

# UPDATES FROM THE HILL **TIGER PRIDE** EAST TEXAS BAPTIST UNIVERSITY



## **Miss ETBUs Return to Campus**

Before junior Speech Communication major Ronni Ward was crowned the 63rd Miss ETBU on Saturday, March 30, six former Miss ETBU winners gathered to reminisce about their own time as Miss ETBU and their college days on the Hill.

"It was a joy to return to campus with my husband, Ryan, and remember all the sweet times we had on the Hill," Former Miss ETBU Andrea Yezak ('12) said. "This is our first time back to campus together in almost seven years and we are thrilled to return to cheer on this year's contestants."

The former title winners present in attendance included Dr. Shirley Elledge ('59), Judith Foster ('61), Dr. Jeri Lee ('78), Dr. Stephanie Andrews ('89), Zane Gruzina ('09), and Andrea Yezak ('12).

Selected from 12 contestants, Ronni Ward was crowned into the Miss ETBU family that evening and will receive the opportunity to represent the University throughout the community and region.

"The ETBU community makes me feel more passionate in my field and walk with Christ every day," Ward said. "It is truly a gift to be able to live on the Hill. In my role as Miss ETBU, I want to tell others about ETBU and share the good news of Christ. I hope to use this platform to further the Kingdom of God."

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## Get to Know Alumnus Larry Denkins ('08)

Larry Denkins ('08) always wanted to return home to his high school to be an athletic trainer, but not right away. The Lord had other plans.

"When I graduated from ETBU, I thought I would settle into the Dallas area as an athletic trainer, but God directed me home," Denkins said. "I was given the opportunity to take the graduate assistant position here at Pine Tree. After one year as a graduate assistant, I was moved to a full-time athletic trainer. After teaching and training for eight years, I was offered the opportunity to become the Head Athletic Trainer at my high school alma mater."

According to Denkins, his time at ETBU helped shape him, not only as an athletic trainer but as a man of God.

"ETBU taught me many valuable lessons in hard work, determination, selflessness, and,

most importantly, opened my eyes in my walk with Christ," Denkins said. "Initially, I felt that it was enough that I was raised in church and believed in God. Thankfully, ETBU helped me see that it is not just about church attendance and living an obedient life. It's about following Christ. The growth in my faith during those four years was valuable in shaping me as a man."

Eleven years after leaving the Hill, Denkins still communicates with his professors and thanks them for their investment in his life.

"My professors pushed me to be the best student athletic trainer I could be while working towards becoming a professional," Denkins said. "Their attention to detail, passion for teaching, and care for the students at ETBU helped motivate me through some tough times in college."

As an alumnus, he looks back on his time at ETBU with great fondness.

"I took away a great experience on campus, professors that I still collaborate with, and spiritual growth that shaped my life. I thank God for my time at East Texas Baptist."



## **Q&A with Dr. Joe David Brown, Dean of the Groner School of Professional Studies**

With the Groner School of Professional Studies looking to move into a renovated Craig Hall, Dr. Joe David Brown answered some questions about how this renovation will

positively impact the fastest growing program on campus.

### **How will the move to Craig Hall impact the Groner School of Professional Studies?**

First, a renovated Craig Hall will allow all programs to be housed under one roof and be the center point for the school. The laboratories (exercise physiology, athletic training, and biomechanics) will allow students experiential learning opportunities as a way to either make or strengthen the connections between coursework and professional application, which will help them in the workplace or if they continue on to graduate school. It will assuredly enhance student recruitment and retention.

### **How will students benefit from the renovation of Craig Hall?**

Study and common areas will allow students to work in partnership on projects and assignments outside of class. This, in turn, helps to build interpersonal relationships. The new labs and equipment will help students to take pride in their degrees and value their education even more.

### **What excites you most about moving into Craig Hall?**

Right off, it would have to be the new labs, which are critical to teaching human movement and having a place to call our own. The look on alumni faces when they see the new building will be priceless. Lastly, we will have an even greater competitive advantage with other universities.

If you are interested in learning more about contributing to the Craig Hall renovation, visit [etbu.edu/careforcraighall](http://etbu.edu/careforcraighall).



# ETBU Theatre Performs *Men on Boats*

The East Texas Baptist University Theatre Arts Department went oars up and oars out with a performance of *Men on Boats*, written by Jaclyn Backhaus and directed by ETBU Costume Shop Supervisor Samantha Pettigrew.

“In order to help the audience connect to a distant and unfamiliar past, *Men on Boats* uses different points of view in an attempt to underscore those stories we might have missed because of the limited scope we have of history,” Pettigrew explained. “These unconventional dramatic choices draw attention to the limiting political structures and outdated ideas of the time while directing our path towards a future that values women as leaders, explorers, inventors, and revolutionaries. Done with a sense of humor, the play ultimately respects and honors the men it seeks to represent, noting that bravery and fear are trademarks of all humanity.”

Based on the journals of John Wesley Powell, Backhaus reimagined the 1869 government-sanctioned exploration of the Green and Colorado rivers. Though the journal entries are only from Powell’s perspective, Backhaus’ retelling includes the viewpoint of all characters, which are meant to be portrayed by racially diverse females.

“It is important to me, as a woman and as a Department Chair at ETBU, that we empower our women as leaders in their respective fields – a mission, I am glad to say, that is supported campus-wide,” ETBU Theatre Arts Department Chair Traci Ledford shared.

“*Men on Boats* succeeds as both a history lesson and a deconstruction of adventurer/pioneer stereotypes when seen through the lens of an all-female cast playing real 19th century soldiers and explorers. We are grateful for this opportunity and to the men working behind-the-scenes to support us.”

While men were not in the cast onstage, many served behind-the-scenes as production staff. From lighting and sound designers to ushers, the men worked alongside the women to represent the message concerning breaking gender stereotypes that the playwright intended.

“The main theme of *Men on Boats* is how history is perceived with established gender norms in mind. This show challenges the audience’s perception of masculinity in an engaging way,” ETBU Technical Director Trace Craver said. “The most rewarding part of being involved in the show was seeing the finished product that the students worked hard for.”

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## **Get to know Reid Adams ('19)**

When Reid Adams ('19) stepped on campus for the first time in 2015, he knew this was where God was calling him to spend his college years. Since then, Adams has made the most of his time here on the Hill playing on the Tiger Tennis Team and serving as Student Body President.

"ETBU is such a special place because it honestly feels like no one is a stranger," Adams said. "Whether I am interacting with faculty, staff, or students, everyone here has been nothing but welcoming. I could not have asked for a better college experience."

After graduation, Adams will be working full-time at ETBU this summer and begin working towards a graduate degree in College and University Leadership. He hopes to someday serve as an athletic director at the collegiate level.

According to Adams, the generosity of donors and alumni enabled him to attend a Christ-centered institution.

"If it weren't for the scholarships I received, ETBU wouldn't have been a possibility for me," Adams said. "To know that alumni care about students enough to give to scholarships or projects here on campus means so much to me as a current student. We really are a family and it's incredible to see people care about the welfare of this University."

With graduation around the corner, Adams knows how significant this time in his life has

been.

"I feel like years down the road, I will look back at my time here and be overwhelmed by all the opportunities and people placed in my life," Adams said. "I have made lifelong friendships and seen servant leadership modeled firsthand by our administration. I could not be more grateful to be a Tiger."

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## WORSHIP AND MUSICAL ENTERTAINMENT FEATURING



The Foto Sisters



Legacy Five



Dr. Jimmy Draper

## Registration for Hilltop University Now Open

Hilltop University, a spiritual retreat for Boomers and Senior Adults, will be held on Wednesday, May 29 through Friday, May 3, at East Texas Baptist University. Conference events include corporate worship, preaching, Bible studies, concerts, breakout sessions, and dessert fellowships. During your stay, enjoy our on-campus housing in a residence facility and meals in ETBU's Dining Hall.

This year's worship and musical entertainment will include:

- Dr. Jimmy Draper, Lifeway President Emeritus
- Legacy Five
- Foto Sisters
- Shellie O'Neal

Click [here](#) to view event details.

**Register Now**

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## ETBU in the News

### ETBU Commissions Students Through Global Missions Week

To highlight both international and local mission opportunities, Missions Week consisted of Mission Marketplace, a Mission Interest Lunch, Go Now Missions Run, and special guests for chapel services. [Read More.](#)



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### ETBU Symphonic Band and Concert Choir Minister in Austria

Over Spring Break, 56 students and faculty performed at and toured historical and cultural sites throughout Austria. [Read more.](#)



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### ETBU Women's Soccer Serves in Costa Rica

As a part of the Tiger Athletic Mission Experience (TAME) 30 student-athletes and University staff partnered with Youth With a Mission (YWAM) to share the Gospel through sport clinics, international soccer games, personal testimony, and Bible distributions in Puerto Viejo, Costa Rica. [Read more.](#)





## BSM Participates in Beach Reach during Spring Break

In partnership with Texas Baptists (BGCT), ETBU sent 18 Baptist Student Ministry leaders to South Padre Island. [Read more.](#)



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Stay in touch and share your news with your ETBU Family. Send your career accomplishments and family updates to [alumni@etbu.edu](mailto:alumni@etbu.edu) or click [here](#) to update your information.

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### For more information please call:

Dr. Scott Bryant

Vice President for Advancement  
903.923.2069 | [sbryant@etbu.edu](mailto:sbryant@etbu.edu)

Allison Peteet ('99)

Assistant Vice President for Advancement  
903.923.2072 | [apeteet@etbu.edu](mailto:apeteet@etbu.edu)

Emily Roberson

Director of Alumni Relations and Advancement Communication  
903.923.2043 | [eroberson@etbu.edu](mailto:eroberson@etbu.edu)

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### Our mailing address is:

One Tiger Drive  
Marshall, TX 75670

[www.etbu.edu](http://www.etbu.edu)

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