



SHEPHERD UNIVERSITY
FOUNDATION
President's Club

2025 IMPACT REPORT



EXCELLENCE • INNOVATION • OPPORTUNITY

Training the Next Generation of Leaders and Model Citizens

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How to join the President's Club

Since its inception in 2015, President's Club leadership donors have been instrumental in providing the resources necessary to advance the strategic priorities of Shepherd University. This philanthropic support allows Dr. Mary J.C. Hendrix to respond quickly to emerging opportunities and to develop new areas of excellence.

Members of the President's Club, through annual unrestricted gifts of \$1,000 or more, ensure the future of Shepherd University. Leadership giving demonstrates a remarkable level of commitment to Shepherd University and stands as a powerful endorsement of our educational mission.

To add your name to the list of President's Club donors, contact Dr. Kelly Hart, Shepherd University Vice President for Development and Annual Giving, at (304) 876-5311 or KLHART@shepherd.edu.



LETTER FROM *the President*



Dear Distinguished Members of the President's Club,

I am delighted to extend my heartfelt thanks to each of you for your membership in this prestigious giving society for the 2024–2025 academic year. The pages that follow illustrate the remarkable ways in which your generosity has positively impacted individuals and programs across Shepherd University. Your annual investment is truly transformational—empowering our students, supporting our faculty and staff, and enriching the broader community we proudly serve.

At the heart of every achievement highlighted in this report is a deep sense of commitment, which defines the President's Club and fuels its enduring legacy since its founding in 2015. Your support has enabled us to create a safer campus environment, exemplified by the purchase of new communication tablets for the Shepherd University Police Department. It has also elevated our alumni engagement efforts, providing crucial funding for meaningful initiatives such as the annual Gala for Scholarships and Professional Connections Day. And most recently, the opening of a new STEM student space on September 30, 2024, stands as a powerful testament to our shared commitment to student success and to updating essential academic facilities.

These are just a few examples of how your contributions are shaping the future of Shepherd University. Together, we are expanding the boundaries of what is possible.

I am deeply honored by your continued leadership and generosity. On behalf of our students, faculty, staff, and the President's Office, thank you for your unwavering support.

With sincere appreciation,
Mary J.C. Hendrix, Ph.D.
President

Appalachian Studies Program Grows During a Challenging Time

Thanks to a generous gift from the President's Club, the Appalachian Studies program was able to stabilize and grow during a particularly challenging time. The funding was originally intended to enhance student programming and marketing, but external funding cuts in early spring 2025 for the annual Appalachian Studies Heritage Writer in Residence program (AHWIR) caused the department to pivot.

The AHWIR is the Appalachian Studies' most important annual event, and there was a very real prospect of having to cancel the residency for the first time in twenty-one years. Many constituencies and groups across campus and in the community rely on this program, and its termination would have resonated loudly. The serendipity of the President's Club gift allowed Appalachian Studies to move forward with planning.

In addition to providing vital funding for AHWIR, the gift also allowed for the expansion of student activities—especially for the growing number of master's students. At the end of spring semester, a pizza party for current and prospective students to meet with faculty to discuss available courses for the 2025–26 academic year was held. The night ended with an interactive “Old Time” string music session, and it resonated so much with students that it will become a bi-weekly occurrence in the backyard of the George Tyler Moore Center for the Study of the Civil War during Fall 2025.

Finally, in light of the University's push to expand tourism and recreation options, the Appalachian Studies department will host several events in October on the topic of “dark tourism,” both on campus and at the Shepherdstown

Opera House. Speakers, including Director of Mainstreet Point Pleasant Christopher Rizer, will talk about the ethics involved in developing tourism at sites with tragic pasts. Director Rizer will provide insight on how Point Pleasant, the site of the Silver Bridge disaster in 1967, now hosts an annual festival devoted to the Mothman folklore that emerged in wake of the tragedy.

“This will be an eventful year for the Appalachian Studies program as we attempt to broaden our programming and attract students to our robust slate of academic offerings,” said Dr. Benjamin Bankhurst, director of the Center for Appalachian Studies. “The Center's success this year is largely due to the generosity of the President's Club, without whose support our programs would not have been possible.” ■



Pictured left: Dr. Benjamin Bankhurst entertains students at the year-end pizza party and “Old Time” string music session.



Local High School Students Experience Unique Health Care Career Exploration Opportunity

Thanks to President's Club grant funding, the School of Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics, and Nursing held three healthcare career exploration workshops during summer 2025. Local students in 9th through 12th grades were able to register to attend one of the workshops for free, where they engaged in hands-on activities in Shepherd's science and skills labs to learn more about careers in nursing, medicine, and other related fields. Each student also received a free T-shirt and a stethoscope. ■



Byrd Science Hall Computer Lab Finds New Purpose

Thanks to funding from the First2 Network and the President's Club, a nonfunctional computer lab in the Robert C. Byrd Center for Science and Technology has become a student-centric space complete with new furniture and ample meeting areas for student clubs and study groups. Co-chairs of Shepherd University's Department of Natural and Physical Sciences, Dr. Sytil Murphy, associate professor of physics, and Dr. Jacquelyn Cole, associate professor of chemistry, oversaw the renovation project.

STEM students had nowhere to collaborate or study before the new space was created, often sitting by outlets on the floor in the hallway to use computers and other devices. A survey distributed to students and faculty provided a blueprint of

necessities for the new space, including wall outlets, desks, a printer, whiteboards, and a Keurig.

Now the students enjoy a dedicated space with clean carpets, functional furniture, wall outlets, and comfortable seating. A follow-up survey showed that a large percentage of students and faculty felt they had a significant say in the direction of the room renovation and felt respected, comfortable, and a sense of belonging in the STEM community.

Plans for the 2025-26 academic year include the installation of additional whiteboards and bulletin boards, hanging student art, positioning of a magazine rack, and the possible addition of a conference table. ■

Shepherd University Police Department Updates Technology for Better Communications, Response Time

The purchase of eleven Panasonic Rugged Tuff Book tablets for the Shepherd University Police Department (SUPD) was made possible through a sizeable donation from the President's Club to supplement other funding sources. These tablets are vital for the improvement of communications to help the SUPD serve the University more efficiently.

Each officer-issued tablet will remain in their cruiser for the entirety of the shift to aid in monitoring law enforcement and fire calls. The computer-aided dispatch (CAD) system already in place will streamline the distress call process by sending information directly from dispatchers around the region to the SUPD officer on duty. This will minimize delays by enabling direct, uninterrupted communications between SUPD and partner agencies.

Key features of the tablets include: logging of emergency and non-emergency calls; real-time tracking of unit locations and availability; live mapping for efficient navigation and response coordination; continuous updates and record-keeping during

incidents; integration with radios, alerts, and mobile devices for accurate, timely communication; and reporting tools to analyze response times, incident types, and resource usage. ■

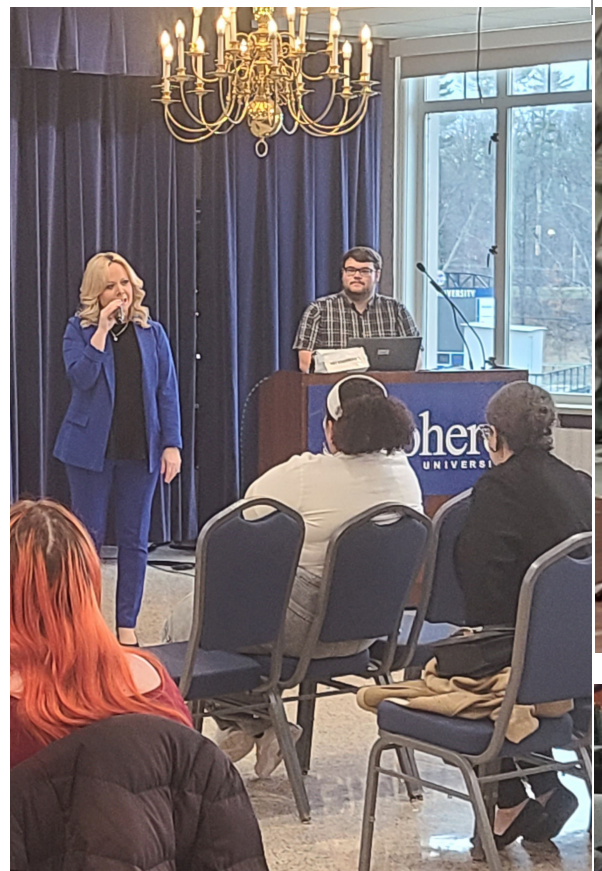


Faculty Mini Grants

The President's Club provided vital grant funding for eight faculty members across four departments this year. Necessary budget cuts and a decrease in unrestricted giving have made funding for professional development, travel, and equipment purchases more important than ever.

Faculty members who received grant funding for the 2024-2025 academic year were:

- Dr. Joshua Beck, assistant professor of business administration
- Dr. James Dovel, associate professor of business administration
- Dr. Zahra Pourabedin, assistant professor of business administration
- Jennifer Yablonsky, assistant professor of art
- Dr. Courtney Campany, associate professor of biology
- Dr. Jessica Graham, assistant professor of recreation, sport, and exercise science
- Dr. Rhonda Hovatter, associate professor of recreation, sport, and exercise science
- Dr. Julia Tracy, associate professor of recreation, sport, and exercise science ■



A Lasting Impact on Shepherd's Alumni Engagement

The generous support of the President's Club had a transformative impact on the programs and initiatives of the Shepherd University Alumni Association during the 2024-25 academic year. These critical funds empowered the Association to deepen alumni engagement, create meaningful student-alumni connections, and celebrate the legacy of Shepherd University through key events. Some of the events and programming supported through this funding are:

Professional Connections Day - February 5:

This annual event brought together alumni and current students for a day of networking, mentorship, and career exploration. Alumni from a variety of industries returned to campus to share their professional journeys, provide guidance, and help students build connections that will support their post-graduation goals.

The Third Annual Legacy Gala for Scholarships - February 28:

This event celebrated the enduring spirit of Shepherd University while raising critical funds for the Alumni

Association's Endowed Scholarship, which is awarded each year to a student who is a family member of a Shepherd alumnus. The evening brought together alumni and friends of the University under the common goal of supporting the legacy of Shepherd University within families.

Regional Alumni Mixer at the Hagerstown Boxcars - June 12:

This exciting event, hosted in collaboration with the New Student Orientation Pop-Up series, connected alumni with incoming students and their families in a fun, informal setting. The outing was designed to foster community and school pride from the very beginning of the student experience.

"The funding received from the President's Club enabled the Alumni Association to invest in meaningful programming and continue building strong bridges between our past, present, and future Rams," said Katie Swayne, director of alumni relations. "We are deeply grateful for this support of our shared dedication to the Shepherd University mission." ■



Writer's Conference Shines Spotlight on Shepherdstown

The third annual Writer's Conference at Shepherd University took place March 21 and 22. This year's conference, titled "Manuscript to Marketplace," brought leading publishers, editors, and book marketing experts together in Shepherd's Marinoff Theater on West Campus to interact with an eager audience of writers at every level. Thanks to funding by the President's Club and other sponsors, the sold-out event continues to provide a shining spotlight on the University and the region.

Co-directed by Alan Gibson and Lee Doty, this year's conference featured keynote speakers Keri Barnum, owner and CEO of New Shelves Books; Shawn Reilly Simmons, co-owner and publisher of Level Best Books; and Art Taylor, Edgar Award-winning author. Along with the keynote speeches, the event included 11

breakout sessions on topics ranging from finding agents and publishers to practical expertise on writing in specific genres.

Prior to the full day of workshops, the conference arranged one-on-one sessions for authors to pitch their books to publishers and editors.

While the conference is not a fundraiser, any net proceeds are directed to Shepherd University's Department of English, History, and Modern Languages.

"Data from post-conference surveys support anecdotal responses that the third Writer's Conference was a best-seller on all fronts," said co-director Alan Gibson. "Lee Doty and I are grateful to the President's Club for its generosity." ■

Shepherd Rams Career Readiness Support

Through generous funding from the President's Club, Shepherd University's Career Services was able to expand and enrich its career development programming and directly benefit hundreds of students during the 2024-25 academic year. This support enabled the office to host a dynamic series of six career panels featuring professionals across diverse fields: business, social sciences, creative arts, humanities and communications, health and wellness, and STEM.

"The panels offered students meaningful insight into the rewards and challenges of various industries," said Dr. Amy DeWitt, associate dean of student academic enrichment and professor of sociology. "For example, during the humanities and communications panel, alumni and other professionals shared advice on building careers in media, marketing, and journalism—emphasizing the enduring value of critical thinking and adaptability."

In addition to the stimulating topics and speakers, the panel events provided a welcoming and engaging atmosphere for student participants through the provision of refreshments and clear drawstring sports packs filled with career resources. Each sports pack featured the Shepherd Ram logo, promoting school spirit while encouraging students to take pride in their professional development journey. These incentives boosted attendance, inspiring more Shepherd Rams to explore career paths, network with professionals, and engage in hands-on career learning.

In addition to the career panels, President's Club support helped fund hospitality at the Career Fair held on March 5, 2025. This University-wide event, which connects students with potential employers, is held annually by the Career Services office. Funding also contributed to a STEM and Nursing Alumni Panel and Ice Cream Social, where students explored careers in science, medicine, and education while engaging informally with alumni, faculty, and University leadership over ice cream sundaes.

These events, along with others that foster a sense of community and connection, play a key role in student retention by promoting engagement, school spirit, and support networks among students.

"From building student confidence to fostering school pride and facilitating real-world connections, the impact of the President's Club investment is clear: Shepherd students are better prepared to enter the workforce and pursue fulfilling professional paths," said DeWitt. "Career Services is deeply grateful for this support, which played a vital role in fostering a culture of readiness, engagement, and opportunity across campus." ■



Environmental and Physical Science Students Make a Return Trip to Yellowstone National Park

Thanks in large part to funding from the President's Club, ten Shepherd University students and two faculty members from the Department of Natural and Physical Sciences traveled to Yellowstone National Park in July 2024 to learn about the ecological, historical, and cultural significance of America's first national park. Each student was tasked with attaining a deeper understanding of some dimension of the park or its context in the larger story of the American West. A similar trip was held during the summer of 2023.

The excursion ran from July 17-27 and covered the Green River Basin of southwestern Wyoming; Fremont

Lake near Pinedale, Wyoming; Jackson Hole, Wyoming; Yellowstone National Park; and the Grand Tetons.

Dr. Jeff Groff, professor of Physics and Environmental Science, who led the field experience, said the group learned about many facets of ecology and natural history during the trip. These areas of study included early exploration of the Yellowstone Plateau and the establishment of the park; Paleoindians, western expansion, and clashes with indigenous tribes; hydrothermal features; the reintroduction of wolves and its ecological impact; fire ecology; water resources in the American West; and the near extermination of the bison population. n

Thank you for your support!



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P.O. Box 5000, Shepherdstown, WV 25443
(304) 876-5397 | shepherduniversityfoundation.org