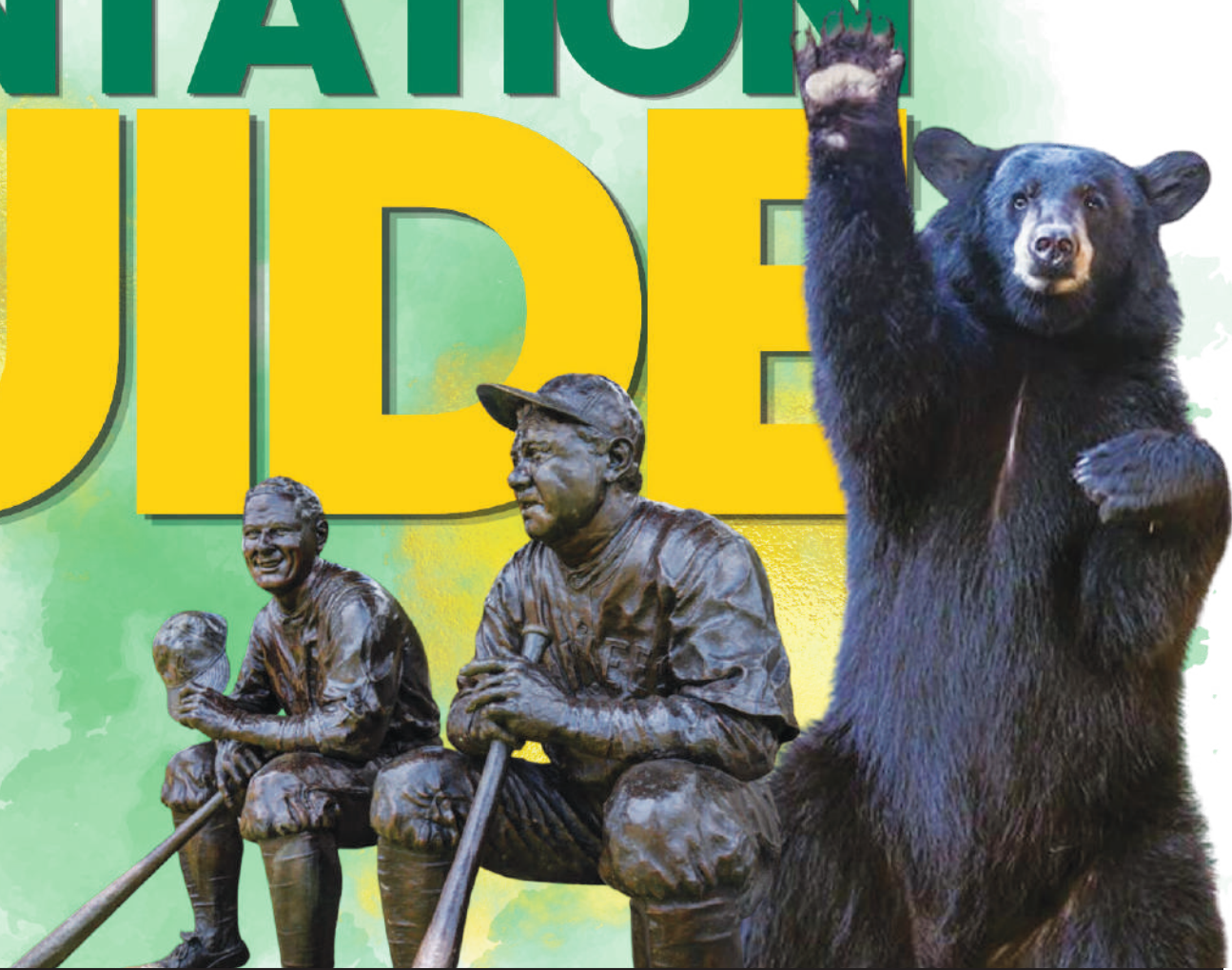


# BU BAYLOR LARIAT

*News for the students by the students*

# ORIENTATION GUIDE



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# Alum Keviah Ealy's path to reality TV

**KALENA REYNOLDS**  
Arts & Life Editor

From being on the track and field team to building a social media brand, alum Keviah Ealy had no shortage of accomplishments during her time at Baylor. After graduation, Ealy made the decision to take a gap year — a choice that has now led her to starring in the third season of “Vanderpump Villa” on Hulu.

While Ealy has begun to make a path for herself in the media industry, her plans weren't always straightforward. After a career-ending all-terrain vehicle injury that resulted in a loss of memories, Ealy was forced to medically retire from the track team, leading her to both a loss of identity and life plan.

“To have my accident, lose my memories and lose that part of myself, I found my passion for social media through that,” Ealy said. “I feel like if my accident never happened, I would still be going to med school, I would still be on track, kind of having this corporate life, which there is no problem with, but it's not what my heart really wanted.”

Ealy said the months after the accident were both emotionally and physically grueling.

“I woke up, and I didn't even really know who I was,” Ealy said. “I was in my childhood room, everyone surrounding me and I'm like, ‘What happened?’”

Following her accident, Ealy underwent a year and a half of vestibular rehabilitation for complications following the accident.

“I had these blackout headaches where I was like, ‘I cannot move, I cannot do school, I have to go to sleep,’” Ealy said.

Ealy elaborated that the strenuous moments of recovery were really where she was able to reflect on her priorities.

“It helped me realize that my accident did position me to explore myself because you don't really know what you have until you lose it all,” she said.

Ealy spent the rest of college building a digital platform, quickly realizing that she wanted to pursue social media as a career. After graduation, she received a direct message from a casting director asking if she wanted to be on a reality show.

“I got an Instagram DM, and I was like, ‘Um, sure,’ like this is gonna be a scam,” Ealy said. “So I took a leap of faith and went through all of it.”

After going through an extensive screening process, Ealy was flown out to Los Angeles a few months later to meet the crew and Lisa Vanderpump.

Vanderpump is an English TV personality who has appeared on “The Real Housewives of Beverly Hills” and has spearheaded her own shows, including “Vanderpump Rules,” “Vanderpumped” and, her latest,

“Vanderpump Villa.”

“Vanderpump Villa” revolves around a cast of staff who work and live at exclusive French and English estates. The cast has to navigate working at the Villa while also managing love interests and high-stakes drama.

“You wake up, you get ready ‘cause there are cameras in your room, and you go grab your microphone,” Ealy said. “If you were the morning shift, you'd go and do brunch service ... If you were dinner service, it would be the opposite.”

During filming, the cast was not allowed to have their phones and was only allowed 10 minutes of phone calls once a week.

“It was hard, but I think more than anything, you missed your daily routine,” Ealy said. “Anxiety is so high ... You're performing as an elevated version of yourself, so you just feel this anxiety of not being yourself, and you're like, ‘Am I being myself or am I performing because there's a camera right here?’”

Ealy said that the thing she wants people to take away from her experience is the importance of “taking the risk and jumping off that ledge.”

“The only way you fully submerge yourself into being truly happy is to chase after your true desires, regardless of what people think about it,” Ealy said.

Ealy's aunt, Tangela Seals, said some of her family were confused about her being on a reality



Photo courtesy of Keviah Ealy

**RISING STAR** Alum Keviah Ealy found her life transformed after a tragic ATV injury.

show; however, they ultimately understood the opportunity that was being presented.

“She's always been a high achiever and had a lot of career aspirations in the medical field, and so I think some of our family might have been a little confused because this is way the opposite direction,” Seals said.

Seals explained that Ealy's drive has propelled her to where she is known.

“Once K finds something, she's committed to it,” Seals said. “Even if she changes her mind, she's going to fully commit to that. She's really self-motivated. She's certainly a self-starter.”

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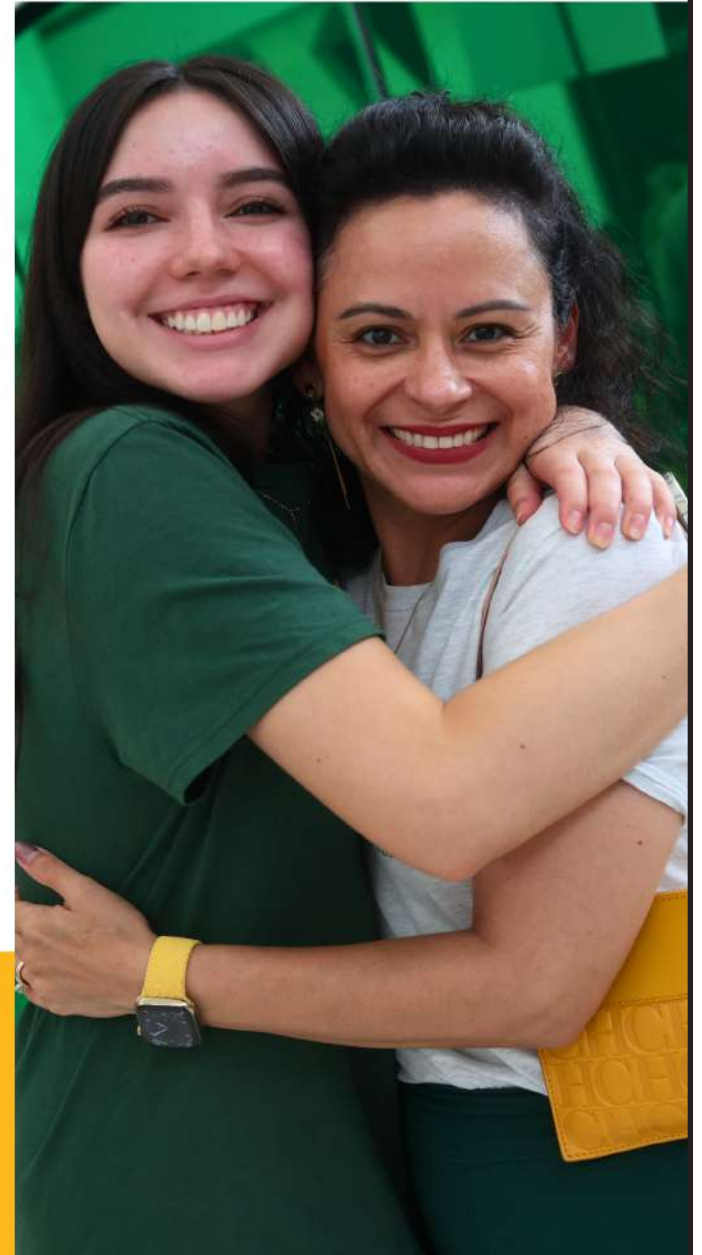
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# THE RISE OF BYX

*Beta Upsilon Chi fraternity achieves biggest recruiting class ever*

**ABBY RATHBURN**  
Staff Writer

Fresh off a first-place Sing win and recruiting 28 new members, nearly doubling its membership within one semester, Beta Upsilon Chi is gaining momentum and drawing attention across Baylor's campus.

Brothers Under Christ, also known as Beta Upsilon Chi, is a Christian fraternity on Baylor's campus, and this year, it drew more eyes than ever. In spring 2025, the fraternity inducted 11 new members. This spring, 28 members joined the fraternity, including Thornton, Colo., freshman Tyler Elmore.

"There is a shift towards wanting this fully integrated Christian life, like, to bring your relationship with God into more than just the church, but into your school and education and into your social interaction," Elmore said.

Many recruits said that they felt drawn to the idea of Brothers Under Christ, doing life together under a Christ-centered lens. BYX President Robert Gulley, a senior from San Antonio, said that a big reason he chose BYX was that the recruitment process felt far more intentional than what he ever expected.

"The entire process for BYX was questions like, 'How does God work in your life? Tell me about your faith, why are you saved and what's your salvation like?'" Gulley said. "I haven't had people want my heart rather than what I have to offer."

When looking for future recruits, the men of BYX hope to continue their growth without sacrificing their organization's values. Gulley said there are three things they look for in potential new members: a love of God, a desire to support each

other and a desire to be a part of a social fraternity.

"You just got to kick that intentionality into high gear because you do have to put in more effort to actually know and love and care about the people around you when you start growing in numbers," Gulley said.



The entire process for BYX was questions like, 'How does God work in your life? Tell me about your faith, why are you saved and what's your salvation like?'

**TYLER ELMORE  
THORNTON, COLO.,  
FRESHMAN**

This mutual selection process brought together men from diverse backgrounds at various points in their faith journeys. However, they are all united under a desire to grow in their relationship with Christ.



Photo courtesy of Robert Gulley

**BROTHERHOOD** Beta Upsilon Chi brought in 28 new members as part of its spring recruitment class for 2026.

Argyle freshman Micah Gassaway said he had heard about BYX before arriving on campus and after meeting some of the guys, he knew he had found the right fit.

"If you're looking for what a fraternity actually is, like what it's intentionally supposed to be ... it is supposed to be a brotherhood of guys building each

other up and making each other better — I feel like that truly is what BYX is," Gassaway said.

Members said that emphasis on community extends far beyond internal relations. At each of their events, they make an effort to reiterate what their organization stands for and the purpose it seeks to fulfill.

"The recent parties we've had have been successfully advertised, and there's been good attendance and we've been capitalizing on that, using it as opportunities, not only to share the fun parts of the fraternity, but at every event we have someone talk about the personal relationship with Christ that comes with it," Elmore said.

# How a first-gen student found herself at Baylor

**ISABEL VORST**  
Intern

Centerton, Ark., senior Gracie Lawhon is graduating with her bachelor's in biology; however, unlike the majority of students, she is the first in her family to graduate. She currently serves as the student outreach specialist for the student organization First in Line and is a Trailblazer Scholar.

She first became involved with the student organization as a First in Line Success Academy (FILSA) Scholar her freshman year, where she quickly found a lifelong community.

"I wanted to pour back into the system that poured into me," Lawhon said. "I served as a peer leader to first-year FILSA scholars for two years. In my final year, I am the First in Line student worker, where I support programming efforts for our student leaders and scholars."

After graduation, she will pursue a master's in clinical rehabilitation counseling at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, with the hope of becoming a vocational rehabilitation counselor for blind and visually impaired youth.

Lawhon said she would not be where she is today without her faith and family.

"My mom has been a single mother to my younger brother and I for half of our lives," Lawhon said. "She worked any chance she could for us, supporting every dream we voiced. Her mentality was 'How can we make this happen' instead of saying no. Despite any financial obstacles or distance, she has always encouraged me to explore new places and step outside of my comfort zone."

For Lawhon, stepping out of her comfort zone has led her to Baylor and helped implement future plans for grad school.

"Gracie's family has been her anchor over the past four years," Neches senior Cara Greve, Lawhon's best friend, said. "I've seen them uplift her, encourage her and bring her a sense of peace and reassurance. From their daily sweet phone calls to their surprise visits, their support has motivated her to keep going even when things felt impossible."

Lawhon's brother, Nash, is also incredibly proud of his sister for working so hard to get into her dream grad school.

Nash said that being in college together with

his sister has allowed them to become close.

"As we both navigate college life while being seven hours apart, I am super glad to have such a loving and amazing sister like Gracie," Nash said.

First-generation students are generally subject to many assumptions and stereotypes. One that Lawhon has proven wrong is the assumption that first-generation students fall under one demographic and are "at-risk" in academic settings.

"When coming to college, I struggled with my identity as a first-generation student," Lawhon said. "My life did not look like the life of my peers. I was adopted from China when I was 11 months old into a white family from southern Arkansas. Few people had similar experiences with me, especially any related to racial or ethnic identity."

Lawhon said there were times she didn't believe she earned the "first-generation" title, her struggle with identity reaching beyond imposter syndrome.

"I learned that the experience of first-generation students is just one experience of many," Lawhon said. "Each should be respected and valued, and my story is a testament to that truth. I've met a lot of first-generation students during my time at Baylor, and one thing is for sure: first-generation students are anything but 'at-risk.' We are resilient, driven and compassionate."

Baylor's community was fundamental to helping Lawhon form her identity in Christ.

"Before coming to Baylor, I knew a lot about God," Lawhon said. "My dad was a Baptist pastor, so I did all the things that came with that. However, it became a religious routine rather than a loving relationship with the Lord. It wasn't until I got plugged into community with Highland Baptist Church that I really understood what it meant to be a child of God."

Lawhon elaborated that all incoming first-generation students at Baylor should focus on finding their own identity and confidence.

"Give yourself grace and flexibility in your plans," Lawhon said. "The goals you have going in may not be the goals you have going out, and that is perfectly okay. Your path is unique to you. Yes, the people in the room around you are qualified, but don't forget that you are also in that room for a reason. Your story deserves to be heard like anyone else's."



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# Behind the scenes of Baylor's student-led tours

**ABBY RATHBURN**  
Staff Writer

Students might notice the green polo and khaki shorts-clad guides walking around campus with groups of prospective students — but what goes unnoticed are the challenges of being a Baylor tour guide.

Fort Worth freshman and tour guide Gavin Schoffler said his role was curated to give students a good experience.

"There's a system and intentionality behind everything you see and do at every event, whether that is just a campus tour on any day of the week, or it is those bigger prospective events, every part of that experience has been intentionally crafted to really provide students with the best experience they can have on campus," Schoffler said.

Leelee Nelson, coordinator of campus visits, manages all of Baylor's tour guides. Nelson said many families expressed gratitude toward the university for how Baylor runs its tours.

"I think it's so genuine and so families really see that and see that this is a place that really values community, and values our Christian mission, and I think that just really shines through our campus tours," Nelson said.

These positive experiences extend beyond prospective students. Ladera Ranch, Calif., senior Ellie Kolster said working as a tour guide has been "a huge blessing" during her Baylor experience.

"It's really helped me grow as a public speaker, and get out of my comfort zone a little bit, because talking to people wasn't something I was always super comfortable with," Kolster said. "Having to do presentations or talk about the struggles that I've had at Baylor — it's not always the most comfortable thing, but it's definitely helped me in my growth overall."

Kolster now serves on the leadership team as a Senior Bear, where she assists in training other tour guides and helps match prospective students with tour guides that share similar backgrounds or interests, highlighting the intentionality behind the scenes of the tours.

"Every morning you kick off with a morning huddle, which is just checking in with everybody, but then it's also an opportunity to pray over the day and get your hearts in the right place to start things off right," Schoffler said.

Nonetheless, tour guides are met with day-to-day challenges that make the job a difficult one. Kolster said it's common for prospective students and their parents to ask difficult questions on the topic of religion, politics and overall campus demographics. But for Edmonds, Wash., freshman and tour guide Graham Icasiano, the reward far exceeds the challenges.

"It is kind of labor-intensive, but I think that that's important because ... we do want to make sure that the experience for visiting families, whether it's alumni or prospective students, is really good," Icasiano said.

For those looking to apply, Nelson said Baylor is hiring for summer



Mesha Mittanasala | Photographer

**CRUISING CAMPUS** Baylor University tour guides welcome prospective students and their families during a campus visit, offering an inside look at student life and traditions.

and fall tour guide positions, giving students the opportunity to work anywhere between eight and 20 hours per week. More information can be found on the campus job board.

"We look for someone who has a love for Baylor, who's excited and wants to talk to people about Baylor and just really show them how much they care about them," Nelson said. "I think it's always really great to see people who are really involved on campus, and I think that kind of goes with the love for Baylor."

Icasiano, Schoffler and Kolster all said they were grateful for the community that being a tour guide provided them. Beyond leading prospective students around campus, each of them described forming close friendships with their fellow guides.

"I've gotten really close with people who work the same shifts as me, and I think it's awesome because a lot of them are people that I otherwise would not have gotten to know," Icasiano said.



Mesha Mittanasala | Photographer

**ALL IN** With tours happening consistently, between 160 to 200 students help facilitate and shuttle around prospective students and families.

“It’s always really great to see people who are really involved on campus, and I think that kind of goes with the love for Baylor.”

**LEELEE NELSON**  
COORDINATOR OF  
CAMPUS VISITS

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# Babe Ruth in Waco: The history of Katy Park

**JACKSON POSEY**  
Sports Editor

Ninety-seven years ago, Babe Ruth arrived in Waco.

Pandemonium ensued.

The 1929 New York Yankees were perhaps America's biggest draw. Wacoans showed up in droves to watch the local Waco Cubs host a preseason exhibition match against the back-to-back World Series champions.

Katy Park typically held about 4,000 fans, but on April 4, 1929, the venue packed in 11,000 spectators, roughly a sixth of the town's population. Fans jostled for a glimpse of the Babe with such fervor that a New York Times story from the following morning called the event "one of the weirdest spectacles probably ever seen on a baseball field."

Waco had "never had occasion in all its history to handle a crowd of such proportions," wrote the Times' John Drebinger, leaving event organizers scrambling to make room for the crowds. Makeshift outfield benches were immediately packed to the brim, and pretty soon "most of the inhabitants of Waco were swarming all over the outfield."

Comic hilarity ensued. Officials, overwhelmed by the size of the crowd and apparently unable to fully evacuate the field, gruffly declared that order had been restored. That declaration may have been premature — fans were still overflowing from the stands, "backed against the fence from foul line to foul line," and the children were getting antsy.

Things came to a head when Ruth jogged out of the dugout to take his place in the outfield.

"As a final demonstration some 300 youngsters, most of them barefooted and in overalls, charged out on right field and surrounded Ruth," Drebinger wrote. "This caused another ten-minute delay ... while the great man shook hands, autographed scorecards and beamed upon his youthful Texan admirers."

Satisfied, the crowd backed up to a respectful distance for a few innings. But by the third, they were back on his heels; by the fifth, Drebinger noted, "the Yanks were forced to play with their distinguished right fielder completely engulfed in humanity." Ruth apparently enjoyed the diversion, allowing the kids to climb all over him as he frolicked and rolled in the grass.

During a rare respite from the crowds, Ruth shot a ground-rule double back into right field, where it drilled a kid in the head. The Babe

rushed to the outfield to check on the child, who was not seriously hurt, and gave him an autographed baseball as an apology.

It wasn't needed. The child, by all accounts, was having the time of his life.

"Tonight the proudest youngster in all Texas is a kid with the lump on his head the size of an apple," Drebinger wrote. "He received this intimate contact with the great man of the Yankees when the Babe smashed a two-bagger into the crowd in right field in the third inning."

Eventually, the chaos reached a fever pitch, and Ruth was removed from the game. That was too much for the already-frenzied crowd to handle. They charged the outfield and actively harassed the Cubs' outfielders, attempting to pull the ball out of the players' gloves after Yankees hits. It was a madhouse only the roaring '20s could produce.

"It was a joyful picnic that terminated without the Waco Cubs taking their last turn at bat," Drebinger wrote. "No one cared what the Waco players did on this day."

Ruth's appearance may well represent Katy Park's enduring legacy, but that game was only one chapter in a storied history. Teddy Roosevelt stopped in April 1905, marking the first presidential visit to Waco. Several baseball teams played there over the years, including the Waco Navigators, who won the Texas League in 1914, and the Cubs, whose diminutive outfielder Gene "Half-Pint" Rye made history in 1930 by becoming the only player in history to hit three home runs in one inning.

The Waco Dons featured one-legged pitcher Monty Stratton, who lost his leg in a hunting accident but continued his baseball career anyway. The one-legged pitcher tossed a shutout for the Dons in 1947, and — a year after his promotion to Waco — served as an adviser for a Hollywood movie about his life entitled "The Stratton Story."

In 1952, the renamed Waco Pirates finished 29-118, good for a .197 winning percentage and a solid 56 games out of first place, one of the worst seasons in minor league history. The following year, the devastating 1953 Waco Tornado destroyed the ballpark, along with much of the city, prompting the team to relocate to Longview.

The park was soon rebuilt, with minimal financial success, and was eventually razed to make room for a parking lot.

"Baseball just holds kind of a special place in the culture," said Dr. Stephen Sloan, professor

of history and director for the Institute for Oral History. "I think all these things happening around baseball seem real central to who we are as a people."

The park also played an incidental role in the civil rights movement throughout its history as the site of various Black sports teams and some high-profile integrated sporting events.

The old Katy Park hosted Texas' Black Little League Championship and multiple Black baseball teams, including the Waco Black Navigators and Waco Black Cardinals. The latter team made history in a May 1930 game against the famed Kansas City Monarchs.

"It's 1930 that the first night baseball game [in Texas] is played in Katy Park," Sloan said. "The Kansas City Monarchs, which was a Negro League team, comes to town with their light sets and they put up lights, and it's wildly popular. And so a few weeks later, the white owners of the white team install lights because it was obvious how much more money they could make if they would stage night games."

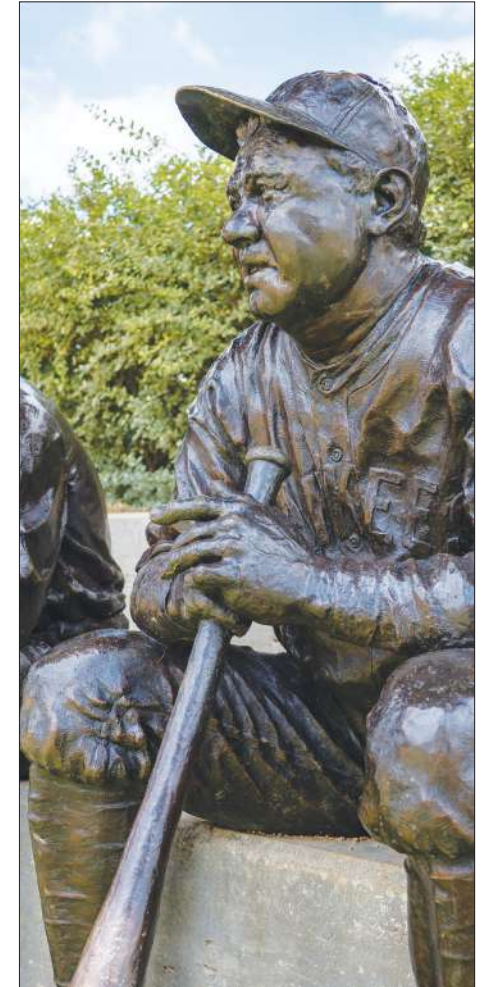
Katy Park also hosted football games for Paul Quinn College, the oldest historically Black college in Texas. In 1949, onlookers watched the Tigers make history, as they defeated the Camp Hood 41st Infantry team 19-6. It was, according to the Philadelphia Tribune, the first game in Texas football history in which an all-Black team played an all-white team.

In 1951, the Waco Tribune-Herald proclaimed that "the greatest Negro baseball attraction of all time will be offered to Waco and Central Texas fans" on Halloween eve, when the "Major League All Stars" — featuring Don Newcombe, Willie Mays and Roy Campanella — would play the "Colored American League All Stars" at Katy Park during a barnstorming trip.

Aside from football and baseball, famous athletes occasionally came to Waco for one-off events, with Katy Park as their venue of choice. Most famously, track and field legend Jesse Owens — three years removed from his historic showing at the 1936 Berlin Olympics — hosted a training clinic in Waco in August 1939, free to attend for any boy under the age of 15.

Joe Louis, one of the greatest American boxers of all time, spent enough time in Waco in 1950 to win a four-round exhibition fight against a soldier from Fort Hood and announce his retirement from the sport. He, too, spent much of his time in that ballpark off Jackson Avenue.

Katy Park no longer exists in its former glory.



Sam Gassaway | Photo Editor

**LEGENDS** A statue of Babe Ruth is located at the Magnolia Market where Katy Park once stood.

It was torn down by the forces of nature, then by force of pragmatism. It is physically survived by a Texas Historical Commission marker outside the Silos at Magnolia and a small wiffle ball field on the premises.

Katy Park's story is riddled with imperfections. Seating was racially segregated, and in many ways, the park fell victim to many of the same issues that plagued the rest of Central Texas over the years. But as a public space shared by Black and white patrons, its role in local racial dynamics is worthy of further study.

After the Pirates left town for good in 1955, business at Katy Park began to wind down.

**THE GREAT BAMBINO >> 13**

# Why leaving this city will be hard

**O'CONNOR DANIEL**  
Reporter

If someone told me several years ago that I was going to move 850 miles away from my hometown to attend college in Texas, I wouldn't have thought them crazy, necessarily. But if they had told me I would come to see Waco, a town in Central Texas, as home, that would've taken some convincing.



Papa Jack's Barbecue was the first restaurant I ever visited in Waco, and that trip alone was enough

to put my parents at ease. The owner, Mrs. Kim, sat down at our table, typed her number into my phone and said to call if I ever ran into trouble — "because I've got three grown boys who'll come straighten things out," she said.

There it is. That's Waco.

Situated by the Brazos River, Waco is the kind of town where locals extend hospitality as if it's their second nature. Gas station attendants mean it when they say, "Have a good day." Fellow students' families have you over for Sunday dinner and send you home with leftovers, knowing college kids don't cook for themselves.

From modest Texas bungalows to takeout-only breakfast tacos, Waco doesn't put on airs. Reflecting on my past four years here, I've examined the small-town charms, people, history and culture.

It's Waco in the conversations at George's with someone who's lived in town for 50 years and insists on paying for your meal. It's Waco in the inability to walk for exercise because you pass by too many friends sitting on their porches. Waco is sitting at a picnic table with my roommates, ruining other folks' exercise. Pretty much everyone I know lives within a three-mile radius of each other. It's the lady at the thrift store who will help people put outfits together with the enthusiasm of a Hollywood costume designer.

My neighbor, Mr. Leo, resonates with Waco

as he takes care of his 90-year-old mother in the home where he grew up, mowing our lawn every week and installing security lights to ward off intruders. He worries about us.

Waco is walking to the pizza restaurant down the street every Thursday or driving to Cinemark for \$5 movies on Tuesdays. It's in the randomness of a birthday camp out at the Llama Ranch and jumping off a cliff at Lake Whitney into the Brazos.

People say Waco can feel isolated. Dallas traffic is isolation. I'd rather hit every pothole on 11th Street. I've realized that Waco is humble — not flashy. Waco is authentic.

As graduation approaches, I have to ask myself what's next. Here I am, a senior, standing on the edge of the next chapter. In the spring, I'll graduate.

It feels like yesterday I was in Athens, Ga., writing my college essay: "Now I'm standing on the line separating childhood from adulthood, with high school almost in my rear view mirror and college, that GREAT BEYOND, looming ahead."

And now, somehow, I'm back on that line again. But this time, I don't want to leave the place I'm writing from, unlike the hometown I was dying to escape. Waco's people, its pace and its weirdness have become part of me.

Sure, Dallas-Fort Worth — where around 35,000 Baylor Bears live — is only 90 miles up I-35. And if I end up there, it won't be completely unfamiliar territory. But cities like Dallas or Nashville, Tenn., come with their own kind of pressure. They're fast, polished and career-driven. That's not necessarily a bad thing. In fact, that's probably where the jobs will take me.

But wherever I land, leaving Waco won't be easy. Mr. Leo told me how sad he'll be when my roommates and I move out.

"The cycle keeps on going," he said. "Girls move in, stay three years, then they leave."

I can only hope I'll carry with me what Waco taught me to appreciate: what's real and what doesn't try to sell itself as more than it is. I hope I don't lose that, even if I trade potholes for rush-hour.

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# Recycling bins appear on campus, awareness lags

**JOANA KAROSHI**  
Staff Writer

Outside residence halls and scattered across academic buildings, new recycling bins have appeared, encouraging students to adopt more sustainable habits.

According to Sustainability Specialist for Operations and Engagement Sarah Guberman VerPloeg, a growing university effort is actively addressing these concerns.

After a restructure in 2024, the Office of Sustainability sought to improve recycling on campus. To do so, they paired each outdoor trash bin with a recycling bin, allowing “equal opportunity” for waste disposal, Guberman VerPloeg said.

“These new waste stations began rolling out over spring break and are expected to be fully installed by

the end of the semester,” Guberman VerPloeg said.

A standardized labeling system seeks to combat contamination and improve clarity of recycling guidelines. Additionally, the bins use different colored bags — black for trash and blue for recycling — to avoid contamination.

Guberman VerPloeg said that although outdoor stations have been improved, the team aims to improve indoor stations as well.

“Ultimately, the initiative aims to encourage responsible habits across campus, reinforcing the message that ‘Bears Care to Recycle Right,’” Guberman VerPloeg said.

As Baylor continues expanding its recycling infrastructure, student responses suggest that accessibility alone may not be enough. Increased awareness, clearer labeling and

education on proper recycling practices may play a key role in determining whether the new bins lead to meaningful change on campus.

San Diego senior Michael Gerken said he had not noticed the new bins and admitted recycling is not always top of mind.

“When I can, I try to, but otherwise I don’t really pay much attention to that,” Gerken said.

Gerken said increasing visibility through promotion could help students engage more with recycling efforts.

“I think if they ran a simple ad campaign or some sort of promotion about it, saying they have new recycling methods or where these recycling methods are, people might pay more attention to them,” Gerken said.

Los Angeles senior Aidan Chiu also said he was unaware of the new bins and described his recycling habits as largely based on convenience.

“If I see it there and I have an empty water bottle, I’ll throw this over,” Chiu said. “But if I just want to get rid of it, I’ll just find some receptacle to put it in.”

Chiu said he has not seen Baylor actively promote recycling initiatives during his time on campus. However, he believes increasing the number of bins might influence student behavior.

“If you lay more recycling cans everywhere, I think it’s human nature to want to go because you’re doing something good,” Chiu said. “It gives people more incentives.”

Fort Worth senior Rylee Robertson said she has noticed the bins, particularly in dormitories,

but raised concerns about a lack of clear instructions.

“There’s no big description on what you can and cannot recycle,” Robertson said. “I do not know as a student if it’s actually going to a recycling facility.”

Robertson said this uncertainty affects how students use the bins and whether they trust the system. Robertson sees people put trash in recycling bins, so she’s unsure whether what goes into them is actually recycled. She stresses the need for clearer communication and education regarding recycling.

“I think it would be great to have even a talk about recycling and what Baylor aims for,” Robertson said. “A lot of people get confused — like with a pizza box. People think it can be recycled, but it can’t because of the grease.”

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# Waco is the best college city – here’s why

**CLAIRE MARIE SCOTT**  
LTVN Managing Editor



For some, the city where one goes to college is an important part of the decision process. Some narrow down their search to certain cities before looking into specific schools. For most of us here at Baylor, I would bet that Waco wasn't necessarily part of the draw.

However, I would say that Waco is, in fact, the best college city.

Waco is close to big cities, has strong local spots and supports a safe, relatively calm lifestyle. Even the country agrees; Waco was ranked in the top 100 best college towns in America, according to a 2016 list.

Part of why Waco stands out is its proximity to major cities like Austin and Dallas. Just an

hour and a half away from both, it allows out-of-state students relatively easy access to airports with a short drive up or down Interstate 35. Being situated between these cities also allows students to take easy day trips. Students and locals can easily make a round trip within a day if they want to experience the charms of a bigger city.

Another benefit is access to live music. Many major artists stop in Austin or Dallas, making concerts easy to attend.

Waco has also stepped into the live music scene more in recent years, with Baylor hosting Tucker Wetmore, Post Malone, Jelly Roll, Lauren Daigle, Willie Nelson and more. The Backyard Bar Stage and Grill and other local venues host live music regularly. There are truly plenty of opportunities to attend concerts, whether in nearby cities or right here in Waco.

Another reason Waco is a great city to live in, especially during college, is that there are many great small local businesses.

From top-tier coffee shops like For Keeps,

Pinewood and Be Kind, to local restaurants like Alpha Omega, Revival, Cafe Homestead, Milo and Opal's Oysters, you genuinely can't go wrong with the food and coffee scene in Waco. Living here is so enjoyable because there are

options beyond fast food and chain restaurants — places you can discover with friends.

Easily accessible local coffee shops enhance the college experience, and unique restaurants make it easier to show visitors what Waco has to offer beyond Baylor.

Finally, Waco supports a relatively safe and calm lifestyle. According to KWTX, the city saw a 7.3% decrease in crime in 2025. As a small- to mid-size city, Waco offers less hustle and bustle and more opportunity for enjoyment.

There are many ways to spend time outdoors, including Cameron Park, Lake Waco and Jacob's Ladder. The city also has a wide range of churches across denominations, making it easy to get connected and find spiritual community.

So the next time you want to complain about Waco, remember that there is a lot of beauty here. You're not living in a desert or driving three hours to reach the nearest airport. There are plenty of hidden gems to discover in Waco — you just have to discover and appreciate them.

“Waco is close to big cities, has strong local spots and supports a safe, relatively calm lifestyle. Even the country agrees ...”



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# Junior challenges norms through tattoo apprenticeship

**STACIE BOYLS**

Arts & Life Writer

Creativity and entrepreneurship run wild with Sherman junior Mazie Ann Petelski, who reframes artistic success through her work as a tattoo artist. Petelski, a fine arts major with a concentration in printmaking, is also a first-year tattoo apprentice at Southpaw Ink in Waco.

As an apprentice, she is balancing studio courses and tattoo sessions and building a portfolio that leans heavily into gothic, surrealist and illustrative styles. The product of her artistry is a stunning portfolio filled with impressive details, shading and realism.

Petelski always had a long-harbored passion for inked skin and artistry.

"I think I've kind of secretly, almost unknowingly been in it for my whole life," Petelski said.

Before ever tattooing skin, Petelski spent years drawing on friends with pens until high school, when she started experimenting with henna to re-create tattoo designs. Her first experience with skin tattooing wasn't until the start of her apprenticeship last January.

"It's very taboo within the industry to tattoo without an apprenticeship, without a mentor kind of monitoring you," she said.

With one year under her belt and one year to go, Petelski has enjoyed experimenting with every tattoo aesthetic and style. However, detail-oriented, gothic tattoo styles have become

her signature.

As an apprentice, Petelski said working with different styles has helped her understand her artistic voice and develop her individual style as a tattoo artist.

"I really like semi-realism and a lot of illustrative, gothic work, a lot of really small details, very kind of complex designs, lots of patterns," she said. "I think it looks good on everyone and is just so beautiful — it's one of the hardest styles, it takes so long with eight-hour sessions most of the time."

One of her favorite ongoing projects is a large stained-glass-inspired sleeve she is creating for Victor Boswell, a Waco-area resident and returning client. The piece features Gothic cathedral imagery rendered in blackwork and negative space.

"It's gonna be his whole arm," Petelski said. "We'll black out all of the spaces that are in between every window. So he'll have a full blackout arm, and then the places where his skin shows through is all of the windows."

Boswell said Petelski's artistic ability stood out to him early on.

"What's crazy impressive to me is her being so young and such a fantastic artist," Boswell said. "Honestly, looking at her portfolio and the things that she does — it's really impressive."

Beyond her technical skill, Boswell said Petelski's collaborative approach keeps him coming back.

"She works with you on stuff," he said. "I've

gotten tattoos all the way from Scotland to Denmark, and by far, Mazie is probably one of the best people I've gotten to work with."

Petelski said building relationships with clients has been one of the most rewarding parts of her apprenticeship.

"It's almost like I can't believe it most of the time because I'm just so new," she said. "Whenever people will choose to come back to me, it's just heartwarming."

Balancing tattooing with being a full-time Baylor student has been difficult, Petelski said, especially with time management and finances.

"Whenever a week is really heavy on school, I can't just pull back on tattooing necessarily," Petelski said. "Time management is just kind of hard for us."

Petelski said she has experienced judgment based on both the projects she creates in art class, tattoo studios and how she presents herself.

"I'm not conforming," Petelski said. "I'm not really going to try to fit in anywhere here."

Petelski described her art as "very gothic" and "kind of surrealist," noting that it can feel out of place in a conservative environment. She recalled moments when strangers questioned her faith based on her appearance.

Rather than discouraging her, however, Petelski felt validated in her sense of self and identity.

"I've experienced some direct judgment

for the things that I tattoo and also the way I present myself and the art I make," she said.

Petelski said people have gone so far as to question her faith in public simply because of her appearance.

"I've genuinely been on campus and had people approach me and ask if I know who Jesus Christ is," she said. "It honestly really humor[s] me and almost kind of ground[s] me in my identity."

While in Waco, Petelski strives to create accessible spaces for people who live outside the traditional Baylor aesthetic and to normalize alternative appearances in conservative or religiously-concentrated spaces.

"Giving people who don't normally have that space ... a way that they can absolutely have a place to go to make themselves feel more comfortable in their body, that's kind of been my goal while being an apprentice here in Waco," Petelski said.

After graduating, Petelski plans to tattoo full-time before pursuing a master's degree in printmaking. Eventually, she hopes to leave Texas and continue growing as an artist elsewhere.

For now, Petelski continues to balance campus life with long tattoo sessions and artistic devotion and to carve out a place for herself and others through art that refuses to conform.

Check out her work on Instagram at [@inkby\\_mazieann](https://www.instagram.com/inkby_mazieann).



Photo courtesy of Mazie Petelski

**BREAKING BOUNDARIES** Sherman junior Mazie Ann Petelski tattoos one of her clients at Southpaw Ink in Waco.



Photo courtesy of Mazie Petelski

**INTRICATE DESIGNS** Devoted customer Victor Boswell showcases a piece of his large stained-glass-inspired sleeve.

## THE GREAT BAMBINO from 8

The end looked inevitable. Perhaps fittingly, the historical marker notes that the field's "last baseball games [were] part of a statewide tournament of African American teams." Even in its final form, the old Katy Park showcased overlooked icons.

Today, the wiffle ball field on Katy Park's gravesite stands as a monument to its former glory. Statues of Babe Ruth and Lou Gehrig look on, occasionally still mobbed by children, as home plate remains in the same place.

Katy Park has a complicated legacy. Razed to a parking lot and raised to a wiffle ball field by Waco's biggest economic attraction, its story shows how far the town has come — and how much further it still has to go.

The field welcomed Babe Ruth and 300 field-rushing children, an undersized slugger, a one-legged pitcher, an Olympic gold medalist, integrated football and Negro League royalty. Heroes for as long as they stayed on that field. Through a tornado, a demolition and a century of social and economic change, baseball remained.

From presidential visits and boxing matches to racial integration and all the innings in between, Katy Park stood silently, watching

generations of patrons pass by and grow old. Watching, sometimes squinting, but always there. In some ways, the old structure lived multiple lives, shifting with the seasons until falling to the winds of calamity.

Life is like that. So is baseball. Babe Ruth left the Yankees for the Boston Braves in 1935 but never got his magic back. He hit .181 with six homers in 92 plate appearances for a team that finished last in the National League. The writing was on the wall. It was time to hang 'em up.

The same fate befell Katy Park. With the rise of television and other alternative entertainment, minor league teams didn't seem so interested in moving to Waco anymore. The money dried up. The heart and soul of a community collapsed with scarcely a goodbye.

But perhaps it isn't all gone. The river still winds through Waco, and the desire for change hasn't run dry. Maybe there's still hope for a better tomorrow, for a day when greater harmony and equality reign free. Perhaps the heart of Waco, like America, endures on the dusty corners of local baseball diamonds, patiently waiting for a new generation to approach their hallowed grounds and play ball.

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# Penland staff trio goes beyond the meal in decades of service

**JOSH SIATKOWSKI**  
Staff Writer

With nearly 120 years of combined experience in Penland Dining Hall, Elaine Battle, Linda Benson and Donna Majors have served thousands — maybe even millions — of meals to the Baylor community. But the three are known for far more than flipping omelettes or making pizzas. Their careers are marked by countless relationships and acts of service that go beyond the women's job descriptions.

Battle, Benson and Majors have served for four decades each in Penland. Benson will hit 41 years in September, Battle was recently honored for her 40th anniversary, and Majors is right behind at 38.

But all of their journeys to Baylor were surprisingly incidental. Battle needed a job in Waco while her husband, a military veteran, was stationed in Germany. Benson was looking for a new position when a nearby turkey plant announced layoffs. For Majors, it was as simple as walking into the building.

"I just came over and applied and put the application in," Majors said. "And [in] the next couple days, [the manager] called me for the job."

What's kept them around is simple: a love that has extended to students, coworkers and every corner of campus.

"It definitely has to be love for me because I don't think I could be at another job this long," Battle said.

## Someone to Lean On

Battle and Benson have worked together at the omelette station and salad bar for years, with Majors remaining nearby at the pizza station. While the three have built friendships over time, food service laws require physical barriers between them and the people they serve. But those barriers are figuratively — and sometimes literally — broken by the three every day.

Like thousands of Baylor alumni, 2019 graduate Erica Franklin often started her day with an omelette from Penland. What made her such a regular was not just the food, but the constant care from Battle and Benson.

"She really cared if I was eating in the morning," Franklin said of Battle, whom she calls Ms. Elaine. "It made me go regularly."

Franklin, now an actress, said Battle and Benson were highly attentive to her. From memorizing her omelette order to recognizing



Josh Siatkowski | Staff Writer

**IN IT FOR THE LONG RUN** Linda Benson (left), Donna Majors (center) and Elaine Battle (right) have nearly 120 years of combined service in Penland Dining Hall.

that an early breakfast meant an impending exam, she said Battle and Benson's compassion reminded her of home in St. Louis. So much so that when Franklin's parents visited campus, she affectionately introduced Benson and Battle to them as her aunts.

But in her own words, Franklin is just "one of many" community members the three have impacted. Majors, Battle and Benson have each formed a repository of interactions with the Baylor community — some humorous, others heavier. But they've embraced their collective role as a support system.

"It's a good experience to deal with the students because they're away from home and away from their parents, so we're the next person for them to look up to," Majors said.

Oftentimes, being someone to look up to has meant more than just offering a smile and small talk in the food line. For Battle, it has meant crossing to the other side of the counter to give a hug and a prayer.

"A student was having problems in his classes and stuff, and he didn't know how he was going to tell his parents that he wasn't doing too good in class, and so he started crying," Battle said. "I came from behind the line, and I prayed for him, and that's something I had never done. I said, 'God, give me a word for right now. I'm not a minister, not like that, but give me the word to

say to him, to help him."

For Majors, it has meant forming long-term relationships with families that come in. One of the most memorable visitors for her is "Miss Maggie," who frequently brings her husband and children to Penland and prays over the staff.

"She had to leave to go back to China to take care of her mom and dad," Majors said. "But she finally came back. And when she came back, she brought her mom and dad with her, and she brought them here to meet me, and so now we're just one big, happy family."

And for Benson, that commitment to support has even led her to open her own home to a student in need. The student, who Benson said was living in Germany at the time, was unable to return home for the summer due to financial reasons.

"When summertime came, she didn't have nowhere to go, and I invited her to my home," Benson said.

Benson said she still has contact with the student and receives messages from her, alongside others, at Christmastime.

## A Working Friendship

In addition to their outward commitment to students, Battle, Benson and Majors have formed a friendship with each other. In addition to their 40 years together in Penland, the three

are also all from the Waco area. Benson and Battle even attended the same high school.

"I just enjoy working with them," Majors said. "We all get along every day."

While the three share a number of memories that make them laugh, one of the first that came to mind for Benson was an incident at the omelette station.

"I tried to flip an egg, and it didn't go so well," Benson said, recounting the time she tried to replicate Battle's omelette flipping skills. The result, Battle said, was a remade omelette and a burnt egg at the bottom of the stove.

"I told her, 'From now on, you practice at home,'" Battle said as the three laughed.

Perhaps, though, the incident was a well-intended attempt to be more like Battle, whom Majors said many of the employees look up to.

"Miss Elaine [has] been here longer than us, and we follow in her footsteps," Majors said.

## Returning the Favor

For as long as they have worked for Baylor, none of the three have any plans to leave. When their managers ask if she's thinking about retirement, she responds with an emphatic no.

"They say, 'Ms. Elaine, where are you going to leave?' And I say, 'They're going to have to drag me out of here,'" she said.

It's not just love for the community they serve that keeps the three around. On the other side of the equation, they said they've taken a lot from their jobs, like respect from students and managers and growth in their roles.

In the same way that Benson, Battle and Majors love their community, they have felt that love reciprocated through acts of kindness, like when Benson's first manager bought shoes for her.

"When I first started, I didn't have money to get my work shoes," Benson said. "I had some red Reeboks, and I wore them. And one day I got ready to go home, and [my manager] handed me a box, and it was a pair of work shoes for me."

More recently, Battle was honored for her 40th year of service with a custom cake and a ceremony in Penland. It's a celebration that Majors can expect in a couple of years, and one that Benson, nearing her 41st year, is owed.

"I'm grateful for ... the respect that I've gotten here, the people that I've grown to love," Battle said. "That's what really has kept me here — respect [from] the students, the staff here, too. They really treated me with respect."

# Tell friends you love them

**HANNAH WEBB**

Arts & Life Editor

I tell all my friends I love them.

I don't do it dramatically or with some big emotional crescendo — just the way people say “drive safe” or “text me when you get home.” Sometimes they laugh, sometimes they say it back, sometimes they look startled, like no one warned them friendship could sound like that.

But there's a particular kind of silence that settles after someone leaves your life; the kind that makes you relive every word you never said. And lately, I've been thinking about how many friendships fade not because of conflict, but because affection was assumed rather than spoken.

We treat friendship like background music: comforting, constant, easily taken for granted. Yet friendship is the architecture holding most of us upright. It shapes us, steadies us, reminds us who we are when everything else feels unsteady. And still, with the people who show up for us most consistently, we hesitate to offer the simplest words: I love you.

Aristotle once wrote, “Without friends, no one would choose to live, though he had all other goods.” It's an ancient line, but it reads like an indictment of our modern habits. We've never been more connected, but our connections rarely stretch past convenience. We send quick texts, tap little hearts, exchange memes and then fall quiet where the real words should be.

But friendship isn't built on repetition; it's built on revelation. It asks us to be honest, sometimes embarrassingly so. It asks us to say the thing we hope the other person already knows: You matter to me. Your existence touches mine. I love you.

Maybe that honesty feels risky because friendship doesn't have a cultural script. Romance gets anniversaries, candlelit confessions, sweeping gestures. Friendship gets late-night drives, shared playlists, coffee shop study sessions and the kind of quiet loyalty that rarely gets labeled as love — though it absolutely is.

Telling my friends I love them isn't a grand gesture; it's maintenance. It's



how I honor the constancy they give me. Aristotle believed the highest kind of friendship was a “friendship of virtue,” where two people are invested in each other's flourishing simply because the other's good matters. That kind of friendship deserves a language that matches its weight.

Besides, love doesn't shrink when you speak it. It expands. It softens both people. It turns ordinary moments into little markers of care. And in a time when loneliness has become a public health crisis, saying I love you is a small corrective — a refusal to let our friendships remain casual or implied.

Some people worry that saying I love you to friends will make things awkward. But in my experience, the opposite is true: it makes things honest.

I think about how many of my friendships have survived heartbreaks, cross-country moves, raw confessions and the kind of laughter that rearranges your insides. I think of the friends who have listened to me spiral over nothing, who have celebrated my victories that didn't benefit them at all, who have stood by me when I didn't particularly like myself.

Why wouldn't I tell them I love them? Why do any of us hold back?

Maybe because affection makes us feel exposed. Perhaps because we're afraid of sounding too earnest in a culture allergic to earnestness, or just maybe it's because we've convinced ourselves we have all the time in the world to say it someday.

We are not promised unlimited time with the people who make life bearable. We are not promised that our closest friends will always live down the hall, or even in the same city. People drift. Circumstances shift. Lives change shape. And sometimes, the only thing that keeps a friendship from dissolving into memory is the courage to name what already exists.

So say it now. Say it casually or deliberately, clumsily or confidently. Say it in the car, in a text, over a shared meal or in the middle of a laugh you don't want to forget. Love doesn't need a grand stage; it just needs your voice.

Tell them because friendship deserves language. Tell them because Aristotle was right. Tell them because silence is too expensive. Tell them because you mean it.

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# Where ‘Kappa Rap’ is now

**CAMILLE KELLY**  
Reporter

When Hannah Lee, Shelley Keller Zych and Katie Whitmire Keil created the “Kappa Rap 2” music video for Kappa Kappa Gamma recruitment in 2011, they never expected it to still be trending across social platforms and on college campuses nationwide 15 years later.

The video now has 1.4 million views on YouTube, a legacy that has recently resurfaced in the lives of the three women in ways they would never have anticipated.

The idea was born when Keller Zych began experimenting with GarageBand and writing original songs. The three friends wrote the original “Kappa Rap” during their sophomore year at Baylor shortly after joining the sorority. They released the first “Kappa Rap” music video with their sorority sisters’ help, solely for recruitment.

According to Lee, the three took a lot of inspiration from Kesha when producing the lyrics.

“I think the ‘Kappa Rap’ started initially out of boredom,” Whitmire Keil said. “We had just become Kappas, and we were in our dorm room quite a bit. We were so excited to become Kappas, and we were like, ‘Well, we should just make a song about it.’”

“Kappa Rap 2” was created and released the following year on YouTube with the help of their videographer friend, Bailey Eubanks, who was a member of Alpha Tau Omega.

“The guy who made the music video put it on YouTube, and that is when it took off unexpectedly,” Keller Zych said. “We never made it to put it on social media. We made it specifically so it would be shown in a room to 100 girls on one day. We had no idea, and I think the night that he put it up, we woke up and it had about 20,000 views.”

The fame only continued, and all three shared stories of being recognized by fellow Baylor students and KKG members but also by people all over the nation.

Whether during their time at Baylor or after they started new jobs, the “Kappa Rap” girls would often be recognized as just that.

“I ended up working at Baylor in athletics for a time, so I knew that it was still being used in rush, just because I was in the college world a little bit,” Keller Zych said. “But TikTok wasn’t a thing then. It didn’t feel like a big thing anyway, but cut to today, I am living in Waco again, and then getting married and having three kids, suddenly they know the ‘Kappa Rap.’ It’s back, fully back in my life within the last year.”

According to Keller Zych, the Wall Street Journal has even reached out to the three about covering them for a story within the past year, although it has not been published.

“Every rush season, we’re getting TikToks sent to us by all of our friends with people using our song,” Keller Zych said. “I put it on Spotify on a whim in 2019, and the streams have gone way up because of TikTok. Nothing has really changed in my daily life, but we are getting asked to now do things 15 years later.”

On Jan. 11, the three were asked to visit Baylor’s KKG chapter



Photo courtesy of Hannah Lee

**KAPPA RAP RESURFACE** Hannah Lee, Shelley Keller Zych and Katie Whitmire Keil created the “Kappa Rap 2” music video for Kappa Kappa Gamma in 2011.

and speak at the sorority event before rush.

“Even my girls now love it,” Keller Zych said. “Literally, my daughter has said, ‘Do we have a music video, and Taylor Swift has music videos?’ and I’ve had to explain, it’s not the same. It’s crazy, and I’m not the one showing her.”

Although they have stayed close friends, the resurgence of the “Kappa Rap” popularity has brought the three back together.

According to Whitmire Keil, she, Keller Zych, and Lee are working on new projects together that will be released in the next six months.

Many aspects of the music video continue to impact culture today, with not only the clips from “Kappa Rap” circulating on TikTok and Instagram, but also the term “Kappa Arms” for the dance move in the video, now a popular GIF.

Despite the resurgence in fame of “Kappa Rap,” the personal

lives of all three have changed significantly since college days.

Lee lives in New York working as a professional live event painter, Keller Zych lives in Waco with her husband and three children working in marketing and Whitmire Keil lives in Dallas with her husband and two children, also working in marketing.

According to Lee, the biggest thing she has learned from this experience is “to be weird and be whoever you are without caring what others think.”

Keller Zych said that, above all else, friendship is what really matters.

“We spent all of our time in college laughing,” Keller Zych said. “We found hilarious friends, and we just were weird and laughed all the time. Friendships stand the test of time if they’re built on the right things.”

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# Q&A with Wacoan that built hot dog social media brand

## KALENA REYNOLDS

Arts & Life Editor

For Waco influencer Carrie Burt, hot dogs aren't just a delicious bite — they are a brand. What started as a COVID-19 pandemic hyperfixation snack has now turned into a social media following of Wacoans eager for more curated cuisine content.

Burt features a variety of hot dog recipes she curated herself on Instagram and TikTok. Some of the recipes include elote dogs, grilled cheese hot dog and a garlic hummus bean sprouts veggie dog. Burt also shares the best local spots for hot dogs.

## WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO START THIS PROJECT?

Burt: "It was kind of into the COVID times when I started really getting into hot dogs and hot dog videos and hot dog content."

I heard about the National Hot Dog and Sausage Council doing a nationwide contest to give titles to hot dog ambassadors across the United States. There were like different regions and stuff that you could apply for, and you were supposed to send in a video of why you love hot dogs and all this kind of stuff.

Basically, I created the Instagram, in order to help me get content for that video, for my contest submission. But unfortunately, the year that I was going to actually join, like, enter the contest, they totally stopped it.

I continued with the Instagram because I was like, 'Well, why not try out all the hot dogs in Waco and then review them, talk about them and then see what hot dogs people around Waco like and go to those places.'

## WHAT IS YOUR GOAL WITH SOCIAL MEDIA?

Burt: "I started making recipes as just a way of creating more hot dog content and getting more things out into the hot dog world."

I started with using vegetables and stuff that I grew from my garden because it's stuff that's there and available and cheap, basically free, because it came from my yard.

So I really just try and use the things that I have available to me to make different recipes because I don't like to go out and spend a lot of money on buying a lot of stuff, and groceries right now are really expensive anyway.

My main goal is just to use what's on hand and repurpose it in different ways to make low or cost-effective meals."

## WHAT ARE YOUR FAVORITE HOT DOG RECIPES?

Burt: "I love making elote dogs because street corn is one of my favorite things in the whole world and it's just corn, a little bit of mayonnaise, some hot chips and lime juice and cilantro."

I also love doing things like macaroni salad dogs or potato salad dogs. If you have something prepackaged or left over, put it on a hot dog, because it's usually gonna taste good anyway.

My favorite that I made so far was a bruschetta dog. I used fresh tomatoes, basil from my garden and some balsamic drizzle from Aldi or something like that, but any balsamic drizzle will do."

## CAN YOU COOK A HOT DOG IF YOU DON'T HAVE A GRILL?

Burt: "One of my friends mailed me a hot dog toaster, and it's literally just like a toaster that you put two wieners in, and it has a slot for your hot dog buns, and you just press it down. You can adjust the doneness level, or you can make it super crispy. And it's just a little hot dog toaster."

I also love a pan-fry method if you don't want to use a grill or don't have access to one or anything. You can literally just heat up a pan and add a little oil to it so the dogs don't stick and then just kind of like roll them around on the pan."

## WHAT IS YOUR GO-TO HOT DOG BRAND?

Burt: "I really love the H-E-B brisket hot dogs. They have such a good, smoky flavor to them. Even their old-fashioned frankfurter dogs are really, really good because they have a little bit of skin on the outside, so they snap when you bite into them. They are just all the H-E-B dogs."

## WHAT ARE YOUR FAVORITE HOT DOG PLACES IN WACO?



Photo courtesy of Carrie Burt

**CURATED CUISINE** From elote dogs to a garlic hummus bean sprouts veggie dog, Waco influencer Carrie Burt has built a brand around hot dogs. While Burt shares a variety of recipes, she also showcases the best Waco hot dog spots.

Burt: "The top right now is called The Lifestyle, and they are a husband-and-wife duo with this little food truck. They're not open every day, and they move around a lot, but they make their buns fresh every day, and they source their hot dogs from a farm here in Central Texas."

So everything is literally made in Waco, and they are so good ... They do Cali dogs, they do chili cheese dogs. They have a Chicago dog, where they make their own poppy-seed bun.

Dog Haus in Waco is amazing. I love the Hawaiian rolls they use for their buns, and all of their dogs are so big. So they are a little bit on the expensive side, but they're completely worth it.

I also really love the hot dogs from Katie's Custard. You wouldn't think that you would go there for hot dogs, but they have some really good hot dogs."



Photo courtesy of Carrie Burt

**DOG DAYS** Eclectic recipes like elote dogs are Waco influencer Carrie Burt's specialty.

# Students navigate new medical engineering major

**AARAH SARDESAI**  
Intern

Baylor's newest academic addition, the Biomedical Engineering Program, is only in its first year, but it's already bringing a wave of freshmen who say the major offers something they couldn't find anywhere else on campus — a blend of engineering rigor, medical purpose and early opportunities to work on problems that matter.

Launched under the School of Engineering and Computer Science, the program is designed to prepare students for careers in medical device design, biomechanics, imaging and graduate study in medicine or research. Faculty such as Dr. Jonathan Rylander, a lecturer in mechanical engineering, described it as a natural fit with Baylor's mission to combine innovation with service.

"Engineering is a vocation where you can take those gifts and actually leverage it to do good for people," Rylander said. "You take biomedical engineering specifically, and it's just enhanced because the thing you're creating or doing research on, the person has a face, they have value, they're creation of God."

In addition to faculty support, this program also has many freshmen excited.

Spring freshman Matthew Tanaka said he entered Baylor as a general engineering major, leaning toward environmental engineering.

"I honestly loved biology as a subject, and I really wanted to do something that would let me make an impact around that, but as I spent more time at Baylor, I learned about biomedical engineering, and it seemed perfect for me," Tanaka said.

For him, the most exciting part of watching Baylor's first BME cohort take shape is the sense of discovery.

"It's a whole new field for me," Tanaka said. "I'm really interested to see what the principles of biomedical engineering actually look like in practice. It feels like we're watching a new program being piloted right in front of us."

Even though he isn't officially a BME major — at least not yet — he's already looking at the courses he would take. Tanaka said the major offers classes about things he wouldn't have had access to under other engineering tracks.

Another freshman's path began even

earlier. Even before Baylor announced the standalone major, Natalia Bricio Camacho from Guadalajara, Mexico, was already searching for a place where engineering and medicine intersected.

"First things first, I was initially attracted to Baylor because I heard it was a really great space for biomedical engineering," Bricio Camacho said. "I started looking into bioengineering, and I heard Baylor had bioinformatics. I wasn't completely sure what that meant, but it caught my attention."

Bricio Camacho soon discovered Baylor's engineering degree with a biomedical concentration, and that was enough to convince her to join even before a dedicated BME major existed.

For both students, the launch of the BME program sparked a mix of excitement and self-thought.

Tanaka was excited by the idea of a new major, but he said it didn't necessarily clarify his own path; it expanded it. For him, the launch of the new major signaled that Baylor was ready to invest deeply in a field he cared about.

"It made me really excited," Tanaka said. "Seeing that Baylor is building a new program from the ground up made me want to explore more."

That exploration includes the possibility of switching to the major himself. While he's still deciding, he said the new curriculum's strengths are hard to ignore.

"The electives are epic," Tanaka said. "There's so much biology, so many in-depth classes about medical devices and biosensors. It's stuff you don't get anywhere else."

For Bricio Camacho, the new major didn't change her degree plan, but it made her more confident that she had chosen the right university.

"Learning about the new degree helped me explore and compare what each pathway might look like," Bricio Camacho said. "That's actually part of the reason why I understood that my current path is exactly where I need to be."

As a student entering Baylor with a lot of credits, switching to a new major intended for incoming freshmen gave her a big problem when it came to scheduling. Though Bricio

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# The man who made history

## Tyce Armstrong's journey to Baylor home run records

**JEFFREY COHEN**  
Sports Writer

It was the second meeting between Baylor and UT Arlington in the 2025 season. The Bears had gotten the best of Mavericks in their previous meeting, dominating 13-4. But that mid-April day would leave a lasting impression for Tyce Armstrong.

The All-WAC Second Team designated hitter did not hold back at the plate. He went 3-for-4 with a home run and double in a 10-inning, 9-8 loss to Baylor.

"Last year we played him, and he tore us up at UTA," redshirt junior right-handed pitcher Lucas Davenport said. "It's good to see him on our side this year."

Despite being a thorn in the Bears' side, Armstrong was also tied to the program through connections with three Baylor staffers.

"Darin Thomas, who's our director of ops, was my head coach at UT Arlington my freshman year," Armstrong said. "That summer I played with [assistant coach Jim] Blair ... and I got recruited by [Mitch] Thompson when I was at summer ball."

Knowing the coaches and having played at Baylor Ballpark, the choice for Armstrong's destination seemed clear.

"This is a historic university, and I always enjoyed playing here, playing against them," Armstrong said. "Never had a problem with them, even playing against them."

His love and drive for the game started at a young age, when he watched his brother play little league baseball and his sister play softball.

"I was always at his games watching him," Armstrong said.

He hails from a family of athletes. His father, Ken Armstrong, is a two-time Olympic diver and a member of the University of Texas Swimming and Diving Hall of Fame. His mother, Patty, was also a national champion

diver at Texas.

Further up the family tree, though, the Armstrongs are ballplayers. Family history on the diamond is what led Armstrong's parents to keep him on the dirt and not in the water.

"My grandpa was a baseball player, so my dad always wanted me to play," Armstrong said. "I grew up and really liked the sport."

Armstrong's hard work paid off in college. He hit .297 in three seasons at UT Arlington with a career-high 12 home runs in 2025, but his biggest performance was still in front of him.

In his Baylor debut, Armstrong became the second player in college baseball history to smash three grand slams in a single game, lifting the Bears over New Mexico State 15-2 on Feb. 13. He went viral with posts from MLB and ESPN highlighting his historic debut.

Armstrong was in awe of what he did like the rest of the baseball world, but he knew this was only the beginning of his time in Waco. He emphasized the need to go back out the next day and play his game.

"We worked all fall and all early spring on just getting our swings right," Armstrong said. "I had an amazing game and I'm so grateful for that opportunity, but after that, you just got to trust what you worked on, trust your ability and just play the game."

Head coach Mitch Thompson has the same mindset. After a historic outpouring,

Armstrong and the Baylor faithful will have to reset their expectations.

"I want him to enjoy the heck out of it tonight, show back up tomorrow, and everybody not be disappointed when he gets a single tomorrow," Thompson said after Armstrong's three-grand slam performance. "Let's get back in it and let's have another



Sam Gassaway | Photo Editor

**CAPTAIN** Redshirt senior first baseman Tyce Armstrong (11) made single-season history when he hit his 22nd home run of the season on May 10 at Baylor Ballpark.

day and let's keep moving on."

Thompson knew what he was going to get out of Armstrong when he recruited him. Armstrong collected 17 home runs and drove in 87 runs in his time with the Mavericks. Along with his talent, Thompson wanted a guy that could help guide a young roster.

"He's got power, we know he had power, and he brings experience," Thompson said. "He's such a great kid, he works hard, he's a good mentor to the young guys."

Armstrong's final ride in college seems to be going according to plan. He quickly formed bonds with his teammates, saying they have already become "some of my best friends."

"This is my last year at college baseball, and this team has been awesome to me," Armstrong said. "From day one, there wasn't a single problem all fall!"

Armstrong picked up four major honors during his first week in the green and gold. He was named Big 12 Newcomer of the Week, Perfect Game National Player of the Week, first baseman for Baseball America's National Team of the Week and NCBWA Co-National Hitter

of the Week following his performance against New Mexico State.

“This is my last year at college baseball, and this team has been awesome to me. From day one, there wasn't a single problem all fall.”

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# Combat to campus: Group helps veterans thrive

**ALEXANDRA BREWER**  
Staff Writer

They've led troops. Traveled the world. Now they're navigating lecture halls, textbooks and deadlines. At Baylor, student veterans are discovering the challenges of college are battles of a different kind — and they're not doing it alone.

Northumberland, Va., junior Nick Bradford balances military and academic life while raising a family. Bradford spent four years on active duty and is now a drill sergeant in the Reserves.

Bradford is the vice president of Veterans of Baylor, an organization that connects student veterans to Department of Veterans Affairs benefits, campus resources and local organizations in Waco, while also helping guide their transition from military service into college and eventually into professional life.

Veterans of Baylor serves more than 1,000 student veterans, spouses and ROTC members, providing practical support and a community for those navigating the transition from military to campus life.

Regular events, mentoring and social opportunities give student veterans the support that can be

the difference between feeling lost and thriving.

"Even if you're the only student veteran in a class, there's a community for you," Bradford said.

Bradford described the discipline and performance skills he developed in the military as vital for handling stress and pressure in college.

"The discipline you gain in the military is different from the discipline needed for school," Bradford said. "Military consequences are immediate; school is intrinsically motivated."

Even though the risks aren't the same, the pressure to perform never goes away.

"In the military, failing your duties can put lives at risk; school doesn't," Bradford said. "The most useful skill I bring is performance under pressure, handling stress for long periods without breaking down."

Even with the stress, Bradford has found support within the classroom.

"Professors at Baylor are incredible," Bradford said. "If you talk to them, they'll go the extra mile ... One even cooked a meal for me and my wife after our son was born."

He also emphasized that student veterans face unique challenges that are often misunderstood by their peers.

"We're just regular students trying to earn our degrees," Bradford said. "Our experiences give us a different perspective, especially in subjects like political science and military studies."

Lubbock junior Chris Varner is a Marine veteran who joined Baylor after a 16-year career in the military. She faced a stroke and a complete life reset before deciding to return to school.

"I never dreamed I'd be coming back to school at this age," Varner said. "I was 55 when I started, and I was a year past having a stroke. It's been some incredible highs and lows and a lot of hard work in between."



Sam Gassaway | Photo Editor

**COMMUNITY** Veterans of Baylor provides resources for veterans and military-dependent students to help navigate the challenges of a college environment.

The transition from military life to college was difficult. Varner said she initially felt lost.

"Before I realized there was a Veterans of Baylor group, I fell through the cracks," Varner said. "Nobody knew I was here, nobody reached out. I was second-guessing myself. The homework was so hard. I kept falling asleep in class."

Support from Veterans of Baylor became essential.

"Having people around who understood where I was coming from made a huge difference," Varner said. "Being a veteran is like being in a 12-step program. We're better off when we have a mission and we're serving someone."

Making friendships and connections made her excited

to show up.

"I forged a couple of relationships," Varner said. "Once you see somebody, you're like, 'Oh, I hope so-and-so is there today.' It gives you a reason to keep coming back. We genuinely like these people, and they genuinely like us back."

Varner described the group as a genuine community that blends social support with organized events.

"We try to be a light for our fellow veterans, not just on campus but in the broader community," Varner said.

Varner's academic journey is ambitious. She is a University Scholars major with concentrations in art history, history and museum studies.

Currently, he is writing her

honors thesis on whether museum interventions can be used as an adjunct to therapy for veterans with PTSD and traumatic brain injury. Her ultimate goal is to pursue a doctorate in social care through museums.

Tyler senior and ROTC cadet Mya Crayton brought another perspective. Inspired by her brother, a Navy veteran, she joined ROTC and is learning firsthand the demands of leadership, early mornings and weekend exercises, all while keeping up with nursing curriculum.

"People think ROTC students are super serious all the time," Crayton said. "We're just regular students. It's definitely harder than I thought, but it's preparing me for what comes next."

“Ask about our story, sit down, listen. Don't just say 'Thank you for your service.' Walk the talk.”

**CHRIS VARNER**  
LUBBOCK JUNIOR

# The Man from Waco

## Midway grad elevates game at Baylor

**JACKSON POSEY**  
Sports Editor

Ten miles south of the Ferrell Center, a gangly teenager with hoop dreams lifted off.

It's tough for a 6-foot-10 athlete to blend in at Midway High School; Caden Powell sure didn't. Born less than four months after Baylor hired Scott Drew to head its basketball program, and seasoned by a lifetime of Baylor games, he's now Drew's first scholarship player from Waco.

"It's a true blessing to have somebody from Waco on the team," Drew said of Powell, who transferred to Baylor this offseason. "I know just what the jersey means to him and what a great teammate and leader he's been on the team."

Powell grew up playing with the neighborhood kids until the lights turned off. He played soccer, too, but times are hard for goalies.

"There'd be times where I'd just be sitting on the ground, just picking at grass and throwing it," Powell said. "Basketball is a lot more fun. It's also on TV."

As a child, Powell would sit in the living room, entranced by the glowing athletes on the screen. When it came time, he would hop in the back of his mom's car to make the pilgrimage to basketball camps and games at the Ferrell Center. It was a blessing, so close to home, to "see what they do on TV."

"You're in an area where the college team is good at basketball," Powell said. "[It was] like, 'If you want to be good at basketball, you're going to have to do this, and there's a school — and if you're good enough, you can go play basketball there.' ... Trying to get to the point where it's like, 'OK, well if they know about you, then that means other people know about you, and that means you're doing something right.'"

Sometimes, though, a bird needs to stretch its wings. As he matured, Powell began telling coaches that he wanted to play college ball

outside of Texas.

"My mom was like, 'I'm going to drive and I'm just going to show up on campus whenever I can,'" Powell said. "I was like, 'Ope, yup, I'm not dealing with that or taking that risk.'"

Powell enrolled at Wyoming, his furthest Division I offer, and spent two years playing for the Cowboys in snowy Laramie. He averaged 5.4 points and 4.6 rebounds per game as a sophomore before transferring to Rice. After a two-year escapade in the mountains, it was time to come home.

"I [wanted] to be able to see my family a little bit more," Powell said. "I was able to see my mom a lot more [at Rice] ... just the proximity, being closer to home."

Powell took a massive step forward for Rice, leading the Owls in scoring during conference play and improving his field goal percentage from 48.2% to 56.5% on higher volume. As soon as he entered the transfer portal, Baylor assistant Tweety Carter — who'd been monitoring his progress since high school — came calling.

"I had probably seven or eight missed calls from Tweety Carter," Powell said. "Got back to my phone and I see eight missed calls — five of them are FaceTimes, three of them are calls ... four texts, like, 'Call me whenever you're free.'"

The pair have known each other for years. Four years ago, Carter spoke at a Midway banquet and, in Powell's words, "sweat through his suit because he was nervous." So when Powell FaceTimed him back, the conversation was jovial. Drew called soon after.

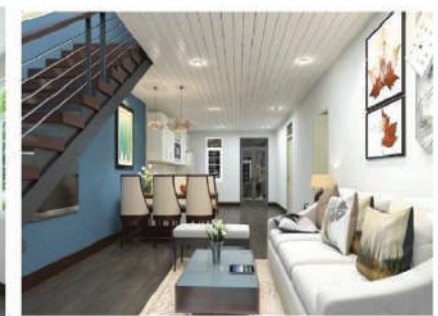
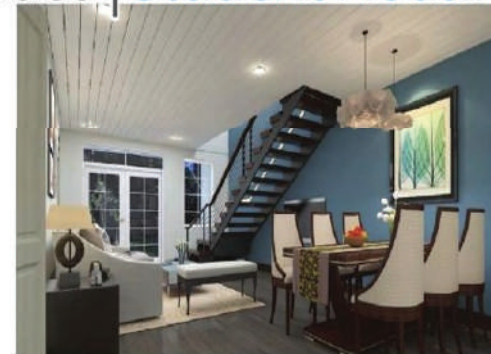
"With so many new guys, he definitely gave them the shortcut versions of where to eat, where to go, what to do in Waco," Drew said.

That little kid from Waco would be in awe of where he is today, Powell said. How do you tell someone their wildest dreams came true?

"I don't know that I would be able to say anything to myself," Powell said. "Probably just be starstruck."

“It’s a true blessing to have somebody from Waco on the team.”

**SCOTT DREW, HEAD COACH**



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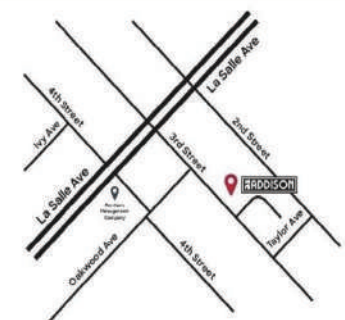
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# Dr. Nancy Brickhouse to step down as university provost

**MACKENZIE GRIZZARD**  
Assistant News Editor

Vice President and Provost Dr. Nancy Brickhouse announced she will step down in an email Wednesday, marking an end to her seven-year tenure at Baylor.

"I've known since my appointment in 2019 that I would make Baylor my final stop," Brickhouse said in the announcement email. "I also knew that I would want my final years to be engaged in the work that attracted me to the professoriate at the beginning: teaching and writing."

University President Dr. Linda Livingstone said in an email that Brickhouse will step down effective July 31 and, following a year-long sabbatical, will return to Baylor's faculty to focus on teaching.

"Provost Brickhouse was integral in the successful completion of 'Illuminate,' and she

helped shepherd the development of 'Baylor in Deeds,' Baylor's last two strategic plans," Livingstone said in the email. "In all, by working collaboratively with deans and faculty across disciplines, Provost Brickhouse has helped lay a solid academic foundation for Baylor's next chapter."

Brickhouse was a champion of Baylor's strategic plan *Baylor In Deeds*, which launched in 2024 and will direct the university through 2030. Additionally, during her tenure, Baylor received Research 1 designation in 2021, something that Brickhouse worked to grow throughout the years.

"While I will not be the Provost who leads the way in the completion of this work, please know that I will be your greatest cheerleader, and I will pray for your continued success," Brickhouse said.

Livingstone said that Dr. Lee Nordt, outgoing

dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, will serve as interim vice president and provost upon Brickhouse's departure this summer.

"Dean Nordt is a familiar face to many faculty, staff, and students after serving in this leadership role for more than 20 years," Livingstone said. "He has overseen nearly half of the University's academic enterprise in his Deanship, and his leadership has been both steady and strategic. I am confident he will ably guide our academic and research endeavors during this season of transition."

Baylor will announce a national search for Brickhouse's permanent replacement at the conclusion of the spring semester, Livingstone said.

Looking forward, Brickhouse said she is grateful for her time at Baylor and will cherish the memories and accomplishments from her time.



Sam Gassaway | Photo Editor

**THE LATEST** Dr. Nancy Brickhouse announced she would be stepping down from her position as vice president and university provost.

"Together, we transformed Baylor into the country's premier Christian R1 university," Brickhouse said. "We laid the foundation, and now it is the work of the next cohort of leaders to build upon and improve on that work."

# Vardaman Scholars impact world 'beyond Baylor bubble'

**GISELLE LEE**  
Staff Writer

The Office of Engaged Learning welcomed a new cohort of students this month, dedicated to learning to burst the "Baylor bubble" and face an ever-changing global society.

This April, the OEL welcomed its newest cohort of Vardaman Scholars, formerly known as Global Engage Fellows. The program, intended for rising sophomores or juniors, lasts for the duration of the student's undergraduate career at Baylor. The program structure requires students to take two courses under the OEL's Philanthropy & Public Service Program before undertaking an engaged learning project and becoming an engaged learning student leader.

Dr. Jennifer Good, Fulbright program adviser in the OEL and co-instructor for the course *Learning for the World*, said the two-part course provides students with leeway to explore opportunities, rather than

boxing them into one path.

"It's learning for the world because we are all part of the world," Good said. "We wanted to ask students in our classes to think of a project that they themselves would kind of like to shepherd into being. For some, it's a study abroad opportunity, a grant opportunity, a research opportunity, and for others, it's a service opportunity."

Good said the curriculum year provides a "ramp" to the ideas students use to think about the projects they will eventually plan. However, she also credited international students for diversifying the course content, bringing meaning to the program's intention of bringing students from across campus together.

"It's easy to forget that not everyone thinks the same way that you do," Good said. "Baylor should really be so appreciative of the international students who are here because it gives us an opportunity to make those connections with students who are not international students.

[The program] is built with enough flexibility that everyone should be able to find their way, and they'll be able to find people for whom they'll be on the path together for a little while."

Mark Richards, the associate director for operations, innovation and programs in the OEL, said the program was designed for students who like "asking big questions." Richards mentioned that previous Vardaman Scholars have come together and learned from each other to "catch a vision" of the program's impact.

"There is a consistent year-over-year ability to ask questions and reflect on your experience and grow into the person that you're going to become or the person that you want to become," Richards said. "This program allows you to do that all and gives you kind of some accountability there. We believe that all these things together will improve [students'] educational experience at Baylor and [their] ability to go beyond Baylor."

Richards, a Baylor alumnus, said the program reminded him of his undergraduate opportunities, which made him excited to welcome students who resonate with the Vardaman Scholar program.

"I remember experiencing that as a student and my now boss — on multiple occasions throughout my Baylor career — directed my path in a certain way, not because he steered me there, but because he offered something and thought I might find it interesting, and it changed my trajectory," Richards said. "I'm looking forward to being along with students for that kind of ride, that kind of experience and all the twists and turns that it might take in these four years or beyond that."

Woodway freshman Madeleine Goff, an incoming Vardaman Scholar, said she is excited to connect her studies to "a greater mission" while serving the local Waco community.

"I enjoy volunteering, and I'm excited to connect with other people," Goff said. "Global-driven learning is

very important to me; I'm passionate about environmental justice, which requires a global awareness and understanding."

For fellow incoming Vardaman Scholar and Waco freshman Lillian Mauriello, the third leadership year stands out to her the most, but she also looks forward to making "good connections" with those who share her passions.

"I think the program will give me more opportunities to serve my community," Mauriello said. "As a Christian, I also think global learning is important. God cares about the whole world and loves people of all nations. As a follower of Jesus, I should also care about all people and tribes. Global learning is a great way to live out our Christian calling to participate in global engagement."

The incoming cohort of Vardaman Scholars will be recognized at the third annual OEL Banquet on Thursday, and will also be hosted in a reception on May 5, as part of their official acceptance into the program.

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# The hardest person to forgive is your younger self

SAVANNAH FORD

LTVN Social Media Editor

It's easier to extend grace to people who hurt us than it is to look back and forgive the person we used to be. I've spent years wishing I could



rewrite certain moments in my life, the ones where I said the wrong thing, stayed quiet when I should've spoken up or believed I wasn't enough. But the hardest version of forgiveness isn't about someone else's mistakes. It's about your own.

When I was 11, I convinced myself that being thin would finally make me feel worthy. What started as "eating healthy" quickly became an obsession that nearly took my life. I was praised for my discipline, told I looked "healthy," and all the while, I was disappearing — first from myself, then from my family and finally from the world around me. The little girl who once danced in the kitchen and laughed too loudly slowly vanished into numbers and control.

Most days, I'd hide alone in my room for hours. I didn't want to be seen, and if my friends noticed I was slipping away, I ran from them.

I pushed everyone out. It wasn't because I didn't love them; it was because I didn't think I deserved to be loved back. I was 11 years old. I was so young. And I thought vanishing would hurt less than being seen in my pain.

I used to hate that version of me. I blamed her for the friendships I lost, for the nights I cried alone, for the way I flinched when someone tried to care. Even as I grew older and recovered, I carried her mistakes with me like a shadow. I'd tell people I was fine, but inside, I still felt like that same broken girl, too damaged to deserve love or peace.

But here's what I've learned: You can't heal a version of yourself you refuse to forgive. You can't expect to grow while holding a grudge against the person who was just trying to survive.

For me, forgiveness started small. It felt like talking to my younger self out loud. I'd look at an old photo and say, "You didn't know better. You were doing your best." It felt weird at first, but it helped me see her not as a mistake, but as someone who needed compassion. Slowly, I stopped wishing I could erase her and started thanking her for getting me here.

The most significant part of forgiving her has been learning to do what she couldn't — letting people in. I've started allowing others to notice when I'm not OK and admitting when something's wrong instead of pretending it's not.

It's hard to open up, and sometimes it still feels scary. But I know my younger self would have given anything for that, to be seen before it was too late. She would've survived a little easier if she'd known that asking for help wasn't a weakness.

We all have a younger me who made choices we regret. Maybe it's the version of you who dated the wrong person, stayed silent when you should've spoken or tried too hard to please everyone. We spend so much time punishing that person, replaying their decisions, labeling them as weak, stupid or selfish, when what they really needed was understanding.

That version of you didn't ruin your life. They built the foundation for the person you're becoming. Every mistake, every heartbreak, every insecurity turned into something that taught me more than perfection ever could.

At Baylor, where so many of us strive for perfection in grades, relationships and faith, it's easy to feel like we have to prove we've grown constantly. But real growth isn't about pretending your past didn't happen. It's about owning it. It's about saying, "Yeah, I went through that," and letting it make you softer instead of harder.

Forgiving yourself doesn't mean excusing what happened. It means accepting it. It's saying, "I hurt people, and I've learned from it," or "I lost myself, but I'm finding my way back." Self-

forgiveness is a kind of bravery; it asks you to stand face-to-face with your flaws and love yourself anyway.

These days, when old memories resurface, I try to respond with grace instead of shame. I remind myself that the girl who once hid in her room is the same girl who now tells stories, connects with people and finds beauty in imperfection. That shift didn't happen overnight. It happened one gentle thought at a time.

If you've ever looked back and cringed at who you used to be, trust me, you're not alone. You don't have to stay trapped in that version of yourself. You're allowed to outgrow them, to change your mind, to start over. The parts of you that once felt messy or broken are just proof that you've lived, and that you're still becoming someone new.

So talk kindly to your past self. Forgive them for not knowing what you know now. Thank them for surviving what they didn't think they could. Because when you start to see your younger self through love instead of judgment, something beautiful happens: you stop being at war with your own heart.

Forgiveness isn't just for others. It's for you. It's for the person you were, the person you are and the person you're still becoming. And when you finally offer that forgiveness, you don't just free your past, you free your future.

## Stop doomscrolling the day away: Create more content than you consume

CAMILLE KELLY

Reporter

We are constantly consuming others' creativity.

This consumption, at its core, is a beautiful privilege. The ability to share art, poetry, music and more with the world in a matter of seconds is astonishing. It is incredible the way we can all appreciate and inspire one another's



minds. But as Thomas Edison said, "Genius is 1% inspiration and 99% perspiration," and in this endless void of constant media consumption we are all addicted to today, the lack is not inspiration.

So why does it seem, when millions are sharing across platforms, the average person grapples with deep, envious regret as they see someone else who finally did write the book, learn the piano or bravely attempt unicycling whilst playing the fiddle? Is our issue simply laziness?

I would argue that what we struggle with is not always a lack of motivation or loss of inspiration, but rather the crippling fear of failure.

This fear is only exacerbated by the prevalent overconsumption of media.

Authors publish their third novel, finally a success, after years of drafts have collected in their junk docs. Meanwhile, we see this and lamely falter when our first attempt at the 60-Day Novel Writing Challenge isn't met with the same praise. The same algorithm that inspires can also be a trap for the easily discouraged.

But as everyone in the real world must learn, the only way to get better at something is to keep at it.

We must revise more than we compare. We must try again, and again and again. Most of all, we must keep creating. We cannot give up

before we've begun and succumb to the endless doomscroll of the lives we wish we had.

Now you may be asking, practically, how do I begin to live this way? Discipline is a lost art, and ironically, is where true creativity often begins — to start creating, you have to turn off your phone and set aside a time to do it.

Here is my challenge: set aside a little time each day, maybe even a mere five minutes (I know, dear college student, time is costly, but please hear me out), and pick one of the things you've always wanted to do, or that your feed is full of others doing.

Then, attempt it for yourself! It could be anything, something random, simple or adventurous. Maybe something you haven't tried before. Something that you permit yourself to start really badly. But then there's a requirement that follows: keep doing it.

Write a sonnet, build a birdhouse, make your own board game, start embroidering, learn to play the Scottish bagpipes (MCC offers a class), arrange flowers, invent your own sport, film a movie, audition for a play, host a dinner or bake a soufflé — the possibilities are endless. For goodness' sake, build some Legos! Whatever you do, create something.



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# Baylor Esports finds national success during first year

**STACIE BOYLS**  
Arts & Life Writer

What began as an experiment has quickly become one of Baylor's most unlikely but enveloping success stories. In its first official season, Baylor's varsity esports program has established itself among top collegiate competitors, pushing them to the brink of national prominence.

Adam Stanley, head coach and director of esports, emphasized the uniqueness of this team's inaugural season.

"We showed up, and we were going to take the whole year to just build things out," Stanley said. "But I got ambitious ... And having said that, I'm pleased to say that it was a very huge success this year."

The program, which competes in Rocket League, Valorant, Overwatch 2 and Super Smash Bros. Ultimate, entered the season without a dedicated facility and with limited infrastructure.

Still, Baylor's Rocket League team, the program's only scholarship roster, quickly distinguished itself, finishing undefeated in

conference play and winning the Power Esports Conference Championship.

That rapid ascent surprised even Stanley. "I thought we would be good this year, but I didn't think we would be one of the best teams in the country," Stanley said.

That success traces back to a foundation laid long before the players ever arrived in Waco.

Franklin Park, Ill., sophomore Kadin "Zineel" Zineelabidine began playing video games on a PlayStation 2 as a child and eventually developed a love for Rocket League.

By age 16, Zineelabidine was already competing in small tournaments and earning prize money, realizing the game could become something more.

"That's when I found out there was a whole scene of professional players on contracts," Zineelabidine said.

Zineelabidine's path to Baylor was equally unconventional. Originally enrolled remotely at Northwood University for esports, he was recruited to Baylor alongside teammates Sun Prairie, Wis., junior Andrew "Andy" Nolan and Pittsburgh freshman Colby "Hockser" James.

"I had known them and teamed with



Photo courtesy of Adam Stanley

**ROCKET LEAGUE RENAISSANCE** Head coach Adam Stanley helped lead the Baylor Esports team to success in their first year.



Photo courtesy of Adam Stanley

**GO GO GAMES** Baylor Esports competes in a variety of categories, including Rocket League, Valorant, Overwatch 2 and Super Smash Bros. Ultimate.

them a ton before any of us were at Baylor," Zineelabidine said. "I put my faith and my trust in the program, and they put their faith and trust in me, and it ended up working out perfectly."

That preexisting connection translated into immediate success on the national stage and a team culture that extends beyond competition.

"The vibes are always high," he said. "We're going out, celebrating wins, exploring places we travel to. It really helps."

Despite the program still being young, Baylor Esports has already amassed an impressive list of accomplishments.

The team claimed titles at the Hawaii Esports Invitational — earning a surfboard trophy — and a Texas statewide invitational, cementing its reputation as one of the top programs in the region.

"We're officially the best team in Texas," Stanley said. "And now hopefully [we have] two chances at the national championship."

As the team's success has grown, so has attention from the university and the city of Waco.

In a twist of timing, Waco will host both a Texas high school esports championship and the Collegiate Esports Commissioners Cup from April 30 to May 3 at the Waco Convention Center, a bid driven by the city of Waco due to the national success of Baylor Esports.

"All things are pointing at Baylor right now," Stanley said.

The event, expected to draw thousands of competitors, will include a kickoff at McLane Stadium and serve as a major recruiting opportunity for the program.

"It's so cool," Stanley said. "We want to get the attention of students who have an inclination for esports."

For Stanley, the significance of esports extends beyond trophies and rankings. He points to its accessibility — something traditional athletics cannot always offer.

"My best friend growing up had cystic fibrosis," Stanley said. "This was his way of competing. Practicing perseverance and fortitude, that's what it's about for me."

That inclusivity is reflected in the program's growing diversity, with both undergraduate and graduate students competing, including a Waco doctoral student in physical therapy on the Valorant team, Javier Alvarez.

With a national championship appearance in Orlando looming and additional tournaments scheduled in Waco, Baylor Esports is entering a defining stretch.

Meanwhile, plans for a dedicated facility in the Mark and Paula Hurd Welcome Center and potential expansion into new titles, including League of Legends and even chess, are in the works.

"Rome was not built in a day, and neither was esports at Baylor," Stanley said.

## NEW MAJOR from 21

Camacho will remain in her own major, she said she hopes to take some of the new classes as biomedical electives in the future.

For both Bricio Camacho and Tanaka, the drive to engineer medical solutions is fueled by a desire to serve, one of Baylor's values. For Bricio Camacho, the spark was lit in elementary school by a book about the "miracles of science." She grew up obsessed with the behind-the-scenes lab work of pioneers like Louis Pasteur.

"If you study the human body, it's another kind of machine," Bricio Camacho said. "If we can understand how it works internally, then we can learn how to use and improve it properly — and ethically — to do even greater good."

Tanaka's motivation is even closer to home. His sister has cerebral palsy and relies on a Vagus Nerve Stimulator to control seizures. Watching the impact of that technology firsthand inspired him to pursue a career in medical devices or research, potentially working with faculty such as Biomedical Engineering Professor and Director Dr. Brent Craven.

"Growing up with her made me feel inspired by the technology that she and the world have," Tanaka said. "I want to improve it."

Regardless of whether they are part of the new major or the concentration, the students view themselves as part of a larger community in the School of Engineering and Computer Science.

"Diversity of thought leads to greater ideas," Bricio Camacho said. "There's mechanical engineering with a biomedical concentration, electrical engineering with a biomedical concentration, and all of those are pointing in the same direction. All of us are working toward a similar goal, which is to put a little grain of sand into this amazing field."

As the BME program launches its pilot class, students aren't waiting to make an impact, either. Bricio Camacho, along with her friend, are currently in the initial stages of building Baylor's first biomedical engineering club.

Whether through a new degree or a refined concentration, Baylor's newest engineers are excited to pilot a large change for biomedical engineering at the university.



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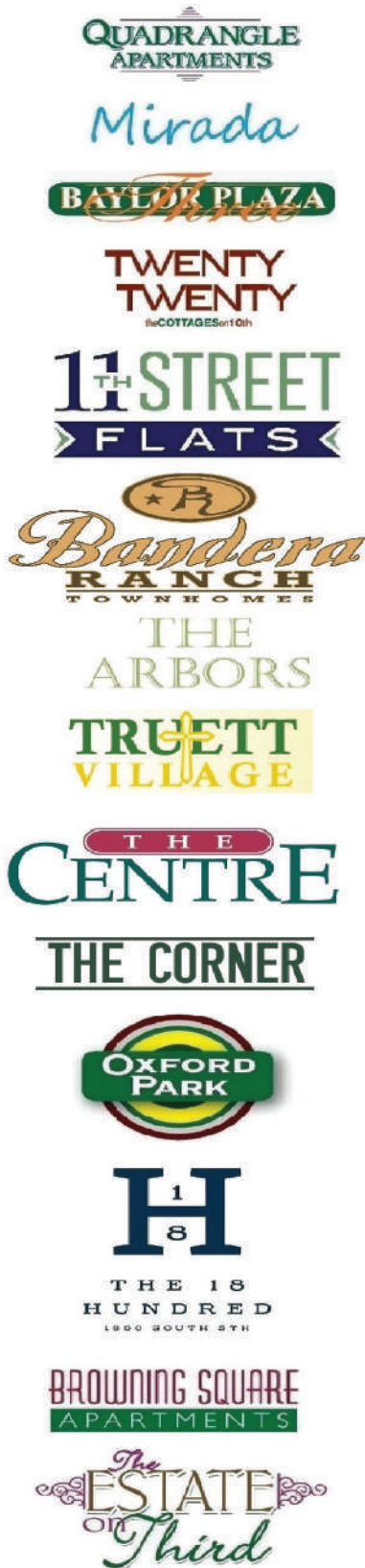
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