



NEWSLETTER

President's Pen

Dear Piedmont University Community,

A new year brings fresh and exciting opportunities to bridge the gap - new ideas to explore, goals to pursue, and chances to learn and grow together. Whether you are teaching, learning, supporting our mission, or guiding the university forward, your presence and commitment make this community what it is.

I hope the months ahead are filled with curiosity, purpose, and meaningful moments both inside and outside the classroom. Thank you for all you do to make Piedmont a place where people belong and where every journey matters.

I wish you a healthy, successful, and fulfilling semester.

Sincerely,
Marshall M. Criser, III

January 2026

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From Scholarship to Doctorate: The Power of Piedmont's Personal Touch

by Grace Wills



Few people can say they are pursuing a doctorate. Fewer still can say they are earning that degree while teaching full-time. Maghan Jefferson is one of those select few, and she credits the place where she's received all of her degrees for kickstarting her success: Piedmont. Each step of her journey was marked by the kinds of meaningful, one-on-one interactions that define our university.

Maghan's Piedmont story began in high school, when unexpected circumstances led to an unlikely friendship. Maghan was accidentally scheduled for a tour of Piedmont during the university's spring break. Former Piedmont security officer "Mr. Bruce" pulled up on a golf cart and offered to be her personal guide. For the next hour, she and her family received a VIP tour of campus so good that it made Maghan want to choose Piedmont for the next four years. Still, Maghan was nervous about covering the cost of college. She attended Open House

with her mom where she met music professor Wally Hinson, who took the time to chat with Maghan. When he learned her intention to pursue a music degree, he took her immediately to audition, then changed her life by offering a scholarship on the spot.

"In hindsight, it's clear the Lord was looking out for me at every stage," Maghan recalls. Indeed, throughout her years at Piedmont, she found community through her classmates and through the staff she connected with as a student worker (whom she describes as her "team of mama bears"). The love and care she felt at Piedmont inspired her to choose it again for her master's, specialist, and now doctorate degrees.

"I wasn't so sure about a doctorate at first," Maghan said, but a note left on her final project for her specialist degree detailing what a great candidate she would make for the doctorate program stuck with her.

"This encouraging note was so impactful, I continued looking back at it, and over the years I just kept thinking about it until I decided it was time," Maghan said.

Now, Maghan is enrolled in her doctoral coursework and looks to begin work on her dissertation in the next year. She is passionate about classroom management, and could see herself focusing on that for research and potential coaching opportunities post-graduation. On the other hand, she loves teaching and can see herself staying in the classroom. Maghan's possibilities are limitless, and one thing is clear: her journey as a Lion demonstrates the impact of Piedmont's personal touch.





Building a Legacy: Terry Martin Honored with Beyond the Spotlight Award

by Joseph Garwood



Piedmont softball head coach Terry Martin has been named the 2026 recipient of the Beyond the Spotlight Legacy Achievement Award, a prestigious honor presented in partnership with the King and His Court Historical Preservation Foundation and the Triangle Collegiate Softball Classic Foundation.

The award recognizes Division III coaches, players and volunteers who exemplify outstanding leadership, sportsmanship and long-term commitment to the game of softball. Rooted in the values of dedication and commitment—hallmarks of the legendary King and His Court—this honor celebrates individuals who have made a lasting, positive impact on the sport beyond wins and losses.

Martin, the longest-serving head coach in Piedmont Athletics history, will enter his 28th season leading the Lions this spring. Over nearly three decades, he has built one of Division III's most consistent and respected programs. His teams have surpassed 600 victories, earned eight NCAA national tournament appearances, captured five conference tournament championships and claimed 11 regular-season conference titles.



With 651 career wins across 27 seasons, Martin ranks among the nation's top 50 active Division III head coaches in total victories. His résumé includes 21 winning seasons, four 30-win campaigns, and a program-defining 40-plus win season in 2014.

His peers have recognized his excellence seven times with conference Coach of the Year honors across multiple leagues.

Equally impressive has been the program's success in the classroom. Martin's teams have finished in the NFCA Division III Team Academic Award national top 10 three times, including a national runner-up finish in 2009. He has helped more than 20 earn All-American Scholar-Athlete honors, while his players have collected 11 USA South "of the Year" awards, 41 all-conference selections, 15 NFCA All-Region honors and multiple CoSIDA Academic All-America accolades.

A native of Toccoa, Georgia, Martin starred as a catcher at Nyack College, earning All-Conference and All-American recognition, and later completed his master's degree at the United States Sports Academy. His Beyond the Spotlight honor stands as a fitting tribute to a career defined by excellence and enduring impact.

"Profe" Jefferson Bowers

by Grant Prather,
Sports Editor, The Roar

Professor Jefferson Bowers is a familiar face for many students at Piedmont University. His Spanish classes promote a high-energy form of learning, one that also keeps and makes connections.

Bowers graduated from Presbyterian College, then later received his Master's degree at Appalachian State. His teaching career began in 2015.

He makes students feel valued by asking them about their career interests and athletics, and by always cracking jokes in class. His classes strike a balance between lightheartedness and seriousness.



"I want students to know that I care about them, and even if they didn't learn Spanish, that they matter as a person and an individual," said Bowers. "I want someone to feel like they matter, like they're not just a number and that they have a unique personality and a unique set of gifts."

Bowers' classes are intensive, but easier if students apply themselves.

"I feel like he controls his class easily," said senior Michelle Cates. "I feel like I understood the material without having to do any extra work."

Professor Bowers also goes by Profe., which is short for professor in Spanish. Many students call him Profe when they see him around campus, or even when he makes an occasional appearance in the cafeteria.

Despite the birth of his first child in the middle of the semester, Professor Bowers has maintained an ecstatic class environment.

"[Having a child] has made me want to be a little more strict by seeing how my actions will one day affect my kid and how she performs in college," said Bowers. "It gives me a different perspective about some of the hardships that some people face, or the things that people carry with them into class or into the workspace. Everybody at one point in time was just a baby whose parents had hopes and dreams and aspirations for their kid."

Professor Bowers won Outstanding Advisor of the Year in 2021 and advises students who are indecisive about their major.

"That was one of my favorite moments, probably one of the most rewarding moments here at Piedmont," Bowers also mentions.

GBI Promotes Toccoa Native Larry Rudeseal to Assistant Special Agent in Charge

Courtesy of the GBI



The Georgia Bureau of Investigation recently announced the promotion of Larry Rudeseal to Assistant Special Agent in Charge (ASAC) of the GBI's Appalachian Regional Drug Enforcement Office (ARDEO). ASAC Rudeseal will be responsible for assisting with supervising the staff assigned to ARDEO, a multi-agency unit that serves 30 counties in northwest Georgia.

ASAC Rudeseal graduated from Piedmont University with a Bachelor of Arts in Criminal Justice in 2008.

"ASAC Larry Rudeseal has built a career defined by service, integrity, and outstanding investigative work," said GBI Director Chris Hosey. "His extensive experience in drug enforcement and his proven leadership make him exceptionally prepared to help guide ARDEO in its mission and serve our North Georgia communities."

"With nearly 25 years of law enforcement experience and two decades of service to the State of Georgia at the GBI, ASAC Rudeseal brings a wealth of knowledge to his new role," said Investigative Division Director Cynthia Adkins. "Throughout his career, ASAC Rudeseal has demonstrated exceptional skill, professionalism, and dedication to combating drug trafficking, and I look forward to seeing him continue that work in this leadership role."

ASAC Rudeseal began his career in law enforcement in 2001 with the Stephens County Sheriff's Office as a Detention Officer and later served as a Stephens County Patrol Deputy. Before joining the GBI, he also worked as an Investigator at the Franklin County Sheriff's Office. In 2004, he began his career with the GBI as a Task Force Agent assigned to the GBI Piedmont-Northern Multi-Agency Narcotics Squad (Piedmont-Northern MANS), working mid-level drug investigations in Northeast Georgia. In 2012, ASAC Rudeseal became a Special Agent and was assigned to the GBI's Region 8 Investigative Office in Cleveland, GA, and spent the next four years working general investigations across North Georgia. In 2016, ASAC Rudeseal was detached to the Drug Enforcement Administration and assigned to the Atlanta-Carolinas High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (AC-HIDTA) Task Force. For the next seven years, ASAC Rudeseal conducted federal drug investigations in Georgia and other states. In May 2024, ASAC Rudeseal transferred to the GBI Appalachian Regional Drug Enforcement Office (ARDEO), where he conducted drug investigations until his promotion to ASAC at ARDEO.

ASAC Rudeseal is a Georgia P.O.S.T. Certified Instructor and certified Use of Force Instructor. He is also a member of the GBI Bomb Disposal Unit. ASAC Rudeseal retired from the United States Army at the rank of Sergeant First Class, with a combined 20 years of service in the U.S. Army and Georgia Army National Guard.





the Revolutionists

Written by Lauren Gunderson

Directed by Kathy Blandin

FEBRUARY 19-22

Thursday - Saturday, February 19-21, 2026 at 7:30 PM

Sunday, February 22, 2026 at 2:00 PM

Swanson Black Box Theater



\$10 Adults, \$5 Seniors and Students, Piedmont Faculty, Staff, and Students are Free. Scan the QR code or call the Box Office at 706-778-8500 x1355 to purchase tickets.

THE REVOLUTIONISTS is presented by special arrangement with Broadway Licensing, LLC, servicing the Dramatists Play Service collection. (www.dramatists.com)



Calendar of Events

JANUARY

- 1/22 Art Reception: Handwork 2026: Jennifer Graff & Thaddeus Erdhaul
- 1/24 Museum Community Workshop: Watercolor Workshop with Kathleen Kollock
- 1/30 Admissions Counselor Day

FEBRUARY

- 2/1 Jeri-Mae G. Astolfi, piano
- 2/16 Admissions Open House
- 2/19-22 Theatre: The Revolutionists
- 2/28 Pro Musica Singers, directed by Wallace Hinson
- 2/28 Museum Community Workshop: Kids' Arts & Crafts with Imani Spence

MARCH

- 3/9-13 Spring Break
- 3/17 Forensic Science & Criminal Justice Preview
- 3/19 Piedmont Athletic Lions (PAL) Games
- 3/26 Piedmont University Singers
- 3/28 Museum Community Workshop: Sculpture Workshop with Normando Ismay
- 3/29 Louise Bass, organ

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



ANNUAL GIFTS of \$1,000 OR MORE
1/1/2025-1/6/2026

LIFETIME (\$25K+)

Edward '80, HonD'94 & Alice Ariail
Jim Armstrong
Gus Arrendale
Louise L. Bass
Sandra G. Borrow
Lewis A. Brannon
Marilyn K. Brown
Ben and Gail Cheek
Betty J. Chokos '62
Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta, Inc.
Council of Independent Colleges
President Marshall and Kimberly Criser
Leon Czikowsky Irrevocable Trust
Demorest Women's Club
Estate of Edwin H. Bingham
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Craig M. and Febby Faerber
Fieldale Farms Corporation
Fred C. and Katherine B. Andersen Foundation
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Georgia Independent College Association, Inc.
Georgia Power Company - Cornelia Office
Mack and Camilla Guest
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Drs. Delene & Jasper Lee
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Michael F. '09 and Kim Mansfield
Dr. James F. Mellichamp
Thomas A. and Lucile M. Moye Charitable Trust
John E. Mullins
Thomas B. Musser Trust Under Will
National Assoc. of Congregational Christian Churches
Old South Church in Boston

Peach State Federal Credit Union
Purdy Flooring & Design
Scovill Fasteners
Charles K. '54 and Catherine Sewell
John Siegel and John Templeton
Jim Sievers '63 and Dr. Samira Beckwith
Dock '72 and Nan Sisk
Judith Griggs Slade Charitable Remainder Trust
Jack Slade
South State Bank
Southeast Conference United Church of Christ
Ann Hawkins Starnes '53
Dr. H. Milton and Mrs. Carolyn Stewart
Dean Swanson
Stewart and Carol Swanson
Rev. Dr. Barbara & Ed Taylor
The Mary Jane Tenny Trust
Truist Bank
Union Congregational Church of Demorest
United Church of Christ
The Frances Wood Wilson Foundation, Inc.

CHAIRMAN'S CIRCLE (\$10K+)

Dr. Douglas A. Torrance
Marilyn Rothschild Trust

FOUNDER'S CIRCLE (\$5K+)

Dr. Christopher & Nannette Curran
Coca-Cola United of Gainesville
William S. Duffey

PRESIDENT'S CIRCLE (\$1K+)

David '67 & Virginia '68 Abbot
B&S Adventures
Lisa L. Black M'01, EdS'07
Jill Bradley '80
Jonathan '81 & Dr. Martha '80, EdS'10, EdD'12 Cantrell
Jessie Carmon
Cris '99 & Jane Carpenter
Marguerite A. Carpenter
Anne W. Chenault
Dr. Rhani Lott Choi '05
Lewis '67 & Dianne '69 Cody
Vallorie V. Coley M'99, EdS'04
Matthew '96 & Kate Cook
Pem and Lucy Cooley
Dr. Kimberly & Mr. Kody Crawford
Christina E. Criser
Dr. O.C. and Mrs. Manita Dean
Rev. Dr. Phil DeMore

Lindsay M. Dilbeck
Janet Donston '65
Ellucian
David '88 & Leslie Foster
Dr. Kevin Freeman
J. Summer '15, M'17 and Kelsey '15 Gantz
Morgan T. '17, 'M18 & Seth '18 George
Bob Glass
Habersham County Chamber of Commerce
Ladson & Caroline Haddow
Paulette Hamby
Bo and Ashley Hatchett
Betty Heathman
Hendrick Automotive Group
Elizabeth Hisey
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North Georgia Community Foundation
Cale Padgett '09
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Rev. Michael S. Robertson & Dr. Emily K. Robertson
Albert H. Santora
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Scottish Rite Foundation of Georgia
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All donors who make an annual gift of \$1,000 or more become Yonahians and are able to choose from a variety of giving opportunities that range from supporting the annual fund, arts, athletics, academics, scholarships, and a new bridge grant option that provides emergency assistance to students in need.

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

Thank You