The Division of Student Affairs at Mississippi State University recognizes two exemplary student employees each month. One student from this group is crowned Student of the Year and receives a plaque and cash prize.

“Grace is our most experienced student worker and has been a great addition to our team. She has been working with us on and off for two years and is a mentor and trainer for our newly hired student workers. Along with being a great worker and student, Grace recently volunteered with her church and, during her fall break, provided recovery support to families affected by Hurricane Ian. Grace is an Air Force dependent utilizing the Post 9/11 G.I. Bill® to major in civil engineering with a concentration in construction. During the time Grace has worked at the G.V. “Sonny” Montgomery Center for America’s Veterans, she has not only served the veteran and military-connected student population with exemplary customer service but also held two part-time jobs while completing her academics. Grace has been very dependable and a mentor to new VA work-study students, assisting with new student worker training and development. In addition to volunteering for numerous church mission trips, during summer 2023, she participated in a construction intern program in Key West, Florida.”

Nomination by Brian Locke, former director, and Doug Robinson, program coordinator.
At Mississippi State University, students are driven by a desire to learn, lead, explore and serve. These qualities inspire them to serve the community, lead the campus and impact the university. In the hearts and actions of these students lies the embodiment of the Spirit of State.

MSU faculty, staff and students annually nominate students who personify the Spirit of State. These students come from all classifications, backgrounds and majors. What makes Spirit of State unique is that the only criterion for the honor is a demonstration of exemplary university values both in and out of the classroom.

Twenty-four students received the Spirit of State for the 2022-23 academic year. The 18th class of recipients was the most diverse yet, representing 29 majors, four countries and five states.

MSU’s Division of Student Affairs honors Spirit of State recipients with a ceremony that includes friends and family. Jason Barrett, President of the Robert Holland Faculty Senate and Spirit of State Selection Committee Member, presents the awards with assistance from MSU President Mark E. Keenum and Vice President for Student Affairs Regina Young Hyatt.

Past Spirit of State recipients received invitations to the ceremony and congratulated the winners. Ann Olivia Radicioni and Amoni Washington, 2021-22 Spirit of State recipients, welcomed attendees and recognized past recipients in attendance.

The Spirit of State encapsulates the essence of MSU and serves as a way to recognize students committed to taking care of what matters.

**2022-2023 RECIPIENTS**

- John William Ables, Chemical Engineering
- Laura Alvarez Rios, Psychology
- Michael Arowolo, Aerospace Engineering
- Jack Camilleri, Finance & Marketing
- Kayla Carter, Microbiology
- Yasmine Davis, Geoscience, Environmental Science
- Reese Dunne, Mechanical Engineering
- Alex Gibbs, Biochemistry
- Hannah Gregory, Secondary Education, Chemistry
- Kennedy Guest, Accounting
- Anna Grace Hand, Agricultural Education, Leadership and Communication
- Brittney Harkins, Elementary Education
- Rucell Harris, Business Administration
- Will Jones, Biochemistry & Molecular Biology
- Luke Losordo, Chemical Engineering
- Wilson Martinez Diaz, Aerospace Engineering & Political Science
- Caleb Meadows, Biochemistry
- Ashlynn Meixsell, Biochemistry & Molecular Biology
- Shivangi Nakoom, Political Science & Business Administration
- Lauryn Polito, Horticulture
- Sarah Rendon, Communication
- Mia Robertson, Political Science & Philosophy
- Madigan Stevens, Biochemistry
- Muneebah Umar, Biological Sciences
When graphics and videos promoting Mississippi State University Division of Student Affairs events come across your social media feeds, students in the Division’s Marketing and Communication department most likely made them.

The department, consisting of two full-time employees, two graduate assistants and six undergraduate students, manages over 500 marketing requests annually, hosts significant campus events, such as the Spirit of State Awards and the Out of State Student Social, and conducts various marketing campaigns.

Over the past two years, the team has increased the Division’s social media reach 37% on Instagram and 99% on Facebook. In addition to supporting the marketing and communication efforts of Student Affairs’ 20-plus departments, Marketing and Communication also oversees the production of Maroon Traditions and assists in other areas such as Bully’s Pantry, Bulldog Bash, Cowbell Well, digital signage and student-focused special campaigns for the university.

Marketing and Communication creates high-quality products and services while upholding the university’s brand standards. Director Brock Turnipseed and Assistant Director Carson Brantley oversee the team, helping the students grow creatively and professionally and providing access to the Adobe Creative Suite, high-quality cameras, microphones and more.

These experiences bolster students’ résumés and portfolios and equip them with the skills that give them a competitive advantage when launching their careers.

The Marketing and Communication department’s professional culture encourages creativity and fosters the growth of graphic designers, photographers, videographers and social media assistants.

Special projects, varying from social media campaigns for mental health awareness to department rebrands, allow students to showcase their personalities and make a difference on campus. Student workers have helped promote on-campus student job opportunities, highlight unique Student Affairs services, create a Bully’s Pantry recipe book and rebrand University Recreation.

Marketing and Communication strives to contribute positively to the university’s aesthetics behind a positive and productive work environment that encourages creativity and provides students access to professional tools and resources.
Internal and external communication across 20-plus departments under the Mississippi State University Division of Student Affairs umbrella can be challenging if not done effectively and efficiently.

With several departments utilizing graduate assistants in their marketing and communication efforts, the Division’s Marketing and Communication department launched a marketing cohort with graduate assistants from Marketing and Communication; Access, Diversity and Inclusion; University Recreation; Student Leadership and Community Engagement; and the Center for America’s Veterans. This cohort has helped provide consistency with events, videos, campaigns and other marketing efforts throughout the Division. In May 2022, the cohort attended a marketing boot camp led by former Director of Marketing and Communication Katie Corban and Assistant Director Carson Brantley.

The cohort allowed the graduate assistants to get to know one another, ask questions and gain a sense of understanding of Student Affairs as a whole. They continued to meet during the 2022-2023 academic year to discuss ways of maintaining the MSU brand identity.

“Our marketing graduate assistants are vital to so many moving parts within the Division of Student Affairs and in our departments. Many of them are crafting the image that both current students, faculty and staff and incoming students see from our areas,” says Brantley. “Having the opportunity to lead these students in marketing efforts while they are learning so much in the classroom is rewarding and exciting. Our students are so talented, and I know this will be a fruitful effort to work with these students for years to come.”

The cohort has improved cross-departmental communication and collaboration, resulting in a more cohesive marketing strategy that caters to the diverse needs of students.
Confidential support from a licensed counselor is now a click away for Mississippi State students. In September 2022, Mississippi State University launched the My Student Support Program (My SSP) mental health resource app. The app rebranded to Telus Health in August 2023. A product of Lifeworks, a company that helps support the well-being of people through technology, Telus Health is free to download for students. They can log on 24 hours a day, seven days a week, to talk with licensed counselors through a phone call or online chat. As of 2023, over 2,500 Mississippi State students downloaded the app, and an estimated 500 students had spoken with a counselor.

Mississippi State encourages students on all campuses and online to download the app. The Division of Student Affairs collaborated with MSU Orientation Leaders to inform incoming students about the app’s benefits.

Students can download the Telus Health app in the Apple and Google Play stores.

The Division of Student Affairs is excited to offer MSU students access to a licensed counselor from the convenience of their mobile device.

Overdose prevention awareness has been a focus of multiple Health Promotion and Wellness (HPW) activities and programs.

HPW promotes education awareness and provides student resources during International Overdose Awareness Day. Students Tackling Overdose Prevention Ambassadors offer different programs and events to support their fellow MSU students in resisting opioid use. HPW also offers Naloxone and NARCAN training twice monthly for students, faculty and staff through the Mississippi Department of Health. NARCAN has also been distributed to residence halls, as well as fraternity and sorority houses.

For National Drug and Alcohol Facts Week, HPW informs students on the impacts and consequences of drugs and alcohol.

HPW’s expansion of awareness offerings continues its mission of increasing prevention education and engagement at MSU.
BE THE LIGHT

HPW sought to shine a brighter light on suicide awareness and the resources available to support students by expanding its Be The Light suicide awareness and prevention program to encompass a month-long campaign.

For over five years, HPW has placed 1,100 backpacks on the Drill Field to represent the estimated number of college students who die each year from suicide. In 2022, HPW partnered with MSU’s Student Counseling Services and Division of Access, Diversity and Inclusion’s Student Support and Outreach to host multiple events throughout September’s National Suicide Prevention Month.

The departments shared weekly positive affirmations across campus during Be Well Wednesday. They also hosted a Health and Resources Fair for students to learn about the eight dimensions of wellness and a Be The Light walk around Chadwick Lake.

NEW DIETITIAN: SUZANNE BOWEN

A new face joined HPW in August 2022. Suzanne Bowen brings a passion for promoting healthy lifestyles and guiding students on their wellness journeys to her role as HPW’s dietitian.

For Bowen, the position combines many areas she enjoys.

“I love working with college students and being part of their journey,” Bowen said. “I love encouraging them to make positive choices when it comes to their eating and health.”

In her role, Bowen offers free nutrition counseling for students. Students can schedule an appointment with her through the Longest Student Health Center, and they can see her as many times as necessary.

Bowen assists with meal planning and offers education about diets for medical conditions such as diabetes, polycystic ovary syndrome and hyperlipidemia. She also provides nutrition counseling to support students struggling with eating disorders.
The Egg Bowl Run has become an annual fall tradition at Mississippi State. The run joins the Army ROTC programs from MSU and Ole Miss to deliver the game ball nearly 100 miles to its final destination—the host site for that year’s Battle for the Golden Egg. 2022 marked the 10th run. MSU cadets began the trek in Starkville and carried the ball 60 miles north to Calhoun City. The Ole Miss Magnolia Battalion carried it the remaining 40 miles to Oxford.

Brian Locke, former Center for America’s Veterans director, said he hopes the tradition continues since it unites fans of the in-state rivalry in supporting those who serve our country.

“It’s the one event that brings both sides together on equal footing,” Locke said. “Even though there’s a competition on the football field, when it comes to military service, regardless of where you come from, it’s a symbol of coming together. That’s what the cadets do, and then they all know they have each other’s backs.”

The Division of Student Affairs welcomed the Army and Air Force ROTC programs into the Division in fall 2023.
MSU also took off running in the spring to support local veterans. In April, University Recreation held the MSU Veterans 5K and 10K runs as a fundraiser for MSU’s Student Veterans Association. Participants of all ages ran through North Farm, receiving encouraging cheers from MSU students and the Starkville community along the way. The Student Veterans Association, a student-led organization comprised of veterans, service members, dependents, survivors and other military supporters, used funds from the event to support the organization’s scholarship program and travel to the national convention.
As our students make their way back to campus each fall, they are welcomed with events, activities and programs to help them get acclimated to campus, discover new ways to get involved and forge connections before the academics begin. We lovingly refer to this time of the semester as “Dawg Days” and cherish this time with our students.
Mississippi State University Dining Services has utilized technology to deliver students, faculty and staff quicker, more convenient access to quality meals.

Among these innovations is the launch of Maroon Markets, 24-hour self-checkout dining locations accessible with an MSU ID.

Maroon Markets currently operate in the Wise Center and Griffis Hall. MSU plans to open more Maroon Market locations in the future, including the renovation of other P.O.D. Markets, to provide a swift solution for those needing an on-the-go meal, late-night snack or last-minute necessity.

When students, faculty and staff need a quick snack between classes or meetings, these areas are the place to visit. The Maroon Markets have more than just snacks. Comet Fish Sushi can be picked up for a convenient lunch on the go, along with sandwiches, wraps, and more.

For students needing essential items and wanting to stay on campus, the markets also offer various consumer products, such as over-the-counter medications.
Mississippi State University allowed Isaiah Mills to discover his direction, purpose and community.

Mills came to MSU after serving in the Mississippi National Guard and sought ways to get connected on campus. That National Guard experience opened the door for him to become president of MSU’s Student Veterans Association. He helped rebuild the SVA after the COVID-19 pandemic, establishing a network of supports and resources for military-affiliated students.

The Clinton native also found a brotherhood in Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity. Mills credits both organizations for giving him outlets to connect with peers and serve the MSU and Starkville communities. He encourages Bulldogs to get involved in campus organizations, network and take advantage of internship opportunities that can open doors to career opportunities.

“Get to know people and don’t be afraid to get out of your shell and communicate and network,” Mills said. “That’s how you’ll find those like-minded individuals who share your same ideals and interests.”
As Mississippi State University Student Association President for the 2023-24 academic year, Ellie Herndon desires to see more students embrace campus involvement opportunities.

The Gulfport native’s involvement with the SA began her freshman year, when she worked with freshman groups. Over the next few years, her roots grew deeper within the organization and the MSU community.

Herndon served on cabinet and earned the title of SA treasurer, allowing her to become familiar with the appropriations process. That experience helped her realize that there are many campus organizations and groups that are not as in touch with the SA as they need to be. Herndon feels students’ thoughts concerning campus involvement shifted after the COVID-19 pandemic.

“I want students to take advantage of the amazing opportunities the university offers,” Herndon said. “As Student Association president, I want to grow the accessibility.”

BLAINE SMITH

Blaine Smith, a graduate assistant in the Office of Fraternity and Sorority Life, planned to work in sports management after graduating from the University of Memphis. But during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Nashville, Tennessee, native began questioning his future career.

Smith’s involvement in his fraternity allowed him to spend time in the Office of Fraternity and Sorority Life and get a taste of student affairs and higher education. An MSU alumnus encouraged him to explore MSU’s Student Affairs and Higher Educational Leadership program.

“I came for a visit and fell in love with MSU,” Smith said.

He said he likes how the office promotes relationship-building with students.

“We have two big tables in the center of the room that the students will stop by to ask questions, get advice or hang out,” Smith said. “I love being able to catch up with the students and lead or encourage them in whatever they’re doing at that time.”
EMMIE PERKINS

After being crowned Miss MSU in 2021, Hattiesburg native Emmie Perkins went on to win the title of Miss Mississippi 2022. While reflecting on the transition from Miss MSU to Miss Mississippi, Perkins says her MSU experiences were essential to her preparation.

Being Miss MSU allowed her the opportunity to represent over 20,000 students and revealed the impact she could make in the role. Perkins acknowledged the outpouring of love she received from the MSU community as she competed for Miss Mississippi, saying there was no better name to wear while competing for the title.

“I developed this extreme sense of pride in my university and the community that helped me get to this point,” Perkins said.

In addition to the community encouragement poured into her, Perkins said her academics played a valuable role in her experiences.

MAE BOGRAN

Mae Bogran, the 2022-2023 New Maroon Camp director, found her freshman year to be less traditional than those before her due to the changes brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Despite the challenges, the Houston, Texas, native looks back on her first year at MSU with a laugh.

“You can be so down in the dumps, but just around the corner is exactly what you need,” she said.

For Bogran, around the corner was New Maroon Camp. She was first selected to the staff, and during that time, she fell in love with the organization and the people she met.

Bogran says the New Maroon Camp experience is unique because you get to see not only the new freshman grow but also the counselors and staff. For her, one of the most rewarding aspects of the experience is people of many different backgrounds coming together to help each other make the most of their time at MSU.
Every August in the heart of Mississippi State and Starkville, teams of Mississippi State students, faculty, staff and community members unite to extend hands of service as part of Service Dawgs Day, an event hosted by the Office of Student Leadership and Community Engagement’s Maroon Volunteer Center.

Service Dawgs Day is specifically crafted for freshman and transfer students to get involved and acclimated to MSU when they arrive in August. Service Dawgs Day has grown since its inception, with 2022’s 14th edition hosting over 300 volunteers.

The MVC has partnerships with numerous nonprofit and local organizations, allowing volunteers to serve through mentoring, tutoring, food packaging and delivering, assisting with equestrian therapy and animal shelter tasks, home building, and more. The partnerships benefit from the volunteers, who gain life and community service lessons they can use following their time at MSU.

“It is a beautiful event. It’s something nice where students get to come together and decide ‘Hey, we’re going to use our power to influence the betterment of our community.’” Hampton said. “It is a beautiful thing to see.”

SLCE most recently added Pledge to Service at State (PSS) as a way for students involved in the MVC and Service Dawgs Day to meet goals and see their growth during their involvement.

Service Dawgs Day serves as a testament to the power of community, compassion and the lasting change possible when the MSU and Starkville communities unite for a common goal.
University Recreation has formulated a vision for what future health and fitness offerings could look like at Mississippi State University.

One aspect of that vision includes plans to remodel the Joe Frank Sanderson Center to offer new and improved ways to promote and encourage healthy lifestyles for the campus community.

Starting last year, MSU students voted to raise the student activity fee to $25. The fee increase will help support the Sanderson Center remodel.

“Our main goals are to modernize the facility and provide additional space for fitness,” Patrik Nordin, director of University Recreation, said. “Designs are already being made for what we want to do. If funding is available, we would like to take the upstairs racquetball courts, remove the wall separating them and create an open fitness space.”

Extra fitness space has been the top request from students, so Nordin hopes the refresh will encourage more students to use the center’s amenities and open doors for additional recreational opportunities in the future.
A new state-of-the-art residence hall and upgrades to current halls sit at the forefront of a bright future for housing at Mississippi State University.

According to Housing and Residence Life Executive Director Dei Allard, the new residence hall—Azalea Hall—opens to students in fall 2025 in the green space between Ruby Hall and Old Main Academic Center.

Allard added the residence hall will house around 400 students, including Luckyday Scholars, as well as a new dining hall and a Maroon Market.

Students can also look forward to interior updates in some of the current residence halls on campus. Housing and Residence Life plans to breathe “new life” into halls like Cresswell and Hathorn by replacing some of the carpet, lighting and furnishings. Renovations to Critz, McKee and Sessums are also scheduled in the near future.

These updates and additions will further the goal of making MSU’s on-campus residence halls feel even more like a home away from home.
STUDENT AFFAIRS
GENERAL FUND
The Division of Student Affairs’ central focus is student success and engagement. Donations to the Division’s general fund contribute to the programs and services that help students achieve academic success, personal growth and career goals.

NPHC PLAZA
The National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC) represents historically Black Greek-letter organizations and is comprised of the “Divine Nine.” With the support of the MSU community, the NPHC is raising funds to construct the NPHC Plaza, a designated on-campus space for students, alumni and the community to gather and celebrate the NPHC community’s contributions to the university.

MAROON & WHITE
COMPLETION SCHOLARSHIPS
Contributions to the Maroon and White Completion Scholarships will provide full-time, pell-eligible students who have completed 75% or more of their program of study a $1,000 scholarship, awarded one time in the student’s academic career.

NEW MAROON CAMP
New Maroon Camp is a week-long student-led retreat that prepares first-year students for the transition to Mississippi State University. Students learn about MSU’s campus, history and traditions; meet other new students; and discover opportunities to get involved.
Mississippi State University sought to simplify the course material purchasing process for students and faculty in 2022 with the launch of Bulldog Bundle.

Introduced initially as First Day by Course for a biology course in spring 2021, the program expanded campus-wide and rebranded as Bulldog Bundle in fall 2022 to offer all undergraduate students access to required textbooks, lab manuals, access codes and electronic book versions in one convenient bundle.

“We wanted all students to start on the same level when classes begin,” Chelsea Cockburn, former general manager for Barnes & Noble at MSU, said of the program’s vision.

According to Cockburn, students previously spent an average of $600 per semester on course materials. Barnes & Noble and MSU came up with a $20 per credit hour fee that is integrated into students’ tuition, meaning a student taking 12 credit hours would pay $240 for all of their required course materials.

While Bulldog Bundle benefits students, it also empowers MSU faculty.

“Our professors can have confidence that Barnes & Noble will have book inventory for all students if they adopt their materials by the deadline,” Cheryl Bowen, director of budget and planning for MSU’s Division of Student Affairs, said. “They can be assured that students will have their textbooks as classes begin.”

Bowen also noted that Bulldog Bundle does not limit what professors can adopt as required course materials.

“If an English professor feels six novels and a digital access code are needed, it doesn’t cost the students any extra,” Bowen said. “Before, professors thought very carefully about whether they wanted their students to buy that many books. [Bulldog Bundle] leaves them with a lot of freedom to do what’s right for education.”

Bulldog Bundle offers students a customized approach to course materials, allowing them to opt-out if the program doesn’t align with their needs.

“For students enrolled in courses that don’t require books, opting out might be the most cost-effective option,” Cockburn said.
Mississippi State’s beautiful campus continues to grow and change from semester to semester. To highlight many of these changes, the Division of Student Affairs took to social media to showcase to students, faculty, staff and campus visitors aspects that were “New to MSU.” Some of these new features include bike and scooter racks, additional seating around the Drill Field and Union, a new parking garage, the life-size Hail State sign and more!
NEW MAROON CAMP GROWTH

BY CANDICE BRUCE

Being a first-year student on a university campus can be overwhelming. Mississippi State University’s New Maroon Camp (NMC) strives to ease the transition process by offering networking opportunities and the chance to learn more about MSU before the start of a new academic year.

Before sharing my NMC experience, let me give you a glimpse into the camp’s history.

The idea for NMC originated in 2012 when a collection of staff and faculty wanted MSU to have its own student-led freshman experience camp. The goal of NMC was to give new students a head start to college life with the hopes of improving student retention.

Modeled after Texas A&M’s Fish Camp, NMC places campers into five family groups, with each group name representing a piece of MSU history. The five original family groups were Ptolemy, Tatonka, Collegians, Cadets and Maroons. To meet the growing enrollment and popularity of the camp while maintaining the close-knit family dynamic, a sixth family group, Reveille, was created in 2018.

Family groups are subdivided into even smaller groups called pods, each having two counselors. Each counselor has a squad of 10-20 students within each pod for a more personal experience.

NMC started in 2014 with 180 campers at Twin Lakes Camp and Conference Center in Florence. In less than a decade, the organization has garnered the respect of MSU students and staff and has grown to 1,750 campers most recently.

NMC grew so much in the first two years that a move to the MSU campus became necessary.

NMC was first held at MSU in 2016 and has remained there since. This change allowed students to adjust to campus life without the pressure of attending classes.

My NMC experience in 2019 played an essential role in helping me adjust to MSU. From the moment I set foot inside Humphrey Coliseum for the opening ceremonies, I knew MSU was where I belonged. My NMC experience forged many friendships and connections that carried me through my freshman year and led to me being a counselor for two years. I even served on the executive staff as a counselor trainer in 2021 and 2022. Taking that first step and registering for NMC allowed me to develop leadership experience in college. And I am not the only one NMC has impacted.

In NMC’s brief history, it has shaped the lives of many students. A NMC staff position is coveted, and staffers are held to a higher standard. NMC helps lead to student success at MSU, as many campus student leaders have connections to NMC in some fashion.

While this camp plays a vital role in crafting student leaders, it also provides an experience that makes students want to finish their time at MSU with a diploma in hand.
According to national data, approximately 30% of college students require support for food and experience essential necessities insecurity. Mississippi State sought to meet the needs of its students struggling with food insecurity and other financial difficulties by launching Bully’s Pantry, Block by Block and Maroon Meals.

The Division of Student Affairs and Student Association opened Bully’s Pantry to assist students struggling with food insecurity and other financial difficulties by offering nutritious food, toiletries, school supplies and other essentials.

Former Student Association President Mayah Emerson initiated the idea of Bully’s Pantry in 2018. Thanks to valuable assistance from Vice President of Student Affairs Regina Hyatt and many dedicated staff and administrators, the pantry opened in 2020 as Bully’s Closet and Pantry at 120 Morgan Avenue.

In addition to food and other essentials, the pantry also started out offering clothing to assist students who needed access to professional clothes for job interviews. Due to an overwhelming amount of donated clothes, the organization rebranded as Bully’s Pantry in 2023 to focus solely on tackling food insecurity on campus.

Block by Block, a partnership between Aramark, MSU’s dining services provider, the Dean of Students Office and the Student Association, provides short-term assistance by allocating meals to students in need. Students with a valid meal plan can donate up to three meal blocks per semester. Those students who qualify for the Block by Block program have five block meals loaded onto their student ID to use at Perry Cafeteria and Fresh Food Company.

Maroon Meals notifies students via email when free food is available on campus. The program has been an important addition to campus, with an average of 200 MSU students benefiting from Maroon Meals annually.

These initiatives are just another example of how MSU strives to meet students’ essential needs when they need support the most, enabling them to concentrate on their primary goal—obtaining their MSU degree.
The Colvard Student Union has stood in the heart of Mississippi State University’s campus since 1964. Built under the leadership of Dr. Dean W. Colvard, many consider it the ideal place to experience the close-knit community that is the Bulldog family.

The facility has undergone significant changes over the years, yet the purpose remains the same: to offer students a place to relax, study and form community in an atmosphere that feels like home.

“It tries to give people who live on campus or commute a place to come between classes, grab food, find a place to sit and meet with friends, study and more,” Colvard Student Union Executive Director Raymond Brooks said. “We need more of that.”

The 110,000-square-foot space is entirely dedicated to meeting the needs of MSU students. As the university’s student population increases, the Union has transformed to ensure students have the amenities necessary for a remarkable college experience.

The Union has undergone numerous interior and exterior changes in the past year, and plans are continuing to ensure the beloved space’s ongoing growth and improvement.

The Union’s outdoor plaza area added Adirondack chairs, tables and umbrellas to provide comfortable spaces for students to enjoy the beauty of campus while studying and hanging out with friends between classes.

Inside, renovations in the Holmes Cultural Diversity Center created additional office space for Vice President for Access, Diversity and Inclusion Ra’Sheda Forbes. The consolidation of reception areas in the Office of Fraternity and Sorority Life and Center for Student Activities added more office space and improved traffic flow.

Brooks calls the Union MSU’s living room, and the university will continue making it a place where all are welcome and Bulldogs are served for generations to come.
KYLIE FORRESTER
Director, Center for Student Activities

Kylie Forrester had mentors pour into her and encourage her to pursue a path in student affairs. Now, she is helping carve paths for current Bulldogs as the Center for Student Activities director, a role she began in August 2023.

Forrester earned a bachelor’s degree in educational psychology and a master’s in student affairs in higher education from MSU and has worked in various student and professional roles since 2008. Before joining the Center for Student Activities, she served as the Office of Admissions and Scholarships’ assistant director and director for Orientation and Events. She began her professional career as the Department of Housing and Residence Life guest housing coordinator.

“When I was an undergraduate student at MSU, I was fortunate to have administrators who became mentors to me throughout the organizations and activities I was involved in,” Forrester said. “Throughout graduate school, my goal was to work in student affairs. I am grateful to be able to serve the Center for Student Activities. My hope is our team will continue to adapt to our students’ needs and foster a welcoming environment where all students can ‘find their people.’”

KENNETH ROGERS
MSU Police Chief

Kenneth Rogers has served and protected the faculty, staff and students at Mississippi State University for more than two decades. Now, he uses that experience to direct Mississippi State University’s Police Department as the chief of police, an appointment he received in June 2023.

“It’s an honor to serve the university community as chief of police,” Rogers said. “Our mission as a police department is to provide an environment in which students, faculty and staff can achieve their educational goals, grow professionally and build relationships.

An MSU graduate with a bachelor’s degree in business administration and a master’s in public policy and administration, Rogers has been a familiar face to the campus community, climbing the ranks as a captain/patrol division commander, special assignments unit commander, accreditation manager and accreditation manager.

Rogers, a member of the National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives and the International Association of Campus Law Enforcement Administrators, is a graduate of the FBI National Academy and the FBI Mississippi Law Enforcement Command College.
Brock Turnipseed spent a decade highlighting the accomplishments of Mississippi State student-athletes. Now, he leads efforts to showcase Mississippi State’s Division of Student Affairs as the director of marketing and communication, a role he assumed in July 2023.

“MSU holds a cherished place in my heart, and I look forward to showing how special our university is and how the Division of Student Affairs is impacting students and their Bulldog experience,” Turnipseed said.

Turnipseed most recently worked at MSU’s Research and Curriculum Unit. Before that, he spent over a decade in MSU’s athletic communications office. There, he led the media efforts for numerous Bulldog teams, including the women’s basketball squads that won an SEC championship and played in consecutive national championship games.

After graduating from MSU with his bachelor’s and master’s degrees, Turnipseed worked in marketing and public relations for Pearl River Resort and the National Fastpitch Coaches Association.

John Michael VanHorn has been part of this endeavor for a decade, first as assistant director and, as of November 2022, director.

“I look forward to working with our team to continue to grow the fraternity and sorority community at MSU,” VanHorn said. “We are constantly looking for ways to provide more students opportunities to join chapters and find their support system at MSU and beyond. MSU has an abundance of student leaders who are fully invested in the success of our chapters and students. Our staff is fortunate to work with such passionate and eager students.”

VanHorn earned his bachelor’s and master’s degrees from MSU before starting his professional career as a hall director at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville. After a year on Rocky Top, he returned to his alma mater as assistant director in the Office of Fraternity and Sorority Life.

VanHorn is currently working on a doctorate in human development and family studies.
Students matter. That motto guided the Mississippi State University Division of Student Affairs’ new five-year strategic plan that launched in fall 2023.

The planning process started in 2019, but the COVID-19 pandemic and MSU’s transformational campaign initiative led to the planning team resetting the plan’s focus and priorities.

According to Director of Planning and Assessment Andrew Rendon, MSU’s rebrand to “Taking Care of What Matters” aligned with the Division’s strategic plan.

“As we considered what mattered to us, there is no doubt that it’s our students and staff and then our environment,” Rendon said. “It’s easy to get distracted and overwhelmed by the competing priorities, but MSU’s rebrand helped us focus on what really matters—our students.”

The strategic plan revolves around taking care of three principles: student learning and development, staff learning and development and creating and sustaining an environment where staff and students can thrive and succeed. These principles drive the Division’s mission to provide transformative experiences that steer students to success at MSU and beyond.

Rendon emphasized the importance of creating an environment where high-impact, co-curricular programs promote continuous student learning and development in a safe, accessible and knowledge-rich environment, and students are guided by a motivated, enriched staff fully supported in their own learning and development journey.

The strategic plan strives to show that MSU is taking care of its students’ and staff’s welfare and development.
Dear Bulldogs and Friends,

As I reflect on the past academic year, captured in this edition of Maroon Traditions, I remain so grateful for the work of our team in the Division of Student Affairs and for the wonderful students and student leaders we get to interact with every day. This last academic year was filled with fun events, new programs and planning for our future. We have BIG, exciting things on the horizon, including the construction of our newest residence hall and major renovations to our dining facilities. We continue to focus on student success and belonging and welcomed Dr. Jackie Mullen to our leadership team this year as Assistant Vice President for the Student Experience.

We have so much to look forward to, and we couldn’t be more excited for the future. The Mississippi State University community—our students, our employees, our alumni—continually work together to make MSU the place where Students Matter and where we are helping our students achieve their goals and dreams. I am proud to be part of this family and can’t wait to share with you the successes of our next academic year with you.

A special note of thanks to our MarComm team for their creativity and energy in bringing the stories of our Division and our students to life through the Maroon Traditions magazine. Stay tuned for our 2023-2024 stories!

And as always, Hail State!

Hail State! Regina
DEPARTMENTAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS

2022-2023

CENTER FOR AMERICA’S VETERANS

Mississippi State University earned recognition as a Top 10 Military Friendly School for the fourth consecutive year.

In a ceremony hosted by the Garden Clubs of Mississippi, the Center for America’s Veterans unveiled a Blue Star Memorial Marker—the first marker of its kind on a college campus in the state.

The Center worked with the Mississippi National Guard to broaden and enhance the Mississippi National Guard General Scholarship program.

DISABILITY RESOURCE CENTER

The Disability Resource Center assisted 1,859 students with accommodations and administered nearly 7,500 accommodated exams.

Three ACCESS program students engaged in conducting research with biologist Dr. Heather Jordan and presented their research at a national conference in Washington, D.C. They then traveled to Texas A&M to present at an undergraduate research symposium.

CENTER FOR STUDENT ACTIVITIES AND FRATERNITY & SORORITY LIFE

The 2022-23 academic year saw 26 new organizations registered, with 277 registered student organizations hosting more than 5,787 meetings, tabling events and activities.

Seven organization awards and six individual awards were presented at the fourth annual Student Choice Awards. New Maroon Camp had a record 1,780 participants.

Fraternities and Sororities raised over $550,000 in philanthropy funds and performed over 65,000 service hours.
Nutritional Counseling supported 77 students, addressing concerns related to disordered eating, diabetes and overall well-being.

The GAIN program, focusing on alcohol and other drug abuse education, was re-established in partnership with the Dean of Students.

Emergency Management assisted in determining Areas of Refuge and providing training. These areas offer enhanced protection from severe weather.

Director Brent Crocker was accepted into the FEMA National Emergency Management Executive Academy.

Bully’s Pantry had more than 1,987 total visits, servicing almost 566 students.

The Block by Block Meal Program awarded over 13,570 meals.

The Colvard Student Union accommodated over 4,600 events in the Union and Lee Hall’s Bettersworth Auditorium during the 2022-23 academic year.

Event Services also added new equipment to its inventory to better support our clients, including a state-of-the-art mobile stage.

Marketing and Communication completed over 500 marketing requests for the Division of Student Affairs; the Division of Access, Diversity and Inclusion; and Student Success.

The department collaborated with multiple Student Affairs departments to establish a consistent brand identity aligned with MSU guidelines and standards.

It also participated in the development and implementation of the MSU rebrand “Taking Care of What Matters” with the Office of Public Affairs.

Budget and Planning implemented the Bulldog Bundle program, offering students textbooks at significant savings.

It also negotiated a new contract with Aramark for MSU Dining, with a significant financial investment to overhaul most dining facilities and install more favorable meal plan options for MSU students.
STUDENT COUNSELING SERVICES

Student Counseling Services implemented 24/7 online clinical support for students through the Telus Health app, formerly My SSP.

SCS also completed the first year of a collaborative effort with Academic Affairs, specifically the College of Education with the Embedded Counselor program.

DEAN OF STUDENTS’ OFFICE

The Dean of Students Office transitioned to Maxient, a more robust case management system, to improve communication and collaboration across the institution and better synthesize departmental efforts to provide holistic care for students.

It hosted the annual Legal Issues Conference, welcoming a record 18 presenters—including two national speakers—and over 180 participants from several different states and 38 institutions of higher learning.

UNIVERSITY RECREATION

Based on student requests, University Recreation collaborated with MSU Libraries to create several small fitness spaces in the Mitchell Memorial Library to help students relieve stress, increase focus and stay healthy while studying.

The Sanderson Center played host to, and helped provide programming for, 1,750 new students at the fall 2022 New Maroon Camp.

The department taught American Red Cross lifeguard and lifeguard instructor courses, certifying more than 40 lifeguards and 10 lifeguard instructors for university and municipal swimming pools during the current nationwide lifeguard shortage.

MSU stakeholders amassed over 6,000 service hours through the Maroon Volunteer Center (MVC), with the MVC AmeriCorps VISTA project having 15 VISTA members and over 20 summer associates placed at various local nonprofit agencies engaging in poverty-alleviating initiatives throughout the Golden Triangle.

Throughout the 2022-2023 academic year, Student Leadership and Community Engagement staff members completed over 50 contact hours through in-person workshops and facilitation opportunities across the university and local community.
MSU Dining Services, in partnership with Aramark, donated more than 600 meals to Casserole Kitchen, a nonprofit organization that provides free hot meals to individuals in the community.

It also rebranded two P.O.D. locations to a new Maroon Market convenience program that offers 24-hour self-service options for students.

The Office of Parent and Family Services welcomed over 1,200 guests from 25 states to its fall Bulldog Family Weekend event.

It also partnered with the Office of Admissions and Scholarships to provide customized newsletters and 24/7 access to information, news and resources curated just for family members of Mississippi State students.

The University Police Department transitioned the leadership of the department to Chief Kenneth Rogers and Assistant Chief Brian Locke.

Officers worked to develop a Rape Aggression Defense course as a for-credit course offered through MSU’s kinesiology department.

The Office of Survivor Support partnered with campus and community stakeholders for programming and outreach and made direct contact with 1,340 students.

The department was awarded an Office Against Interpersonal Violence, Victim of Crime Act (VOCA) Grant for fiscal year 2022-23.

Computer-based Testing Services administered 1,869 professional and certification exams for university and community candidates for the July 1, 2022 to June 13, 2023, timeframe.
The Longest Student Health Center conducted 22,098 patient appointments, with 8,772 unique individuals receiving services.

LSHC hired a psychiatric nurse practitioner and two new physicians.

It also performed a three-year RFP to allow students to purchase affordable, comprehensive health care coverage.

Housing and Residence Life collaborated with University Recreation to launch a pilot hotel-style gym for Magnolia Hall residents in August 2022.

Ground was broken on a new residence hall design and construction project slated to open in August 2025.

The Residence Education Leadership team created a vision for the unit that rolled out at the beginning of the Spring 2023 semester.

Barnes & Noble introduced the Bulldog Bundle program for all undergraduate courses for the 2022-23 academic year, resulting in increased student success due to its affordability, convenience and time efficiency.

The bookstore partnered with the Office of the Provost to boost communication with college deans and administrators. This improved communication assisted in increasing adoption rates to record highs each semester to ensure students have needed class materials.
At Mississippi State University, we strive to show how we are taking care of what matters. I hope Maroon Traditions shows the Division’s commitment to enhancing our students’ MSU experience and well-being.

This student-driven magazine would not have been possible without the dedication of our fantastic Marketing and Communication team and the student writers from numerous colleges and majors who contributed to this year’s magazine. This talented team has created compelling social media narratives, vibrant graphics and videos to tell the Division of Student Affairs’ story.

In this edition of Maroon Traditions, we aim to show the Division’s role in elevating the student journey at MSU and our ongoing commitment to what matters most: our students.

Brock Turnipseed
Marketing and Communication
Division of Student Affairs