

Martha Spack's commitment to student success

BENJAMIN McDOWELL

STAFF WRITER

Her career has brought her to one of Arkansas State University's highest student-focused leadership roles, but Martha Spack's influence extends far beyond her title as vice chancellor for student affairs and dean of students.

Spack grew up in a traditional southern household with two parents who were both educators. She has two brothers and said her upbringing was rooted in strong family values.

"It was wonderful," Spack said. "I had really strict parents, and I think that defined the

things I got to do and did not get to do. But the lessons I learned about character, respecting other people, working hard and fulfilling your dreams are still foundational principles that guide my path both personally and professionally."

As vice chancellor for student affairs and dean of Students at A-State, Spack continues to build a legacy centered on student success. She said she envisions a vibrant campus life with diverse engagement opportunities that emphasize both personal and academic growth.

"The most life-changing moment in my career was

earning my doctorate," Spack said. "I did not fully understand what that meant at the time."

Spack said while she has many fond memories as a student at Arkansas State, she was not heavily involved in campus organizations or events. She said she defines success as more than grades or involvement, emphasizing that it depends on what students invest in their education.

"If a student feels like they are developing personally and academically, then that is success," Spack said. "That looks different for everybody. Some students are very involved

outside the classroom, and others come to class, soak up the information and then leave to work or take care of other responsibilities. Neither pathway is better than the other."

Outside of work, Spack said she enjoys spending time with her husband and her 15-year-old son, Joseph. She said she also enjoys reading novels on her Kindle and traveling with her family.

Spack's influence extends beyond her family to those who work alongside her.

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Martha Spack, vice chancellor for Student Affairs and dean Of students.

The new A-State university website has students howling

SAMI HAMMAKER

SPECIAL TO THE HERALD

The launch of the new Arkansas State University website has sparked discussions among students in classrooms across campus. Some say the website's modernization has improved aesthetics; however, moving certain navigation tools has frustrated others searching for resources.

Among these students is a campus student worker, Kaydence Walls, a junior communication studies major from Percy, Arkansas. "As a student, there wasn't

a lot of support or advice that could come from faculty with the questions you had in navigating it," Walls said.

Walls said she's not the only one having difficulty with finding things on the website.

"A lot of people don't know how to navigate the website," Walls said.

However, Walls said she likes the new menu page. She said it makes frequently used links readily available.

Vice Chancellor for Distance Education & Technology Chris Boothman and Chief Marketing and Communications Officer Todd Clark led the launch

of the revamped website.

They said they understand the frustration many users may have with the new site.

Clark said the biggest challenge related to launching any website serving a university the size of A-State is the volume and number of stakeholders involved.

"You've got prospective students and their families. You've got current students and employees that use the website every day," Clark said. "With a website of this magnitude, that has a large variety of audiences, we're trying to make sure that we're putting the right content

online and prioritizing the audiences in the right way."

Boothman said the previous iteration of the website launched in 2012. He said updating to a new website became a greater challenge every year that passed.

Clark said having a plan to address the challenges and issues that will inevitably come along is a necessary part of building a new website.

"We can monitor analytics and feedback that we receive from the campus community. The institution has invested in resources to actively manage and maintain the website going forward," Clark said.

"We didn't flip the switch, turn it on and walk away. There are four or five employees that spend all day on the website."

Clark said the website will continue to evolve and adapt and the university is invested in maintaining it.

One addition to the new website is the AI chatbot named Howl.

Boothman said A-State acknowledged concerns students had about the possibility of misinformation when interacting with artificial intelligence and, to address it, trained the AI chatbot to retrieve information

only from the website and the knowledge database.

Boothman said one of the most valuable features of the chatbot is its ability to notify various offices around campus.

"If there are any trigger words the student or any user puts in chat, we actually have notifications set up to actually go to different offices," Boothman said.

Overall, Clark and Boothman are pleased with their efforts. "It will continue to evolve. It will continue to adapt, and the university is invested in maintaining it in perpetuity," Clark said.

BSA hosts campus bible study event

EVIE ELLIS

SPECIAL TO THE HERALD

Students gathered for a night of worship and Bible study hosted by the Black Student Association (BSA) and Arise Nations-Jonesboro to conclude their week of on-campus activities.

Earlier in the week, BSA hosted multiple themed events inspired by the television series "Black-ish," including "Unfiltered-ish," an open forum discussion, "CEO-ish," a business expo highlighting Black entrepreneurship, and finally "Celebrity-ish," a talent show featuring celebrity "wannabes." The Bible study closed the week off as the final event in the lineup, shifting the focus from entertainment to faith.

Cabrina Pope, BSA president and senior marketing major from Little Rock, said the timing was intentional.

"We planned this event on purpose so we could finish on a high note and inspire students," Pope said. "With the climate and everything that's been happening on campus, it's important for everyone to come together and build community."

Worship opened the night, led by Kenya Miller. Arise guest Terrell Rogers said Miller's voice first impressed him when they met at the Miss Essence scholarship pageant in November.

Afterward, students teamed up with different members of Arise for a Bible trivia game.



Members of BSA and Arise Nations-Jonesboro who attended the Bible study that ended the week of events put on by BSA.

Beyond the activities, the event was also an opportunity for students to reflect on faith and find community on campus.

Kirsten Vaughn, BSA vice president and senior interdisciplinary studies major from Little Rock, said putting God first in all things is important.

"It's also important to find a community on campus, especially since we all come from different places. You might not have a church here, but it's good to have a group," Vaughn said.

Ian Buchanan, BSA advisor who lives in Jonesboro, said he hopes the event will have a lasting impact on students.

"Tonight, we hope to introduce Jesus in a relatable way. Whether you've been to church your whole life or don't know anything about it, everyone can find common ground through

this event," Buchanan said.

The sermon, given by Rogers, centered on the theme "I Love You, I Think," asking students to consider the difference between real love for others and simply loving how someone can make them feel.

Rogers said they encouraged students to practice love even when angry, centering on faith that requires the use of self-control. Rogers said attendees are called to reflect God's love in all their actions, even during arguments or "clapbacks," which received both laughter and groans from the crowd as students reacted to the saying.

"Think about how you love," Rogers said, finishing the central lesson of the night.

Buchanan and Rogers said they plan to host more programs that bring the campus together in meaningful ways.

CAMPUS CRIME



ALLIE CARSON

NEWS EDITOR

Feb. 15 | 9:50 p.m.

Officer Kevin Willis was dispatched to Embassy Suites in reference to an unresponsive male in the bathroom.

Upon arrival, Willis made contact with the front desk hostess, who said there was a male unresponsive inside the bathroom and an employee was attempting to get him to respond.

Willis made his way to the bathroom. Upon entry, the male was beginning to get up from the floor. The male unlocked the stall door and stepped out. He was later identified as the suspect. While speaking with him, Willis detected a strong odor of intoxicant emitting from the suspect.

Willis asked the suspect whether he was experiencing any medical issues, and he said he was not. Willis then asked the suspect if he wanted to be checked out by medical, and he declined.

The suspect said the last time he consumed alcohol was a few hours ago.

Embassy Suites staff said they wanted the suspect to leave the facility. At that time, Willis escorted the suspect out of the building.

Once outside, Willis obtained identification and ran it. The suspect returned with an active warrant out of Pulaski County. Willis relayed

the warrant information to dispatch and requested dispatch send a hit confirmation to Pulaski County to determine if they wanted a handover.

While waiting for confirmation, Willis' assisting officer arrived and made contact with the suspect. The suspect said he was calling for a ride.

Willis then re-entered the lobby and spoke with the front desk staff to determine if they wanted the suspect criminally charged from the property. The front desk hostess said her manager would make that decision. Once the manager arrived, he said the suspect was not being disruptive and only wanted him to leave the property.

Shortly after, dispatch said Pulaski County confirmed they wanted the suspect detained and transferred to the Craighead County Detention Center to await the handover.

At that time, Willis had the arrestee step to the front of his patrol unit. Willis conducted a pat search for weapons and contraband.

The arrestee was secured in the patrol unit and escorted to the Craighead County Detention Center.

She said when she returned to her dorm room later that night in University Hall, there was also hot sauce spread on her dorm room door as well.

After checking the camera system, Lawson determined there was no camera angle available to see who put the hot sauce on her door.

Feb. 11 | 4:55 p.m.

Officer Caleb Lawson was dispatched to the police department for a report.

Lawson made contact with the complainant, who said she had filed a report with JPD regarding an incident that happened at her job, where she said Suspect One and Suspect Two had spilled a drink and spread hot sauce on her car.

She said when she returned to her dorm room later that night in University Hall, there was also hot sauce spread on her dorm room door as well.

After checking the camera system, Lawson determined there was no camera angle available to see who put the hot sauce on her door.