WE ARE PROUD TO PRESENT
THE 2023 TICUA HALL OF FAME INDUCTEES!

Congratulations to the 24 members of the 2023 class of the TICUA Hall of Fame!

The Tennessee Independent Colleges and Universities Association is in its fourth year of spotlighting outstanding alumni from our 34 Tennessee colleges and universities.

Our institutions purposefully mold leaders each and every day. We are honored to share many of their stories with you.

The Class of 2023 includes Tennessee’s first female Speaker of the House, a civil rights pioneer who integrated SEC varsity basketball, a world-renowned opera singer, music and business executives, and many others.

The TICUA Hall of Fame recognizes these distinguished alumni, their indelible contributions to our state and country, and the institutions that helped shape them.

We hope you enjoy learning about the inductees as much as we have.

Warmest regards,

Claude Pressnell
President of TICUA
Inductee

JEWEL BELL

King University
Doctor of Humane Letters | 2022

70 Consecutive Years of Service to King University

Tireless Community Volunteer

First African American PTA Council President in Bristol, Tennessee

She’s known as the “Jewel in King University’s crown,” and for good reason. Jewel Bell served with the university for seven straight decades. Bell retired from King in September 2022 at the age of 93 but will forever be considered part of the president’s team.

Bell came to King in 1952, a year when Elizabeth II became Queen of England, Eisenhower defeated Truman, Mother Teresa opened her first hospice home, and Hemingway published The Old Man and the Sea.

What was initially expected to be a two-week housekeeper job in the women’s residence hall became a permanent position after former King President R.T.L. Liston asked Bell to stay. As she worked to support her own growing family, Bell naturally developed into the role of confidante, supporter, and sage, first to the young women around her and then to all students on campus.

In 1961, when the decision was made to install a campus switchboard, Bell was a natural fit to serve as supervisor.

Her new position came with a staff of 10 assistants and placed her in the central lobby of Parks Hall, where she could keep track of her flock of female students – as well as those coming to see them.

While her office occasionally shifted locations in the following decades, her role as the “Voice of King” has never changed.

During the civil rights era, Bell’s son became the first African American student to attend King. Following suit, Bell took classes as her work and personal duties allowed.

Additionally, Bell also served on the Bristol City PTA council during this time and was the first African American PTA council president.

A tireless community volunteer, Bell has devoted decades of support to organizations such as the American Red Cross and Slater Community Center.

In 2007, Bell was recognized with the establishment of the Jewel H. Bell scholarship at King. She is also the recipient of the university’s first Lifetime Service Award and has been honored with a street that bears her name on the Bristol campus. Additionally, she was the school’s first honorary alumna, and the King Board of Trustees granted her emerita status, making her a permanent member of the president’s team. In December 2022, in recognition of her exemplary service and character, Bell was presented with a Doctor of Humane Letters.

“Jewel continuously models the call to go above and beyond in serving others. While she has cared for four generations and dozens of members of her own family, those who look to her as a matriarch measure in the thousands.”

Alexander Whitaker
King University President
“She was both an amazing listener and a captivating speaker. In short, Mel was everything that a public servant should be. And while she had many titles – teacher, legislator, advocate, activist, wife, mother – she was, first and foremost, a friend you could count on.”

Rep. Jim Langevin (D - Rhode Island)

Melvoid Benson, the granddaughter of a slave, was born in Jackson, Tennessee in 1930 to a father who shoveled coal on trains and a mother who taught in a one-room schoolhouse.

Benson grew up in a time when domesticity, motherhood, and homemaking were regarded as the only proper and fulfilling roles for a woman. By the 1950s, economic necessity forced Black women to work outside of the home. Despite many challenges, including pushback from those who said women were not suited for or capable of earning a college degree, Benson earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from Lane College in 1951.

Benson moved to North Kingstown, Rhode Island in 1964 with her husband, Arnathia N. “Ben” Benson, who was stationed at Quonset Point with the Navy. She taught school for the Town of North Kingstown for more than thirty years before retiring.

Benson went on to serve seven terms in the Rhode Island State Legislature. She was the first African American woman elected to the Rhode Island General Assembly, where she served as a state representative from 1990 until 2004. She later served on the North Kingstown School Committee for eight years.

Throughout her life, Melvoid Benson was a member of many organizations and committees, including the Rhode Island Economic Development Corporation, the Rhode Island Racial, Religious, and Ethnic Commission, and the Rhode Island State Democratic Committee.

Melvoid Benson died on June 11, 2016. Two days later, on June 13, President Barack Obama signed legislation sponsored by Congressman James R. Langevin (D-RI) and U.S. Senator Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI) designating the United States Postal Service facility located at 7715 Post Road in North Kingstown, Rhode Island, as the Melvoid J. Benson Post Office Building. The facility is the first Rhode Island post office named for a black person.

“This dedication is symbolic of Mel’s lasting influence on the town where she taught and served with distinction,” Sen. Whitehouse said. “I’m proud that the Melvoid J. Benson Post Office will stand as a reminder to the next generation of North Kingstown residents of Mel’s trailblazing spirit and her commitment to education and social justice.”
From its inception, Johnson University has educated students for Christian ministry in local congregations. L.D. Campbell embodies the best qualities of effective church leadership: a gifted communicator, deeply compassionate pastor, and skilled leader and administrator. As an alumnus, he has inspired and mentored many students in ministry. As a board member, he has continued to cultivate and steward the core values of Johnson University.

A native of Hampton, Tennessee, Campbell attended Johnson Bible College, where he served as junior and senior class president and graduated in 1965. Campbell was the pastor/teacher at First Church of Christ in Burlington, Kentucky for more than 38 years. Under his leadership, attendance at the church grew from 250 to more than 2,500. The congregation built five buildings and relocated from Florence, Kentucky to a 22-acre campus in Burlington. Since relocating, they have built a 47,000-square-foot education building and a 30,000-square-foot student center. The staff has grown from two full-time employees to 40, and the giving has grown from $60,000 to $4,000,000, with 20% of the budget going to local and foreign missions. Many young people from the church have gone into specialized Christian ministry. Campbell now serves as Pastor Emeritus of the church.

Campbell received an honorary Doctor of Divinity degree from Johnson Bible College (Johnson University) in 2011 and served on the university’s board of trustees from 1984-2023, serving as chairman for several of those years. He has also served as a trustee for the Mountain Mission School in Grundy, Virginia. He has taught as an adjunct professor at Cincinnati Christian University and Haus Edelweiss in Vienna, Austria and served as the visiting scholar/preacher for the 1996 annual lectures on preaching at Johnson University. In 2003, he and his wife Joyce received the Distinguished Alumni Award from the university. In 2010, he was named a visiting Eubanks Fellow.

L.D. is married to Joyce McPhetridge (Johnson Bible College Class of 1963). They have two daughters, four grandchildren, and three great-grandchildren. The Campbells make their home in Burlington, KY.

“Having pastored what the Christian Standard magazine calls an ‘emerging megachurch,’ served on the board of Johnson University for more than 35 years (including many as the board chair), and been awarded the university’s honorary doctorate, L.D. Campbell perfectly models the ‘Faith, Prayer, and Work’ motto of his ‘beloved Johnson.’”

Rick Woods
Chairman, Johnson University Board of Trustees
Inductee

AUTRY O.V. “PETE” DEBUSK

Lincoln Memorial University
B.S., Biology | 1965
Honorary Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine
Honorary Doctor of Public Service

Founder, Owner, and Chairman of DeRoyal Industries, Inc.

Champion of Appalachian Education

East Tennessean of the Year, 2017

Born in Rose Hill, Virginia, Autry O.V. “Pete” DeBusk’s roots are on a farm in the hills of Appalachia, where his father worked as a construction worker and coal miner, and DeBusk and his mother ran their farm. DeBusk attended Lincoln Memorial University, where he received a Bachelor of Science in Biology in 1965. DeBusk began a career in pharmaceutical sales and developed his first company, Pete DeBusk and Associates, in 1970. In 1973, he patented his first orthopedic product, a boot to protect plaster casts, and founded STAT Medical. In 1976, DeRoyal Industries, Inc. was incorporated, and it is now one of the world’s leading suppliers of medical products.

As founder, owner, and chairman of DeRoyal, DeBusk expanded his business from a single room in Fountain City to 21 facilities in six countries with more than 2,000 employees. DeRoyal manufactures surgical devices, unitized delivery systems, orthopedic supports and bracing, and wound care dressings.

DeBusk has also focused much of his time on another passion: his alma mater, Lincoln Memorial University, and providing educational opportunities for the people of Appalachia. He began serving on the university’s board in 1984 and was named chairman in 2000. DeBusk envisioned a future for LMU that followed the Ivy League model, where one-third of the school’s population would be undergraduate students and two-thirds would be enrolled in graduate or professional programs.

Under his leadership, LMU founded the LMU-DeBusk College of Osteopathic Medicine in 2007, gaining full accreditation just before its inaugural class graduated in May 2011. DeBusk has guided the university as it added the LMU Duncan School of Law (LMU Law), LMU School of Medical Sciences, and LMU College of Veterinary Medicine in addition to terminal degrees including the Doctor of Education, Doctor of Nursing Practice, and Doctor of Business Administration. LMU continues to advance DeBusk’s vision with the development of the LMU College of Dental Medicine and LMU School of Engineering, which opened in 2022.

In addition to serving as chairman of the LMU Board of Trustees, DeBusk is heavily invested in organizations such as the Boys and Girls Club, where he led the fundraising campaign for the Halls and Powell area DeBusk Family Boys and Girls Club. He has received numerous awards and honors, including KnoxBiz’s Health Care Heroes Lifetime Achievement Award; East Tennessean of the Year; Healthy Tennessee Eagle Award; Great Smoky Mountain Philanthropist of the Year; and Knoxville Chamber’s Leadership Award. DeBusk has also received two honorary doctorate degrees from LMU and another honorary doctorate from the International Hall of Fame. DeBusk has never forgotten where he came from and continues to look back and ask how to make life better in Appalachia and beyond.

“The only way you really ever help someone is to give them an education...”

Pete DeBusk
CityView Magazine Oct. 2021
Dr. Jeff Foster, a passionate advocate for expanded healthcare access in rural Tennessee, dedicated his career to supporting optometry's role as primary eye care doctors throughout the state.

Dr. Foster attended East Tennessee State University and then graduated from the Southern College of Optometry in 1981. In the same year, Dr. Foster joined the practice of Drs. Nathan Ford and William B. Henry, now known as Vision Source in Newport.

He served as the former legislative chair of the Tennessee Association of Optometric Physicians, playing a pivotal role in advancing the scope of practice from the 1980s to the 1990s.

Dr. Foster held distinguished leadership positions as the former president of the Tennessee Association of Optometric Physicians, the Tennessee Academy of Optometry, and chair of the Tennessee Board of Examiners in Optometry. Throughout his career, he received esteemed awards, including the Tennessee Association of Optometric Physicians (TAOP) Young Optometrist of the Year in 1984. In 1986, Dr. Foster was named the Optometrist of the Year.

In 2014, Dr. Foster was awarded Optometrist of the Decade, the highest honor from the TAOP association. This award has only been given twice.

On the local level, Dr. Foster demonstrated an unwavering commitment to community leadership in Newport. He actively contributed to various organizations, including the Cocke County Election Commission, Cocke County Library Board, Newport-Cocke County Economic Development Commission, Newport Central Charities, Douglas Adult Cooperative, and the East Tennessee Eye Bank. Additionally, he served as the former president of the Newport Lions Club and the Boys and Girls Club.

Dr. Foster died in August 2020 from COVID-19. At the time of his death, he was serving on the Courtesy/Consultative Staff of Tennova Newport Medical Center.

Dr. Foster embodied the spirit of service to others that the Southern College of Optometry encourages in its students, graduates, and employees.
Throughout his illustrious professional and civic career, Dr. Thomas J. Garland has served his community with distinction and set an inspiring example of leadership combined with a gracious and friendly demeanor.

Dr. Garland has served as a role model to Tusculum students, faculty, and staff with the principle of civic engagement that is embedded in the university’s mission. His extensive career includes 20 years of service in the Tennessee Senate, including 15 years as minority leader. Dr. Garland served as chancellor and CEO of the Tennessee Board of Regents for five years. He also served one year as interim president of Tusculum University and two terms as chair of the Tusculum Board of Trustees.

The Board of Regents classified Dr. Garland as a champion for higher education and good government during his time in the Tennessee General Assembly. During his time at the Board of Regents, Dr. Garland hired 10 college presidents.

Dr. Garland was also prolific in private enterprise, organizing his own businesses, serving as an executive with two national banks, founding a state-chartered bank, and serving as a member of the board of directors for a Fortune 500 corporation.

Dr. Garland never lost his connection to Greeneville, his home community. He served as a board member and senior adviser to the Niswonger Foundation. He has also profoundly impacted Tusculum. He founded and served as chair of the Tusculum Institute of Public Leadership and Policy. He served as chair of the university’s $10 million bicentennial fundraising campaign and as one of three co-chairs of the library expansion and renovation. He now serves as a life trustee.

Tusculum’s affection and respect for Dr. Garland has been ever-present. In addition to the interim presidency, Tusculum bestowed on Dr. Garland an honorary Doctor of Law degree in 1986, and then in 2002 presented him with the Distinguished Service Award, the highest honor the university presents.

One of the most lasting ways Tusculum recognized his achievements and legacy is by naming the university’s library after him in 2008.

“All of us at Tusculum University are grateful for Dr. Garland’s wisdom, guidance, and vision as well as his unwavering support of our institution and of education. He has demonstrated a pioneering spirit and has served as an outstanding example of living our mission. His contributions to the state, the business community and Tusculum are extraordinary.”

Dr. Scott Hummel
Tusculum University President
Rusty Gaston lives out the values of Belmont University by proving himself to be a determined, ambitious, and hardworking individual who seizes every opportunity. Growing up in Texas, he didn’t know anyone in music, and no one in his family worked in the industry. However, he didn’t let that stop him. Today, Gaston is the CEO of Sony Music Publishing Nashville and is associated with more than 50 No. 1 and award-winning hits.

In his early college days, Gaston began cold-calling companies and asking questions in order to get his first internship at a music publishing company. Since then, he has taken his inherent dedication to his craft and adopted the mindset that his profession is a service-oriented industry. He views his role as being one who works behind the scenes and represents the backbone of those in the entertainment business, embodying Belmont’s core values of integrity and service. Gaston first moved to Nashville in 1996 to attend Belmont University.

He began his career at SmithHaven Music, where he secured artist deals. Top producer Byron Gallimore tapped him to run his publishing company, Song Garden. From there, Gaston partnered with songwriters Tim Nichols and Connie Harrington to form THIS Music. As managing partner, Gaston built THIS Music into one of the most successful publishing houses on Music Row.

Now, as CEO of Sony Music Publishing Nashville, Gaston has taken his love of music to even greater heights. He leads all creative operations at the company, including signing new songwriters and developing strategies to promote the Nashville catalog.

Gaston is a longtime volunteer for Big Brothers Big Sisters Middle TN, a member of the Country Music Association, and a board member for both Belmont University and the Academy of Country Music. He was recently named Billboard Magazine’s Country Power Players 2023 Executive of the Year.

“I grew up in a town of barely a thousand people. I never met a soul in the music business. It was nothing more than I’m a kid that loved music who wanted to chase this down. If it can happen to me, it can happen to anybody if you’re willing to put in the work and be nice to people.”

Rusty Gaston
As both a faculty member and an administrator, Dr. William "Bill" Greer has embodied Milligan's mission of “honoring God by educating men and women to be servant-leaders.”

Although he may not have known it at the time, Dr. Greer's undergraduate years at Milligan would set him on a course that would define his career. After graduating from Milligan in 1985, he went on to earn an MBA from East Tennessee State University and a Ph.D. in Economics from the University of Tennessee - Knoxville.

In 1994, Dr. Greer returned to his first collegiate home. He joined Milligan as professor of economics and business administration. He was the university's vice president for institutional advancement from 2006 until 2011. He has served as president since 2011.

During his 30-year tenure at Milligan, Dr. Greer has mentored countless students and advanced the university's academic mission. He has remained true to Milligan's mission while developing new programs that meet workforce and student demand and position the university well for the future.

Dr. Greer has advanced the university's academic mission through the addition or revision of 25 academic programs, an academic restructuring, the integration of Emmanuel Christian Seminary into Milligan's School of Bible and Ministry, 10 successful institutional and program accreditation processes, and the renaming of Milligan College to Milligan University in 2020. Significant program additions include mechanical and electrical engineering and a master's program in physician assistant studies, among others.

Under Dr. Greer's leadership, Milligan has achieved several years of record enrollment while maintaining high academic profiles, retention and graduation rates, and underrepresented minority student enrollment. Presiding over the most ambitious fundraising campaigns in university history, he has led the institution in raising nearly $70 million for the "Forward Ever" campaign and more than $34 million as part of the university's current "On Mission" campaign. These campaigns have assisted with updating, expanding, and enhancing the campus from 195 acres to more than 355 acres.

Dr. Greer is a past Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Tennessee Independent Colleges and Universities Association and also a past President of the Tennessee College Association. Dr. Greer is a member of the Board of Directors of the Bank of Tennessee and the Johnson City-Jonesborough-Washington County Chamber of Commerce. He sits on the Council of Presidents for the Appalachian Athletic Association and is a past member of the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics Council of Presidents.

He and his wife, Edwina, live in Johnson City, Tennessee, and have two sons and three grandchildren.

“Dr. Bill Greer has guided Milligan to unprecedented achievements and recognition.”

Dr. Richard Phillips
Chairman of Milligan University’s Board of Trustees
LIPSCOMB UNIVERSITY

Inductee
SPEAKER
BETH HARWELL

Lipscomb College
B.A. | 1978

George Peabody College
M.S. | 1979

Vanderbilt University
Doctor of Philosophy | 1980

Tennessee's First Female
Speaker of the House of Representatives

15-Term Representative in the
Tennessee General Assembly

Children's Issues and Education Advocate

“I want to tell you from the bottom of my heart that I care deeply about education; I care deeply about preparing the next generation to be servants and to lead and to develop public policy for us going forward as a nation and as a state.”

Beth Harwell

Speaker Beth Harwell is an esteemed alumna of Lipscomb University, where the mission is to be a Christ-centered community that prepares learners for purposeful lives. Speaker Harwell has personified this mission by working to improve the lives of others through her years of dedicated service to the State of Tennessee.

After completing her undergraduate studies at Lipscomb, she pursued a graduate degree at George Peabody College, and then went on to pursue a Ph.D. in Philosophy from Vanderbilt University.

Speaker Harwell served in the Tennessee House of Representatives for 30 years, with the last six years of her term as Tennessee's first female speaker of the house. Speaker Harwell was first elected to the House of Representatives in 1988 before being unanimously elected as speaker in 2011. During her time in office, Speaker Harwell committed herself to making a difference in Tennessee through public service and was known for her willingness to collaborate with her colleagues on both sides of the political aisle.

Under Speaker Harwell's leadership, the Tennessee House of Representatives balanced the budget each year without a single tax increase. Her legislation focused on children's issues, increasing state education standards, and state unemployment. Speaker Harwell also shepherded Governor Bill Haslam's Tennessee Promise initiative through the house to successful adoption and implementation.

She spent a great deal of her time outside of the house chamber encouraging students to get involved in local politics and mentoring them in successful leadership skills.

During her tenure as speaker of the house, Speaker Harwell worked tirelessly toward the General Assembly's common goal of making Tennessee the nation's premier state to live, work, and raise a family.

Her unwavering commitment to service extended not only to her constituents in her home district but also to individuals across Tennessee, creating opportunities for lives filled with purpose and fulfillment, transforming the state for years to come.

Since leaving the Tennessee General Assembly, Speaker Harwell has continued to lead in the classroom as a Distinguished Visiting Professor in Political Science at Middle Tennessee State University. She dedicates insight and wisdom to training the next generation of public servants, political leaders, and policymakers.

In addition, Speaker Harwell was nominated and confirmed to the Tennessee Valley Authority Board of Directors in 2020 and will serve through May 2024.

Speaker Harwell's leadership set Tennessee on a trajectory of continuous improvement that will benefit the State of Tennessee for years to come.

“I want to tell you from the bottom of my heart that I care deeply about education; I care deeply about preparing the next generation to be servants and to lead and to develop public policy for us going forward as a nation and as a state.”

Beth Harwell
When Bob Jimenez graduated from Southern Adventist University in 1987, he wasn't exactly sure where his degree in business administration would take him, but he had a strong passion for connecting people, seeing them as individuals, and bringing out their best qualities. This inherent driving force guided Jimenez to a career in corporate communications that has influenced and impacted corporate culture, entrepreneurship development, and diversity inclusion over three decades.

Jimenez began his career in the arts as director of public relations for Opera Orlando in 1989, raising funds for his own salary to make it work. His innovative and self-starting talents were quickly recognized, and he became the manager of public affairs at Walt Disney World. From there, he took on the role of administrative director of marketing and public relations for AdventHealth, one of the nation's largest faith-based healthcare systems.

Twenty years ago, Cox Enterprises in Atlanta, Georgia, invited Jimenez to join their corporate team, and he has been impacting corporate culture ever since. Serving as the senior vice president of corporate affairs, Jimenez is responsible for leading corporate communication for the 2004 privatization of Cox Communications, the largest transaction of its kind at the time. His passion for people led him to co-found and direct the Cox Employee Relief Fund, which has given more than $13 million dollars to Cox employees in need. He is passionate about inclusion, intentionally driving the company’s messaging that inclusion is the golden thread that unleashes the potential and creativity of employees in the workplace.

Jimenez launched the company’s corporate social responsibility initiative and led the creation of Cox Conserves Heroes and Chairman Challenge Programs, which intentionally acknowledges young people and non-profits for environmentally sustainable initiatives. As a trusted and valued advisor to Cox’s four chief operating officers, Jimenez has influenced positive change and an inclusive corporate culture that has positively impacted and transformed the lives of Cox’s 55,000 employees and the millions of customers they serve.

Jimenez has been honored for his life-long leadership by several influential organizations. In 2007, Hispanic Business magazine named Jimenez one of the 100 Most Influential Hispanics in America, and since 2018, he’s been named one of the 50 Most Influential Latinos in Georgia by the Georgia Hispanic Chamber of Commerce.
Inductee

WILLIAM KILBRIDGE

Tennessee Wesleyan College
B.S., Business Management | 1972

Chairman of the Tennessee Valley Authority
Former Chattanooga Chamber of Commerce President
Philanthropist for Education

The woods and rivers of southeast Tennessee first lured native New Yorker Bill Kilbride to the South more than fifty years ago. At Tennessee Wesleyan University in Athens, Kilbride found a place where he could hunt, fish, and explore another part of the country.

After graduating from TWU in 1972, Kilbride briefly worked in Athens before returning home to New York City. There, he worked as a banker, then as the director of surveillance at the New York Stock Exchange, and eventually as an executive for Dean Witter Reynolds. His job at Dean Witter Reynolds took him to Chicago, where he met the woman who would become his wife. Kilbride’s career at Dean Witter Reynolds eventually led him back to Manhattan.

Kilbride worked for many years on the 74th floor of the World Trade Center until one day in 1992, when he received a phone call from one of his good friends, John Thornton. Thornton convinced Kilbride to serve as president and chief operating officer of Thornton’s company in Chattanooga, American Rug Craftsmen. Kilbride held that position less than two years before Mohawk Industries acquired the company. Kilbride was named president of the Mohawk Home division and later named the company’s chief sustainability officer. He retired from Mohawk in 2014.

Kilbride’s retirement was short-lived. He became president of the Chattanooga Area Chamber of Commerce in 2014, a role he held until 2017. Under Kilbride’s leadership, the Chattanooga Chamber was recognized as the 2017 Chamber of the Year for midsize cities by the Association of Chamber of Commerce Executives.

In 2019, Kilbride was named chairman of the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), America’s biggest government utility which delivers power and promotes the economy for more than 10 million people in seven southern states.

Throughout his life and career, Kilbride has remained loyal to his first home in Tennessee, Tennessee Wesleyan University. In 2014, Bill and his wife, Mary, donated their 91.9 acre farm on the banks of the Tennessee River to TWU to be used as a living laboratory for students and faculty in the fields of botany, zoology, plant physiology, ecology, and other educational opportunities. The lab serves as an outdoor classroom for further historical study and as a place for spiritual retreat and renewal. Kilbride has served on the TWU Board of Trustees in addition to his work on the TVA board and appointments on other boards. TWU also recognized him as the school’s Distinguished Alumnus in 1999.

“At the end of the day, it’s all about people.”

William Kilbride

* Photo Courtesy of the Chattanooga Times Free Press
Each time you swipe your debit card for a wide array of purchases, you can thank Ed Labry. Labry championed the technology behind the transactions that are essential to daily life. During his 34-year career, he led both First Data Corporation and Concord EFS, Inc., prior to its acquisition by First Data in 2004. He is best known for Concord’s role in the acceptance of credit and debit cards in the supermarket and quick-service restaurant industries. He led the movement for pay at the pump technology, where all card types were accepted at the gas pump.

Labry and his team also consolidated the PIN-based debit at the point of sale. Under his leadership, STAR quickly became the largest PIN-based network in the U.S. and is still the largest ATM network and second only to card association at the point of sale. Labry has received various awards and honors in the payment industry, with his favorite being the first-ever Distinguished Payments Professional of the year by the Electronic Transaction Association.

Labry attended the University of Alabama and graduated from Cumberland University in 1985. In 2002, Cumberland honored him with the “Award of the Phoenix,” the school’s highest honor, and presented him with an honorary doctorate for his role in helping develop and advance Cumberland’s business school and master’s degree program.

There is nothing more special to Labry than his wife, Kimberly, and daughters, Holly, Allison, and Margaux. He and Kim enjoy spending time at their home in Napa, California, where they share their passion for winemaking. The couple own and operate Labry Wines.

“Graduating from Cumberland University gave me the drive and ability to launch a successful career allowing me to invest in the education and success of thousands of young people for years to come. So, what does Cumberland mean to me? It helped mold me into who I am today. However, a school is not about bricks and mortar, it is about leaders, faculty, teachers and all who made and make it happen every day.”

Ed Labry
Inductee

ESMERELDA LEE

Lee College
B.S., Biology | 1996

University of Tennessee - Knoxville
M.H.A. | 2000

Christian Steward
Business Leader
Advocate for the Vulnerable

Esmerelda Lee is an extraordinary example of Christian scholarship, service, and vocation. She serves others with grace and compassion. She leads by example in both her personal and professional lives and strives to show Christ’s love by integrating her faith into her work. As a leader, mentor, friend, and caregiver, she truly is the hands and feet of Jesus to those around her.

Originally from Durbin, South Africa, Lee came to Lee College with $200 in her pocket. She graduated completely debt free. Her incredible work ethic and desire for excellence continue to this day in service and care for the most vulnerable community of people.

Lee's professional career includes serving as Executive Director for Life Care Center of Missionary Ridge and Life Care Center of Cleveland before accepting the role of Campus Manager of Garden Plaza at Cleveland from 2006 to 2017. She joined Enlivant as Regional Vice President of Operations in 2017 and was promoted to Vice President of Operations for the company in 2018. Since 2019, Lee has served as the Vice President and Chief Operating Officer for Century Park Associates, an affiliate of Life Care Centers of America, which operates more than 40 independent and assisted living communities in 20 states.

Lee has served with the Cleveland/Bradley Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors, the Rotary Club of Cleveland, United Way of Ocoee Region Board of Directors, the Governor’s Board for Tennessee Centers for Rehabilitation, Argentum Women in Leadership, and the National Center for Assisted Living Board of Directors. In 2015, she received Lee University's Distinguished Alumna Award from the Department of Natural Sciences and Mathematics.

“My mission is to serve the senior community, love them well, and inspire a team of associates who are committed to these goals as well.”

Esmerelda Lee
Inductee

JAMES T. MCAFEE JR.
1939-2004

Union University
B.A., Business Administration | 1961
Honorary L.L.D. | 1990

Georgia State University
Mercer University
Honorary L.L.D. degree | 1999

President and Board Chair of Hallmark Healthcare Corporation
Pioneer of Healthcare Expansion
Benefactor to Union University

Born in 1939 in Chattanooga, Tennessee, James T. “Jim” McAfee, Jr. led a life of service. McAfee graduated from Union University in 1961 and quickly honed his business skills as he entered the world of healthcare – realizing the impact he could make on the lives of those who serve and are served by the healthcare systems. McAfee’s people-focused leadership and future-directed mindset reflected Union’s core beliefs in the community around him. Each new business opportunity was another moment to grow the healthcare system and take care of those who are at their most vulnerable. Each business endeavor was done with excellence, striving to always give God glory in all he accomplished.

McAfee was chairman of the board and president of Hallmark Healthcare Corporation, an Atlanta-based healthcare company, from 1987 through 1994. He led the company through an extensive restructuring and refocusing of operations, which culminated in the merger of Hallmark Healthcare Corporation with Community Health Systems.

Prior to his association with Hallmark, McAfee was executive vice president and responsible for Charter Medical Corporation’s operations. He also served on the board of directors for Charter Medical Corporation. During his leadership, Charter developed, opened, and managed more than 88 hospitals in the United States and Europe. McAfee had also previously served as senior vice president of Hospital Affiliates International and chief executive officer of two community-owned hospitals.

McAfee was a member of the American Hospital Association and a former member of the AHA Board of Trustees. He was also a member of the Board of Governors of the Federation of American Health Systems.

McAfee gave not only his finances but his time as he served on the board of trustees for Union University and Mercer University. On Union’s campus, his generous gift – the largest given to the university at that time – allowed for the McAfee School of Business to be established as well as an organ to be placed in the chapel. McAfee Commons was named in honor of McAfee’s mother to honor the McAfee family tradition of generosity to college students and higher education.

His family foundation recently gifted the lead pledge to build a new academic building on Union’s Jackson campus that will house the McAfee School of Business and the computer science and engineering departments. There is no doubt of the great legacy McAfee has left not only at Union but across the South.

“Jim McAfee has made a significant impact upon his alma mater that is still being felt, and that will benefit students and communities for generations to come.”

Catherine Kwasigroh
Union University Vice President for Institutional Advancement
Dr. Betty Sue McGarvey is a graduate of Baptist Memorial Hospital School of Nursing, which has grown under her leadership to become Baptist Health Sciences University. Baptist Health Sciences University prepares graduates for careers of service and leadership by providing a comprehensive health sciences education within an integrated environment of learning and Christian principles. Under this mission, Dr. McGarvey has led by example. She retired in 2023 as the university president.

Dr. McGarvey’s 48 years of service to Baptist Memorial Health Care began with a career as a trauma nurse coordinator and a nurse in the emergency department and coronary care unit. During her tenure at Baptist, she earned the additional degrees of Master of Science in Nursing and Doctorate in Philosophy of Nursing. She chose to do so to deepen and broaden her knowledge of the healthcare industry, which exemplifies the university’s value of continuous improvement.

Dr. McGarvey valued passing on her knowledge and moved from the bedside to full-time teaching at Baptist Memorial School of Nursing. Her tenure as a faculty member led her to become a founding member of Baptist Memorial College of Health Sciences. Baptist Memorial College of Health Sciences was built on the curricula of the school of nursing to offer a broader range of education programs to develop future generations of healthcare providers. To have the pleasure of knowing her as one of her students, a mentor, colleague, fellow alumni, and friend is to know true leadership, service over self, and the meaning of being a Baptist graduate.

Dr. McGarvey, through her tireless dedication and visionary leadership, oversaw the transition of Baptist College of Health Sciences to Baptist Health Sciences University, offering graduate and doctorate-level degrees, as well as the establishment of the proposed College of Osteopathic Medicine. During this work, she found time to share her knowledge by serving as a board member on several professional, educational, and community organizations. A few of those include the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges, Memphis Medical District Collaborative, Leadership Memphis, Tennessee Independent Colleges & Universities Association, Rotary International, American Heart Association, and several others. She has received awards and recognition from each of her alma maters and was honored as part of the “Super Women in Business” by the Memphis Business Journal and “50 Women Who Make a Difference” by Memphis Woman magazine.

“The years have flown by; I look back and think ‘how did that happen?’ But I will be a Baptist Blue Healer for life!”

Dr. Betty Sue McGarvey
General Bill Morgan’s ties to Freed-Hardeman University run deep. His grandmother served as the first dorm matron for the original women’s residence hall on campus. His grandfather was a member of the faculty. His father served as a member of the board of trustees. Gen. Morgan attended FHU in 1948 and has continued to serve on the board of trustees since 1993.

Born in Puryear, Tennessee in 1930, Gen. Morgan is the only living alumnus who can say that he attended Freed-Hardeman while founder N.B. Hardeman was still president of the school.

After Morgan graduated from Murray State, he enlisted in the U.S. Air Force during the Korean War and served for 35 years — first on active duty, then with the Tennessee Air National Guard and finally with the U.S. Air Force Reserves, including ten years in the Air Force Academy. Among ten different aircraft, Gen. Morgan flew C-119s, C-97s and C-124s all over the world. While stationed in France, he met Irene Whiteside of Dallas, Texas, and they got married in a small village west of Paris in 1955.

During his time in the Air Force, he earned a Master of Arts in teaching government from Texas Technological University, where he was an associate professor of air science and a commandant of cadets. Gen. Morgan earned numerous military decorations and awards, including the USAF Legion of Merit and Meritorious Service Medal. The miles Gen. Morgan has flown are matched only by his lifetime of achievements, including the development of the Marshall County High School Athletic Foundation as well as New Pathways for Children, which provides support services for children in need. He was principal of an insurance and real estate firm for 35 years, served on boards of directors for several banks and children’s homes, and founded the French Christian Education Benin Training Center in Benin, West Africa.

When Gen. Morgan served as chairman of the FHU Board of Trustees, he challenged the university as never before to become the flagship institution of all Christian colleges. He developed 22 strategic goals to be accomplished during his tenure. Nearly all of them were accomplished which led to unprecedented growth in the early 2000’s.

Gen. Morgan continues to give his time and resources to help students in any way that he can. In particular he made a gift to build Morgan Stadium, FHU’s women’s softball stadium, which was voted facility of the year in 2022. Bill also provided lead gifts to begin the ROTC program and Doctor of Ministry program at FHU.

“Everything Bill Morgan has set out to do seems to end with significant accomplishments. His education, military service, business ventures, international mission work, spiritual life, family, and friendships are full and running over. But Bill’s successes are not for personal glory; he is truly a servant of God who creates better circumstances for all who surround him. Bill Morgan is an American success story, and Freed-Hardeman University is proud to have been a part of it.”

David Shannon
Freed-Hardeman University President
Inductee

COLONEL J. CHRISTOPHER MURPHY

Aquinas College
A.S., Liberal Arts | 1976

Auburn University
B.S., Criminal Justice | 1981

Troy University
M.S., Criminal Justice Administration | 1997

21-Year Veteran of the Secret Service
Protected Seated Presidents and Vice Presidents from Ronald Reagan through George W. Bush
Director of the Alabama Department of Public Safety

Retired Alabama State Trooper Colonel J. Christopher (Chris) Murphy lives out the mission of Aquinas College in his lifelong commitment to law enforcement and protection as he lives out his Christian values. He first came to Aquinas College as an advanced placement transfer from high school and was awarded an Associate of Science degree in Liberal Arts in 1976. His decision to attend Aquinas, according to his commencement address for Aquinas’ 2022 graduating class, had a lasting effect on his career choices and philosophy of life.

After completing his studies at Aquinas College, Colonel Murphy earned a Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice from Auburn University and a Master of Science in Criminal Justice Administration from Troy University. He has completed several professional programs, including the FBI's National Executive Institute, Scotland Yard's National Negotiator's Course, and the Naval Postgraduate School's Executive Leaders Program. During his years of study, Colonel Murphy learned how God uses one's natural strengths and interests to lead His sons and daughters into a life of meaningful service.

After a time in municipal law enforcement and as a special agent with the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation, Colonel Murphy joined the United States Secret Service in 1985, serving as a special agent in the St. Louis and Philadelphia field offices. He also served as an instructor in the service's office of training and as a protection agent on the vice presidential protection detail, where he became a supervisor on Second Lady Tipper Gore's protective detail. Colonel Murphy accepted progressively more advanced management positions in Montgomery, Alabama, Houston, Texas, and Birmingham, Alabama. In 2002, he was promoted to Special Agent in Charge of the Birmingham district office, with responsibility for both Alabama and Mississippi. In his 21-year career with the Secret Service, Colonel Murphy worked protection for seated presidents and vice presidents from Ronald Reagan through George W. Bush. He also protected former presidents, presidential candidates, and a host of foreign heads of state, including His Holiness Pope Saint John Paul II.

In 2019, Colonel Murphy published his memoir, In His Majesty's Secret Service. In his book, he describes when, due to various health issues as a child, his parents were told to prepare for Murphy's death. Remarkably, Colonel Murphy recovered, a circumstance that he attributes to God's greater plan. With a deep faith in the God of second chances, Colonel Murphy writes about his life in the Secret Service and how his faith imbued his work there.

Upon retirement from the Secret Service, Colonel Murphy served on Alabama Governor Bob Riley's cabinet as Director of the Alabama Department of Public Safety. At the conclusion of his service to the state of Alabama, Colonel Murphy accepted his current position as the Chief Security Officer for Great Southern Wood Preserving, a two-billion-dollar wood industry company. He and his wife Nancy are blessed with three sons: Christopher, Michael, and Patrick.

Throughout his long and distinguished career, Colonel Murphy has embodied the Christian values of self-sacrifice, commitment to the common good, and esteeming others as greater than oneself. His life embodies the motto of Aquinas College by living out truth and charity.
“In 1961, Reverend Joel Rice joined our family and became the first African American to attend Bethel. Thankfully, he opened doors in 1961 that changed Bethel’s legacy to one we can all be proud of. We are forever grateful for his decision to attend Bethel College and are grateful for his role in making Bethel University the University it is today. He touched so many lives in his life and left us an example of a life we should all strive to model after.”

Dr. Walter Butler
Bethel University President

Today, Bethel University is a strong, vibrant, and diversified campus because of Reverend Joel Rice’s decision to break barriers and attend Bethel College.

In the fall of 1961, Rice entered Bethel College as its first African American student. While his admission was not without controversy, Joel Rice arrived in McKenzie, Tennessee from Muskogee, Oklahoma, without the fanfare that usually accompanied the integration process in the early 1960s.

He quickly led morning devotions during “Spiritual Awareness Week,” and in 1962 was joined on campus by the second and third African American students. In 1964, the Cumberland Presbyterian General Assembly asked Bethel College to broaden the scope of “its ministry by becoming open to all qualified people, and that the Seminary be opened to persons of all races and denominations.”

Integration of the institutions was at that point both possible and legal within the policy of the denomination. On June 10, 1965, Rice graduated from Bethel College and enrolled in the Memphis Theological Seminary.

Rice worked his entire life in service to others. He pastored his first church at the age of 18 and served churches in Kentucky, Missouri, Tennessee, and Texas — all Cumberland Presbyterian Church in America (C.P.C.A.). He served as Executive Secretary of the General Assembly, Vice Moderator of the General Assembly, and Moderator of the General Assembly for the C.P.C.A denomination.

He gave counsel and advice, showed kindness, was a strong leader, and thoroughly knew his Bible and how to open its passages to those he served. He always taught self-respect, inclusion, unity, and racial harmony.

Bethel University

Inductee

JOEL RICE

Bethel College
B.A., English | 1965

Memphis Theological Seminary
Honorary Doctorate of Ministry | 2022

First African American Student to Attend Bethel University
Pastored His First Church at 18 and Served Churches in Four States
Promoted Unity and Racial Harmony
Joe Bill Sloan is an esteemed individual whose profound connection to Carson-Newman University has shaped his life and career. Growing up just three blocks from the campus, as the son of 1932 Carson-Newman graduates, Sloan was deeply intertwined with the university. His father, Albert Sloan, served as a professor of mathematics and chief financial officer for 40 years, making Carson-Newman not only the backdrop of Sloan's childhood but also a central aspect of his identity.

Attending elementary school on campus and working at a local drug store just a stone's throw from the academic center of Mossy Creek, Sloan developed a strong work ethic from an early age. He viewed these experiences not as work but as enjoyable and formative opportunities.

Carson-Newman continued to play a significant role in Sloan's life, as his father, mother, aunt, two sisters, brother, and wife all earned their degrees at Mossy Creek. Upon completing his own degree in 1967, Sloan joined the university's faculty ranks in the history and political science department. Throughout his tenure, Sloan demonstrated excellence in every role he undertook, serving as chair and later as dean of the social sciences division.

Sloan actively contributed to the university for more than four decades. Recognized and respected on campus, Sloan was invited to join the senior staff as associate provost and later assumed the role of interim president during a challenging financial period and leadership transition.

Despite transitioning to administrative roles, Sloan's passion for teaching remained as he continued to advise students on graduation requirements. Upon the selection of a new leader for the university the following year, Sloan returned to his true love: teaching. It was in the classroom where Sloan said he felt the most productive and referred to his students' success as rewarding.

Sloan's commitment to excellence and his impact on the Carson-Newman community earned him several distinguished awards, including the R.R. Turner Spirit of the College Award, the Distinguished Faculty Award, and the Outstanding Student Advisor Award (the only two-time recipient).

In 2022, Carson-Newman honored Sloan as a member of the inaugural class inducted into the Robert Reedy Bryan Society for his exceptional and meritorious service to Carson-Newman University.

“The school is recognizing me. But in a turnabout way, I feel I’m the fortunate one.”

Joe Bill Sloan
Dr. Morris Stocks started his educational path at Trevecca Nazarene University, completing his bachelor’s degree in accounting. He continued with his education, completing his master’s degree in accounting at Middle Tennessee State University, and his Ph.D. in accounting at the University of South Carolina.

Dr. Stocks currently serves as a Professor of Accountancy at the University of Mississippi’s Patterson School of Accountancy and has been a professor at the University of Mississippi for more than 30 years. Dr. Stocks was named the first recipient of the Don Jones Chair of Accountancy, a position that serves as a tribute to the career and contributions of his former colleague, Don Jones. He has also served in several administrative posts throughout his career, including associate provost, vice chancellor, accounting dean, provost, and interim chancellor.

Dr. Stocks has embodied a life of leadership and service as a university educator, church leader, and member of the board of trustees for Trevecca Nazarene University. His commitment to his students has earned him multiple awards, including “Professor of the Year” twice. He has been a trusted, leading voice for Trevecca and continues to invest his time for the good of students and the university.

“I love teaching. There isn’t a better job. It’s a high calling to help students define their professional futures.”

Dr. Morris Stocks

DR. MORRIS STOCKS

Trevecca Nazarene University
B.S., Accounting | 1977

Middle Tennessee State University
MAcc | 1984

University of South Carolina
Ph.D., Accounting | 1991

Professor of Accountancy at Patterson School of Accountancy at The University of Mississippi for over 30 years

School of Accountancy Outstanding Professor of the Year (1995 and 2000)

Don Jones Chair of Accountancy Recipient
Jerry Summers has distinguished himself in his vocation and has demonstrated concern for and service to his community. Furthermore, he has shown dedication to and support of the University of the South.

At Sewanee, Summers excelled in varsity baseball and basketball and was a member of the Phi Gamma Delta fraternity. As an alumus, he has served Sewanee as a career advisor, Sewanee Fund Class Volunteer, Reunion Giving Class Chair, and through many gifts to the Sewanee Annual Fund and the Class of 1963 scholarship.

After graduating with a degree in economics, Summers received his law degree at the University of Tennessee. Following his graduation from law school, Summers worked for two years as a prosecutor in the Hamilton County District Attorney's Office before entering private practice in 1969. He was the founding member of what is now Summers, Rufolo, and Rodgers, P.C., a firm with a diverse practice which includes personal injury, workers' compensation, criminal defense, labor law, medical malpractice, disability law, and other practice areas.

Summers is a member of many professional organizations, including the Tennessee Association for Justice and the Tennessee Criminal Defense Lawyers Association, both of which he served as president. On two occasions, Summers has taken cases to the United States Supreme Court.

His strong belief in the philosophy of giving back to the community is as impressive as his legal career. He serves on the boards of many organizations, including Area IV Special Olympics, Orange Grove Center (for the mentally and physically impaired), and CADAS (treatment of alcohol/drug abuse).

Summers was one of the original founders whose gifts created the Center for Advocacy and Dispute Resolution at the University of Tennessee College of Law. He also created the Summers-Wyatt Trial Advocacy Endowment, which funds scholarships to students whose career objectives are to practice criminal defense or civil plaintiff's trial work. Consistent with his philosophy to give back to the community, the scholarship criteria show preference to graduates of Sewanee (and other select Tennessee schools) in hopes that the student will give back to the community by practicing in Tennessee.

He credits his time at Sewanee as transformational and devotes a chapter in his book, The Turtle and the Lawyer, to that experience. Keeping in the theme of giving, all of the proceeds from the sales of the book go to charities, including Sewanee.

“Some ‘self-made men’ would have you believe they climbed to the top of the world by themselves. Not Jerry Summers. He knows he wouldn’t have made it without his family, teachers, coaches, mentors, colleagues, and friends...”

David Carroll
Author and WRCB-TV Commentator
George Vogel, a distinguished chaplain and philanthropist, graduated from Bryan College in 1958. He holds a Master of Divinity and Doctor of Ministry degree from Talbot School of Theology, supplemented by coursework at Golden Gate Baptist Seminary. Vogel had a noble career, spanning 36 years of chaplaincy in the National Guard, including five years of active duty service.

Vogel's exceptional contributions to the field of chaplaincy were acknowledged in 2015 when he was honored with the Department of Veterans Affairs Under Secretary for Health's Award for Excellence in Chaplaincy, receiving the esteemed Lifetime Achievement Award. Moreover, his dedication to ministry and service to God and his country led to him being granted an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters from Bryan College in May 2015.

Beyond his military and ministry commitments, Vogel and his wife, Doris, have generously supported various initiatives at Bryan College. Their contributions include the endowment of the Elizabeth Jane Cornwell Scholarship (initially benefiting married students, later revised to support nursing majors), substantial donations to the annual fund, the Clara Ward School of Nursing, the Bryan Opportunity Scholarship Fund, and the renovation of Rudd Auditorium.

Vogel also funded the establishment of the Vogel School of Engineering at Bryan College, which gives students access to state-of-the-art equipment, including new computers, a 3D printer, and a wind tunnel. Through their philanthropy, the Vogels have enabled more students to access a Christian worldview education at Bryan College.

Vogel continues his ministry and impacts lives as the Chief of Chaplain Service at the Long Beach Veterans Affairs Medical Center.

His notable achievements, recognition, and philanthropic endeavors exemplify his commitment to making a positive impact on the lives of others.

“Bryan College provided a strong foundation for my career and service to my country. It was a life-changing experience that prepared me for my future. Doris and I are grateful for the work that continues on Bryan College’s campus. It’s an honor to be able to provide the funding for the School of Engineering, and it’s very humbling to have it bear our name.”

George Vogel

Inductee

GEORGE VOGEL

Bryan College
B.A., Bible | 1958
Honorary Doctor of Humane Letters | 2015

Talbot School of Theology
B.D. | 1961
M.Div. | 1967
D.Min. | 1996

2015 Recipient of the Department of Veterans Affairs
Under Secretary for Health’s Award for Excellence
in Chaplaincy, The Lifetime Achievement Award

Chaplain in the National Guard for 36 Years

Sponsor of the Vogel School of Engineering at Bryan College
Inductee

PERRY WALLACE
1948-2017

Vanderbilt University
B.S., Engineering | 1970

Columbia University
J.D. | 1975

Civil Rights Icon Who Integrated SEC Varsity Basketball
Senior Trial Attorney at the U.S. Dept. of Justice
University Professor

As a star basketball player who led his team at Nashville’s Pearl High School to a state championship title in 1966, Perry Wallace had his pick of colleges. More than 80 schools around the country recruited him. Although he was eager to leave the Jim Crow South, Wallace chose to stay in Nashville and go to Vanderbilt University because he knew it would stimulate and challenge him academically. Wallace arrived on the Vanderbilt campus in the fall of 1966. He and Godfrey Dillard, a fellow signee from Detroit, were the first Black athletes at the university.

As members of Vanderbilt’s freshman basketball team, Wallace and Dillard traveled with the varsity team, playing before the main game. When they played games in the South, the two young men endured hostility, hatred, and violence from racist people who didn’t want Wallace and Dillard in their cities and towns. Their home gym at Vanderbilt offered Wallace and Dillard a break. They had the respect of their teammates, and the crowds were nicer. Overall, though, the campus was a lonely and often hostile place for its few Black students.

Wallace moved up to the varsity team in 1967. On December 2, he made history at Southern Methodist University by becoming the SEC’s first African American basketball player to compete in a varsity game. Two days later, he played in his first SEC varsity basketball game against Auburn. Wallace played the rest of his college career at Vanderbilt, enduring racist taunts, things thrown at him, or worse, at every away game. The NCAA even banned his signature move, the slam dunk.

Wallace rose above all the hatred and hostility. He became captain of the team. He was a member of the All-SEC second team, and he received the SEC Sportsmanship Award. Wallace graduated with a Bachelor of Engineering degree in 1970. In an interview with The Tennessean at the end of his senior year, Wallace talked about the isolation and exclusion he felt during his time at Vanderbilt. The interview was highly controversial, with many in the community turning on Wallace. He was not invited back to campus for more than 20 years, and he had no desire to return. University leaders later worked to repair the relationship and honor Wallace’s tremendous impact.

After graduating from Vanderbilt, Wallace earned a law degree from Columbia University in 1975. He also pursued graduate business studies at Columbia University, American University, and George Washington University. He worked for several years as a senior trial attorney at the United States Department of Justice, handling cases involving environmental, energy, and natural resources law. He served a three-year term on the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s National Advisory Council for Environmental Policy and Technology.

Wallace was a professor at Howard University and the University of Baltimore before joining American University’s Washington College of Law in 1993 as a law professor specializing in environmental law, corporate law, and finance. He also served as the director of the university’s JD/MBA dual degree program. He was a securities arbitrator for the National Association of Securities Dealers, Inc. and the New York Stock Exchange, Inc., as well as a commercial arbitrator for the American Arbitration Association, Inc.

Wallace was inducted into the Tennessee Sports Hall of Fame in 2003. Vanderbilt retired his basketball jersey in 2004. The university inducted him as an inaugural member of the Vanderbilt Athletics Hall of Fame in 2008. In 2015, Wallace’s Vanderbilt classmates created the Perry E. Wallace Jr. Scholarship in his honor. The need-based scholarship is designated for deserving undergraduate students at the School of Engineering. Wallace was inducted into the School of Engineering’s Academy of Distinguished Alumni in 2016.

Wallace’s remarkable life and career are told in literature and film. His story is the subject of The New York Times bestselling book, Strong Inside. His legacy is also captured in the documentary film, Triumph: The Untold Story of Perry Wallace.
Gifted with an incredible voice that has taken her to the stage of opera houses around the world, Delores Ziegler has accomplished much in her career. One of the world’s most celebrated mezzo-sopranos, Ziegler has been heralded as “the mezzo we have been waiting for” by Martin Bernheimer in the Los Angeles Times.

Born in Atlanta, Georgia, Ziegler earned a bachelor of arts degree in music at Maryville College and completed her master’s at the University of Tennessee in 1979.

With a repertoire that extends from bel canto to verismo, Ziegler has appeared in the world’s greatest opera houses. Ziegler made her European operatic debut in Bonn as Dorabella and became an international presence afterward. She centered many of her engagements in Germany, Italy, and England.

An acclaimed interpreter of bel canto mezzo roles, she has the honor of being the first singer in operatic history to sing Romeo in Bellini’s I Capuleti e i Montecchi at the Bolshoi in Moscow, at the San Francisco Opera, and in Japan. In another milestone, Ziegler is the most recorded Dorabella in operatic history. She can also be seen as Dorabella in a video disc of the La Scala production with Riccardo Muti and in a film of Così, which has been televised throughout Europe. In South America, she has performed Adalgisa in Norma at the Teatro Colon in Argentina and in Rio de Janeiro. In the United States, this Georgia native has appeared at the Metropolitan Opera as Octavian, Dorabella, Cherubino, and Siebel. Her initial appearances at the Lyric Opera of Chicago were as Dorabella in Così fan tutte.

Ziegler had the honor of making her Carnegie Hall debut as soloist in the Rossini Stabat Mater with Riccardo Muti and the Philadelphia Orchestra. It was Maestro Muti’s last performance in America as music director of that prestigious orchestra. Ziegler has also appeared with orchestras throughout the United States, Canada, Europe, and Japan. She was part of London’s BBC Symphony, where she sang in Rome, Aix-en-Provence in France, and in Venice. She is a gifted Lieder singer and has appeared in that capacity in such cities as Paris, Florence, Vienna, Cologne, and Bonn. In 1992, she made her New York City recital debut in Carnegie Hall’s Weill Recital Hall Series.

Currently, Ziegler is a professor of voice at The University of Maryland, where she has been teaching for more than 20 years.

“Being willing to share her gift with others opened the world to her and allowed her to experience different cultures, learn new languages, meet interesting people, and surround herself with glorious, divine music.”

Suzy Booker
Vice President for Institutional Advancement, Maryville College

Delores Ziegler
Maryville College
B.A., Music | 1973
The University of Tennessee
M.A., Music | 1979

Celebrated Mezzo-Soprano Operatic Voice
Performed in Opera Houses Around the World
Most Recorded Dorabella in Operatic History