



SUMMER 2021

HOME COMING 2021

Sept. 30th - Oct. 2nd

Michael W. Smith
Kick-off Concert
Thursday, Sept. 30th
7pm



Highlights include:

- **Kick-off Concert with Michael W. Smith** - Thursday, Sept. 30th at 7 pm
- **Alumni Chapel with alumnus Jim Franklin** (Pastor of Cornerstone Fresno) at 10:15 am
 • Includes Alumni Awards presentations
- **Celebration Banquet with guest speaker Dallas Jenkins**
 (Creator & Director of The Chosen TV Series) - Friday, Oct. 1st at 6:30 pm
 • Includes Alumni Awards presentations
- **Affinity Reunions** - (Most held at the Tailgate Party prior to Football game)
 Saturday, Oct. 2nd at 11 am
 • Ole Frenz Reunion (including Class of 1971) - Thursday, Sept 30th at 4:30 pm
- **SWA Brunch** - Saturday at 10:00 am
- **Football game** - Saturday, Oct. 2nd at 2 pm



Early Bird ALL Inclusive Package Deal- \$30 per person

- Includes- Michael W. Smith concert, Alumni Lunch Party (Friday noon), Celebration Banquet and Tailgate Party
- Early Bird package price ends on August 15th
- Or can purchase individual tickets

CONTACT: ALUMNI@SAGU.EDU | 972-825-4639

For hotel reservation info, tickets and schedule go to www.sagu.edu/homecoming

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Summer 2021

SAGU Today and the President's Report are publications of Southwestern Assemblies of God University, a Christian, non-profit institution of higher learning.

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Statement of Purpose

The purpose of Southwestern Assemblies of God University is to prepare undergraduate and graduate students spiritually, academically, professionally and cross-culturally so as to successfully fill evangelistic, missionary and church ministry roles and to provide quality educational and professional Christian service wherever needed throughout the world.

Southwestern Assemblies of God University is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) to award associate, baccalaureate, masters, and doctorate degrees. Contact the SACSCOC at 1866 Southern Lane, Decatur, Georgia 30033-4097 or call 404-679-4500 for questions about the accreditation of Southwestern Assemblies of God University.

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IT STARTS HERE



Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has **made all the difference.**
—Robert Frost

In 1915, poet Robert Frost wrote the highly acclaimed poem, “The Road Not Taken,” often referred to as “The Road Less Traveled.” While it is one of the most famous poems of the 20th century, many may not know the story behind this literary masterpiece. It was originally intended as a friendly jab at Frost’s close friend and fellow poet, Edward Thomas. During this period, the two would stroll through the English countryside, and Frost would tease Thomas about his chronic indecisiveness in choosing which roads to take. Thomas would often express regret, considering that the road he had chosen was inferior to the other. Shortly thereafter, and while still complaining about the conditions of the path chosen, the two would find themselves at another fork in the road, forced to make yet another decision.

In many ways, the wanderings of Thomas and Frost remind me of our walks with Christ. We often find ourselves at intersections torn between two or more roads,

forced to make a decision. We can only see so far down each path, and it is impossible to predict all of the bends and turns each way possesses. Fortunately, God has a much better sense of direction than we do. Through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, we can press on, trusting in His prompts to guide our steps and the way He has paved for us. The first road we choose is crucial. It leads us to another, and then another, ultimately influencing the entirety of our journey and final destination.

Reflecting on my life and career, it is clear to see that my decision to pursue my undergraduate studies at Southwestern in 1977 was the first road of many. At a young age, I decided to answer God’s call to come to this institution, and over the past 40 years, God has continually affirmed that decision. He has opened doors to opportunities that I would have never imagined possible. Some of the greatest chapters of my life story were written on our campus. I have experienced precious moments in

the presence of God and fellowship with my brothers and sisters in Christ. I found community, revival, and support. I forged meaningful relationships with classmates, teammates, and professors, many of whom I remain in contact with to this day. Most importantly, I received the hands-on training I needed to prepare me to answer the call God had placed on my life, and I am not alone.

In this issue, students and alumni spanning our 90-year history share their stories of the roads God directed them to travel. Just like my story, SAGU was their starting point as they sought after God’s will, discovering and developing their callings. Thousands have gone on to impact millions, and it started here.

One critical detail I left out about Frost and Thomas—they were both at an impasse in their lives. At the time, neither were renowned poets. They were just two struggling writers trying to find their way. In the end, “The Road Not Taken,” a story meant as a friendly jest, became one of Frost’s most beloved works. It was a catalyst not just for Frost’s career but also for the millions of readers who have since reflected on its contents.

Sometimes, the way is clear, but often, we do not know where our steps will lead us or what new road awaits us around the bend. Similarly, for as many students who arrive on our campus to further fulfill their purpose, there are just as many looking to find it. It is incredible how, without our knowing, God is orchestrating the circumstances of our lives to lead us towards the right destination. He places the right people around us: mentors and coaches, peers and lifelong friends—all of whom will play a vital role in unraveling our destinies. One moment of our lives leads into the next, and we must keep moving forward, trusting in the story God is writing about us.

So, where does your story begin? What chapters are left to be written? While I cannot answer these questions for you—I can tell you that hindsight provides perspective. Like the generations of alumni who came before and after me, SAGU was the start of something remarkable, and should your steps lead you to ‘Dear Ole Southwestern,’ I am confident that God will empower you with the right people and training for you to walk down the right roads and forge new paths.

Welcome to SAGU. It Starts Here. ■



Community STARTS HERE



Written By: **Dean Lance Meche**

Ask any student about their SAGU experience, and without fail, they will tell you how the entire campus embraces the value of community. “The SAGU family” is a phrase applied with a graceful brush to

describe everyone who wants to belong to our community of discipleship. The Residential Life Department has the distinct honor of creating ways for students to experience community within our residence halls and on the campus as a whole. Because of this, and the nature of our department that facilitates activities for the residential population, we developed the vision statement “Connecting Students to God and Others through Community” based on Acts 2:42, “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and prayer.”

The early Hebrews were not entirely open with sharing their table with strangers since the meal might not meet dietary laws; nevertheless, “outsiders” were rarely invited for fellowship. Rules and laws became priorities over people. Relationships with those outside of the culture were secondary and, unfortunately, created relational distance since refusal to eat with someone meant treatment as an “outsider.” There are 19 references to table fellowship in all of the gospels, 13 exclusive to Luke, and one shared amongst the other three gospel accounts, which, in Luke, is found in chapter 9, verses 10-17. In this particular passage, Jesus divides the fish and the loaves to a crowd of several thousand people who were present to hear His message. He taught them, prayed over them, broke bread, and fellowshiped with them as a spiritually unified community, regardless of their differences. Jesus ate with

those considered “unclean”: gentiles, sinners, tax collectors, and the poor. When “outsiders” were invited to the table by the early church, they became part of the family or the larger community. Sharing food and a place at the table creates a connecting point to bridge relationships that might not be created otherwise. Sharing the table creates equality, unity, and intimacy through a table designed explicitly for eating or a table on the campus lawn with books sprawled on it where students are studying and praying over a shared burden.

Connecting students to each other is a lot of fun, but it is not enough. Our department and our university intentionally plan activities that bring students together spiritually to develop relationships that go beyond the typical scope of an on-campus experience. Our goal is to connect students to God and others.

One of the unique components about the SAGU community is the ability to gather at a table while sitting under the wisdom of professors, mentors, and peers who pour into each other’s lives daily, whether it be in the cafeteria, Lions’ Den, Einstein’s, or with coffee from a local coffee shop in a dorm lobby. It is through this environment where people pray and care about each other where SAGU is more like a family than a typical college or university. Weekly hall devotions, campus events like Collinstock and Teeter Coffee House, dorm events such as Bridges Pancakes, Dorm Donut Shop at Guynes, or worship nights like Dwell, create space where students can come to either a physical table to fellowship or a metaphorical table to fellowship in God’s presence as we enjoy life together. We desire to engage students where they live and invite them to our table to grow into what Jesus has called and created them to be. The table is where the community gathers, and there is always a place for you. Community starts here. ■

“In my first semester here, I joined almost every community on campus like Southwestern Missions Association, Student Congress, and Theatre. I was able to build so many connections and friendships through these opportunities. As I continued my time here, I found my close group of friends, and we’ve gotten to know each other on a deeper level. —**Kylee Snow, Student**”

TRAINING *starts* HERE

There are more than 4,000 higher education institutions across the country, many with reputable degree programs. So, how is SAGU different, and what distinguishes our education?

SAGU's training is mission-minded and Christ-centered. As a result, our students' education is supported by a biblical

worldview and a community of Spirit-filled educators rallying behind them. For more than 90 years, we have witnessed firsthand the impact of our training as thousands of alumni have gone on to impact millions for the Kingdom of God. For multiple generations of SAGU Lions, it all started here—with hands-on, practical training.



Criminal Justice Spotlight

As deeply dedicated as SAGU is to preparing students for pulpit ministry, we are just as committed to training leaders for marketplace vocations. In fact, many may be surprised to learn that

strong visionary. This explains why this program has continued to experience substantial growth since it was started in 2006. Spearheaded by Master Peace Officer, Bruce Stayments, this program regularly takes students out of the classroom and into real world scenarios including crime scenes, firearms and violence de-escalation simulations, and even K9 unit demonstrations.

“I’m proud to be a teacher. The best part of it all is connecting with students – finding out what they’re all about, what they’ve been through and what brought them here. It’s just always exciting to be part of what God is doing in people’s lives. I get to be a part of that. I can pour into these students’ lives. I can inspire and train them to be all that they can be.”

—Bruce Stayments, Program Coordinator for Criminal Justice

Criminal Justice is one of SAGU’s largest and fastest-growing degree programs. The program prides itself in real-world, practical instruction for the next generation of our nation’s leaders and peacekeepers.

For a new initiative to succeed, it must be championed by a

Mission-minded

Missions will always be a core component of our identity. While academic instruction is essential, we also believe that training the next generation of believers with the tools and resources to reach the lost is vital to fulfilling the Great Commission. In the last decade, we developed our missions vision even further accomplishing a remarkable feat in Mission TEN (To Every Nation). Within a ten-year span from 2010 to 2020, we trained and sent over 900 students to 165 nations, including 20 states of India,

15 provinces of China, and 28 U.S. states. More than 900 of our students participated in Mission TEN trips and internships. SAGU Lions traveled worldwide, witnessing firsthand the power of missions. The profound impact of these trips left such an imprint on our students that more than 30 of them returned to the mission field to serve missionary assignments! ■

“We are excited to build upon the accomplishments of Mission TEN as we look ahead to strategic partnerships with a focus on what Jesus said in Luke 10:2 is the answer for the plentiful harvest that lies before us—more harvest workers.”

—Nelson de Freitas, SAGU’s World Ministries Director



ROBERT MILLER
Graduate student, Master of Business Administration

I am grateful to earn a degree geared towards business from a college that challenges me to integrate faith in every part of the educational journey. I’m challenged both to grow in leadership and in my faith through SAGU’s MBA program.



KENDRICK WILLIAMS
Senior, Worship Arts Major

I’m learning theory and understanding the depth of music and where it comes from. It’s also preparing me spiritually. My Bible courses help me understand the Bible, and it’s refining my theology on what I believe about my faith. Also, while being at SAGU, I’ve had opportunities to travel and lead worship. This is extremely important to me, especially since I plan to travel and lead worship when I graduate.



KATELYNN PEARSON
Alumna, Elementary Education (2015), M.Ed. Curriculum Development (2018)

Outside of the classroom, the best thing that SAGU ever gave me was people. I felt like SAGU not only provided me with relationships that were foundational and helped me succeed but also presented me with opportunities to put that learning into action.

We have been blessed to achieve many significant accomplishments within the classroom. We now offer more than 50 bachelor's degrees and 20 graduate degrees, including our MBA and Doctor of Ministry. Numerous

academic programs achieve specialized programmatic accreditation reflecting the highest standards in curriculum and faculty, and approximately 80% of full-time teaching faculty have terminal degrees.

Our academic programs are nationally ranked for their excellence!
Just check out these awards below!

#1

Best Online Bachelor's
in Biblical Studies

onlineschoolsreport.com

RANKED

BEST

Online Bachelor's in
Business Management

learn.org

RANKED

#1

Online Bachelor's
in Education

study.com

RANKED

#1

in Mental Health
Counseling

study.com

RANKED AMONG
THE TOP 31

BEST

Online Universities
and Colleges
in Texas

edsmart.org

IMPACT STARTS HERE

In 2007, a 20-year-old Preston Ulmer, a Bible and Church Ministry major at SAGU, deconstructed his faith. No longer identifying as a Christian, he questioned the validity of the gospel and the beliefs that provided purpose to his education.

Then, something remarkable happened.

During this 8-month period, Ulmer encountered a community that refused to allow him to squander his calling and, more importantly, turn his back on God. To this day, he vividly recalls how Dr. Jeff Magruder, Professor of Bible and Church Ministries, walked with him through his many questions and challenges. "He told me that he didn't care where I landed as long as I was honest," said Ulmer.

I tried to listen more than I spoke. I never suggested that his questions were unimportant or inappropriate. When I did speak, I offered



my thoughts about the issues he was raising and pointed him to some authors that I felt had done a good job of addressing those topics...

...In addition to trying to answer reasonable questions with sufficient responses, I also wanted to create a space where he felt we could keep the conversation going. It was vital for him to know that wherever he landed on these issues, I would not stop caring about him or treating him with respect." —Dr. Jeff Magruder, Professor of Bible and Church Ministries; Program Coordinator for Religion and Philosophy

The constant support demonstrated by SAGU community members helped him navigate through his doubts. Individuals like Dr. Magruder made him feel validated, respected and loved during what was possibly the most influential period of his life.

"That time of discovery would have derailed me had the faculty and staff at SAGU not embraced my interrogation of the faith like they did," said Ulmer. "They didn't try to indoctrinate me into thinking like them. And they didn't see me as a threat to 'the institution.' It was the saving grace in my life during that time. I admitted where I was with trusted mentors and was welcomed with open arms."

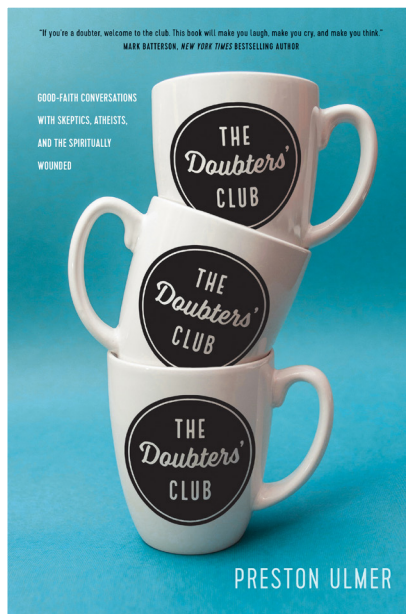
Soon, Ulmer's questions were met with answers, and these breakthrough moments would later set the foundation for his



future ministry, “The Doubters’ Club.” In 2016, nearly ten years after addressing and navigating through his own doubts about the faith at SAGU, he launched this unique ministry to help create and facilitate healthy and meaningful conversations about the gospel. Today, the ministry is impacting thousands of atheists, agnostics, and skeptics about the Christian faith. More clubs are continuing to take root across the globe, all strongly modeled after SAGU’s response to Ulmer’s questions and uncertainties as an undergraduate student. The mentorship, patience, and kindness of professors like Dr. Magruder left such an imprint on him as a young man that he decided to pay it forward!

Now, 15 years later, Ulmer is prioritizing relationships, ensuring all voices are heard and respected. Reflecting on the ministry thus far, he shares that what he finds most fulfilling are the lifestyle changes of members.

It’s seeing Christians and non-Christians moving past friendliness into meaningful relationships that only true friends can have. Serving each other, inviting one another over for holidays, you name it...



The Doubters’ Club Available at navpress.org/doubtersclub or through Amazon

“The Doubters’ Club” comes from Ulmer’s real-life experiences and is meant to teach us all how to have meaningful relationships with people who do not think like us. The book challenges readers to approach non-believers with a relationship-first mentality as opposed to fixating on conversion. The how-to behind this concept is explained through the book’s “5 i’s of pre-conversion discipleship.”

“I think the book will add dignity to the overlooked ‘spiritual misfits’ that the church doesn’t normally have a place for. I’m equally excited about the tools it offers to Christians. My hope is that it is a roadmap for those of us exhausted with the polarizing conversations, and hungry for meaningful relationships with people who don’t think like us.”

As “The Doubters’ Club” continues to experience growth, Ulmer has become more reflective of his beginnings, including where it all started—SAGU. In addition to his many years of ministry experience, he believes his education at SAGU has strongly influenced The Doubters’ Club.

“As someone who left the faith for a time, I feel called to hold Kingdom ground for thoughtful people. To save them a seat at the table so to speak. My education has helped me participate with them in their thinking. The disciplines behind study and articulation I learned at SAGU, and those have been invaluable

...of course, I am thrilled when people decide to follow Jesus. But, I have noticed that the best shot someone has at making their life about Jesus is when we make our lives about them.” —Preston Ulmer

The idea of ministering to skeptics of the faith can seem like a daunting task for many Christians, but Ulmer explains it is not so much about having all the answers but more the ability to love well.

“Jesus wasn’t the loudest proclaimer of what He knew to be truth; He was the busiest doer of what He knew to be love.” Ulmer shares that he believes Christians are not necessarily afraid of knowing what to say but are most fearful of stepping outside their comfort zones. “I think most people are scared to build a genuine relationship with people who will make them ask questions they haven’t truly explored themselves. But relationships are what make this thing so fun!”

And, reflecting on relationships and the meaningful conversations that have taken place in the club, Ulmer felt inspired. So, he started to write!

tools! I think the university does a great job in developing a burden for the lost in their students. It’s what compels so many graduates to the mission field, church planting, etc.”

“To see a former student thrive is one of the payoffs of teaching. A former history professor at SAGU, Dr. Mary Jackson, used to be fond of saying, ‘I may never touch thousands, but I can touch one who will.’ I think what Preston has managed to do since leaving SAGU is a testament to the lasting impact professors have inside and outside the classroom.” —Dr. Jeff Magruder ■

CONNECTION STARTS HERE



Rick Bowles,
VP for Advancement

Reflecting on this campaign, I think it is inspiring SAGU alumni to ask ourselves - what started for me?

Personally, SAGU was a foundation for me spiritually and my career in ministry and business. So much started for me here. I learned to hear the Holy Spirit with encouragement

and guidance when I needed it the most. I learned leadership skills through opportunities of ministries and outreaches. Relationships were built that I still have 40 years later.

Like many, I first stepped foot on this campus with the expectation of receiving a good education, but what I found was so much more. I came here for school, but I stayed for the family. I stayed for the meaningful, lasting connections. One of the reasons I chose to come back to SAGU in my current role was an opportunity to give back because SAGU gave so much to me.

If you were to ask any of our alumni or current students about what SAGU is, I highly doubt any would view their experience here as merely a college education. SAGU is not just four years of classes and a degree to show for it. The moment you enroll as a Lion, you become part of a family. And the moment you step off the graduation stage, you are still a member of this family. We celebrate with you in your wins. We mourn with you in your losses. You are a Lion for Life and a member of a community that will continue to support you as you walk with Christ fulfilling the calling he has placed on your life.

So, yes — it starts here. But it doesn’t end here. Let’s connect!

If you have not yet already, please update your contact information so that we can connect with you! Just go to sagu.edu/update. We would love to know what’s happening in your life and keep you up to date with all the SAGU happenings, including alumni chapter events!

Also, don’t forget to mark your calendars for Homecoming on September 30th through October 2nd! We’re excited to kick off this year’s Homecoming with Michael W. Smith in concert. Complete details are available at sagu.edu/homecoming. ■

Alumni: What started here for you?

My mission field is being wherever God has placed me—neighborhood, job, and city. Community outreach is still my heartbeat! I also met my spouse there, and we have been married for 14 years. I still keep in contact with friends that I met while I attended school there.

JAYNE VALENCIA

Discovering that Christ can be represented in the marketplace.

AARON GUTIERREZ

I found some of my best friends (including my spouse of 4 1/2 years). One of those connections/friends led me to a missions field I may have never considered.

NICKOLE MARROQUIN KETTLE

A hunger to be a lifelong learner and never stop growing.

JON CURRY

My love for studying scriptures and applying them daily.

ANTHONY LAFORGE

I met all of my best friends at SAGU, including my now husband (even though that was not in the plan). I didn’t have many strong female friendships before SAGU, and now I have friends I actually plan vacations with. That’s definitely the best thing I gained from my time at SAGU.

ALY RALSTIN

A heart for missions! My wife and I both look back and can see that God “started” a love for all things missions when we came to SAGU. It all started at SAGU and the story still continues. Thank you SAGU for pouring into us at such a young age.

CECIL WHITTON

I met my husband and some of my very best friends!

WENDY WEAVER WOLLE

It’s cliché, but my 30 year marriage!

RANDEL DUNCAN

MENTORSHIP STARTS HERE

“I had no direction, no plan, and no interest in finding one. SAGU changed my life without me even realizing it was happening.”
 TAYLOR JOHNSON, 2012 ALUMNUS

Taylor Johnson is now a professional comedian, evangelist, and published author. Since graduating from SAGU, he has steadily built his career as a communicator and an advocate for transparency about mental health. However, just ten years ago, Johnson was a SAGU student struggling to find his purpose. He arrived at SAGU at the behest of his parents as opposed to obtaining a degree. Rather, he had no desire to pursue a college education. At the time, the only thing he knew was that he enjoyed making people laugh. Growing up, he was always the class clown dropping quick-witted one-liners cutting up the room, and cracking up his peers. In fact, his ability to make others laugh in the classroom is what connected him with a professor who would help shape Taylor’s SAGU experience and his future career—Dr. Garland Owensby.

At the time, Dr. Owensby’s wife, Tiffani, taught a math course at the university. Taylor, who was enrolled in her class, did what he did best—comedy. Of course, his constant jokes interrupted the class’s focus and certainly caused frustration for her, but she sensed that he had a gift of making people laugh—a gift that her husband also possessed. She encouraged him to reach out to Dr. Owensby to connect with him about stand-up comedy.

Taylor finally took her up, emailed him, and even enrolled in one of his Bible Studies courses. “I would hear him quietly comment in the back of the class, and what he was saying was clever and very

funny. I am always intrigued when I hear someone who is genuinely funny. There’s a difference between someone who can tell a joke or be goofy. What he was saying was clever and presented a unique worldview.”

—Garland Owensby, D.Ed. Min., Youth and Student Ministries Professor

Soon, the two found themselves frequently engaged in conversation about stand-up comedy before and after class. Towards the end of that semester, Dr. Owensby was invited to perform stand-up at a local banquet and asked Johnson to open for him with a 10-minute spot.

“He did very well connecting with the audience, and on the way home, we talked about going to youth groups and doing the same thing. And the idea was born.”

Around this time, a family-friendly comedy club opened in Waxahachie, and the two started performing there regularly. After shows, they would critique one another’s jokes and performances, providing insight into the delivery of their material. “The great thing about comedy is that there are some basic rules for writing and performing, but each person has their own



voice,” said Dr. Owensby. “There are jokes he would tell that only he could tell. I loved watching him perform and would laugh at jokes he told, which I had heard many, many times before. Taylor has become a friend.

His excitement for the art of comedy and the condition of the soul has taught me so much. He really has an inquisitive mind. He is an artist. I told him once that there are clowns and there are comedians. The clown will do whatever to get a laugh. A really good comedian will make you laugh and think.”

For Johnson, it never felt like Dr. Owensby was a mentor, but rather, a close friend. “It felt like a mature Christian in a different season of life who wanted

to be my friend—That’s it. There was no pressure or structure. He didn’t announce one day, ‘I’m going to mentor you!’ We’d just have great conversations in the car as we drove to different stand-up shows we were

performing at. I could ask him for advice. We could talk about our plans for the future. He treated me like an equal, like a friend, and that is exactly what I needed.”

To this day, Johnson and Dr. Owensby remain close friends, communicating weekly with each other and still providing constructive critiques for

their stand-up comedy material. “To me, that’s one of the coolest parts of SAGU—I’m now genuinely friends with one of my old professors.” ■

“There are so many professors who take mentorship seriously. Students know our families, they see the inside of our homes, sit next to us in the local church, and we serve side-by-side in ministry. It’s why we get invited to officiate or attend weddings. It’s why they bring their babies to our offices. It’s why they call us when they are having vocational or personal difficulties. Students that attend SAGU have the opportunity to be known by name and shaped by someone who will become a lifelong friend.” —Dr. Garland Owensby

Grit STARTS HERE



GRIT: Firmness of mind or spirit: unyielding courage in the face of hardship or danger

(Merriam-Webster Dictionary)

In 2020, the world of collegiate sports came to a screeching halt. Nationwide, we experienced the cancellation of entire seasons, forcing students to put their dreams of playing college ball on hold. Leading into the postseason for our men's basketball team last March, we boasted a regular season record of 25-7, beating out two nationally ranked opponents to secure our place in the NAIA National Tournament and then—canceled. What could have been one of the Lions' best seasons concluded in an abrupt and anticlimactic fashion. However, even in the midst of uncertainty, God was preparing them for something spectacular. Our team's story did not end here.

On that 2020 roster was Joshua Kashila, SAC Player of the Year. Known around the SAGU community as "Kash," his friendly demeanor and humility can be misleading. Kash's tenacity and drive on the court is rooted in his understanding from an early age that nothing in life is guaranteed; it must be earned.

When Kash was just 14-years-old, he felt responsible for the safety of himself and his 12-year-old brother, Daniel. In 2012, Kash and Daniel left their family and home in Angola to live in Dallas-Fort Worth with their 24-year-old cousin. At that time, Angola for various reasons had become

unstable, and Kash's parents felt that circumstances had escalated to such a level that it was no longer safe for their two sons to remain in the country. This resulted in one of the toughest decisions Kash's parents would ever make—sending them to the United States by themselves. Their parents would have traveled with them, but were prohibited due to visa issues. Since Kash and Daniel were born in the United States during a period when their parents resided here, they were both granted access to return.

After the two brothers arrived in the United States, it did not take long for the living situation with their cousin to get dicey. Their cousin soon moved out, leaving Joshua and Daniel, ages 14 and 12, to live alone. Later they moved into a one-bedroom apartment with three other minors who had ties to Angola, but troubles soon prompted the flatmates to tell the brothers they had to find another place to live. Meanwhile, hyperinflation had hit Angola, eating up their parents' income. They had nothing to send to help their sons survive. Nor could the boys fly back home, as their U.S. passports had expired and parental permission is required for minors' passport applications. Thus began the boys' three-year sojourn of homelessness. They couch-surfed first among their parents' acquaintances until the adolescents wore out

welcomes and then moved in with friends from high school. But, even in this season of hopelessness, God's hand was on them. The brothers connected with a local church who ensured that the brothers were fed and always had a roof over their heads. All the while, Kash found his escape from life's hardships on the basketball court. In high school, Kash's skills and tenacity caught the eyes of recruiters from several universities, including SAGU.

Kashila recognizes that surviving homelessness for three years of his adolescence and God orchestrating his steps to SAGU is a testament to the power of Christ. His decision to attend SAGU was not just for the opportunity to develop his skills on the court but to grow his faith. Like Kash, many of our student-athletes turn down other opportunities to pursue God's will for their lives. They relentlessly push through adversities to further their education and athletic careers at SAGU—which is why the disappointment of the 2019-2020 season was all the more grim.

Due to circumstances outside of our men's basketball team's control, their dreams were put on hold, causing them to adapt and trust in God's process. And, God blessed them. This past season they once again earned their spot in the NAIA tournament with the Player of the Year (Joshua Kashila), Newcomer of the Year (Joel Polius), and John Hudson Coach of the Year (Head Coach Delton Deal). In fact, they made it to the semi-finals! It was truly a redemptive season, and perhaps, an even greater lesson.

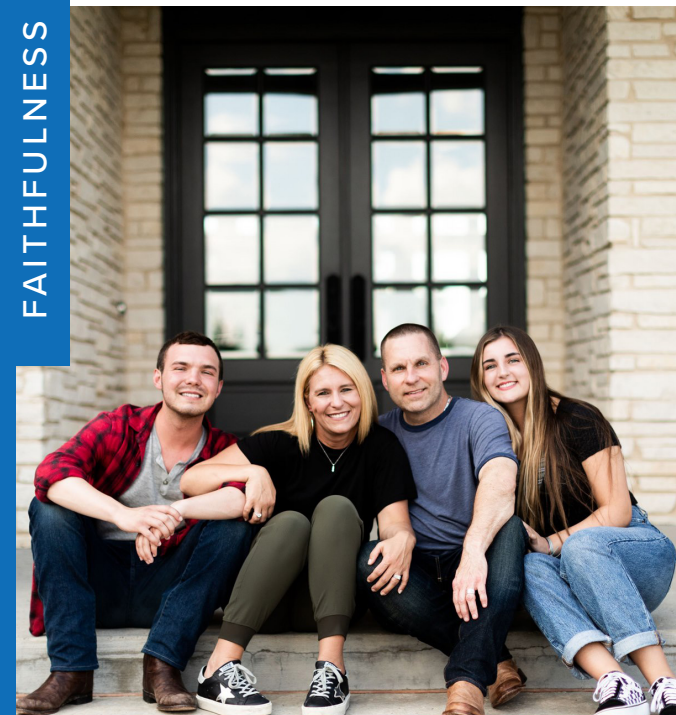


“Iron sharpens iron, but to sharpen one another, there's got to be friction. I can't be focused on the things I can't control in life. I just lean on God, and I know He's going to take care of the rest.”

—Joshua “Kash” Kashila

Following the 2020-2021 season, Kash received an invitation to represent Angola in Tokyo for the 2021 Olympics. He and four other United States-based players will join Angola's Senior Men's National Basketball team this summer.

It requires a special kind of strength and resilience to see past adversity to the other side. It takes grit to persevere when circumstances outside of our control alter our course. At SAGU, we understand that there are excellent athletic programs around the nation, many of which prepare students to hone their skills in their respective sports. Here is where we differ—we will always celebrate broken records, game-winning seasons, and championships, but when the game is over, we know that our athletes need to be prepared for all that life throws at them. Christ is the ultimate source of our fortitude. We understand that success comes from personally knowing Him and following His plan for our lives. After student-athletes receive their diplomas, they can continue to pursue their God-given callings with the same level of tenacity and grit. ■



FAITHFULNESS STARTS HERE

From behind the scenes, to breaking ground, from the foundation to the roof, to everything in between, it takes a whole army to build a house. There are sales representatives, subcontractors and suppliers, title and mortgage companies, and more to see a house completed from start to finish. But rather than seeing all of these people as just another aspect of the business, John Houston, founder and CEO of John Houston Homes, views these interactions as an opportunity to show the love of Christ.

God told us to start this business for two reasons: to reach people for Christ and give to the Kingdom. He said specifically, 'I didn't tell you to sell houses. I told you to reach people...'

...that's really our goal and mission for the company," John says.

With every home built, John says that there are sixty touch points, or sixty encounters to "live life with people where they are and to earn the right to share the gospel."

In addition to managing companies and building ideal homes with integrity, John recently released a book titled "Finding My Way Home". In his book, John reflects on the hardships and painful mistakes from his past, and talks about how God's faithfulness helped him persevere through the lowest points of his life.

At the age of eleven, John's parents divorced and moved to separate cities, leaving John and his fifteen-year-old brother to fend for themselves in Waco, Texas. After his brother began raising him, the two decided to start a landscaping company to support themselves, and it was a success. A few years later, his brother married and moved to Dallas, leaving John to manage the company and essentially live on his own. But with the growth of the business, John's mindset began to change.

"It created this whole independent, unhealthy, greedy attitude that I had because I knew how to make a lot of money," he says.

Everything changed for John, however, when God called him to attend Southwestern Assemblies of God University. Second to meeting his wife, he says that SAGU was a big step in his journey in turning his life around.

"That's when I really started trying to follow the Lord and hear His voice," John says.

During this time, John went through a seven-year struggle that included losing his mother to suicide and becoming financially unstable, ultimately leading him to walk away from his faith. Throughout this process, he learned that God was trying to get his attention. John says that he had to realize that everything we have is God's, and we are simply just the stewards of it all. Now, as a testament of faith, he lives his life and operates his business with the knowledge that God will provide and equip us for life-changing opportunities as long as we shift our perspective.

"After I wrote this book, it really gave me an opportunity to reflect back and realize that God was really there this whole time, even though my perspective was wrong...Even in the midst of trials and tribulations and hard things in our lives, God is still there," he said.

John graduated from SAGU in 1997 with a Bachelor's degree in Business Administration and an Associates in Bible. He credits his time at SAGU for two major turning points in his life—hearing a chapel speaker that talked about the practicality of hearing the voice of God, and providing him with two degrees that he utilizes frequently. He appreciates his Bible degree the most, saying that he uses it every day when conversing with people.

That's where my relationship with Christ really came into a relationship. It wasn't knowing about Him, it was knowing Him...that's what started there, and still drives me today.

Though he has encountered numerous adversities through the years, John explains that a piece of advice from one of his mentors has continued to propel him forward, and it all has to do with having the right attitude and mindset. He encourages everyone who struggles with any kind of trials or tribulations to look at the situation from a different point of view.

"Instead of looking at those people or the situation as negative, look at it as an opportunity to learn and grow," he says. Ever since he heard that wisdom as a boy, John continues to alter his mindset to ask God how he can use these obstacles to further the Kingdom for His glory.

Now a successful businessman, John has seven companies under the John Houston name - one of which is now employee-owned. He's married to Tracy, who also attended SAGU. They have two adult children, one who works in John's business. There have been many blessings in John's faithfulness to the Lord's call, but he has no plans for stopping anytime soon. He will continue using his business to reach people for Christ and give to the Kingdom, and there is even another book in the works.

"I'm hoping that people see that there is hope for them in redemption, reconciliation, and in restoration because God has a huge hope and plan and future for their lives." ■

For more information about **John Houston Homes**, you can visit this website: jhoustons.com.

To learn more about John Houston or to order his book or subscribe to his blog, visit meetjohnhouston.com.



THE FUTURE HERE

starts

THE FUTURE STARTS HERE.

As we look to the future, we are excited to continue growing and enhancing our education experience for SAGU Lions. We strive to ensure that our students receive maximum value from their on-campus and online education by improving the accessibility and affordability of our degree programs and incorporating more methods of practical instruction and real-world application into our curriculum.

We regularly update and refresh degree programs to keep students apprised of current trends and best practices within their respective fields of study. Additionally, we continue to create more ways for students to save by offering numerous discounts, scholarships, grants, and

even lower tuition! We have already taken steps to place a higher focus on need-based scholarships and to decrease out-of-pocket costs for our students. We are just getting started!

“Our institution continually strives to reduce expenses for all of our students, no matter where they are in their education journey. We believe that these initiatives will open more doors for the next generation to pursue their God-given callings at SAGU. The best is yet to come.”

—President Kermit Bridges, D. Min.

In our efforts to further our campus’s value, we have some exciting news to share with you. We are unveiling our institution’s master plan!

What are you *most* looking forward to?



Mike Clarensau, D. Min.
Dean of the College of Bible and Church Ministries

“The creativity of every emerging group of students as they look for ways to impact their worlds for Christ is a most exciting journey to watch. We prepare students for serving people, whether in the local church, on the mission field, or in community settings where social work, criminal justice, or behavioral sciences training find remarkable ways to make real impact. Our future goes where our students go—and it’s fun to see that future unfold.



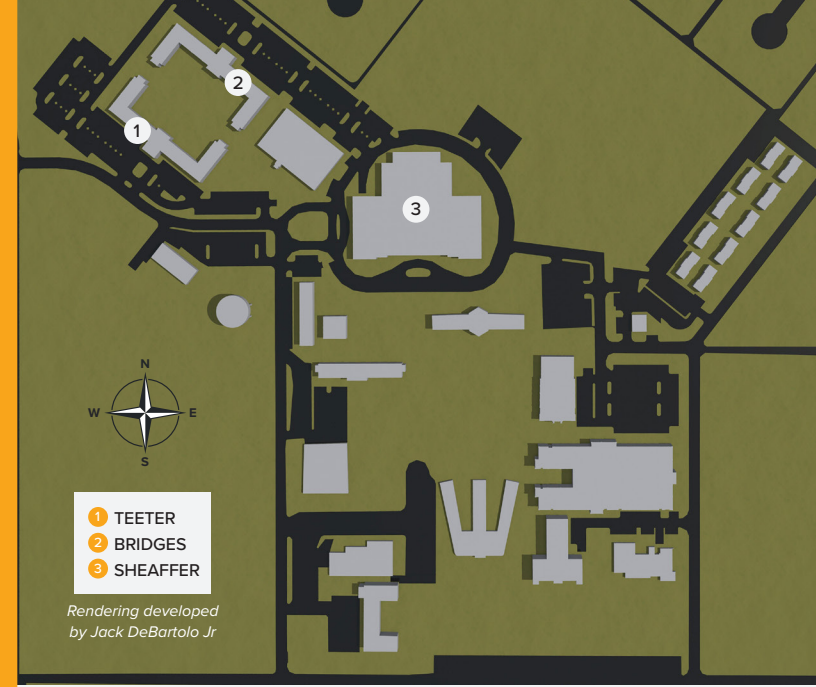
Kimberly James, Ed.D.
Vice President for Institutional Effectiveness; Dean of the College of Music and Communication Arts

“I am most looking forward to watching our students’ gifts and talents develop and grow as they are nurtured by our Spirit-empowered faculty. As students mature and expand their abilities in our college, I get excited about the influence their gifts will have on the arts, film, literature, and every kind of media for the glory of God and the extension of His kingdom.



Sue Taylor, Ph.D.
Dean of the College of Business and Education

“The faculty and staff in the College of Business Education look forward to growth in current and planned marketplace ministry degrees that focus on the holistic development of future leaders across all departments and degrees in the College. We look forward to providing faith-based learning opportunities of the highest quality academic, professional, experiential, and cultural experiences so our graduates leave with sound moral and ethical values, knowledge and skills to succeed.



Our current campus is depicted on the left. The right model depicts the campus upon completion of the master plan with the western side of campus primarily showing student housing connecting to Teeter and Bridges dormitories located on the north side of campus. At the new heart of the campus, future students will find our new academic facilities. Athletic facilities will continue to be developed behind Sheaffer and in the undeveloped area beyond Teeter and Bridges.

Through this expansion, the SAGU campus will have the capability of accommodating approximately 4,000 students and increasing the availability of on-campus housing by around 30 percent! We are also excited to announce that this master plan preserves the current historic administration building which is a registered historical site.

“We have constructed a logical and well-structured approach for the development of this campus in the years to come,” says President Bridges. “I believe we have a promising track to run on now that will help guide this administration and future administrations to further develop this campus as efficiently as possible.”

In addition to increasing academic and housing space, the university is excited to begin constructing a new athletic facility for our student-athletes. By the summer of 2022, we plan to conclude phase one of our new turf field, complete with an 8-lane competition track, artificial turf infield marked for football and soccer, placement of track field event venues on the campus, landscaping, and lights. We only need \$200k more to start the process of building! For sponsorship opportunities, please contact Vice President for Advancement, Rick Bowles, at rbowles@sagu.edu.



“The growth in athletics on the SAGU campus creates a need for facilities that can provide a positive experience for student-athletes and coaches while also benefiting the entire SAGU community. I really think this facility can allow SAGU to further its reach into the community through youth camps and other outreaches, which does excite me personally. The benefit to our student-athletes and coaches includes an increased opportunity for practice times, a needed venue that will enhance recruitment, and an opportunity to set the stage for further development of the area to eventually make football game-days an on-campus experience for the SAGU community.” —Jesse Godding, Ed.D., Athletic Director



We are also making a bold move for Fall 2021. In the face of rising college costs around the nation, we are lowering tuition for distance education and graduate studies by up to 25 percent!

For SAGU’s distance education degree programs, the cost per credit hour will be reduced from \$499 per credit hour to \$399 per credit hour. This is a savings of over 20%, making SAGU’s online degrees even more affordable. Graduate students can also save up to 25% on qualifying degree plans.

“One hundred dollars less per credit hour will save our students upwards of \$12,000 over an entire degree. An investment into earning a college degree is still the most valuable investment you can make, paying you back many times over. This price reduction makes it that much better.”



—Joshua Martin, Dean of Admissions ■

Updated Pricing

Specific tuition reduction information for each of our online and graduate degree programs is provided below

Graduate Tuition	2020-2021	2021-2022
Doctor of Ministry	\$400	\$400
Master of Arts		
Bible & Theology	\$595	\$395
Children & Family	\$595	\$395
Intercultural Studies	\$595	\$395
Practical Theology	\$595	\$395
History	\$595	\$350
Organizational Leadership (MOL)	\$595	\$495
Master of Business Administration	\$595	\$525
Master of Divinity	\$595	\$395
Master of Education		
Curriculum and Instruction	\$595	\$350
Educational Leadership	\$595	\$350
School Counseling	\$595	\$420
Master of Science		
Clinical Psychology	\$595	\$545
Clinical Mental Health Counseling	\$595	\$545
Human Services Counseling	\$595	\$495
Master of English *Starting Spring 2022*	N/A	\$350
Master of Theological Studies	\$595	\$395
Online Undergraduate Tuition	2020-2021	2021-2022
	\$499	\$399
Graduate SOM Tuition	2020-2021	2021-2022
	\$415	\$375

To learn more about our tuition reduction, please visit, sagu.edu/TuitionReduction

Beyond the reduced tuition, we provide numerous opportunities for scholarships, discounts, and financial aid, including:

- ★ **On-Campus Ministry majors** receive 50-100% off tuition, including all federal, state, and SAGU scholarships and grants
- ★ **Missionary children** who enroll full time and live on campus will receive grants and scholarships equal to at least 50% of tuition (This includes a combination of federal, state, and institutional financial aid)

To explore all of our scholarships and grants, please visit sagu.edu/Scholarships



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