

Around the State: Wayland student earns accelerated dual degree

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Christian James Vaughn is the first Wayland Baptist University student to graduate with the accelerated bachelor's to master's degree. He graduated with a dual degree—a Bachelor of Christian Ministry and a Master of Divinity. Vaughn, who is married and has a small child, completed the five-year accelerated program in four and a half years while also serving as the youth and university pastor at First Baptist Church in Plainview and playing football for the Wayland Pioneers. He finished the program early because Wayland accepted dual-credit courses he took while in high school in Houston. The accelerated program is “a win-win for the school and the student,” said **Stephen Stookey**, dean of Wayland's School of Christian Ministries. “The accelerated bachelor's degree allows the student to proceed from one degree to the next seamlessly and allows them to be efficient with their hours and efficient with their money. It doesn't compromise the degree at all, because it is the full 72-hour Master of Divinity degree. It just allows us to not duplicate courses along the way,” Stookey said. Students working on a bachelor's degree earn graduate-level credit for their junior- and senior-level courses, he explained. “These courses transfer directly into the master's program, shortening the length of time needed to complete the degree. The program allows students the opportunity to trim up to two years off the traditional seven-year college and seminary path,” Stookey said. He also noted the accelerated timeline allows students to save on tuition while offering mentored ministry experiences that enhance classroom learning.



Lauren Jarvis

Baylor University senior **Lauren Jarvis** from Boerne was selected as one of only 40 students nationwide—and one of only two students from Texas universities—to receive the 2023 Marshall Scholarship. Evaluated on academic merit, leadership and ambassadorial potential, Marshall Scholarship recipients can pursue graduate study for up to three years at a university of their choice in the United Kingdom. Jarvis will pursue a Master of Science degree at the London School of Economics and Political Science and a Master of Arts degree in political thought at the University of Exeter. She wants to position herself for a life of public service leadership on issues of human flourishing, humanitarian aid and the plight of refugees. Jarvis is Baylor’s sixth Marshall Scholar and third since 2015. She is a University Scholar in Baylor’s Honors College and a member of the Model UN team. She completed internships at the U.S. Department of State, the United Nations Information Center, the Foundation for Defense of Democracies and the U.S. Embassy in Harare, Zimbabwe.



Leah Heather Akridge of Lufkin received the President's Award from East Texas Baptist University President J. Blair Blackburn at fall commencement. (ETBU Photo)

Leah Heather Akridge of Lufkin received the President's Award from East Texas Baptist University at fall commencement. The President's Award is presented to the graduating ETBU student who is considered the best representation of a Christian leader, scholar and servant. Akridge, who graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in education, was a leader in the Fellowship of Christian Athletes and previously was recognized by the American Southwest Conference as a Community Service Athlete of the Year. She served as a Thrive mentor for underclassmen and as a Bible study leader at Immanuel Baptist Church in Marshall. **Dawn Buckingham**, recently elected Texas Land Commissioner and a state senator the past six years, delivered the keynote address at commencement. ETBU conferred 116 undergraduate degrees and 46 graduate degrees.



ETBU President J. Blair Blackburn presented an honorary doctorate to Harold (Hal) Lee Cornish, a supporter of ETBU more than 30 years and former chair of the board of trustees. (ETBU Photo)

ETBU President **J. Blair Blackburn** presented an honorary doctorate to **Harold (Hal) Lee Cornish**, a supporter of ETBU more than 30 years and former chair of the board of trustees. Gifts from Cornish and his wife Joyce have helped to fund student scholarships, the Ornelas Student Center, the Marshall Grand/School of Nursing, the Great Commission Center and ETBU Tiger Athletics. Cornish Soccer Field is named in their honor.

Anniversary

20th for **Joe Bailey** as pastor of Speegleville Baptist Church in Waco.