



OLD GOLD & BLACK

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Introducing Alpha Kappa Alpha, Inc. Upsilon Chi chapter to campus

SK Saggi '26
Managing Editor

A year ago, I interviewed Tasha Smith Tyus, senior director at the Career Center and a member of AKA, and learned about the ongoing process of bringing Alpha Kappa Alpha, Inc. to Wofford. Tyus shared that her role in this procedure was to advocate for Wofford before the local and regional chapter and make it known that Wofford was ready to charter AKA and sustain it.

Now a year later, Alpha Kappa Alpha, Inc. officially chartered Upsilon Chi on March 22nd, 2026 and gained 17 founders. However, getting this chapter on campus took 50 years, exemplifying the importance of this organization at Wofford.

AKA is now a part of the National Pan-Hellenic Council at Wofford along with other sororities: Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc., Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Inc., and Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc.

Alpha Kappa Alpha, Inc was founded on Jan. 15, 1908 on the campus of Howard University, becoming the

first historically Black sorority in the United States. Their mission statement upholds the values of friendship, encouraging high scholastic and ethical standards and to be of "Service to All Mankind."

Kerington Pickney '27 and Jeyada Atkins '28, two of the 17 founders, share their perspectives on the journey to becoming an AKA and finding sisterhood.

Pickney shares how community outreach has been an essential aspect of her life and AKA is another organization through which she can continue her acts of service.

"It all ended up and started with service for me. I am a big advocate for people in general, being able to contribute back to a community was just something that I was able to have a platform through AKA," Pickney said.

Service has been a huge part of Atkins' and Pickney's Wofford journey especially through scholar programs like Bonnors, Gateway or Dr. Handelman's Sustainability Scholar's Program.

When asked to share how being a part of AKA will shape the rest of their journey as a Terrier, they

shared the mutual sense of community that comes with being a part of the organization.

"Greek life is a huge part of Wofford's campus, and to finally have a chartered sorority that is a historically black sorority on campus gives us autonomy," Atkins said. "[Being a part of AKA] is setting us up to succeed throughout the rest of our college careers and also succeed after we graduate."

Atkins and Pickney share why it is imperative to have a sorority like AKA on a campus like Wofford.

"Its a place for students of color to have a voice. And though we also have organizations where they're able to have a voice, this is a new capacity," Pickney said.

"Not a lot of students have a place where they feel like they belong or they're not interest-

ed in Greek life because it doesn't fit with who they are as a person and the values they uphold," Atkins said. "Wofford's mission statement aligns with Alpha Kappa Alpha goals and visions."

Having the Alpha Kappa Alpha, Inc. Upsilon Chi chapter as a part of the NPHC sororities at Wofford is a huge milestone for the individuals who worked hard in the past

50 years to get this organization on campus. While AKA is a historically black sorority, it is open to all women of color on campus so they too can join and find the sisterhood that supports them, speaks for them and represents them.

Keep up with @woffordakas on Instagram to their impact on campus and the community.



photo by Hailey Hirter

Members of Alpha Kappa Alpha performed their step dance during Greek Week 2026. The newest installation of Alpha Kappa Alpha has brought new attention to this campus.

Greek Week steps up for the Roo Crew

Catherine Lessene '26
Staff Writer

Wofford College's annual Greek week is one of the largest fundraisers between both Panhellenic and the Interfraternity Council. The popular on-campus event took place from April 20 to 24 and was full of games and competitions between sororities and fraternities. This year marks the last year with just four sororities, as Chi Omega will be added in 2027.

"This is a great opportunity for our new members to really jump in and get involved. They get to see why we fundraise and how it impacts our community," Karis Phillips '26, vice president of membership experience for Tri Delta, said.

Last year the Greek community raised over \$40,000 for Camp Cole. This year participants hoped to meet that number or exceed it, as all profits will be generously donated to the

Roo Crew.

The selected organization will assist families with support in raising a child with special medical and educational needs. Founder of the Roo Crew, Lindzey Neely, was deeply moved in 2019 when her own daughter, Ruthi, was born with congenital scoliosis and a congenital heart defect. Neely makes frequent visits to campus, and is a guest speaker in Dr. Kristy Hammett's "Diverse Learners" education class. The Roo Crew accomplishes this by approaching conversations with families through the LEAP model: listen, advocate, educate and prepare.

"Over the past four years, Ruthi has endured countless doctor visits, hospital stays and treatments, showing incredible resilience through it all. We lovingly call her 'Ruthi Roo.' Inspired by her strength, we created the Roo Crew to support other families with children facing serious

medical and educational challenges," Neely said.

The week kicked off at 6 P.M. on April 20th, preceded by the beginning of the "CrowdChange Wars" at 7:30 A.M. the same day. Some of the week's most popular events include Greek games, CrowdChange wars, an IFC burger cookoff, a presentation of AKA and the panhellenic lip sync battle.

"I really enjoy all of the Greek week activities. If I had to pick, I think that I'm most looking forward to Greek games and lip sync. The Greek games are always so fun to watch and I love the wheel barrow race. Lip sync is great too and I love watching each sorority perform... This year instead of Jeopardy they're doing 'Are you smarter than a FYI student?' I'm excited to see what they do, but I also really loved Jeopardy night every year. It was a good laugh," Kelsey Wheeler '26 said.

The week raised \$35,805 for the Roo Crew, a fund that will leave a significant impact on the greater Spartanburg community.



photo by Hailey Hirter

Claudia DeArment '26 and Eleanor Donohue '26 prepare for the chariot race during Greek Games. Wofford Panhellenic, IFC, and NPHC, have come together for the annual Greek Week, benefitting The Roo Crew.

STUDENT LIFE

Loss of government data websites makes research more challenging for students

Darcy Phillips '27
Staff Writer

As Wofford students begin research papers for finals week and the countdown begins for summer research, it is critical to understand the current research landscape. Beginning in Jan. 2025, the U.S. government, under the Trump administration, removed or altered over 8,000 websites and over 3,000 databases from the Internet. The information that was removed often was related to science, climate or DEI. Widely respected news outlets including The New York Times and NPR reported on this unprecedented decision by the current administration.

The Old Gold and Black interviewed Emily Witsell, a research librarian at Sandor Teszler Library, and Ramón Galiñanes, director of undergraduate research and post-graduate fellowships at Wofford College, about how this loss of access to vital data will impact student research now and in the future.

Witsell highlights how her department at Wofford is working to ensure student success during this time.

"These resources that we have relied on for decades, suddenly, we have to find alternatives. Faculty who are sponsoring summer research and the librarians are going to have to think about new ways to get at that information," Witsell said. "Any group that was relying on things that were funded by government resources, might find that either the research is not ongoing,

or that research from the past may not be easily accessible. It's going to be more difficult for students to find accurate and reliable information."

In the age of A.I., finding accurate data is becoming more challenging.

"Generative A.I...like ChatGPT, heavily rely on information that is freely available online...so the fact that all of this government research was available meant that was some good reliable data that went into ChatGPT, and now so much of it is no longer available," Witsell said.

Instead, A.I. models will now only pull data from sites like Reddit or blog posts. Witsell claims that A.I. "often doesn't encapsulate the complexity of a topic...(and) that it's very hard to check their work". This will lead to less nuanced research and potentially incorrect data.

Witsell argues there will be a real hole in the research that is being done, if research continues to be politicized. Students may also come to lack skills that were previously developed, such as the ability to put things into context. This could severely impact the quality and amount of data that is produced on a variety of topics in the near and long term.

Yet, Witsell wants students to know that they do have a voice. She suggests calling your representatives and being politically active.

Witsell acknowledges that A.I. can be used in beneficial ways but you have to approach it with caution.

"You have choices about how to use technology...you can accept some and reject others and still be an in-

formation fluent individual," Witsell said.

It is important for Wofford students to know that there are people locally and nationally who are working to mitigate the harms of the website removals. Witsell points out that librarians have been trying to create mirror websites to repost databases that have been removed from by the U.S. government. Regarding A.I., different departments across campus are working on answering the large philosophical questions, including the Sandor Teszler Library.

In an interview with Dr. Galiñanes, he explained how important it is to ensure academic freedom. Galiñanes explains that the American Associa-

tion of University Professors, AAUP, at Wofford College works to protect students who are interested in a variety of research topics.

"President Samhat has been very supportive of academic freedom and [Wofford] has done well [in protecting that freedom]," he said.

Galiñanes shares these are challenging times, and we need to vigorously defend a variety of ideas and research. One way Galiñanes has worked to do so is by encouraging students to make their research projects public, so people know what projects students and faculty have engaged in. Even though this can be a challenge, by interacting with diverse ideas and perspectives,

Galiñanes claims we become better scholars.

Galiñanes proved his commitment to allow students a way to show off their work. The Terrier Expo on April 17 gave students the opportunity to share a variety of projects including art. Galiñanes was excited that students get to share in a friendly atmosphere. Though Galiñanes wanted to ensure that everyone was welcome, including the greater Spartanburg community. He wanted to make sure that every student feels comfortable sharing their views.

It is imperative that Wofford continue to give students this opportunity and protection.



photo by Mark Olencki

In her Summer 2025 faculty-student collaborative project, Dr. Lilly Trotter sought to study the rapid expansion of New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) member firms, which increased accessibility to the stock market, during the 19th and 20th centuries. As access to government run databases is being lost, undergraduate research is becoming more difficult to accurately conduct.

What President Trump's executive order means for NCAA athletes

Brooke Melcher '27
Staff Writer

The landscape of NCAA athletics may soon undergo a major shift following an executive order issued by Donald Trump on April 3 titled "An Urgent National Action to Save College Sports." The order, which is proposed to take effect on Aug. 1, 2026, targets key areas of concern within the NCAA, including transfer regulations, NIL compensation and athlete eligibility.

At the core of the order is a push to tighten transfer portal rules and standardize eligibility limits. According to the White House, the ease of entering and exiting the transfer portal has become a growing concern, with critics arguing it is negatively impacting the stability and competitive balance of college athletics. In response, the order proposes a five-year eligibility cap, eliminating the possibility of sixth year participation and giving athletes a clearly defined window in which to compete.

In addition to the eligibility cap, the proposal introduces stricter transfer guidelines. Athletes would be granted one "free" transfer with immediate eligibility, allowing them flexibility early in their careers. However, any subsequent transfer would only

be permitted after the athlete has completed their undergraduate degree. This provision emphasizes both academic progress and commitment, while also reinforcing the five-year participation limit set forth in the order.

The order also addresses another emerging issue: professional athletes returning to college competition. Under the proposed changes, athletes who have competed at the professional level would no longer be eligible to return to NCAA play. While this situation may seem rare, there has been a noticeable increase in recent years, particularly in high-NIL sports such as basketball, as well as football and ice hockey, raising concerns about fairness and competitive integrity.

To ensure compliance, the order ties these changes to federal funding. Institutions that generate over \$20 million in athletic revenue and fail to comply could face significant consequences, including suspension or loss of federal funding and grants. This financial pressure is intended to encourage universities to adopt and enforce the updated regulations.

However, it is important to note that this executive order is not yet finalized and may never take effect. There are significant legal hurdles, including conflicts with existing pol-

icies and recent court rulings that have challenged similar restrictions as unlawful. While NCAA President Charlie Baker has called the proposal a "significant step forward," Congressional approval would still be required for full implementation, leaving the future of the order uncertain.

So, what does this mean for Wofford athletes? Because the order is

largely aimed at larger programs, particularly those with graduate schools, its direct impact on Wofford College would likely be minimal.

Without graduate programs, Wofford athletes would likely continue following a familiar path of completing their undergraduate careers and transferring elsewhere for graduate opportunities if they choose. However, stricter transfer rules could still

reduce overall movement, potentially affecting how often athletes transfer in and out of the program.

As of now, nothing is set in stone, but if enacted, these changes could mark a significant turning point in the future of college athletics.



photo by Mark Olencki

Donald Trump's recent executive order is likely to bring new changes to NCAA sports.

FROM THE PUB ROOM

Professor spotlight: Dr. Byers

Caroline Kennemur '26
Staff Writer

Dr. Byers is one of Wofford's most beloved professors. In the sociology department she connects with her students and cheers them on. Byers started out at Virginia Tech and chose to work at Wofford because of its tight knit community.

"As a faculty member, I've had the opportunity to work with students across a wide range of majors, supporting them at different points in their college journeys. My colleagues are thoughtful, innovative teachers and I'm constantly learning from them," Byers said.

Byers also has a personal connection to Wofford. Her great grandfather, Mark Shovar, was a visiting professor in the 1960s. This piece of history made her realize that she had to take the opportunity to be at Wofford.

"It's been rewarding to be part of a place that feels both professionally inspiring and personally meaningful," Byers said.

Byers decided to become a professor because she has always loved

school and has always been a curious person. She also loves working with students and digging deeper into different topics.

"Being a professor allows me to keep learning while sharing that process with my students," Byers said.

Byers originally went to college to study vocal performance and become an opera singer. She took her first sociology class in 2014 and felt like she had just entered a whole new world.

"Sociology gave me a way to connect individual experiences to larger social structures and patterns and it completely changed how I understood the world around me," Byers said.

Byers recently ran into that professor of that class last week at the Southern Sociological Society's annual meeting. She attended with several students who presented a panel on why sociology it's important for students pursuing healthcare careers.

"SSS is a great organization that all of our Wofford sociology faculty are a part of and we take students every

year," Byers said.

Byers was voted "most likely to be a choir teacher" in high school, and believes that if she didn't choose sociology, she would have been a pop star. However, one thing that would surprise most people about her is she tends to be quite shy.

"There's still time for that though; I might pull a Hannah Montana situation and be a professor by day, international celebrity by night. All I need is a good wig," Byers said.

That sounds like a dream! Sociology often deals with difficult concepts deeply rooted in our everyday lives. Everything is grounded in evidence, research and observation. To help her students feel comfortable, Byers sets the expectation every semester that students are encouraged to try, ask questions and get things wrong. She also keeps the classroom built with respect and curiosity.

"I'm consistently impressed by how my students rise to that challenge: they approach conversations with thoughtfulness and a genuine willingness to learn," Byers said.

This method makes it possible for

students to have potentially uncomfortable conversations and make them meaningful and productive.

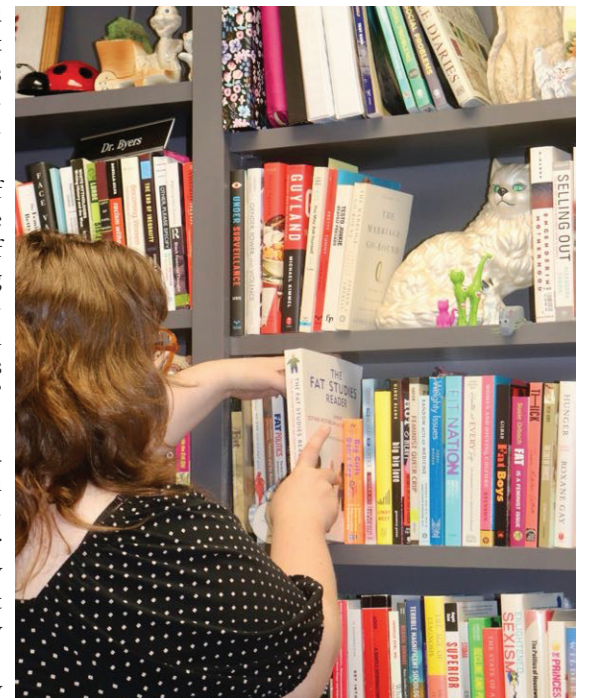
One thing that shapes the Wofford community and makes it what it is are the students and faculty, an integral part of Wofford.

"The amount of time and effort the faculty and staff put into making this the best possible institution it can be makes the community," Byers said.

Byers gave a shoutout to Susan Thomas and Jennifer Sanders for how much they do to support campus life every day.

Byers recently

got the job of assistant professor of sociology, and is very excited to be staying here at Wofford. The Wofford community is lucky to have her.



photos by Susanna Woodward

Dr. Byers is pictured putting a book on fat studies back on her bookshelf. Dr. Byers is a fat studies scholar and has recently accepted a tenure track position here at Wofford.

Where will Interim 2027 take the Terriers?

Nola Webb '26
Staff Writer

The abroad programs for Interim 2027 have officially been released on the Office of International Program's website. For many Terriers, studying abroad during the month of January is a highlight of their undergraduate experience, as this opportunity to travel with classmates and professors is something relatively unique to Wofford.

During the selection process for the Interim 2026 travel programs, the Office of International Programs received many applications for the relatively limited spots on faculty-led programs, reflecting a strong desire among the student body to engage with the global-classroom ideology

that these programs promote.

Programs like "Tanzania and Zanzibar: Culture, Nature, and Connection" with Curt McPhail and Dr. Kimberly Hall and "Nicaragua: Yoga and the Tropical Environment" with Dr. Jennifer Bradham and Dr. Jocelyn Franklin were big hits in 2026 after being offered in recent years and earning high praise from students.

Trips to both of these destinations will be offered again for the following year. However, while the course and instructors will remain the same for Nicaragua, the trip to Tanzania is instead called "Tanzania: From Savanna to Sea" and will be led by Dr. Geoff Mitchell and Dr. Austin Powell.

The trip to Tanzania for the upcoming year seems to take a very ecolog-

ical approach, still leading students on the familiar safari journey and time in Zanzibar, although appearing to lean into a focus on sustainability and non-profit work in conservation.

Another popular trip from 2026 took students to Japan with Dr. Jim Neighbors and Dr. Kaye Savage. A faculty-led trip to Japan had not been offered recently enough for any current Wofford students to have attended, likely a factor for its popularity among students eager to travel.

However, two new faculty members will tackle Japan in 2027- but only Tokyo. Dr. Courtney Kealy and Dr. Heidi Bostic have introduced a course called "Stories of Tokyo." These two professors led a trip to Barcelona in 2026 with an identical

theme and goal.

Kealy shares their goal is to have students engage with one city extensively. For the 2027 trip, this means that students will be expected to understand the ethnography of their destination, interacting with locals in Tokyo.

Kealy mentioned that because of the intense interest around the trip to Japan last year, she and Bostic felt confident that applying their format from Barcelona to this destination specifically would be just as appealing to students.

Another course from last year is taking a stab at a new location, as Dr. Dresden Lackey and Dr. Amy Telligman will take their "Farm to Fork Agricultural Journey" course to Italy after tackling Greece in 2026.

The making of a successful Interim course takes a lot of thought, factoring in where students seem eager to visit, professor interests and academic goals, as well as feasible costs.

Hannah Wells '26, a global ambassador for the Office of International Programs who helps advise students interested in opportunities abroad, shares that this year's array of trips seems to have something for everyone.

"Lots of students on Wofford-led interim trips are going abroad for the first time and thus choose interims that are more structured and going to bigger cities," Wells said. "However, some students really want to prioritize the adventure aspect. This upcoming year has a good mix of the two."

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