

# BUSINESS FIRST.

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## the Gazette

The Gazette is produced within the Department of Communication at Langston University. It serves as a teaching tool.

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# Texas opened up too soon

## Student discusses state's decision to lift mask mandate

On March 2, Texas said it was lifting its mask requirement and would allow businesses to fully reopen. With limited vaccines given out, this move is too fast and unsafe at this time during the COVID-19 pandemic.

After a year into the pandemic, states have been loosening many restrictions, but none of which compare to the actions from Texas Gov. Gregg Abbot toward the 29 million residents in Texas.

"It is now time to open Texas 100%," Abbott said, adding that "COVID-19 has not suddenly disappeared," but state mandates are no longer needed.

With the near 75% drop in average COVID-19 cases in Texas, it seems that Abbott is only looking to bring the number of positive cases back up. It seems as though this move is more focused on the economy following the recent ice and snowstorm than the safety of those still at risk of receiving COVID-19.

"I think in light of our recent ice storm and how much that showed Texas was not prepared to handle such weather conditions, nor issues with the power grid, I feel like they could be spending their time rolling out legislation and efforts to help their citizens overcome what they just went through rather than going against several recommendations and safety



**Fabian**

protocols," said Alex Wyatt, freshman health, physical education and recreation major.

AccuWeather estimate of the multistate winter storm's damage totaled about \$155 billion, with \$130 billion arising out of Texas alone. There is no excuse to put millions of civilians in danger to help recover from the winter deficit.

It is only right to say that the number of COVID-19 cases is decreasing due to the increase in vaccinations. It shows proof that vaccinations are doing what they were intended to do.

About 4.3 million people in Texas, or roughly 14% of the state's population, have gotten at least one dose of the COVID-19 vaccination. Between 10 million and 13 million people are eligible for the vaccine under Texas guidelines, said Lara Anton, a spokesperson for the Texas Department of State Health Services.

With less than 17% of Texans being vaccinated, and

less than 50% is eligible for the vaccine, it is impossible to say that Texas is in a place where positive cases will continue to decrease.

"Texas is not at a place to completely throw out their mask mandate or to abandon all safety recommendations, but it just shows where their priorities are at, and it's not with the safety of their citizens," Wyatt said.

It can be argued that the majority of the 4.3 million who have received at least one dose of the vaccination are the residents who are most at risk of fatal side effects from COVID-19.

Those who are at high risk and have not been able to receive at least one dose of the vaccine will now be at an even higher risk thanks to the millions of people who are now operating their daily lives with no masks or required restrictions.

The main benefit of the lifting of restrictions in Texas is the rising of the economy. This opens up many jobs that have been working under restriction, if working at all. According to the Texas Workforce Commission, Texas added 30,800 total nonagricultural jobs over the past month, marking the ninth consecutive month of job growth.

Private sector employment moved in the same direction with an increase of 32,600

positions for the month. This also decreased the percentage of unemployment from 6.9% to 6.8%.

Oklahoma's average COVID-19 cases have also decreased around 75%. Thankfully, Oklahoma has administered over 1 million COVID-19 vaccinations, which is over 25% of Oklahoma's population. With the rushed lifting of restrictions from Texas, it only makes you think what we would if this was to happen in Oklahoma today.

"If Oklahoma were to do the same thing, I would continue to wear my mask and be aware that the pandemic is not over, and although I may be in good health and not at risk, that is not the same story for everybody," Wyatt said.

Abbott's announcement of the opening of all businesses and lifted mask restrictions is hard to agree with at this point in the COVID-19 pandemic.

Too many lives are still at risk with the limited number of vaccinations. While the economy of Texas is bound to increase, the safety of the population will decrease. Restrictions are still in place for a reason in the other 49 states, but only time will tell if Texas made the right decision.

*Jonah Fabian is a sophomore broadcast journalism major.*

## Student says online learning needs balance

We have officially been learning online for a year, but has it worked in our favor or hindered us even more?

Yes, we can stay connected to our professors no matter where we are, but it doesn't seem to be beneficial in the long run.

I think there are many pros and cons that can be debated on whether technology in a classroom gets in the way of learning, but my stance is that it does – and there must be a

fine balance between online learning and in-person learning.

When speaking for kids in elementary school, education administrators are already trying to convert them to computers and technology rather than actually having them write down anything. Although social media is a huge part of today's generation, it shouldn't be the main tool for learning.

By using a computer daily,

there are many different distractions that can come with it as well. When having a disconnection from in-person social interaction, it can alter the progression of how an individual learns.

Students may think that not being in a classroom daily is the best thing to ever happen, but grades have been heavily impacted for all students learning during a pandemic, including college students. My hardest semester in



**Gavin**

see ONLINE, page 7



# All you need to be successful!

## New director helps students with jobs, internships, resumes

By Paris R. Taylor-Mahone  
Staff Writer

Receiving constant emails can be annoying, but when they have an influence on your future and your finances, Leonell Thompson, director of career and professional development here at Langston University, will direct you where the money resides.

"My job here at Langston is to help students succeed," Thompson said.

She helps students make those connections to increase access to employers and receive internship opportunities, and really help with anything that connects a student to life after Langston. Even alumni who have started their lives can still gain help from Thompson's resources.

Thompson advises students

"Mrs. Thompson has been a really great resource. She has great advice and tips for interviews, being able to let you know how to not only get a job after college but how to succeed as well..."

— DaCota Mims,  
sophomore child development  
and HPER major



Thompson

that as well. She advises everyone to be acceptable to change because "you are not stuck to one thing," she said. "Anything you decide as a freshman does not have to follow you all the way to your senior year. I have changed careers three times. It is totally normal."

Thompson said her overall goal is to "make sure students know that my office is a resource, help them get the best

opportunities possible presented to them, and to make sure they are not wanting for anything in the area of career and professional development," because she is available and willing to help. "You are not in this alone," she added. "I am here to help you and you can never ask too many questions."

Some students are gaining new opportunities just from stopping by Thompson's office.

"Prior to Mrs. Thompson being here, Langston students were pretty much on their own," said SGA President Jada Meads, senior public health major. "And now that Mrs. Thompson is here, I have been offered at least three internships. She is very helpful with resumes. She has changed my perspective on life after college simply because it is very rare that you get people in positions such as Mrs. Thompson's who really cares. There has been an increase in departments that now show up for the career fair. More students have gained a passion for life after college. I feel that she is a life changer."

Meanwhile, students are happy both for her arrival and her capabilities.

"I truly believe that Mrs. Thompson's arrival was God-sent because in my short two years I have yet to see anyone to fill her capacity as a director in career and professional development," said Elija Weaver, junior accounting major. "Since her first day, she has been a great help. I happened to be one of her first students to receive and secure a summer internship. She has helped me with my resume, preparation for interviews and finding opportunities on every coast. I truly believe she is doing a great job at doing her job, and I think students should take the time to meet her and use her resources."

Others who just have no idea where to start, Thompson is your go-to woman.

"Mrs. Thompson has been a really great resource," said

see **RESOURCES**, page 7

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## COVID-19 AND PEOPLE OF COLOR

According to the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, long-standing systemic health and social inequities have put many people of racial and ethnic minority groups at increased risk of getting sick and dying from COVID-19, regardless of age.

Among some racial and ethnic minority groups, including non-Hispanic Black and African American persons, Hispanics and Latinos, and American Indians/Alaska Natives, evidence points to higher rates of hospitalization or death from COVID-19 than among non-Hispanic white persons.

These results are also due to the fact that "People of Color" are refusing to accept the immunization (vaccines) based on self-conceived beliefs. Where or how did this virus originate? And where or how did the vaccines originate?

This question can be answered in a scripture verse found in Hebrews 11:3, which reads from the King James version of the Bible, "Through Faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the Word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear."

Science teaches us that everything consists of matter, even COVID-19 and the vaccines, which is the physical material of the universe; matter is anything that has mass and occupies space. We now state this COVID-19 virus and the resulting vaccines were made by the Word of God, and are observed, using particles of matter which we cannot see. It is suggested that you Love, Fast, and Pray, and that you be led by the Holy Spirit in making your decision.

# Students discuss experiences, effects of February snowstorm

By Kaila Lessier  
Staff Writer

On Feb. 16-17, a massive snowstorm hit Langston University, causing all students to stay stuck in their rooms for nearly two weeks.

The snow was up to 14 inches, and there was no way anyone could drive through it without getting stuck.

Junior biology major Anai Robinson is from Oklahoma, so, she said, she is used to this type of weather. However, the snow was more profound than usual.

"I feel like I needed that break. It felt good to slow down and take my focus off of school for a moment," Robinson said.

Robinson also said she thinks her teachers needed the break and appreciated them for not being too tough on the students once everyone returned after the storm.

"This two-week break helped slow down time and

relieved some stress because life was going so fast," Robinson said.

Damira Flavors, a biology major from Seattle, welcomed the break as well, but she only has one primary concern.

"I enjoyed the time off; however, the only thing I had a complaint about was the fact that I didn't have any food in my room."

Nonetheless, Flavors was grateful for the university providing food during certain hours of the day.

Flavors added, "Most of my teachers were not pressuring us for our work that that was due. Some of them were, but there was nothing we as the students could do about that, especially because the Wi-Fi was out."

Cornelius Florence, a sophomore public health major, is from Bakersfield, California, so he was not used to this extreme winter weather. Florence expressed that he felt frustrated during

the winter storm because he could not go anywhere.

"I felt trapped during the snowstorm because I could not leave my room safely, and my food option was limited."

He also said he felt like the break took more of a mental toll on him than it did a mental break.

"I was not able to go outside and was forced to look at four walls by myself for two weeks straight and, on top of that, my living conditions were below poor. My windows do not open in my room, so I wasn't able to get some nice and fresh air from outside."

Florence said he was happy to see the snow melt and everything get back to normal.



Photo by Larry Harrington

Snow covered the entire Langston University campus like a blanket during Oklahoma's major snowstorm in February.

## Capturing an Oklahoma sunset



Photo by G'ahri Gassaway

During an evening walk, senior broadcast journalism major G'ahri Gassaway captures this picturesque view of an Oklahoma sunset. Gassaway snapped this shot on campus as he was walking near Cimarron Apartments and Centennial Court.

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## Release party at Langston Center canceled

By Larry Harrington  
Staff Writer

On Feb. 25, The Langston Center was supposed to host its first event since COVID-19 began. However, the event ended up getting shut down by Langston officials because of social distancing protocols and scheduling issues.

The event was for up-and-coming artist Pooh Shiesty's mixtape release party, who has quickly racked up hits such as "Back in Blood" and "Monday to Sunday", both of which will be on the album.

According to Rolling Stone magazine, Shiesty announced his mixtape release date on Feb. 6, which had been highly anticipated in the weeks leading up to his release party. The

mixtape titled "Shiesty Season" was supposed to be held at The Langston Center on Feb. 25, while Shiesty was set to perform at the Symphoni Champagne Bar in Oklahoma City later that evening. Instead, Langston officials were forced to shut down the events because the venue space was not equipped to follow standards in place for COVID-19.

"I was mad that the album release party got canceled because I love Pooh Shiesty and I have never seen him live before," said Tianna Smith, sophomore biology major. "It would have been fun just to see one of my favorite artists perform."

The Langston Center is not owned by Langston University. It is owned by a private individual who allows people

and organizations to rent it out for private parties and events. However, the building owner was unable to be reached for comment on this situation.

Pooh Shiesty has risen to a very quick popularity during the pandemic and does not appear to be slowing down, despite the lack of live shows. But students are still disappointed that they couldn't attend a fun event so close to campus.

"[Pooh Shiesty] is one of my favorite new artists and to hear the release party was canceled and it was the first event that we could actually go to since COVID-19 hit, we just were bored, and that would have been something to do," said Josh Adams, a sophomore business major.

Students did not lose hope as the mixtape release party was



Pooh Shiesty

rescheduled for Feb. 27, at Symphoni Champagne Bar, according to eventbrite.com. The event sold out fast and more than 1,000 people attended, including Adams.

"I had fun, it was lit. The energy was cool, too, even before Pooh Shiesty came out on stage," Adams said. "I am just ready for the on-campus events to start back up again."

## Campus Question

How was your experience at the first in-person event on campus since COVID-19?

Compiled by Paris Taylor-Mahone



**Raynita Mason**  
Junior  
Business Management  
and Psychology Major

"My experience at our first in-person game was amazing! As a 'COVID queen', a lot of things have been different during my reign, including not being able to go to games and support our team. It felt so good to be back with the LU family in one place, having a good time, supporting our team – COVID-19 style and all."



**Wesley Lowe**  
Sophomore  
Biology Major

"It was really good being able to see the fans come out there and support Langston football. When COVID first hit, I didn't know if we were even going to be able to play. But seeing everyone with their masks and socially distanced and still were able to have a good time really gave me a boost and made me very optimistic COVID will go away very soon. The first home game was great, and I cannot wait for more to come."



**Tre Davis**  
Freshman  
Computer Science Major

"For my first in-person game, I liked it because it was my first experience of a college game. I can't wait to go to more games. Especially with me being in the band, it was extremely fun!"



**Courtney Webster**  
Freshman  
Biology Major

"It was very exciting and the event was really inclusive."

# Campus organization to host Zoom event, students could win \$25 Walmart gift card

By MacKenzie McQuarters  
Staff Writer

Langston University's Public Health Student Association will host an event called "THIS IS PUBLIC HEALTH" at 7 p.m. March 25, via Zoom.

The Public Health Student Association was founded three years ago by students and faculty in the Public Health program, which is a relatively new degree program at Langston, established about 10 years ago.

Kathy Montella, director of public health, is the adviser for the association.

"The student association is there to enhance the health of the entire Langston campus and to get more people aware and interested in the field of public health," Montella said.

The event will be an informal conversation with people in the public health field about what exactly public health entails, what the job market looks like, graduate school opportunities and what you can do with the

"Our organization is hoping for more exposure so students will be interested in joining and bringing awareness to students of how stress can affect performance in school and everyday lifestyle."

— Jada Meads,  
senior public health major

degree.

Students can look forward to speakers such as Aundria Goree, president of the Oklahoma Public Health Association; Dr. Marshan Marick, founder of Langston's public health program, who is currently employed at OSU School of Community Health Sciences; and Dr. Thomas Teasdale, chair of the Department of Health Promotion Sciences at the Hudson School of Public Health at the University of Oklahoma.

Students who attend the event via Zoom will have the

opportunity to win a \$25 Walmart gift card.

"Our organization is hoping for more exposure so students will be interested in joining and bringing awareness to students of how stress can affect performance in school and everyday lifestyle," said Jada Meads, senior public health major.

The association has hosted other events as well, such as health fairs and condom distribution to promote sexual health. President of the Public Health Student Association Summer Horn said the organization has



other events coming up this semester, but she is particularly excited about this Zoom event.

"I think this will cause a small change because it makes students think. Small changes

always lead to big changes," Horn said.

The Zoom link for "THIS IS PUBLIC HEALTH" on March 25 is: <https://zoom.us/j/2417499887>.

## LU-OKC offers degree for working adults through Reach Higher Completion plan

By Keitoria Jefferson  
Staff Writer

The Langston University campus in Oklahoma City has a degree program for working adults trying to finish their degrees.

The program, called the Reach Higher Completion plan, at the LU-OKC campus offers students an affordable opportunity to finish getting their degree with no application fee.

It is an opportunity to keep your normal daily routine while you finish getting your bachelor's degree because it is an accelerated program.

T'nisha Law, student service coordinator at LU-OKC, said she took the program to receive her Bachelor of Science degree in organizational leadership.

She said more than 69,000 Oklahomans once attended college, but they never had the chance to finish getting their degree — until now.

Students have an opportunity to enroll in the accelerated program five times throughout the year, which means the university is

consistently taking applications. The program also allows students to share the experience with other working adults.

Students who complete the program will receive a Bachelor of Science in organizational leadership.

This degree prepares students for the success in many areas, including government, nonprofit and industrial careers.

The program's curriculum is comprised of ethics, finances, management and communication skills, so the working adults can advance their careers and income in Oklahoma.

According to the Langston University website, there are eight other public universities in Oklahoma that also offer the same program because it is a statewide effort led by Northeastern State University in Tahlequah. The Oklahoma public universities are recognized by the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Universities.

For more information about the program, visit [www.langston.edu/okc/reach-higher](http://www.langston.edu/okc/reach-higher), or contact T'nisha Law at 405-530-7500 for a personal visit.

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# Biden moves for states to prioritize educators in receiving the vaccine

By Jayden Hannah  
Contributing Writer

In early March, President Joe Biden called for the United States to prioritize educators for the vaccine.

This was set in motion by the Federal Retail Pharmacy program increasing supply to meet the anticipated demand. President Biden's goal was to have all educational and childcare staff vaccinated before the end of the month.

The implementation from the president presented swift

changes across the country. On March 8, less than a week after Biden made the announcement, 43 states had made teachers eligible in some way, including Oklahoma.

Despite the swift coalition between the president and state governments, American vaccinations are still off to a slow start, with only 1 in 5 Americans being vaccinated for COVID-19 so far.

Regardless, many educators across the country are welcoming the progressive strides Biden is making against the

COVID-19 pandemic.

Kyle Hawkins, Edmond Public Schools track coach and broadcast instructor, said he was signed up for the vaccine within the first five minutes and that the setup and experience was smooth.

"I think Biden's on the right track," Hawkins said. "It would be so easy to clarify most teachers as frontline workers.

"Many of us have been stuck in large rooms full of students – many of which have been quarantined or tested positive

– so I think it's totally necessary to have teachers vaccinated."

Hawkins continued, "I think that, overall, it will have a positive impact, though I am worried about more outbreaks due to packing so many students in a room when we are still in a pandemic."

However, some people are hesitant to vaccinate, which could still cause issues in the classrooms.

"With the release of the vaccine, many schools are bringing students back into

the building and this will ultimately lead to an increase in cases as teachers are vaccinated, but children and their family members are not," said Oklahoma City Public Schools educational coach Tisha Clay.

"I am glad Biden made the vaccine available to those that need it most, such as health-care workers, elderly and those living with common morbidities. [But] at this time, I have not opted to get the vaccine. I would like to wait until it is FDA approved," Clay said.

## UPDATE: Statewide COVID-19 vaccination information

Special from  
LU Emergency Leadership Team

We write to share an update on the availability of and access to the COVID-19 vaccine.

Langston University is working toward securing a vendor to administer the COVID-19 vaccine on our

campuses; however, the university does not yet have direct access to the vaccine.

At this time, we cannot ensure university-wide access to the vaccine administered on our campuses.

The state of Oklahoma is in Phase 3 of distribution, which means all university faculty, staff and stu-

dents are now eligible.

For the purposes of regional availability and access to the vaccine, university community members interested in vaccination are encouraged to register within the state's online platform.

By registering, individuals can identify eligibility and identify re-

gional vaccine clinics outside of campus specific efforts, as there is still no guarantee that Langston University will gain direct access to the vaccine.

Should you have any questions, please contact us at [luelt@langston.edu](mailto:luelt@langston.edu).

Thank you!

### ONLINE from page 2

college was completely online, and I thought I wasn't going to make it through.

Even if technology can be a distraction, it can also make an effective change in someone's way of containing knowledge. Our society is constantly on their phones, so it should be easy to check when an assignment is due or when the next test is scheduled.

Students are far less likely to miss class now as well because they can "Zoom" from anywhere. They are also able to look up content about a subject that might have not be clear in class with a simple Google search.

Technology is being presented to children at such young ages and, soon enough, this will be all that they know. The growth of mobile technology in classrooms will eventually be a must-have for students and professors. So, as you can see, technology in a classroom can make major changes on how someone excels in school.

Though COVID-19 has ruined many plans for people, Langston University has created a positive way to keep their students engaged, whether students are staying on campus or in their home state.

We are evolving to electronic learning, which is a great supplement to classroom instruction, but it should never convert strictly to just being online or all technology if we want to see our society succeed. Personal interaction is a key element for accomplishments in the future.

*Lauren Gavin is a senior broadcast journalism major.*

### RESOURCES from page 3

DaCota Mims, sophomore child development and health, physical education and recreation major. "She has great advice and tips for interviews, being able to let you know how to not only get a job after college but how to succeed as well. She is very welcoming and has a great way of communicating to students on a level to where you can understand what you need to do to be successful."

Thompson attended the University of Tulsa where she received her bachelor's degree and her master's of business. After receiving her degrees, she then went to work in oil and gas at Conoco Philips for 11 years.

After that, she became a supervisor of accounting at Quick Trip convenience stores at the cooperate office in Tulsa. She then headed back to her stomping grounds at the University of Tulsa, overseeing the college of business career center.

Thompson has been in supervising, accounting, taxation, training in development, project teams and recruiting, which is where she gained her love for students.

In November 2020, Thompson decided it was time for change once again and now uses her expertise through all Langston campuses – OKC, Tulsa, the Ardmore site and

yours truly, the main university campus in Langston. Thompson decided to bring her grit and love for student success to dear Langston because she saw there was a need. Thompson wanted to be a part of connecting HBCU students to industry, employers and organizations.

"I felt that Langston is a special place, and I wanted to be a part of that here," Thompson said.

Due to Thompson's early success and accomplishments with students here at Langston University, she has new projects on the way. First, there will be a program called "Grow with Google" that will help students become efficient in software skills. You can receive a certificate and it will be free.

There is also a project called "Career Clothes Closet" where students are able to see what to wear and gain those professional wardrobe critiques and tips.

If you are ever wanting to increase your connections, tweak your resume and find amazing internships, Thompson can be found in Page Hall, Room 314.

If you are a student who is not on campus or you are an alum of dear Langston, you can communicate with her by cellphone at 405-346-6377 or email at [leonelle.thompson@langston.edu](mailto:leonelle.thompson@langston.edu).

And, most importantly, "Don't forget to read my emails," Thompson said.



# Players, students, fans welcome first home football game since COVID-19

By Jonah Fabian  
Staff Writer

After a long 475 days, Langston University football is finally back in W.E. Anderson Stadium. Southwestern Assemblies of God University proved to be too much as they beat Langston 31-20, but still, many students saw this gathering as a win for the university.

Nov. 9, 2019, was the last time Lion fans were able to physically support Langston's football team at home.

With the cancelation of all fall 2020 athletic seasons, thanks to COVID-19, many students and athletes questioned when they would be able to return to normal play.

The Sooner Athletic Conference allowed athletics to be played, with fan restrictions, in spring 2021. It was later announced that Langston football was returning to campus Feb. 27, against SAC rival SAGU.

The SAC approved that Langston was allowed to let 20% capacity, about 500 people, into W.E. Anderson Stadium for the game. Alongside the fans, Langston's band, cheer and other spirit squads were allowed to attend as well.

This was the biggest gathering Langston had since the announcement of campus closure in spring 2020.

The limited capacity of fans piled in to support their Langston Lions, which gave many players

a boost of excitement.

"Playing in front of my home fans felt great. I miss the home-field advantage and the home-game experience. It was truly amazing to get back on that field after almost two years of not playing," said Devin Dourisseau, a senior defensive back for Langston.

Larry Harrington, junior quarterback, agreed.

"It has a major impact. It's like you have extra teammates out there cheering you on. And as far as the other team, I think the crowd affects their play even with reduced fans," Harrington said. Even with the home-field advantage, Langston was down quickly and ended up losing to SAGU, 31-20.

"We just have to start out faster and can't come out the gates flat, and we also have to finish games when we have the momentum. We need to learn how to capitalize on that and put points on the board," Harrington said.

Joshua Herbert, junior defensive back, had other input on the loss.

"Some things that need to be fixed are finishing plays all the way through, and when you're not on the field to cheer on the ones that are so the momentum can stay high and we can finish strong," Herbert said.

With the loss, LU dropped to 0-2 on the season and will not return to Langston until the Lions matchup with Wayland Baptist University on April 3.



## Lady Lions host first home volleyball game



Photos by Matthew Blue

The Langston University Lady Lions hosted their first home volleyball game against Wayland Baptist University on Feb. 26. The Lady Lions fell short during the match-up, 13-25, 23-25, 15-25.

