



THE MURRAY STATE NEWS

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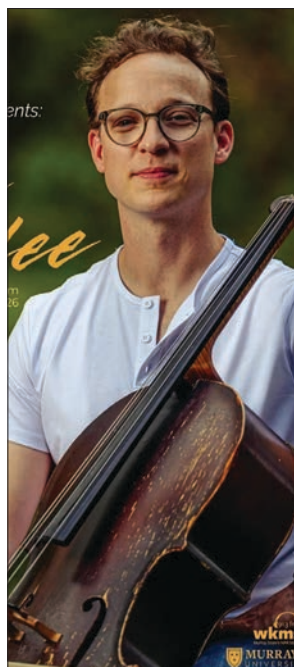
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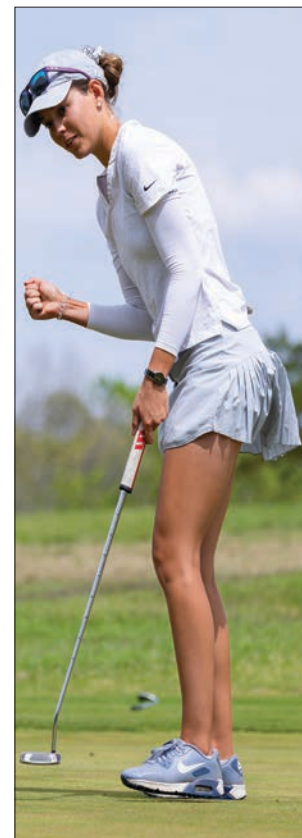
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Patterson outlines priorities as first year concludes

Gray Hawkins

Editor in Chief

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With his first academic year as Murray State University president coming to a close, Ron Patterson has much to look back on and even more to look toward in the future of his presidency.

Patterson spoke with The Murray State News about recent celebrations, visitors and policy changes and the many plans he has for Murray State to continue “racing toward excellence.”

Recent events

Patterson’s Presidential Inauguration events, held April 13 and 14, marked the first Presidential Investiture at Murray State University since 2015.

Events included a cookout and ice cream social hosted by First Lady Jenny Patterson complete with musical entertainment, games and more. Patterson said the festivities far exceeded his expectations and provided an opportunity to engage and involve staff, faculty and students alike in celebration. He said the campus community’s positive reaction to the cookout may result in similar kinds of events moving forward.

“Part of the feedback from the inauguration week was the party (and) the activities were well received, and so we might throw a block party in the fall,” Patterson said. “I’m creative, and I know how to throw a good party, too. You got to have good food, right? (Then) Ice cream. And third, you got to have good people. The fourth thing is music ... After that, the rest is history.”

The Investiture Ceremony was held the following day in Lovett Auditorium. Patterson made it a day not only of celebration but of investment in the future of Murray State and the community it fosters.

“My family, my wife’s family, (our) friends and guests ... left here (as) fans of Murray State University, so they are now part of Racer Nation,” he said. “We were so successful that our friend’s daughter may be enrolling in the fall. I’m a recruiter ... I never, never let go of an opportunity.”

The audience was surprised to see Gov. Andy Beshear attend and speak at the investiture. Patterson said he was very intentional in building a relationship with Beshear and making connections with western Kentucky delegates when he took on his presidency last July.

“It was a wonderful surprise for our campus community, and I hope the community realized that it’s because of that relationship he and I have, along with his team, that afforded us the opportunity to have him visit our campus,” Patterson said.

Later in the week, Patterson spent time with U.S. Rep. James Comer, providing updates on the ongoing and upcoming projects in the University’s athletic areas.

“(Comer) is a fan and advocate and champion for Murray State University ... We want to continue to establish and foster and cultivate those relationships,” he said.

Patterson said his week culminated with the Murray State baseball team’s comeback win against Illinois State during the Missouri Valley Conference on Sunday, April 19.

“We came back and won through the walk off,” he said. “We were hooping and hollering ... It was a really special day.”

University updates and upcoming events

As part of an ongoing campaign for transparency



Zach Simmons/The News

Ron Patterson speaks with Gray Hawkins of The Murray State News.

and the inclusion of student voices, Patterson is instituting a campus fee advisory committee and requested representatives from all across campus. He said he wants the committee to review our campus fees and compare them to regional schools and aspirational institutions.

“My goal is to have almost 50 percent student voice and 50 percent faculty (and) staff,” he said. “That is what I’m aiming for. (I will) do my very best to get there.”

Patterson said another goal with establishing this committee is to create a web page where fees are structurally outlined and their purposes are clearly defined to make this information more accessible and organized.

Patterson and Laura Foltz, vice president for finances and administrative services, will present the finalized 2026-2027 academic year’s budget on Tuesday, April 28, following a preliminary budget town hall meeting held on March 10 and a series of meetings between Foltz and various student groups. He said the feedback Foltz has received from these visits has been brought back into budgetary discussions and is actively being factored into decision making for next year and beyond.

“Those voices have had direct input into the decision,” he said. “Our goal is for them to see ... quick successes (and) hopefully see some of that coming back to them through the budget dollars that will be distributed at the appropriate time.”

After the recent passage of House Bill 490 via an override of Gov. Andy Beshear’s veto, Murray State’s Faculty Senate drafted a policy for the University to instate in accordance with state law. Patterson said he will continue to work with Michael Bordieri, Faculty Senate president, to put the policy into effect by the October deadline while maintaining support for University faculty.

“Our faculty are the bedrock, the foundation, the heart of our campus community and our university,” Patterson said. “I want them to continue to feel that their President supports them and empowers them (and) continue to challenge our students to think critically, discover and be bold in their discovery after graduation. So none of those things will change.”

On April 16, Patterson announced the elimination of the University’s late fee for employee timesheets

via email to administrators, faculty and staff. Murray State has had this penalty as part of its Time and Leave Reporting policy for 15 years. He said it was a topic of conversation throughout his Racer Spirit Listening and Learning tour in the fall 2025 semester which prompted him to review the fee and its practicality.

“I’ve worked at six institutions, and I’ve never heard of a late fee policy where we charge our people for turning in their time sheets late,” he said. “I will be honest and tell you that President Patterson has been late with submitting his time sheet. ... We just lose track, right? So why are we penalizing the people we say we care about, our staff and our faculty that do the wonderful work of supporting (students)?”

He said the decision to eliminate the fee follows the same logic as he applied when he declared the entirety of spring break as a holiday period for University employees.

“I thought it was very necessary (and) long overdue to eliminate what I call an unnecessary burden to our faculty and staff,” he said. “We are professionals (and) adults, and we should be treated as such.”

Looking forward

Reflecting on the year, Patterson said going on the Racer Spirit Listening and Learning tour was the best decision he could have made to begin his presidency. With the tour behind him and much of the feedback gathered from it either addressed or influencing his plans for the future, Patterson said two major goals going into the fall 2026 semester is to continue investing in students, faculty and staff and pursue recruitment efforts by visiting regional high schools.

In terms of ongoing construction plans, Patterson said both Jackson Hall, the new College of Nursing and Health Sciences building, and the Living Learning Commons are on schedule, with Jackson Hall still set to open this August. The University held a groundbreaking ceremony for the Veterinary Sciences Building on Wednesday, April 22.

Read more at thenews.org



Campus construction projects bring improvements

Harper Spaulding
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Murray State launched several new, ongoing and planned construction projects this last year, leaving students both grateful and inconvenienced.

Murray State continues to expand and renovate infrastructure across campus, from the new nursing building to window replacement at the Blackburn Science Building. According to the University, this construction is intended to enhance the overall experience for the campus community and visitors. The new construction has been an inconvenience for some, however, especially as parking spaces become limited.

“While these projects are important for the growth of the University, we recognize that they can create temporary inconveniences, including impacts to parking availability, and we appreciate the patience of our entire campus community during these projects very much,” said Jason Youngblood, assistant vice president of facilities management.

According to a statement by Youngblood, there are 19 ongoing construction projects on campus. This includes the construction of the new nursing building by Faculty Hall and the Learning Commons by Hart Residential College. This also includes renovations and improvements at the Wellness Center,



Nyx Alverson/The News

Construction of the Jackson Hall Nursing Building is ongoing, with plans to open in fall of 2026

Stewart Stadium and Expo Center.

Along with the ongoing construction, there are also over 26 planned construction projects to start soon. This includes major projects such as the new

Veterinary Sciences Building and parking expansion around the new Learning Commons. The University also plans site repairs near the nursing building, various concrete sidewalk repairs and

replacements for the roofs at Winslow Dining Hall, as well, and the Biology Building and Chemistry Building.

Please see Construction | 6



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Construction projects planned over summer break

Continued from page 5

Currently, the University is working on HVAC repair at Faculty Hall, Wellness Center and the Collins Industry and Technology Center. HVAC repairs are also planned for Wilson Hall and Wells Hall.

The campus' temperature control has been a particularly hot topic for students as the campus switches from heating to cooling for the rest of spring. Anna Westerfield, a freshman elementary education major, said she was uncomfortable over how hot the dorms had been prior to the switch.

"Me and my roommate have always struggled with either being too hot and not being able to get any air or anything in our room, or it just being freezing cold and it can't retain heat," she said. "It's never just a good in between."

Westerfield said the ongoing construction projects would help students and improve lives on campus. As a Hart resident, she said the building projects have also posed a problem in terms of parking, rendering it hard to find a spot.

"Since I go home on the weekends, I'm always losing parking spots and having to go on the lower lots," Westerfield said. "Just having to go back and forth with taking all my luggage and my bags, it's kind of a pain."

Rhiannon Loven, a freshman studio art major, said she wasn't affected by

the parking situation on campus, but the construction has been a slight annoyance on her walk to classes in Faculty and Blackburn. Loven, who attends classes in Blackburn, said the biggest problem regarding the construction has been the lack of communication with students and professors over how long the construction will take.

"Just giving updates would have been nice to the professors as well as my blanket opinion," Loven said. "However, it is nice to see the progress, like the nursing building that's going to be right next to the Faculty Hall. Since seeing it (in) my first semester here, it looks entirely different, and it's really nice to see that."

Loven also said it would be nice to see campus improvements to temperature control in the dorms. Instead of having a set heat for winter and cold for summer, she said she would like to be able to set the temperature in the dorms instead of just shutting off the AC.

For more information on available parking, visit the campus interactive parking map.

Scan to see parking map here ---->



Construction at the CFSB Center began March 9

Nyx Alverson/The News

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To all College of Education and Human Services graduates, congrats!

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Dean, College of Education and Human Services

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Dr. Samir Patel

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Crime rate on campus stays steady

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Campus crime remained steady this semester with 57 reported criminal incidents.

On Jan. 12, students entered the new semester with a bomb threat that left many of the University's facilities, and facilities in universities across the country, closed. While an extraordinary incident to usher in the semester, Murray State's crime rate has stayed consistent over the past few semesters. Over the last semester, Murray State has seen 57 reported criminal incidents ranging from theft, assault and vehicle accidents.

"The Murray State University Police Department continually reviews incidents recorded in our public crime log to monitor trends and guide patrol, prevention, and outreach efforts," Murray State's Police Department said in a statement. "Based on incidents reported between January and mid-April, the number and types of reports this semester are generally consistent with the same timeframe last year, with typical semester-to-semester fluctuations."

The majority of these incidents, the department said, were low-level violations, including theft and vehicle accidents. This semester, there were 20 reported thefts and nine vehicular

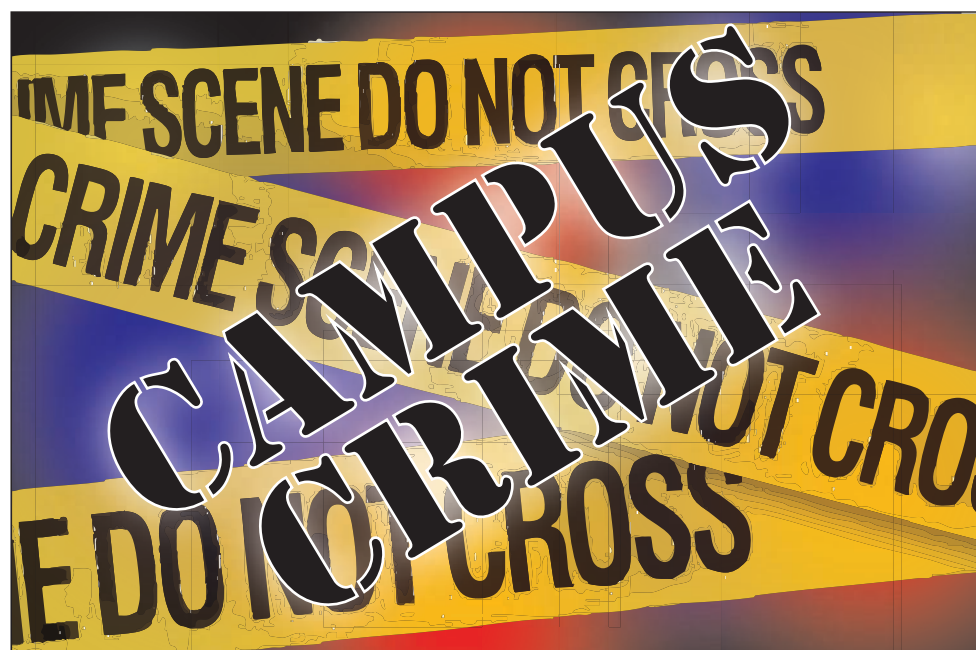
accidents, according to the Murray State Crime Log. Alcohol and drug incidents were the second most common, at 11 reported incidents.

The University's 57 reported criminal incidents this semester are a decline from the 80 incidents reported in the fall. The majority of reported incidents in the fall were theft and vehicle-related, with 22 reported thefts and 11 vehicle accidents.

The fall semester also saw more cases of harassment and assault overall, with 15 reported incidents compared to only seven in the spring. These cases range from verbal harassment to physical assault. October also saw a string of four sexual extortion reports, consisting of an individual threatening the release of explicit photos in exchange for bitcoin and other payments. These cases are currently suspended pending other evidence.

The Murray State Police Department maintains that incidents of violent crime on campus are rare and typically involve individuals who know each other, not random acts of violence. The department said it continues to serve students and keep the campus community safe.

"While no campus is completely immune from incidents, Murray State continues to be a very safe campus," the statement read. "Our officers remain proactive in patrol, prevention, and



MacKenzie Rogers/The News

community engagement, and we work closely with students, faculty and staff to maintain a strong culture of safety across campus."

The department directed students to a variety of sources to protect themselves from crime. This includes the LiveSafe app, which lets students request safety escorts across campus if they feel unsafe. Students are also encouraged to register their bikes in the event of theft, and keep

up to date on emergency alerts through the Racer Alert emergency system

The Murray State Police also asks students to remain aware of their surroundings and report suspicious activity when it occurs. For more information on Murray State's safety resources, you can view visit the Murray State Police Department website.

View police resources here --->



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New University administrator seeks student feedback

Gray Hawkins

Editor in Chief

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Laura Foltz, Murray State's new vice president for finances and administrative services, has taken a new approach to her position by engaging students directly this budget season.

The first of two budget town hall meetings for the upcoming 2026-2027 academic year was held on March 10. Foltz outlined the purpose and fundamental structure of a university budget with examples from the 2025-2026 budget and her intention to streamline financial processes.

Since the meeting, Foltz has collaborated with Don Robertson, vice president of student affairs and enrollment management, to meet with students in the Emerging Scholars Institute, Residential College Association, Student Government Association, The Murray State News and the Oakley Student Lounge. Sharion Meloan, executive coordinator of finances and administrative services, said Foltz also scheduled meetings with the academic college deans collectively and individually.

In a meeting with The Murray State News, Foltz began by discussing the notion of higher education's "iron triangle" of accessibility, quality and cost and how they impact each other.

"I think the hardest thing for management is to get that balance right between access, quality and cost," Foltz said. "They say you can't break the iron triangle; I think you can. I think the way you break the iron triangle is by improving your internal efficiencies so you are improving quality without adding cost."

News staffers posed questions to Foltz regarding her meetings with students, impending changes and University financing decisions.

Open communication and student input

Foltz said her discussions with student groups have involved a mix of clarifying questions about how the University's financial decisions work and suggestions for what students would like to see addressed in future budgetary decisions.

"There's a strong desire to better understand the why behind those questions," she said.

"Students have been really thoughtful in sharing feedback ... I've been encouraged by how engaged the students are and how solutions-oriented they have been and the conversations are shaping how we communicate and prioritize going forward."

She said she has heard student feedback regarding affordability, specific fees, properly staffing student-facing areas on campus and ensuring resources are impacting the student experience as intended.

Communication and transparency have been in high demand in Murray State's community, especially in the early stages of Ron Patterson's presidency and new administrators taking on their roles. Foltz said being open about why and how decisions are made helps build trust in the campus community.

"I think the success of anyone in my position is transparency," she said. "I would rather answer hard questions than have people make up their own narrative because (administrators) are here to tell them what's happening."

During Foltz's meeting in the Oakley Student Lounge on Friday, April 10, Robertson encouraged students to attend the annual budget town hall meetings when their class schedules allow, as it is the most direct way to stay informed on the University's budgetary information and to bring the student perspective into the conversation. He said in the 35

years he has been at Murray State, he has never seen someone in Foltz's position coming to the student body to answer their questions.

Foltz said continued open communication between her and the student body will help the campus community understand the context of the University's decisions and who they affect.

"What I love about higher (education) is it changes lives, and it's great to see some of the lives that are here being part of that process," she said. "So I will continue to accept invitations, and when I need some intentionality, I will ask Dr. Robertson to help me because he knows where students are."

"I've been here for 35 years. I've never had a vice president of finance come and want to talk to students and answer their questions.

-Don Robertson

Internal efficiency

In the first budget town hall meeting, Foltz and Patterson expressed an ongoing intention to reduce physical paperwork as a minor but effective change for internal efficiency that helps reduce wasteful spending and time management issues.

"(Internal efficiency) looks like asking the question, are we adding value to the process (and) how are we adding value to the process?" Foltz said. "During COVID, there was some extra routing added where the vice (presidents) signed all kinds of paperwork that they had not prior to that point. We were asking them to spend many, many hours manually signing all of these papers ... so we dialed back some of those added things that were not added value."

Foltz said a turn toward automation has also helped reduce five hours of an employee's weekly workload previously spent reviewing office supply contracts that included ineligible purchases.

"We want to be focused on those really important things and not spending our time in busy land," she said. "We can build on a really solid foundation and make sure that every dollar is used as effectively and visibly as possible."

University funding and budgetary priorities

At the time of the interview, Murray State was one of three public higher education institutions in Kentucky that did not receive state funding reductions for the upcoming year. Foltz said she thanks the legislators for allowing Murray State to hold harmless with our funding.

According to the Lexington Herald Leader, the state legislature's finalized budget reduced the proposed funding cuts, restoring most of the funding to the Kentucky public universities affected.

"It provides stability because we will have the same amount that we had, and it also avoids the need for reactive cuts because we received a stable amount," she said. "It also lets us plan strategically rather than defensively, so we still remain focused on efficiency and outcomes."

Many of Foltz's discussions have involved an explanation of Murray State's financial decisions,



Photo provided by Digital Media Services

Foltz prepares for the Presidential Investiture.

which she said are sorted into a hierarchy of priorities submitted by the University's vice presidents, provosts and deans that senior leadership will then use to navigate how money should be allocated for the upcoming year.

"President Patterson always has student experience at the front of his mind, and so that's always part of the conversation," she said. "It's back to that cost, quality and access. Can we provide a better student experience? Can we provide better access, and how can we do that with the funds we have?"

Foltz has encountered many questions about the possibility of an increased minimum wage for campus employees. She said that while she cannot guarantee students will see a wage increase, it is a topic of discussion on the University's list of matters to address because student jobs not only help with affordability, but also increase retention and engagement.

Changes to expect

Foltz said the changes students can expect going forward will be incremental and intentional adjustments that will not feel sudden or disruptive to the everyday student experience.

"There's going to be a review of these (changes) and how they're structured and communicated, and students will be represented on that," she said. "President Patterson is putting together a task force, so you will continue to see operational efficiencies behind the scenes that reduce the costs without affecting the student experience."

The finalized 2026-2027 academic year budget will be presented in a second budget town hall meeting held at 2:30 p.m. on Tuesday, April 28, in the Wrath Museum. Wrath is located at the southern end of the Quad between Wilson Hall and the Bauernfeind Business Building.

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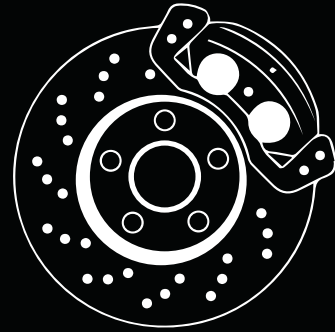
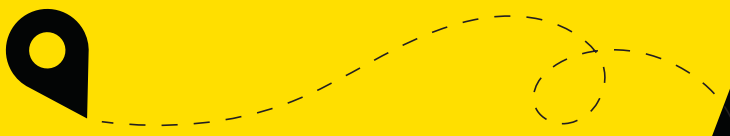
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New legislation makes changes to education, gambling, more

Shelby Bloomer
Staff Writer
sbloomer@murraystate.edu

The Kentucky General Assembly officially wrapped up its legislative session Wednesday, passing bills that would make changes to education, gambling and concealed firearm licenses. This is a list of some of the bills that were passed for 2026 that are expected to go into effect in mid-July.

House Bill 490: Academic tenure

HB 490 allows for public postsecondary education institutions — like Murray State University — to fire or remove faculty for financial reasons or low program enrollment. The measure has been largely contested by MSU faculty members and members of the United Campus Workers of Kentucky. Opponents said the measure would limit academic freedom, opening the door for universities to fire professors for pursuing research in controversial topics and limiting student learning by eliminating less popular academic programs. HB 490 contains an emergency clause, meaning that it is expected to go into effect immediately, rather than after a 90-day period.

House Bill 312: Concealed firearms

Passed on April 14, HB 312 will allow 18-year-olds to apply for and obtain a provisional license to carry a concealed firearm. Concealed carry licenses were reserved for individuals 21

and older who applied for a standard license, passed a background check, met certain criteria and completed a training program. Under HB 312, a legal adult younger than 21 can apply for a provisional license and must pass the same criteria and complete the training program. Upon turning 21, they must then apply for a standard license.

House Bill 904: Sports betting

While the age for carrying a concealed firearm will be lowered, the age requirement for sports betting will increase from 18 to 21. Passed on April 14, HB 904 makes several changes to gambling in the state, including raising the betting age, restricting in-state collegiate athlete prop bets (bets made on an individual athlete’s performance rather than the outcome of a game) and authorizing fixed-odds wagering on horse racing (where a bettor’s payout is fixed at the time of making a bet, as opposed to the odds fluctuating until the race’s end). While sports betting will now require individuals to be 21, the age for horse betting remains at 18.

House Bill 562: Alternate high school diplomas

Another measure impacting education is HB 562, which requires the Kentucky Board of Education to establish and compose regulations for an alternate high school diploma for students with disabilities who are unable to participate in regular statewide assessment and require a modified curriculum. It

Bills Passed This Year expected to take effect mid-July

- House Bill 490:**
A bill concerning academic tenure
- House Bill 312:**
A bill concerning concealed firearms
- House Bill 904:**
A bill concerning sports betting
- House Bill 562:**
a bill concerning alternate high school diplomas
- House Bill 169:**
a bill concerning a health insurance addition
- House Bill 4:**
a bill concerning grooming



Avery “Gingy” Poston/The News

also requires the Department of Workforce Development to create and publish a list of employers who will accept applicants with alternate diplomas.

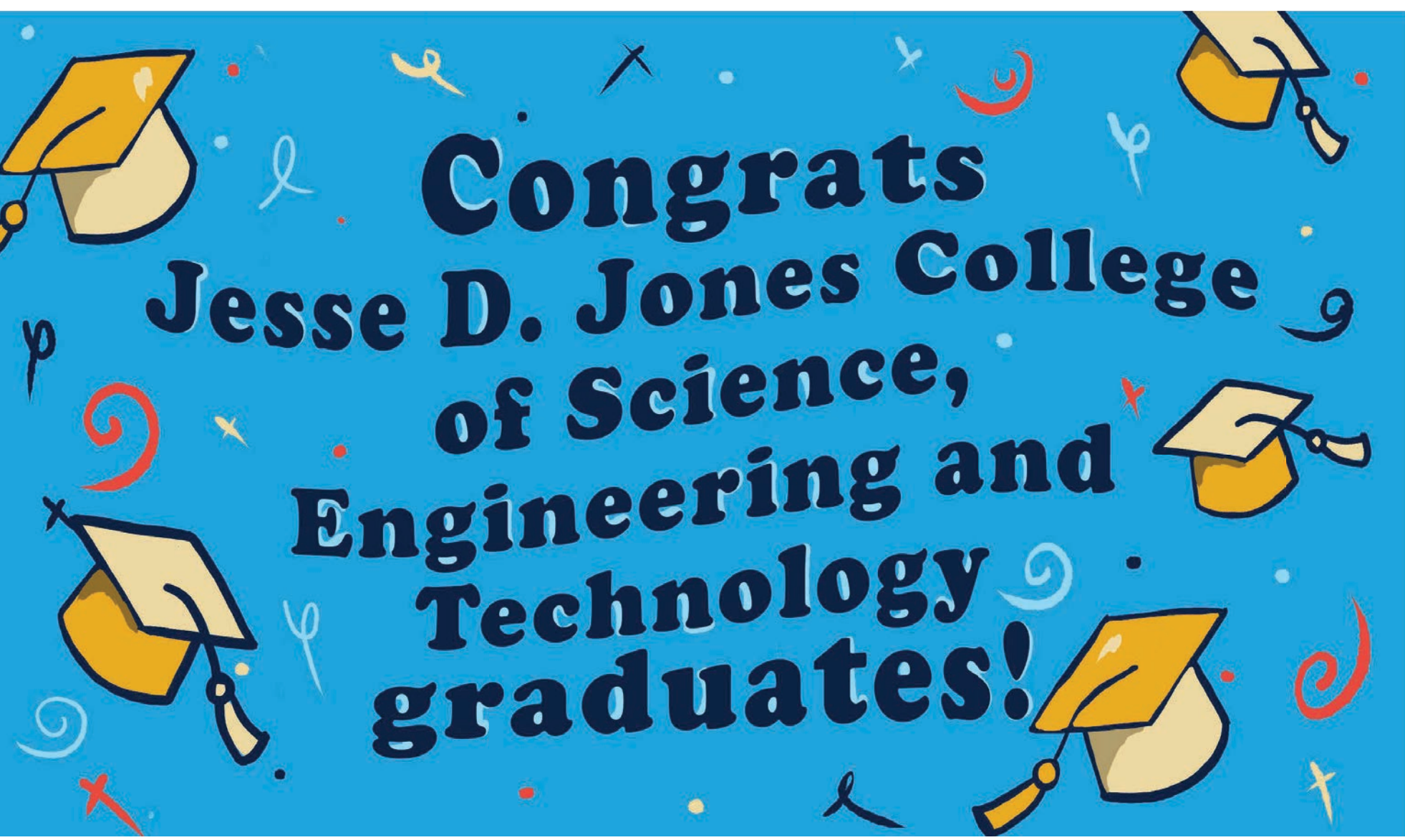
House Bill 169: Adding eating disorders to health insurance

HB 169 requires health plans to provide coverage for the diagnosis and treatment of eating disorders. It also requires that insurers not use standards like body mass index (BMI) to determine a patient’s coverage.

House Bill 4: Grooming becomes a criminal offense

HB4 establishes the grooming of a minor to be a criminal offense. According to the bill, grooming behavior is “a course of conduct directed at a minor that is intended to establish an emotional connection with a minor through manipulation, trust-building, or influence” with the intent to engage in future sexual activity or to “normalize or desensitize the minor to acts of sexual conduct.”

To learn more about these bills or other legislative actions from this session, visit the official website for the Kentucky General Assembly.



Conference champs

The Murray State women's golf team won the Missouri Valley Conference tournament on Tuesday, April 21. The Racers came back from 12-stroke deficit and claimed the title by one stroke. Sports editor Riley Staton has details on page 22. Scan the QR code to view the full photo gallery of the women's golf team's match.

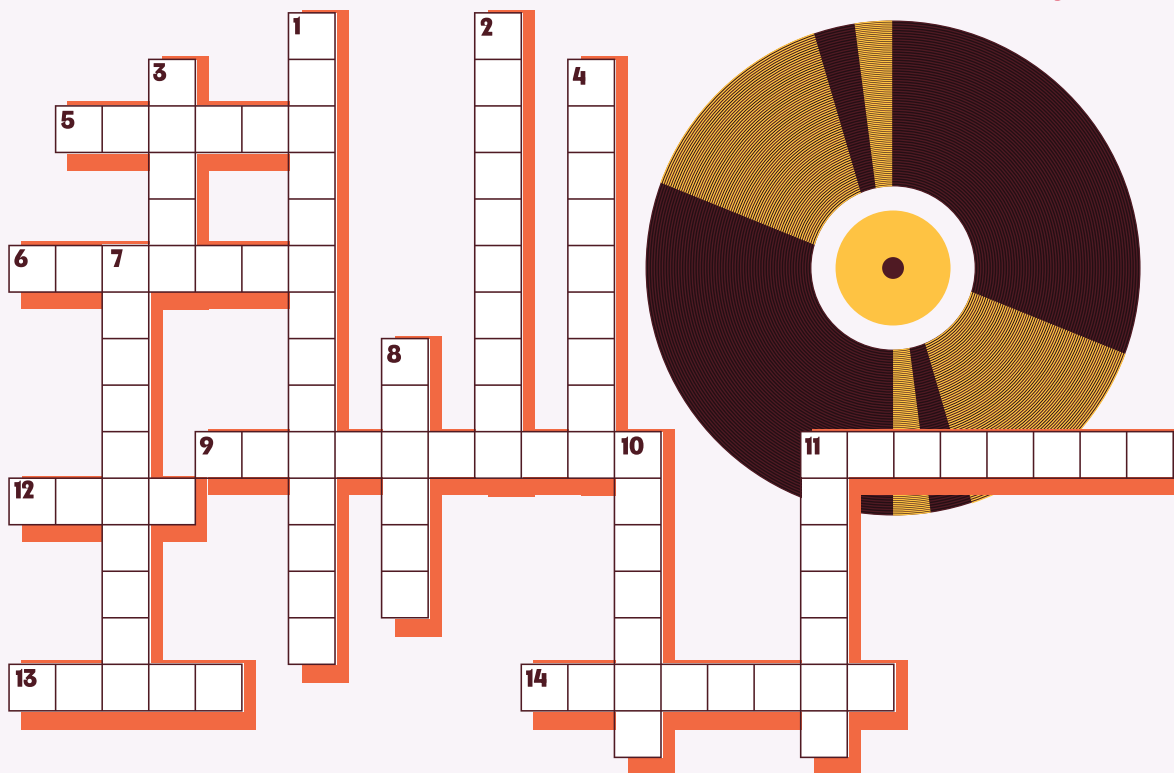
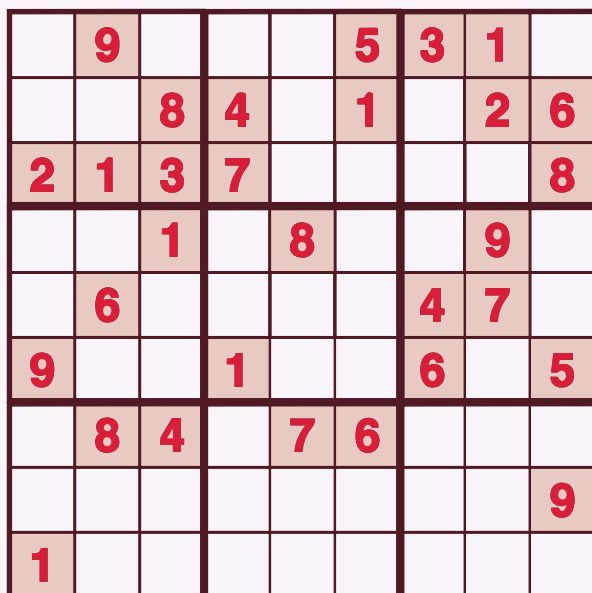
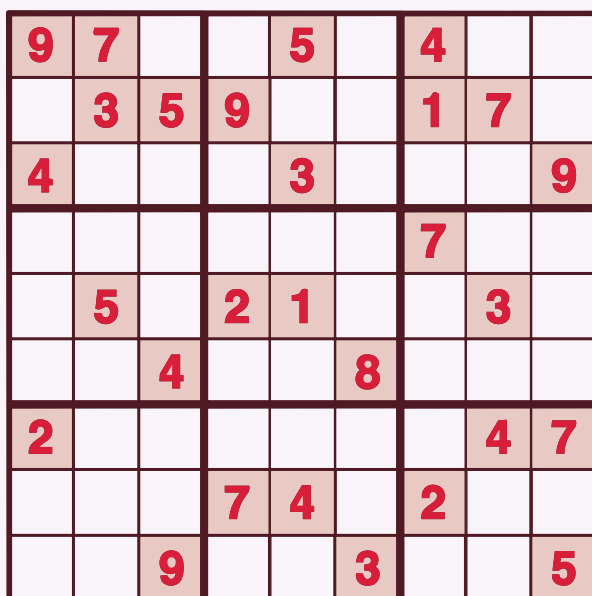


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 P H J R Q K N K D E W X T D I N W G J Y H T O J E
 H T P M M Z M K Y S J D C H C W E E G L G L L N A
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Across

- 5. A prolific artist and musical prodigy who wrote their first song at age seven and played 27 instruments on their debut album.
- 6. A pop icon who moved to NYC in 1977 with only \$35 to pursue dance before becoming one of the best-selling artists of all time.
- 9. Artist who was inducted in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame twice.
- 11. Artist associated with their controversial performance at Newport Folk Festival.
- 12. At one point this band was considered Sweden's top export and even received royalties in oil.
- 13. This band is known for their legendary performance at Live Aid, among other things.
- 14. The best-selling album of all time.

Down

- 1. This artist is largely considered an integral part of the civil rights movement and even toured with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.
- 2. One of the most influential albums that took an estimated 700 hours of work.
- 3. A dance movement that was defined by artists like The Bee Gees, The Village People and Donna Summer.
- 4. A renowned producer and musician known for their signature sunglasses.
- 7. This artist is known for their permanently dilated pupil that was caused by a school fight in their youth.
- 8. The city where Woodstock was held.
- 10. Best selling LP Vinyl from 1977.
- 11. The band that starred in the first music video aired on MTV.

Beloved music professor set to retire after 20-year career

Ainsley Beatty

Features Editor

abeatty2@murraystate.edu

Music, teaching and Murray State are a through-line in the life of professor Todd Hill. After a 20-year career in the Murray State music department, Hill is retiring from his alma mater; however, he has no plans to abandon his dedication to music in Murray.

Hill, a professor of music and the director of jazz studies, leads the MSU Jazz Orchestra, Jazz Band and the Blue and Gold Jazz Combos. He will be retiring from Murray State at the end of the spring 2026 semester. He has led an accomplished career both at the University and in his own professional music groups. Many students from the music department speak highly of Hill as a beloved member of the community who they will dearly miss.

Hill has been working in music education for almost four decades, originally as a band director in middle and high schools. After pursuing his master's in music education, he said he wanted to not only train young musicians, but also usher in the next generation of music educators.

"I came back to (Murray State) to complete my master's degree, and by the time I was finished, I had a new, deeper passion that went beyond the performance of the music and the information that went with it," Hill said. "I knew that I wanted to teach teachers how to teach."

He became a professor at the University in 2006, returning to the place he graduated from twice — and a place with deep family history.

"Murray is a 'home base' to my family," Hill said. "My great-great-grandfather was the first schoolmaster in the Crossland community, and also the Methodist songleader. Two hundred years later, and I'm still around. ... I taught for 19 years all over the country before coming home twenty years ago to establish a real jazz program here at (Murray State)."

Aside from jazz being Hill's personal favorite music genre, he said it is America's art form. He said it's something that could only happen here, and it is the greatest gift we've given to the world. As for his favorite musical artist, Hill said he always comes back to Louis Armstrong.

"(Armstrong's) is the language of jazz, and he had a tremendous effect on every kind of American popular music — as well as American classical styles, to be honest," he said. "Duke Ellington would have to be a close second because of his importance as a composer."

He has led professional music groups since 1982, including the 19-piece Todd Hill Orchestra. What started with a small music group when he was a freshman at Murray State has only flourished since.

"(The) trio grew into a quartet, and that grew into a small 'dance band,' eventually growing to an 18-member big show band," he said. "Concerts, festivals, shows, weddings and dances. We have played from down deep in Starkville, Mississippi, to Columbus, Ohio, in the past few years."

During his time at Murray State, Hill said his most memorable experience was the MSU Jazz Orchestra's selection by an international panel to perform at the Midwest International Band and Orchestra Clinic in 2014.

"(The Midwest International Band and Orchestra Clinic) is the granddaddy of all band activity at that level in the U.S.," Hill said. "Thousands of music educators from around the world attend that clinic annually in Chicago and see the finest groups from around the world perform there. To have been presented in that environment was a lifetime honor. Nothing like it for me or for the students, either."

Hill's favorite part of the job is working with young



Photo provided by Jeremy McKeel

Todd Hill conducts a performance for the University's centennial gala.

people, guiding them into their career paths and watching them succeed. He said he teaches students to never stop seeking and learning, because "that's when you start to die."

Alyssa Shrader is a senior music business major and has taken Jazz Band, Jazz Orchestra and Jazz Combo with Hill. During her freshman year, Shrader said Hill's support was the reason she stayed in the jazz program.

"I hadn't done anything jazz related in years, so I was scared to join because I didn't know if I could keep up," Shrader said. "But Dr. Hill just kept encouraging me and supporting the band in a way that always made you feel good about your progress."

“He’s one of the kindest, most genuine professors on campus, and he loves what he’s doing.”

-Ezra Burton

Shrader said the biggest thing Hill has taught her is to take chances in her music, which has strengthened her courage outside of the classroom as well.

"In jazz, sometimes you have to improvise solos or try something new that can feel scary," she said. "Personally, I'm not that much of a risk taker, so I've always shied away from that aspect of jazz, but Dr. Hill pushes you to take chances and try things in the safety of the classroom. ... Now, because I took a chance on something I was scared of, I'm moving to Illinois to start my first job."

Ezra Burton, a sophomore engineering physics major, took Hill's Honors Seminar in Music. He said the energy Hill brought to the class lightened what could have been stressful moments — particularly when Hill would sing or dance to the music during "listening" sections of tests.

"There is nothing more genuine than Todd Hill dancing or singing along to a jazz song during a test,"

Burton said. "Especially during finals week when ... you're so tired, you don't want to be there, and you have four other classes to study for, and he knows that. So he'll be more than happy to do a little jig in order to cheer you up in the morning."

Despite being in and around music his entire life, Burton said he never gave much thought to what he listened to. He said Hill's class pushed him to listen to music more intentionally.

"If I'm in a car, (I listen to) what's on the radio, and other than that, nothing, and slowly I've been growing more and more listening-wise," he said. "It was (Hill's) class specifically that made me go, 'maybe I should listen to more genres' ... and still now, every time I study, I will pick out a new jazz playlist."

Hill said when he retires this semester, without a doubt, he will miss the daily contact with students the most. He said his plans for retirement include spending more time playing and touring with his music groups and in the other positions he currently holds.

"I will remain in my post at Murray First United Methodist Church, where I serve as Chancel Choir and Traditional Worship Director," Hill said. "And I will keep teaching, but part-time, at little Bethel University down in McKenzie, Tennessee."

Hill also plans to continue volunteering at WKMS and producing his radio documentary series "The Black Cats Jump." The series was originally aired in the 1980s and celebrates the "legacy and expansive repertoire of African American big bands," according to an article by WKMS. Hill and others at WKMS have worked to restore and recreate episodes to air weekly on WKMS.

Shrader and Burton expressed similar reasons why Hill is such a beloved professor at Murray State. They shared that Hill is funny, caring, supportive and genuinely passionate about what he teaches.

"He's one of the kindest, most genuine professors on campus, and he loves what he's doing," Burton said. "You can tell that in his classes, you can tell that in his ensembles ... you can also tell it because he effectively has made his entire life jazz. He directs, he performs, he studies ... he loves what he's doing and it's infectious."

Student-run concert brings Kentucky cellist to campus

Ainsley Beatty
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Kentucky musician Ben Sollee will perform at Murray State University on April 29 in the return of a student-run concert series.

Sollee is a jazz and folk musician from Louisville, Kentucky. He is known for blurring boundaries with his musical style and for his “outside-of-the-box cello playing,” according to his website’s about page. Sollee will take the stage of Lovett Auditorium for the first Lovett Live event since 2024.

Lovett Live is a student-run concert series that brings education and entertainment to the same stage. It has been dormant since the spring of 2024, but it’s making a return this semester thanks to the Racer Live Lab course and music business students in the Music and Entertainment Industry Student Association.

JL Cinotto, a senior music business major in the Racer Live Lab course, said Lovett Live provides an up-close experience with a rising artist.

“Lovett Live was an annual event here on campus pre-COVID, but since then it’s been sparse,” Cinotto said. “We’re hoping that with an incredible artist such as Ben Sollee, we can really bring it back and continue to do Lovett Live regularly.”

Penelope Roy, a junior music business major in the Racer Live Lab course, said Sollee was chosen because of his blend of musical genres.

“We thought that the genre of his music, a folky jazz, would suit the area well,” Roy said. “Many of us (students) also saw him and some of his songs performed in the Fall of 2024 when he and the Louisville Symphony showcased some of his work. He mainly plays folk, country, jazz, and a mixture of all three at times.” Alongside the interest in his music, Cinotto said

Sollee’s Kentucky roots bring a deep connection to an audience at Murray State.

“Ben Sollee was chosen for his incredible talent and uniqueness,” he said. “Hearing jazzy folk tunes played with a guitar as accompaniment is common, however with a cello is something you don’t see too often. Along with that, Ben Sollee is a Kentucky native, which makes it extra special for us as a Kentucky institution.”

Students in the Racer Live Lab have been in charge of organizing and executing every aspect of the event – with MEISA helping out by providing printing for physical posters, creating social media content and providing volunteers for the day of the show.

“Marketing, posters, audio/visual set-ups, the set, and the booking (is) all done by students enrolled in the Racer Live Lab, or by a music business student,” Roy said. “Lovett Live has been a tradition at Murray State, and ... we are really excited to be bringing it back.”

The event’s motto is “Closer to the Music.” Audience members can expect to be seated on the stage to be close to the artist with a full acoustic setup.

Doors are set open at 6:30 p.m. on Wednesday, April 29, and the event will begin at 7 p.m. Student tickets are \$5, and general admission will be \$10. For more information, visit @msulovettlive on Instagram and Facebook.

To stream Ben Sollee’s music on Spotify, scan the QR code:



Graphic provided by JL Cinotto and Zhou Merchant



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Farewell letters from our graduating editors

A letter from the Editor in Chief Zach

Zach Simmons
Outgoing Editor in Chief
zsimmons@murraystate.edu

What an incredible four years it has been. From fulfilling a lifelong dream of working with the men's basketball team, joining The Murray State News, traveling to different parts of the country to cover the sports teams and making a slew of new friends, I truly can't thank you enough.

I will forever be grateful for the time I've spent and will miss it dearly. Who cares that I got accepted to graduate school and may be back for a few more online classes and more learning? Nothing can compare to these past four years.

To my family, thanks for supporting me on this journey that took me to three different schools to figure out what the heck I was going to do. You never once doubted me and helped me every step of the way. Not just in college, but through my 25 years of life.

To the men's basketball teams I got to work with, you welcomed me into the program with open arms and helped me

learn what it takes to work in basketball. I learned that there is more to coaching than just knowing ball. I consider you guys more than just friends, you guys are brothers.

To my News peeps, you guys made everyday so much fun. You guys have been a joy to work with and I can't wait to see how The News continues to grow and how many awards you guys will continue to bring in. I'm extremely proud of the work we've done and know that the best is yet to come.

There are plenty of people that I can't thank directly in this letter (word counts, am I right?), but I truly am so honored and blessed for all of the friends I've made and relationships I've made. Hopefully the next step for me is getting back into basketball and starting a career in college basketball. If that doesn't work, I have a journalism degree that will get me somewhere hopefully.

Take care, Murray State, I can't wait to see how the campus continues to grow and evolve. Also, student journalism matters. Don't let anyone tell you differently.

Thanks for everything.

A letter from the Associate Editor Mack

MacKenzie Rogers
Outgoing Associate Editor
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In the four years I have called Murray State home, I can say that I have become a better version of myself. I've crashed while driving my scooter in the Quad, bought a car two weeks before graduating and adopted the sweetest, fluffiest cat named "Mocha."

Running on limited hours of sleep and enough Dr Pepper to fill an Olympic-sized swimming pool, I'm ready to cross the makeshift stage in Racer Arena and walk away with my two degrees, prepared to embrace adulthood and recently acquired debt.

I've made three magazines, won a handful of journalism awards, both state and national, and discovered I liked designing the magazines more than writing them. I got a bunch of weird coworkers who I am both excited and depressed to leave behind, not only because I'm convinced the newsroom will collapse without my presence, but because they have become my chaotic team of misfits, a team that has helped make my four years at Murray become a memorable, life-changing experience. One that I would not change for anything else.

To the newsroom that has become my second home, peace out! Also, justice for the Oxford comma!



Zach Simmons and MacKenzie Rogers served as the top editors for 2025-26.

Kristopher Fister/The News

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Student news makes for an informed world

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In a world as fickle as our own, the smallest change in a suburban Illinois neighborhood could snowball into an avalanche that collapses the biggest company in New York City — no event exists in a vacuum. Staying informed on all kinds of events changes lives. Misinformation runs like water, so it's vital to have journalists who know how to navigate that sea. Those skills have to start somewhere, and they start with student journalism.

Journalism is an important part of everyone's daily life, whether you notice it or not. You walk through the kitchen and hear the "Today Show" on in the living room. You sit down with a cup of coffee and catch a glimpse of a headline in the paper someone brought in with the mail. You grab your phone and accidentally swipe over to the news while trying to unlock it. You open Facebook, X or Instagram and get flooded with the events of the day from various accounts. In this mundanity, you're interacting with journalism.

These brief interactions can do a lot. That headline you quickly read in the paper could be about the rising gas prices that week and help guide your budget. Hearing about a war on the other end of the world, while it brings no joy to anyone's day, is important to know about in case its

consequences get closer to home. Journalism keeps you socially, economically and politically informed. The upsides of learning something new always outweigh the negatives.

Learning this information in such brief interactions isn't accidental. Journalists are well aware of the fleeting nature of people's interactions with them and have developed skills to work around this. Headlines, social media captions, introductions — everything is curated to give as much accurate information in as little space as possible. With the rampant spread of misinformation, both online and offline, mastering these skills is important, but it isn't easy.

There are a lot of things to learn to do journalism properly. News uses an entirely different grammar format called the Associated Press style, with rules wildly different from traditional American English. If you notice the lack of Oxford commas throughout this column, AP style is the reason. Journalism also takes media law deadly seriously. There's little room for misleading information, copyright infringement or otherwise. These intricacies are important to learn, but the most valuable skills can't be truly taught in a classroom.

A lot of learning in journalism is trial and error. Being able to create an attention-grabbing headline, being able to filter through the fluff of a story to find the key points while keeping your story accurate and



Nyx Alverson/The News

Ainsley Beatty welcomes Lindsey Hopper into the Murray State News newsroom.

informative are journalistic skills that are learned best through experience. This is why student journalism is vital.

Student newspapers, like this one, are led by, operated by and published for students. They're a perfect way for students to get hands-on experience in journalism. The skills that go beyond the scope of the classroom are taught in student newsrooms.

I'm not a journalism student — I'm at Murray State to study computer science. I ended up at *The News* in fall 2025 because I have a friend who works here, and I chose to tag along one time on a whim. I've never taken a journalism class in my life, but I'm able to hold my own in my position here with the skills I've picked up along the way. My story exemplifies why student journalism is so important for actual journalism students: what you learn on the job is an incredibly effective teaching tool.

Journalism is the first line of defense against misinformation, but can also be its soldier. People trust

the news, and misinformation is especially dangerous when disguised as informational coverage. While not much can be done about purposeful satire content besides recognizing the difference between it and actual informative coverage, there's a real problem of misleading news from misguided journalists. Being able to quickly catch their mistakes and accidental misinformation is a skill you learn with experience.

Student journalism raises the reporters of the future. With the ever-changing state of the world, accurately disseminating information will be more important each passing day. What might not be important now could be a major world event someday, and skilled journalists are going to be the reason the world knows about it. But to get those skills, they need experience — it's everything. I urge you to continue to support us and other student news organizations, because these small newsrooms are the foundations of an informed world.

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Racer softball strives for consistency ahead of Valley tournament

Anna Knasel
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Over the span of 18 games, the Racers have a .556 winning percentage with six wins on the month.

With a league batting average of .272, the Racers have five players hitting above that. Freshman catcher Allie Waldron leads with her .342 average. Alongside having the highest batting average, Waldron also leads the team in doubles with eight.

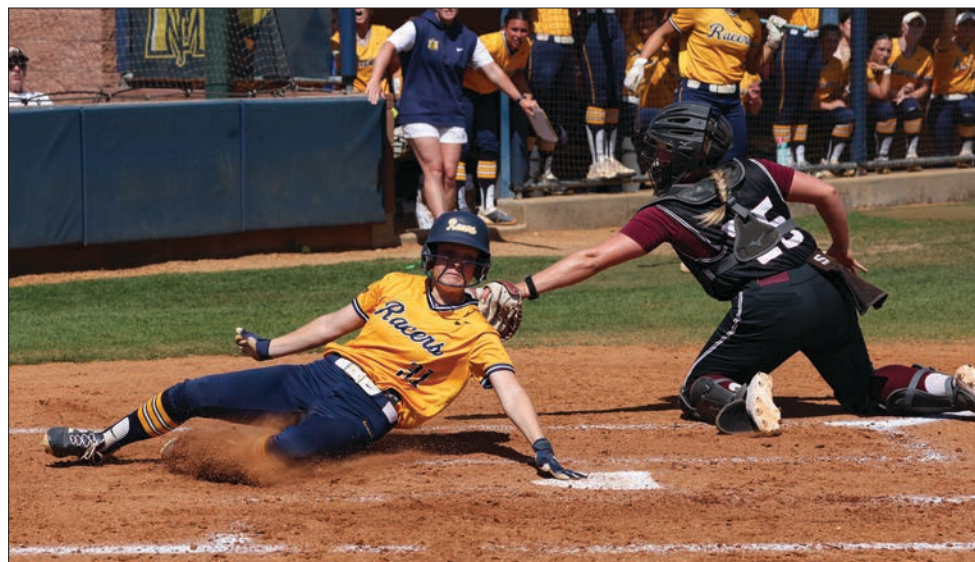
The Racers are slowly below their opponents with homeruns. Sophomore infielder Kenley Minor has the most on the team with six, and senior outfielder Bailey Broemmer is close behind with five.

The Racers' offense struggles with hitting extra base hits and have significantly less doubles, triples and home runs than their opponents. Where they excel, however, is with their runs, outscoring their opponents by 10.

Senior utility player Ava Ozment has only struck out 11 times in 35 games, leading the team with her low strikeout rate. Waldron's eye for the strike zone shines with her team-high 20 walks, and sophomore utility Katy Huels follows with 19 walks.

Despite a rougher start to the season, the Racers' pitching has come around to have a lower ERA than their opponents average. Murray State has an average ERA of 3.76 with a 19-20 record. Senior pitcher Bre Haislip has the lowest ERA of the starters with 2.75.

Although the pitching rotation doesn't have a high strikeout rate, Haislip leads



Kristopher Fister/The News

Sophomore Kynadee Warner slides into home plate against Southern Illinois.

with 74 strikeouts in her 16 starts despite giving up the most hits compared to the rest of the Racer's rotation. Even with her opponents' high contact rate, her opponent batting average is also the lowest with an average of .239.

The team now stands at 20-21 on the year, with a .463 winning percentage. The Racers also stand 11-9 in conference play this year, placing them fifth in the MVC standings. As a collective, the team has hit 22 home runs this year, with several multi-homer games this season. The team has also shown good plate discipline throughout the year, sporting a .359 on-base percentage, as well as consistency, averaging over four runs per game. Murray State now looks ahead to the final stretch of their 2025-26 season. Their next matchup will be a two-game doubleheader against Illinois State on April 24. Game one begins at 2 p.m.

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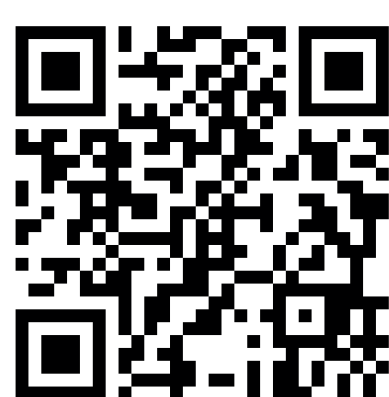
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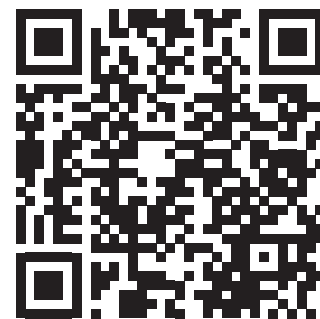
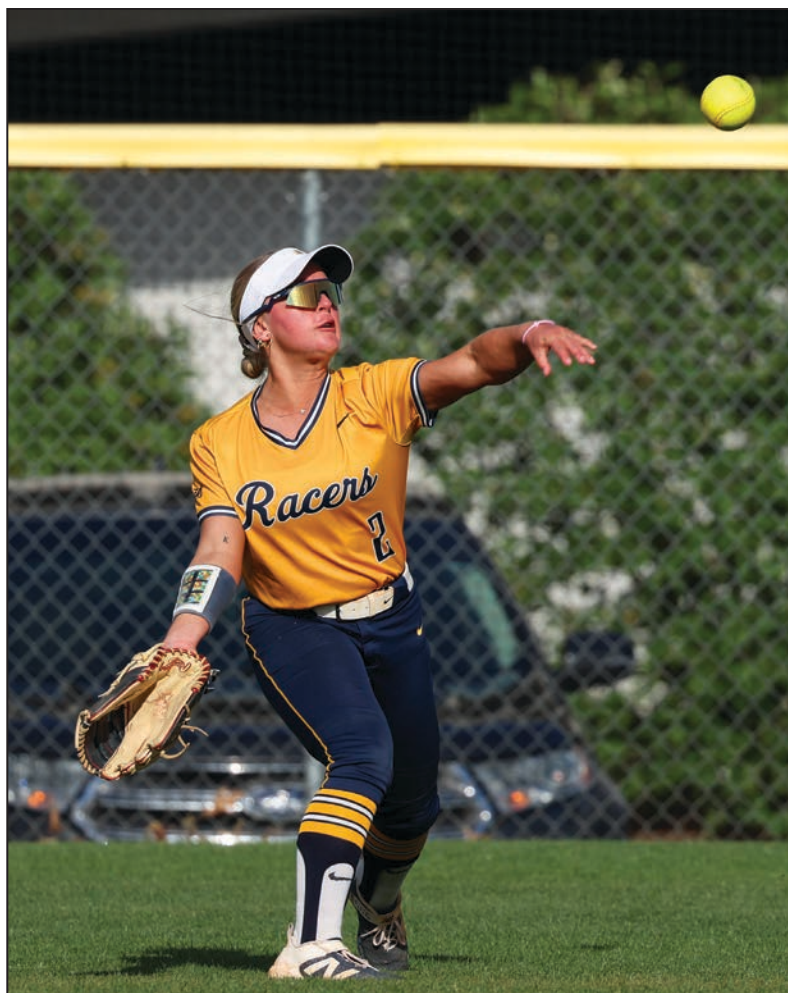
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A look at the 2026-27 transfer portal, so far

Riley Staton
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As the sun sets on the 2025-26 NCAA basketball season, Murray State gears up for next year, as multiple players from both the men's and women's teams are prepared to leave and join the team over the offseason.

An inevitable part of every season, the transfer portal has brought many hopeful young players the opportunity to show their talent on a greater stage than before. Let's take a look at some of these young hopefuls, and analyze the team's additions and subtractions ahead of the 2026-27 NCAA season.

Men's Basketball Outgoing

KJ Tenner; G-So.

Tenner saw greater opportunity in his second year, playing all 33 games for the Racers while starting in seven for the first time in his career. Tenner's numbers increased across the board following this rise in playing time; the young guard saw his offensive output double, increasing his points-per-game average to six. Tenner also showed off his range, shooting 42.6% from beyond the arc throughout the year. Tenner announced in a tweet on April 18 that he intends to join UTSA for the upcoming season. (averaged 6 points, 1.5 rebounds and 2.1 assists per game)

Tristan Ford; G-Fr.

While he did not see any playing time in his 2025-26 freshman year with the Racers, Ford still shows plenty of offensive potential. Ford built his hype through

playing at the Chicago Prep Academy, including a junior year that saw him average 21 points, eight assists and eight rebounds a game. Ford now looks to take his talents to the Atlantic 10 conference, looking to find more playing time with his new school, the University of Dayton. (no stats recorded in 2025-26)

Brock Vice; F-So.

While not an everyday starter for the Racers in 2025-26, Vice improved his numbers across the board with an expanded role in his second year. After appearing in only five games in his freshman year, Vice played in 30 this season, shooting over 60% from the field in his time on the court. Standing at 6 '10", 238 lbs., the reserve forward has the physical gifts to make an impact on most NCAA rosters, but hopes to find an expanded role on both sides of the ball with a change of scenery. Vice announced his intentions to transfer to Kansas State on Wednesday, April 8. (averaged 2 points, 1.2 rebounds and 0.2 assists per game)

Layne Taylor; G-So.

While he wasn't able to maintain the level of point production seen during his freshman year at Central Arkansas, Taylor still played a pivotal role in leading the Racers to a fourth-place conference finish in 2025-26. Taylor put up eight points per game for the team while shooting 40.8% from the field in 31 games throughout the year. He also started in 26 of these games. While Taylor has yet to replicate his 2024-25 freshman year that put him on the map nationally, he still has a lot left in the tank to give a team that's willing to take a chance on the young guard. (averaged 8 points, 2.7 rebounds and 3.2 assists per game)

Men's Basketball Incoming

Brigham Rogers; F-Jr. (previous school: Belmont)

Rogers showed a propensity for consistent inside-the-paint play, seeing a statistical increase in each of his three seasons with the Bruins. He brought his point-per-game average to above seven in his junior year with the team. Scoring efficiency also proves one of Rogers' greatest strengths, as he comes off of a 2025-26 season that saw him shoot over 70% from the field, almost 20% higher than the Racers' most efficient scorer. Starting 51 of his last 99 games with Belmont, Rogers also brings consistency to a Racer team which has seen multiple key departures. (averaged 7.1 points, 3.9 rebounds, and 1.7 assists per game)

Shon Tupuola; C-Jr. (previous school: Valparaiso)

Tupuola saw a major role increase in his junior season with Valparaiso. He was a steady presence in the paint for the Beacons, averaging over six points per game and almost six rebounds a game. Tupuola also brings rim protection to a team with a high turnover at the center position, putting up 1.3 blocks per game in the previous year. While the loss of graduating center and major team presence Fred King leaves a glaring hole in the five spot for the upcoming season, Tupuola is ready to take on the load as the team's anchor. (averaged 6.4 points, 5.8 rebounds and 0.8 assists per game)

Women's Basketball Outgoing

Jada Cook; G-So.

Cook's sophomore year saw a considerable increase in minutes played, giving her the opportunity to show her versatility on both sides of the ball. Cook averaged 2.6 points in 16.6 minutes played per game this season, along with 0.9 assists and 0.6 steals. Most unusually for a guard, Cook also averaged 2.2 rebounds per game, showing an ability to play both sides of the court. Cook fits the profile of any team looking for a two-way



Kristopher Fister/The News
Outgoing sophomore Braxcynn Baker warms up before the Racers' NCAA Tournament game against Maryland.

guard. (averaged 2.6 points, 2.2 rebounds and 0.9 assists per game)

Gabby Spink; G-Fr.

While Spink did not see the court much for the Racers in her rookie season, with only four appearances throughout the year, she still holds lots of potential as an offensive facilitator. Spink holds the single-season points record for Gibson Southern High School, as well as both the career and single-season assists records. Spink has yet to show her offensive potential on a consistent basis at the collegiate level, however, her scoring and play making abilities are sure to have an impact for St. Louis University, her next team, going forward. (averaged one point, 0.2 rebounds and no assists per game)

Braxcynn Baker; G-So.

While Baker saw an increase in minutes played in 2026-27, her scoring output did not. Baker put up 4.3 points and 2.2 rebounds per game in 2025-26, however, she saw both her field goal and three-point percentages decline. Despite these offensive struggles, Baker still holds offensive potential as a scoring threat for a school looking to take a chance on an all-around guard. (averaged 4.3 points, 2.2 rebounds and 0.5 assists per game)



Read the full story at [TheNews.org](https://www.thenews.org)



Kristopher Fister/The News
Outgoing sophomore guard KJ Tenner shoots a layup over incoming Racer Brigham Rogers in a game last year.

Women's golf erases deficit to claim conference crown

Riley Staton

Sports Editor

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The Murray State women's golf team claimed their first Missouri Valley Conference championship at TPC Deere Run in Silvis, Illinois during April 19-21. The Racers fired a 304+318+301=923 across 54 holes. The team secured its championship in round three, overcoming their 12-stroke deficit to take the championship while pacing runner-up Bradley by a stroke.

Sophomore Elin Tynan and junior Ella Scherer gave the team their best performances of the tournament, each tying for fifth place out of all golfers, with a 15-over-par on the tournament.

Scherer's best performance came in the first round, where she finished with a one-over-par 73. Tynan also golfed her best in the opening round, hitting a three-over-par 75.

Sophomore Tina Von Arx finished 14th overall with a 19-over-par for the tournament. Von Arx's best performance came in round two, with a four-over-par 76.

Junior Patti Patterson tied Von Arx, also placing 14th with a 19-over-par for the week.

Patterson's best performance came in the final round, hitting a four-over-par

76. Junior Katherine Weir rounded out Murray State's top 20 finishers, tying for 17th with an even 72.

This is Murray State's first MVC championship since their addition to the conference in 2022, as well as its first conference championship since their 2019 Ohio Valley Conference win. This brings the Racers' conference championship total to 13. This is head coach Philip Nelson's first conference title in four years with the team.

The team now prepares to continue this success further into the NCAA playoffs. Their next stop will be the NCAA regional tournaments, beginning on May 11.

Kristopher Fister/The News
Sophomore Tina Von Arx celebrates a shot.



Scan the QR code for the full MVC Women's Golf tournament scoreboard.



Be Bold For Good!

Student Philanthropy Campaign



Be Bold for Good is our Murray State University student giving campaign that unites our Racer community to support student success. All gifts support the Racers Helping Racers food pantry, a place for students in need to receive assistance, no questions asked and completely confidential.

Join the campaign with a gift of just \$20.26! You will receive a special Be Bold for Good campaign pin to wear around campus, to special events, and even to proudly display on your commencement gown! Make a gift and show your support for our student family!

Every gift, no matter how small, makes a difference.



Be on the lookout for Office of Development Staff at different upcoming events on campus to make your difference!

Upcoming Home Baseball Games

April 28- Racers vs. Memphis, 4 p.m.

May 5- Racers vs. UT Martin, Noon

May 8- Racers vs. Indiana State, 5 p.m.

May 9- Racers vs. Indiana State, 5 p.m.

May 10- Racers vs. Indiana State, 1 p.m.

May 12- Racers vs. North Alabama, 3 p.m.

May 20- Missouri Valley Conference Tournament



Mackenzie Rogers/The News



Thrift with us during our extended hours! Proceeds support local charities HopeCalloway and Need Line. 972 Chestnut Street, Murray

Monday: Closed

Tuesday: 11 - 6

Wednesday: 11 - 6

Thursday: 11 - 6

Friday: 11 - 6

Saturday: 11 - 5

Sunday: Closed

THANK YOU TO OUR ADS CLUB SENIORS!

JADA POINDEXTER

NATALIE GARDNER

JT HANDLEY

WE APPRECIATE YOU!
GOOD LUCK ON GRADUATION!



Kristopher, you have charted your path and we know you will continue your success! Pictures are definitely worth a thousand words and your pictures are stunning. We love you! Your Family

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