

Golden Eagle football alumni pledge more than \$2 million to Football Operations Center



In 2021, Tennessee Tech announced plans for a Football Operations Center on campus and immediately football alumni said, "I want to be a part of this."

"No one knows the potential of Tech football better than former players," said Dewayne Alexander, head football coach. "It says a lot that they are committed to the future of the program."

The 40,000-square-foot Football Operations Center is phase one of a two-phase process to significantly upgrade and enhance the football program. State funds cannot be used for this type of athletic facility, so it must be funded entirely through private donations. The estimated cost to build the Football Operations Center is \$15 million.

So far, more than 15 football alumni have committed gifts of \$25,000 or more, totaling \$2.1 million, to name a space in the new facility.

Several former players are also coordinating efforts to honor coaches and other members of the Golden Eagle Football community through a named space.

Larry Schreiber, '71 marketing, was an Associated Press All-American, three-time All-OVC Performer and Conference Player of the Year. He played in the NFL for six seasons with the San Francisco 49ers and the Chicago Bears and was inducted into the Tennessee Tech Sports Hall of Fame in 1980.

Schreiber made a gift to the facility and is encouraging other players to do the same. Schreiber is also leading an effort to honor John "Shakey"

McClellan. Shakey managed John's Place in Cookeville for many years and was a strong supporter of Tech Athletics. For years, he worked the admission ticket gates for Tech football and basketball games and developed friendships with many Tech athletes that lasted for decades.

"He was a mentor, a jokester, a supporter and a truth-teller," said Schreiber. "He meant a lot to me and to Tech football."

Schreiber hopes to raise \$250,000 to name "Shakey's Corner" in the Football Operations Center.

Sam Smith, '83 geology, is another Tech football alumnus who looks to honor someone in the new facility. Smith is leading an effort to raise \$500,000



to name a coach's office in honor of Don Wade. Wade served as Tech's head football coach from 1968 to 1982 and as athletic director from 1974 to 1980.

"In my four years at Tech, I learned that Coach Wade was genuine," said Smith. "He was tough, sarcastically funny, loyal and loving — albeit tough love. Coach Wade's impact continues to influence my life today."

Mike Ledford, '75 health and physical education and '80 M.A., is leading a group of alumni who plan to



name the equipment room in honor of former equipment manager Fred Burrell. Additional groups are working to name spaces in honor or memory of other former coaches and administrators.

While financial commitments are crucial, many football alumni and fans have also devoted hundreds of hours to the project, helping spread the word and making phone calls to individuals and businesses who might be willing to make a gift.

Ottis Phillips, '74 mechanical engineering and '78 MBA, and his childhood friend M. Dianne Murphy, '72 health and physical education and '73 M.A., lead the Football Operations Center steering committee, a group of football alumni and Tech administrators dedicated to the project.

Phillips and Murphy experienced firsthand what it's like to play for the Golden Eagles: Phillips was a member of Tech's football team from 1969-72, and Murphy played basketball, volleyball and tennis. Now, they are focused on helping the next generation of student-athletes, using the knowledge and experience they gained at Tech and in their careers to establish a new facility for Tech football.

On Nov. 30, 2021, Tech's Giving Tuesday efforts focused on raising funds for the Football Operations Center, and more than 100 individuals gave \$105,252 to the project in just 24 hours.

Head Football Coach Dewayne Alexander and his wife Angy committed to match up to \$35,000 on this day, and when the 24-hour period ended, Alexander learned just how much Golden Eagle football fans had given.

"That was a special day for Tennessee Tech football and for me personally," said Alexander. "I want to

thank everyone who has made a gift to the Football Operations Center. My wife and I love Tennessee Tech Football and we love what it's done for young men to help them develop as people. We have a special heart for football, and we have a special heart for Tennessee Tech University."

While football alumni have committed more than \$2 million, additional gifts are needed to complete the project. Visit tntech.edu/foc to learn more.

