

# *The* Bell Tower

The magazine of the University of Arkansas - Fort Smith

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## READY DAY ONE

**UAFS students  
graduate with a  
diploma and a  
resume, prepared  
for their next step**



*Academic Leaders Want  
Students to Be Ready Day One*

# The Deans' Lists

To make good on their promise to spur the economic mobility of their students and the communities they serve, UAFS leaders know they need to give students an excellent education – but they want to give their students something more. They want to be sure their students graduate with both a diploma and a resume, and they point to the hands-on, individually developed coursework that makes UAFS students so uniquely Ready Day One.

The personalized opportunities to get on-the-job experience vary from major to major and college to college, so we asked our deans to share their strategies for ensuring their graduates thrive in their careers.



RACHEL RODEMANN PUTNAM



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**“Credit-based apprenticeships and internships ... allow students to apply the concepts learned in the classroom to similar job responsibility.”**

– Dr. Latisha Settlage, Dean, CBI



**COLLEGE OF BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY**

## Dr. Latisha Settlage

The College of Business & Industry provides a myriad of opportunities to prepare students for careers in business, leadership, advanced manufacturing, and general technical fields. We offer credit-based apprenticeships and internships that allow students to apply the concepts learned in the classroom to similar job responsibilities they will find when accepting full-time employment.

Select courses and student engagement experiences provide students with project-based learning chances. For example, students graduating with a certificate of proficiency in Community Leadership are required to take an immersive Community Leadership class. Under the direction of Dr. Kristin Tardif, the 2023 class examined issues facing the River Valley region, including food insecurity, cultural belonging, and needed park improvements. Teams networked with business and community leaders to uncover the background context of problems and collaborated to propose feasible and efficient solutions. They wrote full proposals for their solutions and made public final presentations at the UAFS Center for Economic Development,

at The Bakery District in downtown Fort Smith.

Communication is integrally tied to other facets of professional preparation in the college. Business students participate in business simulations and case studies as part of several core courses like the Strategic Management capstone course taught by Dr. LiLee Ng. In addition to making strategic decisions, students must communicate that they understand the “why” and “how” behind their choices and outcomes. This is critical preparation for their next steps as business managers, where their decisions may be to expand operations, launch new products, or perhaps even start new businesses.

A final example of professional preparation in the College of Business and Industry is its exemplary record of student-faculty research engagement. In spring 2023, Dr. Kiyun Han’s Electrical Engineering Technology Senior Design class comprised its own section at the UAFS Student Research Symposium with projects using innovative design and automation concepts in inventory control systems, irrigation devices, remote-activated pet doors, and beverage dispensing. This is just one example of the willingness and flexibility of CBI faculty to incorporate undergraduate students into research agendas and their class plans.

**DR. DEAN CANTU:**

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ELLIOT NEMETH

## COLLEGE OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND HUMAN SCIENCES

### Dr. Dean Cantù

The mission of the College of Health, Education, and Human Sciences (CHEHS) is to empower our students with the knowledge and experience necessary to care for the physical, mental, social, and educational needs of our communities. To this end, the degree programs offered in CHEHS have integrated into their respective curricula an approach that gives our students an opportunity to build on and apply the knowledge and skills they acquire in the classroom to their field and clinical experiences. This real-world practice occurs throughout the River Valley in hospitals, schools, clinics, and community agencies.

These field and clinical experiences are professional in design, promoting both higher-order and critical thinking skills, as aligned with the guidelines and standards established by the state and national accrediting agencies.

The academic rigor and hands-on learning experiences serve to provide our students with an opportunity to build the requisite knowledge and skills needed to be Ready Day One upon graduation and begin their professional careers as dental hygienists, EMTs, healthcare administrators, nurses, psychologists, radiographers, social workers, sonographers, surgical technologists, and teachers.

## COLLEGE OF ARTS & SCIENCES

### Dr. Paulette Meikle, Associate Dean

Our college is proud of the interdisciplinary teaching and learning opportunities that broaden students' capacity to become well-rounded individuals and influential citizens. In CAS, intellectual curiosity, creativity, and informed openness are integrated into a student-centered focus on education, leadership, and engagement. Our students are immersed in rich content, ideas, inquiry, scientific discovery, and analyses. But we go much further by facilitating and cultivating professional standards and dispositions that employers value. We provide co-curricular platforms and infrastructure for students to develop independence, personal efficacy, and leadership skills to contribute to their families, workplaces, communities, and society.

No matter their background, we believe that each student has innate gifts and talents, and they are encouraged to find and be



## Diversity in Approaches Marks CHEHS

In the College of Health, Education, and Human Sciences, diverse programs adopt different strategies to gain the same end: Students who graduate ready for the next step, whether it is a new job or advanced study.

According to Angie Elmore, Executive Director of Imaging Services, students in the Radiography and Sonography programs follow sequential and logical curricula they can apply in a clinical setting. "The diverse clinical education settings provide students with a variety and volume of procedures needed ... to enter the workforce on graduation."

Dental Hygiene educators "maintain high expectations focused on current standards of care in the classroom and when treating patients in the clinic," said Dr. Virginia Hardgraves, Executive Director of Dental Hygiene.

Nursing faculty in the Carolyn McKelvey Moore School of Nursing bridge knowledge from the classroom to real-life clinical practice "by implementing supportive, innovative approaches to learning, enabling nursing students and new nursing graduates ... to strengthen their professional identity (and) contribute to and succeed in a variety of patient care settings," said Dr. Paula

Julian, Associate Dean and Executive Director of Nursing.

The School of Education at UAFA works from the mission statement, "Every candidate Ready Day One so all learners achieve their greatest potential," said Dr. April Evans, Interim Executive Director of Education. The mission informs curriculum and practical apprenticeships "to ensure that we are truly preparing our teacher candidates for the reality of the classroom from the very beginning of their careers."

"Our students are immersed in Psychology from their first course, in which they begin to learn about scientific writing and the various careers that make up the discipline," said Dr. Nicha Otero, Interim Department Head in Psychology. The core curriculum challenges students to think critically and apply their knowledge by producing research and engaging in presentations, scientific writing, and internships.

Because students in the Surgical Technology program work with local hospitals and the Babb Center for Career Services, before they start working full-time, they already know their chains of command, policies and procedures, and critical people with information, said Ashley Smith, Executive Director of Surgical Technology.

stewards of them. Our faculty members mentor, motivate, and inspire excellence among students; thus, our students unearth their unique leadership propensities and resourcefulness in numerous registered student organizations and co-curricular activities. For example, if students are gifted in writing, they can sharpen their skills via our multilingual literary journals, Applause and Azahares. The American Democracy Project empowers students who want to improve the quality of life in their communities through government

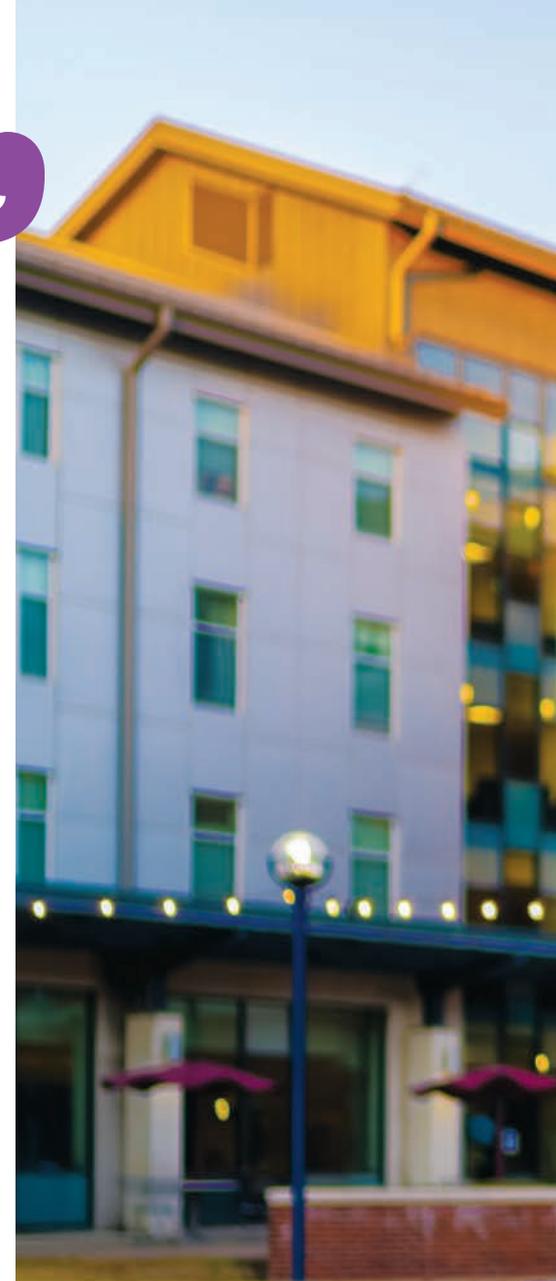
**“Our professional development platforms help students hone their management skills, develop high emotional and cultural intelligence, complex problem-solving, and advocacy acuity. – Dr. Paulette Meikle, Associate Dean, CAS**



and politics. No matter the student’s innate gift, there is a club for them, from the Biology Club and Chemistry Club to the Art and Design Club, numerous honors societies, and many other opportunities.

There is a professional engagement platform for everyone. These platforms not only nurture autonomy and the leader in our students but also sharpen their interpersonal skills and develop effective teamwork, self-awareness, empathy, relationship building, and confidence. Every year our faculty work with students to help them prepare research papers and posters for the UAFS Research Symposium. Some further develop their papers for presentations at various professional conferences. For example, 10 students presented their work this year at the 2023 Arkansas Academy of Science Conference. In the past year, Dr. Maurice Testa worked with students to publish a paper in Geoscience, the American Institute of Professional Geologists’ journal.

Internships allow students to apply their classroom knowledge in real-world settings as a precursor for future employment. Students worked in over 100 local agencies, firms, and non-governmental organizations. In our criminal justice program, students are placed with the Fort Smith and Van Buren police departments, other local, state, and federal correctional agencies, local and state court systems, independent attorneys, the juvenile justice system, corporate security, the Department of Human Services, and related social service agencies. Further afield, our faculty have developed and implemented several courses that exposed diverse students



**LEARNING AND LEADING:** A vibrant campus life helps students develop leadership, interpersonal, and teamwork skills. With more than 100 Registered Student Organizations and other clubs and associations, students who prioritize personal development can find other students who share their interests.



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to classroom instruction, field research, and community projects in Belize, Chile, Bulgaria, France, Britain, South Korea, Canada, Ireland, and Scotland, to name a few locations. Internationalizing the curriculum builds students' cross-cultural competencies and global perspectives, and we do everything we can to facilitate such efforts.

Our professional development platforms help students hone their management skills, develop high emotional and cultural intelligence, complex problem-solving, and advocacy acuity. Our co-curricular

activities develop effective communicators and negotiators and cultivate partnerships with our alums, faculty, and employers. We are grateful to our alumni, local businesses and agencies, and friends of the College of Arts and Sciences who continue to embrace and support our RSOs as we challenge our students to achieve their highest potential, make good memories, and contemplate their positions, first as citizens and second as the next generation of leaders in the workforce. ■