

fall 2025

the magazine of Southern Adventist University

columns



Think. Design. Serve.

Southern's inaugural Bachelor of Science in
Engineering graduates are already
making an impact. | page 12



Thrive Uganda

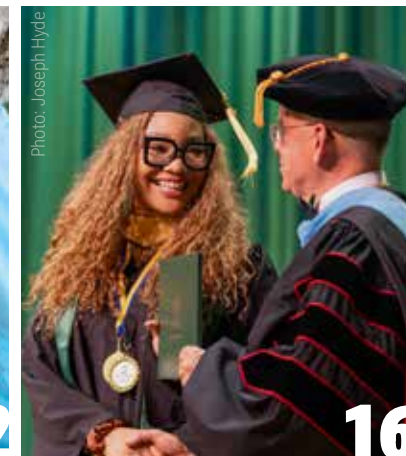
Students in Southern's Enactus business club have been helping people in Uganda strengthen their financial literacy skills and working to improve local school facilities. Partnering with the nonprofit OurGanda, the multi-phase project is called Thrive Uganda. "Students learn fantastic project management skills," says Sergio Bellino, associate professor and adviser for Enactus. Students at the time, Roman Johnson (front left), '24, and Colin Glenn (back left), '24, interact with a group of children in the village of Saara Kihombiya.

Photo: Contributed

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Cover: Daniel Marquez (left), '25, works with Brandon Starr, senior engineering major. Photo by Mila Bales, '25.



How Are We Doing?

Let us know what you think of *Columns* magazine through this external survey. While the questions are standardized, your anonymous responses help us improve our magazine. Your opinion matters!

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A Southern Welcome

There's nothing quite like the start of a new school year at Southern. From the early arrival of first-year students to the bustle of move-in day and preparing for classes, the campus comes alive with energy, anticipation, and a strong sense of community amongst students and staff.

Parents who dropped off their students even shared gratitude online for the hospitality they experienced—the kind of warm welcome that kicks off each school year.

1. Mary Neri (left), associate dean, gives a care package to Nema Ogal, junior chemistry major. The Counseling Services team created these gifts for students, filled with items to support their well-being, comfort, and success.

2. During We-Haul, Southern employees pitch in to move everything from mini-fridges to clothing totes, helping students settle into their residence halls.

3. The Welcome to Rez Life Party gives new students a chance to relax and have fun with activities such as foosball.

4. Southern's mascot, Forrest, poses for photos at the Main Event, a one-stop shop for completing enrollment activities.

5. Admissions counselor Cameron Cautivar greets newcomers, guiding them through their enrollment checklists.

6. Janet Accardo, '87, office manager for the Biology and Allied Health Department, lends a helping hand by holding doors for students during We-Haul.

7. The Freshman Welcome Party is the perfect time for a refreshing slice of watermelon.

8. Tom Verrill, senior vice president for Financial Administration, brings student belongings into Thatcher Hall during We-Haul.

9. A cool Kona Ice treat, courtesy of the First Year Experience team, is a sweet part of the welcome.

10. Faculty and staff, including Joseph Khabbaz (right), vice president for Spiritual Life, are on hand to answer questions during the Main Event.

11. New students enjoy gourmet popsicles personally delivered to class by President Ken Shaw, '80.

12. Students connect and make new friends at the Freshman Welcome Party, a highlight of orientation week.



"Thank you, Southern, for making move-in day a special experience! From President Shaw greeting us at check-in to the We-Haul volunteer helping us with the heavy lifting, our family felt welcomed and cared about in so many ways. It's easier to hug your child goodbye when you know you are leaving her in such good hands. Praying for a great year for all!"
— Eryn Montgomery Savoy

"Thank you to all the organizers and administrators who made the day so smooth. I was never stressed about what to do next, and the transition was seamless. It was awesome to meet the president of the university at the beginning, as well as the key people my kid will need to support him through his freshman experience. Praying for blessings for the Southern family for a new school year."
— Samantha Sutton-Mills

Students Win Nine Sonscreen Awards for Film Creativity

Southern's School of Visual Art and Design was well-represented at the North American Division's annual Sonscreen Film Festival, held April 3-5 at the Loma Linda University Church in California.

Film production major and now recent graduate Ashelen Rojas, '25, won the Best in Festival and Best Documentary Short categories for her film *Papaviejo*.

Jhared Tula, junior film production major, also won awards in two categories: Best Narrative Short for *The Field Between Stories* and Best Art/Experimental Short for *Senses*.

Special Jury awards were earned by three students in four categories. Ruslan Zavricico, senior film production major, was awarded for Achievement in Narrative Directing for his film *On Hold* and for Social Impact in Storytelling for *Asylum Seeker*; Zane Taitano, senior animation major, won for Advancement in Technical Animation; and Connor Nelson, junior film production major, was awarded Best Original Score.

In the pitch competition, Sophia Schwartzrock, senior film production major, won first prize of \$3,500 to create her film *The Ice Cube Movie*.

Attendees also enjoyed a special screening of a project by 2023 pitch competition winner Ashton Weiss, '25. Titled *Last Light*, the project was directed



Nick Livanos, '07 (second from left), associate film professor at Southern, participates in a discussion at the 2025 Sonscreen Film Festival.

by Zach Gray, '99, dean of the School of Visual Art and Design.

"We're grateful for awards, but we're even more grateful for the community found at Sonscreen and the growing sense that creative filmmaking is valued

within the Adventist church," says Nick Livanos, '07, associate professor of film at Southern. "Our students find fellowship and future collaborators through the connections made possible by the North American Division."

- Becky Brooks, '03, editorial manager

» by the numbers

Read full stories and find more news at southern.edu/news.

72

quarts of cucumbers were sliced by the cafeteria staff during the first week of school for the salad bar.

55

faculty and staff volunteered during this year's We-Haul events to help students move in. Browse the photos on page 5.

\$65,000

will be contributed annually from SouthEast Bank for tuition assistance to Southern students beginning this year, an increase of \$30,000 from last school year.

2,222

alumni participated in Southern events last year and more than 175 volunteered as mentors, speakers, or event planners.

92%

of short-term mission trip participants said the experience helped them grow spiritually.

3,360

students this fall make this the largest enrollment in Southern's history!

Trauma Kits Enhance Medical Emergency Response

Southern has a valuable new health and safety resource on campus. In partnership with a generous donor, the university has installed more than 30 Tramedicube® trauma kits across campus, making it easier for anyone nearby to provide immediate triage assistance after calling 911 if a medical emergency occurs.

Tourniquets, hemostatic agents, pressure dressings, and eye wound care are included in a Tramedicube®

along with items to help control bleeding and assist with breathing complications, chest injuries, wound and burn care, and broken bones. With a value exceeding \$27,000, the trauma kits complement the automatic external defibrillators (AEDs) already in place in more than 30 locations around campus.

According to Ellen Hostetler, vice president for Advancement, a donor with a medical background

attended a convention in 2024 where the Tramedicube® was being showcased, learned about successful implementation of the kits at University of Tennessee's Knoxville campus earlier this year, and graciously thought Southern could also benefit from enhanced tools and supplies for trauma response.

"The benefactor contacted us and said, 'I'm shipping 15 kits to you,'" says Josh Fraker, '05, life safety and fire systems specialist for Campus Safety at Southern, who notes that the donation also included cabinets to house the kits. "Upon learning about all of our AED locations, the donor expanded the initiative by doubling the donation and said, 'Put a kit at every place on campus that has an AED.'"

Campus signage and communication to students, faculty, and staff explains where to locate kits and how to use the medical tools within each. "You can look at a map by any exit, find a trauma kit and AED location, go get what you need, and return to offer assistance to the person in distress," Fraker adds. "I'm proud that our university makes safety a priority and is equipped to respond to these types of medical emergency situations."

- Isabele Barreto Freitas, sophomore nursing major



Stevenson Pangkey, Campus Safety patrol supervisor, holds one of the new trauma kits.

Ivory Comb Exhibit Draws Record Number of Visitors

During the three months of the exhibit *The Ivory Comb: Lice and Literacy at Lachish*, the Lynn H. Wood Archaeological Museum hosted the highest number of visitors in its history, welcoming 2,451 guests.

In partnership with the Israel Antiquities Authority and The Israel Museum, Southern was the only location in the United States where visitors were able to see the first complete alphabetic sentence ever found. This oldest deciphered sentence is inscribed on an ivory lice comb, which was excavated by Southern archaeologists and dates to 1700 BC. It was on display at Southern from January 27 through May 2, 2025.

Drawing more visitors in three months than any previous 12-month period in the 20-year history of the museum, February 2025 also broke its record for most visitors in a month with 796 guests.

Throughout the duration of the exhibit, docents led 47 tours, including 13 school

groups, six church groups, and two alumni events, among others.

Registered visitors came from states across the country, including Alabama, Alaska, California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Illinois, Kentucky, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Missouri, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, Tennessee, Texas, Washington, and Wisconsin.

Prominent archaeologists also visited Southern for the opening of the exhibit, including Yosef Garfinkel, PhD, of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem; Madeleine Mumcuoglu, PhD, of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, who discovered the inscription in 2022; Daniel Vainstub, PhD, of Ben Gurion University of the Negev; Christopher Rollston, PhD, of George Washington University in D.C.; and Katherine Helser, '19, PhD candidate at Lipscomb University in Nashville, Tennessee, who was the Southern student in whose area the comb was uncovered.

- Staff Writers



A record number of visitors saw the exhibit featuring the oldest sentence at the Lynn H. Wood Archaeological Museum.

New Doctor of Education Program Coming in 2026

Southern is pleased to announce the launch of a new Doctor of Education (EdD) degree focused on Innovation in Leadership and Learning, which is slated to begin in Fall 2026.

Designed for today's rapidly changing world, the fully online program equips professionals with the tools and vision to lead organizations and communities with confidence.

"There is a growing demand for leaders who can navigate the complexities of educational and organizational environments," says Corjena Cheung, PhD, associate vice president for Academic Administration and dean of

Graduate and Professional Studies. "This program uniquely combines leadership theory with innovative practices and research, preparing graduates to lead effectively."

The scholar-practitioner program emphasizes both research and real-world practice, equipping students to make an immediate impact. Participants will benefit from interdisciplinary approaches, hands-on learning, and partnerships with diverse organizations—all while advancing their careers.

The degree is an excellent fit for professionals across various fields, including business, education, nonprofit

leadership, pastoral ministry, and public service. Whether stepping into an executive-level role or looking to elevate current responsibilities, students will gain practical strategies to drive meaningful change.

"We've heard consistent interest from professionals across the Southern Union who are eager for a doctoral program like this," Cheung says. "Many have been anticipating this opportunity for years, and we're thrilled to finally make it a reality."

Learn more about the program at southern.edu/gradedd.

- Becky Brooks, '03, editorial manager

Building Projects Reach Milestones

From additional housing to a new academic building, Southern's construction and renovation projects are changing the face of campus.

Southern Village has expanded with the completion of the new Spruce building on the south end of campus, and students moved in for the current semester. Construction on the next fourplex has begun and is set to be finished in Summer 2026.

Fully renovated and in use, the Miller Hall Nursing Simulation Center between the Garden of Prayer and Brock Hall includes a large simulation classroom, six simulation patient rooms, control centers, and debriefing spaces. The ever-growing School of Nursing, housed primarily in AdventHealth Hall on the other side of the garden, will now have more space to teach students critical healthcare skills in a hands-on environment.

A new Makerspace Lab in Ledford Hall, behind Lynn Wood Hall on the back side of campus, is now equipped to serve students in the School of Engineering and Physics as well as students in the Applied

Technology program. The repurposed and renovated area was also included in an inspection by the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology.

"We really appreciate the willingness of the Applied Technology faculty to share their machine shop with us," says Tyson Hall, '97, PhD, dean of the School of Engineering and Physics. "We are excited to include a computer numerical control (CNC) plasma cutter, CNC lathe, and CNC vertical mill, which are useful to students and faculty in both programs."

Southern's newest academic building, the Ruth McKee School of Business, is progressing on schedule through the phases of construction. All of the building's four floors are poured and set, wiring and HVAC systems are installed, and exterior walls are sealed. Significant progress has been made on roofing, masonry, and window installation. The building is projected to open its doors next fall. To see the latest photos of the progress, visit southern.edu/gobusiness.

- Isabella Dixon, sophomore English major



Progress on the Ruth McKee School of Business is well underway.



The new Nursing Simulation Center in Miller Hall opened for students to use in Fall 2025.

Reimagining Graduate Business Education

In Fall 2025, Southern launched a reimagined Master of Business Administration (MBA).

The program integrates multiple business disciplines through advancing learners' skills in problem identification, decision-oriented analysis, and strategic solutions.

Grounded in a biblical worldview, it follows an iterative design that reinforces learning through increasing levels of integration. This approach cultivates a missional mindset and

equips students with the competencies they need to thrive in a complex, dynamic marketplace, ultimately expanding the impact of God's purpose in and through business.

The program is fully online, making graduate education accessible for adults with demanding schedules, and shortens the journey to graduation with only 30 credit hours. To learn more, visit southern.edu/mba.

- Stephanie Sheehan, '05, dean of the School of Business



The revised MBA program provides an accelerated course structure and is offered completely online.

Living a Sermon of Service

By Chehalis Eno, senior English major

“Before I became a social worker, I was a Christian,” says Candy Dolcy, director of field education and assistant professor in the School of Social Work at Southern. “Prioritizing service makes my life a living sermon without ever preaching one.”

She was raised with service as a significant part of her life, which directly impacted her career choice. “Social work lines up perfectly with the Christian mission,” Dolcy says. “We have to meet people where they are and serve their immediate needs before they’ll be able to hear the love of God.”

When she began working at Southern, Dolcy recognized that service would be crucial to getting to know the Chattanooga community. “My role requires that I engage with members of the local community, and how else could I get to know people unless I volunteered?” she says. “As a result, I’ve had the chance to connect organizations with my students and promote the incredible work organizations in the area are doing.”

Dolcy looks back fondly on her first service opportunity while at Southern: an invitation from a fellow staff member to volunteer at the IRONMAN triathlon in Chattanooga. “We were doing such a simple thing, handing out water to runners, but in that moment, it was exactly what they needed, and they were so grateful,” Dolcy shares. “That did something to me.” The next year, she led a team of volunteer church members and students who pointed bikers toward the correct path. “It’s been a great way to get involved in the community,” Dolcy shares. “I love any chance to serve with students.”

Even during Dolcy’s first year at Southern, she was looking for ways to get students involved. In January 2022, she organized a group from the university to help with Chattanooga Regional Homeless Coalition’s annual Point-in-Time count, collecting data on the number and location of homeless individuals in the area. “I was glad to have students join me,” Dolcy says. “For a lot of them, it was their first time engaging with the unhoused community, so I had the chance to walk alongside them and mentor them, showing them that the people we were interacting with were people just like us.”



Candy Dolcy, director of field education and assistant professor in the School of Social Work, loves connecting students to service opportunities in the Chattanooga area.

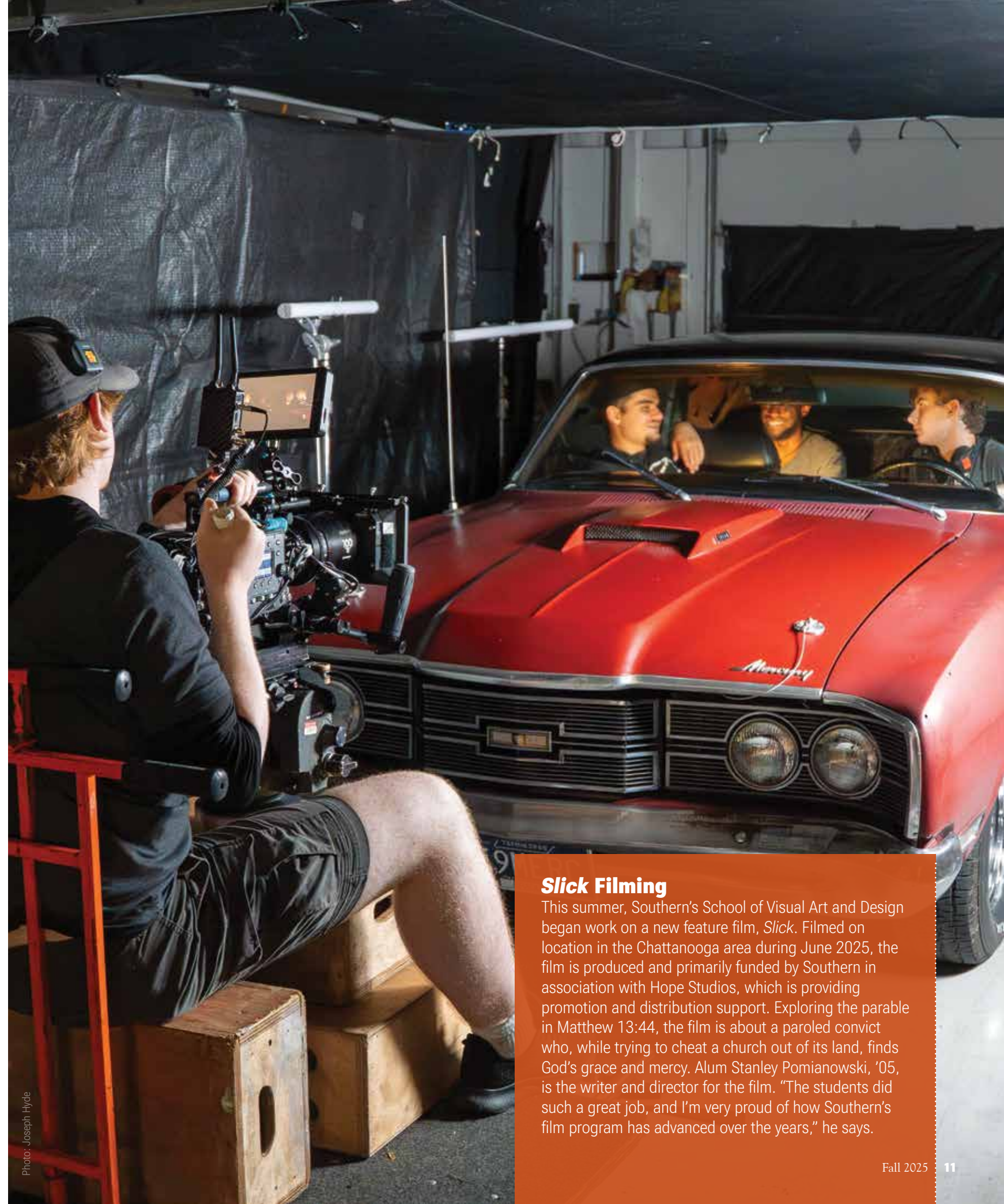
Two years ago, Dolcy helped start a chapter of the Coalition of Black Social Workers as a resource for social work students of all ethnicities on Southern’s campus. “It’s been a great experience working with students to partner with a national organization here on campus,” Dolcy says. Since starting the chapter alongside Stephanie Guster, associate professor in the School of Social Work, she’s organized trips to multiple conferences hosted by the coalition, explaining, “Students gain so much from having a chance to engage with professional social workers in the state.”

Dolcy has also volunteered as a mentor for Girls Inspired, an outreach program for girls in marginalized communities, run by Collegedale Church of Seventh-day Adventists. She’s been working with the same mentee for three years, helping her navigate high school graduation and college. “I’ve loved having the chance to expose her to new things,” Dolcy shares. “She’d never been up to the mountains around Chattanooga before, and I had the privilege to take her and her sister for the first time.”

As director of field education, Dolcy has built relationships across the city of Chattanooga with people at organizations where she volunteers, and she makes connections for students wanting to get involved. Additionally, she’s worked with Chattanooga Purpose Center, a ministry of Orchard Park Seventh-day Adventist Church; helped organize the Chattanooga Human Services Provider Fair; and served as an assistant coach for a local girls’ basketball team.

“I have always believed that if we see a chance to serve, we should just do it,” Dolcy says. “I can’t answer every call, but even if I can’t answer the first time, I tell groups that I’ll do it next time.”

Rooted in her faith, Dolcy looks to Jesus as an example. “He wasn’t a doctor or a chef, but He still served those who were sick and hungry,” she explains. “The only credential I need to serve is that I’m a Christian.” ■



Slick Filming

This summer, Southern’s School of Visual Art and Design began work on a new feature film, *Slick*. Filmed on location in the Chattanooga area during June 2025, the film is produced and primarily funded by Southern in association with Hope Studios, which is providing promotion and distribution support. Exploring the parable in Matthew 13:44, the film is about a paroled convict who, while trying to cheat a church out of its land, finds God’s grace and mercy. Alum Stanley Pomianowski, ’05, is the writer and director for the film. “The students did such a great job, and I’m very proud of how Southern’s film program has advanced over the years,” he says.

Southern's first Bachelor
of Science in Engineering
graduates are already living
out the motto of the School of
Engineering and Physics:

THINK. DESIGN. SERVE.

By Tina Frist Smith, '89 and '23, communication manager

Naomi Munyaka,
junior engineering
major, solders
a project for the
Mechatronics course.



Engineering is more than equations and blueprints: It's about solving real problems that improve lives. At Southern, that vision has shaped the inaugural Bachelor of Science in Engineering graduates.

Joshua Harrington, Annaliese Haugen, and Daniel Marquez chose an emphasis in mechanical engineering; while Tyler Vaudreuil focused on electrical engineering. All graduated with honors and marched in the Commencement ceremony in May 2025. And they didn't just graduate with impressive GPAs. Each one passed the rigorous Fundamentals of Engineering exam on their first attempt. Taken annually by some 20,000 aspiring engineers as the first step in the engineering professional licensure process, the exam has a national first-time pass rate of approximately 70 percent.

"We were very blessed with a highly motivated and competent group of seniors," says Associate Professor Jay Anders. "Throughout their training, we stressed the importance of the Fundamentals of Engineering exam, and each one of them stepped up to the challenge."

A Capstone That Makes a Difference

As part of their two-semester Senior Capstone Design course, the group completed a hands-on, community-centered project that went far beyond the classroom.

Rather than take on a local assignment, the students chose to partner with VIDA Internacional, a nonprofit organization in El Suyatal, Honduras, that trains missionaries in Central America. VIDA runs a bilingual school, provides evangelism training, and operates a lifestyle center, supported by income from bakery sales and housing rentals.

"Several different kinds of projects were presented to the Class of 2025, but they collectively and deliberately chose one with a mission orientation to complete over spring break," says Tyson Hall, '97, PhD, dean of the School of Engineering and Physics, "although I don't think they expected the project to become so full scale!"

Turning Plans Into Progress

The team decided to design and implement improvements to three major systems at the mission: air conditioning, water delivery, and electrical infrastructure. Tin roofs on the mission's buildings and a lack of insulation were causing scorching indoor temperatures, forcing summer closures. Jugs of bottled water were expensive and laborious to haul to the mission, and sources of clean water for cooking and hygiene had proved unreliable. Power delivered through extension cables was inefficient and unsafe.

Under the guidance of Anders and Associate Professor Sean Walters, PhD, the students spent the fall semester developing a plan. They analyzed every aspect of the mission's

operations: energy demands, occupant needs, water flow rates, and safety standards. Discussions in the classroom covered real-world impact areas—health and safety, environmental responsibility, cost efficiency, and more—and helped guide decisions such as burying power lines and using nonpotable well water rather than damming a stream. The group also evaluated requirements for power, water, and cooling on-site, and conducted simulation analyses before delving into more specific project details.

"Managing a project from start to finish on our own was a major learning experience," Haugen says, "and working on my specific area of focus was especially helpful. It was fascinating to see concepts from our Heat and Mass Transfer course come to life in an actual application while working with the HVAC system."

Challenges in the Field

By spring, the team had developed a full-scale proposal, including a budget with contingencies and a four-month timeline for design and testing, then a week-long implementation over spring break. But even the best planning couldn't anticipate every challenge.



The first Bachelor of Science in Engineering graduates pose along with their professors to commemorate the milestone.

Most supplies and equipment for the project could not be purchased until the team arrived in the country, and upon learning that some items were not available in Honduras, the students had to implement revisions at the last minute.

"We were still designing while on the plane during the flight over," Vaudreuil recalls. "I understand more than ever how obtaining accurate field data is crucial in creating any solution. Precision helps an engineer avoid miscalculations,



Students put their engineering skills to the test in Honduras, working hands-on to implement their designs and bring innovative solutions to fruition.

whether it's the length of cable or the number of pipes needed, especially when supplies are hard to come by."

Harrington adds, "The trip was a reminder that conditions out in the field and supply shortages in foreign cities often make it necessary to change engineering plans on the spot."

Nearly a dozen sophomore and junior engineering majors joined the seniors on the trip to help with implementation, translation, and Vacation Bible School programming.

"The students worked from sunup to sundown the entire time in Honduras," Anders notes. "It's really quite impressive how much they accomplished on all three new systems. They went above and beyond to meet the needs of the ministry."

The feeling was mutual. "Our professors truly cared about us and were always willing to help," Haugen says. "Having small class sizes, we built strong relationships and got the support we needed."

Marquez adds, "There were countless moments when professors offered guidance, encouragement, and even life advice outside of class. I also benefited greatly from the strong sense of community that made my learning experience both meaningful and memorable."

The value of effective time management is one specific takeaway that Marquez carried into his professional career. "As an engineer, it's not enough to simply give my best," he says. "I must do so efficiently and reliably, ensuring that excellence is delivered, not just in quality but also in timeliness."

Learning That Lasts

After returning to campus, the team wrapped up the project by creating user manuals for each of the three new systems, enabling VIDA to operate and maintain each

system. According to Hall, the value of the experience extended far beyond their newly acquired technical skills.

"Any real-world project adds incredible value," Hall says, "but coordinating and executing one in another country? That's a level of leadership, problem-solving, and service that truly sets our students and faculty apart."

Today, Harrington is working with Tennessee's Oak Ridge National Laboratory after spending the summer at a solar company in San Jose, California; Vaudreuil is employed by Mesa Associates in Knoxville, Tennessee, in the power sector. Marquez joined Belcan and will contribute to NASA's Space Launch System; and Haugen is actively exploring a full-time role where she can apply her engineering expertise.

Marking more than just a symbolic milestone, graduation of the first class also allows the School of Engineering and Physics to officially begin the 18-month evaluation process through the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology, a significant achievement that highlights the program's academic credibility and commitment to professional standards. Interest continues to grow, with 118 students enrolled for the Fall 2025 semester, surpassing projections twofold and underscoring the program's momentum.

The age-old tradition of blending science and technology to find solutions is rooted more deeply than ever on Southern's campus, and the needs in today's world continue to be met by those committed to thinking, designing, and serving. ■

The senior capstone project enhanced daily operations for VIDA Internacional through designing and installing upgrades to air conditioning, water delivery, and electrical systems.



EXPLORING NUCLEAR FUSION

By Chehalis Eno, senior English major

Early in 2025, the U.S. Department of Energy awarded Southern's School of Engineering and Physics a Reaching a New Energy Sciences Workforce (RENEW) grant of \$156,000 to further nuclear fusion research through curriculum development, bootcamps, and student internships.

Nuclear fusion is a cousin to nuclear fission, which is used as an energy source across the world. "Instead of fission—taking something heavy, such as uranium, and splitting it apart—we take something light, often hydrogen, and fuse it together to release energy," explains Sean Walters, PhD, associate professor. "The technology has the potential to become a very efficient and controlled fission alternative."

Under the guidance of Tennessee's Oak Ridge National Laboratory, the government's largest multi-disciplinary research and development center, Southern partnered with several other universities, including Missouri University of Science and Technology, Tennessee State University, Tennessee Tech University, University of Tennessee at Knoxville, and Tuskegee University in Alabama. Two professors in Southern's School of Engineering and Physics, principal investigator Walters and Vola Andrianarijaona, PhD, spearheaded the initiative.

CREATING CURRICULA

Professors at each of the universities are creating curricula to be implemented free of charge in classrooms across the United States. "At Southern, we're planning to create short, two-week modules on specific fusion energy topics that can be inserted into any class," Walters says. "That way, universities can introduce students to these new concepts without asking them to take extracurricular classes on top of their required course loads."

Classes on nuclear fusion typically begin in graduate school, since the topic is highly specific for an undergraduate degree; however, larger universities have begun implementing specialty tracks in fusion engineering. Southern's plans to introduce students to nuclear fusion keep the university on the cutting edge of education trends in undergraduate engineering programs.

Angelina Castillo (right), junior physics and math double major, and Vola Andrianarijaona, PhD, professor in the School of Engineering and Physics, work with the beamline for ion-neutral collisions at Southern.

GUARANTEED INTERNSHIPS

The RENEW grant funds will also go toward guaranteed internships for Southern students, first at Oak Ridge National Laboratory and then at private fusion-energy companies. Angelina Castillo, junior physics and math double major, earned the first spot at the Oak Ridge lab in Summer 2025.

"Nuclear fusion has a lot of untapped potential, and I was very grateful and excited for the chance to intern in the field," Castillo says. "I worked to find a process to recycle the fuel used in nuclear fusion, exploring ways to separate the different particles in the fuel into the parts that can be reused and the parts that can't."

Castillo has already furthered nuclear fusion through her work at Southern with Andrianarijaona, who has a long-standing partnership with the national laboratory in Oak Ridge, stretching back to 2009. For the past five years, Andrianarijaona has coordinated the participation of Southern students on the laboratory's beamline for ion-neutral collisions.

"Nuclear fusion is unstable in part because when particles fly out after the reaction, they have enough kinetic energy to melt the walls containing it," Castillo explains. "Lining the walls with molecular hydrogen could absorb some of the particles' energy, and the beamline we're building will help us measure how much energy hydrogen can hold, helping to determine the viability of hydrogen-lined fusion chambers." ■



GRADUATE VOICES

As they turned their tassels, these 2025 graduates took a moment to reflect on the experiences that shaped them. From spiritual growth to real-world preparation, their time at Southern left a lasting imprint.



CHRISTIAN BARRERA,
theology

Southern really has a good spiritual atmosphere here at school. They have LifeGroups, vespers, church.



MICHAEL LIGA,
business administration

In the School of Business, we were given opportunities to not only gain experience from materials and books, but we were also given real-life situations and real-life materials. We were provided with professors who were able to share how their careers impacted them. I feel that I've gained a better understanding of my future career path. I feel that I've made relationships that will hopefully last forever. And I feel that I've grown closer to God throughout my four years at Southern.



MICHAELA LOHR,
biology

Southern was definitely the right choice for me, because it grew me in so many ways, not only academically, but in my character and spiritually.



JIREHKA SMITH, *psychology*

I feel as though Southern has prepared me for my chosen career path by providing a lot of different opportunities to learn about communication, interpersonal skills, and working with other departments. It really just fostered an atmosphere of love in my heart, but also on campus.



EDWARD BACKER,
psychology

Southern has just been a fantastic place for me to grow spiritually. I mean, I've learned so much, and I've become a lot more open-minded. I feel I've grown in my spiritual walk.



ETHAN DAVID,
business administration

There's always somebody you're going to meet who's very similar to you, and you're going to find your community around your interests and likes. So, from the education to the people to the nature and the scenery, Southern was absolutely the right choice for me.



DANIELLE HOWELL,
social work

I have made so many great connections, met so many amazing people, learned so much about myself—and now I'm just ready to share it with the world.



KEDRICK JUBANSKI LARSON,
kinesiology/religious studies

For me, even coming here was a spiritual thing. God put people around me that just helped me build my own relationship with God, which, if I hadn't come here, I would definitely say I probably wouldn't be in the church.



ALANI SANTA CRUZ,
psychology

I feel Southern has prepared me for my career path by offering different opportunities for us to serve. Last year, I was a missionary in Bangladesh, and I think that definitely equipped me to have that mindset.



DANIELLE TAYLOR,
graphic design

Southern has definitely helped me grow as a designer. I feel like I've learned how to be not only professional but also how to show my true colors as an artist.



ISADIEL MATOS CARVAJAL,
nursing

I always wanted to study outside my country. And once I found the opportunity to come here, God literally opened all the doors for me to be able to come. This university has been like an answered prayer for me and my family. It's a great pleasure that I'm here today fulfilling this dream.

Watch the Graduate Voices video at southern.edu/columns.

Handwritten NOTES FROM GOD

By Cheryl Craven, '99 and '21, director of Christian Service

As she learned to truly see the natural world around her, Cheryl Craven discovered that God had been leaving her love notes in the trees, birdsongs, and wildflowers all along.



Photo: Jay An

I had walked the promenade at Southern for years, first as an undergraduate and later as an employee. I hurried past the flowerbeds outside Wright Hall, listened absentmindedly to the birds near Miller Hall, and stepped over pine needles without a second thought. The campus was familiar, yet I rarely paused to take in its deeper beauty.

That changed when I pursued a master's degree in Outdoor Education at Southern. I began to see the outdoors not just as scenery, but as God's living classroom. Practices such as hour-long "sit spots"—simply observing one location through changing times and seasons—taught me to slow down, engage my senses, and notice the details I'd missed before. Professors such as Carl Swafford, '75, dean emeritus and adjunct instructor, modeled this awareness, once calling a bird to my sit spot with a whistle. Each lesson opened my eyes to what I now think of as handwritten notes from God.

NOTICING NOTES

Once I began to look closer and learn more in my classes and research, discoveries filled my days. I learned that the evergreens outside my home were white pines, with branches arranged like wagon-wheel spokes. Their design seemed almost playful, as if God imagined our delight when He created them.

Cheryl Craven admires a hydrangea along the promenade.



Photo: Jay An

The Garden of Prayer offers a place for reflecting on God's love.

Birds became another source of joy. Their songs, once a jumble of sound, resolved into distinct voices—wrens, sparrows, phoebes, and chickadees—each a reminder of God's creativity. Even hummingbirds carried lessons: before migration, they enter hyperphagia, eating constantly to fuel their long flights. If God equips such tiny creatures to succeed, I realized, He surely equips me, too.

CULTIVATED BEAUTY

Southern's campus nurtured this shift in perspective. Officially recognized as an arboretum, the grounds feature nearly a hundred species of trees and woody plants, along with carefully curated landscapes. The university's Landscape Services team works intentionally to maintain this natural beauty—not just for function but also to create spaces where students, employees, and visitors can breathe, reflect, and connect with God.

Walking past willow oak trees by Daniells Hall or pausing at ferns by a fountain, I am reminded daily that this beauty is not accidental. It is cultivated—both by the university's care and by the Creator's design.

EVIDENCE OF LOVE

Poet Elizabeth Barrett Browning wrote: "Earth's crammed with heaven, and every common bush afire with God; but only he who sees takes off his shoes. The rest sit round and pluck blackberries."

Outdoor Education

Cheryl Craven highlights her experience in the outdoor education graduate program.

Why did you pursue this degree?

"I already had a background in elementary education and a love for the outdoors. A master's degree opened more opportunities for me and deepened my ability to inspire others through God's book of nature."

What did you learn about?

"The program taught me principles and concepts of outdoor education and a host of practical skills for nature instruction. I took courses such as Nature Study Skills, Adventure-Based Counseling, Environmental Ministries, and a few specialized courses in leadership in outdoor education."

What was your favorite part of the program?

"I enjoyed the summer field intensives. We traveled to offsite locations to observe a variety of outdoor classrooms and educational settings, growing our skills in outdoor site development."

How have your studies continued to impact you?

"They really helped me to see God's hand in nature, which has had a lasting influence on me. I'm always on the lookout for exciting facts that will deepen my appreciation for nature and inspire others. Plus, I still reference the books we studied, such as *What the Robin Knows*, *Last Child in the Woods*, and *Your Brain on Nature*. They continue to inspire me and fuel my passion for helping others connect with creation."

Could it be that God has a message for each of us through the nature around us? One that, if we truly hear it, might move us from casually snacking to standing barefoot in awe? I believe the answer is, “Yes.”

When we turn our focus to God’s book of nature, we can easily see evidence of His intelligent design everywhere. As this becomes our reality, our hearts echo the psalmist’s words: “Lord, our Lord, how majestic is Your name in all the earth!” (Psalm 8:1).

Ellen White wrote in *Steps to Christ*, “‘God is love’ is written upon every opening bud, upon every spire of springing grass. ...—all testify to the tender, fatherly care of our God and to His desire to make His children happy” (p. 10).

BELIEVING TRUTH

Of course, it isn’t always easy to receive that truth. Satan whispers lies to keep us from receiving God’s love, telling us that we are helpless, worthless, or unlovable. The false words affect us profoundly, shaping how we feel and how we respond to our Creator’s voice in nature.

Squirrels are frequent wildlife residents throughout campus.



Photo: Milla Bales



Willow oak trees line the promenade by Daniells Hall.

Melissa Garcia, PhD, associate professor of psychology at Southern, says, “Unfortunately, our brains will essentially ‘get used to’ these lies and rewire to perceive them as truth, so even if someone points out the truth, we are still more likely to believe the lie.

“The good news is that God can help restore the misfiring and faulty structuring of our brains and redeem us from those falsehoods and adverse personal experiences,” Garcia continues. “As the Source of truth, He can banish the lies and their effects, essentially removing the glasses of distortion that we look through.”

God cannot lie. And in Scripture, we read the truth:

- I am not helpless—the Holy Spirit is my Helper (John 14:26, NKJV).
- I am not worthless—I am worth the blood of Christ (1 Peter 1:18-19, NKJV).
- I am not unlovable—Jesus loves me so much, He died for me (John 3:16, NKJV).

LOVE, GOD

Flowers and birds may not be essential for survival, but God gave them to us anyway. As one of my favorite passages puts it: “All that was needed for existence would have been yours without the flowers and birds, but God was not content to provide what would suffice for mere existence. He has filled earth and air and sky with glimpses of beauty to tell you of His loving thought for you” (*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 96).

Whether in joy or difficulty, creation is a steady reminder: God is love. He loves you. And He wants to make you happy.

That message greets me on Southern’s campus each morning—in the birdsong by Hickman, the ferns reviving after rain, or the hostas thriving in the Garden of Prayer’s shade. These are more than plants or sounds. They are notes signed by God Himself, waiting for us to notice.

Won’t you join me in looking for them? ■



Resurrection ferns cling to a tree by Lynn Wood Hall.



Hostas thrive in the shade of the Garden of Prayer.

Walking Together

What if we let nature become a daily reminder of the message that God loves us? Let’s take a virtual walk across Southern’s campus, looking closely to find those handwritten notes along the way. It’s a walk I often take in the morning as I pray and connect with God to start my day.

Beginning on the steps of Lynn Wood Hall, I veer slightly left across the promenade. I stop at the fountain and look up. There, in the oak tree above, are some plants that look rather dead and wilted if the weather has been dry. But all it takes is some rain to bring them to life again—green, feathery, beautiful. Fittingly, these plants are called resurrection ferns. They can lose 95% of their water, appear dead, and then revive within hours after it rains. Many plants die at a much lower percentage of water loss, but not this one. It’s resilient.

My heart responds to what I’m seeing, and I stop and pray: *Lord, there are times I feel dry—physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually. But Your Spirit restores me. As I pray, my spiritual cup is filled a little.*

I keep walking, and as I approach Daniells Hall, I notice six mature willow oaks. Their leaves look like little canoes. These trees are tough—they handle pollution, compacted soil, and drought.

I hear God whisper through the breeze in their leaves, and I pray: *Lord, help me be like this tree. Steady. Kind. Resilient. Giving shade and rest to others, no matter the circumstances. My cup fills a little more.*

I continue to the Garden of Prayer and stop by the hostas. They thrive in the shade. *Lord, at times when I don’t feel the sunshine of Your love, grow my faith to flourish like a hosta.*

Next, I backtrack, passing Hackman Hall, McKee Library, and the Bietz Center for Student Life. Here, I turn onto the path heading toward Hickman Science Center. Many mornings, I hear the call of a house finch, its lilting tune filling the air.

I reflect on God’s blessings: *Lord, You’re the One who makes my life sing. Make my song—my life—beautiful like this bird’s. My cup overflows. I receive God’s words to me. His love floods my heart.*

HOMECOMING WEEKEND 2025

By Becky Brooks, '03, editorial manager

Southern was bustling with activity October 23-26, as approximately 900 alumni and their families visited campus for Homecoming Weekend 2025. This year's theme, "Prayer in Every Season," was woven throughout the weekend's events.

Notable milestones celebrated this year included the 10th anniversary of Merge Worship, the 25th anniversary of Laurie Redmer-Cadwallader's first year as conductor of the Symphony Orchestra, and the 70th anniversary of the Student Park. In appreciation of the 40th anniversary of the Garden of Prayer, a Morning Prayer Circle was held in the garden on Friday and Sabbath mornings.

The university held a senior dedication for the class of 2020, which missed theirs due to the pandemic, with David Smith, PhD, university president from 2016 to 2021, returning

to recreate the special service. Graduation regalia was on hand for photo opportunities with classmates, and graduates reminisced over memories from their time at Southern.

Always a popular event, the annual Sunday morning Car Show also expanded this year to include Family Fun Day activities such as face-painting, pony rides, toy car decorating, a pinewood derby track, and oversized games for all ages.

"Homecoming Weekend here at Southern is very special to me," shares John Lazor, '80. "I come back every year all the way from Hawaii because I love reconnecting with friends, enjoying the music and food, the sermons and messages, and everything going on over the weekend. It's always a blessing."

From beginning to end, the weekend focused on petitions and praises to God, fellowship, remembering fond memories, and making new ones for the future.



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The Kick-Off Banquet on Thursday evening recognized several alumni award recipients, and Southern applauds each of them for positively influencing the lives of others:

DISTINGUISHED SERVICE
Carley Cole-Cavins, '04

ALUMNUS OF THE YEAR
Scott Hodges, '75

YOUNG ALUMNA OF THE YEAR
Abigail (Choi) Madonia, '21

GRADUATE STUDIES ALUMNUS OF THE YEAR
Benjamin Jones Jr., '01

HONORARY ALUMNI
Marty Hamilton and Gary Patterson

LADIES OF THE YEAR
Harriet (Finney) Snyder, '68, and Barbara (Holland) Wear, '62

PICTURE CAPTIONS

1. Gary Rustad, '00, president of Georgia-Cumberland Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, shares the Sabbath morning sermon.

2. The Merge Praise Team leads out in song as part of Merge Worship's 10-year anniversary on Sabbath morning.

3. Alumni who graduated prior to 1965 pose for a group photo.

4. Darin Bissell, '03, facilities manager for the School of Health and Kinesiology, receives a gift at the Employee Reception on Thursday afternoon.

5. Alumni join the Symphony Orchestra Reunion Concert on Sabbath afternoon.

6. This year marks the 25th anniversary of Laurie Redmer-Cadwallader's first year as conductor of the Symphony Orchestra.

7. Madeline Mace, '20 (left), snaps a photo with her husband Gus Moretta, '18, and Linda Case (attended), cafeteria hostess.

8. The Kick-Off Banquet on Thursday evening offers delicious food, special recognitions, and conversation with friends.

9. This year's alumni Award Recipients pose for a photo (from left): Abigale (Choi) Madonia, '21; Harriet (Finney) Snyder, '68; Barbara (Holland) Wear, '62; Carley "Elle" Cole-Cavins, '04; Benjamin Jones Jr., '01; Gary Patterson; Scott Hodges, '75, DO; and Marty Hamilton.

To view more photos from Homecoming Weekend, visit southern.edu/columns.





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PICTURE CAPTIONS

1. A beam that will become part of the Ruth McKee School of Business building showcases signatures of alumni.
2. Mia (Lindsey) Johnson, '12, accompanies her daughter during a Family Fun Day pony ride, one of many activities for children.
3. Car Show participant Jim Davis won second place with his 1967 Chevrolet Camaro SS.
4. Returned student missionaries carry flags during the Student Missions Vespers on Friday night.
5. Alumni tour the School of Nursing's recently completed simulation center in renovated Miller Hall.
6. Jared Thurmon, '04 (left), and Brad Clifford, '05, catch up during the weekend.
7. Children race cars at the Family Fun Day on Sunday morning.
8. Chester Caswell, '70 (left), and Donna (Cockran) Caswell, '74, enjoy lunch with Donnita (Caswell) Burgoyne, '00, junior accountant

in Southern's Accounting Services, and Brett Burgoyne, '05, during the Alumni Lunch on Sabbath.

9. Kris Eckenroth, '99 (left), Alumni Council member, leads the Morning Prayer Circle on Friday, recognizing the 40th anniversary of the Garden of Prayer.

10. Classmates, friends, and families gather for a Sabbath fellowship meal together in Iles P.E. Center.

11. Class of 2020 graduates Delaney (Harris) Goodwin, '20 and '23 (left), and Caleb Cook, '19 and '20, dress in regalia for a senior dedication service.

12. Rick Hardaway, '74 (left), and David James, '75, greet each other at the Alumni Lunch on Sabbath.

13. Harvey Alf  rez, PhD, professor and director of the Center for Innovation and Research in Computing in the School of Computing, equips workshop attendees with practical advice for how to enhance Bible study through artificial intelligence.



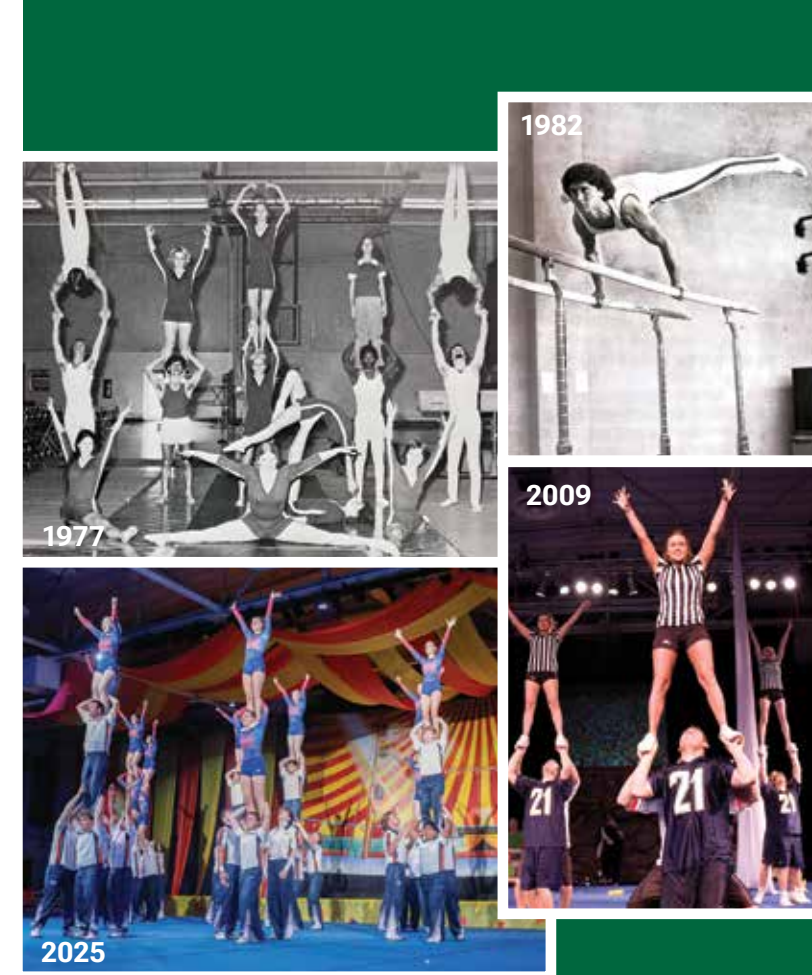
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50 YEARS OF GYM-MASTERS

Southern's Gym-Masters acrobatic team will celebrate its 50th anniversary in 2026 with a special homeshow! Whether you were part of the team or have been a fan from the bleachers, alumni are invited to see the Gym-Masters in action April 18 at 9 p.m. or April 19 at 2 p.m. to celebrate this milestone.

With the theme "50 Years of Gym-Masters," former team members and friends are invited to support future generations of gymnasts by contributing to the Rick Schwarz Gym-Masters Endowed Scholarship. Learn more about the celebration at southern.edu/columns.

Alumni Notes

'60s Marion "Thomas" Jackson, '69 and '82, PhD, completed a book last year titled *Christian Counseling Principles*. With topics of interest to pastors, counselors, and other caregivers, it will also be translated into Russian. Jackson plans to complete another book this year, *Miracles and Stories From the Helene Storm*, highlighting how God worked through the hurricane to share His love and the gospel.

'70s **1** Danette (Glenn) Scotto, '77, married Ronald Scotto in August 2023 in the Payette Seventh-day Adventist Church in Idaho. The couple is retired and plans to enjoy life by traveling, gardening, and serving together.

2 Rebecca Thomas, '78, DNP, has been a volunteer scuba diver at the Tennessee Aquarium for 19 years, feeding animals and interacting with visitors. She serves as a major and executive officer in the Tennessee State Guard's 4th Battalion. Since retiring from hospital work, she joined the Tennessee Department of Health's Medical Response Corps, recently assisting with records at the Jasper Health Department. Rebecca also volunteers with First Baptist Church's "shower ministry" for the homeless, sings in the choir, and has participated in mission trips to Croatia and South Africa. She enjoys travel, family time, and reflecting on her college days at Southern.

'00s **3** Nathan, '00, and Margie (Jones) Tidwell, '02, have been serving in Ethiopia since 2022 with their two children. Nathan is the regional coordinator for the United States' refugee and humanitarian response in five countries in the Horn of Africa. He recently summited Mt. Kilimanjaro at a height of 19,341 feet with a team of climbers. Margie has been a foster mother for abandoned and severely malnourished children in Ethiopia.

Roger Prather, '00, PhD, earned his doctoral degree in public policy in December 2024 from Liberty University in Virginia. He plans to wrap up his criminal justice career with the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, with a retirement date of January 2028, and continue his teaching career in Adventist education. He is currently teaching English at South Lancaster Academy.

'20s **4** Calvin F. Scott II, '22, graduated with a doctoral degree in physical therapy from Andrews University in Michigan this past August.



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We'd love to hear from you, and so would your classmates! Send updates about additions to your family, accomplishments, marriage, professional recognitions, or other news you'd like to share to:

alumni@southern.edu
Alumni Relations • P.O. Box 370
Collegedale, TN 37315-0370
southern.edu/alumniupdates

Family Additions

1 Randy, '17, and Trisney (Bocala) Wiedemann, '21, welcomed a baby boy, Axel, to their family on April 6, 2025. The family lives north of Vancouver in Washington.



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Celebrating Southern Sweethearts



Phil, '76, and Debby (Howard) Worley, '75 and '77, celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary in June 2024. They met at Southern and were married in the Collegedale Church of Seventh-day Adventists. The couple has two grown daughters.

2 Denver, '24 and '25, and Isabella (Beaumont) Nelson, '24, met in the Vegetarian Culinary Arts program at Southern. Sharing a passion for cooking and education, they fell in love and were married in Collegedale on May 19, 2024. They now live and work at Sunnysdale Adventist Academy in Missouri.

Share your Southern Sweetheart story at southern.edu/alumni.

*A Southern Sweetheart couple is defined as an attendee/graduate married to another Southern attendee/graduate.



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2026 ALUMNI TRIPS

Alumni Association Tour | June 16-26



southern.edu/alumnitour

Alumni Mission Trip | June 17-30



southern.edu/alumnimission

Remembrance

1 Sherri (Vasquez) Andersson, '95, passed away on August 30, 2024, in Centerville, Tennessee, after losing her battle with cancer. Born July 9, 1972, in Denver, Colorado, she was the youngest of the three daughters of Pastor Manuel Vasquez and his wife, Nancy. When she was one year old, her family moved to serve as missionaries in Ecuador. She was back in the United States for high school, and then earned a degree in International Studies from Southern. Her post-graduate studies were at Loma Linda University (physiology and pharmacology) and Cal State University in California (MBA). In 2007, she married Erik Andersson, and the couple had four children. They chose to live in the country, where Sherri homeschooled the kids and was involved in her home church through teaching children's Sabbath School classes, doing special music, and serving in various church offices. She was known for her tender heart and would do whatever she could to help animals and people in need. Sherri leaves behind her husband, Erik; children: Valentina, Giovanna, Carmela, and Manuel; mother, Nancy Vasquez; and sister, Julie (Bobby) Pena.

2 Victoria "Vickie" Boling, '78, passed away at age 84 in her home on April 6, 2025, surrounded by her loving family. The youngest of seven, she was born on December 27, 1940, in Goodland, Kansas, to the late Jesse and Katrina Ortiz. She married **Paul Boling**, '78, in 1973, and the couple had a daughter, Colleen. The family moved to Southern, where Vickie earned a bachelor's degree in office administration and worked as a secretary in the Education Department. She and Paul both went on to complete their master's degrees at Andrews University in Michigan. While there, the couple lovingly welcomed the three children of Paul's deceased brother into their home, doubling the size of their family. The couple began their ministry in Alabama after graduating from Andrews, where they spent 16 years at different churches. Paul then pastored in Tennessee, Texas, and Florida. While the family was in Texas, Vickie served as the conference women's ministries director, and she was active in every church they served, helping with Pathfinders, directing children's choirs, serving on committees, and fundraising for a new church building. Vickie loved the Lord and supported Paul's ministry. She is survived and deeply missed by her husband, Paul; children, **Colleen Ross**, attended, **Richard Boling**, **Angie (Boling) Bigsby**, attended, and **Ron Boling**, attended; stepdaughter, Paula Sanchez; and four grandchildren.

3 Gardell Blake, attended, passed away on December 11, 2024, in Yakima, Washington. He was born on October 3, 1951, to Ray and Lorene Blake, at Portland Adventist Hospital in Oregon.

After attending Southern, Gardell earned his nursing degree from Kettering College in Ohio, graduating with his wife, Barbara, in 1974. He was a passionate nurse who loved to help people with their physical and mental wellness as well as their personal and spiritual growth. He always kept Jesus first and radiated God's love. Gardell will be remembered for his love of conversation, family, and life, along with his gentle nature and generous heart. He will be deeply missed by all who knew and loved him. He is survived by his wife, Barbara (Hedger) Blake; brother, Gayland Blake; and two sons, **Jeffrey Blake**, attended, and Jeremy Blake.

Linda (Parker) Cambigue, '67, passed away in 2024 alongside her husband of 50 years, Art Cambigue, following health-related complications. After the passing of her first husband, **Dan Ledbetter**, '67, in 1972, she relocated from Florida to Michigan to pursue graduate studies at Andrews University. While there, she met Art and the two married in 1973, beginning a long and devoted partnership. Linda dedicated her career to serving students as a guidance counselor in the Washington County, Tennessee, school system. She was also an active member of her local church community and was deeply cherished by those who knew her. She and Art are survived by their sons: **Bruce Cambigue**, '91 (**Judy Branson Cambigue**, '89), and Stephen Cambigue (Laura); and grandchildren, Annika Cambigue and Tobin Cambigue.

4 Karen (Haight) Clark, '78, passed away at age 78 on August 6, 2025, after a series of falls resulting from leukemia and early onset dementia. She was born March 22, 1947, in Lockport, New York, and was the only surviving child of her parents. She completed a bachelor's degree in home economics at Southern in 1978 and a master's degree in clothing and textiles from Michigan State University in

1980. Clark worked at Bass Memorial Academy in Mississippi for 35 years, first as the librarian and home economics teacher, then later as the English teacher and sponsor of the student newspaper and yearbook. In 2003, she received the Zapara Award for Excellence in Teaching, and in 2004, the Bass Memorial Academy Alumni Association honored her with special recognition for her contributions to campus morale. The hours she spent in a classroom were the highlight of her life, and she treasured close, lifelong friendships with hundreds of her students. She retired in 2013, then moved to Tennessee in 2018 to live near her family and alma mater. She was preceded in death by her parents, Albert and Marjorie Haight; her husband, Barry Clark; a son, David Clark; and a grandson, Joshua Hicks. She is survived by her daughter and son-in-law, **Debbie (Clark) Hicks**, '91, and **Henry Hicks**, '05, of Collegedale; her grandson, Andrew Hicks; and many beloved cousins.



5 Philip "Garv" Garver, '70, EdD, passed away on September 2, 2025, at 79 years old. He was born on September 25, 1945, in Pendleton, Oregon, to Gilbert Eugene Garver and Leah Ruth Wohlehagen. While at Southwestern Junior College in Keene, Texas, he met Betty Sue Thurber, whom he married on July 18, 1965. A short year later, he was drafted into the U.S. Army, where he proudly served his country in Vietnam from 1967 to 1968. Upon returning home, he and Betty moved to Collegedale, Tennessee, where he earned a bachelor's degree in health, physical education, and recreation at Southern. Garver began his 43-year-long teaching career at Mount Vernon Academy in Ohio. After six years, the couple moved back to Collegedale, where he joined the faculty at Southern in 1978, a position he held for 37 years. He also served as chair and dean of the Physical Education Department for 26 of those years. His leadership transformed the program, culminating in the formation of the School of Physical Education, Health, and Wellness in 1996. Garver also served the Collegedale community as a city commissioner and a tireless visionary who was not afraid to dream big. He masterminded, developed, and conducted fundraising for projects such as Hulsey Wellness Center, Collegedale Veterans Memorial Park, and Southern's "Fit for Eternity" public art installation. He is survived by his wife, Betty; son, **Steve Garver**, '91 (Laura); daughter, **Leah Garver**, '00; granddaughters, **Alicia**, current, Brooklyn, and Madison; brothers, Richard Garver and **Glen Garver**, '77 (**Beth Swanson Garver**, '77); sister, **Gerita Garver Liebelt**, attended; bonus granddaughters Alexis and Alanna; and great granddaughter, Amelia.

6 Lovenia (Mitchell) Greer, '64, of Smyrna, Georgia, passed away at 82 years old on March 1, 2025. She was born and lived in Morganton, North Carolina, until she left to attend Mount Pisgah Academy. After graduating from Southern, she began teaching at Grand Rapids Junior Academy in Michigan. Her career took her to Florida, where she taught at Orlando Junior Academy. In 1986, she relocated to Atlanta, Georgia, where she concluded her education career after more than 20 years at Becker Adventist School. Greer was an accomplished pianist and organist. She shared her talents with many churches, accompanying performers and teaching students. She was the organist at Westminster Presbyterian Church in Snellville, Georgia, for 25 years. She enjoyed traveling, friends, family, and especially her students and church family. She is survived by her two children, Jason Greer and Jilene Greer.

7 Gary Pearson, '67, passed away at 84 years old on November 4, 2024, in Candler, North Carolina. He was born on August 13, 1940, in Fletcher, North Carolina, and graduated from Fletcher Academy

before attending Southern, where he earned a degree in accounting. He got his CPA license and did income taxes for his clients for more than 55 years. He worked up until the day he entered the hospital. After two weeks there, he returned home, and his tired heart gave out just three days later. Pearson loved travel and people, encouraging others to travel and recommending the best places. He loved living in the mountains near Asheville, North

Carolina, and he was thankful to have nearly all of his children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren living nearby. He is survived by his wife, **Eunice (Christensen) Pearson**, '63; sister, **Sharon Pearson**, '68; children, **Phillip Pearson**, attended, and Tamera Pearson; Eunice's children: **Thomas Morton**, attended, Todd Morton, and Sandra Morton; and seven grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren.



Faith and Duty in Vietnam

By Tina Frist Smith, '89 and '23, communication manager

“Come with me on a remarkable journey of adventure and discovery, an opportunity for me to minister to ‘the least of these,’” wrote Kenneth Case, '63, MD, in the forward to his book published last year.

The memoir, titled *A Matter of Faith: An American Doctor in Vietnam*, documents Case’s 12-month medical service starting in April 1969 during the violent war in Southeast Asia. Along with excerpts of personal correspondence, the book features 60 photographs from Case’s year abroad.

As chief health officer of the 29th Civil Affairs Company, he and 40 dedicated medics provided care to Vietnamese civilians. He remembers American soldiers being eager “to heal, not wound” and committed to the group’s unique mission.

“I was always near combat, always in danger, but never in active battles,” Case notes about his travels throughout the five northern provinces of the country. “My story captures some of the positive things that came from being over there ... [and is a] testimony of how God led through this perilous time in my life. My guardian angel was very busy!”

Working to mitigate tropical diseases, bacterial infections including cholera and plague, intestinal disorders, leprosy, and other skin ailments, Case and his team were continually frustrated by health conditions either too far advanced or requiring follow-up care or medicines that were not available. Members of the Viet Cong guerrilla forces often joined the lines for healthcare services, indistinguishably dressed in locals’ clothing.

An amateur photographer, Case carried a camera everywhere he went in Vietnam. Each night, he recorded messages and notes about his day and mailed the tapes to family in his hometown of Portland, Tennessee. Years later, Case revisited and studied those preserved and transcribed audio files as part of his research for the book.

On Southern’s campus, he met his future wife, Ruth Arlene Painter, '63, who completed her bachelor’s degree in nursing. She worked as a nurse at Loma Linda University Medical Center in California while he studied in the School of Medicine. Once his doctorate had been completed in 1967, the couple returned home to begin a residency, but instead Case was drafted by the U.S. Army as a general medical officer. He expected to be patching up the wounded from battalions on the front lines after an abbreviated orientation course at Fort Sam Houston in Texas.



Photos: Contributed

Kenneth Case, '63, MD, recently wrote a memoir about serving as a doctor during the Vietnam War.

Initially confused about why God would take him away from his wife and two small children, and also torn between his duties at home and service to his country, Case now looks back on the year abroad and clearly sees God’s leading: “He always had a plan for my life and [brought] me back home safely after many harrowing experiences.”

With the blessing of a delayed departure and chance encounter on a flight overseas, Case arrived in Vietnam to meet the surgeon general in charge of medical personnel, who was quite familiar with Seventh-day Adventist hospitals all over the world.

Recognizing Case’s medical school affiliation, the surgeon general first confirmed that the young physician shared the Seventh-day Adventist philosophy of health and healing, then tasked him with leading a program to provide healthcare to the native population.

Inspired by the biblical words of Matthew 25:40, Case took his surprising and miraculous assignment to heart, determined to combine faith and duty while ministering to those injured and displaced by the fight between communism and democracy.

Written during his retirement after 50 years as a family practice doctor in Tennessee, Case’s book documents his early impressions of Vietnam, including monsoons, rural medical clinics, and refugee camps; travels from his base in Da Nang to Nha Trang, Saigon, Hue, and other cities for civil affairs; and the joyful Montagnard people.

“I pray this collection of personal memories made public will help surviving veterans, including patients from my own practice over the years, who have never fully recovered from losing their youth to the trauma of war or suffering the collateral damage of combat,” Case says. ■



Photo: Joseph Hyde

Torch Award for Ethics

Southern was honored to receive a 2025 Better Business Bureau Torch Award for Ethics, an accolade for organizations that lead with integrity. “Ethics and teaching our students positive Christian character traits are core to who we are, as an institution and as individuals, here at Southern,” says Ken Shaw, '80, EdD, president of Southern. “This wouldn’t be possible without the dedication and wholehearted commitment of our faculty and staff. Our team is united in our mission because we have a collective goal that each is passionate about—transforming lives for eternity.”

SCHEDULE A VISIT *Your Way*

One size doesn't fit all, so when it comes to checking out Southern, we're giving you options:

- **Virtual visits** allow you to see campus and get your questions answered from the comfort of home.
- **In-person visits** give you an immersive experience of walking around campus and meeting people face-to-face.
- **Group visits** mean you can explore Southern with your friends! Church youth groups, homeschool organizations, or any other group you may want to bring are welcome.

No matter how you visit, you'll get a guided tour, faculty visit, and admissions consultation while having the chance to ask any questions you want. We can't wait to meet you!



Schedule your visit today!
southern.edu/visit