



# The J-TAC

A PUBLICATION OF THE TEXAN NEWS SERVICE

AUGUST 28, 2025



**EECU Center  
opens on  
Tarleton campus**

*-Page 4*

BACK TO SCHOOL- FALL 2025

[texannews.net](http://texannews.net)

VOL. 107, NO. 1

## TNS/J-TAC STAFF

**Mackenzie Johnson**  
*Editor-in-Chief*  
**Colton Bradberry**  
*Managing Editor*  
**Ashtyn Hansard**  
*Digital Media Director*  
**Helena Knutson**  
*Marketing Director*  
**Brenna Dempsey**  
*Executive Producer*  
**Drew Fleming**  
*Associate Producer*  
**Andrew Utterback**  
*Podcast Producer*  
*Opinion Editor*  
**Lindsey Hughes**  
*Art Director*  
**Caroline Crain**  
*News Editor*  
**Gavin Patrick**  
*Sports Editor*  
**Helena Knutson**  
*Marketing Executive*

**Bethany Kilpatrick**  
*Multimedia Journalist*  
**Brooklyn McKinney**  
*Multimedia Journalist*  
**Leslie Posadas**  
*Multimedia Journalist*  
**Alexis Gonzalez**  
*Multimedia Journalist*  
**Kellan Byars**  
*Multimedia Journalist*  
**Micaela Sullivan**  
*Multimedia Journalist*  
**Riley Hetherington**  
*Multimedia Journalist*  
**Avery Harr**  
*Multimedia Journalist*  
**Austin Lewter**  
*Faculty Adviser*

### CONTACT US

**Mail:** Box T-0230,  
Stephenville, TX 76402  
**Physical:** Grant 396  
(254) 968-0519  
editor@texannews.net

### Independent Student Journalism Since 1919

The opinions expressed in J-TAC and the Texan News Service are those of the student journalists and individual contributors and do not necessarily reflect the views of Tarleton State University its administration, faculty, staff or student body as a whole.

The Texan News Service strives for accuracy and fairness in all its reporting. However, we acknowledge that errors may occur. If you believe a factual error has been made, please contact our editorial team at editor@texannews.net and we will address the matter promptly.

Content published in J-TAC and the Texan News Service, whether in print or online, is protected by copyright and may not be reproduced without prior written permission from the editors.

J-TAC and the Texan News Service operate as an independent student-run publication and adheres to the principles of free speech and journalistic integrity as outlined in our editorial policies.

### Artificial Intelligence Policy

The Texan News Service is constantly monitoring the use of artificial intelligence in journalism. At present, articles will expressly state if generative AI has been used for any reason in a story, though AI is presently expressly prohibited in story and art creation per our AI policy. Any questions or concerns can be addressed to alewter@tarleton.edu



**FOLLOW US!**

# From the editor's desk: *A letter to start the semester*

Getting to sit down and write an editor's note is an unprecedented experience for me, but I wanted the chance to step outside the parameters of an article to mark the start of this new school year.

To put it simply, I am ecstatic to be serving as the fall 2025 TNS/J-TAC editor-in-chief. As an agricultural communications major graduating this December, this honor isn't one I was certain I'd be in line for. My final semester of college is strictly internship-based, and my ability to continue my work here depended greatly on the internship I landed and its flexibility. Luckily, it was within reach for me to do a split internship – one with the Fort Worth-based magazine I have always dreamed of writing for and the other here, leading a team and student organization I have dreamed of serving since setting foot in our newsroom.

The position I am in right now may just be the most unique one of my life: pursuing a metropolis internship, taking on freelance opportunities on the side and being so close to my post-grad career while also growing even more intricately connected to this student newspaper and the university and city we are privileged to serve.

And now that I'm officially in this position, at the editor's desk, I am honored with the opportunity not only to serve that community, but to lead a staff of such devoted and talented student journalists. As managing editor last semester, I got to directly behold the diverse mix of skills we harbor among our staffers, and no matter their specific area of brilliance—whether writing, editing, broadcasting, podcasting or marketing—the one thing they all have in common is their undeniable dedication to the job they do.

We are a tightly knit bunch, passionate about what we pour into the TNS/J-TAC, and I hope it shows in the work we put out on the racks.

This Back to School Edition you are holding is brought to you by various members of our Executive Team and J-TAC editors. It en-

capsulates everything this fall semester will likely entail—from new and exciting developments and successes to ways in which to tackle your own college career—but above all else, it contains the stories of students, told by students.

I can't wait to share what we have in store this semester and for you to read the stories told by the rest of our staff, returners and newbies alike.

We are so glad to be here and welcome you back, Texans.

It is going to be a fabulous semester,

*Mackenzie*



Photo By Emily Savage

**Mackenzie Johnson is the fall 2025 Editor-in-Chief**

# Balancing classes, chaos and your sanity

**BY LINDSEY HUGHES**

*Art Director*

The fall semester is often the most chaotic, busy and stressful time of the school year. Balancing all of the hustle and bustle that comes along with figuring out classes, work, extracurricular activities and sometimes sports can be an added task in and of itself.

Whether your time as a college student has just begun, is in full swing or is coming to a close, the stress that comes with starting a new semester can be alleviated—or even eliminated—by choosing to start some very simple but effective practices.

Susannah Millerborg, a former kinesiology student at Tarleton State University, attested to the fact that juggling everything at once can be mentally and physically draining. This is especially true if you're unsure what steps to take to alleviate some of that stress.

"Honestly, my top tip for maintaining all of those responsibilities while still staying mentally okay would be to keep realistic goals for yourself and make sure to prioritize you,"

Millerborg said. "Getting grades and earning money are important, but none of that matters if you aren't okay. Use the downtime you have to do what fills your cup."

This is an important thing to remember, especially for those who are living away from home at college for the first time. Work hard, study hard and find time to have fun with extracurriculars, but don't forget to prioritize everything based on obligation, too.

Those major papers, deadlines, big work shifts and so on most likely need to be on your list of obligations. Social events, and even those time-intensive yet flexible club meetings, can sometimes be second-tier on the list of important tasks. However, the important thing is to never forget that your mental health is of utmost priority.

It is endlessly important to learn that saying "no" is not, by any means, a bad thing. As college students, sometimes we get so caught up in what people consider the "college experience" that we forget it's okay to say no and put ourselves first. Of course, things like going to

campus events and having fun with friends are an important part of being in college, but it's also okay to say no to a night out to get a much-needed night in.

Using downtime wisely is another key player when it comes to creating the best semester possible for yourself. Think about the amount of time we spend scrolling social media, playing video games or doing other activities that don't necessarily benefit us or our busy schedules. These things are good in doses, but it's important to consider how that time could be used to ease some of the unavoidable stress that the balancing act of college produces.

Downtime could look like going on a peaceful evening walk, going to the gym, reading a book, getting an extra two hours of sleep (often a rare commodity in college) or simply having a peaceful evening in with friends or roommates. Anything that promotes a mentally and physically healthy, happy you is productive downtime.

Tarleton junior Kynlie Bogle is one example of someone who struggled to balance it all at

first. With a rigorous psychology class schedule, as well as a hometown job, she understands the amount of juggling needed to stay afloat in college.

"I think the things that helped me most were planning my weeks ahead of time and doing my best to stay ahead on class work, rather than procrastinating," Bogle said. "Planners, both online or pen and paper, are super useful tools that help you visualize your time and deadlines."

Planners, possibly one of the most bought yet least used school supplies, can be a game-changer for a student with a busy semester. Being able to visualize deadlines, important dates, special events or work shifts can help a hectic life become an organized one.

Even if it only gets updated or looked at once a week, that one time can be the key to time management. Blocking time in your planner for study, homework or even planned downtime can make a difference in the semester and your mental health.

## Starting the semester off on the right foot

**BY BRENNA DEMPSEY**

*Executive Producer*

Returning to classes from summer break can be a bit of an adjustment, but starting the semester off right can be the key to success.

One of the best ways to be successful is to attend classes and be consistent with showing up on time. Canvas has resources, but not nearly as many as the professors will have to offer in class.

An article by York College of Pennsylvania, "Attend Class Like You Mean It: Simple Tips to Make the Most of Your College Courses," highlights the value of showing up to class and staying engaged.

"In person, you'll hear valuable explanations and real-world examples that don't always make it into the textbook," York College of Pennsylvania stated. "Plus, your professors will notice when you're engaged, which can open doors to mentorship and future opportunities."

Ask questions from the start, so things that might be confusing later are not as big of a problem. There are very few professors who

would discourage a student from asking for help or clarification.

The classroom is where students go to learn, and being curious is a part of learning.

Use available resources like tutoring and supplemental instruction, which are offered all over campus. Doing this from the start can build a strong foundation for challenging subjects.

Tarleton State University offers these resources, which are available to students both online and in person.

"The primary mission of the Tutoring and Learning Center (TLC) is to assist students in developing effective techniques for facilitating their own learning," Tarleton stated on its website. "The TLC is committed to fulfilling its mission by helping students attain their highest level of academic achievement possible by creating a supportive and challenging environment that will provide access to all students for academic success."

Completing homework before it's due allows students time to work and reflect on what they are submitting. This gives students the

ability to create higher-quality work that can reflect on their grades at the end of the semester.

Doing this at the start not only shows benefits during class but can also be seen on their transcript after the classes are done. This can lead to getting new or better scholarships, and future employers can see the hard work a graduate has put into the assignments they were given.

Without having to worry so much about impending due dates, some students have less homework-related stress.

Stress can make things feel more difficult, so taking the extra steps to stay healthy can pay off.

Louisiana State University (LSU) released an insightful article on this topic, titled "The Link Between Mental & Physical Health and Academic Success."

"Physical health also directly impacts cognitive function, energy levels, and your ability to handle stress," LSU stated in the article. "Regular exercise can improve memory, concentration, and problem-solving skills. Good

nutrition and sleep provide the stamina you'll need to focus and retain information."

Health encompasses more than the body; mental well-being is equally important.

"Your mental health plays a massive role in your learning experience," LSU stated. "Emotional well-being is also essential for goal-setting and perseverance. Studies show that students with good mental and emotional health are more likely to stay motivated and overcome obstacles."

Another way to start the semester right is to make sure to take time for friends and family.

Balancing a social life can contribute to a better mental state and can help students take a step back from all the work and get a fresh start.

Get together to celebrate achievements, even if it's just sitting back to watch a show or movie. Study with friends and classmates to boost morale and encourage each other.

There are many ways for students to start the semester off on the right foot, so stay consistent and enjoy it.



Photo by Sage Tomeu

(Top row, left to right) Bailey Small, Montgomery Parsons, Waitley Sharon, Coleman Shalbetter, (bottom row, left to right) Brayden Roe, Hadley Tidwell, Tori Brower, Brittany Stewart, Mark Eakin, Jacelyn Frost, Kaylie Garza, Jordan Driver and Landris White at the 2025 CNFR in Casper, Wyoming, June 15-21.

# Tarleton Rodeo defends Men's Title, Women's Reserve at 2025 CNFR

**BY MACKENZIE JOHNSON**  
*Editor-in-Chief*

For many student athletes, summer serves as the bookend of a busy school year, marking the chance for them to prepare for the approaching season ahead without the full-time constraints of a packed class and competition schedule. These scorching hot months may still come with intensive training, but they typically don't include the athletes' biggest competition of the year.

Tarleton Rodeo is the one school-affiliated team that not only competes year-round, even when school is not in session, but also performs on its biggest stage.

The College National Finals Rodeo (CNFR) takes place in Casper, Wyoming, June 15-21, and it's the very event Tarleton Rodeo athletes work toward all year. Eleven students qualified for the 2025 CNFR, battling it out between 10 rodeos from September to April to conclude

the season as Women's and Men's Team Southwest Regional Champions.

Winning at the regional level is nearly a yearly occurrence for Tarleton Rodeo – and winning on the national level often follows the same route, considering the team has now won 41 combined team and individual championships.

At the 2024 CNFR, they clinched a Men's Team Championship, a Women's Team Reserve Championship and an individual championship in the saddle bronc riding. This year, Tarleton made back-to-back history by winning yet another Men's Team Championship, Women's Team Reserve Championship and individual championship in the goat tying.

The 11 student athletes who qualified to make the trip to Casper were Jordan Driver (barrel racing and all-around); Hadley Tidwell (barrel racing); Tori Brower (goat tying); Kaylie Garza (breakaway roping); Jacelyn Frost (breakaway roping); Brayden Roe (tiedown

roping); Bailey Small (saddle bronc riding); Coleman Shalbetter (saddle bronc riding); Montgomery Parsons (saddle bronc riding); Waitley Sharon (saddle bronc riding) and Landris White (steer wrestling).

While they all put up a good fight against the 10 other college rodeo regions across the nation, the five Texans that qualified for the CNFR Finals at the end of the week, after three rounds of competition, were Brower, Frost, Shalbetter, Parsons and Small, with Brower being crowned the title of 2025 Champion Goat Tier.

"It's definitely something that I've worked my entire career for, so it's pretty relieving that I get to go home with the title," Brower said. "And I think it's even more special that it gets hung up in the foyer of the Tarleton arena. But now I want to use it and set an example to the younger generation."

Brower was one of the shining senior stars at this year's CNFR, and knowing it would be

her last chance to run down the alleyway as a college athlete was a looming thought over the course of the week.

"Consistency was definitely my goal for the week, and I was definitely trying to take it step by step, run by run," Brower said. "After the second round, I had to wait from Tuesday until Friday to make my third run, and I think I knew that a lot of it would bank on that one run. Out of all the runs that week, that was the run I was most nervous for. I think it was because it could've been my last run ever. By the time the Finals came, I really was quite relaxed and excited. I knew that it was my last run ever, and I just wanted to go and make the best run I could and just truly enjoy it."

Since goat tying is not recognized as a part of professional rodeo, the national level at the CNFR is as far as the event can take Brower on a championship basis. However, Brower can chase breakaway roping on the professional circuit and will also be taking her goat



Photo by Sage Tomeu

**(Left to right) James Hurley, Kindall Hurley, Waitely Sharon, Coleman Shalbetter, Bailey Small, Brittany Stewart, Tori Brower, Jordan Driver, Kaylie Garza, Jacelyn Frost, Brayden Roe, Landris White, Montgomery Parsons, Mark Eakin, Kelly Eakin, Diana Ortega and Doug Jones at the 2025 CNFR award ceremony after a winning week.**

tying talents to the arena to coach rather than compete.

Alongside women's rodeo coach for Tarleton, Brittany Stewart, Brower now strives to get Tarleton's next ascending CNFR goat tying qualifiers to the winner's circle and is grateful for Stewart's longstanding and continued mentorship.

"Brittany has had many conversations with me about goat tying and even just about being a good person," Brower said. "She's taught me so much in the arena, but even more out of the arena that I'll forever be thankful for. She's been the glue that's held me together and has been there for many moments that I've struggled."

Brower also thanked head rodeo coach Mark Eakin, Tarleton Rodeo strength and conditioning coach Tyler Frank, her uncle David and fellow teammates for the unwavering support throughout her college career.

Although Brower might have been the only team member to acquire a world championship at the 2025 CNFR, Parsons was right there behind her, winning second in the saddle bronc riding when all was said and done.

"The part I'm most proud of walking away from the CNFR is just the fact I got to be a part of something as awesome as the CNFR,"

Parsons said. "It was such a cool experience to be able to be there with all my friends. We have such a great group of guys. No matter what happens or what's going on, they always have your back and are always there to support and help."

The fact that Parsons shared the saddle bronc riding top three with a Tarleton Rodeo member made it even more special.

"It was really awesome to be so close in the standings with Coleman (Shalbetter)," Parsons said. "He's my traveling partner and one of my best friends. I'm just glad we both had the opportunity to make the CNFR, and I'm glad we get to rodeo together."

Shalbetter ended up third in the saddle bronc riding at his debut CNFR, and now that he knows what to expect, plans to come back with a quiet vengeance at next year's intended trip to Casper.

"Now that I have been on the CNFR stage, it definitely helps take some of the nerves out of it and put some fun back into it for the next season," Shalbetter said. "One of my biggest takeaways from my first CNFR was to not worry about one bad draw because they give you plenty of opportunities to still capitalize on, and I'm very blessed to be a part of a team with such a good coach and program that

gives us the opportunities to win as a team and alone."

Small, the third saddle bronc rider to advance to Saturday's Short Go and end the CNFR with a ninth-place finish, also feels blessed to be a part of Tarleton Rodeo.

"The past two years, the rodeo team has been more than just a team," Small said. "All the saddle bronc riders and timed event guys, we have had a family mentality, and that didn't just start at the CNFR – it is all the time from each college rodeo to every pro rodeo. We all stood by one another the whole year, all the way through the CNFR and kept the mental game strong and healthy. It seemed that every day we would all have a meal and dang sure went to every performance to support both the men and women's teams."

While the eight-second winning rides of the saddle bronc riders unfold in mere moments, breakaway roping starts and ends in less than half that time, often adding pressure to the already intense stage of the CNFR. But that wasn't new to Frost, who had been planning for it for months—even years—before stepping onto that Wyoming dirt in June.

"It does all happen so fast, so I think it all comes down to preparation in the practice pen and visualization," Frost said. "In these times, I

am able to break it down step by step and form habits that I can count on to work in pressure situations. Going into the College Finals, I was intentional about focusing on one calf at a time and thinking of it as just another rodeo to take the pressure off of what there was to be won."

Frost ended up seventh in the 2025 CNFR breakaway standings, even despite not getting to start the week off how she would have preferred.

"Going into the first round, my goal for the week was to make four solid, consistent runs, and that plan quickly changed when I broke out on my first calf," Frost said. "After that run, I changed my plan a little bit to try and win some more in the remaining rounds to hopefully make up time. My horse worked great all week and was able to make three more good runs. Consistency still ended up being the key in the end."

Consistency certainly seems to be the name of the game for Tarleton Rodeo, and it paid off in the form of a string of repeat titles to make Texan history.

And now that school is back in session, Tarleton can't wait to begin the process of chasing that prestige again at the 2026 CNFR.

# Meet Tarleton State University's



**Tom Faulkenberry**

Photo Courtesy of Tarleton Communications

Dr. Tom Faulkenberry has been an influential member at Tarleton State University since joining as a faculty member in 2013. Now, 12 years later, he is rising to the challenge to serve as dean for the College of Graduate Studies.

"Tarleton is on the verge of just exploding exponentially with respect to our idea as a graduate degree granting institution," Faulkenberry said. "So within the next five years, we're liable to see a tripling of the number of PhD degrees in our institution. So it's really exciting to be able to lead the graduate college with that kind of unprecedented growth."

Faulkenberry's position as dean is effective Sept. 1. Previous roles he has held include associate dean of the College of Graduate Studies and department head and assistant department head in the Department of Psychological Sciences.

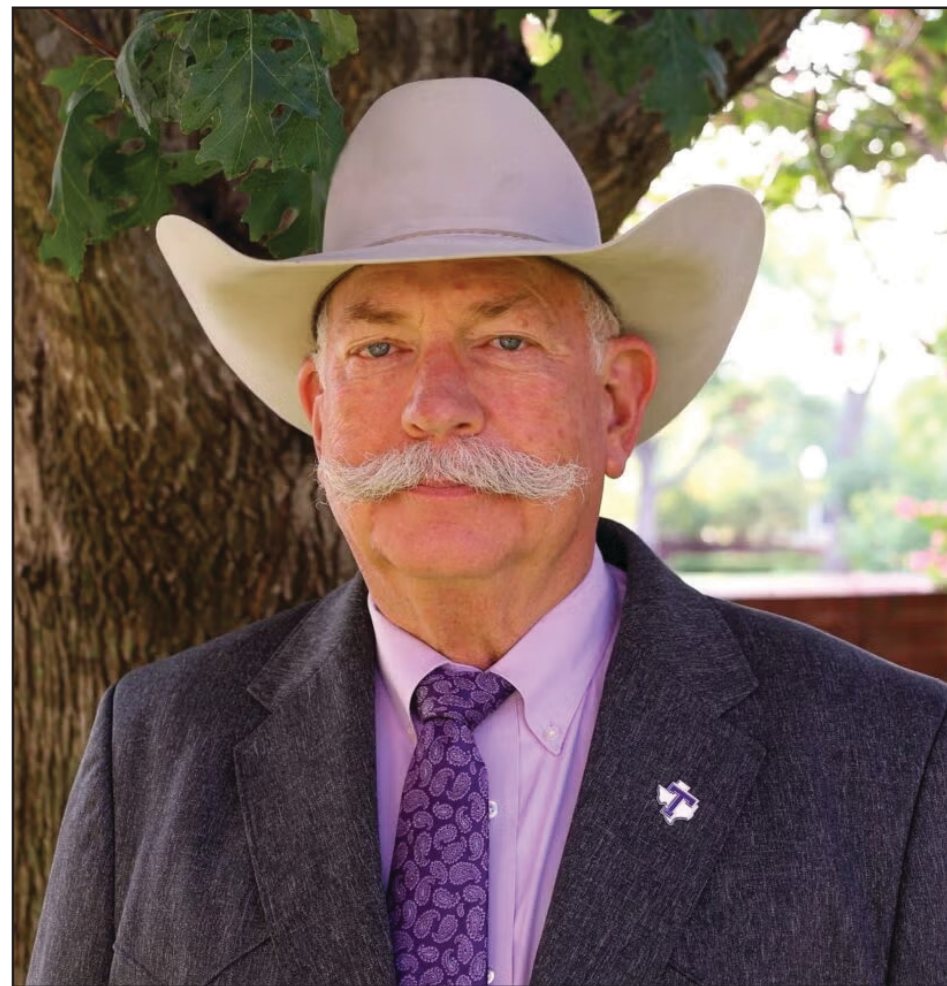
"Across the nation, graduate schools are having a lot of the pressure of increased enrollment being the expectation, and we're no different from that," Faulkenberry said. "Our

number one goal is to grow responsibly and sustainably."

Faulkenberry earned his bachelor's degree in mathematics from Southeastern Oklahoma State University, master's degree in mathematics from Oklahoma State University and Ph.D. in psychology from East Texas A&M. "We want to make sure that things run efficiently behind the scenes so the students can focus on what matters most, which is taking their classes, getting to know their professors and eventually graduating," Faulkenberry said.

As Tarleton increases its visibility across various platforms—including moving to Division I Athletics and R2 Level Research—Faulkenberry acknowledges that the university is shedding its title of "the best kept secret."

"I think that Tarleton is ready to become a major player on any stage," Faulkenberry said. "And for my role, that means with respect to graduate education. This number of PhD programs that you're seeing, we're ready for those."



**Frank Owsley**

Photo Courtesy of Tarleton Communications

W.F. "Frank" Owsley is no stranger to Tarleton and has been part of the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources since 2015. He has served as professor, head of the Department of Animal Science and associate dean, but being named interim dean marks a new step for him.

"I've been a faculty member for over 40 years," Owsley said. "I stepped into a department head role after 33 years in the classroom. I've watched other department heads and deans — some phenomenal, some maybe not so phenomenal. The exciting part of stepping into this is also the most challenging: Can I accomplish what needs to be done? I have personal aspirations, and I want to see if we can do it."

Owsley earned a bachelor's degree in animal science and a master's in animal nutrition from Texas A&M University, followed by a Ph.D. in agriculture from Texas Tech. His teaching career has included Auburn University, University of Georgia, Texas Tech, Texas A&M and Tarleton, with each step focused on

student success.

"We use the phrase 'experiential learning,'" Owsley said. "We have to be focused on students and all aspects of learning. We want to teach, then follow it with experiences that drive the point home. Our job is to prepare students not just for today, but for five, 10, 15 years down the road. I think we're already doing that, but we'll look for better ways. We're focusing more attention on the Ag. Center now and making sure it has the resources to help students learn."

Although the search for a permanent dean begins this year, Owsley plans to make the most of his interim role.

"Success is students leaving here satisfied they accomplished something and faculty satisfied they've done the same," Owsley said. "Have we been spinning our wheels, treading water or moving forward? And as I told the provost when she asked me to consider this role, I don't tread water."

# new fall 2025 deans



**Donalyn Alexander**

Photo Courtesy of Tarleton Communications



**Natalya Delcours**

Photo Courtesy of Tarleton Communications

Dr. Donalyn Alexander has been named Tarleton's new dean of nursing. Alexander was previously dean at Patty Hanks Shelton School of Nursing. Alexander earned her Doctor of Nursing Practice in healthcare administration from Oklahoma City University and holds a master's degree in nursing education from Abilene Christian University. With her 30 years of experience in healthcare education, Alexander is eager to start at Tarleton.

"What excites me most as a dean at Tarleton is the growth that I'm seeing and the predicted plans in the healthcare and science areas," Alexander said. "The potential to see not only the school of nursing growth, but the other professional healthcare schools to grow and to be added."

Alexander has a history of success in healthcare education. During her time at Patty Hanks Shelton School of Nursing, they achieved a perfect 100% first-time pass rate on the NCLEX-RN exam in 2020. Alexander has also worked as a clinical nurse, clinical instructor, program

director and a professor of nursing during her career in education.

"We want our students to be successful, we want them to be competent and confident. I feel like that's a collaboration between great faculty and students, as well as the leadership. To make it where it's an environment where students want to come and learn and enjoy the experience, as well as becoming competent nurses," Alexander said.

Tarleton's 2024 nursing class scored a 94.67% first-time pass rate on NCLEX-RN exams. Alexander wants to not only continue the success rate, but to increase it. Success is an important goal to Alexander, and she has a clear definition for it.

"Success is great admission, retention, high NCLEX pass rates and alumni that think the program's wonderful, and they're in the community and in the world promoting their alma mater," Alexander said.

Natalya Delcours has been an integral part of higher education in the Texas A&M System for more than a decade. Since 2013, she has served as dean of the College of Business Administration at Texas A&M University-Kingsville. This fall, Tarleton welcomes her as the new dean of the Dr. Sam Pack College of Business.

"What excites me most is Tarleton's momentum," Delcours said. "The Sam Pack College of Business is at a point of real opportunity – expanding programs, deepening its impact and strengthening connections with students and the community. I'm energized by the chance to help students succeed while also making a meaningful difference for businesses and communities across Texas."

Delcours earned her MBA from the University of Louisiana Monroe and a Doctor of Business Administration from Louisiana Tech University. Before joining Texas A&M University-Kingsville, she played a major role in the business programs at several other universities,

bringing with her a wealth of experience.

"I want to foster a student-ready environment where every student feels supported and career-prepared. Our programs will be future-focused, with technology, innovation and problem-solving skills at their core so students gain real-world experience through partnerships with local businesses and organizations."

Delcours's passion lies in preparing students for their futures, advancing innovative programs in business education and positioning Tarleton as a trusted partner for economic and community development in North Texas and beyond.

"At the end of the day, my vision for the Sam Pack College of Business is simple – we prepare students for meaningful careers, we give faculty the support to innovate and we serve as a partner for business and community growth. If we do those three things well, Tarleton will not only be known for excellence in business education but also for its impact across Texas and beyond."

# Tarleton EECU Center opens doors to community

BY COLTON BRADBERRY  
*Managing Editor*

Tarleton State University opened the doors Thursday, Aug. 21, to its long-awaited EECU Center, a \$120 million facility expected to transform the student experience, strengthen ties with the Stephenville community and provide an economic boost to the region.

The two-story multipurpose arena sits on the university's main campus and is designed to be one of the largest venues in the area. It will host NCAA Division I basketball games, symposiums, academic conferences, concerts and conventions. Seating capacity is 8,000 for basketball games and up to 10,000 for concerts, making it a centerpiece for both university and community gatherings.

The grand opening drew students, faculty, staff, alumni and Stephenville residents who filled the new arena for a ribbon-cutting ceremony and speeches from state leaders, Tarleton officials and community partners. The celebration marked the culmination of years of planning and construction aimed at elevating Tarleton's status as a member of the Texas A&M University System and as a growing

NCAA Division I program.

The first official event to be held in the new building was Tarleton's annual Convocation, welcoming new students to the university. But Thursday's grand opening was the public unveiling, complete with tours of the facility, a showcase of the building's amenities and reflections on what the project represents for Tarleton and beyond.

Tarleton President James Hurley told the crowd that the EECU Center is more than bricks and mortar.

"The EECU Center isn't just a building, it's the new economic engine for Tarleton State, Stephenville, Erath County and beyond," Hurley said. "It will be a place where we come together to cheer, to celebrate, to be inspired and to create memories that last a lifetime."

Hurley highlighted the collaborative effort that brought the project to completion, crediting the Texas A&M System Board of Regents, state lawmakers and private partners for their support.

Texas Sen. Brian Birdwell, who represents the region in the state Legislature, praised the project for the opportunities it will create for Tarleton students and the Stephenville com-

munity.

"We're here today, not to celebrate a building—a building is an inanimate object—but the opportunities that this building will represent," Birdwell said. "It's the opportunities that come, which are not inanimate, that we're looking forward to with this ribbon-cutting today."

For students, the center offers new opportunities to connect with employers and professionals. Kim Mitchell, assistant director of Career Services, said the building makes an ideal setting for large-scale recruitment events.

"I'm looking forward to our first career fair that Career Services is hosting on Oct. 1, which is the Mayfield College of Engineering Fair," Mitchell said. "We have currently, as of this morning (Aug. 21), 70 different employers that will be here in the EECU Event Center ready to hire our Texans."

Students also expressed their excitement about the new space. Kolt Byrd, Tarleton's Texan Rider, said he expects the building to draw attention not just from campus, but from surrounding towns.

"I think it will be a new wave to the towns around us, and they will all want to come visit



Photo By Lindsey Hughes

**President Hurley speaks at the EECU grand opening on August 21, 2025.**

and check out the new center and events," Byrd said. "It's pretty incredible inside. We have one state-of-the-art facility here."

The event center will soon host its first major entertainment events. On Sept. 7, comedian Leanne Morgan will bring her "Just Getting Started" tour to the arena. Just days later, on Sept. 13, former Tarleton student and Texas country star Koe Wetzel will return to campus for a concert.

## Record number of Texans welcomed at Convocation

BY CAROLINE CRAIN  
*News Editor*

Tarleton State University welcomed the class of 2029 to the Texan family Tuesday, Aug. 19, with the Convocation and Candle Lighting Ceremony.

The tradition was held in the brand-new EECU Center, being the first event to take place within its walls.

Consequently, a unique conclusion to the ceremony took place. As the procession began to exit, flashing stadium lights and AC/DC's "Thunderstruck" filled the center. The electric energy intensified as students took the towels from the back of their seats and spun them around in the air.

The incoming freshman class has continued Tarleton's pattern of growth. The group of 4,225 students set yet another record for new student enrollment.

During the Convocation, Tarleton President James Hurley addressed the crowd, sharing words of encouragement for the incoming class.

"I am proud and honored to welcome each and every one of you to Tarleton State University," Hurley said. "Being a Texan is defined by students' commitment to learn, their resilience in the face of challenges and their pursuit of excellence."

The Convocation and Candle Lighting Ceremony is a long-standing Tarleton tradition that signifies the beginning of a student's journey. At the end of Transition Week, each new freshman and transfer student lights a candle and are officially welcomed to the Tarleton State family. Student Body President Lauren Rogers also spoke to the new students.

"Tonight, you will become part of a fellowship of thousands who have come before you," Rogers said. "Your candle symbolizes the light to guide you on your journey at Tarleton State."

Hurley delivered an important message to the incoming class, one that captured the purpose of the ceremony and the journey ahead.

"Now, with your Tarleton flame lit, please know that the gates are open for you – to pursue new ideas, new opportunities and new dreams as a Tarleton State Texan," Hurley said.



Photo by Caroline Crain

**More than 4,000 new students lit their flame and joined the Tarleton State family at Convocation.**

# Tarleton preps for life after two football superstars

BY GAVIN PATRICK

*Sports Editor*

Out with the old, in with the new.

It's a mantra every football team abides by in a season's early stages. Tarleton State University returns 64% of its players from 2024, including nine defensive starters who helped put together the most impactful season in program history.

But the ceiling this year rides heavily on how the team replaces two of its all-time greats: Darius Cooper and Kayvon Britten.

"A good thing about college football is guys graduate and move on and get new opportunities, and then it's always fun to see what's next," head coach Todd Whitten said. "We're in that position right now."

While Cooper and Britten chase their dreams professionally, their once sidekicks share a big responsibility to adequately support a team expecting to contend for its first championship.

Receivers Cody Jackson and Keylan Johnson are two of the top targets for quarterback Victor Gabalis. They figure to be high-impact players should the QB live up to his unanimous selection as UAC Preseason Offensive Player of the Year.

Jackson finished 2024 on a six-game touchdown streak and averaged 60.9 yards over his last seven. He said he has a great relationship with Gabalis and is working to improve as a leader and establish a more vocal presence on the team.

"My workouts [have] been even more crazy," Jackson said. "I took them up to a different notch than last year 'cause I know I got to step in a big role this year."

The key for Johnson will be staying on the field, having missed 10 games over the past two seasons with injuries. He starts his sixth and final season at Tarleton, averaging 23.6 yards a catch. When healthy, Johnson is a big-play waiting to happen, as proved by his 219-yard, four-touchdown performance on six catches against North Alabama in 2023.

"We have good players at those positions, and they just gotta be themselves," Whitten said.

The backfield appeared ready to be led by veterans Braelon Bridges and Caleb Lewis following last season, but Tre Page III has



Photo courtesy: Las Vegas Raiders/X, Imagn Images

**Kayvon Britten (left) and Darius Cooper (right) have NFL dreams after leaving profound legacies at Tarleton State.**

worked his way into a prominent place in the mix. The redshirt freshman received a share of first-team reps in camp and spent the summer proving his worth.

"I've been watching film a lot more," Page said. "[I've been] going there sometimes with my [position] coach, [Pepe Pearson], me and him by ourselves. [I've been] taking better notes this year and going over my notes and looking at player personnel from the other team to tell me how everything [is] gonna go."

The Texans will also deploy Deangelo Rosemond and University of Hawaii transfer Tylan Hines in what figures to be a crowded room of capable runners.

"We all push each other because we all complement each other's run style in a different way," Page said. "It's gonna be hard to stop us this year."

Replicating Cooper and Britten's production will take a village. The two accounted for 62% of the Texans' offensive yardage in 2024. Guys like that don't grow on trees. But the team's success in 2024 and newfound playoff eligibility opened up recruiting this spring, and the program welcomed a top 15 transfer portal class.

One of those players, Reginald Harden, an Arkansas State transfer, has emerged as a

leader in the receiver room.

"I like Reggie," Jackson said. "...We got a lot of new, older players who are coming in here and being vocal. ...That makes me vibe with them, and they're bringing us together as a team."

Despite the departures of Cooper, Britten and four starting offensive linemen, FCS voters are still very high on the Texans. The team saw their highest preseason rankings yet on the Stats Perform FCS Top 25 (No. 10) and the AFCA FCS Coaches Poll (No. 8). They were also picked to win the UAC, receiving eight of nine possible first-place votes.

It helps to return 18 defensive players with over 200 snaps last season, 11 of the top 12 tacklers and four All-Conference players (Gabalis, DL Brandon Tolvert, LB Ty Rawls, CB Kasyus Kurns).

There may not be a Batman this year – but there are a lot of Robins.

"We have a lot of seniors (48% of the roster), a lot of energy," Whitten said. "These guys have worked really hard all through the winter and summer months, and so they're certainly ready to go play."

As for Cooper, who just snagged a roster spot on the Philadelphia Eagles and was around the program meeting with recruits while train-



Photo courtesy: Grant Cohen

**Running back Tre Page III was a star in fall camp and is in line for a bigger role in 2025.**

ing ahead of the NFL Draft, he leaves one piece of advice for his successors.

"He just tells me, 'Keep God first – and keep going,'" Jackson said.

# The best summer blockbusters of 2025

BY ASHTYN HANSARD

Digital Media Director

When the spring semester ended and my roommate went home for the summer, I was stuck with the challenge of finding out how to spend my time and not be bored out of my mind. Staying in a smaller town like Stephenville, I knew that the movie theater would be my best option.

Over the course of the summer, several movies were released. While I unfortunately didn't have time to see all of them, I managed to catch six of the more popular movies that came out. Below is my ranking from lowest to highest.

## 6. "How To Train Your Dragon: Live Action"

To be completely honest in this review, I never fully finished the animated film before I saw this movie, so I was amazed watching the live-action adaptation. I was so amazed, in fact, that I went home and watched the ani-

ated version to see how they compare. After finishing, I was no longer amazed.

To be fair, the movie was pretty good. However, the live-action is the exact same story as the animated version, just with real people instead of voice actors. I was surprised to see no additions, especially with such a loaded cast.

That being said, the actors did a wonderful job with their characters and on-screen relationships. They had depth and great chemistry. I just wish they had brought something new to the screen rather than a frame-by-frame redo.

## 5. "Jurassic World: Rebirth"

This is another movie that I didn't have much knowledge of, considering the only other movie in this franchise that I've watched is "Jurassic World." While I enjoyed the movie and even fell victim to a few jumpscare, I wouldn't rank it much higher.

I love Scarlett Johansson and everything she's in, but unfortunately, her character is too flat and lacks depth. She's only seen as a

woman who knows how to use a gun and has a rough past. Mahershala Ali also fell victim to the writing, portrayed only as a fierce but damaged friend to Johansson's character.

The only characters that seemed to have multiple layers to them were Jonathan Bailey's character, Dr. Henry Loomis, and the Delgado family. They had good comedic timing and some great lines, including one Henry says to the group.

"We don't rule the Earth. We just think we do. Sure, we're changing the environment, but that makes us the ones to worry about, not the planet. When the Earth gets tired of us, believe me, it will shake us off like a summer cold," Henry said.

While the movie was fun, only these characters had any really memorable moments. If you're looking for a stand alone movie, this is a good option, as long as you're not too nitpicky.

## 4. "The Fantastic Four: First Steps"

Here is where there's a noticeable leap

in the rankings. I loved this movie so much. While I've ranked it lower due to the pacing and editing, I still highly recommend it. It's a great addition to the Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU).

Pedro Pascal and Vanessa Kirby show so much care for their characters, Reed Richards and Sue Storm, respectively, and really feel like a married couple on screen. Their chemistry is undeniable and wholesome, which is a nice change for MCU couples.

Joseph Quinn perfectly plays Johnny Storm by being a source of comic relief when needed but also portraying his brilliant mind when trying to understand Shalla-Bal, also known as the Silver Surfer, who is played by Julia Garner. Ebon Moss-Bachrach does well with his character, Ben Grimm, although it was hard to feel some of his emotions considering his character is made out of rock.

My favorite part of this movie is how it feels like it really focuses on each character and

# Local Advertising

## That Works as Hard as You Do

Print Ads, Digital  
Advertising, Social Media,  
Spotlight Articles, Niche  
Special Sections & More

ADVERTISE  
HERE

## Nobody reaches the Tarleton community better than us!

and we know how to make the most of your advertising budget!

## Texan News Service/J-TAC Marketing Department

254-968-0528  
alewter@tarleton.edu  
www.texannews.net





Collage by Ashtyn Hansard

gives them their moment.

I especially love Kirby's portrayal of motherhood with Sue. Rather than playing her character noble the entire time, she plays into an almost animalistic urge to protect her and Reed's son, Franklin. It's a side of motherly love that I feel isn't portrayed enough on screen, and Kirby did an amazing job.

### 3. "Thunderbolts"

Maybe it's just a recency bias or because I love the character Yelena Belova, but I think this is one of the best Marvel movies to be produced in a long time. I adored this movie so much, I got a DVD player just so I could watch it again before it gets put on streaming.

Honestly, I didn't have much hope walking into this movie given the shakiness of recent Marvel projects, but I was happily proven wrong. I was on the edge of my seat and tearing up at one point, completely entranced by the story.

Putting together a team formed by a former sleeper agent kidnapped by Hydra, a failed super soldier project, an attempt to recreate Captain America, a former Black Widow, a character who can phase through walls and a man who is both a god and the physical embodiment of depression was such a risky move. Thankfully, it was also a perfect decision.

Not only do the characters mesh well together, but the cinematography and overall message of the movie are just beautiful.

Instead of focusing purely on action or defeating a monster, the story delved more into the struggles that the characters went through in their lives. I loved this idea considering most movies tend to gloss over the mental effects that the pressure of saving the world would have on someone. The director and actors both handled the topic beautifully, really shining a new light on these anti-heroes.

I also just love how it feels entirely like its

own project despite having several characters from different Marvel projects. The editing and pacing make it a refreshing change in the MCU.

### 2. "Superman"

Look, I've never cared about the Detective Comics (DC) universe before this movie came out, unless you count CW's "The Flash" that I binge-watched in middle school. I've always been a Marvel fan, never giving a glance at DC characters. After watching this adaptation by James Gunn, I want to know everything I can about Superman.

I've seen a lot of controversy about this movie considering how "on the nose" they were about portraying political conflicts happening in the world today in the movie, but I'm here to judge the movie and the movie alone. James Gunn's "Superman" is one of the greatest comic book adaptations I've ever seen in my life.

Rachel Brosnahan plays Lois Lane perfectly: chaotic, funny and extremely brilliant. When it comes to superhero movies, you're always at risk of the main female character being portrayed as dumb. I was thrilled to see that they kept Lane's wit and smarts.

My favorite character has to be Mr. Terrific, played by Edi Gathegi. He does a fantastic job playing up the analytical parts of Mr. Terrific while also flexing his nonchalant demeanor throughout the entire movie. There's one fight scene involving him that is one of my favorite fight scenes ever, but I won't give that away.

David Corenswet is so undeniably Superman that I can't believe other actors even tried out for the role. He plays his kindness and care for human lives so well that I was grinning ear to ear when he saved a squirrel from a monster. When he finally confronts Lex Luthor, played by Nicholas Hoult, at the end of the movie, he gives a speech that I've kept thinking about

since I heard it for the first time in the theaters:

"I wake up every morning and, despite not knowing what to do, I put one foot in front of the other, and I try to make the best choices I can. I screw up all the time, but that is being human, and that's my greatest strength."

It perfectly encapsulates everything Superman is about: hope, love and doing the best you can. If you didn't get that on the first watch, maybe it's time to do a rewatch.

### 1. "Sinners"

While there are a lot of good movies in this list, "Sinners" is the only original one not involved in a franchise, and it's no coincidence that it's being ranked number one. Directed by Ryan Coogler, "Sinners" is a horror movie with its own voice. I wouldn't be surprised if this gets nominated or even wins an Oscar.

When I first walked into the theater, I didn't know anything about this movie except that Michael B. Jordan and Hailee Steinfeld were starring in it and there were vampires. When I left, I knew I had found a new favorite movie.

While "Sinners" can be seen as a scary vampire movie on the surface level, it's so much more. The movie touches on cultural appropriation, forced religion and the yearning to be a part of a community that doesn't want you. I won't go too far into the deeper message, but this is not just a vampire movie.

While there weren't many jumpscare, there's an overwhelming sense of dread that looms over the story that really builds that anxious feeling for the viewer. Jack O'Connell does a great job playing Remmick, the Irish vampire who wants to take Sammie Moore's (Miles Caton) voice so he can reconnect with his ancestors through music.

Music is a very important plot point of "Sinners." At the beginning of the movie, we hear an opening monologue talking about how there are tales of someone with a voice so pow-

erful, they could connect with the dead and bring present and past people together. This person is Sammie.

Canton is absolutely phenomenal as Sammie, the younger cousin to the Smoke Stack twins, both played by Jordan. Despite only being 20 years old, his voice is of another world, no pun intended. His performance was so brilliant, I was surprised to learn that this was his debut in acting. I'm sure we'll be seeing much more of him in future films.

My favorite aspect of this movie is the music, both the soundtrack and score. Composer Ludwig Göransson really brought the southern twang and soulful blues music to life, making me feel like I was in rural Mississippi with the characters.

One of my absolute favorite lines comes from the midcredit scene where Stack reunites with Sammie. When talking about that terrifying night at the juke joint, Sammie admits that it was also the best night of his life. When he asks Stack if it was the same for him, he gives a bittersweet answer:

"No doubt about it. Last time I seen my brother. Last time I seen the sun. And just for a few hours, we was free."

With this line, followed by the song "Last Time (I Seen the Sun)," it's such a heartbreaking moment after knowing what all the characters went through.

Coogler has always been phenomenal with his directorial choices, but this might be his best film yet. I highly recommend this to anyone who wants to watch an amazing movie.

I may have only been able to catch these six movies in theaters, but I really enjoyed getting to see them for the first time this summer. I recommend these movies—some more than others—if you're looking for something new to watch.

100.7THEPLANET  
THEPLANET100.7  
TARLETON RADIO

LISTEN AT KXTR.COM

BRING SOUND TO THE VACUUM

KXTR



100.7

BECOME A DJ ON THE PLANET

254-968-9586

MATH 138