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Meet  
Park University's  
First Family



# The Smeed Family Welcomes You to Park University

BY NIKKI SWARTZ

PHOTOS BY NATALIE CARVER AND THE SMEED FAMILY

In a quaint little white house nestled near the main entrance to Park University, just a hop, skip and a jump away from Parkville’s Main Street shops and restaurants, lives the Smeed family. Shane, Angela, Samantha, Andrew and Landon Smeed and their little pup, Lucy, are a lot like other Parkville families, except their backyard is Park University, the renowned private, liberal arts university where Shane is president.

When Park University’s president position became vacant in late 2020, the administration didn’t need to look far to find the perfect candidate. For five years, Shane had served as Park’s vice president and chief operating officer. Starting in December 2020, Shane stepped in as interim president. Then, in January 2022, he was named Park University’s 18th president, and he and his family moved into the University White House and got to work.

Shane and his wife, Angela, met at a church in Northern California when they were assigned to teach the same Sunday school class. At the time, Angela was a junior at Sonoma State University and Shane was working in higher education. What started as a fun experience teaching together turned into a marriage. The two were married in La Jolla, California, 24 years ago.

Angela was born and raised in Southern California and earned her Bachelor of Arts degree in history from Sonoma State. She is an accomplished interior designer/entrepreneur and owns a boutique design firm, Angela Smeed Design, which specializes in heirloom-quality custom furnishings. Angela believes our surroundings heavily influence the way we feel, and she loves to bring more harmony into the lives of her clients. She is passionate about honoring each individual family dynamic,

tailoring designs of lasting stylistic relevance. Using her design skills, Park University’s first lady has been instrumental in the renovation work at the University White House over the past two years, significantly contributing to the look and function of the 106-year-old home.

Shane has lived in nine states, including Overland Park, Kansas. He earned a Master of Arts degree in higher education and student affairs administration from Saint Louis University and a Master of Business Administration from the Keller Graduate School of Management. This year marks Shane’s 25th year in higher education.

“As the son of a university administrator, I always knew I wanted to work in higher education,” he said. “My father had an illustrious higher education career, and I have proudly followed in his footsteps.”

Under Smeed’s leadership, Park University has undergone significant progress and transformative changes. He has spearheaded numerous major initiatives that have shaped the University’s trajectory. One notable achievement has been the development and implementation of a comprehensive strategic plan, which has provided a clear roadmap for the institution’s future growth and success.

## The First Family

Park University’s first family includes Shane and Angela’s children, Samantha, Andrew and Landon. Samantha is 21 years old and loves



horses. She is an English-style equestrian, competing in show jumping at the American Royal and other competitions over the years. She also has recently developed a love for ultimate Frisbee. Samantha will head back to college at Brigham Young University-Idaho this summer, bringing along her brother, Andrew, who just graduated from Park Hill South High School. Eighteen-year-old Andrew also just wrapped up his career with the Kansas City Saints, a hockey team that plays at Line Creek Community Center.

Landon, who is 14, will be a freshman at Park Hill South this fall and looks forward to continuing his passion for conditioning, football, and track and field.

Completing the Smeed family is little Lucy, a 3-year-old apricot miniature poodle. Lucy is a friendly girl, and the Smeeds say she is a big fan of all the Park University students. She is delighted when she spots one on her daily walk.

**Welcome to Park U.**

Shane came to Park University in 2015, attracted by the diversity of its student body and its Kansas City metropolitan area location.

"When I first stepped foot on the picturesque Parkville campus and looked around the historic buildings, I just knew that this was the place I wanted to make my professional home," he recalled.

In addition, Shane said he believes deeply in Park's mission of transforming lives through accessible, student-centered, quality higher education.

"Witnessing students accomplish their goals and walk across the stage at graduation is an amazing experience," he said. "It reminds my colleagues and me why we chose to work in higher education."

When Shane took the reins as president,



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the Smeed family followed tradition and moved into the University White House, located on the campus near Park University’s main entrance and just across from Graham Tyler Memorial Chapel, which is home to Park’s International Center for Music. Shortly after they moved in, renovations began, and Angela jumped in to help. She collaborated on many of the finishes, chose flooring and carpeting, and encouraged the use of natural materials where possible.

“We wanted to preserve as much as we could,” she explained. “We wanted the renovations to last and to preserve as much of the home’s history and character as best we could.”

For example, she chose to leave the natural pine flooring in the loft area upstairs, which serves as Andrew and Landon’s bedrooms. It also was Angela’s idea to install a natural rock wall in the kitchen. The Park University campus, established in 1875, was largely built out of Missouri limestone, and the wall is a nod to that history. It’s Shane and Angela’s favorite feature of the house. The rock wall surrounds a large, north-facing window that looks out on the backyard and, beyond that, historic Mackay Hall. Not only is it a beautiful view of campus, but the neighbors are amusing, as well. Angela said the entire family enjoys watching the antics of the “chunky” squirrel who lives in the big oak tree directly outside the window.

Beyond the University White House, the family loves spending time on campus, getting to know students and getting involved. The Smeeds have supported Park’s renowned music program and have encouraged the growth of its international population. Thirty percent of Park University’s student body at the Parkville campus is composed of international students. Across all of the university’s campuses nationwide, Park has more than 570 international students

representing 77 countries, connecting Park and Parkville with the world. According to Angela, every day offers a unique experience to meet and engage in conversation with students who come to the university from every continent.

Angela is involved in fundraising opportunities for the university, volunteers at Pirate Pantry and, with Shane, regularly hosts guests and students at the University White House. The family also are regulars at Park events around campus and they love taking advantage of all Parkville has to offer, too.

“Living on the Park campus in the recently renovated 106-year-old University White House provides us an opportunity to walk to Park events, Parkville Main Street shops and English Landing Park,” Shane said. “Whether we attend a Park baseball game at Comfort Field on the northeast side of campus or an International Center for Music concert in Graham Tyler Memorial Chapel on the southwest end, we feel so connected to Park and Parkville.”

### Life Away From Campus

The Smeeds moved back to the Kansas City area in the fall of 2015 when Shane was hired as Park University’s chief operating officer. Up until they moved into the University White House on campus last year, the family lived in the Thousand Oaks community. Shane said they are grateful for the exceptional Park Hill School District schools their kids attended and the family-oriented neighborhood where they all made great friends.

The family also appreciates the variety of great restaurants across the Northland, including Café des Amis in Parkville and Trezo Mare in Briarcliff Village. Shane, who is a golfer, said another extraordinary benefit of living in the Northland is having The National Golf Club of Kansas City, a world-class golf course, right here.

“It’s no wonder why the Northland continues to grow in terms of population and economic development,” he said. “The people in the Northland make it special. They are committed to the community and to each other.”

With a guiding philosophy of treating others with love and kindness, the Smeeds help make the Northland special themselves through community service, which is a priority and a passion for the entire family. Shane serves in an ecclesiastical leadership role in the family’s church and on several Kansas City-area nonprofit boards, including



the Command and General Staff College Foundation and the Kansas City Area Development Council. He previously served as an appointed planning and zoning commissioner for the City of Parkville.

In his spare time, you'll find the president cheering on the Park University athletics teams, both at the flagship Parkville campus and at Park's Gilbert, Arizona, campus, playing golf or proudly supporting the world-champion Kansas City Chiefs, of which Park University is the official higher education partner.

"The Kansas City area has so many great professional teams. Getting to watch the Chiefs, the Royals, Sporting Kansas City, the Current, the Comets, the Monarchs and the Mavericks is a real treat," Shane said.

Angela volunteers at church, helping lead a young women's organization serving youth ages 12-18. Samantha returned from serving an 18-month church mission in southern Arizona in April.

The Smeeds commit to getting away on a family vacation each year. For spring break, the family traveled to Playa del Carmen, Mexico. The highlight of the trip was visiting various Mayan ruins and swimming in the cenotes, according to Shane. He said they loved learning about Mexican culture, history and people. On an educational trip to China several years ago, the foodie in Shane came out when he tried rare delicacies, including jellyfish head and pigeon. However, he said he was much more fond of Peking duck and dumplings.

Shane and Angela also take a couple's trip so they can spend quality time together without distractions. Some of their favorite trips include: France, Italy, New York, Portugal, Puerto Rico, Rhode Island and Spain. Additionally, the family often travels to Florida to soak up some sunshine.

### At Home at Park University

Shane is committed to leading a university that celebrates diversity, serves a multigenerational student body, and consistently earns recognition from its faculty and staff as a favorite employer. He said that Park's motto, *Fides et Labor* (Latin for faith and work), inspires students, faculty and staff to achieve all their goals.

While working to inspire the Park University community each day, the Smeeds are looking ahead to 2025, when Park will celebrate its sesquicentennial – 150 years of transforming students' lives. Simultaneously, Park is embarking upon its most ambitious fundraising campaign in its history.

"As we celebrate our great past, we stand committed to an even brighter future. I understand the responsibility incumbent within my position and remain optimistic that Park's best days lie ahead," Shane said.

Today, however, he said the door to Park University is open for the entire Northland community, and he and his family welcome you.

"As our family has made the Park University campus our literal home, we invite you to make the campus your Hometown U, whether you attend an art exhibit, a sports event or a concert of our world-renowned International Center for Music," Shane said. "Park has connected the



Northland with the world for 15 decades. We invite everyone in the Northland to come and experience all we have to offer."



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