



NEWSLETTER

President's Pen

July 2024

Dear Piedmont University Community,

While school may be (mostly) out for the summer, I'm excited to share with you that this year our campus is more vibrant and active than ever before! Piedmont is hosting six FCA sports camps over the summer months - basketball, running, tennis, and football, and three new-student summer orientations. These events bring over 1,000 young adults to our beautiful campus, providing an excellent opportunity to showcase everything we have to offer.

Summer Commencement is only a few short weeks away, and we look forward to celebrating these students' accomplishments!

As we look ahead, strategic planning for the upcoming academic year is well underway. And we're preparing to welcome the Fall 2024 freshman class on Saturday, August 10.

We remain focused on delivering high-quality education, fostering innovation, and promoting inclusivity across all aspects of university life.

I wish you all an enjoyable summer.

Sincerely,
Marshall M. Criser, III



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Melissa Jackson: Humble Professor. Emmy Winner.

by Terrie Ellerbee



Students ask Mass Communications Professor Melissa Jackson to bring her Emmys to class. She won several for specials and documentaries she researched, wrote, and produced.

Jackson is humble about it all.

"It's an honor to win. It's more of an honor to tell someone's story or portray an issue accurately. I am always so grateful for the talented team of friends and colleagues who bring a story together successfully. You may lead the charge, but you are only as good as your team in documentary production."

Jackson's first Emmy was for an entertainment program about "The Lion King." Later, working at a television station in Atlanta, she won one for a piece about loggerhead turtles and another covering South American "healers" who were scamming sick Americans. Jackson also covered red-carpet events and interviewed celebrities like George Clooney and Matthew McConaughey.

Now, she shares her passion for documentary filmmaking with Piedmont students in the film production program.

"I really like to watch a student discover a new area. When I have a student who doesn't believe they can write a screenplay and then eventually can visualize one very well — it's gratifying."

Jackson decided upon her career when she was in her 20s. She knew she wanted to tackle issues in-depth and find those fascinating details that make an audience want to watch.

"You may start with a plan, but a documentary takes all types of twists and turns to find the perfect angle. I now enjoy guiding Piedmont students through a similar process to find great stories."



Jackson recently added a new title: Chairman of the Writing Division for the Washington, D.C.-based Broadcast Education Association (BEA). She chaired the faculty screenwriting competition last year and co-chaired the student screenwriting competition two years ago. Piedmont film students know the BEA well and have brought home several Telly Awards for their video production work.

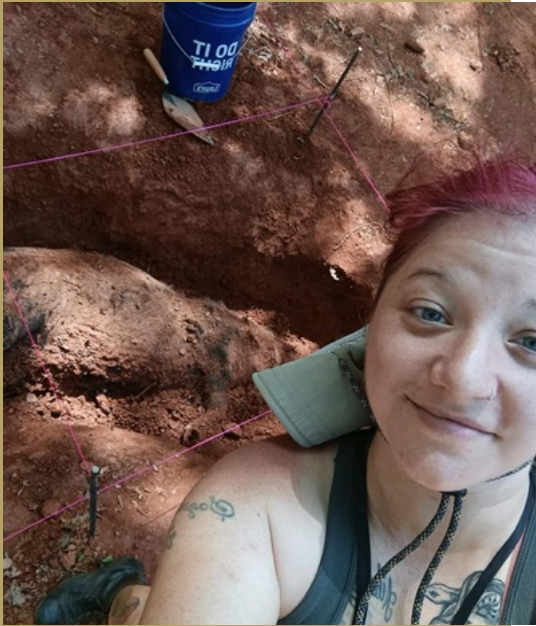
For more information about the film production program, visit piedmont.edu/film-production/.



Working Mom Among First Accepted into Piedmont's Forensic Science Graduate Program



by Terrie Ellerbee



Getting from high school into college is a narrow, simple path for many students. For students like Samantha "Sam" Williams, the route is more like a river, with bends and curves. Williams is the oldest of six siblings and the first in her family to achieve a four-year degree.

She fit in higher education classes between full-time work, getting married, having and raising two children, who are now 5 and 9 years old and homeschooled. The busy mom took classes when and where she could, beginning with criminal justice courses after graduating high school in 2009. She then took nurse aide courses, Practical Nursing courses, behavioral health classes, and became a paralegal.

"I just kept my head up and worked as hard as I could. I didn't let anything — or anyone — stop me from finally reaching my goal. I had come too far to let it all go," Williams said. "I just want to push myself to go as far as I can, to prove not only to myself, but to my kids that you really can do whatever you set your mind to, as long as you have the patience and determination."

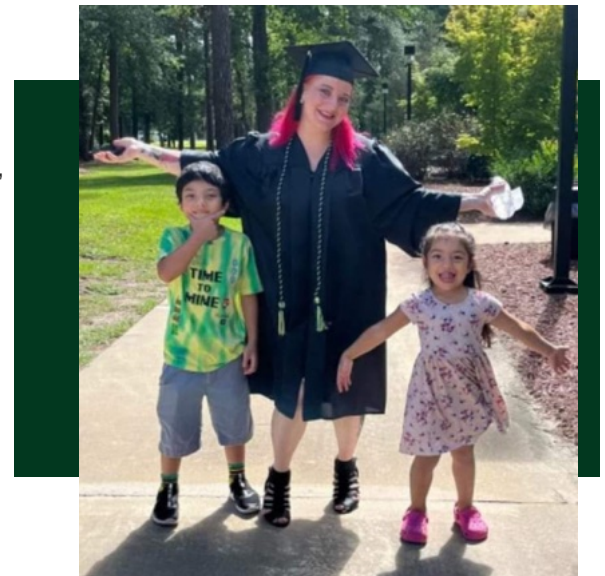
By August 2022, Williams had earned an associate's degree in crime scene investigation technology. She began attending Piedmont soon after, taking three courses at a time.

"The teachers I encountered while here are passionate about what they do, they are more than willing to help you in and out of the classroom, and you're more than just another face or number," Williams said. "The professors know you on a first name basis and want you to succeed. The connections you make here are priceless."

With the help of her mother and grandmother, Williams completed requirements for a four-year degree. She earned enough credits to achieve a bachelor's degree in Interdisciplinary Studies and graduated in May.

Some of the courses Williams took were part of Piedmont's forensics program, one she said "absolutely exceeded" her expectations. The in-depth curriculum and hands-on learning have bolstered her confidence as she takes the next step in her educational journey. This fall, Williams will enter the university's new forensic science master's program. She said it is an honor to be among the first to apply and be accepted.

"I genuinely get choked up just thinking about it all," Williams said. "I came from a low-income family and neighborhood, and what once seemed like only a dream is actually coming true."





The Sophomore Surge: Donovan Leaving a Legacy for Piedmont Women's Golf

by Joseph Garwood



Just two years into her career, Erin Donovan is already the most accomplished women's golfer in Piedmont program history.

Conference Player of the Year. Conference Champion. All American. NCAA Tournament Individual Qualifier. And much, much more.

After beginning to align her focus on golf in high school, Donovan wanted to expand her horizons from her native Mississippi and set her sights on Piedmont.

"I can't explain it in any way other than I had a gut feeling," she said. "I knew that the women's program was growing and the men's program was really good. I knew Piedmont had everything I needed to continue to grow as a golfer."

She announced her presence quickly, as she was named USA South Rookie of the Week eight times and Player of the Week four times. In the postseason, she was the conference's Rookie of the Year and a First-Team All-Conference honoree.

Unfortunately, Donovan was the first player left out of the NCAA Championship.

Fueled by the disappointment, early in her sophomore campaign, she ran away from the field at the Joe and Lee Duncan Invitational, setting multiple Piedmont records with a final round 69.



After the season, she was named USA South Player of the Year in advance of the conference tournament and then validated that choice with a runaway seven-stroke win in the conference tournament.



Unlike in 2023, however, this time, the disappointment turned to elation as Donovan earned selection to the NCAA Championship. With the support of her teammates in the crowd, she battled through multiple weather delays in the second round to make the cut and advance to the third and fourth rounds.

With the pressure of making the cut off, Donovan carded a pair of 74's to break 300 for the week and finish just outside the top ten, in a tie for 11th place overall.

"The week was awesome," said Donovan. "I didn't realize how big of a deal it was until I got there and saw all the NCAA stuff. The tournament staff was so nice, and I got to meet so many nice players. It was just a very enjoyable week."

New Alumni Plaza Dedicated

by Ann Sutton



Calling all alums! We finally have an Alumni Plaza to enjoy when you visit campus!

Dedicated on Saturday, April 27, 2024, this beautiful patio space is between the Mason Scharfenstein Museum of Art and Sweet Breads in downtown Demorest. The plaza is easily accessible, has ample parking, and is conveniently located near the downtown restaurants.

If you purchased paver bricks before April 2024, the bricks are in the plaza, and part of Piedmont's campus, in a lasting, visible testament.

Thank you to the many donors who purchased bricks and donated to the plaza. This could not have happened without you!

Thank you to Assoc. Dean of Fine Arts Chris Kelly and his student workers, Haley McKay and Clemente Mesian, for engraving approximately 150 paver bricks. Thanks also to Rebecca Brantley, Hank Knight (and his crew), James Price (bricklayer), and Shook's Landscaping, who all contributed to the project's completion. And to Becca Shepherd and Evan, who cleaned up and painted the benches in front of the museum.



All alums, students, faculty, staff, and the entire community are invited to enjoy this wonderful outdoor space.

We are selling bricks for Alumni Plaza Phase 2 that will be installed during the 2024-2025 academic year. If you want to purchase a brick in your name or to honor/memorialize a loved one, professor, or friend, here is the link: [Alumni Plaza Pavers Phase 2 - Piedmont University Alumni and Friends](#). Bricks are available in two sizes: \$100 standard-size (4" x 8") and \$200 large (8" x 8"). If you have any questions, please get in touch with Bri Cantrell at bcantrell@piedmont.edu or 706-776-0104.

Calendar of Events

JULY

7/19 Summer Commencement

7/26 Summer Orientation

AUGUST

8/10 Freshman Move-in Day

8/11 Upperclassman Move-in

8/13 Opening Convocation

8/14 Fall Classes Begin

8/25 Art Reception: Ashlyn Pope Exhibit

SEPTEMBER

9/14 Fall Family Day

9/14 Parton Me! A Tribute to Dolly with Katie Deal and her Nashville Band

For event details, or to view the full calendar, please visit [here](#).



We would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to our Yonahian Society and donors. Your generosity and support have made a significant impact on Piedmont University. Your contributions have enabled us to continue our work, reach our goals, and make a positive difference in the lives of those we serve.

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7/1/23-7/1/24

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