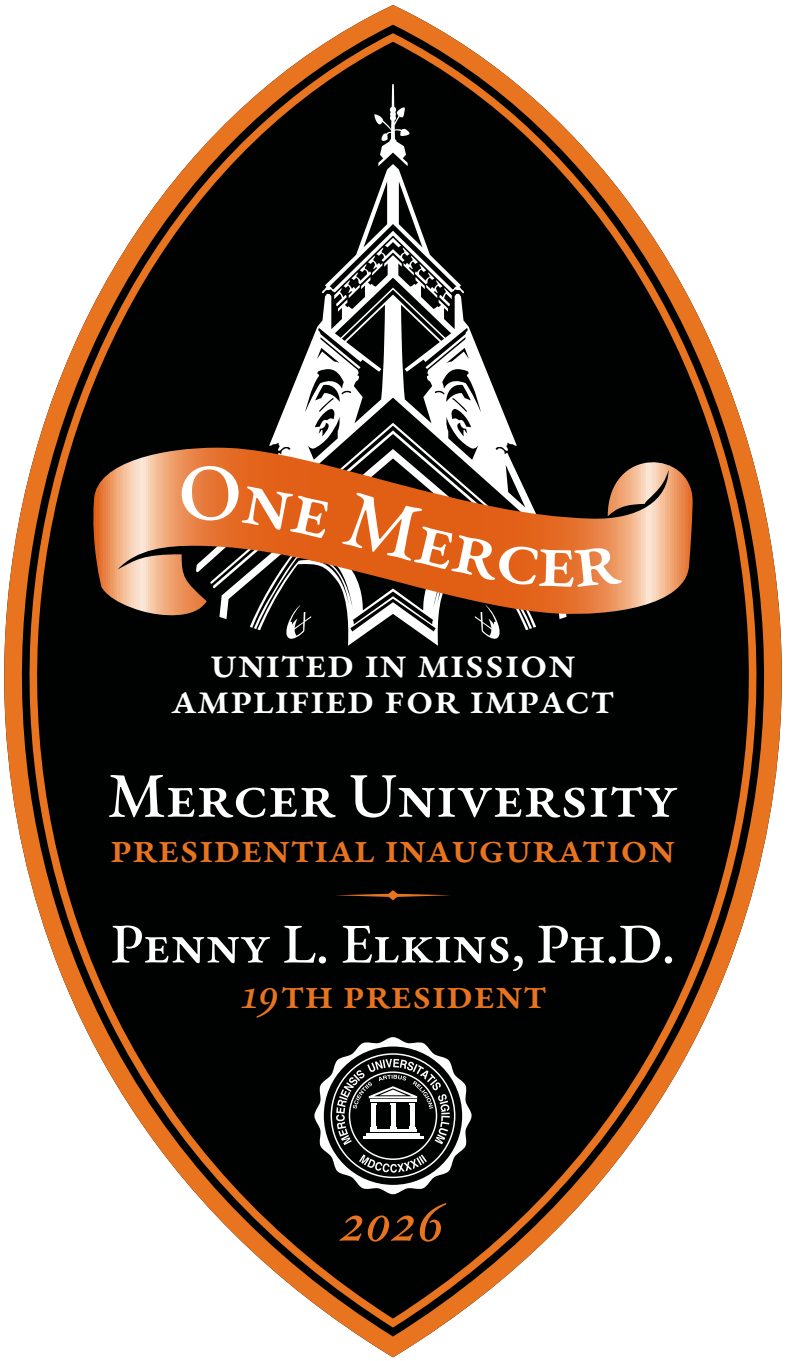
Mercer University

Penny L. Elkins, Ph.D.

Presidential Inauguration



HOSTED BY THE

MERCER UNIVERSITY BOARD OF TRUSTEES

THURSDAY | OCTOBER 29, 2026 | 10:30 A.M.

TONEY AUDITORIUM

WILLINGHAM HALL

MACON, GEORGIA

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About Mercer University

Founded in 1833, Mercer University is a dynamic and comprehensive center of undergraduate, graduate, and professional education. With nearly 9,000 students enrolled in 12 schools and colleges, on major campuses in Macon and Atlanta; three four-year medical school sites in Macon, Savannah, and Columbus; two third- and fourth-year clinical campuses in Valdosta and Carrollton; and at regional academic centers in Henry and Douglas counties, Mercer is ranked among the top tier and best values of national research universities by *U.S. News & World Report.* The Mercer Health Sciences Center includes the University's College of Pharmacy, School of Medicine, and Colleges of Nursing and Health Professions. Mercer is affiliated with multiple teaching hospitals across the state of Georgia and has an educational partnership with Robins Air Force Base in Warner Robins. It operates an academic press, a performing arts center in Macon, and an engineering research center in Warner Robins. Mercer Medicine, the clinical faculty practice of the School of Medicine, is based in Macon and operates additional clinics in Sumter, Clay, Putnam, Harris, Taylor, and Glynn counties. Mercer is one of only 293 institutions nationwide to shelter a chapter of The Phi Beta Kappa Society, the nation's most prestigious academic honor society; one of four private institutions to hold membership in the Georgia Research Alliance; and the only private university in Georgia to field an NCAA Division I athletics program.

Our Mission

To teach, to learn, to create, to discover, to inspire, to empower, and to serve.



Our Vision

To change the world, one student at a time.

President Penny L. Elkins, Ph.D.

Nineteenth President of Mercer University



Penny L. Elkins, Ph.D., became Mercer University's 19th president on January 1, 2026. She is the first Mercer graduate to lead the private, nationally ranked research university in nearly five decades, the first "Double Bear"— earning both undergraduate and graduate degrees from Mercer — to hold the role since the 1950s, and the first woman to serve as president in Mercer's nearly 200-year history.

With a career in education spanning more than 30 years, President Elkins has built a reputation as a transformational leader and recognized expert in developing effective teams. She earned tenure and holds the academic rank of Professor in Mercer's Tift College of Education, and in 2007, was appointed as the Fred L. Miles Endowed Chair of Educational Leadership. She also led the creation of the Department of Educational Leadership and the first non-clinical Ph.D. program at Mercer.

President Elkins has been a member of Mercer's faculty and senior administration for more than 25 years. In October 2023, she was appointed Executive Vice President, and in February 2025, assumed additional leadership for the Provost's Office as Interim Provost. Previously, she served as Senior Vice President for Enrollment Management, leading record growth in University enrollment across 12 colleges and schools.

In 2025, she was the first woman appointed to the board of trustees for the Lettie Pate Whitehead Foundation.

A past President of Georgia Women of Achievement, President Elkins has also served as a consultant with schools, chambers of commerce, businesses, and financial institutions in the areas of leadership development and curriculum planning.

In 2009, Georgia's then-Gov. Sonny Perdue appointed President Elkins to the Georgia Professional Standards Commission, the organization that oversees all educator certification for the state, as well as the approval of all professional education programs in Georgia. She served as chair of the Commission for the last four years of her six-year term.

President Elkins' areas of academic research interest include cognition theory in leadership, transformational leadership, birth-to-five education and early learning development, women in leadership, and community partnership development.

Under the visionary leadership of President Elkins, Mercer University continues to accelerate its reach and student impact, fueled by more than $51 million annually in externally funded research, the expansion of cutting-edge programs and facilities, and its status as Georgia's only private NCAA Division I athletics program. As a premier institution of choice across undergraduate, graduate, doctoral, and professional law and medical programs, and as the new statewide hub for the Georgia Aerospace & Defense Alliance, the University is building and shaping a bright future for Georgia and beyond.

The Investiture Ceremony
of
Penny L. Elkins, Ph.D.
as Nineteenth President of Mercer University

Cathy Callaway Adams, TIFT '81, Chair of the Board of Trustees, Presiding

PRELUDE

"Toccata on Amazing Grace" – J. Christopher Pardini
Ibiyefiebo Harry, organ
Master of Music in Organ Performance, Townsend School of Music

THE PRESENTATION OF THE COLORS

Mercer University Army ROTC

THE ACADEMIC PROCESSION

"Crown Imperial March" – William Walton
McDuffie Center for Strings and Mercer Winds
Brittan Braddock, D.M.A.
Director of Bands

The University Marshal and Macebearer

Kedrick Hartfield, Ph.D., Professor of Mathematics

The Visiting Delegates

The Faculties of the University

College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
School of Law
College of Pharmacy
School of Medicine
Stetson-Hatcher School of Business
School of Engineering
Tift College of Education
James and Carolyn McAfee School of Theology
College of Nursing
College of Professional Advancement
Townsend School of Music
College of Health Professions

The Academic Deans

The President's Cabinet

The Board of Trustees

The Nineteenth President of the University

Penny L. Elkins, Ph.D.

WELCOME

Cathy Callaway Adams

THE INVOCATION

The Reverend Craig T. McMahan, Ph.D.
University Minister and Dean of Chapel

THE OCCASION OF THE INAUGURATION

R. Kirby Godsey, Ph.D.
Chancellor Emeritus

VOICES OF THE COMMUNITY

From the Students

Ceazia Wright, Student Government Association President
Harris Wallace, 2026 Presidential Fellow

From the Alumni

Jayla Moody Marshall, Ph.D., CLAS '19
David E. Hudson, J.D., CLAS '68, Life Trustee

From the Faculty

Alana Alvarez, Ph.D., Chair of the House of Delegates

From the Staff

Victoria Fletcher, Chair of Staff Council

From Higher Education

Janet Smith Fields, Ed.D., Retired Dean of John H. Lounsbury College of Education, Georgia College & State University

From Macon-Bibb County

The Honorable Lester Miller, CLAS '91, LAW '94, Mayor

From the State of Georgia

The Honorable Nathan Deal, CLAS '64, LAW '66, Former Governor of Georgia, Member of the Board of Trustees

READING

Chelsea Rathburn
Poet Laureate of Georgia
Associate Professor of English and Creative Writing

HYMN

"Be Thou My Vision" – traditional Irish hymn
trans. Mary E. Byrne, arr. Josh Stewart
Mercer Singers, McDuffie Center for Strings, and Mercer Winds
Stanley L. Roberts, D.M.A.
Arthur Lowndes Rich Professor of Choral Conducting

The Installation of the President

THE PRESENTATION OF THE CHARTER AND UNIVERSITY SEAL

Cathy Callaway Adams

THE CHARGE TO THE NINETEENTH PRESIDENT AND PRESENTATION OF THE PRESIDENTIAL MEDALLION

Cathy Callaway Adams
William D. Underwood, J.D., Chancellor

THE ENTRUSTMENT OF THE ACADEMIC MACE

Kedrick Hartfield, Ph.D., University Marshal
Lisa M. Lundquist, Pharm.D., Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost

THE PRAYER OF INSTALLATION

The Reverend Barbara Brown Taylor, Member of the Board of Trustees

THE INTRODUCTION OF THE PRESIDENT

Cathy Callaway Adams

The Inaugural Address

Penny L. Elkins, Ph.D.
Nineteenth President of the University

THE ANTHEM

"Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing"
arr. Mack Wilberg
Text: Robert Robinson
Tune: Wyeth's Repository of Sacred Music, 1813
Mercer Singers, McDuffie Center for Strings, and Mercer Winds
Stanley L. Roberts, D.M.A., conductor

The Covenant for Mercer University's Future

Richard A. Schneider, J.D., LAW '81, Member of the Board of Trustees

THE ALMA MATER

Mercer Singers, McDuffie Center for Strings, and Mercer Winds
Stanley L. Roberts, D.M.A., conductor

THE RECESSIONAL

"Queen of Sheba March" – George Frideric Handel
McDuffie Center for Strings and Mercer Winds
Brittan Braddock, D.M.A., conductor

Covenant for Mercer University's Future

Leader: President Penny L. Elkins, you are being entrusted, as Preserver, with the precious and sacred duty of safeguarding the enduring instruments of Mercer University's founding. These institutional treasures represent the University's history, tradition, and continuity and are embodied by its Charter and Seal.

You are further entrusted with the University's Academic Mace, emblematic of the University's scholarly integrity and independence. And, you are Keeper of the Presidential Medallion, symbolizing the leadership and governing responsibility vested in the office. Each historical item speaks on behalf of the University. You have been granted a solemn trust, and we look to you for your faithful stewardship.

Will you covenant with Mercer University, before God and all these assembled here, to lead Mercer to live out its mission to teach, to learn, to create, to discover, to inspire, to empower, and to serve?

President Elkins: By God's help, I make this promise.

Leader: Will you commit to leading in the promotion of liberal learning, professional knowledge, discovery, service to humankind, and community as part of the Mercer difference?

President Elkins: By God's grace, I make this commitment.

Leader: To this assembly, standing witness to the investiture of President Penny L. Elkins, do you join in this solemn covenant to support President Elkins in the mission of Mercer University and together work to change the world, one student at a time?

People: We affirm this covenant.

Leader: Will you strive to be part of the Community of Respect, where everyone is held in mutual high regard, because every human being is created in the image of God, and each person deserves to be treated with respect and civility?

People: We make this commitment.

Leader: And now, to the President and to the people, with your sacred summons, will you respond to the ancient invitation to, "let your light shine, that they may see your good works, and give glory" for this generation, and the generations to come, changed by Mercer for the good of the world?

All: By God's call, we will. Amen.

Alma Mater

On the city's western border
Reared against the sky,
Proudly stands our Alma Mater,
As the years roll by.

Chorus
Forward ever be thy watchword,
Conquer and prevail.
Hail to thee, O Alma Mater!
Mercer, Hail all Hail!

Cherished by thy sons and daughters,
Mem'ries sweet shall throng
Round our hearts, O Alma Mater,
As we sing our song.

Presidents of Mercer University

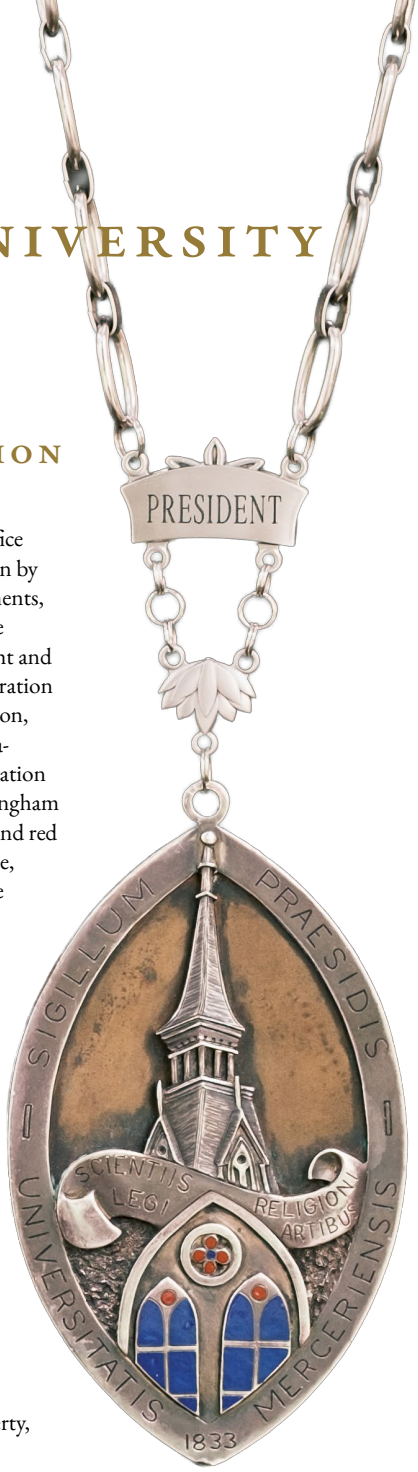
Billington McCarthy Sanders 1833-1840
Otis Smith 1840-1844
John Leadley Dagg.....1844-1854
Nathaniel Macon Crawford 1854-1856, 1858-1866
Shelton Palmer Sanford.....Acting 1856-1858
Henry Holcombe Tucker 1866-1871
Archibald John Battle.....1872-1889
Gustavus Alonzo Nunnally 1889-1893
Joseph Edgerton Willet .....Acting 1893
James Bruton Gambrell 1893-1896
Pinckney Daniel Pollock.....1896-1903
William Heard Kilpatrick .....Acting 1903-1905
Charles Lee Smith.....1905-1906
Samuel Young Jameson 1906-1913
James Freeman Sellers.....Acting 1913-1914
William Lowndes Pickard 1914-1918
Rufus Washington Weaver 1918-1927
Andrew Phillip Montague .....Acting 1927-1928
Spright Dowell.....1928-1953, Acting 1959-1960
George Boyce Connell.....1953-1959
Rufus Carrollton Harris.....1960-1979
Raleigh Kirby Godsey 1979-2006
William David Underwood.....2006-2025
Penny Loraine Elkins.....2026-



Symbols of Mercer University



The Presidential Medallion



The Presidential Medallion and its accompanying Chain of Office serve as the formal uniform of leadership. The medallion is worn by the President at all formal academic convocations, commencements, and ceremonial events as a visible symbol of the high office. The Presidential Medallion was designed by Professor Otis D. Knight and Professor Marshall Daugherty and was first used for the inauguration of President Rufus C. Harris in 1960. The Presidential Medallion, which was carved directly in fine silver and bronze, is a mandola-shaped pendant that depicts the form of the Godsey Administration Building, a ribbon, and a stylized stained-glass window of Willingham Hall. The background is in bronze, and the window is in blue and red cloisonné enamel. On the ribbon are the Latin words for science, law, religion, and the arts. On the border are inscribed the name of the University in Latin and the date of its founding. On the back of the Presidential Medallion are inscribed the names of the Mercer University Presidents who have worn it, along with their years of service.

The Academic Mace

The Academic Mace was designed in 1960 by Marshall Daugherty, professor of art in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, and was first used for the inauguration of President Rufus C. Harris. It depicts a cross atop a globe, symbolizing the spiritual commitment of the University as it seeks to understand the world. Circumscribing the globe are the words, "Mercer University 1833," symbolizing the influence of Mercer throughout the world. Beneath the larger globe is a smaller one, which represents the microcosm of the University. The globes rest atop a form suggestive of a spire. The Mace is made of bronze. Carried by the University Marshal at the head of the academic procession, the Academic Mace signifies that the assembly is formally in session and serves as a representation of the institution's independence and scholarly integrity. Derived from medieval combat weapons carried to protect sovereigns, the Academic Mace today represents the authority of the university and its dedication to defending academic freedom and the pursuit of truth.

Mercer University Leadership

Penny L. Elkins, President

Kathryn D. Kloepper
Chief of Staff

Lisa Murphey Lundquist
Executive Vice President for
Academic Affairs and Provost

Kellie Raiford Appel
Senior Vice President for Strategic
Initiatives and Atlanta Operations

Julia T. Davis
Senior Vice President for
Administration and Finance

Matthew R. Hall
Senior Vice President
and General Counsel

Maria Ann Hammett
Senior Vice President for
Enrollment Management

Mary Bowman Hampton
Senior Vice President for
University Marketing

John A. Patterson
Senior Vice President for
University Advancement

Keith E. Howard
Vice Provost

Douglas R. Pearson
Vice President for Student Affairs
and Dean of Students

William D. Underwood
Chancellor

R. Kirby Godsey
Chancellor Emeritus

Mercer University Deans

John Thomas Scott
Dean, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

Karen J. Sneddon
Dean, School of Law

Michael Crouch
Dean, College of Pharmacy

Jean Rawlings Sumner
Dean, School of Medicine

Julie Petherbridge
Dean, Stetson-Hatcher School of Business

Vicki Britt
Dean, School of Engineering

Sharon Augustine
Interim Dean, Tift College of Education

C. Gregory DeLoach
Dean, James and Carolyn McAfee School of Theology

Tammy Barbé
Dean, College of Nursing

Wesley Barker
Interim Dean, College of Professional Advancement

Gary G. Gerber
Dean, Townsend School of Music

Nannette Cole Turner
Interim Dean, College of Health Professions

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Carolyn Townsend McAfee
Macon, Georgia

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Mercer University

College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
School of Law
College of Pharmacy
School of Medicine
Stetson-Hatcher School of Business
School of Engineering
Tift College of Education
James and Carolyn McAfee School of Theology
College of Nursing
College of Professional Advancement
Townsend School of Music
College of Health Professions

Teaching Hospitals

Atrium Health Navicent
The Medical Center
Macon

Memorial Health
University Medical Center
Savannah

Piedmont Columbus
Regional
Columbus

Piedmont Macon
Macon

SGMC Health
Valdosta

St. Francis-Emory
Healthcare
Columbus

Tanner Health
Carrollton

Operating Units

Mercer Engineering
Research Center (MERC)
Warner Robins

Mercer Medicine
Macon

Mercer Music at Capricorn
Macon

Mercer Physical
Therapy Clinic
Atlanta

Mercer University Press
Macon

The Piedmont
Grand Opera House
Macon

Roberts Academy at
Mercer University
Macon

Robins Financial
Capitol Theatre
Macon

Educational Partner

Robins Air Force Base
Warner Robins

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Tony Kemp, Co-Chair
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Michelle Beavers
Ember Bishop Bentley
Ken Boyer
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inauguration.mercer.edu