Some of the most prolific singer-songwriters in the country music business are Georgia Southern alumni who craft their ideas into sometimes humorous, sometimes poignant songs, leaving a lasting impression on The Music City.

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If you're a country music fan, chances are good that many of the tunes you hear every day on the radio were either written or performed by Georgia Southern alumni. Maybe your favorite is “The Dance,” by Garth Brooks. How about “Honey Bee” by Blake Shelton, “Gimmie That Girl” by Joe Nichols, “Farmer’s Daughter” by Rodney Atkins, or “We Rode in Trucks” by Luke Bryan? These lyrics, penned by University graduates who got their start performing in Statesboro’s night spots, are now sung by some of the hottest talent in country music. They’ve received such honors as ASCAP’s Songwriter of the Year, the Song of the Year award from the Academy of Country Music, and countless Grammy and Country Music Association nominations.

Alumni have performed hundreds of times at the Grand Ole Opry, hosted Sirius XM radio talk shows and one artist’s gold single recently sold more than 128,000 tracks in just one week. Here, we present a tribute to our alumni whose dedication to their craft has rocketed them to stardom in The Music City and beyond.

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Stories by Mary Beth Spence

…”Well, there’s thirteen hundred and fifty two guitar pickers in Nashville. And they can pick more notes than the number of ants on a Tennessee anthill....”

John Sebastian, “Nashville Cats”
DREAM BIG, WORK HARD
Talent and focus take Luke Bryan to the top of his industry

Thomas Luther Bryan (’99) is probably one of the steadiest acts in country music, but before he became a household name, he was cutting his teeth in Statesboro establishments as a student at Georgia Southern.

Better known to his fans as Luke Bryan, the Leesburg, Ga., native has slowly, but steadily built his country music career as a teenager writing songs in his hometown church all the way to being named the Top New Artist and Top Solo Vocalist by the Academy of Country Music.

Bryan counts Alabama, George Strait and Brooks & Dunn as his early musical influences – and now he’s in the same league with some of his country music idols.

And the rest, as they say, is history. Bryan released his first hit single “All My Friends Say” from his debut album, “I’ll Stay Me,” and wrote the song “Good Directions” – a number one hit that was recorded by his friend Billy Currington.

The next few years saw huge successes for Bryan with the release of his second and third albums, “Don’t My Thing” and “tailgates & tanlines,” plus several platinum and gold hits. Bryan’s new single, “I Don’t Want This Night To End,” became his fourth No. 1 hit, and last year he was one of only three country artists – along with Lady Antebellum and Taylor Swift – to have multiple singles sell more than 100,000 tracks in a week.

Bryan’s appealing music has explored love, trucks and honkytonks – among other themes – and his concerts reach out to audiences ranging from college students to farmers. “My music pulls from my life experiences, and I want it to be fun,” he said about his connection with fans through his music.

But hey – if y’all are part of the diehard Bryan fan club called the Nut House – you already know that.

Bryan’s journey to Nashville began with an unspeakable tragedy and temporary detour for the award-winning artist. After graduating high school, he was honing his songwriting skills and performing with his band in hometown venues, ready to pursue his music career in Nashville. Tragically, his older brother, Chris, was killed in a auto accident the very day that he was to move to The Music City.

Bryan wanted to stay close to family, so he scrapped his plans for Nashville and enrolled at Georgia Southern. His music career continued to grow; and the business management major and his band played every weekend at venues ranging from Dungus McGee’s to fraternity parties. “It was the best experience of my life. I had a great time, made great friends, and it was real social,” he said with a laugh. Bryan also continued writing songs and recorded his first album.

Instead of striking out for Nashville after graduation, surprisingly, Bryan returned to Leesburg to work on the family farm. After a year-and-a-half, Bryan’s father wanted to see his son pursue his talent and gave him an ultimatum: move to Nashville, or be fired. When Bryan left for Nashville at the age of 23, he followed his heart, but he was ready. “I was mature, and really clear on my vision for my career,” he said. Within two months of his arrival in 2001, he landed a publishing contract, continued building a catalog of songs, and eventually signed with Capitol Records.

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"My music pulls from my life experiences, and I want it to be fun."
Elise Cook writing songs and ‘touring like mad’

When I chose to make this my career, I had to take that and apply a business sense to it if it was going to work and I was going to make my student loan payments,” she said.

After graduation, Cook was traveling home to Florida one weekend when she received her first recording contract. Because she didn’t travel with a laptop, Cook stopped at an Ace Hardware store to pick up her contract via the store’s fax machine and the rest is history.

Since that time, Cook has performed more than 300 times at the Grand Ole Opry in Nashville and released five albums to rave reviews. Her latest, “Welder,” was produced by Don Was with backup vocals from Dwight Yoakam, Rodney Crowell and Buddy Miller.

In 2007, she was tapped to host the popular Sirius XM radio show “Elizabeth Cook’s Apron Strings,” on the Outlaw Country channel, which features interviews with country music legends.

“My memorable times have been getting to interview Connie Smith and Marty Stuart, Wanda Jackson, getting to be around Willie Nelson, Shooter Jennings and all the Outlaw Country family, and having my mother as a guest on the show the Mothers Day before she passed. Thanks to the satellite radio technology, I’ve also done my show under some pretty wild circumstances…from Japan, the UK and rolling down the Pacific Coast Highway,” she said.

Last fall, Cook charmed TV host David Letterman with her witty, honest portrayal of her Southern upbringing on his show, and she has since landed several TV and film roles. “These opportunities have kinda fallen from the sky,” she said.

And as for the future? “I am thinking on my next record and touring like mad.”

SINGING ON KEY

Dan Adams loves to tell a story. The Greenville, Ga., native has been telling plenty of them through more than 150 songs and five country music albums that he has written since he left Statesboro after graduating from Georgia Southern.

“I love writing songs because they paint a picture and tell a story,” said the songwriter who was influenced by a variety of musical styles. “I grew up on the Allman Brothers and the Eagles, Alabama, Charlie Daniels and Kenny Rogers,” Adams revealed.

A self-professed marketing major, Adams played in local bands until he got a call from Capitol Records, landing an internship before his senior year on campus. After that, he was hooked on the music industry and The Music City.

“A couple of months after graduation, I moved to Nashville to work in the record label side of the business, which included Internet marketing,” he said. Within the next couple of years however, the self-described “road dog musician” switched gears, going back to performing and he began playing more than 200 shows a year for a five-year stretch.

Over the years, Adams’ career has easily moved back and forth from songwriting to performing, “I am thinking on my next record and touring like mad. “

For one, he joined more than 100 songwriters descending upon the island for a series of acoustic performances. “Nashville’s songwriting community moves to Key West for five days, and you get to hear a lot of hit songs from the guys that wrote them,” said Adams.

This is shaping up to be a busy year for Adams, with the debut of his sixth album on iTunes and Amazon.com. He is co-writing with many industry veterans and hosting regular songwriters’ showcases that highlight the talents of his peers. Musicians such as Russell Hitchcock from the group Air Supply and country artists including Joe Bachman and Stuart, Wanda Jackson, getting to be around country music legends.

Country channel, which features interviews with country music legends.

Over the years, Adams’ career has easily moved back and forth from songwriting to performing, “I am thinking on my next record and touring like mad. “
Although Ben Hayslip (’94) has never played in a band, the former Georgia Southern baseball player has scored his biggest successes in the country music industry.

In college, Hayslip viewed songwriting as a sideline, and sports came first. The Evans, Ga., native was a member of the Eagles’ team that went to the 1990 College World Series in Omaha, but athletics was not his calling.

He’d always had the same dream since the age of 14. “I’ve always said, ‘I’m going to Nashville,’” Hayslip recalled. After graduation, a degree in business management, he moved to Nashville to pursue a solo career. Hayslip teamed with producer Kent Wells and recorded an album that included a duet with Dolly Parton on the track "Train, Train," releasing three singles, all of which hit the Music Row Top 40 – "Kill the Mullet" (#38), "Small Town America" (#25) and "Nowhere USA" (#22).

New Music Weekly named Hayslip one of the Top 10 artists to watch, and "Nowhere USA" reached No. 1 on the independent chart in 2008. Beddingfield’s most recent album "This Life Ain’t For Everybody" features 12 tracks, including "The Gospel According to Jones," with the legendary George Jones. He continues to write, tour and make frequent television appearances.

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"This industry is sort of like golf. You keep having little successes at a time, and it was enough for me to keep hanging around Nashville."
In 1984, Tony Arata (‘80) was making a living performing in cover bands in Savannah. The journalism graduate came home from work one day to greet the landlord at his apartment wishing him good luck when he moved in 30 days. Puzzled, Arata discovered that his wife, Jaymi (‘80, ‘83), had given notice. “My wife forced my hand to move to Nashville. She said, ‘If you’re going to write songs, you need to go where people know what it means. She got us there and kept us there,” said Arata, who became interested in music during his childhood. Even though Arata wasn’t aware of it at the time, the road to Nashville began simply enough when he started looking at his siblings’ album collections. “I spent time reading the lyrics from the Beatles, the Rolling Stones and R&B – all kinds of styles,” he said. “That was when it really clicked with me that sometimes songs came from songwriters and the artists were usually not writing themselves,” he mentioned, such as Rod Stewart, Aretha Franklin and Glenn Campbell. Arata taught himself to play guitar, and during his sophomore year at Georgia Southern, he began writing songs and playing in local clubs. After the couple’s move to Nashville, Arata squeezed in his songwriting with his workday, waking up early each morning to write songs before heading off to his job loading trucks for UPS. After work, he would perform at Open Mic nights in some of the city’s clubs. Call it fate or call it perfect timing, but one night after performing a song, “The Dance,” at the Bluebird Café, Arata met another aspiring writer who was himself working selling boots named Garth Brooks, who had just moved there from Oklahoma. “Garth said to me, ‘If I ever get a record contract, I’m going to record that song’ When he signed with Capitol Records, he called me and asked if the song was still available,” said Arata. “The Dance” – Arata’s first song to be recorded, and also the first of several songs that Brooks would record by the songwriter – went on to win Song of the Year in 1990 from the Academy of Country Music; was number one for three weeks in Billboard and Radio & Records and received Grammy and CMA nominations. “I've been fortunate to have a lot of artists sing my songs,” said Arata, estimating that he’s written anywhere from 600 to 700 songs penning chart-toppers for country stars like Patty Loveless, Emmylou Harris, Bonnie Raitt, Lee Roy Parnell, Trisha Yearwood, Reba McEntire, Randy Travis, Clay Walker, Suzy Bogguss, Don Williams, Hal Ketchum and Tanya Tucker. When it comes to songwriting, Arata follows one simple rule: “Write the best thing you can on any given day. What some people shy away from in a song is what others may like in a song, he says about composing lyrics. “There’s no real trick to songwriting – you don’t have to come up with something new. The best songs are what someone has already lived – like having a broken heart.” Arata performs some 60 shows per year, including a monthly show at the Bluebird Café. Some of his favorite concerts are home shows – small intimate gatherings where residents can walk to the venue. Last fall, he returned to his hometown of Tybee Island, Ga., to perform a benefit concert for the Tybee Post Theater. Performances aside, Arata acknowledged that some of his most gratifying work comes from speaking engagements. He shares advice and tips from his experiences in the industry with teenagers and college students serious about their craft. “I want these aspiring writers and artists to know that rejection isn’t the end – it’s where it starts.”
Global economic ties give new meaning to ‘made in’

I nternational trade is a fact of life. Countries have even developed some rules to determine where their products are manufactured, said Trey Denton, Georgia Southern professor of international marketing and advertising. “That’s because we’re sourcing components from all over the world and frequently we’re assembling the products somewhere else.

Countries have even developed some elaborate rules to determine where their products are manufactured,” said Denton. “It’s harder than ever before to tell where products are manufactured. The iPad, for example, which counts as being manufactured in China, only has a very small percentage of its value produced in China. ‘The rest comes from around the world,’” Denton added. “When you see a ‘made in’ label, very frequently only a small part of it was actually made in that particular country.”

Even those who profess to prefer buying home-grown products, often don’t. “There’s a real conflict between intention and behavior,” Denton said. “Who’s against buying American? But when you’re shopping, it’s all about quality versus price. We don’t look. Ask 100 people if they look to see where their clothing is made. They do not look. I do that exercise in all of my classes, and I’ve never had a student tell me they know where their shirt was made. We don’t look. Ask 100 people if they look to see where their clothing is made. They do not look. I do that exercise in all of my classes, and I’ve never had a student tell me they know where their shirt was made.

Globalization – the intertwining of the world’s economies – is sometimes a politically charged topic, but is also an undeniable fact of life. Even those who profess to prefer buying home-grown products, often don’t. “There’s a real conflict between intention and behavior,” Denton said. “Who’s against buying American? But when you’re shopping, it’s all about quality versus price. We don’t look. Ask 100 people if they look to see where their clothing is made. They do not look. I do that exercise in all of my classes, and I’ve never had a student tell me they know where their shirt was made. We don’t look. Ask 100 people if they look to see where their clothing is made. They do not look. I do that exercise in all of my classes, and I’ve never had a student tell me they know where their shirt was made.

About 98 percent of the clothing purchased in the United States is imported from abroad. Only 2 percent of clothing bought in this country is manufactured on U.S. soil.

China is far and away the leader in manufactured clothing, having entire towns dedicated to making specific goods. The city of Dangyang, for example, makes one-third of all the socks in the world.

The amount of clothing produced in the United States is not insignificant – there are 132 clothing factories here – but India and Pakistan in addition to China have more clothing plants than the United States. Clothing manufacturing is a major source of exports and jobs for many of the world’s smaller, developing nations. Little Sri Lanka is home to 21 factories in a geographic footprint about the size of West Virginia. Malaysia, about the size of New Mexico, has 35 clothing plants. Some American manufacturers, notably The North Face, Roundhouse Workwear and American Classic Outfitters have enjoyed a resurgence in sales of late due to increased demand for domestic products and an international demand for “Made in the USA” clothing.

Table: Home grown clothing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Number of Clothing Factories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>294</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>132</td>
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<tr>
<td>U.K.</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>66</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viet Nam</td>
<td>39</td>
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<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S. Korea</td>
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<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
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<tr>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S. Africa</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
<td>21</td>
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Table: Made in America

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Make/Model</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Company</th>
<th>MANUFACTURED</th>
<th>FOREIGN OR DOMESTIC</th>
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<tr>
<td>Toyota Tundra</td>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>Toyota</td>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>80% Toyota</td>
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<tr>
<td>Toyota Prius</td>
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<td>Toyota Corolla</td>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>Toyota</td>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>59% Toyota</td>
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<td>Toyota Avalon</td>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>Toyota</td>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>58% Toyota</td>
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<tr>
<td>Toyota Tundra</td>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>Toyota</td>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>57% Toyota</td>
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<td>Toyota Camry</td>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>Toyota</td>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>56% Toyota</td>
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<td>Toyota Corolla</td>
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<td>Toyota</td>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>55% Toyota</td>
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<tr>
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Source: ClothingRegister.com

About 98 percent of the clothing purchased in the United States is imported from abroad. Only 2 percent of clothing bought in this country is manufactured on U.S. soil.

China is far and away the leader in manufactured clothing, having entire towns dedicated to making specific goods. The city of Dangyang, for example, makes one-third of all the socks in the world.

The amount of clothing produced in the United States is not insignificant – there are 132 clothing factories here – but India and Pakistan in addition to China have more clothing plants than the United States. Clothing manufacturing is a major source of exports and jobs for many of the world’s smaller, developing nations. Little Sri Lanka is home to 21 factories in a geographic footprint about the size of West Virginia. Malaysia, about the size of New Mexico, has 35 clothing plants. Some American manufacturers, notably The North Face, Roundhouse Workwear and American Classic Outfitters have enjoyed a resurgence in sales of late due to increased demand for domestic products and an international demand for “Made in the USA” clothing.
In 1975, nothing could more typify our culture than baseball, hot dogs, apple pie and Chevrolet, or so went the commercial jingle of the day. But just how many of these remain uniquely American?

Baseball:
Baseball is America’s unofficial “national sport,” but is hugely popular in Latin America and Japan. China produces 80 percent of the world’s baseballs, but every baseball pitched in the American Major Leagues is made in Costa Rica in a Rawlings factory. Rawlings is headquartered in St. Louis and is part of the Jarden Corporation of Rye, N.Y.

Hot dogs:
According to recent survey data obtained by the National Hot Dog and Sausage Council, Americans purchase 350 million pounds of hot dogs at retail stores – that’s 9 billion hot dogs. But the actual number of hot dogs consumed by Americans is probably much larger. It is difficult to calculate the number of hot dogs Americans may eat at sporting events, local picnics and the carnivals. The Council estimates Americans consume 20 billion hot dogs a year. That works out to about 70 hot dogs per person. Hot dogs are served in 95 percent of homes in the United States. Fifteen percent of hot dogs are purchased from street vendors and 9 percent are purchased at ballparks, according to statistics from the Heartland Buffalo Company. While the United States consumes the lion’s share of what we know as “hot dogs,” other countries have their own sausage-in-a-bun variations. The world’s largest hot dog was 197 feet and was prepared by Shizuoka Meat Producers in Shizuoka, Japan.

Apple pie:
National Apple Pie Day is May 13. To us, apple pie is an American dessert, but it actually originated in Europe sometime in the 14th century. The first known published apple pie recipe was printed by Geoffrey Chaucer in England. Arriving with the Pilgrims, apple pie quickly became an American dessert staple given the availability of fruit. About 55 million tons of apples were grown worldwide in 2005, with a value of about $10 billion. About two-fifths of the total was produced in China. More than 7.5 percent of the world’s production occurs in the United States, where more than 60 percent of all the apples sold are grown in the state of Washington. Imported apples from New Zealand and other temperate areas are increasingly competing with U.S. production.

Chevrolet:
How “American” is one iconic make? That depends on which model one examines. According to ConsumerGuide Automotive, the Chevy Aveo is built in South Korea with only 1 percent American or Canadian parts. The HHR is built in Mexico using only 36 percent U.S. parts. Chrysler’s Ram 1500 comes in at 70 percent domestic parts. The Ford F-150, once with a domestic content as high as 90 percent, is now at 60 percent. The Chevrolet Silverado contains 61 percent American/Canadian parts. Chrysler’s Ram 1500 comes in at 70 percent domestic content. It should be noted, however, that the domestic content of many U.S. cars varies year by year depending on the reliable supply of quality lower-cost, overseas parts available to U.S. automakers. The Ford Escape, for example, had a 65 percent domestic content in 2009 and 2011. In 2010, however, it was at 90 percent. Surely any truck hailing from Texas would be an all-American hauler, right? Unless it’s a Toyota Tundra, built in San Antonio with 80 percent domestic content.

CHINA:
Are the economic fears justified?
Made in China. It seems to be everywhere from flat-screen TVs to ball point pens.
But is China really the coming indomitable economic force it’s often portrayed to be?
“China is a huge competitor and has a huge influence on the global economy, but they probably don’t deserve the fear that is ascribed to them,” said University marketing professor Trey Denton. “China is approaching the limits for many of its industries in terms of resources and worker productivity. They’ve got a lot of structural problems that limit their growth. They’ve got a capitalistic economy with a communist government and it produces some really weird outcomes.”

A 2011 crash on China’s newly constructed, high-speed rail system resulted in 40 deaths and nearly 200 injuries just months after it began operation. Major earthquakes struck in May 2008 and April 2010 resulting in tens of thousands of deaths in collapsed structures – including schools. These events deepened many Chinese citizens’ skepticism of their nation’s ability to produce reliable, quality products that can stand toe-to-toe with world competitors.
While the flow of goods often seems to be one way, in reality the increasingly affluent in China are buying American – including U.S. automakers. “They’re built in China,” said Denton, “but they’re U.S. brands. They’re buying Cadillacs and Buicks. GM is making quite a bit of money in China. They also like our high-tech products – our computers, our music and our software.
“They have a very hierarchical culture that puts a lot of pressure on them for conspicuous consumption,” said Denton. “The higher you go in their society, the more you’re supposed to demonstrate your level by using expensive products. The pressure is naturally there because of their culture. But there’s also a real bias against things Chinese because of their quality problems. They prefer in many cases to buy foreign brands, and they love U.S. brands for that reason.”
Mike Davis has always loved the game of golf.

Now that he’s the executive director of the United States Golf Association (USGA), only one thing has changed.

“Play less golf now than I’ve ever played in my entire life,” laughed Davis (’87), who became USGA executive director on March 2, 2011, after serving as senior director of Rules and Competitions.

Davis last played golf competitively when he was a Georgia Southern Eagle, and in 1990 he joined the USGA on the administration side of the sport as assistant manager of Championship Relations.

Setting up the course for the U.S. Open, a job he started in 1997 when he became U.S. Open Championship Director, remains one of his great passions.

“I love it,” said Davis. “I would probably pay the USGA to allow me to keep doing it if I had to. I’m not only personally interested in it, but we’ve made some really good strides in terms of how the course is set up, how it’s presented and how much excitement it provides. Hopefully I’m not too busy and I can continue to do that.”

The role of USGA executive director is one to be taken lightly. The position was established 117 years ago, and Davis is only the seventh person to hold the title.

“I’m not sure how to read that,” he said. “It’s kind of daunting if you think about it.”

Davis succeeded David Fay who held the position for 21 years, and follows legends like Joseph Dey, the executive director from 1934-68.

“When (Dey) retired, he was so respected worldwide that he actually became the very first commissioner of the PGA Tour,” Davis said. “Back in those days the Tour was just a separate arm of the PGA of America before it broke away. There’s been a lot of great people before me. I’m humbled by the assignment, and I shudder to think that I’m even in the same category as the six guys before me, and I’m working hard not to disappoint.”

The role of USGA executive director isn’t one to be taken lightly. The position was established 117 years ago, and Davis is only the seventh person to hold the title.

Davis succeeded David Fay who held the position for 21 years, and follows legends like Joseph Dey, the executive director from 1934-68.

Working hard might be an understatement.

Davis is the senior-most staff member of the USGA and is responsible for managing all aspects of the Association’s day-to-day operations. He oversees all of its core functions — which govern the rules, handicapping and equipment standards for the game — essential programs, and human and financial resources of the Association.

In total, the USGA conducts 15 championships including the U.S. Open, the U.S. Women’s Open and the U.S. Senior Open, along with numerous amateur championships and international matches. On top of it all, Davis still finds the time to officiate at The Masters, The British Open and The President’s Cup.

With so much to juggle, it’s nice to know that golf is one sport that sees the players actually step in and officiate themselves — just another aspect of the game Davis loves.

“It’s a self-regulating sport,” he said. “Can you imagine some guy in the NFL saying ‘I’m going to step in and officiate this game’?”

*Mike Davis (’87), USGA executive director*
after a play, ‘Wait, everybody hang on. I just held that guy, so give me a 10-yard penalty.’ It happens all the time in golf, and the rare time somebody doesn’t do that, they’re almost looked at as someone who doesn’t belong in the game. You don’t meet bad people. Everybody’s nice in the game. There’s a great deal of honesty and integrity, even on the elite level.”

The love of the game started early for Davis, who grew up in Chambersburg, Pa., and picked up golf at 8 years old. His parents had a golf-club membership, and his father taught him the game—although it wasn’t easy.

“When I started, they didn’t have junior clubs, so your parents took some old clubs, cut the shaft off and put a grip on it,” Davis said. “You’d take your sawed-off clubs, and that’s how you learned to play back then.”

Davis went on to win the Pennsylvania State Junior Championship in 1982. That put him on the radar of the USGA.

At the time, Davis was familiar with a star Georgia Southern Eagle, Jodie Mudd, who turned pro in 1982 after a stellar year as an amateur. That put Georgia Southern on Davis’ radar.

“Jodie Mudd was one of the best amateurs in the country,” said Davis. “He played on the Walker Cup team in 1981 and I’d seen him play a bunch of times. When he was at Georgia Southern, it was one of the top five programs in the country. I knew I wanted to come down South so I could play golf year-round, and I’m just delighted I picked Georgia Southern.”

—Matt Yogus
W hile it’s been said that words can change the world, one Georgia Southern University public health professor is using his work to accomplish that task.

Recognizing a need both with Georgia Southern students and his native homeland of Ghana, Evans Afriyie-Gyawu, coordinator of the Environmental Health Sciences Discipline in the Jiann-Ping Hsu College of Public Health (JPHCOPH), initiated a plan. “I had a vision,” said Afriyie-Gyawu, “that it would be great for our University students to gain their practical learning experience in an environment or a country whereby their contributions could help improve the health conditions of the people. The students were very excited about this idea!”

Last summer, he and a group of 10 graduate students spent five weeks in the West African nation engaging in HIV/AIDS prevention work, disease control issues and studying environmental health concerns across the three regions in the country. It was the University’s first graduate student-oriented Study Abroad group to journey was the University’s first graduate student-oriented Study Abroad group to journey across the three regions in the country. It was the University’s first graduate student-oriented Study Abroad group to journey to Ghana, and also the first trip for any graduate students in the JPHCOPH.

“In this College, practicum experience combined with capstone research (for master’s students) and preceptorship (doctoral students) experiences are requirements for students, and these are a reflection of what they’ve studied here,” Afriyie-Gyawu said. “It came up with the idea of a study abroad trip after realizing that the JPHCOPH students were having a difficult time finding sites and areas in Statesboro and in the state of Georgia to complete these requirements.

“I thought it would be a good idea to visit Ghana, because not only will students fulfill their academic mandates, but they will also travel to a peaceful country in Africa (in dire need for public health services) and experience other cultures as well,” he said.

In addition to his familiarity with the region, Afriyie-Gyawu felt that the peaceful, English-speaking country would be an easy transition for students.

“Ghana is one of the most stable countries in Africa right now,” he said, “and the students were able to easily communicate with residents.”

A faculty member for the past three years at Georgia Southern, Afriyie-Gyawu holds a Master of Public Health degree in epidemiology/biostatistics and a doctorate in toxicology from Texas A&M University. His research background in food safety and toxicology focuses on strategies to protect humans and animals against contaminantson in foods/feeds.

For Afriyie-Gyawu, Ghana presented a prime opportunity for his students to conduct research on one of the most pressing health concerns in that country – local meat processing. Slaughterhouses in the region are known as abattoirs – use scrape tires as a fuel source for smoking meat intended for human consumption. Workers follow the practice of burning scrap tires over an open fire to singe the fur of slaughtered goats and cattle before cooking and eating. “This is their process of smoking the meat. The abattoir operators use tires because they are readily available, and are often either free or cheap. The disposal of tires in Ghana is not as controlled as it is in the United States,” said Afriyie-Gyawu.

The health risks to the abattoir workers and nearby residents are significant, he said. Tires are made of chemicals and materials that are hazardous to the public’s health when they are released. When tires are burned, the ashes usually contain high levels of heavy/toxic metals (including arsenic, lead, cadmium, mercury, etc.) that can be washed through water runoffs, so Ghana’s water sources could also be polluted with these toxic chemicals.

“We looked at the chemical composition of tires to determine what was emitted on a daily basis,” said Afriyie-Gyawu, discovering that dangerous chemicals (for example, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons – heavy/toxic metals) were polluting the area, and that the meat was also exposed to these chemicals. “These emissions could have toxic effects among humans via the food systems and some of the chemicals have been classified as either carcinogens (cancer causing) or probable carcinogens in the U.S.,” he said.

The group conducted surveys of workers and consumers to determine their knowledge of the scrap tire-based meat processing procedures and the potential dangers presented. “We found that the residents wanted safer practices to be used,” he said. Afriyie-Gyawu and the students subsequently presented their preliminary findings at an American Public Health Association conference in Washington, D.C., and at the University of North Carolina, Wilmington last November.

Another group of Afriyie-Gyawu’s students, including Kimberly Curtis, focused on HIV/AIDS prevention in Ghana. “With a population of 24 million people, approximately two percent have been diagnosed with HIV,” said Curtis, who worked closely with nurses counseling patients in local hospitals. “We were exposed to real-life situations that we wouldn’t necessarily have the opportunity to work with in the United States,” she said, about Ghana’s open-door system in regard to HIV/AIDS. “Thursdays were clinic days, and we discovered that a lot of HIV patients were malnourished, so we provided them with supplements and also dietary recommendations to address the disease.”

Curtis found that life in Ghana is drastically different than life in the United States. “The trip taught me to be happy with what I have,” she said, revealing that residents don’t have amenities such as air conditioning and hot showers. “It has influenced me to help more, and I am trying to figure out other ways to give back to the people of Ghana,” she said, eager to return in hopes of making a small difference in the lives of other residents.

Word of the successful Ghana trip spread throughout campus, and students are requesting spots for the summer 2012 journey to the West African country. Afriyie-Gyawu also sees endless possibilities and the potential for a partnership between Georgia Southern and its sister university, the University of the Cape Coast, through student research programs and funding opportunities.

“There are benefits for Georgia Southern students and also Ghana,” he said. “Our students learn all of the aspects of a different culture, while immersed themselves in hands-on experience. They will have this experience for a lifetime.”

—Mary Beth Spence

A student documents toxic food preparation.

A faculty member for the past three years at Georgia Southern, Afriyie-Gyawu holds a Master of Public Health degree in epidemiology/biostatistics and a doctorate in toxicology from Texas A&M University. His research background in food safety and toxicology focuses on strategies to protect humans and animals against contaminants in foods/feeds.

afriyie-gyawu@gsu.edu

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GEORGIA SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY MAGAZINE 23
Although it’s not unusual to watch groups of loggerhead sea turtle hatchlings make their trek to the Atlantic Ocean on St. Catherines Island, last summer’s nesting season was a little more unusual than most.

A pack of 29 leatherback turtle hatchlings headed out to sea, marking a historic moment at St. Catherines – the first leatherbacks documented to have successfully hatched on the barrier island.

The new group joins more than 100,000 loggerhead hatchlings released since 1991, thanks to the dedication of Gale Bishop, professor emeritus and founder of the Sea Turtle Project. He and groups of professors, students and other volunteers have toiled to ensure that endangered sea turtles are protected and any unhatched eggs from the egg chamber are removed. A ghost crab burrow running downward into the sand and a plastic screen to keep raccoons, feral hogs and other predators at bay.

Realizing a leatherback had come ashore to nest, Bishop dug into the nest expecting to remove a ghost crab. Instead, he pulled out the Island’s first leatherback hatchling. The researchers patiently waited during the two-month incubation period.

“It’s exciting to have the leatherbacks on the coast,” said Mark Dodd, the Sea Turtle Program Coordinator for the Georgia Department of Natural Resources. Leatherbacks are commonly found in the state of Florida, with more than 500 nests discovered each year. “Over the past three years, we have had only a handful of leatherback nests in Georgia,” he said.

According to Dodd, there were 11 leatherback nests located on Georgia’s coast this year. The fact that four of the nests hatched is a testament to the tremendous volunteer efforts on the barrier islands, he said. “One of the things people don’t realize is that these are remote areas. Field work is difficult and it takes a lot of effort to locate and protect the nests. St. Catherines is one of our important cooperators.”

Dodd works closely with the state’s barrier islands on all sea turtle conservation and recovery efforts, and said that monitoring also continues during the winter months when leatherbacks return to the area to feed on jellyfish, their favorite food.

“Because the integrity of the nest had been compromised by the ghost crab, we decided to extract the rest of the hatchlings and any unhatched eggs from the egg chamber,” said Bishop. Over the next three evenings, small groups of hatchlings were released into the ocean.

“In order to tag nesting sea turtles, Dodd said that each of the cooperators supplies an egg from each nest that is no longer viable to extract maternal DNA. University of Georgia researchers have developed unique satellite DNA markers to identify individual turtles, the specific locations where they nest, and how many times they return to the same location.

“Our hope is that the hatchlings will return to the same beach where they were hatched to establish a nesting population,” said Dodd.

“It’s hard to imagine that these tiny, palm-sized leatherback hatchlings may one day return to the Island as large as the size of a Volkswagen Beetle and weighing up to 2,000 pounds.

“Like the return of sea turtles to St. Catherines, Bishop will faithfully arrive on the island this spring from his Iowa residence to once again protect the nests and shepherd another group of hatchlings out to sea, another group of K-12 teacher-interns along the beaches and new research by colleagues into the scientific literature. Samiratedu is also eager for another challenge and new discoveries. His experience at St. Catherines began more than 21 years ago as a student intern, and he continues to spend three weeks each year on the island. “It’s a pleasure to go and work at a living laboratory, and these professors are my heroes,” he said.

—Mary Beth Spence

Photos courtesy of the St. Catherines Island Sea Turtle Project.
MILESTONE EVENT: ENROLLMENT SOARS BEYOND 20,000

In terms of enrollment history, 1989 and 2003 were milestone years as the University surpassed the 10,000 and 15,000 enrollment marks, respectively. It’s likely that 2011 will be remembered in the same vein as enrollment topped 20,000 for the first time last fall with 20,212 students representing 49 states and 101 nations.

While 3,099 new freshmen arrived, graduate enrollment at Georgia Southern also increased by nearly two percent as more students registered to begin work toward their master’s, specialist and doctorate degrees.

“Our goal is not to just grow in size, but to do so in a way that ensures that we stay true to what has made Georgia Southern so special,” said Brooks Keel, president of Georgia Southern. “Surpassing 20,000 students definitely takes us to a new level. Not only are we growing in size, but we’re also attracting very bright and accomplished students from throughout the state and from around the world.”

ONLINE GRADUATE PROGRAMS NAMED AMONG NATION’S FINEST

Georgia Southern’s online graduate programs in business, education, information technology and nursing have been ranked among the nation’s best in U.S. News & World Report’s first-ever edition of Top Online Education Program rankings.

According to the publication, “These rankings were created in response to today’s high demand for education provided in a flexible manner. With many distractions to detract from one’s schooling, online education has become increasingly popular due to its flexibility.”

“Georgia Southern has long been recognized for its outstanding campus-based programs, but this ranking confirms that our talent in education programs in business, education, IT and nursing are among the best in the nation,” said University President Brooks Keel. “Georgia Southern has invested in innovative online programs that not only provide students with access to a respected Georgia Southern degree, but provide them with the ability to earn it from anywhere in the world.”

Georgia Southern’s online Master of Science in computer science was ranked in the Top 25 nationally for student services and technology, in the Top 10 for teaching practices and student engagement and in the Top 5 for admissions selectivity.

The online graduate programs in education were ranked in the Top 15 for student services and technology, in the Top 35 for faculty credentials and training, the Top 20 for teaching practices and student engagement and in the Top 20 nationally for admissions selectivity.

Georgia Southern’s online graduate programs in nursing were ranked in the Top 80 for student services and technology, and in the Top 50 for teaching practices and student engagement.

The University’s growing number of online degree programs in business including its WebMBA and Master of Science in applied economics ranked in the Top 100. Its programs received a Top 50 national ranking for faculty, 40 for social and training.

“While the rankings did not rank overall institution offerings, they do rank our programs in various categories and we are very pleased to be included among the nation’s best,” said Charles Patterson, vice president for research and economic development. “The rankings are a reflection of the outstanding faculty and staff who have put into creating and expanding these programs.”

In order to be considered for the rankings, online degree programs had to offer at least 80 percent of their course content online. The online master’s degree programs were ranked in similar categories, but were evaluated on student engagement and accreditation as opposed to assessment. There was also a separate indicator ranking for admissions selectivity. For more information, visit http://www.usnews.com/education/online-education.

ELITE SPORTS SHOOTING EDUCATION CENTER

Partnering with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Georgia Southern is developing an elite sports shooting education center.

The education—art center is being funded in part by a $3.3 million federal grant that was acquired through the Georgia Department of Natural Resources. That funding, along with private and corporate donations, will allow the Center to be a unique facility serving as an educational, recreational and competitive venue.

The Center is scheduled to open in 2013. “This is tremendous opportunity for Georgia Southern University and all of southeast Georgia,” said Georgia Southern President Brooks Keel. “This Center will have far-reaching economic impact as elite sports shooting enthusiasts and competitors from around the country travel to this venue to train and compete. We are honored to be working with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources to bring this unique facility, and its many economic benefits, to our area.”

Elite sports shooting, which includes archery and indoor-range shooting, is one of the fastest growing sports in the world. “The shooting sports are lifelong activities that promote outdoor recreation, good health, discipline and safety, and an appreciation of conservation,” said Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Commissioner Mark Williams. “The Elite Sports Shooting Education Center at Georgia Southern University will promote these values and activities to its students and the community at large as well as generations to come. In addition, the shooting sports generate more than $478 million in economic impact in Georgia each year, and this facility will be a first-rate addition to our state’s shooting sports amenities.”

Georgia Southern Vice President for Student Affairs and Enrollment Management Terry McQuay said, “The Elite Sports Shooting Education Center will be committed to safety and educating those interested in all levels of the sport. There is only one other center like this in the country,” said Thompson. “Our students are excited about the educational and recreational opportunities they will have here, and are very proud of the fact that Georgia Southern University is leading the way promoting the opportunities of this clean, intelligent sport. We are very appreciative of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources and the Easton Foundation’s efforts to help build this center for our students and community.”

“Georgia Southern has been an ideal partner for this endeavor,” said Dan Forster, director of the DNR’s Wildlife Resources Division. “With its iconic role in Georgia and its active student base, the University recognized the value of a shooting sports facility immediately and has embraced this program at every level of the organization. Each day along the way Georgia Southern has brought excellence and innovation to the process and the program. The end result will be a state-of-the-art, world-class facility that will be a model for others.”

THOUSANDS OF FOOD ITEMS GATHERED FOR MILITARY

Georgia Southern staff, faculty and students sent more than 13,200 non-perishable food items to U.S. armed forces personnel in Afghanistan last fall through Georgia Southern’s “Snacks for Soldiers” project.

“We plan to make the project an ongoing one,” said Jordan Bailey, an ROTC cadet who is serving as assistant special project coordinator. “Our Snacks for Soldiers program is expanding. This is going to be a milestone event.”

in the news

GEORGIA SOUTHERN NEWS ROUNDUP

A few quick highlights from this past month:

Georgia Southern University has been named one of the nation’s top 20 public universities for community service by the Corporation for National and Community Service.

The University was recognized for its more than 20,000 volunteers who spent nearly 200,000 hours in service to the community last year.

The University’s community service efforts were recognized in the Corporation’s 2010-2011 America Graduates Report, which noted that Georgia Southern’s alumni volunteer rate was more than 50 percent.

In addition, the Corporation recognized Georgia Southern’s “Pitch In:039; Ready to Serve” campaign, which raised more than $50,000 for the “Pitch In:039; Ready to Serve” fund.

The University’s President Brooks Keel was recognized as one of the nation’s top 100 college presidents by the Nation’s Top 100 College Presidents. The honor was given by the National Association of Independent College Admissions Counselors.

The University was also recognized by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges for its contributions to community service.

In other news:

Georgia Southern’s Alumni Association will hold its annual meeting on Friday, Oct. 7 at 4 p.m. in the Health and Social Sciences Building, Room 250.

The meeting will feature keynotes by University President Brooks Keel and Alumni Association President Suzie Klauer. The meeting will also feature election results for new board members and the presentation of the 2011 Alumni Association Award.

The Georgia Southern Alumni Association is a non-profit organization that serves as the alumni arm of the University.

Georgia Southern University is a state University located in Statesboro, Ga. The University offers more than 100 undergraduate programs and 50 graduate programs through five colleges.

Georgia Southern University is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

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http://www.usnews.com/education/online-education

For more information, visit http://www.usnews.com/education/online-education.

Georgia Southern has invested in innovative online programs that not only provide students with access to a respected Georgia Southern degree, but provide them with the ability to earn it from anywhere in the world.

The University’s growing number of online degree programs in business including its WebMBA and Master of Science in applied economics ranked in the Top 100. Its programs received a Top 50 national ranking for faculty, 40 for social and training.
In conjunction with the Adopt-A-Soldier program, the University collected crackers, chips, fruit snacks, trail mix, granola bars, beef jerky, nuts, gum and hard candy that will be shipped to soldiers from the Southeast. In addition to snacks, the University collected cards for the soldiers and monetary donations to help offset the cost of shipping the snacks.

**UNIVERSITY ROLLS OUT ‘TXTL8R’ CAMPAIGN**

It’s a sobering fact: Nearly 5,500 drivers die and 450,000 more are injured annually as the result of “distracted driving,” a practice that the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has termed “a dangerous epidemic on America’s roadways.”

Many of the incidents involving young people are the direct result of texting while driving, and Georgia Southern’s “txtl8r” campaign is aimed at reducing those risks among University students.

The recently launched campaign includes radio ads and campus signage featuring Georgia Southern President Brooks Keel, head football coach Jeff Monken, University students and athletes, and a professor who had to break the news of a texting and driving death to one of his classes.

**UNIVERSITY IS ‘MILITARY FRIENDLY’**

Georgia Southern’s welcoming approach to soldiers and veterans was featured in the December 2011 issue of Military Advanced Education’s 2012 Guide to Military-Friendly Colleges and Universities.

“The University has more than 600 active military, reserves, veterans and their dependents seeking degrees on campus or online,” University Provost Ted Moore, a veteran and Purple Heart recipient, indicated that, “not only do the University’s online programs offer an excellent opportunity for members of the military to pursue a respected degree on their own schedules, but Georgia Southern’s location is ideal for soldiers who are stationed in Georgia. The state is home to 15 military installations including Fort Stewart, Ft. Benning and Robins Air Force Base.

“We believe that we not only offer a respected degree, but provide the flexibility that members of the military, veterans and their dependents are looking for,” he said. “Being recognized as one of the most military friendly universities in the country is not just an honor, but a sign that Georgia Southern is committed to our men and women in uniform.”

**FEDERAL GOVERNMENT HONORS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TEAM**

Recognition continues to flow for the team of student and faculty archaeologists who are writing an untold chapter of the Civil War. Georgia Southern researchers on the Camp Lawton prisoner of war site have been honored by the U.S. Department of the Interior with its Partners in Conservation Award.

In a Washington, D.C., ceremony, the team received the award from Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar. It is the highest form of recognition by the Federal government and represents exemplary conservation results through local partnerships, while engaging the community.

Georgia Southern team was honored for their discovery last year of the exact location of Camp Lawton, near Millen, Ga., and its numerous personal artifacts left behind by Civil War soldiers.

**NEW DEAN TO LEAD JIANN-PING HSU COLLEGE OF PUBLIC HEALTH**

Gregory Evans knew right away he was interested in pursuing the deanship of the Jiann-Ping Hsu College of Public Health. The founding director of the Institute for Biosecurity at St. Louis University is the newly named dean of the College.

Exploring the campus among students who didn’t know who we were, we were frequently asked if we needed directions or assistance — and always made to feel at home,” he said. “I have been to many universities and towns over the course of my career, but never have I felt so welcomed and at home.”

Since 2000, Evans’ research has focused on biosecurity issues, helping to develop educational material related to bioterrorism and other weapons of mass destruction which have been distributed worldwide, including to New York City after the 9/11 attacks. His research has also focused on exposure, assessment and health effects of automobile pollutants, dioxin lead and pesticides, severe acute respiratory syndrome, and avian influenza.

Evans earned his undergraduate degree from Hofstra University and a master of public health and Ph.D., in health services research from Saint Louis University.
SOMETIMES IDEAS CAN RESHAPE THE FUTURE. Just ask Georgia Southern President Brooks Keel and Provost Ted Moore. After last year’s milestone achievement of adding mechanical, civil and electrical engineering degree programs, the pair envisioned the formation of a new college dedicated to engineering. Last summer, they delivered a proposal to information technology faculty with the idea of merging the new engineering programs with computer science and information technology into one college. “We asked the deans, department chairs and faculty to recommend a committee to study the idea,” said Moore.

In November, after months of studying how such an alliance would advance the academic mission of the University, the merger committee, consisting of faculty, staff, students and alumni overwhelmingly recommended the formation of the Allen E. Paulson College of Engineering and Information Technology (CEIT), which was approved by Keel.

Part of the restructuring process includes moving the departments of Information Systems and Construction Management to the College of Business Administration (COBA) and establishing the College of Science and Mathematics (COSM) to house programs in biology, chemistry, geology and geography, military science, physics, pre-medical/ pre-dental and mathematical sciences.

According to Moore, the creation of CEIT is a strategic fit. “This positions us uniquely in the state of Georgia, bringing these two broad families of disciplines together,” he said. “I can count on one hand the number of new engineering colleges in the United States. By having both of these families in one organizational structure, this will help in the current design and accelerate research here. There will be synergistic relationship between engineering and IT,” said Moore, “and it will make our engineering programs cutting edge, because IT is articulated in solid engineering disciplines.”

Mohammad Davoud, the chair of mechanical and electrical engineering and interim dean of CEIT said that the establishment of the CEIT is a strategically important decision made by the University that will have the highest economic impact in south Georgia. “This college will have eight graduate and undergraduate degree programs and will produce work-ready graduates in support of the industry and economic developments of south Georgia. We all know that new industry will be coming to our region to capitalize on opportunities and our colleges are already exploring common areas of research and collaboration,” he said.

In addition to faculty collaboration, other benefits of the merger include additional scholarships and expanding curriculums. “The two departments of computer science and electrical engineering can bring the software and hardware sides together to develop a computer engineering program,” said Wen-Ran Zhang, chair of computer sciences.

As a result, students will also have significant hands-on experiences, said Art Gowan, chair of information technology. “This will allow our students to hit the ground running upon graduation. Our programs are already growing and demand for our graduates in both IT and engineering is on the rise. Together, I have little doubt this new College will be very successful,” he said.

Careful planning of the University’s newest college continues and there’s no doubt engineering at Georgia Southern is destined to leave a footprint in the state of Georgia and around the world with increased economic opportunities and partnership.

---Mary Beth Spence

EMERGING TECHNOLOGY

UNIVERSITY LAUNCHES THE NEW ALLEN E. PAULSON COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

LOGO TRAIL LEADING FAITHFUL INTO THE ‘BORO

SOME PEOPLE THEORIZE THAT “X” MARKS THE SPOT. And in this case, Georgia Southern’s Eagle logo is marking the trail to the Eagle Nation with a new tradition.

Eagle-It!, a joint collaboration between Georgia Southern supporters and the Student Eagle Club, a student organization working to foster and promote True Blue spirit, is giving fans, alumni and students an innovative way to express their faithful dedication to the Eagles. The Georgia Southern logos – some as large as 10 feet by 10 feet have popped up everywhere from roadways and commercial buildings to residences leading into Eagle Nation. Trained representatives of the Student Eagle Club, accompanied by professional painters, have painted the landmark on a trail of hay bales on Georgia Highway 67 and U.S. 301, and the logo is also prominently displayed on one of the outbuildings of the Kiwanis-Ogeechee Fairgrounds.

For more information about Eagle-It!, including applications, the review process and location recommendations, visit: www.georgiasouthern.edu/eagle-it.

TOP: A hay bale south of Statesboro on Highway 301 near the Parkwood RV Park and Cottages. ABOVE: The Main Building of the Kiwanis Fairgrounds on Highway 67. LEFT: Entering campus on Herty Drive by Hanner Fieldhouse.
House Calls

Now with an increased elderly population, house calls are making a comeback, and two Georgia Southern Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) graduates are aiding the elderly in need of convenient care with plans to open their own house call franchise business this summer.

Carmen Hill-Mekoba and Ludella Brown recognized that when some frail, elderly patients are faced with the difficulties and challenges of traveling to see their doctors, they often skip the visit. To remedy the problem, the pair is providing comprehensive care for seniors in two Georgia cities and their new business venture is a combination of their house call expertise in nursing homes, assisted living facilities and independent senior residences.

“The elderly often find it difficult to visit a doctor, and we bring personalized care to them. This has really brought nursing and medicine back to the forefront,” said Brown.

Plans are underway for the franchises to begin operating this summer in Georgia and South Carolina, and preparations include employing nurse practitioners with specialized experience. “We would like to select nurse practitioners with backgrounds in geriatrics,” said Brown. “Eventually, our plan is to have a nurse practitioner on-site for one to two days a week at individual nursing homes.” The business includes a team of collaborating physicians who consult with the nurse practitioners.

The goal-oriented pair credits Georgia Southern’s DNP program because its vision of serving a diverse, ethnic community matched the goal of meeting the needs of underserved populations.

“I want to raise the level of healthcare,” said Hill-Mekoba, whose career has also included working in a small, inner-city hospital and creating health and wellness initiatives for companies including Kimberly Clark and Ciba Vision. She founded the Visiting Nurse Program at General Motors, in which staff nurses ride golf carts to provide routine blood pressure and glucose checks for employees who are unable to leave their jobs on the production line.

While in the DNP program, Hill-Mekoba focused on the promotion of health and wellness initiatives with a different group: senior citizens. She has contracted with the Atlanta Housing Authority to provide weekly health care services in one facility’s wellness room of limited resources such as transportation, “she said. Hill-Mekoba makes house calls to approximately 30 people each week, and enlisted the services of a pharmacy to deliver medications. Even more significant is that seniors do not incur any out-of-pocket costs for these visits. "Seniors living in public housing deserve the same health care as everyone else,” she added. In addition to Hill-Mekoba’s busy house call schedule, the mother of three is also a nursing instructor for three universities: the University of Texas at Arlington, the Chamberlain College of Nursing and Boise State University.

Brown has the distinction of being the only nurse practitioner in the Savannah area to open a private practice, Women’s Healthcare and Family Medicine. “When I wrote the business plan for my practice, I had absolutely no idea that my career would expand into home visits,” said Brown, who has provided emergency care to patients in private practice and in hospital settings and has also worked as a nursing instructor. For seven years, she worked as the clinical director and nurse practitioner for the Community Health Mission in Savannah, an organization that offers free primary health care to uninsured patients in Chatham County and surrounding areas.

“When I opened the door to my practice the first day and my first patient walked in, I was always thinking about other opportunities, and ways to help the underserved,” she said.

Brown’s house call idea formed when she went to see her mother, an Alzheimer’s patient. “When I visited my mother, I wondered how many other residents at the facility were receiving physical examinations and routine health care on site. I started making a list of assisted living facilities and nursing homes in the area to contact,” she revealed. Brown discovered that many residents were unable to travel to a provider and that area medical professionals weren’t making house calls.

“Today, I make house calls at five assisted living facilities and two nursing homes to provide physical exams and labs for the residents,” said Brown. While she sees patients in her office three days a week, Brown is also on call for two additional assisted living facilities. “The facilities have been so receptive. It is easier to make house calls versus staff transporting patients in a van to a physician’s office, where they may have to wait two hours or more,” she said.

The call to help the elderly has changed the lives of the two women. “I feel so much professional satisfaction working with the underserved,” said Hill-Mekoba. “This is America’s forgotten group, and many of them don’t have a support system. Seniors really appreciate that someone cares about their overall health and well-being.”

As a result of this hands-on approach to nursing, Brown has developed special and meaningful connections with her patients. “I love to communicate, and I feel that it helps me contribute more to my patient’s lives,” she said.

—Mary Beth Spence
Students designed the Web site for Southern Cyclists, pictured on desktop computer, and an innovative browser site called seniordashboard.com, pictured on the laptop.

THESE DAYS, EVERYBODY NEEDS A WEB SITE.

More and more organizations across the state are turning to the Georgia Southern’s Allen E. Paulson College of Engineering and Information Technology to have their Web sites designed for free – and students do all the work.

A pair of courses offered by professors John O’Malley and Philis Wainford allows students to interact with clients, to work together as a group and to design and build fully functional Web sites.

With Internet presence becoming a necessity in nearly every walk of life, it’s not just information technology (IT) people signing up for the class. Students from a wide array of majors take the courses to learn the process of Web design.

If you’re in communications or you’re in print journalism, you’d better know the Web,” said O’Malley, whose students have been designing Web sites for clients since 2005. “All of the industries utilize the Web. You need a Web presence, because that’s how people are going to find you. I can’t see how it wouldn’t benefit any student.”

Non-majors typically sign up for IT 3132, while a more advanced version of the course, IT 4235, consists mostly of IT students.

The classes, divided into small project groups each semester, have designed more than 70 Web sites over the past six years.

In the spring of 2012, the course took another step into the future, adding mobile sites to the curriculum. Students are still creating pages in standard formats, but the course expanded its services to include mobile Web design to complement standard Web-page displays.

With so many different sizes of screens on a growing list of devices that includes computers, smartphones and tablets, it is important to make sure students leave the course with skills to accommodate all of the current technology. Equally important is making sure the client gets a Web site that is compatible on current devices.

Those are some of the things we’re going to be focusing on in this course in the future,” said O’Malley: “You want to detect the device, detect the operating system and display a presence that is appropriate for your particular screen.”

The course instructs students on becoming proficient with a trio of Adobe programs – Dreamweaver, Photoshop and Flash. The pages designed by the students have included content like bios, contact information, product information and videos based in both Flash and HTML5.

Students have even designed graphics and logos per requests from some clients.

Most of the clients have offered plenty of feedback, but some have been hard to work with.

“For the students, that’s just another opportunity to learn. “They get experience not only with the creation of a Web site, but also dealing with clients and working with a team to accomplish a goal,” O’Malley said. “Sometimes the clients are hard to reach. Sometimes the clients don’t like what the students are doing. It’s a good lesson in either case.”

Locally, small businesses, churches and even the Statesboro-Bulloch County Parks and Recreation Department have had their Web sites designed by the program, and clients from counties across the state have also benefited. Students commonly bring in clients from their own hometowns.

“The students are all giving service back to the community, which I think is an important lesson,” O’Malley said. “They’re giving back to the communities that have supported them.”
THEN & NOW

CAMPUS CHANGES

1966

Home field advantage

Just as in the day when the Blue Tide rolled into Savannah to face Babe Ruth and the Boston Braves, the sights and sounds of Georgia Southern baseball continue to bring pride and excitement to fans. Attendance and amenities at the Eagles’ home ballpark have changed quite a lot, however. Progressing from chain-link fences and wooden bleachers with seating for a few hundred to one of the finest collegiate venues in the country, J.I. Clements Stadium now boasts a capacity of more than 3,000. A 2005 renovation provided for a 30-seat press box with booths for television and home and visiting radio, a fan VIP suite with 27 chairback seats, and a social room with additional seating. The Champions Room on the main concourse features a large meeting area with a kitchen. Coaches’ offices are perched above the home dugout in the Wiggins Building which includes the team locker rooms and clubhouse.

GIVE US YOUR BEST!

Send your favorite old photos of Georgia Southern people and places and we will share them on our Web site. E-mail your pictures along with an explanation of who or what the photo is about to magazine@georgiasouthern.edu.

2012

APRIL 2012

APRIL 1
Softball vs. Chattanooga, 1 p.m.
Baseball vs. College of Charleston, 7:30 p.m.
APRIL 3
Lecture/Film: Keith Farrell.
“Oliver Cromwell in Ireland: Multicultural Showdown in 17th Century Europe,” 7 p.m., Williams Center
APRIL 4
Baseball vs. Ball State
Cookman, 6 p.m.
Competition: Mt. Georgia Southern University, 7 p.m.
Russell Union
APRIL 7
Women’s Tennis: Eagles vs. Wolford, 7 a.m.
APRIL 8
Baseball: Eagles vs. Kennesaw State, 2 p.m.
APRIL 11-18
Theatre: “Joe Turner’s Come and Gone,” 7:30 p.m., Center for Art & Theatre
APRIL 12
Japanese Taiko Drummers, 11 a.m., Russell Union
APRIL 13-22
Undergraduate Juried Art Exhibition, Center for Art & Theatre
APRIL 15
Baseball: Eagles vs. Appalachian State, 3:30 p.m.
Percussion Ensemble, 7:30 p.m., Carol A. Carter Recital Hall
APRIL 15
Yom Hashoah: Holocaust Remembrance Day, 11 a.m.-2 p.m.
APRIL 16
Jazz Band, 7:30 p.m., Performing Arts Center
APRIL 17
Night of Wild Sax, 7:30 p.m., Carol A. Carter Recital Hall
APRIL 18
Softball vs. North Florida, 3 p.m., Eagle Field
APRIL 20
Georgia Southern Symphony Pops Concert, 6 p.m., Botanical Garden
APRIL 24
University Singers and Southern Chorale, 7:30 p.m., Performing Arts Center
APRIL 25
Multicultural Vendor Expo, 11 a.m.-4 p.m., Russell Union
APRIL 26
Georgia Southern Symphonic Wind Orchestra, 7:30 p.m., Performing Arts Center
APRIL 26-MAY 2
Graphic Design Portfolio Reveal, Center for Art & Theatre
APRIL 28
Softball vs. Elon, 1 p.m.
Softball vs. Elon, 3 p.m.
APRIL 29
Softball vs. Elon, 1 p.m.
Georgian Southern Symphony Page Concert, 6 p.m., Botanical Garden
MAY 2
Baseball vs. Charleston Southern, 6 p.m.
MAY 4
Baseball vs. Sanford, 6 p.m.
MAY 5
Community-wide Yard Sale, 8-9 a.m., Parrish Football Center
Baseball vs. Sanford, 2:30 p.m.
MAY 6
Baseball vs. Sanford, 1:30 p.m.
MAY 10
Baseball vs. Western Carolina, 6 p.m.
MAY 12
Spring 2012 Commencement, 9 a.m., Allen E. Paulson Stadium
Baseball vs. Western Carolina, 2:30 p.m.
MAY 13
Baseball vs. Western Carolina, 1:30 p.m.
MAY 19
Feed the Mosasaur Fundraiser, Nessmith-Lane Ballroom, Time TBA
*Performing Arts Center
RESEARCH NOTES

GEORGIA SOUTHERN RESEARCH NEWS ROUNDUP

Part of the College of Science and Mathematics

College of Education

College of Business Administration

Professor Timur Mirzoev has the College of Information Technology (IT) leadership-certified to train other professors and is also Electromagnetic Compatibility-certified. "The only non-commercial virtual machine for research and classes is 1.2 terabytes of RAM dedicated to running a cloud-computing research lab, which has national VMware IT Academy Center in the world. Mirzoev manages Georgia Southern’s cloud-computing research lab, which has 1.2 terabytes of RAM dedicated to running virtual machines for research and classes. The lab consists of 100-percent commercial equipment, allowing Mirzoev and his students to conduct research on server and network storage virtualization with practical, real-world applications.

Mirzoev also hopes to provision cloud space to other academic institutions to combine research efforts, with Georgia Southern being the first public research institution. "The College has been awarded a $100,000 grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to improve the quality of services from public health departments around the state of Georgia. Researchers from IPICOPHL will work with the state’s health departments to improve the Georgia Public Health Practice-Based Research Network, housed at the IPICOPHL, to find ways to better address critical public health issues including obesity, diabetes, and newly emerging infectious diseases.

“Georgia’s public health departments are on the front lines of our battle for good public health,” said Lynn Woodhouse, Allen E. Paulson College of Engineering and Information Technology.

“Human capital” – is not just good employee relations. The grant will support efforts to increase the use of quality improvement techniques that are specifically tailored for local public health agencies in Georgia.

“Collaborators with Todd in the study were T. Russell Crook, University of Tennessee-Knoxville; James G. Combs, University of Alabama; David J. Woehr, University of North Carolina-Charlotte; and David J. Ketchen, Jr. Auburn University. Their work was recently published in the Journal of Applied Psychology.”

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Alleged sexual harassment at middle and high school is still a pervasive vulnerability. "We’d like to believe that sexual harassment, like bullying is the hot topic in schools across the country, but just as damaging and high school is still widespread, sometimes impacting women’s lives long after they graduate. "Pervasive Vulnerabilities was written by Liston and co-author Regina Rahimi, an assistant professor in the Department of Adolescent and Adult Learning at Armstrong State University. It discusses issues of sexual harassment through its impact on women’s lives, the perceptions of teachers who interact with adolescents, the experiences of young girls in middle and high school, and the effects of the SARS outbreak on travel between the U.S. and three destinations: China, Hong Kong and Taiwan. "Moss employed autoregressive integrated moving average (ARIMA) models with interventions to estimate the timing, depth and shape of SARS impact on international air travel. ARIMA models are frequently used to examine time series data to either better understand the data or to predict future points in the series. "Moss and his co-authors, COBA faculty Jun Liu and Steve Moss, established links between their empirical findings and a conceptual framework for analyzing the life cycle of a crisis. "The conceptual framework used situation-alional choices and governmental public relations differences within various locations to explain different response patterns."

The research notes include:

BOOK: HARASSMENT CREATES PERVERSIVE VULNERABILITIES

"Pervasive Vulnerabilities" is a new book by Georgia Southern College of Education professor Delores D. Liston. The book finds that the problem of sexual harassment in middle and high school is still widespread, sometimes impacting women’s lives long after they graduate. The book is written by Liston and co-author Regina Rahimi, an assistant professor in the Department of Adolescent and Adult Learning at Armstrong State University. It discusses issues of sexual harassment through its impact on women’s lives, the perceptions of teachers who interact with adolescents, the experiences of young girls in middle and high school, and the effects of the SARS outbreak on travel between the U.S. and three destinations: China, Hong Kong and Taiwan. "Moss employed autoregressive integrated moving average (ARIMA) models with interventions to estimate the timing, depth and shape of SARS impact on international air travel. ARIMA models are frequently used to examine time series data to either better understand the data or to predict future points in the series. "Moss and his co-authors, COBA faculty Jun Liu and Steve Moss, established links between their empirical findings and a conceptual framework for analyzing the life cycle of a crisis. "The conceptual framework used situation-alional choices and governmental public relations differences within various locations to explain different response patterns."
GEORGIA SOUTHERN SPRING 2012

VSS encourages tweens to put away the Control and Prevention (CDC). The introduced by the Centers for Disease combat this growing epidemic, the VSS diabetes and cardiovascular disease. To by 23 percent, leading to illnesses such as obesity among U.S. youth has increased Foundation.

Moya Alfonso is introducing a new physical activity program called the VERB Summer Scorecard (VSS) which targets physical activity program called the VERB – or physical activity – and sticking with it. The overall focus is wellness and prevention, and for youth to try new physical activities," she said. --Mary Beth Spence

I T S A F A C T, C H A N G I N G S E D E N T A R Y L I F E S T Y L E S C A N B E A CHALLENGE.

This summer however, a Juan-Ping Hsio College of Public Health (IPHCOPIH) professor has a new game for Bulloch County youth that will get them moving and keep them healthy.

Over the past three decades, childhood obesity among U.S. youth has increased by 23 percent, leading to illnesses such as diabetes and cardiovascular disease. To combat this growing epidemic, the VSS was introduced nationally, and is modeled after a social marketing campaign introduced by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The VSS encourages tweens to put away the video games and spend more time with friends participating in activities such as swimming, running, yoga, martial arts or skateboarding. Instead of directly focusing on exercise, the VSS promotes activities that tweens can do with few time or place restrictions, and youth are encouraged to select new activities they would enjoy. The premise of the program is fun: after completing an exercise, youth record their activity on an interactive online scorecard. Tweens receive points for each activity and are eligible to enter drawings for prizes such as an iPod, sport bike, Wii Fit, scooters and more, which are donated by area businesses.

Alfonso is also partnering with Department of Health and Kinesiology professors Ashley Walker and Gavin Colquitt, who have researched issues impacting childhood health. “This program is all about finding your ‘verb’ – or physical activity – and sticking with it. The overall focus is wellness and prevention, and for youth to try new physical activities,” she said.

Get Physical

Program seeks to get kids moving

THERE IS A PROGRAM WITHIN THE ALLEN E. PAULSON COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING and Information Technology (CEIT) that melds the biofuels developed and processed by students in the College’s Renewable Energy Lab with racing vehicles built in the Carruth Building into a single, self-sufficient research project — the Biodiesel Baja Project.

The project is headed on two sides by mechanical engineering professors Brian Vlcek and Vladimir Soloiu. Vlcek oversees the building of the Baja vehicles while Soloiu supervises the production of the biofuels.

The Baja Project was a test bed for the fuels that we developed here on campus,” Vlcek said. “It was to have our own vehicle that we ran our own fuels in, which kind of closed the loop. Before, we just ran it in engines on dynamometers, which measure load and constraint.”

Vlcek said the Biodiesel Baja Project started in a senior design class in the spring of 2008 with 15 to 18 mechanical engineering major, wrote a proposal, with Vlcek as his faculty advisor, to the CEIT’s Office of Undergraduate Research for funding to cover the purchase of a diesel engine, because most of the fuels that were being produced in the lab at that time were diesel-based biofuels. The proposal was a success and he, with the help of some additional funding from the department, was able to acquire the engine for about $2,400.

“By utilizing fuel sources that are not fit to be sold on the commercial market to produce biofuels, the Biodiesel Baja Project is helping create what Soloiu calls “more efficient, cleaner, greener” fuels — Matthew D’La Rotta

Future Fuel

Project serves as a test bed for potential new energy source

Future Fuel

The peanuts used to make the oil have been rejected by the market and have been deemed unfit for human consumption; the poultry fat comes from the poultry industry and is usually fed to other chickens; and the cotton seeds have a low germination rate, resulting in an inability to yield crops if planted. By utilizing fuel sources that are not fit to be sold on the commercial market to produce biofuels, the Biodiesel Baja Project is helping create what Soloiu calls “more efficient, cleaner, greener” fuels — Matthew D’La Rotta

—Mary Beth Spence

GEORGIA SOUTHERN EDU/MAGAZINE

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Extreme Measures

FOR CHRIS KOWALCZYK, INVESTIGATING THE MYSTERIES OF ANCIENT MAN IS ALL IN A DAY’S WORK.

His fascination with archaeological history began with field work at Mont Repose, a rice and cotton plantation near Ridgeland, S.C., and as a member of the initial team that discovered Camp Lawton, a former Civil War prisoner camp in Millen, Ga.

Kowalczyk, however, has now turned his attention to other rare treasures – skulls. “I’ve always been interested in the history of humans,” explained Kowalczyk. “It was neat to find buttons and pottery, but it wasn’t a bone.”

The graduate student is now researching the stories that lie behind the modification of ancient skulls across different cultures through cutting-edge 3D laser scanning.

Traditionally, measuring skulls is done with spread and slide calipers, said Kowalczyk, but he revealed that there are distinct advantages to using a skull scan, which he likens to a fingerprint. “The scans produce 26 different measurements on a skull – many more than a caliper. For example, if I measure a femur bone, I will have the shape and size of the entire surface. If I used a caliper, I would not have all of these measurements. The scans also increase the accuracy of determining the sex or race of a person,” Kowalczyk explained.

Kowalczyk wants to know: What happens to brains after practicing this odd custom, and how have humans been affected?

Thousands of years ago, Queen Nefertiti probably boasted an elongated skull, and who can forget the alien-like skull discovered in Peru in the movie “Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull?”

“In Georgia, there are a few archaeological sites where individuals display unusually shaped skulls. For some, the change was intentional, but for others there was a functional cause. For example, heavy loads were carried on their backs using a tumpline, which is a strap that wraps around the front of their head and over time would create a flattened forehead,” he explained about the 100-plus year customs followed by Native American tribes near Columbus, Ga., in the mid-1600s.

Another familiar practice which unintentionally changed the shape of children’s skulls in many different cultures, was a cradle board. “Mothers carried their babies in a small wooden or reed back pack,” said Williamson. The infants were secured in the baby carrier with a strap across their forehead to keep them from falling out, but it changed the shape of their heads in the process.

“If we can understand how the skull changes and adapts, it will help us understand genetic abnormalities and we can see how a child’s growth is affected,” said Kowalczyk, explaining how these scans might one day solve medical mysteries.

While the cranial modification of skulls might be an unusual concept, Williamson says people continue to modify their bodies in today’s society – just in different ways. “In the present, we continue to express ourselves through body modifications such as tattoos and piercings.”

—Mary Beth Spence
EAGLES VISIT WOUNDED SOLDIERS

More than a dozen Eagle football players took time out from their FCS Playoff preparations in November for an afternoon visit to Fort Stewart’s Warrior Transition Unit, which helps focus, position and rehabilitate physically or psychologically wounded U.S. Army troops.

The Eagles were the centerpiece of a gathering organized by the Warrior Transition Unit, Southern Eagle Distributing, SouthernPigskin.com and countless volunteers.

More than 100 troops in uniform greeted the team members with a standing ovation. It was a poignant moment, one that was quickly and emotionally reciprocated. For about three hours, the players met with soldiers and their families and passed out shirts, gifts and firm handshakes.

SENIOR BRETT MOORE NAMED ALL-AMERICAN

A starter at right tackle for the entire regular season, senior Brett Moore has been honored by the American Football Coaches Association (AFCA) as a Football Championship Subdivision All-American.

Moore was selected for the AFCA first team after helping the Eagles to their first Southern Conference Championship since 2004 and a 9-2 record in the regular season. The Warner Robins, Ga., native finished the regular season with 44 knockdowns and posted a season-high 11 knockdowns against Western Carolina.

CARTER WINS SENIOR DOUBLES WORLD TITLE

Former Georgia Southern Men’s Tennis Coach and Associate Athletics Director Brenda Carter teamed with Heide Orth of Germany to win the ITF Super Senior Doubles World Championship (Women’s 65) in Antalya, Turkey. Carter also competed in the Women’s 65 Singles draw, advancing through two rounds of competition before falling to her doubles partner, Orth, in the quarterfinals.

In team competition, Carter joined Betty Wachob (Panama City, Fla.), Cathie Anderson (Del Mar, Calif.) and Judy Louie (Corona Del Mar, Calif.) to finish third in the World Team Championships.

Carter served as Georgia Southern’s first senior women’s administrator from 1993-99. She was also the faculty chair of athletics (1990-92), associate athletics director, and an assistant professor in the mathematics and computer science department. In 2004, she was inducted into the Georgia Southern Athletics Hall of Fame and is the No. 1 ranked women’s 65s singles player in the world. She resides in Charleston, S.C. with her husband, Harry, Carter.

SIDELINES GEORGIA SOUTHERN EAGLE ATHLETICS ROUNDUP

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Righy now, J. Clements Stadium is home to two guys many would say are two of the best college baseball players in the nation. Whether it’s the offense of Victor Roache, a right-handed slugger who has battled injury throughout his career, yet hit 30 home runs in 2011 to lead all of Division I, or the pitching of Chris Beck, who tossed a complete-game, three-hit shutout against Samford in the 2011 Southern Conference Championship game and has become one of the nation’s elite pitchers, the Eagles know talent when they see it.

“We were fortunate to get them on campus, and that’s the big key here,” said Georgia Southern University head coach Rodney Hennon. “If you can get kids on campus, this University sells itself!”

Both players have come a long way since becoming Eagles in 2010, and they both had a similar journey on the way to a breakout sophomore campaign in 2011.

DRAWN TO SOUTHERN

When Georgia Southern assistant coach Mike Tidick and former pitching coach Jason Beverlin took a trip to Dayton, Ohio, in July 2008 to check out some high school talent, they hit paydirt, finding Victor Roache of Ypsalanti, Mich., a heavy hitter but not many schools down South. There were a couple schools in Indiana and a couple in Ohio, but not many schools in Michigan. There were a handful of high-major, Division-I programs. “A majority at me pretty fast,” said Roache about the recruiting process in 2009. “I, or the pitching of Chris Beck, who tossed a complete-game, three-hit shutout against Samford in the 2011 SoCon championship game and has become one of the nation’s elite pitchers, the Eagles know talent when they see it.

“The trip served as a bonding experience for the pair of Eagles.”

“We had a 21-hour drive up to Boston together, Beck said. “We got to know each other off the baseball field even more than we already did. We played on the same team in Cape Cod, we played in the All-Star game, and we really got to share in every experience together. That’s where best friends are made.”

Roache, the recipient of the Most Outstanding Prospect Award, was second in the league in homers (6) and runs batted in (28). Beck was fifth in strikeouts (41) and sixth in earned-run average (2.12).

Roache homered over the Green Monster during the All-Star Home Run Derby at Fenway Park of the Boston Red Sox, and Beck pitched a scoreless inning in the Cape Cod All-Star Game.

“Either I wasn’t nervous, Beck said about pitching in Fenway, “or my heart was beating so fast I couldn’t tell.”

A BUMP IN THE ROAD

Roache ran into more adversity at the start of the 2012 season. He broke his wrist and was knocked out of action during just the sixth game of the season.

“It’s usually big around there,” said Beck, who was heavily recruited by the Georgia Bulldogs. “You just go to Athens. A lot of guys I know try to walk on over there, but not me. I wanted to come to Georgia Southern.”

EARLY STRUGGLES

In a 2010 lineup with senior heavy hitters Kyle Blackburn (.353, 17 home runs) and A.J. Wirsberger (.328, 10 home runs), Roache started 43 of 58 games and hit 252 while scraping together eight home runs, including two grand slams during his freshman campaign. Beck battled injuries throughout the end of the season and into the 2010 SoCon Tournament, and broke his leg during the offseason.

Like Roache, Beck faced freshman struggles in 2010. Early in his career, he took his lumps in starts against then-No. 7 Clemson and then-No. 3 Georgia Tech. Beck battled injuries of his own through his first season at Georgia Southern, appearing in just 12 games as a freshman.

“We kind of went through the same rocky road, struggling and having an inconsistent season as freshmen,” said Beck, knowing full-well what would be expected from himself and from Roache in 2011. “We both came back to the same thing – the focus was on you to do more than look the part of a leader.”

“Either I wasn’t nervous,” Beck said about pitching in Fenway, “or my heart was beating so fast I couldn’t tell.”

For a big, physical guy like that, Victor’s soft-spoken,” Hennon said of the baddest guy around.”

“Roache’s 30 homers in 2011 weren’t just amazing because of the newly-designed NCAA bats, implemented to better simulate wood. They weren’t just amazing because they were the most in a single season in Georgia Southern history. Perhaps the most impressive part of the stat was that Roache hit more home runs in 2011 than 164 entire Division-I programs. Virginia, the 2011 Atlantic Coast Conference champion, collectively hit only 25.

“Roache exploded onto the stat sheet in (2011) was amazing to watch. “

“Beck threw a complete-game shutout in the 2011 SoCon championship game against Samford. From Wednesday to Sunday at the tournament, Beck threw 234 pitches in 17 innings, struck out 22 and allowed only eight total hits and one earned run in two starts.

“Roche continues to influence his teammates on the field. “He’s all about the team,” said Beck. “With all the attention he’s had, he’s handled himself the right way. He’s definitely a person I want to model myself after.”

—Matt Yogus

Jefferson High School, and went against the tide of fellow JHS graduates.

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TWO OF THE BEST

EAGLES MAKE WAVES, BATTLE ADVERSITY

Matt Yogus

Matt Yogus

Matt Yogus

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Knowing that he’s overcome an injury before and come back stronger gives him some comfort about what he’s faced with now. He’s a strong person. He’s made of the right stuff.

— Coach Rodney Hennon

He made up his mind that whenever he was going to get that ball, he was going to be ready to go out there and get the job done.

— Coach Rodney Hennon
If you've ever heard the rock music coming from the auxiliary gymnasium of Georgia Southern's Recreation Activity Center (RAC) each afternoon after 5 p.m. and wondered what was going on in there, the answer is simple. The wrestlers are back, and hard at work.

Since its resurrection in 2008, the Campus Recreation & Intramurals (CRI) department, along with head coach William Hurst, has made sure the program is here to stay. Heading into their fourth year of competition under Hurst, the Eagles, who compete as a club team in the Southeastern Conference of the National Collegiate Wrestling Association (NCWAA), have already produced a national champion, an Academic All-American and two players who have earned National Wrestling Coaches Association (NWCA) scholarships. It took only two years under Hurst for Georgia Southern to finish fifth nationally in the NCWAA Division II rankings and 16th overall in the field of 79 Division-I and Division-II teams.

Brooks Pendleton, then a sophomore, dominated the 235-pound weight class at the 2009 national championship meet in Hampton, Va., taking the individual national title while allowing only one point against him, a locked-hands penalty in the first match of the tournament. Pendleton entered the tournament field unseeded and defeated No. 4 seed Brian Milford of Texas A&M for the 235-pound-classification national championship. Pendleton wrestled two seasons at Georgia Southern, losing only once as he helped rebuild the program, but his career came to an end when he suffered a broken neck. He has since undergone a full recovery, and is close to graduating.

“His neck’s better, and he’s doing a lot of stuff, but I don’t know when he’s going to come back,” Hurst said about Pendleton. “He’s got a gigantic diamond national championship ring – they don’t give out toys – and he has beaten some of the best wrestlers in the country at every level.”

Shaun Scruggs, a junior who wrestles in the 184-pound class, was named an NCWAA Academic All-American during the 2011 preseason. He also qualified for nationals in each of his first two seasons. Scruggs had his heart set on attending Georgia Southern before he even knew there was a wrestling program. He wanted to follow in the footsteps of his older brother Bill, a cello player who came to Georgia Southern on a full musical scholarship.

“The more I looked into Georgia Southern,” Scruggs said, “I found out that there were two guys who had already been to the wrestling nationals, so I met with Coach Hurst. I was already going to come to Georgia Southern – I loved the school, I loved the campus, I loved the RAC – and then to find out there was already a wrestling team that had a lot of success in such a short time, it was remarkable news for me.”

Scruggs had never dreamed of becoming a college athlete, even after he earned the highest grade point average (3.91) on the Peachtree Ridge High School wrestling team his senior year in 2009.

“I’m a junior in college and I’m still speechless about it,” he said. “I never thought for a second in my entire life I’d be able to say I was a college athlete. Now I’m a team captain and an Academic All-American and I’m speechless. My brain is still trying to catch up with my body.”

Hurst came to Georgia Southern in 2008 with two goals; earn his Master of Science in kinesiology and start a competitive wrestling team. Now in year four of his coaching career, he has already surpassed his wildest expectations for his wrestlers.

“We’ve had one national champion who got a big diamond ring, and we’ve had one Academic All-American,” Hurst said. “I really couldn’t tell you which one to be more proud of. They’re both huge accomplishments. When you fill out an application, that’s the first thing you put on there – show them the ring or show them the plaque.”

—Matt Yogus
Drive to construct Erk statue nearing goal

A drive to construct Erk statue nearing goal

At the start, the task before Derek Sills seemed as imposing as the seven-and-a-half-foot statue of coach Erk Russell he wanted to erect. But less than a year later, Sills has raised $60,000 of the estimated $80,000 needed to construct the monument at Paulson Stadium.

A Georgia Southern Athletic Foundation board member, Sills sees the job as a personal duty to his alma mater.

“It not only honors a legend, which is what we should do, it gives our stadium the presence and pageantry of the game; and you can’t beat the pageantry of the game of football to reach into their pockets to show their appreciation for Russell. Former Eagle coach Hugh Nall; and former Auburn defensive coordinator and ESPN Game Day contributor, Tony Barnhart; Georgia head football coach Vince Dooley; colleague of Russell and University of Georgia head football coach Paul Johnson are among the contributors to Russell’s monument.

Sills has been discussing with fellow University alumnus Brandon Boyd the idea of Boyd’s business donating the base of the statue.

“The would polish the granite and etch in the ‘We’re Georgia Southern’ quote from Erk,” Sills said. There are several options for the statue’s design, but Sills says one strong consideration is Russell wearing his iconic “One More Time” t-shirts and hosting another “Eagles for Erk” barbecue and pig patty party. Last year’s creative benefit raised almost $20,000 toward the project.

Sills is hoping that the statue can be finished in time for the 2012 season.

The experience included a visit to Russell’s bust at Paulson Stadium and the coach’s artifacts in the football office. Mullins created the likeness of Georgia coach Vince Dooley in Athens.

Sills has plans to hold additional fundraisers to complete the project. One possibility includes selling “One More Time” t-shirts and hosting another “Eagles for Erk” barbecue and pig patty party. Last year’s creative benefit raised almost $20,000 toward the project.

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Goal Tender

Realizing the University’s vision is top priority for new Advancement VP Salinda Arthur

Salinda Arthur has been rousing the faithful to action for quite some time. With more than 17 years of fundraising experience and having just completed a $1 billion campaign at Virginia Tech, she is looking forward to the next challenge.

Georgia Southern’s record enrollment, surging school spirit and lofty goals give its new vice president for University Advancement plenty to be excited about, and with state and federal resources dwindling, philanthropy has become even more important to Georgia Southern’s future.

“University Advancement’s mission is to look at what the University has as priorities and then examine which alumni, friends, parents, corporations and foundations can partner with us. We look for their interests to see if we can facilitate a gift through those interests and make the University’s priorities possible.”

Fundraising in today’s economic climate is going back to basics. “Not just Georgia Southern, but many institutions have found themselves with fewer and fewer state and federal funds,” Arthur said. “Philanthropy has become a necessity for some of the basic functions of the University, not to mention being able to move forward with University special initiatives. You want to be able to act upon them in order to grow the institution, and philanthropy becomes the mechanism to do that.”

Additional scholarship support for students is a key ingredient to success, especially in challenging economic times. “Philanthropy can make a difference there,” said Arthur. “When people endow scholarships, their endowment goes on forever, and it enables students who would not otherwise be able to attend to get an education, and with that education and opportunity, the tools to do better in life.”

The ability to attract and keep high quality teacher-scholars is a key to Georgia Southern’s desire to grow as a center of research. “We have a need for philanthropic support of our faculty,” she said. “Those institutions that have large endowments for faculty positions are less likely to lose those professors to other institutions. Faculty can stay and be focused. We want to keep our good teachers, and we want to find great researchers. It is philanthropy that will enable us to do those things.”

Facilities to meet a growing enrollment and changing needs are another priority. “Being able to give individuals naming opportunities for buildings or parts of buildings is something that philanthropy contributes,” said Arthur.

The world of higher education philanthropy is challenging — but very rewarding, she said. “I think as fundraisers we can look back and say, ‘Wow, look at what our donors were able to accomplish — what we were able to facilitate made a big difference.’”

As the president is able to cite his vision for the institution, as the leadership team comes forward with what they believe the institutional priorities should be, University Advancement must support that vision to make it happen through philanthropic efforts.”

Arthur previously served as the assistant vice president of development for colleges at Virginia Tech, managing eight colleges. Before that, she held positions at Chadron State College, Iowa State University and Ohio University. She earned a bachelor’s degree from Susquehanna University and master’s from E.W. Scripps School of Journalism at Ohio University. Upon completion of her dissertation, she will receive her Ph.D. from OU.

“I think as fundraisers we can look back and say, ‘Wow, look at what our donors were able to accomplish — what we were able to facilitate made a big difference.’”

—Salinda Arthur

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Fraternity’s generosity supports future students

Washington, joined me in going to the University Foundation to set it up and, finally, we got it endowed through annual giving from the alumni and the chapter itself.

"In my time at Georgia Southern, I was active in extracurricular activities – the Student Union Board, president of the Afro American Club and one of the charter members of the Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity chapter," he said. "In addition to the obvious great education I received, I was also a two-time recipient of the Board of Regents Opportunity Scholarship.

"With all those blessings, I also enjoyed the mentoring and teaching of a great faculty in the Political Science department – Dr. Lane Van Tassel, Dr. Robert Dick, Dr. Justin Mann, Dr. John Daily to name a few," Jones said. "My activity also gave me the privilege to come to know, have routine access to, and establish friendships with people such as President Dale Lack, Hurricane Matthews and Dean of Students Jack Nolen.

"All of these people and more gave of themselves – to an extent that they did not have to – and I always appreciated it," he said. "I always believed that doing something for GSU and helping someone else the way I was helped was the best way I could be given to me – my way of paying it forward.”

Both the active members of the fraternity and the group’s alumni contributed to the endowment, said APA brother Alvis Coes (’07), executive director of Statesboro’s Hearts and Hands Clinic. “It’s been a dual effort over the last five or six years between the graduate brothers and the undergraduate chapter,” Coes said all fraternity alumni were asked to contribute $100 each year and the Xi Tau Chapter was also a two-time recipient of the Board of Regents Opportunity Scholarship.

Both groups have generously supported the effort, said Jones. “I’m forever grateful to both my fraternity’s alumni and Xi Tau Chapter for making this happen.”

The University professors and administrators that helped support the Alpha Phi Alpha Scholarship was also inspired as his passion to continue supporting Georgia Southern. “They had a great impression on my love of public administration and are a part of why I am a public servant today,” he said.
Chris Riley (93) once had his heart set on becoming a CIA agent.

That all changed once he began his second quarter of Arabic at Georgia Southern and his professor pulled him aside. “He said, ‘You know there really are a lot of red-haired, fair-skinned agents in Arabic-speaking countries!’ and he was correct. He became a career serving citizens on a global scale, the 42-year-old works as a leading public official for its perpetuation in a variety of capacities.

Among the many recognitions Dr. Budack received at the University was the Professor of the Year award in 2000.

He was named head of the Georgia Junior College Athletic Association Baseball Hall of Fame in 2003.

Dr. Colvin joined the faculty of Georgia Southern in 1963. He began his teaching career at Ogeechee Area Hospice and the Department of Corrections for the State of Georgia.

He served as an assistant professor of chemistry. Following an academic reorganization in 1969, he was named head of the Department of Chemistry, a position he held until his retirement in 1975.

He was elected sheriff of Bulloch County in 1951, serving two terms before leaving law enforcement.

He briefly worked at Brookfield Motor Company (now Nissan Ford), before being named chief of Campus Security (now Public Safety) at Georgia Southern, a position he held until his retirement in 1988.

He was a member of First Baptist Church of Statesboro and the Peace Officers Association.

Marvin Goss

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Marvin Goss

Marvin Goss, former sheriff of Bulloch County, died at Zath S. Henderson Regional Hospital in January at the age of 65.

Some of the governor’s top goals this year, Riley said, include job creation, eliminating the sales tax on energy used in manufacturing, removing tax on construction projects of regional significance and expanding the new job
tax credit.

While Riley loves his challenging and exciting job, he also treasures family time with his wife Bambi and sons Jake and Austin. The family lives on a small farm in north Hall County – Riley is the fifth generation to live on the property – and operates a small cattle operation with 19 cows and one bull.

“My wife tells me that I am fortunate because I wake up every day and love my job,” says Riley. “It’s not an easy job and every day is different than the one before. But at the end of the day I like to think, and it is my sincere hope, that the tough decisions we have to make are the right ones and in the best interest of the state.”

As for his future in politics, Riley says that he has no plans to leave the political field. “I don’t have any interest in becoming a candidate. I think God placed me exactly where my talents are best used!”

—Mary Beth Spence
Entomologist stays one jump ahead of harmful ticks

Angela James’ choice of vocation used to give her late grandmother a good chuckle. “My grandmother, just before she passed on, still couldn’t believe I was an entomologist,” said James (’85). “Growing up, when I would visit them in summer, we’d pick black eyed peas and tomatoes, and so on. She used to say, ‘You were always scared of all the bugs. You’d go running in the opposite direction!’”

James’ opinion of certain “bugs” is still not positive, but today she deals with them in a very different way. “It’s really about what can we do to prevent disease transmission to either humans or animals,” she said.

After living in Florida, South Carolina, Illinois, Tennessee, California and Mississippi, it was fortuitous that James’ father, a 30-year U.S. Navy submariner, closed out his career at Naval Submarine Base Kings Bay in St. Marys, Ga., where she completed high school. Based on James’ aptitude for science and interest in animals, her senior biology teacher recommended Georgia Southern.

That advice delivered James straight into the tutelage of world-renowned tick and mite expert James Oliver. “I interviewed with Dr. Oliver and was hired as a work study student in his acarology lab,” she said. “That’s what started my interest in entomology. I worked as a technician and got a biology degree at Georgia Southern. He asked me if I’d be interested in continuing as a graduate student here with him for my post-doctoral studies at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Fort Collins, Colo. After completing high school, Dickinson said he lacked direction and confidence in his academic ability. But, while visiting St. Simons Island, Ga., he decided to enroll in then-Brunswick Junior College (now Coastal Community College) at the urging of his family. “Once there, I realized that I needed to reach his goals – even when the prevailing winds were against him. Later, I was able to do some modeling and mapping for Veterinary Services at both national and local scales to help design strategies for surveillance and prevention of tick-borne disease in the U.S.”

“While soccer was my main impetus for applying to Georgia Southern, rugby became my sport of choice,” he said. An internationally certified coach, Dickinson has been Bermuda’s National Team youth rugby coach for several age categories and taken his team to matches in Bath, England and the Cayman Islands. “Living in Bermuda, you usually end up being either a fisherman or a sailor,” said Dickinson, and the man who grew up in the Atlantic island nation has never lost his love for sailing. “I’ve sailed in many different classes of One Design boats, as well as larger yachts,” he said. “I have also done about 15 ocean crossings and races to and from Bermuda, including the Newport and Marion-Bermuda Yacht Races.”

While Dickinson will always be a rugger, a sailor and an IT innovator, today Dickinson’s main focus now is his family – his wife, Davina, son, Tyler and daughter, Ashley.

Most Bermudians are avid sailors, and Robbie Dickinson is no exception.
Designer Genes

University alumna leads groundbreaking research in plant genetics

Texas Tech University Professor Thea Wilkins once translated Russian for U.S. Army intelligence. Difficult enough, but today she has an even more complex task – translating the function of genes in farm crops.

Wilkins, one of the world’s elite plant geneticists, has laid the foundation for current progress in cotton biotechnology. A leader of the largest cotton genome sequencing project in the world, she holds her university’s endowed Professor of Cotton Genomics chair.

Her work is taking on ever-greater importance as U.S. cotton production continues to rise in response to foreign demand and as many chemicals that enhance production are being outlawed.

“The real challenge is that cotton breeding criteria have always been set for U.S. mills, and now we don’t have any mills,” said Wilkins. “They’ve all been located offshore. Everything is manufactured offshore and then shipped back in. We need to bring our fiber crops up to meet the textile demands for those mills, otherwise they’re going to start importing it from somewhere else. We don’t want that to happen.”

In recent decades, the demand for cotton has increased sharply, she said, with perhaps 200,000 acres in cultivation. “Now it’s up to a million-and-a-half,” Wilkins said. “There’s definitely been a comeback.” And, she added, Texas is the top producer of cotton in the U.S. West Texas – home to Lubbock and Texas Tech – produces one-fourth of all the cotton grown in the nation. “When I’m driving to work, I’ll pass a dozen or more cotton fields,” she said. “We’re right in the heart of cotton country.”

The work of Wilkins and her colleagues is setting the stage for cotton that is more drought tolerant and disease- and insect-resistant. The best way to achieve those qualities was to painstakingly map the genome of the cotton plant and breed them into future crops. Genes contributing weak characteristics can be removed and those providing for stronger crops, she added.

Cotton has one of the longest, fastest-growing cells in the plant kingdom. “In terms of fundamental plants, it makes an absolutely ideal single-celled model system,” said Wilkins. “We’re trying to kill two birds with one stone – understanding basic biology while uncovering aspects of the biology that has direct applications for agriculture and crop improvement.”

“We’ve been doing gene discovery, trying to associate genes with fiber development and how they would impact fiber quality,” she said. “That’s where it slowed down, and where I thought sequencing genomes would help us out – isolating one gene at a time. We can now move up a level where we are now looking at what actually controls fiber growth and development.”

A native of Tonawanda, N.Y., Wilkins, like many teens, was eager to leave her hometown. “I guess like all kids, I wanted to get away from home,” she said. She was a foreign language major at Buffalo State College, but when her brother joined the Army she learned that by enlisting she could attend foreign language school. “I ended up four years in the Army Security Agency as an intelligence analyst with a major in Russian. So, I saw the world and met my husband, who is from Georgia.”

When her hitch was done, she enrolled at Georgia Southern and found herself fascinated by biology. Wilkins went on to graduate summa cum laude, then earned a master’s in plant genetics and breeding at the University of Georgia, and a Ph.D. in plant cell and molecular biology at Michigan State University. She taught and researched for 15 years at the University of California-Davis, before Texas Tech came knocking six years ago.

“I can only say that my interest in learning and curiosity began at Georgia Southern,” said Wilkins. “There’s no doubt. We just had an excellent group of instructors that induced a love of plants. I remember Dr. Donald Drapalik in particular. He made plants interesting to all of us. Georgia Southern had small classes and we had people who were dedicated.

“They did a phenomenal job in imparting basic knowledge. When we left we knew that we were well-educated and you can’t ask for anything more than that.”

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Designed to Last

Alumnus stars in HGTV’s ‘Design Wars’ reality series

A stint on reality TV may seem fun and glamorous. But Georgia Southern alum and interior designer Robert White (’07) can tell you it’s a lot of hard work. White recently completed filming as a contestant on HGTV’s “Design Wars,” and found out what really goes on behind the scenes of reality TV.

“I don’t think people realize how much work goes into a design show,” says White. “Usually, an episode looks like it is done in one day. We filmed 16-hour days, and each episode took between four and five days to shoot. It was a lot more work than I assumed it would be.”

White can’t say what happened on the show or how he fared as a contestant until it airs on HGTV later this year. But, he says, “I don’t think people realize how much work goes into a design show,” says White. "I can’t say enough about the value of the program or the faculty. They really pushed me and really opened my eyes to some of the realities of being an interior designer, and also how to navigate the business world. That prepared me to jump in with both feet. Without their direction, I wouldn’t have the knowledge or skills to be where I am now.”

And White has advice for other new graduates who worry their big dreams could be sidelined by a bad economy. “Get your foot in the door. Don’t focus on being a rock star or trying to see your name in lights right out of the gate. Take a job you will have fun with and value that job. Get in where you fit in, “ White says. “Go where you can get a foothold in the industry. You can start from there and go anywhere, so keep that dream. You always want to hold onto that dream."

—Betsy Nolen

Breaking Free

Alumna chronicles her victory over adversity with new book

Sometimes, just surviving adversity is a major victory. “But then life asks, ‘Now what?’” says emotional resilience expert Paul G. Stoltz. “Over the course of your years, either adversity consumes you, or you consume it.”

Jenny Lynn Anderson (’85) knows the fight first hand, and a new book chronicles her painful, but ultimately uplifting battle with the emotional scars resulting from sexual assault.

In Room 939: 15 Minutes of Horror, 20 Years of Healing, Anderson recounts how the incident led to a variety of deep and long-standing emotional problems, and how she triumphed in the end – over not just her internal struggles, but over her attacker.

In Atlanta to attend a public relations industry convention, she was attacked as she walked alone in a hotel hallway. “I went to Atlanta as a perfectly healthy 28-year-old woman early in my career, full of life and energy and passion for my job, and it just absolutely changed me,” she said. “After that, I came home and 20 years passed.”

During those two decades, she went on with life, but lived uneasily with the memory, suffering post-traumatic stress syndrome, anger, fear, guilt and the ever-present question: “Why me?” She finally decided to seek professional counseling and was able to place the events in perspective.

“I decided that the man who did this to me had kept me in bondage for 20 years – that the only way I was ever going to heal was to tell this story,” said Anderson. “In the past five to seven months, I have rid myself of those shackles and he’s no longer holding me in prison. That’s the beauty of this.”

Anderson has two reasons for authoring the book, “One was that God wanted me to heal,” she said. “Another is to serve as a catalyst for me to go and speak to people about what happens when things go really badly in your life. I want to tell them that you can live through a very bad experience and come out on the other end a stronger person.”

“I’m hoping people will allow me to share my story.”

Room 939: 15 Minutes of Horror, 20 Years of Healing is available for purchase at www.jennylynnanderson.com, Amazon and Barnes & Noble.
Biostatistics

Behind the Scenes

Grad helping to develop new anti-cancer drugs

Developing a cancer drug that will give patients more time and a better quality of life takes years of painstaking research and detailed clinical trials. A Georgia Southern biostatistics graduate is on the front lines of that work at the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute in Boston.

Yang Feng (’04) is a biostatistician who designs and analyzes oncology clinical trials and pre-clinical studies. “Our research will, hopefully, lead to more effective cancer therapy,” said Feng.

Feng said it was a clinical trial that led the U.S. Food and Drug Administration in August to approve early release of Zelboraf, a drug shown to lengthen the lives of late-stage melanoma patients whose tumors have a certain gene mutation. While not involved in that project, Feng said that is an example of how her career in biostatistics has the power to impact patients.

“This was very exciting because it has provided successful treatment to these patients,” explained Feng.

Feng credits the work of the Georgia Southern biostatistics faculty like Karl Peace, professor and founder of the Center for Biostatistics, with giving her the real-world skills she would need as she headed into her field.

“Professors really cared about our professional development and paid individual attention to each of us,” Feng said. “Our classes laid theoretical foundations of biostatistics for us and led us beyond the textbooks into the real world, as well.”

The biostatistics program in the University’s Jiann-Ping Hsu College of Public Health is preparing graduate students for a career where learning is always at the forefront.

“Learning something new is the most exciting part of each day,” said Feng.

‘BUILDING IN THE TREES’

Construction is underway for the new $41 million Biological Sciences Building, at the intersection of Akins Boulevard and Forest Drive. The 155,000-square-foot LEED Silver-certified building is scheduled for completion in Spring 2013.

THE PLACE TO BE

When it came time for Larry Owens to open his restaurant in 1979, there was one name that was stuck in his head and one that has become an iconic establishment on the outskirts of Georgia Southern’s campus – Dingus MaGee’s. It took a while for Owens to figure out where he first heard it, but he recalls now that it came from the 1970 movie “Dirty Dingus Magee.”

The name stuck, and the establishment has become a Georgia Southern favorite. The menu has seen a lot of changes through the years, as Dingus was a Statesboro pioneer in pizza, ranch dressing, chicken wings and even alcohol. When beer and wine were legalized in Statesboro restaurants, Dingus became popular for its “wine daiquiris.”

While the menu has evolved a lot during the past three decades, the atmosphere has always been the same. And that’s how the Owens couple – Owens met his wife Stephanie at the restaurant – likes it.

“I want it to always be the same,” Stephanie said. “We want people to come back after five or six years and say, ‘Wow, nothing has changed!’ When people come back to visit, I want them to have a flood of good memories.”

The Owens couple isn’t the only one to pair up at the restaurant. Country music star Luke Bryan is just one of a long list of Georgia Southern alumni to have met a future spouse or gotten engaged at the corner of Georgia Avenue and Chandler Road.
The Band Perry & The Fray
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