

Your gift of education changes the future.

FOUNDATION NEWS

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**FAIRMONT STATE
FOUNDATION**

West Virginia residents may obtain a summary of the registration and financial documents from the Secretary of State, State Capitol, Charleston, West Virginia 25305. Registration does not imply endorsement. A portion of all donations is used to further advancement efforts on behalf of Fairmont State University.



Fairmont State University celebrated its most recent graduating class on Dec. 13

Fairmont State University celebrated the achievements of the Fall 2025 graduating class during commencement ceremonies held on Saturday, December 13, in the Feaster Center. Two ceremonies took place: a morning ceremony honoring graduates from the College of Business & Aviation, the College of Liberal Arts, and the Regents Bachelor of Arts program, followed by an afternoon ceremony recognizing graduates from the College of Education, Health and Human Performance, the College of Nursing, and the College of Science & Technology. University President Mike Davis praised the graduates' determination and resilience, as well as the families, faculty, and staff who supported them along the way.

The morning ceremony featured a keynote address by Mitch Moore, a 2016 Fairmont State graduate in Accounting and Business Administration and a fourth-generation alumnus. A former Student Government President, Moore went on to graduate first in his class from West Virginia University's College of Law and now practices with Steptoe & Johnson PLLC. He continues to serve Fairmont State and the legal community through leadership roles with the Alumni Association and the West Virginia State Bar.

The afternoon ceremony included remarks from Gia Deasy, a distinguished alumna and recently retired Special Education Director for Marion County Schools. With more than 40 years of experience in special education, Deasy remains active as an adjunct faculty member at Fairmont State and a statewide education consultant. She was honored this year with several awards, including Fairmont State's Alumna of Achievement, and she has accepted a nomination to join the Fairmont State Foundation Board of Directors.



An Enduring Investment in Education: John Norton Anderson's Fairmont State story and his gift to future generations

For John Norton Anderson, Fairmont State University, then known as Fairmont State College, was not simply a place to earn a degree. It was the turning point that made a life of learning, discovery, and global opportunity possible.

Dr. Anderson says it plainly: without Fairmont State, he never would have had a career. The first in his family to graduate from high school, he arrived at the University as a commuter student from Mannington with ambition, curiosity, and limited means. His search for scholarships had not yielded results, and his dreams of larger universities felt out of reach. What Fairmont State offered instead was something far more powerful – access, rigor, and belief in a young student's willingness to work toward a college degree.

That belief was tested almost immediately. In his first English course, Dr. Anderson confidently answered a question – and was wrong. Professor Haddon Rhodes walked to the window, mimed tossing something outside, and told him, "Mr. Anderson, there was your A, right out the window." It was 8 o'clock in the morning on his first day of class, and the lesson was unforgettable. Fairmont State, though smaller in size, demanded excellence.

"That woke me up," Dr. Anderson recalls. "You think a smaller school will be easier. It isn't. It's rigorous, and it prepares you."

That preparation proved impactful. As a chemistry major, Dr. Anderson found mentors at Fairmont State who shaped his future, including Professor Elizabeth Swiger. His time on campus did more than teach him chemistry; it taught him discipline, confidence, and the expectation that learning is earned through effort.

After graduating, Dr. Anderson moved on to the University of Pittsburgh, initially planning to earn a master's degree and quickly enter the workforce. Another wake-up call followed, and another pivotal choice. Learning that a master's degree would take longer than he expected, he opted instead to pursue a PhD. It was a decision rooted in the foundation

Fairmont State had already helped him to form – persistence, ambition, and respect for education.

Over the course of his career, Dr. Anderson worked for multiple companies as a polymer chemist, product developer, and leader in friction materials. His work took him around the world, including years living and working in France. Later, he added an executive master's degree in business, further reinforcing his belief that education is a lifelong endeavor.

"Education is everything," he says. "Not just university education, but learning on the job, learning through experience, learning throughout your life."

It is this philosophy that inspired Dr. Anderson to provide a gift of \$25,000 to create a scholarship at Fairmont State University. The John Norton Anderson (Class of 1959) Endowed Scholarship will be available to students who have graduated from North Marion High School and intend to pursue a degree program within the College of Science & Technology.

The reason for the scholarship is deeply personal. Fairmont State was available when he needed it most, and that access opened the door to all that followed.

"Dr. Anderson's generosity reflects a deep understanding of what access to education can make possible," said Marissa Mauro, Director of Development at the Fairmont State Foundation. "His investment is not only financial – it is a vote of confidence in our students and in the life-changing power of a Fairmont State education. Because of donors like Dr. Anderson, our students are able to focus on learning, discovery, and growth, knowing that someone believes in their potential."

Dr. Anderson's scholarship emphasizes the pursuit of science and technology pathways, not because every student must follow his path, but because he believes strongly in the value of scientific education as a gateway to opportunity. More importantly, he hopes recipients understand that Fairmont State is a beginning, not an end.

“Fairmont State University is a regional driver when it comes to providing accessible education, and Dr. Anderson’s story is a powerful reminder of what access to education can achieve,” said Fairmont State University President Mike Davis. “This is more than a scholarship – it’s an opportunity for students to transform their lives. His generosity ensures that students who share his determination will have the same chance to begin a journey of learning and discovery. We are deeply grateful for his commitment to opening doors for future generations.”

His commitment to giving back is grounded in gratitude and perspective. As a student, his total cost of attending Fairmont State was about \$500, an investment that yielded a lifetime of return. He remembers hitchhiking to class, relying on neighbors for rides, and being supported in countless small ways by people who believed his education mattered.

“That support made all the difference,” he says. “If you see a kid standing on the corner with a book, pick them up. Support students however you can.”

Now retired, Dr. Anderson sees his philanthropy as both a responsibility and an opportunity – to honor the mentors, neighbors, and institutions that shaped his life, including Norton Pearson, the neighbor whose encouragement led him to Fairmont State and whose name he proudly carries as his own.

For fellow donors and those considering a gift, Dr. Anderson’s message is simple and sincere: education changes lives. Sometimes it begins with a scholarship. Sometimes with a professor who demands more. Always with someone willing to give.

For Dr. Anderson, Fairmont State University was the place that made everything else possible. Through its access, rigor, and belief in a determined young student, the University opened doors that led to a lifetime of achievement and discovery. Today, his generosity ensures that same opportunity will be available to students who, like he once did, simply need a place to begin.

“Education is everything. Not just university education, but learning on the job, learning through experience, learning throughout your life.”





DAY OF GIVING NEWS



2026 EDITION

Save the date for Fairmont State University Day of Giving on Thursday, February 26. Make a gift using the enclosed envelope or scan the QR code on Day of Giving to give online.

On Day of Giving, we invite our Falcon Family to come together in support of our students and programs. Whether you are a longtime supporter or making your first gift, this is a meaningful opportunity to give back. Every gift, at any amount, helps support scholarships, academic programs, campus experiences, and the students who will shape the future.



Fairmont State's Day of Giving returns Feb. 26 with a goal of \$800,000

On Thursday, February 26, 2026, Fairmont State University will once again bring together alumni, donors, friends, faculty, staff, and students for its annual Day of Giving – a 24-hour celebration of Falcon pride and collective philanthropy. This year's ambitious goal is \$800,000, which will provide critical support for students and programs across campus.

Day of Giving is a university-wide effort benefiting nearly 100 giving areas, including academic programs, scholarships, athletics, student organizations, and student success initiatives. Gifts of all sizes make a meaningful difference, helping to strengthen the Fairmont State experience for current and future Falcons.

A hallmark of Day of Giving is the generosity of donors who sponsor matching gifts and challenges, amplifying the impact of each contribution by doubling or even tripling its value. These opportunities accelerate

progress toward the goal while allowing donors to see their support go even further. This generosity helps ensure scholarships, academics, athletics, and student success initiatives continue to thrive.

With special events, a 24-hour livestream, and countless opportunities to support what matters most, Day of Giving offers something for every Falcon. Join us on February 26 and be part of a collective effort that continues to shape the future of Fairmont State University.

Give online at <https://FalconsGive.org/dm4> or contact the Fairmont State Foundation at 304-534-8786 for more information.



GIVING AREA PREVIEW

2026 EDITION

The following are just a few of the nearly 100 giving areas participating in Day of Giving this year.

Student Success Scholarships

Student success scholarships (Access Scholarship and the General Scholarship Fund) provide vital support to students whether they're receiving need-based assistance or facing unexpected financial challenges that could prevent them from completing their degrees. These funds often make the difference between a student staying enrolled or having to step away from their education. Every contribution directly impacts a student's ability to move forward and achieve their academic goals.



Athletic Scholarships

Your support means more than you can imagine for our student-athletes to achieve success.

The greatest hurdle we face is recruiting – and recruiting the best and the brightest takes financial resources in the form of scholarships. However, your support is vital to allowing this to occur. Your support will allow us to SOAR to even greater heights!



Women's Basketball - Athletics

We are so thankful for all of your support. All of you are the backbone of our program and we truly cannot thank you enough! We are looking to fund a trip to Hawaii next season. We were fortunate enough to do this 4 years ago and it was an unbelievable experience for our athletes. We look forward to being able to continue to enhance our student athlete experience and need your help! Thank you again and we look forward to creating more memories with you!



Biology - College of Science & Technology

For this year's Day of Giving, the Biology department's primary goal is to purchase a new set of light microscopes for use across multiple laboratory courses. These essential tools help students understand cell structure, physiology, genetics, and other core life science concepts. Donor support will enhance hands-on learning and ensure every student develops the skills and confidence needed for success in the classroom and beyond.



Contact the Fairmont State Foundation for more information: 304-534-8786 or fsf@fsufoundation.org

Club Sports

Fairmont State University Club Sports thrive on the dynamic energy and dedication of student members who spearhead every facet of their respective clubs. The cornerstone of a successful program lies in the commitment, engagement, and participation of our students. Fairmont State Campus Recreation sponsors five club sports teams, providing them with advisement, facilities, and resources to compete at the highest level against other colleges and universities.



Folklife Center - Arts & Culture

The Frank and Jane Gabor West Virginia Folklife Center provides students, community members, and faculty/staff with opportunities to research, interact with folk artists, and see performances and exhibitions. Additionally, programs like the Museum Studies and Folklore minors and Capstone projects at the Folklife Center prepare students for meaningful work in museums, archives, libraries, tourism, education, and event planning.



Education - College of Education, Health & Human Performance

Before stepping into their own classrooms, graduating education students must pass Praxis tests that measure necessary knowledge and skills. Choosing to support an education student by sponsoring their Praxis test fees alleviates the final barrier that stands between our graduates and their careers. Please consider making a gift today in support of a future teacher. Your gift will enable these graduates to confidently step into their own classrooms to pass on knowledge to the next generation.



Football - Athletics

With the ever-changing climate of college football, the support from our community and our alumni is vital to continue to grow the program here at Fairmont State and build off back-to-back winning seasons. Fairmont State Football is asking that you help support our continued growth of our program. Every dollar will go to improving our student-athlete experience. We want to make Fairmont State a destination university and we cannot do that without the continued support of our Falcon Family.



Give online on February 26: <https://FalconsGive.org/dm4>

Honors Program - Student Support and Success

The Honors Program's travel experience is central to its mission of fostering cultural awareness and global citizenship. For more than 25 years, these courses have combined classroom learning with immersive travel, often offering students their first opportunity to explore beyond the place they call home. This year, the Honors Program seeks support for its 2026 trip to Rome, Italy. Donor contributions help keep travel affordable and ensure more students can participate in this transformative experience.



College of Nursing

The mission of Fairmont State University College of Nursing is to serve as a leader in improving the health of West Virginia and the global community through a commitment to excellence and innovation. The school's vision is to produce graduates who can provide care for and change the health of the world. Your support will provide funding to assist nursing students who are experiencing financial burdens and to assist with faculty development.



Open Source Intelligence Exchange (OSIX) - College of Liberal Arts

The Open Source Intelligence Exchange (OSIX) is dedicated to advancing national security through the innovative collection, analysis, and dissemination of open-source intelligence. Your donations directly support our ongoing collaboration with various intelligence projects, ensuring our analysts receive hands-on experience with real-world applications. This practical experience, combined with our rigorous academic program, continues to set our graduates apart in the field.



Women in Aviation - College of Business & Aviation

Through the Women in Aviation program, students gain access to one of the most influential professional experiences available to aspiring pilots and aviation leaders: the Women in Aviation International Conference, taking place this year in the Dallas-Fort Worth area. For women entering a field where fewer than 7 percent of pilots nationwide are female, this conference is far more than a trip. It is a gateway to mentorship, professional networks, and real-world preparation.



How scholarships empower leaders like Riley Neal

Riley Neal did not come to Fairmont State University to blend into the background. From the moment she arrived, she began building a collegiate experience defined by academic rigor, leadership, and service – made possible through scholarship support that freed her to fully engage in campus life.

A triple major in National Security and Intelligence, Criminal Justice, and Political Science, Riley exemplifies the kind of interdisciplinary, high-impact student Fairmont State is positioned to cultivate. Her academic path is demanding but intentional. She chose Fairmont State specifically for its National Security and Intelligence program, which is unique to Fairmont State and emphasizes applied learning taught by faculty with real-world experience.

Riley points to professors such as Dr. Todd Clark, a former Defense Intelligence Agency professional, whose career in federal intelligence provides students with firsthand insight into national security work beyond textbooks and theory. In small classes, Riley and her peers are not anonymous; they are mentored and challenged as individuals. These close relationships have proven invaluable as she prepares for graduation and her next step toward law school.

One of the defining experiences of Riley's time at Fairmont State has been her involvement in Model United Nations, an organization that brings global policy and diplomacy into sharp focus. Each year, the team travels to New York City to compete at the National Model United Nations Conference, representing a designated country and engaging with students from around the world.

In these competitions, Riley has represented nations such as Bahrain and Guatemala, spending months researching political systems, foreign policy, and international priorities. Her work has included position papers and committee assignments focused on international crime and cooperation, allowing her to merge her interests in criminal justice and global security. At the conference, students engage in rigorous debate, public speaking, and coalition building alongside peers from across the globe.

The experience is transformative. Model UN builds confidence, sharpens communication skills, and exposes students to perspectives far beyond their own classrooms. It is also a clear example of how donor-supported programs extend the boundaries

of Fairmont State's campus, preparing students for leadership in an interconnected world.

Riley's leadership extends well beyond Model UN. She has been deeply involved in Student Government, serving on the executive board and acting as a student representative to the Fairmont State Board of Governors. In this role, she worked directly with university leadership, faculty, and staff, gaining experience in governance, policy, and advocacy that few undergraduates encounter.

She is also an active member of the National Security and Intelligence Student Association (NSISA), which brings career-focused opportunities directly to campus. Through this organization, Riley has helped host representatives from the CIA, FBI, and other federal agencies, as well as elected officials and policy leaders. These events provide students with access to professional pathways that might otherwise feel distant or inaccessible.

Riley is candid about the role scholarships have played in her success. With her tuition covered, she can focus on academics, leadership, and service rather than financial stress. That support has also allowed her to work on campus as an admissions ambassador, guiding prospective students and their families through the same college decisions she once faced.

For donors, Riley's story illustrates the direct and lasting impact of philanthropic support. Scholarships do more than reduce tuition costs. They create leaders. They open doors to global experiences. They empower students to serve their communities and prepare for careers that shape public life.

Riley Neal is not just a student success story – she is a return on investment that continues to grow.



Riley Neal pictured first row, second from left.

Endowed scholarship creates lasting support for Fairmont State nursing students

Fairmont State alumna Kim Toothman and her husband, Don, have made a generous gift to the Fairmont State Foundation to establish the Kimberly Lannan Toothman Endowed Nursing Scholarship. Rooted in gratitude, service, and a deep connection to West Virginia, the scholarship reflects a lifetime shaped by nursing, education, and community. This scholarship will provide support for nursing students at Fairmont State University for generations to come.

"The Toothmans' generosity is a powerful expression of belief in our students and in the future of healthcare in West Virginia," said Dr. Anne Bolyard, Fairmont State Foundation President. "This scholarship will open doors for aspiring nurses, easing financial barriers while inspiring students to pursue lives of service, compassion, and excellence. We are deeply grateful for their commitment to Fairmont State University."

For Kim, nursing is more than a profession – it is a calling that defined some of the most meaningful years of her life. Her career as a nurse created lasting bonds with colleagues, physicians, parents, and even former patients. "I'm very blessed to have worked as a nurse," she shared. "By creating the scholarship, my hope is to give opportunities to others so that they may have similar life experiences."

Supporting Fairmont State was a natural choice. The couple grew up in West Virginia near Fairmont, and Kim is a proud Fairmont State graduate. "Go Falcons!" she added enthusiastically. The university played a pivotal role in shaping her confidence and sense of possibility. Once a shy student from a small West Virginia town, she recalls how being accepted into Fairmont State's nursing program changed her life trajectory. "I learned that I could dream big and actually achieve it," she said.

That belief carried her far beyond the classroom. Kim went on to serve as a neonatal ICU nurse, flying in helicopters across North and South Carolina to transport critically ill premature infants for specialized care. The experience cemented her passion for her profession and underscored the profound impact skilled, compassionate nurses can have on families during their most vulnerable moments.

Although their careers and lives took them out of state, the Toothmans remain deeply connected to West Virginia. "We will always be West Virginians first and foremost," the Toothmans shared. That enduring pride informs their hope that scholarship recipients will not only find joy and fulfillment in nursing but will

also consider building their careers in West Virginia, strengthening healthcare across the state.

"We are deeply grateful to Dr. and Mrs. Toothman for their extraordinary generosity," said Fairmont State University President Mike Davis. "Their gift will help prepare skilled, compassionate nurses who are essential to the health and well-being of our communities. The impact of this scholarship will extend far beyond our campus, strengthening healthcare in West Virginia and wherever our graduates serve."

The Toothmans' commitment to nursing is also deeply personal. Their daughter Taylor was born prematurely at just 27 weeks, weighing only 2 pounds, half an ounce, into the very NICU where Kim worked. Thanks to exceptional care, she not only survived but thrived. Today, Taylor is a dentist and orthodontist. "Yes, a dentist named Toothman!" her parents joked. The experience reinforced the life-changing power of compassionate, well-trained healthcare professionals.

To nursing students and recipients of the Kimberly Lannan Toothman Endowed Nursing Scholarship, Kim offers heartfelt encouragement: "Though grades are very important, they are not the sole determinant of the type of nurse you will be. Compassion and enthusiasm are not graded. Skills will improve with practice as long as there is a will to be an excellent nurse. Don't give up – always move forward."

Through this endowed scholarship, the Toothmans are investing in more than education. They are creating a lasting legacy of care, resilience, and opportunity – one that will empower Fairmont State nursing students to dream big, serve boldly, and make a difference for generations to come.



College of Nursing Pinning Ceremony - Fall 2025



How Fairmont State student Gavin Nichols is learning to lead, teach, and give back

Gavin Nichols did not come to Fairmont State University by accident. He came with a plan, shaped by family influence, financial reality, and a clear sense of purpose. Today, as an elementary education major with a specialization in special education and a dedicated member of the Fairmont State University Bands, Gavin represents the kind of student whose trajectory is strengthened by donor support.

Originally from a rural community in Wirt County, West Virginia, he grew up understanding both the value of education and the challenges of access. From an early age, Gavin saw the patience, creativity, and advocacy required to support students with diverse needs. That exposure helped shape his own professional aspirations long before he ever set foot on a college campus.

When it came time to choose a university, Gavin looked closely at several institutions in West Virginia. Ultimately, Fairmont State stood out. Its education program offered

a clear, well-structured pathway that felt realistic and attainable, and for him, that mattered. He wanted a program that balanced rigor with support, one that would prepare him not only to graduate but to succeed in the classroom.

Affordability was also a factor, and the cost of higher education posed a significant barrier. Scholarship support made the difference between aspiration and reality. Without this financial assistance, attending Fairmont State would not have been possible. It has given him the freedom to fully engage in campus life, academics, and enrichment opportunities.

A skilled woodwind musician, Gavin arrived at Fairmont State with his saxophone in hand and a willingness to contribute wherever needed. Band quickly became more than an extracurricular activity. It became a community and a training ground for building leadership skills and sharing knowledge with his peers.



He speaks with pride about watching first-year students grow more confident and capable over time. Teaching did not feel like an obligation. It felt natural. Many members of the band arrive with varying levels of musical experience, which creates opportunities for peer instruction and mentorship.

Gavin embraces these moments. Each rehearsal and performance becomes another chance to practice the very skills he hopes to use as a future educator.

Looking ahead, Gavin envisions himself remaining in the Fairmont area after graduation. Long-term, he hopes to complete a master's degree and become a school counselor, continuing his work with young students.

For now, he is focused on finishing strong and making the most of every opportunity. When asked what experiences at Fairmont State he is most proud of, Gavin points to leadership, connection, and growth.

Leading a section. Mentoring younger students. Building relationships with fellow education majors and faculty. These are the moments that define his college experience.

Gavin's story is a reminder that philanthropy is not abstract. A gift does not simply fund a line item or sustain a program. It changes a student's daily reality. It allows a future educator to step confidently into classrooms and rehearsal halls, carrying forward both skill and gratitude.

Gavin Nichols is one student, but his journey reflects the broader impact of investing in music and education programs at Fairmont State University. Through scholarship support, donors are not only helping students earn degrees. They are helping shape teachers, mentors, and leaders who will, in turn, shape countless lives across West Virginia and beyond.



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