



Fall Virtual Commencement set for Dec. 12

As previously announced, Southeastern Oklahoma State University will celebrate its December 12 Fall Commencement in a virtual format, due to safety and health concerns surrounding the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

“The health and well-being of our students, their families, faculty and staff continues to be our top priority,” said Southeastern president Thomas Newsom. “Unfortunately, holding large, in-person gatherings such as commencement are not advisable, according to health officials. While we are disappointed that we will not be able to celebrate this accomplishment in person, we believe this decision is in the best interests of the University.”

Newsom added that it was one of the toughest decisions he’s ever had to make.

“As a parent, I know how important it is to recognize young people for their achievements,” he said. “Commencement is one of those significant milestones that we should all be able to celebrate together, and it really bothers me that we are not able to honor our students in the traditional manner. But on behalf of the entire University, I want to congratulate all the graduates and their families. (see Commencement, page 4)



Southeastern president Thomas Newsom, his wife Vicky, and their three children, Katie, Will, and John, participated in the recent Welcome Home activities by offering a virtual tour of the Magnolia House.



Taping time

Southeastern president Thomas Newsom and vice president for academic affairs Teresa Golden tape a segment for the virtual commencement ceremony. The ceremony will be available for viewing on Saturday, December 12 at 10 a.m. on the University website.

Virtual Candlelighting to be held Dec. 7

This year marks the centennial for the Candlelighting Ceremony with a joint production by the Department of Music, Center for Instructional Development and Technology, and University Marketing at Southeastern Oklahoma State University.

Due to the impact of the pandemic, the ceremony will be held virtually on Monday, December 7, at 7:30 p.m. on the Southeastern website (www.se.edu) and also on the Music at Southeastern Facebook page (@musicatsoutheastern).

The Symphonic Chorus, under the direction of Dr. Patrick Antinone, will anchor the event with classic and holiday choral works. This virtual event will also include performances by the Southeastern Symphonic Winds, under the direction of Dr. Michael Scheuerman, and the Durant High School Varsity Mixed Chorus, directed by Aprill Raines.

Also featured in this virtual production will be video clips with a campus and community greeting by Southeastern president Thomas Newsom, a journey through the history of Candlelighting with Dr. Mike Davis, and celebration of Cardinal Key with Vice President Liz McCraw. And in celebration of the event, Dr. Stacy Weger and Dr. Walter Britt, retired Emeritus Professors in Choral Music, will provide a reflection on their time producing and conducting Candlelighting.



Southeastern president Thomas Newsom stands with the Top 10 Freshman Award recipients: Delanie Cooper, MeKenzie Cruz, Madison Hunt, Charisma Lacy-Ray, Marli Nagel, Daniel Hair, and Oliver Spiller. Not pictured, Andre “Dee” Johnson II, Karsyn McKinnon, and Josie Frazier.

Southeastern presents Top 10 Freshman Award

Southeastern Oklahoma State University recognized the recipients of the Top 10 Freshman Award recently. The awards are based on academics, leadership, campus involvement, and letters of recommendation, and are presented to students who were freshmen in 2019.

Following are the Top 10 Freshman Award recipients:

-- **MeKenzie Aileen Cruz**, from Tulsa, is a double major in Theater Management and Acting and Directing. She is a member of the of the 2019-2020 President’s Leadership Class, and has participated in the Savage Storm Leadership Program, Student Government Association, Sigma Sigma Sigma Sorority, Treasurer for Alumni Legacy Leaders, and the Theater Department.

-- **Marli Nagel** of Clayton is pursuing a Pre-Med degree. A member of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, she currently serves as a Teacher’s Assistant in the Biology Department. Nagel is a member of the Honors Program and the Pre-Med Club, as well as the OKLSAMP Program.

-- **Josie E. Frazier** is from Hugo and is working on an English Education degree with a minor in Communications. She is a member of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma. Frazier is a member of the 2019-2020 President’s Leadership Class, and is also active with Alpha Sigma Tau Sorority, Alumni Legacy Leader, and Gay and Straight Alliance Club.

-- **Karsyn McKinnon** of Healdton is pursuing a degree in Psychology. She is a member of the 2019-2020 President’s Leadership Class and is the President of North Hall Committee and Alumni Legacy Leader. McKinnon also serves as the Vice President of Growth for Alpha Sigma Tau.

-- **Daniel Patrick Hair**, from Lewisville, Texas, is enrolled in Aviation and studying to be a Professional Pilot. He is a mem-

ber of the 2019-2020 President’s Leadership Class, a Senator for the Student Government Association, and an Alumni Legacy Leader. Hair is currently the Captain of the Flight Team.

-- **Charisma Lacy-Ray** of Duncanville, Texas, is working on a degree in Vocal Music Performance. She is also a member of Southeastern’s Track and Field Team. Lacy-Ray is involved with the Southeastern Chorale and the Choral Union, and was a volunteer for Relay for Life.

-- **Madison L. Hunt**, from Lone Grove, is in the Pre-Med degree program and plans to be a dentist. A member of the 2019-2020 President’s Leadership Class, Hunt’s activities include being on the Savage Storm Cheer Team, Student Government Association, and Alumni Legacy Leader.

-- **Oliver Spiller** of Fredericksburg, Virginia, is pursuing a degree in Aviation as a Professional Pilot. He is a member of the Cherokee Nation, and a member of the 2019-2020 President’s Leadership Class. Spiller is a Alumni Legacy Leader, and also spends time volunteering for J127 Ministries in Durant. He is also a leader for the Student Bible Center.

-- **Andre “Dee” Johnson II**, is from Red Oak, Texas, and is studying business. He is a captain of the Southeastern Savage Storm football team and a Representative for SAAC. Johnson has also been appointed to the University’s Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee.

-- **Delanie Brooke Cooper** of Colbert is pursuing a degree in Biology. A member of the 2019-2020 President’s Leadership Class, Cooper is a Council Representative for Alumni Legacy Leaders, Senator for Student Government Association, North Hall Council Member, and Resident Assistant for Shearer Hall. Other activities includes Pre-Med Club, Sigma Sigma Sigma Sorority, and Baptist Collegiate Ministry.

Darrin Wade makes transition from theater to medicine

When many people reach a certain age in life, they make a career change. For Darrin Wade, such a decision came at the relatively young age of 28.

Saying that he has always “wanted to help people,” Wade is the midst of transitioning from theater teacher to physician.

But that’s getting ahead of the story.

Wade, a Houston native, graduated from Alief Kerr High School, a magnet school, where he was involved in theater, among other activities. He then moved to the Sherman-Denison area, where his father is a pulmonologist. (His older sister is a cancer research nurse in Dallas).

It was while working on various productions at the Sherman Community Playhouse that Wade first heard about a school nearby called Southeastern Oklahoma State University.

“I met some students there and they told me about Southeastern,” Wade, now 30, said recently.

And the next thing you know, he was in Durant, majoring in Technical Theatre Design, with a minor in Computer Science.

“I was very fortunate in that Dell McLain (director of theater), Riley Risso Coker (director of dance), and Dr. Aaron Adair (theater professor) provided me with different avenues to be successful,” Wade said. “The work ethic I learned at Southeastern was also important to my development. Southeastern gives students the tools to begin their journey in life, and that’s what I would tell high school students today, that ‘this is the absolute best place to start your journey.’”

While immersing himself in theater at Southeastern, specifically lighting design, Wade found time to serve as a True Blue Student Ambassador. He would also return in later years to work at the Oklahoma Shakespearean Festival in the summers.

Wade earned his bachelor degree (magna cum laude) in 2013 and headed for grad school in southern California (Cal-Irvine), determined, in his words, “to be an accomplished lighting designer in theater.”

In addition to graduate school, Wade gained some valuable experience in lighting, with “gigs” at both Universal and Disney theme parks.

“I liked the culture out in California, but at the same time, I missed Texas and Oklahoma,” he said. “Although I am from Houston, I consider Durant to be my hometown now. People will go out of their way to be friendly and to help you. It’s a step beyond southern hospitality in Durant.”

So after three years out west and with master’s degree in hand, Wade traveled back to Texas, searching for a job in education. He found it, teaching theater arts at Marble Falls High School, near Austin.

“After two years (of teaching), I decided it was time to sit down and have a hard talk with myself,” he recalled. “People go to the theater to feel better, but I wanted to do something to actually make people feel better. My father always said to follow your dreams.....”

So Wade found himself back in his “hometown” of Durant, working on a third degree, this time in Biology-Biological Health. Administrators/professors he cites as influences are Dr. Teresa Golden, Dr. Brad Ludrick, Dr. Diane Dixon, and Dr. Ning Wu.

Wade will graduate in December (summa cum laude) with plans to attend medical school and to eventually become an emergency room physician.



Darrin Wade is completing his third college degree, with plans to attend medical school.



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Commencement reimagined

(continued from page 1)

By no means is their work and dedication leading to a college degree lessened by the circumstances of not having a formal ceremony.”

SOSU 2020 COMMENCEMENT REIMAGINED will go live on the Southeastern website homepage www.se.edu on Saturday, December 12 at 10 a.m.

The event will include pre-recorded comments from President Newsom; Vice President for Academic Affairs Teresa Golden, who will read the names of the honor graduates; Vice President for Student Affairs Liz McCraw, who will read the names of all other graduates; and Alumni Association President Andrea Rogers Mersiovsky. These remarks will be filmed in a stage setting.

In addition, in mid-November, graduates had the opportunity to have their official graduation photo taken on the stage.

Also, the University will be recognizing the graduates in a unique way online. Each graduate will have their very own webpage where family, friends, and the University community can post written and video messages of congratulations. Photos and other information may also be uploaded to the webpages, and graduates will be able to share the site and photos through various social media platforms.



Twelfth Night performance

Theatre at Southeastern presented William Shakespeare's comedy "Twelfth Night" in a one-act format at the amphitheater. The performances were held on the nights of November 13-14.