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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.

The College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences is the largest of the eight colleges that make up Georgia Southern University, and it plays a central role in every student's core of knowledge. CLASS, also described as the University's College of the Creative Mind, prepares students to achieve academic excellence, develop their analytical skills, enhance their creativity, and embrace their responsibilities as citizens of their communities, their nations, and the world. CLASS offers more than 20 undergraduate degrees and several interdisciplinary minors from its 11 departments and five academic centers. CLASS offers eight master's degrees, two graduate certificates and one doctoral degree. For more information visit: <http://class.georgiasouthern.edu>.

Georgia Southern University, a public Carnegie Doctoral/Research University founded in 1906, offers more than 125-degree programs serving more than 20,500 students. Through eight colleges, the University offers bachelor's, master's and doctoral degree programs built on more than a century of

academic achievement. Georgia Southern is recognized for its student-centered and hands-on approach to education. Visit GeorgiaSouthern.edu.