

# Around the State: DBU's Pilgrim Chapel turns 15

October 2, 2024

On Sept. 9, Dallas Baptist University hosted a convocation chapel service to commemorate the 15th anniversary of the Pilgrim Chapel, where DBU President **Adam C. Wright** and DBU Chancellor **Gary Cook** briefly described how the iconic building came to be. In 1999, Cook felt led by God to start the fundraising campaign for a chapel with a donation from him and his wife, Sheila Cook. Inspired by the [First Baptist Church in America](#) in Providence, R.I., Cook modeled Pilgrim Chapel after this historic landmark. DBU decided to situate the chapel on top of the hill, overlooking Mountain Creek Lake, to cement the university's vision of being a "city on a hill," as Jesus spoke about in [Matthew 5:14](#). Cook continued to pray for more funds and for someone to oversee the campaign. In 2005, Wright was 25 years old, working in undergraduate admissions at DBU and gripped with a "holy wrestling" in his heart. Wright was wondering where the Lord would place him next and was even considering leaving DBU. But Cook invited Wright to walk with him around campus. Cook described his vision for a chapel. Wright asked who would fund such a project. Cook responded, "I don't know, but God knows." Cook asked him to serve as the coordinator for the chapel campaign. Wright began his new role in late 2005 and began seeking and praying for a donor to fund this massive project. During the convocation, he read a prayer from the journal he used in 2005, "Lord, please put a burden on Bo Pilgrim to fund this project." After months of working and praying, on March 24, 2006, Cook received the long-awaited call from [Bo Pilgrim](#). This gift was the final piece everyone was waiting for, and they broke ground on the construction site shortly after. On Sept. 2, 2009, DBU students worshiped for the first time in [Patty and Bo Pilgrim Chapel](#).



Artistic rendering of the Smith Engineering, Science and Nursing Building slated for completion at HCU in fall of 2026. (Rendering courtesy of Kirksey Architecture)

A new building is on the horizon at Houston Christian University thanks to a \$20 million lead gift from Sherry and Jim Smith—the largest single gift in HCU’s history. The Smith Engineering, Science and Nursing Building will be a multidisciplinary facility. The multi-million-dollar structure will provide state-of-the-art technology, learning spaces and labs to equip students with the skills to compete in the high-demand engineering, science and nursing fields. HCU President **Robert Sloan** expressed appreciation to the Smiths and called their gift “consistent with their family’s long history of generosity, beginning with Jim’s father, Orrien Smith,” one of the founding fathers of the private faith-based institution. The \$60 million-dollar, 71,000-square-foot, three-story building will be built on the east side of the HCU campus with a direct view to the [Morris Family Center for Law & Liberty](#), celebrating the university’s dedication to the past and to the future. The Smith Engineering, Science and Nursing Building will enable the university to advance [Imperative One of its Institutional Strategic Plan 2030](#) by providing new instructional space for students pursuing undergraduate and graduate-level degrees in STEM-related disciplines and will support the university’s goal to grow HCU’s student population to 10,000 by 2030. The building is slated for completion in fall 2026.



WBU commemorates 50 years of service to the local community and Sheppard Air Force Base at its Wichita Falls off-campus

instructional site. (Wayland Photo)

Wayland Baptist University has reached a milestone as its Wichita Falls off-campus instructional site commemorates 50 years of service to the local community and Sheppard Air Force Base. A ribbon-cutting ceremony, celebrating a half century of educational service and community partnership, is scheduled for 11 a.m., Oct. 9, at Wayland's Call Field Road location. Jerry Faught, executive director and campus dean at WBU-Wichita Falls, will speak, reflecting on the history of the off-campus instructional site and its future. Wayland's Wichita Falls off-campus instructional site began in 1974 at Sheppard Air Force Base, launching programs tailored for active-duty military personnel, veterans and community members. Through the decades, the site has expanded its academic offerings and facilities—responding to the evolving needs of its students and embracing the shift toward online education, while maintaining in-person instruction at the Call Field location. Wayland's Wichita Falls site has awarded approximately 5,400 undergraduate degrees and close to 1,000 graduate degrees in its 50 years. The Wichita Falls site at Sheppard Air Force Base marked the beginning of a Wayland system that now also includes on-site classes in Lubbock, Amarillo and San Antonio, as well as Arizona, Alaska and Hawaii. These are in addition to traditional classes at the home campus in Plainview and online classes offered globally.



UMHB's College of Visual and Performing Arts will offer several events in October. (UMHB Photo)

The University of Mary Hardin-Baylor's College of Visual and Performing Arts will offer several events in October. Performances take place in the Baugh Performance Hall in the Sue & Frank Mayborn Performing Arts Center, and tickets are required to attend. Guest artist **Wendell**

**Kimbrough** performs on Oct. 3 at 7 p.m. Kimbrough is a songwriter and performer reimagining the Psalms for modern worship. With melodies steeped in the sounds of folk, gospel and country music, his songs are sung at churches around the world. Rodgers and Hammerstein's *A Grand Night for Singing* will be presented Oct. 18 at 7 p.m. and Oct. 19 at 2:30 p.m. On Oct. 22, at 7 p.m., the university will welcome Chanticleer to the stage. This Grammy-award-winning vocal ensemble is known worldwide as "an orchestra of voices" for its wide-ranging repertoire and dazzling virtuosity. Since its foundation in 1978, Chanticleer quickly became one of the world's most prolific recording and touring ensembles, selling over one million recordings and performing thousands of live concerts to audiences around the world. To learn more about these musical performances, visit [www.umhb.edu/pac](http://www.umhb.edu/pac). To purchase tickets, call the Sue & Frank Mayborn Performing Arts Center at (254) 295-5999 or email [pac@umhb.edu](mailto:pac@umhb.edu). Box office hours are noon to 4 p.m., Monday through Thursday.



ETBU welcomed students, families and the community for Family Weekend 2024, held on Sept. 27-28. (ETBU Photo)

East Texas Baptist University welcomed students, families and the community for Family Weekend 2024, held Sept. 27-28. The event offered activities that celebrated Tiger pride, fellowship and campus life. The weekend began on Friday with live music, lawn games and local food trucks for Gather at the Grove. Attendees also participated in activities at the outdoor recreation center—which included pickleball, sand volleyball and basketball. Fans cheered on the ETBU Volleyball team as they earned a 4-1 victory over the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor. Meanwhile, hockey enthusiasts headed to Shreveport, where ETBU Hockey tallied a win over the University of Texas at San Antonio. The evening ended with a movie

night under the stars complete with popcorn, candy and drinks. Saturday started with Small Business Saturday Market and Brunch Bar—where families supported ETBU students, faculty and staff selling handcrafted goods and baked treats. Participants then gathered at Baker Chapel for family worship led by the chapel band. During family and faculty connection, families enjoyed Shiver Sticks and met their students' professors. Throughout the afternoon, sports fans had the opportunity to cheer on the ETBU volleyball team against UT Dallas, the ETBU women's and men's soccer teams against Hardin-Simmons University or return to Shreveport to watch ETBU Hockey take on UTSA once again. A family tailgate began at 3:30 p.m., with the traditional Tiger walk to hype up the football team before the game. The weekend concluded with ETBU football, where the Tigers faced off against Centenary College in front of a packed house, securing a 47-8 victory.



(Left to right, from top left) HPU homecoming honorees Kathy (McCaleb) Strawn '70; Mary Loretta (Jones) Houston '74; Lauren (Teel) Browning '10; Joe Young; Wilbert Rogers '75; Robert Cuellar; and Steve '77 and Carla (Vandiver) '77 Evans. (HPU Photo)

Howard Payne University will celebrate eight individuals for accomplishments and service during homecoming on Oct. 18-19. The university's homecoming weekend, presented by Citizens National Bank, also features Family Weekend and Yellow Jacket Preview. The honorees for 2024 are **Lauren (Teel) Browning**, Outstanding Young Graduate; **Robert Cuellar**, Dr. José Rivas Distinguished Service Award; **Steve and Carla Evans**, JAM Faithful Servant Award; **Loretta Houston**, Coming Home Queen; **Wilbert Rogers**, Medal of Service; **Kathy Strawn**, Distinguished

Alumna; and **Joe Young**, Grand Marshal. The honorees will be recognized at the Alumni Banquet on Oct. 18, at 5 p.m., in the Beadel Dining Hall of HPU's Mabee University Center. They also will be included in the homecoming parade on Oct. 19 at 10 a.m. and during the halftime show of the football game versus University of Mary Hardin-Baylor.



Current nursing students tour the construction of HSU's new nursing school facilities in Abilene Hall. (HSU Photo)

Hardin-Simmons University announced its new on-campus nursing program has reached \$8 million in funding—which includes a recent \$1 million grant from the U.S. Economic Development Administration and generous contributions from foundations, alumni, friends, and donors—including \$100,000 in nursing scholarships from a long-time HSU legacy family. The funding will enable the construction of state-of-the-art facilities, expand educational resources and provide enhanced student training opportunities. The nursing program's new facility, located on the third floor of Abilene Hall, will feature modern classrooms, simulation labs and cutting-edge equipment designed to prepare students for success in an evolving healthcare landscape. HSU anticipates a surge in enrollment for the nursing program, which will help address the shortage of qualified nurses in Texas and beyond. With this transformative funding, HSU's nursing program is set to make a lasting impact on healthcare education and address the increasing demand for healthcare professionals across the region.

## **Anniversary**

John Crowder celebrates 30 years as pastor of First Baptist Church in West

Oct. 6.