



**FRESHMEN**

**FREE WRITE**

REFLECTION OF HOW YOUR PERSONAL JOURNEY HAS LEAD YOU  
TO BECOMING A RED WOLF, AND WHAT BEING AT A-STATE  
MEANS TO YOU



# TABLE OF CONTENT

1. CALLIE NEWBERRY – PG. 3
2. BREANNA RUNNELLS – PG 4
3. CLAIRE WALZ – PG. 5
4. EMILY HOLLAND – PG 6-7
5. LILLY SHEPHERD – PG. 8
6. MOMONE TAKAHASHI – PG. 9
7. SUSHMA REDDY VONTEDDU – PG. 10-11
8. ANNA BOROVIINSKAYA – PG. 12
9. KIESHA JOHNSON – PG. 13
10. KAYLEE STOUT PG. 14
11. SHANIA KIRBY – PG. 15-16
12. BAO MANH TRAN – PG. 17



Callie Newberry

As an individual born in Jonesboro, I was involved in the environment that supported the Red Wolves community. Both of my parents met on campus in the same classroom that I attend three times a week that is contributing to my minor. Without this university, my parents would not have met and I would not have the opportunity to become a Red Wolf myself. A red wolf is a symbol of achievement which is what each Arkansas State student is working towards. Wolves are strong and can intimidate their enemy which decreases their obstructions. A wolf is never alone because they have a pack to support and protect them during the struggles of life. The pack has pride in who they are and what they can do for the other members of the pack. Arkansas State has a community of people discovering themselves while forming bonds with other students going through similar life stages and changes. The decision to come to this university was based on the wide variety of majors that are offered on campus and online. I came to the conclusion that I would not be as successful without the education provided at Arkansas State. At this university, I have learned that opportunities are worth taking because the benefits are worth the hard work and determination. The course that I am currently on is securing the future that I want to accomplish. Becoming aware of my study habits and what helps me learn the information can influence my future occupations.



**Breanna Runnells**

When children are young, they are always asked what they want to be when they grow up. My answer has barely changed. From 5 years old, to 14 years old - I wanted to become a veterinarian. Then as I got closer to college, the realization came to me that exotic animals would be my goal. Animals have always been important and amazing to me. So when I heard about A-State's Zoology program, I was over the moon. I chose this school because it can give me the best chance to achieve my career goal. Then when I got here, I was told that the zoology program was being scrapped. Luckily I was given an alternative route, still taking the classes, but they were under a different name this time. I can proudly say my major is now Wildlife, Fisheries, and Conservation, emphasis in Wildlife. It's a long one, but A-State was still able to provide me with what I needed. Cheesy to say, but being at A-State means new beginnings to me. I'm from Bryant, Arkansas. I've always been used to the big school and not knowing a lot of people; but being here has given me the chance to make new friends, take steps toward my career goal, and a milestone of growing up. It is a place for the next chapter of my life to start.



**Claire Walz**

*No Place Like Home*

Arkansas State just so happens to be in Jonesboro, the town I grew up in, automatically meaning easy-access. However, my lovely parents would have allowed me to go wherever I want for college. I chose A-State. Because I'm from here, I do know a lot of people, but that did not and has not stopped me from meeting so many more wonderful friends during my first year. Yes, I'm here to get an education, but I'm here for the memories, too. I decided to rush, which helped in the friend-making process before school even started. Being in Alpha Omicron Pi has opened up so many doors for me in all aspects of life. I have the privilege to spend time with other young women with the same values as me, but from all different walks of life and so many different interests and personalities. Another way I decided to get involved here was through choir. Being able and encouraged to continue singing past high school has been so much fun. A-State's choir program has also allowed me to travel the world! This summer, one of the choirs I'm in is going to Portugal to sing in festivals and take in the culture and beauty of the country. Arkansas State, just in my first year of college, has given me more than I ever could have asked for. This is my home, and I can't wait to see what these next 3+ years have to offer me.



**Emily Holland**

*Journey to A-State*

Hello, my name is Emily Holland. I grew up in Harrisburg Arkansas. I went to high school in Harrisburg, I got my first job in Harrisburg. Harrisburg is a small rural town just 30 minutes away from A-state. But those 30 minutes make all the difference, in comparison. I have never seen so much diversity in so many ways in one place alone. I have been so grateful to attend and to learn so much more than just what I've learned in Harrisburg. They can tell you things about the world, but it doesn't do it justice until you leave to experience the world for Yourself.

In 2022 I was diagnosed with both ADHD and Anxiety. These are apparently very difficult to live with, for the longest time I had just thought everyone struggled to do everyday tasks, and that they had just learned to deal with it better. But as I met new people, who had similar experiences or were also neurodivergent, I came to realize that other people didn't struggle to email their teachers, talk to their peers, or even just focus on writing a paper. I had gone through my entire life struggling to keep high grades, to even talk to people that I've known my entire life. To go out and make memories and friends who share my interests. When I learned that I didn't have to struggle to keep high grades, to cry before I took a timed test because I knew that I probably wouldn't be able to focus, I was so relieved. To learn that I wasn't just dramatic, that I was actually struggling. It felt very validating. Despite not learning this until my senior year, I had managed to keep all A's and B's and even took some online college credits. Which is one of the reasons that no one ever knew I was struggling. I was terrified to ask for help, disappointing my teachers and parents. It also hadn't helped that I had great grades on average for my classmates.



However, I've recently started to learn how to ask for help and to voice my opinions and questions. Since coming to Astate, I have applied to start therapy to help learn more ways to help build strategies. Learning to go out of my comfort zone to send those emails and to learn to talk to my peers and classmates. I've already developed some strategies to help me stay on track and focus on my work, which allows me to keep up with my peers mentally and emotionally. Astate has been a blessing to me and my mental state. Today I have come so far from where I was, and I plan to keep pushing myself further. I still have setbacks, but since my journey to Astate, I have learned to overcome them and grow from them. I just want to thank everyone for this chance to change for the better, to help me further myself in life.



**Lilly Shepherd**

*A-State is Me*

My joints started dislocating frequently, and I was confined to a wheelchair for several years. I was in multiple years of physical therapy and have had many surgeries. The pain only continued to get worse, and other complications joined in. After countless medical tests, I concluded that I have a rare congenital disability that causes every joint in my body to be larger than average, causing joint dislocation to be an everyday occurrence for the rest of my life. Another added surprise was that my father started to show abusive tendencies that continued to develop further, further complicating my life.

Years later, I had the pleasure of meeting Dr. Katherine Baker at an A-State event. She guided me around, introducing me to many people. Due to her influence and leadership, I now participate in numerous programs here. After many wonderful, amazing conversations, I was enthralled by her and everything this school could offer me.

I've fought my entire life to keep my head above water. Being here, I've been able to get a fresh breath of air, and I feel this is the first time in my life that I'm not being swept under the surface. I have faced harsh abuse, absurd medical complications, and mental health issues and maintained my interests, classes, and extracurricular activities. I found the best version of myself on this campus. Despite my trials and victories, I have almost made it, and I want to continue calling A-State my home.





**Momone Takahashi**

*Meaning of A-State for Me*

I decide to enter A-State when I was sixteen years old. To retain my dream which is to study in the A-State, I worked really hard on my study in high school. After, I came to the U.S, I needed to study English in the ESL. Thanks to the ESL, I am not struggling with my undergraduate classes.

A-State is everything for me. I cannot go back my home easily because I am Japanese, I stay on campus almost all the time. Therefore, A-State is like a home for me. Also, professors are like guardians for me. They help me all the time including studying, personal life, and so on. Thanks to them I have never been homesick. I am glad that I chose this university because I am really enjoying being a Red Wolf. Even though I am a still freshman, I feel like I am staying here more than five years. Sometimes I encounter difficulties such as study and cultures. However, since I came here, time goes really fast because I am busy and enjoying every day. I cannot imagine and I do not want to imagine that someday I will leave A-State. I wish I could stay A-State forever.



**Sushma Reddy Vonteddu**

My name is Sushma Reddy Vonteddu. I am a student and an ALD member at Arkansas State University doing Bachelor's degree in Medical Radiologic Science with emphasis on Cardiovascular Interventional Technology. My educational aspirations consist of acquiring a bachelor's degree that would assist me in pursuing a medical career as a doctor. I decided that I will attain a career as a doctor since my passion has always been assisting others and trying to improve their quality of life. Therefore, I think that pursuing such a career will provide me the opportunity to help improve the community's health quality conditions and learn about their medical needs. I can make a big difference in how much time and resources I will have during college to spend on enhancing my experience and knowledge through service-learning, volunteer opportunities and internships. I am hoping to find an internship at a Hospital. Personally, a scholarship can reinforce my self-confidence and gives me greater powers of resilience. It is a concrete way of demonstrating that I am a valuable commodity. I can definitely succeed in my life if I get financial help. This scholarship will help me achieve my educational and career goals. I didn't find any job on campus because there are no vacancies. As an International student I am not allowed to work off campus. I do wish to focus a lot of my time on my studies. This scholarship will help by lowering the costs of college throughout my studies. This way, I'll be able to continue with my academic achievements. This scholarship will help me with buying academic books which allows me to pursue the education I need to achieve my goals. I always knew I was different than my friends in some way. Growing up, I struggled while everyone else around me had little to no problems. My friends would hop on planes and travel all around the world while I had to stay at home. Knowing that I had to work harder than everyone else lead me to be the person that I am today. I took that fire inside of me, pushed myself with a



cumulative 4.0 GPA. I plan to continue my success in the classroom and do everything to the best of my ability as I know that under my current circumstances it can all be ripped away from me at any moment. Growing up with my situation has taught me to not take advantage of a single opportunity. I will strive to be the first generation in my family to graduate from an American University and I will set a stepping stone for my future family so they will not have to struggle as I did.



**Anna Borovinskaya**

*From Tears of Sadness to Tears of Joy*

The A-State wolf pack means family! Here, I finally found my home. For the past 3.5 years, stability was not in my vocabulary. While competing on the international tennis tour, I was changing countries, friends, coaches, and academies monthly or even weekly. I was sacrificing all I had for my dreams. My ranking was at an all-time high, but at what cost? I had no sense of belonging and was feeling depressed because of that. I prayed for things to get better and to find a stable home. Then my situation took a dire turn as my dad and grandma were, and still are, stuck in Ukraine. I was forced to put my professional career on pause and search for an alternative plan. That's when the idea of going to college entered the picture. I figured that it would lessen the financial burden on my family, who were the main sponsors of my tennis. Even though enrolling in college was not originally part of my plan, it turned out to be a great decision. Furthermore, choosing ASU was one of the best decisions of my life! The community is tight knit, making it truly feel like one, big family. The students, teachers, and staff look out and care for each other with pure intentions. I genuinely feel that I have never been happier in my life than since I came to ASU. I am proud to be part of the wolf pack. Wolves Up!



**Kiesha Johnson**

*Searching Beyond the Horizon*

While scrolling through social media, an intriguing quote came across my feed. The quote read, “Moving away from your hometown is so beneficial to your growth.” A personal interpretation of this quote is if you are not thriving where you are, it’s imperative to go somewhere with better opportunities and adequate exposure. With these variables, success seems to be inevitable. My hometown is a small community with a notably small population of 3,000. With one stoplight, three gas stations, and a few dollar stores, the options are not in multitudes. It is either a minimum wage or factory job. Going to college was an important goal of mine and a way out of a dying town.

Arkansas State University was the first college to reach out to me. The staff is always warm and welcoming. A-State offers me plenty of opportunities and chances to expand my horizons. Numerous organizations are offered, and I participate in a few. In my hometown, they took the honor roll away from the high schoolers. Academics were not a focal point. In my first semester at Arkansas State, I received numerous emails giving kudos and support. I made the Dean’s List and received a certificate, a sign of my academic excellence that I had not received for years. Arkansas State makes me feel valued and appreciated. The school cares about my future and the path I will take to achieve my goals. Being here means acceptance and a chance to search beyond the horizon.



**Kaylee Stout**

I chose Arkansas State University because the opportunities here are endless. Hi! My name is Kaylee Stout, I am from Memphis, Tennessee. ASU was the most affordable and ideal university for me. It has provided me with the opportunity to receive a higher education, as I adjusted into the next stage of my life. Moving away from home, I have been able to grow as a person, and mature into a young adult. I have learned many life lessons, along with furthering my education. One thing I love about A-State is how small the university is. I have been able to create relationships with all my professors. This has heavily benefited my education. If I ever encounter struggles in class, I'm able to approach my professors and easily access help. Being able to feel "at home" while being away from home is very unique and rewarding. I thank A-State for this feeling.

With my first year of being a A-State student coming to an end, I reflect on my year and can only provide positive feedback. From my professors to my friends, my overall experience has been very beneficial. Opportunities for involvement on campus vary. A-State provides an number of clubs and organizations for students. These clubs and organizations help new students find their place. If I could recommend a college to any high school senior, I would say go A-State! Our campus consists of a happy and healthy environment, that makes all students feel at home. Home is here!



**Shania Kirby**

Did you ever questioned your young, minded self, “Am I going to school for the rest of my life?” I am assuming, yes. As kids we are challenged to finish school in some sort of way. If it is not college is high school. College is just a beginning. It is the first step of everything in your life. Growing up I knew I had a purpose; my purpose was to keep going in school and to make my family proud. Knowing you made it is shedding blood, sweat, and tears.

First, I wanted to acknowledge anyone that stepped foot into college. Even if you realize it is not your cup of tea. Starting college is challenging already, you must have a plan to have another. Knowing you are starting school is like high school over again, meeting new people, what to wear, and where to go on this campus. Just before starting college, you must be physically and mentally prepared.

Moving on, I wanted to tell you how my journey would go. Starting over is difficult, especially with unfamiliar faces. For me, learning how to be on your own is step one. It is to me because it is an opportunity for me to grow on my own, how to initiate and interact first. Last semester was rough, honestly. I was still processing being independent.

Currently, I am still a first-year student. My year as a first-year student has been adventurous. I said this because I think I finally found my people and know my balance. Everyone has a foot they just need a kick. I applied myself to enjoy the time I have because once I go into my career, I want to be fully focused. Sometimes I want motivation, but I remember the steps I took to even start college and finish my first year and many to go. Another thing first year around students do is compare, beat themselves up with the college life. When you are on the right track, give yourself a congrast every now and then it keeps you going. Do things you would enjoy doing, the right people will come.



In Conclusion, enjoy yourselves while you can, we are not going to be young forever.

Getting into college is not just schoolwork, it is a part of growing up. And when you grow older you will learn more about what you like and what kind of person you are. My favorite part of college is not knowing what to expect next and having your priorities first. Growing up I knew I had a purpose; my purpose was to keep going in school and to make my family proud. Knowing you made it is shedding blood, sweat, and tears.





**Bao Manh Tran**

As time passes and the past fades away, my memories of the first time I set foot on campus still come back to life. After attending the orientation, I spent an hour running around the campus to explore the buildings' architecture, names, and locations. During the orientation week, the university faculties helped me overcome difficulties in settling everything down before class. As an international student, I was nervous about my communication skills and life in a new place. However, the enthusiasm of A-State faculties stimulated my confidence and self-esteem. Thus, I am open-minded and willing to share my plans with my instructors and the international Program.

In mid-spring, the university had a beautiful bucolic campus surrounded by greenery. The landscape overflowed with grass and pinecones which attracted many squirrels. Everything was changed to be better, and so I am. Time flies, and I reflected on my journey to become a Red Wolf and realized it was a mature process. I dared to step out of my comfort zone: from a small town in Vietnam to the United States. Honestly, I still felt homesick on the twenty-hour flight that brought me across the Pacific Ocean. However, this feeling tends to reduce when I have had the chance to build up a connection with A-State students and faculties. As a Red Wolf, I want to collaborate with others in helping students and contributing to the university. In my heart, A-State has become my new home in the US, allowing me to develop the fundamental values for my future career. In conclusion, I want to express my gratitude to the university for supporting me in my academic journey.