



Stephens F.Y.I.

Dear Stephens,

Today marks the beginning of a new kind of connection with you, our Stephens family. When I travel to visit or have an opportunity to see many of you at events like Reunion, you frequently tell me that you had “no idea!!” about all the great things happening at Stephens...and we’re here to change that.

This is the first edition of Stephens FYI, our new alumnae newsletter, which you will receive in your email inbox about the 20th of every month. We want you to be as well informed about your beloved Stephens as you want to be and to feel directly connected to our campus community – still extraordinary after 190 years (10 years until our bicentennial!).

So let’s get started: What IS going on at Stephens College?

She’s Back! I am delighted to share with you that Shannon Blankenship Walls ’93 has returned to her former role as our Vice President of Advancement. Shannon agreed to serve on an interim basis after Gina Sholtis, our Advancement VP since 2019, recently accepted a new position at the University of Central Florida.

Many of you will recall that Shannon served in Advancement and Philanthropy from 1995 to 2015, including serving as our VP of Advancement from 2013 to 2015. She currently leads the College’s diversity, equity and inclusion program, but is truly enjoying being back in touch with so many of our Stephens alumnae!



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Go Stars! Nearly 100 students participate in the College’s athletics program, competing in basketball, volleyball, soccer, and softball, as well as competitive dance and esports. We win some and we lose some, of course, but our student athletes and their supportive fans (including me!) are always proud to be the Stars...

We are especially proud of our basketball team this season. Under the direction of Coach Andre Bell, the Stephens Stars defeated the Columbia College Cougars for the first time ever – after playing them for **30 years!** Those successes have drawn plenty of local attention (it doesn’t hurt that I announce it at the opening of every local meeting I attend!).

You can watch the games live by going to the [Stephens Stars](#) basketball [schedule](#), scrolling down to the day’s game, and clicking on the Watch Live button on the right. While the regular season is over, the Stars have clinched a berth in the AMC Conference Tournament, which will be played February 24-27. Join us online to cheer for our Stephens Stars!



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Mission Promise Kept



Mission Promise Kept. Many of you are aware that Stephens last fall launched a living-and-learning community for women veterans, designed to provide the support and opportunities they need to complete their college degrees.

Under the leadership of Executive Director Elizabeth Herrera, an Air Force veteran, Mission Promise Kept is the only campus program in the nation designed to meet the unique combination of needs common among women veterans:

- A residential community of women veterans on the campus of the pet-friendliest women's college in the country;
- A coordinated network of academic, medical, legal, and social services are provided to the veteran. Additional services assist her towards a successful career path;
- Access to the on-campus Children's School and neighborhood public schools for affordable, supportive and coordinated childcare;
- An on-campus apartment renovated to meet the unique needs of women veterans with children and/or pets; and
- A built-in community of peers, mentors and friends.

You can read more about Mission Promise Kept here:

<https://comomag.com/2022/09/09/mission-possible/>



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Reimagining Stephens. As always, Stephens is working hard to identify ways it can better meet the needs of today's students – a generation of learners whose experience includes a global pandemic in which many were isolated, removed from physical and social environments (and the personal growth experiences they create), and restricted to remote learning.

The College's 2017 Strategic Plan has been completed, and we are now in the exciting but challenging process of reimagining Stephens for its next decade. Those conversations are occurring in the most difficult environment for higher education in decades – circumstances particularly significant for small, private colleges like Stephens. Add to those national market realities the fact that only 2 percent of high school students say they would ever even consider a women's college, and you begin to understand the daunting challenges we face.

While our strategic planning discussion is still very much in its conceptual phase, we have established three “non-negotiables” around its outcomes: Stephens must expand the profile of its students, thereby increasing enrollments; it must adopt a sustainable business model, one that diversifies revenues to support undergraduate education; and it must remain committed to its core and historic mission.

The Board of Trustees meets this week to consider some of our initial big ideas; a final report and our recommendations will be considered for adoption by the Board at its meeting in June.

Please join me for Reunion in April; I'll be ready then to share many of the details of our proposals at our State of the College event.

You can find the current Strategic Plan here: <https://www.stephens.edu/about-stephens/leadership/strategic-plan/>



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Stephens is as beautiful as you remember, and we are keeping it that way. The College in 2020 adopted a Campus Renewal Plan that will over three years invest more than \$12 million in improvements, repair, and new projects.

Among those improvements are:

- New roofs on the stables buildings, with more improvements under consideration (thanks to the generosity and support of one of our amazing alumna donors!)
- A complete redesign of our dining hall, complete with a pizza oven all the way from Italy!
- Renovation of Prunty and Searcy halls;
- Renovation of Hickman Hall East as home to the new Conservatory for the Performing Arts;
- Renovation of Hickman Hall West into the new home of our Children’s School (and a new playground on the west side of the President’s Home yard);
- Relocation of our new Nursing program into the second floor of Lela Raney Wood Hall, including a new simulation lab, establishing that anchor campus building as home to public space (our historic ballroom), academic space (Nursing) and administration space.
- Renovation of the Hugh Stephens Library Penthouse into a beautiful events venue; and
- Renovation of the first floor of Walter Hall into a “Creative Hub” that provides creative spaces for students in our Business Administration and Creative Design program to collaborate on projects for real-world clients and their own businesses.



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Just to name a few.....

Serving all learners. Stephens remains committed to all of its students – from the toddlers in its Early Childhood preschool to our undergraduates in our women’s college and Conservatory for the Performing Arts, to the adult students earning a Master’s degree in Counseling or an MFA in script and screenwriting – no matter what their ages.

That commitment to meeting students where they are is a historic tradition at Stephens: Remember the University Without Walls? In that spirit and mission, we are expanding our adult education programs to include short-course certificate programs that will train workers in the ever-changing skills they need to succeed in the marketplace – with a special focus on women who are struggling to return to the workforce after Covid, or who just need a few more skills and some career counseling to earn the living wage they need to better support their families.

I am delighted to inform you that Stephens College has joined our higher ed counterparts across the nation in establishing a robust Workforce Development program, designed to partner with local and regional employers to help train a highly qualified labor force. Our program, directed by Dr. Scott Taylor, launched in January, and you can expect to hear much more about it in the months to come.



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Nursing, Class of 2023



We graduate our first class of Nursing students in May – and they are already employed!



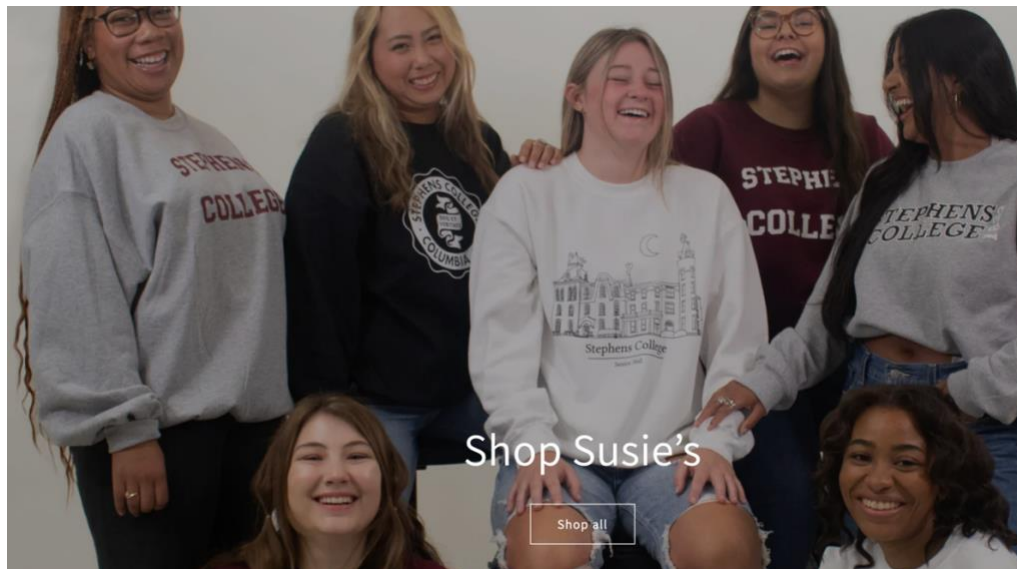


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Home, Sweet Home (and Welcome!)

In January, we relocated the Admissions team from Lela Raney Wood Hall to join their Marketing colleagues in the renovated Visitors Center, a move that has enhanced collaboration and efficiency. But we wanted to be sure our prospective students and their families continued to have an impressive and memorable first impression of our historic campus – and what better way to achieve that than to welcome them into the President’s Residence?

I continue to live on the second floor of the house, but we have always used the first floor as a special-events venue (including for the late-night secret meetings of the Ten Ideals!). We’re expanding that public purpose to also use the space as an Admissions Welcome Center: Prospective students and their families will meet Admissions representatives at the house for an information session before taking a campus tour and meeting with faculty and students. What better place to welcome them into the Stephens family?



Looking for some cozy clothes? Or a coffee mug big enough to hold your daily caffeine quota? Start your shopping at Susie’s, the College’s (FINALLY) online store – with merchandise designed, staged, sold and delivered by students. Why go anywhere else?

<https://stephenssusies.com/>



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And finally:

This is the year to come home to Stephens! Whether you're one of our true-blue, never-miss-it Reunion returnees, or haven't been back since you walked across that stage to pick up your diploma, now's the time.

And here's why:

If you're reading this, it means you still care about this amazing women's college and its future. Please consider joining us back on campus in April for three days of memories, friendship, reconnection, and an opportunity to see, hear and feel for yourself what Stephens means to today's students. They would love to meet you – and there's nothing like being here to remind you what it felt like to be their age, and to be at Stephens.

Here's where you register: <https://www.stephens.edu/for-alumnae/alumnae-relations/reunion/>