



MORTAR BOARD

NATIONAL COLLEGE SENIOR HONOR SOCIETY

2024 Alumni Award Recipients

Distinguished Lifetime Membership Award

M. Kathryne Timberlake MacKenzie

Oklahoma Baptist University, 1968

Kay MacKenzie was initiated into Mortar Board at Oklahoma Baptist University in 1968. Growing up on a college campus as the daughter of two faculty members, Kay was destined to live by her ideals of scholarship, leadership, and service. For the past fifty-years, Kay has served Mortar Board in a variety of national leadership roles. Kay's involvement on a National level began with her service as a Section Coordinator over fifty years ago. During this time, Kay was integral to the discussions around Title IX and the decision to accept men. Kay was Vice President for Mortar Board where she tapped and mentored many current National Leaders. She served as National President from 1991-1993 and led the society through the Celebration of our 75th Anniversary. Even when Kay took a short hiatus from National Leadership, she served as Chair of the local host committee for a National Conference in Atlanta.

Kay more recently completed her time as a three-term Foundation Trustee for the Mortar Board National Foundation. Kay served as the chair of the Fellowship Committee for many years where she revamped the fellowship application and enhanced the review process. Under her tenure as Fellowship Chair, applications for Fellowships increased! After five decades of National Service to Mortar Board, Kay rolled off the Board of Trustees in August 2023. However, Kay continues to be a fellowship reader and team-lead despite and this past November helped install Mortar Board's newest chapter, the Lasting Legacy Chapter at Life University in Marietta, Georgia. Kay is also a fund founder, a charter member of the Mortar Board Alumni Association as a Lifetime Member, and a member of the Mortar Board Singers. Kay and her husband Craig reside in Atlanta, Georgia and are the proud parents of two adult children, Peter and Kate. When not serving Mortar Board, Kay enjoys spending time with her family, especially her four grandchildren.

Alumni Achievement Award

Melinda Beuth Whittington

The Ohio State University, 1988

Melinda Whittington is President and Chief Executive Officer of La-Z-Boy Incorporated, one of the world's leading residential furniture producers and retailers and serves on its Board of Directors. Prior to her appointment in 2021, she served for three years as Chief Financial Officer for the company. Since graduating summa cum laude earning her Bachelor of Science in Business Administration degree at Ohio State, Melinda Whittington has held a number of finance roles of increasing responsibility including with The Proctor and Gamble Company, The Kraft Heinz Company and now as the President and CEO of La-Z-Boy Incorporated.

Melinda is an innovative and inspiring leader who finds time to support the personal and professional development of others, particularly other women. She is passionate about giving back and generously gives her time serving on several corporate and non-profit boards including Best Buy Co., Inc., the American Home Furnishings Alliance, the American Home Furnishings Hall of Fame, Business Leaders for Michigan, and the YMCA of Monroe, Michigan, and the Dean's Advisory Council of the Fisher College of Business. Melinda resides in Michigan with Steven, her husband of 36 years. They have two adult children, and all four Whittington's are proud Buckeyes. In their limited spare time, they enjoy traveling to spend time with friends and family in interesting places, ballroom dancing, and getting outside to boat and bike.

Sarra Nazem

University of Michigan, 2004

Dr. Sarra Nazem completed her undergraduate degree at the University of Michigan and earned her Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology from West Virginia University. Sarra is currently the Deputy Director at the National Center for PTSD Dissemination & Training Division located at Veterans Affairs Palo Alto, California. An accomplished Clinical Research Psychologist, Dr. Nazem has published over 40 peer-reviewed articles and book chapters and given 100+ professional and scientific presentations. She has led the national efforts behind the development of suicide postvention resources for Veterans Affairs (VA).

Sarra exemplifies servant-leadership prioritizing a commitment to mentorship and service throughout her career. She has served on several national committees/workgroups. Sarra has been volunteering for Mortar Board since 2005, serving as the Section Coordinator for Michigan/Section 10 until 2018 when she was elected as Mortar Board Vice President, serving two terms. Sarra's Mortar Board

leadership contributions include leading efforts to better utilize data to guide development, helping to develop the first Mortar Board member needs survey, and overseeing the restructuring of the Section Coordinator role into the current Region Coordinator model. Sarra plays volleyball, is a barre enthusiast, enjoys hiking and traveling, and can spend hours talking about cupcakes, pandas, and Costco.

Ann Marie Smith

The Ohio State University, 1986

Dr. Ann Smith has led a life of service to others. A nurse for 36 years, Ann earned her Bachelor of Science (BS '87), Master of Science (MS '88), Doctor of Philosophy (PhD '95), and Advanced Nurse Practitioner Certificate (ANP '96) all from The Ohio State University. As a member and team captain of the OSU swim team, she knew she wanted to become a rehabilitation nurse upon witnessing a teammate suffer a tragic accident and took a nursing position upon graduation in the spinal cord and traumatic brain injury unit. Ann serves as the Central Ohio Think First Chapter Director, educating youth throughout Ohio on behalf of OSU's trauma injury prevention program. Dr. Smith has served on national boards and coalitions including the Association of Rehabilitation Nurses, the Association of Spinal Cord Injury Professionals, SafeCommunities, and Midwest Injury Prevention Alliance. Ann participates in the Buckeye Paws-Therapy Dog program and takes her dog Ashby on many visits throughout the medical center and campus.

Ann's involvement with the OSU swim team helped launch her community service and involvement. She served Varsity O in a variety of volunteer roles from 1997 to present. She has remained active as an NCAA swim official and coordinates swimming alumni reunions and events. In addition, Ann's community leadership and lengthy list of volunteering includes at The Ohio State University, Girl Scouts, and of course, Mortar Board. Ann has been in a leadership role with the Greater Columbus Alumni Club for many years serving as Vice President, President, and currently Past-President. She is proud of all three of her children, a son Joey and two daughters, Katie and Elaine, both of whom are also Mortar Boards.

Emerging Leader Alumni Award

Gracen Daniel

Texas Tech University, 2015

Gracen is a seasoned trial lawyer who practices business, employment, and IP litigation. She was recently recognized by the Dallas Women Lawyers Association for her significant professionalism and community leadership, among other noteworthy awards.

Arielle Devorah

University of Arizona, 2019

Arielle is a rising political star and currently serves as the Communication Director for the office of Phoenix Mayor Kate Gallego.

Jessica Johnson

Knox College, 2011

Jessie is a recipe developer, writer, and photographer as well as a brand developer and the CEO of a digital publishing company – Life as a Strawberry.

Courtney Vick

University of Tennessee at Knoxville, 2011

A natural leader, Courtney has been named to the University of Tennessee's 40 Under 40 Volunteers, and to Nashville's 30 Under 30 and holds the position of Field Marketing Manager for Whataburger.