

This is a copy of our Alumni newsletter that is sent monthly to our alumni.

If you wish to receive these emails, please let us know at alumni@jsu.edu.



April 2026 Edition

FEATURED EVENTS



In March, alumni and friends enjoyed getting together at Melt Downtown Huntsville before the men's game in the CUSA Basketball Tournament. Fun was had by all at the Gamecock Grand Slam Series pregame gathering at Monday Night Brewing-Social Club in Birmingham, and at the Jax State vs UAB baseball game that followed. To conclude the month of March, Jax State alumni and university leaders attended the Higher Education Partnership Legislative Reception in Montgomery, where other university alumni directors and state legislators met to discuss the value and importance of higher education. To view our events over the past month, [click here](#).

Reminder, nominations close on April 15 for our Alumnus, Alumna, Young Alum, and Military Alumnus/Alumna of the Year. If you know a Jax State graduate who has outstanding achievements in their profession, community, and/or service activities, please nominate them for one of these prestigious awards. Please note that a CV and/or resume and a letter of recommendation are required for the nominee. [View additional details here](#).

UPCOMING EVENTS



April is filled with many networking opportunities! Make sure to join us tonight for the Marshall County Spirit Night in Albertville or stop by Mellow Mushroom in Auburn before our Jax State baseball team takes on the Auburn Tigers at Plainsman Park.

Due to unforeseen circumstances, we have had to shift our Fairhope visit to June. The events scheduled for this Friday, April 10, and Saturday, April 11, have been postponed. More information to come soon!

Also taking place this month is our 20th Annual Shrimp Boil! Join us for an evening of great food and entertainment by the Jax State Steel Drum Band. Afterward, support our football players and coaches, and stay with us to watch the Jax State Football Spring Game. We will also be traveling to Troy for a Gamecock Grand Slam Series pregame gathering and to watch our Jax State baseball team take on the Troy Trojans.

We hope to see many of our alumni, friends, and family this month! Check [here for event details on the website](#), or [view the schedule here](#).

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT



Once on staff of The Chanticleer at Jax State, **Emily Hayes ('13)** works as a senior editor with credit cards, loans and banking at U.S. News & World Report and as a regular contributing writer to Martha Stewart Living.

Originally from Hokes Bluff, Alabama, Hayes now resides in metro Atlanta. She began working for U.S. News & World Report in 2021 and has been writing for Martha Stewart Living for almost two years.

"Communications has many paths. You can choose broadcast or print, local or national. You can zero in on a specific niche, like money, or keep to general news," Hayes said. "JSU's communications department sincerely prepared me for the zigs and zags my career has taken."

[Read more here.](#)

COCKY BUSINESS



Jacksonville native **Crissy Werner ('05)** always had a passion for travel and creating meaningful experiences. In collaboration with fellow Gamecock Amanda Cobb, Werner started Southern Belle Travel Company.

Werner said Southern Belle Travel Company's team of planners – several who are also Jax State alum – focus on personalized, boutique-style travel planning. From the initial consultation to the final trip, the team at Southern Belle Travel Company provides expert planning, guidance, and ongoing support.

[Read more here.](#)

[Submit your own Cocky Business to be featured](#) in one of our upcoming newsletters here!

ALUMNI CONNECTION



If you are interested in mentoring students or younger alumni, please consider signing up for Alumni Connection and marking the "Mentor younger alumni / students" box under your profile preferences. Our new

ALUMNI ASSOCIATION



Show your Gamecock Spirit! When it is time to renew your Alabama car tag this year, consider getting a **J-tag!** Proceeds from our car tag sales help fund scholarships and are tax-deductible. We appreciate those who

cohort will begin in the fall.

Alumni Connection is a free platform to help you stay connected to Jax State and fellow alumni. You can also update your information anytime. [Sign up today!](#)

have helped support our students through this program.

Jax State now has a **National Society of Leadership and Success (NSLS) Alumni Chapter!** This is a wonderful opportunity for young alumni to gain career insights and earn additional leadership certificates to assist with career aspirations. [Learn more here.](#)

Interested in becoming an Alumni Association member or want to learn more? [Click here!](#)

GROWING GAMECOCKS



Enroll your Growing Gamecock (ages 0–18) and let Cocky help celebrate their birthday each year with a special gift or card, as well as occasional seasonal surprises throughout the year.

Even if your child is in high school, it's not too late to join the fun! Alumni, family, and friends are welcome to enroll the Growing Gamecocks in their lives.

[Click here for details and to sign up today!](#)

AROUND CAMPUS



Jacksonville State University is excited to announce the launch of its newest academic program — a **Bachelor of Science in Aviation**, set to begin in Fall 2026.

Grounded in a strong foundation of aviation science, safety, and industry best practices, the program offers three concentrations to support students' career goals: Aviation Management, Commercial Aviation, and Public Safety Aviation. [Read more here.](#)

After more than four decades in coaching and 26 seasons as a head coach at the Division I level, **Rick Pietri** announced his retirement from coaching. Pietri spent the past 13 seasons leading the Jacksonville State women's basketball program, became the program's all-time winningest coach with 197 victories. On March 30, the Gamecocks named his successor, Alabama High School Athletic Association Hall of Famer and Spring Garden basketball coach Ricky Austin. The Jax State alumnus was

introduced as the program's new head coach at a press conference on March 31 in Pete Mathews Coliseum. [Read more here.](#)

COMING TO THE ROC



We have some exciting news! Join us for the **Grand Opening Celebration** of The ROC on May 27, 2026.

Tickets are on sale April 16. For sponsorship information, please contact Joseph Munster, Senior Philanthropy Officer, at (256)-782-8261 or jmunster@jsu.edu.

For more information, visit jaxstatearts.org.

GAMECOCKS GIVE BACK

Marching Southerners On the Go Fund



The Marching Southerners have been invited to represent Jacksonville State University on one of the world's most iconic stages — **the 138th Rose Parade** in Pasadena, California, on January 1, 2027. For millions of people around the world, the Rose Parade is a treasured New Year's Day tradition, and your support will help ensure that every dedicated student musician has the opportunity to march in this once-in-a-lifetime experience, regardless of financial need. Donations offset travel, lodging, new uniforms, and logistical costs, allowing our full band to proudly showcase JSU's tradition, excellence, and school spirit before a global audience.

By giving to the **Marching Southerners On the Go Fund**, alumni and friends play a direct role in making history and investing in the students who bring the Marching Southerners' sound to life. **Make your gift today by visiting jsu.edu/roseparade or by scanning the QR code to support our journey to the 2027 Rose Parade.**

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