

Newsroom

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Georgia Southern University

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Georgia Southern Alumnus Finds New Human Relative

SEPTEMBER 11, 2015

STATESBORO, Ga. — A Georgia Southern alumnus is leading a group of scientists who claim to have found the bones of a new species in our human ancestry.

Paleoanthropologist Lee Berger ('89) led a team of around 30 scientists deep inside a cave in South Africa where they discovered more than 1,500 fossils, representing some 15 individuals from the Homo genus, but with significant differences from any known species. Berger and his team named the new species Homo naledi, and it is the first discovery of its kind in the world. The find has been covered by a wide range of national and international news outlets, and experts suggest the species will rewrite the history books concerning the origins of our human family tree. An exact date on Homo naledi has not been determined, but the species could date back as far as 2.8 million years ago.

Berger graduated from Georgia Southern with a Bachelor of Arts in anthropology and holds a doctoral degree in palaeo-anthropology from the University of Witwatersand in Johannesburg, South Africa. He is currently a professor at the University of Witwatersand. His find will be featured in the October issue of the National Geographic.

Berger and his mother are in the process of starting two endowments at Georgia Southern, the Archeological Federal Depository on the newly announced South Campus and the Lee Berger Endowed Professorship.

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