



NEWSLETTER

President's Pen

Dear Piedmont University Community,

This time of year offers a chance to pause, reflect on our achievements, and set intentions for what comes next. For some of you, this summer may be a time for internships, research, or community engagement. For others, it's a time to rest, recharge, and reconnect with friends and family. All of these are essential parts of growth - personally, academically, and professionally.

We are already preparing for the fall semester, and I'm excited about what's ahead. New opportunities, fresh ideas, and shared experiences await us. Until then, I encourage you to stay curious, take care of your well-being, and continue to support one another as part of this wonderful university family.

I wish you all a fulfilling and restorative summer.

Sincerely,
Marshall M. Criser, III

June 2025

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First-Ever Master's Degree SLP Graduates Achieve 100% Exam Pass Rate, Begin Careers in the Field

by Terrie Ellerbee



Piedmont University's Speech-Language Pathology (SLP) program celebrates a milestone: its inaugural Master of Science graduating class has achieved a 100 percent pass rate on both comprehensive and national Praxis licensure exams. Even more impressively, 10 of the 12 students have already accepted job offers and are poised to begin making a clinical impact immediately.

"This outcome reflects the dedication, resilience, and excellence of our students, faculty, and the entire support network behind this program," said Dr. Megan E. Cuellar, Program Director of Communicative Sciences and Disorders.

Cuellar praised the graduating class for setting "the gold standard."

"Your commitment to academic and clinical excellence, along with your collaborative spirit, has shaped the future of this program," she said. "You are building a legacy that future cohorts will follow with pride. Thank you for trusting us to be part of your journey."

Faculty, staff, and university leadership were also recognized for their integral roles in the program's success.

"Piedmont's passion for creating a high-quality, student-centered program is the foundation of our success—and we're just getting started," Cuellar said. "This moment is a powerful milestone in our growth, and we look forward to continuing to build one of the Southeast's most dynamic and effective graduate programs in speech-language pathology."

About the Program

Piedmont University's Master of Science in Speech-Language Pathology is a growing, high-demand program based in Demorest, Georgia. The program also offers a five-year bachelor's-to-master's track, allowing students to complete both degrees in an accelerated timeline.



About the Clinic

Located on Piedmont's Demorest campus, the Piedmont University Speech and Language Clinic is a state-of-the-art facility serving patients of all ages. The clinic offers evidence-based care for communication and swallowing disorders, and its university affiliation ensures patients receive the most current, research-informed treatments.

[For more, visit here.](#)



Silas Goolsby Earns Second Team All-American at NCAA Division III Track & Field National Championship



by Danielle Percival



Putting an exclamation point on the 2024-25 academic year for Piedmont University Athletics, Silas Goolsby represented the Lions at the NCAA Division III Track & Field National Championship earning All-American honors.

Goolsby qualified for the national championship in the 200m with his mark of 21.10 in the regular season in early April at the Electric City Invitational in Anderson, S.C.

His time of 21.10 ranked second nationally at the time and remained inside the top 15 coming in tied for 14th best nationally at the end of the year. The top 22 individuals in each event qualify for the national championship.

The junior from Dacula, Georgia earned USTFCCCA All-Region honors in the 200m as one of the top five individuals in the 200m in the South Region.

At the NCAA Division III National Championship, Goolsby placed 16th in the country with a time of 21.60 to earn Second Team All-American honors, becoming just the second All-American in Piedmont Track & Field history joining Anthony Jordan.

His time of 21.60 was the second fastest time he has run since his 21.10 qualifying mark.

Goolsby was in lane eight of the second heat of the 200m prelims on Thursday and finished fifth in his heat, but a DQ above him moved Goolsby up the final leaderboard.



Holden Oversoul Head Chef Jamie Allred partners with Piedmont Professor Chris Kelly's art students for an unforgettable FOTA benefit

by Grace Wills



L to R: Chris Kelly, Chef Allred, Vickie Turner, Marshall Criser

On the evening of April 10, hail pounded the roof and thunder boomed, but the atmosphere on Holden Oversoul's patio was warm as can be at the inaugural FOTA benefit dinner.

The idea for the dinner began with Holden Oversoul owner and Head Chef Jamie Allred and Professor Chris Kelly. Professor Kelly approached Chef Allred about having ceramics students create dishes for the restaurant. Chef Allred suggested that the dishes be used at a dinner that would benefit Friends of the Arts, a fund that plays a vital role in funding opportunities for fine arts students. With Professor Kelly's enthusiastic agreement, preparations for the meal began.

The students gathered in the restaurant in January for a brief on the plan. As Chef Allred described each course of the meal, the students took notes and began sketches, beginning the process of tailoring each dish to the food it would hold. At the dinner, guests would have the opportunity to purchase the ceramics from which they ate their meals. The following months saw hours of hard work in the ceramics studio making samples and then altering them based on Chef Allred's feedback. In the end, hundreds of pieces were sculpted, glazed, and ready to serve.

The evening of the meal arrived, and guests took their seats to the sounds of a live guitarist. On either side of the patio stood Professor Kelly's students beside tables overflowing with additional pottery for sale. Wowed by the dishes, guests began asking to buy dishes before the first course was even served. As the evening continued, the students had the chance to experience selling their own work to interested buyers.

In the end, the dinner was a major success that even a severe thunderstorm could not hamper. Thanks to Chef Allred's generous offer to donate \$60 from every \$80 slot at the meal, Friends of the Arts gained thousands of dollars. That funding can assist student trips, enable guest artists to visit, and more. From the donation to the student sales, the benefit to Piedmont's fine arts students from this dinner is immense.



The experience would not have been possible without Chef Allred. As Professor Kelly said, "I want to express our appreciation to Jamie for partnering with Piedmont. The impact goes well beyond the funds raised—our students gained valuable experience working alongside a local business, which made this collaboration especially meaningful."

With more ideas for similar benefits in the future, the partnership between Piedmont and Holden Oversoul is sure to be a special one. On behalf of the dinner guests, the student sculptors, fine arts students, and all of Piedmont: thank you, Chef Allred! And thank you to Professor Kelly and his students for their hard work in making the pottery — the event was extra special thanks to your artistic touch!



Piedmont University Celebrates Alumni Day 2025 with Campus Events and Honoree Recognition

by Terrie Ellerbee

Alumni Day 2025 brought energy, pride, and celebration to Piedmont University's Demorest campus as graduates returned for a full day of events—and to recognize some of Piedmont's most distinguished alumni. From a morning Alumni Association breakfast and wetlands walk to baseball games and a Chamber Singers reunion, the schedule reflected Piedmont's vibrant campus spirit. The highlight of the day, however, was the honoring of the 2025 Alumni Award recipients—an accomplished group that includes a professional baseball player and a former teacher who helped name the space shuttle Endeavour.

Distinguished Alumni Award: Cris Carpenter '99

The *Distinguished Alumni Award* is the highest honor the Piedmont University Alumni Association bestows. It recognizes a graduate with a remarkable professional record, proven leadership, dedication to public and community service, and ongoing support of Piedmont University and its mission.

This year's recipient, **Cris Carpenter**, exemplifies those ideals. A Gainesville native and former professional athlete, Carpenter played Major League Baseball for eight years with teams including the St. Louis Cardinals, Florida Marlins, Texas Rangers, and Milwaukee Brewers. Before that, he earned acclaim as a two-sport All-American at the University of Georgia.

After retiring from baseball in 1996, Carpenter returned to school and graduated magna cum laude from Piedmont in 1999. He went on to teach and coach baseball at his alma mater, Gainesville High School, where he is set to retire this year after 25 years of service. His legacy continues both in the classroom and on the field.



Pacesetter Award: Dr. Claire Kitchens Stevenson '20 Ed.S

The *Pacesetter Award* honors graduates who embody the Piedmont tradition of visionary leadership, service, and community activism. **Dr. Claire Kitchens Stevenson**, a dynamic educator and advocate, is a shining example.

A Piedmont dual-enrollment student during high school, Stevenson earned her Educational Specialist degree in Curriculum and Instruction in 2020, later adding endorsements in gifted and ESOL education. In 2023, while welcoming her first child, she completed her doctorate—in just 18 months—while continuing to lead impactful school improvement initiatives.

She is known for revitalizing her school's yearbook program, mentoring aspiring educators, and advising student leadership organizations. In addition to her work in education, she has advocated for sexual assault survivors across seven Georgia counties through Bridging Hope (formerly Rape Response) and raised over \$60,000 for the 1LT Weston Lee Memorial Scholarship at the University of North Georgia. She also serves on the UNG Alumni Board of Directors and is marketing chair for Women of UNG.

Stevenson credits Piedmont for giving her the foundation to lead with courage and heart: "Piedmont helped me get ahead in my own education, which allows me to better serve my students and support their journeys."



Piedmont University Celebrates Alumni Day 2025 with Campus Events and Honoree Recognition

by Terrie Ellerbee

Excellence in Education Award: Micah Dingler '05, MAT '06

The *Excellence in Education Award* recognizes alumni who have made significant contributions to the field of education. This year's recipient, **Micah Dingler**, has achieved success as both an educator and a world-class performer.



Dingler earned a BA in Vocal Performance and an MAT in Music Education with a concentration in choral conducting from Piedmont, followed by a Master of Music in voice and opera from Northwestern University. He performs professionally with elite ensembles, including the Chicago Symphony Chorus, Lyric Opera Chorus, and the Grammy Award-winning chamber choir *The Crossing*, where he has recorded 30 albums and contributed to four Grammy-winning performances.

Beyond the stage, Dingler is a dedicated educator who teaches voice to approximately 40 students across four schools in the Chicago area. He also leads workshops and collaborates with top universities including Dartmouth, Princeton, Rice, and the University of Chicago.

His career was jumpstarted in part by Dr. Wallace Hinson, former Associate Dean of Piedmont's School of Fine Arts, who helped him land a transformative international performance opportunity. Dingler's work continues to bridge education and the arts on a global stage.

Alumni Service Award: Dr. Martha Cantrell '80

The *Alumni Service Award* is given to a graduate whose dedication and service have significantly benefited the university. **Dr. Martha Cantrell** has done just that for more than 27 years as a Piedmont University Trustee.

As a student, Cantrell was a record-setting hurdler, cheerleader, student government president, and presidential secretary. Since graduating in 1980, she's spent over four decades in education and public service. In 1989, her leadership helped name NASA's space shuttle *Endeavour* through a national student contest, earning her and her students a visit to the White House and a seat at the shuttle's maiden launch.

Cantrell has served on key educational boards, including Georgia's Gifted Children Association and Governor Nathan Deal's Teacher Advisory Board. A torchbearer for the 1996 Olympic Games, she is also a graduate of Leadership Georgia and remains deeply involved in her local community. She is a proud mother of three and grandmother of five.



Learn More About Piedmont Alumni

Piedmont University is proud to celebrate the success, service, and spirit of its alumni. For more information about the Alumni Association, upcoming alumni events, or ways to give back, visit [here](#).

Holden Oversoul FOTA Benefit Dinner

Calendar of Events

JUNE

- 6/13 Summer Orientation 1
- 6/16 Triple Threat Musical Theater Intensive
- 6/27 Summer Orientation 2

JULY

- 7/4 Independence Day
- 7/18 Summer Commencement
- 7/25 Summer Orientation 3

AUGUST

- 8/12 Opening Convocation
- 8/13 Fall Classes Begin

SEPTEMBER

- 9/2 37th Annual Coach Cave Golf Tournament @ The Orchard
- 9/20 Fall Family Day - includes concert in Ampitheater

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





ANNUAL GIFTS of \$1,000 OR MORE
7/1/2024-6/5/2025

We would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to our Yonahian Society and donors. Your generosity and support have made a significant impact on Piedmont University. Your contributions have enabled us to continue our work, reach our goals, and make a positive difference in the lives of those we serve.

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assistance to students in need.

To donate, please visit <https://piedmont.edu/giving>