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GEORGIA SOUTHERN


MAGAZINE

SUMMER 2020

THROUGH
THE STORM

ARMSTRONG IN PRIME TIME

MAKING HISTORY



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Leaps with
NASA



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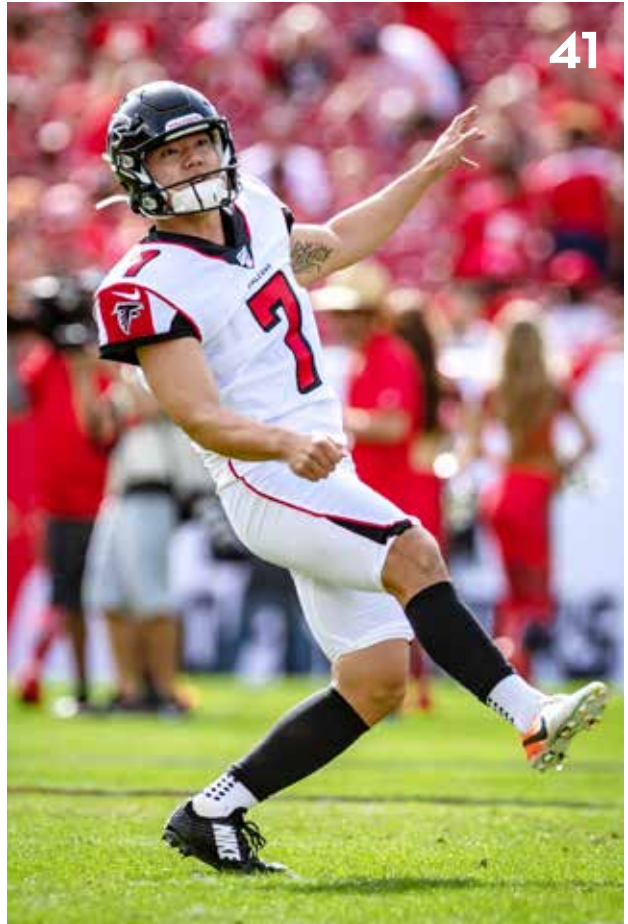
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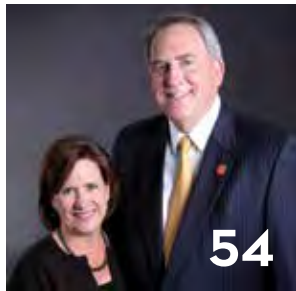
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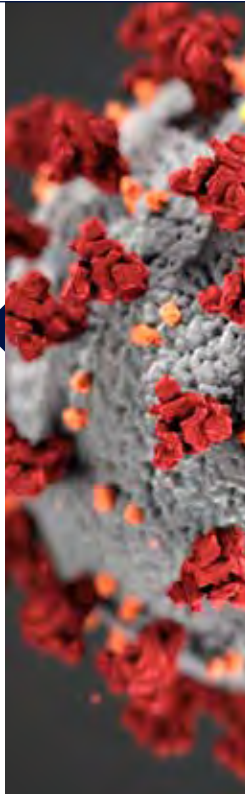
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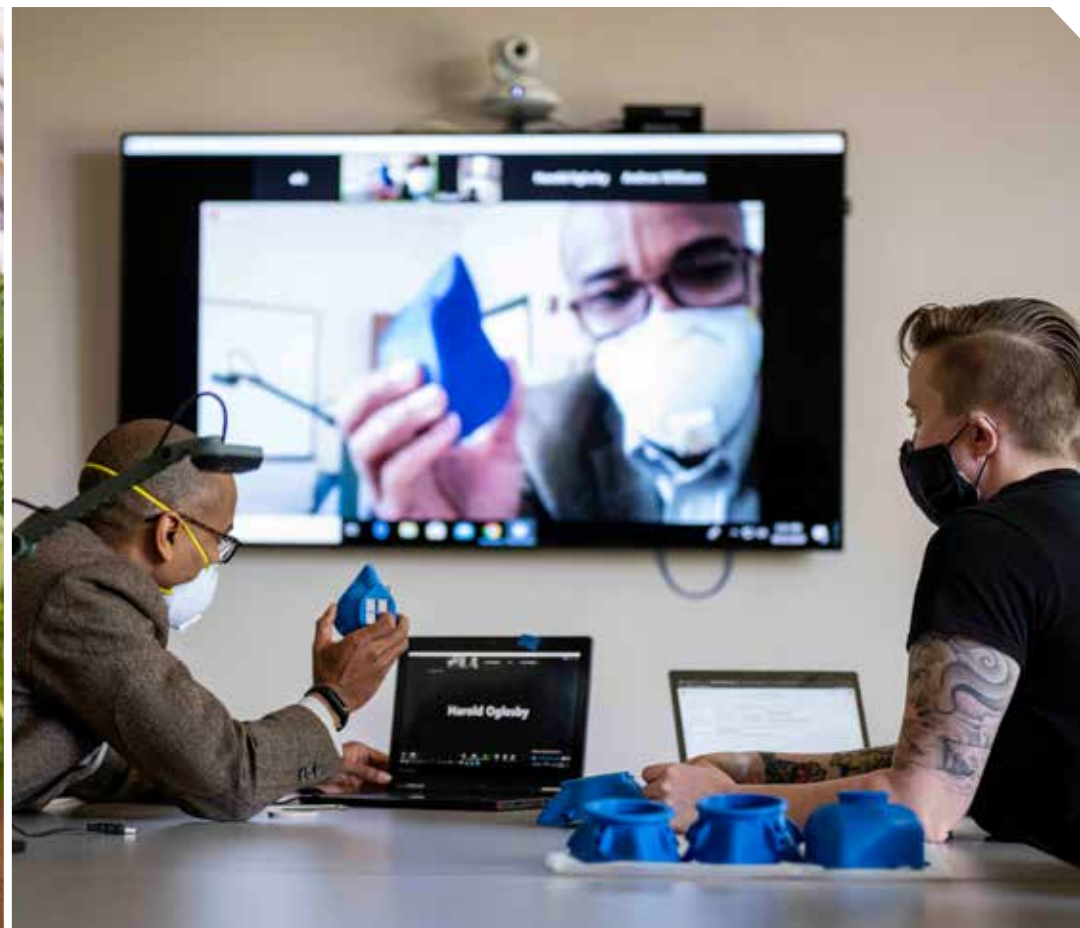
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COVER: On July 20, 1969, NASA made history with the launch of Apollo 11, the first space flight that landed men on the moon and brought them back to Earth. Several Georgia Southern alumni were members of the vast space program at NASA, and played a role in this historic effort. Read their story on page 12.



YOU AIN'T SEEN NOTHIN' YET

A Letter from Georgia Southern University President Dr. Kyle Marrero

I firmly believe you can gauge the substance of a person by how they deal with adversity.

That's where the proverbial rubber meets the road, where the proof is in the pudding, where the right stuff is displayed.

I can't imagine few situations more adverse for Georgia Southern than the COVID-19 pandemic. I've certainly never seen anything like it in my lifetime. And while it has proved to be one of the most challenging times of my professional career, I can also honestly say that it has shown me what an exceptional University I am privileged to lead.

In mid-March, Georgia Southern sent faculty, staff and students home, not knowing when or if they could return to campus for the rest of the academic year. We made the decision to completely rework our education delivery model and move more than 5,000 in-person courses online — a herculean task! In the span of little more than two weeks, our faculty and staff not only moved classes and operations online so students could resume instruction after their spring break, we also provided technology and access support at unprecedented levels to ensure our students' academic success. Our library even developed a laptop check-out system by mail.

For our students living on campus, Operation Move-out was an emotionally difficult process, but operationally very successful as we quietly and quickly moved more than 4,500 students from our residence halls.

For those students who remained in housing, or who lived nearby and were having trouble making ends meet, we stocked up our student food pantries in Savannah and in Statesboro to assist them. We processed nearly \$11 million in student refunds, then developed a system to deliver another \$11 million to our students through the federal CARES Act.

Of course, we were also forced to cancel spring commencement ceremonies. My heart broke for the Class of 2020, and we immediately began looking for alternative

ways to honor their achievements. Once again, our team came together to create a virtual graduation experience where the magic of the day could be felt from anywhere in the world and where each student would be personally recognized. The team reached out to notable alumni like CEO of Chick-fil-A Dan Cathy, country superstar Cole Swindell and Inspector General for the Army, Lt. Gen. Leslie Smith, to offer congratulatory messages to our graduates. Our production team created more than 4,300 individual student slides — many with student-provided photos and personal notes. Each of our graduates' names were read aloud as their image appeared on the screen. More than 100,000 visitors tuned in on Facebook, and shares reached more than 250,000. What an amazing accomplishment for our University!

Add to all this the fact that our faculty and staff accomplished these milestones while working from home, managing family and work, and meeting and collaborating online.

As we look to our next chapter, we are still innovating and adapting to this unprecedented time in the University's history. We are transforming the way we recruit students, revamping our digital marketing efforts and our website, and creating virtual tours of our campuses. We're operating leaner than we ever have.

This year has brought disappointments, fears and so many struggles. But one thing has remained constant through it all, Eagle Nation has SOARED.

We've flown through the wind and rain and thunderheads and climbed above it all. We've innovated, adapted and persevered, finding new ways to help our students succeed, and I believe we're just beginning.

I am so proud of this University because you can't keep us down.

I think Erk Russell said it best when he said, "And folks, you just can't beat that...and you can't beat Georgia Southern. And you ain't seen nothin' yet!"



Photos (opposite, clockwise from top left): Students move out from housing in March, Chick-fil-A CEO Dan Cathy performs for the University's virtual Commencement in May, 3D-printed masks built by Georgia Southern, Armstrong Campus Aquaponics donated food to Second Harvest food bank in Savannah.



ARMSTRONG CAMPUS PLANTS NEW MEDICINAL GARDEN

The Armstrong Campus features a new garden of plants useful for medicinal purposes in historical and even contemporary times. Rosemary, parsley, castor beans and foxglove are just a few of the plants with healing properties that fill the physic garden, a type of herb garden.

“Physic gardens are obviously not a new idea, and our garden is modeled after the Sibbald Physic Garden in Edinburgh, Scotland, where the plants are organized by historical era,” said Philip Schretter, superintendent of grounds operations. “More specifically, our garden is defined by authors that lived during notable time periods related to herbalism. For example, the era of the early herbalist features plants included in the writings of Roman and Greek herbalists.”

The garden is a unique way to gain the interest of students and make learning fun. Schretter noted that all of the plants represent the state of medical care throughout history.

“It was interesting to read which maladies were more prevalent in each time period based on what cures the plants provided,” he said. “The 16th and 17th centuries focuses on plants described by authors living during the rise of herbalism in Europe. The 18th and 19th centuries contains plants featured by writers describing the discoveries of new plant treatments from the Americas, and the 20th and 21st centuries features plants described in modern herbals and the use of plants in medicine today.”

The garden is also the first in the 268-acre Armstrong Campus Arboretum to use QR codes that will link to a page on the Arboretum’s website with information about each plant. The garden is located near Ashmore Hall.

‘SURREAL EVENT’: LIBERTY CAMPUS STUDENT ATTENDS STATE OF THE UNION ADDRESS

First-year student Jaiden Thompson was Congressman Buddy Carter’s guest at President Donald Trump’s State of the Union Address in February.

“The event was surreal,” said Thompson, a student on the Liberty Campus. “I remember watching past State of the Union addresses on the television with my grandfather, so seeing them in person was mind-blowing.”

Thompson and her mother watched the annual address from a balcony seat in the House Chamber of the U.S. Capitol.

“I had so much fun with Buddy Carter,” said the business administration major. “He introduced me to many other representatives and members of Congress. I also got to attend two receptions with him and my mother in a beautiful room on Capitol Hill filled with other representatives and their guests.”

Thompson caught Carter’s attention when she was honored as a Gold Award Girl Scout in 2019. It is the highest award for a senior Girl Scout. Thompson, a Girl Scout in Hinesville, Georgia, for 13 years, was honored for her outreach work, which included the project Community of Care.

“My project was geared toward helping those who were in need of personal hygiene items and school supplies and blossomed into the school uniforms closet and a prize room,” she said.



ASSOCIATE DEAN NAMED TO MENTAL HEALTH COUNCIL

Joseph Telfair, DrPH, has been appointed to the National Mental Health Advisory Committee (NAMHC). He is the associate dean of public health practice and research in Georgia Southern University’s Jiann-Ping Hsu College of Public Health.

Telfair’s advisory role pertains to public health research and practice, community-based research, and issues of health inequities and translational research — all areas in which his national and global expertise has been recognized.

The NAMHC advises the secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the directors of the National Institutes of Health and the National Institute of Mental Health on all policies and activities relating to the conduct and support of mental health research, research training and other programs of the institutes.

His appointment will run through September 2023.



INTERNATIONAL LEARNING CENTER OFFICIALLY OPENS IN IRELAND

This summer, Georgia Southern University is hosting the first scholars to study at its new Irish learning center. Georgia Southern President Kyle Marrero led a delegation of higher education and business officials to Wexford County, Ireland, last fall for the ceremonial opening of the international facility. Ireland's deputy prime minister attended the event, which also led to a meeting between Marrero and Ireland's president, Michael Higgins. It was the first official meeting between a Georgia Southern president and a foreign head of state.

The facility is housed in a historic 1812 building located in County Wexford, which has historical and current ties with Savannah. In the mid-1800s, shipping companies provided direct services to Georgia's port city, bringing thousands of Irish emigrants to Savannah. In recent years, Wexford and Savannah have formed a partnership centered around trade, education and exchange.

"Our ambition is to develop this center in Wexford Town as Georgia Southern University's primary educational venue for Europe," said Howard Keeley, director of Georgia Southern's Center for Irish Research and Teaching. "While the principal user will be Georgia Southern's 26,000 students, we anticipate and welcome use by our sibling institutions in the University System of Georgia, which serves some 330,000 students."

During this summer's initial phase of Georgia Southern University-Wexford, offerings include honors humanities and international-studies courses focused on the connection between Wexford and Savannah.



NEW JUNIOR ACHIEVEMENT PARTNERSHIP

Georgia Southern is planning a partnership with Junior Achievement of Georgia (JA) that could bring thousands of middle school students to the Armstrong Campus every year. The project calls for retrofitting the Student Recreation Center into a JA Discovery Center. The center would educate middle schoolers in such areas as career readiness, personal finance and entrepreneurship.

Georgia Southern President Kyle Marrero said the project aligns with the University's mission, values and strategic plan. He explained it would offer experiential and employment opportunities for Armstrong students and help make the Armstrong Campus a destination for the coastal region.



STUDENTS SHINE IN RETAIL COMPETITION

A team of Parker College of Business students won this year's National Retail Federation (NRF) Foundation Student Challenge competition. For their case study, Cayley Creekmore, Shannon Foote, Anna Tiller and Woodley White created a jewelry line that empowers women in Uganda by providing them with the skills to earn a living wage to support their families.

The students based their concept jewelry company, Akola, in Dallas, Texas. They developed a complete business plan including a \$10,000 budget plan to take the goods to market. They also had to determine the logistics of producing the jewelry in Uganda and shipping it to the U.S. Additionally, the team had to select a retailer to carry the line and create a 30-page pitch deck along with a 90-second pitch video to present to buyers of Free People, the team's selected retailer.

The group worked with a mentor from KPMG, the challenge's sponsor, during their eight-month project. The students were recognized at the NRF Foundation's annual gala in New York in January. Their win came with a \$5,000 scholarship for each student. NRF is the world's largest retail trade association. It represents discount and department stores, home goods and specialty stores, Main Street merchants, grocers, wholesalers, chain restaurants and internet retailers from the United States and more than 45 countries.



'TASTE OF THE WORLD' CELEBRATES CULTURAL DIVERSITY

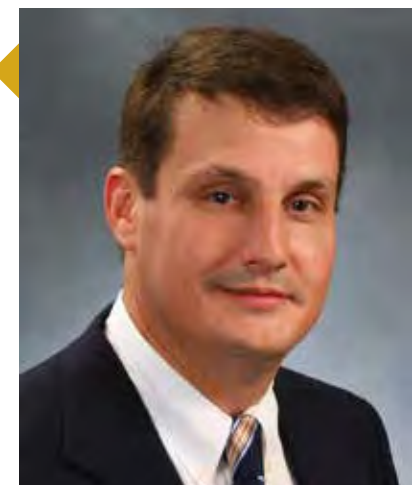
Students on the Armstrong Campus enjoyed savory foods and activities from around the world during a celebration of International Education Week on Nov. 13, 2019. The Taste of the World festival has been a staple on the Savannah campus since 2002. It's a chance for attendees to sample traditional foods from other countries and learn about various cultures through demonstrations, exciting performances and hands-on activities. Eleven different countries were represented in the booths staffed by international students and volunteers. The International Student Organization (ISO) hosted the event. The ISO provides an opportunity for international and U.S. students to socialize while promoting the awareness of Georgia Southern's diverse cultures.

ALUMNUS IS NEW DEAN OF JIANN-PING HSU COLLEGE OF PUBLIC HEALTH

Georgia Southern University alumnus Stuart Tedders, Ph.D., ('87) is the new dean of the Jiann-Ping Hsu College of Public Health. The native of Perry, Georgia, began his career at Georgia Southern University as an assistant professor in 2000 and was an original member of the Jiann-Ping Hsu College of Public Health, which was founded on Jan. 1, 2006. Tedders has worked with rural and underserved communities in Georgia for nearly 26 years and was named Georgia Rural Health Researcher of the Year in 1999 by the Georgia Rural Health Association.

"I am delighted to be selected as the next dean of the Jiann-Ping Hsu College of Public Health," said Tedders. "Having spent much of my career at Georgia Southern University, I am proud to continue serving an institution with such strong traditions of excellence and a vision to serve rural and underserved communities."

Tedders has served in numerous faculty and administrative capacities in the college, most recently as the interim dean. He also served as director of the Center for Rural Health Research and the director of the Office of Public Health Practice/Community Service.



TRUE BLUE SPOTLIGHT



Former pen pals reunited after more than 10 years. Pictured are (L to R): Hannah Jackson, Boslie Booth, Maci Nease, Jenna Mosley, Gen. Buggs, Tatum Taylor, Skyler Sikes, Former DEA Kindergarten Teacher Michelle Lamm.

‘TRUE BLUE’ A WAY OF LIFE FOR ARMY RESERVE BRIGADIER GENERAL

True Blue is more than just a phrase for Georgia Southern alumnus Vincent E. Buggs, a brigadier general with the U.S. Army Reserve. It’s a mindset.

“To be ‘True Blue’ means to give,” he said. “The one thing that Georgia Southern as an institution teaches everyone, if you embrace it, is that you have to be kind, you have to give and you have to be willing to share your experiences.”

This mentality led him to surprise a group of high school seniors at David Emanuel Academy in Stillmore, Georgia. While deployed early in his military career, Buggs was pen pals with this group of students who were set to graduate in 2020. The students sent Buggs letters, candies and whatnots often, which helped keep his spirits high during tough times.

Years passed and Buggs never forgot the young students who took the time to write and encourage him. Buggs made a visit to Georgia Southern University in fall 2019 to meet the cadets in the Army ROTC program. When he learned that David Emanuel Academy was less

than an hour’s drive from Georgia Southern’s Statesboro Campus, he scheduled a visit.

“Being able to get there to thank them was something really personal to me,” he said. “Getting to the campus, I had butterflies. You haven’t seen them, you’ve never met them and you just don’t know how it’s going to go — it can go sideways.

“There were a lot of emotions, but positive emotions,” he said. “I did break down for a minute, but I got my composure and I explained to them the importance of sending letters or care packages to a service member who is away from their family. It’s a heartwarming thing.”

Thanking these students was important to Buggs not only to close a chapter in his life but to also show his appreciation for the positive influence their gestures had on him. This is just one way he embodies his True Blue mindset.

“Even my toughest days at Georgia Southern, there was always somebody there to pat me on my back or my shoulder and say, ‘keep going,’” he said. “There were days when you just knew ‘this is not going to be a good

day,’ but there was always somebody there who had a positive outlook on something and it made a difference in my life.”

That support is what Buggs credits with his successes in life and in his military career.

“When I got to Georgia Southern, I was a college student,” he said. “When I left, I was a visionary. I had objectives and things that I wanted to accomplish in my life.”

Buggs has garnered numerous accomplishments over the years as he moved up in rank to brigadier general. Currently, he is the director for the Army Reserve Engagement Cell, U.S. Army North, in Fort Sam Houston, Texas.

Because of the positive influences he encountered as a student, Buggs chooses to share similar support by frequently speaking with young people and visiting Georgia Southern often. He makes a point to speak with current Army ROTC cadets and other students to explain to them the importance of embracing the full Georgia Southern experience.

“The greatest moment of my life was when the football team allowed me to speak to them before a football game,” he said. “That was an honor that I can never, ever replace. That was surreal. And that’s when you know you’re True Blue.” — *CRISSIE ELRICK BATH*

FEATURES

THROUGH THE STORM

Georgia Southern Adapts and Excels in Wake of Pandemic



Some of Georgia Southern's greatest stories describe how the University weathered storms.

From winning a difficult bid in Savannah in 1906 to establish the First District A&M School, to transitioning from a secondary school to a teachers college, to reviving a football program with a visionary coach and no money, to merging two regional institutions into one University, Georgia Southern has faced its share of challenges.

Through them all, however, the University has emerged better and stronger than before.

On Friday, March 13, when Gov. Brian Kemp issued a public health state of emergency in Georgia, students were wrapping up their last week of classes before spring break. The University System of Georgia (USG) announced that students would stay home through the end of March while institutions reviewed business plans, online learning capabilities and options for the remainder of the semester.

In their time of reflection and planning, the University could've followed in the steps of universities around the country who decided to cancel the rest of the semester and wait to see what the future would hold. At Georgia Southern, however, campus leadership, faculty, staff and students found ways not only to continue academic training, but also to innovate, adapt and give back during one of the most challenging times in our history.

BACK TO VIRTUAL REALITY

Some of the first and most consequential decisions the University had to make was how to continue academics for students, and how to organize on-campus residents' return to campus to get their belongings — all in little more than two weeks. Added to this challenge was the fact that all faculty and staff except for essential personnel were instructed to work from home.

Faculty worked incessantly through the break to move more than 5,000 face-to-face courses online, which was a herculean task.

"These are units that don't traditionally go online," stated Dustin Anderson, Ph.D., associate professor of literature, provost faculty fellow and online transition coordinator for the Office of the Provost and Academic Affairs. "This is where we were being most creative moving remotely."

Professors incorporated current news media coverage of the pandemic into their instruction, used Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) data as a way to analyze statistical analysis, and allowed students to use social media apps like TikTok, Snapchat, Instagram and Twitter for their coursework.



Georgia Southern students gather their belongings during the University's staggered move-out plan, which was a model for other USG institutions.

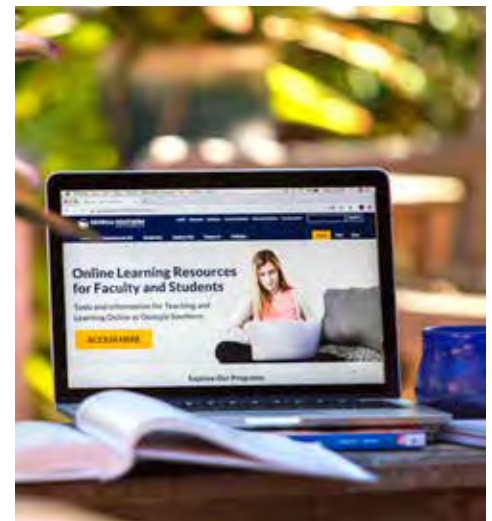
In conjunction with this faculty effort, University Communications and Marketing and Information Technology Services quickly assembled online resources with a range of tools for students to transition completely to virtual learning. They also kept the University community informed with stories, FAQs and up-to-date presidential communications about the pandemic response effort.

While faculty and staff were working on academics and student support, University Housing devised a staggered move-out plan that brought smaller groups of students on campus over two weeks, so they could observe social distancing and safety guidelines according to the CDC.

Not only were Georgia Southern's plans successful, they were used as a model for other USG institutions.

However, not all students were able to leave. Almost 200 students remained on campus and were moved to one residence hall, and help was offered to students who couldn't find alternative housing. For these remaining students, some of the dining facilities operated on a limited schedule, and the University also provided a full range of physical and mental health services to all students by telehealth. Students in Savannah and Statesboro also had access to an on-campus food pantry to help with meals during quarantine.

Because students were sent home early and had limited access to campus, Georgia Southern prorated a refund of housing and



dining plans, graduation fees, parking refunds and more, resulting in more than \$11 million in funds returned to students. The University also developed a plan to deliver another \$11 million to students through the CARES Act, a federal higher education relief fund.

POMP AND CYBER-STANCE

Once students finished the semester online, the University was faced with the difficult decision of how to honor their achievements from afar.

Georgia Southern administrators, faculty and staff got to work on a plan to create a virtual ceremony for each college to celebrate more than 4,300 spring 2020 graduates. The result was a star-studded series of videos, each of which included a trumpet serenade from Chick-fil-A CEO Dan Cathy ('75), congratulations messages from other high-profile politicians, alumni and



Wayne Johnson, Ph.D., professor of mechanical engineering, works with student Alicia Hawrylko to develop, test and donate 3D-printed respirators to St. Joseph's/Candler Hospital System.

friends, including Gov. Kemp, and a special congratulations from country music star Cole Swindell.

The Multimedia Development Center developed the video, and the University carried the ceremonies live on Facebook and on the commencement website. Each featured a separate slide for every graduate which included their name, degree, and — for those who submitted it — their photo and thank you to supporters. A faculty member read each name aloud, just as they would at an in-person ceremony, and graduates shared social media tagged #GSGrad20 to show them moving their tassels.

Each ceremony also included the national anthem, the alma mater and remarks from Georgia Southern University President Kyle Marrero, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs Carl Reiber, Ph.D., and the deans of each college.

“As much as I wish we could all have been together in Statesboro and Savannah, I am thrilled with the effort our faculty and staff put into creating this online commencement ceremony,” said Marrero. “We have received amazing feedback from students and family, and I think it was a great way to honor our graduates in the midst of these difficult circumstances.”

HELPING OTHERS IN A PANDEMIC

The COVID-19 health crisis has brought out the best in Eagle Nation. Students, faculty, staff, alumni and administrators have found

many ways to lend a helping hand or offer their support and expertise.

Numerous reports of workers on the frontline facing personal protective equipment (PPE) shortages spurred Georgia Southern University to act. By making use of 3D-printing technology, the Statesboro and Armstrong campuses and the FabLab at the Business Innovation Group's (BIG) downtown Statesboro location quickly began production of protective face shields and respirators.

The FabLab sent 100 face shields and 10 Montana Masks to Atlanta-area hospitals. The 3D-printable respirator filtration mask can be fitted to a health care provider's face and sanitized between uses. Dominique Halaby, DPA, director of the BIG said making swift moves to use the resources of the BIG and other Georgia Southern areas to fulfill a need demonstrates the University's innovative capabilities.

“This shows that great individuals and great ideas can come from anywhere,” he said. “I believe the common psyche is that we expect things to happen in Atlanta and kind of work their way down, but we're showing that we have the ability, the skillset and the desire to have an impact anywhere in the world, even in a place as innovative as Atlanta.”

The Department of Manufacturing Engineering sent 200 3D-printed protective face shields with headbands to Augusta, Georgia, for health care workers at Augusta Medical Center. Laboratory supervisor Andrew Michaud and Tara Drake, the



Department of Manufacturing Engineering lab supervisor Andrew Michaud prepares face shields and masks for shipment.

department's administrative assistant, worked together to produce the 3D-printed face shields with headbands for distribution.

“We are really glad to be able to help in any way we can,” said Daniel Cox, Ph.D., chair of the Department of Manufacturing Engineering. “This is what engineers do - we see a problem, and we solve it.”

The Department of Mechanical Engineering also used 3D printers to produce Montana Masks for workers in the St. Joseph's/Candler Hospital System in

Savannah. Wayne Johnson, Ph.D., professor of mechanical engineering, believes providing these materials to the Savannah community during a time of critical need reinforced the University's longtime commitment to the region.

"The Armstrong Campus of Georgia Southern has a long history of working within the Savannah community, and during this pandemic, it was especially important for mechanical engineering faculty and students at the Armstrong Campus to step up during a time of great need," said Johnson.

Engineering student Alicia Hawrylko was allowed to assist with the project. Johnson said it provided her "with a great opportunity to apply the skills she learned in our engineering courses to a real-world application in real time."

PROVIDING VENTILATORS

Georgia Southern stepped up to comply with the University System of Georgia's request for its 26 colleges and universities to inventory their medical supplies and donate what they could in the fight against the coronavirus. The respiratory therapy program in the Waters College of Health Professions donated 10 ventilators to the Georgia Emergency Management and Homeland Security Agency (GEMA/HS) for use by those on the front lines of the COVID-19 battle.

DONATING PRODUCE TO FOOD BANK

The COVID-19 health crisis threw millions of people out of work — and food banks have been busier than ever helping feed the increasing number of hungry families. The FORAM Sustainable Aquaponics Research Center (SARC) on the Armstrong Campus donated produce grown at its aquaponics farm to America's Second Harvest of Coastal Georgia.

"SARC's mission has always included community outreach and education, which means knowing how we can support the community when it's in need," SARC curator Brigette Brinton said. "Right now, we're just supplying food instead of information."

The donated produce included lettuce, kale and chard.

ALUMNAE JOIN MASK-MAKING OPERATION FOR ESSENTIAL WORKERS

Anna Ferguson ('09) a Georgia Southern fashion merchandising and apparel design



graduate, found a new sense of purpose in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic. The designer of all-in-one cross-body phone case wallets, signed up as a volunteer for the grassroots organization, Sewing Masks for Area Hospitals—Atlanta. The network of more than 8,000 volunteers creates and makes masks for health care workers on the frontline.

"People feel so helpless," said Ferguson. "We want to let them (health care workers) know that we care. We need our soldiers on the front line to have whatever protection they need. I feel so grateful to be able to lend my talents from the comfort of my home, where my family is safe. These health care heroes are feeling the anxiety and added stressors that we are all feeling and still showing up for long and grueling days. I feel like sewing masks is the very least I can contribute."

Initially, dozens of facilities, including Emory and Piedmont Hospitals, requested more than 8,600 masks from the group. Emory provided a template for a mask, outfitted with a pocket for a filter that is intended to cover N95 surgical masks that health care workers use while treating contagious patients. Typically, the masks are for single use, but as shortages abound, the group's homemade fabric masks act as covers that can be reused with sterilization.

Armstrong alumna Megan Williams ('17) is using her sewing skills to make masks for Savannah area health care facilities during the COVID-19 pandemic. "I am a member of numerous volunteer groups within the community and often offer my services as a seamstress," said Williams. When there is a need for a crafted item, I believe it is my civic duty to volunteer my time and energy to assist."

The masks are being donated to local hospitals that are facing shortages.



Clockwise from top left: Professor Doug Masini, Ed.D., on behalf of Georgia Southern's Respiratory Therapy program donates 10 ventilators to GEMA/HS.; (L to R) Student Alex Quach and SARC curator Brigette Brinton prepare to donate produce from SARC to America's Second Harvest of Coastal Georgia.; Healthcare workers at Atlanta Heart Associates wear masks distributed by Sewing Masks for Area Hospitals - Atlanta.

MOVING FORWARD

Whether we're facing widespread changes in higher education or facing the obstacles presented by a worldwide pandemic, Georgia Southern University continues to innovate and adapt — focused on student success and growing ourselves to grow others.

At the time of this publication, the University is planning to bring employees back to campus in phases beginning in June, with a return to full operations for staff and students by Aug. 1. Administrators, faculty and staff created a plan for student safety and have created a useful FAQ web page at GeorgiaSouthern.edu/covid-19-information.



THE EAGLE HAS LANDED

***Georgia Southern Alumni Reflect
on Work with NASA Space Program***



The Vertical Assembly Building at Kennedy Space Center



Scan here to see the video of our Georgia Southern NASA alumni.

In the summer of 1967, Georgia Southern graduates Bob Pound ('67) and Charlie Abner ('67) hopped in a car and headed for Cape Canaveral with one mission – to “fix NASA.”

In January of that year, NASA was conducting a pre-flight check for the crew of Apollo 1 – the program’s first crewed mission – when a fire broke out in the cockpit and killed its three astronauts.

“After that, we said ‘Let’s go down there and put the space program back on its feet,’” said Pound, a native of Statesboro.

They didn’t call. They didn’t have an appointment. They just pulled into the badging station on U.S. 1 and figured they’d found their destination. “Wasn’t a very big building, but it had some rockets out front,” said Pound.

“What can we do for you?” the attendant asked.

“Well, we came down here to get a job,” said Pound.

“Okay, who with?”

“Well, NASA, of course! Isn’t this NASA’s place here?” Pound said they didn’t realize it at the time, but there were several hundred contractors coming in and out of Kennedy Space Center (KSC).

“Uh, let me make a few phone calls,” said the attendant, and motioned them to wait in the lobby.

Pound listened as the attendant talked on the phone.

“No, they don’t have an appointment... they’re here! They’re sitting right here! No, they just came in and said they’re looking for a job... No, they’re here already!”

“They said that over and over,” recalled Pound, laughing.

The attendant hung up the phone and said, “They’re going to call me back.”

Pound and Abner waited and waited, wondering with each passing minute if they’d made the trip for nothing. Then the phone rang.

It was a call that not only changed their lives, but also carved a path for several Georgia Southern graduates who would follow in their footsteps.

GET AFTER THAT AEROSPACE

Pound and Abner were the first graduates of Georgia Southern’s physics and mathematics degrees to join the ranks at NASA, and the tale of their success quickly spread through the small department.

Sonny Belson ('68) traveled down to Cape Canaveral the next summer and showed up unannounced the way his classmates had. He interviewed and was offered a job the next day. Chris Fairey ('69) skipped class to drive down to KSC and get his name on

the list, and he was hired the summer after graduation.

“It was absolutely amazing that you literally walked in, a cold call off the street, and here I am,” said Belson. “And I’m still at it after all these years.”

Though they all graduated with the same degrees, they were each assigned to wildly different roles within the Apollo program. Pound says this was a testament to the college and its faculty, especially Carroll W. Bryant, Ph.D., professor emeritus and head of the physics department at Georgia Southern from 1963-1975. He passed away in Statesboro in 1988.

Bryant was an accomplished physicist who served as a scientific advisor to the U.S. Armed Forces and most notably worked on the development of the atomic bomb. He was not only a knowledgeable physicist, but also had the wealth of experience to convey physics’ practical use for his students.

“He was really an amazing man in terms of what he could convey to us in terms of theory and physics and his own application....” said Fairey. “You ask yourself, ‘How am I going to use all of this?’ And what you realize at the end is that what they’re teaching you are the tools. You may not necessarily use a particular theorem or a math equation, but you understand how it evolved and why it’s there and how it can be used.”



THIS IS GOING TO BE BIG

When Pound, Abner, Belson, Fairey and other alumni joined NASA, they were thrust into a workforce of more than 400,000 employees, contractors and consultants working all over the United States to achieve one goal, set by President John F. Kennedy: “before this decade is out, of landing a man on the moon and returning him safely to earth.”

Pound was assigned to the Ground Instrumentation Systems technical staff in the Central Information Facility (CIF). His team collected real-time telemetry data surrounding the Saturn V rocket, and displayed it on the huge Eidophor Projectors in the Control Room. Abner started as a ground station engineer, working up to ground station manager before leaving to join the Air Force in 1968.

Fairey joined Pound in the CIF, the entire second floor of which housed two giant GE 635 computers that were responsible for managing data for Apollo. “Today, you have more computing power on your phone!” said Fairey.

Belson went to work with the design engineering directorate in the communications electronics area, where he installed and designed the operational television system at the launchpad and towers around the complex, and the mobile television vans for use during launch and events.

As each took on their small piece of the larger puzzle, they couldn’t immediately see the true impact and scale of what they were doing. It wasn’t long, however, before the picture became crystal clear.

“Well, at the time, of course, it was just a job,” said Pound. “Then we saw how big it was and what all it encompassed, and we thought, ‘Wow! This is going to be something big!’ And we felt like we were doing a pretty important job.”

It’s easy to get lost in the massive scale of NASA. There, everything is big.

“Anytime you put together a large program like the Apollo program that involved human spaceflight as well as the manufacturing of the launch vehicle and the facilities that manage it, you realize the scale of the vehicle itself,” said Fairey.

The biggest part of the Apollo program was the Saturn V rocket, which is still the most powerful rocket ever built.

The Saturn V was a three-stage, expendable, super-heavy lift launch vehicle that was used to send Apollo missions into space between 1967 and 1973. It was 363 feet tall, weighed more than 6.5 million pounds and reached speeds of more than 17,000 mph to break free from earth’s gravity. To house the construction of these rockets, NASA constructed the Vertical

Georgia Southern’s NASA alumni stand under the Saturn V rocket on display at the Apollo museum at KSC. Pictured are (L to R): Chris Fairey (‘69), Bob Pound (‘67), Sonny Belson (‘68)



One of two “crawlers” at NASA, which carry the launch vehicle to the launch pad.

Assembly Building — the VAB — which is still the largest and most visible complex at KSC. The building is 526 feet tall and covers 8 acres of square footage. It’s a vast cavern with 40 floors of scaffolds and railings that allow thousands of technicians to reach every part of the spacecraft.

Once the Saturn V was built, it had to be moved to one of two launch pads, the closest of which was 3.5 miles away. To accomplish this impossible task, NASA used one of two machines called “crawlers,” weighing 6 million pounds each, to carry the launch vehicle — fully upright — across the complex, traveling at less than 1 mph. The journey took roughly 8 hours to complete.

Even more impressive was the level of detail involved in creating these rockets and executing their missions. Each stage of each rocket was built by a different American company, and each wire, duct, nozzle, rivet and screw was carefully designed by engineers who were armed with nothing but slide rules and an expert grasp of their field.

For each Georgia Southern alumnus, their role supported one step in an impossibly large number of procedures and processes that all came to fruition on July 16, 1969. The launch of Apollo 11, which carried the first men to step foot on the moon, was a history-altering event each of them witnessed firsthand.

“It’s kind of hard to describe until you see it,” said Fairey.

“From a mankind standpoint, this was a significant achievement,” said Belson. “You know, if you look at where we are today in all of that, it’s based on how we got there. So it’s

very, very important for mankind overall that we were able to go do this. And somehow we played a part in that.”

SPACE IS A RISKY BUSINESS

Accomplishing the goal of manned space flight came with difficulty and sometimes tragedy, however.

In 1970, while more than 210,000 miles from earth, the crew of Apollo 13 was doing a routine stir of the oxygen tanks on the service module when a faulty wire ignited and caused an explosion. With the service module inoperative, the crew of three astronauts had to use the lunar excursion module (LEM) as their lifeboat home, but it was only designed to support two men for two days.

Back on earth, engineers at Lyndon B. Johnson Space Center in Houston worked around the clock to create procedures to reprogram and modify the LEM to support all three crew members for four days, and communicated the plans to astronauts who had limited power in their craft, a cold and wet cabin, and a shortage of potable water.

For Pound and others that worked in the Launch Control Center at KSC, these types of events meant quick decisions and immediate action — both of which would mean the difference between life and death for the flight crew and ground personnel.

“We used to say it was hours and hours of boredom punctuated by moments of sheer terror,” said Pound. “And we had to be able to make decisions pretty quickly without talking to the other people. And then we had to know





Chris Fairey, Albert Morrison, Bob Pound, Johnny Wilkerson, Jimmy Dobson (star baseball pitcher for GS), Danny Johnson (last to come), Jim Winn, Sonny Belson
 Charlie worked in film library – bottom floor of the student center – Pound's dad director of student center

who to talk to in case we needed answers to get things done.”

While the story of Apollo 13 ended happily, there were other space program missions that did not.

In 1986, Fairey was the shuttle project engineer for the Space Shuttle Challenger, and one of the key figures involved in its launch. On Jan. 28, 1986, he was in the control room of KSC when, only 73 seconds into liftoff, a leak in one of Challenger's rocket boosters caused the external fuel tank to explode, disintegrating the shuttle and killing its crew.

“It was a horrible day – especially due to the fact that I had trained with the crew. I knew the crew,” said Fairey.

“I was midfield of the shuttle landing facility, and actually was there with some of the astronaut family,” said Belson. “It's very close and personal and, you know, I still won't watch the video. I won't watch it today. Yeah, it was very emotional.”

Fairey and his engineers spent the next two years going over the accident, learning what happened. As a result, they completely reworked all of their procedures, software and training and then completely retrained with their colleagues in Houston and Marshall Space Flight Center in Huntsville, Alabama.

“You do all you can to minimize the risk, but it's risky business,” said Fairey. “I mean, you're sitting on top of a bomb – liquid hydrogen and liquid oxygen. It took a lot of people checking a lot of things, double checking, lots of tests and test firings. This is a risky business, and when you commit to human spaceflight, you have to be willing to take the risk.”

A PLACE IN HISTORY

Through both tragedy and triumph, mankind's pursuit of space changed the world forever.

Since its establishment in 1958, and its charge to reach the moon within a decade in 1962, NASA has been a place where scientists and mathematicians can dream big. The space program enlarged those dreams, broadened them far beyond the bounds of earth, and made people believe that they could achieve anything to which they set their minds.

In addition to space exploration, however, the NASA space program also pioneered new technologies that people around the world now take for granted in their daily lives. Whether they use solar panel technology, cordless and battery-powered tools, reflective vests or even memory foam, they can thank NASA and the space program for these inventions.

“The technology that came out of this program was awesome,” said Fairey. “It advanced the United States exponentially in terms of computing capability, material science and all those things.”

During his tenure in the Apollo program, Fairey worked with researchers from the University of Arizona to pioneer a lightning detection system at KSC as lightning was an especially dangerous hazard during launch. Fairey worked on all the mathematical algorithms used in the system.

“It was so accurate that you could actually see the electrical potential build up if a storm was coming from Orlando or out in the ocean,” he said. “And you could calculate when it would get here and make a determination of whether or not it was safe to launch. And so they use that today for all the launches.”

Fairey passed away on April 8, 2020, but left a great legacy at NASA. He finished his career as the flow director for four missions of the Space Shuttle Discovery, an orbiter that launched several satellites and other hardware into space, including the Hubble Space Telescope. Most notably, Fairey arranged

for Discovery astronauts to fly several Georgia Southern University flags on one of their missions, and then presented one of the flags to the University.

After more than 30 years of service, Fairey retired in 2002 and became a docent at NASA, sharing his knowledge and his love of teaching with camp participants and museum visitors, and inspiring the next generation of students interested in STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) fields.

In his interview, he reflected on the program and the impact it had on the world.

“You're proud to have been a part of a team that worked so hard for so many years that achieved this unbelievable goal that many people thought was not even possible,” he said. “So you're very humbled in the aspect of you being such a small portion, and just one individual of a very large team that achieved this magnificent goal.”

Abner returned to NASA in 1974 and finished his career as the chief engineer for the Space Shuttle program. He is currently “semi-retired” as a staff engineer at the United Space Alliance.

Belson worked with the design engineering directorate throughout his career at NASA, and helped design the video systems that film the countdowns and launches, as well as the video simulators that astronauts used to train for their missions in space. He left NASA after the Challenger accident and went to work for the Department Of Defence supporting Expendable Launch Vehicle satellite programs being flown from Cape Canaveral Air Force Station in Florida and Vandenberg Air Force Station in California.

“It gives you a certain sense of fulfillment that we had the opportunity to even participate in this,” said Belson. “When I go back and look at the history, I remember watching Dr. Wernher von Braun on TV talking about rockets and going to the moon and landing on the moon. So it's not a job, it's more of a vocation, you know?”

Pound finished his career as chief of the NASA Test Director's office, the culmination of his many roles in coordinating and planning for all the missions at KSC. He worked at NASA for 28 years and retired in 1995.

“I hope it makes Georgia Southern feel proud of us,” said Pound. “That's what I'm hoping. I think we did a pretty good job while we were down here and glad we could do what we could. And then the Georgia Southern people looking at it and looking at us saying, ‘Well, we were part of that.’ So Georgia Southern was a part of it, too.”

“It was a really fun career,” he added. “I enjoyed every minute of it, except for the moments of sheer terror.” – DOY CAVE



TO THE MOON AND BACK AGAIN

Alumnus Helping NASA Return to the Moon by 2024



No one on Earth has stepped foot on the Moon since Apollo 17 landed there in December 1972. But NASA is relying on the new space exploration program, Artemis, to change history and take the first woman and the next man to the moon by 2024.

Georgia Southern alumnus Andy Warren ('87) is one of the engineers helping NASA return astronauts to the moon. He started his career with the space agency in 1988, two years after the space shuttle Challenger disaster.

"I was looking for a job and they were hiring. Honestly it was never something I thought about doing growing up but it gets in your blood," Warren said. "It's very exciting and fulfilling work. I have a passion for it."

Warren works at the Marshall Space Flight Center (MSFC) in Huntsville, Alabama, as manager of the Cross-Program Integration team for NASA's new rocket, the Space Launch System (SLS). A team at MSFC is

designing the powerful SLS rocket that will send the crew in the Orion spacecraft to the moon and eventually to Mars. The Orion crew capsule is being developed at the Johnson Space Center in Houston, and the ground systems including the launch pad are being handled by a team at Kennedy Space Center (KSC) in Florida. Warren said the cross-agency team "ensures that the systems, including the rocket components, all work together when the flight vehicle gets assembled and launched at KSC."

Prior to the Artemis program, Warren worked on the Space Shuttle program in various capacities from 1988 through the last mission in 2011. In his early years, he worked on ground systems including the large cranes that were used to assemble the shuttle. After that, he served as the management intern to the launch director, the person who gives the final "go" for launch on launch day.

"I sat right next to him in the control room during several shuttle launches," said Warren, who grew up in North Augusta, South Carolina. "It was an amazing experience because you could just feel the raw power. You could actually physically feel it rumbling off the launch pad."

REMEMBERING A SHUTTLE DISTASTER

Warren was a Georgia Southern student when he watched the Challenger explosion. It was later determined that the accident was caused by the solid rocket booster O-rings not working properly at cold temperatures. During Shuttle mission STS-132 in May 2010, Warren served as the solid rocket booster representative on the Shuttle Mission Management Team and gave the final concurrence ("go") that the solid rocket boosters were safe for launch.

"It was one of the highlights of my career," he said. "When talking with students, I

present it in the context that there's nothing special about me, but you never know where you'll end up and the opportunities that you'll have in the future if you apply yourself."

As the Cross-Program Integration manager for the SLS program, Warren is excited about the upcoming test of the ambitious rocket that has been in development for the past decade. The SLS relies on long-proven hardware from the space shuttle, including the engines and solid-fuel boosters. But the rocket is different in that it has been designed for launching both astronauts and robotic scientific missions for deep space exploration hundreds of thousands of miles from Earth, while the space shuttle was designed for travel a few hundred miles above the Earth.

"Our first flight will be a test to demonstrate the ground systems, rocket and crew systems. It will go around the back of the moon next year," Warren said. "Then about two years later, we'll launch astronauts in the Orion crew capsule beyond the moon and back to Earth. That's further than any humans have ever been from Earth. Then we'll launch a crew, which will land on the moon."

As NASA embarks on this next era of space flight, Warren is confident it will inspire a new generation of explorers.

"I think the future is really bright," he said. "In the 60s, we had the beginnings of space flight and ever since we went to the moon, people have been dreaming of going to Mars and deep space exploration. And now we're actually building the rockets. We dream big and we're currently building a really big rocket to achieve those dreams."

Warren is an active Georgia Southern alumnus. He serves on the College of Science and Mathematics advisory board and returns to campus every year to meet with students, professors and administrators.

— SANDRA BENNETT

MAKING HISTORY

Alumna and Literature Professor Wins State Election



Ghazala Hashmi ('86) comes from a family of educators and always knew she would teach.

"I think since I was 12 years old, I knew that I wanted to be a professor of English," she said. "Both my father and mother always encouraged academics and a love of books. I grew up surrounded by books, both fiction and non-fiction, and pursuing excellence in academic work was a high priority in my family."

For nearly 30 years, Hashmi was a literature professor or administrator at colleges and universities in Virginia. But three years ago, she faced what she called a "moment of crisis" as a Muslim American. She said she was troubled by the Trump administration's travel ban, which blocked refugees and visitors from seven countries — five with Muslim majorities — from entering the United States. At the time, Hashmi led the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning at Reynolds Community College in Richmond.

"We have many folks who are from immigrant communities," she said. "We have refugee families. We have individuals who are trying to find a foothold in this country. And this rhetoric and the policies that followed

were serving to divide the communities. I felt like I needed to have a more public and visible presence and respond to these issues."

TAKING THE LEAP

So, the career educator made the decision to run for public office. On Election Day last November, Hashmi made history in her community. She became the first Muslim woman elected to the Virginia State Senate. Her victory helped Democrats in Virginia take control of both legislative chambers for the first time in a generation. She unseated an incumbent to represent the state's 10th Senate District, which includes a part of Richmond and suburbs west and south of the capital city.

"I had a wide network of friends and people that I have known for many decades," said the married mother of two adult daughters. "And I think the message that resonated is that we can bring a diverse perspective, and we can bring different voices to the table. I was able to establish a coalition of people across demographics, young and old, Caucasian and African American, and immigrant voices."

GROWING UP IN STATESBORO

Hashmi was a child when her family moved from India to the United States. Her father, Zia Hashmi, and her uncle, Shafik Hashmi, both had distinguished careers in Georgia Southern University's political science department. Both were given the honorary title of professor emeritus when they retired.

"Conversations around politics, national and international affairs and history were a central part of our dinner table discussions," she said as she recalled growing up in Statesboro and attending Marvin Pittman Laboratory School on the Statesboro Campus. "It was a lovely childhood. As you know, growing up in a small town you pretty much knew everybody."

As a Georgia Southern student, Hashmi was in the inaugural class of the University's Bell Honors Program, and said her favorite memories are connected to that program. She pointed out it was a unique opportunity to have team-taught classes that were led by exceptional faculty.

"The program paired courses in a very interesting way," she recalled. "For instance, we had a philosophy professor teaching with an art professor, and then a course that combined the study of philosophy as well as the history of art. So that provided a very interesting perspective."

The alumna forged long-lasting relationships with many of her professors and she encourages today's students to do the same with their teachers and mentors.

"They have the opportunity to guide students in different career paths and really help shape and mold the direction of the individual student," she said. "I know I had long-lasting friendships with my faculty. They're still my friends. I still reach out to them and talk to many of my Georgia Southern faculty. And those friendships have been among the most important ones that I've had my entire life."

Hashmi, who was also able to pursue fluency in French and German while pursuing her bachelor's degree in English, said her father was her first and most important inspiration. "I was also mentored by faculty, too many to count, but I must certainly name Dr. John Humma, Dr. Hew Joiner, Dr. John Parcels, Dr. Fred Richter, Dr. Pat Gillis and Dr. Lane Van Tassell," she said.



SERVING THE COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA

Hashmi, the daughter of Indian immigrants, put education at the front and center of her campaign, pledging to restore funding for public education and increase teacher pay. Her campaign was covered by the major broadcast and cable networks, The New York Times, the Washington Post and media outlets in India, Pakistan and other countries. The literature professor said her win “signals a sign of hope in the midst of a national political discourse that is often divisive.” And while she is still adjusting to her new role, Hashmi remains a strong proponent of education.

“I have always seen educational opportunity as the most essential pathway for improving the lives of individuals and communities,” she said, challenging students to take as many classes as possible, even if the courses are not in their major or minor.

“I think the benefits of a real solid liberal arts education is to explore the world in both breadth and depth. And being able to understand that there’s just so much out there to learn,” said the longtime educator.

Hashmi was sworn into office in January 2020. — SANDRA BENNETT



June 1986: The first graduating class of the Bell Honors Program (Ghazala Hashmi in the center in the white/gray dress.)

When Ghazala Hashmi was a Georgia Southern Student
Three of Ghazala Hashmi’s Georgia Southern professors shared some memories of their former student and weighed in on her latest accomplishment.

Professor and Chair Emeritus of Political Science Lane Van Tassell, Ph.D.

“I also had the opportunity to have taught Ghazala in the Bell Honors Program here at Georgia Southern. She was a superb student and among the best in her class. I would rank her in the top 1% of students I had in over 33 years of teaching at Georgia Southern. I have spoken with her on numerous occasions during her recent political campaign in Virginia. She will make an extraordinarily good state senator. Of that I am most confident. Georgia Southern should be very proud of this alumna.”

— Professor Emeritus Lane Van Tassell, Ph.D., has lived in Statesboro since 1970 and retired after 33 years at Georgia Southern. He was a colleague of Hashmi’s father in the Department of Political Science for over 30 years. During his tenure at Georgia Southern, Van Tassell also served as the dean of Graduate Studies and as the associate vice president of academic affairs.

Professor Emeritus of History George (Hew) Joiner, Ph.D.

“I was privileged as director of the Bell Honors Program (BHP) for 22 years to work closely with and know well an extraordinary group of students as ever graced the campus of Georgia Southern. Even in that stellar group, Ghazala Hashmi stood out. ... I confess I was a bit surprised when I learned that Ghazala had become a candidate for election to the Virginia State Senate, but in retrospect I suspect I shouldn’t have been. Throughout her high school and college years Ghazala had a very impressive record of being elected by her peers to an imposing list of significant leadership positions. The larger step into Virginia politics was a major transition, but I know Ghazala to be the kind of person — with her intellect, her personal values, her integrity, her generous and mature vision of what human society ought to be — that we should succeed in attracting to political offices, but, alas, do not very often.

— Professor Emeritus George Hewett (Hew) Joiner, Ph.D., is director emeritus of the University’s Bell Honors Program (now University Honors Program.)

Professor Emeritus of Literature Fred Richter, Ph.D.

“I don’t remember knowing of her plans for a career in higher education, but many of our Honors students went on to notable and noble careers, including Ghazala. I would say her high intelligence, strength of character and her minority status as Muslim female under attack in the current milieu might have combined for her call to public office. Her voice was and is needed. Her father and her uncle were both held in high regard as academics and campus citizens here at Georgia Southern. So in some measure, she is the extension of a distinguished line of leaders.

Probably what I would call an “old soul” from a young age, a prodigy. I am proud to know her and to think we here at Georgia Southern had some small part in the formation of this remarkable leader.”

— Professor Emeritus Fred Richter, Ph.D., joined the Georgia Southern faculty in 1969 and retired in 2002. During his 32-year career, he also served as the assistant dean of undergraduate studies and was the founding director of the University Honors Program.

THE CALL TO PUBLIC SERVICE

An Alumna's Journey to the Bench



Rachel Ross Krause ('96) has an easy answer for why she became a lawyer.

"I'd like to say that I was inspired by Perry Mason or 'To Kill a Mockingbird,'" she said. "But really it's because my mom used to tell me I could argue with a brick wall and win. She encouraged me to be a lawyer and never let me give up on that goal regardless of what life threw at me."

Not even a life-changing accident on her 17th birthday discouraged her. Krause suffered burns and a spinal cord injury in an automobile accident in her hometown of Macon, Georgia. She spent two months recovering at the Shepherd Center in Atlanta where she learned how to get around using a wheelchair. She acknowledged it "made sense for a lot of reasons" to consider another career path, but she never did.

"I always counted myself as very lucky," she said. "I really did always want to be a lawyer, and I just never changed my mind."

COLLEGE DAYS

A little more than a year later, Krause was a student at Georgia Southern in Statesboro. It was in the early years of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Looking back, she doesn't recall significant issues with accessibility. What she remembered is a supportive college community.

"What I found (at Georgia Southern) is something that I have found throughout my life," she explained. "When people are trying to accommodate you and make sure that you can access the things that you need to access, and there might not be a ramp, somebody will come out and help you."

Krause thrived at Georgia Southern. She was involved in student government, joined a sorority and was a little sister for Sigma Nu fraternity.

"One of the stories I tell people all the time is that I went to Georgia Southern for my undergraduate degree, and then I stayed for a year to do my coursework for a master's degree," she commented. "And my

family has always joked that if Georgia Southern had a law school, I never would have left."

BECOMING A LITIGATOR AND JUDGE

The political science major earned a law degree from the Walter F. George School of Law at Mercer University. She spent 10 years at a law firm in Atlanta where she specialized in life, health, disability, Employee Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA) law and general litigation. During those years, she handled her share of interesting cases.

"Every day, every case was different," she noted. "But also, what I liked about it is there was enough similarity that you felt like you developed some expertise, so I never felt like I was bored with seeing the same thing over and over."

Krause never aspired to become a judge, but when a position opened on the bench, she found herself profoundly interested. She applied for the open seat and before leaving office last year, Georgia Gov. Nathan Deal appointed her to the Fulton County Superior Court bench. Krause was drawn to the job because she wanted to make a difference in her community. The biggest challenge she has faced is "feeling like I am doing the right thing when I make decisions that affect criminal defendants and their victims and families."

"I'm almost always seeing people at the lowest points of their lives. I'm seeing a defendant who's accused of awful, awful, horrible things," she said. "I'm seeing victims of those crimes who have had to suffer through those horrible things. I'm seeing businesses that are falling apart because the owners are fighting with each other or people who've been injured and are suing."

ON THE BENCH

She recalled the very first trial she presided over. It was a murder case and one that still sticks with her.



“The defendant and the victim both had positive backgrounds with family members who loved them and were supportive,” she said. “They both graduated from high school. They both had jobs and the fact that one of them was convicted of murder and the other one was dead just struck me as how wasteful and sad it was. It just seemed so senseless and that really broke my heart.”

As an attorney, Krause knew the law and how the judicial system worked, but now that she has a different role in the courtroom, she has learned what it takes to be a smart and prepared jurist.

“Socrates once said that four things belong to a good judge: to listen courteously, to answer wisely, to consider soberly and to decide impartially,” she

noted. “Everybody knows that judges have to try and make decisions and be fair to both sides. But I don’t think that people realize the extent to which judges really do just have to sit there and listen and let the information be given to them before they decide how they’re going to decide.”

Judge Krause must make tough decisions in her courtroom, but in many instances, her decisions offer defendants a glimmer of hope.

“Even if it’s sentencing someone to prison or probation, at least I’m giving them guidance on what they have to do to regain their place in society,” she said. “I am giving crime victims closure. I am helping litigants resolve their lawsuits and move on with their lives and that is something that just really energizes me.”

The judge’s happiest moments in the courtroom usually involve adoption cases. She said, “It is such a wonderful and positive thing that we get to do amidst much of what we do, which can be so sad.”

OFF THE BENCH

Krause said serving on the bench wouldn’t be possible without the support of her husband, Tom, and their daughters Alden, Madelyn and Peyton.

“I am blessed to have found a wonderful husband who has helped me continue to succeed and work hard while also having a fulfilling family life,” she said. “My husband and I have a great partnership. He always makes me laugh and helps me let go of the stress of my job.”

In her downtime, she likes to cook, read and play with Cooper, the family’s black lab mutt. — SANDRA BENNETT



AN IMPORTANT STORY THAT NEEDS TO BE TOLD

New Historical Marker Celebrates Armstrong State University History

A new historical marker honors Armstrong State University's contributions to the city of Savannah, its students and its legacy in Georgia Southern University's history.

In December, Georgia Historical Society and Georgia Southern dedicated the marker, located on the Armstrong Campus in the quad behind Burnett Hall. The plaque commemorates Armstrong's history from its beginning as a two-year college in 1935 through its consolidation with Georgia Southern in 2018.

"I want to congratulate Georgia Southern on receiving this marker about Armstrong and its history, which played such a crucial role in the development of our city during the 20th and into the 21st century," said W. Todd Groce, Ph.D., president and CEO of the Georgia Historical Society. "It is an important story that needs to be told. As Armstrong now goes forward in its next chapter under its new name and its association with Georgia Southern University, this is an important part of continuing to understand who we are as a city, as a state, as a nation, as a university and as a university community."

The marker joins more than 250 historic points of interest in Georgia Historical Society's marker program, an important tool for furthering an understanding of Georgia history and promoting tourism.

Georgia Southern President Kyle Marrero, praising the dedicated community leaders, faculty, staff, alumni and students who make the Armstrong Campus the unique place that it is today, promised that Georgia Southern will continue to elevate all that makes the campus distinct while ensuring it continues to bolster the economic impact of the region and provide substantial opportunities for students.

"This is an important marker for us today as we enliven and bring forward our history, the legacy of Armstrong and what it is today as a part of Georgia Southern," Marrero said, addressing a crowd gathered on the lawn. "We will enhance it together as two very distinctive campuses under one umbrella, Georgia



(L to R): Georgia Historical Society President W. Todd Groce; Regent Don Waters; Former Savannah mayor and alumnus Otis Johnson; Georgia Southern President Kyle Marrero

Southern University. We will grow together to not only impact ourselves, but others."

Former Savannah mayor and Armstrong alumnus Otis Johnson, Ph.D., recognized on the marker for his perseverance and dedication to education, was the first African American student to attend Armstrong College.

He spoke at the event and reflected that the time was right for him to attend Armstrong College the same year other students desegregated the public school system in Savannah. He acknowledged the staff and faculty who supported him along the way and changed the trajectory of his career, helping him make the best of his American dream.

"When you look at the fact that I was one, and now look at the number of African Americans, Hispanics and others on these two campuses now, I am very happy to be able to say that I was a part of changing the way things were," Johnson said.

"I want to thank Armstrong for what they did in providing me that opportunity that changed my life," he continued. "I want to also thank Armstrong for the way they have received me over the years. Armstrong, over the years, has affected me and treated me with dignity, and I am eternally grateful for that."

The Georgia Historical Society erected the Armstrong State University historical marker with support from the Waters Foundation, Inc. and Georgia Southern University Foundation, Inc. — JENNIFER S. WISE

A VISIT WITH THE DALAI LAMA

Education Professor Joins Conference in India for Human Education in the Third Millennium Project

If you received an email one day with Russian characters in it, you would probably think it was a scam. That's what John Weaver, Ph.D., professor of education first thought.

"I got an email from Russia," said Weaver. "It was from the organizer of the Human Education in the Third Millennium project, and she's a professor in Russia. When I saw it, my first thought was, well, is this a scam?"

AN INVITATION TO MEET WITH THE DALAI LAMA

What Weaver received was an invitation to participate in the first organizational

conference of the Human Education in the Third Millennium project at the Dalai Lama's residence in Dharamsala, India. He would be joining 14 senior philosophers, an anthropologist and educators from around the world at the conference.

Weaver was asked to join because of his work and many writings dealing with posthumanism, a theory that critically analyzes traditional ideas about humanity and the human condition.

The committee was tasked with planning the project's World Forum which focuses on the obstacles of educational equality on a global level. Originally planned for December



in Delhi, India, the COVID-19 pandemic has postponed the forum until 2021.

The desired outcomes of the forum are a declaration on education which confronts contemporary trends that pose a danger to humanity, and to identify the approaches to education that offer value.

"An educated person has a better life than someone that's not educated," said Weaver. "In many countries the powers that be are not interested in making sure that everyone has access to a quality education."

THE MOUNTAIN COMPOUND

The group met in the Dalai Lama's residence because at nearly 85, he has trouble getting around. His compound is built in a mountain in the Himalayas and he requires a Land Rover to get from one building to the next.

"The first thing I remember seeing when I arrived was a sign saying Tibet, Parliament in Exile," said Weaver. "The Tibetans created this whole city in exile and they built it from nothing in a mountain. They literally live in the mountain. It's very hard to get there and even harder to get out."

The Dalai Lama was the honorary keynote speaker at the conference.

"When the education system is focused on materialistic goals, as modern education too often is, those brought up under it tend to follow a materialistic way of life," he said. "...This kind of meeting confirms that modern education is not sufficient. And for that reason I hope discussions will continue into the future."

"He's deeply interested in education," said Weaver. "He spoke for an hour and a half on why education is important in the world. And hopefully this forum will help change education's future direction." — LIZ WALKER



The Dalai Lama (Center) poses with John Weaver, Ph.D. (Far Left) and the other educators, philosophers and an anthropologist who participated in the first organizational conference of the Human Education in the Third Millennium project.

ARMSTRONG IN PRIME TIME TV

Health Professions Academic Building Becomes ‘Savannah General’ in NBC’s Drama ‘Council of Dads’

When location scouts for NBC’s new television series “Council of Dads” combed Savannah for a realistic venue to shoot multiple hospital scenes, they knew they had found something special in the Health Professions Academic Building on Georgia Southern University’s Armstrong Campus.

“I set up a visit, came and looked at it and I was floored,” said “Council of Dads” location scout and Armstrong Campus alumnus Anthony Paderewski (’05). “I couldn’t believe it. Basically, you have a backlot for a TV show here. It was absolutely perfect for what we were looking for. So that being said, I went and I talked to the producers and I got some pictures. We looked at the pictures and everyone was blown away.”

“Council of Dads,” which premiered on March 24, is based on the book by Savannah native Bruce Feiler and developed by former “Grey’s Anatomy” co-showrunners Tony Phelan and Joan Rater, who also serve as executive producers on the series. The story follows Scott Perry, a father of five who, after receiving a cancer diagnosis, asks a group of friends to step in as father figures to his children in the event that he isn’t around to see them grow up.

“It’s an emotional family drama,” explained “Council of Dads” co-executive producer and producing director Jonathan Brown. “The idea is to try and be as real as possible. And the show is telling the story of a family and what it means to be a family in this day and age. It’s not just blood. The definition of family is growing, broadening with the types of relationships that are now included in a family. This is the story of one of those families that is made up of blood relationships, friendships, adoption and all those different kinds of things.”

The show filmed almost entirely on location in the Savannah area for five months. Several of the scenes take place in a hospital, and the set has to be believable, multifaceted and offer the right aesthetic for television.

“We try to find locations that look authentic, and Georgia Southern, this facility, is essentially a real hospital,” Brown said, sitting in the lobby of the Health Professions Academic Building. “Everything looks, and is, real.”





“But because it’s not in use on a daily basis as a working hospital, it’s easier for Georgia Southern to let us film here. And it’s easier for us to schedule it in our crazy schedule as we try to do all these different scenes all over town, plus work on stage. And it’s beautiful and looks exactly like we want it to.”

The 63,000-square-foot facility, designed to train future health care providers in a state-of-the-art interprofessional environment with a simulation suite and nursing and medical laboratory labs, became the major hospital location for “Council of Dads.” For the better part of three weeks, the Academic Building transformed into the fictional hospital, “Savannah General,” as scenes with two of the main characters, who are doctors, were filmed for the season premiere and two subsequent episodes.

As the liaison between the actors and the show’s staff of writers, who are headquartered in Los Angeles, Brown is largely responsible for maintaining the tone and “visual vocabulary” of the show.

The hospital scenes, he said, were created with relative ease, given the pliability of Georgia Southern’s Health Professions Academic Building.

“It allows us a lot of freedom in staging and writing to possible scenes,” noted Brown. “Freedom because of the size of it, because of how good it looks, because of the flexibility of the spaces. You know, if we need it to be an operating room or a delivery room or recovery room or exam room or an ER, for example. We’ve turned some of the bigger rooms into the corner of an ER. Plus, it has a beautiful nurses station. Georgia Southern’s facility gives us flexibility and allows us to write without feeling too restricted.”

Primarily, the true-to-life setting allows the University to provide exceptional education and training opportunities to help students succeed while addressing the health care needs of the region. The Waters College of Health Professions, housed in the Academic Building and Ashmore Hall, is the largest undergraduate health sciences college in the state of Georgia, and the University’s allied

health care programs represent almost one-fifth of all undergraduate health care degrees earned in Georgia.

“The use of the Health Professions Academic Building is validation that we are training our students for real-world health care settings,” said Barry Joyner Ph.D., dean of the Waters College of Health Professions. “The goal for the building was to simulate a hospital setting, and we have accomplished that.”

Paderewski, who graduated from Armstrong State University with a B.A. with a focus in theater and performance, enjoyed returning to campus to work with his alma mater.

“It was neat to go back and see how the college has changed and what hasn’t changed,” he said. “Especially with it changing from Armstrong, yet it’s still Armstrong. It still has the Armstrong feel, yet it’s changed and it’s under a new umbrella, but it still feels like home to me.”

“Council of Dads” was cancelled after one season. All episodes are available to watch on NBC or Hulu.

— MELANIE SIMÓN



JAW-DROPPING CHANGES

Georgia Southern Museum Reopening after Major Renovation

What began as a simple project to repaint the Georgia Southern Museum turned into a two-year undertaking to renovate the entire building. Built in 1937 as the original library, the building was seriously suffering from old age.

"The painters told me they thought there was something going on with the ceiling," said Museum Director Brent Tharp, Ph.D. "Then architects, engineers and everybody else came in and said the ceiling was falling down. They sealed it off and said nobody's going in."

This turned out to be an unplanned opportunity to finally fulfill the mission that was established when the Museum was founded in 1982.

"The mission was always to do natural and cultural history of coastal plain Georgia," said Tharp. "We'd always had the permanent gallery with the mosasaur that looked at the natural history side. We covered the other part of the mission through changing exhibits."

Now, there are two permanent galleries. One side of the rotunda displays the ever-popular mosasaur skeleton and related natural history. The other side exhibits cultural history of Georgia's Coastal Plain. Visitors will see a more complete natural and cultural history from 75 million years ago.

A new third gallery displays a changing exhibit. The first is "Saints and Sinners:



Salvation and Damnation in Latin American Folk Art.” Curated by history professor Michael Van Wagenen, Ph.D, the presentation examines how Europeans, Americans, Africans and their descendants wrestled with existential questions of life, death and afterlife in a uniquely Latin American way. It is also the first bilingual English/Spanish exhibit.

Tharp easily answered the question everyone asks, “Was the mosasaur damaged during construction?”

“No, he’s such a favorite,” said Tharp. “He had to move and was taken apart into four different sections. But he’s now back and in a completely new setting with a larger viewing tunnel that allows children, and now adults, to go underneath him and pop up into his stomach. Or you can use new technology with cameras that allow close-up views. So if you really want to see the teeth you can get right up on them.”

The Museum appears brand new, which Tharp says is a long time coming. He is thankful for everyone’s patience during construction and the extended closure due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

“We appreciate our members, the school groups, teachers and others being patient for this process,” said Tharp. “But I think they’re going to be really thrilled with the results. Especially our own students. We can’t wait to get them back in here to study and see what’s been going on at the Georgia Southern Museum.” — LIZ WALKER



EAGLES IN DEMAND

First Graduating Manufacturing Engineering Class Rapidly Finds Jobs



Lianjun Wu, Ph.D., assistant professor (L), trains students (L to R) Jesse Davis, Cameron Crater and Jacob Lindsey in the robotics laboratory.

Jesse Davis ('19), one of the first graduates from Georgia Southern's Bachelor of Science in Manufacturing Engineering, didn't have to wait long to find a job.

"When I woke up the day of graduation, they called me at eight in the morning and told me I had the job," he said. "So the day I graduated, I had a job offer from Lummus Corporation."

As rare as it might seem, Davis' story is not unique among recent program graduates, and it's easy to see why.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, Manufacturing Engineering (MfgE) is one of the fastest-growing careers today. Employment of manufacturing engineers is expected to grow by 10 percent through 2026 — faster than all other occupations.

Adding to this demand is the fact that Georgia Southern offers one of the few undergraduate programs in the nation, the only one in Georgia and one of only three in the Southeast United States.

"There are only about 20 nationwide. They are scattered around, but the closest for the B.S. MfgE degree are in Virginia and Texas," said Daniel Cox, Ph.D., professor and founding department chair.

Even though he moved across the country into a tight job market, program graduate Craig Ward ('19) still found an incredible career, and now works with NASA.

"I moved to the D.C. area after I graduated to be with my girlfriend, and didn't have a job lined up," said Craig, who works at NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center in Maryland as

a contract engineer for Newton Engineering and Product Development. "D.C. is a very tight market and I didn't have any contacts there, but in about two months, I had this one and a couple other opportunities. The manufacturing engineering program is so hands-on and very diverse. It covered many different areas of engineering and that's what people look for."

TRUE HANDS-ON EXPERIENCE

Giving students hands-on experience with automated manufacturing technology is one of the selling points for the department, which opened its doors to the first class of students in fall 2015.

The department houses several manufacturing laboratories, which include

computer numerical control (CNC) equipment such as milling machines, lathes, wire electrical discharge machining (EDM), 3D composite and metal printers and waterjet cutters. There are also reconfigurable advanced manufacturing laboratories for robotics and automation.

For the students, all of this technology means relevant experience in the workforce.

“A lot of what I learned basically matched the job description,” said Cameron Crater (’19) who started his career at Samsung Electronics in Newberry, South Carolina. “And what I was interested in really matched what my job criteria was, which is process improvement, reducing defects and things like that.”

“The manufacturing engineering program gave me the skills,” said Ana Ordonez (’19) who works for an Atlanta-area plastics manufacturer on the front lines of the COVID-19 pandemic. “Because of the job in the lab I had as a student, I was able to apply what I learned every day. From programming the CNC to using the waterjet, the 3D printers, from computer skills like AutoCAD and SolidWorks. So it gave me a lot of exposure to what I wanted to do and played a big part in why I was hired.”

EXPERIENCE VALUED BY EMPLOYERS

On top of their hands-on training and technology experience, the program also offers robust co-op, apprenticeship and internship programs. Jacob Lindsey (’19) benefited from an apprenticeship program sponsored by JCB and is now employed as an engineer in their Pooler, Georgia, facility.

“I started out in JCB’s apprenticeship program going to classes at Savannah Tech,” he said. “JCB encouraged me to move to Georgia Southern when the MfgE program first started, and it has turned out great for me.”

The department is seeking accreditation from the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology, Inc. now that the first cohort of B.S. Manufacturing Engineering students graduated last May. The accreditation will only make the program more desirable to students and to the employers eager to hire them.

“Industry is always asking for more students,” said Cox. “The entire class of 2019 got jobs, with the exception of Ryan Kent who is a teaching and a research assistant as a graduate student here. Some students are getting job offers before they graduate. It’s just an indication that the companies are really after them, there is such a high demand.” — LIZ WALKER



Vladimir Gurau, Ph.D, assistant professor (Standing Center) coaches students (Seated L to R) Ryan Kent, Cameron Crater, Ana Ordonez, (Standing L to R) Jesse Davis, Jacob Lindsey and Craig Ward on programming the equipment.



Ana Ordonez (L) discusses robotics with Lianjun Wu, Ph.D. (R).



ESCAPE FROM THE OKEFENOKEE SWAMP

Library Special Collections Hosts Escape Room Experience

Zach S. Henderson Library invited visitors to embark on a spooky adventure to the Okefenokee Swamp, without even having to go outside or apply insect repellent.

Last October, the library created an Okefenokee escape room experience, an interactive game where a small group of players find clues, solve puzzles and accomplish tasks in one or more themed areas to complete a goal or “escape” the room in a limited amount of time.

The experience was built around Professor Emeritus Delma Eugene Presley’s collection of original documents, photographs,

audio and visual recordings from Francis Harper’s work in the Okefenokee Swamp between 1912 and 1952 – artifacts housed in the Henderson Library Special Collections department.

Harper was a Cornell-trained naturalist and biologist who went to the Okefenokee Swamp to document not only the flora and fauna of the swamp, but also the history and culture of the Okefenokee people. His collection includes the region’s distinctive folk speech, tales, music, customs, home remedies and beliefs which were largely lost when the people moved away after the land was protected as a National Wildlife Refuge in 1937.

AN IMMERSIVE LEARNING EXPERIENCE

“We took some of the materials of the Harper collection and made surrogates that looked really authentic,” said Autumn Johnson, Special Collections librarian. “We built an immersive experience where visitors start in a modern room where they imagine they are a researcher. They’re interested in Frances Harper, but they need to get more into his mindset. They hear that there are some lost film rolls he had and they want to find them. Then the visitors go into the next room where we re-created the swamp of late 1938 with Harper’s research area, his tents, hanging moss, wildlife sound effects, everything.”

Johnson and her colleague Nikki Cannon-Rech, research services librarian, built exercises for escape room participants to reinforce researching Special Collections. The gamers found most of Harper’s field notes, but some were missing.

“We needed the field notes from January 6, 1918. That one notebook was the escape room code,” said Johnson. “When we did our exercise after the game, we asked participants why wouldn’t a field notebook from 1918 exist? When they couldn’t answer, I let them know the notebook was missing because of World War I. So we were able to teach researching the archive and thinking about primary sources.”

JUST THE TIP OF THE ICEBERG

The feedback on the escape room was overwhelmingly positive. And the artifacts in the Harper collection are just the tip of the iceberg of what is available to researchers, students and the community in Special Collections.

“There are over 11,000 items in Special Collections housed in the ARC (automatic retrieval system), so we have a lot to choose from when we do another escape room,” said Johnson.

The ARC is a huge warehouse-style room with metal bins stacked to the ceiling filled with Special Collections materials. Computerized robotic arms find the bin requested and deliver it to a retrieval space directed by a few keyboard commands.

“Special collections are housed here for a number of reasons,” said Johnson. “It’s a more stable environment for the collection. Humidity and temperature are controlled. If there’s a power outage, the conditions remain stable, which is the most important part in storing these artifacts.”

Johnson also wants people to understand the mission of Special Collections.

“We are not a museum,” said Johnson. “We’re not just amassing old stuff. Our primary objective is to make sure we have a researchable collection that’s of value to researchers, students and the general public. Many people are intimidated to use us, so we really try to get the collections out there in classrooms and do outreach programs like the escape room.”

More than 150 visitors participated in the escape room exercise during its two-week run, and after their experience, their main question was when the library would host another one.

“We’re planning another escape room in the fall,” said Johnson. “We’re letting the collections drive us. So stay tuned for another memorable experience. The last one was very out there, but it was also very successful.” —LIZ WALKER



A MODERN SPACE FOR RESEARCHING HUMAN MOVEMENT

Innovative Facility Replaces Hanner Fieldhouse Pool



The University celebrated the opening of the new Kinesiology Research Laboratories on the Statesboro Campus in February. The old Hanner Fieldhouse pool was renovated into state-of-the-art laboratories dedicated to helping improve lives every day.

The only facility of its kind in the region, it enables students and faculty to conduct human movement research that will help athletes, first responders and people with disabilities, avoid injuries, strengthen performance and improve their quality of life. The renovated space boasts four labs — two biomechanics labs, a motor control lab and a human performance lab.

There is space in each lab for students to conduct research that helps prepare them for jobs in the workforce. In the biomechanics labs, they work alongside world-class faculty as they monitor University athletes at risk for concussion, and help others recover. In the human performance laboratory, faculty and students are conducting tactical assessments on firefighters and law enforcement, helping

them avoid injury; and working with players on Statesboro's professional soccer team, Tormenta. In the motor control laboratory, faculty and students are working with cerebral palsy patients to combat the painful symptoms of spasticity and provide training programs to improve their strength and quality of life. The facility also includes patient consulting rooms so that area physicians can use it for their patients and learn from the ongoing research.

Georgia Southern now represents 20% of all undergraduate health care profession graduates in Georgia — almost one out of every five in the state. The University is committed to meeting Georgia's demand for more health care professionals, and the Hanner renovation project is another step in addressing this crucial need. Approximately 11,000 square feet of space was renovated and life safety issues in the complex were addressed through the \$5 million project. Funding was provided through the state of Georgia.



University System of Georgia Regents Don Waters and C. Everett Kennedy III, helped cut the ribbon on the new facility in the February ceremony.

Pictured are (L to R): Professor of Kinesiology and Waters College of Health Professions Associate Dean Stephen J. Rossi, Ph.D., Waters College of Health Professions Dean Barry Joyner, Ph.D., Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs Carl Reiber, Ph.D., Regent Don L. Waters, Georgia Southern University President Dr. Kyle Marrero, Regent C. Everett Kennedy III, Sarah Creveling, Associate Professor of Kinesiology Gavin Colquitt, Ed.D., Professor of Kinesiology Li Li, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Kinesiology Barry Munkasy, Ph.D., and Assistant Professor of Kinesiology Greg Ryan, Ph.D.

ELEMENTS OF SUCCESS

Alumna finds her home at Pfizer



Standout student finds success at Pfizer. Pictured are (L to R): Brent Feske, Ph.D., professor of organic chemistry and associate dean of outreach, planning and community programs; Sara Zingales, Ph.D., associate professor of organic chemistry; Ariana Vargas, Will Lynch, Ph.D., professor of chemistry and chair of the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry; alumna Phuong Nguyen, Elizabeth Van Winkle-Harris and Sharon Stricklin; Delana Gajdosik-Nivens, Ph.D., dean of the College of Science and Mathematics.

Learning about small chemical reactions in her high school chemistry class changed the trajectory of Ariana Vargas' ('18) life. Hearing her high school teacher explain what caused the reaction piqued Vargas' curiosity about different and more complex chemical interactions, and her love for chemistry was born.

"Even though it was basic chemistry back in high school, I always wanted to know more," she said. "Like what interactions were between the molecules and all the forces that can contribute."

On a quest for more knowledge in the field, she found the curriculum at Georgia Southern to be more challenging than many other colleges she had explored and quickly found her home there under the mentorship of biochemistry professor Brent Feske, Ph.D.

"When I was in undergrad, my teachers were so supportive and always offered me educational support if I needed more help," she said. "They were always available for me and made time for me to succeed."

Specifically, Feske mentored Vargas and helped her as she honed her skills. She worked under his guidance to research pharmaceutical synthesis, which helped her land a job at the pharmaceutical giant Pfizer. Vargas went straight to work at Pfizer fresh out of her undergraduate career in a position normally reserved for individuals with a master's degree or more experience in the field.

"Honestly, I never even thought of applying to Pfizer, but my mentor, Dr. Brent Feske, was the one who guided me through the process and encouraged me to apply for this job," she said. "And I did so, and I was very excited when I got it."

Vargas, who moved to the United States from Mexico in 2009, has found a home at the company's research and development laboratories in Connecticut. Her colleagues encourage and support her in her role as an associate scientist, and she conducts research daily, which she loves.

"I love to research the new literature and paperwork on the scientific aspects of chemistry," she said. "It has been a great opportunity for me to apply what I learned in undergrad into the workforce and knowing that I can help other people. In the end, it's the patients who get the results."

With the experience she is gaining at Pfizer and the knowledge base she obtained at the Armstrong Campus, Vargas ultimately hopes to use her skillset to contribute to prescription drug affordability around the world.

"Many people are not able to afford medication, especially in third world countries," she said. "I believe that if there is a way to help people to obtain medicines at no cost, or at least by decreasing the costs, I think for me will be good to see a project I work on get released to the market, and that people will be able to afford medicine."

— *CRISSIE ELRICK BATH*

2020 AVERITT AWARD WINNERS

Top Honor Goes to Four Graduate Students

For the first time ever, the Averitt Award has four winners in a single academic year. The award is the highest honor bestowed upon students in Georgia Southern University's Jack N. Averitt College of Graduate Studies. In most years, there are just two recipients. One is for Excellence in Research and the other for Excellence in Instruction. This year, the Graduate Student Organization on the Armstrong and Statesboro campuses voted to give it to two students in each category.

EXCELLENCE IN INSTRUCTION RECIPIENTS



**LAURA
SERRANO-AMERIGO**
*Doctor of Clinical Psychology
Candidate*
*College of Behavioral and
Social Sciences*

Hometown: Scottsboro, Alabama

What did you teach?

Multiple sections of Lifespan Development and Psychology of Gender, in-person and online.

What did you enjoy about teaching?

Initially, I was nervous about undertaking the responsibility of instructor of record as public speaking has never been my forte. However, I am so thankful for the opportunity to teach because it has been such a rewarding experience to both

disseminate psychological literature and to have a chance to positively impact my students. To the best of my ability, I tried to use my platform to assist students with realizing their long-term academic and vocational goals while encouraging the cultivation of their professional identities just as I experienced under the mentorship of my undergraduate professors.

Describe your Georgia Southern experience.

Working and being a student at Georgia Southern has shown me the effect of community support on well-being and academic success. I was grateful to see students supporting one another within the classroom and instructors making concerted efforts to break down academic barriers. I appreciated the faculty in our department striving to elucidate and promote mental health well-being among the students. Furthermore, I had the opportunity to work alongside or observe many organizations working to delineate factors that may present barriers to students achieving academic and vocational goals or harm well-being.

What did it mean to you to be a recipient of the Averitt Award?

I am deeply honored to have been nominated for the award. Teaching has been one of my most valued experiences at Georgia Southern and something I enjoyed investing my time in to best serve my students and the psychology department. It is a significant compliment to receive the award and I am thankful for our department chair, Dr. Michael Nielsen, and all of the department faculty for supporting me and helping me improve as an instructor. The encouragement of the department faculty and the privilege to receive this award have bolstered my desire and confidence to continue work in academia, particularly as an instructor.



MELANIE HINTERPLATTNER
Ph.D. Candidate
Parker College of Business

Hometown: Steyr, Austria

What did you teach? Operations and Supply Chain Management 4438-Negotiation

What did you enjoy about teaching?

The fruitful interactions with my students, learning from them, and helping them learn and connect the dots between the content and their lives.

What does it mean to you to be a recipient of the Averitt Award?

I am deeply honored that I've received this award. It is always great when hard work pays off. Tell me and I will forget, show me and I may remember, involve me and I will learn. This statement guides my teaching and my aim is to always support students in building habits, developing skills and gaining the understanding to be articulate, grounded decision makers.

EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH AWARD RECIPIENTS

DELORES QUASIE-WOODE

Doctor of Public Health Candidate
Jiann-Ping Hsu College of Public Health

Hometown: Upper Marlboro, Maryland

What is the focus of your research?

Sickle cell disease and sickle cell trait; mental health; overall health disparities

Describe your Georgia Southern experience.

The people in my program truly made my experience at Georgia Southern memorable. From heated discussions during ethics class to late night work sessions in the computer lab, cracking jokes in the Hendricks Hall lobby and walks to Chick-fil-A in Russell Union. I am also extremely thankful for the opportunity I had to lead and conduct my own research in Kumasi, Ghana, through the study abroad program, directed by Dr. Evans Afriyie-Gyawu.

What did you learn about yourself at Georgia Southern?

I learned that I truly value work-life balance. It is so easy to get caught up in the work side, so I need to be intentional about the life side. For me that looks like taking a fitness class at the RAC, taking some time to learn to cook a new dish, taking time to chat with a professor or hanging out with friends in different capacities.

What does it mean to you to be a recipient of the Averitt Award?

I am both excited and humbled to have received the Averitt Award for Excellence in Research. I would be remiss if I did not mention the outstanding researchers and professors of the Jiann-Ping Hsu College of Public Health, especially my mentor and dissertation chair, Dr. Tilicia Mayo-Gamble. They have all empowered me to gain additional research and professional skills that will give me a competitive edge in the workforce.



CORINA NEWSOME

Master of Science Student
College of Science and Mathematics

Hometown: Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

What is the focus of your research?

Nest predation in the MacGillivray's Seaside Sparrow

Describe your Georgia Southern experience.

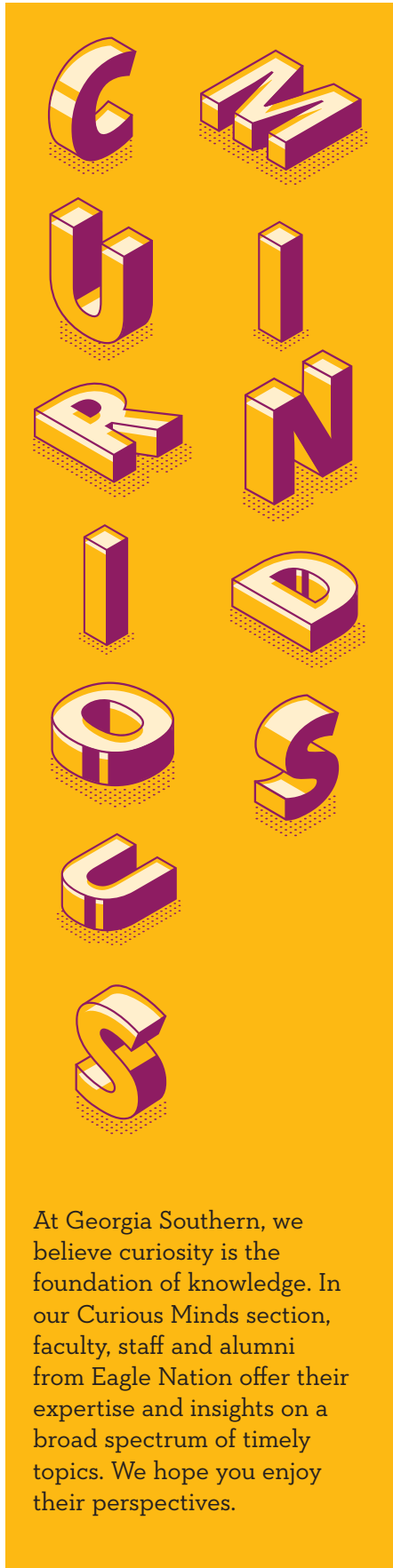
I have had the opportunity to work with professors who far exceeded my expectations in their commitment to my learning and success, the most important being my advisor, Dr. Elizabeth Hunter, Dr. Kevin Loope and Dr. Checo Colon-Gaud. Not only did they provide their academic expertise and resources, but also, they offered me invaluable social support as well. I hope to be the mentor to others that they have been to me.

What did you learn about yourself at Georgia Southern?

I learned that engaging the public in conservation and outdoor exploration is more important to me than I previously realized. No matter what my future job title may be, I will be diligent about incorporating such efforts into my work.

What does it mean to you to be a recipient of the Averitt Award?

The research that I conduct is important to me both academically and morally. Wildlife conservation has been at the center of my vocational drive and is rooted in a deep conviction that I must do everything I can to prevent the extinction of imperiled species. To receive the Jack N. Averitt award for this very work is an honor, a cherished affirmation and a testament to the incredible mentorship I have received throughout my career thus far.



At Georgia Southern, we believe curiosity is the foundation of knowledge. In our Curious Minds section, faculty, staff and alumni from Eagle Nation offer their expertise and insights on a broad spectrum of timely topics. We hope you enjoy their perspectives.

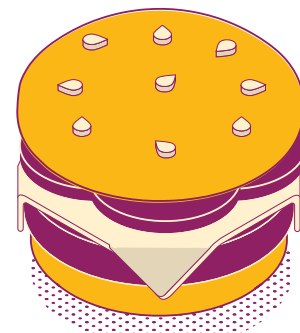
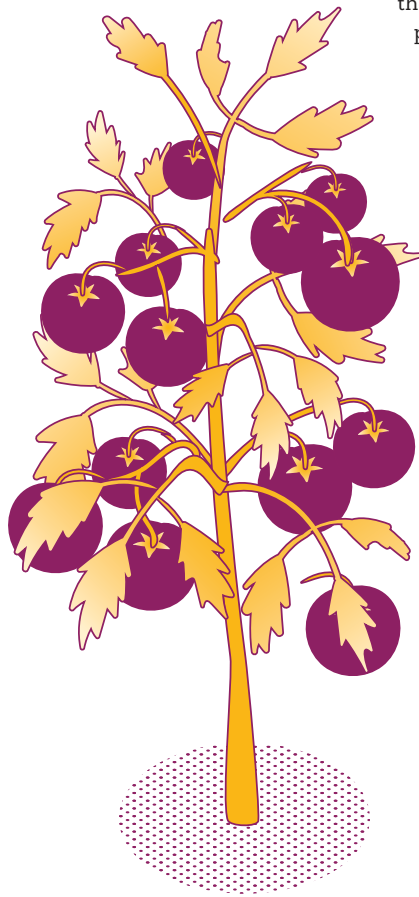
WATERS COLLEGE OF HEALTH PROFESSIONS

Plant-Based Meat Alternatives: Food For Thought

Plant-based meat alternatives have existed commercially for years. Within the U.S. market, textured soy protein was incorporated into meatloaves in institutions in the early 1970s when the price of beef soared with rising transportation costs. These products weren't necessarily popular though, due to major textural differences compared to their meat-based counterparts and the need to add flavors to an otherwise bland product. In the 1980s, plant-based burgers, including the famous Garden Burger, gained ground in the commercial market because they offered a lower saturated fat option that appealed to consumers wanting to reduce their risk of heart disease. These frozen burgers evolved from burgers with visible vegetables in them to burgers colored brown to resemble cooked beef which appealed more to consumers reluctant to make the switch from meat for health reasons. Fast forward to 2020 and, with environmental sustainability in the forefront of many consumer's minds, a new surge in the desire for plant-based meat alternatives has resulted in their increased availability in the market. In this new frame of mind, consumers should be aware that health is not necessarily in the forefront of the minds of retail food establishments producing such products. For example, Burger King took a lot of heat from vegetarian consumers when it was reported that their new "Impossible Burger", made from plant-based ingredients, was prepared on cooktops previously grilling beef burgers. Burger King's CEO told *Business Insider* in 2019 that their focus was to gradually shift people from animal meat to eating more plant-based foods based on the principle that eating an animal is not necessary. Rich in high-quality protein, B-vitamins, and minerals like iron and zinc necessary for human growth and development and healing following illness or surgery, meat provides many nutrients. While these nutrients can be obtained from combinations of plant-based foods with careful planning, consumers need to be willing to invest the time and energy into planning such meals. Retail food industries can provide quick plant-based meat

alternatives. Depending upon the plant-based ingredients they use to mimic the taste and texture of meat, these products may or may not contain all of the essential nutrients afforded to those who consume meat and may actually provide additional unwanted ingredients such as increased sugar, which may compound other human health problems. Whatever the reasons consumers decide to shift to plant-based meat alternatives, it is important to be educated on nutrition for health and to ask questions and demand of producers an equally nutrient-rich plant-based meat alternative.

— JOELLE ROMANCHIK-CERPOVICZ, PhD, RD, LD
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF NUTRITION AND FOOD SCIENCE AND DIRECTOR, DIDACTIC PROGRAM IN DIETETICS



Family Meals in the Digital Age

Parenting is hard work, rewarding, and a topic everyone seems to have an opinion about. I have taught Parent Education and Guidance to undergraduate Child and Family Development students at Georgia Southern for 20 years. I teach students how to use evidence-based, not opinion-based knowledge to educate parents.

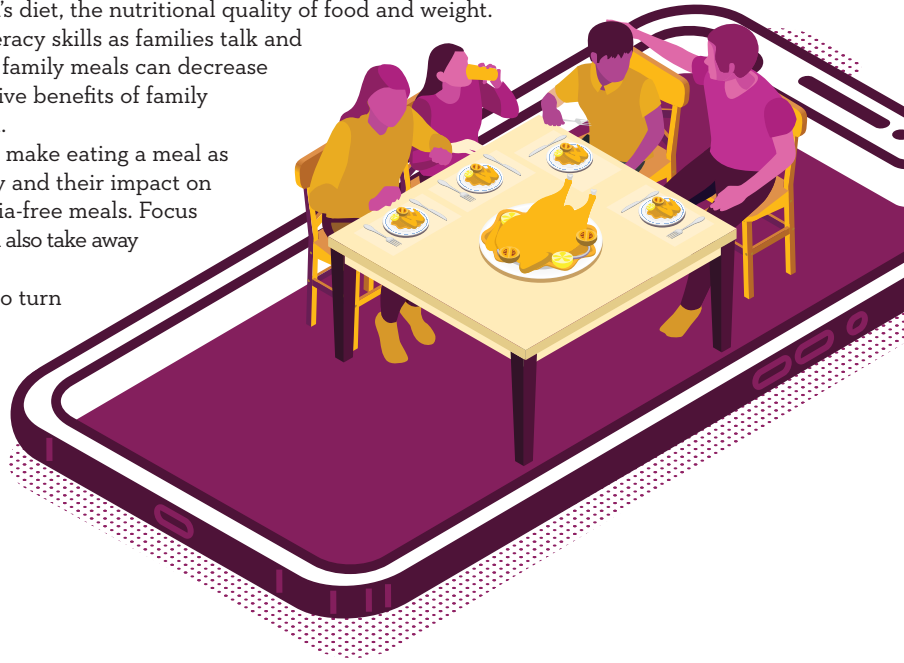
All family members need to eat, and we are living in a digital age full of screen time options sometimes used at meal times. Family meals are a time for cultural traditions, routines and rituals. Some family meals are very structured with set times, chores (table setting), teaching of manners and appropriate mealtime topics. Some family meals are more relaxed with very few rules and traditions. Research on family mealtime has found that family mealtime has an impact on children's diet, the nutritional quality of food and weight.

In addition, mealtime impacts the development of language and literacy skills as families talk and share about their day. Research has also found that participation in family meals can decrease risk-taking behaviors in children. The evidence is clear on the positive benefits of family mealtime on children's development and yet the challenges are real.

With school, work and extracurricular activities, it can be hard to make eating a meal as a whole family a priority. Then, we add the challenges of technology and their impact on mealtimes. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends media-free meals. Focus on a TV and/or phone can lead to overeating and weight gain. It can also take away from face-to-face communication with family members.

Bottom line is that family meals benefit children's development, so turn off your TV and phones and make family meals a priority.

— ALICE H. HALL, PH.D., PROFESSOR OF CHILD AND FAMILY DEVELOPMENT, SCHOOL OF HUMAN ECOLOGY



Be a Super Hero in Your Community

Every fall, my twins excitedly walk into our local health clinic to be vaccinated against influenza. Yes, you read it correctly... they are thrilled to receive the flu vaccine. Ever since they were little I spoke of how immunizations transformed them into modern-day superheroes. While they may not have super powers like the ones seen on the big screen, the ability to fight against deadly viruses and protect others in the community becomes their secret weapon.

One of the greatest medical advancements in the history of mankind is arguably the creation of the vaccine. For example, smallpox, an extremely contagious and deadly virus, was declared eradicated worldwide in 1990 following a global immunization campaign. Continuing this success, measles was declared eliminated from the United States in 2000 after continued transmission of the disease waned. However, this status is currently under threat. Despite the overwhelming research that showcases the importance of vaccines, vaccine hesitancy has reached an all-time high, prompting the World Health Organization to declare it as one of the top ten threats to global health. That's because whether or not an individual chooses to get vaccinated actually impacts their entire community.

In any given population, there are people who are not able to get

vaccinated, perhaps because they are too young or they have a medical condition preventing them. In order for those members to be protected, a certain percentage needs to be vaccinated. However, as misinformation spreads and vaccinations no longer become a priority, this number declines. It is clear a new, innovative approach to vaccinations is desperately needed. This could mean improving the conversations around vaccines or looking for novel ways of reaching the community.

Through a Jiann-Ping Hsu College Of Public Health classroom project, in collaboration with the South Central Health District, vaccinations were administered to local, rural communities through drive-thru flu clinics. Drive-thru clinics are exactly what they sound like. You roll up to a clinic, roll down your window, and receive a vaccine from the comfort of your car. This exercise has helped communities prepare for potential emergencies, as well as deliver a vaccine that people don't often prioritize.

Through each individual act of vaccination, healthy members of the community can limit the spread of the disease and keep others safe... the true definition of a hero. Parents, caregivers, and health care providers have an excellent opportunity to reframe the conversation around vaccinations for both the benefit of the individual and the community. Take care of yourself and be a hero in your community today.

— JESSICA SMITH SCHWIND, PH.D., MPH, ASSISTANT PROFESSOR, DEPARTMENT OF BIostatISTICS, EPIDEMIOLOGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH



COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

How to Turn Children into Readers

Helping children develop as readers requires more than giving rewards for completing books, encouraging competition to see who can read the most books or asking them to read a number of texts in an allotted amount of time. In order to encourage a child's intrinsic motivation to read and support them on their journey to

becoming lifelong readers, we need to look at both their value of reading and their expectations for success with reading. The following is a list of suggestions to help promote lifelong reading habits with children.

Researchers agree that choice of reading is a motivating factor for children. When empowered to choose a text about a topic or genre of interest, children will likely place higher value on reading.

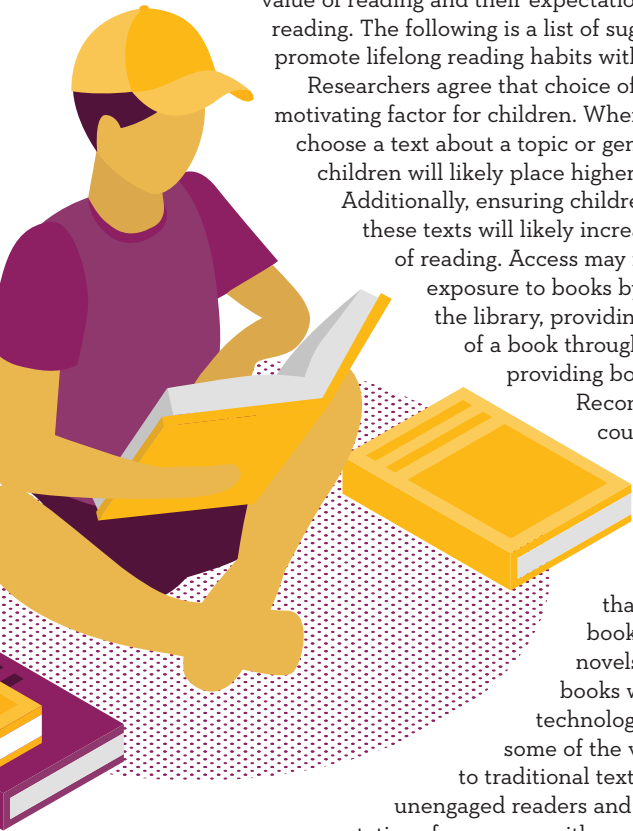
Additionally, ensuring children have access to these texts will likely increase their value of reading. Access may include varied exposure to books by taking trips to the library, providing a brief overview of a book through book talks, and providing books as a gift.

Reconsidering what counts as reading can also prove helpful for reluctant readers who prefer other forms of reading than the traditional book. Blog posts, graphic novels, comic books and books with integrated technology represent just some of the various alternatives to traditional texts that can engage unengaged readers and increase their expectations for success with reading.

Finally, children need to see reading role models. To solidify the value of reading, children need to see reading being done at home by respected others (e.g., siblings, parents, etc.). Setting aside time to read as a family where children see the importance of reading, taking the time to read to children daily or discussing the books children are reading will increase children's experience with and exposure to reading.

Lifelong readers are created through positive experiences with books in varied environments rather than solely experiencing reading at school.

— LESLIE ROBERTS, PH.D., ASSISTANT PROFESSOR, DEPARTMENT OF CURRICULUM, FOUNDATIONS AND READING



PARKER COLLEGE OF BUSINESS

Confused about Bitcoin and other Cryptocurrencies? Do They Matter to Me?

Bitcoin is the first and most popular digital currency based on a protocol outlined in a white paper (2008, bitcoin.org/bitcoin.pdf) under the pseudonym of Satoshi Nakamoto. Is bitcoin a viable currency or asset? The views on the matter are not unanimous but highly controversial. Some describe bitcoin as “noxious poison” (Charlie Munger) or “Avoid bitcoin like the plague” (Jack Bogle). Others describe it as “digital gold” (David Markus, Facebook) while Jack Dorsey (Twitter) said that “the internet will have a native currency” and thinks that it will be bitcoin.

What is the importance of bitcoin? One can answer this question by examining bitcoin as a technology, currency or asset. As a technology, the decentralized payments mechanism through the distributed ledger, the blockchain, represents an important technological innovation that may result in a potential disruption in the payments system and reconfigure industries. It could lead to the development of central bank digital currencies (see the attempt to introduce the global stablecoin Libra by Facebook in 2019). The decentralized web already has applications in smart contracts, banking, retailing and other areas. Many technologists agree that the blockchain technology will be transformative.

Does bitcoin qualify as a currency? Bitcoin is not backed by any authority (it is not a liability of any individual or institution). So far, it is accepted by a small number of companies and thus has a very limited use as a medium of exchange. Also, its function as a store of value is problematic given the tremendous volatility of bitcoin prices on the exchanges. It follows that presently bitcoin does not meet the criteria for currency.

How much is bitcoin worth as an investment asset? As bitcoin does not generate any cash flows, its intrinsic value should be zero. However, it has recorded the largest price bubble in financial market history. Bitcoin prices may be driven by speculative fervor on the expectation that other investors would be willing to pay a higher price in the future (greater fool theory). Should an investor speculate in bitcoin? Given the substantial legal and regulatory risks, there is a clear danger of a sizable permanent loss in the bitcoin value. The time integral, short- versus long-term horizon, is an important consideration in the decision to speculate in bitcoin. On the positive side, research shows that bitcoin offers portfolio diversification benefits. If investors want to speculate in cryptocurrencies, they should allocate a small percentage of their funds (less than 5%) toward that purpose. Finally, if blockchain is a foundational transformational technology, investing in blockchain technology companies has merit.

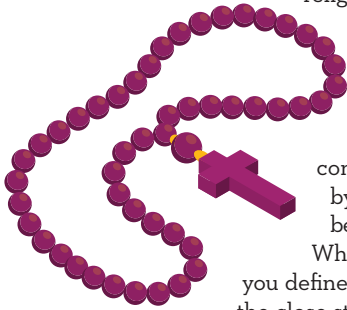
— JOHN BARKOULAS, PH.D., PROFESSOR, DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE



Are Young People Losing Their Religion?

Ours is certainly not the first period that has asked if young people are losing their religion. Nor is it likely to be the last. But recent findings from the Pew Research Center could lend some support to those persuaded that the loss of religion marks the lives of many of our university students: of those surveyed under the age of 25 in the United States, the respondents who claimed no religious affiliation (the “nones”) comprise the second largest group, at 36%, behind only that of Christianity, at 56%.

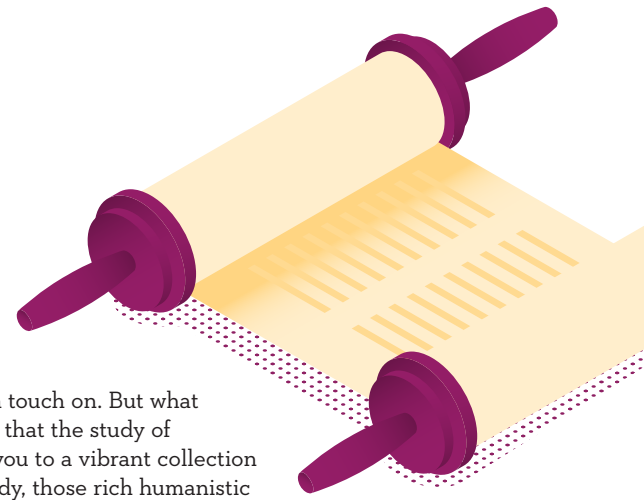
But how we understand these figures depends on how we understand “religion.” In our Introduction to Religious Studies classes at Georgia Southern, we find that how someone thinks about religion depends on a host of cultural, social and historical factors - and that the question “what is religion?” proves more complicated, and more fascinating, the more you probe it. If we were to return to those figures above and the under-25 contingent who claimed no religious affiliation, by way of an example, 8 out of 10 express a belief in God, a full 50% with “absolute certainty.” What religion means will depend, then, on how you define it. And to define it well will necessitate the close study of culture, society, history, language,



literature and politics, to name only some of the subjects that questions of religion touch on. But what this also indicates is that the study of religion introduces you to a vibrant collection of other areas of study, those rich humanistic disciplines committed to learning more about what it means to be us.

If the question of whether young people are losing their religion proves difficult to answer, one thing is more certain: the study of religion at Georgia Southern is thriving. Our classes are filled with bright, curious students who are passionate about learning more about religion in all of its diverse expressions and complexities. This interest has led to a new department at Georgia Southern University (Philosophy and Religious Studies) and a new major (B.A. in Philosophy with a Concentration in Religious Studies). So come support us. Sponsor scholarships, travel and talks for our students. Come take classes with us. How we think about religion matters.

— DANIEL PIOSKE, PH.D., ASSISTANT PROFESSOR, DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGIOUS STUDIES



Is There a Future for Coral Reefs?

In 1979, as an undergraduate biology major, I participated in a class trip to learn about the amazing natural history of the Florida Keys. While there we snorkeled on an astonishingly beautiful reef built by huge expanses of branching elkhorn and staghorn coral. The complex structure provided by the coral branches created tunnels teaming with life ranging from multicolored fish to spiny black sea urchins. While this image of a coral reef was cemented in my brain, little did I know I would never again see a Caribbean reef like that.

I began studying Caribbean coral reefs while a graduate student in the early 1980s. By that time many of the structurally important corals that I observed in 1979, were being infected and killed by something called White Band Disease. This disease is dispersed by water currents and does enough damage on its own, but White Band Disease is not the only stress that corals have endured over the last 40-50 years. Deforestation, overfishing, pollution, and steadily increasing seawater temperatures are just a few of the many ways humans have, and are, negatively impacting corals.

Unfortunately, the future for coral reefs looks bleak. A recent presentation at the Ocean Sciences Meeting in February 2020 indicated that 70-90% of coral reefs around the world will be gone within 20 years and

virtually none will be left by 2100. The main culprit for this decline? Rising seawater temperatures that are a result of carbon dioxide being released into the atmosphere from burning fossil fuels. The evidence for this link is indisputable.

If coral reefs disappear, the implications will be far-reaching. Not only will we lose one of the most biologically diverse ecosystems on the planet, but gone will be the vast services they provide, such as storm protection, water filtration, food, jobs and recreation. Nearly one-eighth of the world population lives within 60 miles of coral reefs, benefits from them, and stands to lose if reefs continue to decline. If we are to save coral reefs for future generations we must act now, and the best action we can take is to reduce our reliance on fossil fuels. We owe it to the reefs and we owe it to humanity.

— DANIEL GLEASON, PH.D., DIRECTOR OF JAMES H. OLIVER JR. INSTITUTE FOR COASTAL PLAIN SCIENCE





“It’s 10 percent what happens to you and 90 percent how you handle it.”

–Athletics Director Jared Benko

A TIME TO SOAR

New Director of Athletics Jared Benko Joins Eagles During Historic Challenges

Jared Benko began his tenure as the new director of athletics for Georgia Southern on April 1, right in the middle of historic challenges for the University, for athletics and for the nation.

On March 12, just three days after his first visit to the University, the NCAA suspended men’s and women’s basketball and tournament play. Less than two weeks later, Benko would have to conduct a search for a new men’s basketball coach in the middle of a pandemic.

“I’ll never forget that Thursday as we were heading back, everything started to break on the cancellation of tournaments,” he said. “There were about three days with no real COVID concerns and then the floodgates broke.”

While the pandemic may have changed the way he approached his role as director of athletics, Benko says it didn’t change the job. He began the coaching search the way he always does, calling mentors, friends and other coaches to gather a large list of good candidates. “It’s like putting a puzzle together,” he said.

Once the candidates were narrowed down to five, he met all of them on Zoom, an online meeting platform, and made a decision. The entire process took Benko less than two weeks to find Brian Burg, former assistant coach at Texas Tech, who now leads the Eagles.

“He’s a winner,” said Benko. “He’s won everywhere he’s been. He’s worked with some of the best coaches in the country... He’s going to take us to heights we haven’t been in a while.”

Formerly the deputy director of athletics and chief financial officer at Mississippi State University, Benko brings more than a decade of experience in the Southeastern Conference (SEC), where he served in various athletics positions at Auburn University, the University of Arkansas and the University of Georgia. In his new role at Georgia Southern, he

reports directly to the University president and serves as a member of the president’s cabinet.

“This was a highly sought-after position attracting over 100 candidates from across the nation,” said Georgia Southern University President Kyle Marrero. “The expressed enthusiasm for and reputation of Georgia Southern validated the success we have had, and the potential in our future. Jared stood out in everyone’s mind. The committee and I are confident he is the right person to capitalize on our momentum and lead Eagle Nation to even greater heights.”

While plans to keep athletes, students, fans and patrons safe loom large in the new director’s mind, Benko says he and his staff are planning for their first football home game on Sept. 12, “and until we hear otherwise, that’s what we’re working toward.”

Benko has big plans for the athletics program. He’s aiming for comprehensive excellence in all 17 programs, both on the field and in the classroom, expanding engagement with fans, donors, alumni and students in person and on social media, and looking for new ways to generate revenue and expand the fan base. He hopes to reach alumni and fans in Savannah, and in greater markets throughout Georgia, between Statesboro, Savannah, Atlanta and Augusta, where the University has large numbers of alumni.

And have the historic challenges changed his expectations about what he can accomplish?

“I have a strong faith, so in this process I’ve tried to focus on what I can control and let God handle the rest,” he said. “I try to plan for contingencies, but the challenge is really an opportunity for growth.

“You know, it’s 10 percent what happens to you and 90 percent how you handle it.” – DOY CAVE

DON'T STOP BELIEVIN'

Former Eagle Kicker Overcomes Adversity to Make it in the NFL



Younghoe Koo (17) came to Ridgewood, New Jersey, from South Korea having never touched a football. Last year, he signed mid-season as a kicker with the Atlanta Falcons, becoming one of only four Korean-born NFL players.

How did he get from South Korea to the NFL? It's quite a story.

Koo spent his childhood years in South Korea playing soccer, primarily, but when he moved to the U.S. as a sixth grader, his new friends convinced him to try football. Koo joined the seventh grade football team and played through high school. At Ridgewood High, Koo was a First-Team All-Big North League kicker all four years. He scored 151 points in his kicking game, and as a senior, he was 32 for 32 in points after touchdowns with six field goals and a long of 41 yards.

It was no wonder Georgia Southern came calling.

"Coach [Jeff] Monken came to my high school to recruit me," said Koo. "And when I visited Georgia Southern, it just felt right. Everything felt like home. And I felt wanted more than anything."

As an Eagle, Koo put together one of the greatest kicking seasons in University history. He became the program's first FBS All-American (3rd team) and a finalist for the Lou Groza Award, college football's top kicking honor. Koo led the Eagles in scoring with 85 points and set a school record for field goal percentage with an 88.6.

Koo's football career had been progressing without a hitch, then it hit a rough patch. Going undrafted in the 2017 NFL draft, he was picked up by the San Diego Chargers and named starting kicker, but was cut after only four games.

He didn't just sit around feeling sorry for himself, however. Koo trained with John Carney, the legendary NFL kicker, for a year-and-a-half.

How did Koo stay motivated during that time?

"I really believed that if I just took it day by day and focused on improving each day and just working on myself, whenever the opportunity came, I knew I would be ready," he said.

And Koo was ready. In January 2019, he signed with the Atlanta Legends for what turned out to be the sole season of Alliance of American Football (AAF). When the league ceased operations in April 2019, Koo was a perfect 14-of-14 on field goals.

Koo's AAF success led him back to the NFL and he was signed by the Falcons last October, where he made an indelible impression. He was named NFC Special Teams Player of the Week for his performance in his first game against New Orleans, and repeated the feat a week later. Most notably, Koo made the most field goals in the NFL (23) from week 10 through the end of the regular season. He showed an uncanny ability at on-side kicks as well, kicking three in one game, and even catching his own kickoff after a Panthers' fumble.

Unsurprisingly, this March, Koo was re-signed for the 2020 season — validation for a player who never stopped believing.

"Some players might think that coming from Georgia Southern, they'll be overlooked by the NFL," said Koo. "But guys from Georgia Southern have been making it. You just have to take it day by day and trust in yourself."

—LIZ WALKER



THE BODY KEEPS THE SCORE

Merabu Nagwandala Overcomes Illness, Rewrites Record Books in Cross Country

Merabu Nagwandala is an unlikely legend in Georgia Southern athletics history.

She holds six University records in track and field, but it was only a few short years ago that anyone could have imagined her running at all.

As a child in Kampala, Uganda, Nagwandala was a talented aspiring runner, but before she even reached adolescence, she contracted typhoid four times and was plagued by health problems for several years.

"I was running, but I had a lot of health complications and my mom thought sports would never be my thing," she said. "My health really deteriorated. I was very sick. My legs would swell. So my mom was just like, 'You may have the talent, but I don't think your body can handle the stress of training every day and pushing.' So I put that aside and focused on school."

Nagwandala spent more than eight years in and out of school and bed rest, watching her friends and family excel in the sport she loved — a cousin who ran marathons, and a brother, Makweta Allen, who ran the steeplechase for Uganda in the 2013 World University Games in Russia.

It wasn't until her senior year of high school that Nagwandala's health began to stabilize, but even with her improved condition, she wasn't thinking of taking up running again. Her brother, however, had other plans.

"I just woke up one morning, and my brother said, 'You don't feel sick anymore. And you know, down here they're recruiting. You know you can go back. I know. I know you. We have grown up together. You just need a year, you know? You just need a few months.' And then I said, 'OK,'" Nagwandala recalled.

Allen sent her money for shoes and gear, and gave her the name of several coaches who could help her get in shape. She said she was looking for a coach who could bring her talent from zero to anything, really. It didn't take long. After six months of training and testing

the limits of her endurance, she clocked a personal best 18:15 in the 5,000-meter run and entered her first race.

Against some of the best college runners in her country, Nagwandala pushed herself harder than she ever had before and remarkably placed sixth. The exertion, however, proved too much for her. She passed out and was taken to the hospital. Despite her exhaustion, she decided she was hooked.

"I've never looked back," she said. "I've run personal bests ever since. But it comes with a lot of sacrifice and error of forecasts and staying on your goals every day, looking at them thinking, 'I'm going to get that.' You can't lose focus. So the only thing I face is that my body has not built for so long, so my fitness evaporates very fast."

When she arrived at Georgia Southern, Wes Penberthy, assistant track coach for distance and cross country, said he spent his first three months as her coach showing her what she could actually do.

"It was just like, here's what we're doing today for a workout, and she was like, 'Oh, coach, I can't do that! There's no way.' And then she would run 30 seconds faster than I'd give her for the time. And it was like, 'See, you can do that, so let's just keep building.'"

Today, Nagwandala holds University records for the mile, 1,500 meters, 3,000 meters (indoor), 5,000 meters (indoor and outdoor) and 10,000 meters. Penberthy says she's one of the best he's ever coached, and has "reset the record books" for Georgia Southern. And with two more years of eligibility, there's a chance she'll reset them again.

What's certain, however, is that with every race she runs and every record she breaks, Nagwandala gains more confidence in her abilities and in her own body.

"My body takes a long time to warm up, so I have to wait for my body where it's just moving by itself," she said. "But when my body says, Merabu, go! We go!" — DOY CAVE

SIDELINES



BASKETBALL

NEW HEAD COACH

New Georgia Southern basketball coach Brian Burg says his job is a “dream come true.” The former Texas Tech assistant coach was named head coach by new Director of Athletics Jared Benko. Burg spent four seasons with the Red Raiders and helped lead Texas Tech to the NCAA Championship Game in 2019. He was the program’s chief of staff his first two years in Lubbock. Burg, who is described as one of the nation’s top recruiters by his peers, brings nearly a decade of experience as an assistant coach at the Division-I level with stops at Campbell, North Carolina Central and at fellow Sun Belt school Little Rock under Texas Tech head coach Chris Beard in 2015-16. Burg marks the first big hire for Benko, and replaces Mark Byington who resigned as head coach to accept the same position at James Madison University in Virginia.



RIFLE

FRESHMAN TAKES TOP HONOR

Freshman Ashley Judson was named SoCon Co-Air Rifle Athlete of the Year for having the highest season average. It is the third straight year a Georgia Southern shooter has held the title of SoCon Air Rifle Athlete of the Year. In addition, Coach Sandra Worman was named the co-coach of the year in the conference for the second straight year. Georgia Southern hosted the two-day event in March at the Shooting Sports Education Center on the Statesboro Campus.



TEAM REACHES SUN BELT SEMIFINALS

Men’s basketball’s bid for the Sun Belt title was halted by the coronavirus pandemic. The Eagles advanced to their conference tournament semifinal round for the third straight season, the first time that has happened in program history. Georgia Southern also tallied 20-plus wins for the third straight season, a feat not accomplished since 1986-89.



TRIO NAMED SCHOLASTIC ALL-AMERICANS

Three members of the Georgia Southern rifle team were honored for their work in the classroom during the academic year. The Collegiate Rifle Coaches Association (CRCA) named recent graduate Lydia Odlin and first-year students Lillian Herring and Ashley Judson CRCA Scholastic All-Americans for achieving a GPA of at least 3.20. This was the third year in a row Odlin was honored by the CRCA.



FOOTBALL

TWO EAGLES MAKE NFL DRAFT

Two former Georgia Southern football players were selected on the final day of the 2020 NFL Draft. Cornerback Kindle Vildor went in the fifth round to the Chicago Bears as the 163rd overall pick and the Buffalo Bills selected kicker Tyler Bass as the No. 188 overall pick. The picks marked just the second time in program history the Eagles had two players taken in the same draft.

Vildor, a native of College Park, Georgia, is the 14th Georgia Southern football player to be taken in the NFL Draft. He was a two-time first-team All-Sun Belt selection and was named an All-American in 2018 by Pro Football Focus. For his career, he had 95 tackles, 24 pass break ups and 10 interceptions. Vildor participated in the Reese’s Senior Bowl and in the NFL Combine.

Bass, a native of Irmo, South Carolina, is the 15th Georgia Southern football player ever taken in the NFL Draft and the second kicker in program history to be selected. He was a two-time All-Sun Belt selection and was named an All-American in 2019 by Chris Sailer Kicking. Bass made 114 PATs and 54 field goals in his career with a long of 50 yards. As a senior, he set a new school record with 20 made field goals. He also participated in the Reese’s Senior Bowl and in the NFL Combine.



ALWAYS AN EAGLE

Longtime Alumni Association Leader Retires

You might say Wendell Tompkins arrived at Georgia Southern in 1982 and never left. Aside from a short absence, he has spent almost 40 years at Georgia Southern - first as a student then as an employee. Tompkins admits he found a second home at the institution he loves.

"As graduation approached in 1987, all I could think of is that I didn't want to leave Georgia Southern and Statesboro," he said. "I moved to Savannah for my first job and immediately began exploring ways to return to Georgia Southern in some capacity."

In May 1989, Tompkins was back at his alma mater as the very first assistant director of the Southern Boosters, now known as the Georgia Southern University Athletic Foundation. Frank Hook, the Southern Boosters executive director who hired him, remembered Tompkins' first big assignment - a pre-game social for several hundred guests and donors. A few hours before the event, he was astonished to see that his new hire had planned everything with a meticulous attention to detail.

"Wendell was finishing up some things and I looked down and every table, the tablecloths, the table arrangements, the brochures were lined up, not anything was out of line," Hook said. "He was cutting the lemons and the limes for the bar area and they were lined up to a tee. The wedges were cut exactly the same, side by side by side. Everything was covered and wrapped and put in a refrigerator. Everything was spotless. I said, 'that's all I need to know about my employee and now my new friend, Wendell Tompkins.'"

Tompkins is from Sandersville, Georgia, and graduated with a Bachelor of Business Administration degree. He recalled that 1989 "was a very exciting year to return to Georgia Southern and Statesboro and have the opportunity to be directly involved with so many historic events."

Among the events he cited:

On Sept. 12, 1989, it was announced that Georgia Southern would become a university.

The Hugo Bowl was played in Paulson Stadium on Sept. 12.

Georgia Southern won its third football national championship at home on Dec 16. Football Coach Erk Russell retired four days later.

For the next 30 years, the alumnus witnessed many other momentous events in Georgia Southern's history. But last fall, Tompkins retired after serving in various roles, which included director of annual giving, associate director of the Southern Boosters and finally as senior director of alumni relations and annual giving. As an advocate for Georgia Southern and its alumni, he engaged with thousands of

Eagle Nation members over the years and built lasting relationships with alumni all across the country.

"What I love the most about Georgia Southern is the people," said Tompkins, who took on additional duties as the University's cheerleading coach from 1995 to 1997. "It all goes back to Dec. 1, 1906, when that group of Statesboro and Bulloch County residents rode to Savannah on the train to present the winning bid for Statesboro to be the location of Georgia Southern. It is about the blue-collar work ethic, doing more with less and building something great from the ground up with very little in resources. Georgia Southern is a family, from the students, faculty/staff, alumni and the people of Statesboro and Savannah."

As senior director of alumni relations and annual giving, Tompkins found many ways to celebrate the passion alumni have for their university. He planned and guided dozens of projects that included homecoming festivities, fundraising initiatives, banquets, luncheons and many other alumni-related services.

"There is no way I can choose one thing that I am most proud of over a 30-year career," he said. "I am proud of all Georgia Southern alumni, students, faculty and staff and what we have ALL been able to accomplish to bring Georgia Southern where it is today and the success we have had since its founding."

Tompkins also expanded his commitment to service outside Georgia Southern. He served on the executive committee of the Georgia Education Advancement Council (GEAC) and was elected GEAC president 2015. In 2019, he received GEAC's Lifetime Achievement Award. Now that he has retired, the alumnus plans to spend as much time as possible outdoors, whether it's relaxing at the beach or hiking in the mountains of north Georgia. Looking back, he is proud of how far he and Georgia Southern have come.

"I have been fortunate to be a part of the unbelievable success and growth of Georgia Southern. From the small Georgia Southern College of 6,800 students in 1982 to the major research university of today with more than 26,000 students on three campuses," he said. "So many people have been part of my journey at Georgia Southern but the one person that believed in me the most is Frank Hook. Frank instilled in me a strong work ethic, a love for people and a deeper love for my alma mater. Frank became my friend, mentor and brother."

Hook is retired now but has a part-time role as director of special projects for the Athletic Foundation. He expressed deep appreciation for Tompkins loyalty, work ethic and organization. Hook added, "One of the best day's work I ever did at Georgia Southern was hiring Wendell Tompkins."

— SANDRA BENNETT

VIRTUALLY TRUE BLUE

Alumni Team Keeps Eagles Engaged During Pandemic

As Eagles across the globe began to shelter in place, Georgia Southern's alumni team shifted to virtual events to maintain engagement and entertainment. Alumni joined in for workouts, Eagles After Hours events, coloring sheets, and family fun with Trivia/Bingo.



GEORGIA
SOUTHERN
• STRONG •

SOUTHERN STRONG VIRTUAL WORKOUTS

Alumna America Minc ('03) hosted our first Southern Strong workouts from her home as she kept Eagle Nation fit.



LUNCH & LEARNS

Biology Professor Lissa Leege, Ph.D., shared helpful information about Earth Day and practicing sustainability with interested alumni. The Lunch & Learn series brought several different guest speakers on a variety of topics.





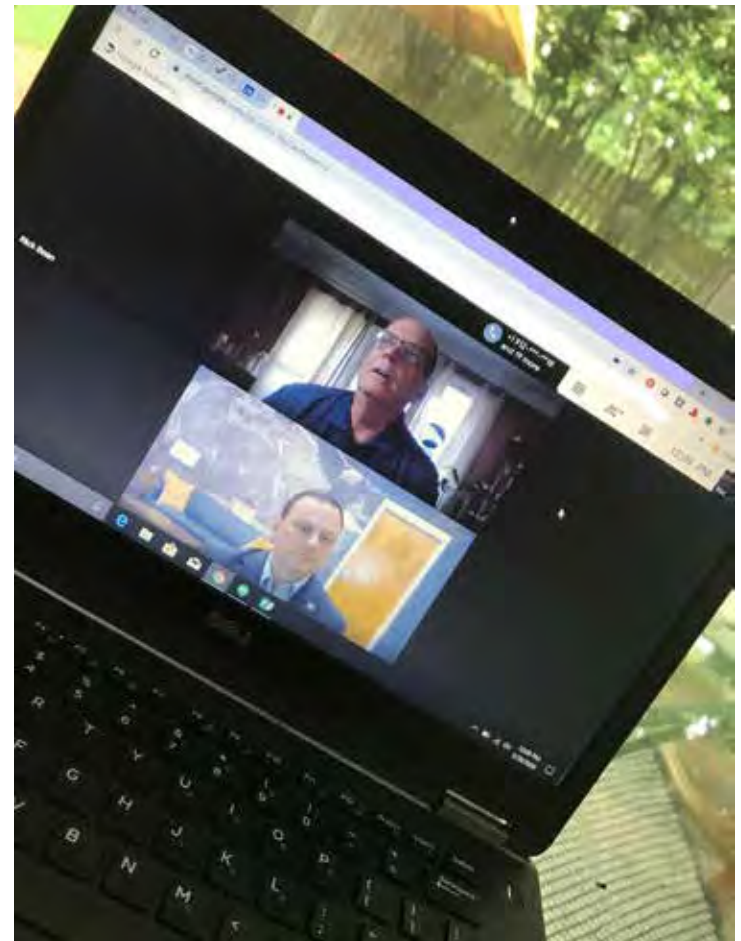
WELLNESS WEDNESDAYS

On Wellness Wednesdays, alumni learned valuable information about self-care from Double Eagle Justine Coleman ('08,'10), and how to make an Eagle-style mask from Cindy Teate, a three-time GS Alumni parent.



BINGO

Alumna Susan Townsend ('02) hosted Family Bingo Night with the help of the Hammett sisters.



VIRTUAL SAVANNAH ALUMNI LUNCH

This long-time Savannah Network tradition was turned into a virtual event and all alumni were invited to join in. Special guest in May was Director of Athletics Jared Benko.



TRIVIA

Alumni were invited to test their knowledge of all things Georgia Southern at Thursday night trivia, hosted by Alex Grovenstein ('02) and his boys, and Terry Harvin ('91)



EAGLES AFTER HOURS

Special happy hours for Georgia Southern alumni were hosted by Jon ('00) and Hollie ('01) Sisk and Michael ('00) and Octavia ('01) Gibbs who welcomed us into their homes for a little virtual socialization.



2019 CURE BOWL ALUMNI TAILGATE ONE OF THE LARGEST EVER

More than 1,000 alumni showed up for the 2019 Cure Bowl Alumni Tailgate on December 21, 2019, in Orlando, Florida. The event was held at the Cheyenne Saloon with live music by Pee Wee Lewis and the Hues.



CHRONICLES

Eddie McCurley ('76) was recently honored by having the Hart County Comprehensive High School basketball court dedicated to him and his former coach, Bill Ensley. McCurley led Hart County to four Georgia state championships in 1989, '90, '91, and '92. He retired in 2016 after 32 years of coaching basketball.

David Chancey ('79) completed 20 years as pastor of McDonough Road Baptist Church, Fayetteville, Georgia, last November. He released his first book, a self-published legacy project titled *The Day I Nearly Met Dolly: Tales of Faith, Family and a Few Home Runs*, available on Amazon.

James William Strickland ('80), dealer at Bellamy-Strickland Chevrolet/Buick/GMC in McDonough, Georgia, was nominated for the TIME Dealer of the Year award. Strickland was chosen to represent the Georgia Automobile Dealers Association in the national competition. He was one of

only 49 auto dealers nominated for one of the automobile industry's most prestigious honors. The nominees are among the nation's most successful dealers who also demonstrate a steadfast commitment to community service. He has been an advocate for A Friend's House, a safe and loving environment for children in crisis in McDonough.

J. Snyp III ('84) has been named to the Million Dollar Club of the Georgia Association of Business Brokers.

The Rev. Frank Logue ('84) has been elected the 11th bishop to lead the Episcopal Diocese of Georgia. He was elected on the first ballot from a field of five candidates. Logue leads a diocese of 70 congregations in mid-south Georgia.

Everett Kennedy ('87) of Statesboro, is one of five new members who joined the University System of Georgia Board of Regents this year. He was appointed by Georgia Gov.

Brian Kemp. Kennedy is a real estate broker and president of the Statesboro Board of Realtors. He is a loyal supporter of Georgia Southern athletics and active in Statesboro civic groups. A seat on the 19-member board is one of the most coveted appointments in state government. The board oversees operations at Georgia's largest public colleges and universities.

Heather McAdam Pomilio ('95) of Long Island, New York, who played softball for Georgia Southern, was inducted into the New York State High School 2018 Softball Hall of Fame as well as into the Nassau County Athletics Hall of Fame 2019. She is a retired special education and physical education teacher who owns her own softball company instructing softball players throughout the year.

Melissa Shivers, Ph.D., ('96) has joined The Ohio State University as vice president for student life.

Move Ahead While Staying At Home

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CHRONICLES

Kim Hartsock ('00,'01) was appointed the new managing member for the Atlanta office of the accounting firm, Warren Averett CPAs and Advisors. Hartsock has been the leader of the local growth strategy team and most recently became the co-host of Warren Averett's podcast, "The Wrap."

Demetrius Bynes ('02,'04) has been appointed human resources director for the city of Statesboro. His department provides human resource services for the city's workforce of approximately 300 people.

Paulette Chavers ('03,'06) helped usher in a new era of political leadership in Statesboro when she was sworn in as a city council member in January. She was one of three women who defeated male incumbents last November, making them the first female members ever elected to the Statesboro City Council. Chavers represents Statesboro's District 2 city council seat.

Paul Geisler, Ed.D., ('05) a professor of athletic training at Ithaca College in New York, was recognized by his peers recently when he received the Most Distinguished Athletic Trainer award from the National Athletic Training Association.

Mackenzie Anderson ('07) has joined Nike as the company's director of global purpose communications and engagement. "PRWeek" also named her to its 2020 40 under 40 list.

Stephanie Thomas, Ph.D., ('13) has been recognized as one of the "100 Most Influential Women in Supply Chain" by B2G, a business consulting firm. She was among only four academics to be named on the list that primarily recognizes women in senior-level corporate positions. Thomas is Georgia Southern's first Ph.D. graduate in the Logistics and Supply Chain program. She is now a professor in the Sam M. Walton College of Business at the University of Arkansas.

Monica Plut ('14) has been hired as the first women's lacrosse head coach at Eastern Oregon University. While a student at Georgia Southern, she founded the women's lacrosse club team. She joined the Mountaineers after leading the women's lacrosse program at Adams State University in Colorado.

James Woodall ('16) is the youngest person to serve as president of the Georgia NAACP. Elected last October, he is the youngest state conference president in the national civil rights organization.

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FOCUSING ON PHILANTHROPY

Gratitude Gala Celebrates Georgia Southern's Exceptional Donors

An audience of alumni, donors, faculty, staff and other guests gathered for a celebration recognizing four individuals, a foundation and a corporation that have demonstrated longtime support for Georgia Southern University. The annual Gratitude Gala honoring these key recipients was held Feb. 29 at the Mansion on Forsyth Park in Savannah.

"We are honored to recognize alumni and friends of the University who have made it their priority to not only improve Georgia Southern but to also promote education," said Vice President for University Advancement Trip Addison. "It is important that we show how grateful we are to all who have helped the University along the way."

The 2020 honorees who received special recognition are listed below.



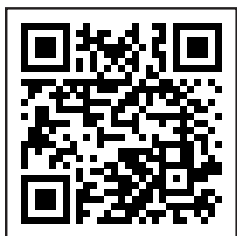
2020 Legacy Award: Bruce and Kathryn Grube

It has been a decade since Bruce Grube, Ph.D., served as the president of Georgia Southern, but he remains a loyal supporter of the institution. From 1999 to 2009, the University experienced exponential growth under his leadership. During Grube's presidency, Georgia Southern became a Carnegie Doctoral/Research university and experienced record-breaking enrollment. His wife, Kathryn Grube, was a fixture in Bulloch County as she volunteered in countless organizations and held numerous positions. Georgia Southern honored the Grubes for their deferred charitable commitment to the University Honors Program, the Recreation Activity Center and multiple student leadership scholarships.



2020 President's Ambassador Award: E.G. and Lynn Meybohm

E.G. and Lynn Meybohm are members of the Class of 1965 and remain devoted supporters of Georgia Southern athletics. E.G. Meybohm, an inductee into the Athletics Hall of Fame, led the Georgia Southern baseball team to capture their first NAIA National Championship in 1962. In 2019, the Meybohms generously supported the renovation of the W.S. Hanner Fieldhouse, a facility critical to Georgia Southern student-athletes. The Hanner Fieldhouse is a state-of-the-art home for basketball and volleyball programs, the Biodynamics and Human Performance Center and University fans. Georgia Southern University awarded the Meybohms the President's Ambassador Award for their unwavering support of University athletics.



SCAN THIS CODE TO SEE TRIBUTE VIDEOS FOR ALL THE GRATITUDE GALA WINNERS.

**2020 President's Innovator Award:
Dot and John Mooney Foundation**

Founded in 1977, the Dot and John Mooney Foundation is a nonprofit charitable extension of Willingway Hospital of Statesboro, Georgia, that specializes in the treatment of alcoholism and drug addiction. At Georgia Southern, this foundation supports over 40 students a semester as they master sobriety and their courses through the Center for Addiction Recovery within the Jiann-Ping Hsu College of Public Health. The program has a 90% graduation rate and graduates have gone on to earn doctoral degrees in pharmacy, physical therapy and psychology, among others. The Dot and John Mooney Foundation was honored for its commitment to the well-being of our students and their futures.



Seated left to right: Cindy Moore, Robbin Mooney, Lynn Meybohm, Kathryn Grube. Standing left to right: Dr. Kyle Marrero (President), Richard Moore, Jimmy Mooney, Sheryl Bunton, E.G. Meybohm, Bruce Grube, Trip Addison (VP University Advancement)

**2020 President's Visionary Award:
Gulfstream Aerospace Corporation**

Although Allen E. Paulson never attended Georgia Southern, he and his company, Gulfstream Aerospace Corporation, became one of the University's biggest supporters in 1984 when a check was written to pay for the football stadium. Since then, Gulfstream has become an important ally, turning the company's support to engineering students through scholarships, career development opportunities, internships and co-op programs. Over the years, Gulfstream partnered with Armstrong State University as well, with both relationships having a vested interest in the development of Savannah area students. Georgia Southern continues to honor the passion Gulfstream has for engineering, the University and the Allen E. Paulson College of Engineering and Computing.

INVESTING IN LIVES

Cliff McCurry Honors His Mentor Through Giving

Cliff McCurry (Armstrong '68) knows the value of having someone invest in your life.

The Savannah businessman and philanthropist can't imagine the direction he would've taken had it not been for his mentor, Nick Mamalakis.

When McCurry was a senior in high school, he returned home from studying one evening to find his mother lying unconscious on the floor. She had suffered a cerebral hemorrhage, and was rushed to the hospital, where she passed away.

It was Mamalakis who helped the young McCurry find a way forward.

"He got in my face that night and grabbed me by the shoulders, and he said, 'Son, you got three choices you can make. You can be pissed off at the world and say, 'Why me?'' You can shift into neutral and not give a damn, and just go through life feeling sorry for yourself. Or you can take everything that your mom and dad have taught you and decide you want to make something of yourself. And if that's the choice you make, I want to be part of your life,'" said McCurry.

Mamalakis was a business and community leader in Savannah, and took the young McCurry under his wing and into his family. After McCurry attended Armstrong on a basketball scholarship for



Nick Mamalakis



Cliff and Kathy McCurry

two years, Mamalakis helped him transfer to the University of Georgia to study risk management and insurance, and gave him a job in his own company, Mercer Insurance, after he graduated.

McCurry worked for the firm and its successors for 39 years. Serving under his mentor, he not only learned the insurance business, but also learned the value of giving back to his community.

"When I give I feel like it's a blessing in my life to be able to give back, to know that I am in a position to help others, because I know how much it meant for others to help me," he said. "The people that believed in me and invested in me is something that I feel like I have the opportunity to do and makes me feel good and makes my family feel good."

McCurry is widely known for his willingness to put in long hours for worthy causes. He served as the chairman of Bethesda Academy for Boys, helping other young boys overcome their circumstances in the same way Mamalakis helped him. He has also served as vice chair or chair for St. Joseph's/Candler Foundation, Communities in Schools/Savannah, Savannah Area Chamber of Commerce, Savannah Economic Development Authority (SEDA), and the Armstrong State University Foundation.

When McCurry first became involved in giving at Armstrong, he was trying to find a

way to honor Mamalakis for the impact he had on his life as a mentor and as a leader.

"And it just struck me one day while he was still alive to make the connection with leadership," he said. "My wife, Kathy, and I made a gift to rename the emerging leadership program the Nick Mamalakis Emerging Leadership Program because I knew how much Armstrong, and especially leadership training for young people, meant to him."

Mamalakis lived long enough to meet the first three classes of the program, and to speak to them about what it meant to have a mentor in his own life, and then hear McCurry tell them what it meant to have Mamalakis.

"Having a father figure like Nick Mamalakis really made a big difference to me," said McCurry. "He would get on me when I was not doing what I was supposed to do, and kick me in the butt and remind me that there ain't no Santa Claus for grownups. If you want to make it happen, it's up to you to make it happen. But then, he also knew how to give me that hug and encouragement to achieve the best I could with the task that I had been given."

— DOY CAVE



Scan this code to see
Cliff McCurry tell his story.



The Evans family made a \$125,000 commitment to the Ensure Our Eagles Finish Strong campaign. Pictured are (L to R): Tim, E.J., Brianna, Roman and R.T. Evans.

DONORS HELP EAGLES FINISH STRONG

Campaign Raises Funds to Help Students, Student-Athletes

On May 18, Georgia Southern University launched the “Ensure Our Eagles Finish Strong” campaign with a goal of raising funds for students facing financial hardships during these unprecedented times.

The campaign raised more than \$289,000 in funds for students on a needs-based priority and for assisting up to 14 returning spring sport seniors who saw their 2019-2020 collegiate seasons cut short. For traditional students, the money raised will keep them from dropping out due to a lack of funding. For student-athletes, the campaign will ensure they can finish their seasons and reach their athletics goals.

“I am so proud of our Eagle Nation family for rallying around our students and student-athletes during these challenging times,”

said Georgia Southern University President Kyle Marrero. “These funds will mean all the difference for a student who is struggling financially, and for our student-athletes, who were unable to properly finish the journey they started. Thank you to all of our alumni, friends and community supporters who made this possible.”

Alumni advocates like Curtis J. Williams ('10) created videos and social media posts to get the word out about the campaign, and generated excitement among his fellow alumni. Each one solicited donations and together raised thousands for Ensuring Our Eagles Finish Strong.

One of the most notable contributions to the campaign came from alumni R.T. ('12) and Brianna ('12) Evans, together with Richard T.

(Tim) and E.J. Evans, who made a \$125,000 commitment to the campaign, its single largest gift. Tim and R.T. are executive team members of Evans General Contractors, a leading design/build, general contracting and construction management firm headquartered in Atlanta with an office in Savannah.

“Helping students achieve their goals is our top priority. Helping to provide for their needs is essential to ensure they are able to rise above the uncertainty they are facing at this time,” said Tim Evans, president and CEO of Evans General Contractors. “At Evans General Contractors it is our philosophy and mission to give back to the communities that helped build the company we are today.”

Scan this code to see Curtis J. Williams' video.



ENGINEERING THE FUTURE

Engineering and Research Building Drives Excellence, Innovation in Southeast Georgia

Georgia Southern University's new Engineering and Research Building will open on the Statesboro Campus later this year, and will serve as an epicenter for engineering innovation in southeast Georgia.

The new building will house state-of-the-art applied research facilities where faculty and students will conduct research to strengthen existing companies and attract new companies to the region. The facility will also provide regional businesses with expanded access to engineering faculty with technical expertise as well as opportunities to collaborate with faculty on research and development.

For the past 72 years, JCB, Inc. has invested heavily in research and development, always staying on the cutting edge of innovation. This acclaimed global manufacturer of construction equipment recently tapped the Allen E. Paulson College of Engineering and Computing at Georgia Southern University to help the company innovate even further and to achieve even higher levels of success.

With 12,000 employees on four continents, JCB designs and manufactures world-class construction equipment incorporating the latest technology. The company's manufacturing facility in Pooler produces more than 3,000 units annually that are shipped to customers around the world. JCB employs an in-house engineering team in Pooler, Ga., but understands the importance of expanding and deepening its connections with resources across Georgia.

"At JCB, we started looking for talent locally," explains Justin Haddock, a 2004 Georgia Southern Electrical Engineering graduate who currently serves as the Systems Engineering Manager at JCB, Inc. "Georgia

Southern's College of Engineering and Computing is right up the road and has so much to offer."

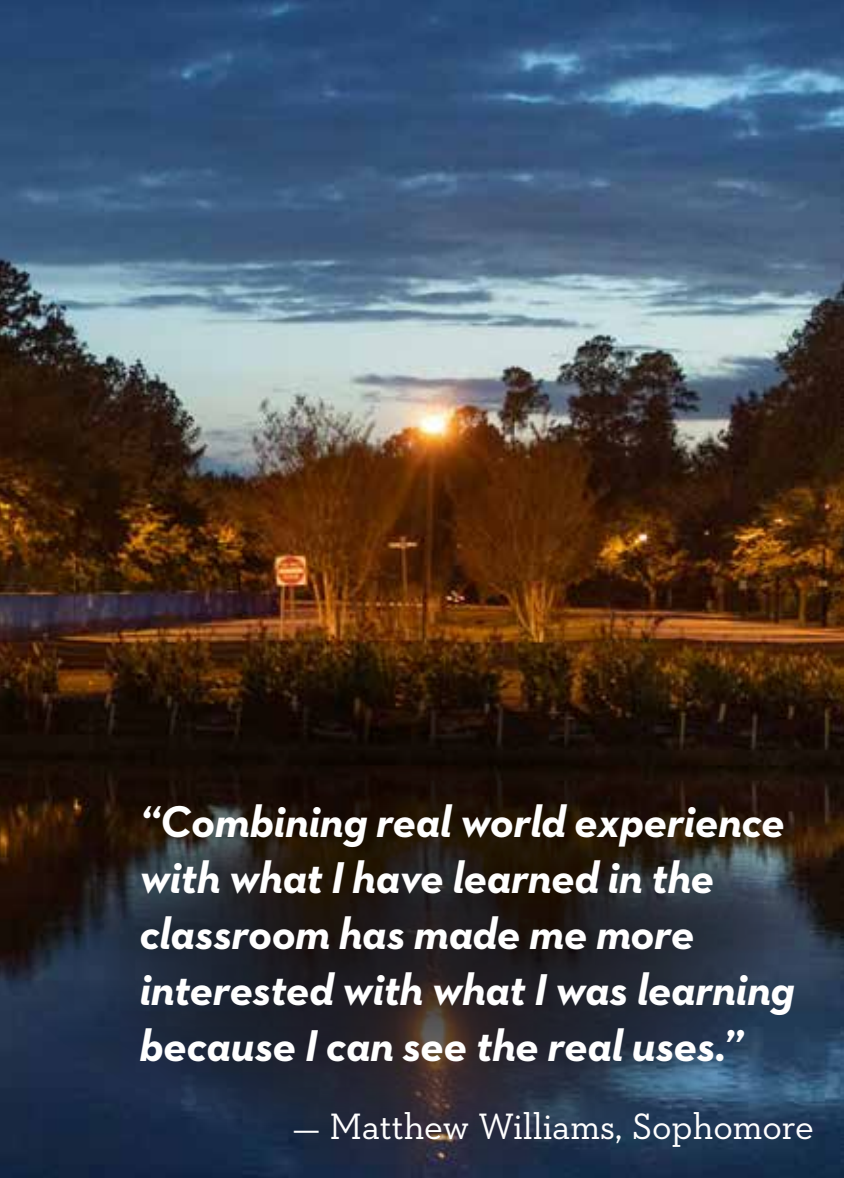
JCB started by bringing Georgia Southern Engineering professors to the company's Pooler campus to lead small-group continuing education sessions focused on state-of-the-art technology in a wide range of areas. Haddock says this "accelerated learning path" has helped JCB engineers "get a leg up" by offering customized instruction utilizing JCB's real-world data, rather than abstract textbook scenarios.

"We provide them with data sets and they manipulate it and share the results with us," explains Haddock, who is also a longtime member of Georgia Southern's Electrical and Computer Engineering Advisory Board. "They share their wealth of knowledge with us. That really hits home."

At the same time, JCB, Inc. has several co-op students from Georgia Southern's College of Engineering and Computing who work on important projects, like incorporating acoustical camera technology or testing new software.

Matthew Williams, a sophomore from Acworth Georgia, who is working on a B.S. in Mechanical Engineering, recently served as a co-op student at JCB, where he had the opportunity to help create and test an instrument that can control a Teleskid skid steer boom remotely.

"This experience has been very beneficial to me as it offers a look into what being an engineer is actually like," explains Williams. "What I have learned in the classroom is the basic ideas and principles, but actually applying them is very different. Combining real world experience with what I have learned in the classroom has made me more interested with what I was learning because I can see the real uses."



“Combining real world experience with what I have learned in the classroom has made me more interested with what I was learning because I can see the real uses.”

— Matthew Williams, Sophomore



Georgia Southern faculty also advise JCB engineers regarding cutting-edge technology, which is helping to develop the next generation of construction equipment. Weinan Gao, Ph.D., assistant professor of electrical and computer engineering at Georgia Southern, has led several technical briefings at JCB and currently advises the company's engineering team in the area of PID Control Systems.

“It's truly an honor to work with JCB on this ongoing project and to support their talented engineering team,” said Gao. “This collaboration is a great opportunity to help a world-class company make strategic refinements to its product line and incorporate the latest technology.”

The fact that Georgia Southern bridges theory and practice, while offering insight into new technology, is a tremendous benefit to JCB.

“Georgia Southern has all these tools available and they can show us what they can do,” says Haddock. “They offer an excellent team-oriented approach. If one professor isn't sure about something, they can walk down the hall and bring in another professor who can help.”

By offering customization, flexibility, hands-on assistance and a team-oriented approach, Georgia Southern's College of Engineering and Computing serves as an important resource for this leading global manufacturer.

“It's been a very productive partnership,” says Haddock. “Everything we've done so far has had a good outcome.”

For more information on ways you can support the Allen E. Paulson College of Engineering and Computing and the new Engineering and Research Building, contact University Advancement at 912-478-2000.



1940s

Merle Craven Cockfield ('48) of Jesup, Georgia, died Jan. 5, 2020. The retired English teacher loved playing bridge, traveling and staying at her second home on St. Simons Island.

Sue Breen Waller ('44) of Augusta, Georgia, died Jan. 7, 2020, at age 95. In retirement, the elementary school teacher continued to teach by volunteering in adult literacy programs.

David Fritts ('48) of Savannah passed away March 29, 2020, at age 97. The World War II U.S. Army veteran was a retired attorney. In his private practice of 57 years, he specialized in civil and family law.

1950s

Myra Newton Fountain ('59) of Fitzgerald, Georgia, died May 3, 2019, at a health and rehab facility in Macon, Georgia. She was an elementary school teacher in Fitzgerald for nearly 30 years.

Barbara Hamilton Riley ('59) of Savannah died July 3, 2019, at St. Joseph's Hospital. She was a retired teacher having taught in Chatham and Effingham County schools.

Mary Brock McKinnon ('55) of Folkston, Georgia, died at home Oct. 12, 2019. She was a dedicated middle school English teacher for 37 years.

Judge Tom Edenfield Sr. ('59) of Savannah died Oct. 15, 2019, at St. Joseph's hospital. The

lifelong Savannah resident was the assistant district attorney for Chatham County in his early career. He had a private practice and later served as a municipal court judge in Chatham and Effingham counties for 30 years. He was active in numerous community organizations and loved history, genealogy and Georgia Southern football.

Mary Wilhite Craik ('53) of Louisville, Kentucky, died Oct. 27, 2019, at age 95. As a military spouse she lived in 10 states and two countries while pursuing degrees and careers in education. A fiber artist, feminist and faculty member, she created a psychology of women course and developed a women's studies program at a Minnesota university.

Peggy Ann Marsh Weatherford ('59), formerly of Twin City, Georgia, died Nov. 4, 2019, in Greensboro, Georgia. She taught school in Charlton County, Georgia, and retired from the Nassau County, Florida, court system after 30 years.

Latha Phillips Tyson ('52) of Soperton, Georgia, died Nov. 11, 2019, at age 97. She was a retired teacher.

Raymond Hutchinson ('51) of Pooler, Georgia, died Nov. 30, 2019, at a Savannah hospital. At the end of WWII, he served as a seaman first class in the U.S. Naval Construction Battalion "Seabees" in Guam. After the war, he worked for Southern Railroad Company and

later became an original Kentucky Fried Chicken franchise holder.

Betty Long Brown ('58) of Williamson, Georgia, died Dec. 8, 2019, at age 87. She was a teacher in Chatham County schools for many years. She enjoyed traveling abroad and to all 50 states in the U.S.

Dorothy Holbrook Leary ('53) of Washington, Missouri, passed away Dec. 21, 2019. She was a former school teacher and established a day care center.

Sue Kennedy Warren ('53) of Pulaski, Georgia, died Dec. 21, 2019, at an assisted living facility in Statesboro. The former home economics and science teacher in Chatham County schools and Armstrong, was a past president of the National Council of the Garden Club of Georgia.

Cherrell Williams Rose ('55) died Dec. 24, 2019, in Smithville, Texas. She served on the Smithville School Board and was a volunteer for the Boy Scouts and Smithville Heritage Society.

Donald Thornhill ('58,'66) of Augusta, Georgia, passed away Dec. 29, 2019. The lifelong educator served as a coach, principal, assistant superintendent and superintendent of Columbia County schools.

Eugene Collins ('57) died Jan. 1, 2020, at his home in Appling, Georgia. The U.S. Air Force Korean War veteran taught shop and vocational education for 30 years in Georgia

public schools. The skilled carpenter and craftsman also co-owned a cattle farm.

Joel Stowers ('53) of Athens, Georgia, died Jan. 19, 2020, at the age of 87. He was director of the University of Tennessee Library at Martin, and retired after 29 years. In retirement, he played the piano at churches and nursing facilities in Athens.

Betty Parrish Lee ('53) of Brooklet, Georgia, died in hospice care Feb. 29, 2020. The educator and active community volunteer, was a Deen Day Smith Service to Mankind Award recipient.

The Rev. Claude "Ted" Bass ('56) of Macon, Georgia, died March 1, 2020. He joined the South Georgia Conference of the United Methodist Church in 1956 and served churches in south Georgia for 44 years.

Peggy Burke Daniell Ferguson ('53) of Statesboro and Metter, Georgia, died April 14, 2020. The former teacher was an active member of the Daughters of the American Revolution and an advocate for the arts.

Shirley Avis Bragg McClellan ('55) passed away May 26, 2020, at her home in Waynesboro, Georgia. She was a retired educator.

1960s

Wilmer Sheffield ('65) of Acworth, Georgia, died June 13, 2019, in hospice care. He was a retired Georgia State Patrol

corporal and a civil service employee at Robins Air Force Base.

Richard "Dickey" Collins Sr. ('60) of Cobbtown, Georgia, died at home July 19, 2019. He was a farmer and worked as a federal contract specialist.

Henry Hughes III ('69) of Dexter, Georgia, died Sept. 24, 2019, at a hospital in neighboring Dublin. He was a retired computer programmer.

Dinah Tucker Everhart ('69) of Peachtree Corners, Georgia, died Oct. 3, 2019, after battling lung cancer. She retired from a 30-year career with Bell South.

Michele "Mickey" Peterman Creel ('64,'94) of Savannah died Oct. 11, 2019, after an extended illness. She had a lifelong career as a mathematics educator who taught for many years at Savannah Tech.

Walter Vollenweider Sr. ('60) of St. Simons Island, Georgia, died in hospice care Oct. 15, 2019. A former mayor of Waycross, Georgia, he was active in his church and several civic organizations. He also served in the U.S. Air Force.

Robert Sikes ('67) of Bluffton, South Carolina, passed away Oct. 30, 2019. The U.S. Navy veteran was an entrepreneur who owned several businesses.

Nancy Edenfield Kerves ('65) of Savannah and Columbia, South Carolina, died Nov. 5, 2019. The wife and mother of two taught adult education

classes for several years and mentored foster families.

Ruth Bray Brown ('68) died at home in Statesboro on Nov. 7, 2019, after an extended illness. She had a 31-year teaching career in Georgia school districts. She was married to her husband, the Rev. William Brown, for more than 67 years.

Kelly Hardwick III ('67) died Nov. 22, 2019, at his home in Bartow, Florida. He practiced law in Bartow for 39 years and retired from the Florida Army National Guard as a lieutenant colonel.

Donald Turknett Sr. ('67) of Cochran, Georgia, died at Mayo Clinic in Jacksonville, Florida, Dec. 24, 2019. He was a teacher, coach, principal and school superintendent in Bleckley County, Georgia. He had 33 years of service in Georgia's public school system.

Bobby Todd ('65) of Fayetteville, Georgia, died Dec. 31, 2019, at age 83. The retired educator served as an administrator in several Georgia public school districts.

Anne Blount Sawyer ('61) of North Augusta, South Carolina, passed away Jan. 2, 2020. The English teacher and library assistant enjoyed collecting antique dolls, and for more than 30 years appeared in adopt-a-pet segments on television stations in the Augusta area.

Mary Bowen Hendrix ('68,'85) of Metter, Georgia, died Jan. 4,

2020, at Candler County Hospital. A former elementary school teacher, she also worked for the Candler County Department of Family and Children's Services.

Wendell Tanner ('66) died Jan. 7, 2020, at his home in Augusta, Georgia. He served in multiple Georgia school districts as a social studies teacher, guidance counselor and administrator.

Thomas Hendrix ('62) of Clermont, Georgia, died at home Jan. 7, 2020, after battling cancer. He was an educator for 30 years serving in the roles of teacher, principal and superintendent in Chattahoochee, Muscogee, Whitfield and Newton counties in Georgia.

Edward Bugg ('69) of Forsyth, Georgia, passed away Jan. 14, 2020. He served as a correctional and criminal psychologist for nearly 30 years at the Georgia Diagnostic State Prison.

Steve Wright IV ('63) of Craftsbury, Vermont, died at home Jan. 16, 2020. The former Sterling College president and commissioner of the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department had battled Parkinson's disease.

Olyvia Deal ('66) of Wytheville, Virginia, was surrounded by family when she died at home Jan. 18, 2020. She had a degree in nursing.

Ann Crawford Smith ('60) was surrounded by family when she died at home in Novato,

California, Jan. 26, 2020. She was a native of St. Marys, Georgia.

Dennis "Coach" Burau ('60,'64) of Augusta, Georgia, passed away Feb. 14, 2020. He played basketball at Georgia Southern for legendary Coach J.B. Searce. As a graduate student he was an assistant to Coach Searce and coached the Georgia Southern freshman team. He later became a coach and professor at Augusta College.

Otis Cook ('65) of Cocoa, Florida, died Feb. 21, 2020. For many years, he lived in Louisville, Kentucky, where he was a leader in the food industry.

Timothy Mizzell ('62) of Harleyville, South Carolina, died in the hospital Feb. 25, 2020. He served in the U.S. Army, and was a retired teacher and guidance counselor in Chatham County, Georgia, and Richland School District No. 1 in Columbia, South Carolina.

Sally Whitten Wells ('64,'67) of Savannah died on Ash Wednesday, Feb. 26, 2020, at a memory care facility in Pooler, Georgia. She was a teacher in her early career, then spent several years in Europe where she was an information officer in the insurance industry.

Judy Nunn Mason ('64,'66) of Savannah died in an automobile accident March 9, 2020. After a teaching career of more than 30 years, she retired from Calvary Day School working as the elementary school librarian.

John Christopher Fairey ('69) of Titusville, Florida, died peacefully April 8, 2020. He started his career as an engineer at NASA in 1969 and served in many capacities while at Kennedy Space Center, ultimately retiring as the director of spaceport services in 2002. He received many accolades during his tenure at NASA including the Silver Snoopy Award, the Exceptional Engineering Achievement Medal, the Exceptional Service Medal, and the Vice President's Hammer Award for leadership. He was also the recipient of the National Space Club Lifetime Achievement Award in 2014.

Sarah Frances Griner ('62) passed away April 13, 2020, at her home in Orlando, Florida. She taught fifth grade in various Florida schools for 40 years and was an avid supporter of nature, animals and environmental groups.

Richard Van Brunt Jr. ('65) of Goose Creek, South Carolina, died of complications from cancer April 22, 2020. He was a coach and educator for 43 years. He also served with the National Guard from 1965-73.

Linda Cason Cartee ('66) of Statesboro died May 8, 2020, at East Georgia Regional Medical Center. She taught in the Bulloch County School System for over 33 years and was the administrator of the QUEST Program for gifted and talented students. The Georgia Southern University football fan

spent many Saturday afternoons at Paulson Stadium.

Dr. Jesse L. Petrea Jr. ('65) of Hagan, Georgia, died because of an automobile accident May 22, 2020. He had a general psychiatry private practice in Eastman, Georgia, and worked with the Eastman Youth Detention Center through the Department of Juvenile Justice, the Federal Correctional Institute in Jesup, Georgia, and with many nursing homes in middle Georgia serving as medical director caring for geriatric patients. More recently, he worked with Pineland Mental Health and the Southern Counseling Center of Baxley, Georgia.

Orita Resseau Tonkens ('67,'74) of St. Simons Island, Georgia, died peacefully May 24, 2020. After a lifelong career in education, she retired from the Glynn County Board of Education.

1970s

Retired Lt. Col. Eugene Neville Jr. ('75) of Statesboro died Jan. 17, 2019, after a short illness. The U.S. Army veteran retired after more than 26 years of military service and later served as the human resources manager for Claude Howard Lumber Company in Statesboro. He was the co-founder of a nonprofit organization that served as a health care purchasing alliance to 130 businesses in south Georgia. In 1998, he received the Deen Day Smith Service to Mankind Award in 1998 for his unselfish service

to the people of Bulloch County Georgia. An avid supporter of Georgia Southern, each fall he could be found cheering for his beloved Georgia Southern Eagles. He was a longtime contributor to A Day for Southern and he cherished his membership in the 1906 Society, the oldest donor recognition society at Georgia Southern.

Linda Woodall Lang ('78) of Brunswick, Georgia, died Sept. 17, 2019, in hospice care. She was a retired elementary school teacher.

George Tassej Jr ('74) of Bulloch County, Georgia, died at home Sept. 30, 2019, in hospice care. The veteran of the U.S. Army retired as a public school teacher in Savannah.

Groover "Clint" Crosby Jr. ('72) of Jesup, Georgia, passed away Oct. 1, 2019. The former vice president with SunTrust Bank lived in Brunswick, Georgia, for many years where he had a 33-year career in the banking industry.

Patricia "Patti" Shy Bartlett ('71) of Fort Valley, Georgia, died Oct. 4, 2019, after an extended illness. The retired educator lived for many years in Griffin, Georgia, and taught for 25 years in Pike County schools.

Rufus Miley Jr. ('71) died Oct. 8, 2019, at his home in Glen Mills, Pennsylvania. He retired from the Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia. In addition to a successful banking career, he served on the Concord Township Planning Commission for more than 10 years.

Glenn Stiegman Jr. ('71) died unexpectedly Oct. 9, 2019, on the Isle of Palms, South Carolina. During his career, he was the chief financial officer in South Carolina's Greenville County School District, Spartanburg District 7 and the Charleston County School District.

Henry Swaim ('71) of Eatonton, Georgia, died suddenly Oct. 16, 2019. He was in the electrical business and traveled around middle and south Georgia for many years.

William Doyle ('70) lost his battle against cancer Oct. 29, 2019, at his home in Jacksonville, Florida. He served in the U.S. Marine Corps Reserves for six years and had a 50-year career with State Farm Insurance Company.

Dana Brown ('73), a native of Savannah, passed away Nov. 1, 2019. He lived in Bulloch County the last 13 years of his life. He served in the U.S. Army during the Vietnam War and retired after 30 years of service in the Savannah Police Department.

Penny Crittenden Kozee ('77) of Macon, Georgia, died Nov. 11, 2019. The wife and mother of five was a former member of the Lady Eagles basketball team.

Laura Turner Worrell ('70) of Savannah died Nov. 19, 2019, in hospice care. A retired federal service employee of 40 years, her lifetime passion was advocating for the equal and fair treatment of women.

Gary Sanders ('78) died in hospice care in Statesboro Nov. 20, 2019. He began his teaching and coaching career at public schools in Brooklet, Georgia, and after finishing a 20-year career in computer services at Georgia Southern University, he returned to teaching and coaching at Statesboro High School.

Tommy Kemp Jr. ('77) of Savannah died at home Nov. 23, 2019, after battling Parkinson's disease. He was a computer consultant and retiree of Union Camp/International Paper.

The Rev. Edna "Eddie" Adkins ('75) of Tybee Island, Georgia, was surrounded by loved ones when she died at home Nov. 30, 2019. A deacon of the Episcopal Diocese of Georgia, she was also a teacher and high school media specialist.

John Johnson ('76) of Marietta, Georgia, died Dec. 10, 2019. He married his Georgia Southern sweetheart, Jonella Payne Johnson, and had a 40-year career in medical sales.

Jane Bacon Barrett ('76) of Augusta, Georgia, died Jan. 9, 2020, at age 92. She was a retired educator.

Earl Eugene "Gene" Lang ('73) of Springfield, Georgia, was surrounded by loved ones when he passed away Jan. 24, 2020. The U.S. Army veteran served during the Vietnam War and was awarded the Purple Heart for injuries sustained in combat. As a civilian, he

had a 34-year career with the Effingham County Board of Education.

Jean Stanley Oldag ('76) of Blythe Island near Brunswick, Georgia, died Feb. 8, 2020. A teacher for 32 years in several school systems, she retired from the Glynn County School District.

John Blackston ('70,'74) of Savannah was surrounded by family when he died Feb. 22, 2020.

Gordon Gregory Colson ('70) died March 17, 2020, at his home in Greensboro, Georgia. He was a partner in a successful accounting and advisory firm in Atlanta before retiring in 2010. He also served in the Air Force Reserves from 1970-76.

George Richard "Rick" English ('71,'73) of Forsyth, Georgia, passed away Friday, March 20, 2020. The veteran of the Georgia Army National Guard was a business owner and high school educator for more than 30 years.

Garey Lambert Simpson Sr. ('75) of Savannah died at home April 9, 2020, following a diagnosis of pancreatic cancer three weeks prior. The geologist, environmentalist and co-owner of an environmental consulting firm, was a professor of environmental science at Kennesaw State University for many years.

Nola LaBudde ('71) of Kennesaw, Georgia, passed away April 16, 2020, due to the COVID-19 disease. She was a retired elementary

school teacher and a founding member of Holy Spirit Catholic Church in Sandy Springs, Georgia.

Leonard (Len) Shelton Jr. ('72) of Atlanta died April 26, 2020. The U. S. Army veteran retired after more than 32 years from the Georgia Bureau of Investigation.

1980s

Janette Pusha Scott ('80) of Savannah, died June 9, 2019, in Lanham, Maryland. She was a retired media specialist.

Rachel Armstrong Curtis ('81) of Tucker, Georgia, died Aug. 17, 2019. She was a retired teacher.

Lisa Simcox Morin ('81) of Ellabell, Georgia, was surrounded by her family when she died Oct. 16, 2019, in Baltimore after a long-term illness. She retired from the Mediation Center of Savannah.

Margaret "Cricket" Lewis Amason ('84) of Statesboro was surrounded by family when she passed away Nov. 14, 2019. She was the wife of Allen Amason, dean of Georgia Southern's Parker College of Business. The former teacher had a heart for service, and served as a volunteer for church-led mission trips, Meals on Wheels and various community outreach centers.

Marion Rines Stanford ('81) of Savannah died Nov. 18, 2019, at the hospital where she worked for many years. She was a registered nurse at Memorial Health University Medical Center for more than 30 years.

Craig Harney ('82), a television icon in the Savannah community, died at home Nov. 20, 2019, after a short battle with cancer. The longtime employee of WTOC-TV was the station's creative services director. Last October, he was inducted into the Junior Achievement Savannah Business Hall of Fame.

Jeffery Chezem ('89) of Dunwoody, Georgia, passed away Nov. 29, 2019. He had a long career in senior-level sales, and loved movies, music and fly fishing.

Tracy Evans Sauers ('80) of Savannah died unexpectedly Dec. 6, 2019. She had a career in international shipping and logistics.

Wanda Evans Lloyd ('85) of Douglas, Georgia, did not recover from a stroke and died Jan. 2, 2020. She worked in Georgia Southern's business office from 1973-89, before joining the staff of South Georgia State College where she retired in 2011 as vice president for business affairs.

Deborah Johnson ('80) of Statesboro died at home Jan. 29, 2020. She was a retired teacher with Bulloch County Schools.

Betty Jones ('88), formerly of the Statesboro area, died Feb. 13, 2020, in Decatur, Georgia. For many years, she taught English and drama at Southeast Bulloch High School.

Cheryl "Cherry" Hargrett ('87) of Savannah was surrounded by family and friends when she

died Feb. 18, 2020. An expert marksman, she was the first female deputy sheriff in Wayne County, Georgia. She completed her career with the Norfolk Railway police department.

Thomas (Trey) Allen Strock III ('89;'92) of Charleston, South Carolina, died March 18, 2020. He was president of Strock Enterprises Design and Remodel, LLC.

Conrad Mills ('83) of Atlanta passed away April 18, 2020, of complications from diabetes. He taught high school industrial arts for several years before establishing a career in architectural design in the San Francisco Bay area. In later years, he returned to Georgia and focused on the preservation and renovation of historic buildings, including a hotel and a 100-plus year-old general store.

1990s

Mike Minix ('90) of Brunswick, Georgia, died Sept. 20, 2019, at age 59. An avid golfer, he worked for many years as director of marketing for a medical center pharmacy in his hometown.

Kenneth Smith ('94) of Statesboro lost his life in a home invasion March 27, 2020. He was 49 years old.

David Yarbrough ('98) of Port St. Joe, Florida, died Oct. 22, 2019, at a hospital in Tallahassee, Florida. The construction company owner grew up in Moultrie, Georgia, and was known for saying, "All roads lead to Moultrie."

Mona Herrin Collins ('98) of Pooler, Georgia, died Oct. 23, 2019, at age 52. An animal lover and artist, she served as an ER nurse, traveling nurse and worked at the Savannah VA Clinic.

Kelly Stephens ('92) died Dec. 15, 2019, at a hospital in Duluth, Georgia. He owned and operated Shane's Rib Shack for 10 years in Norcross, Georgia, and later opened his own catering business, in Duluth.

Todd Aldrich ('96) of Statesboro died suddenly Dec. 17, 2019. The lifelong resident of Statesboro worked as director of IT Business Services at Georgia Southern University. Over the course of his career, he was the business manager for Tim Durden Construction and a partner in an antique store.

Bob Lafortune Jr. ('92) of Bellingham, Washington, lost a long battle with cancer Dec. 29, 2019. The former salesman fulfilled a dream of owning a business by becoming a partner in a legal document services company in Orlando, Florida, before selling his portion and working for Michael Business Machines, Inc. in Bellingham.

Peter Moore ('98) of Lakeland, Georgia, died Jan. 3, 2020, at a hospital in Tallahassee, Florida. He was a high school teacher who participated in mosquito research, sea turtle studies, and water quality testing and education for the Georgia Department of Natural Resources.

Thomas Evans ('96) of Milan, Georgia, died Jan. 17, 2020. He was a former jeweler in McRae, Georgia.

Dana Deal Thomas ('92;'94;'05) died Feb. 21, 2020, at her home in Bulloch County, Georgia. She was an educator, counselor and homemaker.

William Otis Lacefield III ('99) of Atlanta passed away March 23, 2020. He was a mathematics professor at Mercer University.

Allen Candler Pritchett III ('91) of Powder Springs, Georgia, passed away unexpectedly March 24, 2020. He worked as a business development manager.

David Paige ('94) passed away April 22, 2020, at his home in Statesboro. He worked as a victim's advocate for a domestic violence shelter, as a CNA at a nursing home, as a trainee caseworker for Rural Home Health Services and as a volunteer for rape crisis advocacy. He was a craftsman and artist who enjoyed carpentry, drawing, sculpting and cooking.

2000s

Johnny Carmack ('01) of Brunswick, Georgia, was surrounded by his family when he died July 23, 2019. The 23-year veteran of the U.S. Navy was also a retired educator.

Chris Hesling ('12) and **Brittany Trowell Hesling** ('11) of St. Marys, Georgia, died Nov. 16, 2019, in an automobile vehicle

accident that also claimed the life of their 4-year-old son. Their 6-month-old daughter was the only survivor. According to the Florida Highway Patrol, the driver of another car was heading the wrong way on State Road 24 outside Gainesville, Florida, when it collided head-on with the Hesling family's car. Chris Hesling was a marketing director at Naval Station Mayport in Jacksonville, Florida. Brittany Hesling was a Pre-K teacher at Naval Submarine Base Kings Bay Naval Base.

Aaron Rachels ('14) of Augusta, Georgia, passed away Nov. 22, 2019, at an Atlanta hospital. The civil engineering major loved the Georgia Southern Eagles and the Atlanta Braves.

Charles "Chuck" Ricks II ('11) of Ivey, Georgia, passed away Nov. 27, 2019. The U.S. Air Force veteran served in Operation Desert Storm during the first Gulf War.

Jennifer Wedincamp Meinhardt ('06) of Statesboro died in hospice care Jan. 8, 2020. A wife and mother, she was involved in various breast cancer organizations.

Amanda Stevens van der Linden ('06) of North Augusta, South Carolina, died Jan. 17, 2020. She was a former member of the equestrian team at Georgia Southern.

Daniel Coble ('18) formerly of St. Simons Island, Georgia, died Feb. 4, 2020. He was employed by C.H. Robinson in Atlanta at the time of his death.



Chester Webb ('56) of Elberton, Georgia, and a star basketball player for Georgia Southern when it was known as Georgia Teachers College, died Jan. 29, 2020, at age 85. The veteran of the U.S. Army was a well-known coach and educator in Appling And Elbert counties. He was an assistant

superintendent in Elbert County. Webb is the Georgia Southern basketball program's all-time leading scorer with 2,542 career points and rebounding leader (1,685). In his senior year in 1956, Webb scored 883 points, with an average of 30.5 points per game for the best single season scoring in school history. He led the team known as the Professors to the NAIA national tournament his last two seasons. Webb was inducted into the Georgia Southern Athletics Hall of Fame in 1959, and his number 22 was retired in 2010. In 2014, he was inducted into the Georgia Sports Hall of Fame.



When **Dr. Irving Victor** ('41) died peacefully after a brief illness Jan. 8, 2020, at age 97, Savannah lost a medical giant. He graduated from Savannah High School in 1939 and from Armstrong Junior College two years later. He earned his medical degree from The Medical College of Georgia and served two years in the U.S. Navy. Dr. Victor completed his

residency at hospitals in St. Paul, Minnesota, under the supervision of Dr. Frederic Foley, the famous inventor of the Foley catheter. Upon his return to Savannah, he built a thriving urology practice, and served as chief of staff of St. Joseph's Hospital, Candler Hospital and Memorial Hospital. One of his biggest accomplishments was creating Emergency Medical Services in Chatham County in 1973. After retiring from his urology practice of 41 years, Victor had a second career as a physician and administrator with St. Joseph's Hospital and helped organize the merger of St. Joseph's/Candler. Active in Savannah's civic and business communities, he co-founded the restaurant Vic's on the River. Dr. Victor was chairman of Armstrong State University's Board of Trustees and president of the Armstrong Alumni Association. He received an Honorary Doctor of Letters from Armstrong State University in 2001 and in 2017, Armstrong awarded him with its second-ever Eminent Alumni distinction, which recognizes extraordinary merit.

Melvin "Mel" McBride Jr. ('92) passed away June 4, 2020, in Marietta, Georgia. He attended Georgia Southern University to pursue his lifelong dream of playing football for the Eagles under Coach Erk Russell. The middle linebacker was on the 1989 and 1990 NCAA Division I National Championship teams. He had a marketing career in Florida and later established McBride Merchandising. He was an executive at Apollo Retail when he died. He was a member of the Georgia Southern Athletic Foundation Board as well as past president and member of the Eagle Football Alumni Association executive board. His passion for football will continue with the establishment of The Mel McBride Scholarship Fund which will be awarded each year to a Georgia Southern football player.

Dr. Leigh Sundem ('12), a former member of Georgia Southern's Center for Addiction Recovery passed away April 14, 2020. She overcame her struggle with alcoholism and drug addiction to graduate with honors and later earned her medical degree from the University of Rochester School of Medicine. Her family and friends have created a memorial fund in her honor through the Georgia Southern University Foundation, Inc.

EAGLE NATION

Professor Emeritus James Hood ('56) of Statesboro died Feb. 12, 2020, in hospice care. The U.S. Army veteran was an assistant professor of educational psychology and counseling. He retired after 18 years of service to Georgia Southern.

Professor Emeritus and Associate Dean Emeritus Fred Page Jr. ('71,'73,'77) passed away peacefully April 8, 2020, after being diagnosed with Lewy

body dementia in 2016. He had a 31-year career at Georgia Southern as a professor and associate dean in the College of Education. For 14 years, he coordinated with the college's field experience programs which involved all levels of preservice teaching. He also served as an elected executive board member of the Georgia Accrediting Commission and as a resource for the Georgia Professional Standards Commission on Education. In 1982, Coach Erk Russell asked Page to develop and coordinate a chain crew for Georgia Southern's home football games. He remained on the chain crew until 2001 and continued hosting game officials until 2005.

Professor Emeritus Osmos Lanier Jr. died April 2, 2020, at home in Savannah. He arrived at Armstrong State College in 1965 and taught history until his retirement in 1997. He returned in 2000 and taught part time for another 15 years. The Lanier Conference Room in Hawes Hall

was dedicated in his honor in 2015. The history professor also was recognized on the Armstrong State University Wall of Fame in Burnett Hall. Lanier was an Eagle Scout, a singer, an athlete and a passionate supporter of social justice and equal rights.

Harriet Kanter Konter died at her Savannah home Oct. 13, 2019, at age 94. She was active in the real estate industry for more than 50 years. Konter served as president of the Savannah Board of Realtors and was the first woman to serve as president of the Georgia Association of Realtors. She was inducted into the Georgia Association of Realtors Hall of Fame in 2012. She served as president of the Armstrong Atlantic State University Alumni Association and received both the Distinguished Citizen Award and the Distinguished Alumnus Award from Armstrong Atlantic.



Georgia State Sen. Jack Hill Leaves Legacy at Georgia Southern

Georgia state Sen. Jack Hill (‘66) died unexpectedly at his district office in his hometown of Reidsville, Georgia, April 6, 2020.

The retired grocer was sworn into the Georgia Senate in 1991, representing District 4, which includes Bulloch County. The longest-serving state senator was re-elected to his 15th consecutive term in 2018. Throughout his years of service, Hill served as chairman of several state Senate committees including most recently the Senate Appropriations Committee, one of the most powerful positions in the Senate.

"Eagle Nation mourns the loss of Senate Appropriations Chairman Jack Hill, a tremendous servant leader who loved Georgia Southern," said Georgia Southern President Kyle Marrero. "He left an indelible mark on this institution, Southeast Georgia, and the state. I was among a great many who relied on his friendship and wise counsel."

He was a staunch supporter of his alma mater and was a key member of the legislative delegation that advocated funding for Georgia Southern. Significant projects funded during his tenure as a state senator that will benefit generations of students to come include the College of Education Building, the Biological Sciences Building, the Interdisciplinary Academic Building, the Engineering and Information Technology Building, the Nursing/Chemistry Building, the Military Science Building and the currently under construction Center for Engineering and Research Building.

Hill, who lived in Reidsville his entire life, also served in the Georgia Air National Guard for 33 years as a unit commander and state inspector general.

Triple Eagle **Ruth Nail Hill** (‘73, ‘90, ‘91) of Reidsville, Georgia, died April 24, 2020, 18 days after the unexpected death of her husband, state Sen. Jack Hill. She had Alzheimer’s disease and was recovering from a broken hip. She was an educator who retired as principal of Reidsville Elementary School. She was also known for working in the family’s grocery store. Her forte was in the frozen food section where she demonstrated whatever frozen food was being featured for the week. She would dress according to the location or region the food was from, sewing her own costumes. The Hills are survived by three children.





CONTACT US

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR
and other submissions are encouraged.
Georgia Southern magazine
P.O. Box 8055
Statesboro, GA 30460-8055
magazine@georgiasouthern.edu

CLASS CHRONICLES and alumni updates may be sent to
Office of Alumni Relations
P.O. Box 8055
Statesboro, GA 30460-8055
magazine@georgiasouthern.edu

FOR AD SALES contact the Office of University Communications and Marketing by email:
marketing@georgiasouthern.edu

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EAGLES RISE ABOVE

The Georgia Southern Class of 2020 faced unprecedented challenges this year, but finished their education with perseverance and poise. Some of those who couldn't experience in-person graduation came back to the Statesboro and Armstrong campuses to commemorate their achievements.



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Congratulations Graduates! Welcome to the Alumni Association!



As part of Eagle Nation, we hope you'll keep in touch, engage and network with other alumni online and at events. Keep your information up to date so we can celebrate your future achievements. Visit GeorgiaSouthern.edu/alumni/InfoUpdate or scan the QR code to update your information and get notifications about events near you.



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