



NEWSLETTER

President's Pen

Dear Piedmont University Community,

Spring is blooming all around us, students and faculty are gearing up for their last push towards finals week, and I want to encourage each of you as we approach the last few weeks of the semester.

This season reminds us of growth, renewal, and the promise of new beginnings - all of which reflect the incredible work we've done together this year. Whether you're preparing for final exams, important projects, or simply looking ahead to what's next, know you have a community here cheering you on.

Finish strong, take care of yourselves and one another, and remember - every challenge you overcome brings you closer to your goals.

Sincerely,
Marshall M. Criser, III

April 2025

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Piedmont Hosts PAL Games for Local Elementary Schools

by Athletic Communications



Once again, Piedmont University was proud to sponsor the PAL Games (Piedmont Athletic Lions Games), a special day of competition and camaraderie for students, staff, and local elementary school students with special needs.

After a three-year hiatus due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the games returned in 2023 to great success and have continued for the last three years.

This year, the event took place on Thursday, March 20, inside Cave Arena to great success. The student-led event was organized by Ann Sutton, Assistant Vice President for Advancement and Development at Piedmont.

Each elementary school student was paired up with a Piedmont "pal" for the event. The activities included lacrosse, basketball, soccer, cornhole and Minion bowling.

Piedmont athletics played a major role in the event, as Head Women's Soccer Coach Timmy McCormack provided live PA while Lindsay Dilbeck, an assistant professor in the health science department, led the always popular group dances.

Two Piedmont student athletes, Nathan Jacome from men's soccer and Sarah Row from women's tennis, offered a special perspective on what the day meant to them.

"It makes Piedmont an amazing environment to be in. Everybody coming together to help out these kids and have an amazing day, it's great to see!" - Nathan Jacome, Piedmont Men's Soccer



"The best part of the day is seeing how big my pal's heart is. He cares so much for other people. He keeps giving the ball back to the next person in line without me asking. So just seeing how big his heart is has made a really big impact on me today." - Sarah Row, Piedmont Women's Tennis

The project continues a growing commitment from Piedmont students and athletes to both become and stay involved with the local community while making a difference in the lives of those around them. These students give back to the local schools and extend their love for sports and their educational studies.



Unexpected Application Takes Piedmont Student Paige Kluba to the NCAA National Student Athlete Advisory Council



by Grace Wills



When Paige Kluba applied to join the NCAA National Student Athlete Advisory Council (SAAC), she did not know she was.

"I thought I was applying for our conference SAAC," Paige says, referring to the advisory group for the Collegiate Conference of the South. Instead, her application went to the national level — and was accepted. She became one of only 42 representatives from Division III schools across the country to join the National SAAC, a group whose purpose is to consult with NCAA officials on life as a student-athlete and potential policy changes.

The confusion did not stem from a lack of ambition. Paige's list of accomplishments demonstrates her commitment to excellence. As a sports communication and mass communication double major, she plans to graduate early and pursue a Master of Business Administration degree. She plays on Piedmont's women's soccer team. She's the editor-in-chief of The Roar, Piedmont's student-run newspaper.

Before she ever joined SAAC, the NCAA had already featured her work on "Why DIII" stories, in which athletes at Division III schools explained their college decision.

Paige's own decision to go DIII was an unexpected one. Both her parents had participated in DI sports in college, and she had intentions to do the same. That was until she toured Piedmont and knew she had found her perfect fit. The close-knit community and personal attention Piedmont provides, she says, made all the difference.

Part of Paige's on-campus community is her coach, Timmy McCormack. He was the one who encouraged her to apply to SAAC.

"Paige not only has the courage to speak on issues surrounding the student-athlete experience, but she also has the ability to communicate eloquently and effectively with a group," said Coach McCormack.

The experience in SAAC, Paige reports, is fantastic. She has made new friends who despite diverse backgrounds bond over their shared experience as student athletes. She and other representatives have attended conferences, sports events, and even conga danced together through a Nashville convention center.

One memory in particular stands out for Paige. The SAAC members participated in a vote on whether to approve women's wrestling as an official NCAA sport. Paige was thrilled to be present as the sport was approved with a 100 percent yes vote.

"As a female athlete and someone interested in sports communication, that was really important to me," she said.



To read the full story, click [here](#).

Three-Time Piedmont Alumnus Patrick Franklin Takes Helm as Superintendent of Habersham County Schools

by Terrie Ellerbee



Patrick Franklin became superintendent of the Habersham County School System on April 1. His love for education began in childhood with his late mother, Brenda Joyce Franklin. She taught in Habersham County schools for more than 34 years. Franklin's wife, Chrissy, is also an educator.

Franklin earned three Piedmont degrees: an undergraduate in Broadfield social science (2003), a master's in teaching (2006), and an Education Specialist degree (2007). He takes over a school system with a high school that boasts one of the best graduation rates of 24 in the region. Habersham Central High School graduated 98.5 percent of its seniors last year.

"I'm going to be happy when that is 100 percent because I want those kids down the line — whether it's going to Piedmont, technical school, the military — I don't want the lack of that piece of paper to be a hindrance," Franklin said. "We want to be one of the best in Georgia and I think we're well on the way."

As he sets goals for his administration, Franklin will prioritize literacy at the elementary level. "If we do well at a younger age, it will help down the road. I think we can focus on that."

Franklin believes in "community schools," and that is how he thinks of each campus in the Habersham system.

"Many of those schools have been here for years. Other counties will usually close smaller locations and build one massive school. In my opinion, that is not good. I knew every family in Clarkesville. They knew me. That is important," said Franklin, who was principal of Clarkesville Elementary School from 2015-2022 before being named assistant superintendent, his most recent post.

That kind of knowing helps place students and teachers in classrooms where they are the best fit. It extends to developing leadership pipelines for teachers, assistant principals, and principals.

Franklin acknowledged the strong relationship between Habersham County schools and Piedmont University. Student teachers are in classes every day.

The school system is the second largest employer in Habersham County, with 14 schools, 7,200-plus students, and buses that travel more than 6,000 miles every day. As superintendent, Franklin is in discussions with local leaders and employers about the big picture, namely managing the growth that is coming to Habersham County. How can the school system adapt to it while keeping the communities that have been built over decades?

"That's going to be one of our largest challenges," Franklin said. "We've been working on it for years, so we'll continue to plan, and we'll be flexible."

Franklin's children will grow up — as he did — in the school system and graduate high school in Habersham County. Being superintendent is more than a job for him. It's a promise Franklin makes to his children.

"For them and every student, I want to leave it better. You can always improve."

Piedmont's Director of Counseling Sean Williamson Honored with State Association Award

by Terrie Ellerbee



Piedmont University Director of Counseling Services Sean Williamson was honored with the Sylvia Shortt Counselor of the Year Award at the 32nd Annual Georgia College Counseling Association (GCCA) Conference in January in St. Simons Island, Georgia.

Williamson's previous experience includes director of behavioral health at a hospital, adjunct professor, and 14 years as director of counseling at Emmanuel University. He joined Piedmont in 2022.

"Sean is certainly deserving of this award," said Dr. Kimberly Crawford, Piedmont University VP of Student Affairs. "Since arriving at Piedmont, he has been dedicated to creating more awareness and visibility so our campus community is aware of how the counseling department can offer support services."

Every year, the GCCA presents seven awards at the annual conference that identify and encourage those in college counseling who are making a difference.

"I was so honored to receive the Sylvia Shortt Counselor of the Year Award from the Georgia College Counseling Association," Williamson said. "It's always nice to be recognized for the work you do, but the greater honor is to be able to work with a fantastic team each and every day at a place where you feel supported and encouraged by your peers and administrators and get to make a difference in the lives of students. Piedmont is a wonderful place to come to work every day and be able to share your passion to see what students become."



Calendar of Events

APRIL

4/10-13 Steel Magnolias

4/10 Piedmont Wind Ensemble

4/10 Symposium

4/15 Piedmont String Orchestra

4/17 Piedmont Chamber

Ensembles

4/26 Great Composers Concert

4/26 Alumni Reunion Day

MAY

5/9 Spring Commencement

5/26 Memorial Day Holiday

JUNE

6/13 Summer Orientation

6/16 Triple Threat Musical

Theater Intensive

For event details, or to view the full calendar, please visit [here](#).