

BEREA COLLEGE

MAGAZINE

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and Proven**

BEREA COLLEGE

MAGAZINE

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Chad Berry Hon. '20, Vice President for Alumni, Communications and Philanthropy
Amicheli Salyer, Art Director
Crystal Wylie '05, Director of Digital Multimedia Strategy

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

Kim Kobersmith, Jason Lee Miller, Sree P S '24,
Derek Shorkey '26

CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHERS

Oluwatobi Adejumo '20, Sarah Heggen, Kalilah Hicks '27,
Brooklyn Kenney, Jayla Leavell '25, Breana Lovins '25,
Maya Meads '27, Ehku Say '26, Eli Simpson '27, Justin Skeens,
Breon Thomas '11, Crystal Wylie '05

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CORRESPONDENCE AND REPRINTS

If you have comments, questions or suggestions for the Berea College Magazine or would like information about reprinting any article appearing in the magazine, please contact:

Editor, Berea College Magazine
Berea College
CPO 2142
Berea, KY 40404




AT YOUR SERVICE

Web: www.berea.edu
Mail: CPO 2142, Berea, KY 40404
Phone: 1-800-457-9846
Toll free: 1-866-804-0591
Magazine: magazine.berea.edu
Email: magazine@bera.edu

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■ Two students in the Forest and Wildlife Management course conduct research in the Berea College Forest. This is one example of many out-of-the-box classroom settings and hands-on learning opportunities offered to students. Experiences like this are the basis for Berea's Admissions Office's *This Is My Classroom* recruitment postcard series.

Photo by Crystal Wylie '05

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About the cover: Berea's newest academic building—Communication, Media and Information Technology (CMIT)—opened in summer 2024. Its cutting-edge computing laboratories, innovative makerspace, flexible classrooms and new spaces for digital media endeavors such as a sound stage and on-air studio allow faculty like Dr. Jasmine Jones to open up a world of technology learning possibilities for students like Grayson '26. Photo by Breana Lovins '25.

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Berea Alumni and Friends,

Did you know that of our more recent graduates (2017-2020), 41 percent chose to advance their education after leaving Berea? Of those, 20 percent have completed a master's degree or higher. And these Bereans are following in the footsteps of thousands of graduates before them who took the education they received at Berea and continued their educational path to higher levels of learning and academic accomplishment. My husband and I are among those ranks.

For those who have attended Berea, you know that Berea's academic rigor is in a class of its own—the work is hard, and the expectations are high. Through the years, I have heard many graduates express how prepared they were for master's level programs because of the arduous nature of Berea's academic programs. Add to that Berea's ranking as the No. 1 liberal arts college in the nation by *Washington Monthly* this past September, and it is obvious Berea provides students with a top-tier education—and for the better part of two centuries that education has come with a \$0 tuition price tag.

And that's just the beginning. In this issue, we explore some facets of Berea's educational experiences that push it into that top tier. Berea takes students out of the traditional classroom setting; provides spaces for innovation and creativity; and allows students freedom to explore their options, their strengths and their world. Berea has also invested in new technology, new buildings and new ways of thinking about the work in majors and minors across our broad spectrum of offerings. Some may be prone to think that because Berea is tuition-free, it cannot provide the highest caliber education and resources, but nothing can be further from the truth. *U.S. News and World Report* ranks Berea No. 9 in best undergraduate teaching and 40th among national liberal arts college in its 2025 Best Colleges List.

As you read stories of summer research opportunities for first- and second-year students, hands-on learning spaces on and off campus and individual student experiences in majors across all six of Berea's academic divisions, we hope you recognize the unique opportunities Berea's students have to receive an unparalleled education. Each student can curate an academic journey, backed by service opportunities; job experience; and research, education abroad or internship opportunities that give them an incredible leg up when they leave Berea and take their next step on their journey. Destination—success!

Abbie Tanyhill Darst '03

Editor

Executive Director of Marketing and Communications

Resilience

By Jason Lee Miller



The world is unfair. For Jennan '25, that doesn't mean give up.

Born and raised in Berea, Kentucky, Jennan grew up surrounded by Berea College's influence. Her dad taught physics at Berea, so the values of community, diversity and education shaped her upbringing. Her choice to attend Berea College was not solely because of her family's ties, it was also a conscious step toward her own dreams, particularly in cancer research.

while staying rooted in her family life.

Despite Berea's challenging academic environment, Jennan thrived with the support of her professors, who became mentors. "Berea is difficult, but the professors prepare you to succeed," she noted. These relationships were crucial in fostering her confidence, especially as she set her sights on genetics and cancer research.

Jennan's drive to pursue cancer research is deeply personal. Her father passed away from cancer, and that loss inspired her to explore the field. "I

Pre-Health Club. She even took on leadership roles by joining their boards. When asked if she did anything fun, she laughed.

"It's all fun stuff," she replied.


These clubs also gave Jennan a space where she felt she truly belonged. "Growing up, I never thought I'd fit in anywhere. But here, I feel like a normal person," she said.

Berea's inclusive environment let her embrace her identity fully, surrounded by peers from diverse backgrounds who accepted her as she was.

The support from Berea's community extended beyond academics. "When my dad was sick, faculty members would help take care of me and my brothers," Jennan recalls. This support network left a lasting impression, influencing her view on the importance of community.

As she nears the end of her college journey, Jennan remains committed to her goal of advancing cancer research. She hopes to pursue further studies in genetics, driven by a passion to understand cancer better and contribute to finding solutions. Her journey is not just about personal achievement; it's about giving back and making a difference in others' lives.

Berea College has played a crucial role in shaping who Jennan has become. The College's emphasis on inclusivity, support and academic rigor has prepared her to take on future challenges with confidence. "The friends I've made here are people I want in my life forever," she says, reflecting on the bonds she's formed.

Looking ahead, Jennan envisions a future where she can combine her scientific interests with her desire to serve others. She carries with her the lessons learned at Berea: the value of community, resilience and the pursuit of knowledge for the greater good. As she prepares for the next chapter, Jennan's path is clear, guided by her father's memory and the support of a college that believes in her potential. 



◀ Jennan '25, a biology major who grew up in Berea, has hands-on experience to guide her in her career path toward cancer research.

Photo by Crystal Wylie '05

◀ In the Margaret A. Cargill Natural Sciences and Health Building, Jennan stands next to a plaque outside a faculty office named in honor of her father, Dr. Amer S. Lahamer. The former professor died of cancer in 2013, and his legacy inspired Jennan to pursue a degree in biology.

Photo by Brooklynn Kenney

"My dad always talked about Berea as this incredibly diverse place," Jennan recalls. Growing up as part of one of the few Muslim families in town, Berea felt like a sanctuary—a place where she felt a connection. When she enrolled in Berea College, she stepped into the welcoming environment her father had described. It was a space where diversity thrived, and she found acceptance among students from all backgrounds.

With her family only minutes away, she could ease into college life without the usual stress of being far from home. "Coming out of COVID, it was nice to have my mom just 10 minutes away," she says. This setup allowed her to focus on academics

knew I wanted to go into cancer research because of my dad," she explained. Learning about the links between genetics and cancer became her focus, driven by a desire to honor her father's memory and make a meaningful impact.

Balancing her studies and personal life is a skill Jennan has honed over time. Learning to manage her schedule helped her carve out time for herself and her loved ones. "Berea taught me how to prioritize and still make time for myself," she said.

Beyond academics, Jennan immersed herself in campus life, joining various student organizations like the Muslim Student Association, Biology Club, Chemistry Club and



■ Students in Berea's computer science courses learn to code and problem solve in a real-world context. They build programs to solve issues on campus, and they participate in fun activities like hack-a-thons to hone their skills.

Photo by Oluwatobi Adejumo '20

Video Games and Music

By Derek Shorkey '26

Langston '26 grew up in a family that valued creativity. His mom played clarinet, and his brother played in the school marching band. Langston had interests in music as well, among about a million other things. But above all, Langston knew when he got to high school that his calling was programming.

"My school had a computer science pathway, graphic design, video editing and game design," he said. "Whenever I could, I would take those classes."

When he heard about a school in Appalachia with low cost and a computer science major from his school counselor, he was all in.

Langston's desire to learn programming and computer science stems from his family's interest in video games. Describing them as a "Nintendo family," Langston said growing up with games and playing them with his family was a big motivation in learning to make games himself.

"I'm pretty sure I learned how to hold a controller before I learned how to walk," he said.

Langston isn't just a computer science major, though. Music has been a constant in his life, much like video games. He followed his brother in joining his school's marching band. This perhaps unlikely connection between music and computer science has been nurtured at Berea, where he's pursuing a computer science major and

an electronic composition minor. He's also a member of the Music Department's Audio and Visual (AV) team.

Computer science is more competitive than most majors, Langston said. In his first year, classes were so full he couldn't take a single course in computer science, despite declaring it as an exploratory academic major. This forced him into general education courses and other prerequisites, which he thinks ultimately helped him the longer he stayed at Berea and encountered more challenging courses. Among these courses was GSTR 110, the most difficult course he had to take.

"I wrote more in my first semester at Berea than I ever did in kindergarten to 12th grade," he added.

Now in his junior year, Langston is well on his way to completing his degree in computer science and has taken many different classes in the major. He recalls how dense and difficult the courses in the major can be: A lot of work in and out of class, moving on from concept to concept in a week, group projects, labs, quizzes and exams. He says it can feel overwhelming, but the major's faculty build on concepts and do their best to teach them in a way that feels linear and consistent.

"It feels like a video game. I'm building up my repertoire of abilities, so-to-speak, and combining them to produce what I want and what my teacher wants."


Following college, Langston hasn't

decided if he wants to work independently or apply to a company to make video games, although he would prefer to go it alone. In his career path, he described both pros and cons to working independently and joining the corporate gaming industry.

"Working independently is like, 'When the [money] bag is there you have to chase the bag,' even if it's not convenient," he explained. "Working corporate is more predictable. Predictability is very safe, and a lot of people like predictability, and I think that's fine. I don't know, I'm split between the two mindsets. Whatever happens, happens!"

Even though Langston's plan is to make video games, that is far from all a computer science graduate can do for a career. Langston says he's keeping the door open for wherever his degree takes him. Thanks to his working experience at Berea, the flexibility of his future career path is vast—from careers in the audio and visual field to library science.

Along with the daily struggles and liveliness of the Berea experience, his computer science courses and his work with the AV team, Langston continues to share his love of gaming with others on campus, including being co-president of the Fighting Game Club. Overall, from music to video games and the library to the sound booth, Langston's time at Berea has been worth it, he says.

"I feel pretty satisfied with my decision to come here. I wouldn't trade it for anything else." 

What We Learn from Dark Skies

By Jason Lee Miller

Note on Stars

- I. Six AM ripe with dark
I'm racing to catch
the sun before
it breaches the mountain
The stars are bleeding
their wordless chord
to Earth
- II. The Milky Way in the dew-
dropped hours before
predawn / Earth wet with
night's afterbirth
Up the mountain I kicked
at the dark afraid of the way
it touched me and blued
my figure
- III. Backyard bonfire / Sparks
on tips of sticks / The stars
watching us burn the body
of an oak into warmth
There's a crackling in the
woods and I want to look
the beast in the eye
What is fear of the dark
but the fear of what makes
a home in it

By Lie Ford '25



“How many poets does it take to change a light bulb?”

The telling quip and rhetorical joke from Lie

Ford, a senior English major from Knoxville, Tennessee, references the poet's experience from the Dark Skies writing excursions led by Ansel Elkins, visiting assistant professor of Creative Writing at Berea.

Elkins, who joins acclaimed novelist Silas House as a creative writing teacher at Berea, has always found poetry to be a way of understanding her world. A poet whose 2015 collection “Blue Yodel” won the prestigious Yale Series of Younger Poets competition, Elkins was raised in Talladega County, near Cheaha Mountain, one of Alabama's highest points. Her work draws heavily on her upbringing in the rural South, influenced by her experiences as the daughter of two journalists.

“My father was a photojournalist, and I'd often travel with him on assignments,” Elkins explained. “That's how I came to see Alabama, through river baptisms, mules grinding sugar cane and the people he captured with his camera.”

One of the unique aspects of Elkins' approach to poetry is her interest in the night sky. As a young girl in rural Alabama, she spent her nights under dark skies, an experience she found difficult to replicate as she moved to larger cities.

“In Greensboro (North Carolina), I couldn't see the stars,” she recalled. “It's a spiritual loss. And it wasn't until

I read ‘The Darkness Manifesto’ that I understood it. Light pollution is something we can change with a simple flick of a switch.”

Elkins' exploration of the night sky has led her to teach students at Berea College about its significance, not only as a source of creative inspiration but also as a topic of ecological concern. She regularly takes her students on immersive writing excursions. A recent trip took her class to an International Dark Sky Park in Tennessee, where the group hiked miles to a remote location, free from the distractions of electricity or cell phone service.

“We lay beneath the stars and saw the Milky Way. It was magical,” she said.

This experience was not just about poetry, but also about reconnecting with the natural world, which Elkins feels is essential for her students to understand the beauty and loss associated with modern life's disconnect from nature.

“There were enough stars to startle anyone into a poetry frenzy,” Lie '25 remembered from the excursion.

“Learning about the issue of increasingly disappearing dark skies has exposed me to what I had been missing without knowing it. The stars are not gone, just obscured by manmade lights.”

Elkins takes her students beyond the classroom in other ways. During a course on poetry and eco-justice, she led them on a full moon hike through Lily Cornett Woods in eastern Kentucky, where they experienced the sounds of spring peepers in an old-growth forest.

“It was such an incredible experience,” she said. “The volume of the frogs was so intense, I had to cover my ears.”

These field trips, she explained, offer students not just a break from traditional classroom settings but a chance to see how the world of nature and the creative world overlap.

Her approach to mentoring is deeply rooted in her personal

experiences as a student and as a writer. Elkins grew up in a single-parent household, and she vividly remembers the isolation she felt when she attended college.

“I was a poor kid from Alabama surrounded by wealth,” she said. “I felt alienated and ashamed, and I struggled with things like not having enough to eat. It made me really angry.”


At Berea College, Elkins has found a community of scholars who deeply value mentorship and open discussion.

“What I love about Berea is the genuine conversations we have about socioeconomic issues,” she said. “It's something I never experienced at other institutions. At Berea, we really talk about what it means to come from different backgrounds, and that openness is something that makes this place special.”

Her commitment to her students is evident, not only in her classroom but also in the supportive relationships she builds with them. With a class size typically capped at 12 students, Elkins can provide the personal mentorship that is essential to her teaching style.

“I expect a lot out of my students,” she said. “We read a lot, and they really bring their A-game.”

High expectations have already produced tangible results. Berea College poets took three of the five awards in the 2023 Flo Gault Poetry Prize, an annual competition for Kentucky undergraduates.

“These students are incredibly talented,” Elkins said. “I know that one day, we'll be reading their work in print.” 

◀ Students in Ansel Elkins' creative writing class read poetry under the night sky as a source of creative inspiration and a way to reconnect to the natural world.

Photo submitted



■ Health and Human Performance major Jaleesa '26 chose her major as a way to help others recover from life-altering injuries. Her experience with a physical therapist demonstrated the importance of the role in the lives of everyday people. She says the rigors of the classroom are worth the impact she'll have in her career.

Photo by Kalliah Hicks '27

Helping Others Recover

By Derek Shorkey '26

Jaleesa '26 knows the value of physical therapy firsthand. She's from Jamaica, where she spent her time in high school running track. After beginning to experience shin splints, or pain caused by constant stress on the muscles, she was held back from performing at her best. A visit to a physical therapist changed her life.

"I went to sessions twice a week, surrounded by other athletes who faced similar challenges. Despite the setbacks, the resilience and the dedication our therapist showed us all kept everyone motivated. Those interactions inspired me—I saw firsthand how empathy and support could transform an athlete's path to recovery."

Before applying to Berea, she was considering another institution—Harvard—before choosing Berea's no-tuition promise, where she's now pursuing a health and human performance (HHP) degree. Jaleesa's interest in the HHP major stemmed from her experience in dealing with her injuries as a student-athlete.

"Having to always visit my personal physical therapist led to me to love what she does for me, and I want to give that back to others."

Physical therapists play an important role in the lives of not just athletes, but also everyday people. The

top priority of a physical therapist, Jaleesa says, is improving the quality of life for their patients, especially after serious physical trauma. After an accident, Jaleesa explains, it can be difficult for those affected by injury to return to a normal life. Physical therapists help with recovery, especially making daily activities possible for their patients. This work is grounded in helping others and serving your community.

The major is comprised of courses across multiple fields of study, including anatomy and biology, focusing on studying the foundations of health science. The introductory courses to the major are rigorous, demanding and dense with information, and Jaleesa says they were easily the most difficult courses she's had to take so far at Berea.

The rigor of these classes is worth it, though. When it comes to physical therapy and human anatomy, a mistake could make things worse before it gets better.


"You have to know what you're talking about," she warned.

The weight of these difficult courses is counterbalanced by passionate professors who expect the same amount of appreciation for the topic from students as they put in as teachers, Jaleesa says. The major also has a diverse and open path forward after graduation in terms of

occupation. Jaleesa mentions that those majoring in HHP could pursue different occupations like personal training, physical education and coaching. The involved classes and flexible application of the resulting degree seem to be one of the primary strengths of this major.

After college, Jaleesa plans to attend graduate school. She believes her interests, abilities, and most importantly, personal experience, are best suited to study kinesiology and become a physical therapist, where she can help people directly.

"I want to make an impact not only in sports but also by helping children and people dealing with physical trauma in their daily lives. I'm passionate about improving lives after unexpected challenges, and majoring in health and human performance is the foundation for making this goal a reality."

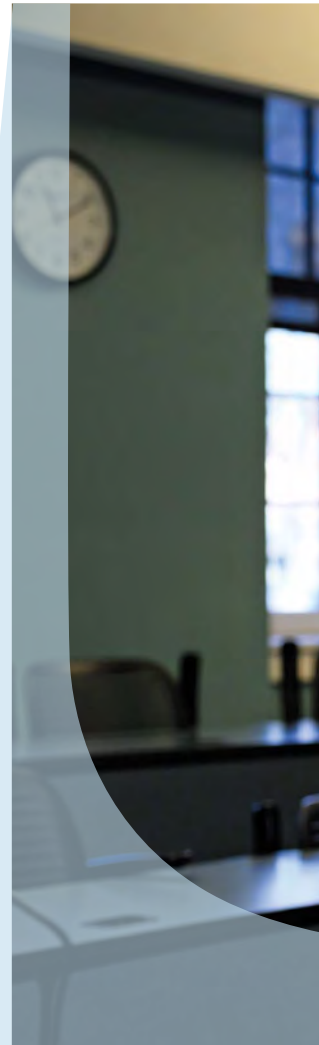
One of Berea's Great Commitments is focused on service, specifically to Appalachia and the Berea community, but service can also take form wherever a Berea College graduate may find themselves. For Jaleesa, the most important part of being a physical therapist is to help patients return to something as close to normal as possible, in much the same way she was helped. 

► As a communication and child and family studies double major, Shaun '25 found his fit after a difficult adjustment moving from Hawai'i to Berea, Ky., and trying to determine the perfect path for his future.

Photo Maya Meads '27

Switching Comfort Zones

By Jason Lee Miller



Though Shaun '25 and Nicole '26 came from much different backgrounds, their experiences share a common thread. Both communication and child and family studies double majors sought a place to grow academically and personally, and both found that place at Berea College.

Shaun, born and raised in Honolulu, Hawai'i, had always been surrounded by the beauty of the islands. However, by the time he reached high school, he knew he wanted something different.

"I needed a change of pace, to experience life outside of the island," he said.

When he learned about Berea College, it seemed like the perfect place to explore new academic and personal horizons. At first, he wasn't sure what

to expect from Kentucky, associating it only with Kentucky Fried Chicken, bourbon and horse racing.

"I had no idea what to expect, but I knew I had to take a chance," he said. His decision was influenced by the isolation of the COVID-19 pandemic, which gave him time to think about his future.

"The pandemic made me realize I needed to go somewhere that challenged me," Shaun said.

Nicole, who grew up in Louisville with her grandparents, always dreamed of leaving home to explore more of the world. Berea College's focus on providing access to higher education for students from underserved backgrounds aligned perfectly with her aspirations.

"I saw Berea as a chance to grow in a way that wasn't possible where I was," she said. Despite the close-knit

community she had at home, Nicole was eager to pursue something else.

Both students faced challenges adjusting to their new environments. Shaun, accustomed to Hawai'i's laid-back lifestyle, found Kentucky's culture very different.

"It was a huge change. The food, the social norms, everything was so different," he said.

However, he soon appreciated Berea's support system, particularly through the Berea Bridge Program, which helped him adjust. "It was crucial in helping me understand how to navigate this new life," he said.

Nicole also struggled emotionally when leaving behind her tightly knit family and friends. "I was scared to leave, but I knew it was something I had to do for myself," she said. While facing academic challenges, she found solace in the supportive community at



Berea. “It was hard, but I found strength in the friendships I made here,” she said.

Both students initially struggled academically but found their paths in time. Shaun started in engineering technologies and applied design (ETAD) but quickly realized it wasn’t a good fit. “I was over my head, and I wasn’t passionate about it,” he said. “I did not enjoy the path that seemed predetermined for me.”

After reevaluating his goals, he decided to pursue a double major in communication and child and family studies. “It felt like the right fit, where I could blend my interest in helping others with my love for communication,” he said.

Nicole, too, shifted her focus and decided on a double major in communication and child and family studies. “I always loved reading and

writing, but it wasn’t until I started my coursework that I realized I wanted to teach,” she said.

Over time, both Shaun and Nicole embraced the challenges they faced and grew stronger because of them. Shaun learned to push through academic obstacles. “I learned how to embrace challenges, not run from them,” he said.

For Nicole, the experience has been equally transformative. “College has pushed me to grow, not just as a student but as a person,” she said.


Their experiences at Berea have shaped their futures. Shaun is now considering a career in academia, hoping to pursue a Ph.D. in psychology or social science. “I want to make a difference in how people understand human behavior and development, communication and psychology to make a difference in

society and help people,” he said.

Nicole aspires to become a professor and continue her academic journey. “Teaching is my passion, and I want to give back by helping others achieve their dreams the way Berea has helped me,” she said.

Shaun and Nicole’s stories are testaments to the power of education and the importance of stepping outside one’s comfort zone. They arrived at Berea College seeking new opportunities and, in doing so, discovered not only new academic paths but new versions of themselves.

As Shaun said, “Berea gave me the chance to be who I really am and who I want to be.”

Nicole echoed this sentiment: “Berea is where I found my purpose.” 

New Spaces, New Faces

PSYCHOLOGY IN THE 21ST CENTURY

By Jason Lee Miller



■ Psychology professors Dr. Ian Norris (left) and Dr. Alison Heck (right) help prepare Claudia Read '24 for experiencing new capabilities within Berea's recently upgraded psychology lab.

Photo by Crystal Wylie '05

The basement of the Frost Building has recently undergone a dramatic transformation. What had been a maze of dark hallways and isolated testing rooms has become an inviting, open area filled with natural light, designed to support both teaching and collaborative research.

Dr. Ian Norris, marketing professor, director of the Entrepreneurship for the Public Good (EPG) program and former chair of the Psychology Department, spearheaded the renovation that brought the basement space into the modern era.

“Back in the 1990s, the space reflected the research methods of the time—mostly paper-based studies,” Norris explains. “Participants would be placed in small, individual rooms to complete tasks. Today, research looks very different.”

Advances in technology have shifted psychological research toward digital platforms like Qualtrics, enabling researchers to gather data from broader, more diverse populations. Recognizing this shift, Berea’s administration decided it was time to renovate the old basement, making it more consistent with current research practices.

The new design focuses on openness and collaboration, converting isolated rooms into multifunctional spaces where students and faculty can

work together.

“We restored windows that had been covered for decades, letting light flood in,” Norris said. “Now, students can gather in comfortable seating areas overlooking the quad, transforming the space into a place they want to be.”

With state-of-the-art tools like a new electroencephalogram (EEG) system and upgraded labs, the department is now equipped to offer cutting-edge research experiences. Norris also ensured that pieces of the department’s history remained intact. “We found old equipment like reaction timers and even World War II-era psychological tests,” he noted. “These artifacts will be displayed in seminar rooms to honor the department’s legacy.”

Amid these changes, Dr. Alison Heck, assistant professor of psychology, has been leveraging the renovated space to push the boundaries of student learning. Since joining Berea, Heck has focused on hands-on research, particularly in the field of developmental psychology. “I’ve been really excited to see how the new spaces have energized both the students and faculty,” Heck said. “We now have the resources to offer more experiential learning.”

Heck, a developmental psychologist, has made it her mission to equip students with practical research skills. She emphasizes the importance of independent study, a cornerstone of Berea’s psychology program. “Every student completes a capstone project,” she explained. “They design an experiment from start to finish, gaining skills that set them apart when applying to graduate schools.”

Heck’s research focuses on how people perceive emotions across different backgrounds, using tools like eye-tracking technology to gain insights. “I’m interested in how our backgrounds affect how we recognize and express emotions,” Heck says. “We know people generally struggle to recognize emotions in faces from other races, a phenomenon known as the

‘other-race effect.’ My work aims to understand why that happens.”

The new lab space has proven instrumental in advancing Heck’s research. “We’ve been able to create a more inclusive database for emotional faces, using models from a variety of racial and cultural backgrounds,” she explains. “That’s something existing databases often lack.” Her portable eye tracker allows her to conduct studies with participants of all ages, including infants, opening new avenues for student-led research projects.

Beyond her own research, Heck mentors students through Berea’s Undergraduate Research and Creative Projects Program (URCPP). “Last summer, I worked with five students on research projects,” she said. “The renovated space has made these collaborations much smoother and more engaging for everyone involved.”

As the department continues to expand with new faculty and cutting-edge resources, Heck sees endless potential for her students. “Psychology isn’t just about therapy,” she emphasized. “I want students to see the diverse career paths available in research, academia and industry. Offering them access to tools like eye trackers and EEG systems gives them an edge against graduates from much larger schools.”

Both Heck and Norris share a vision for the future of Berea’s Psychology Department: One where students not only learn the theory but also apply it in meaningful, hands-on ways.

“The renovations have brought the department into a new era,” Heck said. “It’s an exciting time to be here, helping our students unlock their full potential.”

Heck is joined by Dr. Rebecca Singer, who will lead efforts to increase student involvement in behavioral neuroscience, and Dr. Sarah Jones, the new department chair, who believes the lab, collaborative spaces and updated classrooms will continue to enhance the student experience in psychology. **B**



◀ Berea's student chaplains greet first-year students as they exit Phelps Stokes on their first day on campus in August 2023.

Photo by Crystal Wylie '05

Putting Students First

By Derek Shorkey '26

Berea College is unique compared to other institutions in many ways, from its financial aid model to required participation in the Labor Program. As high school seniors wrap up their final year of school, incoming Berea students may struggle to navigate the complexities that make up the Berea experience. Berea maintains the Office of Student Success and Transition (SST) to mitigate those struggles and ensure student success.

SST's unique role on campus is defined by its support for students. "From the moment students commit to Berea, our office welcomes them and works to design a transition experience that will lay a foundation for success," said Elle Keys, coordinator of first-year programs. "Once here, we help students align their academic experiences with their goals, whether that be through study skills development, help with time management, supplemental academic advising or other types of support."

SST runs various programs designed to assist students in areas like

academic major exploration and interview preparation. In addition to unique events they can attend throughout their first semester, the office also hosts academic coaching, supplemental advising and syllabus navigation to ease the burden of figuring out which buildings their classes will be in.

Some of the notable events the SST puts on are meant to reach out to students proactively. Events like Welcome Week and Summer Connections serve as orientations for new students. SST staff members also serve as professors, teaching GST 101. New students can take this course to learn how to be successful college students and get a leg up on studying strategies to help them prepare for higher-level courses.

"[GSTR 101] teaches students what to expect in college and how to balance the responsibilities of being a college student," Keys said. "Topics for this course include stress management, choosing classes, time management, how college differs from high school and exposure to campus resources."

SST also connects with new

students through strategies designed to react to potential warning signs before they become issues. The most prevalent example is counseling for students struggling with GPA maintenance. SST staff can intervene in these instances, providing academic counseling, academic major advising and general aid to students.

While SST is most known for its help with transitioning students into and out of Berea College, it is also set up to be a resource while the student is here. SST holds the Major Exploration Fair, an event where most or all of Berea's 35 academic majors set up tables and present their department for new and returning students. In addition to the fair, SST hosts one-on-one course registration for first-year students' second semester, for which more than 100 students volunteer to receive advising for their next semester of classes.

Whether students are fresh out of high school or enrolling after a gap year, SST remains active on Berea's campus to help them navigate this historic and unique institution. **B**

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Photo by Crystal Wylie '05

Dr. Kristen Barnard

Associate Professor, Mathematics:
18 years at Berea

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Associate Professor, Communication:
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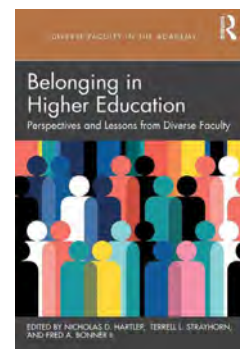
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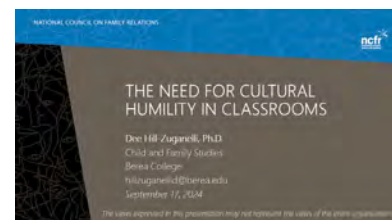
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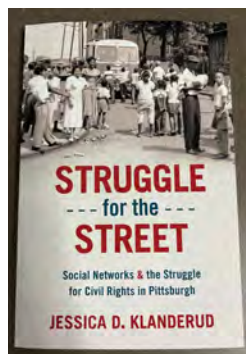
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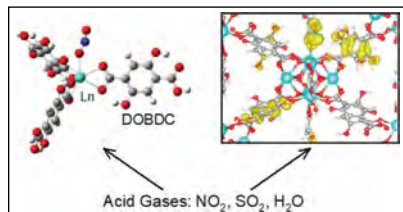


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Dr. Kelsey Malone

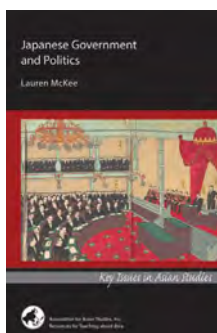
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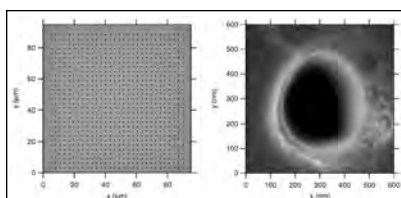
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Víctor García Ramírez

Assistant Professor of Spanish, Foreign Languages: 1 year at Berea

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Professor, Education Studies: 17 years at Berea
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Associate Professor, Psychology: 1 year at Berea

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Dr. Nancy Sowers

Professor, Finance, Economics and Business: 10 years at Berea

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Chair and Associate Professor, Peace and Social Justice: 15 years at Berea

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Associate Professor, Health and Human Performance: 8 years at Berea

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Dr. Ronnie Wu

Visiting Assistant Professor, Chemistry: 1 year at Berea

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A photograph of two young women in graduation caps and gowns. The woman in the foreground is wearing a black cap and a blue stole over a black gown, with her mouth wide open in a joyful shout. The woman behind her is also wearing a black cap and a blue stole, smiling broadly. The background is a blurred outdoor setting.

BEREA COLLEGE

GREAT COMMITMENTS SOCIETY

A young woman with blonde hair, wearing a black long-sleeved shirt and blue jeans, stands on a white spiral staircase. She is smiling and looking towards the camera, with her hand resting on the white railing. The walls of the staircase are covered in vibrant, colorful murals featuring various characters, including a large orange butterfly, a girl in a blue dress, and a girl in a red dress. The background shows a modern interior with a curved ceiling and recessed lighting.

■ Allison '26 was always passionate about art, but until she attended Berea, she didn't believe she could make a career out of her passion. She has been able to do just that, curating and designing exhibits with the Doris Ulmann Galleries.

Photo by Kalliah Hicks '27

Curating a Path

By Sree P S '24

Allison '26 is a Nickelodeon kid. As a child she drove around in her Dora the Explorer Jeep and had Miranda Cosgrove stickers on everything she owned. The shows and cartoons she watched taught her to appreciate and create art.

In sixth grade she drew a cartoon turkey for Thanksgiving, the first drawing she remembers making. Later, she drew one of her puppies, which won a prize at the Grayson Gallery and Art Center in Grayson, Ky. She continued to make art, but Allison's high school counselors told her that art was not a career path and refused to sign her up for an art class. The art instructor in her school, Ms. Reynolds, stood up for her.

"She went and fought for me," Allison said, "and I don't know what she did, but she texted my mom and said, 'Tell Allison she's in my class tomorrow.'" Allison had some of her fondest memories in Ms. Reynolds' class. She drew a bit of everything, but portraits were her speciality.

"I started drawing a lot of portraits and people were impressed by them," Allison said. "I always love seeing people's faces when you draw them. I drew one boy. It was a picture of him and all his football gear. When I showed it to him, he said 'Oh my gosh! You even got the scar on my eyebrow!' I love when people can look at things they think might be a flaw and see the beauty in it because it's a piece of art."

Allison was constantly reminded that art was not something someone of her socioeconomic status could pursue. She doubted herself even as she received her acceptance to Berea. But once she took on the position of exhibitions associate at Berea's Doris Ulmann Galleries, she felt her dreams were coming true. The museum of

16,000 artifacts that span a period of 5,000 years gave Allison access to an understanding of how art was interconnected with global history. Under the guidance of Dr. Kelsey Malone, curator of the Berea College art collection, Allison investigated and curated artwork and created exhibitions that told a story.

"I love fashion prints," she said. "The one I'm working with now is from the second oldest French magazine from 1836. On the surface, it looks like this pretty little print that was in the magazine that people used as a reference to get clothes made at dressmakers. But then when you learn more about it, you get to know how the prints were made by men. It tells you about this stereotype that women had to have tiny waists. So, it was fashioned to please the male gaze. The corsets would change women's bodies. It's just interesting to see that even back then that was a problem because it's still a problem now."

For Allison, her job and academics are closely linked. What she learns in Dr. Malone's Museum Studies class she applies every day at work. She works hard to make museums interactive places that all people can access and appreciate. Last summer she took her experience in museum work to the Nickelodeon Studios in Los Angeles in an internship funded by Berea's Office of Internships and Career Development. Working for Nickelodeon fulfilled a dream she'd had since middle school. Allison could experience firsthand the creative forces behind the art that shaped her as child.

"I got to see the original Sponge Boy—not SpongeBob—Sponge Boy show bible," she said. "I got to do stuff

with physical assets like the original "Avatar, The Last Airbender" storyboards. The original Patsy the Pirate Costume. I got to catalogue them."

While she is busy researching and studying artwork from around the world, Allison also spends considerable time making art. She made a portrait of her husband welding which was displayed in the Team Kentucky Gallery in the Kentucky Capitol near the Governor's office. But her goals are set on museum work and making inclusive spaces where people of all backgrounds can access art and understand how art is a part of our daily lives and how much we are shaped by it.

Allison also wants to advocate for young artists and curators like her, let them know that art is a meaningful career path and become a voice of support that buoys children above the discouragement she faced as a child. **B**

▼ Allison's drawing titled, "Bluegrass & Blue Collar" hung in the Team Kentucky Gallery, located in the main halls of the state Capitol in Frankfort, in fall 2023.





Getting There

By Sree P S '24

Benjamin '26 has a tattoo of a snail above his right ankle. Over the past summer, he walked 300 miles from Porto, Portugal to Santiago in Spain, tracing the steps of pilgrims on the Camino de Santiago, an experience funded by Berea's Sloan Shelton Arts and Humanities Grant.

During the journey, he observed people opening their businesses, birds singing and snails crossing the roads of the European countryside. He related most to the snail, its slow but steady progress toward its goal. Benjamin was also making measured progress along an historical and spiritual path, 25 miles a day over two weeks in the hours of pre-dawn and early morning to

avoid the summer heat. He takes a similar approach in Berea, steady and deliberate as he pursues majors in peace and social justice studies, economics and political science.


Benjamin worked in restaurants in his home country of Chile. He was a dishwasher, a waiter and a cook. He found the physical tasks of washing dishes and cooking therapeutic. When he waited tables, he got to interact with a cross-section of Chilean society and learned about their problems. Benjamin is grounded in the idea of measured progress in life, which looks different for everybody, from snail to pilgrim.

His aunt's generosity allowed Benjamin to get his secondary education. Coming from Puerto Varas,

Chile, Benjamin was used to an education system where a path was pre-determined for him. But at Berea, he could explore. He came in with an economics major in mind, but Dr. Jason Strange's Introduction to Peace and Social Justice Studies course challenged his preconceptions about the world.

"[The class] was different because it's experience based. For example, the experience of a Black person living in a big city is different from a Latine, Asian or white person in Appalachia. And in all these experiences, there are commonalities regardless of the race or background.

"I also took a peace and social justice class called Voices of Nonviolence," Benjamin continued.



◀ Benjamin '26 displays the snail tattoo on his ankle that reminds him to take a slow, steady and determined pace in life and on his academic journey.

■ A native of Chile, Benjamin loved his ability to explore majors and career choices at Berea. The triple major has created his own path in peace and social justice, economics and political science in hopes of pursuing a career in international relations or electoral politics.

Photos by Eli Simpson '27

“And it was to see different nonviolent movements through history and how you can make a huge change, from Gandhi to Mandela or Chavez in the southern hemisphere or Martin Luther King Jr. and Carly Goodson in the northern. They made huge change without using violence, without shooting a bullet, without forcing anyone to do anything but instead refusing to do something.”

Peace and social justice emphasizes the value of community and community building. The discipline creates empathetic leaders who can relate their experiences to that of people from around the world. The major motivates action beyond the classroom. Benjamin believes his philosophy and what he learns from

the three majors will allow him to return to Chile and become his nation's president.

“I understand the struggle,” he said. “That's what peace and social justice is. I can come up with a solution to economic problems. And I understand how to present it to people—that's where the political science goes,” Benjamin said.

“My main goal is to go back to Chile and make things right, with the values my family has taught me, that Berea has taught me: honesty, transparency—with the mission in mind, with the passion to do it. I have that fire in me that tells me: ‘You have got to do it!’”

In his free time, Benjamin builds community. He is the president and

co-founder of the Latin American Student Association (LASA) that seeks to represent the diversity of South America.

Benjamin is committed to a long journey. He wants to pursue international relations at the graduate level to enter electoral politics as someone with experience in foreign policy. Berea gave him the opportunity to learn from the world, from the diversity of his classmates, from the erudition of his professors. He wants to give back to his community by applying his learning, solving conflicts and becoming a compassionate leader. He understands how formidable his challenges are, but will persevere, slowly and steadily, until he gets to his goal. [B](#)



■ Sydney '26 (left) and Jakeisha '25 set up game or trail cameras in the Berea College Forest by Cowbell Reservoir to capture wildlife activity, which was one of the class activities for the Forest and Wildlife Management course.

Photo by Ehku Say '26

Learning Here, There and Everywhere

By Kim Kobersmith

Field Work

Every Friday, Berea students can be found tromping in the woods at the Berea College Forest or around the region. The Forest and Wildlife Management Class' weekly lab period gets students outside helping them get a field-based education from agency and nonprofit leaders in the profession. Professor Dr. Sarah Hall explained that for students pursuing the forest resource management minor, which constitutes about half of the class, seeing the real-world applications of the principles they learn in the classroom is crucial.

In a recent lab experience, the college's Forestry Technician Phil Vogel taught about silviculture, the practice of managing trees and forests. First, he gave historical context, explaining different eras of forestry in the United States and how practices have evolved over time. Then, the group walked to specific spots in the College Forest to talk about their land use history. Students could see the long-term impacts of clear-cutting, prescribed burns and timber stand improvement work like girdling and removing less desirable trees.

Field and forest work is the norm

for Dr. Hall's classes. Her Appalachian Plants and People course focuses on food, medicine and crafts created from natural materials. For one lab, they usually visit a chair crafter who walks them through the process from harvesting a tree to final seat. Plant science students study extensively at the college horticulture farm, with visits to other food growers in the community.

"Many students learn more in those settings, by being able to look at and talk about what different factors go into management decisions," Hall said. "They are observing what is around them, and we often have fruitful discussions that go beyond the particular topic at hand."

Community Engagement

Spanish 310 is one of multiple courses at Berea with a service-learning component. Coordinated through the Hispanic Outreach Project, students volunteer in community-based cultural and language practice settings. For one project, the class designed an ofrenda for the Dia de los Muertos celebration on campus. In smaller groups, students

teach Spanish to interested community members at the Madison County Public Library and provide English as a Second Language tutoring for Spanish-speaking adults.

Dr. Jhonn Guerra-Banda, professor for the course, explained that combining advanced grammar and practical communication skills through service is an integral part of his teaching approach for advanced-language students. Service also connects them to their own culture; 80 percent of class members are heritage Spanish speakers. One young woman, whose parents are from Mexico, developed a special connection with teaching English because it resonated with her own story of immigration and family.

Service-learning courses like Spanish 310 are a key component of Berea's community and civic engagement minor. The coursework supports student learning in how academic majors approach public problem solving and address pressing social issues. Designed to be multidisciplinary, it uses a mix of theoretical and experiential learning. One graduate, a political science major, interned with FoodChain in Lexington for an intensive summer experience.



■ Computer science students Cade '28 (left) and David '26 work inside the new Makerspace in the campus' new technology building. Spaces like this where students can create, imagine and gain hands-on experience are invaluable to our next generation of innovators.

Photo by Ehku Say '26

Now she works full time with Feeding Kentucky on food access issues across the commonwealth.

"Service-learning prepares students to use Spanish in real-world settings and aligns with the Berea College mission of community engagement," Dr. Guerra-Banda said. "Volunteering with the Hispanic community in the area develops responsibility for and empathy with others and can have a real impact."

Room for Technology and Creativity

Inside the new Computer, Digital Media and Information Technology Building, a custom-designed Makerspace encourages student-

initiated projects, interdisciplinary experimentation and other collaborations. Its tools facilitate 3D printing, electronics, sewing, laser engraving, paper crafts and precision writing. Dr. Jasmine Jones, director of the Dr. Ann Evans Hon. '23 and Carl Evans Fd.'62 Makerspace, said the project space was envisioned for hands-on learning and research in physical computing and modern crafting.

While open to all students, the Makerspace offers a special complement to computer science and technology-focused areas of study. Academic classes introduce the foundations of computer science, like algorithms and databases. Research has shown that post-graduate outcomes improve when students experiment with their own projects outside of the classroom.

The Makerspace also supports the

joining of creativity, art and technology. One recent graduate, an art major, shifted his creative focus to technologically integrated sculptural art after studying practical computing. His first small piece for the class was a welded metal flower with solar power LEDs. For his capstone project, he created a large forest with a waterfall. With video projection and audio synthesis elements, the piece required fabrication, soldering, electronics and computing skills and tools.

The unstructured space to try out ideas that combine art and technology, Jones explained, helped this student succeed with such a large-scale project. "By seeing other student projects and messing around with the machines, students get inspiration and gain a broader understanding of the intersection between technology, design, art and computer science," Jones said. [B](#)

Building Kinder Leaders

By Sree P S '24

Jared Aaronson is an experiential learner. He was part of the team that ran the first data-processing centers in Saigon (now Ho Chi Minh City) during the Vietnam war. After he returned to the United States, he became a programmer, and he



▲ Summer '25 in Spain
▲ Gabriela '25 in Argentina

Photos submitted

attributes his success to the hands-on training in Saigon.

Travel is another means through which he learned experientially. Aaronson was born in New York and completed his education at the University of Alabama and hitchhiked around the U.S. during that time. Later in life, he traveled to places like New Zealand and South Africa.

Aaronson sought to understand the world's diversity through food as a medium that helps people communicate interculturally. He thinks that appreciating someone else's culinary tradition grows an understanding that transcends linguistic and cultural differences between people and fosters connections.

He also understands that not everyone has the resources to learn from the world the same way he did. Aaronson wants America's youth to build bridges between the cultures of the world, and he was captivated by Berea's student body. For him, the diversity of Berea's students creates an atmosphere where students learn from each other's experiences.

To expand Berea students' international vision, Aaronson donated to create a fund that pays for students to obtain a U.S. passport, the key to participating in Berea's many education abroad programs like the Berea International Summer Term (BIST).

"The youth of today are going to be tomorrow's leaders," Aaronson said. "I think going to another country and seeing and experiencing other cultures and environments is essential to building kinder leaders."

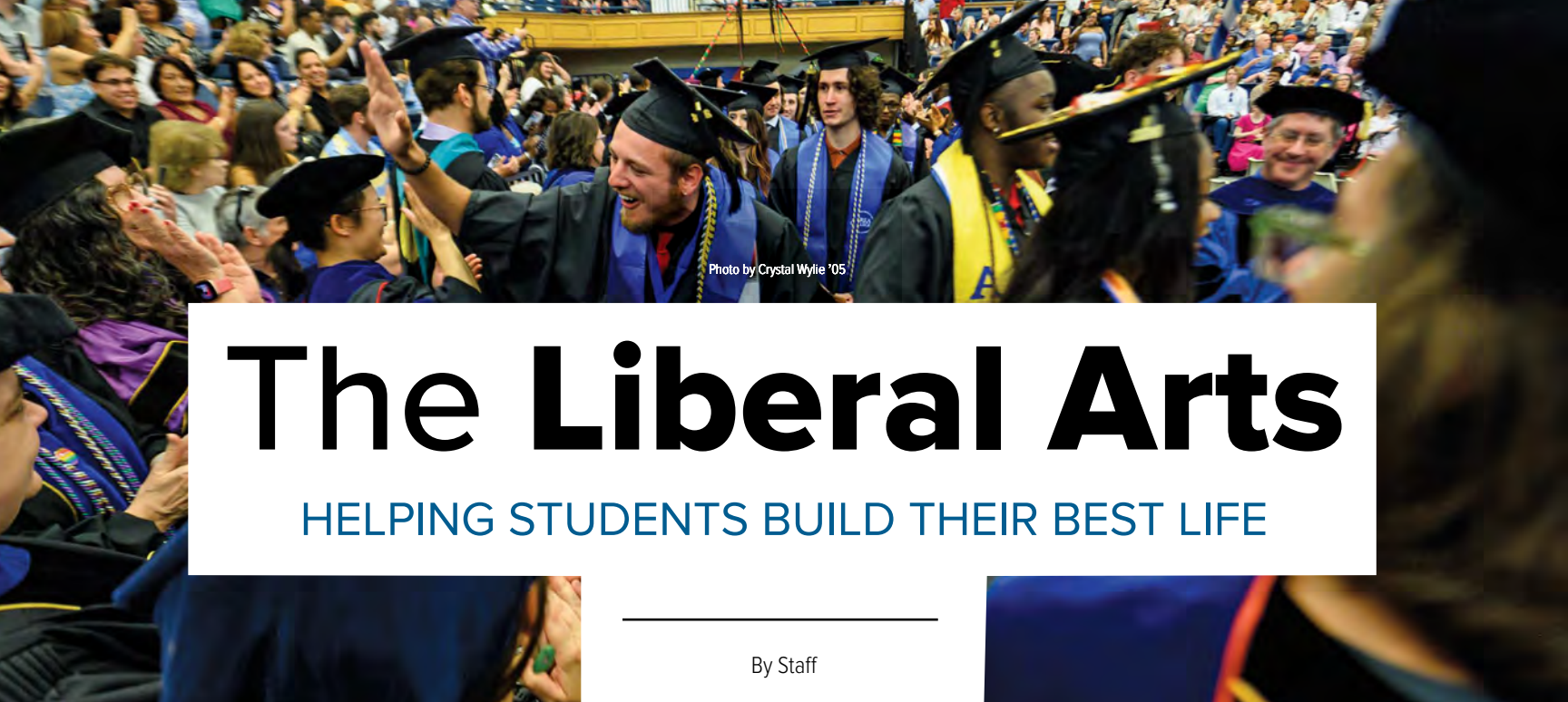
Aaronson wants to give Berea's

▼ Jakeisha '25 in Japan
▼ Christina '26 in Italy

Photos submitted



students the opportunity to expand their worldview through their travels and learn from the world. He has not been to campus yet, but eagerly awaits the *Berea College Magazine* to see what adventures Berea students are pursuing. [B](#)



The Liberal Arts

HELPING STUDENTS BUILD THEIR BEST LIFE

By Staff

Providing a liberal arts education is one of Berea's core commitments. Even though most students pursue a college degree to get the career they dream of, a liberal arts education is less about training for a particular job, and more about being the best possible version of yourself in whatever job you're doing. Berea thinks of it as making a more complete citizen. It's about the nurse who connects with patients beyond "where does it hurt?" It's about computer programmers who ask important ethical questions about the technology they've created. And it's about the scientist who thinks about things "beyond the bench." If students focus on making a life, making a living will follow.

Students need all the liberal arts to understand what it means to be human. It is a balance of depth—learning about various academic subjects—and breadth of study—about drilling down into an academic discipline. In liberal arts, students' coursework is taken from different disciplines while pursuing a major that follows their educational and professional interests.

"The liberal arts is about educating the whole person, thinking about what an informed citizen should be in the world," said Associate Provost Eileen McKiernan-González. "It's training beyond a profession. It's more about

the person and expanding a mind that can then delve into other areas."

Fostering Exploration

A Berea liberal arts education fosters exploration, innovation, rigorous thinking and clear spoken and written communication. Liberal arts education prepares students for many possible professions while inspiring and readying them to confront and responsibly engage with an ever-changing world. The liberal arts, beyond mere vocational training, prepares students for the world as it is and as it will be. It's one of the reasons virtually every graduate from Berea will say that the College prepared them very well for further education in graduate or professional school.

Adaptability

The world changes quickly, and a liberal arts education enables a person to change with it. The value of a Berea education is that it prepares students for what they don't expect. The world their parents grew up in and the world they see right now is not the world they will be confronting in five, 10 or 15 years. This ability to adapt, communicate and think about ethical concerns may be why a liberal arts graduate earns more, over time, than graduates from other kinds of

vocation-focused or specialized institutions.

Making Connections

Berea's students make connections from one subject to another. They are curious and reflect on what is personally meaningful to them, nurturing many aspects of themselves. Making that human connection in all professions is an important aspect of not just having a good life, but also being a good member of a business, organization or institution, no matter what direction each student pursues.

"The value of a liberal arts education is that it makes you think about people outside of yourself when you're doing the work you're doing," said Dr. Scott Heggen, computer science associate professor.

Connections are important whether you are a doctor, entrepreneur, engineer or schoolteacher. The liberal arts teaches there is something more to existence than figuring out how to make a living—it's about also seeing one's interdependence and interconnectedness with others. Thoughts of human connectedness have practical applications for any profession. The computer scientist, for example, must think beyond the algorithm one creates and ask if they are thinking about people and the world for which they're creating it. **B**

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Photo by Crystal Wylie '05

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BEREA BLACK HISTORY AND HERITAGE EXHIBIT

In collaboration with Our Land of Promise, the Berea Arts Council hosted the Berea Black History and Heritage Exhibit in Fall 2024, celebrating and honoring the vibrant history and legacy of Berea's Black community.



▲ Top photos: Various artifacts and photos collected from African American community members lined the walls and display cases in the Berea Arts Council exhibit. These pieces show the rich and diverse history of Black families in Madison County.

◀ Sharyn Mitchell '69 has researched African American history in Berea and all of Madison County for decades. Much of the Arts Council exhibit came together under her direction.

Photos by Crystal Wylie '05



PLAY VIDEO
Scan QR code or go to
the link below to learn
more about the exhibit.

<https://magazine.berea.edu/berea-in-the-community/berea-black-history-and-heritage-exhibit/>

Berea Named No. 1 Liberal Arts College

Washington Monthly has ranked Berea College the top liberal arts college in the nation in its 2024 College Guide and Rankings, up one spot from the 2023 rankings.

Berea College retained its ranking as the No. 1 Best Bang for the Buck College in the South in this year's guide. Additional rankings include No. 1 in Pell performance, No. 17 in service (up five spots from last year), and No. 2 in social mobility.

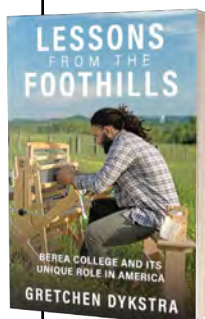
In its discussion of the Best Bang for the Buck schools, *Washington Monthly* said, "much more credit should go to the regionally focused public and private universities on this list that consistently manage to do more with less," adding that Berea College is one of two colleges leading

the way in the South as an "institution that keeps prices in check while generating strong outcomes."

Berea College's mission is to provide students of lesser means with a high-quality liberal arts education. At Berea, 96 percent of students receive federal Pell Grants, and the average annual household income of students' families is about \$32,000. Nationally, graduation rates for students in that demographic are only in the mid-teens. By contrast, about two-thirds of Berea students graduate on time, with many going on to earn advanced degrees.

The *Washington Monthly* College Guide and Rankings can be found online at: <https://washingtonmonthly.com/2024-college-guide/>

Book About Berea College Newly Released



Released in late September, "Lessons from the Foothills: Berea College and its Unique Role in America" by Gretchen Dykstra profiles modern Berea College. The book is the first to focus on contemporary Berea and its eight Great Commitments—principles that guide the College's aspirations and community. Each chapter explores the history, practice and significance of one Great Commitment, from providing opportunity for the marginalized to high academic standards and environmental sustainability. Drawing from interviews with alumni, students, faculty and staff, it offers an engaging portrait of this historic institution and its enduring dedication to academic excellence and service. Published by University Press of Kentucky.

Berea Students Earn Gilman Scholar Awards

Berea College students earned 11 of the 1,600 Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarships awarded by the U.S. Department of State in December 2024. Gilman scholars come from all 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico, in the fall 2024 cycle. All scholarship recipients are U.S. undergraduate students with established high financial need as federal Pell Grant recipients. On average, 65 percent of Gilman recipients are from rural areas and small towns across the U.S., and half are first-generation college or university students. Since the program's inception in 2001, more than 44,000 Gilman scholars have studied or interned in more than 170 countries around the globe. Supported by the U.S. Congress, the Gilman Scholarship is an initiative of the U.S. Department of State's Bureau

of Educational and Cultural Affairs and is aided in its implementation by the Institute of International Education. To learn more about the Gilman Scholarship and its recipients, including this newest cohort, visit gilmanscholarship.org.

Berea's Gilman scholarship awardees for the fall 2024 cycle are:

- Autumn '26, studying in Italy in summer 2025
- Henry '25, studying in Spain in spring 2025
- Chloe '26, studying in Tanzania in summer 2025
- Rely '26, studying in Taiwan in summer 2025
- Vung '25, studying in Tanzania in winter 2024-25
- Nova '26, studying in Ireland in spring 2025

Berea Moot Court Teams Earn Bid to Nationals

Berea Moot Court team participated in two regional tournaments. Competition team members Jordan '24, Brian '26, Andrea '25, Sydney '27, Daniela '24 and Zora '27 compete in pairs in both the "orals" competition and the "brief writing" competition against colleges and universities from across the country. In November, Jordan and Brian competed as an orals pair in the South Texas Regional at the Texas A&M University School of Law in Fort Worth, while Andrea and Sydney competed in the D.C. Regional orals tournament at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C.

Despite the presence of major university moot programs, such as the University of Texas, Baylor, Texas Tech, and the University of Louisiana at the South Texas Regional, Jordan and Brian cut a path through the competition. As a second-year moot team member, Brian scored an average of 90.1 percent from all judges in all categories during the first tournament day of preliminaries. Jordan, in his third year of Moot Court, scored an incredible 95.2 percent average during the first day's rounds across all judges and categories—an average strong enough to earn him third place in the tournament's Top Orator rankings (missing first place by only 0.7 percent). As a competing pair, they made it through three rounds before being beaten by Baylor University. That Baylor pair then went on to the finals and won the tournament.

Jordan and Brian's scores in the South Texas Regional earned them a coveted "bid" to the national tournament series where only the highest qualifiers in each regional tournament will face off against each other as they chase the overall national championship. This achievement by Jordan and Brian represents only the second time a Berea pair has received a national bid.

- Marcelo '25, studying in Greece in winter 2024-25
- Tristan '27, studying in Taiwan in summer 2025
- Elyssa '27, studying in Taiwan in summer 2025
- Syd '26, studying in Tanzania in summer 2025
- Carly '27, studying in Japan and South Korea in summer 2025



Dr. Rashaad Abdur-Rahman '03
Distinguished Alumnus Award

Dr. Rashaad Abdur-Rahman '03

Dr. Rashaad Abdur-Rahman '03 is a dedicated advocate for racial and social justice, with a proven track record of leading transformative change in organizations nationwide. As the founder and CEO of the Racial Healing Project, he empowers groups and institutions to embrace anti-racist, anti-white supremacist principles through comprehensive strategies, training and action planning.

Dr. Abdur-Rahman's expertise is deeply rooted in his academic background and extensive professional experience. With degrees in psychology and social work and doctoral studies specializing in organizational change, he brings a unique blend of theoretical knowledge and practical application to his work. His career journey includes roles in child and family behavioral health services, violence prevention initiatives, executive leadership positions within government agencies and work promoting a just multi-racial democracy.

Throughout his career, Abdur-Rahman remains committed to equity and justice. He has led initiatives to address systemic racism and promote belonging within organizations from local nonprofits to state-level agencies. His work has had a significant impact on communities across the country, fostering a more just and equitable society.

Beyond his professional accomplishments, Abdur-Rahman is actively involved in his community. He serves on the boards of the Muhammad Ali Center and Seven Counties Services, contributing his expertise and passion to these important organizations.

Abdur-Rahman's personal mission statement—to work boldly and courageously to achieve racial and social justice—is a testament to his unwavering dedication to creating a more equitable world. His leadership, expertise and commitment make him a powerful force for positive change.



Charles Glenn Ihrig '63
Alumni Loyalty Award

Charles Glenn Ihrig '63

Born in Whitesburg, Ky., Charles Glenn Ihrig graduated from Whitesburg High School in 1959 and completed his bachelor's degree at Berea College in 1963. The following year he taught high school in Monroe, Conn. In 1965, Dean Kenneth Thompson encouraged Ihrig to teach in southern Africa at Nyatsime College. When Ihrig returned to the U.S., he worked in three positions at the College: Alumni Building director, Edwards Residence Hall director and assistant finance director for the Council of the Southern Mountains, to which Loyal Jones—Appalachian scholar and namesake of Berea's Loyal Jones Appalachian Center—recruited him. Later, Ihrig was drafted and served as a sergeant in the U.S. Army in 1968-69.

After his military service, Ihrig became the business manager at the Public Welfare Foundation. He was promoted to executive director, then president and CEO. During his 22-year career, Ihrig grew the organization from three employees making \$1 million in grants to 17 employees making \$17 million in grants annually.

Berea alumni pay forward their education in myriad ways, and Ihrig has generously given his talent, time and treasure. His prolific volunteer record from 1970 to this day includes volunteering at WAMU, his public radio station and at the Smithsonian as a docent at the Natural History Museum, the American Indian Museum, the National Museum of African American History and Culture and the National Folklife Festival. Ihrig also served on the WWII Memorial opening celebration. His other volunteer commitments focus on low-income housing programs, feeding programs for those experiencing food insecurity and programs supporting battered women and abused children.

At Berea, Ihrig has generously funded internships in Washington, D.C., and Kentucky, remembering his alma mater that helped him not only make a living, but also a life—one very well lived.



Dr. Michael and Becky Berheide
Honorary Alumnus/Alumna Recognition

Dr. Michael and Becky Berheide

Dr. Michael Berheide arrived on Berea College's campus in 1981 after receiving his bachelor's degree in political science from Ohio Northern University. He completed his Ph.D. in political science from Indiana University in 1984. He became a full professor at Berea in 1999 and later was awarded the Seabury Award for Teaching. Through his time at Berea College, he taught classes in political science and general education.

Michael was a beloved teacher and mentor, guiding students who study political science and has served as chair of the Political Science department and been on nearly every Berea College committee and council. His commitment to Berea's students through support of student organizations and athletics is impressive.

Michael has also engaged with the larger community, serving various leadership roles in professional organizations (especially the Kentucky Political Science Association—which designated him as one of 13 "Distinguished Political Scientists"), local schools, churches, youth sports, community service organizations and even as the drummer in several bands.

After nearly half a century of teaching and mentoring Berea College students and serving the Berea College community, the mark Michael leaves is indelible. He has been a leader, dedicated to teaching and committed to Berea College and its students. His generous gifts have deepened this community.

After graduating Montpelier High School, Becky Berheide obtained her bachelor's degree in health and physical education at Ohio Northern University. She began working at Berea College's Student Craft warehouse in 1993. Becky served several roles, including services coordinator, shipping clerk/office worker at the Student Crafts warehouse and a salesclerk for the Log House Craft Gallery. Becky also

had a seasonal position at Berea College Book Store from 1994 to 1997, and she worked at the Berea College Log House Gift Shop from 1996 to 1997.

In December 1997, Becky took an administrative assistant role in Facilities Management. Retiring as the office manager at Facilities Management, Becky has served many other roles in this position, such as student labor supervisor, administrative assistant and support team leader, and she provided accounting support to the capital projects manager. Becky also taught dance aerobics and step aerobics classes at the College beginning in 1989.

Becky has been a valued student labor supervisor for Facilities Management. She has always presented herself as a role model for other team members and students by acting with integrity and showing concern for others. Under her guidance and direction, student workers are courteous and pleasant in their interactions with all customers. In her student labor meetings, Becky stressed the importance of customer service, enriching soft-skills development in Berea's students.

Becky has been dedicated to her jobs and the Berea College mission. Her knowledge and work in each role have been valued and appreciated.



Dr. Rachel Saunders Carr '08
Distinguished Alumna Award

Dr. Rachel Saunders Carr '08

Dr. Rachel Saunders Carr '08 is an accomplished physician and educator in obstetrics and gynecology, and she serves as an associate professor at the University of Kentucky College of Medicine. Born in Lexington, Ky., and raised in Birmingham, Ala., Dr. Carr returned to Kentucky to pursue higher education, earning a Bachelor of Arts in Biology, cum laude, from Berea College.

Carr obtained her medical degree from the University of Kentucky College of Medicine, followed by a residency in obstetrics and gynecology. Since 2016, Carr has held various academic positions at the University of Kentucky, including assistant and associate professor roles, where she focuses on medical student education and the management of pregnancy for first-time moms.

A passionate advocate for medical student education, Carr has developed and led numerous teaching activities, including lectures on reproductive health and clinical practices for both medical students and residents. She is actively involved in mentoring students throughout their medical training, guiding them through residency applications and providing invaluable clinical insights.

Carr is board certified by the American Board of Obstetrics and Gynecology and holds a fellowship in the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology. She also is a recognized leader in the field and has received several awards for excellence in teaching, including the APGO Excellence in Teaching Award and the Humanism in Teaching Award.

In addition to clinical and educational responsibilities, Carr is engaged in research related to women's health, with a particular focus on improving patient outcomes for those with abnormal pap smears. Her commitment to enhancing the quality of medical education and patient care continues to inspire students and colleagues.



Alix Heintzman '09
Distinguished Alumna Award

Alix Heintzman '09

Alix Heintzman '09, grew up outside of Bowling Green, Ky. She graduated from Berea at 19 years old with a history degree, and she spent the next few years disappointing her parents. She harvested blueberries in Maine, spent a summer as a Tractor Supply cashier and lived in a van for a while before going back to school. She got her master's degree in history from the University of Vermont in 2013, where she studied empire and environment.

She was an adjunct professor at Eastern Kentucky University when she wrote her first novel. "The Ten Thousand Doors of January" was published in 2019 under the name Alix E. Harrow, because she was afraid her students would Google her. Since then, she's published two more novels, a couple of novellas and many short fiction pieces. She's won a Hugo and a British Fantasy award, and she has been nominated for the Nebula, Locus, Goodreads Choice and Southern Book Prize. Her books have been selected for Reese's Book club, translated into more than a dozen languages and hit the *New York Times* bestseller list.

She lives in Charlottesville, Va., with her husband and their two perfect kids.



Alumni Office and President Select Areas to Engage Alumni

The Alumni Office and President's Office collaborated to enhance alumni engagement in highly alumni-concentrated regions. Out of our top 10 regions, eight held meet-and-greet events with Dr. Cheryl Nixon. Cities included: Birmingham, Ala., Greenville, S.C., Atlanta, Ga., Lexington, Ky., Cincinnati, Ohio, Louisville, Ky., Nashville, Tenn.; and Knoxville, Tenn. There also were alumni gatherings in south central Kentucky and Winston-Salem, N.C.

▲ Cincinnati alumni gather with staff from Berea's Alumni Philanthropy office and President Cheryl Nixon to connect as alumni in the southern Ohio/northern Kentucky area.

Photo by Crystal Wylie '05



◀ Top left: Alumna Joan Jarrell Gould '81 and her husband, Alan Gould, talk with President Cheryl Nixon at the Louisville-area alumni gathering.

Photo by Ehku Say '26



◀ Top right: Ivan Santos, spouse of alumna Taylor Santos '17, shows their daughter the colorful art lining the walls at the Lexington-area alumni gathering.

Photo by Crystal Wylie '05

▲ Bottom left: At the Atlanta-area gathering, Chris Awosika '05 greets a fellow alumnus with a smile and a hug.

Photo by Breon Thomas '11

▲ Bottom right: Leslie Porter '77 (right) shakes hands with Bob Boyce '66 at the Knoxville-area alumni gathering, joined by Steve Boyce '75 and Jean Boyce '66.

Photo by Crystal Wylie '05

BEREA HOMECOMING 2024



▲ Demetris '27 attempts a layup during the men's basketball game against Sewanee. The Mountaineers won 74-70.

Photo by Maya Meads '27



▼ Country Dancers alumni gathered to dance and fellowship during the Homecoming festivities.

Photo by Jayla Leavell '25



▲ The Center for Excellence in Learning through Service hosted a 5K to raise money for its Better Together campaign that helps families in need in the Berea community.

Photo by Sarah Heggen

▲ Cheerleaders Africa '27 (back) and Quincey '25 stun the audience with toe touches after a three-point shot.

Photo by Crystal Wylie '05

▲ An audience member stood in worship and praise during the Black Music Ensemble performance in Union Church.

Photo by Maya Meads '27



▲ Valentine '25 and Mam-Mary '28 were crowned winners of the Black Student Union pageant.

Photo by Maya Meads '27

▼ Cotton candy added a sweet touch to Berea Fest, where members of the campus community, alumni and their families enjoyed food trucks, a DJ, lawn games and an inflatable bounce house.

Photo by Crystal Wylie '05

▼ President Cheryl Nixon chats with alumni at a reception at Boone Tavern. The three-day event honored six classes marking milestone reunions.

Photo by Brooklynn Kenney

▼ Blue, the Mountaineer mascot, handed out stickers and cheered on children playing a giant Connect Four game on Fairchild Lawn.

Photo by Brooklynn Kenney



▲ Emily LaDouceur '04 and Christie Shrestha '04 enjoy catching up with each other during Berea Fest.

Photo by Crystal Wylie '05

▲ Alumni from the class of 2004 pose for a selfie during their class photo session on the steps of Fairchild Hall.

Photo by Crystal Wylie '05

▲ Alumni Award recipients enjoyed a laugh during the awards reception at the Boone Tavern Event Center.

Photo by Brooklynn Kenney



ALUMNI CLASS PHOTOS



Photos by Kalilah Hicks '27

Front row: Heather McNew Schill, Wendy Norfleet, Michelle Shupe Williams **2nd row:** Sylvester Little Jr, Marisa Aull, Amy Burkhardt, Heather Huddleston, Shawnta Davis-Earwood, Chris Thomas **3rd row:** Silas 'Jermaine' Dye, Strider Deaver, Eric North, Joe Dinwiddie, Jonathan Johnson



Front row: Adrienne Eisenmenger, Sarah Shannon Kindler, Angela Hunt, Baron Wolf, Adwoa Nyamekye Blackburn, Melissa Lowe, Sam Wade, Tommy Clapp, Crystal Wylie, Emily LaDouceur, Christina Caul **2nd row:** Rolland Blair, Greg Begin, Christie Shrestha, Elizabeth Marie Bakkar, Karis Russell, Angel Todd **3rd row:** Carrie Blair, Lowell Sellards, Naomi Carrick Sellards, Jennifer Shepherd, Kara Crispin, Leah Johnson Thompson **4th row:** Amanda Richie, Angela McAmis, Abigail Derringer, Amanda Blakley Hale, Rebekah Lyttle Posadas, Brooke Watkins **5th row:** Heather Evans, Kaya Beyan, Selena Orengo, Felicia Fefe Sullivan, Tiffany Davis Storey **6th row:** James Heffernan, Jennifer Williams, Theresa Cash, Patricia Tarquino, Trinaye Pierson, Julie Stewart, Leslie Yow, Nate Green



Front row: Roxanne Bolen, Danielle Pelenkahu, Anna Rose **2nd row:** Aaron Crawford, Anita Coleman, LaQuinta Bailey



Front row: Annaliese Norris, Kimberly Bihl, Erica Woods, Victoria Bauer, Lindsey Heuscher, Katie Newville-Sinkel **2nd row:** Hsin-Ta Tsai, Stephany Blaney, Joel Cecil, Samantha Leslie, Danielle Owens **3rd row:** Markcus Kitchens, Raissa Cecil, Jelisa Smallwood, Suzanne Dazo **4th row:** Betsy Crabtree, Maria Diaz, Johanna Hall-Rappolee **5th row:** Amanda Butler, Cheyenne McGraw Hubbard, Christopher Rightmyer, Emily Nugent **6th row:** Rachel Burnside, Jessica Fosbenner, Mira Denton, Ashley Thomas Schroader **7th row:** Gary Thornsberry, Ashley Stephens, Kaila Noland, John Schroader, Karen Reynolds



Front row: Christian Grentzel, Amber Follin Prater, Liam Taylor, Loren Weber, Adara Scott, Hunter Malone **2nd row:** Angelica Gantt, Bethany Howard, Dayzaughn Graves, Alondra Barrera Garcia, Tanika Chasteen, Kris Anderson Wentland **3rd row:** Andreea Teban, Lakshya Bharadwaj, Corey Bush, Emily Brown, Katie Lane **4th row:** Kelsey Tippitt, Kiley Bizzle-Brown, Courtney Baker, Arres Reilly, Tiana Moorer **5th row:** Emily North, Sam McMahan



Kelli Thomas, Maddie Pierce

The Berea College Alumni Association enjoys hearing from Bereans from all over the world. The “Class Notes” section of *Berea College Magazine* reports verifiable news you wish to share with your alumni friends and associates: careers, weddings, retirements, births, and other items of importance to our alumni. Please include your class year and name used while attending Berea. Notes may be edited for style and length. While we will make every effort to put your information into the next issue of BCM, some delays may occur. We appreciate your understanding.

1954

John K. Gwinn recently attended his 70th reunion and sat alone at a table with his wife. He noticed the campus has changed greatly in the past 70 years.

1956

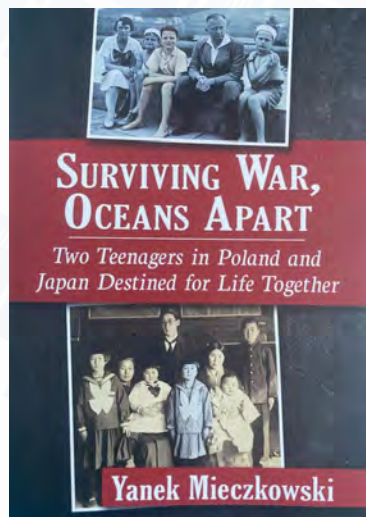
Tom Reesor retired after 47 years as a United States immigration agent.

1957

Wally Truesdell's play “Sanctuary” was selected for the Foothills Arts Council's fourth Annual One-Act Play Festival, Sept. 20-22, 2024, at SUNY Fulton-Montgomery Community College, Johnstown, N.Y. Wallace was active in the Berea Players. Contact Truesdell at: wtruesdell@nycap.rr.com

1958

Seiko Kawakami Mieczkowski's World War II experiences and journey to Berea College are chronicled in a new book “Surviving War, Oceans Apart: Two Teenagers in Poland and Japan Destined for Life Together” (McFarland Press, 2024), authored by her son, historian Yanek Mieczkowski. Living in Hokkaido, Japan, during WWII, Seiko was forced to leave school and work in a wartime factory. Ten years after the war's end, she entered Berea College. The book details Seiko's life in Berea and the mentorship she received from the college's legendary history professor, Dr. Joseph Van Hook. Seiko eventually became a U.S. citizen,



professor and author, marrying Bogdan Mieczkowski, who fought for the Polish Army in the 1944 Warsaw Uprising. Now retired, Seiko lives in Cocoa Beach, Fla.

1966

Ron Golliday and wife, Ann, celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary with a river cruise starting in Budapest, Hungary, and ending in Bucharest, Romania. The couple were married after Golliday's sophomore year at Berea. They are blessed with three children and seven grandchildren. When not traveling, they live quietly in Edinburg, Va., with their puppy, Moxie.

1969

Sharyn Richards Mitchell Fd. '65 received two state awards for her work in collaboration with the Richmond Tourism Commission and the Madison County Historical Society. She received the Kentucky Historical Society Publication award and from the Blue Grass Trust Historic Preservation, the Clay Lancaster Heritage Education award for the booklet “Footprints: Traces of Black History in Richmond, Kentucky.” Read more: <https://bit.ly/4f2SQVT> and here: <https://bit.ly/3UvQabk> You can watch an interview with Mitchell discussing her work here: <https://bit.ly/4frqlvv>

1970

Ronald Carl Dockery's wife, Charlotte, passed away April 8, 2024 after 32 years



of marriage. She was diagnosed with Stage 4 pancreatic cancer in early March 2024. Dockery sends his thanks to fellow alumni **Gary Hilton '70**, **Bill Melton '69** and his wife, **Nancy Melton '73**, for their attendance at the funeral service at Greenville United Methodist Church in Greenville, Ky., and all the other alumni who sent their condolences.

1975

Dr. Merry Embree Stewart published a historical nonfiction book “Standing On Our Ancestors' Shoulders: Transformations of African American Life in Rural Georgia from 1930 to 1970s,” which is available on Amazon. This book provides firsthand accounts of 25 storytellers' historical transformations in African American communities in Georgia between the 1930s and 1970s. The storytellers' unique perspectives and personal experiences capture emotions often absent from other written records. These memories/stories provide insight beyond the lives of these African American storytellers from Columbia County and Richmond County, Ga. The shared memories also reflect the lives of other Black Americans living in the rural, segregated South in the early 20th century.



1979

James Stratman joined Hillsdale College in Hillsdale, Mich., as friend and supporter. He is also enrolled in their classical liberal arts courses, including constitution studies, politics, literature, chemistry, religion, philosophy, economics and the fine arts.

1981

Susan Jordan was recently promoted to clinical supervisor at an addictions clinic. She is training staff and providing addictions counseling. She lives with her wife, Debbie Barrett, who is retired from grant-proposal writing and management at a large domestic violence, sexual assault, and child abuse center. Their son, Barrett, is a senior engineering student at the local university. Their older son serves in the Army as a warrant officer in Alabama with his wife, who is studying veterinary medicine at Auburn University.



1982

Dr. Tijan M. Sallah retired from the World Bank in 2015, where he was a senior economist and sector manager for agriculture and rural development. Dr. Sallah is also an accomplished writer and has published, among other genres, six poetry collections to date. His latest poetry collection is "I Come from a Country" (Africa World Press, 2022), which has received several favorable reviews and is available on Amazon. Most recently, Dr. Sallah was featured in the prestigious "The Oxford Companion to Modern Poetry," edited by Ian Hamilton and Jeremy Noel-Tod, which according to the back cover features the most "influential poets writing in English from 1910 to the present day...covering international poets such as Don Paterson, John Kinsella...in addition to updated entries on well-established figures such as T.S. Eliot and Carol Ann Duffy."

1984

Gaitley Stevenson-Mathews was honored with the Leadership Award at a vibrant Latin Fiesta and Business Expo at the Sea Cliff Yacht Club hosted by the North Shore Hispanic Chamber of Commerce (NSHCC). The event, held on July 18, 2024, drew a capacity crowd, bringing together local businesses, community members and cultural performers for a celebration filled with networking, entertainment and a showcase of Hispanic culture. President Connie Pinilla expressed, "We could not have been more pleased with the turnout

and the enthusiasm of everyone who attended. The support shown for the expo and for Gaitley was truly heartwarming. We were very appreciative of all who turned out for the event, and it was a special privilege to have the opportunity to honor Gaitley, who does so much for our community." Stevenson-Mathews is a founding board member and former council member. Read more: <https://bit.ly/4hmRJSB>

1993

Dr. Suzannah Hicks completed her Doctor of Business Administration - Organizational Development from Johnson & Wales University in July. Dr. Hicks is an artificial intelligence strategist for Merchants Fleet, the fourth largest fleet management company in North America. She lives in Strafford, N.H. with her wife, Kim Armstrong, and son, Daniel Rately, of Portsmouth, N.H. Her LinkedIn profile is <https://bit.ly/48vj804>



MARRIED: Rebecca Lewis Burns to Johnathan Burns on Feb. 15, 2022.

1997

Carolyn Coffey Pennington was an invited guest reader of personal writings for *Kentucky Monthly* magazine's 25th anniversary event at Boyle County Library and again at Penn General Store on May 18-19, 2024.

Rachael N. Pettigrew presented at a convocation in October 2022. She graduated with a degree in child and family studies. She has been a faculty member and a department chair in Bissett School of Business at Mount Royal University in Calgary, Alberta, Canada since 2015. She was honored to receive a Distinguished Faculty Award from MRU; only one is given each year. Read more: <https://bit.ly/3YJbhcl>

Mahjabeen Rafiuddin is humbled and honored to have received the University of Kentucky College of Social Work Hall of Fame award.

1998

Elizabeth McQueary-Loiacono was the music director for the production "Brother Wolf," and she wanted to give the production an authentic Appalachian feel. Read more: <https://bit.ly/48qRMsq>

1999

Sara James left preK-12 education and has moved to higher education. She is now a residence hall director at South Dakota School of Mines and Technology. Go Rockers!

2000

Rebecca Jones Wren, who has a long history of family tradition at Berea College, is proud to share her daughter, Caroline, is following in the footsteps of the Jones family and joined Berea's incoming first-year students in fall 2024. Her great-great grandparents ran the College bakery and confections, her great-grandpa rang the bells in Phelps Stokes, her grandfather was a nontraditional graduate and teaches in the foreign language department. Wren graduated in 2000 and now leads with a servant's heart in the non-profit sector. Caroline comes by her intellectual curiosity by both nature and nurture and she is so proud of her decision to continue the Berea College tradition.

2002

Bobi Conn was published in *Time Magazine* for her piece about misunderstood complexities of life in rural America. This is also one of the major themes of her latest book "Someplace Like Home." Read more: <https://bit.ly/3AI7TLG>

2003

Angie Young Clapp recently received a promotion to director of clinician development with Optum Home & Community. She is a family nurse practitioner and received her BSN at Berea College and MSN at Carson-New-



man College. She worked in family practice for six years before starting house calls (providing home visits to the geriatric population) with United Health Group/Optum. She was promoted to clinical team manager for the past five years, covering east Tennessee, and, in January 2023, became director of clinician development within the home and community division of Optum. She lives with her spouse, **Tommy Clapp '04**, who owns his own practice as a licensed marriage and family therapist (LMFT) and teaches at Carson-Newman College. They have four children and live in Jefferson City, Tenn. Their daughter, Sophie Clapp, is a first-year student at Berea College.



2008

Lesia Denise Smith Chaffins attended Eastern Kentucky University to gain her Master of Public Health (MPH) and went on to work in various public health areas, but ultimately decided a few years ago to attend the University of Kentucky's Physician's Assistant program. She graduated in May 2024 and has been hired at Lake Cumberland Regional Hospital in Neurosurgery. Her husband, Ashton, is really proud of her grit and



determination to follow her dreams, even after all these years. Grit and determination are traits he attributes to many Berea graduates he knows.

Willow Gene Free recently presented at the International Council of English Braille eighth General Assembly in Auckland, New Zealand. It was a special occasion because it was the 200th anniversary of the invention of braille.

Free is a certified braille transcriber, and her career is currently as a Global Innovations product manager at the American Printing House for the Blind, with a focus on braille, tactile graphics and technology. She is a member of the World Braille Council and is a co-chair on the development of a new braille file type called eBraille (<https://bit.ly/3AonGJJ>) She is one of the product managers of a revolutionary new multiline braille display called the Monarch (<https://bit.ly/3Uu9jdH>).

Free gives presentations all over the United States and sometimes internationally. She makes it a point to mention how Berea College changed her life by giving her the opportunity to get a college degree with very little debt. Her career is an attempt to apply that education in a way that positively impacts other people. She is a trans woman, and her pronouns are she/her.



2009

BIRTH: a daughter, Eliette Francine Sachs, born to **Aaron Sachs** and Ashley Sachs on Sept. 28, 2023. She was 6 pounds, 6 ounces and 19 inches long. She joined her big (human) sister, Lennon Amelia, and her fur sister, Stella Rae.



Cory Schlesinger will be re-entering the NBA with a position with the Detroit Pistons after becoming the strength and conditioning coach for Texas. Read more: <https://bit.ly/40nHHdW>

2011

Amanda Beers Caldwell graduated with a master's degree in nursing, rural family nurse practitioner, from Eastern Kentucky University in May 2024. She passed the American Association of Nurse Practitioners (AANP) national certification board examination in June 2024.



2012

Gerald Fitts is stationed in Augusta, Ga., at Fort Eisenhower.

Ana Megrelishvili published her first book "Finding Courage to Change," where she shares her journey of healing and resilience.



2014

BIRTH: a son, Fletcher, was born to **Christina Dillow Meadows** and **Doug Meadows '16** on May 30, 2024. Fletcher was born seven weeks early and was placed in the NICU to have more time to grow before coming home. Everyone was excited to bring him home.



Kaila Noland successfully defended her dissertation and graduated with her Ph.D. in molecular medicine from the University of Maryland, Baltimore. While attending she received various awards and honors including the UMB President's Fellowship, USGA vice president, Berea College's Olive Ruth Russell Fellowship and American Physiology Society Award, to highlight a few. She is transitioning to an ORISE Fellowship at the FDA to continue her work and enthusiasm for serving the public.



2015

Seth Bailey is a doctoral student in strategic leadership and is actively involved in alumni engagement with the University of Kentucky College of Social Work as assistant director of strategic operations alumni engagement.



BIRTH: a daughter, Penelope Lorena Blount, born to **Alyssa Blount** and **Duncan Blount '14** on May 18, 2024.



Rachel Mauro Hutchins graduated from Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine with her master's in applied positive psychology. She is excited to apply her new skills and knowledge to positively impact the workplace.



2017

Sierra Marling has joined West Virginia's largest newspaper, *The Charleston Gazette-Mail*, covering health and education in the Mountain State. Marling's big move comes following a two-year stint at the *Richmond Register*, where her journalism work earned her several awards from the Kentucky Press Association and recognition from local organizations such as Leadership Madison County.



2019

Ronnie Sloan Pessetto has been busy since her graduation in winter 2019. Since graduating from Berea, she has obtained her master's degree from the University of Utah in city and metropolitan planning and has received a leadership role with Salt Lake City Public Lands to bring alive parks throughout the city. She shares this news in hopes of inspiring other alumni and fellow students. Read more: <https://bit.ly/40ILH9h>

Derby Ozioma Chukwudi relocated in July 2024 to Hong Kong SAR China with JPMorgan to join the Asset Management Alternatives APAC Client team after spending five years at the New Jersey and New York offices in the U.S. private bank.



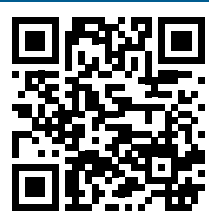
2020

Sara Holly graduated from Auburn University College of Veterinary Medicine in May 2024. Dr. Holly works as a veterinary surgeon in Columbus, Ga.



2021

MARRIED: Sydney Coleman to Zach Campbell '20 on May 18, 2024. Sydney and Zach met at Berea. They both ran track, which is where they first met. They started dating the second semester of her first year and have been together ever since.



SUBMIT CLASS NOTES

To submit class notes and photographs, scan QR code or go to:

www.berea.edu/alumni/class-note

Staff & Faculty

Dr. John S. Bolin
English, Theatre, Dean of
Faculty (1970-2009)
Sept. 10, 2024

Dr. Steve Boyce
Academic Vice President,
Provost (1969 – 2003)
July 12, 2024

Miriam David Brown
Director of Berea College
Health Services (2001-2014)
April 30, 2024

Peggy Burgio
Assistant Director of Student
Crafts (1985-2008)
May 30, 2024

Beverly Faye Cook
Finance Accounting Depart-
ment (1970-1978)
Berea College Postmaster
(1978-2023)
Aug. 11, 2024

Rosemary Dreager
Office of Development
(1999-2009)
July 25, 2024

Stephen D. Farmer '77
Woodcraft (1997-2010)
June 13, 2024

Dr. Paul David Nelson '65
History (1970-2005)
Sept. 8, 2024

1930s

Rose Wheeler '38
Obituary unavailable

1940s

Beryl King '41
July 2, 2024

Leonora Green '46
Aug. 10, 2023

Jessie Hibbitts Beasley
Acad. '45, '49
May 26, 2024

Alice Mildred Hook Colley
'49
Aug. 26, 2024

Robert Roy Lang '49
Obituary unavailable

Fannie Owens, RN '49
Obituary unavailable

1950s

Donal A. Funkhouser '50
Aug. 3, 2024

Cherry Davenport Kelly '51
July 17, 2024

LTC James Thomas Medley
'52
Aug. 6, 2024

Dr. John M. Ramsay '52
May 8, 2024

Rose Moore Ramsay '52
June 15, 2024

Dorothy Obi '53
Mar. 4, 2024

Jeanette Thurman '53
June 20, 2024

Donald G. Martin '54
July 1, 2024

Joe Douglas Powell '54
May 26, 2024

Ted Rogers '54
Aug. 1, 2024

Ledford L. Austin '55
May 18, 2024

James Edward Hyder Fd.
'50, '55
May 27, 2024

Billy Edd Wheeler '55
Sept. 16, 2024

Joyce Bryan '56
April 14, 2024

Hi Woong (Hugh) Kang '56
July 16, 2024

Sarah G. Gouge McKee '56
April 6, 2024

Barbara A. Power '56
June 4, 2024

Keith Jones '57
Obituary unavailable

Wilma Riddle Lambert '57
June 20, 2024

Mae Eudell Middleton '57
April 11, 2024

Robert Henry Wolfe '57
Oct. 22, 2023

Patsy Alley Browning '58
June 17, 2024

David L. Gillenwater '58
Dec. 22, 2023

Howard P. Miller Jr. '58
April 16, 2024

Robert Clell Miller Sr. '58
Aug. 9, 2024

Agnes Sirhun Woolsey '58
Oct. 23, 2024

Daniel Hall '59
June 19, 2024

Daniel Hance '59
Aug. 21, 2024

Joanne Schweitzer '59
Obituary unavailable

1960s

Dr. Lloyd M. Browning, MD.
'60
Aug. 5, 2024

Winifred Compton '60
June 1, 2021

Halburn L. Kitts '60
Nov. 13, 2023

Patricia Stiegler '61
May 4, 2024

Jean Blair-Robertson '62
April 23, 2024

James H. Brookshire '62
Oct. 10, 2023

Linda Lethgo '62
April 19, 2024

Thomas W. Little '62
June 20, 2024

Flay Spencer Price '62
July 12, 2024

Myra Riley '62
April 2, 2024

Carol Roland '62
June 7, 2024

Ronald Ratliff '63
May 24, 2024

Paul D. Nelson '65
Sept. 8, 2024

J. B. Trout Jr. '65
Obituary unavailable

Faith Briggs '67
June 7, 2024

Dr. Frank C. Fuller Jr. '67
April 9, 2024

Betty Jean Hall Fd. '64, '68
Aug. 16, 2024

Dennis R. Singleton '69
Jan. 23, 2024

1970s

Albert Johnson '70
July 27, 2024

Ronald J. Black '72
May 11, 2024

Carolyn Earehart '72
May 29, 2024

Kenneth Darrell Maynard
'72
Sept. 4, 2024

Stephen D. Farmer '77
June 13, 2024

David Levi McFarland '79
July 24, 2024

1980s

Sylvia Logan '80
June 28, 2024

Kenny Eugene Walker '81
June 9, 2024

Saundra Lynn Riddle '82
July 21, 2024

1990s

Jill Ellen Jeffries '90
July 28, 2024

Melody Linette Crawford '91
April 5, 2024

Omar Njie '95
March 2, 2024

Vadim Kornilov '99
Jan. 2, 2024



FULL OBITUARIES

To read full obituaries on our
website, scan QR code or go to
<https://magazine.berea.edu>



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our 50th Reunion Class of 1975
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1980, 1970, 1965, 1960, 1955 and 1950!**

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— THE —
DATE**

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2025**

Registration will begin on March 1.
More details to come...

***We can't wait to
welcome you home!***

**BEREA
COLLEGE**
ALUMNI

BEREA COLLEGE

MAGAZINE

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We would love it if you would put us on your travel itinerary and come visit us when the time is right for you. Reach out and let us know you're coming, and we'll be more than happy to make sure you have an enjoyable stay.

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www.bctrace.com

