

GLENVILLE STATE UNIVERSITY

Pioneer Update

Glennville State University Newsletter for Alumni & Friends | February 2026

Alumni
SPOTLIGHT





Dr. Rico Gazal (foreground) instructs students in the use of a laser BAF scope and dendrometer during an outdoor lab session. Gazal was recently named a finalist for the Faculty Merit Foundation's West Virginia Professor of the Year award.

Glenville State University's Dr. Rico Gazal Named WV Professor of the Year Finalist

Dr. Rico Gazal, Professor of Forestry at Glenville State University, is a finalist for the Faculty Merit Foundation's West Virginia Professor of the Year recognition.

Gazal came to Glenville State in 2005 and teaches courses in natural resource management, environmental science, and forestry. He holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Forestry from the University of the Philippines Los Baños, and then completed graduate studies in Japan and at Mississippi State University.

He earned Glenville State's Faculty Award of Excellence in 2025.

"I am deeply honored to be named a finalist for West Virginia Professor of the Year. This recognition reflects the hard work of my students and colleagues at Glenville State University. My greatest reward as an educator is seeing students gain confidence, develop professional skills, and realize their capabilities through education," Gazal said.

Outside of his classroom obligations, Gazal serves as the Academic Coordinator for the Global WV Consortium and coordinates study-abroad opportunities and Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) projects. Gazal says that he is passionate about giving students the chance to see the world through education.

He has also served a stint as Chair of the Department of Land Resources, has helped secure grants for his department, and has been a member of campus committees related to curriculum, academic appeals, international education, and student research.

"This is a tremendous recognition for Dr. Gazal," said Glenville State University President, Dr. Mark A. Manchin. "Rico is an outstanding faculty member who consistently goes above and beyond to enrich the lives of the students he works with every day. His commitment to learning is evident in the summer internship programs he leads, where students engage in hands-on work within the unique landscapes and makeup of the Philippines. He strives to meet student needs without compromising academic standards, with many of Dr. Gazal's former students continuing to speak highly of his mentorship long after completing his courses. The Pioneer family joins me in congratulating Dr. Gazal on this well-deserved recognition."

James Arnold '07 is currently serving as the Vice President of Enrollment, Management, Marketing & Athletics at Columbia College at Missouri. He previously spent 20 years as a college women's basketball coach before transitioning to administration as a Director of Athletics, Vice President of Student Experience, and now VP of Enrollment, Management, Marketing & Athletics.

During his time at Glenville State, James – a native of Paw Paw, West Virginia – was involved in Student Government, was a member of the Pioneer Basketball Team, served as a Resident Assistant, and was a writer for *The Mercury*.

In addition to his undergraduate degree from Glenville State, he also holds an Executive Masters of Business Administration from Benedictine College and has nearly completed a Doctor of Education & Leadership degree through William Woods University. He plans to defend his dissertation, which is focused on the role that hope plays in the academic success of collegiate student-athletes, this summer.

Last year, James was inducted into the Central Methodist University Hall of Fame. He has racked up 350+ career coaching wins at the college level and was inducted into the North Central Missouri College Hall of Fame in 2023. He is a two-time Moz Rahmatpanah Champions of Character Award recipient and a five-time Conference Coach of the Year award recipient. James also presented at the 2018 Women's Basketball Coaches Association National Convention/Final 4 on the topic of "Playing Fast: Free Throw Break for All Levels."

In his spare time, James enjoys hiking and backpacking, all things food, traveling, and attending concerts. He also serves as an Election Judge for Callaway and Boone Counties, is the Chair of the City of Columbia Sports Commission, and volunteers as a community youth softball and basketball coach.

James and his wife Lesley recently celebrated their 20th wedding anniversary. Lesley, who works as a preschool teacher, and James have one child, Audrey. Audrey is a high school senior who has signed to play women's basketball at the DII level at Drury University next year.

When asked what Glenville State means to him, James said, "Glenville State College changed my life and I think of that time often. I arrived in Glenville as a first-generation college student from the Eastern Panhandle where I knew no one. At the time, I had no fear, lots of energy and ignorance...but as I have looked back over the years I

In addition to Gazal, the 2025 finalists include: Dr. Peggy Fink, an Associate Professor of Nursing at West Virginia University Institute of Technology; Dr. Rebecca J. Giorcelli, a Professor of Information Systems Management at Fairmont State University; Dr. Barbara Ladner, a Professor of English at West Virginia State University; and Dr. Sam Zizzi, the Dr. Pat Fehl Endowed Professor in the School of Sport Sciences at West Virginia University.

Interviews with the candidates will take place Monday, February 9 and the Professor of the Year recipient will be announced at a banquet in April.

The Faculty Merit Foundation was created in 1984 to provide a means to recognize and reward innovation and creativity among the faculties of West Virginia's public and private colleges and universities. Through the Professor of the Year program, the outstanding achievements of those individuals are brought to the attention of the general public. A \$10,000 cash award is given to the candidate selected as Professor of the Year, with smaller awards to the other finalists.

The Professor of the Year award is sponsored by individual donors and United Bank, Bowles Rice LLP, Greene, Ketchum, Bailey & Tweel LLP, Maier Foundation, and The Daywood Foundation, Inc.



Past men's basketball players and coaches being recognized at Winter Homecoming in 2024.

Winter & Fall Homecoming Dates Announced

know with certainty that I needed every single support structure, faculty and staff member, friend, and student engagement opportunity the College provided to make it. The entire Glenville community is so special and without a doubt has shaped who I am as an adult, leader, and parent. I am forever grateful for the relationships, education, opportunities, and highs and lows of my time at GSC!"

We are pleased to feature James in this month's Alumni Spotlight and are proud to call him an alumnus.

Glenville State alumni and friends are encouraged to mark their calendars for two upcoming Homecoming events: Winter Homecoming and our annual fall Homecoming!

Winter Homecoming is scheduled for **Saturday, February 28** at the Waco Center. The women's and men's basketball teams will take on Concord University (2:00 PM and 4:00 PM) and the Alumni Office will host "The Deck" with food and drinks (\$10) and time with friends.

Later this year, **fall Homecoming** is slated for **Saturday, October 24**. After last football season took place out in communities across West Virginia due to construction at Morris Stadium, 2026 will see the return of our usual Homecoming traditions back on campus – so make plans now to come back to the Lighthouse on the Hill! We'll share more details as autumn nears, but for now we encourage everyone to save the date and make travel plans with friends and classmates.



(l-r) Del. Lori Dittman, MacKenzie Petry, DJ White, Cheryl McKinney, Whitney Nettles, Adrianna Blanco, and Eric Brown.

Glenville State Delegation Attends CPA Day at the Legislature

Last month, a delegation from Glenville State University traveled to the West Virginia statehouse to be part of “CPA Day at the Capitol,” which was sponsored by the West Virginia Society of Certified Public Accountants (WVSCPA) to support HB 4088 and SB 532. This legislation aims to enhance pathways to CPA licensure, reduce barriers, and addresses critical challenges the accounting profession is facing, including a declining workforce and increased demand for CPA services. The legislation seeks to expand the educational pathways leading to CPA licensure, providing the option for students to begin their careers as a CPA with a bachelor’s degree and would keep West Virginia in-step with more than 20 other states that have already introduced or enacted these changes.

Those who attended CPA Day from Glenville State included: current students Adrianna Blanco, Whitney Nettles, and Danielle "DJ" White; GSU’s Lecturer of Accounting, MacKenzie (Ammerman) Petry '21; alumnus Eric Brown, CPA '01; and Professor Emerita and Past President of the WVSCPA, Cheryl McKinney, CPA.

“This is a pivotal moment for the CPA profession and our students are the next generation who will be directly impacted by this legislation, which is why it’s so important to get them involved early. Each student brings a unique story and perspective, and CPA Day gave them the opportunity to share those voices while networking with their local legislators,” said Petry. “By moving from a 150-credit-hour requirement to 120 credit hours with two years of experience, students can trade additional debt for income. This approach better serves our communities and strengthens the profession by pairing practical experience with education.”

The current students in the group attended a networking dinner with practicing CPAs on their first night in Charleston. The next morning, more than 90 CPAs and students convened at the Culture Center before having photos taken on the steps of the Capitol. The Glenville State group was then able to meet with Delegate Lori Dittman, Delegate Erica Moore, Delegate Adam Burkhammer, Delegate Stanley Adkins, Delegate Joe Parsons '83, and Senator Ben Queen.

“I was extremely proud of our students and Mrs. Petry, and I was honored to have been invited to accompany the group. Without reservation, I believe that CPAs and GSU were well represented by the Pioneer delegation,” McKinney added.

HB 4088 and SB 532 have both been introduced this session and are being reviewed in committee.



Matt Cottrill (left), Pioneer Mascot in 1997-98, and his niece Adalynn Cottrill, Pioneer Mascot for 2025-26.

Passing the Musket: Pioneer Mascot Legacy Continues

Almost every year since 1933, a new Pioneer mascot has been selected to represent Glenville State.

Adalynn Cottrill has been serving as the mascot for the 2025-2026 academic year, but her tenure is about much more than helping promote school spirit – it is the continuation of a family legacy.

“My dad told me about my uncle Matt being the Pioneer when I was young, but I hadn’t really thought about it until I went to college. When I transferred to Glenville, the first thing I told Coach [Dan] Meyers was: ‘I’m going to be the Pioneer – my uncle was, so I have to carry on the legacy!’”

Adalynn is an education major, studying Elementary Education (K-6) and General Math-Algebra I (5-9). She is also a thrower on the Women’s Track and Field team at GSU.

Her uncle, Matt Cottrill ‘03 served as the Pioneer in 1997-98. These days, Matt works as a Special Education teacher at Point Pleasant Junior/Senior High School, serving seventh- and eighth-grade students under the Mason County Board of Education. In addition to his 23 years of service in the classroom, he is also the Head Coach of the High School Girls Track Team and serves as an Assistant Varsity Football Coach.

Matt said that serving as the Pioneer was an incredibly exciting experience. “I enjoyed every moment. It also offered a unique perspective, as I truly had the best seats at all of the sporting events,” he said. “What I enjoyed most was firing the musket – hearing the crowd chant and call for me to ‘shoot the gun,’ produced an atmosphere of excitement and energy that made the experience especially memorable.”

When Matt found out that Adalynn was going to be ‘following in his moccasins,’ he said it was a full circle moment.

“When Adalynn sent me a picture of the coonskin cap with the message, ‘Following in your footsteps,’ it was one of the most meaningful messages I have ever received. I felt an overwhelming sense of pride and confidence, knowing she would represent the role exceptionally well,” he said. “Getting to watch the job she does and how she interacts with the crowd is amazing. She does a great job and has a very bright future ahead of her.”

“My favorite part of being the Pioneer is being authentically myself; you get to be goofy and excited, and people love it,” Adalynn said. “You only live once, and I know these are days I will look back on and reminisce.”

As always, the Pioneer attends GSU football and basketball games, tournaments, and other school events. The Pioneer is charged with working with GSU students, faculty, and staff to positively promote and support the University. As part of the more than 80-year tradition, the official uniform of the Pioneer mascot is a set of buckskins, a coonskin hat, and a musket.

February 19 is Founders Day of Giving

Glenville State University will celebrate Founders Day on Thursday, February 19! As part of the day’s celebration, we will hold our Founders Day of Giving – the 24-hour period annual giving day that aims to support over 50 projects!

Glenville State is committed to innovation, efficiency, and student success. At a time when higher education institutions face increasing challenges, private support is essential. Your help during Founders Day of Giving ensures continued growth of programs, provides direct assistance to our students, and delivers immediate impact across campus. Simply put: your generosity keeps the Lighthouse on the Hill shining!

Interested in participating? Here’s how!

- **Make a gift on or before February 19:** Give online or, if you prefer not to make an online gift, please mail us your gift – it still counts toward the Day of Giving totals. The giving website - give.glenville.edu - opens for donations on Friday, February 13.
- **Spread the word:** Talk about Founders Day of Giving on your social media outlets. Chat with and challenge your friends, post your own Glenville State story on Facebook, tweet why you give, or post a selfie on Twitter or Instagram using #GSUGiveDay2026 - the campaign’s official hashtag.
- **Pioneer Fund:** If you are not sure where to give, consider a gift to the Pioneer Fund. This will directly support the greatest needs impacting our faculty, staff, and students.

And remember – every gift, no matter the amount, helps us reach our goals.

Visit the Day of Giving website - give.glenville.edu - for more information.



Chapman nets 300th victory, Gilmer County begins Class A title defense

By Joe Brocato, WV MetroNews (01/11/26)

As the Gilmer County girls basketball team begins their defense of the Class A state championship, a mix of new guards and veteran frontcourt players comprise the rotation for the Lady Titans. Veteran head coach Amy (Riddle) Chapman '08 likes the makeup of the group.

"Day one coming into practice, obviously we knew we had a new lineup here. Some kids are stepping into bigger roles," said Chapman. "We just really emphasized to the girls to trust the process. We just needed to get in the gym and work hard, grow, critique and get a little cleaner basketball going on."

A trio of six-footers return this season for Gilmer County. Sophomore Kenley Hartshorn is in her second season and 6-foot-4 seniors Ava and Blair Dobbins provide the Lady Titans with tremendous size and skill at the forward and center positions.

"They have really come a long way. They have worked really hard and they are so dialed in. They understand the process, obviously for being here for four years. They want to win and they want to do anything it takes to win. They are great kids to coach. They are real intense players, both offensively and defensively. They just make a huge impact defensively. It allows us to do a lot of other things around the perimeter."

Gilmer won 23 games last season, culminating with a win in the Class A final against Tug Valley. Chapman has laid out a challenging regular season schedule for her team. In addition to Little Kanawha Conference contests, Gilmer has a home-and-home series with Tug Valley and upper-classification opponents late in the month of February. The Lady Titans are 5-0 after defeating Wirt County on Friday evening.

"Ritchie County is a really good program and they are well-coached. They've got a nice ball club, so we knew we wanted to get them on the schedule. Obviously, [Parkersburg] Catholic is a good basketball team. We were happy to get them on the schedule a couple of times, and Wirt County. The schedule is, I think, perfect this year. We have the top single-A's that we need to face and look at. Lewis County is going to be a great end-of-season opponent for us. That will get us ready for our postseason run. Lincoln is well-coached and they play in a [Big 10] Conference that they just play good basketball in that conference."

Chapman reached a significant career milestone on December 27th. With a victory over Robert C. Byrd, Chapman collected her 300th victory leading her alma mater.

"It is super-humbling. I didn't even know about it until a couple of days before that game. I am not on social media but I started getting some messages. I didn't even know about it. But I did have a chance to reflect and just really appreciate my assistant coaches. That was probably my first thought

on how lucky the girls and I have it with that staff. They bring so much to the table. I just really appreciate them. Almost all of the credit goes to the players that have come through the program.”

In Memoriam: Professor Emerita Prem Verma

Glennville State University was saddened when we recently learned of the passing of former cataloger and library science instructor, Prem Verma. She passed away in September 2025.

Prem earned an undergraduate degree from Agra University (India) and began her teaching career in New Delhi in 1973. Later that year, she traveled to the United States, where she settled and pursued advanced studies. Prem earned a master's degree in education summa cum laude from the State University of New York, followed by a second master's degree in Library Science, graduating with academic distinction.

After completing her studies in 1978, she taught at Briar Cliff College in Sioux City, Iowa, before accepting a position at Glennville State College in 1981 – a place she would come to describe as warm, welcoming, and deeply meaningful. In 1982, she proudly became a United States citizen, a milestone she regarded as a privilege and a meaningful affirmation of her independence and values.

At Glennville State College, Prem built a distinguished career spanning more than two decades. She served as Head of Technical Services for the Robert F. Kidd Library, taught library science, and played a key role in developing the College's online catalog. In recognition of her lasting contributions to teaching, scholarship, and service, she was named Professor Emerita on May 10, 2003. After retiring, Prem lived in East Brunswick, New Jersey, to be closer to her sister. In 2022, she relocated to Columbus, Ohio, settling in a senior living community near family.

Read her full obituary [here](#).

In lieu of flowers, the family has requested memorial donations be made to the RFK Library, which may be done by [clicking here](#).



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PIONEER ATHLETICS

Check out these game schedules and come out to support the Pioneers!



**Men's
Basketball**



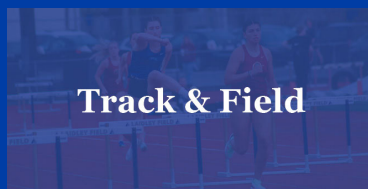
**Women's
Basketball**



Wrestling



**Acrobatics &
Tumbling**



Track & Field



Baseball



Softball



Women's Golf



Men's Golf

Interested in Joining the Pioneer Athletic Club?

As a member, you directly support Pioneer student-athletes through scholarship. Annual Pioneer Athletic Club membership gives you exclusive access to premium areas at Morris Stadium and the Waco Center, where you will have a bird's eye view of the football field and McPherson Court.

[Click here](#) to learn more about membership benefits and how to enroll.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Tuesday, February 10 - Music Audition Day

8:30 AM-1:00 PM - Fine Arts Center

If you know of a high school student who would be interested in attending, have them contact (304) 462-6341 or Lloyd.Bone@glenville.edu

Wednesday, February 11 - Little Kanawha Reading Series: Bob Tinnell

4:00 PM - Robert F. Kidd Library

Thursday, February 19 - Founders Day of Giving

Save the Date!

Friday, February 20 - Casino Night

Mollohan Campus Community Center Ballroom

Tickets \$50 | Call (304) 462-6220 or [click here](#) for more information

Saturday, February 28 - Winter Homecoming

Waco Center

Save the Date!

Saturday, April 25 - Baseball Alumni Reunion

1:00 PM | Sue Morris Sports Complex (1294 US-33, Glenville, WV 26351)

Save the Date!



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