor's degree at what is now Stephen F. Austin State University in 1935.

"He was selective with the institutions that he attended, and he really wanted to go to the University of Kansas," Bronson says. "He very much liked having everyone around a table and being very hands-on, and he probably came to Berkeley because here he found the environment that was the closest to what he had at Kansas. He knew he wanted that environment where a lot of discoveries were happening and where truly anything was possible."

Bronson's character does not speak in the film and appears only briefly, yet the unproven actor had to bring Kennedy to life and give him his proper due, in both the movie and history; it was not an accident that Kennedy appears troubled and brooding while sharing scenes with excited scientists who seem unaware of the implications of the project unfolding in their Berkeley labs.

Kennedy, then a 24-year-old PhD student, was credited with discovering the element plutonium in 1940 alongside Cal-Berkeley faculty giants Glenn Seaborg and Edwin McMillan—who later shared the 1951 Nobel Prize in physics—and fellow doctoral student Arthur Wahl. A social media page dedicated to the science underpinning "Oppenheimer" noted that the movie "honors the collective endeavor while rightfully crediting Kennedy as the key discoverer."

Whatever controversy might have emerged over who did what, it was apparently no concern for Kennedy, who immediately grasped plutonium's implications. Despite Kennedy's youth, Gen. Leslie Groves appointed him the Manhattan Project's head of chemistry and metallurgy at the nascent Los Alamos Laboratory.

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# "For me, it's not just... 'I'm the doctor and you're the patient."

We're partners."

 Raed Al-Rajabi, MD Physician Medicine Clinical Oncology

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