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Spring 2014

### Armstrong Magazine

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# Armstrong

SPRING 2014



**START  
STRONG**

.....  
*Generations  
of Success*

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## FROM THE PRESIDENT

At Armstrong, we're dedicated to helping our students start strong and finish even stronger.

We support student success in the classroom, in the lab, on the sports field, and in the community. From award-winning classroom instruction to cutting-edge research opportunities, we're proud to provide powerful, transformative learning experiences.

Our Start Strong outreach focuses on Armstrong as the perfect launching point for a brighter future. Through television, billboards, and multimedia placements, we're sharing Armstrong's message far and wide.

As always, we celebrate the success of our impressive alumni, who carry maroon and gold in their hearts long after graduation. Armstrong alumni continue to make a positive impact in fields ranging from healthcare to the arts. We're honored to share their stories with you.

In this issue of *Armstrong* magazine, you'll meet three members of the Cohen family, all of whom are proud to be Pirates. You'll learn about exciting events happening on our campus and meet some of our talented students and impressive faculty.

I hope you enjoy this latest issue of *Armstrong* magazine, which celebrates the spirit of our university and our ongoing commitment to making a positive difference in the world far beyond our campuses in Savannah and Hinesville. Like you, I'm proud to be part of an exceptional community dedicated to student success, academic excellence, and community service.

Since 1935, we've worked hard to help our students start strong. Please join me in celebrating Armstrong's impressive legacy and continuing impact.

Linda M. Bleicken  
President

# Armstrong

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### Let us hear from you!

We'd love your feedback on this issue, as well as what you'd like to see in upcoming issues of *Armstrong*.

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To change your mailing address, call 912.344.2738 or email alumni@armstrong.edu.



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### ABOUT THE COVER:

Armstrong alumni Sheryl McCusker Cohen '96, '12, Michael Cohen '83, '86, and Howard Cohen '53, '72 (l-r) share a commitment to starting strong.



## Armstrong Wins Innovation Award for Learning Commons Expansion

Armstrong's Learning Commons renovation recently won a 2013 Innovation Award from the University System of Georgia. The award, which is presented annually to outstanding University System of Georgia institutions, recognizes Armstrong's excellence in the Design category.

The 13,000-square-foot Learning Commons provides students with flexible learning spaces designed for both group and individual study. The environment encourages collaborative learning and provides access to state-of-the-art technology.

In October, Armstrong's Learning Commons earned LEED Gold certification, recognizing the university's commitment to sustainable design and green building principles. Sustainable design components at the Learning Commons include energy-efficient mechanical systems, solar photovoltaic panels, a green roof garden, and sustainable building materials.



## Armstrong Day at the Capitol

Armstrong took center stage at the Capitol Rotunda in Atlanta on January 22, showcasing the university's College of Health Professions during Armstrong Day. The South Rotunda was filled with Pirate pride as students and faculty dressed in maroon for the inaugural Armstrong Day showcase.

Georgia Speaker of the House David Ralston personally welcomed Armstrong students, faculty, and administrators at the event, which took place during the second week of the 2014 legislative session.



Fifteen health professions students donned blue gloves and demonstrated hands-on techniques as part of a coordinated simulation of medical treatment for a mannequin "patient" named Chuck. Chuck enjoyed high-quality care by an interprofessional team of students enrolled in programs including nursing, medical laboratory sciences, radiologic sciences, respiratory sciences, communication sciences and disorders, physical therapy, and health sciences.

On the floor of the Senate and the House of Representatives, Sen. Buddy Carter introduced Armstrong President Linda M. Bleicken, who accepted an official Armstrong Day Resolution. "We are the largest producer of undergraduate health professions majors in the state," she told the legislators in attendance. "Armstrong students are our best ambassadors, and we are very proud of them."



## Armstrong Liberty Center Rendering Unveiled

The new Armstrong Liberty Center in Hinesville is currently under construction and is expected to be complete in the summer of 2015, welcoming students for the fall 2015 semester.

Hussey, Gay, Bell & DeYoung serves as the architecture firm for the new 21,000-square-foot Armstrong Liberty Center, which is located at the southeast corner of the intersection of Memorial Drive and Welborn Street in downtown Hinesville. Once complete, the new Armstrong Liberty Center will allow the university to offer new programs in a variety of fields, including programs tailored for working professionals and the military.

"The new facility will provide increased opportunities for the residents of Liberty and surrounding counties, as well as to the soldiers and military families from Fort Stewart," said Peter Hoffman, director of Armstrong Liberty Center. "Construction of the new Armstrong Liberty Center is very timely and will help meet the growing demand for higher education options in the Hinesville area."



### New Sculpture Garden Takes Root

The seeds have been planted for Armstrong's new Sculpture Garden, located in the Fine Arts Annex Courtyard near the university's police station.

Nestled between the Ceramics Annex and the Student Recreation Center, the Sculpture Garden is currently taking shape under the creative direction of Armstrong's longtime ceramics professor John Jensen. The project officially began when the department received an anonymous \$20,000 donation two years ago to build an outdoor pagoda and garden. The overall theme of the Sculpture Garden is "life in all its various forms."

Jensen saw the potential to transform a neglected corner of campus—which once served as a plant maintenance facility—into a vibrant celebration of student creativity. Today, newly planted plum, Chinese cherry, and persimmon plants grace the grassy outdoor space, which includes hand-crafted student works by Nancy Fountain, Kay McCartney, Dayna Anderson, and Jane Pruitt.

### Field Lab Opens on Ossabaw Island

Thanks to a recommendation at the Armstrong Community Summit regarding ways to accommodate visits to the island by the university's biology students, The Ossabaw Island Foundation recently transformed a 400-square-foot building on Ossabaw Island, Ga., into a multipurpose teaching laboratory and workspace. Robert Gregerson, Armstrong's dean of the College of Science and Technology, provided guidance for the configuration and design of the facility.

The Ossabaw Island Field Lab is now available to visiting groups in need of a preparation site for scientific research on this historic barrier island, located seven miles south of Savannah. Armstrong plans to offer a coastal ecology class this summer, utilizing the field lab and Ossabaw Island.

"In the past, samples had to be transported back to the mainland for processing," Gregerson said. "Now, for the first time ever, scientific research on Ossabaw Island can be conducted and analyzed on-site. This opens up exciting new avenues of inquiry for visiting scientists and students."



Photo by Jenny Fitch

### Georgia Power Supports Armstrong Commitment Fund

Cathy Hill, vice president of Georgia Power's Coastal Region, presented Armstrong President Linda M. Bleicken with a check for \$25,000 to benefit the Armstrong Commitment Fund in January.

"Georgia Power is dedicated to being good stewards in our community and supporting education throughout the state of Georgia," said vice president Cathy Hill, who also serves as immediate past chair of the Armstrong Foundation. "We believe today's students are tomorrow's leaders and are proud to support student achievement at Armstrong."





## Armstrong Police Chief Wayne Willcox Wins Georgia Governor's Public Safety Award

Georgia Governor Nathan Deal recently presented Armstrong Atlantic State University's Chief of Police Wayne R. Willcox with a 2013 Governor's Public Safety Award for Outstanding Contribution to the Profession.

Willcox, who also serves as the director of the university's Cyber Security Research Institute, was officially recognized at a special ceremony held at the Georgia Public Safety Training Center in Forsyth, Ga. The Governor's Public Safety Award honored Willcox for his cyber forensics leadership, which has reduced the digital forensics backlog in southeast Georgia from 7 to 12 months to less than 30 days.

## Delana Gajdosik-Nivens Promoted to Associate Provost for Student Engagement and Success

Armstrong recently named Delana Gajdosik-Nivens associate provost for student engagement and success. In her new position, Gajdosik-Nivens will work with the provost to provide leadership for undergraduate academic programs and initiatives designed to foster student success, engagement, retention, and graduation.

A dedicated professor, administrator, and scientist, Gajdosik-Nivens previously served as assistant dean of Armstrong's College of Science and Technology and as a professor in the Department of Chemistry and Physics. She originally joined the university in 2000 and was named assistant dean of the College of Science and Technology in 2010.



## Deidra Dennie Named Director of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

Armstrong recently hired Deidra Dennie as the university's first director of equity, diversity, and inclusion. In her new position, Dennie is responsible for coordinating Equal Employment Opportunity programs and increasing diversity at the university.

Dennie previously served as Equal Opportunity Officer and Title IX Administrator responsible for planning, managing, and performing all activities related to equal opportunity at Kennesaw State University. She earned a Doctorate of Public Health and Administration from Valdosta State University, an M.A. in Human Resource Development from Webster University, and a B.A. in Communications from the University of Louisville.

## Grace Fleming Featured in USA Today College

Grace Fleming '97, academic advisor and student success coordinator for the College of Liberal Arts at Armstrong, was featured in *USA Today College*, a national publication of the *USA Today* newspaper.

The article, titled "6 Study Habits That Could Be Hurting Your Grade," offered timely tips for today's college students. Fleming discussed why cramming is a bad idea and how active study strategies can support student success.



Photo by Allen Love



**HOWARD COHEN**  
'53 Associate Degree  
'72 Master's, Mathematics

**MICHAEL COHEN**  
'83 B.S., Health and Physical Education  
'86 Master's, Health and  
Physical Education

**SHERYL McCUSKER COHEN**  
'96 Mathematics  
'12 Master's, Special Education

# STAYING STRONG THROUGH THE GENERATIONS

by JESSICA LEBOS



Inside Savannah's Anderson Cohen Weightlifting Center, located a few miles south of the Armstrong campus, the air rings with the cheerful clang of weights being slammed to the ground.

It's the middle of the day, and the sunny gym brims with groups of energetic people shifting equipment to bear the next increment of weight. One man sits up off a bench and jumps to his feet.

"Hey, I'm Howard Cohen, nice t' see ya!" he declares with a crushingly firm handshake.

Small in stature but solidly built, the 81-year-old Cohen has been lifting weights before most of us could hold a rattle—and still competes. A former member of the Union Bag boxing team, the regional Golden Gloves champion switched sports after spotting a barbell in the corner of a boxing gym in the early 1950s.

"In junior high, I weighed a little over 90 pounds, but I didn't know I was small," he says. "I could put a whooping on the biggest guys!"

## COMPETITIVE SPIRIT

That tenacious spirit and competitive appetite has driven him not only to stay loyal to weightlifting but to inspire legions of others to pick up the curl bars as well—starting with his own family.

His son, Michael, was an Olympic athlete in the 1980s and coached the Olympic women's weightlifting team. Michael's wife, Sheryl, is an accomplished lifter herself. The three of them—all Armstrong graduates with advanced degrees—spend their days at the city-sponsored center that bears their name, encouraging others to use their own strength as part of Team Savannah.

The elder Cohen grew up on Savannah's west side, attending Benedictine Military High School just as World War II was winding down. He enrolled at Armstrong back when the college was housed in the stately mansion just north of Forsyth Park and earned a two-year associate's degree, completing his bachelor's degree by commuting back and forth to Georgia Southern in Statesboro.

His Air Force unit was called up to California and he was supposed to deploy to Asia. However, a month before the company packed up, he was designated an "athletic specialist" and assigned to the Azores off the coast of Portugal. He spent the remainder of the war training other soldiers, dreaming of the day he could open up his own place. He married his wife, Carol, in 1956. Together, they had three children and settled into family life.

"As soon as the war ended, I came back to Savannah, opened the gym, and re-enrolled in Armstrong," he remembers.

He earned his master's in mathematics at Armstrong in 1972 and began a career as a math teacher in the public schools. Meanwhile, Howard's Gym became a local institution, hosting and training athletes from all over the country.

## THE NEXT GENERATION

It was there that his son, Michael, first began to train. Michael also followed in his father's footsteps by attending Armstrong. However, after just a few semesters, his athletic ability took him to the Olympic training camp in Colorado Springs, Colo.

Taller, stockier, and even stronger than his father, Michael garnered a spot on the United States Weightlifting Team for the 1980 Summer Olympic Games in Moscow. Regrettably, President Jimmy Carter announced that the U.S. would boycott these Olympics to protest the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, leaving Cohen and hundreds of fellow athletes without the opportunity to compete.

Though he qualified again for the 1984 Olympics in Los Angeles, a back injury kept him out of the arena. "It was tough, but I moved on quickly," assures Michael, who set his sights on finishing college and becoming a top-notch coach. He finally realized his Olympic dreams by leading the U.S. Women's Weightlifting Team in 2000 and 2004.

"I was not a very solid student before," Michael recalls, "but after I came back, I was on the Dean's List every semester."

Always handy with numbers, the younger Cohen tried out his father's major, but that changed on the

first day of his advanced calculus class. "The professor wrote a complex problem on the board and said whoever couldn't solve it needed to leave," he remembers with a laugh. "I looked at the board and I got up, went straight to the bookstore, got a refund for my calculus book, and went over to the Health and Physical Education building."

He found quick work in the public schools after graduation and was hired to develop a weightlifting program for the Jenkins High School football team in the late 1980s. In his spare time, he put together a small program for the rest of the students, starting out with a few kids who wanted to lift weights.

"Six weeks later I had 8. Four months later we had 16," he says. "Before you knew it, we had more kids doing Olympic lifting than we had playing football."



**"As soon as the war ended, I came back to Savannah, opened the gym, and re-enrolled at Armstrong."**

— Howard Cohen, proud Armstrong alumnus

*continued on page 35* →



# YAIR MUÑOZ '15

Hidalgo, Mexico  
PRE-MED/BIOLOGY

For many years, college seemed out of reach for Yair Muñoz, due to his immigration status and lack of financial aid.

However, receiving a Goizueta Scholarship from Armstrong provided him with financial support as well as the support to grow and thrive. "The Goizueta Foundation Scholarship gave me a sense of hope," he says. "It has been a vital part of my life, and through it I see that it is possible to achieve my dreams."

After graduating from Armstrong, Yair plans to attend medical school abroad and to become a family practitioner, providing medical care in underserved areas of the world. He credits Armstrong with helping make his dreams come true.

"Armstrong's commitment to respect diversity and to support high standards of performance creates the perfect atmosphere for the development of any student," he raves. "It has allowed me to succeed in academics, extracurricular activities, community service endeavors, and achievements beyond my local community. Thanks to Armstrong, I have been empowered with all of the tools necessary to grow not only as a student but also as a person."



# ALLISON SMITH '14

Toccoa, Georgia

PUBLIC HEALTH



Allison Smith, a dedicated student with Type 1 diabetes, found a home here at Armstrong.

"I wanted to do something in the health field and Armstrong has great health programs," she says. "I also loved that Armstrong was located in Savannah and was within driving distance to the beach. Coming from north Georgia, it's nice to be able to have a beach day."

Allison's battle with diabetes has proven to be an arduous one. Her greatest obstacle has been her fear of needles. "My first injection took me almost three hours to give," she says. "Now, after more than six injections a day for five years, it comes second nature to me. I've had to learn how to balance school, work, exercise, and diabetes."

Because of the trials Allison has endured, she plans to further educate the community about diabetes and was recently certified as a Health Education Specialist. "I would like to be able to promote research and teach others how to prevent the onset of diabetes," she says. "I would also like to work in the epidemiologic side of what can be done to lower the prevalence of diabetes as a whole."



**KISHNI  
CARTHAN '16**  
Raleigh,  
North Carolina  
**NURSING**

Kishni Carthan, a recipient of the Lettie Pate Whitehead Scholarship, credits Armstrong's Liberty Center in Hinesville with helping her transition to civilian life after serving seven years in the U.S. Army.

As a dedicated wife and mother, Kishni applied to Armstrong while stationed in Killeen, Texas. "I chose Armstrong because they are accredited and had the exact program I was seeking," she explains. "I was even more ecstatic to know that the Armstrong Liberty Center existed and would allow me the flexibility of being a working mom and military wife."

Armstrong faculty and staff supported Kishni from day one, ensuring a smooth transition. "I'm able to share my story with other students here," she says. "I encourage them and let them know that all things are possible as long as you work at it."

After she completes her BSN in Nursing, Kishni plans to continue her education and receive her M.S. in Nursing. "I was a little nervous about how my life would be post-military," she confesses, "but thanks to Armstrong, I no longer worry about it. I especially appreciate the staff at the Liberty Center because they really made me feel welcome and wanted. Armstrong has restored my confidence that it's never too late to achieve my goals."



**HENRY  
LAXSON '16**  
Jonesboro,  
Georgia  
*CRIMINAL JUSTICE*

Henry Laxson chose to attend Armstrong because he wanted a more intimate college atmosphere with a strong academic focus.

"Armstrong helped me discover what I truly wanted to do with my life and led me in the right direction," he says.

Henry will be the first person in his family to graduate from college, setting a positive example for his younger sister and making his family proud. "My future goals are to finish college with a criminal justice degree and then get my master's degree in global security," he explains. "From there, I plan to join the military and eventually to work with some kind of law enforcement agency."

Henry says Armstrong has helped him grow academically, personally, and professionally. "Armstrong has helped me find out who I am and has also pushed me to achieve success," he says. "It has provided me with the tools in life I will need long after graduation."



# IN THE

# LAB

## ANALYZING INSECT DNA

By ALLISON HERSH

Erin McGillen, a psychology major at Armstrong, leans into the microscope, squinting her eyes to get a closer look at the dead beetle she carefully manipulates in a petri dish with a tiny pair of tweezers.

“Do you think this is *Coleoptera*?” she asks her lab partners. “It looks like an immature insect.”

Erin is one of 25 undergraduates in Traci Ness’ Biology 1107 lab, which analyzes DNA isolated from insects in an effort to study *Wolbachia*, an invasive bacterium infecting many arthropods. Armstrong students collect and study aquatic and terrestrial insects, getting hands-on experience in one of the university’s Science Center laboratories.

“The overall goal of this research project is to determine if insects collected in the Savannah area contain *Wolbachia*,” Ness explains. “Specifically, students work in small research teams to develop an insect collection strategy, collect insects, and analyze selected specimens.”

Students work on one continuous lab project the entire semester, which gives them the opportunity to investigate *Wolbachia* infection in greater depth and apply the scientific process in an authentic research experience. Ness reports that, to date, more than 900 science and allied health students have participated in the *Wolbachia* project at Armstrong’s Savannah campus and at the Liberty Center in Hinesville.

Throughout the semester, students get hands-on experience with high-tech lab equipment like centrifuges, nanodrop spectrophotometers, thermocyclers, electrophoresis equipment and gel documentation systems. “We want students to learn what it means to do ‘real science,’” says Ness. “Right now, there are fewer than 200 professional *Wolbachia* researchers worldwide. These students are given the opportunity to be *Wolbachia* researchers for the semester and have the opportunity to contribute new data to this field.”

The National Science Foundation has awarded Armstrong a Transforming Undergraduate Education in STEM Grant to support the development of this particular course. The results of the students’ research will be shared with the scientific community.

For undergraduate students like Victoria Broady, a rehabilitation science freshman, the opportunity to get interactive experience in the lab is invaluable. “This project is interesting to me,” she admits. “Biology in high school wasn’t as in-depth as this. I like how this lab is very hands-on.”

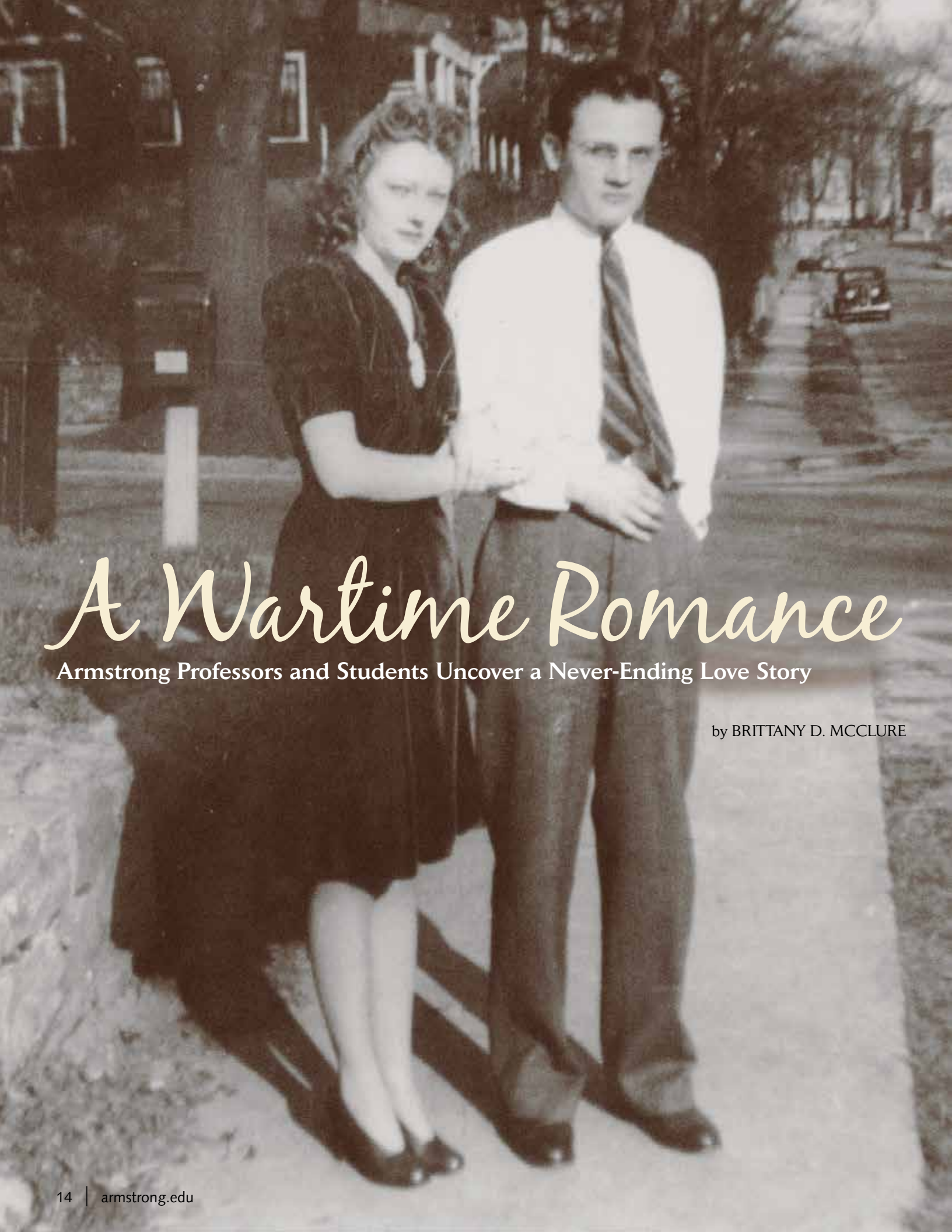
Rehabilitation science major Noelle Thornton agrees. “I’m enjoying doing a semester-long research project,” she raves. “I can’t wait to see the results!” ♦

“We want students to learn what it means to do ‘real science.’”

— Traci Ness,  
Assistant Professor of Biology







# *A Wartime Romance*

Armstrong Professors and Students Uncover a Never-Ending Love Story

by BRITTANY D. MCCLURE

Sara and Marvin King had a love that was unwavering, even in the face of physical separation. Marvin enlisted in the U.S. Army Air Corps in November 1944, while Sara remained at their home in Royston, Ga.

"Realizing the days are numbered for us to be together may seem awful but not so bad as you think," Marvin wrote to Sara on November 13, 1944. "We may be apart for a while as far as our bodies are concerned but we'll really be close to each other. I won't ever forget to think about you every day darling."

## A TREASURE TROVE

Marvin and Sara are not characters from a Nicholas Sparks romance novel, but rather the center of an artifact that is currently sitting in the Armstrong archives. In the fall of 2013, Armstrong professor of history June Hopkins came into possession of a World War II era trunk.

"Zack Blaylock was a student from my U.S. Surveys class," explains Hopkins. "One day, he brought me a trunk that his grandmother bought at an auction and later passed down to him. I opened it, and my eyes popped out."

Inside the trunk was a lifelong story told through letters, war uniforms, report cards, and even homemade scrapbooks of a soldier named Marvin and his loving wife Sara. From 1928 through 1962, fragments of their life were documented and are now being dissected by Hopkins, Armstrong professor of history Barbara Fertig, and several Armstrong students who have become invested in a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to explore this unique wartime romance.

The story of the trunk's contents began to unfold in Fertig's Museum Studies class in the fall. Undergraduate and graduate students worked side by side and began to organize and index the artifacts in preparation for the contents to be studied.

For eight weeks, Fertig's students diligently cataloged all the contents of the trunk down to a single, cryptic button imprinted with an anchor that, for some unknown reason, Sara kept.

"They found all the contents quite exciting," Fertig explains. "This experience has now made them academic historians and preservationists."

Fertig's students made a virtual exhibit of the trunk's contents and presented their findings to Hopkins' special topics history class on the New Deal and World War II. As Hopkins' students began to delve further into their study of the war era, they had hands-on access to the trunk.

## BRINGING THE PAST TO LIFE

With every letter, scrapbook, and piece of memorabilia that was analyzed and researched, Marvin and Sara began to come to life. Armstrong students were no longer just studying history, they were helping history unfold into one of those rare love stories that captivates us even generations beyond its existence.

Sara Wakefield was intelligent, as reflected in her stellar grade school report cards from the 1920s and '30s. During her seventh grade year at Harrison Consolidated School in Myrtle Turner's class, she met the love of her life, Marvin.

The pair eventually married and, though they never had children together, their lives were fulfilled by the deep love and admiration they shared.

"From the letters and the scrapbooks, we know that Sara was a very romantic woman, and she and Marvin had a very close relationship," says Fertig. "And if you read Marvin's letters, they were just as romantic as Sara's."

Both Marvin and Sara were in their 20s when Marvin was away with the U.S. Army Air Corps during the war, and Sara did everything she could to remain close to Marvin throughout their time apart. By reading letters from Sara to Marvin and examining two ice cream cups, students discovered Marvin was away for one of his birthdays, so Sara held a party for him.

"Sara had a birthday party, but it was just her," explains Hopkins. "She made two Skippy cups of ice cream, ate hers, ate Marvin's, and then cleaned both of the cups and placed them in the trunk."

Sara was a collector of memories, and many of her keepsakes and scrapbooks in the trunk can be compared to the modern day utilization of Pinterest, a pinboard-style photo-sharing website that allows users to collect and share various images from across the Internet.

## ENDLESS LOVE

Hopkins, Fertig, and their students have been able to construct the story of Marvin and Sara's life from grade school through World War II. The trunk abruptly ends with a single postcard from Sara dated May 30, 1962, which contains the imprints of four kisses made in red lipstick. This postcard is just one example of the many

questions the trunk leaves.

Why was there a postcard from almost 20 years after World War II? The trunk offers no explanation of the paths Marvin and Sara's lives took after the war. However, from the kissed postcard, we do know that the couple was still very much in love 20 years after the war ended.

The trunk has found a permanent home at Armstrong, and according to Hopkins and Fertig, its contents will continue to be studied by students for years to come. While Marvin and Sara never rose to become famous historical figures, the story of their love has made its mark in history decades later, and will continue to do so.

As author Richard Bach once wrote, "True love stories never have endings." ♦

**"One day, [my student] brought me a trunk that his grandmother had bought at an auction and later passed down to him. I opened it, and my eyes popped out."**

— June Hopkins,  
Professor of History







## ALLISON SCARDINO BELZER, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor of History and  
Coordinator of Undergraduate Research

**Teaching at Armstrong since:** 2003

**Best part of my job:** "Interacting with Armstrong's diverse student body, which provides different perspectives."

Allison Scardino Belzer, the recipient of the 2012 Brockmeier Faculty Award, can't remember a time she didn't want to be a teacher.

She loves communicating great ideas from the past and teaching history through the eyes of ordinary people. "History is the study of everything humans have done," she says. "It allows us to celebrate the things that have gone right and warns us about things that have gone wrong."

Belzer's main objective is to engage students in dialogue and to encourage them to make new discoveries. "I love helping students discover the value of listening to individual voices from the past," she explains. "I hope it reassures them to know what other people across the centuries have endured and created. I appreciate the humanity of history and feel that the liberal arts really do help us to become better people, more capable of leading and making decisions at the personal and political levels."

The author of *Women and the Great War: Femininity under Fire in Italy*, Belzer emphasizes ethics and citizenship in her courses. She wants students to find role models in history, to identify inspiring people who have made great choices in the past. She also helps undergraduates focus on their own interests and provides incentives for them to explore related field areas, read primary sources, and connect to the past.

"Trying to get my students excited about history is a fun challenge," she says. "I love how curious and diverse they are."



## BRANDON QUILLIAN, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor of Chemistry

**Teaching at Armstrong since:** 2011

**Best part of my job:** "Mentoring undergraduate students with an interest in science."

Wearing his signature cabbie hat, assistant chemistry professor Brandon Quillian '03 strolls through the halls of Armstrong's Science Center, chatting with students as he moves from the laboratory to the classroom. This popular professor may be easily recognized by his fashionable headgear, but his path in academia has been defined by an inspiring personal journey.

Quillian is the only person in his family to earn a bachelor's degree. His mother died when he was only six. "I was determined to get a college degree in memory of my mother, so her influence wasn't in vain," he explains.

Originally from Cornelia, Ga., Quillian earned a bachelor's degree in chemistry from Armstrong, followed by a Ph.D. in chemistry from the University of Georgia. He completed a post-doctoral fellowship at the University of Virginia as a Ford Foundation Fellow and decided to return to his alma mater to teach full-time in 2011.

Today, Quillian is a popular professor who specializes in organic chemistry and organometallic chemistry. However, his favorite part of working at Armstrong is collaborating with students in the classroom and in the laboratory. "When students get in the lab, it inspires them to learn more about chemistry," he says. "It really brings chemistry to life."

"I love the fact that you can always make new discoveries in the lab and find tangential outcomes that are often more impressive than what you originally set out to do," he adds. "Chemistry, like life, is full of surprises."



# PATRICK THOMAS, Ph.D.

Department Head of Adolescent and Adult Education and Associate Professor of Middle and Secondary Education

**Teaching at Armstrong since:** 2002

**Best part of my job:** "Watching the lights come on when someone 'gets it.'"

A world map hangs upside down on the wall of Patrick Thomas' office on the second floor of University Hall.

"Is it upside down?" he asks with a smile. "It's still a map. It's just a different perspective."

Like the map on his office wall, Thomas' teaching style offers a unique worldview. As a professor of middle and secondary education, he strives to create top-notch teachers.

"My goal is to help produce teachers who are better than we are," he says. "I want to develop teachers who have passion, so they can pass the desire to teach to others."

After graduating with a B.A. in History from Vanguard University, Thomas worked as a truck driver for five years. While on the road, he missed the interaction he had with children during his coaching days in college. He decided to earn a teaching certificate and spent 20 years teaching in public school, earning a master's degree and a Ph.D. along the way.

Each student Thomas teaches will go on to lead countless classes in the future, extending this popular professor's reach far beyond the Armstrong campus.

"I want to put teachers out there who are dynamic and want to see the lights turn on in their own students' eyes," he says. "Every semester I have new students who look at everything differently. It makes it very easy to come to work."



Photo by Jenny Fitch

# ANDY BOSAK, Ph.D., HFS, CSCS

Associate Professor of Sports Medicine

## Teaching at Armstrong since: 2012

**Best part of my job:** “Teaching students in the classroom; conducting research with them; taking them to academic conferences; and helping them prepare for further degrees, graduate assistantships, and future careers.”

Andy Bosak has a passion for education, research, fitness, health, and wellness that far exceeds his job description at Armstrong.

Since joining the university two years ago, Bosak has earned the respect of his students and peers by serving as an advocate for physical fitness. He understands the importance of “walking the walk” when it comes to health and wellness.

“In my opinion, it’s relatively easy to just concentrate on conveying information to our students and contributing to the improvement of their knowledge base,” he explains. “However, getting them to be compliant to completing physical activity on a daily basis, maintaining a healthy diet, and focusing on all areas of wellness is slightly more difficult to do, yet it will contribute to a healthy body and also lead to improvements in their academic ability.”

Over the past year, Bosak has worked closely with graduate and undergraduate students in the Biodynamics and Human Performance Center to determine if Nintendo Wii Sports Resort Canoeing can serve as a viable form of exercise that meets the American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) guidelines for “moderately intense” physical activity. In addition, Bosak was one of many College of Health Professions professors and students who manned a booth at the Savannah Rock ‘n’ Roll Marathon and ½ Marathon’s Health and Fitness Expo, assessing body fat percentage, giving fitness tips, and offering training advice to runners and joggers from all over the U.S.

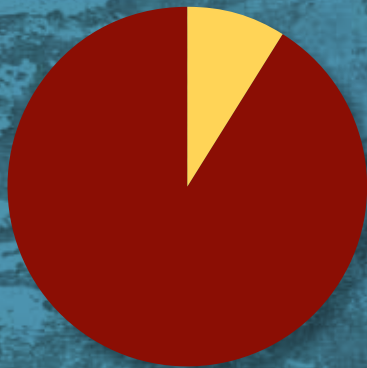
Bosak developed a love of sports and physical fitness at a young age and earned a Ph.D. in Human Performance/ Kinesiology from The University of Alabama. Today, this dedicated professor inspires students with his knowledge of exercise physiology, sport science, and fitness assessment principles.

“The interaction with students is extremely important to me, and it’s what I enjoy most about teaching,” he says. “When you can truly see that they understand what is being taught and they can apply what they have learned, that makes me feel like I’m making a difference in a person’s life.”



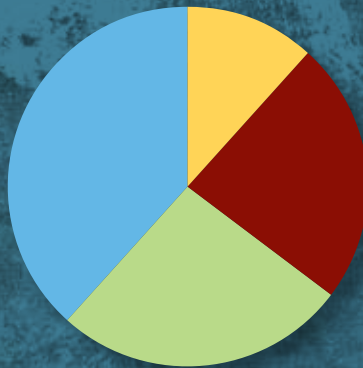


# Armstrong *by the numbers*



Undergraduate  
6,377 / 90%

Graduate  
724 / 10%

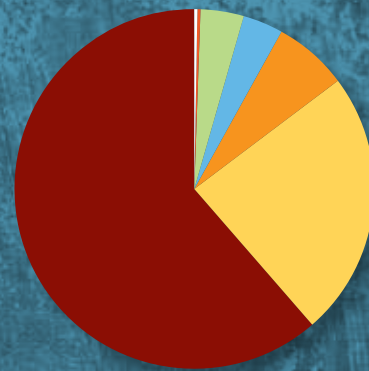


College of Health Professions  
2,548 / 35.9%

College of Science & Technology  
1,755 / 24.7%

College of Liberal Arts  
1,583 / 22.3%

College of Education  
730 / 10.3%



White/Caucasian  
61.5%

African American  
23.9%

Hispanic  
6.7%

Asian/Pacific Island  
3.7%

Multiracial  
3.7%

Native American  
0.2%

Unknown  
0.2%



**85%**  
OF STUDENTS RECEIVE  
FINANCIAL AID

**1,226**

GRADUATES IN 2013

**42%** WERE HEALTH  
PROFESSIONS  
GRADUATES



**71**  
COUNTRIES  
REPRESENTED



**44**  
STATES REPRESENTED

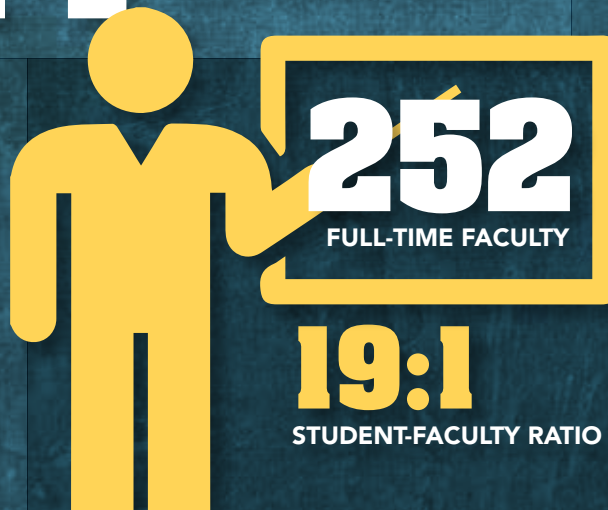
**\$214** MILLION  
ECONOMIC IMPACT



**41.1%**  
FROM OUTSIDE LOCAL AREA



**1,204**  
RESIDENTIAL STUDENTS



**252**  
FULL-TIME FACULTY

**19:1**  
STUDENT-FACULTY RATIO



**11**  
NATIONAL  
CHAMPIONSHIPS

**65%** PIRATE ATHLETES  
WITH 3.0 GPA  
OR HIGHER

# Q&A

# DAVID WARD



David Ward, the dean of Armstrong's fast-growing College of Health Professions, is passionate about healthcare.

He joined Armstrong in 2012 and brings a wealth of experience to his position, having served as dean of the Westbrook College of Health Professions at the University of New England and associate dean for academic and student affairs at the Medical University of South Carolina.

Originally from Long Island, N.Y., Dean Ward grew up in Hollywood, Fla., and earned a Ph.D. in Public Administration from New York University. In addition to his duties as dean of Armstrong's College of Health Professions, he teaches a popular Healthcare Financial Management course at Armstrong.

This accomplished healthcare expert recently spoke with *Armstrong* magazine about the appeal of interdisciplinary education, the allure of academia, and the challenges of today's healthcare system.

## What originally attracted you to Armstrong?

The mix of programs, including the clinical focus and the broader health science, really appealed to me. Also, I welcomed the opportunity to take the College of Health Professions to an even higher level of success and to really build a faculty and a system that works across disciplines.

## How did you first become interested in the healthcare field?

My interest was originally in policy and public administration. As a graduate student in public administration, I quickly realized that many of the programs I found interesting were stymied by people's lack of access to healthcare. My interest morphed from public policy to a focus on healthcare on the ground level.

I also made a shift into academia in the early '90s. I was working in the Office of Management and Budget in New York City, overseeing the city's budget on homelessness. I saw a change in administration and realized all the problems stayed the same. I decided to go into academia. I was attracted by the research and the opportunity to take a question or a problem and conduct research to answer the question and solve the problem.

## What do you love most about working at Armstrong and why?

There's nothing better than thinking I had a small part to play in students walking across the stage at commencement. Seeing students progress and succeed is fantastic. It's so rewarding.

## What lessons did you learn at the University of New England and the Medical University of South Carolina that have come in handy here at Armstrong?

As an administrator, the biggest lesson I've learned is that no problem can be solved with a spreadsheet. Almost all problems are people problems. And I've learned that when you have really good faculty, the best thing you can do is get out of their way and support their success.

As an administrator, the biggest lesson I've learned is that no problem can be solved with a spreadsheet.

## What are some of the biggest challenges facing the healthcare field today?

The absolute uncertainty about the Affordable Care Act is really causing tension for providers and employers. Nobody really has a handle on how everything is going to play out.

From a student standpoint, it's a great time to be in healthcare. You can feel good about the work you do—morally, ethically, and spiritually—and it pays well. Unless scientists invent a magic

pill that cures everything, the healthcare industry has a virtually unlimited demand for the foreseeable future.

## What is your overall vision for the College of Health Professions?

I want us to create an environment where students who graduate from our program are outstanding practitioners in their field and are well-equipped to be members of a healthcare team. We need to create a culture that builds on teamwork, so our graduates can hit the ground running on day one. ♦



# ECONOMIC FORECAST

## B.S. in Business Economics to Launch in Fall

Starting this fall, Armstrong students will have the opportunity to earn a B.S. in Business Economics, expanding on one of the university's most popular degree tracks.

Offered through the College of Liberal Arts, the new degree program serves as an extension of the university's longstanding Economics degree. The B.S. in Business Economics builds on Armstrong's liberal arts roots, emphasizing strong communications skills, ethics, and teamwork.

"Armstrong's B.S. in Business Economics will offer an exciting new opportunity to students who are interested in studying economics and business in a holistic context," says Laura Barrett, dean of Armstrong's College of Liberal Arts. "This degree combines business fundamentals with sought-after communications and leadership skills."

Business economics is a specialized area of study that uses economic analysis to make strategic business and management decisions. Armstrong's Business Economics degree will provide a foundation in economics, preparing students for employment in the public sector, the private sector or graduate study in business, finance, or law. Armstrong's proposal for the new Business Economics degree was approved by the University System of Georgia's Board of Regents in March.

"The demand for a Business Economics degree at Armstrong is quite strong," explains economics professor and department head Yassaman Saadatmand. "Our Business Economics track has been extremely successful, so it made sense to expand the track to a full undergraduate degree program."

Armstrong's business economics course offerings include Money and Banking, Managerial Economics, Finance, International Trade, Economics of Health, Econometrics and Marketing, and Management.

Economics majors at Armstrong receive a sound theoretical foundation in economic theory and economic statistics, as well as exposure to applied fields such

as money and banking, labor economics, public finance, and international economics. Class sizes are relatively small, providing ample opportunity for students to interact with faculty.

Since economics focuses on the science of decision making, economics students learn to analyze the costs and benefits of financial and social decisions. Skills in cost-benefit analysis, the core of economics training, are widely applicable and highly valued in current job markets. Graduates of Armstrong's economics program are currently employed in a range of fields including finance, insurance, banking, real

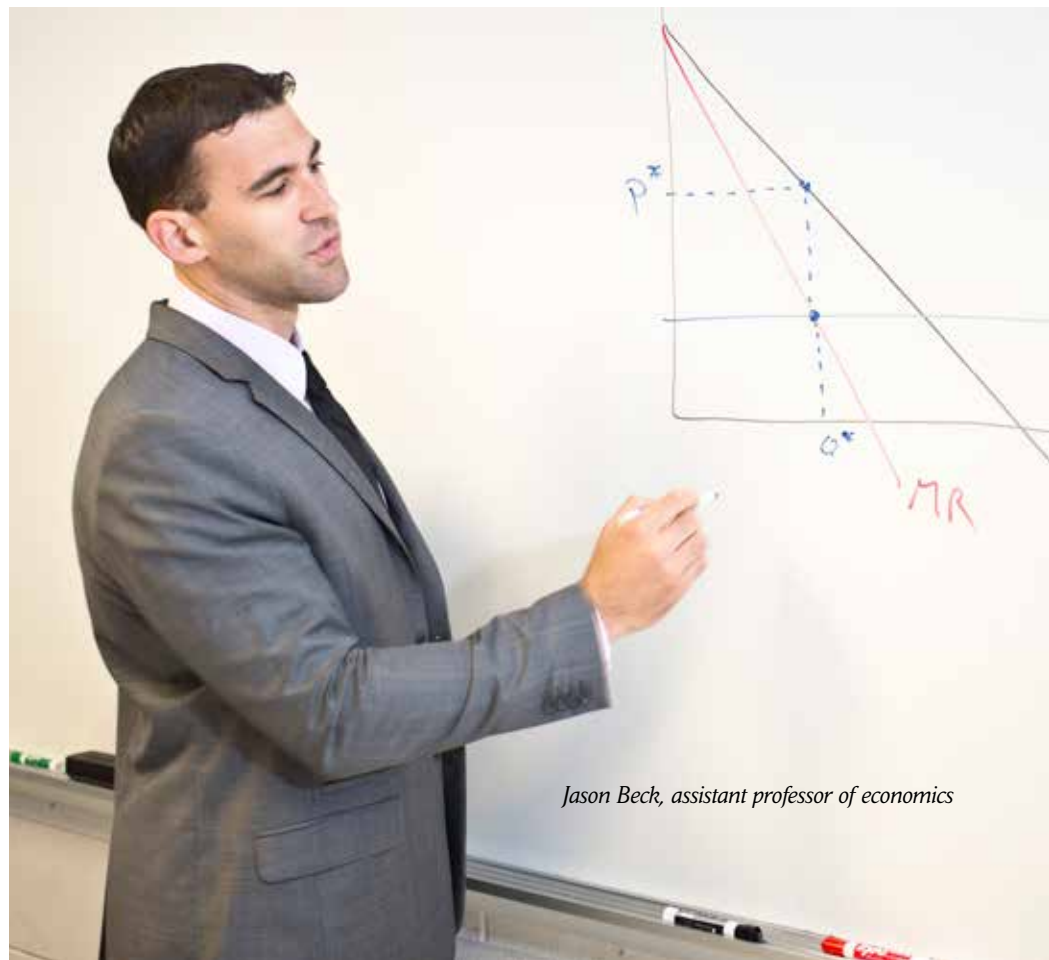
estate, business, education, public policy, and government.

Armstrong's Department of Economics introduced the Business Economics track in the fall of 2011. Since that time, the Economics program has enjoyed a 45 percent increase in enrollment.

"This is an exciting time for the Economics department at Armstrong," says Saadatmand. "We invite students and prospective students to learn more about our new Business Economics degree and to discover how this degree program can help advance their careers in the future." ♦

**"Our Business Economics track has been extremely successful, so it made sense to expand the track to a full undergraduate degree program."**

— Yassaman Saadatmand, economics professor and department head



Jason Beck, assistant professor of economics

# Women's empowerment!

by BRITTANY D. MCCLURE



Armstrong student Maree Helmken on the cover of Life magazine in 1939

Women have been starting strong at Armstrong since the university's inception. When the university was founded in 1935, Armstrong had 165 students, 95 of whom were women.

Jule Rossiter Stanfield graduated in 1939 and started working as a secretary for the college in 1952. By 1979, she rose to become the university's first female vice president.

Trailblazing women at Armstrong are not a rarity. Outstanding female graduates include Phyllis A. Kravitch, of the class of 1939, who became a judge on the 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals. Elizabeth Jean "B.J." Ford came to Armstrong in 1976 as the first female coach and established a program in women's athletics. Armstrong President Linda M. Bleicken broke the mold when she became the university's first female president in 2009.

Armstrong's list of exceptional women spans eight decades. If history is any indication, the list will only continue to grow in the future. ♦



The 1940 Armstrong rifle team



A picture from The Inkwell of the 1979-1980 Lady Pirates basketball team

Photos courtesy of Lane Library Archives. Background information courtesy of Janet D. Stone's contribution to the Women of Armstrong exhibit on Flickr and her book, *From the Mansion to the University*.



## TANIA SAMMONS

Senior Curator of Decorative Arts and Historic Sites, Telfair Museums  
M.A. in American History '02

Pragmatism was part of life growing up in the Appalachian Mountains.

When Tania Sammons became the first person in her family to attend college, the expectation was that she would choose something practical to study, like accounting.

"When I told my dad I was majoring in art history, he thought I was going to die," laughs Tania, who earned her bachelor's degree from the University of Kentucky. "He didn't know how I was going to make a living!"

Since 2006, Tania has put her education to fine use as the senior curator at the Telfair's Owens-Thomas House and the Telfair Academy. She has overseen the production of several exhibitions and books based on the museum's collection, including *The Story of Silver in Savannah* and *Sitting in Savannah: Telfair Chairs and Sofas*.

An accomplished scholar, Tania was recently awarded the 2014 Kahlil Gibran International Award for her work on the art of the famous poet. She first encountered the Telfair's collection of Gibran's artwork—one of the world's largest—as a volunteer at the



museum when she first came to Savannah in 1993 with her husband, Rich Copeland.

"I knew two things when I moved here," she explains. "That I wanted to work at a museum and I wanted to further my education."

Not entirely sure what her academic focus might be, she enrolled in a women's history class at Armstrong taught by American History professor Nancy White. "She was so knowledgeable and passionate on the subject that I signed up for another class with her," Tania recalls.

Ultimately, she wrote her thesis about Mary Haskell Minis, the Savannah adventurer and benefactor who brought Gibran's work to the Telfair, and won the Roger K. Warlick Prize in History in 2001 for her work on this subject.

Tania counts the support she received from Professor White, as well as her thesis committee members June Hopkins and Teresa Winterhalter, as vital to her academic and professional success. "They gave me a framework to get ideas on paper and publish work in a scholarly environment and to pursue ideas on a subject that sparked my interest," she says.

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# LT. COLONEL RON SPEIR, JR.

Commander, 117th Air Control Squadron  
English Literature '91

Growing up in Savannah, Ron Speir thought he might become a photographer or an artist. It wasn't until he transferred to Armstrong that he began receiving compliments on his writing and discovered a love of reading.

"At Armstrong, I discovered Ernest Hemingway and the other greats of Americana," he remembers. "When I realized I could get a B.A. reading and writing, I was in."

To help pay for college, Ron enlisted in the Air National Guard. The G.I. Bill paid his tuition while he served his country one weekend a month plus two weeks a year. In between, he hung out with other literature lovers. He acted as the editor of *The Inkwell* his junior and senior years and wrote for *Calliope*, the campus literary magazine. He even got a taste of theater, running lights and sound for the Armstrong Masquers.

"I had more fun than I would have at a larger school, but I would say that the biggest impact of having all those different experiences is how I was able to become a leader," says Ron, who won the Joseph A. Buck Award for Outstanding Senior in 1991.



Once he graduated, he chose to make the military his career and found a niche as an air traffic controller, making sure Department of Defense planes arrived and departed safely around the globe. He quickly rose up the chain of command and was commissioned as an officer, commanding his own squadron. He has worked security for the space shuttle and is currently deployed in the Persian Gulf.

Ron and his wife, Brenda, have imparted their love of books to their two girls, ages 12 and 8, both of whom have a "voracious appetite for reading and writing."

This busy colonel mostly reads historical biographies these days, but he still enjoys classic literature. Every year, he pulls out Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises* and hopes to write a novel of his own someday.

While the precise, logical work of an air traffic controller seems a departure from his major, Ron is quick to dispel any notion that he's a frustrated writer.

"I actually use my writing skills all the time," he says. "I think it's why I've done well. Communication is important in any job."



## KERRY COURSEY

Principal, Coastal Middle School

Health and Physical Education '91, Master's Health and Physical Education and Educational Leadership '96

It's a testament to the power of public schools that Kerry Coursey never left.

The Savannah native graduated from Johnson High School in 1987 and headed just a few miles south to Armstrong, where she received a bachelor's degree in Health and Physical Education.

Boosted by her selection as the Roy J. Sims Physical Education Major of the Year, she signed up as a P.E. teacher at Myers Middle School the next semester.

"My coursework at Armstrong was instrumental in preparing me for the demands of being an educational leader," says Kerry, who was inspired to choose physical education by her part-time work as a YMCA gymnastics coach and youth sports coordinator. "I believe that P.E. teachers and coaches are naturally skilled at planning, scheduling, and 'coaching' others to success."

While leading her own P.E. classes, Kerry continued to further her education, earning a double master's degree in Health and Physical Education and Educational Leadership. Soon after, she was promoted to assistant principal, and in 2001 became the principal of West Chatham Middle School. She has served as the principal of Coastal Middle School since 2008 and affirms that her years at Armstrong prepared her well for the demanding job.



"We were expected to not only motivate and engage students in healthy practices, but to bring about change in attitudes regarding healthy eating and exercise. This required significant communication and motivational skills—both of which are critical for being a successful school leader," she says.

When she's not at school, Kerry volunteers at the Ronald McDonald House and Family Room with the Junior League of Savannah and is a member of 100 Women Who Care in Savannah. In her spare time, she enjoys spending time with her husband, Jamie, and their 10-year-old daughter Peyton.

Committed to ongoing education in her field, this hard-working principal remains active in the Georgia Association of Educational Leaders and the Georgia Association of Middle School Principals. In 2013, she represented Georgia as the state's National Distinguished Middle School Principal in Washington, D.C. She was named an Armstrong Notable Alumna in 2013.

"As I reflect back on my experience at Armstrong, I truly believe the personal connections developed with my instructors helped to shape the educator that I became," she muses. "The classes were small, and the instructors made a sincere effort to get to know each and every one of their students."

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# JEFF BUSH

Director of Fuel Services, Parker's  
B.S. Economics '13

A Forward Observer in the U.S. Army for seven years, Jeff Bush earned more than 15 awards and medals during his service, including the Non-Commissioned Officer of the Year. This Delaware native was on the “green-to-gold” track to become an officer when he suffered an injury that put him out of commission.

“I realized I needed to recalibrate,” he says. “I said to myself, ‘Now what do I strive for?’”

Jeff, his wife Katie, and their two daughters had been stationed at nearby Fort Stewart, so Bush used his military status to enroll at Armstrong. He immersed himself in his studies and became involved in campus activities, including working at *The Inkwell*.

Eager to expand his knowledge of business and economics, Jeff took several classes taught by Professor Richard McGrath, whom he credits with uncompromising patience and practicality.

“The professors at Armstrong really expand your vision of what a degree field is all about,” Jeff says. “They push you to see how any major is applicable in the real world.”

At a guest lecture organized by the Armstrong Economics Club, Jeff met convenience



store guru Greg Parker, the president and CEO of Parker's. Realizing he had a true example of business acumen standing before him, Jeff took the opportunity seriously.

“I basically barraged him with questions during his whole talk,” Jeff remembers.

Far from being annoyed, Parker engaged Jeff in conversation and was extremely impressed by this ambitious undergraduate.

When Parker's had an opening for a director of fuel services, Greg Parker offered Jeff the job—before graduation.

Jeff spent the next year juggling the responsibilities of his new job, family, and school. He completed his B.S. in Economics in 2013, and has settled into his role at Parker's. Supervising a wide spectrum of operations from logistics to fuel pricing, while heading up the company's popular PumpPal program, this Army veteran has his hands happily full.

He believes his military background gave him the discipline for the position, but the education he received at Armstrong prepared him for the real world.

“Armstrong is a not a laid-back, breeze-through kind of environment,” Jeff explains. “It was strenuous, but I knew the sacrifice would be worth it.”



# Kole Collection Showcases West African Treasures

at *Fine Arts Gallery*

Intricate metalwork from West Africa is on display through May 30 at Armstrong's Fine Arts Gallery.

"The Metal Artistry of West Africa: From the Kole Collection" offers the opportunity to view a portion of the vast private African art collection of Don and Kaye Kole '75 of Savannah. The exhibit, which is free and open to the public, includes works from sub-Saharan Africa, including metalworks handcrafted in Nigeria, Cameroon, Mali, and Benin.

Curated by African art expert Darrell Moseley and organized by Armstrong professor Tom L. Cato, head of the university's Department of Art, Music & Theatre, the exhibit offers insight into the rich tradition of African metal sculpture.

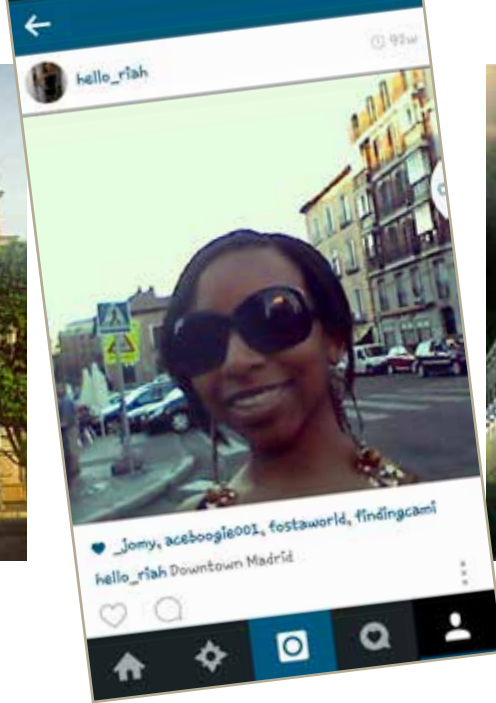
This exhibition includes sacred and ceremonial objects created by people in sub-Saharan Africa. Highlights include intricate Nigerian altar pieces, a detailed Dogon ritual harvest bowl, an animal-inspired Edo ritual dance helmet, and an elaborate Toma costume used in healing rituals.

"The Metal Artistry of West Africa: From the Kole Collection" is open to the public Wednesdays through Fridays from noon to 8 p.m., Saturdays 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., and Sundays noon to 4 p.m. For more information, please call 912.344.2556. ♦



"Each piece of African art has a different purpose. It could bring prosperity to the village, give fertility to women, or protect someone from evil spirits."

— Don Kole, Savannah businessman and art collector



# POINT OF VIEW

## My Summer in Spain

by MARIAH WATKINS

**M**y mother always wanted me to have the opportunity to study abroad, but our finances couldn't support my plans to travel to Argentina.

When my mother passed away unexpectedly in 2011, she blessed me with the financial support I needed. Thanks to my mother's generosity and a stipend from Armstrong, I could go anywhere I wanted. I decided to travel abroad for a summer in Spain, hoping for a once-in-a-lifetime cultural opportunity.

Traveling to Spain through Armstrong involved much more than receiving college credits and completing my minor in Spanish. Spain paved my path to independence and into womanhood, but it was a journey I had to take without the comfort of my mother or my family and friends in the U.S.

Spain offered me a way to find out who I really was, apart from anyone else. Nevertheless, it was difficult being away from home in a foreign land, torn free of familiar customs, foods, and traditions.

July 4th is a special day when we celebrate our country's independence, but it's also my mother's birthday. My summer in Spain marked the first birthday after her death and the only birthday I have ever missed during my entire life. I felt the loss of my mother deeply, particularly being halfway around the world.

My journey to Spain was one of my most humbling experiences. I was blessed to meet people from different corners of the world. I loved my professors and appreciated the "hands-on experience" of being immersed in Spanish culture.

My study abroad experience expanded my horizons in ways I could never have predicted.

I'll never forget watching soccer during the summer Olympics. I have seen dedicated sports fans in America, but to observe hundreds of people devote themselves to one team is truly spectacular. When Spain won the soccer match, the streets of Seville brimmed with passionate, jubilant Spaniards yelling at the top of their lungs, beeping their horns until the next morning, and partying like there was no tomorrow.

However, my Spanish summer abroad didn't always involve sunshine and rainbows. Many political and social struggles occurred during my time in Seville and Cadiz. Spain underwent a financial crisis, and people were desperate. Parents sat homeless and desperate with their children, asking for assistance; criminals preyed on those who appeared prosperous. My faith in God grew immensely and that experience, although scary at moments, formed me into the woman I am today.

Ultimately, I realized that, although we may come from different states and different countries, we're really not that different. We all experience struggles and endure challenges we have to overcome.

My study abroad experience expanded my horizons in ways I could never have predicted. Now, I'm prepared to face whatever challenges my future brings. I'm excited about graduating from Armstrong, finding a job and starting my future. But I'll always be grateful for my life-changing journey to Spain. ♦

*Mariah Watkins is a senior majoring in English Communications and will graduate in Spring 2014. She was born and raised in Atlanta.*



Armstrong gratefully recognizes the loyalty and commitment of alumni, parents, faculty, staff, and friends of the university through three new donor recognition societies.



**HERITAGE SOCIETY**

The Heritage Society celebrates those who have chosen to name Armstrong as a beneficiary through a planned gift, such as a bequest in a will. This elite level of giving supports the present needs of the university and makes provisions for future generations of Armstrong students.

Heritage Society membership does not require dues, obligations, or solicitations, but it does allow Armstrong to thank donors and recognize them for the plans they have made, inspiring generosity in others.



**ARMSTRONG SOCIETY**

Armstrong's arboretum campus is full of stately trees that are strong, full of life, and deeply rooted. However, even the majestic oak trees flanking Burnett Hall began as tiny acorns.

Armstrong Society members all made a first gift to the university, and then continued to nurture their philanthropic impact over the years. As individuals, couples, or organizations support the university, their growing long-term commitment and generosity is honored.

Lifetime giving to the university is celebrated at the following levels:

\$1,000,000+	Live Oak Circle
\$500,000 – 999,999	Evergreen Circle
\$250,000 – 499,999	Magnolia Circle
\$100,000 – 249,999	Cypress Circle
\$50,000 – 99,999	Camellia Circle



**1935 SOCIETY**

1935 stands apart as the year Savannah's political and civic leaders established Armstrong Junior College in downtown Savannah. Since then, Armstrong has evolved to become the respected four-year university that it is today. Annual support from donors keeps the university strong year after year.

Annual gifts to the university are celebrated at the following levels:

<b>President's Circle</b>	<b>Maroon &amp; Gold Circle</b>
\$25,000+	\$500 – 999
\$10,000 – 24,999	\$250 – 499
\$5,000 – 9,999	\$120 – 249
\$2,500 – 4,999	
\$1,000 – 2,499	

## RAY GASTER '72

Member of Armstrong Foundation Board of Trustees and owner of Gaster Lumber & Hardware

### Why do you choose to support Armstrong?

Armstrong was a defining point in my life, as it gave me the educational qualities to be successful. I loved my studies and my time at Armstrong. I choose to support Armstrong because it has high standards. Graduates come out with great skill sets. They end up being the people that make Savannah tick. This is worth preserving and making available for future students.

### How would you encourage others to get involved at Armstrong or support Armstrong?

That's easy. Just come on out and see for yourself the changes on campus, meet the students and the teachers, send your children to Armstrong, and give generously to Armstrong. When you look around Savannah, you can't help but see how Armstrong is interwoven into Savannah's character. Think of the school teachers, the medical and health professionals, police officers, and others who support us every day. Then, it makes it easy to support producing more of these fine people at Armstrong.



"I choose to support Armstrong because it has high standards."

— Ray Gaster '72  
Heritage Society donor



"Our donations can help make dreams happen for students."

— Brenda Logan  
President's Circle donor

## BRENDA LOGAN, Ed.D.

Associate professor of adolescent and adult education, Campus Campaign donor

### What attracted you to Armstrong?

I was drawn to Armstrong because of the College of Education, the teaching aspect. I was able to stay because I was offered a full-time position, and I really admired the hard-working and dedicated faculty in the Adolescent and Adult Education division. They loved teaching just like I still do.

### Why do you give to the university?

Giving to Armstrong is about supporting our students who have chosen college as preparation for future careers. Research tells us that, by far, college graduates make up to \$17,000 more per year than high school graduates. Our donations can help make dreams happen for students.

## SOMI BENSON '09

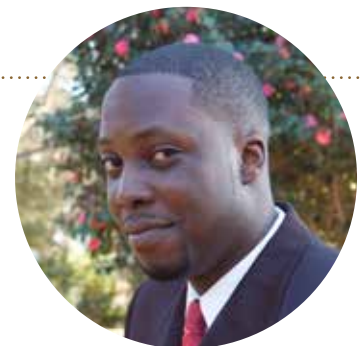
Savannah-Chatham County Public School teacher, Alumni Association Board member, and Fall 2013 Phonathon donor

### What does giving to Armstrong mean to you?

I support Armstrong because Armstrong has shaped me into who I am today. Armstrong gave me a chance to blossom to my full potential. Armstrong is like family. It's a part of me.

### How do you hope your gift is used?

I hope my gift is used to attract students to Armstrong and to aid the university in its mission of a high quality of teaching and learning. Support for Armstrong grows our community. More support means a greater ability to provide more service to students as well as the community.



"I support Armstrong because Armstrong has shaped me into who I am today."

— Somi Benson '09  
Maroon & Gold Circle donor





## Tribute to the Class of '37

In the summer of 1935, young men and women lined up in the heat to be among the first to register for Savannah's new junior college, located in a stately mansion on Forsyth Park. Still in the depths of the Great Depression, America was accustomed to seeing bread lines, not registration lines, when those first students made their way into the history books.

The first class created many traditions that are still honored at Armstrong today. A group of male students selected the school colors of maroon and gold, after visiting a men's clothing store to pick which ties looked best. More than a dozen students organized and named *The Inkwel*, which continues to publish news and editorials and to serve as Armstrong's student newspaper. Meanwhile, Doris Falk Stillman, with encouragement from music instructor Margaret Spencer, wrote the lyrics to Armstrong's alma mater, set to Beethoven's "Ode to Joy."

In the first issue of "The 'Geechee," the class of 1937 thanked "all the founders of Armstrong Junior College, and hoping for sound growth, turns its eyes confidently to the future." It was a future

that mirrored what has come to be called the "American Century" and they are all members of the "Greatest Generation." Many went on to serve in World War II. By 1943, 218 Armstrong alumni served in the military, another university tradition that continues today.

Fortunately, some members of the Class of 1937 are still with us. Nearly 77 years ago, they launched the Armstrong name into the world of higher education. Today, the next generation is carrying those proud traditions forward.

### Inaugural Alumni

- Alma mater lyricist **Doris Falk Stillman** went on to earn a Ph.D. from Cornell University. She retired as a Professor of English at Rutgers and now makes her home in Florida.
- Beloved *Inkwel* editor **Robert McCuen** continued his military service in the Korean War and beyond, eventually retiring as a captain in the U.S. Naval Reserve. He went on to a career in communication and retired again, this time as director of public affairs with the

DuPont Co. He passed away in 2010 at the age of 91.

- Former *Inkwel* photographer **Robert Heriot** opened Savannah Camera Co. after the war. For more than five decades, he was the lens through which many people saw Savannah. When he died in 1990, his wife donated his photos to the Georgia Historical Society, where they are available for use by researchers.
- Armstrong's very first graduate, **Nelta Beckett Blackmon**, was also one of the first alumni to make her home far from the Savannah campus. Following the war, she settled in California with her husband and raised her family there. She passed away in October 2013, with Armstrong still on her mind.
- **Alva Lines**, among the dapper young men who picked the school colors, also passed away just last year. A World War II veteran, he completed a law degree at Emory University and eventually argued a case in the Georgia Supreme Court that gave Georgians ownership of all the state's beaches. He was also a documentary filmmaker. ♦

# class notes

## 1960s

**Thomas Nease Sr. '60** and his wife Ann celebrated their 70th wedding anniversary in 2013. He was the first food director at Armstrong when the campus opened at its current location.

## 1970s

**Daniel Brown '74** is an archivist with the U.S. Army Signal Corps at Fort Gordon, Ga., and he is the associate rector of the Church of the Holy Trinity (Anglican) in North Augusta, S.C.

**Debra Franklin Cannon '76** was honored with the Distinguished Service Award by the Georgia Restaurant Association and was inducted into the Atlanta Hospitality Hall of Fame by the Atlanta Convention & Visitors Bureau in November. She is the director of the Cecil B. Day School of Hospitality Administration at Georgia State University.

**Don Waters '75** was honored at the American College of Prosthodontists and ACP Education Foundation Annual Session at Caesars Palace in Las Vegas on Oct. 10 for his outstanding contribution to prosthodontics. Earlier in the year, he was named Honorary Director of the ACEPEF Education Foundation. In connection with this honor, he was profiled in *Dentistry Today*. He also serves on the Advisory Boards of the New York University College of Dentistry in New York and the UCLA College of Dentistry in Los Angeles.

## 1980s

**Calvain Culberson '89** has been named head coach of the Armstrong baseball team.

**Jacqueline Kornegay Jacobs '85** resides in Columbus, Ga., and has been in the Air Force Reserves Nurse Corps for 23 years. She's been Commander of the 908 Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron at Maxwell Air Force Base, Ala., since March 2010. She currently works at West Central Georgia Regional Hospital as Team Nurse on the Recovery Team. She and her husband of 29 years have four children.

**C. Maguire '80s** recently published her first children's novel, *The Bloody Book Bag Ordeal*.

**Henry Morgan '87** has been appointed to a four-year term on the Coastal Marshlands Protection Committee and Shore Protection Committee, which determine what can and cannot be built along Georgia's marshes and coastlines.

**Jesse Petrea '89** is running in the Republican primary for the Georgia House of Representatives in District 166, which includes parts of Chatham and Bryan Counties.

## 1990s

**Kerry Coursey '91** was named the 2012 National Distinguished Middle School Principal from Georgia. She is also a member of the 2013-2014 Leadership Savannah Class.

**Tracy Deemer Chance '90** has two grown sons and one still attending Savannah Christian Preparatory School. Her career as CFO/owner of Central Compound Pharmacy Supply LLC has kept her busy but she enjoys traveling when she can. She still snow skis and

scuba dives, and travels by motorcycle with her husband and sons.

**James Gauthier '98** recently accepted a position as a major gifts officer with Yale University and will be relocating to Connecticut with his wife Kris '01 and their two sons, Hunter and Mason.

**Glen Williams '92** reports: "In 2012 I served as Worshipful Master of Columbia-Brotherhood Masonic Lodge in San Francisco. That was an eight-year commitment to the lodge as a line officer. What a journey. Glad to have that completed. Now I am in the maritime industry and working in Gulf of Mexico. Home port is Lake Charles, La. Working on ocean tugs with Crowley Marine Services. I hope to be visiting Armstrong and Savannah early in 2014! Can't wait!"

## 2000s

**Erin Christian '08** is a middle school English Language Arts Teacher at STEM High and Academy in Highlands Ranch, Colo., and lives in Denver with her husband, Joshua Bjerke '12.

**Tracey Clark-Johnson '04** is resource coordinator for the Progressive Care Unit at St. Joseph's Hospital in Savannah.

**Chris Cobb '00s** has a three year old, Bailey Emily Cobb, and another daughter, Sadie Caroline Cobb, on the way due in December 2013.

**Peter Doliber '03 '06** has been named the executive director of the Alliance of Massachusetts YMCAs.

**April Coe Duffie '05 '09** is the new prospect research coordinator at University of West Georgia.

**Chris Epperson '05** finished in the top 10 at the Web.com Tour Qualifying Tournament at PGA West in La Quinta, Calif. He has qualified every year since 2007.

**Tosha Fowler '02** has been named associate artistic director at Mary-Arrchie Theatre Company in Chicago.

**Christine Futch '06** is engaged to marry Robert Pickrell. She recently completed a Master of Science in Nursing from Georgia Regents University.

**Bonnie Futrell '00** reports that husband **Hugh Futrell '70s** is the assistant chief at Southside Fire/EMS/Security. Their five children have all graduated, three from Armstrong and two from Brenau University. The Futrells have four grandchildren and two on the way.

**Kris Seay Gauthier '01** was recently awarded Teacher of the Year for 2013 in the Orange Southwest Supervisory Union in Vermont, where she has taught kindergarten and first grade for the last five years.

**Georgia Gerard-Reed '05 '09** published a children's book, *The Fairbluff's of Pennington Island*, 2013. The first in a series for young girls, it is about twin nine-year-old girls growing up on a fictitious island off the coast of Savannah. A second book, *Under the Harvest Moon*, is scheduled to be published in 2014. She is also pursuing a doctorate in education and recently traveled to Africa as part of her dissertation.

Submit your class notes online at [www.armstrong.edu](http://www.armstrong.edu), email [alumni@armstrong.edu](mailto:alumni@armstrong.edu) or call 912.344.3081.



**Tiffany Glick-Leighty '03** teaches P.E. at Mercer Middle School and lives in Pooler.

**Gina Hurst '01** was profiled in the Jan. 3 "On the Job" column on AL.com. She is the member and volunteer services manager for The Arts Council Inc. in Huntsville, Ala.

**Ladonna Hutcherson '07** is a nurse practitioner at Acute Care Clinic in Vidalia, Ga.

**Michael Kaplan '00** recently published a book, *Break the Chains that Bind You!*, which focuses on entrepreneurship.

**Andrew Graham '00s** has been named the new manager of the West Michigan Whitecaps, the Class A Midwest League farm team of the Detroit Tigers.

**Susanne Hall '10 '13** has been hired as a software developer and programmer at Healthpac Computer Systems, Inc.

**Robert Morgan '03** is an optometrist at 1Hour Optical in the Augusta, Ga., area. He completed his Doctor of Optometry degree at the Pennsylvania College of Optometry in Philadelphia.

**Erica Neff '06** was honored as the 2013 Young Lawyer of the Year by the New Mexico Defense Lawyers Association. She is currently a member of the Albuquerque Bar Association Board of Directors, as well as the New Mexico Defense Lawyers Association Editorial Board.

**Patrick O'Neil '01** has been named Bank of America's market president for Savannah and the tri-county area.

**Elmore Patterson III '03** has been named CEO of Greene County Hospital and Nursing Home in Demopolis, Ala.

**Austin Roberson '06** has been hired as an assistant district attorney in the Chatham County District Attorney's Office, after completing a federal judicial clerkship with the United States District Court for the Southern District of Georgia as law clerk to the Honorable B. Avant Edenfield.

**Tania Sammons '02** has been awarded the 2014 Kahlil Gibran International Award for her scholarly work on the art of Gibran and his collection housed at Telfair Museums, where she is senior curator of decorative arts and historic sites.

**Erica Sampson '09 '13** is engaged to marry Samuel McElroy on April 26. She is a nurse practitioner for Summit Cancer Care Practice in Savannah.

**Erin Turner '00** was named Bryan County (Ga.) Teacher of the Year for 2013. She teaches English at Richmond Hill High School.

**Lake White '05**, director of training for Starfish Aquatics Institute, received the Best Speaker Award for his presentation at the 33rd Annual World Waterpark Association's Symposium and Trade Show.

## 2010s

**Kallie Breningstall '11** had a solo exhibition of her art work at the Hinesville Area Arts Council in October. The show also promoted breast cancer awareness.

**James Carver '10** lives in Savannah with his wife, fellow alum **Katherine Ledford Carver '10**. He is flight platoon leader with the Georgia National Guard.

**Stephen Clark '13** is engaged to marry Danielle Farthing '14.

**Georgia Gibbs Dess '11** completed a Master of Education degree in school psychology in 2013 and is currently pursuing an Education Specialist degree at Georgia Southern University.

**Victoria DiNatale '13** has formed Standing Victorious LLC, a speaking business used to spread bullying awareness to bullies, bullying victims, and their families. As a former victim of bullying, she shares her message of hope and perseverance with schools, universities, churches, and civic organizations.

**Bynikini Frazier '10** was named the 2014 Teacher of the Year for the Savannah-Chatham County Public School System.

**Kathleen Henry '12** is a research specialist at the World Trade Center Savannah.

**Sarah Keller '13** has started a Doctor of Public Health program at the University of Florida, with a One Health concentration.

**Erin LaHaise '13** is the member services coordinator at the Savannah Area Chamber of Commerce.

**Tora Johnson '10** is a customer service representative with Ingo Money. She lives in Cordele, Ga.

**Katie Martin '11** is a reporter and copy editor at the *Savannah Morning News*.

**Kascion Outland '12** lives in Tampa, where is a lead chemist at River Crossing Labs, LLC. His role includes method development, client service improvement, and strategic marketing. He is also CEO and President of Augusta Strike Force Mentor Academy in Augusta, Ga.

**Renata Peters '12** has been selected to be a firefighter for the City of Savannah.

**Karl Smith '13** is working as an entertainment technician at Busch Gardens in Tampa, Fla., where he helped operate the Howl-O-Scream and Christmas Town events. He is now working as a technician with one of their theaters and getting his feet wet as a lighting designer.

**Syeta Sutson '11** is working on a master's degree in healthcare administration with a specialization in healthcare leadership from Capella University. She writes, "Thanks to the program offered by Armstrong and SCHA, I was able to work in a field that I love and build upon my current and past knowledge to reach a brighter future!"

**Matt Walker '12** is the Spanish teacher in the Upper School at Memorial Day School in Savannah.

**Jermaine Whirl '10** has been named Dean of the School of Business and the School of Art & Design at Gwinnett Technical College in Lawrenceville, Ga.



## MAYOR FLOYD ADAMS, JR.

1945-2014

The Armstrong community mourns the loss of former Savannah Mayor Floyd Adams, Jr., a beloved university alum who studied business at Armstrong from 1966 to 1971. Adams, Savannah's first African American mayor, died on February 1, 2014, at age 68 at Candler Hospital in Savannah.

Adams graduated from St. Pius X Catholic High School in 1963 and attended Armstrong and Brooklyn College. He shortened his college education to assist his father with the family's

printing and newspaper company. After serving as a City Councilman for many years, Adams was elected Savannah's 63rd mayor in 1995 and remained in office until 2003.

Throughout his career, Adams earned the respect of his peers as a politician, publisher, printer, and photographer. As the long-time publisher of *The Savannah Herald*, he stayed connected to timely political and social issues affecting the community, even after he left public office.

## marriages

Sarah P. Boisvert '04 married Michael J. Rule in Reading, Penn. on Oct. 26, 2013.  
Dakota Brown '13 and Jordan Balke '14 were married in Savannah on Dec. 20, 2013.  
Chris Epperson '05 married Sarah Aycock in Savannah on Jan. 4, 2014.  
Tiffany Glick-Leighty '03 married Thomas Leighty in Savannah on Aug. 2, 2013.

## births

Tyrone Avery Acker '04, '11, and Erica Acker '04, welcomed their first child, daughter Elise Amerie on Sept. 6, 2013.

## in memoriam

Floyd Adams, Jr. '71, Feb. 1, 2014  
Ralph K. Anderson '56, April 2, 2013  
John William Andre, Jr. '69, Nov. 9, 2013  
Mary R. Andruss '74, Feb. 19, 2014.  
Richard Dick Murray Armstrong '74, March 29, 2012  
Frances B. Arnold, July 18, 2013  
Donald E. Austin '47, Oct. 11, 2013  
David T. Best '75, Jan. 28, 2014  
Nelta Beckett Blackmon '37, Oct. 29, 2013  
Herbert Blumenthal, September 11, 2013  
Mary Jane Gnann Boykin '37, Sept. 22, 2013  
William Robert "Bob" Cottle, II '70, Jan. 28, 2014  
Paul D. Dickey '72, Feb. 18, 2014  
Martha Sue Boone Dubow '49, May 12, 2013  
Mark Finlay, Assistant Dean College of Liberal Arts, Oct. 6, 2013  
Marion Collins DeFrank Gannam '46, Jan. 5, 2014  
Cayce Hunnicut Girardeau '84, Oct. 26, 2013  
Margaret Mitchell Hagan '78, Sept. 8, 2013  
Mae Grier Driggers Harrell '40, Oct. 30, 2013  
Laura Anne Head Thomas '96, Dec. 23, 2013  
Mary Bevill Helmey '47, Oct. 6, 2013  
Kevin L. Hensley '92, Jan. 29, 2014  
Claudine Clark Hutchins Hill '38, Sept. 15, 2013  
Marion "Ben" Hunley '80, Nov. 20, 2013  
James S. Joyner, Jr. '97, Nov. 23, 2013  
Edward C. Kicklighter '41, Dec. 1, 2013  
Jack L. Kiley, Sr. '48, Oct. 4, 2013  
Alice Faye Buck Kraft '84, Jan. 21, 2014  
Elsie May Kroboth '73, April 20, 2013  
Francis E. Kroboth '73, July 26, 2013  
Andrew P. Lambeth '03, June 7, 2013  
Sandra Locke '99, Jan. 30, 2014  
Joseph A. Logan, III '48, Oct. 3, 2013  
William C. Maddox, Jr. '79, '97, Aug. 25, 2013  
Joan Cartwright Madison '53, Oct. 27, 2013  
John E. Matthews '79, Nov. 6, 2013  
Sarah Clary Minchew '72, Feb. 2, 2014  
Margaret Wright Odom '37, Nov. 17, 2013  
Bobby Ray Parker '72, Oct. 14, 2013  
Ralph D. Rockwell '57, '68, Jan. 20, 2014  
Jane Turner Schunemann '49, '85, July 29, 2013  
Dorothy Harden Scott '79, Oct. 23, 2013  
Jude Anne Phillips Smith '61, April 27, 2013  
Lorrie A. Burch Snyder '84, May 5, 2013  
Teresa O. Spillane '80, Oct. 11, 2013  
Meldrim Lester Sykes '53, Dec. 31, 2013  
Lawrence M. Tapp, Professor of Physical Education Emeritus, Sept. 17, 2013  
Mary Ellen Tippins '72, Oct. 13, 2013  
Thomas A. White '79, Jan. 24, 2014

## STAYING STRONG THROUGH THE GENERATIONS

(continued from page 7)

### TWIST OF FATE

One day in 1990, a junior named Sheryl McCusker walked into the gym, following a friend who wanted to try weightlifting. Michael began training Sheryl, who after just a few months began winning competitions and became a top member of the team. However, a tweaked knee demanded that she withdraw from the sport.

Instead, Sheryl focused on her studies. As one of the top students in the Engineering specialty program at Jenkins, she earned a full cross-university scholarship to Armstrong and Georgia Tech, the only girl in all her classes. Though she might have met more female engineers in Atlanta, when it was time for her to fulfill the rest of her scholarship, she didn't want to go. She switched her focus to mathematics and graduated from Armstrong.

Several years later, she ran into her former coach. Michael was just starting up Team Savannah at the Anderson Cohen Weightlifting Center and could really use a female coach. Would she give it a try?

"So, we were coaching staff together, and every Friday night all the coaches would go out to dinner after training," Cohen explains, telling the story with great relish. "After a while, it was just the two of us. So I hatched a plan—"

"He's full of it! I asked him out," Sheryl good-naturedly interrupts.

The two married in 1997 and have four children: Mikey, 16; Will, 14; Carolyn, 11; and Sam, 8. All are accomplished athletes in their own right, and the two older boys recently brought home medals from the National Junior Championships.

### THE NEXT GENERATION

Not only has their brood inherited the family strength, they appear to also have a knack for math. "You should see the little one, Sam," marvels Howard about his grandson. "I showed him once how to convert pounds to kilograms, and now he's a whiz!"

All three remain deeply connected to Armstrong, counting their education and experiences there as tantamount to their success. There's no doubt in their minds—that there will be another generation of strong Cohens at Armstrong in the coming years. "Mikey has already told us he plans to go to Armstrong," says Sheryl. "Will is probably going to want to go, too."

Adds Michael: "It makes sense! Even if it wasn't home, it's the only place in the world where they can get a fantastic education and keep training at an Olympic facility."

The patriarch of the family just smiles, his legacy of strength and smarts already well-established as he walks back over to resume his workout. ♦



Armstrong

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