

Clafin University

Purpose:

Clafin University provides a student-centered, liberal arts education grounded in research, experiential learning, technology, community service, and life-long personal and professional fulfillment. Clafin is a diverse and inclusive community that works to cultivate practical wisdom, judgment, knowledge, skills and character needed for globally engaged citizenship and effective leadership.

A Selection of Newsworthy Moments from the Previous Year:

FEB 2026 – Clafin University welcomes Dr. Hua-Jun Fan as its new Dean of the School of Natural Sciences and Mathematics. Previously at Alcorn State University, where he led efforts that significantly increased research funding, modernized STEM curricula, expanded laboratory infrastructure, and recruited high-quality faculty, Dr. Fan has built a strong national and international profile. His professional engagements include work with the U.S. Department of Energy, service with the American Chemical Society, and the development of extensive global partnerships that promote student mobility, research collaboration, and faculty development.

JAN 2026 – In a new initiative spearheaded by Clafin University's new Director of Church Relations, Rev. Vivian R. Lingard, in close consultation with the University Trustee and interim Chaplain, Rev. Dr. Albert Shuler, Clafin hosted a Campus Spiritual Shield Day on January 14. Following a brief gathering at the Dorothy Z. Elmore Chapel, twenty-two clergy members were commissioned to walk the campus grounds and cover the University community with a blanket of prayer at the start of the new semester.

DEC 2025 – Civil rights photographer, Cecil Williams delivers keynote address at Clafin University's Fall 2025 Commencement Convocation. "Your future will not grow in the soil of your comfort zone. Great things seldom happen when we cling only to the familiar. Doors open when we are willing to stretch, to learn, and to step forward," said Williams, renowned photographer, author, and inventor whose stirring photographs chronicled the Civil Rights Movement in South Carolina and beyond.

NOV 2025 – Clafin University is named as a Fulbright Historically Black College and University (HBCU) Institutional Leader for 2025. This initiative recognizes those HBCUs with exceptional engagement with the Fulbright Program, the U.S. government's flagship international academic exchange program. Fulbright HBCU Institutional Leaders demonstrate noteworthy support for Fulbright exchange participants and encourage administrators, faculty, and students at HBCUs to engage with Fulbright on campus. The Fulbright HBCU Institutional Leaders initiative highlights HBCU alumni and faculty excellence, as well as HBCUs as a destination for international students and scholars.

OCT 2025 – Latica 'Tish' Archie-Oliver was among the 15 distinguished leaders, innovators, and trailblazers inducted into the National Black College Alumni (NBCA) Hall of Fame during the organization's 40th Anniversary held recently at the Hyatt Regency Atlanta. Archie-Oliver, a Class of 2000 Clafin alumna, is the Chief Inclusion & Belonging Officer at Gap Inc. where she leads with purpose, precision, and a deep belief in the transformative power of inclusion. In this global role, she is the architect of a people-first, digitally enabled, and future-focused strategy that is boldly advancing Gap Inc.'s purpose of bridging gaps to create a better world.

SEPT 2025 – Clafin University was named as a Fulbright Historically Black College and University (HBCU) Institutional Leader for 2025. Each year, this initiative recognizes those HBCUs with exceptional engagement with the Fulbright Program, the U.S. government's flagship international academic exchange program.

AUG 2025 – Clafin UNIVERSITY Alumni surpassed \$1 Million fundraising goal for 2024-2025 Fiscal Year. Alumni contributed \$1,006,088, cementing the University's reputation as a national leader in alumni engagement and philanthropic giving.

"At Clafin University, our alumni are more than graduates; they are champions of excellence, access, and transformation," said Clafin President Dr. Dwaun J. Warmack. "This year, your unwavering commitment and generosity have helped us exceed our ambitious \$1,000,000 goal for the fiscal year. You've shown the world what it means to be a Clafinite for life. Thank you for your loyalty, your leadership, and your love for our university."

Clafin's culture of giving is built on legacy, pride, and purpose. Over the past five years, alumni have raised more than \$4.8 million to support student scholarships, academic programs, and innovative initiatives. This year's achievement is especially significant, as it reflects broad participation across all generations, from the golden reunion classes to young alumni just beginning their philanthropic journeys.

JULY 2025 – Clafin University was awarded the 2025 UNCF Institutional Excellence Award during the national UNITE Summit in Atlanta. The recognition by the UNCF Institute for Capacity Building celebrates Clafin's bold leadership, strategic innovation, and unwavering commitment to student success, long-term sustainability, and community transformation.

"This award celebrates an institution whose steady commitment to quality, performance, and impact is raising the bar for the entire HBCU sector," said Edward Smith-Lewis, Senior Vice President of the UNCF Institute for Capacity Building. "Clafin University's achievements and collaborative spirit reflect the very best of what this network can accomplish."

Clafin President Dr. Dwaun J. Warmack, who accepted the award on behalf of the university, expressed deep gratitude for the recognition.

JUN 2025 – Clafin University continued to build on its commitment to excellence in STEM education through a renewed partnership with Savannah River Mission Completion (SRMC). Four Clafin scholars from the University's

Department of Mathematics and Computer Science completed a high-impact capstone project in partnership with SRMC, to improve safety and efficiency at the U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE) Savannah River Site (SRS). SRMC is the liquid waste contractor for DOE at SRS.

MAY 2025 – Reverend Larry D. McCutcheon, interim chaplain at Claflin University, was the featured speaker for the Spring 2025 Baccalaureate Service on Friday, May 9, 6 p.m. at the James and Dorothy Z. Elmore Chapel. McCutcheon is a “Man of God” who continues to serve as a “Minister of the People, For the People, and By the People.” A spiritual and civic leader, he preaches the Gospel and “Walks the Walk” throughout various sectors of the community in an extraordinary way, touching the lives of so many with his unique ability to reach all people from all walks of life. McCutcheon, a native of Lake City, S.C., grew up in Wesley Chapel United Methodist Church in Lake City and graduated from Carver High School in 1968. He earned his bachelor’s degree in religion and philosophy in 1972 at Claflin University.

APRIL 2025 – Following a national search, Claflin University appointed Willie Jude II, M.Ed., as Vice President for Institutional Advancement beginning in July. A seasoned advancement executive and passionate advocate for education, Jude brings some twenty years of leadership experience in higher education and nonprofit development to his new role. Jude leads Claflin’s fundraising, alumni relations, and external engagement strategies as the university continues its remarkable legacy of philanthropic excellence. Claflin University has achieved the highest alumni-giving rate of any Historically Black College or University (HBCU) in the nation every year consecutively since 2000.

“We are delighted to welcome Willie Jude II to the Panther family,” said Claflin University President Dr. Dwaun J. Warmack. “He is a proven leader who brings exceptional energy, experience, and vision to our advancement enterprise. His deep understanding of educational equity, coupled with a strong record of fundraising success, will be invaluable as we advance Claflin’s mission of excellence and prepare for our next era of growth.”

Jude most recently served as Executive Director of the MPS Foundation, the nonprofit partner to Milwaukee Public Schools, the largest and most diverse school district in Wisconsin. During his tenure, he significantly increased total giving, expanded the donor base, and elevated the foundation’s visibility and community impact.

MAR 2025 – Claflin University and South Carolina State University was chartered as collegiate sections of the National Council of Negro Women on Wednesday, March 26, at 4 p.m. in Ballroom B at the Claflin Student Center. Reverend Shavon Arline-Bradley, president and CEO of the National Council of Negro Women (NCNW), delivered the keynote address at the charter ceremony.

Claflin and South Carolina State will join Morris College as the only South Carolina Historically Black Colleges/Universities (HBCUs) currently chartered as NCNW collegiate sections. Founded in 1935 by Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune, NCNW is an "organization of organizations" that enlightens, inspires, and connects more than 2,000,000 women and men. The addition of Claflin and South Carolina State strengthens NCNW's presence in higher education and its commitment to developing future leaders. It also aligns with NCNW's commitment to engaging young women in its critical work.

Objectives for the coming year:

RE-IMAGINING the UNIVERSITY’S GENERAL EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS – given the blinding speed of change in higher education and workforce needs, general education requirements of the past can be inadequate to meet the needs of future students. Under the leadership of Claflin’s new provost, Dr. Michelle Mayo, and our new Dean of Natural Sciences and academics, Dr. Hua-Jun Fan, the Division of Academic affairs will consider several innovative curricular changes that will better prepare our students for future success.

CONSTRUCTION – Three major construction projects will transform Claflin’s campus and downtown in the coming year. Our new center of Nursing, Student Health and Humanities Conference Center Complex will mitigate critical needs in nursing in South Carolina and support seamless integrations of closely aligned academic disciplines with the needs of our students and the surrounding community. Our new \$25M facility, our Center for Innovation and Biotechnology, will strengthen the foundation of Claflin’s growing STEM research programs. The state-of-the-art teaching, learning, and research facility will increase the university's capacity for research in emerging bioscience areas, environmental science, and cybersecurity. Finally, Claflin will shortly begin construction of an alumni center at the Railroad Corner on Magnolia Street.

NEED-BASED SCHOLARSHIPS – With more than half of our students being first-generation students and nearly 75% eligible for Pell Grant support, building support for need-based scholarships continues to be a pressing priority for the University.

Action(s) required from the 2026 Annual Conference: None.

If you take away nothing else from this report, know this:

Support from the South Carolina United Methodist Church conference is crucial to Claflin’s ability to sustain and build on its proud legacy of nurturing and cultivating future leaders for the ministry of the United Methodist Church. Furthermore, the University remains steadfast in its commitment to honor, promote, and support its affiliation with the United Methodist Church locally, nationally, and globally.

Narrative:

As we reflect on this remarkable year at Claflin University, we are reminded that our progress is not accidental—it is anchored in faith, sustained by partnership, and propelled by purpose. From national recognitions such as our designation as a Fulbright HBCU Institutional Leader and the UNCF Institutional Excellence Award, to transformative campus initiatives including the Campus Spiritual Shield Day and our continued investment in STEM innovation and research, this has been a season marked by growth, gratitude, and grace. Each milestone affirms that Claflin’s calling as a United Methodist-related institution remains both vital and urgent in a rapidly changing world.

Looking ahead, our work continues with clarity and conviction. As we re-imagine general education to meet the demands of tomorrow’s workforce, launch major construction projects that will transform our campus and community, and expand need-based scholarships for the many first-generation and Pell-eligible students entrusted to our care, we do so grounded in the values that have defined Claflin since 1869—faith, excellence, access, and service. Our commitment to cultivating leaders of character and conscience has never been stronger.

The South Carolina United Methodist Conference remains an essential partner in this sacred endeavor. Your prayers, advocacy, and steadfast support strengthen our ability to prepare graduates who lead in ministry, education, science, business, public service, and beyond—always guided by moral courage and a spirit of servant leadership. Together, we continue to demonstrate that an institution of higher learning rooted in Christian faith is uniquely equipped to shape not only successful careers but transformed lives.

Respectfully submitted,
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Other ministry members:

Rev. Dr. Robin Dease '92, Bishop, North Georgia Episcopal Area, Claflin University Trustee

Rev. Dr. Albert Shuler, '74, Claflin University Interim Chaplin

Spartanburg Methodist College

Purpose:

Our mission is to equip our students with the knowledge, skills, virtues, and mindset needed to thrive personally, create positive change in their communities, and lead purposeful lives. Through a transformative liberal arts education, practical career skills, and holistic support, we empower students to confidently pursue the future they've imagined.

Key moments from the previous year:

SMC's SACSCOC Fifth Year Report was accepted, with no further information requested. Essentially, this notification means that our report's submission provided all the necessary information for our accreditor to determine that we are making satisfactory progress until our decennial report is due in 2028.

On April 14th, SMC held the first-ever Pioneer Scholars Day. Expected to be an annual event in future years, Pioneer Scholars Day showcased the talents and accomplishments of students. The day combined the fine arts exhibits, literary readings, student research poster projects, and senior capstone project presentations into a singular event.

Our Faith Development Organizations have been active on campus, hosting studies and special events. These groups include CRU (Campus Crusade for Christ), CO (Campus Outreach), FCA (Fellowship of Christian Athletes), World Harvest, and YL (Young Life). Leaders of these organizations are being encouraged to attend student events such as athletic games.

165 student-athletes were named to the Athletic Director's Honor Roll (Fall Semester 2025).

Objectives for the coming year:

The Capital Campaign will begin to raise funds for the complete remodeling of the Montgomery Science Center. Other projects will include replacing the cross at Davis Memorial Chapel and improved gathering spaces around the facility.

SMC will offer a Bachelor of Science in Exercise Science, SMC's first Bachelor's of Science degree.

SMC will offer a Bachelor of Arts in Criminal Justice in the fall of 2026.

Men's Volleyball will compete in the NAIA for the first time.

Action(s) required from the 2026 Annual Conference:

Approval of the Board of Trustees slate.

If you take away nothing else from this report, know this:

Since 1911, SMC has provided education and opportunity to young people who might not otherwise be able to access it. Every person on this campus, from the staff to our faculty to President Cochran is committed to shepherding these young people in the direction of love, peace, and prosperity.

It is our belief that the ongoing work to move into offering a four-year option at SMC will enable us to better reach these students. Time and again, we have heard from graduating students that they wish they could remain at SMC in our familial, supportive atmosphere. Now we can offer them that opportunity to continue to grow in knowledge, citizenship, and faith while continuing to be nurtured by our committed, caring faculty and staff.

Furthermore, SMC's unique emphasis on Professional Development prepares these young people for the work world better than anyone else.

Narrative:

An SMC student who will graduate in May 2026 shared his story with me.

When he arrived at SMC, he attended for primarily financial reasons. He planned to move on to a more prestigious institution after obtaining his associate's degree.

However, during his freshman year, he found community. He became active in student government and found a close-knit, supportive group of friends. Over time, he served as a student leader and Community Assistant.

When the time came for him to transfer, his perspective had changed. Now, he couldn't imagine finishing his undergraduate work anywhere else. He took full advantage of the educational and professional development opportunities at SMC and has grown by leaps and bounds.

After graduation, he will attend college as part of a program to develop teachers for underserved communities.

Respectfully submitted,
Rev. Timothy Drum
Chaplain and Director of Church Relations
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Wofford College

Purpose:

Wofford's mission is to provide superior liberal arts education that prepares its students for extraordinary and positive contributions to a global society. The focus of Wofford's mission is upon fostering commitment to excellence in character, performance, leadership, service to others and lifelong learning.

Key moments from the previous year:

In May, Dr. Nayef Samhat announced his decision to step down as president of Wofford College on June 30, 2026. Wofford has been transformed since Samhat assumed the presidency in 2013, with eight new facilities constructed on campus and the major renovation of 12 existing facilities. The endowment has grown to almost \$450 million, and the student body is now at 1,800 students. The college community is appreciative of everything Nayef and Prema Samhat have done for Wofford.

Wofford looks forward to announcing its 12th president at the upcoming annual conference. The Presidential Search Advisory Committee has worked hard to select the ideal candidate to continue this momentum.

Brand Stille (Wofford Class of 1986) retired in June after 38 years of service to the college. Megan Tyler (Wofford Class of 2014) has succeeded him as vice president of enrollment. Stille's leadership led to record application numbers, strengthened academic profiles of incoming classes, promoted the integration of enrollment with marketing and broadened the college's geographic and demographic recruitment range.

In the fall, the college welcomed 450 students to campus as the Class of 2029. Enrollment is on target to meet or exceed goals for the Class of 2030.

Wofford graduates continue to excel and give back. Some examples include:

- Bishop Will Willimon '68 endowed the provost position at Wofford. Dr. Tim Schmitz became the inaugural Willimon Family Provost.
- The Rev. Patrick Hitchman-Craig '12 welcomed monks on the Walk for Peace for an overnight stay at Foundry United Methodist Church in Opelika, Ala.
- Dr. Tiffany Tonismae '08, assistant professor at University of Louisville School of Medicine, launched her university's first maternal-fetal medicine fellowship.

Objectives for the coming year:

Wofford continues to look for innovative ways to create meaningful experiential learning opportunities for our students.

The Wofford College Wesley Fellowship, under the leadership of the Revs. Megan and Brad Gray (Wofford Class of 2001), meets on campus weekly and offers a Sunday school class at Bethel United Methodist Church. The group remains very active and has expanded its reach to include students from other campuses in Spartanburg.

Wofford College is appreciative of its ongoing relationship with Central United Methodist Church. Our Lifelong Learning program is housed there and enrolls 524 annual members.

The Chaplain Fellows program entered its second year and grew to 18 students under the mentorship of the Rev. Dr. Ron Robinson, a 1978 Wofford graduate and the Perkins-Prothro Chaplain and Professor of Religion. This program offers students an opportunity to deepen their spiritual formation and serve campus while developing leadership and pastoral skills. The college's Emerging Leaders Initiative, a vocational discernment program for those considering some aspect of lay or clergy ministry, continued this year. Students receive scholarship assistance as participants in each of these programs.

Robinson and Director of Career Services Curt McPhail (Wofford Class of 1996) received a multi-year grant from NetVUE and the Lilly Foundation to establish a Vocation Across the Academy program. More than two dozen faculty and staff are part of a cohort that is reading books about the theological exploration of vocation. Each will present an action plan for integrating vocational exploration and discernment into their work with students. Training sessions are being offered this year to faculty, staff and students through the grant.

Action(s) required from the 2026 Annual Conference:

Please continue to support our state's United Methodist colleges and universities. Our students learn, grow and graduate prepared to make their families, communities and professions better. The Methodist tradition of supporting education is vitally important.

If you take away nothing else from this report, know this:

During the past academic year, Wofford distributed more than \$88 million in merit and need-based scholarships, federal and state aid, as well as outside scholarships and loans. A third of Wofford's budget goes toward scholarships and financial assistance, and 99% of Wofford students receive some form of financial aid. 100% of the South Carolina Annual Conference's contribution goes toward financial assistance for deserving United Methodist students.

Respectfully submitted:

Jake Crouse, Director of Communications

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