



# NEWSLETTER

## *President's Pen*

March 2025

Dear Piedmont University Community,

While we are on the cusp of spring, there is a distinct buzz of activity around both campuses that is exciting to see. This month we have several fine arts events, an active-shooter disaster drill, and the always heartwarming Piedmont Athletic Lions (PAL) games on the Demorest campus, and a "Meet the President" event on the Athens campus. The month concludes with Living Like a Lion, where students who have been accepted to the university get to experience "a day in the life of a Piedmont student."

As we continue to focus on academic achievements and career readiness in the classroom, activities such as these outside the classroom provide our students with a well-rounded educational experience.

Thank you for your leadership and commitment to ensuring our success!

Sincerely,  
Marshall M. Criser, III

### IN THIS ISSUE

Faculty Spotlight	2
Student Success	3
Piedmont Lions	4
Alumni Reunion Day	5
Upcoming Events	5
Donor Thanks	6

# From Demorest to Athens, Dr. Joe Dennis Leaves an Impact

by August Rotter  
Staff Writer, The Roar



Compassionate. Understanding. Supportive. Kind. Joe-kster – all these describe Dr. Joe Dennis, Associate Professor and chair of the Mass Communications department at Piedmont. However, Dr. Dennis is much more than a professor. He is a father, husband, friend, and Public Address announcer for a new local hockey team, the Athens Rock Lobsters. Originally from Chicago, Dr. Dennis (colloquially known as Joe) originally studied at North Central College in Naperville, Illinois before getting his master's and PhD in Mass Communications from the University of Georgia. While waiting for his wife to graduate, he became a SID (sports information director) at his former school.

"I feel like the luckiest person in the world, because I really had three dreams at different parts of my life...and I've been able to work through all of my dream professions."

After moving to Athens, Joe, known as "Just Joe" on the radio, worked at a rock radio station in Athens while also working as an editor for the Walton Tribune. His third dream profession was teaching, and he discovered that passion while teaching at UGA, beginning in 2009.

Dr. Dennis arrived at Piedmont in 2016, and was already the P.A. announcer for the UGA Ice Dawgs club hockey team. Due to his standing with the Ice Dawgs, Joe was the first choice to fulfill the vacant position of Rock Lobsters P.A. announcer.

"Pursuing this opportunity was a no brainer to me, because it's not work to me, it doesn't feel like work... It's the same kind of thing with announcing my kid's baseball games, or the games for the [Clark Central] High School. I would be supporting the team anyways...it's kind of my zen moment."

This passion for his job and his love for his work is apparent in his third dream as well: teaching.

A large part of having the best interest of students is fostering a family-like environment in the mass communication department.

Students have expressed the love and support that Dr. Dennis pours into the department.

"Joe is a supportive advisor. Not only that, but he is also a very laid-back professor who has become a friend," said senior sports communications major Eric Edmonson.

Dr. Dennis loves his family, students, colleagues and jobs, and is patient with all those who come to him with struggles. When asked for advice to give to Piedmont Students, Joe said:

"Recognize that dreams change, priorities change. Give yourself credit for the little victories."



To read the entire article, please visit The Roar [here](#).



# SAIL Sets First-Year Riley Robinson Up for Success



by Grace Wills



Riley Robinson makes a strong first impression. His sense of humor and thoughtful manner of speaking suggest the maturity and intelligence of a young adult doing ordinary reflections at the end of their college years. But Riley is no ordinary student and not yet an adult; at just 17 years old, he is halfway through his first year as a first-generation college student and a first-generation high school graduate.

Riley's career as an exceptional student began in high school. Eager and ambitious, he accelerated his education by taking night classes at Mountain Education Charter High School to graduate early. After finding that he could not live on campus at other universities because of his early graduation, Riley chose to attend Piedmont, intending to transfer after a year. Piedmont, however, proved too good to leave.

"I feel like I get to make more personal connections, and those have been very meaningful. I don't think I could get the same thing somewhere else," says Riley.

Those personal connections began on an especially interesting note. As a Voyager in Piedmont's SAIL Program, Riley attended special events before the beginning of his first semester designed to acquaint him and his peers with campus life. One of those events was a hiking trip near Camp Mikell in Toccoa. Riley and his group (accompanied by SAIL Captain Jim Peeples) set out on their hike but soon realized an issue; their map had led them on a trail that had yet to be completed, and they were lost.

"It wasn't funny in the moment," says Riley, "but it's pretty funny now."

One of the ways Riley is making that impact is by cofounding VOICE (Voices Offering Insight, Compassion, and Empathy), a club aimed at building connections between staff, counselors, and students. "A friendship club, essentially," Riley calls it, "a place where students struggling to find community on campus can find that."

While he looks forward to launching VOICE during college, the more distant future is always in mind. As a double major in health administration and biology, Riley hopes to become a doctor and, eventually, a professor. His ambition and inspiration come from his desire to help others; he says he wants to make an impact, whether medical or academic.

His impact is already felt on our campus and will surely be felt for the remainder of his time as a student. We are proud to have a student as exceptional as Riley, who exemplifies daily what it means to be a Lion!





# CHAMPIONS: Women's Basketball Shuts Down Belhaven in 64-51 Title Game Victory



by Danielle Percival



Piedmont women's basketball clinched its first ever Collegiate Conference of the South Tournament Title, rolling over Belhaven in the second half with a 64-51 win on Saturday afternoon inside Cave Arena.

Nae-Nae Eades was the catalyst for the Lions on offense, scoring a career-high 20 points on 18-of-22 from the free throw line while dishing out four assists. After the game, she was named CCS Tournament MVP.

Eades was joined in double figures by Alexandria Willis, who tallied 16 points and 12 rebounds, her fourth double double of the season. Seniors Ashley Scott and Andelin Hill pitched in as well, with Scott scoring 13 points and Hill grabbing a career-high 19 rebounds in the win.

Both teams struggled shooting the ball, with Piedmont claiming the win despite a 25.4% field goal percentage. However, the Lions were stifling on the defensive end, holding the Blazers to 27.7% shooting.



Piedmont's aggressiveness on offense was the difference, shooting a season-high 40 free throws and making 31 of them, led by Eades' 18-of-22 performance.

This marks Piedmont's first conference tournament title since three-peating in the USA South from 2017-19. The last of those three wins came in 2019 at Cave Arena.

# Alumni Reunion Day

Saturday, April 26, 2025

<u>TIME</u>	<u>EVENT</u>
9:30 am	<b>Alumni Annual Meeting / Breakfast</b> Student Commons Banquet Hall
11:00 am	<b>Alumni Awards &amp; Sports Hall of Fame</b> Student Commons Banquet Hall
12:30 pm	<b>Alumni Banquet</b> Student Commons Banquet Hall
1:30 pm - 4:30 pm	<b>Food Trucks</b> Pinky's Shaved Ice & Fender's Diner Behind Mize Center
1:30 pm	<b>Men's &amp; Women's Basketball</b> Alumni Game & Competitions Mize Center Cave Arena
2:00 pm	<b>Baseball Game &amp; Alumni Reunion</b> Loudermilk Field
2:00 pm - 4:00 pm	<b>College / Department Reunions</b> College of Education College of Business College of Nursing & Health Sciences Natural Sciences Department
5:00 pm	<b>Alumni Reunion Dinner</b> Classes of 1960, 1965, 1970, & 1975 Student Commons Dining Hall
7:30 pm	<b>Great Composers Concert &amp; Chamber Singers Reunion</b> Music Conservatory

For more information: [Alumni & Friends | Piedmont University](#)  
Contact Bri Cantrell at [bcantrell@piedmont.edu](mailto:bcantrell@piedmont.edu) or call 706-776-0104

## Calendar of Events

### MARCH

- 3/18 Piedmont Camerata
- 3/19 Disaster Drill
- 3/20 Piedmont Athletic Lions (PAL) Games
- 3/22 Museum Family Workshop
- 3/25 Piedmont Singers
- 3/25 Meet the President, Athens Campus
- 3/28 Living Like a Lion

### APRIL

- 4/10-13 Steel Magnolias
- 4/10 Piedmont Wind Ensemble
- 4/10 Symposium
- 4/15 Piedmont String Orchestra
- 4/17 Piedmont Chamber Ensembles
- 4/26 Great Composers Concert
- 4/26 Alumni Reunion Day

### MAY

- 5/9 Spring Commencement

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.

*Thank You*

ANNUAL GIFTS of \$1,000 OR MORE  
1/1/2024-3/1/2025

### LIFETIME (\$25K+)

Jim Armstrong  
Gus Arrendale  
William R. Bannister  
Louise L. Bass  
Estate of Edwin H. Bingham  
Sandra G. Borrow  
Marilyn K. Brown  
Ben and Gail Cheek  
Betty J. Chokos '62  
Charlie Allen Cleere '04 EdS  
Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta, Inc.  
Council of Independent Colleges  
President Marshall and Kimberly Criser  
Dwight and Sharon Evans  
Craig M. and Febby Faerber  
Fieldale Farms Corporation  
Fred C. and Katherine B. Andersen Foundation  
Dr. Phillip '68 and Mrs. Paulette Furman  
Bill and Carolyn Gaik  
George I. Alden Trust  
Georgia Independent College Association, Inc.  
Georgia Power Company  
Mack H. Guest, III & Guest Family Foundation Inc  
Harriet Davis Wilbanks Trust  
Helen S. McPheeters Trust  
Thomas and Jenna Hensley  
James and Margaret Hobbs  
William M. House, Esq.  
James and Susan Irvin  
The Thomas T. & Bernice F. Irvin Foundation Inc.  
J. Bulow Campbell Foundation  
Fran and Gary Jarrett  
Jane C. Johnson M'09  
Judith Griggs Slade Charitable Trust  
Susan Spaeth Kyle '95  
Lettie Pate Whitehead Foundation, Inc.  
Leon Czikowsky Irrevocable Trust  
Michael F. '09 and Kim Mansfield  
Dr. James F. Mellichamp  
John E. Mullins  
Peach State Federal Credit Union  
Purdy Flooring & Design  
Megan and Woody Ramsey  
Scovill Fasteners  
Charles K. '54 and Catherine Sewell  
John Siegel and John Templeton  
Jim Sievers '63 and Dr. Samira Beckwith  
Dock '72 and Nan Sisk

Jack Slade  
South State Bank  
Dr. H. Milton and Mrs. Carolyn Stewart  
Stewart and Carol Swanson  
Dean Swanson  
The Mary Jane Tenny Trust  
The Frances Wood Wilson Foundation, Inc.  
Thomas A. and Lucile M. Moyer Charitable Trust  
Thomas B. Musser Trust Under Will  
Truist Bank  
United Church of Christ  
William H. Guild Charitable Trust

### FOUNDER'S CIRCLE (\$5K+)

Christina Blackney  
Samuel P. Carpenter '21  
Coca-Cola Bottling Company United, Inc.  
DB Acoustics & Sound, Inc.  
Deloitte Foundation Matching Gifts Program  
Mylle and Bill Mangum  
Southeast Conference United Church of Christ

### PRESIDENT'S CIRCLE (\$1K+)

David '67 and Virginia '68 Abbot  
Abby Jackson '84 & Abby J's Blackhawk Gourmet  
Edward '80, HonD'94 and Alice Ariail  
Kathy and Niles Baker  
J. Philip '69 and Jane Higdon '70 Ballard  
Barnes Group Foundation, Inc.  
Lisa L. Black M'01, EdS'07  
Jill Bradley '80  
Lewis A. Brannon  
Jonathan '81 & Dr. Martha '80, EdS'10, EdD'12  
Cantrell  
Cris '99 and Jane Carpenter  
Marguerite A. Carpenter  
Anne W. Chenault  
Dr. Rhani Lott Choi '05  
Lewis '67 and Dianne '69 Cody  
Vallorie V. Coley M'99, EdS'04  
Matthew '96 and Kate Cook  
Pem and Lucy Cooley  
Dr. Kimberly and Mr. Kody Crawford  
Christina E. Criser  
Dr. Christopher & Nannette Curran  
Dr. Phil DeMore  
Janet Donston '65  
Timothy Dunton  
Harold Dupuis

Linda Ellis  
Dennis and Jennifer Fahey  
Renee' and Patrick Fargason  
Mr. David '88 and Mrs. Leslie Foster  
J. Sumner '15, 'M17 & Kelsey '15 Gantz  
George F. & Sybil H. Fuller Foundation  
Georgia Center For the Book  
Dr. Margaret Rose Gladney  
Bob Glass  
Habersham County Chamber of Commerce  
Holman Automotive Group  
Ladson and Caroline Haddow  
Paulette Hamby  
Hayes of Baldwin  
Betty and Phil Healy  
Betty Heathman  
Travis R. Hunt '08, M'10  
Curtis L. Hughes '59  
Tinsley and Gail Irvin  
Kelly Tours  
Chris and Kathryn Kelly  
Dr. Kelly Land EdS'12, EdD'15  
Dr. Delene and Dr. Jasper Lee  
Rev. Dr. Sarah Lund  
Terry & Robin Martin  
Matthew '02 & Jennifer Martin  
Marilyn L. McNeely  
McNeely Foundation, Inc.  
Kimberly and Hon. Harold Melton  
National Association of Congregational Christian Churches  
Sierra Nicholson '03 and Ryan Hull  
North Georgia Community Foundation  
Ann and Greg O'Connor  
Old South Church in Boston  
Dr. Larry and Mrs. Dinah C. Peevy  
Michael Porcelli '24  
Tony Porcelli  
Marilyn Rothschild  
Dr. Albert H. Santora  
Justin M'05 & Katie '06. 'M07 Scali  
John and Karen Spiegel  
Ann Hawkins Starnes '53  
Dr. Gabriele U. Stauf  
Dr. Gerald and Dr. Margaret Sullivan  
Ann Sutton '10, M'12  
Tallulah Falls School  
Dr. Edwards & Frances Taylor  
The Budd Group  
The Heathman 40 and 8 Nursing Scholarship Fund  
Blake '07, M'09 and Stephanie '08 Thomas  
United Way of Central Florida  
Dr. J. Kerry Waller  
Weidner Law Firm  
Thomas J. Wigley  
Robert M. and Colleen D. Williams  
Carol Wood

All donors who make an annual gift of \$1,000 or more become Yonahians and are able to choose from a variety of giving opportunities that range from supporting the annual fund, arts, athletics, academics, scholarships, and a new bridge grant option that provides emergency assistance to students in need.

To donate, please visit <https://piedmont.edu/giving>