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Alumni Spotlight: Nipuna Ambanpola

September 26, 2022



After graduating from Parker College, Nipuna Ambanpola (ECON, 2019) “dipped his toes into the nonprofit and tech-for-good space.” He attended The University of Georgia (UGA) where he earned masters in public administration and policy and business analytics. While at UGA, Nipuna also worked in youth leadership, international NGOs, and public-sector consulting. He identified a big and growing space in the use of technology and data science for good, which led to a desire to pursue a career making a big impact for people and the planet. Currently, Nipuna is executive director of IVolunteer International, a tech-nonprofit he founded in 2017. His firm uses technology, advocacy, and action to mobilize volunteers in their local

communities around the world. In addition, Nipuna works full-time as the Research & Public Service Manager at the JW. Fanning Institute for Leadership Development at UGA. In this role, he supports the university’s land-grant mission of public-service and outreach through data collection, analytics, and reporting.

Nipuna says that he absolutely loves his profession and wakes up every day happy to go to work. His favorite part of his job at UGA is working with clients from public, nonprofit, and private industries to advance their leadership, community, and organizational needs. Nipuna works alongside faculty who lead leadership and development programs across the state to provide data science support. In essence, Nipuna works with organizations that work with people across the state and visualizes their data to support growth and effectiveness. At IVolunteer International, he works with a globally distributed team of volunteers to support local, regional, and national volunteer mobilization for social impact. Nipuna notes that he never has a single idle day, and he enjoys every bit of it!

The biggest challenge he has faced in his career development is figuring out what he wanted to do and how to go about doing it. Even though Nipuna knew he wanted to go into public-service, he also wanted to use data and technology. He spent a lot of time talking to people, volunteering, and testing his skills in various areas before diving into the tech-for-good space. Starting with B-Corps, sustainability, and tech-for-good, Nipuna found a growing market of public and private collaborators in this space. So, although it was a slow process of figuring out what he wanted to do and because it was slow and uncertain, it was nerve-wracking. Nipuna is thrilled he invested time figuring out what he wanted to do, rather than getting stuck in something that did not connect to his avocation.

Nipuna attributes most of his success to volunteering. He volunteered all over the place and got engaged in his community. These experiences, the people he met while volunteering, and the

different types of exposure he received really helped make Nipuna self-aware and allowed him to determine what he wanted to do and to understand the opportunities available to him. Nipuna considers his own growth as one of his greatest accomplishments. Over the years, he learned about the causes people fight for, cultivated empathy, and learned to see the world in different perspectives. Nipuna invites everyone to open themselves up to perspectives and causes that allow humanity to grow and unite. That said, Karen, the love of his life, has been the extraordinary changemaker behind his perseverance, and his proudest accomplishment is to have won the heart of such a kind, thoughtful, and intelligent woman.

While at Georgia Southern, Nipuna was heavily involved on campus. He enrolled at the Armstrong campus and worked as a resident advisor with Housing for three years—a monumental experience. Nupina also joined several student organizations—the Rotaract Club, Student Alumni Association, Residential Student Association, Student Government, Student Integrity Board, and the Economic Society among others. He served as president of the Student Government Association at Armstrong during the consolidation and represented the amazing student body in the endeavor to create a unified Georgia Southern University.

Nipuna credits the Parker College of Business’s combination of classroom learning and real-life experience as laying the groundwork for his career. As an undergraduate, he was able to work at the World Trade Center Savannah as an economic research intern. This internship allowed Nipuna to explore the opportunities that lay outside the classroom, to meet people in the industry, to learn and grow in a real-life business setting, and to identify his strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities. The Parker College dedication to combining intellectual learning and research with real-life experiences helped Nipuna to remain current with the rapidly evolving job market and skills demanded. It also allowed him to find his passion and provided the foundation that allowed him to establish a career in an industry in which could he be successful while making a lasting impact.

In the Parker College, Nupina’s first class in economics was international trade with Yassi Saadatmand, Ph.D., chair, Department of Economics. He absolutely loved that class. Michael Toma, Ph.D., Callaway professor of economics; Rick McGrath, Ph.D., professor of economics; and Omid Ardakani, Ph.D., professor of economics, are some names that come to mind whenever Nupina thinks about the tremendous education he received from the Economics Department that has shaped his entire career and graduate learning after Georgia Southern. He fondly recalls taking environmental economics from Dennis Barber, Ph.D., former assistant professor of economics. Environmental economics really impacted on Nupina’s decision to pursue tech-for-good and sustainability careers. He remembers it was obvious that the Parker College faculty and administration were ready to invest in innovative and market-relevant coursework to provide the most apt educational experience to students.

These days, Nupina spends his spare time doing “bucket-list” things with his partner, Karen. He also enjoys travelling, playing tennis, reading, volunteering, and hanging out with friends. As his personal mission is “to empower people and movements to cultivate a society of equity, unity, and sustainable growth,” in the future, Nupina hopes to continue to expand his contribution to this world at the intersection of data, social impact, and policy for people and the planet.

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[New Hospitality Scholarship Honors Inman Hodges](#)

September 26, 2022



L. Inman Hodges

The Parker College of Business is excited to announce the creation of the L. Inman Hodges, Sr. and Mary Sue Lovell Hodges Endowed Scholarship to support students majoring in hospitality management. A group of Mr. and Mrs. Hodges's friends and family, led by their son Greg, established the scholarship to honor the memory of Statesboro business leader and restaurant pioneer, Inman Hodges.

A native of Statesboro, Hodges and his wife, Mary Sue, launched their company by purchasing a small restaurant across from the Georgia Southern campus that became The Paragon. An early franchisee for Kentucky Fried Chicken, Mr. Hodges travelled to Kentucky to personally meet with Col. Sanders and sign the deal. The couple eventually built a restaurant firm with more than 35 locations of national brands including KFC, Taco Bell, Pizza Inn and Dairy Queen.

Inman and Mary Sue Hodges not only fed countless Georgia Southern students, they also provided jobs for many of them, including current Parker College Dean, Allen Amason, who worked at Pizza Inn on South Main Street as an undergraduate.

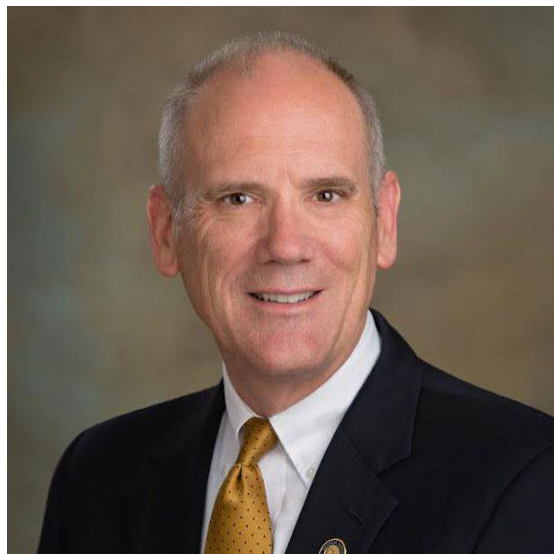
“When I was a student at Georgia Southern, Inman Hodges not only gave me the job I needed but also provided me a hands-on education in how to run a business. So, it's fitting and appropriate that Inman and Mary Sue will continue to support future students through the creation of this scholarship,” said Dean Amason.

To learn more about the Hodges Scholarship or other giving opportunities, contact Chris Osborne at wosborne@georgiasouthern.edu.

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Message from the Dean: September 2022

September 26, 2022



As you may recall, I'm using my letters this year to talk about strategy, specifically, my approach to strategic management and the way we apply it in the Parker College. My first note talked about viewing alumni as stockholders and our focus on increasing the value of their degrees. It's an unorthodox idea but one that helps us to align our priorities and to serve all of our constituents well. In this letter, I'm going to talk about a similarly unorthodox idea. In the academic literature, we call it "logical incrementalism" (Quinn, 1980).

Logical incrementalism grew out of a debate on the efficacy of formal planning. Back in the 1970's, scholars and practitioners alike spent considerable time debating the utility of formal, strategic planning. The idea was simple; if formal planning worked as it was supposed to, then those organizations with the most formal and comprehensive plans should perform the best. But the data showed that wasn't the case. Many successful organizations did very little formal planning. Moreover, even among those that followed strict and detailed planning procedures, performance varied; some strict planners performed well, while others performed poorly. At the same time, among those that planned by "the seat of the pants," some performed poorly, while others performed well. Given this, researchers concluded that planning and plans alone couldn't be the key to superior performance. Instead, what they observed and suggested was that plans are often quite different from real strategies. While a strategy is part plan, a plan is only part of a strategy. A true strategy is more like a series of interconnected plans, some long-term, some short-term, some specific, some general. Some plans are laid out in intricate detail, with tangible timelines and milestones, while others are more like guidance, with broad and open-ended directions. What made the whole process effective was not its formality or its comprehensiveness. Rather, what made it effective was the logical connections among the parts. This observation evolved into the principle of logical incrementalism. The key idea of which is that the efficacy of planning and strategy, really depends upon certainty and control. When we are more certain and have greater control, we are better off planning deliberately and in greater detail. On the other hand, when we are less certain and have less control, we are better off planning more broadly and generally. You can think of it this way: plan generally in the long run and specifically in the short run, and, then, allow the direction of the general, long-run plans to guide the details of the specific, short-run plans.

In a nutshell, that is the big idea of logical incrementalism. It's also the big idea behind how we do strategic management at the Parker College. We have a simple, overarching goal—to be

among the leading business schools in the country. To do that effectively, we focus relentlessly on the value of our degrees by building intellectual capital among our faculty, educational quality in our programs, professional readiness in our students, and reliability in our internal processes. Of course, doing these things increasingly requires more granular and detailed plans and processes. But all of our plans hold together because of the guiding logic of our purpose. So, while we never lose sight of where are going, we recognize that we make progress incrementally, and, in so doing, we believe we provide a superior return on investment and move ever closer to making the Parker College degree among the most attractive and sought-after, anywhere in the world.

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