

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



## **ETBU Breaks Ground on Kenny Ponder Park and Chapel on the Hill**

East Texas Baptist University faculty, staff, and trustees met together on Friday, August 30 at the future site of the Chapel on the Hill and Kenny Ponder Park, as President J. Blair Blackburn and the Ponder family officially broke ground for the new construction. Located adjacent to the pond on ETBU's campus, this facility will be a dedicated house of worship to focus on the power of prayer, the sanctity of biblical marriage, and the celebration of loved ones.

"This is possible because of the sacrificial commitment of the Ponder family," Dr. Blackburn

said. "It is amazing how sovereign our God is to have created this vision for a chapel dedicated to Him and then fulfilled it through this faithful and generous contribution of this loving and caring family, who have dedicated themselves to serving their employees and others in our community through their cabinetry business. We give praise to the Lord for His continued faithfulness and provision for the Christ-centered calling of ETBU and for the benevolence of Gene and Patsy Ponder and their children and grandchildren."

A cornerstone of the Marshall community as founders of Master WoodCraft Cabinetry and devoted members of First United Methodist Church of Marshall, Gene and Patsy Ponder, along with their children and grandchildren, initially donated funds to create a park area with gardens, a walking path, an arbor, and benches. The Ponder family contributed additional funds to construct the Chapel on the Hill. The park is named in the memory of Kenneth Ponder, son of Gene and Patsy, who passed away in 2017.

"Kenny was a very special young man who knew how to bring out the best in people," Mr. Ponder said. "He had such a love for his family, his parents, and everyone he knew. The concept for this park is simply to create a place of hope, peace, and quiet contemplation. Our goal is to make a sacred space that will last. As people walk through the park and up towards the chapel, we want them to find places to stop, think, and feel closer to God. He has been more than gracious to our family, and we want to pass it along. We hope this park means as much to everyone who walks through it as it does to us."

Several members of the Ponder family, along with Dr. Blackburn, participated in breaking the first ground for this building endeavor. Kenny Ponder Park, located next to the newly named Kenny Ponder Pond on the campus of ETBU, will serve as a place of meditation for students, faculty and staff, alumni, and the Marshall community. Construction on the Chapel on the Hill, which overlooks the park, will commence this month, and is scheduled to be complete in summer 2020.

To see renderings of the Chapel and to learn more, click the button below.

[Chapel on the Hill](#)



## ETBU Kicks off 2019-2020 Academic Year with Convocation

East Texas Baptist University held its annual 2019 Fall Convocation chapel service on

East Texas Baptist University held its annual 2019 Fall Convocation chapel service on Friday, September 6. Faculty, staff, students, and governance leaders gathered for Convocation to celebrate the official start of the new academic year. During the service, the University recognized Judge David L. Anderson with an Honorary Doctorate degree.

“Convocation is a formal gathering of faculty, staff, students, and governance leaders, which recognizes and celebrates the official start of the new year here on the Hill,” ETBU President J. Blair Blackburn said. “At ETBU, we honor this annual tradition as both an ecclesiastical and academic ceremonial assembly. Through worship and praise, commitment of prayer, and the proclamation of God’s word, we dedicate this year to teaching His truth and reflecting the light of Christ’s love to a world desperate for hope and peace.”

During Convocation, East Texas Baptist University presented David L. Anderson with an Honorary Doctorate degree to commemorate his remarkable career. Judge Anderson served the East Texas community as Judge for Panola County from 2003 until his retirement in 2014. Committed to a career of service, he was involved in his community and church in many ways including serving as a certified EMT, a Reserve Deputy for Shelby County, and a volunteer firefighter for the Carthage Fire Department.

“Judge Anderson faithfully served as a member and past Chair of the Board of Trustees at East Texas Baptist University, following the role model of his parents, who were generous benefactors to ETBU,” Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs Dr. Thomas Sanders said. “The Honorary Doctorate is awarded to very few individuals who have distinguished themselves in service to God and humanity. The honor attached to these degrees notably reflects the respect and esteem earned by such people as Judge Anderson.”

Those in attendance received a message from Dr. Nathan Lorick, 2003 ETBU graduate and Executive Director of the Colorado Baptist Convention, who reminded students that a surrendered life will take us to places where our dreams collide with God’s desires.

“ETBU is a light on a Hill, and you ought to be so encouraged and excited to pursue your education with other brothers and sisters in Christ,” Lorick said. “If I can challenge you with anything from the Word of God today, it would be this, as you pursue your education, we need doctors, lawyers, business owners, we need teachers and stay at home moms, we need coaches, we need missionaries, we need pastors, we need professors all who are fully surrendered men and women of God.”

Dr. Blackburn recognized the 2019-2020 East Texas Baptist University Board of Trustees, who are actively involved in the development of new academic programs and majors, and thanked them for their service to the University.

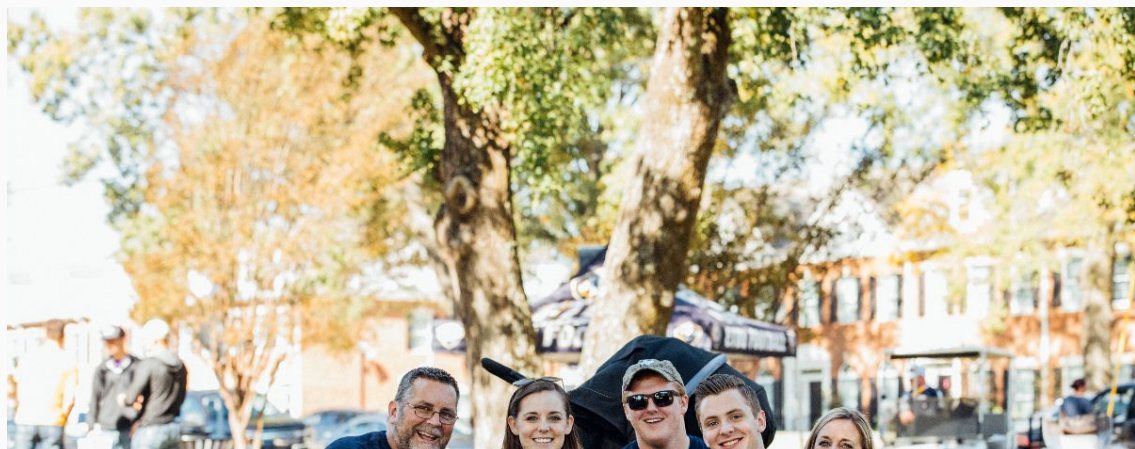
“Today is a day of celebration, and we are thrilled to have so many people here today, who support this institution,” Dr. Blackburn said. “We are grateful to the Board of Trustees for their leadership, service, and support of East Texas Baptist and everything God is doing here today.”

During the service, each class, along with faculty and staff, received a special prayer of blessing and purpose as well as a verse of encouragement to live by throughout the

following academic year.

“At Convocation each year, we dedicate the classes. We believe that you chose ETBU as the result of God’s leadership,” Director of Student Success Shelby Jones shared. “It is your openness to that leadership we wish to recognize and affirm—whether you are just beginning or are about to graduate.”

Prior to the official pronouncement of the beginning of the school year by Dr. Blackburn, all students recited a commitment aloud together, “We are the light of the world. Lord, please let our light shine in such a way that others may see our good works and glorify You in heaven and be drawn to your Son, Jesus. We further pledge to honor and lead our fellow students in the pursuit of academic excellence, knowledge, and wisdom for the glory of You, Lord.”





## Miles to Marshall | Homecoming 2019

Reunions, fireworks, Late Night Breakfast, tailgating at the Grove, and Tiger Football can only mean one thing: Homecoming 2019! Join us October 25-26 here on the Hill and reconnect with your fellow Tiger Alumni. Registration is open, and we are looking forward to seeing you and your family this October. Remember, your Home on the Hill is only just a few Miles to Marshall!

[Register Now](#)





## Get to Know Alumna Dr. Oteka Jackson-Cenales ('07)

Dr. Oteka Jackson-Cenales never thought she would earn another degree after obtaining her BSN from ETBU, but her love for knowledge and the desire to provide an example for her children kept propelling her forward.

"When I graduated from ETBU, my only intentions were to work and flourish in my field, but the more I worked, the more I wanted to learn as much as I could," Dr. Jackson-Cenales said. "I never imagined that after earning my bachelor's degree, I would attend Loyola University New Orleans for my Masters of Science in Nursing (MSN), and then go on to earn my Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) degree."

Today, Dr. Jackson-Cenales serves as a full-time nursing faculty member at Texas Christian University in Fort Worth, Texas where she supervises and advises clinical students, conducts clinical research, and evaluates student performance. She also remains PRN at Baylor Scott & White Health All Saints Medical Center.

According to Dr. Jackson-Cenales, ETBU prepared her spiritually and academically for the calling God placed on her life.

"ETBU sets very high standards," Dr. Jackson-Cenales said. "How you perform academically is vital to your success at ETBU. Because of this, I was able to push forward

with my MSN and DNP degree and be successful at the graduate level. Spiritually, ETBU prepared me to care for the world. Having the opportunity to embrace the Lord during my undergraduate degree kept me grounded, motivated, and close to the Almighty Father."

As an alumna, Dr. Jackson-Cenales is proud to be a graduate of the ETBU School of Nursing.

"I enjoyed so much about ETBU," Dr. Jackson-Cenales said. "The campus and buildings are absolutely stunning, but I loved the unity, uniqueness, family-oriented, and Christ-centered environment the most. It also brings me great pride to see ETBU's School of Nursing be ranked so highly in the state. It would make any alum proud!"

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## Enroll Your Future Tiger in the ETBU Cub and Tiger Club

The Alumni Office is excited to offer the ETBU Cub and Tiger Club programs to the children and grandchildren in the ETBU family. The programs nurture and develop participants' connection to ETBU so that one day, they will enroll as an ETBU Tiger.

The **ETBU Cub Club** is for infants to children seven years old. The **ETBU Tiger Club** is for those between the ages of eight and 18. Every year the participants receive a birthday card from the University and will receive age-appropriate ETBU gifts on select birthdays. The cost for the program is \$25 per participant. Enroll your children or grandchildren today!

[Enroll Now](#)

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## ETBU in the News

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### ETBU Remembers Fallen Heros of 9/11

A prayer service, memorial stair climb, and a special memorial presentation during ETBU's chapel service were held this morning to honor those who lost their lives during the 9/11 terrorist attacks. [Read more.](#)



### ETBU Alumnus and Trustee Emeritus, Dr. Bill Everett Passes Away

Dr. William "Bill" Everett ('57), Trustee Emeritus of the ETBU Board of Trustees, passed away September 2, 2019, after a battle with cancer. Dr. Everett dearly loved his alma mater and would share with others his affinity and devotion to the University. He will be missed by his family and the entire Tiger Family. [Read more.](#)



### ETBU Shows Appreciation for Firefighters and EMS Responders

ETBU presented a check for \$1,000 to Marshall Fire Chief Reggie Cooper for the Marshall Fire Department's Historic Bell project. The Historic Bell project was started by the Marshall Fire Department with the goal to have the 900-pound bell, dating back to 1877, mounted at Central Fire Station in time for the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation's "Bells Across America for Fallen Firefighters"





tribute. [Read more.](#)

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**Pray for ETBU**

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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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