## Feature Stories

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EAGLES NIGHT OUT

Students gathered at the Recreation Activity Center (RAC) for Eagles Night Out, an event held each fall for students to mingle and learn about campus organizations.

Watch the photo take shape at GeorgiaSouthern.edu/magazine.
TRUE BLUE spotlight

ALUMNUS TAKES GEORGIA SOUTHERN TO NEW HEIGHTS

When alumnus Chris Bostain ('02) set a goal of climbing to the top of Mount Kilimanjaro, he wanted to bring along a special token to ensure his climb to the top was unique.

That’s why he decided to embark on his six day, 37 mile climb at 19,039 feet above sea level with a Georgia Southern flag in tow.

Bostain traveled to Africa with fellow Georgia Southern alumnus Trey Yearwood ('01), who also wanted to take an adventure trip that was on a "bucket list level and very challenging," Bostain added. And although difficult, the climb was rewarding and humbling, he said.

"After completing the climb, I felt very humbled, lucky and drained. I felt lucky I was not as affected as others with illness so that I could make this journey and reach the summit," he said. Bostain braved freezing temperatures, nausea, 25-mph winds and other adversities to make it to the top.

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Alumni and Friends,

We are proud to share our new issue of Georgia Southern magazine. While we have featured many stories that capture the essence of this special University, you might have noticed one small difference. There were so many exciting developments this fall that we adjusted our publication date in order to provide you with a comprehensive end-of-the-semester recap.

And we are glad that we did! We were able to highlight the Eagles’ historic win over the Florida Gators in The Swamp on our cover and in a special photo spread. We hope you enjoy the keepsake photos in this issue taken by Jeremy Wilburn and Casey Jones that capture the celebratory atmosphere in Gainesville.

In this issue, we also focus on former first lady Laura Bush’s visit to Hanner Fieldhouse as a speaker for the University’s Leadership Lecture Series. It was a pleasure to meet with Mrs. Bush before her speaking engagement to discuss a range of topics from education to her new granddaughter.

Our dedicated staff has worked diligently on a variety of features about Georgia Southern's history, our alumni, students and the remarkable growth on campus that we continue to experience. We hope you enjoy! Please continue to send your comments to us at magazine@georgiasouthern.edu. - MARY BETH SPENCE
An easily recognizable University icon beloved by all Eagles’ fans, GUS has been a loyal member of the Eagle Nation dating back to the late 1970s. The mascot has slowly evolved over the decades, from costume design to the number of students filling the role.

During the 1988-89 seasons, Leonard Bevil was the only official GUS. The former Georgia Southern linebacker assumed the role of the mascot after he was sidelined with an injury. “Representing the University as GUS was one of the highlights of my life,” said the president and CEO of Macon Occupational Medicine.

Many of Bevil’s fondest memories occurred in Paulson Stadium. To the delight of fans, Bevil (in full costume) and former Eagle punter Terry Harvin would often high five in the middle of the field during a football game. As GUS, Bevil would roam the sidelines, sometimes rubbing Coach Erk Russell’s head. “One of my favorite memories happened when I was in the end zone. I returned the kick off from the opposing team and scored a touchdown. The fans went crazy!”

Today, several full-time students are selected to assume the role of GUS after tryouts. “The tryout process includes an interview, storyboarding, pantomiming, improvisation and game day performance,” said Barry Munkasy, Ph.D., the cheerleading coach who supervises GUS’ on-field and on-court responsibilities.

Selected students receive scholarships for the position and they are required to be in good academic standing. In addition to remaining anonymous, their main obligation is to make appearances representing the University. According to Gordon Hunter, director of athletics marketing at the University, GUS makes nearly 200 appearances a year, including all Eagles football games, other athletics events on campus and traveling to the NCA Mascot National Championships where he competes.

One of the students who currently holds the role of GUS enjoyed acting in high school and thought trying out for the mascot position would be a fun and new way to continue that hobby. “When I’m in the suit, I’m GUS, and GUS doesn’t talk, so it wasn’t very difficult to get used to that,” he said. “Once you put on the suit, it’s easy to just interact with hand signals.”

While the student enjoys attending athletics events and interacting with crowds and fans, the best thing about being GUS is “that you get to embody the University itself. You’re one of the biggest figureheads of the school, and one of the most well-known figures, so it’s just really cool to represent the school.”

- CRISSE ELRICK
FEATURE STORY

CAMPUS GROWTH

The past year brought additional change and expansion to Georgia Southern University with the completion of three multi-million dollar projects — the renovated Lakeside Dining Commons, the new Dining Commons and the new Biological Sciences Building.

“OUR UNIVERSITY IS EXTREMELY FORTUNATE TO HAVE OPENED THREE WORLD-CLASS FACILITIES THAT PROVIDE OUR STUDENTS WITH WHAT THEY TRULY DESERVE — ENHANCED EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES, ACCESS TO CUTTING-EDGE TECHNOLOGY AND AN ARRAY OF DINING OPTIONS,” SAID PRESIDENT BROOKS A. KEEL, PH.D. “GEORGIA SOUTHERN IS ON THE MOVE AND THESE PROJECTS DEMONSTRATE OUR COMMITMENT TO ATTRACT MORE STUDENTS TO OUR CAMPUS AND NEW BUSINESSES AND INDUSTRIES TO OUR AREA.”

LAKESIDE DINING COMMONS

Lakeside Dining Commons (formerly Lakeside Cafe) is back in operation after undergoing a dramatic yearlong $6.6 million transformation that doubled the size to serve more than 500 customers. Most of the original building was gutted, and only about 20 percent of the original building remains in the renovated facility. For the first time, Lakeside has a full service kitchen to offer students expanded dining options that include a fresh fruit and salad bar, pizza, pasta and hibachi and Tex-Mex stations. The nearly 28,000-square-foot facility overlooks Lake Ruby offering diners some of the best views of the Georgia Southern campus.
Dining Commons, the University’s main dining facility, was completed just before the arrival of more than 20,000 students for the fall semester. The 75,000-square-foot facility offers a wide variety of fresh and flavorful dishes and can accommodate 1,100 customers. At the seven stand-alone food stations, students can choose made-to-order dishes, sample international foods, feast on traditional home-style meals or opt for special dietary needs foods.

The $18.4 million Dining Commons is located on the site of the old Landrum Center adjacent to the University Store. The facility also houses the Post Office, Eagle Print Shop and Eagle Card Center. Dining Commons is open from 7 a.m. until 11 p.m., Monday through Thursday, and closes two hours earlier on Fridays. It opens at 8:30 a.m. on weekends, closes at 9 p.m. on Saturday and 11 p.m. Sunday.
The biggest project – the $41 million Biological Sciences Building, located at the corner of Old Register Road and Forest Drive – officially opened in August at a ribbon-cutting ceremony attended by the Statesboro-Bulloch County legislative delegation, and local and University dignitaries.

The state-of-the-art 158,000-square-foot facility is designed to enhance scientific research and learning, and to provide students with exceptional research opportunities. The academic building has five active learning classrooms, 10 teaching labs, 15 research labs, specialized research facilities and faculty offices.

The new herpetology and wet collections facility is home to two research collections (herpetology and ichthyology), plus teaching collections for herpetology, ichthyology, marine invertebrates and terrestrial invertebrates. Lance McBrayer, Ph.D., the curator of the herpetology collection, said it contains 35,000+ specimens, with the other collections adding approximately 2,000.

“Several rare, threatened and endangered species are housed in the collections, including gopher tortoises, indigo snakes and flatwoods salamanders,” said McBrayer. “This facility is much larger and more centralized than former spaces, thereby making it much more useful and safer. Plus, the facility allows for room for growth in each collection and it has more bench space, which is now ventilated and thus safer for students and visiting researchers alike. In just about every way, this facility is light years ahead of our former space.”

Biology Department Chair Steve Vives, Ph.D., said the space will help turn students into scientists and inspire their imaginations and creativity. “When a facility accomplishes these goals, we can reach the best faculty and students and have them work to their potential,” he added. - SANDRA BENNETT
The University recently held a groundbreaking for the new $5.8 million Shooting Sports Education Center, located at the corner of Old Register Road and Veterans Memorial Parkway. Construction is expected to take between 12 to 18 months to complete the 30,000-square-foot facility, which will include a public indoor archery and firing ranges as well as an outdoor archery range. The Center will also be the home of the Georgia Southern women’s rifle team, and the mission of the facility is to educate hunters and archers to be responsible shooting sports enthusiasts and promote safe firearms and bow handling.

The Center will be the only facility of its kind east of the Mississippi River, and will provide learning and recreational experiences for many students and introduce them to the world of shooting sports. The Center is expected to boost the local economy by bringing thousands of visitors to campus and Statesboro each year for training, tournaments and competitions.

The Center is a partnership between Georgia Southern and the Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Funding for the facility includes a $3.5 million grant secured by the DNR, along with private donations made to the University as well as support from the Easton Foundation and the City of Statesboro. - MARY BETH SPENCE

THE CUTTING OF THE RIBBON  Robert Whitaker, Eddie Mills, Brooks A. Keel, Ph.D., Student Government Association President Garrett Green and Jeff Yawn at the Lakeside Dining Commons Ribbon Cutting.
Former first lady Laura Bush visited Georgia Southern’s Hanner Fieldhouse Sept. 17 as part of the University’s Leadership Lecture Series. For decades, Mrs. Bush has traveled the U.S. and the world championing issues in education, healthcare and human rights. She now serves as Chair of the Women’s Initiative at the George W. Bush Institute and continues working on global health care innovations, education reform, empowering women in emerging democracies and supporting America’s veterans. The former first lady is also the best-selling author of her memoir, *Spoken from the Heart*.

During Mrs. Bush’s inspirational speech, she shared her journey from teaching in a public school to becoming first lady of the United States, and spoke candidly about her emotional experiences during 9/11 as well as her treasured family memories.

Following her speech, Mrs. Bush responded to questions from students in the audience on a range of topics, including the importance of maintaining a work/life balance. She encouraged students to have children and enjoy family life, but also select a career they enjoyed and work hard at it. “Family life with children is one of the great experiences of life, and work is very important. Working very hard is what you can do to make life very fulfilling,” she said.

*Georgia Southern* magazine had the opportunity to speak with Mrs. Bush about her devotion to improving people’s lives around the world, her passion for education and her joy at becoming a new grandmother.

**The Former First Lady Visits Georgia Southern**

GS: *When did you decide to become a teacher, and who influenced your decision to enter the field of education?*

LB: I decided to become a teacher in the second grade. I loved my teacher and wanted to be just like her. I also played school when I was little and my mother knew that I would become a teacher when I fussed at my dolls for not paying attention.

GS: *Did you ever imagine that your career in the classroom would lead to a life in the White House and becoming an advocate for education in the U.S. and around the world?*

LB: I never imagined that I would one day live in the White House, but in fact, having been a teacher was a huge advantage for me. I knew a lot about inner city public education and that was a big advantage, especially since George ran for both governor of Texas and the Presidency on the platform of Education Reform.

GS: *The Laura Bush Foundation for America’s Libraries has provided more than $10 million in grants to school libraries around the nation since 2002. How has your Foundation made a difference?*

LB: We provide grants to schools that are about 85 percent free lunch, and the money we give goes toward materials that support the student body or a specific curriculum. Currently, we are looking at providing support for electronic media – both through funding and purchasing tablets for schools, which would be very helpful.

**RECEPTIVE AUDIENCE** Mrs. Bush shared treasured family memories with the audience as well as her experiences in the White House.
GS: In your work with the Bush Policy Institute, you have frequently mentioned that ‘women around the world are catalysts for change.’ Please discuss your efforts in launching the First Ladies Initiative.

LB: This summer we hosted a First Ladies conference in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. This was a unique opportunity for the first ladies to get together and talk about issues that are the most important to them, and the ways we can make a difference. This network of first ladies is working to advance education, good health and economic opportunities for women and children around the world. We also hope to partner with Teach for All and Global Health Corps. Teach for All trains young educators, places them in classrooms and improves educational opportunities for children. The first ladies are eager to help establish teacher recruitment programs in their countries with this initiative.

Our daughter Barbara is the founder of Global Health Corps, and she presented information at the first ladies meeting about her innovative program which has Global Health Corps fellows working in the health field in many African countries. The young people really inspired us.

GS: How do you feel about the challenges facing our schools, and in what way will the Institute play a role in shaping the future of education?

LB: We are working on several projects. The first is AREL (Alliance to Reform Educational Leadership), which works to improve principal training programs. Our goal focuses on the need for strong leadership in public education. If you have a great principal, then you are much more likely to have a really good school. School leaders are very important, and principals are the ones who structure the school and choose teachers.

At the Institute, we are also working on a program called Middle School Matters.
Middle school is really the last chance children have to come up to grade level, and if high school students are not reading on their grade level, they are not likely to be successful in high school.

A great deal of new research has been done over the last decade or so on how to intervene and do specific strategic intervention with children who are not reading on grade level in middle school. In this way, students can be brought up to their grade level pretty quickly because their spoken vocabulary is larger than a first grader learning to read.

We have other projects, including the global report card, which provides a rating comparison between school districts around the world, and also a research project on productivity, which focuses on the amount of money spent by school districts and its ties to academic achievement.

GS: How do you feel that you have improved people’s lives in ways you may not have expected?

LB: One of the most important ways is through breast cancer awareness. I have visited the Middle East and spoken on television about the importance of breast self-exams and mammograms. In the Middle East, Arab women present about 10 years younger with breast cancer, and by the time it is discovered, many women are in stage 4. It was very important for me to communicate this message to women.

In these countries, there are many cultural reasons why cancer is not discussed. For example, in the Middle East, even mentioning cancer might make your daughters unmarriageable. After I talked openly on television, many Saudi women reached out to their sisters, families and friends to make sure they had mammograms.

Something else that is very important to me is the Heart Truth Campaign, which raises awareness about heart disease in women. I was told by one woman that I saved her life because she heard me talk on television about the symptoms of a heart attack. Often, women do not experience crushing chest pain. She woke up in the middle of the night with jaw and neck pain, and told her husband ‘Let’s pray and get to the hospital. I think I’m having a heart attack.’ She is in good health now and speaks to women’s groups about heart disease.

Both of these examples are wonderful ways of knowing that people are listening and I have been able to affect their lives in a positive way.

GS: What inspires you to devote your efforts to others, and what experience has affected you profoundly?

LB: As first lady, I had the opportunity to be a voice for others, especially in Afghanistan. In 2001, I gave the weekly presidential radio address and described the plight of girls and women in the Taliban-ruled Afghanistan. We saw a country where women and girls were not allowed to be educated and it was shocking for me and the nation. After the radio address, I was approached by a woman who thanked me for speaking about their plight. At that time, I realized that people do listen to the first lady, and that she does have a platform, if she chooses to use it.

GS: What are some of your favorite family memories of reading to your girls Jenna and Barbara?

LB: I loved that time with them! Especially when they were little and they sat on my lap and we would read classics like Goodnight Moon and all the darling children’s books that American children are so lucky to have. George loved to read the Dr. Seuss book Hop on Pop to them, and they took it literally and jumped on him! (she laughs) In fact, I still have a little photo of the girls in diapers standing on top of him while he is laying on the ground reading to them.

Even today, Jenna, Barbara and I still send our recommendations for best books to each other.

GS: What type of family traditions will you introduce to your granddaughter?

LB: Mila loves to look at books and chew on them, which is mainly what she wants to do! But, it’s fun to read to her, and I am going to continue our family traditions of reading together. One of my favorite memories is when George and I used to read the Hank the Cow Dog books to the girls when they were a little bit older. Those books are hilarious, and they are fun to read aloud.
‘...SPRUNG UP from SANDY EARTH’

It is said that Georgia Southern was born of humble farm beginnings. It’s all the more fitting then that historian Delma Presley would find himself driven to explore the roots of the region so closely intertwined with those of his own family.

It was 1969 when Presley and his wife, Beverly, arrived in Statesboro on an offer from iconic University professor and chair Fielding Russell to teach English at Georgia Southern. Through the 1970s, Presley’s love of language and literature and his training from Mercer, Baptist Theological Seminary and Emory served him well in his academic pursuits. Yet, in the back of his mind an idea was forming – one that became increasingly focused with the passage of time and led to a gradual shift. Presley’s passion was focusing less on classical lit and more on south Georgia grit.

“I decided that I was going to try to understand the people of south Georgia,” he said. “My father grew up in Laurens County – a farmer’s boy. I wanted to know the people: why the people lived this way, who the people are, what their values are. This was one of my overriding concerns when I came here. And so, gradually I found a way to do that by becoming active in local history.”

Presley’s father left his south Georgia farm in the midst of the Great Depression for a job with the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) in north Georgia. “He joined the CCC boys and moved up to north Georgia where they built roads and parks and that sort of thing,” said Presley.

Those stories eventually came to bear on his career. He continued to teach, but in 1971, he and history professors George Rogers and Frank Saunders received a grant to study the local Deloach Primitive Baptist community. “That was my first effort in that area,” he said. “It turned out well, so we kept getting grants. We got grants through the ’70s until I went to the Museum and then we carried it on there.

“It was basically an effort to work with other people to understand who we are, where we came from, and what our values are,” said Presley. “I became interested in folklore – what the great stories are in this area. I guess we all evolve.”

And so he did. In 1982, with a tip of the hat to his grandfather’s timber work, he organized Project R.A.F.T. (Restore Altamaha Folklife Traditions) as a way to honor the memories of the men who floated timber down the Ocmulgee and Altamaha rivers in the early 20th century. A tremendous success, the project was coordinated with folk life festivals along the river and its message continues to be shared with others more than 30 years later.

That year heralded an official career shift when...
he became the first permanent director of the new Georgia Southern Museum, leaving the classroom and delving full time into stories about the people of south Georgia. For 17 years he enthusiastically embraced exhibits on the region’s history, culture, geology, zoology and botany while independently writing and researching.

“I wanted to know the people: why the people lived this way, who they are, what their values are.”
- Del Presley

Retiring from the Museum in 1999, he continued to study, interpret and organize local and regional historical events. As the University was approaching its 2006 centennial observance, he agreed to take on a massive task at the request of former President Bruce Grube — that of recounting Georgia Southern’s first 100 years.

The result was the 291-page definitive history of the University, The Southern Century: Georgia Southern University, 1906-2006.

Presley in Print

In a salute to Georgia Southern and those who led its founding, development and transition to a major university, Del and Beverly Presley have authored Georgia Southern University, a pictorial history and part of Arcadia Press’ Campus History Series.

“The book is about the community, the leaders of the College, the changes – the art of leadership,” he said. “It’s about students and how they have molded this place, and athletics, too.”

The couple has focused on those who pushed for the establishment of a college in Statesboro, like visionary Mayor Lonnie Brannen, those like President Guy Wells who saw the University through its early trials, and present-day men and women who guide its continuing evolution.

“Georgia Southern has always had the ability to adapt to change,” said Presley. “A lot of people don’t have that foresight. I don’t think Georgia Southern has been given the kind of regard that it should. That’s another reason we wanted to write the book – to give the kind of rationale for our existence that people need to appreciate. We wanted to tell that story.”

In addition to The Southern Century and Georgia Southern University, Presley has authored or co-authored numerous works on local and regional history including Images of America: Bulloch County with Smith C. Banks; Images of America: Statesboro with Smith C. Banks; Okefinokee Album with Francis Harper; and Dr. Bullie’s Notes: Reminiscences of Early Georgia and of Philadelphia and New Haven in the 1800s with James Holmes.
“The true story of Georgia Southern needs to be understood and told.”

- Del Presley

“I feel that the true story of Georgia Southern needs to be understood and told,” said Presley. “I got at the true story, I think, in The Southern Century. I wrote the book and I fell in love with the story even more. I realized that not only was Georgia Southern a special place, but Statesboro had some unique qualities that made this place happen to begin with. I think that’s important, too.”

As for the future, Presley is committed to doing all he can to ensure that the people of south Georgia are aware of their history, and that it is seen by others in its proper context.

“I was very fortunate to be able to fulfill some of the personal ambitions that I had to understand my past and my father’s past,” he said. “And, I hope to make a contribution to people’s understanding of life in south Georgia.”

Presley Files: He’s a distinguished scholar and researcher, but Del Presley’s interests and expertise range far afield. He has:

- Known and once read: Latin, Greek, Hebrew, French and German
- Earned a divinity degree from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary
- Coached Georgia Southern’s cross country team
- Served as president of the Ga. Association of Museums and Galleries (GAMG)
- Received the Governor’s Award in the Humanities by the Ga. Humanities Council
- Been named a Legend of the Arts by Statesboro’s Averitt Center for the Arts
- Received the Lifetime Achievement Award (GAMG)
- Been named Professional of the Year (GAMG)
- Received the Educator Award (GAMG)
- Written, directed and produced “The Last Raft” television documentary
- Authored “The Lighterd Knot” musical drama
- Written “A Place to Call Home: Statesboro the Musical”
- Been named Professor of the Year, Georgia Southern College

Presleys Establish Exhibit

To document and preserve for posterity a sense of daily campus life, Del and Beverly Presley have provided the $25,000 lead gift for a permanent Museum exhibit.

“Georgia Southern University - An Inspiring Past, a Promising Future: The Presley Exhibition” is housed in the Nessmith-Lane Conference Center and tells the history of the University through personal stories and mementos of the University’s alumni, faculty and staff.

“Our exhibit tells the story of the development of Georgia Southern,” said Museum Director Brent Tharp, Ph.D. “We’ve gathered items that tell us about the lives of faculty and students, not with official documents, but with the kind of things that were used day-to-day and defined their college experiences.”

Tharp said there are 200-300 items that range from clothing to report cards and from scrapbooks to trophies. Major artifacts will rotate as new acquisitions are received, he said.

The Presleys hope that visitors to the exhibit will take away a sense of the University’s determination to overcome adversity and accomplish feats that many said could not be done.

“It’s good to expose the story to people who visit even briefly,” Presley said, adding that it’s important to offer even casual campus visitors the opportunity to “catch some of the spirit of what we’re trying to do.”
For journalist and activist China Altman ('54), a good part of the past 26 years of her life has been spent on an unpaid job: tending to hundreds of roses in the historic Public Garden of Boston, Mass.

Altman founded and still leads the Rose Brigade, a group of volunteers who work a few hours every week to maintain the rose beds, noted as visual masterpieces. Thousands of visitors from this country and all over the world walk through this botanical garden in the heart of the city.

While her spirit and determination restored the formerly decrepit beds in the Public Garden, many aspects of Altman’s life are marked by her resilience and resolve. She has broken through barriers as the first female journalist for United Press International’s Boston bureau, become a lifelong activist for the equality of women and African Americans and stepped into the role as a national spokesperson for runaway and abused children.

The roses are a long way from Waycross, Ga., and Altman’s journey to Boston is nothing short of extraordinary.

At the age of 16, Mary Helen Altman was looking for a way to escape her troubled family life and Georgia Teachers College was the answer.

Even though she had neither applied to nor been admitted to the College, Altman was determined to register for classes. Her decision was gutsy, as were many other life choices: she got a ride from Waycross to her future in Statesboro.

“When I arrived on campus, I hid my small suitcase in the shrubbery, and went straight to the president’s office,” she said. For the next five hours, Altman sat in the reception area, waiting to meet the president, Zach Henderson. When she finally saw him, Altman told him that she could not go back home. “I told him that I needed to go to TC, and he could call my Methodist minister and my principal to verify who I was and validate my academic record.” Henderson sympathetically listened to her story, and then arranged for her admittance to the College.

As an undergraduate, Altman worked several jobs to support herself, was a reporter for The George-Anne and experienced a weekend that was historic for her. She was one of several students from various colleges who accepted an invitation to visit Paine College in Augusta, Ga. to discuss the racial situation. “It was indescribable,” she said, about the evening she arrived as the only white student on the African-American campus.

According to Altman, she shared the same beliefs as her mother. “My mother was a very powerful influence on me. She believed in equality of the races, and in her time, that made her an unusual thinker,” she said. The weekend at Paine was her first activism for racial issues.

After earning her degree from Teachers College, Altman headed back to her hometown to raise money for her next venture by working as the society editor for the daily Waycross Journal-Herald. “I was in love with journalism,” she said, “and at the age of nine, I decided that I wanted to be a reporter.” In her early teens she decided to change her name as a strategy she realized later was her first feminist activism. She knew hard news stories mailed or telegraphed under a female-sounding name could meet with kneejerk rejection by most editors of the time.

“I wanted a name that would not reveal my gender. I thought if editors were confused by my byline, they would consider my reporting on its merit.

After several months at the Journal-Herald, Altman left to attend graduate school at the University of Missouri, where she sought out a job as an assistant...
in the office of the dean of the journalism school. While working there, she had the opportunity to meet many influential editors and famous journalists. So, true to form, Altman made a bold move.

"During my second year, I wrote letters to some of the editors I met -- from the L.A. Times and the Chicago Tribune to the UPI -- and told them they should hire me," she said. "Earl Johnson, the president of UPI at the time, said I was a gutsy kid and had sent him a gutsy letter. He told me to come to Boston," she said. "I was a romantic, idealistic and driven kid and I wanted to go for the prize," she added.

She was the first female reporter to work in the Boston bureau of United Press, which became United Press International (UPI) a few months later. Not too long after she arrived she had a key role covering the sinking of the Andrea Doria in 1956.

"The bureau chief sent me to Coast Guard headquarters, where the signals were coming in, and I got there before any other reporters. I persuaded them to let me go inside the ship to shore communications room, before it was closed to the other reporters who arrived later. I was able to phone in updates to the bureau. The UPI got the scoop first when the ship went under," she revealed.

After achieving success in Boston, Altman was transferred to UPI’s London bureau to work on Fleet Street where she covered stories ranging from the royal family to Parliament to demonstrations against apartheid in South Africa. "Journalism was in its heyday, and this was the biggest bureau that UPI had in the world, covering stories not only in England, but in Africa and Europe," she said. "I was a free spirit," said Altman, about her travels around the world.
What followed was a year of living in Rome where she began freelancing for UPI and was sent on her biggest wire service story. At that time President Jack Kennedy and First Lady Jacqueline had been on a triumphal diplomatic mission to Paris and Vienna. At its conclusion Mrs. Kennedy went on vacation in the Greece islands and Altman was sent to Greece to cover her. Later she spent a year behind the Iron Curtain in Budapest, Hungary.

After returning to the U.S., Altman’s career headed in yet another direction when she began freelancing for *Life* and other magazines.

In the 1960s, Altman’s self-described "spirit and guts" came into play when she spent several months delving into the world of organized crime. Her extensive interviews with some of the most dangerous members of Boston’s crime families and the gangland wars was published by *Life* magazine.

During this period in Boston, she hosted a television series on WGBH, was the first woman on the east coast to have her own radio call-in talk show and also worked as *People* magazine’s first Boston bureau chief. In the 1980s, she became MIT’s first director of communication for the arts and was instrumental in founding the Office for the Arts there.

From the 1960s onward to now Altman worked as an activist in her free time, becoming more and more focused on animal rights and environmental issues.

“I've always liked naming things, and I thought the names of these beds should be appropriate to history,” she added. “The Tiffany bed has a large number of Tiffany roses in it, and is across the street from the historic Arlington Church, which has Tiffany windows in it. The Ether bed is close to the monument commemorating the first use of ether to bring peace from pain, and, in this bed we have mostly the roses called “Peace,” and quite a few examples of roses hybridized from Peace.

“The twin beds,” she added, are named Mr. Hale – for statesman and philosopher Edward Everett Hale – and Mr. Lincoln, for our former president.”

For more than two decades, she and the dedicated members of the Rose Brigade work for nearly nine months every year to meticulously care for the roses. “As important as what we do is that we are

While at MIT she began volunteering in the Public Garden which had fallen on hard times. Under the auspices of the Friends of the Public Garden, she first led a group of volunteers who cleaned up the Garden, and then founded the Rose Brigade in 1988 to care for the four languishing rose beds.

“When I first came to Boston a long time ago, the whole city was the first place I ever felt at home, and the Public Garden was the place I loved most,” she said. One of her first actions was to name the beds: Ether, Tiffany, Mr. Hale and Mr. Lincoln.

“I wrote letters to some of the editors I met and told them they should hire me ... the president of UPI at the time said I was a gutsy kid and had sent him a gutsy letter. He told me to come to Boston.”

- China Altman

While Altman’s botanical work is public, her private work is focused on activism for animal rights, creating assemblages as an unknown artist and writing poetry and her memoirs. “I’ve been hesitant about writing my life story but now I think I almost have enough courage,” she said. - MARY BETH SPENCE

**BREAKING BARRIERS** Altman was the first female reporter in UPI’s Boston bureau and the first woman on the east coast to have her own radio call-in talk show.
Tee Time

Drives are Flying and Putts are Dropping at the New Georgia Southern University Golf Course

Public play at the new championship 18 hole course began in early October, and tee times have been filling quickly because golf and Eagles just go well together.

“This golf course is challenging yet friendly,” said Director of Golf Marten Olsson. “These 18 holes will give opportunities to the golfer who’s just starting to play as well as the experienced golfer who wants a challenge.”

Money collected from student fees paid for the transformation of the 167 acres located about six miles from campus. “This is an opportunity for us to provide an experience to our students and community members and expose them to the game of golf,” said Gene Sherry, executive director of Campus Recreation and Intramurals (CRI). “This facility is a great addition to meet the needs of our active and growing student body as we promote healthy lifestyle habits.”

Three years ago, the University spent $650,000 to purchase Southern Links, which had been closed for several years. With $5 million spent on renovations and a new layout designed by Robert Walker, Georgia Southern students, faculty, staff and community members have another option to exercise and relax.

“This is what a student-centered University is all about,” said Teresa Thompson, Ph.D., vice president of Student Affairs and Enrollment Management. “What we were buying was the opportunity to expand our recreational and student activity opportunities. We have very bright students who have high expectations inside and outside the classroom.” Thompson also pointed out the golf course could help keep students enrolled. “We have found in studies that students who are involved in recreational activities are retained and graduate at a higher rate.”

The golf course is another attractive addition to a long list of outstanding recreational facilities already available to students. “This represents a number of things that speak loudly and boldly about what Georgia Southern is and where we are going,” said University President Brooks A. Keel, Ph.D. “We are a University
on the move and are always looking for ways to better serve our students and community. This is one more way in which we can tell the world that we are different, and we are special.”

The course has five sets of tees and measures 6,900 yards from the back tees and 5,300 yards from the front tees. Water is in play on 11 of the 18 holes, and the course has 53 bunkers in the fairways and around the greens. “This is a very pretty and fun golf course to play with a lot of variety,” said Patrick Reinhardt, golf course superintendent. “The students were the driving force behind this, and they are so excited about having a golf course available as a recreational activity.”

The facility also has a driving range, practice putting and chipping greens, along with a renovated 8,000 square foot clubhouse, which includes a pro shop, snack bar and meeting space. Find out about greens fees, schedule tee times and learn more about the course by visiting GeorgiaSouthern.edu/golf.

~CASEY JONES
LEARNING TO OVERCOME

At 20 years old, Tianna Quiller has learned the art of balancing schoolwork, family, friends and more. And she learned it all nearly three years ago while going the extra step to become a high-achieving International Baccalaureate (IB) high school graduate while struggling with homelessness.

The Marietta, Ga., native and special education major said her family became homeless just before she began her senior year at Marietta High School after her mother unexpectedly lost her job. In the months that followed, Quiller and her family lived in hotels, stayed with friends and eventually moved to a homeless shelter. She also woke up extra early to catch a city bus to her school bus stop because her family didn’t have a car, and sometimes went without running water.

But despite the challenges she and her family faced, Quiller stayed positive knowing their situation wasn’t permanent.

“Honestly, and I know this doesn’t sound right, but it wasn’t hard,” she said. “Nothing is hard, you just have to take it one step at a time. And nothing is supposed to be effortless — if you put effort into what you do, then you’ll get what you want. Yes, sometimes you will cry, and weeping may last through the night, but joy comes in the morning.”

Knowing the importance of education, Quiller diligently worked to obtain her IB diploma, which is similar to an Advanced Placement (AP) diploma, only with international standards. She took courses just like any other high school student would, but the IB course standards took those classes to the next level, requiring in-depth essays, community service projects, critical thinking and more. Though it was a more difficult route, she knew going the extra mile would be well worth it for her future.

“In a situation like that, you don’t want to think about where you are, so you think about where you want school I was at school, and when I was at home – or wherever I was – I would think about it then.”

Quiller considered leaving Marietta to be with her extended family in Thomaston, Ga., but said, “I felt like it was important to be with my mom and brother, to make sure my brother was okay if my mom had something to take care of,” she said. She also knew finishing her IB diploma wasn’t possible in Thomaston. So she stayed to finish her education and did her best not to let anyone know the struggle she and her family really faced.

“I feel that you have to do what you’ve got to do, and I’m not one to complain,” she said. “I was still able to go to prom, thanks to my grandma, and I was able to do everything a high school senior should do – I just had some other priorities.”

She went on to graduate from Marietta High School in 2012 and enrolled at Mississippi State University. After a year there, she wanted to achieve her goal of becoming a special education teacher and reading specialist by coming home and attending Georgia Southern.

“There is just something about being home and being around people who have things in common with you,” she said. “There is also something to be said about experiencing people who come from different backgrounds who have completely different stories, and I love that. But there is just something about being home – nothing beats it.” – CRISSE ELRICK

Now a Sophomore at Georgia Southern, Tianna Quiller was Homeless as a High School Senior

See Tianna on her graduation day at GeorgiaSouthern.edu/magazine.
Many of our alumni can still remember their first day on the True Blue campus and why they decided to attend Georgia Southern. The reasons are varied – but not all that different from the ones expressed by the new freshmen class now settled into nine residence halls across campus this fall.

Some were lured by the football team, the University Honors Program, Sweetheart Circle or even the lore of Beautiful Eagle Creek. Others say they fell in love with the University’s traditions and history, followed parents or brothers and sisters to Georgia Southern, or were attracted by the diversity of students, classes and activities. Whatever their reason for coming, the University enrolled nearly 5,000 freshmen this fall. On Move-in Day we checked with several to find out why they chose Georgia Southern.

CRYSTAL PALMER
Athens, Ga.

“Once I visited Georgia Southern, I knew I would come here. I am not a city girl and this is kind of a remote campus. I am looking forward to getting these first two years over with so that I can get into the nursing classes that everyone speaks of so highly. I am also very excited about the Recreation Activity Center. The facility is huge and I plan to take full advantage of it.”

MYRRIAME DOSSO
Norcross, Ga.

“I chose Georgia Southern because when I came to visit it was such a friendly and nice place. I liked the dorms, the programs, and especially the pre-med program because that is what I am interested in. I am looking forward to entering the athletics training program, meeting new people and getting started with my career by interning.”

JACOB MURPHY
Atlanta, Ga.

“A lot of my friends’ brothers and sisters came here and they always talked about the opportunities this school has to offer. Also, I like the beautiful campus, the friendly people and the laid back attitude.”

CHRISTINA JONES
Savannah, Ga.

“I decided to come here because it was close to home, but not at home. I considered different majors, and decided the business program at Georgia Southern was one of the best.”

In a study released by Georgia Southern University’s Bureau of Business Research and Economic Development (BBRED), the University’s economic impact topped $846 million during fiscal year 2012. This figure represents Georgia Southern’s growth, visitor and student spending, jobs in the region and ongoing construction projects.
LSTD 3630: WHITE-COLLAR CRIME

“There is always a risk that officers may collect evidence that is not in the search warrant. For instance, what happens if an officer enters an office to search for documents like bank ledgers; opens a drawer and finds a bag of marijuana, but that is not in the search warrant? That is contraband and no one has a legal right to have contraband so it can be seized. However, if it’s a gun, we don’t know if the suspect has a legal permit to own it so it can’t be seized because it’s not listed in the search warrant.”

– J. CHARLES WILLIAMSON

The legal studies class “White-Collar Crime” is required of all fraud examination minors, an interdisciplinary minor in the College of Business Administration. Williamson has three decades of experience investigating tax fraud, embezzlement, bribery, money laundering and public corruption cases. Prior to joining the Georgia Southern faculty in 2011, he was Special Agent in Charge of the Tax Fraud Investigations Division of the State of New Mexico and taught a tax course as an adjunct faculty member at the University of New Mexico.

Williamson began considering teaching full time and as he neared retirement from his “real job” and said, “An opportunity came up at Georgia Southern to join the faculty teaching in the forensic accounting/fraud examination area as well as teaching tax.”

Notable Case

While a special agent in charge of the Tax Fraud Investigations Division of the State of New Mexico, Williamson recalls:

“I was involved in a case in Albuquerque that has been on “Dateline NBC” and several other news magazine shows. It involved Ellen Snyder, who killed her husband, Mike Snyder, in January 2002. I became involved when we discovered that state tax returns had been filed in the name of Mike Snyder several years after Ellen had claimed that he was ‘missing’. The refunds claimed on the returns were deposited in Ellen’s bank accounts. After years of her insistence that he was alive, Ellen finally admitted (in 2010) shooting Mike in the back three times and burying him in the backyard.”

College of Science and Mathematics

MBI PROGRAM MAKES FINALS

The Molecular Biology Initiative (MBI) program was a finalist for a 2013 Georgia STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) Education Award presented by the Technology Association of Georgia (TAG). The MBI project partners with teachers to bring hands-on, relevant content and technology into high schools. In the program, Graduate Teaching Assistants are trained by Georgia Southern faculty to go into area high schools to work with teachers and students to promote interest in the STEM fields.

College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences

DEAN APPOINTED

Curtis Ricker, Ph.D., was appointed the new Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences (CLASS). Ricker, who assumed his new duties on Nov. 1, had been Interim Dean since July 2012. He has been at Georgia Southern since 1984, serving in various roles including CLASS Associate Dean for Faculty and Research. The new dean said he is especially honored to serve with the finest faculty in the University and professors who love their teaching, scholarship and creative activities.

College of Business Administration

DSI STUDENT CONSORTIUM

Willis Mwangola, a Ph.D. candidate in the Logistics/Supply Chain Management program was invited to participate in the 31st annual Decision Sciences Institute’s (DSI) Doctoral Student Consortium in Baltimore, Md., on Nov. 16. The Doctoral Student Consortium is an invitation-only event in which participants are selected competitively based on the merit of their applications. Mwangola’s research topic was titled “An empirical analysis of the vulnerability-efficacy tradeoff in Manufacturing Companies.”
IN THE SKY
If you’re not on campus, but eager to catch a glimpse of the Eagle Nation, look no further! Perched atop the University’s Biological Sciences Building is a newly installed SkyCam, which provides a panoramic view of the College of Education and Chemistry buildings. Tune in to Savannah, Ga.’s WTOC News anytime from 4:30 a.m. to 11 p.m. on weekdays and late news broadcasts on weekends to watch a skycam view.

MEET ALLEN AMASON
Alumnus Named College of Business Administration Dean

For Dr. Allen Amason (’84), one of the most satisfying aspects of his career has been helping others reach their goals and achieve a peak performance.

“I enjoy helping others perform better,” said the former chair of the Department of Management in the Terry College of Business at the University of Georgia. “As a department chair, you see the productivity of others as a measure of your success, and the next step then was to do that for a college,” he added.

In August, Amason was named the new dean of Georgia Southern’s College of Business Administration. Although Amason had envisioned ending his academic career at UGA, the lure of returning to his alma mater was too great.

“I am happy to be here, and Georgia Southern offered a good opportunity,” added the native Georgian and married father of four who grew up in coastal McIntosh County. Amason earned his Bachelor of Business Administration degree in finance from Georgia Southern and doctorate in strategic management and international business from the University of South Carolina.

Amason brings a variety of ideas and leadership experience to COBA, and at the Terry College of Business, he led the effort to create and establish the UGA Music Business Program and the Institute for Leadership Advancement. He was also instrumental in helping establish distance learning initiatives such as the EMBA and professional MBA programs, which utilize a hybrid delivery model blending in-class with distance learning.

Amason believes COBA is in a unique position to prepare students for their future careers, despite the obstacles of today’s tough job market. “The biggest challenge is the first job. It is the on-ramp to the expressway of a career,” he said. “There was a time when you would graduate, send out resumes, get a dozen interviews and take the best offer. Those days are past. Today, graduates must be better prepared, more innovative and more strategic in their approach.”

The new dean spent his early weeks learning about the University and College, and meeting with students, faculty, staff and members of the business community. He said that, while he foresees changes, he doesn’t expect to implement them overnight. “Change can be good, but changing too quickly can break the things that are working well already,” he noted. “I’m content to spend a little time learning what works and what doesn’t. Ultimately, my responsibility is to make the College of Business Administration and its brand stronger,” said Amason.

Because COBA competes with larger and better-endowed universities, Amason said it is imperative to increase the value of the school’s intellectual capital and to get companies turning to “our faculty because they are thought leaders.” As a result, his various initiatives include bolstering faculty research and support, providing internships and international opportunities and attracting more people and support to COBA’S programs.

“My approach is to create an atmosphere where people see us as a good investment. If you invest in the College of Business Administration, if you invest in Georgia Southern, your own degree becomes more valuable. Hence we create a culture where gifts become investments that benefit our school, our alumni and all the communities that we serve.” - SANDRA BENNETT
WELCOMING NEW EAGLES
Prospective Students Attend Reception

Hundreds of prospective Georgia Southern students and their families discovered what it means to join the Eagle Nation at one of the University’s three regional Undergraduate Receptions hosted in October. Georgia Southern University President Brooks A. Keel, Ph.D., along with College deans, faculty, staff and alumni welcomed guests to The Cobb Galleria in Atlanta, Ga.

In the main ballroom, students had the opportunity to watch an admissions video to gain a feel of campus life. Faculty were on hand to discuss majors offered in their respective colleges, and students were also able to explore a range of activities and organizations while checking on their admission status.

That evening, parent volunteer Cher Breslin from Dunwoody, Ga., excitedly greeted guests at her sixth Georgia Southern Undergraduate Reception. “I feel that this is a great way to stay connected to the University, and I believe in supporting my child’s education,” said Breslin, referring to her son Kevin, a first semester freshman.

At the reception, students also had the opportunity to interact with some of the dedicated alumni representing the University, who were working alongside Rachel Miller ’05, the director of Atlanta regional development. For alumna Margot Dawkins ’76, the reception represented an opportunity to share her memories of the University with prospective students. An active supporter of the University since graduation, Dawkins enjoyed talking with students and parents about Georgia Southern’s growth and impact.

“I do anything Georgia Southern asks me to do,” said the former Alumni Association president about her participation in the event. “Statesboro is such a warm, loving community, and it’s a good college feel. My goal is to make everyone at the reception aware of the fantastic opportunities available at Georgia Southern.”

For the past dozen years, alumnus Brian Brennan ’95 has enjoyed meeting prospective students at these receptions. “I always tell students that Georgia Southern is an experience they are never going to forget, and when they graduate, the University will always be a part of their lives, and they will want to give back,” he said.

Other new faces that evening included first-time volunteers, such as alumna Kristin Lord ’06. An accountant with the firm Mauldin & Jenkins, which employs 40 Georgia Southern alumni – Lord has taken a special interest in recruiting for the University. During the reception, Lord enthusiastically shared her positive University experiences with students, answered questions about the size of the campus and talked about her active involvement with the Alumni Association. “I’m here tonight because I want to bring awareness to the University,” she added. Her most important words of advice to incoming freshmen? “Embrace everything! Campus life offers so much.”

- MARY BETH SPENCE

NEWS, CONT.

College of Education
“FOCUS ON EXCELLENCE” AWARDS
Three College of Education faculty were awarded University-wide “Focus on Excellence” awards at Fall Convocation. The annual awards are given to two faculty in each of three categories: contributions to research/creative scholarly activity, instruction and service.

All three of the College of Education winners are from the Department of Teaching and Learning. Yasar Bodur, associate professor, and Julie Maudlin, also an associate professor, both won the Award for Excellence in Contributions to Instruction. Associate Professor Scott Beck was awarded for Excellence in Contributions to Service. Associate Professor Scott Beck was awarded for Excellence in Contributions to Service. Associate Professor Scott Beck was awarded for Excellence in Contributions to Service.

NEW CHAIRS NAMED
The College of Engineering and Information Technology has four new department chairs. Mike Jackson, Ph.D., is serving as the chair of the Department of Civil Engineering and Construction Management. The Macon, Ga., native spent the last 12 years on the faculty of the Civil Engineering and Construction Management Programs at the University of North Florida in Jacksonville.

Murali Medidi, Ph.D., was appointed the chair of the Computer Sciences Department. He joined Georgia Southern from Boise State University where he also served as chair of the Department of Computer Science. His principal research interests include wireless and sensor networking.

Frank “Skip” Gross, Ph.D., appointed chair of the Department of Electrical Engineering.
WHAT’S IN A NAME?

Many Georgia Southern alumni and students are familiar with the Williams Center, which houses the Office of Student Activities, but what about Veazey Hall, the Rosenwald Building or the Eidson House? Several buildings on the expanding campus bear the names of men and women who have made significant contributions to the University, but do you know anything about some of these individuals?

For instance, did you know the Eidson House is named for John Olin Eidson, Georgia Southern’s seventh president who served from 1968-1971?

The building on the corner of Herty Drive and Georgia Avenue was originally built in 1954 as a residence for then-President Zach Henderson. His successor, John Eidson and his wife, Perrin, were the second and last presidential couple to live there before it was converted to an Alumni House in 1972 with guest rooms for visitors to the campus. By 1980, it had become an office building for the Alumni Association and the Georgia Southern Foundation. It was named the John Eidson Alumni House in a ceremony on April 28, 1995, and is now home to the University’s Honors Program.

The Eidsons relished the idea of living on campus where they would invite students and faculty to join them for meals and conversation. Eidson was only president for three years, but in the book *The Southern Century*, Professor Emeritus Delma Presley noted those were action-packed years that left a deep imprint on the college for decades to come. Presley remembers him as being an “old-fashioned English professor” who had broad interests in subjects beyond his field of expertise and calls him a “gifted leader” who introduced new approaches to managing the academic organization.

Eidson introduced faculty governance through a faculty senate, the first organizational chart and began a planning process. Perhaps the most important activity he initiated was for the future campus. Realizing the need for upgrading the campus infrastructure, Eidson committed funds to an underground utility system more than a decade before the building boom began in the late 1980s.

He is credited with reorganizing Georgia Southern’s academic structure into schools and departments instead of divisions. The School of Arts and Sciences, The School of Education, a graduate school and the School of Business were authorized during his leadership. The first Callaway Professorship and the Division of Continuing Education were created during his tenure. Eidson was president when the College submitted its first proposal for a doctorate in education, and he supported the move from the NAIA (National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics) to the NCAA (National Collegiate Athletic Association).

The Fulbright Fellow and Tennyson scholar left Georgia Southern when the Board of Regents appointed him Vice Chancellor of the University System of Georgia. A gift left to the University by the Eidson estate is currently worth more than $875,000 and funds the John Olin Eidson Honors Program Scholarship, which gives out scholarships yearly to Honors students. - SANDRA BENNETT
Georgia Southern University welcomed more than 1,500 participants to the inaugural STEM festival on campus at several locations. Hosted by the University’s Office of Research and Economic Development, the three-day event showcased opportunities for students to discover and become interested in exploring careers in science, technology, engineering and math. The festival was designed to engage all ages from young children to adults in three distinct segments: i2 Work, i2 Research and i2 Explore.

During the i2Work segment of the Festival, students on campus had the opportunity to meet with prospective employers about internships and employment. i2 Research offered opportunities for students to explore all of the research being performed at the University in the fields of public health, athletics training, coastal plain science and more. During this event, Georgia Southern faculty and other area colleges and universities also met with regional industries for a research conference.

The festival concluded with an i2 Explore community event for K-12 students and their families at Nessmith-Lane Conference Center. During the children’s fair, younger students were treated to fun-filled lessons about robotics, how to make ice cream with liquid nitrogen, how to launch rockets with alka seltzer and even how to become a Jedi Knight.

“The purpose of the STEM Festival was to use exploration stations to demonstrate to our greater community that science, technology, engineering and math, despite many misconceptions, can be fun and that subjects that seemed boring in school have some very real applications and are tied to interesting careers,” said Karin Scarpinato, Ph.D., associate Dean for Faculty and Research and biology professor.

Engineering, is an expert in antennas, smart antennas, electromagnetics and propagation. He earned his Ph.D. in EE from Ohio State University, and served for 18 years on the faculty of Florida State University in Tallahassee.

Georgia Southern professor, Brian L Vlcek, Ph.D., is the new chair of the Department of Mechanical Engineering. He joined the University in 1997, and has served as faculty advisor to ASME and Eagle Motor sports, leading student teams to impressive finishes in regional SAE competitions. All four chairs will also serve as faculty members.

College of Health and Human Sciences NAMED AMONG TOP TEN SCHOOLS The Department of Health and Kinesiology’s online Master of Science degree in Sport Management has been recognized among the top ten by TheBestSchools.org. Sport Management is one of the fastest growing fields of study in the country. The Georgia Southern program can be completed in two years or once a student accumulates the required 36 credit hours. Students with this degree are prepared for such careers as athletics directors, coaches, league managers, agents and sports information, media or communications specialists.

Jiann-Ping Hsu College of Public Health ICSA SPECIAL CITATION Biostatistics professor Dr. Lili Yu and Ruth Whitworth, an IT expert and webmaster received a Special Citation from the President of the International Chinese Statistical Association (ICSA) in recognition of their contributions to the growth of the ICSA. Yu’s area of research is mainly concentrated on survival analysis and Whitworth is a liaison between the College and IT Services and has worked with the Biopharmaceutical Applied Statistics Symposium as a webmaster and registrar since 2004.
DREAM JOBS

Students Land Internships From Italy to the NFL

Not many college seniors can claim they have experienced their dream job before they’ve graduated. Not many can say they’ve lived and worked in three countries during their college career while still taking classes. And not many can say they have worked with foreign diplomats and ambassadors. But senior public relations major Dhara Shah can.

Shah has not only lived in America, but also spent two months living in Mumbai, India, for an internship with public relations firm Porter Novelli where she worked with clients such as Johnson & Johnson. Most recently, she lived in Italy where she served as a public diplomacy intern with the United States Mission to the United Nations Agencies at the Embassy of the United States America to Italy in Rome.

“This was a very unique and enormous opportunity for me as I have always been interested in government and politics,” she said. “I have Georgia Southern to thank because my experiences there have given me the confidence and the formal training to do well, along with my family and friends who have always supported me.”

Though she has had more than four internships in the public relations and marketing fields, her internship in Rome was a preview of the career Shah dreams of — serving as a public affairs or public diplomacy officer for the U.S. Government.

Her daily tasks included representing the United States in the United Nations to push for policy and reform. She also was in charge of leading two major campaigns demonstrating the United States’ stance on the issue of hunger, agriculture and poverty in relation to World Food Day, which was Oct. 16. Shah worked closely with the Food and Agriculture Organization of United Nations and the World Food Program of United Nations among others.

“The most interesting thing about this internship was attending high level United Nations meetings — it charmed me each time,” Shah said. “Diplomats and ambassadors from each country take time to voice their opinions and the entire setting is just so powerful and surreal. It’s something I’ve only seen on television before.”

Getting to an internship at this level wasn’t easy, she said. The application and acceptance process took six months to complete and included an application, several interviews and a security clearance process. But despite the lengthy process, Shah is proud of her accomplishment, and proud to have been able to represent the University on an international level.

“I was told that out of thousands of applicants, 10 were short listed and among those, only six made it to Rome,” Shah said. “I feel extra proud when people ask me which school I come from because my other co-interns were graduate students at Harvard,
Brigham Young and Yale. It does get overwhelming when you’re surrounded by such intelligence, but I know I am equally compatible and good at what I do, and I have Georgia Southern to thank for that.”

Megan Fannon’s (’13) internship is a little closer to home. The Atlanta, Ga. native can be found all over social media, working as the assistant to the Atlanta Falcons social media coordinator. Fannon discusses everything about the NFL team with fans at FalconsMegan on Twitter and completes upward of 25 posts per week on the Falcons’ Facebook page.

During Fannon’s internship, which began last July, she has become adept at learning the Falcons’ audience. “I’ve learned what the fan base wants from the team, and the importance of engaging with our fans,” she said. This includes garnering responses from fans by posting interviews and even wishing a happy birthday to players on social media.

“On game days, I assist with the social media hub, post pictures from the game, select photos for the video board and tweet about the Falcons,” she added.

While game day is always exciting, Fannon said that weekdays also offer memorable opportunities. “Every Tuesday, the players participate in community events. One of my favorite events was with the Make a Wish Foundation. One of the children wanted to hang out with a Falcons player for the day and also see what a pilot does. So, I traveled with one of our players to the tarmac at Southwest Air to meet a child. Another time, one of the Make a Wish children spent an entire day visiting the Falcons’ camp in Flowery Branch,” she added.

The sport management major entered Georgia Southern as a student athlete with a track and field scholarship, and later gained experience working with Georgia Southern Athletics in the areas of media relations and social media, which she credits as the key to her successful internship.

Second year graduate student Matthew Holmes recently completed a summer internship at Harvard Medical School studying the effectiveness of practicing Tai Chi and balance control in older adults.

Holmes is pursuing his Dr. P.H. degree in the Jiann-Ping Hsu College of Public Health and his internship, a T-32 Training grant, is a highly selective award intended to give doctoral students additional exposure to research, as well as the necessary skills to become an independent researcher.

“As a part of this grant I was able to collaborate on a publication, as a first author, with some of the best aging researchers in the world,” said Holmes. During the project, Holmes’ work consisted of research involving balance control and falling in older adults, and the effectiveness of practicing Tai Chi.

“Maintaining balance and preventative falling requires a complex network of biological systems. As people age, the biological systems that help maintain balance slowly decline, which ultimately leads to balance problems and increased risk of falling. However, there has been mounting evidence in the literature demonstrating that Tai Chi practice can improve balance in older adult populations. Tai Chi emphasizes controlled balance, controlled breathing, and mental focus. These components may all play some integral role in improving balance,” he said.

- Mary Beth Spence and Crissie Elrick
NEW HELMETS At the Homecoming game against Western Carolina, the Eagles’ HITS helmets featured a throwback to the original mascot of the school.

TRACKING HITS

The bodies of Georgia Southern Eagles football players take a pounding during a season and during countless practices. By the nature of the game, football injuries happen; however, the University put a revolutionary system in play this season to protect the health of these student-athletes.

The Eagles are using new equipment to hopefully prevent concussions. Georgia Southern is the only collegiate football team in the state using the Helmet Impact Telemetry System (HITS). It measures and records every hit to the head a player receives in games and practices.

“The system worked really well, and we received some great data from HITS for our concussion research,” said Tom Buckley, Ed.D., associate professor of athletic training. “This is not a one year project. We will be able to track players and their hits from year to year to determine the cumulative effects of concussions.”

Georgia Southern has equipped 40 Riddell helmets with HITS which is produced by Simbex. It costs around $1,500 per helmet with funding from the Office of the Vice President for Research and Economic Development. It is a solid investment in safety by the University. “We want to do everything we can to prevent our student-athletes from suffering a head injury,” said Georgia Southern President Brooks A. Keel, Ph.D. “The addition of this monitoring equipment will hopefully reduce the risks our Eagle players face on the field.”

There are six sensors in the helmets that measure the severity of each hit to the head. Each hit typically lasts around 15-milliseconds and has the impact of being in a 20 - 25 mile per hour car wreck. The data collected is then transmitted in nearly real-time to a computer being monitored on the sideline during every practice and game.

If a hit reaches a certain threshold, a pager worn by a graduate research student and the head athletic trainer will receive a notification. “If I get a message saying a player took a hard hit, I’m going to be keeping a close eye on that player,” said Eagles Head Athletic Trainer Brandy Clouse. “If that player displays any unusual behavior, I’m coming over to do a clinical evaluation to make sure that he’s not trying to hide it or downplay the hit and that it’s safe for him to continue playing.”

Each impact will also be time-stamped and can be synchronized with game video so coaches, athletic trainers and researchers can better evaluate the hits. “We can look at the body position, see what the athlete is doing and examine the force they experience,” said biomechanics professor Barry Munkasy, Ph.D. “We can then consider what can be done to reduce those hits by possibly changing techniques or teaching players what to do to lower their risks that will help improve their performance.”

HITS is not a diagnostic piece of medical equipment, but it is an early warning system. “At the midway point of the season, we had four players suffer concussions while wearing the HITS helmets,” explained Buckley. “We are now studying those impacts. We are looking at whether the magnitude or direction of the velocity had any bearing on what the outcome of the concussion was and whether the player’s cognition and balance were affected.”

HITS is a first line of defense to help keep the Eagles safe and in the game. - CASEY JONES

Concussion Research Impacts Athletes

HITS is a first line of defense to help keep the Eagles safe and in the game. - CASEY JONES
RESEARCH IN PANAMA’S RAINFOREST

Professor of Environmental Geography John Van Stan is collaborating on a research project in Panama’s tropical rainforest to determine how the roughness of tree bark affects the ability of ants to forage for food resources. To conduct the research, Van Stan is using an instrument he invented as a graduate student called the LaserBark automated tree measurement system, which is used to scan trees. He is collaborating with University of Louisville professor, Stephen Yanoviak, on the five-year National Science Foundation project. Preliminary results from a recent research trip to Panama indicated that ant species’ ability to forage for critical resources in tree canopies is limited by bark roughness.

DUO COLLABORATES ON TEXTBOOK

Political Science professors Darin Van Tassell and Patrick Novotny have published the new textbook, *Listening, Looking, Living: Qualitative Research in Political Science*, which incorporates qualitative research methods into the study of political science. Van Tassell and Novotny combined their own research experiences and classroom work together in a book that is an accessible, engaging and student-friendly introduction to the work of qualitative research. Focusing on interviewing (listening), participant observation (looking), and ethnography (living), the book introduces students to each of these methodologies and some of their basic techniques, then takes students through a review of some of the leading works in the field of political science that are based on each of these approaches.

JOINT RESEARCH PROJECT

Faculty in the Center for Forensic Studies in Accounting and Business are launching a joint research project with the Inspector General’s office for the State of Georgia. The project will gather data on the current efforts in state agencies to prevent exposure to fraud and related controls across state agencies. The report will be produced annually and will include reported cases of documented instances of fraud, waste and abuse and will identify the effectiveness of controls in place to prevent and detect fraud.

RADZYMINSKI NEW CHAIR OF GANDD

Professor and Chair of Nursing Sharon Radzyminski has been named chairperson of the Georgia Association of Nursing Deans and Directors (GANDD). Radzyminski currently serves as vice-chair of GANDD and will take over the chair position in August 2014. The nursing organization is committed to educating registered nurses by providing quality undergraduate and graduate education, leading-edge research and excellence in nursing practice.
Georgia Southern’s qualitative research community, Eagle QuaRC, has already held its third workshop since its inception in fall 2012, and interest is gaining across campus. Created by College of Education professors Christopher Brkich and Robert Lake, Eagle QuaRC is a community of faculty from different disciplines interested in conducting, supporting and exploring opportunities for qualitative research.

Qualitative researchers look at the “story” behind the numbers. “Numbers are absolutely everywhere,” said Brkich. “They’re important, but they don’t tell the whole story,” he continued. “When exploring the richness of human experience and in telling the story of that experience, sometimes it makes more sense to focus on a few images or the words of a few individuals to present a powerful and compelling account,” he said. For example, Brkich explained, a statistical analysis of painkiller consumption by addicts undergoing treatment may be important for the medical community, but it doesn’t tell the whole story. “The numbers don’t say anything about how or why the patients became addicted or what their experiences of addiction have been like,” he said. Additional faculty responsible for organizing Eagle QuaRC are COE’s Tracy Linderholm and Amelia Davis, Katy Gregg of CHHS and April Schueths of CLASS. The faculty organizers are discussing a fourth event to be held this spring or next fall.

Professors Helen Bland and Bridget Melton, along with Master of Public Health student Krystina Johnson, examined adults’ attitude toward teen pregnancy in a rural Georgia county. The study determined that while abstinence is the main teen pregnancy prevention method taught in the county high school, most adults in the community did not think abstinence programs were sufficient in preventing teen pregnancy or teaching responsible sexual practices. More research is needed on what types of sexual education programs parents would find acceptable to be taught in schools.
BELIEVE IT! WHAT A WAY FOR GEORGIA SOUTHERN TO LEAVE THE FOOTBALL CHAMPIONSHIP SUBDIVISION!
THE EAGLES 2013 SEASON CAME TO AN END WITH A WIN FOR THE AGES TO GO ALONG WITH SIX FCS NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS. GEORGIA SOUTHERN CLOSED OUT AN AMAZING RUN THROUGH THE FCS BY KNOCKING OFF THE FLORIDA GATORS 26-20 ON NOV. 23. THE VICTORY MARKED THE FIRST TIME GEORGIA SOUTHERN HAS BEATEN AN FBS TEAM. WHAT AN EMOTIONAL AND ELECTRIFYING DAY ON THE FIELD AND IN THE STANDS AS EAGLE NATION MADE HISTORY.

Opposite left: Jerrick McKinnon scores the game-winning touchdown
Opposite right: Zach Lonas and Garrett Frye celebrate with Jerrick McKinnon
Opposite bottom: Time runs out and the Eagles rush the field
Top right: Coach Jeff Monken embraces his wife, Beth, during the celebration
Below: (l-r) Kyle Oehlbeck waves the Black Flag, President Keel gets a hug from wide receiver Allen Lee, Eagles graduate assistant and former quarterback Jaybo Shaw and Jerrick McKinnon
What a year it has been for J.J. Wilcox. Since last fall, he has gone from playing football at the Prettiest Little Stadium in America at Georgia Southern to playing for America's Team, the Dallas Cowboys.

"An unbelievable, great year would be an understatement," said Wilcox. "I give credit to my family for the amazing support I have received. Plus, my coaches, my teammates and my community helped me get where I am."

During his first three years as an Eagle, Wilcox was an offensive force powering his way through defenses as a running back and receiver. His senior year, he switched to defense to play safety. Wilcox didn't think the position change would be his ticket to playing on Sundays. "No, not at all," he said. "I thought I'd take the hard route which is undrafted free agency and make some plays and make a roster somewhere. My parents and I always talked about how blessed I am. I am very fortunate."

When it comes to football, Wilcox always believed. He worked hard. He prayed hard. "As a kid, I always watched the draft growing up, and I always wanted that to happen to me. To hear Cowboys owner Jerry Jones call my name and tell me that he picked me -- that was one of the best days of my life."

Three games into the season, the third round draft pick found out he would be starting. On Sunday, Sept. 22, J.J. stood in the tunnel of Cowboys Stadium waiting for his name to be called over the PA system. This was his moment. 'Going through my head I'm thinking 'Oh, here I am. The big life on a big stage. What am I going to do? I'm finally here,'" said Wilcox. "All of the hard work, sweat and blood and those days where you didn't want to get up and go to practice finally paid off, and I'm here. It was a relief that I finally made it."

The Cowboys won that game 31-7, and Wilcox finished with three tackles and even had an interception, but it was negated by a penalty.

So, how is Wilcox handling the fame and success? He credits Georgia Southern for giving him a foundation for life and putting him in this position to achieve great things on and off the field.

"Georgia Southern is a great institution. The football program we have there is one of the best. It prepared me physically and mentally for the NFL. Coach Monken is a great coach. Practicing hard, playing hard and playing unrelentless football are some of the same Georgia Southern characteristics that we have in the system in Dallas."

When it comes to football, Wilcox always believed. He worked hard. He prayed hard. "As a kid, I always watched the draft growing up, and I always wanted that to happen to me. To hear Cowboys owner Jerry Jones call my name and tell me that he picked me -- that was one of the best days of my life."

The transition of going from Cairo, Ga., his hometown with a population of 10,000 to Dallas with a population of 1.2 million has led to some logistical challenges. "In Cairo, I go just a few blocks, and I'm downtown," said Wilcox. "Out here in Dallas, I have to go 15 minutes or more. Driving in the city and learning my way around have been my biggest adjustments off the field."

With all the happiness that comes from playing in the NFL, this rookie has dealt with a heartbreaking loss. Just before the season began, Wilcox's mother passed away. As Eagle Nation reached out to offer words of comfort and support, he was moved by a gesture from the Southern Pride Marching Band. After a practice, the band members stood together, arm in arm, and sang a stirring, a cappella rendition of the Georgia Southern alma mater. "I saw the video, and it was very touching," said Wilcox. "It really made my day. It wasn't an easy time, but that video made it a little better. I really appreciated that, and I'm glad I'm an Eagle. I'm so proud to be representing my University in the NFL."

What a journey from the ’Boro to Big D. J.J. Wilcox has arrived. He’s a rookie earning his star with the Dallas Cowboys. - CASEY JONES
Ever since Mark Byington was tapped for the Eagles head coaching position last April, he has been busy doing what he loves most — teaching.

“My favorite part of the day is practice and working with our players. There are times when I feel like I have to help guide them to become better men. I had coaches in my life who I really appreciate for helping me prepare for the challenges in life,” he said. “That is what I want to do. I want to make an impact on their lives; they might not always understand what I am doing, but I am doing what is in their best interest. I have to be a leader, I have to be a teacher, I have to be a communicator, and at the same time, I have to balance everything and do what’s best for our program.”

Hired to elevate the basketball program as it moves to the Sun Belt Conference, Byington’s day begins as early as 6 a.m. with a workout, followed by office duties and meeting with staff to check on players’ academics and other issues. He then watches video of the Eagles or their opponents, makes recruiting calls to high school coaches or parents and plans practices and team workouts.

In just a few months, he recruited five newcomers — two freshmen, a transfer student and two junior college transfers — to join the team of seven returning players. Byington is counting on such veterans as Jelani Hewitt out of Miramar, Fla., Marvin Baynham from Miami, Fla. and Tre Bussey of Lithia Springs, Ga. to assume leadership roles.
Following a season when Georgia Southern went 14-19 overall and 7-11 in the Southern Conference, the Eagles’ opening win against Columbia International is an exciting start to the season. In fact, Bussey and Hewitt both scored 20-plus points each in the 110-74 win.

The 100-point game was the first since November 2010, and the 102nd in program history.

Byington is optimistic about how things are going under his leadership and said his hopes for the season are “just for the team to get better every day, every game and prepare to win a championship.” He expects the move to the Sun Belt to be great for the team and fans alike adding, “It gets us in different parts of the country. It’s a higher level of basketball, with greater competition and challenges.”

“I want this group to be a great building block for what we’re trying to do here in the future,” said Byington. “A lot of these guys are in new roles, and I’m anxious to see how good some of them will be with the increased responsibility as the season progresses.”

Byington firmly believes his team is heading in the right direction, pointing to two key areas showing improvement – skills and academics. He encourages players to not only compete on the court, but also in the classroom. This past spring, players posted the highest GPA for a semester in nearly 15 years.

Raised in Salem, Va., Byington was a star player in high school and a three-year starter on the men’s basketball team at the University of North Carolina Wilmington. Last season the former shooting guard was an assistant coach at Virginia Tech. Before that, he spent seven seasons at the College of Charleston as an assistant under Bobby Cremins, the former Georgia Tech head coach. “Once I was finished playing college basketball, I really missed being around the team, the competition and just the everyday highs and lows of trying to build something and trying to win championships. From that point forward, I wanted to get back in basketball,” he said.

A passionate coach, Byington encourages alumni and fans to “get behind us early and watch this thing grow. I don’t know if I’m a player’s coach or an old-school coach, probably a mix in between, but when it comes to game time, it’s about the players and not me.”

“I am fortunate to be at Georgia Southern. I know I am blessed to have this situation. Am I living a dream? I definitely could say that.” - SANDRA BENNETT

“I have to be a leader, I have to be a teacher, I have to be a communicator, and at the same time, I have to balance everything and do what’s best for our program.”

- Mark Byington
ATHLETICS

FOOTBALL

Alumna Named New Director of Football Operations

Kassi Lee (‘11, ‘13), a former team captain and four-year letterwinner for the Georgia Southern Cross Country and Track program was named the new Director of Football Operations. Lee earned both her bachelor’s and master’s degrees in business administration from Georgia Southern. Before assuming her new role, Lee spent two years working with the Eagle Football office as a graduate assistant responsible for the recruiting database and handling itineraries and logistics for visits by prospects.

Join the Journey

The excitement is building as the Eagle Nation continues with construction at Allen E. Paulson Stadium in preparation for the 2014-15 Sun Belt Conference season. Improvements include the addition of 6,300 seats and the construction of an upper deck, with an expected completion date of May 2014. Construction is also moving ahead on the new $10 million, privately funded Football Operations Center in the east end zone of Paulson Stadium. The 50,000-square-foot facility will house coaches’ offices, locker rooms, workout facilities, meeting rooms, a video production suite and a football Hall of Fame.

Shaw Returns as Assistant Coach

Former quarterback Jaybo Shaw (‘12) has returned to Georgia Southern as a graduate assistant working with running backs. As quarterback, Shaw led the Eagles to a 10-5 record season and a semifinal appearance in the FCS playoffs in 2010. Shaw was at the helm when Georgia Southern won the Southern Conference and advanced to the semifinals in the playoffs, finishing the 2011 season with an 11-3 record. He is pursuing a master’s degree in sport management.

Eubanks Makes NFL Roster

Rookie NFL linebacker Darius Eubanks (‘13) was promoted from the Cleveland Browns practice squad to the active roster. The four-year Georgia Southern starter signed on as a non-drafted free agent with Minnesota in May. The club waived him on August 31, and three days later the 6-2, 222-pound linebacker was picked up by the Browns.

VOLLEYBALL

The Eagles defeated Samford University 3-1 in the Southern Conference championship match. This is the team’s fourth SoCon Tourney title.

Van Dyke Signs Pro Contract

Alumna Kate Van Dyke (‘13) signed a contract to play professional volleyball in Laon, France. The four-year starting setter for the Eagles called it “a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.” Van Dyke is the only player in Southern Conference (SoCon) history to earn first-team all-league honors all four years, and she was named the league’s Player of the Year in 2012. Van Dyke earned tourney MVP honors after leading the Eagles to the 2010 SoCon Tournament title and helped Georgia Southern win the SoCon South Division regular-season title in 2012.

Wood Named Head Volleyball Coach

Dustin Wood, former assistant coach at George Mason University, has been named the Eagles new head volleyball coach. Wood has nearly 10 years of experience coaching volleyball. For six seasons, he served as a coach at East Stroudsburg University and also as the head coach of the Division I men’s program from 2006-09. In announcing his selection, Athletics Director Tom Kleinlein said Wood “brings head coaching experience -- experience as a player and the understanding of the CEO concept of running a program.”
**BASEBALL**
*Eagle Signs with Astros*

Former Eagle pitcher Justin Hess (’13) signed a free agent contract with the Houston Astros in July after earning his degree. The pitcher finished his University career with a 14-12 record and a 4.34 ERA. This past season, Hess went 5-6 with four saves and a 3.69 ERA in 13 starts and 23 games.

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**SWIMMING AND DIVING**
*Graduate Assistant Promoted to Diving Coach*

David Giambra, Georgia Southern’s assistant diving coach for the last two seasons, was promoted to full-time diving coach. Giambra holds a bachelor’s degree in mechanical engineering from Clemson University and is pursuing a master’s at Georgia Southern. He was a four-year letterwinner at Clemson and holds school records in the one-meter, three-meter and platform diving events.

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**GOLF**
*University to Add Women's Golf*

Beginning in the 2015-16 season, the University will add women’s golf as its 17th intercollegiate program and will compete as a member of the Sun Belt Conference. The program will offer six full scholarships, the full complement allowed by the NCAA. Director of Athletics Tom Kleinlein also announced the promotion of men’s golf coach Larry Mays to Director of Golf/Head Men’s Golf Coach. In this role, Mays will oversee both programs. Men’s assistant coach Carter Collins was promoted to associate head coach of the men’s team.

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**BASKETBALL**
*Chester Webb Named to Georgia Sports Hall of Fame*

Chester Webb, a star basketball player for Georgia Teachers College, has been named to the Georgia Sports Hall of Fame’s Class of 2014. The native of Elberton, Ga., played between 1952 and 1956 and is the program’s all-time leading scorer with 2,542 career points. In 1956, Webb scored 883 points at an average of 30.5 points per game for the best season in school history. He holds school career records for field goals made (883), free throws made (776) and rebounds (1,685). After his senior season in 1956, the Syracuse Nationals chose him in the NBA Draft, however, Chester chose to serve in the U.S. Army. Webb was inducted into the Georgia Southern Athletics Hall of Fame in 1959, and he was on hand to see his number 22 retired on January 30, 2010. The 2014 Georgia Sports Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony will be held at the Macon City Auditorium in Downtown Macon on Saturday, Feb. 22, 2014.

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**SOFTBALL**

Georgia Southern Softball earned 12 slots on the National Fastpitch Coaches Association’s All-America Scholar-Athlete list. The squad posted a 3.33 team GPA, ranking second in the Southern Conference.
Picture billionaire industrialist Tony Stark’s garage/workshop, or Air Force One in the movie “Iron Man 3,” starring Robert Downey Jr. Those sets were designed by Georgia Southern alumnus Timothy Martin Earls (’92), who has amassed an impressive list of film and television set design credits that include 38 episodes of the television series “Glee,” and movies such as “Mission: Impossible III” starring Tom Cruise, “Flightplan” with Jodie Foster and “Valentine’s Day,” which featured an ensemble cast of Hollywood superstars.

As the set designer, Earls is responsible for “creating the working drawings used by the construction or effects crew to build both physical and virtual sets.” He adds, “I enjoy creating environments that literally pull a viewer into the picture if just on a subconscious level. It enhances the audience’s experience and helps further the writer’s or director’s vision to sell the story being told.”

How did this alumnus born in Coventry, England, find success in Hollywood in the two decades since he left Georgia Southern? Earls began his career training to become an architect and spent several years working at the James W. Buckley and Associates architectural firm in Swainsboro, Ga., where his family relocated just before his senior year in high school. At heart though, Earls always wanted to design for film and television, but he says, “Living in Swainsboro, nobody knew how to get into the film industry.” He credits the owner of the firm for encouraging him to
FROM STATESBORO TO HOLLYWOOD
Alumnus Turns Dreams into Show Business Career

return to school, and he explains, “I had a unique experience because I was working full time while I was going to school full time, and I still managed to have a social life. I had a really good time at Georgia Southern.”

Armed with a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree, the Georgia Southern graduate headed to California to take a job as art director for a gaming company owned by hometown friends. He was soon looking for work when the company ran into financial trouble. “I sent out blanket emails to anybody that I thought worked in the movie business,” he remembers. “Within weeks I got an email from someone saying they needed an art director on a short film.” That two-day shoot led to the television series “Babylon 5” for which he earned his first screen credit as a concept designer for illustrations he developed for the show. When that job ended two-and-a-half years later, Earls found a position on the series “Star Trek: Voyager,” and worked there for a couple of years.

He managed to break into feature films with 2003’s “Terminator 3: Rise of the Machines.” Since then he has designed sets for more than a dozen films and most recently served as the senior lead set designer for “The Lone Ranger.” Currently, he is working on the seventh installment of the “Fast and Furious” franchise. Earls can’t reveal his specific designs in that film but acknowledges his work has a definite design style. “I try to create objects, devices and sets which heighten the illusion or reality or workability. Due to my interest in engineering and architecture I tend to design things the audience would believe could be real regardless of whether they’re actually possible or not.”

The one project he regrets turning down: “Avatar,” the 2009 science fiction action film that set new box office records. “I was working on ‘Walk Hard’ and received a request to design ships for ‘Avatar,’ but declined because I felt a little loyal to the production designer I was working for, not knowing I would be let go the next day anyway,” he says. Still, Earls admits his show business career has exceeded his expectations. “For me to move to California and get into the union within three months, I was very lucky,” he says. “I count myself very fortunate, more fortunate than I ever expected to be.”

Although show business may be his first love, his passion for British sports cars is not far behind. He bought his first before attending Georgia Southern, has restored several since then, and currently drives a Jaguar. “It was my father’s time at the Triumph factory in Coventry that sparked my interest in British roadsters,” Earls says. - SANDRA BENNETT

ON SET
Far Left: “Fast and Furious 7” is among the set designer’s favorite projects.

Nissan GTR courtesy of Robert Hewlett.

Left: Timothy Earls on the set of “Star Trek: Voyager.”

- sandra bennett

GEOGRASOUTHERN.EDU/MAGAZINE 47
Geology professor Katy Smith holds the molar of an American mastodon.
AN ARTIST’S EYE

Eric Strauss (’85) is an artist who knew he had passion and talent; however, when he graduated from Georgia Southern, he was unsure if he would ever make a living as a full-time metal sculptor. Fast-forward to 2013, when Strauss is in demand as an artist commissioned by clients to create original works that can cost tens of thousands of dollars.

“It hasn’t always been easy, but I have really worked hard and that is the key,” he said. “It has taken an amazing amount of effort, persistence, drive, enthusiasm and being in the right place at the right time,” he said as he explained how his career blossomed after Fay Gold, the legendary Atlanta art dealer and gallery owner, began showing his pieces. “I used to call myself the low end of the high end art world, but after putting my work on exhibit in Gold’s gallery, my lowest work was selling from $2,200 to $20,000 and that was within five years of my leaving Georgia Southern.”

The sculptor entered college as a business major because he expected to one day run his father’s manufacturing company. Nevertheless, a class in photography led to a startling discovery that changed his life. “My photography class was across from the Sculpture Department and they always kept that door shut to keep the dust down,” he said. “Toward the end of the year, I opened the door, and saw this wonderful chaotic feast of materials and tools. What I saw spoke to me; it called me.”

In an instant, Strauss was drawn into the worlds of metal, fire, hammers and welding. After he received his Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in bronze casting and ceramics, he studied in Italy and apprenticed for two years with Caroline Montague, the Georgia sculptor known for her monumental stainless steel and wall sculptures. Eventually, Strauss opened his own studio in Atlanta, and made art from scrap metal he foraged from his uncle’s scrapyard.

How a Closed Door Changed a Sculptor’s Life

He has exhibited in Georgia, Florida, Tennessee, Michigan, California, Arizona, New Mexico and several other states. Today, his pieces can be found in museums, companies, schools and the collections of private collectors such as legendary musician Elton John and a founder of Home Depot.

“Elton John saw my work in an Atlanta gallery and he bought a few pieces,” said Strauss who estimates his art has also helped raise at least $400,000 in almost 30 years. “I do a lot of charity work because it is the only way I can give back,” he said.

Looking back at his career, Strauss said if not for University teachers like Professor Emeritus Pat Steadman he would not have made it as a full-time sculptor. “The whole way I create, I credit to my education at Georgia Southern; more than just the technical skills of how to weld and how to grind, the professors were great and really molded me to what I am today. I didn’t know it then,” he said. “It took me years to discover it, and come back and say ‘wow’ I now know what they were talking about then.”

Currently he employs contemporary blacksmithing techniques such as forging to assemble many of his pieces, which can range in size from a small ornamental leaf to a 15-foot sculpture. “I am not a traditional blacksmith because I was not trained as one,” he said. “I use their technique but because I’m from the fine arts world, I think a little differently than they. It has helped me to diversify and build a whole new career.”

Strauss grew up in Atlanta and currently lives on a small blueberry farm in the Chattahoochee Forest in Ellijay with his wife and two children. Living at the foot of the Smoky Mountains inspires his creativity. “My work is organic and I am constantly surrounded by nature. I live in it, I live with it and my kids grow up in it... I just love it. I look at everything through an artist’s eye.” - SANDRA BENNETT
HOMECOMING 2013

CELEBRATIONS
Above: Nickel Bag of Funk performed on Sweetheart Circle.

Right: Homecoming royalty (l-r) Ellen Hogan, Annalee Ashley, Zac Watson and Errol Spence.

JUST FOR HOMECOMING
Above: The Eagles wore throwback uniforms, the same style worn by the Teachers College Professors from 1924-41.

Left: GUS represented the theme, “The Wonderful World of Georgia Southern.”
COMING HOME

“What did you love most about your time at Georgia Southern?”

“I met the love of my life in 1997.”

WALTER STAFFORD AND YOSHONDA WILLIAMS

“The ‘large-scale, small-feel,’ because you do feel like a family, you don’t feel singled out.”

DARYLE-LYNN ROBERTS

“I loved all the people I got to meet and all the different ways I was able to get involved on campus.”

MONICA CASTANEDA

“Tradition. Just being able to be a part of it from 2007 to 2012. And feel the tradition that goes way back to 1906 and everything in between.”

BRENT GOLDMAN

GAME DAY

Above: Country music singer and songwriter Elizabeth Cook (’96) performs during halftime.

Below: Fans cheer the Eagles on to a 35-19 win over Western Carolina.
Many tailgating groups have come and gone at Paulson Stadium, but for the last 13 years, one group of individuals has stayed strong. They call themselves the Red Flag Gang.

The group of about 35 people makes it to every home game and many away games, where they share food, drinks and camaraderie, things many of the group members can’t imagine Saturdays at Paulson without.

“It’s kind of funny because people have always heard of the Red Flag Gang,” said original group member Seaby Phillips (’75). “Whether it is good things or bad things, everybody always seems to hear about it.”

Mike Wright, who began tailgating because his son, Justin Wright (’02), played for the Eagles in the early 2000s, is considered the founder after initiating the group’s first meet up. Wright said he saw fellow Georgia Southern fans at a red light and reached out to them about meeting up on a Georgia Southern online sports message board now known as gsufans.com.

“I posted on the message board, which was created by Paul Barkley, that I would put up a flag so we could find each other,” Wright said. “I said let’s don’t do white and let’s don’t do blue. Nobody had red at the time, so I got some PVC pipe and put the red flag up, and it just kind of grew from there.”

Though he no longer tailgates with the group, Wright said, “It was the camaraderie that made the Red Flag Gang special. We were a friendly group and always had new people come in. It was four of the greatest years of my life. I was able to go places, do things and meet people, and I wouldn’t take the world for it.”

Doyle Clifton (’75), another original member, said the gang even welcomes opposing fans to join their tailgate.

“We always invite opposing fans to join us for festivities before the battle begins on the field, and many, even when they lose, come back after the game for more fellowship,” Clifton said. “We have a pretty good reputation for taking care of our ‘enemy/friends’ and many of these same fans come back year after year.”

Through the years, various people have been in charge of the red flag, said Phillips, who is currently the keeper. “It’s almost like a sacred thing now to get there and raise the red flag because I don’t feel like it’s time to tailgate until the flag is flying.”

And just what is the atmosphere like at a Red Flag Gang tailgate? “Excitement. We’re all just excited about getting to see our Eagles play one more time, the pageantry of the band and Freedom’s flight,” Phillips said. “We’re all just passionate about Georgia Southern and football, and we enjoy the tradition of being there.”

Clifton described the gang as a family that jokes around, and sometimes even argues. “We fight over football, politics and sometimes each other, but we all can’t wait for football season so we can get back together again,” Clifton said. “Hopefully the Red Flag Gang will continue into the next phase of Georgia Southern football and become even stronger as we change and grow as Georgia Southern.” - CRISSE ELRIK
ALUMNUS HONORED FOR WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

The Defenders of Wildlife organization recently honored alumnus Nick Wiley ('83) with its “Spirit of Defenders” Public Service Award for his dedication to a wide range of conservation issues including the sustainable management of American alligators and northern bobwhites, and programs to get young people outdoors.

As the executive director of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Wiley oversees the state’s 6.5 million acre wildlife management system. “I was very appreciative of the recognition,” he said. “People from all across the country attended the dinner. It was very nice, very professional and one of the highlights of my career.”

Emmy award-winning actor Ed Asner co-chaired the event and popular television entertainer wildlife conservationist Jeff Corwin hosted the September dinner in Washington D.C. where Wiley and three others were recognized for their commitment to wildlife preservation.

Wiley, a Georgia Southern biology major, grew up in rural South Georgia, and since joining the Florida agency in 1988 as a field biologist, worked his way up the ranks to executive director.

SIPS ‘N STROKES

Southern Women Paint Pittman

The first Atlanta, Ga. meeting of Southern Women gathered for a “Sips ‘N Strokes” social in Sandy Springs. The group of 81 alumni from the graduation years of 1980-2013 participated in a three-hour painting class. The evening ended with each person completing a portrait of Sweetheart Circle featuring the Marvin Pittman Administration Building and the University’s symbolic GSU bushes.

1970s
Faye Chatman (‘75), the program director for the University of Georgia’s Franklin College of Arts & Sciences in Griffin, Ga., was elected president of the Georgia Association of Women in Higher Education. Chatman graduated from Georgia Southern with a Bachelor of Arts degree in English.

1980s
Donna Brewton Brooks (‘86) recently launched Red Clay Editorial Services LLC, an Atlanta-based provider of editorial content and editing services. A native of Savannah, Ga., Brooks graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in journalism and served as the editor of The George-Anne, Georgia Southern’s student newspaper. Brooks previously worked as a columnist for Georgia Magazine and as managing editor for Lionheart Publishing.

The Honorable Jeffrey Hanson (‘88) was appointed Bibb County’s second state court judge by Georgia Gov. Nathan Deal. Prior to joining the bench, Hanson was a managing partner at Sell & Melton law firm in Macon specializing in civil litigation.

2000s
Jill Knight (‘00) was named the 2013-14 Teacher of the Year for the Darlington County School District in South Carolina. Knight is the Social Studies department chair at Mayo High School for Math, Science and Technology.

College of Education doctoral alumni Jesse Davis (‘06) and Amy Duke (’07) were named Georgia’s 2013 National Distinguished Principals by the National Association of Elementary School Principals. Davis is principal of Feagin Mill Middle School in Houston County, and Amy Duke is the principal of Springdale Elementary School in Bibb County. They were among 61 principals honored during an October awards banquet in Washington, D.C., as part of National Principals Month.

Francys Johnson (‘01), a civil rights attorney living in Statesboro, was recently elected Georgia state conference president of the National Association of the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) at the 71st Annual State Conference. Johnson is a native of Sylvania,
When Patrick J. Smith ('83) lost his Georgia Southern College class ring 30 years ago on a beach in Florida, he never thought he would see it again. But an odd turn of events proved him wrong and landed the ring back in his possession this year.

It all began when Randi Sykora-McCurdy, administrative assistant in the Jack N. Averitt College of Graduate Studies, received a letter from Florida resident Sylvia Sanchez claiming to have found a class ring with the Georgia Southern logo and the name “Patrick J. Smith” inscribed on it.

“We usually don’t get requests like that, but I called the registrar’s office to see if I could find any information,” she said. “Oddly enough, there was only one ‘Patrick J. Smith’ who had graduated from here and it ended up being him.”

Smith said Sanchez didn’t want a reward, but simply wanted to get the ring back to its rightful owner. Smith is grateful to Sykora-McCurdy, who was happy to have played a small role in the reunion. “It makes me feel very good to know that I could help in some way. This was such a unique story, and I wanted to see how it would all pan out,” Sykora-McCurdy said.

Even more amazing? The ring still fits. Smith said he wears it regularly and was surprised at its condition after all these years. “To lay in the sand, surf, salt and sea for that length of time and still be recognizable is unbelievable,” he said. “Doing the right thing and reuniting me with my ring, I just think that’s pretty darn cool.” – CRISIE ELRICK

INTERNATIONAL FLAIR

As a bilingual child growing up in Savannah, Ga., Salua Brannen ('98) always had a love — and a knack — for languages.

Fluent in Spanish with an ability to also speak Dutch and Portuguese, it’s no wonder that Brannen’s travels around the world influenced her decision to pursue a degree in international studies from Georgia Southern. As a child, Brannen traveled to her mother’s native Colombia, South America and later on in life to many other countries in Europe, Latin America, Asia and South Africa.

Even though Brannen wasn’t born in another country, she became a mentor for other international students on campus, and also was the first student to earn an international studies degree from Georgia Southern. “Everybody thought I was international, because that is how I was raised. The different cultures were always so present at home,” she added.

As an undergraduate, Brannen participated in the Model UN with other student representatives, was a member of the International Club and Spanish club and a staff writer for The George-Anne student newspaper. One of her most memorable experiences occurred during the 1996 Olympics, when she worked as an interpreter for the Spanish speaking athletes and was an envoy for the Dutch sailing team.

An accomplished author who has received poetry awards for works in both English and Spanish, Brannen is sharing her passion for languages and writing with her two young daughters. “The languages were always my favorite courses. The whole international aspect of it all is so exciting. It’s an outlet to the world.”

Brannen continues to keep close ties with Georgia Southern, most recently participating in an alumni panel for the Center for International Studies. – MARY BETH SPENCE
Investing in the future is very important to Cheryl Saxon (’99). As a former Georgia Southern scholarship recipient, Saxon is committed to providing opportunities for students, in the hope that she can give back to the University that opened so many doors for her.

Saxon’s path to college began as a non-traditional student. After graduating from high school, she got married, had a child and then decided to go to college. Saxon chose to follow in her father’s footsteps by majoring in construction management and was grateful to learn that she was the recipient of a University Foundation scholarship.

“The scholarship made a big difference and really allowed me to focus on my studies and then gave me the opportunity to pursue a career in the construction industry. This is why I feel it is so important to help future Georgia Southern students,” Saxon said. Today, she works as a project manager for Stage Front Presentation Systems, an audio visual installation company located in Savannah, Ga.

Georgia Southern ties run deep in Saxon’s family. This month, her son, Lee, graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in philosophy.

Andrea Miller (’03) released her novel Smokin’ & Spinnin’ in August through Amazon.com. Her debut novel is the story of a young woman’s broken engagement, her decision to move to Charlotte, N.C., to escape the gossip of her small hometown and her unanticipated entry into the world of NASCAR. Miller is a graduate of the College of Business Administration.

Kate Randall (’09), Caleb Holloway (’10) and Darin Lane (’09) recently received promotions from Draffin & Tucker, LLP. The certified public accounting firm provides a variety of accounting services to clients across multiple states, primarily in the Southeast, with office locations in Albany and Atlanta, Ga. In the firm’s healthcare practice located in Albany, Randall was promoted to supervisor, Jamison was promoted to senior and Holloway was promoted to associate II. Lane was promoted to associate II in the firm’s Atlanta healthcare practice.

Dr. Kelly R. Price (’91, ’96, ’01), the curriculum coordinator for Forsyth County Schools in Cumming, Ga., has been named a board member of the National Science Teachers Association for a three-year term. Price’s educational experience includes working for 14 years as a middle and high school science teacher. She has held a number of leadership positions within the Georgia Science Teachers Association, and has served as president for the Georgia Science Supervisors Association and the Georgia Council of Supervisors of Mathematics. Price was a member of the Georgia Department of Education’s Science Education Advisory Panel and STEM Education Advisory Panel. She has also worked on several education committees and has served as both a Georgia regional science fair director and the Georgia Science Olympiad state program co-director.
Chester Curry
Basketball standout Chester Curry ('60) died at his home in Coleman, Ga., on July 30. A player for the Professors under Coach J.B. Scearce, Curry was a four-year starter for Georgia Teachers College from 1956-60. During his college career he scored 2,008 points to rank second in all-time scoring. He was a member of the '58-'59 team, which reached the NAIA national tournament in Kansas City, Ms.. After leaving college, Curry taught and coached in Mitchell and Clay counties. In 1993, he was inducted into the Georgia Southern Basketball Hall of Fame.

Jacob Elisha (J.E.) Rowe
Jacob Elisha Rowe ('61), former Eagle athlete and head basketball coach, died in September. He played both baseball and basketball at Georgia Southern, earning All-American first team honors in baseball. Rowe played briefly with the New York Mets and the Los Angeles Dodgers before returning to Georgia to coach high school basketball. He coached the Eagles for four seasons in the early '70s, compiling a 57-46 record as the team moved to NCAA Division I. Rowe was inducted into the Georgia Southern Athletic Hall of Fame and was named the 2013 Alumnus of the Year of the College of Health and Human Sciences. In 2011, the decorated amateur golfer and his family established the Coach J.E. Rowe Scholarship to support students in the Department of Health and Kinesiology who pursue a career in the coaching field.

Annette Slater Branch
Annette Slater Branch ('83,'87), the wife of Professor Emeritus of Sociology Roger Branch, died in June. She was a double major in anthropology and sociology and was the first person to receive a B.A. degree in anthropology from Georgia Southern. She also earned the Master of Education degree from the University. Slater's husband, Dr. Branch, chaired the Department of Sociology and Anthropology for 18 years.

James “Jim” William Long
Former basketball star and retired high school basketball coach James “Jim” William Long ('62) passed away at age 77. The 6’7” center played for Georgia Teachers College’s Professors under famed coach James Boyd (J.B.) Scearce. He is remembered for grabbing 22 bounds in just one half in a game against Mercer University. He later spent nearly 30 years coaching basketball at Georgia’s Effingham County High School. Coach Long won 454 games and was presented the Scholastic Coach magazine superlative plaque.

Esther Raines Mallard
Esther Raines Mallard ('73), a retired history teacher, passed away in July. A Columbia, S.C. native, Mrs. Mallard was a Statesboro resident for 46 years. After her retirement from Statesboro High School, she worked with Special Collections in the Zach S. Henderson Library. Mrs. Mallard earned a master’s degree in history and an education specialist degree from Georgia Southern.

Martin Parris
Men’s soccer alumnus Martin Parris ('08) was killed in an October automobile accident in Fayetteville, Ga. The 31-year-old played for the Eagles from 2001-03 and graduated with a bachelor of science degree in information technology.

Tommy Dee “Doc” Smith
Former assistant professor of health and head athletic trainer Tommy “Doc” Smith, passed away in October in Statesboro, Ga. A native of Huntingburg, Ind., Mr. Smith was awarded basketball scholarships to Indiana University and Indiana State Teachers College. He served in the United States Army and spent 15 years teaching and coaching in cities across Indiana. During this time, he earned a master’s degree in guidance and counseling and a master’s degree in sports medicine and athletic training. Mr. Smith moved his family to Statesboro in 1971, when he took the position of head athletic trainer, and officially became known as “Doc.” He was well-known as a trusted healer, counselor, mentor and friend to many Eagles.

During his career, Mr. Smith was honored to work with many sports legends including Georgia Southern University head coach, Erk Russell and Georgia Southern University head baseball coaches, Ron Polk and Jack Stallings. He also traveled with the baseball team when they played in the NCAA 1973 World Series in Omaha, Neb., and in the Intercontinental Cup Baseball Tournament in Cuba in 1979.

The Eagle Football Alumni Association awarded two student scholarships from the Tom “Doc” Smith Athletic Fund endowment shortly before his passing.
Cadets Establish New Alumni Network

As one of a dozen cadets in Georgia Southern’s ROTC program, COL David Lee (’87) shared a unique bond with his fellow graduates. Today, he is leading a new alumni network that is strengthening that bond by providing the opportunity to renew friendships, establish connections and mentor new cadets. Lee serves as the founding president of the Eagle Battalion Alumni Network, an organization that is also spearheading efforts to increase alumni involvement.

“Since 1980, the Eagle Battalion has experienced tremendous growth, and it has transformed into a fantastic organization. There were 12 in my graduating class, and we were located in the basement of the Math/Physics building. Since that time, more than 460 graduates have commissioned from the program,” he added. “I want to give back to the program in any way that I can, and this network is a great way to continue the legacy of the Eagle Battalion.”

Lee, who is set to retire after more than 32 years of military service, attributes his successful career to his experiences in the Eagle Battalion, and he is encouraging others to join him in supporting current and future cadets. “The Eagle Battalion has provided the foundation for many cadets to establish successful military careers, including myself,” said Lee, a veteran of Desert Shield and Desert Storm, who has also held numerous positions in the Georgia Army National Guard.

The benefits of this organization are numerous, Lee said. Not only do members have the opportunity to reconnect with other alumni, but they have the ability to make a difference with current cadets. “By establishing this network, we are able to take the vast military experience of our alumni and use it to assist a new generation of cadets,” he added. Working in concert with the Eagle Battalion, Lee says alumni network members have the opportunity to further a cadet’s education through mentoring, by offering support, answering questions and teaching valuable life lessons.

The Eagle Battalion Alumni Network recently celebrated their successful launch with a cookout during Homecoming Weekend, and Lee anticipates further alumni involvement at next spring’s commissioning ceremony.

Membership in the network is open to all commissioned Georgia Southern cadets. For more information, visit the Eagle Battalion website at GeorgiaSouthern.edu/rotc.
The Georgia Southern University Foundation hosted the inaugural Southern Classic Golf Tournament Oct. 21 at the historic Peachtree Golf Club in Atlanta, Ga., raising more than $51,000 for student scholarships.

One of the finest golfing venues in the world, the Club was established in 1945 by golfing legend Bobby Jones.

Some of the participants hitting the links that day included PGA golfer and alumnus Aron Price, former Georgia Southern quarterback Tracy Ham, Trip Addison, Teresa and Andrew MacCartney, Marshall Mize and Jim Van Epps. The winning foursome of Matt Chesser, Rob Whitaker, Jayce Stepp and Karl Lutjens placed first in the tournament.

Tournament co-chairs Tommy Bond and Jim Medbery were encouraged by the large number of Eagle supporters at the event. “We had a number of great golfers and athletes and this was a tremendous success,” said Bond. - MARY BETH SPENCE
James Van Epps (’77) is following in the tradition of many other Georgia Southern alumni who have endowed a fund at the University to benefit succeeding generations of students. Van Epps, a successful executive in the finance and insurance industry, decided he wanted to do something to help military veterans who face many challenges as they ease back into civilian life and navigate the nuances of higher education. The business administration graduate has endowed the Wounded Eagle Fund to benefit the nearly 800 veteran students, including dependents, at Georgia Southern.

“As alumni, I feel it is important that we act as good stewards and make sure our wounded veterans are given support,” Van Epps said. “Everyone benefits from the services that the military gives us over a lifetime, and it is important for us to support these deserving men and women after they have served their country.”

Georgia Southern has been named among the most military-friendly campuses in the nation by both G.I. Jobs magazine and Military Advanced Education’s Guide to Military Friendly Colleges and Universities. Still, veterans who return to the classroom may struggle physically, psychologically or financially. The Wounded Eagle Fund provides direct help to the brave men and women who serve in times of war and peace. It was established to provide the gift of a financial stipend supplementing the benefits of the G.I. Bill for wounded veterans or their dependents.

For Van Epps, the Wounded Eagle Fund is a family affair. He and his wife Buff (’77) have hosted events for Wounded Warriors, and their son Jason (’10) helped design the Wounded Eagle Fund website where anyone can contribute to the Fund. “I want alumni to know that this fund is a unique opportunity for them to make donations that go directly to Wounded Warriors on Georgia Southern’s campus,” he said.

“Donors will know where their money is going, and they have the potential to meet the people the Fund assists.”

Military students eligible to receive assistance from the Wounded Eagle Fund include veteran Wounded Warriors from any branch of service who maintain a 3.2 GPA, Purple Heart recipients or veteran students with a demonstrated financial need.

Today, Van Epps is the co-founder and chief operating officer of First Principles Capital Management, a privately held investment management firm with offices in Atlanta and New York. He explained being at Georgia Southern “was an exceptionally important period in my life. I made many good friends there, received a great education and it helped start my career in the business world. Georgia Southern provided me with a good foundation.”

That foundation is what he wants for the University’s veterans and Wounded Warriors. - SANDRA BENNETT

CONTRIBUTIONS WELCOME
You can learn more about the Wounded Eagle Fund and make contributions to it at the website gsuwoundedeaglesfund.com.

★
George K. Brannen has a passion — helping to make great students better.

And in an effort to fulfill his goal of helping young people excel, Brannen has created the George K. Brannen English Scholar’s Award and the George K. Brannen Department of Writing and Linguistics Award for students interested in pursuing careers in English and writing.

Additionally, he established the George K. Brannen Center for Addiction Recovery Endowment for students working to obtain their degree through the University’s Center for Addiction Recovery.

“I could have waited until I passed on to endow these scholarships, but there is just a part of me that would like to see results from it,” he said. And he has, by sitting in a classroom with the students who benefit from these awards.

Brannen isn’t a professor, but a student, well on his way to completing degrees in English and writing and linguistics that he began working on at Georgia Southern 40 years ago. He is also retired after working many years in oil fields out west and in Canada. His first attempt as a student was unsuccessful after he began experimenting with alcohol and other substances, he said, which is why he felt it important to help students struggling with similar problems.

“The reason I failed out of Georgia Southern in 1973 is because of that exact problem — addiction. I think that people who really want to work to overcome that deserve a second chance,” he said. “It definitely affected me, but I came out okay, and it doesn’t mean other people can’t do that. Sometimes they just need a little help, and I see this program as a giant step forward for students here at Georgia Southern.”

The endowment is even more personal for Brannen after not only overcoming addiction, but also surviving cancer and a liver transplant. He made the award official on the 10th anniversary of his transplant.

“Ten years ago I had cancer, and that had a lot to do with 1973 because of the direction I chose to go in with certain substances. I ended up having a liver transplant, and I try to tell people maybe they don’t need to go that route,” he said.

And while helping students who struggle with addiction gain a second chance at an education is important to him, Brannen
“I could have waited until I passed on to endow these scholarships, but there is just a part of me that would like to see results from it.”

-George Brannen

believes even more in inspiring students who are interested in English and writing to become future educators.

“I just think it’s really important to encourage students who are interested in becoming English teachers because I can’t fathom going through my life not being able to read or write. I’ve worked with people in my life that are totally illiterate – adults who can’t read or write,” he said of his decision to endow the awards in the Department of Literature and Philosophy and in the Department of Writing and Linguistics. “People do it every day, and I just don’t see how they manage. So if I can help that issue in some way, I just think that’s a good deal.

“And another reason I do this is because I know there are a lot of colleges and universities that center scholarships around sports – and that is very important,” Brannen continued. “But truth be known, nothing would get done if you didn’t have reading, writing, arithmetic, science and those basic subjects.”

But most of all, Brannen said he enjoys knowing his contribution will impact future generations.

“I think what I’m trying to do here is make my life count for something. I don’t want to come into the world and leave and not have done anything,” Brannen said. “And if I can help change someone’s life, then that’s a good deal. If that person can go on to help someone learn to read or write, that’s an even better deal.”

- CRISIE ELRICK

The 40th annual “A Day for Southern” campaign soared to a new record, with alumni, faculty, staff and supporters in Statesboro and Bulloch County donating more than $2.1 million during the fundraiser in September.

The Georgia Southern University Foundation uses these funds for academics, athletics, scholarships, faculty and staff along with community resources including the Performing Arts Center, the Georgia Southern Museum, the Center for Wildlife Education and the Lamar Q Ball Jr. Raptor Center. Pictured left to right are: Campus Co-Chair America Minc, Campus Co-Chair Stephen Rossi, Community Chair Phyllis Thompson, University President Brooks A. Keel, Ph.D., Vice President for University Advancement Salinda Arthur, Athletics Director Tom Kleinlein and Director of Annual Giving Alex Grovenstein.

Upcoming Prospective Student Reception:
January 23, 2014
Cobb Galleria Centre
Atlanta

Upcoming Open Houses:
February 1, 2014
April 5, 2014
Georgia Southern University

prospective eagles can explore your alma mater

RSVP Today: GeorgiaSouthern.edu/eventRSVP
Georgia Southern University hosted its first induction ceremony for Legacy Society members Sept. 6 at Georgia Southern’s Garden of the Coastal Plain.

The evening honored and recognized alumni and friends who have included Georgia Southern in their estate plans either by last will and testament or as a beneficiary of a trust, retirement account or life insurance policy. Following dinner, new members were presented with Legacy Society pins.

Guests were entertained by the Southern Chorale, the University’s student choral ensemble, as well as Georgia Southern alumnus Durwood Fincher (’69), (aka Mr. Doubletalk).

Watch the video of Mr. Doubletalk in action at GeorgiaSouthern.edu/magazine.

IN THE GARDEN

The Legacy Society Event was held at the Heritage Pavilion in the Garden of the Coastal Plain.
The Georgia Southern University Foundation hosted the annual 1906 Society Event at the Eugene M. Bishop Alumni Center Sept. 27, honoring the University’s annual supporters. Georgia Southern President Brooks A. Keel, Ph.D. and First Lady Tammie Schalue, along with University Advancement Vice President Salinda Arthur, welcomed guests to the event which included entertainment by the Swingin’ Medallions. Membership in the 1906 Society is extended to contributors who make annual gifts of $1,200 or more that support scholarships and initiatives to enhance teaching, research, cultural activities and economic development.

See more photos at GeorgiaSouthern.edu/magazine.