



NEWSLETTER

President's Pen

Dear Piedmont University Community,

Welcome back, students and faculty!

As we begin a new academic year, I am filled with excitement for the opportunities that lie ahead for each of us.

Whether you are arriving on campus for the first time, or returning for your tenth year, now is the perfect time to check out all this university has to offer. From attending a fine arts performance to cheering your fellow Lions on at an athletic event, to joining one of the many fun-filled CAB experiences, I encourage you to try something new and get involved on campus.

Thank you for all you do to make our university such a vibrant and welcoming community. Let's make it a great year!

Sincerely,
Marshall M. Criser, III

August 2026

IN THIS ISSUE

Student Success	2
Staff Spotlight	4
Athletics	6
Alumni	7
Upcoming Events	8

MANE Leaders Talk What They Love About Piedmont

by Grace Wills



Chelsey Sanders — Spring 2026 elementary education graduate, current master's of education in elementary education student

Why did you become a MANE Leader?

- "I wanted to help first-year students feel comfortable and access resources."

What are your favorite Piedmont memories so far?

- "Being in SAIL, specifically going to the SAIL retreat."

What advice do you have for incoming first-year students?

- "Have fun! Stay out of your dorm room, go to events, and be open to opportunities."

Chelsey is a leader within the MANE program and has been part of it for several years now. What has this role meant to her?

- "It's my third year, so I have had a lot of experience now. I have learned a lot, and enjoyed being a mentor both to incoming freshmen and to the other MANE leaders. I think it's helped develop my leadership skills."



Hannah Marlowe — marketing major, graduating fall 2026

Why did you become a MANE Leader?

- "I love connecting with new students and working with admissions."

What are your favorite Piedmont memories so far?

- "Going to compete with the cross country team at Berry College. We had so much fun traveling together!"

What advice do you have for incoming first-year students?

- "Talk to all the new people you can and get involved on campus."



Jackson Parker — marketing and management double major, graduating spring 2029

Why did you become a MANE Leader?

- "I love being Leo the Lion!"

What are your favorite Piedmont memories so far?

- "When the ice storm hit campus last year. I stayed here to play in the little bit of snow we got with my friends."

What advice do you have for incoming first-year students?

- "Try talking to as many people as you can, and not just students. The relationships you form with faculty and staff can be important too."

MANE Leaders

by Grace Wills



Nick Parker — criminal justice major,
graduating spring 2029

Why did you become a MANE Leader?

- "I give tours on campus and enjoyed introducing people to campus, so this was a good fit."

What are your favorite Piedmont memories so far?

- "CAB events, specifically Late Night Rodeo."

What advice do you have for incoming first-year students?

- "Get involved on campus by getting a campus job! You'll get good experience and get to know Piedmont better."



Brandon Philpot — sports and healthcare
administration major, graduating spring 2028

Why did you become a MANE Leader?

- "I felt really welcomed at my Orientation and wanted to give that experience to other students. I wanted new students to know that I can be there for them not just at Orientation, but also be a friendly face around campus once school starts."

What are your favorite Piedmont memories so far?

- "The SAIL retreat!"

What advice do you have for incoming first-year students?

- "Get out of your comfort zone. Try new things! And learn how to manage your time."



Jayleen Lona — psychology major, graduating
spring 2029

Why did you become a MANE Leader?

- "I wanted to help out freshmen like my MANE Leader helped me, and let them know it's all gonna be okay."

What are your favorite Piedmont memories so far?

- "Being in SAIL! I met my two best friends there and I felt like I really found my place there."

What advice do you have for incoming first-year students?

- "Check your email every day! Manage your time. Bring a camera and capture as many memories as you can!"

Reboot: New CIO Schwarz Is Here to Make a Difference

by Terrie Ellerbee



Steve Schwarz is the kind of executive people call when something needs fixing by someone who won't flinch.

Piedmont University's new Chief Information Officer brings experience in technology and institutional leadership to the role. Schwarz overhauled financial systems at the University of North Carolina Wilmington, unified technology infrastructure across 12 schools at the University of Pennsylvania, and managed a national IT portfolio worth more than \$280 million annually at the Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond.

In April 2026, he arrived exactly where he wanted to be: Piedmont University in Demorest, Georgia.

"I wanted to make a more significant impact on the next generation of the workforce, and this opportunity to contribute is appealing to me at this stage of my career," Schwarz said. "I had accomplished both my own goals and those my former institution had expected of me, so the timing was right."

Challenges Accepted

Schwarz knew the challenges awaiting him at Piedmont. Some were obvious. Others had been telegraphed to him during campus visits, introductions, and in his first month on the job. He picked up on what wasn't being said: reboots were needed for the department, for equipment and infrastructure, for relationships.

"I am pretty good at reading between the lines, reading a room, and trying to employ active listening to ensure I am understanding what is being conveyed and communicated," Schwarz said. "My job involves a lot of psychology in the form of listening; being open to ideas and a large variety of opinions, inputs, and feedback; and relationship building, growing, maintaining, and sustaining. I think many folks think it's about computers and business applications being available and online — which it is — but those are the knowns."

Schwarz takes a portfolio management approach to IT, weighing risk, resources, the vision and the plans to achieve it. It's not rocket science, he said, but it is a balancing act. Collaboration is key.

"I do things with people, not for or to people," he said.

That means collaborating on a target before committing to hit it together, communicating honestly through the inevitable bumps in the road, and managing expectations around finite resources.

"We need to make technology simple and easy to use to enhance our learning and living experiences at Piedmont. I believe we can do that together as a campus community."

Outside the Classroom and Office

Schwarz is thinking beyond the classroom to how clubs and organizations could use technology to improve student engagement and involvement. He would love to see campus communities use drones for mapping — for leisure or for search and rescue. Schwarz said he was surprised to learn that Piedmont doesn't have a gaming club.

Continued on next page...

Reboot: New CIO Schwarz Is Here to Make a Difference, continued

by Terrie Ellerbee

"Creativity leads to innovation," he said. "Peanut butter came from a creative process, for example."

Off campus, Schwarz loves to listen to all kinds of music. The innovation and vast array of methods used to create music appeal to him.

He's also an amateur chef who has received genuinely strong reviews for the food he's served.

"For me, the cheffing is about having people eat the food and ask what we will make for the next meal. If I make a lot and it's mostly gone, then I know it was good. Actions speak so much louder than words when it comes to cooking and serving food. It's about how much people want that meal again and how much they eat when they feast."

Schwarz has hit the ground running, and the Piedmont community looks forward to what he'll cook up next.



Schwarz, who gets good reviews for his culinary talents, is shown with a feast he made for a class he taught at UNC Wilmington.



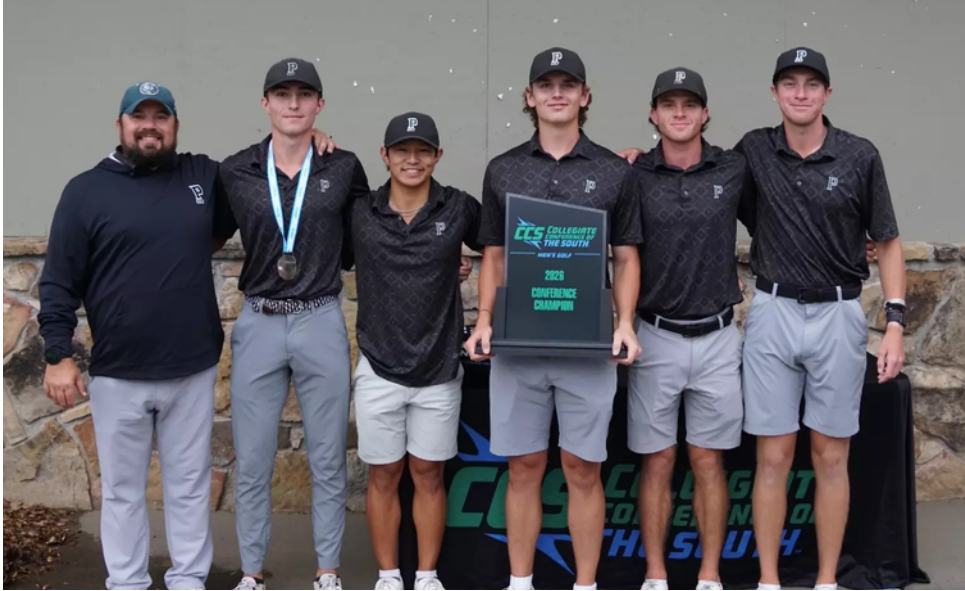
Pictured, from left, wife Lori, and children Mallory, Sam, Ben, and AJ with Steve at a Coastal Carolina bowl game over winter break.



Piedmont Making History on the Golf Course - Come Be Part of the Story!



by Timmy McCormack



The 2025-26 season for both the men's and women's golf teams at Piedmont were historic campaigns with both teams winning their respective conference championship tournaments and appearing in the NCAA National Tournament field.

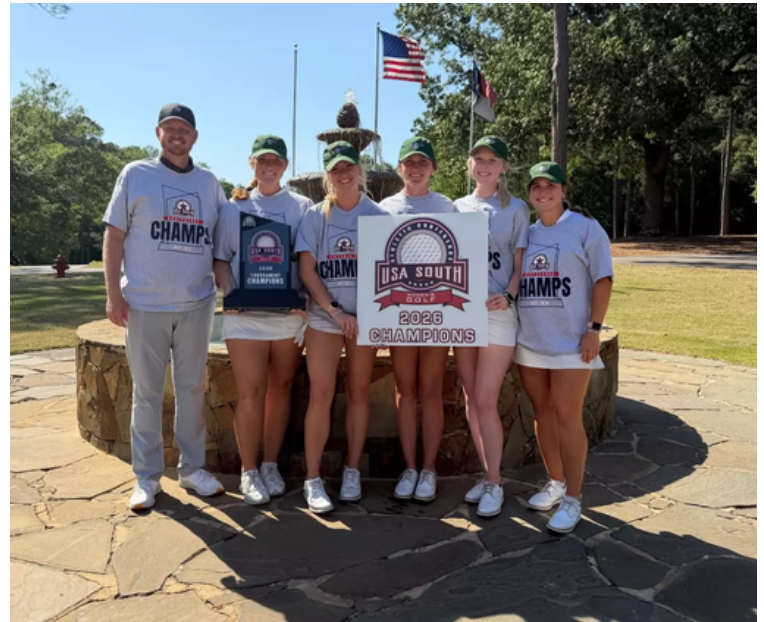
The Lions were selected 11th in the final Bushnell/Golfweek Division III Coach's Poll by the GCAA with the men being led by a rising star coach in the sport, Head Coach Dustin Meadows.

Piedmont put an exclamation point on their spring in the conference championship, defeating conference rival and the nation's #1 ranked team, Huntingdon College, with an exemplary day two of tourney play to beat the Hawks by nine strokes at the end of the event. With the conference tourney title in hand, the men's golf team earned an automatic bid to the NCAA tournament for the second straight year.

While the present has been rewarding, the future for the Lions looks bright as well with Braden Kiley's Rookie of the Year honor leading four CCS All-Conference selections for men's golf on the year. Kiley posted two top five finishes on the season and was a 4-time Rookie of the Week honoree. His fellow All-Conference honoree, Adam Rogers, went on to take home GCAA/PING All-Region honors.

Switching to the women's side of the course, the Piedmont women's golf team also won their conference tourney taking home the USA South team title for the first time ever. For their efforts, the Lions qualified for the NCAA Division III National Tournament for the first time in program history under first year Head Coach Blake Watson who made a splash in his debut season leading the women's golf team.

Like Meadows' young star Kiley who took home newcomer conference honors, Coach Watson also showed his team's future is bright with Lila Polakowski earning Rookie of the Year honors from the USA South All-Conference listing.



Continued on next page...



Piedmont Making History on the Golf Course - Come Be Part of the Story!



by Timmy McCormack

Both the men and women capped off their seasons in the Division III National Championship tournaments posting 23rd and 22nd-place finishes, respectively, but it was women's golfer Erin Donovan who captivated Lions Nation as she made the cut to play on in the NCAA's as an individual. Holding the lead for more than a round and staying in the hunt throughout the weekend, Donovan proved why she was one of the best women's golfers in the country with the performance earning All-American honors for the third straight season before eventually finishing 12th of the 176 golfers.

For her performance on the course as well as her contributions to the Piedmont community and academic efforts, Donovan would later go on to be named Piedmont's first-ever recipient of the prestigious USA South Rita Wiggs Woman of the Year Award, joining her roommate Paige Kluba who won the Woman of the Year Award in the CCS as Piedmont swept those honors this year.

If all of this golfing around has drummed up interest in getting on the links, please join us for the 38th Annual Coach Cave Memorial Golf Tournament to be held on August 25th at The Orchard Golf and Country Club. Information on how to join is available at PiedmontLions.com.



From Classroom to Career

by Kayla Neal



At the Georgia Forensic Academy, we often say that when students and law enforcement train together, opportunities happen. Kaitlynn Crawford's story is a perfect example.

While working toward her degree at Piedmont University, Kaitlynn took advantage of a unique opportunity available to students on our campus. The Georgia Forensic Academy, a limited purpose POST academy, is housed directly at Piedmont, giving students in our programs access to professional forensic training that is typically reserved for working law enforcement personnel.

Instead of waiting until after graduation, Kaitlynn chose to invest in her future early. She enrolled in additional academy courses while completing her degree and working toward her POST Crime Scene Certification, training alongside investigators from agencies across the region.

During one of those courses, Kaitlynn introduced herself to members of the Jackson County Sheriff's Office who were attending the training.

That initiative changed everything.

The Jackson County Sheriff's Office recognized Kaitlynn's drive and potential and extended her an offer of employment before she even graduated.

We cannot say enough how thankful we are to the Jackson County Sheriff's Office for their partnership, their willingness to train alongside our students, and their trust in the education and training happening here. Agencies like Jackson County create real pathways for students to transition from the classroom into meaningful careers serving their communities.

We were also incredibly proud to see members of the Jackson County Sheriff's Office attend Kaitlynn's graduation, standing alongside her as

she reached that milestone. That moment spoke volumes about the type of agency they are and the investment they make in the people they bring onto their team.



Please join us in congratulating Kaitlynn on her accomplishments!

SAVE THE DATE

PIEDMONT UNIVERSITY

38TH ANNUAL COACH CAVE

MEMORIAL GOLF TOURNAMENT

ENTRY FEE:

\$150 PER PLAYER
\$600 PER TEAM

INCLUDES:

RANGE BALLS
GOLF
DRINK TICKETS
BBQ AWARDS

REGISTER AND PAY
ONLINE HERE



TUESDAY, AUGUST 25TH, 2026 10:30AM
SHOTGUN START THE ORCHARD GOLF
AND COUNTRY CLUB

FOUR PERSON SCRAMBLE

PROCEEDS BENEFIT THE PIEDMONT
UNIVERSITY ATHLETIC DEPARTMENT



REGISTRATION AND

RANGE BALLS:

9:30AM

SHOTGUN START:

10:30AM

LUNCH, AWARDS

AND AUCTION:

3:30PM

PRIZES INCLUDE:

CLOSEST TO THE PIN
LONG DRIVE
HOLE IN ONE

QUESTIONS?

BLAKE WATSON
678-378-6497

BWATSON@PIEDMONT.EDU

SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

HOLE SPONSOR

\$300
HOLE SPONSOR SIGN
INSERT IN GIFT BAG

SILVER SPONSOR

\$750
ONE FOURSOME
HOLE SPONSOR SIGN
INSERT IN GIFT BAG

GOLD SPONSOR

\$1,500
TWO FOURSOMES
LARGE HOLE SPONSOR SIGN
DISPLAY TABLE AT EVENT
COMPANY SUPPLIED BANNER DISPLAY
INSERT IN GIFT BAG



Calendar of Events

AUGUST

8/11 Convocation

8/25 38th Annual Coach Cave
Memorial Golf Tournament

8/30 Piedmont University Camerata

SEPTEMBER

9/7 Labor Day Holiday

9/12 Fall Family Day

9/17 Fine Arts College Experience
(FACE)

OCTOBER

10/4 Lux, Professional Treble
Ensemble

10/8 Forensics Science & Criminal
Justice Preview

10/12 Fall Break

10/29-Nov 1 Theatre: The Addams
Family Musical

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