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# Tarleton commemorates 125 years of success

BY HAELEY CARPENTER

*Managing Editor*

Tarleton State University commemorated 125 years with a ceremony and celebration on Sept. 3, 2024. The ceremony was held in Wisdom Gym, a historical and traditional building for the university.

2024-2025 Student Body President Gabriel Day and 1978-1979 Student Body President Nancy Golden Turley gave invocations of the past, present and future before a video remembering and honoring John Tarleton and how the far the university has come thus far was played.

Dr. Credence Baker, Chief of Staff and 125th Celebration Chairman, opened up by welcoming faculty, staff, students and guests before introducing current University President Dr. James Hurley to the podium.

Hurley of course comments on the past and what they are doing to uphold the history and traditions John Tarleton has set.

“With the many changes that have occurred, one characteristic has remained constant: our keen focus and commitment to ensuring students’ success,” Hurley said. “Providing an outstanding student experience has been and continues to be the cornerstone of this university.”

Hurley announced a new campaign that will benefit the students for the future.

“This year marks the public launch of our next comprehensive capital campaign titled ‘Always Texan,’” Hurley said. “Through this campaign we will raise \$250 million by the year 2030 to ensure we are fulfilling the mission of our founder to provide access, opportunity and affordability to all students.”

Other remarks included speeches from Texas A&M University Board



PHOTO BY HAELEY CARPENTER

**Tarleton president Dr. Hurley speaking at the 125 year celebration ceremony.**

of Regents Chairman Bill Mahomes, Texas A&M University System Chancellor John Sharp, Congressman Roger Williams, Senator Brian Birdwell, Representative Dewayne Burns and Mayor of Stephenville Doug Svien.

Each speaker shared their personal history with Tarleton and how proud they were of the past 125 years of accomplishments and how the next 125 are going to be even better.

“The words of Tarleton State’s fight

song ‘ever forward, ever onward’ were never truer than now,” Mahomes said.

John Sharp looks back at the last ten years, specifically all that the current board and Dr. Hurley has done while in office and shares plans for the future.

“For 2025 alone, the board has already approved another \$172 million of construction projects for Tarleton State University,” Sharp said.

In all, Sharp proudly boasts Tarleton.

“There is no institution of higher education in the state of Texas that

has transformed and grown and shined better than Tarleton State University,” Sharp said.

The Tarleton Choir and Wind Ensemble played throughout the ceremony, the choir even debuting a brand new song entitled Steward of Fire just for the celebration.

After the ceremony, everyone moved to the Barry B. Thompson Student Center for blow up carnival activities, free food and games.

**125 YEARS**

# The future is bright for the Tarleton State Wind Ensemble

**BY BRENNA DEMPSEY***Multimedia Journalist*

The Tarleton State University Wind Ensemble has come a long way from the original 9-person marching band founded in 1919 under the Corps of Cadets.

A. J. Ault led the program for the first year before the most notable director Dennis G. Hunewell took over and opened the doors for the bands to become what they are today.

Part of their growth has been branching off from the Corps of Cadets and starting with their new name: the Wind Ensemble. This change happened under Jonathan Hooper, who served as the director from 1986 to 2008.

The Wind Ensemble recently performed at the 125th Commemorative Ceremony where they played pieces they worked diligently to perfect. These students delivered a performance that gave extra life and history to the event.

"I knew it was going to be a challenge and challenges are always fun," Alan Sigala a member of the ensemble and trombone player said. "You get pushed a lot and sometimes that's what you need in order to find out what type of player you are."

The amount of time these students put into practice is not talked about that often but without their effort, the band programs would not exist and would not be celebrating their 105th anniversary.

"Most of us are in a practice room at least two to three hours a day, every day of the week. Some of us more than that, some of us less than that," musician Kris Torres said. "But the majority of us are constantly in a practice room trying to get ready for concerts and everything."

The ensemble is built up of 45 members who come from various

backgrounds.

"A lot of those people are music majors, so people that are studying to be either professional musicians or music educators, a lot of those people will be band directors someday, but not all of them," Robinson said. "Some of them aren't. We have people from majors all over campus, we have some engineering majors, some education majors, and some ag majors, it's a very very representative group."

Jared Parsons is an accounting major and an active member of the Wind Ensemble.

"I like getting to make music with strong musicians," Parsons said "It's an experience I don't think I'll get to have post-college"

Over the past decade, they have reached national recognition.

In 2014 they performed at the gala concert at Carnegie Hall and in 2022 they were invited to the Texas Music Educators Association Convention which is a big deal for the Wind Ensemble.

"We submitted a tape and then every other big program in Texas submitted a tape and they take one or four every year and we happened to be one of the three that year," Robinson said after receiving the invitation.

This was one of the first events of that caliber the Wind Ensemble had been a part of, but it certainly will not be the last.

The future holds many exciting milestones for the Wind Ensemble with their upcoming album set to be professionally released on Spotify and iTunes in November 2024. More information about that will be released by the band program later on.

Their first formal performance of the semester will be held on September 26 in the Clyde H. Wells Fine Arts Center.



PHOTO BY HAELEY CARPENTER

**Tarleton Wind Ensemble performing at the 125 year celebration.**

The performance will be combined with the traditional ULTRA Club dinner. The theme of the performance is Renaissance reimagined.

To watch this kick-off event, attendees can call the box office for price information.

"Everything we play is going to be influenced by the Renaissance period from 15th 16th century Italy in some way," Robinson said. A notable piece being played is The Pines of Rome written in 1924. This will be the 100th

anniversary of the piece.

Through the years many people have been inspired by the Tarleton State University's Wind Ensemble. Brooke Lane a music education major was one of those people.

"The high level of performances they have to offer and working under amazing musicians like our director David Robinson and working with a bunch of amazing musicians Tarleton has here," Lane said. "It is an honor to be in that ensemble"



## 125 YEARS

# What Tarleton has in store for the next 125 years

*Hurley says  
the best is yet  
to come...*

**BY ANDREW UTTERBACK**

*Multimedia Journalist*

Tarleton State University celebrates its 125th anniversary this year. Its President, Dr. James Hurley has played a large role in the recent exponential growth of the university, and has high hopes for its future.

Dr. Hurley's term as President began in August of 2019, and he first discussed the improvements since he took office. He said that Tarleton has improved their infrastructure by adding new buildings and parking lots. Several small maintenance projects have been done, such as replacing roofs, gutters and transformers so that students don't just look good but feel good a well.

He spoke on Tarleton's plans for the next five years, emphasizing student growth, calling it "very strategic."

"We've averaged about five to six percent [growth] each year," Hurley said. "It's not too much, but it's really, really steady. And that's well above the national average."

Tarleton's family is indeed growing, the university saw a record breaking freshman class this year and now have a little over 10,000 students on the Stephenville campus, with a total of around 18,000 including Waco, Fort Worth and the online campus. Dr. Hurley is working towards the goal of 28,000 students by the year 2030.

"And we're easily going to surpass that number," Hurley said.

The Fort Worth campus is also doing great things. Dr. Hurley said that Tarleton has 80 acres of undeveloped space to work with by the campus, and the university is getting ready to secure funding for a third building. It's located just 20 minutes from downtown Fort Worth and a little under an hour away from Dallas.

Hurley says that because of the consistent population growth of the DFW metroplex, he could one day see the Fort Worth campus



PHOTO BY ANDREW UTTERBACK

**125 year pin given at the ceremony to celebrate the 125 years of excellence at Tarleton State University.**

having more students than the main campus in Stephenville. No matter how many students each campus has, Stephenville will always be where the DNA of Tarleton will remain, making it the main campus forever.

Finally, Dr. Hurley spoke about his hopes for the next 125 years of Tarleton.

"We've increased significantly. Our retention rates have increased. We've increased graduation rates. Obviously our enrollment growth is among the best in the country," Hurley said. "We've added more faculty. We've added more staff to ensure that our students still maintain small class sizes. I mean, this institution is going to continue to grow. It's going to grow for the next 125 years."

According to Dr. Hurley, Tarleton should

"easily" be at 40,000 students in 125 years.

While Tarleton continues to see its enrollment numbers increase, the school's culture, history, and family bond remain a strong focus.

"But it's important that we maintain the sense of who we are...And that doesn't mean we don't grow. We continue to grow. We're just a larger family," Hurley said.

One stance that Hurley feels strongly about is if Tarleton started to put a cap on the number of students in its freshman class, it would take opportunities away from many prospective students.

"There's a good chance that a lot of other Texans would not have had the same opportunity. So again, it goes back to access, it goes back to opportunity," Hurley said.

"I think family is everyone that wants to be part of our family. We're going to make them feel welcome and we're going to make them feel included," Hurley said. "We've got so much momentum now because so many students from across the state want to be part of it. And I think it's our responsibility to ensure that they have an incredible experience."

The Stephenville, Texas based university was founded back in 1899 by John Tarleton and since then, Tarleton has become a D1 school with a record 18,000 students. In 1917, Tarleton became part of the Texas A&M system and has been growing ever since. Tarleton just had their 125 year ceremony and have several 125th anniversary themed events coming up throughout family week and homecoming.

125 YEARS

# Chancellor John Sharp shares his vision

BY MACKENZIE JOHNSON  
Multimedia Journalist

When Tarleton State University's Stephenville campus was born 125 years ago, 127 students were enrolled and there was one single building on the John Tarleton grounds that housed the entirety of offered classes. The wooden building was known as College Hall and the handful of rooms were filled with no more than a few desks for students to sit in and a small number of blackboards for teachers to write on.

Today, Tarleton is home to roughly 35 buildings on the 170 plot of acreage, from academic classrooms to residence halls, along with 18,000 students to fill them. Like never before, Tarleton is able to offer Texans with the best opportunities to reach success - and it's just the beginning.

The university has made leaps and bounds since its creation over a century ago, and one of the frontrunners who's helped springboard Tarleton's recent growth is Texas A&M University Chancellor John Sharp.

As a chancellor, Sharp oversees all 11 universities and eight agencies in the A&M University System. Both the agencies and presidents of the universities report to Sharp directly. From there, he reports to the non-member board of regents in order to recommend the hiring of each president and CEO of an agency. Implementing federal policies and financial management also falls in the wheelhouse of a chancellor's job description, along with many other responsibilities, such as managing his administration.

"What I encourage all of my staff, presidents and CEOs to do is think way out of the box," Sharp said. "Don't just assume that because something is not on your campus, it shouldn't be on your campus. That's what too many agencies, too many universities, are stuck in. They always do what they've



**Chancellor Sharp**

always done, and we don't follow that."

Sharp graduated from A&M in 1972 with a degree in political science. Before stepping in as A&M chancellor, he served in the Texas House of Representatives, the Texas Senate, the Texas Railroad Commission and as a state comptroller. These decades of experiences in public service have greatly influenced Sharp's journey as a chancellor and how he leads his administration.

"One of the things that's most important to each one of our universities and agencies is the ability to get resources from the state government and the federal government for research grants, money for buildings and things like that," Sharp said. "Having that prior experience in dealing with the legislature and the governor's office has been important in making sure that we are the kind of place where they can feel comfortable investing their money, but I think the best thing that we have going for us is we have some really great presidents. And Hurley's right up there at the top."

Sharp and Tarleton's 16th University President Dr. James Hurley talk on a regular basis in order to ensure Tarleton stays on the right track. Sharp praises Dr. Hurley for his role in keeping Tarleton surging ahead.

"He's a president that really is

visionary and looks into the future in a hurry," Sharp said. "He wants to get his university in the very top tier that he can and that makes Dr. Hurley one of the real shining points of Tarleton. He pushes the edges, pushes the limits, and is not shy about asking for things, and the Board of Regents and I are not shy about investing in Tarleton."

The question of how to best invest in Tarleton is one constantly being turned over in the minds of Sharp, Dr. Hurley and the board.

"Just so far this year, we've approved \$70 million in construction for Tarleton in 2025," Sharp said. "Over the last 10 years we've done more than a half a billion dollars in construction, and have gotten another 70 already approved by the board to begin in 2025. And there are several others that we're looking at as well - we want to go to the legislature to try to get a new agriculture school building and get a new medical school for Tarleton."

Keeping that momentum going is crucial in capitalizing on Tarleton's fast paced growth.

"We decided early on that Tarleton is going to be one of those stars in Texas," Sharp said. "Everybody at the system office and the board office is absolutely committed to making Tarleton the very best it can be and getting the resources to make that happen."

The reason as to why Tarleton deserves to be invested in is simple, as it holds a special place in the A&M University System.

"Tarleton is one of the real crown jewels of our system," Sharp said. "Only two of our regional universities draw students from virtually the entire state, and other than A&M, that's Corpus Christi and Tarleton."

Tarleton is certainly drawing in students from the state, as this year's freshman class has exceeded 3,000 students - the largest class yet. Tarleton also now pulls students from 230 out of the 254 counties in Texas, being one of the few universities in Texas other than

A&M and The University of Texas at Austin that does.

"Tarleton also just has great traditions," Sharp said. "It has a lot of support from the community, a great alumni association that's willing to put their money where their mouth is and all of the things necessary to really blow the socks off of everything. I think over the last 12 years or so, it has really been the golden age of Tarleton that people will look back on and say, man, this is when this place took off."

Tarleton's expansion has been truly a remarkable one, but the university isn't the only place that's developed. The city of Stephenville has also benefited from the success of Tarleton.

"Winston Churchill once said, 'if you want to create a great city, first create a university and then wait 50 years,'" Sharp said. "All of our presidents and CEOs of the agencies work very hard in community outreach and serving the public, and certainly Tarleton is no exception to that... We work real hard to make sure that the people in the community know what we're doing, approve of what we're doing and support us."

After 14 years of service, Sharp is preparing to retire in late June of 2025. Although Sharp inevitably can't maintain his position as chancellor for the next 125 years to come, he's certain that because of Tarleton's esteemed legacy and the people behind it, the next century and a quarter will involve many more milestones and accomplishments for the university.

"Tarleton has what people want," Sharp said. "The culture of the students, the culture of the faculty - it's what Texans are looking for. They're looking for young men and women that get there early, stay late and by large are dedicated to their jobs, families and public service. Tarleton is a really good reflection of what Texas is about... And that culture is worth its weight in gold."





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# First in the family

## *Experiences of being first-generation*

**BY ANNABETH JOHNSON**  
Multimedia Journalist

Welcoming a new semester means welcoming the new students joining the Tarleton State University family. From students coming in from overseas or just up the road, every student has a different background and story. Within the Tarleton family, over 45% of students are first-generation.

Jenny Watts, Tarleton's Executive Director for the First-Gen Initiatives, briefly describes what qualifies you as a first-generation student as well as the current first-gen enrollment here at Tarleton.

"By definition, a first-generation student is one whose parents don't have a Bachelor's Degree. About 48% of our undergraduate students are first-generation," Watts said. "That is roughly about 7,000 students that are first-generation. Other universities are only going to have about 25% of their students that are first-generation."

First Gen Initiatives is a community of students, faculty and staff who are or were first-generation students. This organization focuses on holding student facing events to celebrate and provide community and network for first-generation students.

The community of First Gen Initiatives hosts First-Gen Fridays. On the first Friday of every month, students and faculty have coffee and donuts on campus. This provides students the opportunity to explore and see different offices and resources.

First-Gen Initiatives also celebrates November 8, National First-Generation College Student Day, on all of the Tarleton campuses as well as online.

Jeanelis Watson is entering her sophomore year and is the first in her family to attend a four-year university. With her parents receiving their Associate degrees at community colleges, Watson is the first member of her family to be working on a Bachelor's degree.

She describes her first-generation student experience as fun and non-stressful.

"All the events on campus help you make friends and get to know more about the school. There is a lot to do," Watson said. "There is something for everybody."

She currently enjoys supporting the Texans by attending soccer games and being a member of the American Sign Language club.

President James Hurley, who was a first-generation student himself, extends some advice to his fellow first-gen students.

"Know that you can do it and you are going to be successful," Hurley said, "Start with the notion that you are going to be



PHOTO BY ANNABETH JOHNSON

**Jeanelis Watson is a sophomore and first-generation student here at Tarleton State University.**

successful. Also, start with the end in mind. You have to understand the destination, and that destination is the degree. The learning experiences along the journey are far more valuable than the degree. Enjoy the journey, but also don't be afraid to ask for help. I am fortunate enough to be here today because people believed in me but I also believed in them. I believed in the power of partnership and collaboration and being there for one another."

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125 YEARS

# Tarleton Spirit Orgs. boast a rich history

BY HELENA KNUTSON  
Multimedia Journalist

Memories help make us the people we are today and, in this instant, make this campus the University it is. As Tarleton has grown through the years new memories have been created and shared, several of these memories are now Tarleton traditions, such as P.A.N.K.U.S (people against not knowing the university spirit) and the Purple Poo.

One of these organizations members is Bryce Wishan, second years P.A.N.K.U.S member,

“We’re basically trying to be a big family, whether it be P.A.N.K.U.S members or Texans,” said Wishan.

You might recognize these organizations by their iconic striped overalls and painted chests and stomachs at sporting events, 4th-year P.A.N.K.U.S member Cally Reding reflects on their history.

“Our founders went to a football game that was raining, and so they painted trash bags like ponchos,” said Reding. “That was our original uniform, then we changed to painted jeans and painted up [our bodies].”

This organization was established in 2001 to unite people who shared one thing in common: their love for Tarleton. The group was started by a group of residential leaders who all worked on the same floor.

“How the spirit came along was they would do chance and cheers at D Hall and stand up on the chairs,” said Reding. “People were like, ‘who’s

those crazy weirdos that are standing on chairs at D Hall and hollering, I want to be a part of that, and then we started growing.”

P.A.N.K.U.S has been around for a little over 20 years now and is growing each year with new members ready to embrace the Tarleton pride; one of these members is Ashow Bailey.

“I joined P.A.N.K.U.S because I can scream and yell at any game and meet new people, and they make sure I do my homework and stuff like that,” said Bailey.

P.A.N.K.U.S is constantly building the spirit of Tarleton and helping bring that pride to the students on campus.

“We do have some new tricks up our sleeve that we were going to pull out for homecoming. Hopefully, this will also get our name out there with other smaller organizations around campus,” Reding said.

Another spirit organization that has helped lift the spirit at Tarleton is the Purple Poo

Tarleton’s Purple Poo started off as Ten Tarleton Sisters and Ten Tarleton Peppers, also known as the TTS and the TTP. Each year, 20 members represent the organization. One of these members was Tarleton alum Ace Brooks.

“It’s about raising the spirit of Oscar P. and making sure that everybody’s morale is raised,” said Brooks.

You may recognize the Poo by their fun outfits and masks, but these masks have a very important job, and that is to conceal the identity of the Poo.

“The mask and hiding your identity



PHOTO BY HELENA KNUTSON

Here is a picture with P.A.N.K.U.S members Callie Reding and Kendall Rodriguez with the Purple Poo

was because you weren’t allowed to sneak out back then. You had to hide who you were because of the curfew,” said Brooks

The Purple Poo holds a lot of meaning to Tarleton and its students. Some think of the Poo as just another spirit organization, but for some the Purple Poo is their family.

“There is such a base, you really can’t call it any other word except

family, and it’s a loving community, it’s a giving community. You have some of the most fun times. I couldn’t be more blessed to be a part of it,” said Brooks.

These organizations make Tarleton the school it is. As these organizations grow, Tarleton can continue to make new memories and embrace new traditions.



## 125 YEARS

# The Tarleton experience keeps State Representative Burns' family coming back

BY JAXON HANSARD  
*Sports Editor*

1899 is a special year for Tarleton State University as that is when the school was founded. Throughout its 125 years of existence, the agricultural school has produced some very successful people, for example, DeWayne Burns.

Burns is a State Representative for District 58 and is an alumni of Tarleton himself.

The Tarleton experience is what keeps bringing people from the Burns family to Tarleton as he has had a family member in school at Tarleton since the 1960's.

Burn's parents and other family members attended the university in the 60's then he went to Tarleton in the 1990's where he would meet his wife Jennifer. Later on, their kids would attend the purple and white school.

Burns' parents planted some family roots just down the road in Cleburne where the representative would grow up and all the family members would end up gravitating back because of the family farm. Stephenville was the "perfect distance" from Cleburne.

"It's an important employer for our region and, as well. So I became even more plugged in as the only alum to make sure that Tarleton was given its due respect and treated fairly by the legislature when it came to funding and things like that," Burns said.

Burns applied and got accepted to three schools (Texas A&M, Tarleton, and Cornell University) but after a year of college station he was ready for the smaller town feel of Tarleton with some influence from his future wife. Ever since his return and later on Burns children would pick Tarleton, and he has been keeping his eye on the smaller



PHOTO BY HAELEY CARPENTER

**State Representative Dewayne Burns giving a speech at the 125 years Celebration for Tarleton State University.**

school while being a lifetime member of the Tarleton Alumni Association. Burns made it his mission to give back and make sure that the university would get its fair share of funding.

"When the tuition revenue bond bill came through, Tarleton was left out of it completely, and so I of course spoke to the chair of the committee and the speaker and anyone who would listen and said we got to make sure Tarleton is a part of this," Burns said.

The bill was changed and Tarleton was able to get part of the millions of dollars from the revenue bonds. The money secured from the bonds was able to help build the campus in Midlothian, improve the Fort Worth campus and help the Stephenville campus.

Tarleton has always been referred to

as the "best-kept secret in Texas" but with continued growth, it is possible that it is outgrowing that status.

"Well I would say it definitely was, but I think the secret's out. I don't think it's a secret any longer," Burns said. The exponential growth we've seen with student enrollment has led to some milestones. Tarleton was one of only a couple schools may be in the country to increase enrollment during COVID."

The proximity to the metroplex has been one of the biggest factors, along with the Fort Worth campus, for Tarleton's growth. Good problems are still problems as the school has been trying to combat the record-breaking number of students by getting bills and plans passed to build more dorms,

parking and buildings to better the campus overall.

"You're always going to have growing pains. That's what I would call them," Burns said. "Increased traffic, harder to find a parking place and some of the local establishments are busier now which is a good thing for the business owners and maybe inconvenient."

The Tarleton experience for the state representative that kept him and his family in the university for years was the biggest reason for love of the school and what it stands for.

"You are a person with a future, and the people that are helping to prepare you for the most part care about that and are invested in that and invested in each student," Burns said.



# A second family:

## *Student shares perspective on life at Tarleton*

**BY LINDSEY HUGHES**  
Multimedia Journalist

Tarleton State University prides itself on student life, culture and a campus that gives students a sense of belonging. They feel very at home on campus: from traditions, people and atmosphere, to professors, classes and student organizations.

Tarleton's history and traditions are rooted deeply within students from the moment they step foot on the campus. Reminders of the past and tokens of these traditions are scattered around the grounds. From Heritage Park, where the Purple Poo put out their signs every Monday night for students to grab on Tuesday mornings, to the statue of Army Major General James Earl Rudder where students can throw coins at his feet for good luck.

Other historic places around campus include the military memorial cube, the Tarleton time capsule and the original 1922 cannon, as well as various statues and seals around campus.

The statue of John Tarleton and his pet duck Oscar P. stands tall on Alumni Island, a sign of tradition and history.

Student Brittany Roark said that the school traditions are one of her favorite parts about being at Tarleton.

"I love all of the traditions, and all of the events that are on campus. There's a lot of opportunity to make connections," Roark said.

Other than tradition, according to students the people and atmosphere

on campus are some of the best parts of being a student at Tarleton. The university strives to provide an open and welcoming environment, and it has not gone unnoticed.

Sophomore Kynlie Bogle is one of those students.

"My favorite part of being a student at Tarleton is the involvement within the community and within the school," Bogle said. "I feel like everywhere I turn there's a new event going on and there are so many opportunities for me to be involved on campus."

Students come from all over the country and world, over 47 states are represented, as well as over 36 foreign countries. People from all walks of life have found a second family at Tarleton. Across campus stand 254 oak trees representing each of the 254 counties in Texas, a longstanding reminder that there is a little reminder of home for its natives.

The diverse and welcoming student body is just one reason that students choose to make Tarleton home, even students who never originally planned to stay.

Susannah Millerborg is a sophomore who originally planned to continue her education at Texas A&M University, but ultimately chose to stay at Tarleton.

"My favorite part about Tarleton is the diversity. There are all kinds of people here with different hobbies, beliefs and backgrounds, and it is refreshing to see that almost everyone you meet has an open mind and wants to learn about



PHOTO BY LINDSEY HUGHES

**The original 1922 cannon outside of the E.J Howell Building. The cannon was once fired during celebrations and events, until WWII when ammunition became hard to come by.**

each other's differences," Millerborg said.

Tarleton could not have made it to 125 years of excellence without a student body that has genuine passion for the school, the history, the faculty

or the campus. Students today are proving that they have an enthusiasm and love for Tarleton that will continue to take the university through another amazing 125.

## 125 YEARS

# How Tarleton helped bring the arts back

BY ASHTYN HANSARD  
*Executive Producer*

Tarleton State University recently celebrated 125 years of school being in session. Over these years, Tarleton has grown exponentially, providing more opportunities and programs for incoming students to explore.

One of these programs is Tarleton's Liberal and Fine Arts. Although the Clyde H. Wells Fine Arts Center was only built in 1980, Tarleton has quickly progressed in expanding the program.

Chris Ireland, the department head of Visual Arts & Design and a professor at Tarleton, said he was very prideful in the program and the students.

"When I started here in 2009, we had about 15 or 20 majors," said Ireland. "We've since expanded to digital media, video game design, animation and we have almost 200 majors now. It's been really rewarding to see the program grow."

Ireland has also helped make several improvements in his time here. New ceramics labs, drawing and design labs and motion capture studios have been important projects that have been added to the visual arts department. However, the department still has some improving to do.

"Our biggest issue is since we grew so fast, we kind of ran out of space in the Fine Arts Center," said Ireland. He explains that more space for students, especially digital media studies majors that require lots of lab space, is their biggest challenge that they're currently



PHOTO BY HAELEY CARPENTER

### The Fine Arts building on the Tarleton State University campus.

dealing with.

Ryan Jones, a sophomore at Tarleton and a music business major, agrees that the Liberal and Fine Arts program still has some areas to improve on.

"The thing with the music industry right now, especially with music business, is the technology," said Jones. "That's exactly what Tarleton needs for us music business majors in order for us to improve even more."

Elli Phillips, a graphic design major at Tarleton, had her own opinions on how to improve the visual arts program.

"One improvement I wish to see implemented is an emphasis on the business side of art," Phillips says. "I also believe all art majors need to

have a baseline set of skills, regardless of their concentration, that deal with composition, drawing/thumbnailing and concept design."

When discussing how their major and the material they have access to has improved their personal lives, Jones and Phillips had plenty to share.

"There's a kind of fog of war music in the music business where you really don't know what's ahead of you," said Jones. "It's very self-driven and it [the music program] kind of helps you to get on your own path because that's what is scary about music. There's no one true path to follow. It helps you build your own path."

For Phillips, the effect it had on her

was more design focused.

"The most important thing for me that my major has influenced is a renewed love of drawing and creating," said Phillips.

She goes on to explain that now, she's able to see the different principles of design when looking at websites or flyers. She's also able to organize her notes more and make her own work more accessible for herself.

Tarleton's Liberal and Fine Arts program has helped shape many students' lives at Tarleton, and it's just getting started. We hope to keep seeing the program grow and inspire more and more students every day.



# Trogdon House is the ‘Beating Heart of Tarleton’

BY BROOKLYN MCKINNEY

Multimedia Journalist

For over 125 years, Tarleton State University has evolved from a small agricultural college to a nationally prestigious university. Its surrounding buildings have been constructed, torn down, repurposed, and modified to evolve with the growing campus.

While Tarleton has been left almost unrecognizable today, the beating heart of the Trogdon House has stood the test of time. Within its walls lies not only the presidents and their families, but the legacy of the Tarleton family.

This 4,500 square foot two-story stone house, nestled between the O.A Grant Building, the E.J. Howell Education Building and the Dick Smith Library, remains bustling with life to this day.

President James and First Lady Kindall Hurley host countless campus traditions on its front steps, including Sundaes on Sundays to kick off the fall semester, Family Weekend breakfast and holiday receptions for faculty and staff.

“Nothing is more important to us than getting to know our students and their families. We’re in the center of everything – academics, arts, athletics – and that makes connecting with them so easy. We want them to know that they’re part of our family, the Tarleton family, and the Trogdon house is their home,” Kindall said.

The Trogdon home was originally built in 1923. Construction was overseen by its architect, Tarleton Dean J. Thomas Davis, and mostly involved students, keeping costs low at just \$8,000.

Students and other workers were paid anywhere between 25-62.5 cents per hour. Tarleton State University Magazine, last year, quoted a local newspaper describing the structure.

“Besides the student labor, whereby many boys have earned enough to place them in school for the coming term, many local men have been used,” the newspaper wrote. “The material for the dean’s home has, to a large extent been native stone. This, of course will be stuccoed and plastered, but will in the end be a very substantial building and help materially the appearance of the campus.”

In addition to two stories, the home featured an attic with 18-inch exterior walls made of several layers of concrete plaster.

While Davis moved into the Trogdon House in 1948 and made several renovations over time, the house actually got its namesake from Dr. W. O. Trogdon, who came to Tarleton with his family in 1966.

With Dr. W. O. Trogdon’s 16-year stay, enrollment almost doubled and several new academic programs were added to the curriculum.

Outside of his duties as Tarleton’s President, he was also an upstanding member of the surrounding community as the District Governor of the Rotary Club, a member of First United Methodist Church and a WWII Army Veteran.

While Dr. Trogdon did not build the Trogdon House itself, countless other construction projects were completed during his time as president, including the Industrial Education and Technology Building Farm Facilities and the Clyde H. Wells Fine Arts Center.

Steve Trogdon, President Dr. W. O. Trogdon’s son recalls many renovations that were made to the home due to former President Howell’s declining health.

“One of my first memories was walking into the kitchen, and the pantry had a bathtub in it! That was because President Howell could not climb the stairs. They put a bathtub in that little corner, and when you walk in to the right, that room functioned as his office/bedroom,” Steve said.

While some rooms have been utilized in different ways over the years, the



central staircase and pass-over landing from the front to the back of the home remain untouched. Steve still remembers his parents insisting on installing a door from the front room to the kitchen so that they didn’t have to climb up and over the landing.

“To get from the front door, or that front room that became our den, you either had to go all the way around through the living room, formal dining area, and breakfast area to reach the kitchen or go up and down the stairs. You would get your mileage. First thing I remember mom saying is, ‘I’m not sure about this,’” Steve said. “Maintenance gave her all sorts of reasons why [installing an extra door] wouldn’t work. My dad looked at them and said, ‘You don’t understand – she wants a door there.’ And that’s how that door got in there.”

Steve expressed sentiments similar to those of Kindall, recalling Tarleton students and faculty as an extension of the Trogdon family.

A student once knocked on the door of the Trogdon’s house to take a hot shower because the boiler went out.

“Dad showed him upstairs to the shower, he took his shower and came down, said ‘Thank you’ and Dad looked him square in the eyes and said, ‘Don’t you ever try that crap again,’” Steve said.

While the Trogdon House is no stranger to smiles and laughter, it has also witnessed tragedy. General James Earl Rudder, a decorated war hero and former president of Texas A&M was said to have spent his last day within its walls.

“I was at the house when mom and dad got the call that Earl Rudder had passed away. A lot of people don’t know Earl Rudder was a student here. Played football. Big guy. The statue out here is not anywhere near as tall or big as he was. He started up here and his last day, he was here. He came up and spent the whole day with mom and dad, just to get away from all the chaos on the main campus,” Steve said.

Rudder died of a cerebral hemorrhage on March 23, 1970, at 59 years old.

“That day that he was here I was on campus and I came in because I had to get something. He saw me come in the kitchen back door on the far side by the porch and he said, ‘Steve! Come on in.’ ‘Mr. Rudder, I gotta get back to school’. He said, ‘You sit down and have lunch with your dad and me. If they give you any flack over getting there late tell them to call James Earl Rudder’.”

The front steps of the Trogdon House have seen thousands of students and faculty in its lifetime. It has been filled with the footfalls of many former presidents and their Tarleton families.

Laughter echoes through the walls during campus events. It connects us, feels our joy and our stress during finals week, it has cried our tears.

The Trogdon House is just as alive as you and me, living and breathing with Tarleton’s legacy.

## 125 YEARS

# Tommy Keeling's Tarleton Hall of Fame journey

**BY GAVIN PATRICK**  
*Multimedia Journalist*

Tommy Keeling knows a thing or two about baseball.

Any Tarleton State University Texan would be proud to know the story of Tommy Keeling because getting into a hall of fame, of any sorts, is no easy task.

But it's possible, and it starts with being inspired by something you love, setting goals and fighting like hell to achieve them.

"A lot of people these days don't put the work in; I worked nonstop," Keeling said. "Before I did anything else, I would make sure I put in the work."

Well, it paid off.

Keeling was inducted into the Tarleton State University Athletics Hall of Fame in 2014. Before that, he spent his four years at Tarleton (1994-1997) as a standout outfielder and a feared hitter.

No Tarleton State Texan has more at bats, hits or doubles in their collegiate career than Keeling. He also owns single-season school records for total bases tailed (157) and doubles (25), set in 1996 and 1997.

The crack of his bat was something to behold. It was how the legend was born.

The team was driving out to face East Texas Baptist in 1994, Keeling's freshman year, and he was sitting a few rows back from his assistant coach, Trey Felan.

He asks: "Hey, how big's the field?"

"Well, just get the ball over the pine trees," Felan told him.

It didn't take long for coach to be proven right.

"My first at bat, I come up there and sure enough: I hit one way over the pine trees all the way down into a soccer field," Keeling said. "And I just look at coach.

"And Coach [Jack] Allen (the head coach) comes in to me and he goes, 'y'know, before today, your dad had hit the farthest ball I've ever seen.'

"Now you hold that record."

It was the first of many records set by Keeling at Tarleton State, and up until our interview 30 years later, he never looked back.

But his time as a Texan almost never got started.

Keeling, an Austin native, was originally slated to join the University of Texas on a baseball scholarship. The deal essentially guaranteed him a spot on the team and a future as a Longhorn, a school some of his friends had played for before.

But as soon as the offer was made, it was taken away. Instead, the school wanted him to come as an invited walk-on. And, well...

"I didn't want to do that," Keeling said.

He didn't know what to do next either.

Then, out of the blue, Keeling's father -- a decent ball player in his own right -- saw a newspaper story about baseball tryouts at Tarleton State. He read that the team's head coach was Jack Allen, who had coached him at Ranger Junior College in 1971 and '72.

"He was like, 'let's just go up there, we'll go to the tryout,'" Keeling said. "And when I went to the tryout, he offered me right on the spot."

Just like that, Keeling was a Texan.

Once his career at Tarleton was off and running, after he hit that ball over the pine trees, he started getting offers from other schools. Because of course he did.

But just like Taylor is with Travis, Keeling was already taken.

"The other people had their chance before, and they let it slip through their fingers," he said. "I wasn't gonna give them the opportunity again."

Keeling had bled enough purple to that point that no one was going to lure him to another school. He had found his place, a place that gave him the opportunity to not just play the sport he loved, but flourish in it.

"Being a big institution like that, they don't have some of the accolades that I have," Keeling said, "which just makes me happy that I stuck to where I was and was able to succeed like I did and have the accolades that I got. I couldn't be happier with that."

Four years came and went at Tarleton. By the time he was done, Keeling was subject to two team MVPs, three first-team All-Lone-Star Conference selections, three Big Stick awards (just to name a few), and capped it all off with a phenomenal .417 batting average his senior year.

His time as a Texan was done, but his competitive drive wasn't satisfied. He wanted to make it to the major leagues, which, in his words, was a far-fetched goal.

The MLB draft came and went, and Keeling's name was never called.

But that didn't stop him from continuing his baseball career. In 1997, he was invited to tryout for the Tennessee Tomahawks, an independent pro baseball team in the (now dissolved) Heartland League.

His tryout went similar to his one at Tarleton. After one workout and a batting practice session, he signed a contract on the spot.

"I was given the opportunity, just health was an issue," he said.

Unfortunately, Keeling broke his ankle in the championship series his first season and was never the same. He was able to work his way back the following year but could only play a few days in a row before needing to rest.

"After that season, I decided it wasn't getting any better," Keeling said. "So it was time to move on."

It was a hard pill to swallow for Keeling. An injury that was completely out of his control had dashed his hopes and dreams of one day playing major league baseball.

So, what would he do next?

"You gotta find something else to fill that competitive edge," he said.

Well, first, Keeling got a job at Dell in 1999. But in his free time, he found another sport.

"I play golf all the time," Keeling said. "It's something that you still gotta have the drive to wanna compete in.

"You always have to have something."

For some, that competitive edge never goes away. Not even a career-ending injury can stop it.

For Keeling, it didn't matter if he was down-and-out, got a scholarship pulled or couldn't play major league baseball: he always chose to keep going.

He never gave up. And playing baseball taught him that lesson.

"It gives yourself a drive, your competitive nature," Keeling said. "You don't wanna lose. You play the game for a reason; you're not playing just to play. [Because] in life, you want a certain outcome.

"You also learn discipline. You can't be off-the-cuff and do whatever you want; you gotta be disciplined. And, if you have the right coach, it teaches you good life lessons."

Thankfully, in Jack Allen and Trey Felan, he did have the right coaches. And coupled with a strong work ethic, there was never an obstacle too big for Keeling to overcome.

Today, Keeling is an outside account executive for SHI International Corp. where he resells computer equipment for organizations in the DFW area.

Keeling coached his youngest daughter's softball team when she was six up until she was 12. And even with a bad ankle, he still dabbles in the sport he loves by showing the ropes to young girls.

"I haven't swung a baseball bat [recently], but I've been swinging softball bats and hitting balls for them and throwing with them," Keeling said. "I do that all the time. As a matter of fact, I still go out and help girls if they ask me to hit with them or throw with them.



**125 YEARS**

# Tarleton State University has grown dramatically in 125 years

**BY BARRETT JORDAN**  
*Multimedia Journalist*

Tarleton State University has witnessed unprecedented progress, in recent years. From significantly larger student enrollment, new buildings and several major expansions the university has personified the reputation it has today.

So, what better way to celebrate 125 years of excellence than to look back at the school's amazing growth over the years—a trend that's only expected to continue in the years that follow.

You don't become one of the fastest-growing colleges in the state of Texas overnight. Funded by John Tarleton, Tarleton's story begins when the college opened in 1899. The university had a fraction of the current infrastructure and number of students who attend today.

It's difficult to imagine how different it was over a century ago, but those original students and faculty members pioneered an institution that soon joined the Texas A&M system by 1917.

Tarleton was somewhat limited in its development as solely an agricultural college. By this time, there were several student organizations on campus and more buildings and residence halls were built since the college's opening.

Clearly Tarleton was experiencing growth. However, it didn't reach a major turning point until it became a four-year, degree-granting institution by 1959. The increased variety of programs offered widened its appeal and student enrollment numbers shot up significantly.

Little by little, Tarleton enhanced its facilities, athletics programs and the student population only continued to rise.

And that brings us to where we are



COURTESY PHOTO TARLETON STATE UNIVERSITY

**Tarleton State University's class of 2028 students gather to watch the raising of their class's flag as they enter their first college semester**

today; the 2000s and beyond have marked a modernization period for the university.

Ongoing renovations to on-campus residences, the construction of education buildings for emerging departments and the establishment of a global campus or availability of online degree programs are just a few of the recent developments that have taken place within the last few decades.

In even more recent times, Tarleton

has invested in the building of a parking garage to cater to increasing numbers of students and a large events center adjacent to the football stadium.

Greek life, recreation clubs, and many student-led organizations (the TNS/JTAC included of course) all exist on campus to serve the interests of students.

Tarleton proudly boasts a student population of 16,230 (and this stat is from fall of 2023 meaning the number

is even greater now). As each incoming Freshman class grows, it's obvious more people are taking notice of what was once a small agricultural college in Stephenville, Texas.

Tarleton's rich history and achievements are impossible without motivated students given the opportunity to succeed. Here's to 125 more years: it's only up from here Texans.

125 YEARS

# Tarleton Alumni:

*Ever Forward,  
Ever Onward*

BY DREW FLEMING  
Multimedia Journalist

On Sept. 4, 2024 Tarleton celebrated 125 years of excellence. Including: the impact Tarleton Texans are leaving, and continue to leave on the state of Texas and the world. Starting with sports, Tarleton is officially a NCAA Division I Institution. Also current student Conner Prince competed in skeet shooting at the Paris Olympics, and brought home a silver medal. And of course still in Stephenville, it seems now more than ever that the excellence of Tarleton is being carried on by the 17,000 students currently working towards their degrees.

While looking forward, the future of Tarleton is exciting. The 125th anniversary is a great opportunity to take a look back at the milestones and alumni that left their mark on Tarleton.

The Texan News spoke with Tarleton sports hall of fame track and field star, Delta Zeta Member, and Alumni Association Board Member, Michelle Heavyside. When asked about her thoughts on the future of Tarleton, Heavyside said, “Witnessing its growth fills me with a deep sense of pride and nostalgia. The expansion and development of the campus reflect not just the physical growth, but also the evolving spirit and increasing impact of the university.”

In a recent article The Wall Street Journal ranked Tarleton State University fifth in universities highly recommended by students and recent alumni. In an article issued by the office of the president, University president James Hurley stated that he is not surprised by The Wall Street Journal ranking. “The academics, the knowledge exchange, the campus life — they’re all here.” Hurley said. Heavyside echoed, “Seeing new facilities, programs, and opportunities emerge reminds



PHOTO BY DREW FLEMING

**Brick sign outside of Tarleton Alumni House, echoing that, “The Gates Are Always Open.”**

me of my time there, and it reinforces my belief in the lasting value of a Tarleton education”

Regarding the family aspect of being a Tarleton Texan, Hurley said, “From their first day on campus, our students know they’re part of the Tarleton family. Their success is our top

priority, and that will never change.” Anyone that has stepped on Tarleton’s campus knows this very well. Alumni, students, and staff all agree that Tarleton is the place where you find your family, your home, and your career.

As Heavyside stated, Tarleton Alumni feel

a strong connection to Tarleton’s future and a desire to support its mission to shape future generations. It is evident that this anniversary is a major milestone in the lives of past, current, and future Tarleton Texans.



125 YEARS

# Honoring 125 Years: Tarleton's 'Steward of Fire' Unites past and present

BY COLTON BRADBERRY  
Multimedia Journalist

On Sept 3, 2024, Tarleton State University celebrated its 125th anniversary, marking more than a century of academic excellence and tradition. Among the many festivities held to commemorate this milestone, unveiling a new school song, "Steward of Fire", stood out as a highlight.

The song, written and conducted by Tarleton's Director of Choirs, Dr. Troy Robertson, reflects the deep connection between the university's past, present and future.

The title "Steward of Fire" was inspired by the university's long-standing traditions involving fire, including the bonfire, lighting your candle at Convocation, and the solemn ceremony of Silver Taps, where flames are extinguished.

"You begin your life as a Texan with the lighting of the candle at Convocation, and it ends with the extinguishing of the flame at Silver Taps," Robertson said. "This symbolic connection between fire and a student's life became the song's foundation."

"Steward of Fire" pays tribute to Tarleton's musical history by quoting two of the university's most iconic songs, the fight song and the color song. The song's final lines, "Ever forward, ever onward/ Run the Purple and the White," are a direct reference to both. These lyrics are widely recognized by students and alumni, symbolizing Tarleton's enduring pride and spirit.

By incorporating these familiar phrases, Robertson ensured the new song would resonate with the entire Tarleton community, linking the present with the school's storied past.

Reflecting on the university's rich history and the significance of its 125th anniversary, Dr. James Hurley, President of Tarleton State University, emphasized the core values that have shaped Tarleton since its founding.

"John Tarleton's vision for our beloved



PHOTO BY HAELEY CARPENTER

## Tarleton choir performing "Steward of Fire" at the 125 year celebration.

university was founded on access, opportunity, and affordability," Hurley said.

The theme of the song emphasizes the shared responsibility of Tarleton's community to preserve its traditions and values. Robertson described this as being stewards of the university's legacy, a gift that has been passed down through generations of students and alumni.

"This experience we have together is

centered around our values," he said.

The song's lyrics highlight the importance of carrying these values forward, much like a flame that must be tended and passed on.

Creating a song for such a significant occasion required Robertson to adapt his usual writing process. Rather than relying on the traditional late-19th-century style often associated with school songs, he chose to modernize "Steward of Fire" by giving it a pop-influenced sound.

"A school song is supposed to be sung by everybody," he said, explaining his decision to create a song that would appeal to a wide audience.

"Steward of Fire" stands as a testament to Tarleton State University's enduring legacy. With its thoughtful lyrics and contemporary sound, the song serves as a reminder to all Texans, past, present and future, that they are stewards of the university's flame of learning.

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