



2025-2026

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PROFILES *in* EXCELLENCE



*Each year, the Office of Academic Affairs presents Outstanding Faculty Awards for excellent work in Teaching, Research, Science, and Advising. The honorees are nominated by their colleagues and students, and honored at UNA's Annual Awards Gala.*

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# Outstanding Teaching

*Dr. Greg Carnes*

Dr. Greg Carnes is the Raburn Eminent Scholar of Accounting in the Sanders College of Business and Technology. The 2024-2025 academic year marked his return to teaching full-time after more than a decade of serving as the College Dean. Here he is in his own words:

**Q:** When did you know you wanted to teach, and did you always know it would be in higher education?

**A:** When I was growing up in Tennessee, I realized that I enjoyed opportunities to teach. My earliest opportunities for teaching were in a church setting at devotionals or camps. During my master's program at the University of Memphis was the first time that I wondered if teaching might be an enjoyable career path. I had a rewarding relationship with several accounting professors at my alma-mater, Lipscomb University and Memphis, and I could envision myself being in their role one day. At that point, I knew if I ever pursued their path that it would be in higher education.

**Q:** How do you create an environment for students to engage in accounting and its techniques so that it becomes an opportunity to learn while also enjoying the process of learning?

**A:** Accounting has a special set of knowledge that students need to master to be CPAs and to do well in their careers. However, learning accounting is also an excellent way to develop very high-level problem-solving skills. And at the end of the day, employers and clients will pay you well if you can solve their problems, whether or not they are accounting issues. So, in my classes, I emphasize the development of problem-solving skills so that the students understand that, even if they never need the tax knowledge I am providing them, they are developing skills that increase their value in the labor marketplace. My lectures are pre-recorded, and students can watch those before class, and then I spend most of the time in class solving problems.

**Q:** Many of the letters of recommendation refer to you as a mentor. What does that look like for you for students as well as for your colleagues?

**A:** The Sanders College of Business and Technology has had many noteworthy achievements over the last decade, and I was pleased to have made some contributions to those efforts. But those who know me best understand that my greatest satisfaction comes from helping an accounting major land a job with an excellent employer, and then see the student launch their career. Education can transform an individual's life, and it also provides a solid foundation for future generations of their family. My dad was one of the first in his family to earn a college degree, and I have witnessed how that has benefitted me and my siblings and, now, our children and grandchildren. Being a part of that transformative, educational process for our students is very rewarding. An investment in education is an excellent choice because no one can ever take your education away from you. So I do enjoy investing my time in the lives of students and mentoring them.

**Q:** You have been back in the classroom full-time for a year after more than a decade as Dean of the Sanders College. Tell me what it has been like for you, and what did you miss the most?

**A:** One difference in my time being Dean, as contrasted with most Deans, is that I never left the classroom. I continued to teach three classes each academic year because I did not want to give up my interaction with students. However, because of the time commitment and intensity of the Dean's position, it was more challenging for me to invest time in my students outside the classroom. During the last year, I have enjoyed spending more time mentoring and encouraging students. What do I miss most about the Dean's job? A wise man once told me that, as an academic administrator, your highs are higher but your lows are lower. I think he meant that, as an administrator, your decisions and activity have a broader impact on a college, university, or community. I have missed that aspect of being a Dean. No doubt though, what I have missed most is the day-to-day interaction with the Sanders Leadership Team and the staff in the Dean's office. The primary reason I accepted the offer to be Dean in 2013 was because I believed our College had significant untapped potential, and that potential resided in our faculty and staff. The last 12 years has proven that my belief was correct. Once our faculty and staff were encouraged to aim higher, they responded to the challenge, and the Sanders College has achieved more than I imagined in 2013. It is a blessing to work with individuals such as that. The Sanders College is in an excellent position today because of the outstanding individuals who work in it.

**Q:** Finally, what does it mean to you to be the 2025 recipient of the Lawrence J. Nelson Outstanding Teaching Award?

**A:** I had the opportunity to get to know Dr. Nelson before his untimely passing, and I still remember how much students loved him. Yes, they respected and liked him, but it was clear that they revered him in a way that was uncommon. To win an award with his name and its legacy is humbling. I am grateful to my colleagues who decided that I was qualified to win this award. Teaching has always been my No. 1 priority, and I am very appreciative to have received this award.



# Outstanding Advising

*Ms. Laura Beasley*

Laura Beasley is the Program Coordinator and Academic Advisor in the Delores and Weldon Cole Honors College. She is the 2025 recipient of the Academic Advising by Staff Award. Here she is in her own words:

**Q:** You joined UNA as a temporary employee. What appealed to you about the work, and how have you made it your own?

**A:** The family/team atmosphere of UNA was so welcoming. Everyone I met went out of their way to help me learn and make me feel a part of the team. The camaraderie of my coworkers definitely stands out. What I did not expect was how much I would love working with the students. Serving them to the best of my ability became my focus. Luckily, Dean Brewton supported my desire to improve my advising skills. I became a University Advisor, took NACADA Advising courses, and obtained a Master's in Family Studies and Community Relations.

**Q:** What do you find to be the most rewarding aspect of your role?

**A:** I love that students feel welcome to come and see me about a million things, from just stopping in to tell me about their day or some cool item they thrifted, to helping them find their passion and pathway to their careers. Keeping in contact with Honors alumni and watching them succeed is truly special. Students reaching out to me makes me feel like I am doing something meaningful.

**Q:** What do you see as success when it comes to the students of the Cole Honors College?

**A:** That is a big question. Success can mean so many different things. For me, it is watching students develop their confidence and self-esteem. At times, it seems like they change before my eyes. Knowing that the people and programs of the Cole Honors College have helped students is hugely rewarding.

**Q:** The College has changed and evolved in many ways since your arrival in 2013. What has been the constant?

**A:** The College truly has changed from a Program in 2013 with around 200 students and Dean Brewton and me, to the Cole Honors College now with 1,000 student, Dean Brewton, me, Nikki Yarber, and Eric O'Neal. That is a lot of growth, but two things have been constant. First is the ability and quality of our students. They make me smile every day. Second is the Honors College staff's dedication. Each of us is truly passionate about helping students have success both at UNA and as alumni.

**Q:** Finally, what does it mean to you to be the 2025 recipient of the Academic Advising by Staff award?

**A:** I have been surprised by how much it has meant to me. We are all so busy, but to have Dr. Brewton nominate me and to be recognized by my peers is more special than I can say.



## Outstanding Advising

*Ms. Jabril Diamond*

Jabril Diamond is a Lecturer and Program Coordinator in the Respiratory Care Program in the Anderson College of Nursing and Health Professions. She is the 2025 recipient of the Faculty Advising Award. Here she is in her own words:

**Q:** What does student success look like to you?

**A:** If I could define student success in one word, I would use the term happiness. It is my goal that each student enjoys their experience at UNA and are happy in the classroom and supported in their personal lives. Student success is not just about grades or test scores. It's about preparing individuals to thrive in learning, work, and life.

**Q:** The student letter of recommendation indicates a level of care and concern you provide as part of your role as an advisor. Tell me about a mentor or advisor you had in your life that was part of creating the advisor you are today.

**A:** I had exceptional professors who were my mentors and advisors when my younger self was completing my respiratory care education. Those mentors took the time to help mold me into the educator, therapist, professional, and person that I am today. I maintain connections with each of them, and strive to provide the same mentorship to each of my students.

**Q:** In your letter, you write: I love helping students discover who they are both professionally and personally. Why does this take on added significance for you?

**A:** Caring for others requires you to give the individuals you serve a part of yourself daily. Respiratory Care is a profession that you must love in order to thrive. Self-discovery, both professionally and personally, allows you to determine who you are and know you are living in your purpose. This knowledge allows you to pour into those who are in the most vulnerable times of their lives.

**Q:** Why is it important to have a solid relationship with pre-respiratory and respiratory care students? Does it affect outcomes and future success?

**A:** Having solid relationships with pre-respiratory and respiratory care students is crucial for academic success. Our relationships help students align academic work and foster healthy relationships with each other. We meet with students individually and collectively. This past semester, we started the Respiratory Care Student Association. I am the group's advisor, and we have meetings and events that students can attend to meet and collaborate with one another. Students who are interested in joining can reach out to me for more information.

**Q:** Finally, what does it mean to you to be the 2025 recipient of the Faculty Advising Award?

**A:** It means the world to me to be the 2025 recipient of the Faculty Advising Award. I am among some of the best educators in the country who are all so deserving, and I am so grateful to have been selected. I truly love what I do, and it makes it easy to come to work every day. My heart is so full of gratitude and joy, and I look forward to more growth for the Respiratory Care Program. Roar Lions!



# Outstanding Research

*Dr. Hilary Glover*

**Dr. Hilary Glover is an Assistant Professor in the Anderson College of Nursing and Health Professions. She is the 2025 recipient of the Jim Couch Award for Outstanding Research by Faculty. Here she is in her own words:**

**Q:** What drew you to your field of research in addressing the critical need for trauma-informed care in clinical practice and education?

**A:** My background in emergency and forensic nursing introduced me to the critical importance of trauma-informed care in clinical settings. I witnessed first-hand how trauma shapes the way patients engage with healthcare systems and how easily we can unintentionally retraumatize them, especially in high-stress environments. As I transitioned into academia, I realized that students bring their own experiences, stressors, and vulnerabilities into the classroom, and I believe we have a responsibility, not only as nurses but also as educators, to create spaces, both clinical and academic, that foster empathy and psychological safety.

**Q:** Forensic nursing is a unique specialty in the field. Can you tell me a little more about it?

**A:** Absolutely! Forensic nursing is a specialized area of practice that bridges the gap between healthcare and the legal system. Forensic nurses provide care to patients who have experienced trauma related to sexual assault, intimate partner violence, human trafficking, and other forms of interpersonal violence. The role requires advanced clinical skills as well as a thorough understanding of evidence collection, documentation, and legal processes. It's a discipline rooted in both science and advocacy.

**Q:** Research brings its own set of challenges and rewards; what do you find to be the most challenging and most rewarding parts of your research?

**A:** One of the greatest challenges in trauma-informed research is translating deeply personal, often complex topics into meaningful research while accurately representing the lived experiences of the participants. This work requires a trauma-informed approach that not only honors the authenticity of those experiences but also takes intentional steps to prevent trauma reactivation. The most rewarding part is seeing the real-world impact. When students express that trauma-informed strategies helped them feel seen and supported in the classroom, or when clinical staff begin to reframe patient behavior through a trauma-informed lens, it reinforces the importance and relevance of this work.

**Q:** Tell me a little bit about your collaborative style when you work with others as part of your research?

**A:** Collaboration is key to my research. I've had the privilege of working alongside incredibly talented and passionate faculty and students in the ACONHP – each bringing their own unique perspective and expertise. This work, and this award, would not be possible without their contributions. I'm also grateful for the support of our leadership, who make faculty research a priority. Whether working with peers or mentoring students, I value a collaborative approach grounded in mutual respect and a shared commitment to evidence-based research.

**Q:** Finally, what does it mean to you to be the 2025 recipient of the Jim Couch Award for Outstanding Research by Faculty?

**A:** Receiving the Jim Couch Award has truly been a humbling experience, and I'm honored to represent the ACONHP. This recognition reflects not just my work, but the support and collaboration of so many colleagues, mentors, and students who have been part of the journey. I've been passionate about this research for a long time, and, more than anything, I hope it reminds my students, as well as my children, that pursuing your passion with integrity and purpose can lead to a lasting contribution.



# Outstanding Service

*Dr. Amanda Hitt*

Dr. Amanda Hitt is an Assistant Professor of Nursing and Project Coordinator for the Project IMPACT Grant in the Anderson College of Nursing and Health Professions. She is the 2025 recipient of the Outstanding Service Award by Faculty for 2025. Here she is in her own words:

**Q:** Tell me why service is so important to you.

**A:** Service is important to me because it's how I express purpose and connection – it's not something you can measure, but you can absolutely feel its impact. Over the years, I've come to see that service often happens quietly: solving problems behind the scenes, creating new opportunities, or simply showing up when someone needs support. These acts may seem small, but they can make a world of difference in the lives of our students. For me, service is how I help others thrive, and that's what keeps me inspired every day.

**Q:** Throughout your nomination documents, you use the word "commitment." Why does it take a commitment to service to make a difference?

**A:** A single act of service is meaningful, but it's consistency – the ongoing commitment – that creates real, lasting impact. When you're committed to service, it becomes part of who you are. For me, that means showing up for our students and colleagues day after day, whether the need is large or small. It's not just about helping in big, visible ways. It's about being dependable, approachable, and willing to go the extra mile in the everyday moments that build trust and community. That kind of commitment is what drives positive change over time, and that's the difference I hope to make.

**Q:** In what area have you found your commitment to service has made the biggest difference?

**A:** Finding unique experiential learning opportunities for our students has really become a passion of mine. Over the past two years, I have had the privilege of leading study abroad trips to the Dominican Republic, where our nursing students get hands-on experience providing care to communities with significant health needs and health disparities. There's a tremendous amount of behind-the-scenes work that goes into making these trips happen, but it's all worth it. Seeing our students grow, both personally and professionally, as they serve others in such a meaningful way is honestly indescribable. It's a life-changing experience, and I truly wish more students could have the opportunity to be part of it.

**Q:** How has nursing as your chosen profession linked to your passion for service?

**A:** When I first became a nurse, I didn't fully realize that nursing is, at its core, a profession rooted in service. Nurses give not only their time and clinical skill, but also their empathy, energy, and emotional presence – often thinking about patients long after a shift ends. That deep sense of responsibility and care naturally carried over when I became a nurse educator. Now, I serve my students the same way: investing in their growth, supporting their challenges, and giving them the tools to care for others. Nursing gave me the foundation, and education became the extension of that calling to serve.

**Q:** Finally, what does it mean to you to be named the 2025 recipient of the Outstanding Service Award by Faculty?

**A:** Being named the 2025 recipient of the Outstanding Service Award by Faculty is an incredible honor – and deeply meaningful to me. I've been a nurse for 21 years, and service has always been at the heart of who I am. To be recognized by the University for something so foundational to my identity is truly humbling. What makes this even more special is that I now have the privilege of serving not only patients but also our students – mentoring and guiding the next generation of nurses. My greatest hope is that the passion I bring to this profession inspires them to carry that same commitment forward as they care for others in the years to come.