

OKLAHOMA WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY

TOWER

OKWU



Momentum & Impact

Dr. Kevin Osborn Called
to Lead as President



Beyond These Pages

Explore the *Impact Report* for a deeper look at the lives being shaped, the communities being served, and the Kingdom impact made possible through your partnership.

For more than a century, through sacrificial partners, dedicated faculty and staff, and generations of students, God has sustained the mission of OKWU. The stories in this issue point to a simple truth:

God often does His greatest work through ordinary faithfulness sustained over time.

Momentum & Impact

As Dr. Kevin Osborn begins his presidency, he brings a pastor's heart, a teacher's calling, and deep confidence that God is still writing the story of Oklahoma Wesleyan University.

The Next Chapter Begins

When the phone call came, **Dr. Kevin Osborn** felt two emotions at once.

Joy. And weight.

Becoming the seventh president of Oklahoma Wesleyan University is about accepting responsibility for a place he already loves, a community his own family has come to call home, and a mission he believes matters now more than ever.

"Through the presidential search process, the Lord has given me peace," says Osborn. "This is a place where I really sense He wants me."

That quiet confidence became clear throughout a season of prayer, discernment, and encouragement from people around the world who prayed not for a particular candidate, but for God's will to be done. Following the election of **Dr. Jim Dunn** as General Superintendent of The Wesleyan Church, the Board of Trustees selected Osborn after a national search, entrusting him to lead OKWU into its next season.

For those who know him well, the decision feels less like a new beginning than the continuation of a calling.

Where God Wants Me

Osborn has spent his professional life in Christian higher education. Yet he rarely talks about education without first talking about ministry.

Years ago, he sensed God's call to serve the Church. Rather than leading him to a local congregation, that calling opened doors into colleges and universities, where he discovered another mission field.

"We're here to help people discover how God has gifted them," he says. "Whether they become pastors, teachers, business leaders, healthcare professionals, artists, or entrepreneurs, every vocation becomes an opportunity to serve Christ."

"What encourages me most is not simply what our students accomplish, but who they are becoming as they learn to lead with conviction, serve with humility, and follow Christ wherever He calls."

That conviction shapes the way he leads.

"I want OKWU to be known as a transformational university, not just a transaction."

A university education is important. Career preparation matters. But Osborn believes something even greater happens in the classroom. Students are formed to carry knowledge and faith into every corner of the world.



Long before becoming president, Kevin experienced OKWU through the eyes of a father. He and First Lady Michelle, an adjunct professor of music and worship arts, have built a life centered on ministry, education, and family. Together they are raising three daughters and a son while eagerly anticipating a new adventure this year as first-time grandparents.

Michelle's story reflects the heartbeat of ministry in education. Raised in a pastor's family and shaped by years of worship ministry, she now teaches students to think deeply about worship rooted in Scripture and lived faithfully in the Church.

Their family knows OKWU not only from faculty meetings and boardrooms, but from residence halls, classrooms, rehearsals, and friendships.

Their oldest daughter graduated from OKWU, and another daughter will graduate this year. Watching their daughters with remarkably different personalities flourish in the same community gave Kevin a perspective few presidents receive before taking office.

"Our faculty invested in our daughters personally," he says. "They didn't just prepare them for careers. They helped form them as followers of Christ."

That experience affirmed what he already believed. The greatest strength of a place like OKWU is found in people who know students by name and care deeply about the servant leaders they are becoming.

The Stewardship of a Calling

Christian higher education stands at an important crossroads. Across the country, universities face declining demographics, financial pressures, rising costs, and growing cultural challenges. Remaining faithful to biblical truth while preparing students for a rapidly changing world requires wisdom, courage, and perseverance.

Osborn does not minimize those realities. Instead, he sees an opportunity for faithful stewardship.

He speaks with optimism about equipping students for the future, embracing innovation wisely, and continuing to strengthen OKWU's mission. But he is equally convinced that the University's next chapter will be shaped by more than sound strategy. It will be sustained through prayer, faithful leadership, and God's provision.

It will require faithful churches, alumni, parents, faculty, and friends who believe deeply in the mission of Christian higher education. It will require generous partners whose investments make it possible for future generations to encounter Christ, discover their calling, and carry the Gospel into every vocation.

"When I look back at Oklahoma Wesleyan 10 years from now, I hope people see **transformed lives for Christ. Faithful alumni living out their calling. And **an institution that's flourishing** while staying on mission."**

That future will not belong to one president alone. Like every chapter in Oklahoma Wesleyan's history, it will be written by a community of people who faithfully steward God's calling together.

As Kevin and Michelle begin this new season of leadership, they invite the entire OKWU family to join them. Through prayer. Through partnership. Through faithful generosity. Together, we have the privilege of helping write the next chapter of servant leaders. 🙏



Dr. Kevin and Michelle Osborn have served Oklahoma Wesleyan together since 2019. As he begins his presidency, they continue their shared commitment to forming students for lives of faithful service.

President Kevin Osborn

LEADERSHIP JOURNEY

- Ph.D., Education, University of Kansas
- M.A., Christian Leadership, Asbury Theological Seminary
- B.S., Friends University
- More than 25 years in Christian higher education at Oklahoma Wesleyan University, Fuller Theological Seminary, Friends University, and Asbury Theological Seminary

Called in the Middle of It All

GRADUATE & PROFESSIONAL STUDIES

Kelsey and Zach Tinsley describe the season when school, work, ministry, and parenting all collided as “organized chaos.”

Their path through OKWU’s Graduate & Professional Studies program didn’t begin with margin. It began in the middle of full schedules, shared responsibilities, and a decision to move forward anyway.

There wasn’t a perfect rhythm. Just a choice, over and over, to keep going.

How They Made It Work



- **They traded time, not roles**
When one needed space to study, the other stepped in.
- **They stayed flexible**
Plans changed. They adjusted and kept moving.
- **They kept their why in front of them**
This was about calling, not just a degree.
- **They leaned into faith daily**
Personal devotion set their direction.
- **They didn’t wait for perfect timing**
School happened in the middle of real life.

“Whether it was, ‘hey, I need to go to a coffee shop and work on a paper,’ and then you’re on double duty, we would merely switch that role.”

Some nights meant late assignments. Others meant holding things together at home. They learned to carry the weight without keeping score.

For Zach, going back to school started with a ceiling he couldn’t ignore. “If I was offered a higher up position, they wouldn’t look at me anyway because I didn’t have any college education.” A simple question from his boss pushed him forward.

For Kelsey, it was about calling. “It was one of the best decisions I’ve made because it put us where we’re both at in ministry.”

At OKWU, their education didn’t just add knowledge. It reshaped how they see people. “I learned to just be human,” Kelsey said. “And I think that... is just as important as getting a degree.”

Zach sees it in how he leads. “I see situations... differently because of going back to school.”

Kelsey lives it out in community mental health, choosing presence over distance, people over process.

Then came a stretch they didn’t expect. Their son, Lincoln, was hospitalized for nine days. New job. Active classes. Long nights that blurred together. There was no pause. Only a decision to keep going.

“Even when life feels full. Even when it’s hard. If God is calling you, He’ll make a way.”

Through it all, their faith stayed steady. “You have to have a personal devotion with the Lord... it kind of sets your path for you.” They don’t talk about balance. They talk about trust.

Now their degrees are finished. But what changed runs deeper than a credential. It shows up in how they lead. In how they serve. In how they keep showing up. Together. 🙏



TOWER

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Kelsey and Zach Tinsley

Learn more about Graduate and Professional Studies
at www.okwu.edu/gps



ADVANCING THE KINGDOM

"Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need."
Matthew 6:33 NLT

The mission of Oklahoma Wesleyan University is to develop and send servant leaders to advance the Kingdom of God. We model a biblically centered way of thought, life, and faith as a vital part of The Wesleyan Church. Through deliberate study, honest questions, and critical engagement, we foster a vibrant liberal arts community that upholds the Primacy of Jesus Christ, the Priority of Scripture, the Pursuit of Truth, and the Practice of Wisdom.

LEGACY STORY



The
**Enduring
Impact**
of Doctor Weeter



It wasn't funny at the time. Four decades later, Dr. Mark Weeter can laugh about it.

It was his first semester at Oklahoma Wesleyan University. He was teaching new courses, finishing his doctorate, pastoring a local church, and caring for a newborn with colic. One night, exhausted after hours of pacing the floor, his doorbell rang. Students had toilet-papered his house.

The next morning, he addressed his classes calmly, "If you have time for this, you have too much time. And I can fix that."

They believed him. It never happened again.

That story is equal parts humor, humanity, and high expectations. It captures something essential about Dr. Weeter. For forty years, he has taught Scripture with conviction, demanded excellence, and anchored everything in one hope: that students would leave in love with the Word of God.

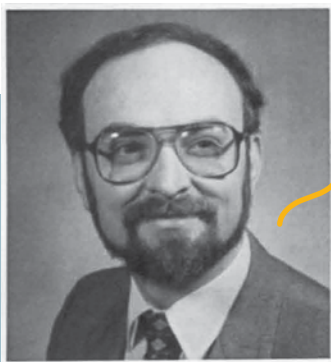
A Call That Became Home

Dr. Weeter arrived at OKWU in 1986, expecting a short stay. He had pastoral experience, ongoing doctoral work, and a plan to return to Ohio. Oklahoma, he assumed, would be a brief chapter.

It became a lifetime.

"I thought I'd come, teach a few years, and move on," he says. "That clearly wasn't God's plan."

Over four decades, Weeter served as professor, pastor, provost, and dean. But he never strayed far from the classroom or the pulpit. For most of his career, he taught while pastoring local churches, convinced that theology must stay grounded in real people and real pain.



1990 Yearbook

"If you're in the pulpit every week and in the hospital with people, you can't become an ivory-tower theologian."

SCAN TO WATCH
THE TRIBUTE VIDEO



That conviction shaped his teaching, his leadership, and his steady presence through every season of change at OKWU.

Teaching That Forms Lives

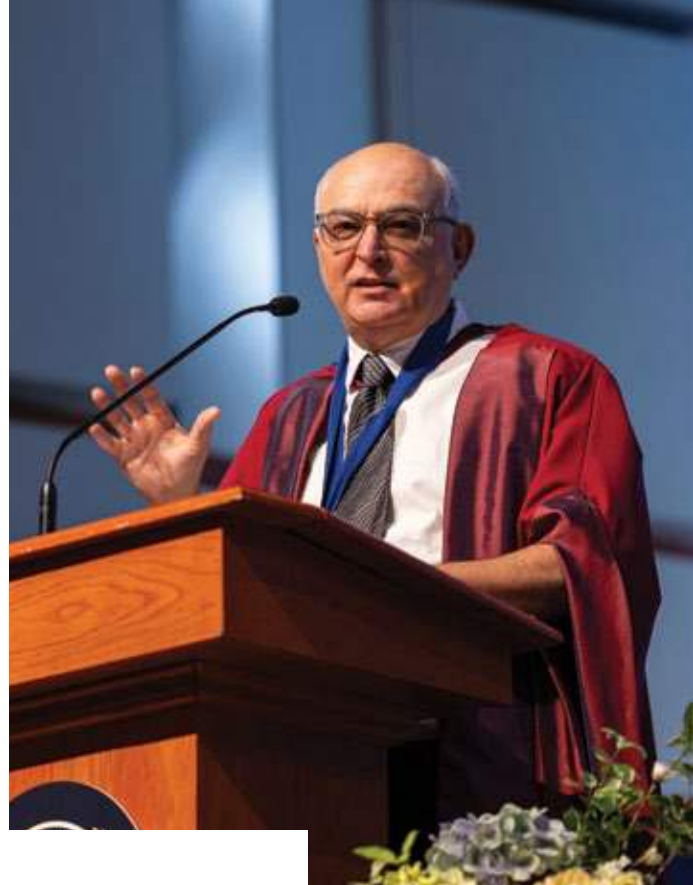
Ask Dr. Weeter about his favorite courses and he doesn't hesitate: Hermeneutics. Doctrine of Holiness. Not because they were easy. Because they were essential.

"If students learn how to rightly interpret Scripture," he explains, "they'll be a blessing wherever God sends them."

His classroom was known for rigor and high expectations. Students were stretched, sometimes uncomfortably, but always purposefully. Many reflected later that his courses gave them confidence not only for ministry or graduate study, but for life itself.

One former student, who barely survived Greek, credited that struggle with shaping his discipline and self-belief. He went on to serve as a Navy lieutenant commander. "That class changed my life," he said.

Moments like that confirmed Weeter's calling.



"When students leave knowing they are deeply called and deeply loved by God, then I know I've done my job." – DR. MARK WEETER

Called Together

Behind every semester stood a quieter story. "I couldn't do this without my wife, Brenda," Weeter says without hesitation.

Their partnership was tested and refined through raising three daughters, one of whom has Down syndrome. Emily, Allison, and Megan each shaped him in ways no textbook could. They taught him patience, dignity, and the sacred worth of every person made in God's image. His theology didn't just grow in the classroom. It grew at home.

Now, retirement does not mean leaving. The Weeters are staying in Oklahoma, close to grandchildren and the community they've long called home. For Weeter, faithfulness has always been lived first at home and taught with credibility everywhere else.

The truest measure of forty years isn't a title or a curriculum. It's **the people** who carry his voice **forward**.

"Teaching was never just a job for Mark; it was a calling. You don't measure forty years of faithfulness in titles. You measure it in people. It will be measured in eternity."

Dr. Jim Dunn, Former Student & OKWU President

"Dr. Weeter did not just teach theology. He taught us how to live it. He taught with a view toward the pulpit and toward local church ministry."

Dr. Jon Ensor & Dr. Josh McNall, Colleagues

"For him, the classroom was sacred ground, a place where minds were sharpened, hearts were shaped, and callings were clarified."

Rev. Torrey Martin, OKWU University Pastor

"Everyone warned me not to take a Dr. Weeter class. I started looking for his classes because they pushed me like no one else pushed me."

Rev. Mike Skor, Former Student & Church Leader

That kind of influence doesn't stay contained to one classroom or one generation. Students became pastors. Pastors became leaders. Leaders became teachers. And many of them still carry his voice with them.

Steady Through Every Season

OKWU's history would look different without Weeter at key moments. As provost and dean, he helped guide the university through leadership transitions and lean financial years. In seasons when faith and perseverance mattered as much as strategy, he was there.

"We're here because we're called," he reminded colleagues more than once. That shared conviction, he believes, sustained the university through its hardest chapters.

As Dr. Weeter steps into retirement, his hope is unchanged from the first day he walked into a classroom in 1986.

"I want them to leave in love with the Word of God. Rooted in Scripture, confident in their calling, and prepared to trust God even when life makes no sense."

Not simply informed. Transformed.

And so, the story ends where it began: a classroom, a professor giving everything he has, and students learning that calling, discipline, and love often arrive together. The young professor who once warned students about misplaced energy leaves behind something far greater. Generations of leaders sent into the world, grounded in Christ, and deeply in love with the Word of God.

Forty years. Still teaching. ☸

Seek First

“Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up” – Galatians 6:9

We rejoice in the harvest. As OKWU continues to walk faithfully, God brings growth, influence, and lasting fruit in ways that extend far beyond campus. 🙌





FREE FREE FOREVER AMEN
AS ARRESTED AND MY LIFE B

Faithful Over Time

THE IMPACT OF TRACIE GILLETTE

Long before she built a program, Tracie Gillette was a student-athlete who simply said yes.

In 1993, she arrived from Sheridan, Wyoming, drawn by volleyball and a Christian college. She did not come with a long-term plan. What followed was something quieter and stronger. A calling that took shape over time.

"I think it was a God thing," Gillette said. "He's definitely laid out this path."

Now entering her 17th season as head coach, her story is tied closely to OKWU. Not just as a leader, but as someone who returned when she sensed it was time.

After building a successful high school program in Bartlesville, the opportunity to come back gave her pause.

"If you don't know how to coach college, you don't know," she said.

But the hesitation did not last. Over time, her confidence grew, and so did her clarity.

The early years were not defined by trophies. They were defined by learning. By balancing practices, recruiting, and raising three children. By trusting that she was where she needed to be.

"That was a God thing," she said. "I knew this was where I needed to be." What took shape was not just a team, but a culture.

"Students don't look at your wins," she said. "They look at how you're leading."

That belief has shaped OKWU volleyball. The goal has never stopped at performance. It



has always reached toward formation. Growth in faith. Growth in character. Growth that lasts beyond a season.

The wins came. A long-awaited conference title in 2023. Then two more in 2024 and 2025, with the added joy of coaching her own daughter along the way. But even those moments sit in their proper place.

"It's so much more than winning," she said. "Are you seeing growth in these girls' lives? That's what matters."

Now the program stands on steady ground. New opportunities are ahead, including men's and beach volleyball. Expansion is coming, but the foundation is already set.

"I want this to be a program that puts God first," she said. "Let His light shine through."

That legacy is not measured in banners.

It shows up in former players. In the way they lead. In the way they live.

And it traces back to a coach who kept saying yes—year after year, season after season—trusting that faithfulness over time would become something that lasts. ☸



STUDENT STORIES

Called Here for More

THREE STUDENTS CAME TO OKWU FOR
ATHLETICS. THEY FOUND SOMETHING
THEY DIDN'T EXPECT.

Ethan Williams didn't come to Bartlesville looking for a calling. He came for basketball.

A sophomore from Mesquite, Texas, Ethan is a business accounting major and point guard on the Eagles men's basketball team. He got a text from Coach Hartman one day, drove up to see what this small school in northeast Oklahoma was about, and decided it felt right. He wasn't wrong, but he also couldn't have predicted what OKWU would ask of him.

WATCH THESE STORIES
OF SERVANT LEADERS



A Look at *Servant* Leadership at OKWU

- Ethan mentors underclassmen through the PATH program while leading on the court as point guard.
- Zach started a team Bible study that grew as players came to faith and wanted to go deeper.
- Mia channels the selflessness of team sports into preparation for a career in law, shaped by Christ.

"Being a student athlete helped me connect more with the community here," Ethan says. "Being surrounded by athletes who also want to grow with God as much as I do, it really helped create a bond we share on the court and off the court."

"I feel like I have the *power* to set the tone. Momentum at OKWU is like oil being poured on fire. You can watch it *grow*."

His first year, the coaching staff asked him to redshirt. He put in the work anyway, stayed ready, and eventually had a choice: protect his eligibility, or give it up to help the team in the moment. He chose the team. That decision, small in the grand scheme of basketball, turned out to be a picture of who he is.

Going into the national finals that year, Ethan was nervous. But his teammates kept him steady. "It's good to have a group of people who are ready to support you no matter where you're coming from," he says. "That experience gave me momentum going into this year. I feel like I get to set the tone." As point guard, he means that literally and spiritually. Ethan is also a mentor in the PATH program, where he invests in younger students the same way older ones once invested in him.

He has been playing basketball for 15 years. His mom coached at Nebraska. But the court, he'll tell you, is just the starting point.



Zachary Ray came to OKWU as a senior accounting major on a baseball offer. He grew up in the church, got baptized more than once, but by his own admission never took the initiative to lead others.

That changed here. OKWU gave him a team of guys some of whom had never heard the gospel. So Zach started a Bible study. At first it was just him teaching. Then more players started showing up, asking questions, wanting to go deeper.

"I wasn't able to lead a Bible study at any other school," he says. "I know God's calling for me is to preach to others and teach others His ways. Baseball brought me to OKWU. But what I found here is so much more than the game."



“What I
found here
is so much
more than
the game.”



Mia Veale started her path with a rough soccer practice and a quiet conviction. She was a high school player questioning whether she even wanted to compete in college when she felt, unmistakably, that OKWU was where she was supposed to be.

"The Lord said, 'You're going to go to OKWU.' It was very clear," she recalls. "He just opened all the doors." Scholarships and grants made it possible. She plays soccer, studies pre-law, and has found in both a training ground for a bigger life.

"I can focus right now on strengthening my faith so that when I get to the legal field, I can be one who stands out for Christ," she says. "Momentum can start with one play, one person. You can be the one to carry this forward."

Today, Mia's story continues as the 2025-26 Alumni Scholarship recipient, a reminder that faithful steps often open doors to opportunities we never could have planned ourselves.

Calling Servant Leaders

Three students. Three sports. Three different roads to the same place: a university where the work you do on the field, the court, the pitch, turns out to be practice for something that lasts longer than any season.

None of them planned it this way. But that's usually how a calling works. ☸

ALUMNI AWARDS

2026



Joe Colaw



Dawn Marie Colaw



Nathan Wall



Charissa Dunn



Joe & Dawn Marie Colaw

Alumni of the Year

They laugh easily. They tell stories that stretch across generations. And somewhere between South Dakota, Missouri, Indiana, and Oklahoma, you begin to see it. This isn't just a life built together. It's a life shaped by God's steady hand.

For **Joe ('77) and Dawn Marie Colaw ('77)**, a lifetime of ministry was never about recognition. When they were named Oklahoma Wesleyan's 2026 Alumni of the Year, the honor reflected what those closest to them have long known. Their lives have been marked by steady faithfulness and servant leadership. For 50 years, they faithfully pastored, led, and invested in people.

Dawn Marie's story begins in South Dakota, where she grew up in a family that was transformed when her parents came to faith in Christ. "I was old enough to know the difference... what a difference Jesus makes when he comes into a home." That moment shaped her understanding of what it means to follow Jesus and share her faith with others.

Joe's path carried a different vision at first. Raised in a pastor's home, he came to Bartlesville Wesleyan College determined not to enter ministry, saying, "I'm not going to be a pastor. I'm going to be an attorney." But during

his freshman year, that direction changed. Through a series of undeniable encounters, Joe sensed a clear call to pastoral ministry. What began as resistance became surrender, and ultimately, a lifelong calling.

Joe and Dawn met in 1972 at a Wesleyan General Conference in North Carolina. They stayed connected through letters, then enrolled together at BWC. They married in 1975 while still in school and graduated in 1977, already stepping into ministry together as they served in a local church.

Their early years led them to Brookings, South Dakota, where they pastored for eleven years. From there, they were called to Marion, Indiana to serve as senior pastor at College Wesleyan Church before returning to First Wesleyan Church in Bartlesville, OK. What began as a step of obedience became a long season of impact. Their love for mission work has opened doors to serve locally on several nonprofits and in eight overseas countries through various mission trips. For 35 years, they faithfully served the same community, investing in generations of students, families, and leaders.

Their 50 years of ministry have always been shared. While Joe preached and led, Dawn counseled, discipled, and created spaces where people felt known and welcomed. Together, they modeled a partnership rooted in calling, not position.

That legacy extends beyond their own work. Their two sons, both graduates of OKWU, carry the same heart for ministry. One is now a pastor at Trinity Wesleyan in Indiana. The other is “making Jesus famous” as the owner of six fitness centers.

Looking back, their story is not defined by a single moment, but by a pattern. Saying yes when no is easier. Trusting God in uncertainty. A legacy measured not in years, but in lives changed for eternity.

Dawn Marie still sees it the same way she did as a child when a “wonderful guest came to our house.” Jesus continues to change lives through their legacy.

Today, Joe and Dawn Marie’s connection to Oklahoma Wesleyan remains strong. Their lives stand as a reminder that a life surrendered to God will always leave a lasting impact.



Nathan Wall

Young Alumnus

Nathan Wall ('14) doesn't try to be someone he's not.

“I will never be the cool youth pastor,” he says. “I am the awkward, quirky person that God has created me to be.”

That clarity has shaped a ministry defined not by comparison, but by calling.

For Nathan, being named OKWU's Young Alumnus of the Year reflects a life already deeply invested in others. Since graduating, he has served in full-time youth ministry, first in Croswell, Michigan, and now at First Wesleyan Church in Bartlesville. He faithfully leads students, mentoring young leaders, and shaping the next generation of the Church.

His calling began early. Raised in a Christ-centered home, Nathan never knew a time when he didn't believe. In eighth grade, at a youth convention in Denver, he sensed a clear call to ministry.

“From the eighth grade on, ministry was all that I thought about.”

At OKWU, that calling took shape through relationships more than classrooms. Mentors and professors saw his potential before he saw it in himself, calling him into leadership and building his confidence.

“I didn't think that I could really be anything, and OKWU gave me that confidence.”

Today, that transformation defines his ministry. Nathan leads with presence. Whether preparing messages or meeting one-on-one with a student, his focus is simple: be fully there.

“If I can simply focus on the people that I'm with, they feel valued and loved.”

That philosophy shapes how he invests in students, showing up to games, meeting for lunches, and walking alongside them beyond weekly gatherings. His leadership extends

into the broader community as well, serving as District Youth President, coaching youth sports, and volunteering in local schools.

At the core of his work is a future-focused mindset. Success isn't measured by numbers, but by lives changed over time. He is committed to helping students know what they believe, why they believe it, and how to share it with others, equipping them for a faith that lasts.

Already, that investment is multiplying. Former students are stepping into leadership and ministry, carrying forward what they've been taught.

Nathan's journey is already marked by consistent presence, preparation, and purpose. And through it all, a commitment to simply be who God created him to be.



Charissa Dunn

Servant Leader

Charissa Dunn ('82) is not interested in recognition from the platform.

She would be one of the first to tell you there are others more deserving. That instinct to step back while continuing to serve has defined her life and is why she is being honored as this year's Servant Leader Award recipient.

Charissa earned a double major in Business Administration and Business Education from Bartlesville Wesleyan College (BWC). Her calling did not begin with a clear plan. In fact, she once resisted the idea of becoming a teacher. Over time, through prayer and the steady leading of God, that direction became clear.

Once it did, she committed to it fully.

Charissa spent 12 years teaching in Copan, Oklahoma, before returning to BWC in 1994. For more than two decades, she served as a professor, Student Teaching Supervisor, and Practicum Placement Coordinator. In those roles, she helped shape future educators with consistency, care, and a deep sense of responsibility for their impact.

Her influence was rarely found in a single moment. It was built over time.

"The little things make the difference... it's the cumulative of all of the things that make you who you are."

That belief shaped how she approached her work. Students were not projects to manage. They were people to invest in. Many of those students would later point back to small, faithful moments that made a lasting difference in their lives.

From 2020 to 2023, Charissa stepped into a role as alumni director. Once again, her focus was to reconnect graduates to the university, strengthen relationships, and create meaningful community.

"You've got to be faithful to God every day... live your life for something bigger than yourself."

That kind of faithfulness does not draw attention to itself, but it builds something lasting. It creates momentum through daily obedience. It shapes lives through consistency rather than visibility.

Even in retirement, Charissa continues to serve. She chooses roles that support others rather than lead from the front, creating space for the next generation while remaining faithfully involved.

Her life reflects what it means to be a servant leader. Not driven by recognition but grounded in calling. Not defined by position, but by a steady commitment to serve wherever God places her.

It is that kind of faithfulness that leads to meaningful impact over time. ☪

NOMINATE AN ALUMNUS AT
[OKWU.EDU/ALUMNI/AWARDS](https://okwu.edu/alumni/awards)

ATHLETIC HALL OF FAME

2026 INDUCTEES

A

title that changed the program. In May 2011, a group of Oklahoma Wesleyan baseball players boarded a bus with quiet belief and a season that had already tested them. Twenty-six players. A 39-28 record. Nothing flashy. But something steady was building.

By the time they arrived at Prasco Park in Mason, Ohio, that belief had teeth.

Led by **Head Coach Kirk Kelley**, the Eagles entered ranked ninth. In the championship series, they faced North Greenville, the defending national champions. OKWU didn't flinch. Pitch by pitch, inning by inning, they pulled ahead. When the final out settled into a glove, the Eagles had done something no team in program history had done before. They were national champions.

Junior outfielder **Cory Ford**, named tournament MVP, led the charge. Around him stood a roster

built to carry weight together. **Nick Randolph, T.L. Murdock**, and **Chris Needham** delivered on the mound when it mattered. **Jonathan Porter** steadied things behind the plate. **J.D. Nalder** and **Shane Elliott** made the routine look certain.

In the dugout, Kelley set the tone: calm, focused, relentless. He was later named **NCAA National Coach of the Year**. Those who watched knew his impact long before the award arrived.

2011 marked the start of something lasting. OKWU baseball has posted 30-plus wins in 11 of the next 12 seasons. In 2026, Coach Kelley reached 950 career wins.

But it started here. A team that refused to play like underdogs. A coach who believed before anyone else did. And a championship that still echoes every time the Eagles take the field. 🏆



**2011 BASEBALL
NCAA NATIONAL
CHAMPIONSHIP TEAM**



Redeeming Story Through the Arts

For **Professor Harty Blackert**, storytelling has never been about performance alone. It has always been about purpose.

Long before stepping into the classroom at OKWU, Blackert first encountered the power of theatre in a small Christian school. A traveling drama ministry visited campus and transformed ordinary stages into spaces that stirred conviction, imagination, and faith. What began as a middle school introduction to theatre slowly became a calling.

Through biblical productions and summers spent traveling with a Christian theatre team, Blackert saw how stories could move people toward truth in ways sermons sometimes could not. Audiences laughed. Reflected. Worshipped. Listened differently.

“That experience shaped everything,” Blackert says. “The goal has always been the same. To use storytelling to bring people closer to the Lord.”

That conviction now shapes his work at OKWU as Instructor of Film and Photography and as a key voice behind the university’s **new Bachelor of Arts in Theatre**.

For the first time in university history, students can pursue a full theatre degree at OKWU. For Blackert, the addition is about more than expanding academic offerings. It reflects a larger belief that the arts belong within Christian formation, not outside of it.

“We’re not creating something new,” he says. “We’re reclaiming something that’s always belonged to the Kingdom.”

Historically, the Church commissioned artists, musicians, and storytellers to teach Scripture and help people encounter truth. Blackert believes that calling still matters today.

And he believes students are hungry for it.

In his classroom, storytelling is not treated as self-expression alone. Students are challenged to see creativity as stewardship. Their gifts are not simply tools for recognition or applause, but opportunities to serve, influence, and point people toward something greater than themselves.

“God has created each person uniquely,” Blackert says.

**“Your gifts have purpose.
The question isn’t whether
you’re creative, it’s how you’ll
use that creativity.”**



OKWU
THEATRE



Bachelor of Arts in Theatre Coming Fall 2026

Pursue storytelling, performance, and production through a Christ-centered lens with hands-on experience in theatre and film. Learn more at www.okwu.edu.

That perspective resonates with students trying to discern both identity and calling. It also shapes the structure of the program itself.

Rather than pushing students toward one narrow definition of success, Blackert emphasizes the broad landscape of opportunities within the arts. Students explore filmmaking, production, photography, design, performance, writing, advertising, and collaborative storytelling. Some may pursue professional theatre or film. Others may serve in churches, nonprofits, schools, or launch creative ventures of their own.

The goal is formation. Students are taught to approach their craft with excellence, humility, and trust in God's direction. Blackert often compares the creative process to farming. Artists prepare the ground, plant faithfully, and continue showing up. Growth comes later, often slowly, and not always visibly at first.

That mindset is already taking shape through student-written films, collaborative productions, and creative projects that invite students to tell meaningful stories together. All while cultivating technical skill.

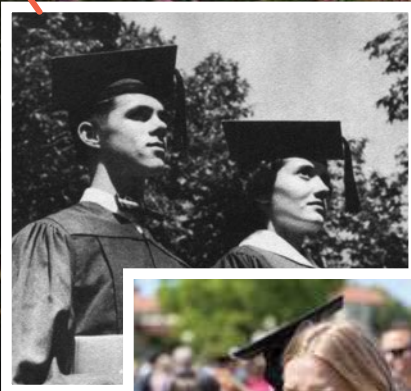
He wants students to leave understanding why stories matter in the first place. Because for Blackert, the end goal has never been the stage, the screen, or even the degree itself.

It is the student who discovers clarity in their calling. The artist who creates with conviction. The storyteller who understands that truthful stories can point people toward hope, redemption, and ultimately Christ Himself.

And in classrooms and creative spaces across campus, that work is already beginning. 🙏

OKLAHOMA WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY

A Bright Future— Fueling University Growth



For 120 years, OKWU has equipped servant leaders to impact the world for Christ. **The NOW Campaign** is a \$68 million initiative to strengthen that legacy—investing in scholarships, faculty, facilities, and campus growth to prepare the next generation. Join us in building OKWU's future now.

BUILDING THE NEXT

OKWU

NOW

FUELING UNIVERSITY GROWTH

The NOW Campaign continues to drive strategic investment in scholarships, facilities, and student life. With millions already raised, the campaign is shaping the future of OKWU through expanded housing, athletic development, and enhanced learning environments.

Recent student life and facilities projects include upgrades to softball fields, ongoing Wert Hall renovations, and a \$250,000 Give Week effort—boosted by a \$100,000 matching gift—positioning the residence hall to reopen in Fall 2026.

WERT HALL RENOVATIONS STRENGTHEN STUDENT EXPERIENCE

Renovations to Wert Hall are underway, modernizing a residence hall that has served students since 1974. Updates include improved bathrooms, expanded laundry, and key infrastructure upgrades to strengthen student life and community. The OKWU community rallied during Give Week, raising \$192,215 for Wert Hall renovations. Matching gift donations accelerated progress as the project builds momentum toward reopening in Fall 2026.



SOFTBALL FIELDS RELOCATING TO SUPPORT PROGRAM GROWTH

A \$590,000 grant from the Lyon Foundation will enable the relocation of OKWU's softball complex from Tuxedo Blvd to the main athletic fields at Silver Lake. Construction begins in the summer, with the new field projected to be ready for play in Spring 2027. The project marks a significant investment in athletic growth, with future enhancements of field lighting still needed.

STEVE LESSMAN NAMED VICE PRESIDENT OF ADVANCEMENT



Steve Lessman brings extensive experience in mission-driven leadership and fundraising. He is passionate about building meaningful relationships and expanding support for the university's mission. ☸

Get an inside look at supporting the NOW Campaign at okwu.edu/now.

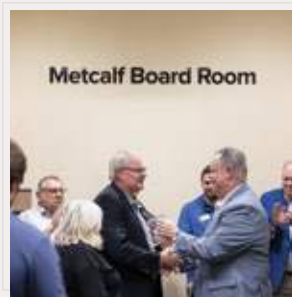


OKWU Headlines

FALL/WINTER 2026 NEWS

Metcalfs Honored for Legacy of Faith and Generosity

Roger and Marijean Metcalf were honored at Foster Bonanza 2025, receiving the President's Award for decades of faithful service. The newly dedicated Metcalf Board Room stands as a lasting tribute to their quiet generosity and enduring impact on generations of OKWU students.



METCALFS HONORED
FOR YEARS OF SERVICE

Master's Programs Expand Graduate Impact

Graduate & Professional Studies launched two new master's programs for Fall 2026, **MS Sports Leadership** and **MA Counseling Psychology**, blending market-driven learning with faith-based leadership. A redesigned **MA in Strategic Leadership** offers a flexible 30-hour, 12-month pathway focused on leading people and teams. This provides a seamless on-ramp to OKWU's MBA program.

Inaugural Nursing Symposium Connects Professionals

The department of Nursing's 2026 Implementation Science Symposium welcomed 80 attendees, including alumni, exhibitors, speakers, and volunteers, for a day of innovation and continuing education. Led by **Dr. Rosanina Ketchum** and **Dr. Anna Mangimela**, the event strengthened professional connections and featured keynote **Dr. Jim Woodard (DNP '25)**, who brought practical insights into healthcare innovation.



GLOBAL MISSION IN
FOCUS FOR GO WEEK



NURSING SCIENCE
SYMPOSIUM

GO Week Inspires Global Faith and Action

GO Week brought renewed focus to global missions through a parade of nations, worship, teaching, and powerful moments of spiritual response. **Rev. Jenn Petersen**, CEO of World Hope International, led students to engage deeply with God's call to go, serve, and live out their faith across cultures and communities.

SPRING 2026 NEWS

Dunn Institute Equips Church Leaders for Impact

The annual Dunn Institute featured **Dr. Jo Anne Lyon**, Ambassador and former General Superintendent of The Wesleyan Church, as keynote speaker. The event created space for pastors and leaders to grow, connect, and be equipped for faithful ministry.

Baptisms Mark a Year of Spiritual Renewal

As part of the "Seek First" chapel theme, five students were baptized in April, publicly declaring their faith in Christ. Led by **Rev. Torrey Martin**, these moments reflect a campus culture marked by spiritual response, renewal, and a pursuit of God's calling.

Class of 2026 Sent with Purpose

This year, 170 graduates joined the OKWU alumni family. Representing Fall 2025, Spring 2026, and Summer 2026, the Class of 2026 steps forward ready to live out the call to Be One Sent.

SEE THE IMPACT AT
[OKWU.EDU/IMPACT-REPORT](https://okwu.edu/impact-report)

Faculty and Staff Celebrate Awards

During May graduation ceremonies, Team OKWU was recognized by both student-focused awards and honors from their peers. **Dr. Brian Turner** received Faculty Member of the Year, and the Staff Members of the Year are **Aaron Bunker** and **Stevan Djukic**.

See a need. Meet it.

Congrats to our Be One Sent Award recipients, honored at our final Spring 2026 chapel. **Ellie Haskins** (Nursing '26), **Dr. Stacey Duke** (Associate Dean of CESB & Professor of Business), and **Scott Tinsley** (Facilities Maintenance Supervisor)

Faculty Achievements Reflect Academic Strength

OKWU faculty continue to advance scholarship and leadership. **Dr. Eric Peterson** completed his terminal degree, **Dr. Jerome Van Kuiken** published and presented nationally, **Dr. Ackrion Mangimela** was promoted to associate professor, and **Dr. Josh McNall** was promoted to full professor.



Campers staying cool at the Tri-State Wesleyan Camp hosted at OKWU.



Prof. Brian Turner and summer camp STEM students launching rockets.

Summer Camps Engage and Inspire the Next Generation

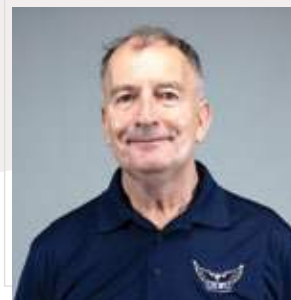
OKWU's 2026 Summer Camps welcomed students of all ages through hands-on learning and creativity. Highlights included the new Mission to Mars STEM camp, Kids' Theatre productions, and athletic camps that built skills, confidence, and community.



DR. GERALD
YELLOWHAWK



MS. LEEANN
LITTLE



COACH
THOMAS POLING



MS. ELEANOR
HUNSINGER

REMEMBERING FAITHFUL SERVANT LEADERS

The OKWU community honors the lives of **Dr. Gerald Yellowhawk**, **Leeann Little**, **Thomas Poling**, and **Eleanor Hunsinger**. Yellowhawk, a respected Wesleyan leader and 1994 honorary doctorate recipient, faithfully served Native American ministries. Little, an alumna, board member, and staff member, invested deeply in students and campus life. Poling, a beloved assistant men's basketball coach, was honored as the 2025 season was dedicated in his memory. Hunsinger, recipient of the 2022 Hall of Faith Award, devoted more than two decades as a missionary nurse in Zambia before continuing a lifetime of ministry and service. ☸

2025-2026

SEASONS OF MOMENTUM

OKWU Athletics delivered a season defined by consistency, breakthrough moments, and a growing national presence. Across every sport, the Eagles showed what steady faithfulness looks like in competition.



FALL MOMENTUM

Men's Soccer (19-1-3) swept KCAC regular season and tournament titles, advanced to the NAIA final site, and earned **National Coaching Staff of the Year**. **Biel Campo** led the way as KCAC Player of the Year.

Women's Soccer reached a 21-2-2 record, winning both conference titles and advancing to the **NAIA Final Four**, the best finish in program history. **Laura Gieseler** was named KCAC Player of the Year.

Women's Volleyball (26-5) added a KCAC Tournament title and national appearance. **Head Coach Tracie Gillette** reached 350 career wins, while **Evelyn Rohrberg** earned KCAC Player of the Year and NAIA National Attacker of the Year.



WINTER STRENGTH

Men's Basketball (30-4) continued its dominance, winning KCAC regular season and tournament titles and advancing to the NAIA final site. **Head Coach Donnie Bostwick** reached 300 career wins, and **Tamaje Izuagbe** was named KCAC Player of the Year and an All-American.

Women's Basketball posted its best season in four years, while **Wrestling** qualified two athletes for nationals.



BY THE NUMBERS



5

KCAC Regular Season
Champions

4

KCAC Tournament
Champions

6

NAIA Final Site
Appearances

2

Final Four Finishes
Women's Soccer

5

KCAC Players
of the Year

350th Win

Coach Tracie Gillette

300th Win

Coach Donnie Bostwick

**Multiple
All-Americans**

across programs



SPRING BREAKTHROUGHS

Women's Tennis made history, winning both KCAC titles for the first time and advancing to the NAIA final site.

Softball (39-13) surged behind KCAC Player of the Year **Brooklyn Purtell**. Baseball returned to the NAIA Opening Round after a conference tournament runner-up finish.

Men's Tennis finished as KCAC runner-up, and **Beach Volleyball** recorded its best season to date. In its first year, **Cheer** brought energy and unity to the sidelines while championing the Eagles' season. **Women's Flag Football** is gearing up for Fall 2026.

BUILT ON CONSISTENCY

This year wasn't built on moments. It was built on daily work. Across programs, OKWU continues to develop teams that compete well and represent something greater. And the momentum is still building. 🙌

VIEW THE SCOREBOARD
[OKWUEAGLES.COM](https://www.okwueagles.com)

OKWU On the Move



1. Jeremiah Storkson ('20) serves as Kids Pastor at City Church in Bartlesville, where he has led ministry to the next generation since graduating. Ordained in 2022, he continues to invest in families while pursuing a Master's in Applied Biblical Leadership from Western Seminary. Jeremiah and his wife, Savanna, welcomed their son, Martin, in January 2026.

2. Dr. Jim ('88) and Wendy Dunn ('88) have guided OKWU as President and First Lady since 2019. On May 18, 2026, Dunn was elected General Superintendent of The Wesleyan Church. For seven years they led OKWU in renewed mission clarity, spiritual focus, and institutional growth. His election marks a new season of Kingdom influence serving the global Church.

3. Chloe ('24) and Jace Reid ('24) married just three weeks after graduating from OKWU and have quickly built a life rooted in calling and community in Bartlesville. Chloe serves as a counselor with GRAND Mental Health, while Jace teaches 7th grade math and coaches multiple sports at Madison Middle School. In February 2026, they welcomed twin daughters, Adeline and Scotland, beginning a new chapter as a family of four.

4. Diana Sturdevant ('03) will be inducted as a Fellow of the American Academy of Nursing, one of the profession's highest honors, with formal recognition in Washington, D.C.. A Research Assistant Professor at the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center, her work focuses on dementia care and quality of life for older adults. She leads statewide training initiatives and contributes to national research advancing geriatric care.

5. Katie Carter ('20) serves as a paramedic with Bartlesville Ambulance Service, where she has worked since 2022 after earning her paramedic license in 2023. With six years of EMS experience, she continues to pursue further medical training while serving patients with skill and compassion.

6. Connor ('25) and Abby Welcher ('24) welcomed twin daughters on June 2, 2026, celebrating the joyful arrival on their wedding anniversary. The family recently returned to Wichita, Kansas. Abby is now a stay-at-home mom, while Connor works in public accounting, pursues his CPA license, and supports his family's businesses.

7. Rachel Showler ('09) was recognized as the 2026 Emerging Star in Healthcare at the Emerging Stars Under 40 Gala for her impact in behavioral health. She serves as Executive Director of GRAND Mental Health in Bartlesville, where she and her husband, **Ben Showler ('09)**, are raising their two daughters, Penelope and Ingrid.

Paige Johnston ('19) continues to expand Speedway Racing Ministries, now a content partner with the YouVersion Bible App, reaching over 1,900 subscribers through faith-based racing devotionals. What began as a passion project has grown into a thriving community, including a Christian NASCAR fan group with nearly 400 members, online Bible studies, and ongoing outreach within the racing world.

Blaine Spencer ('20) was named Christian Teacher of the Year, recognized for integrating faith and thoughtful dialogue in the classroom. His work continues to shape students with both academic excellence and a Christ-centered perspective.

Jim Lo (BWC '78) continues to see global impact through his teaching ministry, as more than 30,000 individuals across Africa have engaged his study God's Call to Holiness. His work is helping spark church growth, including in regions historically closed to traditional missions. Lo serves as General Director of World Missions for the Churches of God (Holiness) and remains active in global training and prayer initiatives. 🌐





SHARE YOUR NEWS AT [OKWU.EDU/SHARE](https://okwu.edu/share)



**OKLAHOMA
WESLEYAN
UNIVERSITY**

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COLLEGE PREVIEW DAYS →



Experience OKWU—a community where faith, learning, and purpose come to life.

Oct. 12, 2026

Nov. 11, 2026

Mar. 8, 2027

Apr. 7, 2027

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Daily campus visits available.