



News From Lenoir-Rhyne University

Rising Star Young Alumnus Award Honoring Zac O'Brien '09

A dean's list honor roll student, Zac O'Brien graduated from Lenoir-Rhyne with a Bachelor of Science in finance and accounting in May 2009. A scholar student-athlete, he was a member of the LR Bears football team and Theta Chi fraternity.

O'Brien started his career with Thrivent Financial as a financial consultant where he was responsible for building investment portfolios and worked with clients to assist them with their financial needs. Recently, he joined Crown Wealth Group, where he serves as managing director, responsible for oversight and delivery of individual, family and business financial options. O'Brien has been recognized as a Winston-Salem Under 40 Award recipient in 2014.

During his studies at LR, O'Brien remembers his classes with Ted Reingold. He attributes his LR education to the professors and coaches who shaped his professional path and prepared him for his career.

"LR was an amazing four-year experience for me," O'Brien said. "I couldn't ask for a better opportunity to learn from professors that cared about me and my future. Professor Reingold was such an amazing teacher that prepared me for the real world. I still reference his classes today. With an incredible student-teacher ratio, I never felt like a number. The professors knew my name and were always accessible to help in any area that I didn't understand. Coach [Wayne] Hicks and Coach [Mike] Houston were both inspirational role models for me. I want to thank my fraternity brothers for being a great support system for me as well."

Most important, O'Brien remembers meeting his wife, Nichole "Nikki" Horton O'Brien '09, during his sophomore year at LR. Noted as his biggest supporter and his best friend, Nikki works for Truist in the financial intelligence department. Together, they have a son Wyatt, four, and Luke, born in July 2020. They also have two puppies—Magnus and Nyla.

As a former student-athlete, O'Brien needed structure and competition after college, so he volunteered as a Little League football coach and began racing in triathlons. In his free time, he enjoys hunting, traveling, following the LR Bears, Chicago Bears and Cubs. He is one of the founders of the Ducks Unlimited chapter in Davie County and serves as a board member of Live Like Katie Foundation. He encourages today's student to value the experience of college.

“It would be the same advice that was given to me, which I wish I would have truly listened. Enjoy every minute of the LR experience; it goes by way too fast. Do what you’re supposed to do in the classroom and don’t ever turn down the opportunity to make a memory or friendship—they will stay with you your entire life.”

Zac O’Brien, for your demonstration of outstanding achievement that positively represents the university, and inspires students and other recent graduates, to excel in their work and recognize the important impact of your experience as a student at LR, the Lenoir-Rhyne University Alumni Association is pleased to present you the **Rising Star Young Alumnus Award**.

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About Lenoir-Rhyne University:

Founded in 1891, Lenoir-Rhyne University is a co-educational, private liberal arts institution with 50 undergraduate degree programs and over 30 graduate degree programs. LR enrolls more than 2,750 undergraduate and graduate students and has had 11 consecutive years of enrollment growth. LR’s main campus is in Hickory, North Carolina, where both undergraduate and graduate degrees are offered. The University also offers graduate degree programs on its campuses in Asheville, North Carolina, and Columbia, South Carolina. The Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary is also in Columbia. LR is affiliated with the North Carolina Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and welcomes students from all religious backgrounds. The website is www.lr.edu.