



Eternal Impact

A Highlands College Magazine

2025

The Harvest is Plentiful

Chris Hodges and Mark Pettus Model Keeping
the Mission in the Middle of Transition

Chris Tomlin

Live at Highlands College

Strengthening the Local Church

Why Faith Family Church Partners
with Highlands College

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Chris Tomlin

Live at Highlands College

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Strengthening the Local Church

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THE HIGHLANDS COLLEGE VIRTUAL TOUR

Download in the App Store (iOS) or Google Play (Android).



ON THE COVER

Chancellor Chris Hodges with Highlands College students Lacey Wood, Cooper Lewis, Isaac Cox, Staci Smith, Connor Reeder, and Vanessa Rivas.

Institutional Model

HIGHLANDS COLLEGE is built on a distinctive Ministry Academy Model, a holistic framework designed to equip students with the spiritual depth, academic excellence, practical skills, and leadership experience needed to thrive in ministry. The Four Pillars form the foundation of a transformational education at Highlands College, ensuring that graduates emerge as biblically literate, theologically sound, practically skilled, and spiritually fortified leaders, ready to make a lasting impact for the Kingdom of God.

The Four Pillars—Academic Instruction, Ministry Training, Character Formation, and Spiritual Development—work to holistically shape well-rounded leaders of intellect, competence, and character to lead the local church and fulfill the Great Commission. Each pillar plays a vital role in preparing students to serve with wisdom, competence, and unwavering faith as they fulfill their God-given calling.



The Academic Instruction Pillar provides students with a deep, biblically grounded education that fosters critical thinking and intellectual curiosity. Through rigorous coursework in Foundational, Biblical, and Theological Studies, students gain the tools to articulate and apply their faith in diverse ministry contexts.

The Ministry Training Pillar bridges the gap between theory and practice, offering students immersive, hands-on opportunities to serve in real ministry settings. Under the guidance of experienced practitioners in their field, students engage in practical leadership experiences that equip them to navigate the complexities of modern church ministry with confidence and skill.

The Character Formation Pillar focuses on personal integrity, discipline, and leadership growth. Through intentional discipleship and structured mentorship, students cultivate Christlike character and develop the emotional intelligence necessary for leading others effectively. By fostering humility, resilience, and self-awareness, this Pillar ensures that graduates are capable leaders and compassionate shepherds.

The Spiritual Development Pillar immerses students in a faith-filled environment that encourages prayer, worship, and deep personal devotion. Through spiritual disciplines, corporate worship experiences, and personal discipleship, students develop a strong, unshakable relationship with God that remains the source of their calling and sustains them through their ministry journey. ■

“The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into His harvest field.”

LUKE 10:2



Letter from the Chancellor

DEAR HIGHLANDS COLLEGE COMMUNITY,

This year has certainly brought new growth throughout Highlands College. We celebrate our largest student body to date, our first-ever senior class, and more graduates placed in full-time ministry positions as the hands and feet of Jesus.

At Highlands College, our students receive hundreds of hours of hands-on training in their field, ensuring they graduate with knowledge and

practical experience that equips them for a lifetime of ministry. Our esteemed Academy Model and Four Pillars—Academic Instruction, Ministry Training, Character Formation, and Spiritual Development—provide a holistic approach unparalleled in biblical higher education. We believe in developing the whole student—spirit, soul, and body—so they can step into their calling fully prepared to be laborers of the Gospel in the harvest field.

As Chancellor, I am more passionate than ever about stewarding this generation into fulfilling the Great Commission. We are committed to raising leaders who are transformed from the inside out by the power of the Holy Spirit—leaders who will, in turn, transform the world.

A key part of our mission is ensuring education remains financially accessible and Kingdom-funded, removing barriers so graduates can step into ministry fully equipped to make an immediate impact. By refusing to accept a penny of government funding, we keep our values true to the core of God’s inerrant and infallible Word. We protect the integrity of our mission, ensuring that every student can step into ministry without financial burden and remain focused on their divine calling.

As you read this edition of the Highlands College Magazine, I hope you see how God is undeniably at work transforming families, communities, and students’ lives through America’s Ministry Leadership University.

I pray that through these stories, the God of hope fills you with all joy and peace as you believe so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit (Romans 15:13).

Sincerely,

Chris Hodges
Chancellor

the harvest is plentiful

KEEPING THE MISSION IN THE MIDDLE OF TRANSITION

CHANCELLOR FEATURE

In February 2001, with a bold vision to reach the people of Birmingham, Alabama, Pastor Chris Hodges planted one of the most influential churches in America—Church of the Highlands. With just 34 people on the original launch team and the first service held in a local high school, what followed was miraculous.

Church of the Highlands quickly became known for its passionate worship, relevant teaching, and vibrant small groups. Its growth was rapid but intentional—each new campus launch and ministry initiative was rooted deeply in a desire to help people know God, find freedom, discover purpose, and make a difference.

Chancellor Hodges spends intentional time with a group of students in his office.

FROM THE BEGINNING, Pastor Chris Hodges, Chancellor of Highlands College, has been committed to raising the next generation of leaders. “My life has been about giving ministry away,” he shared, “Whether through the Dream Team at Church of the Highlands, small group leaders, church planters, or sending practically-trained students into the harvest field, I’ve always believed in multiplying leaders to address the leadership deficit in the world.”

That heart for leadership development gave birth to Highlands College in 2011. Originally a ministry training program held at Church of the Highlands’ Greystone campus, Highlands College equipped young leaders through hands-on training and deep spiritual formation. Highlands College has since evolved into a fully accredited four-year institution with state-of-the-art facilities, on-campus housing, and a bold vision to develop ministry leaders of character and competence who serve the local church.

Pastor Chris has often emphasized that the greatest crisis in the global church is not a lack of opportunity but a lack of leadership. “Everything rises and falls on leadership—including the church—and I believe with all

my heart that Highlands College is strategically positioned to reverse this reality,” he shared.

During the recent celebration of Church of the Highlands’ 24th anniversary, Pastor Chris announced a historic leadership transition: He stepped into the role of Founding Pastor of the Church, and Pastor Mark Pettus, then serving as the College’s President, became the new Lead Pastor of Church of the Highlands.

“I realized I was spending 80% of my time on the church, but I was waking up every day thinking about Highlands College,” Pastor Chris said. “My passion and vision were increasingly centered on raising the next generation of church leaders.”

In reflection, Pastor Mark shared the same realization, “I’ve always loved Highlands College—it’s where my heart for ministry was truly formed, and I will always champion its mission. But I was waking up every day with ideas for the Church.” Mark’s words were both vulnerable and visionary—confirming a calling Pastor Chris immediately recognized. —*continued*

Chancellor Chris Hodges and Church of the Highlands Lead Pastor Mark Pettus announce the Billy Hornsby Memorial Scholarship recipient at the 2024 GrowLeader Conference.



Pastor Chris explains, “When Mark began preaching more often, more people were getting saved. I saw the grace of God resting on him. It was a sign for me to support the vision from a different seat.”

The transition of roles was stewarded over two years with intentionality, prayer, and wise counsel. External advisors walked both leaders through a succession process that Pastor Mark lightheartedly compared to “premarital counseling.” With Church of the Highlands being a critical partner for Highlands College students to receive instruction from real-life practitioners and experience hands-on ministry training, what’s most moving about this transition is how it has unified the relationship between a local, life-giving church and Highlands College. The values and DNA of honor, organizational stability, and spiritual family have left a remarkable legacy.

“Healthy transition is rare,” Pastor Chris said. “But it should be the norm in the Body of Christ. Leaders must get out of the way at the right time so the church can keep moving forward.”

Pastor Mark affirms that the Church and College will continue standing firm with the mission in the middle. “God was clear when He gave us the Great Commission—we’re called to raise workers and disciple them to be sent out into the harvest field to share the Good News of Jesus with a hurting world. Regardless of our earthly leadership roles, we will always answer to the mission of God.”

Rather than retirement, this transition was a step forward in the *re-firing* of God’s purposes. **“Now more than ever, the global church needs**

trained, Spirit-led leaders who will reach the lost and disciple the found,” Pastor Chris shared.

As Pastor Chris continues to pour into Highlands College, leaning into his Chancellor role with greater capacity, millions of dollars have been raised for Highlands College, with expansion plans and new academic pathways underway.

“The vision for Highlands College has never been clearer. We want to supply the capital ‘C’ Church with leaders of competence, character, and spiritual maturity to fulfill the Great Commission. Our mission matters because people matter—eternity matters. The harvest isn’t just plentiful—it’s urgent,” said Pastor Chris.

Highlands College’s partnership with Church of the Highlands is the primary distinctive that sets it apart from other biblical higher education institutions. Each student receives hands-on ministry training from experienced practitioners in their field of study. Positioned in a healthy and thriving local church—Church of the Highlands, the second largest church in America—Highlands College students actively gain and build upon the knowledge and practical skills they need to lead in real-world ministry settings—ultimately equipping them to tend to the harvest and fulfill the Great Commission.

As Highlands College and Church of the Highlands stand on the foundation of what has been, one thing is sure: God’s best is yet to come, and He’s at work in the next generation of ministry leaders. ■

“The vision for Highlands College has never been clearer. We want to supply the capital ‘C’ Church with leaders of competence, character, and spiritual maturity to fulfill the Great Commission. Our mission matters because people matter—eternity matters. The harvest isn’t just plentiful—it’s urgent.”

- CHRIS HODGES,
CHANCELLOR

A Holistic Approach to Academia

The Heart of Academic Instruction

By John Larson,
Vice President of Academic Instruction and Ministry Training

ACADEMIC INSTRUCTION at Highlands College is the bedrock of our students’ development. Our commitment is to cultivate well-educated and spiritually formed leaders who carry the message of Christ with clarity and conviction as they step confidently into their God-given calling. We don’t educate for academic achievement alone—we’re developing Spirit-empowered leaders ready to fulfill the Great Commission with wisdom, spiritual depth, and theological integrity.

Academic Instruction invites students into a transformative journey where intellect and the personal knowledge of God grow together, anchored in the truth of God’s Word. Through rigorous coursework, thoughtful discussion, and hands-on application, students gain a comprehensive education that enables them to lead with wisdom and serve with excellence. This journey is not merely academic but deeply personal, shaping the heart and mind for a lifetime of impactful leadership. This Pillar embodies Proverbs 1:5: “Let the wise listen and add to their learning,” and echoes the command in Mark 12:30: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.”

The academic framework at Highlands College builds upon three core areas: *Foundational Studies*, *Biblical Studies*, and *Theological Studies*. Each component is critical in developing knowledgeable and discerning leaders capable of applying biblical truths to real-world challenges.

Foundational Studies provides essential skills for life and ministry by teaching effective communication, critical thinking, problem-solving, leadership, pastoral care, and finances. These courses sharpen a student’s ability to articulate ideas clearly, persuasively, and proactively—whether from the pulpit, in counseling sessions, or through written content. In today’s ever-evolving cultural landscape, the ability to think critically, respond wisely, lead with vision and humility, and plan for longevity is essential for ministry leaders.

Biblical Studies immerse students in the richness of Scripture, exploring the historical, literary, and theological depth of God’s Word. This curriculum ensures that students develop a deep, well-rounded understanding of the Old and New Testaments, enabling them to interpret and apply biblical truths accurately and relevantly. A firm biblical foundation is indispensable for leading with integrity and guiding others in their faith. —continued

Professor Josiah Roop guides students through a class assignment.

(Right) Students take notes while a guest speaker teaches in Learning Studio 300, the largest learning studio at Highlands College.

Theological Studies challenge students to engage with the great doctrines of the Christian faith, grapple with complex moral and cultural issues, and develop a personal theology that informs their ministry and biblical worldview. These courses cultivate a deep understanding of God’s character, His redemptive work, and His call on our lives, equipping students to lead with theological clarity and spiritual maturity.

Specialized Impact

Highlands College offers specialized training through the Schools of Media, Ministry, and Worship, deepening students’ understanding of their specific ministry calling.

The School of Media equips students passionate about creative ministry and church production. With bachelor’s degrees in Technical Arts and Visual Arts, these programs equip students with the technical skills and artistic vision to craft compelling worship environments where people can encounter the presence of God and tell powerful stories through media. From mastering live production to developing compelling visual content, students in this school learn to leverage technology as a tool for ministry.

The School of Ministry prepares students for leadership in key pastoral roles, offering bachelor’s degrees in Family Ministry, Global Ministry, Pastoral Ministry, and Student Ministry. Each ministry track provides theological, pastoral, and leadership training, ensuring graduates are well-equipped to serve effectively in their chosen ministry field. Through mentorship and hands-on experience, students cultivate a heart for service and a deep understanding of their vocational calling.

The School of Worship offers a Bachelor of Arts in Worship Ministry for those called to lead others in worship musically or instrumentally. This program combines theological depth with musical excellence, training students in worship leadership, songwriting, and team development. With a strong emphasis on biblical worship principles and practical musical skills, students graduate prepared to lead worship with authenticity and spiritual authority.

The Mind of Christ

The Academic Instruction Pillar launches graduates into ministry with a mind renewed by truth anchored in God’s Word. When you meet a Highlands College graduate, you meet someone who has engaged deeply with Scripture, practiced leadership, and embraced the discipline of learning as worship. These students become catalysts for change by engaging in deep learning, refining their skills, and growing in spiritual maturity. They don’t just know the Word—they live, teach, and lead with it. Academic Instruction shapes leaders who will impact the Kingdom of God with clarity, wisdom, and unwavering commitment, preparing them to lead lives of lasting Kingdom impact. ■



(Above) John Larson, Vice President of Academic Instruction and Ministry Training, teaches students in Learning Studio 300.



Calvin Pringle, a junior, in his Business Administration class.

Business Administration Minor

Equipping Leaders for Ministry and the Marketplace

By Ben Johnson,
Practical Ministry Department Chair

THE HIGHLANDS COLLEGE Business Administration Minor equips students with foundational business knowledge and skills tailored for application in nonprofit settings. Anchored in a biblical worldview, this minor helps students better understand financial stewardship, organizational strategy, and ethical decision-making.

The Business Administration Minor integrates practical skills with faith-based leadership principles through a dynamic curriculum that includes: **Core Business Courses**—financial management, nonprofit leadership, and strategic planning for nonprofit service; **Hands-On Labs**—providing experiential learning opportunities, reinforcing key concepts, and enabling students to apply business concepts to nonprofit contexts; and **Leadership Development**—leading with

integrity and vision, fostering sustainable growth in nonprofit organizations.

Beyond technical knowledge, this minor focuses on soft skills essential for effective leadership—communication, problem-solving, and strategic thinking. Whether a student is called to full-time ministry or nonprofit management, these skills enhance their ability to navigate challenges and drive meaningful change. By combining business expertise with a heart for service, the Highlands College Business Administration Minor prepares students to make strategic decisions that amplify their impact in faith-based organizations and beyond by leading with wisdom, influencing with integrity, and eternally impacting communities by using business as a platform to serve others. ■



“The Business Administration Minor at HC has deepened my understanding of how business and ministry intersect, equipping me to lead with wisdom in a nation where business shapes culture. I’m prepared to add dynamic value in various settings where a well-rounded understanding of business will bring effective solutions to diverse organizations and my personal life.”

- MADISYN VIRDEN, JUNIOR,
PASTORAL MINISTRY MAJOR



“The financial accounting course in the Business Administration Minor has given me a clear understanding of managing an organization’s finances, from creating balance sheets and income statements to analyzing financial decisions. I plan to use these skills to better serve as a resource to the church, ensuring wise stewardship and effective financial planning to support the church’s mission.”

- LUKE CHRISTIAN, JUNIOR,
PASTORAL MINISTRY MAJOR

Professional Writing

A Foundational Study

PROFESSIONAL WRITING is essential to effective communication in ministry. Highlands College’s approach to writing reflects its core mission: students are holistically trained and equipped to share the Gospel clearly and persuasively across cultures and generations through written and oral communication.

“Writing is foundational. Without writing, we’re unable to communicate the ideas God is giving us with others and share the Gospel message around the world,” Marguerite Armistead, Director of the HC Writing Lab, explains. “God wrote the Bible for us—He’s a writer!”

At Highlands College, writing is a way to glorify Christ, and students are encouraged to embrace

professional writing in diverse ways to engage the intended audience while staying true to the mission of sharing the Gospel.

Under the Foundational Studies Department, an eight-week course introduces students to rhetorical appeals—appealing to their readers’ reasoning skills, hearts and passions, ethics, and ability to trust—which helps them develop critical thinking and analytical skills necessary for compelling writing. Students engage with the works of renowned Christian apologists, like C.S. Lewis and William Lane Craig, and contrasting viewpoints to sharpen their ability to construct and deconstruct arguments effectively.

Formal writing, from the Latin word “forma,” means to mold or shape, reinforcing the idea that students must structure their writing appropriately for their audience. “The common denominator in all forms of writing,” Armistead shares, “is that **we must decrease, and He must increase**. The Holy Spirit gives us His ideas, and we mold and shape them into the expected form.”

Whether crafting persuasive essays, research papers, academic arguments, resumes, thank-you notes, or social media content, students’ professional writings must be factual, ethical, intentional, and biblical. At Highlands College, students think critically about their work as they present biblical ideas clearly and credibly. Through prayer, students actively invite God into the process and ask Him to provide words that will be meaningful and uplifting to the reader.

“We pray, we think, and then we write down those thoughts,” Armistead explains. “It’s a beautiful process—we intentionally think about our thinking because the most important thing when we speak or write is that our faith shines through.”

As students learn how to bring light and truth to the world through sharing the Gospel in various written and spoken forms, Armistead’s prayer speaks directly to the heart of Highlands College: “God, let them be shining instruments in Your hand with the Gospel they carry as laborers to the harvest field.” ■



(Above) Marguerite Armistead, Director of the HC Writing Lab, guides freshman Joshua Shoemaker as he writes his class assignment.



Creative Writing Small Group

Students explore their creative voices and their calling to share the Gospel through story, poetry, and prose.

THE CREATIVE WRITING SMALL GROUP at Highlands College was born out of a deep conviction and remains a thriving community where students are encouraged to explore their writing voices in a faith-filled environment.

“In 2021, God put a nudge in my heart that He wants to speak through this next generation,” Armistead shared. This small group has since blossomed, growing from just four members to a dynamic gathering of 20 participants who meet weekly to develop their creative writing skills.

The sessions are structured yet inviting—students begin with prayer, followed by writing exercises and sharing their work in a supportive atmosphere. They have explored diverse literary forms, from haiku and sonnets to novellas and devotional writing.

Beyond honing technical skills, the Creative Writing Small Group provides a spiritual refuge where students can express themselves authentically. “We invite Jesus into the space and ask for His words,” Armistead explained. “It’s a fresh way to share the Gospel, reaching those who may never walk into a church but might pick up a story imbued with biblical truth.”

As the group continues to flourish, its impact extends beyond the Highlands College campus, reaffirming the power of words to inspire, heal, and bring others closer to Christ. ■

“It’s a fresh way to share the Gospel, reaching those who may never walk into a church but might pick up a story imbued with biblical truth.”

- MARGUERITE ARMISTEAD,
DIRECTOR OF THE HC WRITING LAB

The Experience of a Lifetime

Where faith, writing, and calling intersect—five Highlands College students reclaim culture for Christ through an exclusive workshop experience in Orlando, Florida.

THE ASSOCIATION FOR BIBLICAL HIGHER EDUCATION’S (ABHE) Reclaim Today Student Initiative is a prestigious program offered in partnership with Our Daily Bread Ministries, a U.S.-based devotional publisher, to give students an extraordinary opportunity to integrate their faith with their writing and design aspirations. Since 2023, Highlands College (HC) students have participated in the workshop, competing against peers from 160+ ABHE-affiliated institutions for 30 writing seats. This year, five remarkable students from Highlands College were selected to attend, reflecting the caliber of talent and dedication among the HC student body.

Over the years, this three-day workshop has offered students a platform to refine their skills, network with industry professionals, and potentially publish their work.






This achievement emphasizes the strength of the College’s writing foundations and the dedication of its students to integrating their faith with their craft to share the Gospel. Highlands College students use their creative gifts to bring glory to God and serve the Church.

“God can line up the passion that He’s put inside of you with the words that He’s given you, and that can be your calling and career,” said Marguerite Armistead, Director of the HC Writing Lab.

Beyond the immediate workshop experience, the partnership with Our Daily Bread Ministries connects students to editors and publishers. “They’re not just teaching students to be better writers,” Armistead emphasizes, “they’re creating pathways for these students to publish devotionals and faith-driven content, ensuring that their voices contribute to the broader mission of sharing the Gospel.”

Through mentorship, hands-on training, and faith-driven storytelling, the Reclaim Today Student Initiative empowers students to be influential voices and faith-driven communicators, reclaiming this generation for Christ.

As Highlands College continues to grow, opportunities like these solidify its reputation as a premier institution for excellence in Academic Instruction, Ministry Training, Character Formation, and Spiritual Development, fully encompassing faith-based writing and communication. —*continued*

				<p>←</p> <p>MYA RICHARDSON</p> <p>enjoys writing poems and stories with a unique and fresh turn of phrase. She is also a member of the Creative God, Creative Writing at HC small group.</p>		
	<p>←</p> <p>LILLIAN NEMETH</p> <p>has a passion for journalism and writes blogs about missionaries she interviews. She is also a part of the Creative God, Creative Writing at HC small group.</p>					
				<p>←</p> <p>MACY GUTIERREZ</p> <p>is an excellent writer who has shared her work at Open Mic Night at Highlands College. She also had the honor of reading her prayers during the final celebration dinner at the ABHE Conference.</p>		
						<p>←</p> <p>LYDIA HAMANN</p> <p>enjoys poetry, and her poems are deeply moving. She had the honor of reading her prayers during the final celebration dinner at the ABHE Conference.</p>

Hayley Valdois



As a Worship Ministry junior, I’ve been in Professor Marguerite Armistead’s Creative God, Creative Writing at HC small group since my first semester. She believed in my gift for writing and pushed me to apply—even after I was rejected last year. I took a leap and tried a new style, and this time, I was accepted.

The Conference in Orlando surprised me in the best ways. I connected with Christian students from North America and heard their hearts, struggles, and stories. We learned from Reclaim Today’s team, who encouraged us spiritually and creatively. By the end, I had written “A Prayer for Smelling the Roses,” inspired by Isaiah 40:8.

What I’ll remember most is the unhurried space to rest, hear from the Lord, and grow. I came home empowered and ready to keep stepping into the calling on my life. Thank you to every donor, professor, and mentor who believed in me—Highlands College wouldn’t be the same without you.

“God can line up
the passion that He’s put
inside of you with the words
that He’s given you, and
that can be your calling
and career.”

- MARGUERITE ARMISTEAD,
DIRECTOR OF THE HC WRITING LAB

Lydia Hamann



Some friends brought me to the HC Writing Center to proofread my submission, and I was selected to attend this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. Gathered with like-minded students from the U.S. and Canada, I was encouraged to know that the Lord is working everywhere and that Gen Z is ready for Jesus and eager to pursue lives of ministry.

Learning that writing is a spiritual gift and an act of worship took the pressure off being perfect and created space for me to truly rest in God. The assignments stretched my creativity and challenged me to sit still and wait for the Lord to inspire me through scripture. At the end of the trip, I was honored to share my prayer with the entire ABHE audience!

It gave me confidence to discover that my words bring glory to God and allow others to see Him. I am incredibly grateful that Highlands College allowed me to attend this initiative—I’m forever changed!

Lilly Nemeth



I’m a graduating sophomore in the Global major, and this was my first and only chance to attend the Reclaim Today workshop. When Professor Armistead reached out and encouraged me to apply, I said yes—because I try to say yes to anything that makes me better. I was excited but didn’t expect how deeply connected I’d feel to everyone there.

We worked on individual and group writing assignments, and I was given “A Prayer for Packing a Backpack.” It made me think creatively and spiritually—combining the practical with the personal. Reading it aloud to the group was a little nerve-wracking, but it turned out to be so much fun.

The highlight? Building authentic relationships—with my HC family and students from all over the world. Highlands College prepared me by helping me refine three writing samples for the application. I’m so grateful to the professors and leaders who made this unique, inspiring trip possible.

Macy Gutierrez



When I showed Dr. Kristen Lushington, the HC Writing Center Coordinator, an essay for class, I never expected it would lead to me being selected to attend this Conference. She encouraged me to apply to Reclaim Today, even though I’d just started writing poetry and wasn’t sure I was “good enough.” Submitting felt scary—but peaceful. Being chosen felt surreal.

As a Family Ministry major, I found the whole experience life-giving. Brenna and Kat, who led the sessions, were so intentional and encouraging. I’ll never forget the honest conversations with students like me—writers, dreamers, believers. I left feeling full—creatively and spiritually.

I even shared a deeply personal prayer I’d written. Before this, I’d only ever written prayers in my devotional time, not to read out loud. But this moment stretched me and affirmed me. I’m grateful to the Lord and Highlands College for helping me step into something new. This was a truly wonderful experience. ■



Students Hayley Valdois, Lydia Hamann, Mya Richardson, Lillian Nemeth, and Macy Gutierrez were selected by the Association for Biblical Higher Education to attend the Reclaim Today Student Initiative in Orlando, Florida.

Penning a God-Sized Story

A once-private passion for writing has become Mya’s powerful tool for connection, healing, and ministry.

STUDENT FEATURE

By Mya Richardson

WHEN I FIRST CAME TO Highlands College, sharing my writing felt almost impossible. I came from a boarding school that discouraged both Christianity and creativity. I had always loved writing—ever since I was 13 and heard a poem that moved me deeply—and it was something I kept close. Writing became worship and a way to God when I didn’t know how to speak my thoughts out loud. I never thought it would be something God could use—until Highlands College made me believe differently.

I first heard about the Creative God, Creative Writing small group at a kickoff event on campus at The Forum in my first week of school. Professor Armistead personally invited me, and though I was nervous, I decided to attend. We took time to write pieces of poetry and share what we came up with. I didn’t want to share what I was working on, but there was something safe about the space. Everyone there was dedicated to letting God speak through our creative writing and sharing it for God’s glory.

Now, we meet regularly, sometimes with guest speakers and self-published authors, and collaborate on projects like rewriting parables. Every session feels like a step closer to God. I’ve learned that writing isn’t just creative expression; it’s a way of worship.

Before Highlands College, I honestly thought I was done with writing. But God reminded me that He’s not finished with my gift—He’s still writing something in me. He is a creative God with no limits to how He moves in the Church.

This group has helped me grow—not just as a writer but as a person. I’ve had to trust the Holy Spirit to speak through my words, even when they’re personal or complex to share. I’ve started to see writing not just as something I do but as something God does *through* me. I’ve learned the importance of consistency and staying committed to a community long-term. Now, writing is part of my daily rhythm and how I talk to God.

I’m grateful to be part of this group and for the people in it. The Highlands College team has greatly encouraged me to step out, try new things, and trust my voice. They’ve reminded me that creativity is a tool for the Kingdom. That writing isn’t “just writing”—it’s a way to reflect heaven. This small group has opened dreams I never thought I could have.

I want to write music one day—something inspired by Chris Tomlin, whose songs have always encouraged me. I want to make movies that tell stories about God. I even dream of starting a global ministry with campuses worldwide, helping rebuild communities and sharing the love of Jesus through every aspect of life—including creativity.

My encouragement is to pursue God creatively—to see that spending time with Him doesn’t have to look just one way. Whether through writing, music, design, film, or something totally outside the box, God delights in our creativity. It doesn’t have to be perfect or polished. What matters is that it’s genuine. God isn’t looking for a certain “type” of creativity—He’s just looking for hearts willing to create with Him. My story is still being written—but this chapter began with a small group, a few faithful voices, and a gentle reminder from God that He will use my gifts. He’ll use yours, too. ■

“I want to write music one day—something inspired by Chris Tomlin, whose songs have always encouraged me. I want to make movies that tell stories about God. I even dream of starting a global ministry with campuses worldwide, helping rebuild communities and sharing the love of Jesus through every aspect of life—including creativity.”

Practically Equipping the Next Generation of Leaders

The Strategy for Ministry Training

By John Larson,
Vice President of Academic Instruction and Ministry Training

AT HIGHLANDS COLLEGE, ministry training is a calling students fulfill with humility and responsibility. The Ministry Training Pillar is the foundation for specialized training, making our students theologically sound and skilled leaders who serve confidently in multiple roles within the local church. Our commitment is to cultivate leaders who are well-equipped for practical ministry work and can impact the world around them.

The Ministry Training Pillar ensures students navigate the complexities of modern ministry comprehensively. Students gain in-action training through intentional mentorship, immersive experiences, and real-world application, preparing them to lead with wisdom and serve with excellence. This journey is not merely educational but deeply personal, shaping the heart and mind for a lifetime of impactful leadership. This Pillar embodies 1 Timothy 4:7a-8: “Train yourself for godliness; while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.”

Highlands College’s Ministry Training framework builds upon three key components: *Practical Training*, *Service-Learning*, and *Leadership Formation*. Each element is critical in preparing competent and engaged leaders who apply their ministry experiences and biblical truth to real-world ministry contexts.

Practical Training prepares students for the day-to-day realities of ministry work. Through hands-on experience in church settings, classroom instruction taught by practitioners in the field, and mentorship from experienced leaders, students learn to develop and implement ministry strategies that foster growth and engagement within their congregations and communities. —*continued*

Reece Meyers, a sophomore, uses her audio-visual production skills to serve the church on a Sunday morning.

(Right) Church of the Highlands Creative Director of Video, Adam Edwards, provides hands-on training to Highlands College students like Jordan Martorell, a sophomore, as part of the Ministry Training Pillar.



Service-Learning develops well-rounded leaders with real-life experience through service opportunities in various communities. Through this experiential learning model, students develop the servant-hearted posture necessary to make a meaningful impact in the lives of others for the sake of the Gospel.

Leadership Formation equips students with character, wisdom, and practical leadership skills to shepherd others effectively.

Impactful Degrees

Highlands College offers specialized training through the Schools of Ministry, Worship, and Media, providing students with targeted education and hands-on application to refine their skills.

Bachelor of Science in Family Ministry equips students to minister effectively to children and families, integrating curriculum, classroom design, and pastoral practices to nurture a biblical worldview early on.

Bachelor of Science in Global Ministry trains students in evangelism, team building, and cross-cultural ministry to expand the reach of the Gospel locally and globally.

Bachelor of Science in Pastoral Ministry develops shepherding and discipleship skills to lead healthy, life-giving churches, equipping leaders to guide congregations through every stage of spiritual growth.

Bachelor of Science in Student Ministry prepares leaders to disciple and mentor the next generation through innovative ministry approaches tailored to youth and young adults.

Bachelor of Arts in Worship Ministry combines musical excellence with theological depth, training worship leaders to create Christ-centered environments that inspire genuine encounters with God.

Bachelor of Arts in Technical Arts provides live production, audio engineering, and worship technology expertise to support and enhance church services and events.

Bachelor of Arts in Visual Arts equips graphic design, motion design, and video production students to communicate the Gospel powerfully through creative storytelling and visual media.

Equipped for the Call

The world needs ministry leaders who are both spiritually grounded and practically equipped. Through the Ministry Training Pillar, we are developing a generation of graduates who are fully prepared to step into their calling, minister effectively, and bring the hope of Christ to communities around the world. This training immerses students in hands-on ministry, mentorship, and real-world leadership opportunities to equip them to become influential, skilled, and prepared to advance the mission of the Church and make an eternal impact on every generation. ■



(Above) Junior Tait Johnson at Student-Led Chapel, where students plan and lead every detail of a service from start to finish.

In-Residence Day

Esteemed ministry leaders invest their lives at Highlands College to shape the next generation of ministry leaders.

By John Larson,
Vice President of Academic Instruction and Ministry Training



(Left) Vice President of Academic Instruction and Ministry Training and Highlands College Artist-in-Residence Chris Tomlin have a breakout session for In-Residence Day at Highlands College.

THE IN-RESIDENCE PROGRAM is a cornerstone of our commitment to holistic student development. This initiative brings esteemed practitioners—individuals who have not only theorized about leadership but have also demonstrated it in various fields—to invest directly in our students. These leaders, ranging from renowned pastors to influential authors and artists, share their wealth of experience, bridging the gap between academic concepts and real-world applications. Such interactions ensure that our students are educated, inspired, and equipped to make an eternal impact in their respective callings.

The vision behind the In-Residence Program is deeply rooted in the belief that exposure to diverse leadership approaches enriches the educational journey. Students gain insights into pioneering church leadership and community building by engaging with leaders like Chris Hodges, our Chancellor and Founding Pastor of Church of the Highlands. Similarly, interactions with global strategists such as Rob Hoskins, president of OneHope, provide a broader perspective on worldwide ministry and outreach. These engagements are not mere lectures; they are immersive experiences where students

can glean practical wisdom and develop a deeper understanding of their future roles in ministry.

This year’s In-Residence Day welcomed back, for the third time, award-winning artist and songwriter Chris Tomlin as the Artist-in-Residence. Known as TIME magazine’s “most often sung artist in the world,” Tomlin’s participation offers students a unique opportunity to learn about worship leadership from a global perspective. **We were honored that Chris Tomlin recorded his new album at Highlands College this spring.** With students as the live audience, they experienced first-hand the privilege of being led in fresh songs of worship before these songs were released worldwide.

In-Residence Days are interactive, allowing students to engage directly with these leaders, ask questions, and participate in discussions that challenge and expand their understanding. By integrating the expertise of these practitioners into our curriculum, students are practically equipped and poised as well-rounded leaders with exposure and knowledge outside of their fields. Through these personal, first-hand experiences, students become more aware, confident, and prepared for the ministry landscape ahead. ■

chris tomlin



LIVE AT HIGHLANDS COLLEGE

GUEST FEATURE



FOR THE THIRD TIME, Chris Tomlin returned to Highlands College as Artist-in-Residence. As a world-renowned artist and songwriter with a staggering 21 number-one singles and 12 million albums sold, Tomlin speaks of worship leading as a man compelled by a deeper mission—a desire to pass the baton, to pour into the next generation, and to remind them that worship isn't about performance, it's about presence.

This year, Chris Tomlin recorded his new album at Highlands College. With students as the live audience, they were the first in the world to hear and worship through this collection of songs. "I've never done anything like this," Tomlin shared. "But every time I come to play here at Highlands College, and I leave, I call my manager and my team and say, 'Someday I want to record whatever happens there because it's so special every time.' I tell everybody I can about this place because of how special it is with what God is doing with the next generation of leaders." —*continued*

With every visit, his connection to the students, the mission, and the culture of the College has only grown deeper. “Jesus broke all of our chains and came to free the captives—this is the message students have heard that they share with the world. It’s the best news ever told, and people long for it. People still need to know it. I’m so hopeful for the future of the church because of this College existing to share that news.”

Tomlin’s day with students included worship, storytelling, teaching, and honest encouragement from his decades of experience. “I’ve been looking for ways to impart and share my journey with the next wave of leaders,” he said. “God doesn’t bless us so we can hoard it—it’s about giving it away. Everyone needs someone to believe in them, and I want to help these students believe in what God’s placed in them.”

Two of the most powerful moments of Tomlin’s time were him leading the student body in communion and unveiling a transcendent new worship song inspired by an 1,800-year-old hymn found in Egypt—the oldest Christian hymn with musical notations ever discovered.

His posture of humility, reverence, and spiritual depth makes Tomlin’s presence at Highlands College deeply impactful. “God is looking for hearts available to Him—not the most talented person in the room, just the most surrendered.”

This focus on relationship, authenticity, and spiritual formation drew Tomlin to Highlands College before his time as an Artist-in-Residence. “Lauren, my wife, and I came to tour HC, and the facilities floored us—this place is first class. Everywhere you turn, you can see the mission—it’s written on the walls, it’s written everywhere. The mission is to preach the Gospel worldwide, and I believe this generation can do it. Seeing Highlands College raising leaders in real, practical training—all students working audio production, camera equipment, setting up the lyrics, the band—that is how you do it! Not many colleges are doing that.”

As Tomlin wrapped up his time at Highlands College, he left behind more than new songs and recorded worship moments. He left a legacy of worship that will echo through every graduate of Highlands College. “This is the charge,” he told them. “I want to take the Word and shine it all around. But first, help me to live it, Lord. And when I’m doing well, help me to never seek a crown—for my reward is giving glory to You.” ■

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“I’ve been looking for ways to impart and share my journey with the next wave of leaders. God doesn’t bless us so we can hoard it—it’s about giving it away.”

- CHRIS TOMLIN,
ARTIST-IN-RESIDENCE



Let There Be Light

In-Residence Day with
Reverend Samuel Rodriguez

GUEST FEATURE

AS CULTURAL STRATEGIST-IN-RESIDENCE at Highlands College, Reverend Samuel Rodriguez was on fire for the Gospel, challenging the leaders of this generation to stand firm in their faith as lights to the world. Advisor to multiple U.S. Presidents, Senior Pastor of a multi-campus church in California, author, and filmmaker, Rev. Samuel called students to rise above cultural complacency and embrace their kingdom identity.

“We are who we are in Christ,” he declared. “Our identity is not in trends, trauma, or titles. It’s in the finished work of Jesus.”

In Chapel, Rev. Samuel’s message *Let There Be Light* defined how faith-filled believers are to live. “We stand on the unshakable foundation of God’s Word. We stand on righteousness and justice, on truth and love. That is Christ’s light that shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it,” he said.

His message was clear: revival won’t come through passive faith that cowers to modern-day Goliaths—it will come through Spirit-empowered believers who rise in truth and refuse to hide the light of Jesus.

“Today’s giants are moral relativism, ecclesiastical lukewarmness, cultural decay, spiritual apathy, and other nonsense. We’re tolerating things we should be rebuking.”

Rev. Samuel’s teachings continued in intentional classroom sessions where he outlined a prophetic blueprint for leadership rooted in 1 Samuel 17:40. He urged students to lead with courage and conviction in every sphere of influence by embracing their identity, cultivating intimacy with the Lord, walking in integrity whole and holy, approaching spaces of influence as altars, innovating with creativity, and leading authentically—all while holding fast to compassion and the truth of the Gospel.

Reflecting on the day, Rev. Samuel shared, “**Highlands College is a true harbor of Christian leadership development. The atmosphere was electric with faith and purpose, and the humble, brilliant, and bold student body profoundly impacted me. The Kingdom is advancing for such a time as this.**”

Rev. Samuel’s boldness, prophetic voice, and relentless commitment to truth left an unforgettable mark on our students, reminding them to carry the light of Christ boldly into every corner of the world, unashamed of the Gospel, because it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes (Romans 1:16). ■



MATTHEW 5:14-16

“You are the light of the world. A city situated on a hill cannot be hidden. No one lights a lamp and puts it under a basket, but rather on a lampstand, and it gives light for all who are in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.”

The Grant Transforming Mission Trips



HIGHLANDS COLLEGE STUDENTS serve at least one Cross-Cultural Ministry Trip as part of their core requirements in the Four Pillar Model. Students and faculty members will embark on these mission trips in 10 locations this year. For many students, this will be their first encounter with the realities of global evangelism.

“Right now, 42% of the world is unreached. These communities will never meet a Christian, never see a Bible in their language, never step foot in a church,” said Jackie Pettus, Global Missions Coordinator. “This portion of the world is known as the 10/40 window, and our students are being strategically sent there as ministers of the Gospel.”

But for many students, these trips seemed impossible. With mission costs

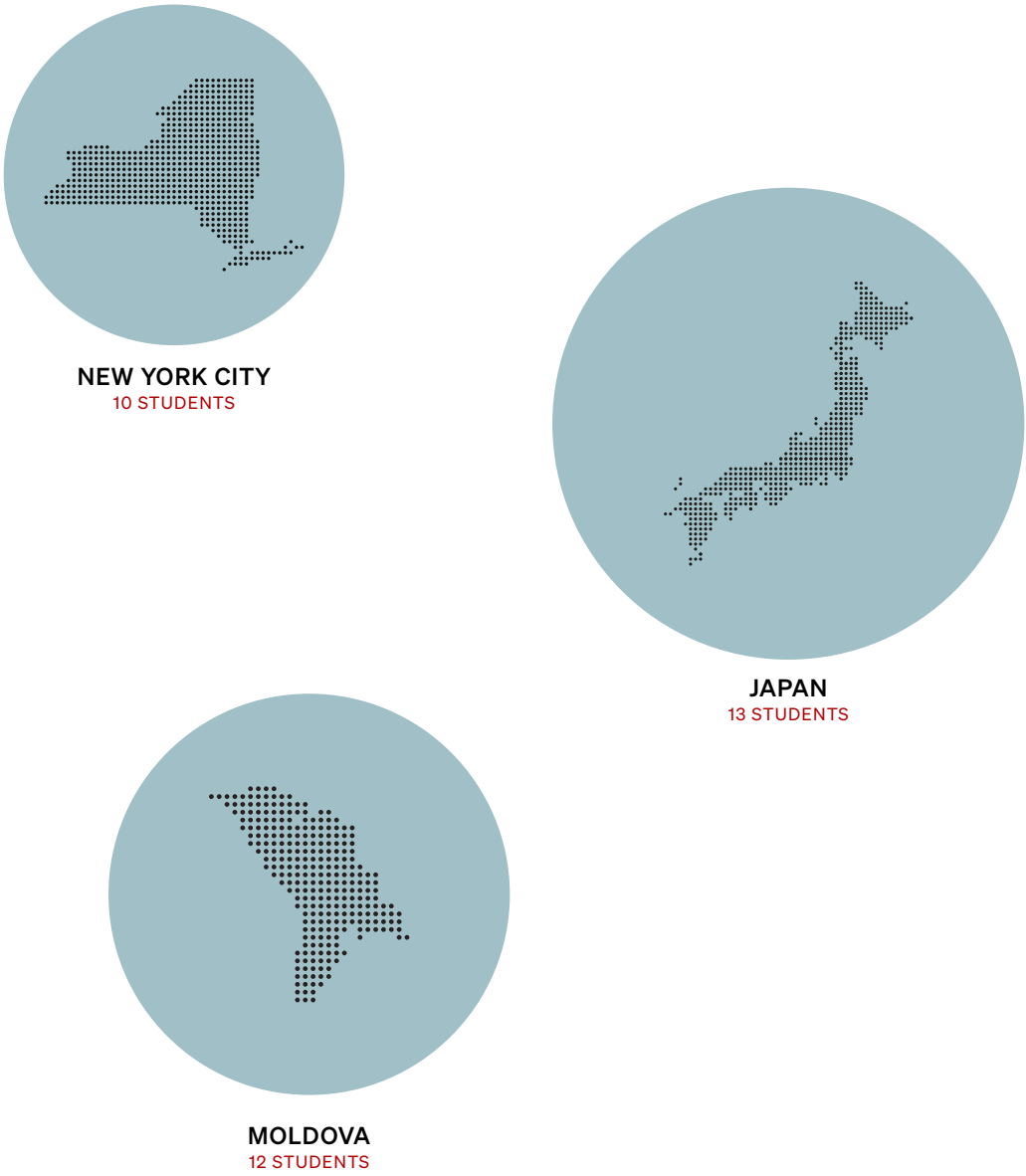
ranging from \$1,500 to \$4,000, financial barriers made participation difficult. “Knowing these trips are part of their core requirements, the students were praying for funding and provision from God where they didn’t see a way forward.”

Then, a miraculous answer to prayer arrived. In divine intervention, an anonymous gift was given to Highlands College. This generosity cut costs significantly and helped cover a portion of each student’s mission trip.

“I truly believe the Lord heard the cries of our students and put these mission trips on the hearts of the givers,” Pettus shared. “Now, our students will meet people who have never heard the name of Jesus, and they will witness miracles.”

This funding did more than lighten financial burdens—it made room for a more profound ministry impact. Thanks to this grant, more trip leaders will

Students also traveled to two restricted nations—6 students at each location—for missionary work.



be sent—a remarkable total of 94 students and 22 faculty. With more students laboring in the fields to reach the lost, eternal impact is multiplied. The opportunity to send our students is the groundwork for seeds to be planted and souls to be harvested for the Kingdom of God.

This grant also emphasizes deeper spiritual transformation by allowing students to expand their worldviews and become practically equipped in discipleship, church planting, and global ministry. “I hope students allow their mission to become more than their personal calling—to see the Missio Dei, the mission of God, at work in the world,” Pettus said. “It’s not just about ‘What do I feel like doing when I’m placed?’ but ‘What is God doing globally, and how can I be a part of it?’”

This grant is not guaranteed in the years to come, but this year, it has made an undeniable impact. These experiences shape future pastors, church planters, and missionaries—leaders who will carry the Gospel forward in ways we can’t yet imagine.

“To the ones responsible for this gift: thank you. Your generosity is not just funding a trip; it is changing lives, equipping leaders, and advancing the kingdom of God. We are profoundly grateful,” Pettus shares.

“This grant has removed barriers, allowing our students to step into God’s calling to reach every nation, tribe, and tongue with the Good News of the Gospel. We hope this is just the beginning of a greater movement—one where students go and steward the mission of God.” ■

“I had the opportunity to visit Moldova on a mission trip back in 2016, and I am excited to lead the upcoming trip back to Moldova with 12 HC students. My wife, Amy, and I have been leading a missions small group to prepare our students spiritually and build unity as a team. The pastor and church we are visiting have a strong desire to spread the Gospel in Eastern Europe. Our students will help lead that church’s children’s conference, outreach to the villages in the countryside, deliver essential goods where there is a lot of poverty, and share the Gospel. I am excited to share with the locals how Jesus has changed my life and how His power is available to everyone all over the world.”

- STEPHEN PIERCE,
DIRECTOR OF DINING AND RETAIL

“Cambodia is one of the only countries in the 10/40 Window where it’s legal to convert to Christianity. Our partner told us they’re seeing rapid salvations and church attendance growth. Over 65% of the population is under 30—the harvest is so ripe! We’ll be doing house visits, praying over families, helping with children’s ministry (our partner hosts over 700 kids every Sunday!), encouraging the team, and loving on people. I believe each student on this trip will return with a deeper love for Jesus and His bride, the Church. I believe students will experience a fresh fire and vision to live on mission for the Gospel that will mark and motivate them for the rest of their lives.”

- SYDNEY PARKER,
DIGITAL MARKETING SPECIALIST



Worship at Chapel, a twice-a-week gathering of students, faculty, and HC Team for worship, the reading of God's Word, a teaching, and prayer.

The Vessel That Carries the Culture

Understanding Character Formation

By Hamp Greene,
Vice President of Character Formation

AT HIGHLANDS COLLEGE, we believe that the strength of a leader is not defined by charisma, talent, or platform, but by character. In a world increasingly marked by a crisis of integrity, we resolve to be different. **Our mission is to develop leaders of godly character who persevere in both ministry and life.** This mission is why Character Formation is not a program at Highlands College—it is a foundational pillar of who we are.

While gifting may open doors, only character can keep a leader effective for the long haul. It is the unseen strength that carries a calling, sustains faithfulness, and reflects Christ when no one is watching. John Wooden once said, *“Reputation is what others think of you. Character is who you really are.”* We could not agree more.

The Character Formation Pillar equips students to live Christ-centered lives shaped by four essential values: integrity, discipline, service, and excellence. These values are not only taught—they are practiced and embodied through every aspect of the student experience. From weekly mentoring and coaching to student housing, from intramural sports to transformational challenges like Expedition and the Birmingham Marathon, students are intentionally formed to lead with wisdom, humility, and resilience.

Our approach to character is deeply theological and practical. As 1 Samuel 16:7 says, “...People judge by outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.” We are not after perfection—we are committed to formation. As Romans 5 reminds us, “suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope.” This is the refining process our students walk through: one thought, one choice, one habit at a time.

Leadership at Highlands College begins on the inside. Through intentional relationships, a spiritually rich community, and moments of real challenge, students are shaped into the kind of leaders the Church and the world desperately need—leaders who are grounded in Christ, anchored in truth, and prepared to persevere.

This development process is not to produce character for character’s sake; it’s to strengthen and shape the vessel that carries the calling. Internal transformation ensures our students start and finish strong. ■

Students overcoming an obstacle as part of Expedition, an outdoor endurance race that divides students into teams to compete in challenging conditions as part of the Highlands College Character Formation Pillar.

Month of Madness

A tradition of spirited competition to build leaders, shape character, and unite the HC family.

WHAT BEGAN IN 2020 as a spirited students-versus-staff basketball game has become one of Highlands College’s most cherished and unifying traditions: HC Madness. Initially just a one-night event, this recently rebranded competition has evolved into a multi-week, multi-sport experience now known as the Month of Madness. This tradition creates more opportunities for student participation, character-building, and long-lasting memories. It celebrates the bond of being part of the HC Family, having fun in competitive settings, and forming students into the leaders God has called them to be.

This year’s Madness included student-staff matchups in basketball, volleyball, pickleball, soccer, and softball—reflecting the diversity of student interests and the growth of student-led ideas.

Support for the Month of Madness has grown significantly among Highlands College Teammates. With students creating hype videos, enthusiastic participation from every corner of the HC Family fuels the school-wide tradition. “Even our Pastors play in the games,” said Justyn Benton, Director of Campus Life & Student Engagement. “Our Teammates have gotten behind this. We wanted to create experiences that unite every part of our HC Family.” One of the most memorable parts of the experience is seeing professors and campus leaders step out of the classroom and onto the field. “This is when students see their professors not just teaching in a classroom but competing,” Benton continued. These shared moments break down barriers and deepen the connection that sets Highlands College apart from other institutions.

HC Madness is more than just fun and games; it’s a living extension of Highlands College’s Character Formation Pillar. “Sports is a ministry,” said Men’s Minister Anthony McCall. “It’s where you learn who you are under pressure, how to lead, how to take correction, how to be part of a team. That’s why we do this.”

Tryouts alone aren’t the basis for Madness—the HC Team evaluates students’ behavior in the classroom, on the field, and in their daily lives. “It’s a privilege to be part of this,” Benton added. “It’s a reward for those already living out the values we teach daily.”

From a leadership standpoint, HC Madness is just as much about what happens off the scoreboard as it is on it. Moments of correction become teachable moments. Wins and losses become opportunities to grow in humility, integrity, and resilience. “We’re not training athletes here—we’re raising world-class leaders who will carry these lessons into ministry, families, and organizations for decades to come,” said McCall.

For many students, the experience becomes a core memory. “If we can create a moment so rich that a student can still remember the smell of the gym or who was standing next to them, then that’s a win,” said McCall. “These memories matter. In 10 years, that moment could remind them that they need to keep going.” ■



The Highlands College Birmingham Marathon

More Than a Race

ON SATURDAY, April 12, runners from every walk of life gathered for the first-ever Highlands College Birmingham Marathon. With over 1,000 runners, this event served as a space for fostering relationships outside of the walls of Highlands College while simultaneously training students in the Character Formation Pillar.

Through the event—from pre-race activities to the finish line celebration—the Highlands College Birmingham Marathon created meaningful opportunities to share the love of Jesus with families, local vendors, and people who may be encountering Highlands College for the first time.

“This race is about more than crossing a finish line—it’s an opportunity to practice discipline,” said Vice President of Character Formation Hamp Greene. “We want our students to plan, train, and follow through. That intentional preparation shapes the character they’ll carry into life and ministry.”

Whether running the 10K, half marathon, or 26.2 miles, students develop discipline, resilience, and a deep sense of accomplishment that fuels their future in ministry. With the race open to the public, Birmingham residents witnessed a mission-driven training ground for ministry leaders committed to building their character through perseverance—pressing on, one step at a time.

The Highlands College Birmingham Marathon is a powerful expression of internal character development and what’s possible when we persevere in Christ. “This experience transforms how students see themselves and how they depend on God,” said Greene. “Crossing that finish line leaves them with a deeper confidence—physically, mentally, and spiritually—because they’ve learned to rely on the Holy Spirit.”

As students abide in Christ, they discover strength beyond themselves, reminding them that with the Holy Spirit, they can do more than they could on their own. This internal transformation prepares them to lead themselves, others, and the local church well. It allows students to become high-capacity and trustworthy leaders committed to fulfilling the Great Commission even through trial. ■



Over 1,000 runners from the community joined the first Highlands College Birmingham Marathon in 2025.





(Above) Students Lexie Pegues and Anna Grace Sessions are overjoyed at the completion of their races.



(Above) Some of the medalists from the marathon before the start of the 26.2-mile race.

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Students like Alexa DeHaan, a freshman, had space to seek God during Saturate, a three-day fasting retreat.

Strength for the Journey Ahead

The Spiritual Development of a Student

By Michael Hodges,
Vice President of Spiritual Development

THE SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT PILLAR exists for students to cultivate a deep, resilient relationship with Jesus Christ that will anchor them for a lifetime of healthy, Spirit-empowered ministry. We do not simply teach students what to do in ministry; we shape who they become in Christ.

Throughout their time at Highlands College, students are intentionally trained to develop spiritual disciplines centered around prayer, worship, and the Word of God. Chapel services, small groups, Sunday experiences, and the annual Saturate prayer and fasting retreat provide consistent, formative environments where students encounter the presence of God, experience personal transformation, and build lasting spiritual dependency.

Chapel gatherings bring the entire college body together for worship, prayer, and teaching from some of the world’s most influential Christian leaders. These services create space for students to hear God’s voice, respond to His promptings, and obediently align their lives with His purposes and will. Small groups foster an authentic community where students are strengthened through accountability, encouragement, and relationships centered on Christ.

Sunday experiences provide a vital connection to the life of the local church. Students attend, serve, lead, and grow alongside seasoned ministry leaders, learning firsthand what it means to be rooted in community and faithful to God’s people. Through Saturate, our students disconnect from the noise of the world and reconnect deeply with the heart of God. These experiences are pivotal in helping students cultivate a lifestyle of intimacy with Jesus that will carry them far beyond their college years.

Every Highlands College student will graduate with more than a degree and ministry experience. Students are equipped with an unshakable identity in Christ, a deep love for His Church, and the spiritual maturity to lead with integrity through every season. The Spiritual Development Pillar is not merely an addition to their education but reflects the heart of who they are becoming.

The greatest gift our graduates give the world is not their talent or knowledge *but their relationship with Jesus*. When students are transformed internally, their leadership is enduring, their impact is eternal, and their lives point the world to the glory of God. This is the very purpose of the Spiritual Development Pillar—to raise leaders whose lives are deeply marked by the presence of God and whose ministry flows from an abiding relationship with Him. ■



Saturate

A Weekend of Spiritual Transformation

By Michael Hodges,
Vice President of Spiritual Development

ONE OF THE MOST significant differentiators of Highlands College is its enduring and symbiotic relationship with a thriving, life-giving church—Church of the Highlands. At the beginning of each year, all congregants are led in 21 Days of Prayer and Fasting, powerfully unifying the Church and College in prayer and dependency on God. Every morning at 6:00 a.m., you’ll find HC students fully participating, engaging in worship and prayer alongside their church family.

In addition to 21 Days of Prayer and Fasting, the student body embarks on a fasting retreat called *Saturate*. Over three days, every student participates in a water-only fast, disconnecting from the world and seeking God through prayer, worship, and His Word. We facilitate this disconnection by taking students off-campus, leading to transformative personal experiences with God. By helping our students draw closer to Jesus and become more like Him, Saturate fulfills Highlands College’s vision: to build spiritually mature leaders. As spiritual leaders and co-laborers with Christ, our graduates’ greatest value to the harvest field of ministry is their spiritual maturity and deep love for Jesus.



In these three short days, students learn to be still, wait for the Lord to speak, and listen to Him. With open and authentic conversations fostered through small groups, our team intentionally creates space for joy-filled, lighthearted moments, strengthening the bonds of our HC Family.

My favorite part of Saturate is witnessing the wholehearted involvement of our HC Team and Faculty, who are passionately committed to pouring their life into our incredible and called students. On the final night of the retreat, we teach about the Baptism of the Holy Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit. Teammates travel to the retreat center to pray over students one by one. Each year, hundreds of students receive prayer to experience the power of the Holy Spirit, confess sin, and experience healing. **The level of calling and care extended by every department makes Highlands College so distinct. We are all united in the same mission—to educate our students and lead them into a more vibrant relationship with Jesus.**

Saturate is a vital component of the curriculum in our Spiritual Development Pillar. It is a graduation requirement because we strongly believe in the life-changing potential this retreat has for each student. Each year, we look forward to students developing personal spiritual disciplines for life beyond Highlands College. I’m continually in awe of the deep and sacred connection shared between our Team and students as they all draw closer to God and powerfully experience the Holy Spirit—together—as an HC Family. ■



Student-Led Chapel

Practical, hands-on experience prepares students to steward ministry environments to come.

By Holly Savoie,
Chapel Experience Coordinator

AS PART OF THE SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT PILLAR, twice-a-week Chapel services equip the student body with time for worship, biblical instruction, and prayerful reflection. One of the areas in which our students experience the most hands-on ministry training at Highlands College is through Student-Led Chapel. Once per semester, students are given the opportunity to take the lead and execute the full Chapel experience from start to finish. This opportunity to curate an entire service gives students the experience of what they will one day be doing in churches and ministries around the world.

Student-Led Chapel isn't just an event; it's a training ground. Students shape every aspect of the Chapel experience by creating the theme, planning the worship set, organizing production elements, selecting student speakers, and choosing message topics. Students also coordinate an after-party for their peers, hosted at student housing, to build community beyond the service.

This semester, the students crafted a Chapel experience around the message series, "Cultivated in Character: From the Inside Out," inspired by the

theme verse, 1 Samuel 16:7: "But the Lord said to Samuel, 'Don't judge by his appearance or height, for I have rejected him. The Lord doesn't see things the way you see them. People judge by outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.'"

Through this hands-on training, students crafted an atmosphere for people to experience the presence of God. They created a God-honoring service by managing logistics and designing an environment that reflected intentionality and excellence.

Student-Led Chapel is designed to embody the HC distinctive of practical ministry. This isn't a mock assignment; it's a ministry moment led under the mentorship of seasoned leaders who coach and champion students as they grow.

At Highlands College, students don't just learn about ministry; they do ministry in an environment of high challenge and high support, where failure is never final, and growth is always the goal.

Whether a student takes the stage, runs a camera, leads a prayer, or shares a testimony, they are stepping into the fullness of their calling. ■

Clockwise from top left: (1) Student Reagan Dooley, sophomore, starts pre-service rally for Student-Led Chapel. (2) Every detail of Student-Led Chapel was planned and carried out by the Chapel Experience and Chapel Worship Teams, which are current students who have stepped into Student Leadership positions while pursuing the completion of their degrees. (3) Kolby Hughes, sophomore leading worship at Student-Led Chapel. (4) Worship was led by students for students—creating space for a distraction-free environment where peers could connect with the presence of God.



"Student-Led Chapel taught me to work with other personalities and skill sets within a ministry setting. My spiritual walk, character, and relationships with my peers grew. I saw God working through each student in unique ways through the gifts He has graciously given. I left impacted and inspired."

- ANGELA MALAGISI,
2025 GRADUATING CLASS,
WORSHIP MAJOR



"Student-Led Chapel was a shaping moment for me, giving me hands-on experience to prep for and deliver a message. I walked away from the Chapel with a deep excitement to continue being molded and developed into the leader God has called me to be. I'm grateful for a school that empowers students to lead not just in the future, but now!"

- WALKER THEUS,
SOPHOMORE, PASTORAL MAJOR

Students in the Grandview lobby before Chapel, twice-a-week services for students, faculty, and the HC Team.



“Highlands College has helped me grow closer to God, deepen friendships, and enjoy life in every season.”

Markwan Luttrell reads his Bible on the back patio of The Heights, the first residence hall on campus.

Finding Meaning in Unexpected Moments

STUDENT FEATURE

*By Markwan Luttrell,
Sophomore, Worship Major*

I’VE EXPERIENCED GOD PERSONALLY, grown spiritually, and built a community with true friends. Over the past two years, I found spaces on campus that have become sacred. Whether it’s the back patio of The Heights, a quiet pod on campus, or an empty classroom, each campus setting has created meaningful moments for me to meet God in deeply personal ways. Through student events and off-campus activities—like attending local sports games or Christian concerts—I’ve found my true friends and had the chance to connect with others and enjoy life. The environments Highlands College has prepared for students like me have given me room to breathe, reflect, listen, and learn as I mature in Christ. Highlands College hasn’t just built a “normal” campus for college students—they’ve cultivated an atmosphere where encountering the Lord and becoming more like Him feels natural and constant.

A campus location that holds a special place in my heart is The Heights’ back patio, where I lived freshman year and spent countless moments with the Lord in nature and His Word. Most mornings, when I had a break between classes, I sat there with my Bible in hand, threw my feet up, soaked in the view of the pine trees, listened to the birds, and felt the quiet peace settle in. It reminded me of Psalm 148—all creation praises God! This setting was a personal invitation from God to get outside in His creation, read His Word, and be aware of His presence. This space helped me see Him more clearly. Honestly, I don’t know where I’d be without those moments; it was where I grew with Him, not in a loud or showy way, but in the quiet, consistent way that transforms you over time.

This residence hall was the heartbeat of my community, too. The Heights is peaceful, just as it was vibrant. I’d always see someone I knew on the patio, playing games, watching football, or just hanging out. —*continued*



I made friends so easily by sitting down for five minutes to catch up, which would always lead to me staying for hours. Student Life Events with our entire dorm created core memories that were fun and simple yet meaningful. In those spontaneous, unscripted moments, **I felt like I belonged.**

Beyond the campus hangouts, Highlands College has gone above and beyond to make community available outside the classroom and the dorms. They bought us tickets to the local minor league baseball games and concerts for some popular Christian artists. I’ve connected with others and have enjoyed life in Birmingham by attending these events—I didn’t realize how much those opportunities would matter to me until I experienced them firsthand. It was in these moments that I began to build deeper, more genuine friendships. Moments like cheering in a stadium with my classmates or singing worship with thousands of other believers created a real bond with the people around me. Highlands College isn’t just investing in our education but also in our joy through life-giving relationships.

Another space of personal encouragement has been the gym—a total game-changer that has saved me time and money as a student! I love working out and accessing an on-campus gym between my classes, which allows me to steward my health as God commanded. Everyone there wants to see you grow,

and people will walk up, give advice, or hype you up mid-workout—not out of pride, but out of genuine support because they care. Seeing familiar faces working hard alongside me made the gym feel more like a brotherhood than a workout zone. It’s clean, well-equipped, constantly improving, and one of my most consistent blessings.

Then, every student knows the significant events on campus—HC Mayhem, the Student vs. Staff basketball game, Expedition, and the Highlands College Birmingham Marathon. These weren’t just fun games or events; they pulled leadership out of me. Through these activities, I’ve been marked in profound and remarkable ways, growing as a leader and a person. Whether I was helping lead a team, cheering on my friends, or stepping up in unexpected ways, I saw growth in myself. **I found confidence. I found joy. And I found people who encouraged me to become more of who I’m called to be.**

Reflecting on my time here, it’s not just the classes or dorms I’ll remember—it’s how Highlands College made me feel seen, known, and loved. I’ve grown closer to God, have deepened friendships, and enjoy life in every season because Highlands College has created an environment where students can thrive both on and off campus—I couldn’t be more grateful. ■

Torch Awards

Where Honor Meets Legacy

By Shannon Zeigler,
Executive Director of Character Formation

AT HIGHLANDS COLLEGE, we believe that honoring students is more than a kind gesture—it reflects the culture of honor and legacy we’re called to create. Born out of that belief, the Torch Awards is an evening set apart to celebrate our students’ journey, calling, and character.

The idea came from a simple place: a college memory that stuck with me. I remembered what it felt like to be seen, celebrated, and surrounded by community. So, in 2023, we launched our first-ever Torch Awards. The Holy Spirit breathed on the idea, resulting in a profoundly moving and joy-filled night where students laughed, cried, and felt honored for everything they had poured into the school year.



(Above) Students arrive at the venue for the 2nd annual Torch Awards in downtown Birmingham, AL.



(Above) Students were best dressed to celebrate this award-show-style event.



(Above) Kayla Hudson, December 2024 graduating class, received the Ministry Training Pillar Award for her exceptional displays of skill and leadership by taking ownership in her field of study (Global Ministry), applying her knowledge, and being an effective ministry leader in the local church.

The entire student body is invited. We roll out the red carpet, we dress up, and most importantly, our Highlands College Team—the same people who walk with students through classes, Chapel, and coaching—serve them. From picking up plates to delivering desserts, our teammates become waitstaff for the evening, not because it’s trendy, but because servanthood is our culture. Jesus washed feet—we’ll gladly carry a tray.

Some of the awards are peer-nominated superlatives, which bring fun and laughter. Others are Culture Awards, chosen by our staff to highlight the students who embody the values that define Highlands College as America’s Ministry Leadership University. Students don’t know they’re honored until their name is read, and they’re called to the stage. We share specific stories, moments, and even statistics to remind them how much they’ve grown and accomplished throughout the year.

The Torch Awards is our chance to tell the students: “You’ve made a difference. You’ve grown. You’ve served. And we see you.” ■

More Than a Visit

A powerful new tradition to connect families and celebrate the transformation of students.

By Jinda Clement,
Executive Director of Enrollment Services

THIS SPRING MARKED the launch of a new and meaningful tradition at Highlands College: our very first Family Weekend. Created as a special space for connection, inspiration, and celebration, we opened the doors of our campus—and our hearts—to the families who stand faithfully behind each student’s journey.

Throughout the weekend, families stepped into the rhythm of student life and witnessed transformation firsthand. From the growth in spiritual depth and academic excellence to the development of Christ-centered leadership, it was a front-row seat to all God is doing in and through our students.

A sense of joy and warmth permeated the weekend as vibrant gatherings gave way to heartfelt moments of reflection. Parents and loved ones spent meaningful time with faculty, worshiped alongside their students, and celebrated the growth unfolding in this season, including proudly cheering them on as they ran the 10K, half-marathon, and marathon races designed to challenge their endurance and shape their character. These intentional few days weren’t just a campus visit but sacred moments of alignment, connection, and shared vision.

At its core, Family Weekend is more than an event; it’s a reminder that no student walks this journey alone. Behind every milestone and moment is a network of encouragement, prayer, and unwavering belief. Our families are, and always will be, essential to the mission of Highlands College.

As this new tradition begins, we look forward with hope and expectation. God is using this community—students, staff, and families alike—to raise up the next generation of leaders who will change the world. And we believe wholeheartedly that the best is truly yet to come. ■



Clockwise from top: (1) The Alzime family drove ten hours from Florida to Alabama to join Samantha, a sophomore, for Highlands College’s inaugural Family Weekend. (2) Kara Grace Moore, a freshman, takes a selfie with her family at the Family Experience night on campus. (3) Freshman Cody “CJ” Schmitter was joined by his brother and father at Family Weekend.

“One of the reasons we wanted our daughter to come to Highlands College is their excellence and Kingdom mindset. The education system they have here, from the professors to the In-Residence Program, with people coming to speak who are top in their field, gives the students access right here in Birmingham, AL. We are blown away!”

- JOEY COOTS,
FATHER OF TRINITY COOTS (A FRESHMAN)

[CLICK HERE TO
SEE A RECAP
OF FAMILY
WEEKEND](#)



Accepted Students learn how to prepare for Highlands College from current students, faculty, and the HC Team.

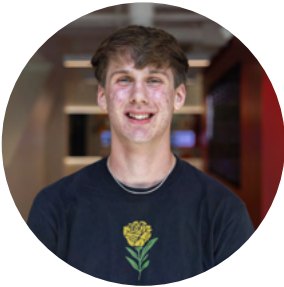
Celebrating the Future World Changers

By Jinda Clement,
Executive Director of Enrollment Services

AT ACCEPTED STUDENT DAY, Highlands College welcomed 110 students who are boldly stepping into the call of God on their lives. From the moment they arrived, these students encountered the presence of God and the heart of America’s Ministry Leadership University.

The leaders of the next generation understand that Highlands College is set apart in biblical higher education. Throughout the day, students were immersed in the rhythms of life at Highlands College, touring our state-of-the-art facilities, diving into the “why” behind our ministry-focused leadership training, and hearing directly from faculty and team who champion their God-given calling. Students and families experienced firsthand what it means to be part of a College that’s fully invested in their calling.

Highlands College equips future generations of leaders to confidently step into their calling and advance the Kingdom of God. As we welcomed these future world-changers to campus for our second Accepted Student Day, one truth was clear—their journey is only just beginning, and the impact they will make is eternal. ■



“Highlands College is unlike anywhere else—from the godly community to the training I’m going to get, I’ll be properly equipped to go where I’m called, straight into the ministry field as soon as I’m out of college.”

- LUKE MANIACI
(NEWNAN, GA)



“I committed to Highlands College because of the overwhelming peace I felt the second I stepped on campus. I knew it was the place for me, and as I’ve grown to learn more about the College, it’s further confirmed that feeling. I’m excited to start!”

- AVA “REECE” SIMS
(MADISON, MS)



Highlands College students welcome prospective students and their families to campus for Discovery Day—a full-day opportunity to experience life as a student at Highlands College.

Discover the More You Were Made For

Discovery Day at Highlands College

By Jinda Clement,
Executive Director of Enrollment Services

DISCOVERY DAY IMMERSES prospective students and their families in the culture and mission of Highlands College, America’s Ministry Leadership University. From dynamic chapel experiences to engaging tours of HC’s world-class campus, Discovery Day is an invitation to encounter a Christ-centered community dedicated to educating, equipping, and empowering students to lead lives of eternal impact.

Students experience a day filled with connection and intentionally crafted

moments to receive confirmation of their calling. By walking the same halls as current students, joining in interactive sessions with passionate faculty, and witnessing up close the hands-on training that sets Highlands College apart, prospective students don’t just walk the College—they step into its mission, becoming the next generation of leaders fulfilling the Great Commission.

For anyone ages 18–24 considering a bachelor’s degree in ministry and leadership, Discovery Day is the moment to see how Highlands College could be the launchpad for your purpose. ■



“Walking into Highlands College on Discovery Day, I was overwhelmed with a sense of love and peace that I knew could only come from the Presence of God. The genuine warmth and intentionality of every person confirmed that this was a place I was called to and a community that I wanted to be a part of.”

- LIAM DURMAN,
FRESHMAN, PASTORAL MAJOR



“Discovery Day at Highlands College was a powerful confirmation of my calling—the intentionality and encouragement of the students, the Spirit-filled atmosphere, and the exceptional hospitality all made it clear this is where I’m meant to be. Every session was thoughtfully designed to give a practical glimpse into the heart of the College, and I left with a deep sense of belonging.”

- ALIVIA LANGE,
SOPHOMORE, GLOBAL MAJOR

Visit Us

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Ministry Placement

Launching graduates into meaningful, full-time ministry through a global network of 15,000 churches and organizations.

*By Steven Pettus,
Executive Director of Ministry Placement*

HIGHLANDS COLLEGE EXISTS to equip Spirit-empowered leaders to fulfill the Great Commission and change the world. The success of this mission is measured by students stepping into their calling as ministry leaders when they graduate. The Ministry Placement Team at Highlands College deeply invests in students by preparing them for meaningful, sustainable vocational opportunities.

The Ministry Placement Pathway is a four-year journey that intentionally develops students into strong, well-rounded candidates for various ministry opportunities. The four courses within the Placement Pathway (Plan, Prepare, Practice, and Propel) are an intentional roadmap to ensure each student graduates prepared and confident for their next step. Through career connection events, church networking forums, résumé building, mock interviews, career coaching, internship guidance, job-search support, and ongoing mentorship, we’ve created an ecosystem where students don’t have to search for opportunities alone. They’re prayed for, coached, and guided every step of the way.

Our model is simple: plan with the end in mind. That requires strategic planning, hands-on experience, and deep reliance on receiving direction from the Holy Spirit. Further, because career transitions don’t stop at graduation, our Placement Office provides ongoing placement assistance for graduates throughout their ministry careers.

Thanks to our partnerships with ARC (Association of Related Churches) and GrowLeader, our students can access over 15,000 churches and ministries worldwide. These organizations support churches to plant, grow, and thrive—and our graduates are the next wave of leadership stepping in to serve. Because of these active relationships, ministry roles and hiring opportunities are constantly available to our graduates.

Over 1,300 graduates trained by Highlands College have already been launched into 370 churches and ministries across 36 states, the District of Columbia, 1 U.S. Territory, and 22 countries. They are pastors, worship leaders, kids’ directors, outreach leaders, communicators, and more—each called, each fully prepared. We’ve seen the fruit when graduates are placed in full-time ministry—churches are strengthened, lives are changed, and the Kingdom advances.

If you’re a church leader, we invite you to consider hiring a Highlands College graduate. You’ll find biblically grounded leaders, practically trained and ready to serve. By joining our relational network of Placement Partners, you can present your opportunities to upcoming graduates prepared to bring energy, excellence, and a servant’s heart to your team. ■



(Above) Graduates like Annah Stearns, class of 2024, are prayed over before they are sent to lead in the harvest field.



(Above) Logan Teague, class of 2023, is covered in prayer at his Placement Ceremony before he steps into his position as Worship Leader at The Bridge Church in Oskaloosa, Iowa.

[CLICK HERE TO LEARN MORE
ABOUT HIRING A GRAD](#)



Class of 2024 graduate Isaiah Carrera celebrates his placement as a Worship Assistant at Palm Valley Church in Mission, Texas.

strengthening



the local church

WHY FAITH FAMILY CHURCH
PARTNERS WITH HIGHLANDS COLLEGE

PARTNER FEATURE

PHOTOGRAPHY PROVIDED BY FAITH FAMILY CHURCH



(Left) Pastors Josh and Kara Joines with their sons, Caleb and Tyler.



(Right) Student Ministry Assistant Director Caleb Joines, class of 2024, offers an encouraging moment during Youth Nights.

WHEN PASTORS JOSH AND KARA JOINES returned to their hometown of Baytown, Texas, to plant Faith Family Church, they carried a simple dream: to create a life-giving church where people could encounter God, find family, and step into their calling. Ten years later, that dream grew into a flourishing church that has impacted thousands in their community.

With growth came a pressing need for ministry-minded leaders who could carry the DNA of a life-giving church and advance the mission with excellence. For Pastor Josh and his team, Highlands College quickly became the first and only choice to source these leaders.

“To be quite honest, finding candidates that understand what it means to be in a life-giving church and carry that culture—that’s not easily found anymore,” Pastor Josh shared. “The reputation of Highlands College made it a no-brainer for us to establish a partnership. Graduates come in with an excellent spirit. They’ve been taught well, know what serving in a life-giving church means, are teachable, honor leadership, and work hard because they understand the harvest is ready, and they’re ready to be a part of it.”

Highlands College graduates have brought a unique combination of character, competency, and culture that Faith Family Church deeply

values, which Pastor Josh describes as a foundation the church can build on immediately. “The graduates we’ve hired have strengthened our church’s ability to move the mission forward,” he shared.

“Highlands College graduates help us maximize momentum as we mobilize the local church. They bring the leadership our church needs to steward what God has given us—the people God’s called us to reach—and disciple them.”

Faith Family has hired seven Highlands College graduates, resulting in tangible wins for the church body. Every life touched through expanded youth ministries, new worship teams, and growing campuses is evidence of what happens when the local church invests in next-generation leaders.

“Having young leaders in the church makes us more effective in reaching the next generation,” Pastor Josh said. “To keep the church young, you need young people in ministry that you can empower, give a seat at the table, and welcome their ideas. These graduates are active disciples shaping the future of the Church.”

Faith Family’s partnership with Highlands College is rooted in more than filling roles—it’s also an intentional, Kingdom-focused investment in the future of the global Church. —continued

(Left) Small Groups Pastor Graham Betancourt, class of 2017, helps with baptisms at Faith Family Church’s central location in Baytown, TX.



(Above) Worship Leader Joshua Minor, class of 2023, leads worship at Youth Nights.

“*Highlands College graduates help us maximize momentum as we mobilize the local Church. They bring the leadership our church needs to steward what God has given us—the people God’s called us to reach—and disciple them.*”

- JOSH JOINES,
LEAD PASTOR OF FAITH FAMILY CHURCH

Pastor Josh deeply believes that giving to Highlands College is one of the best investments any church can make to secure the capital ‘C’ Church’s future.

“Partnering with Highlands College—even in a small way—is a big deal to us because of what that investment produces: *laborers raised to reach people, plant churches, and advance the Kingdom*,” he said. “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. If we reach the next generation, we need next-generation leaders. Highlands College is raising them, and we want to resource that.”

Pastor Josh describes this as a strategic investment that provides a greater return that speaks for itself. “Every time I visit Highlands College, I see the vision advancing through forward-thinking training, state-of-the-art facilities, and measurable impact produced in communities. God’s vision is in motion. Our church believes that because we pour into Highlands College, God also blesses the next generation within our house.”

Pastor Josh’s heart for ministry remains as clear today as when he first planted Faith Family Church. Highlands College has become a crucial partner in this local church’s calling.

“As long as heaven and hell are a reality, we must continue to reach people. God has asked us to help Him reach His lost kids—that’s the Great Commission, and that’s the purpose for which our church lives. But we need more laborers in the field. Highlands College is giving us graduates who can be placed on Day One. The mission is happening. The vision is happening. Every prayer, every dollar, every graduate—it’s making a real difference.”

Pastor Josh offers simple but powerful advice to those considering hiring young leaders from Highlands College: **“When you hire a Highlands College graduate, you’re hiring someone trained in a world-class ministry school. They’re competent, eager, and excited—and that breathes something fresh into your church that every pastor should want.”**

Through partnerships like these, Highlands College is directly resourcing the local Church, building the Kingdom of God, and ensuring that the Great Commission continues to advance—one leader, one church, and one life at a time. ■



(Above) Joshua Minor, class of 2023, leads worship at an Easter service in 2025.

PHOTOGRAPHY PROVIDED BY FAITH FAMILY CHURCH



Clockwise from top left: (1) Graduates celebrate earning their associate degrees at the 2025 Commencement Ceremony. (2) Dr. Nido Qubein, High Point University President, gives his first Highlands College commencement speech. (3) Presidential Award winner Parker Stanfill speaks on behalf of the class of 2025.



Our Vision: *To educate, equip, and empower leaders in a ministry academy model, applying leading-edge methods in world-class facilities where students launch into their calling to expand the Kingdom of God.*

The Journey is Just Beginning

2025 Commencement

THE HIGHLANDS COLLEGE FAMILY gathered to celebrate the sacred moment of Commencement—the commissioning of our graduates into their callings. These graduates have answered the call of God and are ready to lead lives of eternal impact, sent into the world to carry the mission of God forward.

We honor the Class of 2025—this milestone marks a powerful *beginning* to their ministry journeys. While many students of the same academic class are continuing their education through the College’s recently offered bachelor’s degrees—entering this fall as the first senior class at Highlands College—students

have completed their associate degrees and have decided to step boldly across the stage at graduation into their next assignment.

This year, the Highlands College undergraduates had a combined ceremony with certificate recipients from Highlands College Leadership Institute (HCLI)—*ministry leadership education in the form of night classes for working adults and seasoned leaders to expand their impact*. All 160 students were celebrated for their commitment and faithfulness in their respective paths. While the undergraduate students were honored for persevering through rigorous academic study, spiritual formation, and practical ministry training, HCLI graduates were recognized for their dedication to growing as ministry leaders while balancing the responsibilities of life and leadership.

Dr. Nido Qubein, High Point University President, was welcomed back to Highlands College, this time as the 2025 Commencement speaker. A respected leader and cherished friend of Chancellor Chris Hodges, Dr. Qubein brought a message of wisdom and inspiration that marked Commencement as a moment of clear vision and ignited purpose for graduates.

It’s an honor to cheer on the students who have been invested in and prayed over for the past two years. We know seeds have been planted, and God will be faithful to bear the fruit. Graduates, the best is yet to come! ■



Alumni from Texas and nearby states meet in Dallas, Texas, after ARC Conference.

Until the End

The Alumni Network

By Hamid Al-Dlaigan,
Alumni Director

EVERY HIGHLANDS COLLEGE GRADUATE remembers the joy built up from years of preparation for God’s calling on their life—the call they answered as they stepped into the harvest field upon commencement. That milestone was never meant to be the end but the beginning of their next chapter.

That’s why we created the Highlands College Alumni Network—our newest platform designed for life after graduation. Whether stepping into their first ministry role or navigating a new season as a seasoned alum, the

Alumni Network is built with every former student in mind.

Over a year in the making, this platform reflects our heart to see our Alumni stay connected, celebrated, collaborative, and cared for—from the first year after graduation until the end.

The Alumni Four C’s—Celebrate, Connect, Collaborate, and Care—serve as the foundational values for the Highlands College Alumni Department, guiding how we engage, support, and grow with our graduates long after their time on campus.

Celebrate

From first jobs and new marriages to growing families, moving, and continuing education—we celebrate our alums in every milestone. It’s an attribute that defines our culture. Joy and celebration don’t stop at graduation! Whether through confetti at a Placement Ceremony, a new position, or a post on our Prayer and Praise group, the Alumni Network allows our community to mark wins and rejoice in advancements together.

Connect

The strength of Highlands College is found in its relationships, and our Alumni Network is the first time HC graduates can stay genuinely connected to one another and the College. Alums have access to a searchable directory of every graduating class, online groups to localize connections in regional chapters, invitations to exclusive events at the HC campus, and save-the-dates for regional meetups.

Collaborate

Alumni can now collaborate across their churches, denominations, and positions, sharing sermons and ideas for life in ministry. We are better together! With a built-in business directory and access to the job board—currently hosting over 400 ministry positions—alumni can share their businesses, post job openings, or find their next assignment in the harvest field.

Beyond peer-to-peer engagement, we encourage alums to join Highlands College in pointing the next generation to Jesus through Discovery Days, Chapel visits, mentoring, and speaking engagements.

Care

Ministry can be as challenging as rewarding, and we know the road isn’t always smooth. That’s why Care is a Pillar of our Network. Whether through regional chapters to connect with Alumni in their local area, prayer groups to share prayer requests and praise reports, mentorship opportunities with peers, or resources for their time in ministry, the Alumni Network is a place to be known and supported. Here in the highs and the lows, HC is family for life!

Since 2019, a phrase has echoed across the halls of Highlands College: Until the End. It’s more than a chant—it’s a conviction. We want to see our alumni start strong and finish strong.

From personal meetups, connecting on the Network, hopping on a phone call, answering prayer requests, or guiding our alumni in job transitions, we aim to be where our alumni are—to equip, support, and walk with them every season.

As Alumni Director, I want to see our graduates in the field, thriving in their calling. The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Alumni are the workers—they are the sent ones. And no matter how far they go or how long it’s been since graduation, they are part of the HC Family. Until the end! ■



Click here to hear what the Alumni Network means to Kevin Eades, graduating class of 2014.

Pastoring the Most Unchurched County in America

Gabe & Breanna Rivera

ALUMNI FEATURE

HIGHLANDS COLLEGE BECAME the launching ground for Gabe and Breanna Rivera, equipping them to step confidently into their God-given purpose as pastors in one of America’s most spiritually underserved communities.

“Palm Beach County is the most unchurched county in America. We had no idea we were signing up for this kind of challenge—but that’s what I love about it. It’s a mission every single day,” Gabe shared.

“There are 50-year-old men in my Bible study who have never opened up a Bible—never owned one, never even stepped into a church,” Gabe shares. “The challenge is helping these men realize that while they may have everything financially, they still need Jesus spiritually. Once they understand that, they’ll realize that life with Jesus is better. There’s fulfillment, purpose, and transformation beyond what comfort or success can give. I do this because I want to see their eyes light up with the revelation that Jesus is worth more.”

Since starting their positions in the middle of COVID-19 in 2020, the Riveras reflect on how the rhythm and rigor of their education at Highlands College practically built their capacity and prepared them for longevity in ministry.

“I’ve seen God use my desire to give my all to ministry as a student to prepare me for what I’m doing now,” Breanna shared. “Highlands College was the best training ground because I

Faith Church is a multi-campus church founded in St. Louis by Pastors David and Nicole Crank and has grown to eight locations across three states.



(Above) Gabe Rivera (Class of 2019) is the Campus Pastor at Faith Church in West Palm Beach, Florida, and he oversees church assimilations, connections, students, and young adult ministry statewide. His wife, Breanna Rivera (Class of 2020), is the Outreach and Events Coordinator for all Florida campuses—including the third campus, which will launch later this year.

was surrounded by leaders, pastors, and support systems that tested my limits and stretched my capacity in a safe environment. Now, when a big week of events hits, I’m not thrown off—I’ve already lived it.”

Gabe adds, “The best thing we did to prepare for our current-day ministry was pushing ourselves hard as students at Highlands College. Leaders and faculty poured into us, teaching us what we could endure and how to endure it with excellence. Ministry can be tough, but our resilience can be built. When I face long or intense days now, I think back to the previous season and remember—if I could do it then, I can do it now.”

Now, four years into their full-time ministry roles, the Riveras celebrate the fruit they’ve seen as a result of their training, perseverance, and the movement of God.

Since its launch, Faith Church’s Florida campuses have seen more than double regular attendance, with over 800 people gathering for Easter weekend this year and more than 70 making decisions for Christ.

“One of the most powerful moments recently was seeing a single mom and her six children

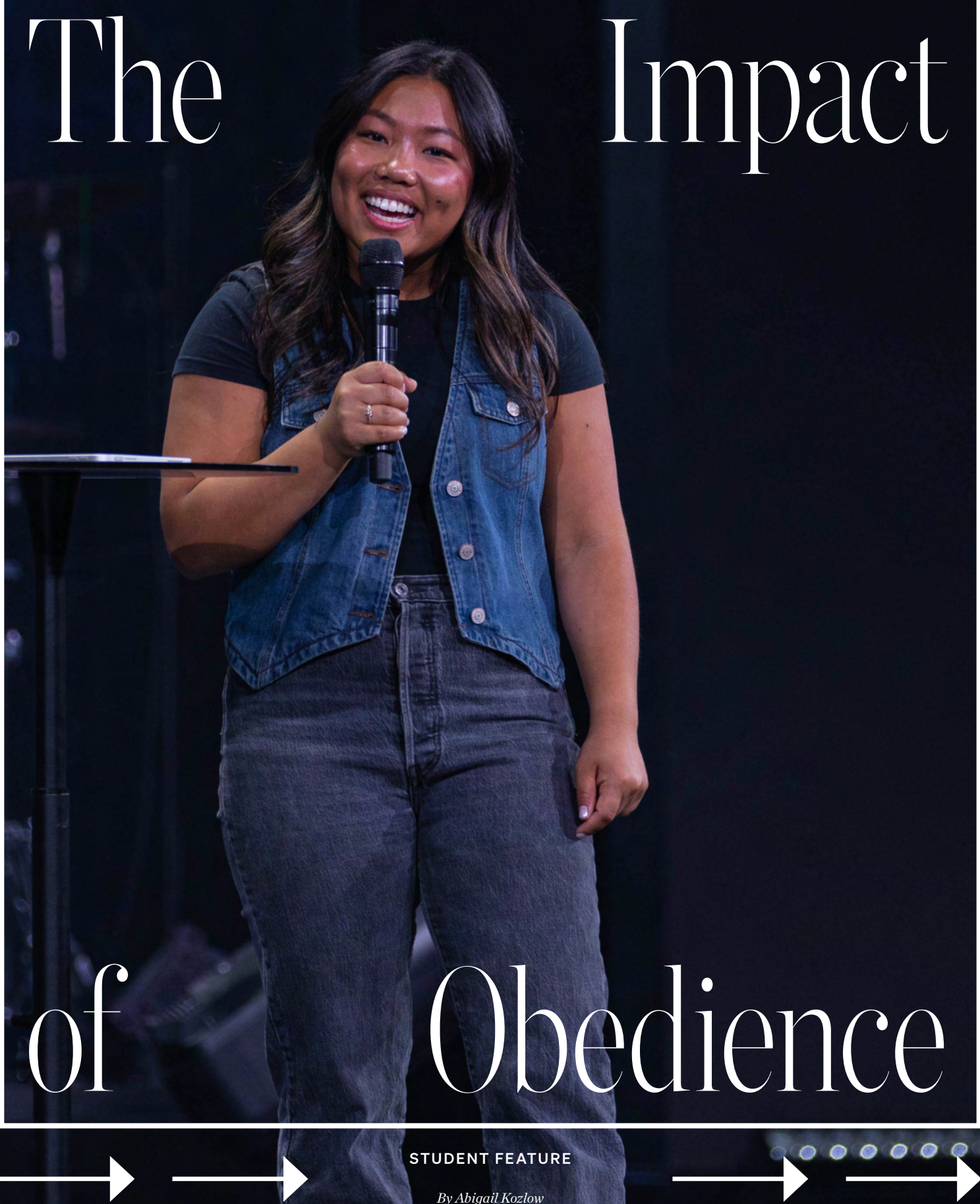
decide to get baptized together,” Breanna shared. “They found our campus just a few weeks ago after driving by and seeing our signs outside. What started as a casual curiosity turned into a life-changing encounter with Jesus—and now, they haven’t missed a weekend in almost two months.”

“We’ve seen marriages restored,” Gabe shared. “One couple went from years of spiritual separation to serving together faithfully, even with the husband receiving a church award for outstanding service.”

Watching God transform lives keeps Gabe and Breanna passionate about the mission. “Every new connection and life change reveals that the harvest is plentiful—and God is on the move. The call to ministry isn’t a job to us—it’s a response to the love we’ve encountered,” Gabe shares. “Seeing lives changed, marriages restored, people finding hope and freedom reminds us daily why we said ‘yes’ to this journey.”

Breanna adds, “Generosity is building the future of the Church. Each investment into Highlands College produces lasting fruit, and we are living proof.” ■

PHOTOGRAPHY PROVIDED BY FAITH CHURCH



STUDENT FEATURE

By Abigail Kozlow

THE DEFINITION OF “IMPACT”

is the force of impression of one thing on another, or a significant or major effect. The Impact Story I get to share results from someone else’s “yes”—the “yes” of my parents, my pastors, and the generosity of those who believed in me.

On February 14, 2004, my mother, who was unable to conceive biological children due to a rare medical condition, received a dream from the Lord that she would go to Nepal and adopt a little girl named Abigail. My mother is an artist, and during this season, she did faux finishing in houses. In the dream, God miraculously showed my mother what my face looked like and the mural she would paint in my childhood bedroom. That night, the verse in Jeremiah where God says, “I knew you before I formed you in your mother’s womb,” came alive to my mother.

The following day, my mom said “yes” to the faith journey ahead of her and began believing in my future arrival to sunny Naples, Florida. So many voices told her this wasn’t from God or that God meant something else, but she clung to Luke 1:45, which states, “Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill his promises to her!” Her journey was arduous, and she traveled to Nepal several times before being able to bring me home. However, she knew it wouldn’t be a God thing if it were easy, so it built her faith more. After a long two years and seven months of waiting and trusting, I was home.

On September 18, 2006, I went from nameless to Abigail—meaning “my Father’s joy.” Orphaned and without a birthday or birth certificate, I was now chosen, adopted, and celebrated. First Peter 1:18 became my life verse, which says, “For you know that God paid a ransom to save you from the

empty life you inherited from your ancestors. And it was not paid with mere gold or silver, which lose their value. It was the precious blood of Christ, the sinless, spotless Lamb of God.” Without the impact of my mother and father, I would not be here. Not just here telling you this story, but in this country, where I’m free to express my faith and beliefs without persecution and given the gift of knowledge and independence while surrounded by the most incredible friends and family I could ever imagine. All because of one person’s “yes.”

The miraculous thing about impact is that it goes from person to person. It is a small seed that’s sown patiently. And this seed took some time to grow in my own life. Though incredible parents raised me and I grew up in the church, I didn’t truly have a relationship with God until middle school. I struggled with identity issues, fear of abandonment, and fear of rejection, among other things. It wasn’t until the summer before 6th grade that I had a radical encounter with Jesus, leading me to begin my relationship with God. Like many of us, I went through seasons where my faith waned, especially in high school.

Then came 2020—the year that changed everything. Amidst the chaos of COVID-19, I joined a summer internship at my church and began volunteering every day. This internship changed my life as I was surrounded by peers who were also pursuing the Lord and His plan. I participated in the internship for the next three summers, fell in love with ministry, and caught God’s heart for His people. I served any chance I could, wherever I could. From wearing a princess costume for our church skit to making dance moves to kids’ worship songs, reading lines for our Sunday news, and pulling off our once-a-month student services—I loved being a part of something much bigger than myself.

At this point, I had still never considered ministry as a career. I planned to pursue a business degree and stay in Florida, but it was during my third year with the internship that the Lord convicted me: I was treating my role in ministry like a hobby, something I could do on the side rather than a God-given



(Above) Abigail Kozlow and friends at the 2025 Torch Awards, an off-campus event celebrating students’ achievements each academic year.

“I went from being nameless to Abigail—meaning ‘my Father’s joy.’ Orphaned and without a birthday or birth certificate, I was now chosen, adopted, and celebrated.”

passion. In that moment, I realized that if I didn’t say “yes” to the call of God on my life, people’s “yes” to eternity would be on the line.

So, despite my years of hard work, 5.3 GPA, 182 community service hours, and a full ride to business school, God was calling me to something different—He was calling me to Highlands College. In the summer of 2022, I decided to apply despite my family’s disapproval and financial constraints. I knew that getting to Highlands College would require supernatural provision from God. After a month of trusting, fervent prayers and fasting, God not only provided the vehicle I needed to get here but, in an unbelievable way, provided the full scholarship that would cover my entire education—funded by the extraordinary generosity of donors who believed in me.

The impact of my mom’s obedience, the faith of my pastors, and the influence of those who championed me has led me to where I am today—fully provided for and the first in my entire family to go to college. Not because of anything I’ve done but because of the profound effect of someone’s “yes.” While you may never see all the lives your “yes” and generosity are transforming, I am living proof of the countless Highlands College students whose futures are forever changed because of you. So, thank you. ■



(Above) Abigail Kozlow and Kristina McDonald are excited before Chapel.



Abigail’s Story from Motion 2025—Click to Watch.

A rendering of Residence Hall III next to the existing first residence hall, The Heights. Rendering provided by TURNERBATSON.



“The vision is bold, but the heart behind it is simple: we exist to supply the Church with leaders—leaders of character, competence, and spiritual maturity—who are fully prepared to fulfill the Great Commission.”

- KAY HARGRAVE,
CHIEF ADVANCEMENT OFFICER

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FOR THE
2025-2029
STRATEGIC
PLAN](#)

Building a Legacy of Eternal Impact

By Kay Hargrave,
Chief Advancement Officer

THERE ARE RARE MOMENTS in the life of an institution when the future feels close enough to touch—when vision collides with reality, and the trajectory of what *could be* begins to take the shape of what *will be*. At Highlands College, we are living in such a moment.

The vision is bold, but the heart behind it is simple: we exist to supply the Church with leaders—leaders of character, competence, and spiritual maturity—who are fully prepared to fulfill the Great Commission.

Our Path to 1,000 is one of our most significant spiritual initiatives. We aim to educate and equip 1,000 students annually, each of whom will be sent to churches and communities across the globe to lead lives of eternal impact. These aren't just students; they're world-changers in the making. **Each student represents a church launched, a generation disciplined, a family restored, and a community reached.**

As we prepare to welcome this growing student body, Highlands College is expanding across every dimension—constructing new world-class facilities, hiring more faculty, and enhancing our training environments. From state-of-the-art classrooms to expanded residential spaces, athletic facilities, and new discipleship courses—every brick and blueprint reflects our commitment to excellence and the students who will walk these halls.

Training 1,000 students annually is a holy responsibility we do not take lightly. With each step forward, we are stewarding the future of the Church. It's a privilege to train more leaders so that more may be sent into the harvest field.

This future of eternal impact doesn't unfold on vision alone—it requires faithful Kingdom investment by believers who understand that God's Kingdom expanding across the earth is often planted in the quiet faithfulness of generosity.

A Strategic Path Forward

Highlands College is answering the heart cry of Jesus in Luke 10:2: “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few.”

In response to this urgent need, we have written the vision and made it plain, following the instruction of God in Habakkuk 2. The Highlands College 2025-2029 Strategic Plan is a bold and prayerful roadmap for the next five years, representing our shared calling to raise leaders who will amplify and accelerate the Great Commission. While our plan lasts five years, we pray its impact will be eternal.

We invite you to read it, pray over it, and join us on this remarkable journey to build America's Ministry Leadership University that equips leaders to make disciples of all nations. ■



A rendering of The Rec, the soon-to-be renovated recreational and fitness facility for Highlands College students. Rendering provided by TURNERBATSON.

Campus Enhancements

Strategic expansion is meeting the growing needs of our future ministry leaders.

The Rec

One of the most anticipated renovations on campus is The Rec, a reimagined recreational and fitness facility designed to support students in athletics, wellness, and intramurals as part of the Character Formation Pillar. Opening in the summer of 2026 next to The Heights and the main campus, The Rec will include state-of-the-art equipment, an open gym, basketball and outdoor courts, spin, conditioning, recovery spaces, and expanded locker rooms. A partnership with Tinsley Performance—trainers of collegiate and professional athletes—will provide biblically-grounded expertise through weekly classes. With expanded space and programming, The Rec will equip students to steward their bodies and embrace Christ-centered discipline for a lifetime of healthy ministry leadership.

Residence Hall III

With enrollment nearing 1,000 students, our current housing options are nearing full capacity, making the expansion of on-campus living mission-critical. A third residence hall is essential to ensure we never have to turn away a student called to ministry simply because we lack the space to house them. On the contrary, additional living spaces will allow Highlands College to welcome, train, and send more ministry leaders to the harvest field.

This new residence hall will be built next to The Heights, the first residence hall on campus. Rising two stories higher and adding much-needed capacity to our campus community, the third residence hall will be more than just a place to sleep. Every square foot of this expansion is designed to help students engage wholeheartedly in developing their character, building life-giving friendships, and engaging deeply with campus life.

Hobby Lobby Founder and CEO David Green and his family's transformational generosity made student housing possible at Highlands College. The \$20 million gift from the Green Family allowed the College to become a residential campus.

“Our family sees this gift as an investment paying dividends as each graduate fulfills their calling. Highlands College is like no other. It is a community of believers, leaders, and learners who develop the whole person in spirit, mind, and body.”

- DAVID GREEN,
HOBBY LOBBY FOUNDER AND CEO

“Thanks to the opening of our new common space here at The Village, students like me can now make new friends. I have had multiple opportunities to watch movies and play games with people I would not normally hang out with because we have a shared space to enjoy.”

- JOSH STULL,
JUNIOR, RESIDENT ASSISTANT

The Village Commons

Located inside The Village, the second residence hall on campus, The Village Commons offers an inviting, purpose-built environment for students to foster genuine connections through collaborative cooking and dining areas, communal study spaces, and a fitness center for residents. “The Commons” opened in the Spring of 2025.

With thoughtful design and a vision for relational discipleship, The Commons is more than a lounge or lobby—it’s where life-on-life formation happens over shared meals and future leaders become family. The Village Commons has already begun shaping student lives in meaningful ways.

The Village, which opened in August 2024, stands as a powerful testament to the transformative generosity of the Green Family, whose \$17.5 million challenge gift in November 2023 helped make this second residence hall possible in under nine months. Because this family believes in the mission of Highlands College, students now have two beautiful, intentional places to call home.

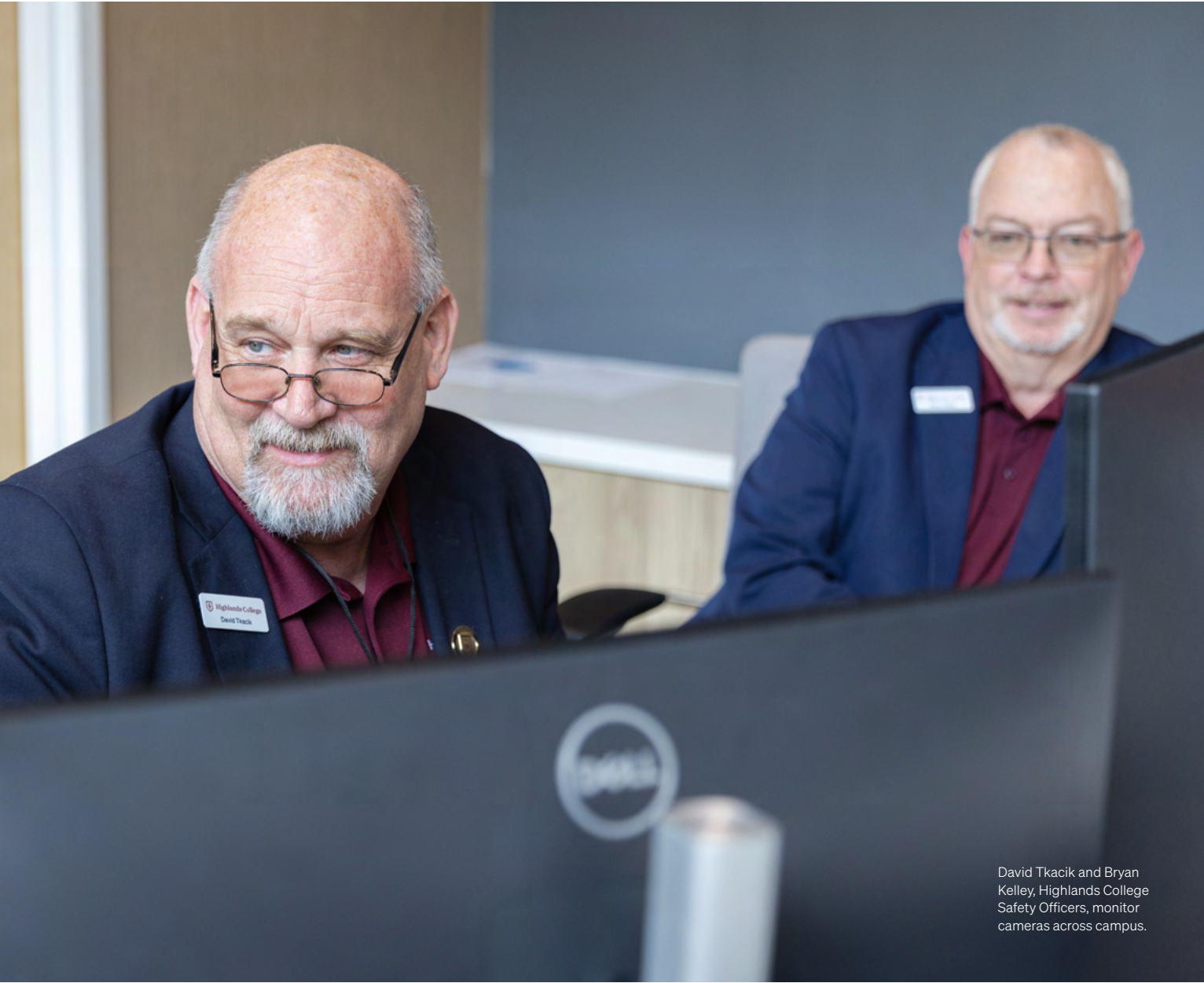


“Whether students study, watch movies, or play board games, this shared space has become a central spot for connection, creating an inviting environment where relationships can grow naturally. The common space has created a noticeable difference in the unity of our campus by fostering a stronger sense of community and building real friendships that feel more like family.”

- BRIANNA NUNEZ,
JUNIOR, RESIDENT ASSISTANT

“Once the common space opened, it completely changed the atmosphere for the upperclassmen. It gave us a place to connect—whether we were working on a group project, catching up with friends, or just relaxing after a long day of class. The movie room became a go-to spot for late-night hangs, and the gym has made it much easier to stay active without leaving The Village property. Overall, the common space has brought The Village to life. It’s not just a place where we live—it’s a place where we do life together.”

- LEE WRIGHT III,
SOPHOMORE, THE VILLAGE RESIDENT



David Tkacik and Bryan Kelley, Highlands College Safety Officers, monitor cameras across campus.

A Commitment to the Future of Our Students

The Safety and Security Team ensures and proactively maintains safety through strategic planning, expert personnel, and innovative technology.

By Ronald McCormick,
Director of Safety and Security

AT HIGHLANDS COLLEGE, the safety and security of our students, faculty, staff, and visitors is a priority and foundational commitment. Our mission is to cultivate an environment where students pursue their calling without distraction or concern, focusing entirely on fulfilling the Great Commission.

Every aspect of our security efforts is rooted in the understanding that a secure campus is essential for academic and spiritual growth. Students who feel safe can better focus on their education and ministry preparation, and faculty who feel safe can teach and serve without concern, best supporting our students in their ministry journeys.

As the Director of Safety and Security, with over 30 years of experience in law enforcement and security—including 25 years with the U.S. Secret Service protecting U.S. presidents and foreign dignitaries—I am committed to leading a professional and proactive security department. Our team is building upon the foundation already laid, anticipating our growing institution’s future needs as we plan to welcome 1,000 students to campus.



Safety Officer David Tkacik welcomes students to The Heights, one of the two current residence halls on campus.

A Multi-Faceted Approach

Every initiative, every training, and every resource Highlands College invests in is strategically aligned to maintain a safe and supportive campus environment. To uphold this commitment, our security strategy encompasses several key areas, including Proactive Assessments, Risk Reduction Strategies, and Rapid Response Capabilities, as well as hiring the best in the security field, forming a Safety Committee, and collaborating between internal departments and external agencies. We remain committed to enhancing and continuously improving our campus safety measures through evaluation and analysis, training and development, and technology integration.

The Future

Looking ahead, our goal is to anticipate and meet the evolving safety needs of Highlands College. We aim to implement new technologies, refine procedures, and ensure that our security measures scale with the growth of our institution while remaining committed to fiscal responsibility, maximizing the efficiency of our resources while never compromising on safety.

Security is a shared responsibility. Each Safety and Security team member is here because we believe in the mission of Highlands College and the transformative power of faith-based education. Our faith is central to our lives, and we are honored to serve in this department and work alongside dedicated teammates to make Highlands College a safe place for all who come here to learn and serve. Highlands College will remain the premier biblical institution where students grow, learn, receive their commissioning, and make an eternal impact on this world. ■



(Above) The Security Desk at Highlands College provides 24/7 access to students, faculty, HC Team, and guests for visitor check-ins, questions, and guidance. While students are on campus, Highlands College ensures there is an armed, uniformed police officer or courtesy officer present at all times.

Financial Model

Increasing Accessibility to Scholarships

By Matthew Brumfield,
Executive Director of Finance & Operations

WHEN I THINK ABOUT the students who step onto the campus of Highlands College, I think of their dreams to answer Jesus’ heart cry in Luke 10:2: to fulfill the Great Commission by serving others and building the Church. Serving on the frontlines of finance and operations at Highlands College, our team is committed to helping students achieve their God-sized dreams.

Highlands College has an intentional and missional financial model because every student called here should have a clear and supported path to *remain* here. We’ve intentionally chosen to stay rooted in our biblical values and mission by refusing government funding. Instead, we rely on the generous support of donors, churches, and ministry partners—people who believe in the eternal impact these students will make—to create a radically generous, uniquely personal space that remains deeply anchored in the values and teachings of the Word of God.

Highlands College is unique in biblical higher education because our Finance Team offers tools beyond tuition invoices and pre-set scholarship packages. We consider finance and operations to be a relational ministry. We meet with families, we listen, and we pray. We walk parents and students through options and resources. Whether it’s our Financial Program—customized to fit unique family circumstances—or financial coaching to help students budget and steward wisely, we are committed to developing real, understanding, and supportive relationships with our students and their families.

We know the road to college can feel overwhelming. I’ve talked to parents who are anxious about how to fund their child’s calling and students who wonder if they can afford to follow God’s direction. The weight is real, so our commitment to walk every step of that journey with them must also be.

Every student accepted to Highlands College receives a scholarship because we see their acceptance as our invitation to invest in them. These scholarships are tailored to the student—reflecting academic achievement, leadership, service, and demonstrated financial need—allowing them the opportunity to graduate with little to no debt so they can run full speed into the harvest field of ministry, unencumbered by financial burdens and full of faith for the path ahead.

The model we’ve created at Highlands College is only possible because of the remarkable generosity of donors and ministry partners who see what we see: a generation of students called to build the Kingdom of God. Every dollar given to Highlands College is a seed sown into that future. It funds scholarships. It supports discipleship. It opens doors for students who are ready to say “yes” to God—but need a community to help them take that first step.

We believe that when barriers fall, opportunities rise. Our financial model exists to fund education and release the next generation of leaders into ministry with the freedom and confidence to step boldly into the harvest field. ■



Scholarship recipient
Ziontavian Turner meets
with Student Accounts
Coach Stephanie Bass.

“Highlands College’s scholarship model has taken away the stress of student debt and allowed me to focus completely on my purpose and education. Because of generous donors, I’m growing in my faith, skills, and future without financial worry.”

- ZIONTAVIAN TURNER,
2025 GRADUATING CLASS

“I truly enjoy connecting with students and hearing their stories during our financial coaching sessions. We talk about biblical stewardship, budgeting principles, and working hard. This year, I witnessed the Lord bring clarity and peace into dozens of students’ situations.”

- STEPHANIE BASS,
STUDENT ACCOUNTS COACH



(Left) Accepted Student Hadassah Garcia, Fall 2025 incoming class, receives an Endowed Student Scholarship—funded perpetually by the gifts of Highlands College donors with a deep commitment to equipping future generations of leaders through their giving.

[CLICK HERE TO SUPPORT STUDENTS THROUGH THE ETERNAL IMPACT CAMPAIGN](#)

Fueling the Mission

Eternal Impact Begins With You

By Kay Hargrave,
Chief Advancement Officer

AT HIGHLANDS COLLEGE, we are focused on one clear mission: to train and equip ministry leaders who will make an eternal impact. **The Eternal Impact Campaign is our strategic response to the growing demand for more leaders to serve the capital “C” Church.** Our priorities—*campus expansion and student scholarships*—equip our students to become well-prepared, spiritually mature leaders who fulfill the Great Commission without hindrance.

We are building the facilities to support our growing student body through residence halls, academic buildings, discipleship spaces, additional dining options, and athletic and wellness centers. These aren’t luxuries; they’re essentials for holistic training and immersive development. When we send

more students, we impact more lives, serve more churches, and reach more communities. We see the fruit of our holistic training model in our alumni—*serving on church teams, leading worship and student ministries, and making disciples in every sphere of influence.*

At the same time, **we are growing a scholarship endowment to support 1,000 students annually.** Our goal is simple: **no student called by God should be held back by financial need.** We are committed to providing barrier-free entry into ministry for our students.

We **know** our students here. We challenge, pastor, and launch them into the world educated, equipped, and empowered. **Every gift to this Campaign invests in the future of the Church.** It’s not just about Highlands College—it’s about what God will do through the leaders we send out.

Giving to Highlands College makes you part of a transformative journey. You help shape the hearts and futures of students trained to lead in ministry. Luke 10:2 says, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few.” The Eternal Impact Campaign is our answer. We are building in response so that *more may be sent*. Thank you for partnering with us and for believing in this mission. ■

No Greater Reward

How One Business is Building the Kingdom of God

PARTNER FEATURE

FOR DR. JOSH AND CARLIN EVERTS, owners of Community Oral Facial Surgery, the Highlands College Community Partner program is a clear investment in the future to expand the Kingdom of God while building a lasting community and creating eternal impact through their intentional generosity.

“Carlin and I feel very passionate about our partnership with Highlands College because we truly believe in the mission the College is fulfilling,” Josh shared. “We know the value of increasing the hands and feet of Jesus in the world; being a small part of that is the greatest benefit.”

The Everts believe God will place opportunities in front of them that align clearly with their calling. **They recognized this partnership as an opportunity to invest their business resources into a mission aligned with their faith.** “We had complete peace about partnering with Highlands College, knowing our investment would create a return that advances the Kingdom year after year. There’s no greater reward than knowing we are helping build a future generation of leaders for Christ.”

As believers and parents, the Everts think about the future and what their children need to become leaders as mature young adults. “We have a heart for the people that are going into ministry, but that heart perspective shifts when we consider that our children could be at Highlands College one day,” Carlin explained. **“We want to support what God has called them to do. We realize now that *our calling is to be generous in what God has given us to make an impact that carries on to future generations.*”**

“The Lord has been very generous and gracious to us. We know we have received this financial ability specifically for Kingdom-minded investment,” Josh shared. “Through biblical higher education, Highlands College is preparing leaders of the future, and we feel the College is on the cusp of something truly great.”

Beyond the future benefits, the Everts have experienced present-day growth, maturity, and an expanded sense of community through the Community Partnership program. Carlin reflected on the personal impact the partnership has had in a season of life that can sometimes feel isolating. “As a small business in a unique field, it can be easy to feel alone when working hard to create and steward a family and career. Being part of the Community Partner program brought us into a circle of people walking similar paths and one season ahead who could speak into our experiences. I’ve gained support from other mothers and wives who understand the balance of raising a family while supporting their husbands in leadership.”

Knowing these events and opportunities exist has made the Everts continually desire to invest more in the College. Each gathering, prayer service, and opportunity to connect with other like-minded leaders has paved the way for meaningful relationships, mentorship, encouragement, and wisdom, reinforcing the Everts’ commitment to the mission of Highlands College.

“Being a Community Partner has expanded our network and allowed us to build valuable relationships with other business leaders,” Josh explained. “We are reaping the rewards and the benefits of these relationships.”

With a much larger circle of people to call on for business advice and biblical encouragement, Carlin emphasizes the mutual growth and maturity in her and Josh’s faith, resulting in better versions of themselves. “It is impactful to grow alongside others seeking the same goals in different professions. We both have an overwhelming desire for others to experience the same personal growth that we have through this community partnership with Highlands College.”

Frequently analyzing their financial stewardship and gift of generosity in each season, the Everts have never wavered on the ability to be a part

of the Highlands College Community Partner program. “We both have an overwhelming sense of peace and joy that we get to do this, to be a part of building for the future,” Carlin said.

“As a young couple with a young business and young children, we look forward to taking our current investment to the next level. We desire to continue to grow our business and to bring our children into it so that they know why we’re working so hard—it’s because we have this Kingdom-minded perspective, and we want to be able to give even more than we are giving now.”


Carlin encourages other leaders who share their values to consider joining the Highlands College Community Partner program.

“If the Holy Spirit leads you to be a Partner, be obedient. If you have the ability to do this, know that it will have a greater impact than you can imagine and touch millions of lives. We have no idea what the Lord’s going to do with it. But my hope and prayer are that when we get to heaven, God will say, *‘I gave you this business, I gave you this profit, I gave you this financial wealth—you did the right thing with it.’* That’s what we want to hear, and I’m sure other business leaders who are believers want the same thing—to hear: *‘Well done. You used what I gave you, and you used it well.’* I can’t think of a greater reward.” ■



(Left) Dr. Josh and Carlin Everts with their three children [from left to right]: Eli (12), Isla (7), and Isaac (10).

PHOTOGRAPHY PROVIDED BY DR. JOSH AND CARLIN EVERTS



COMMUNITY
ORAL FACIAL SURGERY

Community Oral Facial Surgery is a small, family-operated oral and maxillofacial surgery practice with four offices in Alabama and Georgia. Established on core Christian values and strong surgical principles, Dr. Everts is committed to bringing his patients the very best in surgical technique and modern technology.

[CLICK HERE TO LEARN MORE](#)

Make An Impact Bigger Than Business

Become a Community Partner

As an annualized sponsorship, all Community Partner revenue is tax-deductible and will directly benefit the Eternal Impact Campaign, which exists to fund the mission, vision, and goals of Highlands College—America’s Ministry Leadership University.

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2024-2025 COMMUNITY PARTNERS



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Dr. John C. Maxwell teaches business leaders how to multiply leadership and influence at the 2024 Impact Leadership Conference.

“Leadership is influence—nothing more, nothing less. Influence is about how you add value to others. The greatest leaders are not those who collect followers, but those who multiply leaders. When you develop others, your impact outlives you—your legacy and transformation continue through generations.”

- DR. JOHN C. MAXWELL

Celebrating 10 Years of Impact

Impact Leadership Conference

IMPACT LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE 2024 welcomed over 14,000 in-person and virtual attendees from all 50 states and 24 countries for a powerful one-day experience championing values-driven leadership. Hosted by Highlands College—America’s Ministry Leadership University—Impact Leadership Conference reflected the College’s commitment to developing confident, competent, and spiritually mature leaders.

Since its beginning as *John Maxwell Live*, Impact Leadership Conference has featured renowned leadership experts like Dr. John C. Maxwell, Craig Groeschel, Simon Sinek, Dan Cathy, and more, providing business leaders and students alike with real-world insight and inspiration as they prepare to lead in churches, ministries, businesses, and missions around the world.

The 2024 lineup offered attendees a masterclass in courageous, character-filled leadership from Dr. Maxwell, global leadership authority

and Highlands College board member; Chris Hodges, Chancellor of Highlands College and founding pastor of Church of the Highlands; and Ed Mylett, best-selling author and entrepreneur.

Impact Leadership Conference reinforces the core values of Highlands College—to develop leaders of competence, character, and spiritual maturity. This Conference has given students a powerful glimpse into the leadership realm, allowing them to experience firsthand what it means to lead with excellence and eternal purpose in all spheres of influence.

As we celebrate a decade of Impact Leadership Conference, we invite you to join us in championing the next chapter—the 2025 Highlands College Leadership Conference. Over the past 10 years, Highlands College has created an environment that has shaped the principles, values, and character of adults and students for Kingdom-centered leadership. Under a new name, with the same vision, we hope to continue sharing how to live a life of eternal impact across every organization and generation. You can learn more about attending the Conference by scanning the QR code at the top of the page. ■

Thank you to Founders Advisors and their Founder and CEO, Duane Donner, for their 7th consecutive year as Title Sponsors of the Impact Leadership Conference.



Impact Team joins College leadership at an off-site gathering, diving deeper into the mission of Highlands College.

A Vision Worth Building Together

Intentional gatherings, deep alignment, and transformational generosity empowering the next generation of ministry leaders.

By Kay Hargrave,
Chief Advancement Officer

THIS ACADEMIC YEAR, the College hosted two memorable gatherings—distinct in format yet united in purpose. The **Impact Partners Retreat** hosted pastors and churches known as Impact Partners, and the **Impact Summit** hosted individuals and families known as Impact Team, both of whom give \$100k+ per year to the College. Amongst key leaders of Highlands College, these key supporters were invited deeper into the heart of our mission: to develop students who are spiritually grounded and practically trained, ready to embody a life-giving culture within any area of ministry.

We first hosted a group of Impact Partners, pastors from churches across the country, at a special retreat off-campus. Chancellor Chris Hodges and Church

of the Highlands’ Lead Pastor Mark Pettus invested in the pastors by creating an intimate, intentional space to share powerful leadership principles and to inspire the pastors’ partnership in equipping those who will lead *tomorrow*. As these pastors heard stories of transformation and saw firsthand the vision for what’s ahead, many left with a renewed commitment to help fuel our mission.

At the *Impact Summit*, a group of faithful donors and prospective patrons joined us for a three-day retreat. Through powerful stories of students who had once wrestled with calling, found clarity at Highlands College, and are now courageously leading in churches or completing their ministry degrees, guests encountered the undeniable fruit of God’s work through Highlands College.

In this meaningful space, relationships flourished, strangers became friends, and individual passion became a collective vision. In a remarkable outpouring of generosity and belief, nearly \$11 million was committed to continue building America’s Ministry Leadership University.

These events beautifully expressed the unity in strengthening the local church and ensuring that future ministry leaders are fully prepared to serve with excellence, compassion, and faith.

The ripple effect of these gatherings is still unfolding, a testimony to what God can do through shared vision and surrendered hearts. If your heart beats for the next generation of ministry leaders, there is a place for you here. Come see what God is doing. Let’s build it *together*. ■

Join Us in Shaping the Future of Ministry Leadership

YOUR INVESTMENT IS MORE THAN A DONATION—it’s a direct contribution to launching students into their God-given callings that impact every nation, tribe, and tongue with the Good News of Jesus, forever changing *eternity* for many.

We need partners—individuals, businesses, pastors, and churches—who see the value in building the global Church by building up ministry leaders in this next generation. Every dollar fuels scholarships, develops campus resources, and strengthens Spirit-empowered leaders to be sent into the world. If you’re looking for a partnership with shared values that counts for eternity, Highlands College is the place.



Students attend Ministry Partner pop-up events throughout the academic year to learn about placement and hiring opportunities with churches and ministries across the globe.

Ways to Partner

Impact Team

The Impact Team is a community of high-capacity individuals and businesses called to lead through generosity by giving \$100K or more annually. Members of the Impact Team directly support student scholarships, campus expansion, and strategic initiatives. In recognition of their leadership, Impact Team members are invited to exclusive Highlands College events, immersive experiences with Chancellor Chris Hodges and the HC Leadership Team, and unique opportunities to connect with special guests of the College. Impact Team is more than giving, it’s your opportunity to belong to a team that changes lives for eternity.

Impact Partners

Designed for pastors and churches, the Impact Partner program offers spiritual leaders a way to magnify their influence and invest in the next generation of ministry. Impact Partners come alongside Highlands College in a deep, meaningful way, supporting the pipeline of future leaders who will serve the global Church. Impact Partners are welcomed into a trusted circle of Kingdom-minded leaders and receive invitations to special College gatherings and ministry trips with the Highlands College Team.

Community Partners

The Highlands College Community Partner program builds bridges between the College and business leaders nationwide. Through annual sponsorships, Community Partners support the Eternal Impact Campaign and help advance scholarships, student life, and campus development. All contributions are tax-deductible and include valuable marketing and experience benefits. This program fosters mutual support between Highlands College and values-aligned businesses, bringing together purpose and partnership to impact communities locally and globally.

CLICK HERE TO LEARN MORE AND CONTACT THE OFFICE OF INSTITUTIONAL ADVANCEMENT

campaign@highlandscollege.edu

Young Communicator Sunday



Building the Next Generation of Ministry Leaders

Highlands College immerses students in the education, real-world ministry training, and community designed for them to make an eternal impact. Watch our Young Communicators' sermons to witness how leaders are called, transformed, and sent to fulfill the Great Commission through Highlands College.

THERE IS MORE FOR OUR PURPOSE

[Click here to watch these students' and graduates' messages.](#)

Make an Eternal Impact

Give Today at highlandscollege.edu/giving



Highlands College

America's Ministry Leadership University

America's Ministry Leadership University

Choose a Life of Eternal Impact

Learn more at highlandscollege.edu

