

Upcoming Event Dates

FEBRUARY

24: Etowah Co Lunch Bunch

24: Jax State Softball at West Georgia

MARCH

10-14: Jax State Basketball in CUSA Tournament (date TBD)

24: Jax State Baseball at UAB

APRIL

7: Jax State Baseball at Auburn

7: Marshall County Spirit Night

10-11: Fairhope/Mobile Gamecock Gathering/Programming

16: 20th Annual Shrimp Boil

21: Jax State Baseball at Troy

29: Grad Toast

MAY

5: Retiree Day Trip: Hills & Dales, LaGrange, GA

7-9: Nashville Gamecock Gatherings/Programming

29: Seattle Gamecock Meet and Greet

30-June 7: Alaskan Cruise



OFFICE OF ALUMNI ENGAGEMENT
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700 Pelham Road North
Jacksonville, AL 36265

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Scan to view
all engagement
opportunities!

GROWING GAMECOCKS

JACKSONVILLE STATE UNIVERSITY.

The Growing Gamecocks program is open to all retirees, alumni, friends and family of Jax State for the special children in their lives! Enrolled children will receive Jax State promotional items and/or a birthday card each year. Enrolled high school seniors will also be eligible to apply for Growing Gamecocks Legacy Scholarships upon being accepted to Jax State.

If you have a Growing Gamecock in mind, scan the QR code to enroll today!



Alumni Connection

We invite you to join Jax State Alumni Connection, an engagement platform specifically designed to keep you connected to your fellow Jax State retiree family and alumni. It's easy to discover how many Gamecocks are in your area and connect with past team members. To get started, scan the QR code.



Alumni Engagement

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FOREVER Gamecocks

The Gateway that connects our Retiree Family

Spring 2026

Ways to Engage

As the spring semester begins, the alumni team is looking forward to seeing some familiar faces as we travel to support our baseball and softball teams throughout the season and cheer on our basketball team at the CUSA Tournament in March. This spring also brings back annual events such as Marshall County Spirit Night and our fantastic Annual Shrimp Boil, marking our 20th year of fun, music, and food, which benefits Calhoun County Alumni Network Scholarships. In May, just for our retirees, we are planning a day trip to the Hills and Dales Estate in LaGrange, GA. We plan to have a bus that leaves from campus, but you're also welcome to meet us there! More details to come, but save the date of May 5 for this fun and educational outing! We hope you will plan to attend some of our upcoming events to support our student athletes, make new friends, and reconnect with others you may not have seen in years.

Did you hear? Our beloved

Marching Southerners are continuing to excel - they've been invited to march in the 2027 Rose Parade in Pasadena! Alumni, friends, and family can travel with them to take in all of the activities! The trip starts on December 28, 2026, and ends on January 2, 2027. Ring in a new year with hundreds of your closest friends and plan to join us for a trip full of sightseeing, music, the historical parade, and roses! The deadline to reserve your trip is March 1. To learn more, contact Chris Lindley with ATC at chris@americantravelconsulting.com.

For the last few years, the Alumni Office has been housed in Kennamer Hall. While we have loved the building and space that we are in, we realize our alumni and retirees need a welcoming place they can return to, share memories, and enjoy one another's company. We are pleased to let you know that this spring semester, we will be moving our office over to what is formerly known as the Development

House, or Philanthropy House, located on Pelham Road. This is not our final destination, but we are excited about the new space that will have a place for you to come in, say hello, look at memorabilia, and flip through our archive of Teacolas and Mimosas. We look forward to welcoming you in our new home.

In 2025, the Alumni Engagement Office hosted **59 events** and engaged with more than **2,500 alumni and retirees**, as well as with their friends and families. We are excited to see what 2026 brings, and as pillars of our institution, we do hope you'll consider coming back to campus or meeting us at many of the opportunities we have planned for this year.

Alumni Spotlight Dr. Royce Woodruff, '94, '04, '18

Dr. Royce Woodruff is proud of being the first alumna to receive all three degrees - bachelor's, master's and doctorate - from Jax State. He was awarded a doctoral degree in emergency management in 2018 and has continued to assist his alma mater as a consultant since the EF3 tornado struck campus. Woodruff is deeply impressed by how the university has continued to rebuild since the tornado.

"The transformation across campus is not only physical but symbolic - a reflection of the university's resilience and commitment to progress," Woodruff said. "It's inspiring to see how JSU turned a moment of adversity into a model for renewal and growth."

Greetings, Forever Gamecocks!

I hope your holiday season brought peace, joy, and time to relax, reflect, and cherish those around you. May the new year be wonderful for you, full of fun surprises and new adventures.

As spring begins to take shape, I hope you'll remember what campus looks like with all the trees budding

out and the mountains coming alive with new foliage. With all of the exciting changes at the university, please take some time to visit with us and see the growth the campus has experienced over the last few years. You're always welcome back to the Friendliest Campus in the South!



Wendy L. Cash, PhD ('00)
Director, Alumni Engagement

Dr. Royce Woodruff continued

He commends Jax State leadership as the university is on its way to full recovery. "Recovery is a long and arduous process, but I'm proud to say we've been able to repair or upgrade practically every facility on campus - with just one remaining," Woodruff said. "We're truly on the last mile as we close out this chapter of the disaster."

In addition to assisting with recovery efforts, Woodruff is Founder and CEO of NETWORKX, a workforce technology company in Atlanta. "Through NETWORKX, I've worked with regional partners, including technical colleges, workforce agencies, and courts to create faster, more accessible pathways to training and employment," Woodruff said. "The platform helps people gain real skills, real jobs, real fast - especially those from underserved or overlooked communities."

He notes that the foundation he built at Jax State continues to shape everything he does. "To the JSU community, thank you," Woodruff said. "JSU taught me the importance of resilience, service, and innovation - values that still guide my work today. I'm proud to be part of a university that continues to rise, rebuild, and redefine what's possible."



Alumni Association

Even if you are not a graduate of Jax State, retirees can join the Alumni Association, too! Show your Jax State spirit with membership swag and receive discounts at The Caf and other local and national businesses with a membership!



Join today!

Retiree Spotlight

Dr. Mark Fagan, '74



For Dr. Mark Fagan ('74), love and family devotion to Jax State have spanned for more than a century. Fagan is Professor Emeritus in the Department of Sociology and Social Work, where he taught from 1981 to 2012, helping to develop the Bachelor of Social Work program and design the curriculum. His great-great-grandfather, Captain Wilson Parks Howell, served as the first temporary Chairman of the Board of the State Normal School in Jacksonville in 1883, now Jax State. Howell helped hire the first President and

faculty members to launch the State Normal School, which trained educators - a major contribution to education in Alabama.

"I enjoyed the opportunity to help establish a degree program that would produce many graduates who could go out and help others," Fagan said. "I loved helping students develop their professional backgrounds and understanding things that would help them later in life."

In addition, Fagan worked as

Cocky Business

What started as a leap of faith between two cousins has blossomed into a beloved eatery where faith, family, and community are always on the menu. In October 2023, Tillery Rice ('19) and Chloe Tidwell ('23) took ownership of Swheat Market Deli in Cartersville, GA, transforming their dream into a flavorful reality.

"Serving our community, being the hands and feet of Jesus Christ, and sharing delicious food—it doesn't get better than that," said Tillery.

Walking into Swheat Market is like coming home. Whether a regular grabbing their usual or a traveler passing through

for the first time, everyone is greeted with genuine Southern kindness. "When you step into our restaurant, you're not just another guest—you're part of our family," Chloe said. "We've created a space that's filled with warmth, love, and a sense of community."

Owning a business in their hometown brings a sense of fulfillment that the cousins don't take for granted. "There's something special about serving the people who have watched you grow," Chloe shared. "It's a full-circle moment for us. We are so blessed to have such a supportive community—we couldn't do it without them."

Both Tillery and Chloe credit their time at Jax State with laying the foundation for their business journey.

"Jacksonville State gave us the chance to explore, lead, and build relationships that would last a lifetime," Chloe says. "It taught us how to adapt, how to lead, and how to believe in ourselves."



Consultant to The Center for Economic Development at Jax State from 1985 to 2010, assisting in research that contributed to the development of The Robert Trent Jones Golf Trail (The Trail) by The Retirement Systems of Alabama (RSA). He contributed economic impact studies for sites on The Trail, assisted with negotiations, and helped with funding for access roads.

He has written a total of 10 books, eight of which were written during his retirement, covering a range of topics, including The Robert Trent Jones Golf Trail, retiree migration and its economic impact, the financial assets of the RSA, Coastal Alabama, financing retirement, and a biography of his great-great-grandfather.

"I greatly credit my years at JSU for any successes I have had," Fagan said. "JSU remains a wonderful place for growth and enjoyment."

University Updates

Jacksonville State Achieves Historic Enrollment Record, Surpasses 10,000 Students

For the fifth consecutive year, Jax State has broken its all-time enrollment record - yet this fall's achievement stands apart. For the first time in its history, the university has surpassed 10,000 students, a milestone long envisioned by the institution.

Jax State enrolled 10,339 students, continuing a trend of steady growth that has positioned the university as one of the fastest-rising institutions in the region. The total represents an increase of 384 (3.9%) students compared to last year's record enrollment of 9,955, demonstrating Jax State's ability to build on success year after year.

Jacksonville State Named No. 1 Employer Headquartered in Alabama by Forbes

Jacksonville State University has been recognized by Forbes as the top-ranked employer headquartered in Alabama on its 2025 list of America's Best Employers by State. Jax State

placed No. 7 overall among 45 employers that made the Alabama rankings and was the highest-ranked university on the list.

Among Alabama-based companies, Jax State earned the top spot, followed by Baptist Health (Montgomery), UAB (Birmingham), the Alabama Department of Public Health (Montgomery), and Books-A-Million (Birmingham). The university was one of only four in the state to be recognized in 2025, ranking ahead of UAB (12), the University of Alabama (25), and Auburn University (32).

Dr. Jeremy Stovall Named Director of Bands at Jax State

Dr. Jeremy Stovall has been named the next Director of Bands at Jax State. A longtime member of the Jax State music faculty and a two-time graduate of the university, Stovall succeeds Dr. Ken Bodiford.

"It's an incredible honor to have the opportunity to step into this role and continue the legacy that has meant so much to me and to generations of Southerners," said Dr. Stovall.

Giving Back

The It's a Jax State of Mind \$100 million comprehensive campaign has already surpassed university fundraising records by securing more than \$33 million in its first two years of the five-year effort. This tremendous early momentum reflects the dedication of the Jax State family, including many of you, whose years of service helped build the strong foundation our university stands on today.

Gifts to the campaign are helping expand scholarships, enhance academic programs, and improve the student experience, advancing many of the priorities you helped shape during your time at the university. As valued retirees, you can continue making a meaningful impact in several ways. In addition to traditional one-time or recurring gifts, retirees may give through Qualified Charitable Distributions (QCDs) from IRAs, gifts of

Jacksonville State University Police Department's K9 Daphne to get donation of body armor

Jacksonville State University Police Department K9 Daphne will receive a bullet and stab protective vest thanks to a charitable donation from non-profit organization Vested Interest in K9s, Inc. This potentially lifesaving body armor for four-legged K9 officers is U.S. made, custom fitted, and National Institute of Justice (NIJ) certified.

Jax State Board of Trustees Authorizes Next Step in Partnership with RMC to Bring Emergency Services and Student Health Center to Campus

The proposed project would relocate the health center back to the heart of campus, offering more convenient and accessible care for the university community. It would also include a new freestanding emergency department complete with treatment rooms, diagnostic imaging capabilities, ambulance access, a helicopter landing zone, and onsite parking.

Read more at jsu.edu/news

appreciated stock, or by naming Jax State as a beneficiary of a life insurance policy or estate plan. These giving options can provide tax advantages while supporting the areas you care about most. For more information contact Kim Dalesandro at kdalesandro@jsu.edu or 256-782-5606.

Together, we can ensure Jax State remains a vibrant, student-centered institution for generations to come!

