

PROPS

The A-State PROPS Committee is the Proudly Recognizing Our Pack Staff committee, a part of the Arkansas State University Staff Senate, that highlights and celebrates outstanding staff members through monthly profiles and interviews, promoting a positive campus culture by recognizing dedicated employees.

The PROPS program includes a monthly profile of an A-State staff member that works every day behind the scenes to improve Arkansas State University... because we are ONE PACK!

To nominate someone for recognition use the following form:

https://arkansasstateuniversity-djakl.formstack.com/forms/props_nomination_form

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January 2026 Props Recipient-
Larry Floyd

JANUARY PROPS



LARRY FLOYD

NOMINATED BY: TREVOR BATEMAN

"Larry is a quality leader on our facilities maintenance team who oversees and supports our campus housing communities. Larry is a hard worker and him and his team are fast and efficient in their work in maintaining and repairing Arkansas Hall. I've heard from other areas that he does amazing work in the Pack Place, Village, Circle, North Park Quads, and Red Wolf Den Areas."~ Bateman

JANUARY PROPS

LARRY FLOYD



Describe yourself in one sentence.

I believe that I am a loyal, kindhearted person.

What do you like most about A-State?

I like that I can assist future leaders, and I like that I can help people who are my kids' age. Helping people is very fulfilling to me.

What do you wish everyone could know about your position?

I like that I can assist future leaders, and I like that I can help people who are my kids' age. Helping people is very fulfilling to me.

The best advice you ever received was...

Respect your peace like you respect oxygen. You only have your peace, and you can only stay grounded underneath where your feet are at the moment. You can't look back and you can't go too far forward. My grandmother told me that and it's always stuck with me.

Before retiring, what would you like to do?

I already have my Bachelor's, and I would like to go for my Master's degree in Construction Management. Also, I actually am retired already. I served twenty years in the Army before working here.

If you could travel anywhere, where would it be?

The Philippines. My wife is Filipina, and I would love to go home with her and see more of her culture.

What do most people not know about you?

I served twenty years in the military. I don't voice that often, but that's a very important part of my life.

What is your favorite meal?

Pork adobo, which is a Filipino thing. It's probably the best thing I've ever tasted, and something that I wish I've had my whole life. When my wife first made it for me, it changed my flavor palate. Being married to someone from a different culture opens up so much in life.

December 2025 PROPS
Recipient- Phareta Calkin

P.R.O.P.S

December P.R.O.P.S Winner:

Phareta Calkin

Institutional Printer, Printing Services
49 years



Phareta was nominated by Lavonda Evans.

Evans said, "Phareta is simply a rockstar! She goes above and beyond to assist any department with their printing needs. Whether it is getting you in touch with another department for artwork approval or replying to numerous emails. Her demeanor and attitude speaks highly of her drive to be as efficient as possible, without losing any facets of the "customer service" this world is so desperately in need of. Phareta is an asset to this campus and deserves this recognition."

What do you like most about A-State?

The people. I like dealing with people. I think a lot of it is like when they have a job that they need in a hurry, I would say 99% of the time, we can get that done as quickly as we can. Some people may give me an almost impossible deadline, but I'm willing to come in early or stay late, or do whatever I need to do to make sure their stuff gets done. I like making people happy. I like dealing with the customer service end of it.

What do you wish everyone could know about your position?

I think people don't understand that when they send you a file to print, what all the printing process goes through to get to the final product. They think that you stick it on a copy machine, hit the button, and its "go," but there's a lot more to it than that. So I wish they understood the complexity of the printing process.

If you could have another job or career, what would it be and why?

I might like to do something in the sports-related field. Maybe a trainer or something like that in the medical field. They didn't have that when I was in school many moons ago. I volunteered for thirty-three years in the sports information office here. I traveled some with the basketball and football teams, and the track teams. I just like sports so much and going to events is what I enjoy most. So I think something in the sports-related field would probably be right up my alley.

December P.R.O.P.S Winner:

Phareta Calkin

Institutional Printer, Printing Services



November 2025 PROPS
Recipient- Larry Vinson

P.R.O.P.S

November P.R.O.P.S Winner:

Larry Vinson

**HPESS Building Supervisor &
Skilled Tradesman**



Larry was nominated by Terell Bowie.

Bowie said, "Larry has shown up every day and made sure that the HPESS building runs along without a problem! He does everything from repairs, painting, and rebuilds, and even greeting people as they enter the building. He is the heart of the HPESS facility and deserves his very long overdue PROPS!"

What do you like most about A-State?

The people. I've been here for about 17 years and have gotten to know a lot of good people on campus. It's also fun to get to know the students. They stop in to say hi, and to get to know them and see them through graduation is something I enjoy.

What do you wish everyone could know about your position?

I like to work, and I like to stay busy. There are a lot of projects we have done in the HPESS building as far as improving classrooms. We've gotten them painted, put in new furniture, and built a new lab. We are always working to improve the space and make it as comfortable as possible for students. Our building has a lot of students coming through on any given day.

If you could describe yourself in one sentence...

Even though I'm old enough to retire, I continue to work because I want to and I don't like to sit still. If I'm not working on campus, I'm working on projects at home. I also enjoy learning and believe you can learn something new every day. So, a hard worker and an outdoorsman sounds about right.

P.R.O.P.S

November P.R.O.P.S Winner:



October 2025 PROPS Recipient-
Morgan Adams

P.R.O.P.S

October P.R.O.P.S Winner:

Morgan Adams

University Marketing and Communications,
Office Manager



Morgan was nominated by Tonda Keys.

Keys said, "Morgan has a lot of experience here at A-State, and his knowledge and resources are a huge asset. He goes out of his way to help others in our college when they have questions or issues they do not know how to handle."

What do you like most about A-State?

I started at A-State in 2019 in HR, and throughout my time here, I will say hands-down the people. The atmosphere amongst colleagues around campus and within different colleges is great. You get to meet so many different individuals, and I'm really appreciative of that and the connections I've made along the way.

What do you wish everyone could know about your position?

It may not be all potlucks and decorations every day, but I try to bring the most positive vibe to the environment because niceness is free. Being positive is free. There's a lot of behind-the-scenes work that happens with University Marketing and Communications. We put out news releases, we help with set up and hosting big events, like the Topping Off ceremony earlier this week, the groundbreakings, all kinds of things. There's a lot of behind-the-scenes work our office does to make these events happen.

If you could travel anywhere, where would it be?

Anywhere with a body of water. I don't even have to have anybody with me, just put me around some water and I'm going to make the fun happen regardless. It doesn't matter if it's a beach, pool, the lake, I'm good. If I had to pick a specific place, I guess the Bahamas, but truly if you put me on some sand and leave me alone, I'm happy.

P.R.O.P.S

October P.R.O.P.S Winner:



September 2025 PROPS
Recipient-Laura Miller

P.R.O.P.S

September P.R.O.P.S Winner:

Laura Miller

AState Small Business & Technology
Development Center, Director



Laura was nominated by Robert Bahn.

Bahn said, "Laura Miller's commitment to service is unparalleled. She consistently goes above and beyond to ensure that the needs of our clients and stakeholders are not only met but exceeded. Whether it's providing personalized assistance, conducting thorough research, or offering invaluable guidance, Laura consistently puts the needs of others first, embodying the true spirit of service."

What do you like most about A-State?

So many things! It's a very inviting and welcoming place to work. As of this month, I've been here 25 years and it's something different every day. When I walk in to work, it's an exciting environment because there's always something new happening with both my job and the community. And, when you have students around, you feel like you can stay young forever!

What do you wish everyone could know about your position?

I feel like I have the best job in the world. I get to get up every day, come in, and help entrepreneurs and small business owners realize their dream of owning their own business. I can live vicariously through what they do. I'm very risk-averse, so they take the risk, but I can share in their successes and help them create the life they want. If anybody wants to start a business, come see us. We're here, but we also work in ten counties, so we're not always on campus. We're an economic development outreach program, and it's a partnership between A-State, U of A Little Rock, and the US Small Business Administration. It's a great position to have.

P.R.O.P.S

September P.R.O.P.S Winner:



Nomination Form

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February 2026 PROPS
Recipient- Craig Estes

FEBRUARY PROPS



CRAIG ESTES

NOMINATED BY: LISA GLASCO

"Craig is the best employee Procurement can ask for. He does all the work thrown at him perfectly, without complaining. He raises two sons with his wife, works full-time, and plays

FEBRUARY PROPS

CRAIG ESTES



Describe yourself in one sentence.

I'm busy and dependable.

What do you like most about A-State?

Well, there are so many things, but I think the first thing that comes to mind is just how, although there are many, many employees and students on campus, it's kind of like one big family. No matter what department you're working with, you can always count on kindness and a customer service kind of atmosphere. There have been many times where I've worked with different people from different departments, and no matter what we're dealing with, no matter how big or small, the problem can always be solved. A lot of people who have each other's backs and I try to provide that to the departments from my standpoint as well.

What do you wish everyone could know about your position?

Whether correct or not, my own perception of how others view Procurement is that we basically just place orders all day or tell people "no" whenever they ask us certain questions.

I wish that everyone could spend a day, or even a week with us to see every little thing that we do.

We do a lot of orders, and we do say "no" sometimes regarding certain rules and regulations, but just from actually placing orders and making payments, change orders, and the entire PCard process.

I do a lot of contracts that I have to send to the state for legislative review based on dollar amount and that kind of thing. There are just

FEBRUARY PROPS

CRAIG ESTES



In school, I was best known for...

Kind of going off of some of the things that Lisa was saying about my dependability and that kind of thing. The first thing that I thought of.

My senior year in high school, I won a citizenship award, which honestly kind of came to my surprise. I didn't really think about it too much, but I try to be kind to everyone.

No matter what walk of life they're from or like here at work, whatever department they're from, I tried to start doing that early on, I guess, even back in high school. And then I try to do that here as well.

What music is playing in your car?

I listen to all kinds of music. Just about every genre from different time periods. Lately, I've been listening to. I just discovered this band. They're called You Me at Six. It's kind of fast-paced but also kind of emotional. It's kind of like Death Cab for Cutie, which is not something that I really listen to a lot. So it's kind of weird, but that's the band I've been listening to lately.

What is your favorite hobby?

I would say my favorite hobby is playing guitar and singing. I haven't always sang. I had to kind of work up to that, but I've played guitar since I was about 13, and that's been my very favorite hobby ever since.

I started at home and then several years ago...When we lived in Mountain Home before we moved here, I was in a band with

FEBRUARY PROPS

CRAIG ESTES



The one thing I would tell my adult self is...

Maybe just to slow down and to keep my head up and everything works out in the end.

Craig Estes 8 minutes 43 seconds

Maybe just to slow down and to keep my head up and then everything works out in the end. I used to be kind of in a hurry when I was younger to try to get to these milestones in my life. And then when that didn't happen... I kind of stopped that, and you start seeing some areas when it all kind of starts working out. So it's just to slow down and everything works out eventually.

The best advice you ever received was...

Although it may be hard to do sometimes, I think it is to, no matter who you cross paths with, to give everybody grace because you don't know what they're dealing with. I know people, I say people, myself included. Sometimes it's easy to jump to conclusions or assume the way that somebody's behaving. Just to give everybody grace, because you have no idea what they're dealing with in their personal life, and you could make a difference by being kind to them no matter what they're going through.

Brandy Johnston

Treasurer for Arkansas State University

Brandy Johnston was nominated by Meagan Wynn for P.R.O.P.S. Recognition. Wynn said, “Brandy has helped me so much starting at A-State. Brandy is an excellent role model and treats others with so much respect. She takes the time to explain things and how/why we do them this way, but is always open to opinions.”

P.R.O.P.S. subcommittee members Catherine Beaver, Elizabeth Duryea, and Cathy Naylor spoke with Brandy to learn more about her and her experience at A-State. Brandy serves as the Treasurer for Arkansas State University.



Brandy Johnston

What do you like most about A-State?

One thing I really like is that we all have the opportunity to watch people's lives change. We get to see our students go through that whole progression of coming in - some of them really unsure, or some of them very sure of themselves. We get to see them kind of go through those growing up phases and change their lives and I think it's really neat to be able to have a seat to watch that.

What do you wish everyone knew about your job on campus?

Probably that in the Treasurer's Office, we aren't the bad guys. We do have that reputation on campus of being the ones that are really hard-nosed and have really strict guidelines. And we do, but we want to help as many people as we can. I think that's one of the things that's hard about working in our office - people only see pieces of it and they don't see all the work behind the scenes and that we really do try to keep our students here and moving forward.

If you could travel anywhere, where would it be?

Anywhere with a beach, somewhere tropical. That's always my go-to because I love the sunshine and the warmth and the water.

What is your favorite hobby?

Usually reading, but I started playing tennis a few years ago, so that's kind of my second favorite. I'm clumsy, so it's not great. But primarily reading.

What is the best advice you've ever received?

I think one of the best pieces of advice I've ever received was that with your staff, you basically need to coach yourself out of a job. You should be elevating the people you work with in a way that they could take over for you and make yourself not needed. That's easier said than done.

Who is one of your biggest role models?

I would say my boss, Russ Hannah. I've worked in his area the entire time I've been here at ASU and he's just very patient and very level-headed. He doesn't get visibly wound up about anything, which is not something I can say for myself, but I would say he has been one of my biggest role models.

What accomplishments are you most proud of?

Part of me says my kids - I have two kids. One of them is an adult now and the other one is almost there. I also think staying here for as many years as I've been here is an accomplishment - I've

been here 23 years.

What is a dream or goal you're currently working towards?

I don't know if there's anything that I would consider a big goal I'm working on right now, other than constant improvement in the areas I work with. Trying to find better ways to do things and making things flow more smoothly for everyone. That's a never-ending goal.

Johnathan Reaves

Instructor of Creative Media Production

Johnathan Reaves was nominated by Taylor Shannon for P.R.O.P.S. Recognition. Shannon said, “I am enthusiastically nominating Johnathan Reaves for recognition. In his role as academic advisor, he consistently demonstrates a remarkable commitment to our students and our university. His contributions go far beyond the expectations of his position, and his dedication to fostering a supportive and engaging educational atmosphere makes him invaluable. Known for his lighthearted sense of humor and fun-loving personality, he makes students feel comfortable and valued.”

P.R.O.P.S. subcommittee members Catherine Beaver, Kelsey DeFord, and Madeline Ragland spoke with Johnathan to learn more about him and his experience at A-State. Reaves talks about his previous years as an academic advisor. He is currently transitioning to be a full-time instructor of Creative Media Production within the A-State’s Department of Media & Journalism.



Johnathan Reaves

What do you like most about A-State?

I love the community that we have here at Arkansas State. It is a very tight-knit community. It's a community that looks out for one another. I really like the Red Wolves mascot because there is that pack part of that. And when we had Dr. Damphousse, I really still believe in that Every Red Wolf Counts. Whether you are a student or a faculty or a staff member, we look out for one another.

We love each other, so that's what I really appreciate about the community. I'm a two-time alum of Arkansas State, working on a third degree right now. I couldn't think of a better place I'd want to be than be here at Arkansas State. It's just it's home. It is. It's home.

What do you wish everyone knew about your job on campus?

So the academic advising role, I would say that academic advising is crucial to the success of students, and that students should take advantage of the opportunity to get to know their academic advisor. There are studies that have shown that students are more likely to stay in school and go to graduation if they have that positive relationship with an academic advisor. One of the things that really broke my heart is when I would hear students come into my office and they said that previously they felt like they had to do everything themselves. They didn't know how to navigate through things. They had specific challenges that they didn't know that how to be able to go around and work through. And that's what academic advisors do.

Ideally, it should be much more than just creating course schedules and those things. It should really be a relationship between advisors and students to be able to ensure that students know that they have a place they can go to. Ideally, that academic advisor is going to be the one main constant person that is it that that student will deal with from the university. So get to know your academic advisors. They're good people. They want to help. And that's what I would say to every student. Get to know your academic advisors because they work hard to ensure that students are set up for success. So that's what I would say about academic advising. It is extremely important.

I will say this, I've seen many people in Catherine Beaver or Taylor Shannon's offices, right? And I mean, when they sit down, it's a safe space. That's what it's designed to be where you can come in, even if you're having a bad day. Tell me what you're experiencing. What challenges are you facing? That's a real benefit for the student to know they have an advocate in their corner.

If you could travel anywhere, where would it be?

Oh, that's a great question. I will tell you that on my bucket list is taking my wife Jennifer and going to Hawaii. When I get out of this doctoral program, one of the things I would love to do is to take her to Hawaii.

As a celebration, but I would also like to renew my wedding vows with her, and also take (daughter) Emily too. We'd love to be able to do that and just make it a full family thing.

I've never been to New York City. And I would love to be able to see New York City.

If you could describe yourself in one sentence...

I guess if I could describe myself, I would like to think of myself as being caring, outgoing. I just genuinely love people, and love the students that we have here at Arkansas State.

What is your most recent binge show?

So I will tell you that I'm a little odd, in that I have 30 years of broadcast, radio and that. So I'm more of an audio person than a video person. I would rather listen to audio podcasts than I would watch TV. That's just me personally, but one that I was listening to because we have Jaws with the 50th anniversary. There's a great audio podcast called Blockbuster, and it's not a new one. It's kind of an older one, but it tells the story in one season about how George Lucas and Steven Spielberg were kind of working on Jaws and Star Wars around that time. And really told the story about some of the challenges that they were having. George Lucas had all sorts of problems with Star Wars. Nothing was going right.

And he knew that he needed to have some sort of music, and he was thinking about having maybe an orchestra, but he wasn't really sure. And it was actually Steven Spielberg who recommended John Williams because he wrote the music for Jaws.

And it was in the music for Star Wars was the only thing that exceeded his expectations originally. George Lucas's. Of course, if you could imagine Star Wars without the music, I mean, it really helped set the tone. Another [podcast] I love is called 20,000 Hertz. It talks about how sounds are created and how sounds are made.

There is another podcast. Now the language is very salty on this. I'm just going to say it's extremely salty. But there is a true story podcast called American Hostage, and it's a really good story. And it tells about going back to old time radio journalism in the 1970s, and tells a true story about how a news director committed a cardinal sin of journalism. You never make yourself part of the story. And through series of episodes, he did, and it was really interesting to listen to. It has John Hamm from Top Gun in there. And so those are kind of the three that I have been recently bingeing.

Before retiring, what would you like to do?

So I am currently working on my doctorate in higher education. It's an education leadership through A-State Online. I'm now a full-time instructor in the School of Media and Journalism and Delta Digital News faculty advisor.

I'd like to continue teaching like on a professor level. Also, I would love to be able to maybe run an advising center at one point, kind of oversee an advising center, or maybe one day work up to be a department chair or maybe an associate Dean or something like that.

So I would love to be able to work in in that area. It would make me very sad if I was not able to continue having some sort of interaction with students. Because the students really are the heart

of the university.

I think as long as I could have some sort of continuing interaction to be able to help them. That would be that would make me very happy.

What music is playing in your car?

Once again, I'll go back and say I'm more of a podcast and audio book kind of thing. But if I'm listening to music, I have to say I love the 80s and early 90s. I am an 80s and early 90s kind of person.

I have to admit, there are some times when I want to start imitating Casey Kasem and the American Top 40, right? That's what I would like to do. I love the 80s and early 90s. I think that those a lot of those songs have stood the test of time and that's just my jam.

When I think of like '87-'89. I graduated from high school in 92, right? So that was kind of the music of my childhood. As I was going through junior high and high school. So that's what I'm listening to for sure.

In school, what were you most known for?

I was not like this when I was in school. When I was in high school, I was more shy. I was not as outgoing. I got into radio like right after high school.

And so that kind of brought all of this out. The one thing that I think what I was known for was I have bad knees that my dad gave me and I really wanted to play football, but I couldn't because of my knees.

So I was actually the equipment manager for high school. And I really enjoyed it because you learn the ethic of being a team. You learn that part of it, and you learn the work ethic and you learn all of that and you still have those team parts of that. So I wasn't on a "most likely to" list. A lot of what you see of me now came after school.

But I think that what high school years taught me was: I didn't have very many friends in high school, but the ones I did, we were loyal to one another in that. And so you learned about loyalty and being part of a team. You learned about not quitting. Once you make a commitment, you stick with it no matter what happens. And some of the things that I learned, my wife and I were able to teach Emily when she was on the soccer team or dance team. You may want to quit, but you have to stick it out through the end of the season.

And I have to remind myself as I'm going through this doctorate program, because it is exhausting. And sometimes you lose your motivation and it's like, OK, you've got to keep thinking about you're in this to win it, right? And so, how do you pick yourself back up when you want to just lay down and say I can't keep doing this.

And I hope that those lessons are things that we can also teach our students.

Now going back to school, I can kind of understand. I have a better understanding of when students come to me and say, "I just don't have the motivation. I just feel like I can't push through."

I can honestly tell them, "look, I'm right there with you." But we can do this together, you know? So those are some things I learned in high school, being on a team and all that.

Hopefully we can use to be able to help motivate our students to keep going. We've tried to teach our daughter to do that.

What is the best advice you ever received?

The best piece of advice I ever got was from a former faculty member and it's on my signature line. "Pay it forward." Because when I was working on my master's degree, she had helped me when I went through undergraduate school. She helped me through all that.

I said, "I cannot tell you how much you mean to me, so how can I ever pay you back for this?" And she said, without missing a beat, "Pay it forward to your students every single time. And as long as you do that, you're paying me back because you're paying it forward to someone else."

So that's what I live by as much as I can. We're paying it forward to be able to help somebody else. And as long as we can do that, we're making the world and A-State a better place.

Rhonda Curbo

Academic Advisor, University College

Rhonda Curbo was nominated by Lavonda Evans for P.R.O.P.S. Recognition. Lavonda said, “Rhonda is a god-send for admins; whether assisting in helping MA students prepare for thesis or working on FYE course to ensure their experience is a great one; she goes above and beyond to ensure things flow smoothly as possible. The A-State community is blessed to have Rhonda as a part of the team!”

P.R.O.P.S. subcommittee members Kelsey DeFord, Cathy Naylor, and Madeline Ragland spoke with Rhonda to learn more about her and her experience at A-State. Curbo is currently an Academic Advisor at University College. And has served A-State for 22 years.



Rhonda Curbo

What do you like most about A-State?

The family type environment; it seems to keep me here for many, many years.

What do you wish everyone knew about your job on campus?

Well, it's not my job in particular. I don't stand out. My whole office does the same thing. So it's not like I stand out above any of them. But, we probably do more than most people know. Well, for one thing, we do just about anything they come in and ask us to do. We help all first-year students, we help all students who are in academic distress, and we process the early alerts. So, we try to

actually be in touch with those students. And that's before they are ever on a suspension or probation list. So to me, that's the most important part to me is getting a hold of them, keeping them off of suspension.

But we do so much more than that. We register students. That's what I've been doing all day, just registering students. We work student orientation. And then when people call here, we often wind up taking care of something that's not even supposed to be done in this office. Because we can, we don't want to push them over. And all of the transfer students come through us too, as well as the exploratory students. So we really wind up doing just whatever we're asked to do. And we all pitch in and just get it done.

It is a lot of networking and connecting them with the right people. So a lot of the times, it might seem like we're passing them off, but we're passing them to people who are much more experienced in those areas than we. But, we don't just say here, let me transfer you. You know, we find the best solution for them.

What is your favorite hobby?

I like to read and I like to sew. It would be hard to pick between those two. But, I'm better at reading than I am sewing.

What is your favorite genre to read?

Right now, my very favorite is Appalachian. And magical realism, but that kind of changes over time. I just find the early life of the Appalachian Mountains, when they were settled, the things that they [settlers] brought here, their music, and things that they have in their culture. Everything is artistic to them, even their gardens. Quilts are art to them, and I just find it really fascinating. And then most of those stories have some kind of fairy or ghost or something going on that makes them a little bit more interesting.

If you could travel anywhere, where would it be?

Well, it wouldn't be out of the country like most people are gonna think. It would probably be the Rocky Mountains. My mom's buried there, and every summer was spent there from the time I can remember until my mom died, so it would probably be there.

If you could describe yourself in one sentence...

(laughs) I cannot do that. Maybe just say I'm fun-loving and like to help people. I like to keep people laughing.

Cathy: What I know about you is your reputation with Halloween costumes...

Well, the contests I get my students to be in. Now I just dress up to entertain people. And usually for about two weeks, I'm somebody different every day. And I'm all in it. I just do it for my kids so they can have some fun. We have a lot of fun so I'm not stressed out about my Halloween costumes.

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What is the best advice you've ever received?

I would say probably the absolute one that has stuck with me the longest... I got it from my grandmother when I was 16. She wrote it in a card and I still have it. She says. "Keep on smiling and spread your love around because that's what life is all about." And that's the one. It might not be the best I've got, but that's the one that has lived here in my heart for a long time now. It's not professional advice, but I think it works well in the profession.

If you could have a different job or career, what would it be and why?

Probably an actress. Halloween costumes, you know. That's probably what I would be.

Tara Thomason

Director of Alumni Engagement & Outreach

Tara Thomason was nominated by Aimee McDonald for P.R.O.P.S. Recognition. McDonald said “Tara is always a ray of sunshine and wealth of knowledge. Working in Alumni has allowed Tara to have different roles, but her latest role with Student Engagement is one that truly shows Tara's passion about helping students. She is genuinely excited to be able to speak to families about A-State. She is a recruiter, and although this is not truly part of her job description, A-State is lucky to have her! She offers ideas and suggestions on how to make our processes, not just in the Alumni Association, but also in every aspect of the University she touches, better. She truly has a heartfelt WANT to HELP our students succeed.”

P.R.O.P.S. subcommittee members Catherine Beaver, Andrew Nolley, and Madeline Ragland spoke with Tara to learn more about her and her experience at A-State.



Tara Thomason

What do you like most about A-State?

What I like most is being able to help students and the community. Seeing people come to us to pursue their education, gain that knowledge they need in that degree, then go off into the world to do big things. It's really rewarding for me to be able to have a very small part in working with students, whether that be through the Student Philanthropy Council or helping with any homecoming activities, just getting to have that interaction then see them go out into the world to do great things is really inspiring.

What do you wish everyone could know about your position?

The Alumni Engagement and Outreach position is a new role, and there are many people who come to me and ask questions about who to talk to. So, I wish people knew to utilize me more to be that connector with different departments on campus. I am an alum, as well as a former, current, and future parent of A-State students, so I really try my best to help. I don't ever have all the answers, but I love and feel passionate about connecting, whether that be a parent or student. I want people to know I am someone they can reach out to for help.

If you could travel anywhere, where would it be?

Honestly, I saw a movie years ago about Bora Bora, and I don't know that I'm ever going to get there, but it looks absolutely amazing. That's probably where I would choose to go.

The best advice I ever received was...

I've gotten lots of good advice! My grandmother taught me from an early age to never judge a man until you walked a mile in his shoes. I know that wasn't original to her, but that was important advice; I really do try to view a situation based on the other person's perspective. I think that is an important quality or skill to have is to be able to be empathetic for our fellow Red Wolves.

If you could describe yourself in one sentence...

I would consider myself to be friendly, caring, intentional, and sometimes goofy.

What is your most recent binge show?

The TV show "Younger." I have had several people say I reminded them of one of the characters, so that's what got me started watching it.

What music is playing in your car?

I'm old school and am still listening to the radio, so I'm an Air FM girl, 93.7. It's encouraging, inspiring, and helps me to stay grounded and focused on what's really important.

What event or experience led you to this career?

I have primarily worked in either healthcare or education, and when I learned about a position at my alma mater working with alumni, I was thrilled to jump at the chance. I was excited to come back to what I consider home. I was born in Jonesboro, my life started geographically close to the university, I have lots of family connected to A-State in small ways, but still felt a part of A-State. I feel fortunate and grateful to be a part of a team where we truly are family and care about each other. We work together to really try to do our best in providing engagement and activities for alumni.

What is your favorite vacation spot?

From the time I was a small child, I had family who had a place in Destin, FL, so that is my go-to beach. Any beach, honestly, but more importantly the gulf. It makes me feel so connected and grateful when I first step onto the sand and hear the waves. It just makes my soul feel connected and peaceful, and all your troubles have gone away. I'm grateful I've been able to raise my three children with that same experience.

Sharon McDaniel

Records Management Supervisor

Sharon McDaniel was nominated by Dr. Joanna Grymes for P.R.O.P.S. Recognition. Dr. Grymes said “I work with many students transferring in, or thinking about transferring to A-State. Sharon is consistently providing support, direction, answers, and correcting my goofs related to working with these students. I consider her both a friend and a colleague, I am consistently struck by her professional manner, quick responses, and depth of knowledge.”

P.R.O.P.S. subcommittee members Kelsey DeFord, Cathy Naylor, and Karen Nelson spoke with Sharon to learn more about her and her experience at A-State.



Sharon McDaniel

What do you most people not know about you?

That I was on the 1st ASU swim team.

I got my degree in '85 and immediately went to work for ASU. That was not my intent; I have an education degree, so I thought I work here a couple of years and teach. And one year turned into five years which turned into a marriage with a couple of children. The hours and some flexibility allowed me to be at my boys activities and that was very important to me. School teachers don't have flexibility and next thing I know I've been here 39 years. It's been a great job, I will say.

What is your favorite hobby?

Naturally swimming. I do try to swim a couple of days a week. I was very disappointed when the ASU pool shut down. I had been going there with a couple of people for many many years. Now I use the St. Bernards Wellness facility.

I'm a big outdoors person. I like adventures. I like to hike. I like to camp. I like to go to the lake, but I would guess most everything that I really enjoy revolves around water.

What is your most prized possession?

My children and a great relationship with my husband. My family.

What do you think makes a good university?

For little background here in my office and what I do daily. I see all kinds of transfer work from all types of institutions. For instance, today I saw a transcript. The student took 12 classes, and she was able to take all 12 of them in six days. That is the kind of thing that's very interesting. So what makes a good university to me is one that is based on ethics and good morals to produce good citizens not just the profit that is made.

What do you like most about A-State?

The students. I like guiding them, helping them towards their path of success, and guiding them on different levels. Whether it's sitting in my office, bumping into a student and a mom at Walmart or the gym. Being able to be supportive and to know that the information I'm giving them is the correct information.

I think connecting with the students is the best but my colleagues are great, and not just in my office, but across campus. But the students are what I enjoy and I think that's what's kept me here.

What is the best advice you've ever received?

Work hard while you're here to complete everything you can, so that when you're away from the office, you can relax and spend time with family.

What would you like to do before retiring?

I don't think I have a before. I believe in making the most of life and not waiting until retirement. I think at my age I see too many people that don't make it to retirement, and I believe in, doing what you can do, before retirement so that when you do make it to retirement, you can continue those adventures.

What do you wish that everybody at A-State knew about your position?

That our office follows the rules and regulations of the bulletin and the state and we have very little wiggle room to make adjustments.

Departments often don't understand that we don't have grey area, we are very black and white and follow the policies of the ASU/state has given us. I wish everybody understood that. Unfortunately, we don't give the answer that a lot of students/faculty want.

Natalie Eskew

Executive Director of University Housing

Natalie Eskew was nominated by a student for P.R.O.P.S. Recognition. “Natalie has helped many people, including me. Even with the food pantry, her and Dr. Martha Spack brought me a box of food literally to my dorm. They have many housing issues to assist with; it’s the least I can do to nominate Natalie.”

P.R.O.P.S. subcommittee members Kasidy Newbern, Cathy Naylor, and Madeline Ragland spoke with Natalie to learn more about her and her experience at A-State.



What do you like most about A-State?

That's hard to pick just one. But I think all encompassing would be just the people, both the students and faculty and staff. It really feels like home. I think it's just an atmosphere that if you're willing to take time to get to know the people on campus and just even start with simple, "Hey! Hi! How are you? Where do you work?" You never know how many small connections that can make 1.) make someone feel welcome, but then, 2.) that they can teach you things that you don't know or didn't know, that can make your job easier. But then, also our students, a lot of them starve for connection, even though they seek that a lot of times through social media platforms. They really do need that in a face-to-face interaction or a connection via email. And so, it just always feels like home.

What is one thing you wish you could teach everyone about your role on campus?

It's never dull! For me, I've learned things. I've worked with students for years, and I have that passion and love it; but in this role, I've had to work with trades in facilities that frankly, I never thought that I would even have to think about, such as what an air handler unit does, or why this construction was built this way, or why it wasn't. I try to be positive, it's not dull, and a lot of people think of roommate conflicts, but I try to think of the positive things--we really get to make this a home for students and staff/faculty, too, that live here on campus, even though we have fewer of those--and they want to make this their home a lot of times, but there are parts of it that I never thought I would have to consider.

If you could travel anywhere, it would be...

I think right now there's a lot of places, but Africa would be one. It's always been on my bucket list of places to travel! And not just for the safari aspect of it, but we do have students that are from Africa. I work with several South African students, and then I've had students from Zimbabwe and all other places. And so, even though we have lots of international students, Africa is just one that I wanted to do. And it's not just for the safari, but also the culture differences! And, you know, maybe who knows? Maybe I'll go back again after I've been once. But that would be one place.

What is your favorite hobby?

My favorite hobby is kind of two-fold, depending on the time of year. I love to read, it just gets work off my mind--frankly at night--which sounds really silly, now that I think about it. But I love to read! I have always been a big reader. I go through spurts, though, which ties into my second one. I do read a lot throughout the year, but I love to be outside, and so when it starts warming up some, I just either love to sit down on the porch, or by the pool, or wherever...it doesn't have to be Summer and warm, but just to be outside in the fresh air, and reading is kind of a two-for-one, but

then also just being outdoors to go for walks or hikes, is a big stress relief for me, too.

Before retiring, what would you like to do?

I still go back and forth with toying about getting my Doctorate's. I miss school, but also, I know it's about having the grit to do it. But I think about that probably more now than I have in a while, because I would be the 1st in my family to do that as well. And so that's something that I think about. That and seeing where my career path will take me.

The best advice you ever received was...

The best advice I've ever received is one that I still am learning but that it's okay to take time away. I was always taught to be a really hard worker, and to follow the example my parents set. They were at work a lot, and that wasn't a bad thing, but they just didn't take a lot of time away. And so that, coupled with when you're away, it's okay to disconnect as much as possible.

Who is your role model?

I have a couple of different role models. Of course, one would be our Vice Chancellor, Dr. Spack. We talk about her often with her and separately from her in our division. It's not uncommon for several of us to talk about not just how much she bounces, but Dr. Spack always just knows the right way to say things, and how to say it depending on who she's talking to. My other role model, aside from Dr. Spack, was Dr. Cooksey, and when I think about both of them, it's two different generation times, since Dr. Cooksey's not here. But they were strong women that sat on the table of predominantly male leadership. And Dr. Cooksey, I tell her every time I get to see her, "You know, you were really strong to do that, and to hold your own." I'm sure that there were times that maybe she questioned--and Dr. Spack too--if they were supposed to have the seat at the table, and they absolutely are, and I think that they both set very good examples.

Describe your biggest obstacle and how you mastered it.

Well, there was a time early on in my career, and then, as I started being a director that I sat at the table, and I was either the youngest one, or the only female, or I did not know the lingo that was being talked about, and I wasn't always confident in speaking up or asking questions. And so that was an obstacle for me at times, because I was also trying to instill in the newer employees, that they also had the importance of feeling like they belong. And how do you overcome that, and with our students, too? So, I just had to really work on being more confident and knowing that my voice mattered, or that if I had to ask a question, it's okay. It's sometimes something that I still have to remind myself, so I don't let it become an obstacle, because I think we're all in different positions sometimes where it's like, "Oh, this isn't my strength, and I don't want to do that."

Corey Readnour

Meats Laboratory Manager

P.R.O.P.S. subcommittee members Kelsey DeFord, Catherine Beaver, and Andrew Nolley spoke with Corey to learn more about their experience at A-State.



Corey Readnour

Corey, what is one thing that you wish that you could teach, or wish everyone knew, about your role on campus?

We actually have a full processing facility on campus and that we do on campus deliveries to university offices of our products. So yeah, a lot of people don't realize that we offer that service. You can order products on our marketplace website and then we get those orders made-up and deliver them around campus.

What is the best advice you have ever received?

"Leave things better than you found it."

If you could travel anywhere, where would it be?

One of my favorite places to travel is Puerto Rico, where my wife is from. We love the tropically weather, especially right now because it is so cold.

Before retiring, what would you like to do?

Well, that's a long way out but before retiring I would like to:

Continue to build our program up, by adding new additions such as our new high-speed snack stick line that will be operational very soon. We have partnered with Arkansas Hunters Feeding the Hungry to make snack sticks that go into the local school backpack program. We actually just received some grant funding that is helping us expand this line and provide students with more hands-on practical experience.

The last couple of years we have put a lot of things in motion to advance our program. My long-term goal is to get all these different parts of our disciplinary area up and fully operational, so that we can continue to benefit students for a very long time through hands-on learning.

I didn't know that was a program here, so you're educating me as well.

We have a class that we teach here called Meat Science and Processing through the Animal Science program. Then we also utilize student workers in our facility and student volunteers as well.

Can you describe yourself in one sentence?

I'm an outgoing person, I enjoy my family and friends, I enjoy my job. I'm a father and a husband, those are two important things in my life.

What is it that you like most about A-State?

The people I get to work with, it's more of a closer community than other career paths/institutions. I enjoy being able to work closely with my coworkers you know, because everyone's willing to jump in and lend a helping hand and help each other. Also, I enjoy seeing the students excel in our numerous hands on opportunities provided by the meat lab. That's a really rewarding experience.