

# Ben Johnson Statue unveiled at artist reception

Northern Oklahoma College unveiled a new art piece at the Pickens Learning Commons last week with the unveiling of a 1½ life-size statue of famed actor and rodeo cowboy Ben Johnson.

The statue was created by sculptor John Free and painted by artist Yatika Starr Fields. The work was commissioned by Hugh Pickens and is on loan to NOC as part of the Pickens Museum collection. There are 79 pieces currently displayed in the Pickens Learning Commons.

“This is one of the most significant art collections on display in northern Oklahoma,” said Sheri Snyder, NOC vice president for development and community relations.

Pickens, an art collector and executive director of the Pickens Museum, said he has long admired art despite not being an artist himself.

“I am not an artist myself, but I’ve loved art since I was in high school,” Pickens said. “I al-

ways thought art was in museums, but I learned that individuals could own art. I love to encourage artists, and I purchase their paintings and in some cases commission pieces of art. That’s what I am doing here.”

Pickens said Free originally created the plaster statue in pieces. After seeing the fragmented work, Pickens purchased the pieces and commissioned Free to assemble the statue at NOC. The components were transported separately before being reconstructed on site. Pickens then commissioned Fields to complete the painted finish.

“I love to combine works of art,” Pickens said.

Fields expressed appreciation for the opportunity to contribute to the space.

“It’s good to be back in Tonkawa,” Fields said.

“I appreciate what Hugh has done in this space and in the Cultural Engagement Center here at



Pictured with the newly unveiled Ben Johnson statue at Northern Oklahoma College’s Pickens Learning Commons are (from left) NOC President Diana Morris, Hugh Pickens, artist Yatika Starr Fields and Sheri Snyder, NOC vice president for development and community relations. (photo by Caroline Hillock/NOC)

NOC. Artists need spaces like this to explore in enhancing understanding and offering new and create important conversations.”

Fields said the arts play a fundamental role

(See **Statue** on Page 2)

*NOC Tonkawa Homecoming on Monday, March 2, at halftime of Mavs’ game against Eastern*

## Statue

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(Continued from Page 1)

perspectives.

“The arts are a fundamental way to enhance students and human understanding of beautiful things and another way of thinking,” he said. “It’s great that we can have these conversations in Tonkawa.”

NOC President Diana Morris closed the ceremony by thanking Pickens and the artists.

“How fortunate are we in Tonkawa, Oklahoma, to have this museum,” Morris said. “Thank you, Hugh, for the work you started long before I came here and that we have been able to continue.”

Pickens serves as executive director of the Pickens Museum, a fine arts museum with exhibition spaces at three locations in north-central Oklahoma: the Pickens Learning Commons at NOC, the Pickens Museum at City Central in Ponca City and the Pickens Art Gallery at Woolaroc Museum in the Osage Hills between Barnsdall and Bartlesville.

John Dale Free Sr., born in Pawhuska in 1929, grew up on his grandfather’s ranch near McAlester and developed a lifelong admiration for cowboys and ranching. By 1971, he held his

first one-man show at the National Cowboy Hall of Fame in Oklahoma City and became widely recognized for his Western-themed sculptures. Many of his works depict American Indian subjects, reflecting his Osage and Cherokee heritage. In 1981, Free founded the Bronze Horse Foundry, which continues to operate as a family business.

Fields, a painter and muralist originally from Oklahoma, studied at the Art Institute of Boston from 2000 to 2004. Influenced by graffiti aesthetics and landscape painting, he is known for large-scale works featuring vibrant colors and dynamic movement. Fields currently lives and works in Tulsa through the Tulsa Artist Fellowship.

Johnson, a native of Foraker, was an American film and television actor, stuntman and world champion rodeo cowboy. Known for his authenticity and horsemanship, he transitioned from stunt work into acting with the help of director John Ford. In addition to his film career, Johnson operated a horse-breeding ranch and became a successful real estate investor.

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## Spring Musical set for March 5-8

The Northern Oklahoma Division of Fine Arts presents ‘A Gentleman’s Guide to Love and Murder’ March 5-8 at the Kinzer Performing Arts Center in Tonkawa.

Show time is 7:30 p.m. March 5-7 and 2 p.m. on March 8 in the Dineo Heilmann Auditorium.

The musical is noted as “A Bloody Brilliant Musical.”

Admission is \$10 for adults and \$7 for children. Children under 12 must be accompanied by an adult.

Admission is free for NOC students, faculty, and staff with ID.

The musical is directed by NOC Fine Arts Faculty member Chad Anderson.

The production is based on the book by Roy Honiman, music and lyrics by Steven Lutvak. The production is based on the book and lyrics by Robert L. Freedman.

**NOC ENID**

**PLANETARIUM  
SHOW**

**Tuesday,  
March 3, 2026 | 6 pm**

**Mackie Planetarium**

**Free Admission**

*[Donated non-perishable food items accepted]*

**NOC** Life changing.

## NOC Regents approve clean audit; yearly foundation donations near \$1 million

Northern Oklahoma College Board of Regents approved an external audit report at its February meeting last Wednesday in Tonkawa.

Anita Simpson, vice president for financial affairs, said the audit revealed “no weaknesses, discrepancies, or findings.”

President Diana Morris said the college is proud of its strong financial oversight.

“I am grateful for Vice President Simpson’s exceptional financial leadership – her team’s diligence and integrity are instrumental in NOC receiving this clean audit,” she said.

In administrative updates, Vice President for Academic Affairs Dr. Shelley Mencacci reported that two recent events at the NOC Enid Bert and Janice Mackie Planetarium drew a total of 138 visitors.

“We are always excited when our Enid campus and community visit our campus and participate in our events,” she said. “We plan to provide more opportunities this spring.”

Vice President for Development and Community Relations Sheri Snyder said NOC finished the year with \$918,000 in donations to the NOC Foundation. She added that donor support remains strong.

“The McKenzie Scott donation has not affected giving to the foundation,” Snyder said. “That shows the consistent support of our donors and it is much appreciated.”

Jeremy Hise, vice president for Enid, reported on the new Athletic Training Education Center

at NOC Enid.

“Progress on the Athletic Training Education Center at Failing Field continues,” he said. “The bid process is underway and we hope to begin construction later this spring.”

Vice President for Enrollment Management Dr. Rick Edgington reported that spring enrollment is down about 1%, with one more enrollment opportunity remaining this semester. Simpson also said deferred maintenance funding from the state continues to support several campus projects.

“These aren’t glamorous projects,” she said. “But they will help fund roofs, concrete, flooring and paint to keep our campuses maintained.”

Morris reported on behalf of Marsh Howard, vice president for Stillwater, noting that Howard was representing NOC at the state Capitol for Stillwater Day. She also said NOC has updated the memorandum of understanding with Oklahoma State University for the Gateway Program.

Vice President for Student Affairs Jason Johnson reported that seven men’s wrestlers have qualified for the national tournament and will be joined by 14 women in Council Bluffs, Iowa, March 6-7.

The next Board of Regents meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, March 25, at NOC Stillwater in the Brown Board Room.

# SOPHOMORE *Transfer Day*

**Wednesday, March 4, 2026**

**10 am - 1 pm**

**NOC Tonkawa**

Cultural Engagement Center [CEC]

Located inside the Vineyard

Library-Administration Building

**For NOC  
Students  
That Are  
graduating or  
Transferring**



**Several universities will be present  
to answer questions and help with the transfer process!**

Northwestern Oklahoma State University

Oklahoma State University

OSU Institute of Technology

The University of Oklahoma

University of Central Oklahoma

Wichita State University

and More!



Life changing.



## Planetarium Show set for March 3

The Northern Oklahoma College Enid March planetarium show is scheduled for Tuesday, March 3, at 6 p.m.

Planetarium Director Fritz Osell will present a show for children, "The Little Star That Could."

Osell will also show the night sky over Enid in the spring and point out interesting objects to look for during spring evenings. The main

show will be about "time."

On Good Friday, April 3, the Mackie Planetarium will offer the annual Via Dolorosa presentation. Join the planetarium as there is a demonstration of the walk with Jesus as He carries His cross along the Via Dolorosa from His trial to the crucifixion and resurrection. The presentation takes about 20 minutes.

Northern Oklahoma College Division of Fine Arts  
Presents

**A GENTLEMAN'S GUIDE TO LOVE & MURDER**

Directed By  
**Chad Anderson**

## February/March Faculty Birthdays



Harley Morton	Feb. 28	Greg Krause	March 16
Kelli Goad	March 1	Logan Lawrence	March 18
Rachel Love	March 1	Destiny Davis	March 18
Kelly Vinson	March 2	Lerna Deyirmencian	March 21
Jason Johnson	March 4	Brian Baird	March 22
Alan Foster	March 5	Patricia Briggs	March 22
Ashley Kruse	March 6	Teresa Reich	March 23
Scott Harmon	March 7	Breanna Beaty	March 25
Brady Kohler	March 7	Nathan Oesterle	March 27
Cindy Esch	March 9	April Heitfeld	March 28
Matthew Bolz	March 10	Jimilea Jansson	March 28
Sherrie Martin	March 10	Christopher Young	March 28
Joe Jolly	March 14	Chris Townsend	March 29

**MARCH 5-8, 2026**

Kinzer Performing Arts Center  
Dineo Heilmann Auditorium, NOC Tonkawa



*A Bloody  
Brilliant  
Farcical  
Musical*

Thursday-Saturday 7:30 pm  
Sunday 2:00 pm

**\$10 Adults | \$7 Students**

Free Admission for NOC Students  
and Employees with I.D.



Children under age 12  
must be accompanied by an adult.

Based on the Novel by  
**Roy Honiman**

Music & Lyrics By  
**Steven Lutvak**



Book & Lyrics By  
**Robert L. Freedman**

Presented through Special Arrangement with Music Theatre International

## Distinguished Alumni Banquet set for March 26, three to be inducted

Wilma Harman, Adam Leaming, and Rick Scott will be honored Thursday, March 26 as the Northern Oklahoma College Distinguished Alumni Banquet.

Non-refundable tickets are now available for \$25 each.

Harman, deceased, NOC Class of 1973, was an NOC Fine Arts Division Instructor.

Leaming, NOC Class of 2001, is the Superintendent of Ponca City Public Schools.

Scott, NOC Class of 1983, is the president of Rick Scott Construction in Ponca City.

The Class of 1976 will also be recognized. The

Alumni Legacy Scholarship will also be presented.

The banquet will be held at the Renfro Center at 6 p.m.

The award recognizes the achievements of former students whose personal lives, professional achievements and community service exemplify the objectives of the college.

A complete listing of Distinguished Alumni Hall of Fame Award recipients is located on the NOC website at [www.noc.edu/alumni](http://www.noc.edu/alumni).

Please contact Ciera Kirby at [ciera.kirby@noc.edu](mailto:ciera.kirby@noc.edu) or 580.628.6685 for ticket information.

## Sophomore transfer days scheduled for Tonkawa and Enid

Northern Oklahoma College is hosting sophomore transfer days on the Tonkawa and Enid campuses.

Sophomore transfer days are for students that are graduating or transferring.

The Tonkawa Sophomore Transfer Day is Wednesday, March 4, at Cultural Engagement Center inside the Vineyard Library/Administration Building from 10 a.m. – 1 p.m.

The Enid Sophomore Transfer Day is Wednesday, March 11, inside the Zollars Library Lobby from 10 a.m. – 1 p.m.

Universities represented at Tonkawa will be Northwestern Oklahoma State University, Oklahoma State University, OSU Institute of Technology, University of Oklahoma, University of Central Oklahoma, Wichita State University and others.

Universities and Tech Centers represented at Enid will be Autry Technology Center, Northwestern Oklahoma State University, Oklahoma State University, OSU Institute of Technology, University of Oklahoma, University of Central Oklahoma, Wichita State University and others.



Life changing.

# SOPHOMORE Transfer Day



**For NOC Students That Are Graduating or Transferring**

**Wednesday, March 11, 2026  
10 am - 1 pm**

**NOC Enid, Zollars Memorial Library Lobby**

**Several universities will be present to answer questions and help with the transfer process!**

Autry Technology Center

Northwestern Oklahoma State University

Oklahoma State University

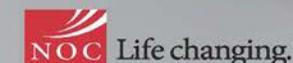
OSU Institute of Technology

The University of Oklahoma

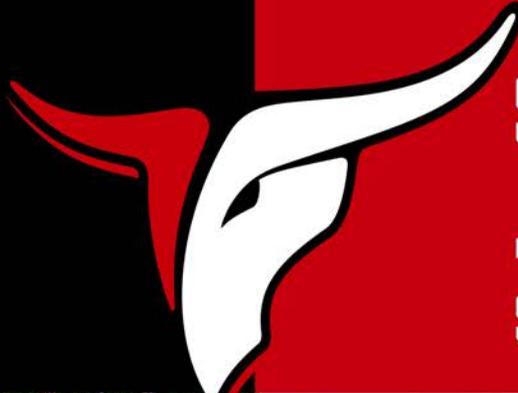
University of Central Oklahoma

Wichita State University

and More!



# NOC Fine Arts presents Black History Celebration Concert at CEC

# STUDENT ACTIVITIES SPRING 2026



- ▶ February 9  
**Pizza, Pool and Air Hockey**  
Student Union | 7:30 pm
- ▶ February 17  
**Bingo for Food**  
Student Union | 7:30 pm
- ▶ February 19  
**Bedlam Basketball**  
Women | 5:30 pm, Men | 7:30 pm
- ▶ February 24  
**Homecoming Voting**  
Student Affairs Office | 9 am – 1 pm
- Karaoke**  
Walcher Conference Center | 7:30 pm
- ▶ February 25  
**Homecoming Voting**  
Student Affairs Office | 9 am – 1 pm
- ▶ March 2  
**Homecoming Basketball**  
Women | 5:30 pm, Men | 7:30 pm  
*[Coronation halftime of men's game]*  
**Homecoming 5th Quarter**  
*[Food, games, mechanical bull]*  
East Gym | Immediately Following Game
- ▶ March 3  
**Homecoming - That's No Bull Revue**  
Wilkin Auditorium | 8 pm
- ▶ March 9  
**Bingo for Food**  
Student Union | 7:30 pm

## MARCH 16-20 | SPRING BREAK

- ▶ March 24  
**Dodgeball**  
Fieldhouse | 7:30 pm
- ▶ March 30  
**Magician Show**
- ▶ April 6  
**Easter Egg Hunt**  
Meet at Gazebo | 7 pm
- ▶ April 13  
**Petting Zoo**  
Clock Tower Area | 10 am - Noon
- ▶ April 21  
**Spring Fling**  
Chick-fil-a Truck  
Ice Cream Truck | 5:30 – 7:30 pm  
Archery Tag | 5:30 – 7:30 pm  
Fading Fast Concert | 8 pm
- ▶ April 28  
**Campus Wide Hide n Seek**  
Meet at Gazebo | 8 pm
- ▶ May 4  
**Food for Finals**  
Cafeteria | 10 pm – Midnight
- ▶ May 8  
**Dorms close at 10 am**



# Tonkawa PTK February events

NOC Tonkawa Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society (PTK) served the community and engaged with the NOC Tonkawa campus during February 2026.

For Valentine's Day, members were at the Clock Tower in the circle drive passing out Valentine suckers. Volunteers also went through the administration building spreading happy wishes.

The Knot Blanket event in the Renfro Center was a huge success. Pizza, cookies, and water were served. Approximately 30 blankets were

created and will be donated to a children's home and various nursing homes in Kay County.

As part of PTK awareness, a Shoot-a-thon was held during the men's halftime of the Mavericks/Jets Bedlam Basketball game. Students signed-up and two students were selected.

Each student had to make a lay-up, free throw, 3-point shot, and then run to the other end of the court and make a lay-up. The winner received a \$50 gift card and PTK t-shirt.



Knot Blanket (L-R): Otto Cardwell, Carson Wilbourn, Jose Sosa Martinez



Knot Blanket (L-R): Jadison Ackerman, Faith Williams, Angel Franklin

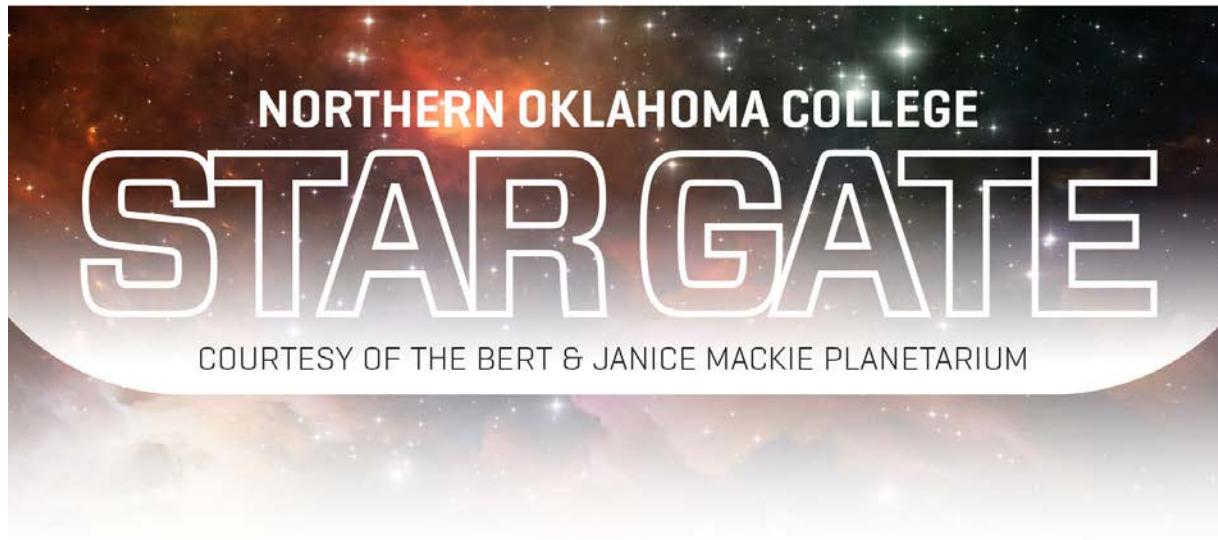


Valentine's Day (L-R): Jadison Ackerman, Kaidince Calvert, Dee Cooper, Claire Lawver, Amy Heick



Winner of the Shoot-a-thon was Bree Gomez. Also in the competition was Carson Wilbourn.





**A Weekly Portal to the North Oklahoma Sky**

*Brought to you by the Bert & Janice Mackie Planetarium at Northern Oklahoma College*

**This Week's Viewing Conditions:**

*The Moon:* This is an exciting week for the Moon! On March 3, we will have a lunar eclipse. This does mean that the Moon is going to be a problem for viewing dimmer objects as we are going to be approaching the Full Moon.

*Weather:* Check the forecast! The next week is going to be fairly temperate making it easier to spend time outside, but we do have clouds moving in. Hopefully, we will catch a break the morning of March 3 to see the eclipse.

**Highlights for the Week of Friday, Feb. 27 to March 6, 2026**

*This Week* – Remember the planetary parade? The planets are still lining up, and the best days to observe them will be the 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup>. You may also catch the “Zodiacal Light” which is a faint, ghostly glow in the sky just after sunset. You are looking in the right direction as Mercury and Venus are setting about the same time as the light appears. Jupiter is going to be near the “Twins,” Caster and Pollux.

The big show this week is the lunar eclipse. The Earth is going to be between the Sun and

the Moon, and the Moon will be in the Earth's shadow. The event will last about 58 minutes and can be observed between 5:04 and 6:02 CST. You might want to set your alarm to see the Moon turn red.

**Astronomical Notes**

This full Moon is referred to as the Worm Moon. (It will also be a “Blood Moon” as it is going to turn red when the eclipse hits totality. According to the Farmer's Almanac, the name has been traditionally linked to the time of year where we start to see the ground thawing and earth worms appearing. However, the Almanac provides another explanation, one attributed to Captain Jonathan Carver in the 1760's where he linked it to the appearance of beetle larvae emerging from thawing trees. (<https://www.almanac.com/content/full-moon-march>)

**Citizen Science Corner: The NOC Challenge**  
*This Week's Mission: The Color Scale*

During a total lunar eclipse, the Moon doesn't disappear; it turns a shade of red or orange because Earth's atmosphere bends sunlight toward the Moon. The exact color depends on how much dust and cloud cover is in Earth's atmosphere at that moment.

- **The Task:** During totality (between 5:04



AM and 6:02 AM CST on March 3), observe the color of the Moon.

- **The Observation:** Scientists use the **Danjon Scale** to rate an eclipse. Is the Moon:
  - **L=2:** Deep red or rust-colored with a very dark central shadow?
  - **L=3:** Brick-red, usually with a bright or yellow rim?
  - **L=4:** Very bright copper-red or orange?
- **The Report:** Email your “color rating” and your viewing location to **Astronomy@noc.edu**. Your observation helps us understand the current clarity of Earth's upper atmosphere!

**Pro Viewing Tip**

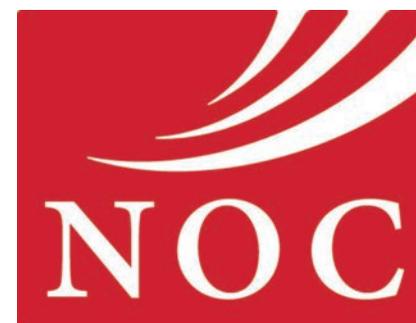
**Catching the Ghostly “Zodiacal Light”**

The Zodiacal Light is a rare treat, often called “False Dusk.” It is actually sunlight reflecting

off a disk of interplanetary dust particles that orbit the Sun.

- **Timing is Key:** Look to the West about 60 to 90 minutes after sunset on the 27<sup>th</sup> or 28<sup>th</sup>, once the last glow of twilight has faded.
- **The Look:** You are searching for a faint, hazy pyramid of light stretching up from the horizon along the path of the planets (the Ecliptic).
- **The Trick:** Because this light is so subtle, you must be away from city lights. Use **averted vision**—don't look directly at the glow. Look slightly to the side toward Jupiter, and the pyramid of light will become much more apparent in your peripheral vision.

Photo Credit: Waxing Gibbous Moon Slooh Telescope Canary Two, by Dr. Frankie Wood-Black on Nov. 11, 2024.



**NORTHERN**  
Oklahoma College  
TONKAWA | ENID | STILLWATER

# NOC Calendar

## Feb. 28

OSSAA Solo and Ensemble Contest, KPAC, Tonkawa  
 Away Jets Softball vs. Western/Carl Albert at Shawnee, 11 a.m./1:30 p.m.  
 Away Mavs Softball vs. Carl Lincoln Land (IL)/Rock Valley (IL) in Branson, 11:30 a.m./1:30 p.m.  
 Away Mavs Baseball vs. Olney Central (IL) in Kansas City, 1 p.m./4 p.m.  
 Home Jets Baseball vs. Pratt (KS), 1 p.m./3:30 p.m.

## March 1

BCM Open House, 8 p.m. – 10 p.m., Tonkawa

## March 2

Homecoming Lady Mavs/Mavs Basketball vs. Eastern, 5:30 p.m./7:30 p.m.  
 5<sup>th</sup> Quarter after the Homecoming Games, East Gym, 9 p.m. - 11 p.m., Tonkawa  
 Away Lady Jets/Jets Basketball vs. Redlands, 5:30 p.m./7:30 p.m.

## March 3

Free Lunch, BCM, 11:15 a.m. – 1 p.m., Tonkawa  
 Home Jets Softball vs. Carl Albert, 1 p.m./3 p.m.  
 Phi Theta Kappa Meeting, Wilkin 304, 1 p.m., Tonkawa  
 Home Jets Baseball vs. Seward (KS), 2 p.m.  
 Planetarium Show, Mackie Planetarium, 6 p.m., Enid  
 That's No Bull Revue, Wilkin Auditorium, 8 p.m., Tonkawa  
 The Gathering, BCM, 8 p.m., Enid

## March 4

Sophomore Transfer Day, CEC, 10 a.m. – 1 p.m., Tonkawa  
 Free Lunch, Wesley House, 11 a.m. – 1 p.m., Tonkawa  
 Free BCM Lunch, Gantz Center, 11:30 a.m. – 12:45 p.m., Enid  
 Cup Pong Tournament, Gantz Center, 7 p.m., Enid

## March 5

Away Lady Mavs/Mavs Basketball vs. Murray, 5:30 p.m./7:30 p.m.  
 Home Lady Jets/Jets Basketball vs. Connors, 5:30 p.m./7:30 p.m.  
 “A Gentleman’s Guide to Love and Murder,” KPAC, 7:30 p.m., Tonkawa

## March 6

Away Lady Mavs/Mavs Wrestling at NJCAA National Tournament in Council Bluffs, Iowa, 9 a.m.  
 Away Jets Softball vs. Kirkwood (MO)/Fort Scott (KS) at Branson, 2:30 p.m./4:30 p.m.  
 “A Gentleman’s Guide to Love and Murder,” KPAC, 7:30 p.m., Tonkawa

# NOC END SPRING 2026 STUDENT ACTIVITIES

## Join Us!

January 21	<b>KARAOKE NIGHT</b>	Gantz Center, Montgomery Hall 7 pm
January 28	<b>BINGO FOR FOOD</b>	Gantz Center 7pm
February 2-6	<b>HOMECOMING WEEK</b>	Times Vary
February 11	<b>CROCHET NIGHT</b>	Gantz Center 7 pm [Making Woobles]
February 18	<b>MOVIE NIGHT</b>	Gantz Center, Montgomery 7 pm Students pick the movie
February 25	<b>BOB ROSS PAINT NIGHT</b>	Gantz Center, Montgomery Hall 7 pm
March 4	<b>CUP PONG TOURNAMENT</b>	Gantz Center, Montgomery Hall 7 pm
March 11	<b>BINGO FOR FOOD</b>	Gantz Center, Montgomery Hall 7 pm
March 25	<b>TRIVIA NIGHT</b>	Gantz Center, Montgomery Hall 7 pm
April 3	<b>GOLF SIMULATOR</b>	Mabee Center Racquetball Courts 7 pm
April 8	<b>BOWLING NIGHT</b>	Oakwood Bowl 7 pm
April 14	<b>BOARD GAME NIGHT</b>	Gantz Center, Montgomery Hall 7 pm
April 22	<b>ARTS &amp; CRAFTS NIGHT</b>	Gantz Center, Montgomery Hall 7 pm
April 29	<b>PING PONG TOURNAMENT</b>	Jets Residence Hall Lobby 7 pm