

David Nilsen



2025 ALUMNI AWARDS

Program

June 14, 2025

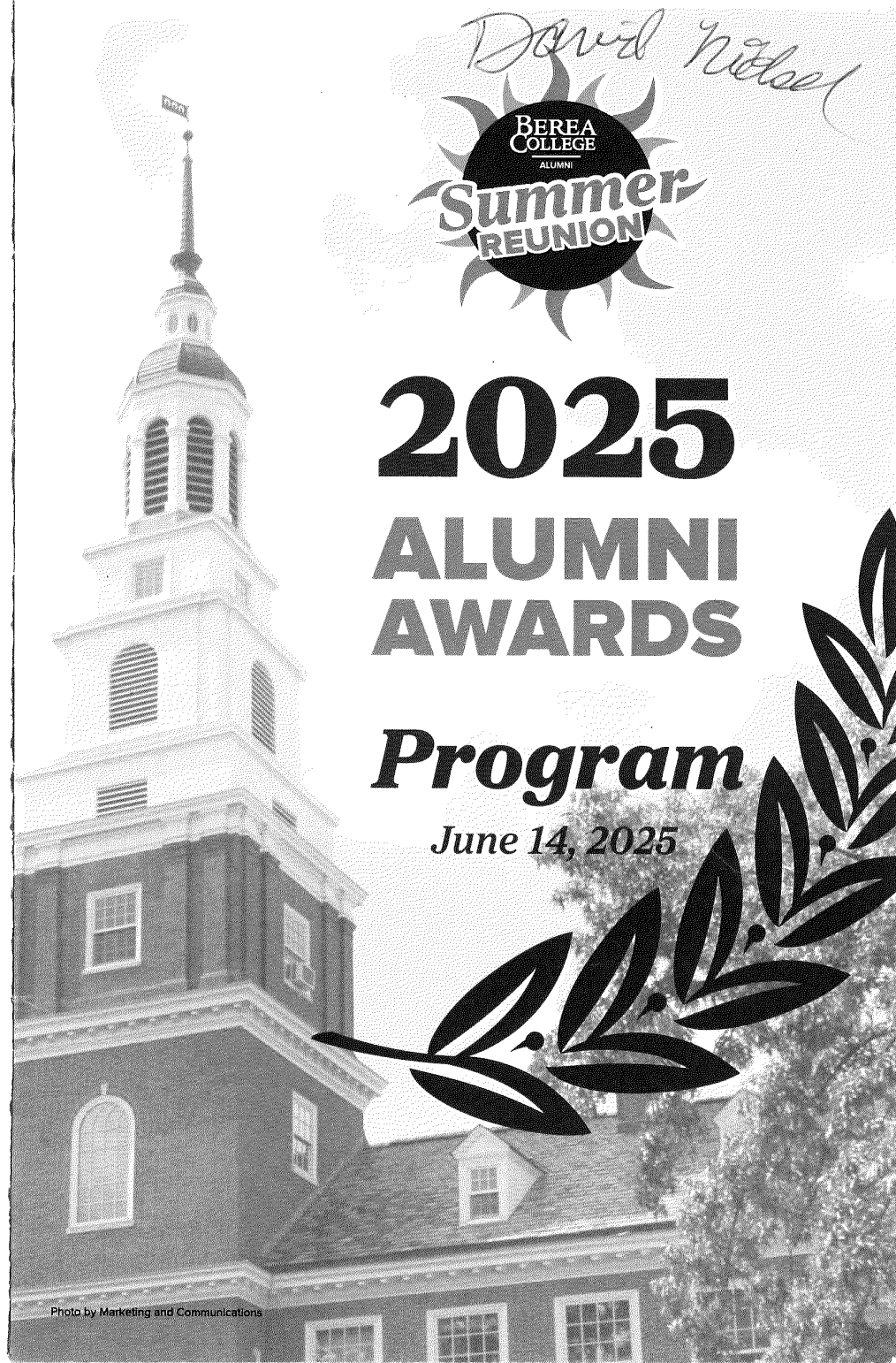


Photo by Marketing and Communications

Dr. Jennie Tallent Nickel '65

ALUMNI LOYALTY AWARD

A native of Maryville, Tenn., Dr. Jennie Tallent Nickel was one of 13 students to graduate from Berea College's nursing program in 1965. Her clinical experiences as a student—particularly her public health rotation in Eastern Kentucky—proved formative. Driving mountain roads to visit families, schools, and even a granny midwife, Jennie found her calling in community and public health.

Following her marriage to fellow Berean David Nickel '64, she pursued public health nursing positions across Kentucky, working first with the Louisville-Jefferson County Health Department, and later as a consultant to health departments in southcentral Kentucky. She earned a master's degree in community nursing from the University of Kentucky and taught at the UK College of Nursing before pausing her career to raise her two children.

When her children entered school, she commuted to Columbus, Ohio, to complete a Ph.D. in preventive medicine from The Ohio State University College of Medicine. Afterward, she joined the OSU College of Nursing, where she taught community health nursing and epidemiology, gained tenure as an associate professor, and conducted research on case management for HIV patients, childhood immunizations, and health service delivery.

Later, she transitioned to the Ohio Medicaid Program as section chief for data management and analysis, focusing on community-based care until her retirement.

Dr. Nickel continues to serve her community through literacy programs and food outreach, and she nurtures her artistic talents through oil painting—a passion first sparked by Berea's humanities curriculum.

For 20 years, she and David coordinated the Central Ohio Berea Alumni Chapter. Their dedication to Berea has never waned. Dr. Nickel considers her years at Berea to be life-defining, shaping her values, friendships, and lifelong commitment to service and equity in health care.

Dr. David Nickel '64

ALUMNI LOYALTY AWARD

A native of Greenup County, Ky., Dr. David Nickel credits Berea College with providing the singular opportunity that made his higher education possible. Despite graduating as salutatorian from McKell High School in 1960, his family lacked the financial means to support college. The offer to attend Berea changed the course of his life.

Nickel earned a Bachelor of Arts in chemistry and left Berea with many cherished memories—from playing varsity baseball to intramural football—and recognition through honors such as the Veltin Citizenship Prize and the Athlete, Scholar, and Gentleman Award. Most meaningfully, he met his wife of 60 years, Jennie Tallent Nickel '65.

He went on to earn a master's degree in chemistry from the University of Kentucky and a Ph.D. in chemistry and higher education administration from Indiana University. His career spanned work in laboratories, higher education leadership, and corporate training. He held senior admissions roles at Arkansas State and the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and later served in leadership development at Goodyear and Lockheed Martin.

Returning to academia, Nickel served as faculty coordinator and lecturer in The Ohio State University's College of Business. He taught in Ohio and abroad in Wuhan, China, and contributed to curriculum and administrative development at several institutions. He conducted research on higher education leadership, publishing and presenting widely.

A committed volunteer, he served on the American Association of University Administrators board, chaired his church's Adult Learning Council, and is active in Toastmasters International and Braver Angels. He and Jennie coordinated the Central Ohio Berea Alumni Chapter for two decades.

In semi-retirement, Nickel remains active and grateful, sharing wisdom with his five grandchildren and reflecting often on the lifelong impact of Berea College.