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A-State Howler

A-State Alumnus Moves to Puerto Rico 4 Months Before Hurricane Fiona

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EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Arkansas State alumnus moved to Puerto Rico days after May graduation and months before Category 3 hurricane Fiona devastated Puerto Rico leaving residents without power or running water.

On Sunday, the tropical storm changed status and was officially declared a hurricane. The storm reached landfall at about 3:20 p.m., knocking out most of Puerto Rico's power and running water, putting the island under a flash flood warning. Certain areas were met with 12-18 inches of rain. Some reported as much as 30 inches and 115 mph wind. Officials predicted the storm could last up to two-days.

Residents were warned to stay inside. Some areas may experience mudslides and landslides. The hurricane is expected to reach a Category 4 classification before it is over.

Hurricane Fiona has left five dead across the Caribbean as of Tue, Sept 20.

Five years ago, Puerto Rico was hit by Hurricane Maria killing thousands of residents and leaving a lot of the island's infrastructure destroyed. Some were still recovering from Maria when Fiona hit.

Hurricane Maria caused \$90 billion in damages, the third costliest hurricane in U.S. history and the deadliest Atlantic hurricane since Mitch in 1998.

John Dellorto moved to Puerto Rico on May 21

after his official graduation ceremony on May 7. Dellorto is from Bryant, Arkansas and majored in Business.

Originally, his plan was to enlist into the U.S Marine's until he found an opportunity to move with his church, Central Baptist's 747 College Ministry, for mission work. He is the only A-State student out of the bunch to be currently living there.

Dellorto lives in an apartment above an elderly couple's garage that is behind their house. He doesn't have power or running water.

"Where I live it's more northeast on the island. The hurricane passed southwest of the island so we didn't get as bad winds or rain. There were areas that got two feet of rain within a day. There was a lot of flooding."

Where Dellorto is currently staying; he experienced little to no property damage. He will travel to one of the nearby places affected to help with relief efforts.

"I'm not sure how my afternoon is going to line up because I am going with a group later this afternoon (Tuesday Sept. 20) with members of my church and a Southern Baptist organization to help with relief and to pass out meals. I know I'm gonna have an eye opening experience because where I am on the island it's really not that bad."

Dellorto began collecting runoff water when their running water went out to use in the meantime.

"The stuff we are so used to in

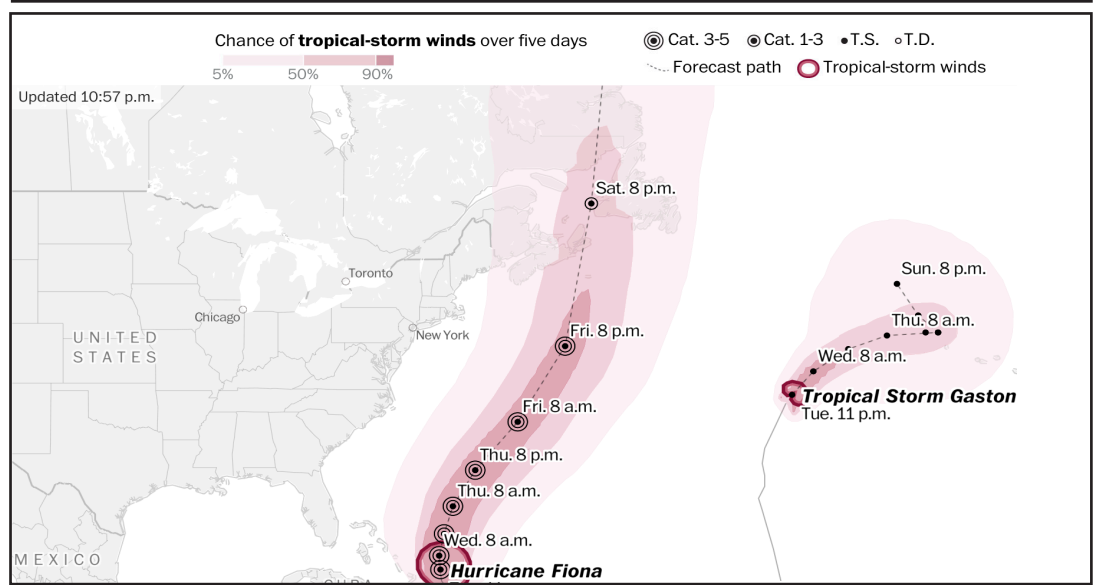
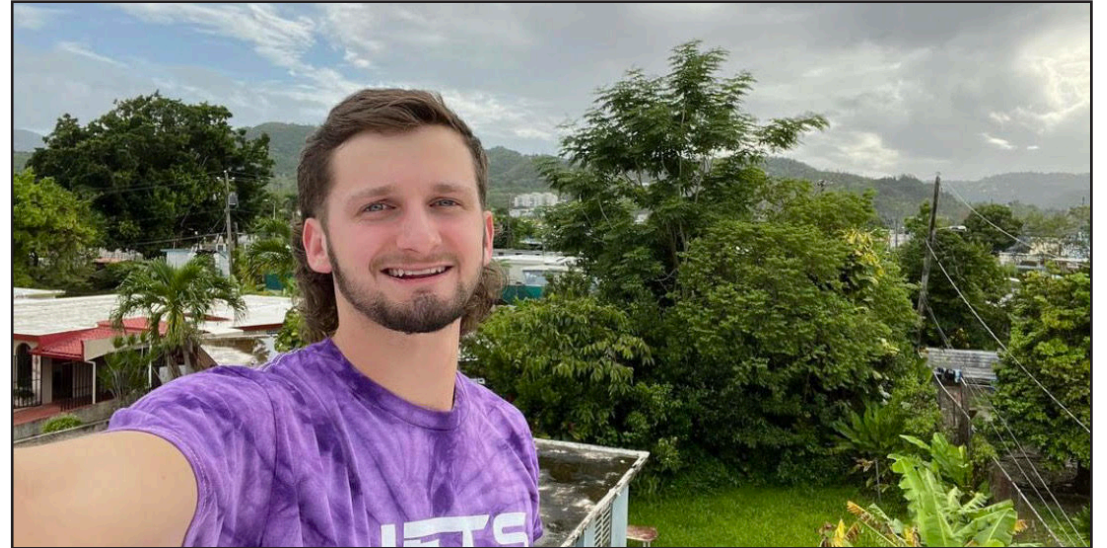
the states are things that people are so used to going without here," Dellorto said. "One thing I never thought about was not being able to flush my toilet without running water. I've been filling an ice chest I keep in my bathtub so when I flush I can fill my toilet tank back up. The power goes out here even when there's not hurricanes and that's so normal here"

Puerto Rico has been hit by several hurricanes and earthquakes over the years making repair efforts more difficult. The islands have also been in an economic crisis for over a decade. In 2016, U.S. Congress passed "Puerto Rico Oversight Management and Economic Stability Act" to help with the island's debts.

Puerto Rico requires a lot of investment in new infrastructure.

"I came to the realization that there's not a huge distance between the States and Puerto Rico but there's a lot of differences like, losing power often does not happen in the states, things like roads not being in good repair, on an infrastructure level it's so different here. Five years ago there was a huge hurricane and then there were earthquakes, it's hard to improve when you're always in repair mode," Dellorto said.

For more information and updates on Dellorto's experience in Puerto Rico and the hurricane visit astatetheherald.com



TOP PHOTO COURTESY OF JOHN DELLORTO.
BOTTOM GRAPHIC COURTESY OF WASHINGTON POST

Top Photo: A-State Alumnus John Dellorto in Puerto Rico.
Bottom Graphic: A Map of path Hurricane Fiona is on.
Side Map: Puerto Rico's location next to the United States.



Arkansas State University reports record-breaking enrollment numbers

RACHEL RUDD
NEWS EDITOR

Arkansas State University ranks second in the state in enrollment numbers, reporting a new record of 14,109 students after its 11th day of class census.

"More than once I've had someone tell me that 'campus seems busy again' or 'events are bigger,' and it adds up to making A-State a great place to be," said chancellor Dr. Todd Shields in a press release.

Over the past three years, A-State experienced a decline in enrollment. According to an A-State press release, the upturn is also "highlighted by growth in first-year students on campus, and an increase of over 100 students living in campus housing."

In addition to on-campus growth, the university also saw increases in the number of first-time international students, Campus Queretaro and online students.

"Foreign policy changes allowed more international students to come to the US," said Dr. Thilla Sivakumaran, vice chancellor for enrollment management and global outreach.

"During the pandemic, everything was closed down, but US embassies were open in those areas. More people applied and we have admitted them."

Sivakumaran stated the reason for such a large class is A-State's diverse portfolio of students.

"Not just focusing on domestic students, but also international, online and locations like Beebe and even Mexico, if you start adding all those together, it gives us our second largest enrollment," Sivakumaran said.

A-State made changes in its recruitment techniques as well. A-State is placing recruiters in more parts of the state, such as Memphis, Tennessee and central and northwest Arkansas.

"They live there... so it's easier for them to build relationships in those locations. (They can) visit with school counselors and build those relationships because the school counselors are key to recruiting students," Sivakumaran said.

Even with the increased numbers, A-State is not at maximum housing capacity. The university considers 2,000 freshmen the maximum capacity. Currently, A-State has around 1,000 freshmen.

A-State is also experiencing its second best first-to-second year retention rate with 77.6%.

"Anytime you have a positive return, it just means that the next year's class will benefit from it as long as you bring in the same or higher number of students," Sivakumaran said.

A-State plans to continue this trend by employing extensive digital marketing campaigns. They currently have a recruiter in Dallas who serves the east Texas area, as

well as the increased number of recruiters within Arkansas.

"It really comes down to continuing to do what we started last year, but just refining it. Then being conscientious of where the demographic shifts are, where the market is and really building relationships with school counselors," Sivakumaran said.

A-State is one of only three schools in the state whose enrollment numbers grew, the others being Southern Arkansas University and the University of Arkansas.

"UCA is now down under 10,000 (students), UALR is down under 10,000, Arkansas Tech is down under 10,000," said Dr. Bill Smith, chief communications officer. "We're growing, but it's not like Fayetteville growth. But we are moving in the right direction."

While Smith and Sivakumaran weren't sure what prompted such growth, both thought A-State's on-campus, online, graduate, international



PHOTO COURTESY OF ARKANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Dr. Thilla Sivakumaran.

and Campus Queretaro offerings brought in many new students. "The difference for us is that our portfolio is very different from Fayetteville's," Sivakumaran said. "We have multiple ways to get an A-State degree. It's important to create multiple pathways to get a degree where other people are just invested in mainly one pathway."