



Clemson Legacy Connection

PLANNED GIVING NEWSLETTER

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Students Who Inspire Us All – Grayson Simmons, June 2025

Happy Summer! There's something truly special about the rhythm of summer — a season that invites us to pause, reflect and reconnect. In the words of Seals and Crofts, *"Summer breeze makes me feel fine, blowing through the jasmine in my mind."* In Tiger Town, those words ring true. From the sparkling waters of Lake Hartwell to the cool shade of mountain trails, we are surrounded by natural beauty that encourages us to slow down and soak in the moment.

I hope you make time for rest and renewal — whether that's a breezy beach vacation, backyard cookout or a quiet morning with coffee with songbirds and robins. However you spend your summer, may it restore your spirit.

After the joyful flurry of Spring Commencement, campus takes on a different kind of beauty — quiet, peaceful, almost meditative. The walkways are calm, traffic lights and the classrooms momentarily still. While we certainly miss our students' energy, their absence reminds us just how vibrant and essential they are to the heartbeat of Clemson. And around August, we'll be ready to welcome them — and their contagious enthusiasm — back home.

I'm delighted to introduce you to one of the students who makes our

Clemson Family so special: **Grayson Simmons**, a junior computer science major from Columbia, South Carolina, and an Air Force ROTC cadet with aspirations to serve in the U.S. Space Force.

I first met Grayson last fall when he volunteered for the Legacy Day Committee. As he rehearsed his role in the Leaf Ceremony — which honors individuals who've left transformational planned gifts to Clemson — he noticed that the bronze leaves on Fort Hill could use a little polish. Unprompted, Grayson rallied fellow ROTC cadets to shine every leaf, ensuring they gleamed for the ceremony. His act of initiative grew into something larger: a renewed student interest in a cherished Clemson tradition, and a personal inspiration to me.



Later I learned Grayson's ROTC scholarship was funded by one of the couples whose names are engraved on a bronze leaf — **Michael and Margaret Roetner** of California and later Hilton Head Island, South Carolina. Michael, a decorated B-29 bomber pilot during the Korean conflict, created a significant legacy to support and inspire future generations of ROTC cadets.



"When people you've never met take the time to invest in your future, it's incredibly inspiring," Grayson shared. "Their generosity gives me the freedom to focus on my studies and ROTC responsibilities without the stress of juggling a job. It's a gift I don't take lightly — and one I hope to pay forward one day — just like the Roetnors and others have done

for me."

And pay it forward, he does. Grayson is a member of the Arnold Air Society, where he mentors younger cadets just as upperclassmen once mentored him. His commitment to service and leadership extends across campus through involvement in Brother-to-Brother, Connections, Kappa Alpha Psi, the National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE) and CUhackit, a 24-hour hackathon where he sharpened his coding and collaboration skills. This fall, he traveled to Philadelphia for a regional engineering conference, building connections with professionals from top firms like Aerospace and EXOM.



Despite growing up just minutes from another South Carolina university, Grayson said that Clemson *felt right* from the moment he stepped on campus.

"My choice to attend Clemson was one of the best decisions I've made," Grayson stated. "I have a younger sister and brother and hope that they will follow in my footsteps to get a great education in such a wonderful campus environment," he said. Growing up in Columbia, it would've been easy for him to stay close to home for college. However, Grayson said that when he toured Clemson, he immediately felt relaxed and comfortable, thanks to the friendly students and beautiful campus environment. "Clemson checked all of the boxes for me with strong engineering and ROTC programs," he said.

I am thankful that many Clemson students like Grayson have the opportunity to receive a quality education that will enable them to better our world, thanks to visionaries like the Roetners. The forward-thinking and generosity of those who desire to help Clemson move *Fiercely Forward* IS inspiring. And our team of talented professionals would be honored to work with you to consider how you can include Clemson in your estate plan.

When you create a visionary gift for Clemson — whether it be a scholarship,

fellowship, professorship or unrestricted endowment — you are investing in future innovators, leaders and difference makers — students like Grayson who will carry the Clemson spirit around the globe and make it better for everyone.

Grayson's potential was unlocked by thoughtful generosity — the kind of transformational opportunity made possible because someone made the decision to invest in his future. Grayson's journey is a reminder that planned gifts don't just fund programs; they ignite futures. Your generosity can make it possible for students to lead, serve, explore and inspire others — all while carrying the Clemson spirit into the world.

And now, that choice belongs to you.

A gift in your will, trust, beneficiary designation accounts or overall estate plan can change the trajectory of a student's life. It can open doors, unlock dreams and create a legacy that extends far beyond your lifetime. Whether you support scholarships, faculty, research or innovation, every gift helps Clemson move *Fiercely Forward*.

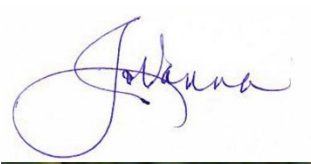
If you've ever wondered *when* the right time to start planning your legacy is, I assure you: **It's now.** And we are here to help you.

Please visit our **[website](#)** to learn more or reach out to the Office of Trusts, Estates and Gift Planning at **giving@clemson.edu**. We encourage you to download our free **[Estate Planning Guide](#)**, a thoughtful resource as you consider the legacy you want to leave. And please don't hesitate to contact me directly at **864-656-0663** or **jovanna@clemson.edu**. It would be my pleasure to learn more about your Clemson experience and help you explore various ways that you can shape the future for others.

Let your legacy be the light that guides the next generation of Tigers — outstanding and amazing students like Grayson — as they carry the Clemson spirit into the world to make it brighter for all of us.

Sending you our warmest wishes for a restful and enjoyable summer!

Ever Loyal and Forever Grateful,



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