

TU Insider

May 2019

Important information for students about what's happening at Thomas University

TU recognizes outstanding students

Anna Gray receives TU's top student honor

Students took center stage Friday evening, May 10, as Thomas University honored those graduating with Latin honors and those who earned the top awards in their academic divisions during the annual Honors Ceremony held at the Thomasville Center for the Arts.

This year 90 undergraduates earned Latin honors and received honor cords to wear with the cap and gown during commencement on Saturday, May 11. Other students received awards for being the top undergraduate or graduate student in their academic division.

The President's Award, TU's most prestigious honor presented to a student, went to Anna Gray,

a Psychology major from Devon, England, graduating magna cum laude. Gray was lauded for her academic and athletic accomplishments as well as for her service to other students.

For the past three years, Gray served as a tutor in TU's Academic Resource Center, where students sought her out because of her expertise and patient nature with students.

"She is not only good-humored and friendly, but she also has the ability to gauge a peer's level of knowledge and attitude toward a subject in order to build rapport and confidence in that student," said Robin DePaola, ARC Director. "Several particularly anxious writers have commented that Anna's calm approach to their particular

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Anna Gray, a Psychology major from Devon, England, received the 2019 President's Award, TU's most prestigious student award.

Mother, daughter overcome challenges to graduate together

By Joshua Barrett, Student writer

It's not every year a mother and daughter graduate together from college. This year Thomas University students and Thomasville natives Orlando Davis and Chynekqua "Chae" Lott have done that. The duo – both veterans and nontraditional students – graduated May 11. Davis receive a Bachelor of Science Degree in Psychology Degree. Lott received a Bachelor of Science Degree in Business Administration.

Davis graduated from Thomasville High School in 1988. She then joined the U.S. Army. After her military career ended, Davis worked and raised a family. Her long hours of work made her realize it was time to go back to school for better job opportunities.



Chynekqua "Chae" Lott and her mother, Orlando Davis, graduated together on May 11.

MOTHER, DAUGHTER continued on page 6.

Record number of students graduate

A record number of 455 students graduated during Thomas University's 64th Commencement held Saturday, May 11, on the lawn in front of Smith-Bonvillian Hall on TU's Forbes Campus. Associate, bachelor's, master's and education specialist degrees were presented.

RIGHT: President Andy Sheppard greets graduates and guests.

BELOW: Soon-to-be graduates process into the Commencement area.

View more photos from Commencement on the [TU Facebook page!](#)



TU begins offering one-year MBA degree

In an effort to help busy professionals, Thomas University now offers a one-year Master of Business Administration Degree. The 30-hour degree program is fully online.

"We live in a highly competitive business environment," said Dr. Melinda Piller, Chair of the Division of Business. "Earning a college degree is critical to securing a good paying job. Earning an MBA provides even more opportunity for advancement and is recognized as a superior academic achievement by employers."

For students who prefer to take classes in person, TU offers a campus-based program that takes two years to

earn an MBA.

"Our one-year MBA program is offered for the busy working professional," Piller said. "We want to deliver advanced business courses to working adults who wish to upgrade their education credentials while working on a graduate degree with schedules that work for them."

The MBA program includes concentrations in Business Administration and Human Resources. A concentration in Accounting is planned for the near future.

For more information about TU's one-year MBA degree, or any of TU's other degree programs, contact the Office of Admission toll free at 844-862-6978.



Photo by TU Athletics

The Thomas University Night Hawks Baseball Team celebrates after winning in West Palm Beach, Florida, on May 5 to become the Sun Conference Champions.

Night Hawks Baseball Team wins Sun Conference Tournament Championship

WEST PALM BEACH, Fla. – On Sunday, May 5, the No. 6 seed Thomas University baseball team defeated third-seeded Webber International University, 7-1, to win the program's first Sun Conference Tournament Championship.

Thomas went unbeaten at 4-0 throughout the Sun Conference Tournament with wins over No. 1 Southeastern, Keiser, Warner and Webber International at FITTEAM Ballpark of the Palm Beaches.

The Sun Conference Tournament Champion Night Hawks clinch an automatic berth into the 2019 NAIA National Championship's Opening Round, scheduled to take place from May 13 through May 16.

The Thomas Night Hawks accounted for the game's opening run in the bottom of the second inning, as Maury Gonzalez scored on a bases-loaded wild pitch. Webber International starting pitcher Rey Rodriguez however got out of the

jam, and the score remained 1-0 Thomas through the first three innings.

Webber International was able to tie it up at 1-1 in the top of the fourth, as Norberto Navarro doubled, advanced to third on a groundout, and eventually worked his way around to score with some aggressive base running after a dropped third strike putout at first and an error from the catcher on the ensuing close play at home.

The first two Night Hawks reached base in the bottom of the fifth on a walk and a Luis Martinez single, then Jake Bryan had an opposite field RBI single with a nice piece of hitting to put Thomas in front 2-1. Levi O'Steen's groundout to first base was then good enough for the RBI after another close play at the plate, and in the next at-bat Landon Boyette made it 4-1 with a sacrifice fly to score the tagging up Bryan.

The Thomas starting pitcher Chance

Carter was in control and had a quality outing, conceding just one run, three hits, and two walks while striking out seven through his seven innings of work. Carter also would receive even more run support in the bottom of the seventh. Boyette battled with a great at-bat before connecting with an RBI single, and a bloop single down the left field line from Jake Webb scored two to make it 7-1 Night Hawks.

After the first two Webber International batters reached in the top of the eighth, Carter gave way to Jorge Meran out of the bullpen who immediately induced a 4-6-3 double play and recorded a strikeout as well to keep the Warriors from drawing any closer.

Meran also retired the side in order in the top of the ninth, ending the game with a strikeout to secure the 7-1 victory over the defending champion and No. 3 seeded Webber International.

Outstanding student athletes honored at Green Gala



Photos by Joshua Barrett, Student photographer



ABOVE: Thomas University honored its outstanding student athletes during the first-ever Green Gala presented by the Optimal Performance Advisory Council on Monday, April 22, in the TU Gymnasium on Magnolia Campus. During the event, TU honored the Most Valuable Player from each sports team along with overall awards. Honorees include (front row from left) Chase Hinson, Men's Scholar-Athlete Award and MVP for Varsity Baseball; Anna Gray, Women's Scholar-Athlete Award and MVP for Women's Soccer; Megan Withrow, MVP for JV Softball; Genevieve Courtney, MVP for Women's Golf; Ben McFarlane-Barnes, Male Athlete of the Year and MVP for Men's Soccer; (middle row) Kiana Ocasio-Molina, Female Athlete of the Year and MVP for Women's Swimming; Holly Campbell, MVP for Varsity Softball; Samantha Gilbert, Breakthrough Female Athlete; (back row) Joshua Scott, MVP for Men's Basketball; Ethan Bainbridge, MVP for Men's Swimming; and Joe Bannan, MVP for Men's Golf. Not pictured are Luis Martinez, Male Breakthrough Athlete of the Year; Micah Garvin, MVP for Women's Basketball; and Maury Gonzalez, MVP for JV Baseball.

LEFT: The top award, the Golden Talon Award, was presented by Talon, the TU Night Hawk mascot, to Gaby Mora, a Softball player from Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Men's Golf Team qualifies for NAIA National Championship

KANSAS CITY, Mo. – No. 13 Thomas University has qualified for the 68th annual NAIA Men's Golf National Championship that will be held at Las Sendas Golf Club in Mesa, Ariz., May 21-24.

The Sun Conference led all of the 19 conferences and unaffiliated teams with five qualifiers: William Carey (Miss.), Coastal Georgia, Johnson & Wales (Fla.), Keiser (Fla.), Thomas (Ga.) and USC Beaufort (S.C.).

The 156-player field consists of 19 automatic qualifying teams, which won or finished runner-up in their respective conference, independent or unaffiliated group tournament, one host berth to Benedictine-Mesa and 10 at-large team berths.

At-large teams were determined using the final regular-season Coaches' Top 25 Poll.

Each day of the national championship will be captured in

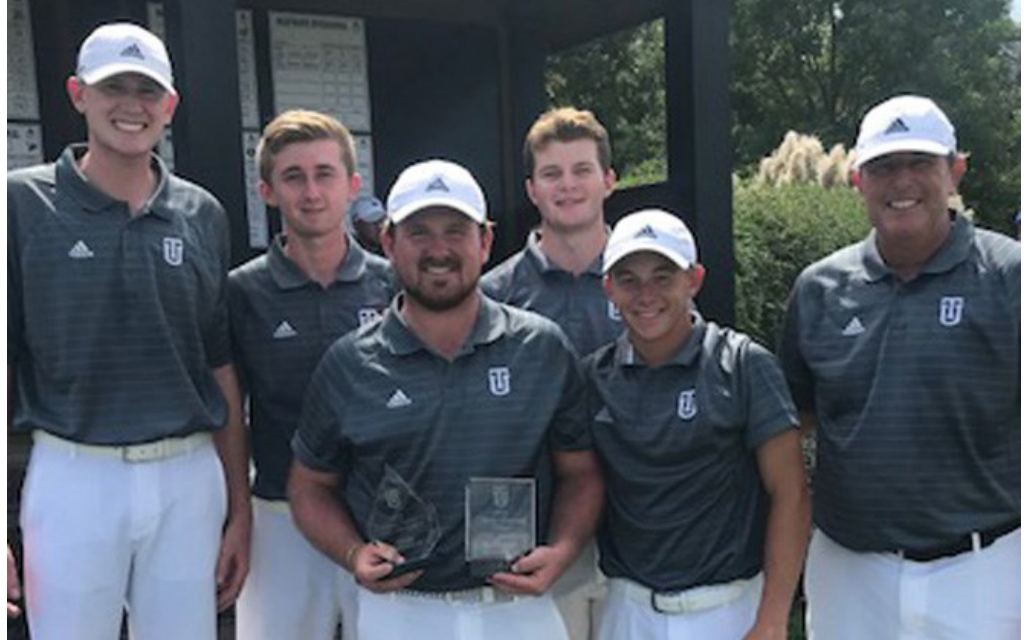
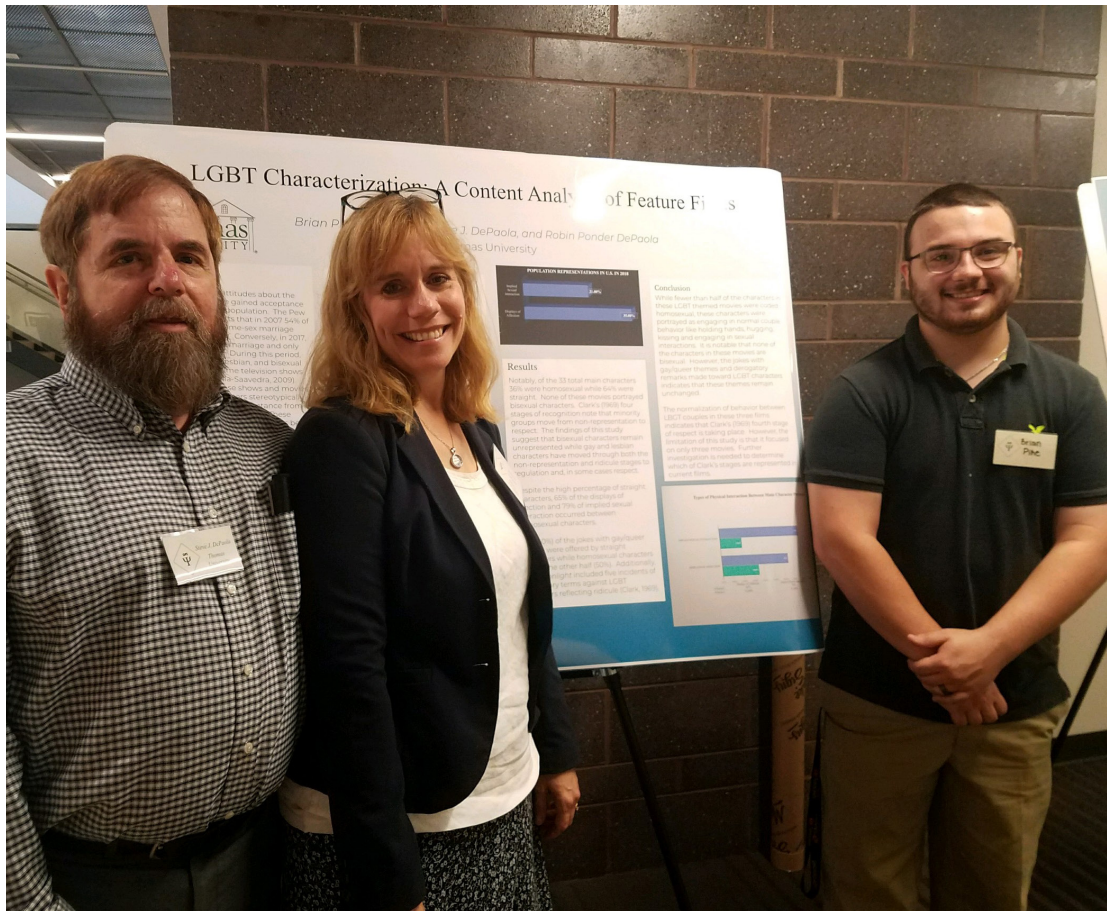


Photo by TU Athletics

The Night Hawks Men's Golf Team will compete for the NAIA National Championship in Mesa, Arizona, on May 21-24.

a video daily recap, available for free on the NAIA Facebook page.

Highlights, interviews and more can be seen by 8 p.m. CDT each day.



TU students present at GPS meeting

A group of Thomas University students presented papers and posters at the Georgia Psychology Society meeting held at Valdosta State University on April 27. In the photo, Brian Pike (right) presents his poster "LGBT Characterization: A Content Analysis of Feature Films." Joining the students were Dr. Steve DePaola (left) and Prof. Robin DePaola. Also attending the conference was student James Lamb. Students Anna Gray and Lexie Jones were not able to attend but participated in the research projects presented.

MOTHER, DAUGHTER continued from page 1.

TU's location made it a convenient option for Davis. Once on campus she realized what TU had to offer.

"The people I met at TU were wonderful," Davis said. "I could name a long list of individuals who helped me through it all."

Especially helpful to Davis was Stephen Ferguson, Associate Vice President of Enrollment Management.

"Stephen Ferguson was a God-send," Davis said. "He helped me with raising funds that would eventually pay for my tuition so I could attend TU."

In the beginning, being a TU student wasn't easy. Classes were difficult. Davis struggled after being out of school for a long time while serving in the military, but a few faculty and staff kept her focused and on the right path, she said.

"I used to sit down and have heart-to-heart conversations with my academic adviser, Jen Silva," Davis said. "Without her guidance, I wouldn't have known what classes to take. She took time out of her day to sit down with me and walk me through it all."

Dr. Steve DePaola, Professor of Psychology, was one of Davis' professors. He said he knew there was something special about Davis when she first walked into one of his classrooms.

"The word that reminds me the most of Orlando is perseverance," DePaola said. "Orlando had all sorts of obstacles thrown at her during her education, but still she still forged ahead. She is a sociable and gregarious individual who makes everyone around her feel welcome and important. It was a pleasure to have her as a psychology student."

Davis' family also helped her along the way.

"Without them none of this would be possible," she said. "Once I was working and my computer crashed. I believed all of my stuff was gone, so I went to work and began to panic.

"Orlando had all sorts of obstacles thrown at her during her education, but still she still forged ahead. She is a sociable and gregarious individual who makes everyone around her feel welcome and important."

— Dr. Steve DePaola,
Psychology Professor

I got home from work, and my two daughters had come together and purchased me a brand new computer so I could get back to doing my schoolwork. At that exact moment, I knew I would never give up. I was going to finish my degree."

Davis currently works at the Apalachee Center in Tallahassee, Florida. After graduating, she plans to continue her education by pursuing a master's degree.

Graduating in the same Commencement ceremony with her daughter adds to the celebration.

"I am ecstatic to graduate with my daughter," Davis said.

Lott said she is excited to graduate with her mom. Her original plan was to graduate last year, but everything worked out so that now she will graduate with her mother.

Lott, who also graduated from Thomasville High School, attended another university after high school for a year and then decided to join the U.S. Air Force.

After medically retiring from the Air Force, Lott said she was nervous to return to school, but being in the military prepared her. That's where she learned patience and time management.

While juggling being a full-time student, Lott also ran her own business and worked as the team manager for the TU Men's Basketball Team.

"She is an amazing human being," said Head Men's Basketball Coach

Brenton Crews. "Chae is still serving our country proudly. She does so much for the community and people around her. She has a huge heart and loves everyone. We need more people like her in the world to make it a better place."

Mina Haretos, Instructor of Business, taught many of Lott's classes.

"Not everyone follows the same traditional path to education, and Chae is no exception," Haretos said. "She has persevered and worked hard for her degree. Her involvement with the TU basketball team also speaks to her motivation to be a part of our university community. Her military experience set her apart and owning her own business now is impressive!"

Lott combined her love of children and love of dance into a business, Dance-A-Lott Studio in Thomasville.

Lott said she struggles with PTSD and depression after leaving the military, but she hasn't allowed them to stop her. The faculty and staff at TU helped push her through.

"I would sit with Coach Crews and Professor Haretos for hours and talk," Lott said. "They listened and didn't judge me. It helped me get through all the hard times while I pursued my degree."

Haretos said, "I'm very happy to see Chae graduating, especially alongside her mother! I know family means a lot to her, and this will make the day even more significant and meaningful."

After graduation, Lott plans to put her degree to work.

"The lessons and information I learned will help propel my business to the next level," she said.

Both mother and daughter said they benefited from TU's commitment to military veterans.

"This school is a school for veterans," Davis said.

When it comes to pursuing a degree, Lott gave this advice.

"Don't ever give up," she said.



Thomas University honored its outstanding students during the annual Honors Ceremony held Friday, May 10, at the Thomasville Center for the Arts. Honorees include (from left) Anna Gray, Camille Turner-Bragdon, Kimberly M. Duncan, Randy Cribbs, Abigail Barwick, LeAnn Pritchett, Christina Jones, Gregory McLaughlin, Caitlyn Riggins, Amy Cannon, Anna Felixson and Brandon Geiger. Not pictured is Carson Minor.

HONORS continued from page 1.

writing problems gave them the self-assurance to address not only those problems but to improve the quality of their writing. Her deep work ethic and commitment to serving others are hallmarks of not only the manner in which she conducts herself as a tutor but the way she approaches all she does.”

As a member of the Night Hawks Women’s Soccer Team, Gray served as team captain for the past two years. She was the lead scorer and offensive player of the year in 2018. Gray has been a on the Sun Conference All-Academic Team for the past three years and has been recognized as an NAIA Scholar Athlete. She has also served as the Head Coach of the Varsity Women’s Soccer Team at Brookwood School in Thomasville.

“So much goes into being a quality student and a quality athlete in college,” said Julie Orlowski, Head Women’s Soccer Coach. “Anna Gray has established herself as the standard everyone should strive for. I am so proud of the woman she has grown into. I am excited for what her future brings. We are proud she is a Night Hawk!”

Other awards presented during the Honors Ceremony recognized students earning top honors in their academic divisions. Those include:

- Brandon Geiger of Crawfordville, Florida – Undergraduate award in the Division of Science
- Christina Jones of Thomasville, Georgia – Undergraduate award in the Division of Counseling and Psychology
- Abigail Barwick of Boston, Georgia – Undergraduate award in the Division of Business
- Gregory McLaughlin of Midland, Georgia – Undergraduate award in the Division of Criminal Justice
- Kimberly M. Duncan of Thomasville, Georgia – Undergraduate award in the Division of Humanities and Interdisciplinary Studies
- Carson Minor of Jacksonville, Florid – Undergraduate award in the Division of Nursing
- Caitlyn Riggins of Pearson, Georgia – Undergraduate award in the Division of Education
- Camille Turner-Bragdon of Tallahassee, Florida – Undergraduate award in the Division of Social Work
- Anna Felixson of Thomasville, Georgia – Graduate award in the Division of Business
- Randy Cribbs of Fort Worth, Texas – Graduate Award in the Division of Counseling and Psychology
- Amy Cannon of Jakin, Georgia – Graduate Award in the Division of Education
- LeAnn Pritchett of Tifton, Georgia – Graduate Award in the Division of Nursing

O'Neill named 2019 Professor of the Year during Commencement

In addition to graduating a record number of students during its 64th Commencement ceremony on Saturday, May 11, Thomas University honored Dr. Marty O'Neill as its 2019 Professor of the Year. O'Neill, a resident of Tallahassee, is an Associate Professor of Nursing. She joined Thomas University in 2008.

O'Neill has served as the Faculty Counselor and Governance Chair for TU's Phi Tau Chapter of Sigma Theta Tau International Nursing Honor Society, on TU's Faculty Affairs Committee, as Chair of the Division of Nursing's Curriculum and Program Evaluation Committee, on TU's Institutional Review Board, on TU's Academic Program Review Committee and is the immediate past Speaker of TU's Faculty Senate. She currently maintains the Program Evaluation Plan for the TU Division of Nursing. O'Neill is active in the American Organization of Nurse Executives and the Council for Advanced Practice Nurses.

O'Neill earned her Ph.D. in 2014 from the University of Florida, where she was named the Graduate of the Year. Her dissertation focused on the relationship of the number of years of experience in nursing to patient safety. She shared this research as a poster presentation to the Southern Nurse Research Society. In 2016 she was selected to present at the Sigma Theta Tau International Research Conference in Cape Town, South Africa.



Dr. Marty O'Neill (right) receives the Professor of the Year Award from TU President Andy Sheppard during Commencement on May 11.

O'Neill uses learning outcomes to make her courses interesting for students and applicable to the nursing field.

Are you ready for Fall Semester?

- Have you completed your FAFSA and any other financial aid forms?
 - Have you talked with your advisor about which classes to take?
 - Have you registered for classes?
 - Have you told the Financial Aid Office if you plan to attend fall, spring AND summer semesters in 2019-2020? (It may affect how your financial aid award is disbursed.)
 - Have you completed forms for on-campus housing?
 - Have you paid your room reservation fee?
 - Have you checked Hawklink (the student portal) to make sure you've completed all the necessary forms?
- 