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Monthly Edition

January 25, 2021



The [Martin Luther King Jr. Day Community Celebration](#), an annual event sponsored by Austin College, Grayson County Rotary Club, and Sherman Rotary Club, was held in Ida Green Communication Center's Sally and Jim Nation Theatre on January 8. A small audience gathered along with online guests to hear student speaker Victoria Star Gilbert '21 and keynote speaker Terrence Steele, City of Sherman Assistant City Manager. Although COVID precautions prevented the usual gathering of community guests, the online streaming and access to the recorded event opened the audience to more than 2,000 viewers. Pictured left to right: Aneurin Minson '21, Nadia Hannon '21, President Steven P. O'Day, Victoria Star Gilbert '21, Sherman Rotary President Andie Lane, Terrence Steele, Rev. Charles Brown Jr., Grayson County Rotary President Edwin Clark, and NAACP Representative Dr. Al Hambrick.

JanTerm '21 Grounded in Unique Opportunities

After one week of all-remote instruction and mandatory COVID-19 testing, **JanTerm '21** continued with COVID health and safety protocols in place. It was clear early in the pandemic that JanTerm travel would not be possible, so the faculty and administration developed a robust slate of 45 unique, on-campus and remote classes that students could choose from. Close to 800 'Roos have returned to on-campus learning, with others committing to distance learning, for classes in prairie restoration, ballet, WWII, 3-D game design, and more. The classes fulfill the intention of exploring interests outside of a student's major area of study and giving the faculty members opportunity to explore as they develop meaningful coursework for the term.

While everyone enjoys a little more “down time” during the three weeks, Director of Student Activities Amanda Handsbur offered a [full calendar of events](#) and activities for students to enjoy and connect across campus. JanTerm concludes on January 26, and Spring Term 2021 begins February 3.



Alumni and Students Connect for Virtual Mentoring

The **2021 Alumni Connections Event**, a collaboration between Alumni Services, **First-Year Experience**, and Career Services, brought more than 40 alumni to the virtual “table” on Monday, January 18, to share their insights about different careers. Zooming in from Minnesota, New York, Dallas, and more, the alumni addressed questions about work in healthcare, law, entrepreneurship, and nonprofit organizations. “The challenge of virtual event is all of the logistics,” said Dr. Erin Copple Smith, Director of First-Year Experience. “There were a lot of Zoom links going around and it was tricky to figure out. But, the advantage is we were able to include alumni who are not local to the campus!” While the College looks forward to conducting these events in person in the future, Alumni Connections was considered a great success in connecting so many students and alumni.

Tour Space from Any Distance

Austin College Star Parties have been overshadowed by COVID in recent months, but space and science go on! Austin College’s **Adams Observatory** has produced guided videos for stargazing expeditions right in your own backyard. The first video offers a tour of the sky that is visible in January and February. It points out the easiest ways to find constellations and to remember names of some bright stars. Narrated by Kristen Recine, Administrative Assistant to the Dean of Sciences, the video is perfect for individuals, families, or classes that want to get outside for some naked-eye astronomy.



Bangara Awarded Research Grant



Dr. Saritha Bangara, Co-Director of Austin College's Public Health Program, has been awarded a grant in excess of \$90,000 from The Discovery Foundation of Dallas, Texas, in support of her project "Women's health education for victims of intimate partner violence at the Grayson Crisis Center." The grant covers a three-year period of research, evaluation, and education.

Bangara and her team of three Austin College student public health researchers, working in partnership with Grayson Crisis Center, will conduct focus groups with Crisis Center clients to determine the health issues the women need more information on. Bangara and her team will then develop interactive health education modules, including preventable risk factors and ways to mitigate them.

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Coming Soon to 'RooNation:

A new network platform exclusively for the Austin College community to empower alumni, students, faculty, and staff to connect with friends, network with professionals, and give or receive mentoring assistance. Watch your email for more information!



Seibert Heads Out for Fulbright Assignment

Austin College 2020 graduate **Katherine Seibert** heads out late January to begin a Fulbright English Teaching Assistant post in Seoul, South Korea. She looks forward to the opportunity to experience the rich culture of the country and to serve as an ambassador of the United States. "It's more important now than ever to learn about other cultures so that we can be inclusive members of the global community," she said. "We have so much to learn from other countries about education, public health, and democracy, and I'm excited to gain valuable perspective in South Korea." Her assignment is for the 2021 calendar year.



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Audrey Rose Continues Fulbright Adventures

Audrey Rose '19 has already experienced the joys of Fulbright service, having been awarded a 2019-2020 Fulbright English Teaching Assistantship to Spain, assigned to the Canary Islands. There, she discovered that she adored living on an island, delighted in new foods, and realized that her new island neighbors captured her heart. She spent the year teaching children from 3 years old through third grade, which she enjoyed as much as everything else.

Then, Audrey was chosen to remain in the Canary Islands for 2020-2021, serving as the Fulbright Cultural and Pedagogy Mentor for the new cohort of Fulbright grantees who are arriving in the islands this month, January 2021.

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Watch the 'Roos from the Best Seat in Your House

'Roo athletes are back in action! With COVID restrictions in place, spectators are not allowed at any athletic event. But, you can watch from wherever you are on collegetvticket.com. Team sporting events including baseball, basketball, football, soccer, and volleyball will stream live at no charge; and softball games will stream on Facebook. Check acroos.com frequently to confirm streaming times and availability. Go 'Roos!

