From Woman's College era to today, core values remain constant, as new ideals have emerged.
news front
University and alumni news and notes

out take
Piney Lake remains the naturally beautiful retreat it’s been since the 1950s.

studio
Spartans take Manhattan, Rhiannon Giddens, Jewel, and classic Disney animation

Changemakers
Who are today’s UNCG students? Here are the stats and, better yet, their stories.

Power of Named Professorships
Beginning in the final years of WC, our campus’ creation of Distinguished and Excellence Professorships is a tale of exponential impact.

Child Care Stars
Pioneering UNCG-led child care assessment initiative has made its mark in 50,000 N.C. classrooms – and counting.

legacies
Retired UNCG faculty are making an impact through philanthropy.

grad tidings
Lots of class notes and photos, too

Check out the magazine website
Visit magazine.uncg.edu to enjoy the digital version of the magazine in both photo-rich stories you can easily share on social media and in PDF format. While there, you can also submit a class note, view video clips, or click on archives to see former issues.

BOLD AND BOULDER Have something to express? Students know The Rawk is the place to paint your message. It’s no place to be shy. Promote your big event. Make a big statement. And it’s a big year for The Rawk, which is marking 50 years on campus! Now that’s something to celebrate in the biggest letters you can imagine. Make it splashy!
It’s a combination that and opportunities here. Those before, find their generation on our cam- line connecting every WC alumna. It’s a is creating every day. Our students serve as a reminder of the North Star.

131 years, opportunity and excellence have been selors – the list goes on. Our alumni are in workers, nutritionists, artists, chemists, coun - “Changemakers.” They’ll be teachers and imagine what their future holds. wearing shirts that read “Changemakers” and to deeply meaningful for our students as well as for ner organizations that make a direct impact.

Counties in support of critical projects with part - students traveled in teams throughout Guilford every class since. At this year’s day of service, first class of students chose “Service” as the national opportunities is perhaps why our very “Astera,” a tribute to Light the Way

As we continue our campaign, includes students who specify are likely more, since that only includes students who specify they are military-affiliated during their application process or are

UNC’s commitment to military students has earned the University a designation as a Military-Friendly School, ranking in the Top 10 nationally among Tier 2 research institutions. “It’s not just the dedication and devotion to serving our military population from our office. It is really a University-wide commitment,” says Chris Gregory, director of the Military-Affiliated Services office (MAS). About 1,500 Spartans are military-affiliated students. There are likely more, since only includes students who specify they are military-affiliated during their application process or are using military benefits. “One of the biggest things we hear from folks coming directly from the military to higher education is they don’t really know where to go for things,” says Gregory. “We try to help break down some of those walls.” Some ways UNCG is doing that:

• All active-duty (including National Guard and reservists) along with veterans can apply to UNCG with no application fees.
• All active-duty, veterans, and anyone who uses military educational benefits get priority registration for classes.
• A convenient, one-stop shop for these students, the MAS office helps them handle military benefits as well as scholarships, grants, and loans.
• Garrett Baris, a captain in the Army Reserve, explains that the office has been instrumental in his transition from active duty. He gained an internship at UNCG, and then transitioned to conducting research as a PhD student in UNCG’s Chemistry and Biochemistry Department – all while continuing to serve. He’ll use his doctorate as an Army biochemist.
• Being the only military PhD student in the Chemistry and Biochemistry Department can be lonely, as my life experiences are very different from most of my peers,” he says. The office has been hugely supportive, not only helping him navigate optimal usage of his GI Bill for PhD credits – a complicated process – but also as a vital source of social support. Marine Corps veteran Adriana Ramirez also enjoys the support: “I originally went to another university, but didn’t feel like I belonged or that there were any resources available for me there.” A Winston-Salem native who served in South Korea and Japan, she decided to check out UNCG and fell in love with the campus and its diversity. The student resources – including first-year resources, help for first-generation students, and the MAS – have given her a sense of belonging.

UNC School of Nursing’s support for nurses goes back to its origin. Founding dean Eloise Lewis had served during WWII, as did several professors. Today, its innovative Veterans Access Program (VAP) provides military veterans, active reservists, and active-duty military the opportunity to earn their BSN. Dan Lorden ’16, ’23 DNP, Army Special Forces veteran; Adriana Barrera Ramirez, Marines veteran

On July 1, 2023, the Women’s College celebrated its 131st birthday. It’s a reminder of the through institutional memory that fuels the pride of the College. It’s a celebration of the students who have come before and those who will come after. It’s a celebration of the strength and resilience that have been a constant in the College’s history. It’s a celebration of the future, of what is yet to come. It’s a celebration of the College itself.

In April we dedicated “Astera,” a tribute to Woman’s College and WC alumnae. It’s a reminder of the through line connecting every generation on our cam- pus. Students now, like those before, find their way to UNCG because of the academic excellence and opportunities here. It’s a combination that makes UNCG unique.

Being the beneficiaries of these rare educa- tional opportunities is perhaps why our very first class of students chose “Service” as the University motto. It has been embraced by every class since. At this year’s day of service, students traveled in teams throughout Guilford County in support of critical projects with part- ner organizations that make a direct impact right here – investing in our “shared place.”

Such an initiative at the start of the semester is deeply meaningful for our students as well as for our community. It was heartening to see them wearing shirts that read “Changemakers” and to imagine what their future holds. Through their careers and their lives, UNCG graduates in our state and beyond will be “Changemakers.” They’ll be teachers and principals, nurses, entrepreneurs, social workers, nutritionists, artists, chemists, coun- selors – the list goes on. Our alumni are in every realm of life. “Astera” means star. The name is fitting. For 131 years, opportunity and excellence have been our North Star.

As we continue our Light the Way campaign, our students serve as a reminder of the remarkable real-world impact our University is creating every day.
Woman’s College was known as the nation’s top public college for women. Its legacy of excellence and opportunity is now on full display at the Woman’s College Tribute. Betsy Oakley ’69, Board of Trustees chair, told those gathered at May’s dedication on Stone Lawn, “The WC alumnae were bold pioneers who embraced the educational opportunities they were given—and they worked for them,” she said. “They were trailblazers. WC graduates have made an enormous impact on our region, our state, our nation, and indeed the world.”

Sculptor Michael Stutz, with landscape artist James Dinh nearby, said the Tribute is envisioned as a space to gather, to relax, perhaps to reflect.

“We see it as a meeting place,” Emilie Mills ’62, ’65 MFA had earlier noted. Sarah Shoffner ’62, ’64 MS, ’77 PhD added they hope students will meet their friends at the spot. “It’s a place for community.”

Image panels derived from Woman’s College-era Pine Needles yearbooks are featured. The brick walls were designed to hold seasonal flowers. “Conceptually, the three garland walls relate to when they used to make daisy garlands here on campus,” Stutz said.

The sculpture is named “Astera.” “Astera is from the Latin word Asteraceae, which is the family in which daisies are,” he said, referencing the campus’ flower. “Also ‘astera’ means ‘star.’”

The sculpture is made out of strips of bronze—it’s woven, he added. “It’s very strong, but it’s also very open. There’s openings within it. I hope that gives the viewer a chance to make their own determination about what they’re seeing. You can actually go inside the sculpture, look out through her eyes.”

DID YOU KNOW

Astera looks toward Jackson Library, the former Elliott Hall (now EUC), and the McIver Statue.
He’s 22 years into his tenure as president of USA Baseball. He was the founding coach of UNCG Baseball. But Mike Gaski ’73 MFA says the sport is not what drew him to UNCG in the early 1970s.

As he graduated from the University of Detroit, John Mahoney, the dean of Arts and Sciences, told him about a tremendous UNCG writing professor down in North Carolina: Fred Chappell. After coming to UNCG to study with Chappell and earn his MFA, he joined the Ohio State Baseball coaching staff—and his career took off.

USA Baseball, the national governing body for amateur baseball, selects and oversees our nation’s professional teams in the global World Baseball Classic. Mike Gaski served the University on the Board of Trustees and in other educational goals through the Sloan Scholarships and have each bought at a very early stage, very cleverly recognizing the University, to its students, and to the general population for its mission. Juliette Bianco, the museum’s Anne and Ben Cone Memorial Endowed Director, calls the gift “transformative.” She explains that Frankenthaler was “an innovative and daring woman who challenged people to think differently about paint on canvas.”

One of the few women to gain prominence in American Abstract Expressionism, Frankenthaler’s formal and stylistic innovations set her apart from painters like Jackson Pollock. Her career spanned six decades and included exhibitions at New York’s Whitney Museum and the Museum of Modern Art, among others. This gift comes as the Weatherspoon takes a deeper look at how its collection can make room for diverse perspectives and further its mission. Juliette Bianco, the museum’s Anne and Ben Cone Memorial Endowed Director, calls the gift “transformative.” She explains that Frankenthaler was “an innovative and daring woman who challenged people to think differently about paint on canvas.”

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ENDOWED CURATORSHIP

More UNCG students are enjoying the Weatherspoon each year. Director Juliette Bianco calls it “the largest classroom on campus.”

Now, thanks to the generosity of an anonymous donor, the Weatherspoon’s capacity to use art for teaching and learning is expanding. Managing this vision will be the newly endowed Elizabeth McVier Weatherspoon Curator of Academic Programming and Head of Exhibitions, Dr. Emily Stamery.

The position is named for Elizabeth McVier Weatherspoon, for whom the museum is also named. The younger sister of the campus’ founding president, Charles Duncan McVier, she enrolled in 1892, in the first class. In 1906, she joined the faculty as an instructor of art education for elementary school teachers. A strong advocate for the establishment of a Department of Art, she saw that dream come true in 1935—and served as a professor in that department.

$68M

UNCG’s annual research funding has climbed to a record-setting $67.6M, a 30% jump from the previous year.

GIDDY-UP!

Do you prefer fuzzy, feathery, or scaly? UNCG’s psychology department wants to know. The “Pet Wall” in the Eberhart Building is lined with pictures of some adorable “best friends” from Rodney the rooster to Department Head Stuart Manzeyich and Professor Janet Bosevski’s cat Pickle, students can see another side of their department. The Biology Department has followed suit, but with a twist. They deliberately omitted the names of the pets’ owners. Students need to guess—or strike up conversations. “I think that coming out of COVID, people weren’t talking to each other as much as they used to,” says Biology grad student Zachary Bunch. “This gets them back together.”

For now, you’ll just have to wonder who owns Puddles the snake, Belle the cat, and Toulouse the horse. And if you think this is silly, well, there’s always room for neigh-sayers.

A HOME FOR ‘HOUDINI’

HELEN FRANKENTHALER is one of the biggest names in 20th-century American painting. Now the Weatherspoon Art Museum’s mission is bolstered by “Houdini” (1976), a gift from Linda Fisher Sloan ’82 MFA and Thomas R. Sloan. “This painting lived in our New York apartment for 16 years,” notes Tom Sloan. “We thought that it would make an impact at the Weatherspoon Art Museum, which has been a service to the University, to its students, and to the general population for decades.”

As he points out, “Houdini” is not the only work of 20th-century abstract painting that the Weatherspoon owns. “The museum has a major piece from Willem de Kooning, ‘Woman’ (1947-50), that they bought at a very early stage, very cleverly recognizing the importance of that painting.”

The Sloans have helped many UNCG students reach their educational goals through the Sloan Scholarships and have each served the University on the Board of Trustees and in other capacities. Tom’s mother, Edith V. Sloan ’63, was a graduate of Woman’s College as well as a lecturer in the Department of Mathematics.

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UNCG’s School of Nursing is hitting the road with a new mobile clinic that has a name and look inspired by one of the University’s indelible symbols — Minerva.

Minerva’s Mobile Health, officially unveiled in August, will benefit UNCG nursing students and help medically underserved populations around central North Carolina get access to health care.

Students in the bachelor of science in nursing program, as well as nurse practitioner students in the graduate program, will get clinical experiences in the mobile health unit. It has an exam room, a waiting area for patients, a bathroom, and a wheelchair lift for anyone with mobility challenges.

“It’s about providing access, which involves taking services to people in our communities, and concurrently educating our nursing students to serve those most in need of health care,” said School of Nursing Dean Debra J. Barksdale.

Minerva’s Mobile Health was made possible thanks to funding that the School of Nursing, in partnership with Cone Health, received last year from the U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA). The HRSA grant is for $3.7 million over four years.

LAUNCH TIME

THE UNCG SCHOOL OF NURSING launched a new family nurse practitioner (FNP) program this fall. The FNP program, which is at the master of science in nursing level, prepares students to provide primary care to individual and families across the lifespan. It joins UNCG’s already nationally recognized adult-gerontological primary care nurse practitioner program.

In addition, the School of Nursing has moved three programs — PhD, RN to BSN, and post-master’s doctor of nursing practice — entirely online to make them more convenient for working nurses in the region and well beyond. Students in these programs will take classes online.

UNCG’S STATE-OF-THE-ART ESPORTS FACILITY is about more than gaming — it’s about education, says Dr. Gregory Grieve, a faculty member in the Religious Studies department and former UNC Board of Governors Award for Excellence in Teaching winner. He directs UNCG’s Network for the Cultural Study of Videogaming (NCSV), which focuses on curriculum, research, and outreach through academic programming.

With associate director and fellow faculty member Dr. John Borchert, Grieve developed the interdisciplinary gaming and esports minor that launched in Fall 2023. It includes 18 different classes in nine different departments that really represent what’s going on with gaming, esports, and academics,” says Borchert, whose scholarship focuses on religion, media, and the concept of death.

Grieve, a faculty member in the Religious Studies department, says. “Does it change when it goes through different types of media,” he wonders. “A lot of them have deep ethical choices that the players have to make.”

Did the group make it through the airport with their ethics intact? Yes, this time. “They decided to turn their backs to all the violence and not engage with it,” says Grieve.

ARE YOU GAME?

“Religion and Video Games: An Introduction,” will be published by Routledge in 2025. Borchert agrees that the possibilities for research — and education — are just beginning. Within the classroom, students can delve into curricula that connect gaming to professions from sports broadcasting to digital animation to music. “If we can adapt and adopt games as a form of teaching and learning, then I think it’s going to benefit everyone.”

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Their forthcoming textbook, “Religion and Video Games: An Introduction,” will be published by Routledge in 2025.
The Rawk’s golden anniversary

From a Jamestown, N.C., quarry, to Gray Drive near the dining ball, to its current location near the library’s tower (where it moved in 1987), The Rawk is a 12.7 ton “rolling stone.” It’s gathered no moss, but this “rolling stone” has gathered lots of paint. For 50 years, it has been the students’ message board. Its lore has been reported over the decades – including the myth that it began as a tiny pebble! In truth, it was purchased for $31.78 from Lambeth Construction Company by the Phi Kappa chapter of Alpha Phi Omega (APO), and since 1973, students have used The Rawk to celebrate milestones, spread congratulations, and get attention.

The main rule? Messages are left for at least 24 hours before being painted over. Nearby, you’ll find two smaller rocks – the official “timekeepers” that mark the date and time of the most recent message.

Messages on The Rawk reflect the times. In the early 1980s, one message celebrated the end of the Iranian hostage crisis. For a time in 2020, it read “Black Lives Matter.” It has also been a source of campus humor. In 2005, The Carolinian’s staff writer Luke McIntyre penned a fiery piece of journalism (filed under “Faux News”): “Housing shortage forces students to live on Rawk.”

One major controversy that has divided campus publications is how to spell the name of this imposing and informative stone. A 1983 Pine Needles retrospective used the spelling “The Rock,” but UNCG Magazine has traced the first known mention of The Rawk in a campus publication to the pages of The Carolinian on August 17, 1973.

Under a photo of the newly placed Rawk, the caption reads, in part, “Among APO’s most recent projects is the importation of RAWK. The brothers now hope that students will paint their rawk instead of the statue of Charles McIver.”

From the late 1950s into the ’70s, one spot was the focal point for paint, for decorating, for clever gags: the statue of Charles Duncan McIver. Starting in the late ’50s, UNCG Archives explains, he’d inevitably get some Christmas colors or a Santa hat in December. At Easter, he might get some rabbit ears and Easter egg coloring. At any time, creative students might adorn McIver in striking apparel.

The wear and tear from the regular cleanings led to a much-needed restoration in 1990. Fortunately, by then, the best place where students could “send a message” had become, well, rock-solid.

“On Ring Day, we would paint Charlie red. On Valentine’s Day we might decorate him with hearts.”

– CHERYL “CHERRY” CALLAHAN ’71, ’87 PHD

FOR MORE INFO VISIT MAGAZINE.UNCG.EDU.
Disaster, relief

When there’s a large natural disaster in America, Jessica Haynes-Titlebaum ’14 leaps into action. A planning section chief for FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency), she helps bring federal and local parties together, making sure everyone has the information to save lives and bring relief as quickly and efficiently as possible.

Her UNCG experience catapulted her to this essential role. “I found the right toolbox for me—and that was anthropology,” she said. A transfer student initially drawn to psychology, the professors in UNCG Anthropology set her on her path: Donna Naal, Susan Andreatta, Art Murphy, Linda Stone. As she graduated, she entered into a FEMA Corps internship and she’s been building her skills ever since.

Hurricanes, wildfires, tornadoes, flooding—from American Samoa to Florida, she has helped relieve suffering and save lives through strategically using data and evolving technologies, understanding cultural perspectives, and leveraging optimal ways to convey information. This is all part of her role, which involves the “three C’s”: communication, collaboration, coordination. “I help others leverage what I know,” she says. “I connect folks. A lot of my toolbox came from what I learned in anthropology to build relationships.”

Those courses and her internship, building on all she’s learned before, galvanized her capabilities. “I was way more versatile than I realized.”

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Earlier this year she returned to campus to receive UNCG Anthropology’s Dorothy Davis Distinguished Alumna Award and to speak with students. Her advice for them? “Don’t settle for anything. Go with what you’re passionate about. This is the study of humans! What could be more important? So much can be done with the toolbox of anthropology.”

And one more thing: “Get an internship to add on top of your classwork. It’s all about developing your career—and creating a life well-lived.”

GOING UP

STEM GRANT BOOSTS UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH, CAREER READINESS

SIXTEEN INTERIOR ARCHITECTURE STUDENTS took a three-day trip to Charleston, S.C., to meet with executives at Wild Dunes Resort earlier this year. The class, led by Professor Travis Hicks, would present ideas for redesign of a sports pub at one of the resort’s golf courses; complete site visits for another Wild Dunes restaurant they would redesign; and tour a construction site for a hotel in Charleston’s historic district. Expenses were being paid by the client, Wild Dunes Resort.

An alumnus of UNCG’s IARC program, Anna Will Maginn ’11, ’13, made it possible. Her position with Wild Dunes provided some riveting tours and prospective design assignments.

After an extensive meeting and tour with the firm that built Wild Dunes, they met with resort leaders to give presentations.

“Our leadership was blown away!” Maginn exclaimed. “Some managers canceled meetings to stay for the entire presentation, because they were so compelling.”

One student has been offered a position, beginning later this year.

FOR MORE INFO VISIT MAGAZINE.UNCG.EDU.
WANT TO GET AWAY? Piney Lake has provided a respite for UNCG students since 1956. Eight miles from campus, the forty-acre facility is light years from city life. Shuttles run each day, providing relaxing outdoor recreation for students and members of the Kaplan Center during the warm-weather months. Swimming, hiking, volleyball, disc golf, badminton — it’s got something for everybody. Kayaks and paddleboards are a hit, and a swan-shaped paddleboat is almost as popular as the water trampoline (seen here). What a great way to unplug and recharge. And if you want to bring a book, well, there’s no better spot to enjoy a few chapters.

PHOTOGRAPH BY SEAN NORONA '13

“To say it was a beautiful day would not begin to explain it. It was that day when the end of summer intersects perfectly with the start of fall.”

— Ann Patchett
Spartan Sarah Gooch ‘18 is believed to be the first woman to graduate from UNCG’s Miles Davis Jazz Program. “Whatever music makes me happy, I’ll do it.”

IF THEY CAN MAKE IT THERE …
IT’S THE ARTS CAPITAL OF THE WORLD, AND NEW YORK CITY IS HOME TO LOTS OF SPARTAN MUSICIANS.

HER OWN BEAT
Spartan Sarah Gooch ‘18 is believed to be the first woman to graduate from UNCG’s Miles Davis Jazz Program. “Whatever music makes me happy, I’ll do it.”

“If the drummer is the conductor of the jazz combo,” she says. “She likes that control over the bandstand, without the pressure of being at the front microphone. She also loves the “freedom of expression,” as she puts it.

Her life currently revolves around touring and teaching. She recently recorded and toured with vocal group Morgan James and is currently touring with social-media star MALINDA (Malinda Kathleen Reese), an Irish folk singer. In Manhattan she performs at venues like Smalls and Dizzy’s Club. And she is not locked into any one form. “Whatever music makes me happy, I’ll do it.”

GO, WEST
It all started at UNCG’s Summer Music Camp,” says Tanner West ‘18. Now, after a months-long audition process, he has earned a chair in one of the most prestigious and oldest American orchestras: The New York Philharmonic.

West, from Charlotte, attended the School of Music’s Summer Music Camp in 2012 and took a lesson with Professor of Horn Dr. Abigail Pack. “Dr. Pack was very welcoming and friendly. And I decided then I wanted to go to UNCG and study with her. UNCG was the only school to which I applied.”

Since graduating, he has performed with the North Carolina Symphony, Los Angeles Philharmonic, San Diego Symphony, and Charlotte Symphony Orchestra. Last summer, he traveled with the Philharmonic in North America and Asia before returning to the City. Dr. Pack recalls one thing she’d told him: “You’re going to get that big job one day.” And she made him promise that, when that happened, he’d return to give a masterclass. Recently, he did just that.

PIANO MAN
Thomas Linger ‘15 is no stranger to the spotlight: A UNCG major in piano performance in Jazz Studies, he took first place in the American Jazz Pianist Competition in 2017. Linger, who hails from Waynesville in western North Carolina, started playing the piano when he was 4 years old. His years in UNCG’s Miles Davis Jazz Program were formative. “Steve Haines, Chad Eby, Brandon Lee, Thomas Taylor, and John Salmon are some amazing professors. You get to be very close to the faculty in a program like that.”

Linger’s journey also took him to New York. There he has worked as a performer, composer, and teacher. He has monthly residencies at Mezzrow, OnOrhythm Jazz Club, and The Django. He has also performed at some of the city’s most prestigious venues, including the Village Vanguard, Smalls, Jazz at Lincoln Center, and Dizzy’s Club. Linger leads his own trio and released his debut album, “Out In It,” on Cellar Records last fall.

Golden Age of Disney
The first Benjamin Fellow has been named: Dr. Heather Holian, professor of art. She worked with Walt Disney staff to curate an exhibition of original animation art from Walt Disney Studios. These artworks include concept art, story sketches, animation drawings, master backgrounds, and painted animation cells from what scholars refer to as the “Golden Age” of early Disney films: “Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs,” “Pinocchio,” “Fantasia,” “Dumbo,” and “Bambi.” The Weatherspoon’s presentation of these works, on view through Dec. 9, coincides with the 100th anniversary of the Disney studios.

GEM OF A SEASON
JEWEL has sold more than 30 million albums worldwide. The singer-songwriter has earned 26 award nominations, including the Grammys, American Music Awards, MTV Awards, VH1 Awards, Billboard Music Awards, and Country Music Awards, winning eight times. She will perform at UNCG Auditorium Jan. 12 as part of this year’s UCLS, the longest-running concert and lecture series in North Carolina.

Other shows include:

CHRIS BOTTI: Grammy award-winning jazz trumpeter and composer perform riveting work after another. The season also includes performances by three top jazz musicians from UNCG’s Jazz Artists and Faculty and Family Visiting Robinson.

GARTH FAGAN: Company led by the celebrat- ed choreogra- pher of “The Lion King” performs.

DANCE: The season also includes performances by three top jazz musicians from UNCG’s Jazz Artists and Family Visiting Robinson.

"Fantasia," "Dumbo," and "Bambi:" The Weatherspoon’s presentation of these works, on view through Dec. 9, coincides with the 100th anniversary of the Disney studios.

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Pulitzer prized
Alumna Rhiannon Giddens received the 2023 Pulitzer Prize in Music for the opera “Omar,” with co-author Michael Abels. The two-time Grammy Award winner and MacArthur Genius Award recipient spoke about the beginnings of her work on this opera at a UNCG talk in 2018. That event explored the ways in which African Americans have shaped musical traditions in the Americas and are the products of multiple traditions, including Muslim-influenced cultures and people from across the world.

Giddens is the second Spartan alumna to receive a Pulitzer. The late Claudia Emerson ‘77 received the Pulitzer Prize in Poetry in 2006, for her book “Late Wife.” UNCG English professor Peter Taylor, who taught here in the 1940s and served in the 1960s as the first Alumni Distinguished Professor, won the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 1987 for “A Summons to Memphis.”

91 FEA received the Pulitzer Prize in Poetry in 2006, for her book “Late Wife.” UNCG English professor Peter Taylor, who taught here in the 1940s and served in the 1960s as the first Alumni Distinguished Professor, won the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 1987 for “A Summons to Memphis.”
young woman in a cable-knit sweater, ripped jeans, and brown leather boots raises her phone and snaps a selfie before descending the EUC stairs. Another passes in black-and-white checkered Vans and a Nirvana T-shirt. Another wears pajama pants and Crocs, colorful closed-toed foam sandals. Some of these Crocs are decorated with Jibbitz, “shoe charms” styled as anything from a piece of fruit to the animated character SpongeBob Squarepants.

For UNCG undergraduates, 88% of whom are under 28 years old, there is no single way to dress. But if they love your outfit, they might say, “That’s a slay.”

They were children during the Great Recession of 2008. Their high school years were spent planning events that would be canceled due to the COVID-19 lockdowns of 2020-21. Now, they’re graduating into a workplace marked by the “Great Resignation” and a changing technological landscape.

Today’s 20-somethings are the inheritors of a world shaped by the Silent Generation, the Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Millennials. No wonder many of their ideals and dreams sound familiar.

At the same time, as new alumna Grace Wall ’23 says, “There will always be shifts and changes. Every new generation is going to push back on something.”

Who are today’s UNCG students and how do they think about their education, their University, and their future?

UNCG LOOKS LIKE THE REAL WORLD

Since 1892, Spartan students’ lives, expectations, and challenges have changed. The University has grown with the times. Woman’s College alumnae will speak of daily life that was very different from today’s – explaining that the only electronic appliances on their halls were radios and record players. To make a call, students used phone kiosks in the residence halls. Local calls, one recalls, were a dime.

Today, students have 24-hour access to video calls, texts, and social media. They can listen to podcasts, stream movies, and play online games anywhere through their phones. They also continue to build personal and professional networks in person as well as online.

In some ways, UNCG’s 21st-century student body looks familiar. For example, the University’s legacy of expanding access to education for women is clear. Today 67% of Spartan students are women. In other ways, UNCG’s demographics reflect contemporary state and national trends, with more representation of students of color and LGBTQ+ students than in previous generations.

Alyssa Odom is studying public health and wants to eventually become
WHO ARE TODAY’S STUDENTS?

ECONOMIC HEADWINDS

According to the 1962-63 Woman’s College course catalog, in-state students could attend that year for $870, and that included laundry! But the reality is – college today costs around twice as much. “It was easier to study whatever you wanted when school didn’t cost as much,” says Associate Vice Chancellor for Enrollment Management Joel Lee. “You didn’t have to worry about, ‘When I get out, my job needs to immediately pay me enough to pay off my student loan.’”

Couple this with the fact that 35% of UNC undergraduates who file a FAFSA financial aid form expect a $9,000 contribution from their families, and the economic stress on today’s UNC students is clear. “I always grew up wanting to go to college, and I already have college student loans,” says Claudia Stakoe, a student in Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Environment, and the economic stress on today’s UNC students is clear. “I always grew up wanting to go to college, and I already have college student loans,” says Claudia Stakoe, a student in Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Environment, and the economic stress on today’s UNC students is clear.

Sydnie Yarbro, a student in Psychology Services Jennifer Whitney. “That generation immersed ourselves in,” says Hannah Bond, who studies War and Human Sciences and self-avowed Baby Boomer, a “generation” is something more than cell phones, AirPods, and T-shirts. It has a sociological definition. A generation is a group influenced by common events, Adams explains. At the same time, individuals react differently to those events. “You can have a Baby Boomer who volunteered to go to the Vietnam War and you can have another who was a protestor,” she says. “The fact that they have different political opinions is expected. It’s just that they were both marked by that same event, the Vietnam War.”

Adams says that Gen Z has been marked by COVID and by the social justice movements of the 2010s. Another common life experience that impacts their families during times in which they were very malleable in understanding the world and their safety.

“Every couple of years there was a new social media outlet that my generation followed,” says Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs Cathy Akers.

And yet, many Gen Z students still choose to attend the University. Director of Admissions Erin Slater explains: “We’ve been seeing it more and that experience is expected. It’s just that they were both marked by that same event, the Vietnam War.”

GEN Z SURVIVED COVID, VIRTUALLY

According to Dr. Rebecca Adams, a sociologist in the School of Health and Human Sciences and self-avowed Baby Boomer, a “generation” is something more than cell phones, AirPods, and T-shirts. It has a sociological definition. A generation is a group influenced by common events, Adams explains. At the same time, individuals react differently to those events. “You can have a Baby Boomer who volunteered to go to the Vietnam War and you can have another who was a protestor,” she says. “The fact that they have different political opinions is expected. It’s just that they were both marked by that same event, the Vietnam War.”

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WHO ARE TODAY’S STUDENTS?

Claudia Senior Major: Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies and History with a focus on public history Fun Fact: Was an intern at the GSO Historical Museum in Summer 2022. Runs the Open Closet for students, housed in the WGSS student lounge.

I LIKE THE DOWNTOWN COMMUNITY SPECIFICALLY. EVERYWHERE I GO, I SEE PEOPLE I KNOW.

Awareness of fatphobia and how that connects to disordered eating and eating disorders is something that previously I would have to introduce and explain.” Today, students are coming to her ready to analyze these forces.

“I think this generation is completely attuned to health and wellness in a way that previous generations have not been,” she says. “The awareness of fatphobia and how that connects to disordered eating and eating disorders is something that previously I would have to introduce and explain.” Today, students are coming to her ready to analyze these forces.

Claudia, whose research focuses on disordered eating, says that asking for help is healthy. She sees UNCG students, this number is slightly higher, at 77%. Personal issues related to social interaction and isolation are evident in many students, say mental health professionals. “Social media has increased social anxiety, and folks have lost some of the tools to navigate in-person social relationships,” explains Dr. Whitney. “I feel like that is when we delved into social media,” says Odem, who was a high school senior in Spring 2020. “That’s when the whole TikTok thing happened, and I used FaceTime to talk to my friends.” “I was actually one of those people who would make an account and never use it, pre-pandemic,” says Wall. “Post-pandemic, I needed those accounts to stay in touch with people I cared about.”

Growing up with social media comes with some well-known obstacles. “There are downsides, especially in terms of body image and confidence,” says Skow, who notes that some online content can make viewers feel insecure.

Dr. Whitney, whose research focuses on disordered eating, says that eating disorders is something that previously I would have to introduce and explain.” Today, students are coming to her ready to analyze these forces.

Bond agrees. “You compare yourself to the ‘perfect’ images that pop media calls an ‘ideal’ woman.” She adds that social media can also be used for online bullying.

The pandemic made an impact, too. Ayana Cholula – a resident advisor at the time – observed the difference in student life before and after the worst years of the pandemic. She says that when the mask mandates were lifted and students had more ability to socialize normally, the residence halls still felt empty.

“It was like, ‘Okay, why are the halls so quiet?’” she says. “There used to be nights when the entirety of Cagan Residential College would have a movie night downstairs or do a baking contest. And it was like, students don’t even walk into the common spaces – it’s like they’re not interested.”

Wall observed a similar struggle: “I was a resident advisor for the first semester when we were able to come back on campus. People were really struggling to make those connections that are so integral to a college experience. During 2023, students and staff have been learning what it means to return to a ‘normal’ face-to-face world. At least on the surface, campus feels active again. This year began with 100% capacity in residence halls. With about 80% of first-year students living on campus, residence life and co-curricular activities have an important role to play in the UNCG experience.

DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS

The story of mental health for Gen Z has two sides. In some ways, it’s an example of the contradictions today’s students live with. Whitney says that asking for help is healthy. She sees Gen Z students as the inheritors of decades of increased mental health awareness. “A lot of times the story gets told that students these days are not resilient. Well, we just spent the past 20 years telling folks: You should get help, you deserve help.”

Outside of a counseling setting, how do today’s students express the challenge of living in anxious times? Whitney says that asking for help is healthy. She sees Gen Z students as the inheritors of decades of increased mental health awareness. “A lot of times the story gets told that students these days are not resilient. Well, we just spent the past 20 years telling folks: You should get help, you deserve help.”

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WHO ARE TODAY’S STUDENTS?

I DID NOT COME INTO UNCG KNOWING THAT THIS WAS A MINORITY-SERVING INSTITUTION. I CAME HERE BECAUSE OF THE OPPORTUNITIES THAT IT GAVE ME.

“Sometimes Gen Z has the capacity to be moody about the future. But the flip side of that coin is that we try to call out bad practices.”

Some students, like Victoria Howard, put this contradiction between resilience and action at the center of real opportunities to make change.

She says “difficult conversations” are key to growth. “They let you understand from a different perspective, which can be more beneficial than hurtful. There’s no more assuming. It should be conversations, not assuming,” she says.

Howard wants to bring this forthright attitude to her future work as a teacher. “My cohort of educators here, we actually want to make a difference in the world. We won’t sugarcoat anything for students because we want this next generation to succeed.”

FROM MAINSTREAM TO “LIVE STREAM”

On platforms like Facebook, Instagram, or TikTok individuals post their own content and build their own audiences. This means that cable TV is less important to young consumers than in the past.

The content on social media is created by the generation that it’s directed at. “The content on social media is very ‘in the moment’, very connected generation because of these different online platforms that we have,” says Howard.

On TikTok pages are business casual outfits. I look for outfit inspiration on TikTok,” says Ayana Cholula. “I see people who are finding love and making it work through just dancing and singing on TikTok.”

TikTok star

“On the first day at UNCG, I got recognized from TikTok in the dining hall,” says ETHAN POISSON, who has 1.5M followers on TikTok. “It’s so weird that people can be so popular, yet only see them online.”

Today, many students say TikTok is a place at the 2022 UNCG Thomas Undergraduate Research and Creativity Expo for “Video Games and Research and Creativity.”

GOT TALENT? PASS IT ON

“I think of it as a Clark Kent/Superman situation. By day, I’m a psychologist and by night, I’m an actor,” says MELISSA LOZADA, a psychology major and musical theatre minor. She has a story shared by many UNCG students – she’s the first in her family to attend a university. What will she do with her experience? Pass it on.

“I know my younger brother no longer has to struggle with the college application process because he can always ask me,” she says.

She’s also part of a growing cohort of Latinx students at UNCG. According to Fall 2023 data, Hispanic students make up 14.6% of the degree-seeking student population. During her time here, Lozada has participated in student organizations like S.A.L.S.A (a Spanish American Latino Student Association).

In her passion for singing, she finds a beauty that crosses cultures. “It’s a way to communicate that surpasses language barriers. It’s a free-flowing bridge that you can use to create your own thing. I’m grateful that I can learn, listen, and sing in both English and Spanish.”

And she does it well. Back in Fall 2022, she even auditioned for “America’s Got Talent”!

“America’s Got Talent”! MELISSA LOZADA

“America’s Got Talent”!

“IN THE FIELD” ONLINE

“Hey bestie, do you like this song?”

The Musical.” He continues to make TikTok content and loves to meet followers and friends both online and on campus.

AN APP FOR THAT

Not all social media platforms and apps are the same.

On Instagram and TikTok, people post pictures or short videos. Some share their daily lives. Others post music or fashion. “There are people whose entire TikTok pages are business casual outfits. I look for outfit inspiration on TikTok,” says Ayana Cholula. 

Hannah Bond says that on Twitter, people share “热点” – controversial opinions about politics, sports, or culture.

Video calling apps like Zoom let users see friends online and on campus.

LIVING ONLINE

“IN THE FIELD” ONLINE

SOPHIA ROSENBERG

SOPHIA ROSENBERG

“IN THE FIELD” ONLINE

SOPHIA ROSENBERG

SOPHIA ROSENBERG

SOPHIA ROSENBERG
Ivan is a junior majoring in Communication Studies. He is an intern and student mentor in UNCG’s Communications and Community class. Lives in Gray Hall, the same dorm that his mother and sister—both alumnae—lived in.

Some students see value in embracing both changing social standards and tried-and-true practices. Cholela, who is working on a Master of Education degree, observes: “Some students call parents by their first names,” she notes. “Dr. Adams describes a warm and respectful relationship with today’s UNCG students. "They’re just more appreciative of interaction whether it’s face-to-face or via technology," she says, adding that her Gen Z students specifically point out one-on-one meetings with her as something they value about their learning.

“It’s not a one-size-fits-all,’ Bond notes that some things in the world of work have not changed. “A lot of it is still all about networking, which I will preach to the heavens about! Networking, networking, networking!”

Counseling, the Office of Intercultural Engagement, and other campus offices are trying to meet today’s Spartans where they are.

They also believe UNCG is listening to them. Over 70% of respondents “agree” or “strongly agree” that the University takes survey results seriously. That’s a measure of trust at a time when many young people are skeptical of institutions in general.

“We talk about the Spartan family because that’s what it is," says Director of Enrollment Communications Katie Machenes. “Students are coming here to spend four years of their lives. I mean, it’s your home, so it needs to feel like a family.”

Taking the Reins

The majority of today’s UNCG students have lived their whole lives during the 21st century.

Much has changed professionally. Much has also changed in family relationships. While no single description of family relations applies to every individual, many Gen Z students have experienced a more informal relationship with elders than their parents or grandparents did.

“Relationships with their parents or caregivers are very much unlike the hierarchical relationships that existed in the generations before. I think there’s a real richness in those relationships,” says Dr. Whitney. “Some students call parents by their first names,” she notes. “Dr. Adams describes a warm and respectful relationship with today’s UNCG students. They’re just more appreciative of interaction whether it’s face-to-face or via technology," she says, adding that her Gen Z students specifically point out one-on-one meetings with her as something they value about their learning.

Informal but eager to connect, self-assured but seeking support, familiarly ironic but prone to isolation: These contradictions are part of what make today’s young Spartans so dynamic.

“If there are alumni who think Gen Z folks seem ‘foreign,’” says Whitney, “I would say life is the same, it’s just in a different frame. Go meet someone and have these awesome conversations that are so dynamic.”

Another way to put it? As Associate Vice Chancellor Carter says, “This is a group that’s going to be boisterous!”

WHO ARE TODAY’S STUDENTS?

UNCG magazine • Fall 2023

ONE OF THE MAIN REASONS I CHOSE THIS SCHOOL WAS BECAUSE OF THE DIVERSITY. ULTIMATELY I WANTED TO GO TO A SCHOOL THAT LOOKS LIKE THE REAL WORLD.

ALYSSA Sams
MAJOR: Public Health Education
FUN FACT: SGA Senator for the School of Health and Human Sciences. Has worked as a peer success coach on campus.

Paying Their Way

• More than 3/4 of UNCG students work on or off campus.

Source: 2023 Belkong Survey

• Over 1/3 work 10+ hours per week in a combination of on/off campus employment.

Source: 2023 Belkong Survey

• 65% of bachelor’s degree recipients borrow some amount of money.

Source: UNC System DatasetMart, Fall 2022 census snapshot

• UNCG bachelor’s recipients who are in-state borrowers graduate with an average federal debt of more than $20,000.

Source: UNC System DatasetMart, Fall 2022 census snapshot

One of the main reasons I chose this school was because of the diversity. Ultimately I wanted to go to a school that looks like the real world.

there are many ways to support UNCG’s students. To learn details, visit success.uncg.edu

There Are Many Ways to Support UNCG’s Students: To Learn Details, Visit Success.uncg.edu.
Nineteen years ago, Dr. DiAnne Borders ’72 received the Burlington Industries Excellence Professorship. It was a game-changer.

“When Ed Uprichard, our School of Education dean, called to tell me, I thought ‘Wow!’” Her research, her teaching, and her department were being lifted up.

When she’d come from Cleveland County to enroll in 1968, the campus had only a few endowed professorships. As our campus moved from the Woman’s College era (1932-63) to the current research university of UNCG – and doctoral programs were becoming key for all universities – several Triad corporations gave us pivotal support through named professorships. Alumni stepped up. Friends of the University stepped up. Woman’s College classes at their 50th reunions teamed together to endow more professorships to elevate our University.

“It signals to prospective students we will train you well. It allows us the resources to compete with other universities for outstanding faculty. We’ll attract the crème de la crème – and keep them at UNCG.”

Borders is a perfect example. A pastor’s daughter, she lived in various rural North Carolina communities. She graduated in the tumultuous Vietnam War era with an English degree. She gained real-world experience as a high school teacher in High Point. She leveraged that experience to build her academic credentials at other universities. In 1987, she joined UNCG’s burgeoning counseling program and ultimately became a trailblazer nationally not only in the realm of counselor education, but in the creation of standards and ethical codes in the new field of clinical supervision as a specialty within the counseling and mental health fields.

“Power of named professorships”

Since the early 1960s, our University has presented Distinguished and Excellence Professorships to exceptional faculty. The impact these professorships make on these stellar individuals creates an exponential impact on their graduate and undergraduate students, on their realm of research, and ultimately on our world.

BY CHRISTINE GARTON AND MIKE HARRIS ’93 MA • PHOTOGRAPHY BY MARTIN W. KANE, SEAN NORONA ’13, AND BERT VANDERVEEN ’93, ’97 MA

“‘It allows us the resources to compete. We’ll attract the crème de la crème – and keep them at UNCG.’”

—DR. DIANNE BORDERS ’72, BURLINGTON INDUSTRIES EXCELLENCE PROFESSOR
DISTINGUISHED PROFESSORS

With these funds, I am able to provide opportunities to the undergraduate and graduate students in my laboratory.

—Dr. Nadja Cech, Sullivan Distinguished Professor

From the end of the WC era to the beginning of the 1980s, annual gifts rose from $2000 to just over $8 million, according to Allen Trefousse’s “Making North Carolina Literate.” Much of that revenue was placed in the Excellence Fund, whose income was used primarily to supplement existing scholarships and faculty research, as well as salaries of outstanding faculty.

In the 1970s, as the needs of a research-intensive university with dozens of doctoral programs were growing even more apparent and state appropriations were not keeping up, University fundraising rose to a higher level. Notably, the Tritia’s corporations stepped up, as they saw that a strong UNCG with dynamic academic programs would elevate the region and state. Jefferson-Pilot, NCBN, and Cone Hospital were among the companies that knew a more impactful university with strong programs would be a win-win for the business community.

In 1975 UNCG had gained seven “Excellence Professorships,” five of which were named for the largest donors: Burlington Industries, NCBN, Jefferson-Pilot, and the Wayne Foundation (the Joe Rosenthal Professorship and Elizabeth Rosenthal Professorship). Alumni were also key in creating named professorships. In two instances, classes at their 50th reunions took on the challenge of creating one. The Class of 1949 Professorship in the Humanities was given to novelists Craig Nova and now held by Dr. Christian Moraru, and the Class of 1952 Professorship established by Dr. Nicholas Oberlies, who also holds a membership in the American Society of Pharmacognosy Conference when he was an undergraduate in my laboratory, to tell the New York, ‘I’ve decided what I’m going to do. I’m going to graduate school!’ A first-generation college student, he earned his PhD and is a well-published researcher, she has helped enhance and enrich the instructional program. Attendees are often a life-changing experience for a student. For example, Joe Egan, who attended the American Society of Pharmacognosy Conference when he was an undergraduate in my laboratory, to tell the New York, ‘I’ve decided what I’m going to do. I’m going to graduate school!’ A first-generation college student, he earned his PhD and is a well-published researcher, she has helped enhance and enrich the instructional program. Attendees are often a life-changing experience for a student. For example, Joe Egan, who attended the American Society of Pharmacognosy Conference when he was an undergraduate in my laboratory, to tell the New York, ‘I’ve decided what I’m going to do. I’m going to graduate school!’ A first-generation college student, he earned his PhD and is a well-published researcher, she has helped enhance and enrich the instructional program. Attendees are often a life-changing experience for a student. For example, Joe Egan, who attended the American Society of Pharmacognosy Conference when he was an undergraduate in my laboratory, to tell the New York, ‘I’ve decided what I’m going to do. I’m going to graduate school!’ A first-generation college student, he earned his PhD and is a well-published researcher, she has helped.
GIFTS IGNITE EXCELLENCE

Susan Morris Safran ’77
Distinguished Professorship in Nursing

A health care entrepreneur and nurse who has taught countless American Heart Association Lifesaving courses, Susan Morris Safran ‘77 has created an endowed professorship in Nursing so far has been awarded to eight unique students. “This new professorship is my way of giving back to the faculty who inspired me and to the students who want to be inspired,” she says.

THE ELLA FITZGERALD DISTINGUISHED PROFESSORSHIP IN JAZZ STUDIES

A long-standing supporter of UNCG’s Miles Davis Jazz Studies Program, Dr. Ward Robinson ’70 MPH, ’76 PBC aims to harness the power of collective giving to establish the Ella Fitzgerald Distinguished Professorship in Jazz Studies. His leadership gift serves as a challenge to others to make a major gift and open the opportunity for professional faculty in jazz and pop vocals a reality.

One of the top jazz programs in the Southeast, the Miles Davis Jazz Studies Program boasts a diverse cohort of talented performers. The Ella Fitzgerald Distinguished Professorship, the College of Visual and Performing Arts seeks to increase minority representation among Jazz Studies faculty. Robinson stands shoulder to shoulder with the College’s commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion, which will have far-reaching effects both now and for the future.

“Both the Ella Fitzgerald estate and UNCG are incredibly excited about this new opportunity,” says Professor of Jazz Steve Haines. “Ms. Fitzgerald is an inspiration, with unparalleled musical talent and a massive heart in helping others, which is exactly what this does for the University, at large. This professorship benefits UNCG by helping to attract and retain top-notch faculty, whose contributions in teaching, research, and public service raise the profile of this University and help it reach its high-impact goals.”

Most named professorships – nearly 75% – are distinguished professorships. This term indicates they’ve received matching funds (e.g., $333,000 for a $667,000 gift from donors) from the UNC System’s Distinguished Professors Endowment Trust Fund (DPETF) to create the full endowment. Many of the earlier-established distinguished professorships were supplemented by the C.D. Spangler Foundation in addition to the DPETF.

Making history with Light the Way

Not only are our professors exceptional, but an innovative approach to supporting outstanding faculty is, as well. Alumna Sue W. Cole’s recent gift to the Bryan School of Business and Economics endows a faculty excellence support fund that is the first of its kind at UNCG. In fact, while conducting research to determine criteria for making awards, Bryan School Dean McBlock discovered only one other university in the nation with such a fund.

The Sue Cole ’72, ’77 MBA Professional Track Distinguished Faculty Endowed Fund is rare in that it offers special opportunities exclusively to professional track faculty. Cole’s intent is to support at least two professional track faculty members, each for two-year terms, annually in the Bryan School.

“There are different ways to reward excellence besides distinguished professorships that are based on high-quality research,” Banks says. “Sue’s gift offers long-overdue recognition to this sector of our faculty.”

Full-time, professional track faculty do a lot of “heavy lifting” as far as teaching is concerned. With four classes per semester, they impact lots of students. This new endowment will fund stipends, professional development, and travel opportunities that will enhance the level of instruction in their classrooms.

“The potential for fulfilling our professional track faculty’s ‘wish list’ is really exciting,” says Banks. “Sue’s endowment elevates the Bryan School, its departments, and the University overall. This is a game-changing gift.”

Light the Way

Provost Debbie Storrs has a unique perspective on what this does for the University, at large. These professors are nationally recognized figures, sought by other universities. “Each professorship benefits UNCG by helping to attract and retain these top-notch faculty, whose contributions in teaching, research, and public service raise the profile of this University and help it reach its high-impact goals.”

With each endowed professorship come specifically tailored expectations. A common thread is a high level of professional service at national and international levels. And each will contribute to the continuing development of both their students and senior faculty members and will serve as a mentor and role model to students at all levels.

Their impact is steadily growing. “The distinguished professors over the decades have taught hundreds of thousands of students throughout Greensboro and mentored and guided the research of thousands of master’s and doctoral students,” Storrs says. “They are key in staking our flag as a first-class university with a reputation for academic and research excellence.”

The professors are proud of the strategic philanthropy behind the name. “It’s a way a donor can make a targeted impact – one that will carry the UNC System’s Distinguished Professors Endowment Trust Fund (DPETF) to create the full endowment. Many of the earlier-established distinguished professorships were supplemented by the C.D. Spangler Foundation in addition to the DPETF.

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How do you decide on the right child care facility? A star rating at a North Carolina child care facility can ease the minds of parents and caregivers. What’s more, it can help a facility learn about areas where it can improve – and how to support these changes.

The NC Rated License Assessment Project, run by UNCG for nearly 25 years as a pioneering initiative, has helped improve the lives of millions of children in North Carolina and beyond. When bids were solicited in 1999, UNCG stepped up to lead this groundbreaking effort. Dr. Deborah Cassidy, a leader of UNCG’s Human Development and Family Studies early childhood program, applied for that first child care assessment contract. UNCG, which had long been known for its exceptional quality child care program, was awarded the NC Rated License Assessment Project (NCRLAP) – and subsequently served as a model for other states.

UNCG researchers were undaunted by the blank slate they faced. What should be the process for evaluation of classrooms? How many evaluators would be needed? What parts of the state would have more assessment requests? Nearly 25 years later, the NCRLAP has answered these questions and many more.

One thing became clear: Collaboration would be a key to success. “When we started, we had six subcontracts with other universities, they were in charge of their region, and they hired the assessors to go...”

For nearly 25 years, a UNCG-led child care assessment initiative has made its mark in 50,000 classrooms – and counting.
out into their communities,” said Dr. Linda Hestenes, current NCRLAP co-director. “I think that helped create a foundation, and it evolved from there.”

UNCG partnered with another university for training on the assessment tool, while the researchers began working on partnerships with child care facilities. They took a whole-state approach, rather than having different standards for each county.

The leaders and staff in child care facilities didn’t know what to expect. “This was new, and in addition to people from their communities coming in as assessors, it was important to help programs understand the process. We worked hard to provide this information,” said Dr. Sharon Mims, NCRLAP co-director.

Collaboration paid off.

Over time, the NCRLAP progressed from simply making people aware of what the state licensing requires, to what the new assessment process would be, to how to improve your facility while continuing to focus on offering safe and quality classrooms for children.

Changes over the years

Though the tools for scoring child care facilities have remained largely the same over the years – with some changes mandated by the State – scores at child care facilities have risen markedly, showing Mims and Hestenes that the assessment system was working.

Some improvements are obvious.

For example, a health inspector told Mims soon after the assessment process began he saw more attentiveness to handwashing.

Other changes that we may take for granted today?

“We have standards that children have more outside play, and that they have access to specified materials for most of the day,” Hestenes said.

Examples include building materials like blocks; fine motor activities like puzzles or art supplies; dramatic or pretend play objects; and nature or science materials such as safe plants, shells, or driftwood, depending on the age of the classroom.

All of the age-appropriate items are designed to support the overall development of the child.

North Carolina does not require child care facilities to be assessed. Those that choose to do so are ones that may serve children anywhere from birth through age 12. An assessor will review them on more than 400 indicators every three years, then this score is used in conjunction with other factors to lead to a star rating of one to five by the Division of Child Development and Early Education. An assessment usually takes three to four hours at a facility, followed by a written report by the assessor. It typically takes three months to train someone to be an assessor, and their reliability is routinely checked afterward.

A facility is notified of the four-week period an assessor will come, but not the day. The assessor will examine one-third of the classrooms at the child care program, with the rooms randomly selected and at different age levels.

“When we started, there was less attention on how to improve quality, but over time our staff have developed many resources and

“We are part of a long history of providing a model of how to do good things for children across the state.”

—DR. SHARON MIMS, NCRLAP CO-DIRECTOR

“...the rated license system is an indicator for early childhood educators seeking employment and for parents. The process itself, including the classroom assessments, is a great tool for staff development.”

—NORMA HONEYCUTT ’14 MÉD, ’14 PBC, ’14 CERT

Norma Honeycutt ’14 MÉD, ’14 PBC, ’14 CERT is executive director of Partners in Learning in Salisbury. Left: Their child care rating – in this case 5 stars – is public record and must be displayed prominently.
and posting the materials for what is being measured there, and people understand what is being measured and why, adding a website

experiences of children in care. We’re proud of how far we’ve helped

improvements in the

events to support positive

held numerous outreach
events to support positive
changes,” Hestenes said. “We’ve made real

improvements in the

experiences of children in care. We’re proud of how far we’ve helped

move our state in terms of quality.”

This includes doing more outreach to facilities and teachers, helping

people understand what is being measured and why, adding a website and posting the materials for what is being measured there, and constantly looking to be more impactful.

Why facilities want stars

The facilities want to be assessed for a simple reason: They want parents to know they are a good one. For Norma Honeycutt ’14 MEd, ’14 PCC, ’14 CERT, executive director of Partners in Learning in Salisbury, N.C., a rating lets her know if she has the best facility.

“The rating license system allows us to do that by providing a way to measure quality,” she said. “It’s an indicator for early childhood educators seeking employment, and for parents. The process itself, including the classroom assessments, is a great tool for staff development.”

Her facility, which has been open 27 years, has a five-star rating. Honeycutt, who began as the executive director 25 years ago, proudly

says that her facility was one of the first in the state to receive the five-star rating.

They prepare for assessments regularly, with teachers observed monthly by a member of leadership who offers feedback. Teachers are also invited to observe each other’s classrooms. And during rating renewal, they focus on staff morale.

Similarly, UNCG alumna Arietha Brumson ’17, ’23 MEd operates the in-home child care facility Kingdom Kids Development Center in Greensboro and wants it to be assessed so parents and caregivers can see accountability.

“Being rated also provides opportunities to identify quality indicators and potential areas of improvement in our child care facility,” Brumson said. “Being rated may ease the minds of potential families as they seek quality early learning experiences for their children.”

Her facility has been open four years and has a four-star rating. Brumson said she works with Education, Quality Improved and Professional Development (EQuIPD) for technical assistance and professional development with early care and education prior to being assessed, and she also examines mock assessment reports.

EQuIPD – founded by the same Dr. Deborah Cassidy who led UNCG into the statewide ratings initiative – provides professional development, educational planning, and curriculum assistance for Guilford County’s early childhood care facilities.

Pride in high standards

One of the biggest hurdles UNCG faced 25 years ago – and still examines – is how to have one system that is applicable to every child care facility. Assessors evaluate child care centers, child care homes, ones that are private and non-profit, licensed public school sites, bilingual centers, one in which the students and staff speak Cherokee – and the rating system

accessibility and fair to each facility.

It is a task that is reexamined when UNCG repurposes for the contract from the state annually. Thus far, UNCG has conducted just under 50,000 assessments of child care facilities since being awarded the first state licensing contract in 1999.

Mims said the Human Development and Family Studies Department and UNCG have always taken pride in setting high standards for child care and early childhood education.

“We are part of a long history of providing a model of how to do good things for children across the state. We work with the intention of educating others,” she said.

TO LEARN MORE, VISIT HHS.UNCG.EDU AND HHS.UNCG.EDU/CCEP.

Long-Standing Legacy of Excellence

DR. MARY ELISABETH KEISTER, whose impact was global, put UNCG’s already notable child care research standard on an exceptional level. Before joining UNCG, she was the Home Economics Officer for the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, where she developed programs to train leaders on improving the lives of women and children around the world. Joining UNCG in 1965, she soon directed the University’s first federally funded Infant Care Center. Her research brought national attention to UNCG as the growing trend of mothers entering the workforce launched the University’s model day-care program – one of the first in the country for infants. She was an adviser in all 50 states regarding child care centers. The UNCG System presented her the O. Max Gardner Award, the highest honor bestowed on a faculty member.

DR. DEBORAH CASSIDY continued that high standard, notably as director of the innovative Child Care Education Program, providing a model facility and lab. A UNC Board of Governors Excellence in Teaching Award winner and recipient of numerous grants, she led the NC Rated License Assessment Program for UNCG from its inception until her retirement. When she served as director of the NC Division of Child Development and Early Education from 2009 to 2013, Hestenes and Mims served as NCRAP co-directors. (They’d worked with Cassidy on the project since its start.) They succeeded her as co-directors in 2016.

“We’re proud of how far we’ve helped move our state in terms of child care quality,”

– DR. LINDA HESTENES, NCRAP CD-DIRECTOR

DR. MARY ELISABETH KEISTER

"HDFS department and is a proud alumna. “I love the relationship that ECC has built with UNCG. It’s my hope that UNCG students who come to ECC look at us as an extension of the quality that UNCG teaches every day.”
Legacies

ALUMNI AND FRIENDS OF THE UNIVERSITY MAKE AN IMPACT HERE.

Want to teach kids to be responsible? “Make it happen in the gym.”

It’s sage advice from Dr. Tom “Doc” Martinek Sr. – teacher, counselor, mentor, and coach – who recently retired after 47 years in UNCG’s Department of Kinesiology. As a parting gift, he and his wife, Kathleen, established the Youth Development and Community Engagement Endowment in Health and Human Sciences. The fund will enhance the work of the department’s Project Effort program, an after-school sports and leadership program for underserved children and youth, which Martinek founded nearly three decades ago in partnership with Guilford County Schools.

Martinek is an internationally respected scholar whose early research in psycho-social development was widely recognized as a valuable contribution to exercise and sports science literature. His shift to research about service learning in 1993 made a significant impact on programs specifically designed to develop life skills through physical activity.

For the past 30 years, his work through Project Effort has been modeled throughout the world. Its initial purpose was to give elementary school kids plagued with low grades, office referrals, and school suspensions a chance to participate in a values-based after-school program that would help them channel negative energy in a positive way.

As a child, the program had a significant impact on his life. “I had the opportunity to teach life skills to other children in the Triad, many of whom were immigrants. Since they began operation, Project Effort and the Youth Leader Corps have provided life-changing experiences to more than 900 children and youth.”

Martinek’s graduate students participated in rigorous qualitative research, examining the results of his programs and the process of young people taking responsibility through sport, leaving UNCG with the skills to start similar programs for the next generations. For decades to come.

To support Project Effort, visit kiu.uncg.edu/community-engagement/project-effort.

SCHOOL OF ED: THE RIGHT STUFF

Before her 25-year tenure at UNCG’s School of Education and even prior to earning her PhD in educational psychology, Professor Emerita Dr. Barbara Barry Levin taught elementary school students for 15 years. Her experience in that realm formed the backdrop of her teaching, research, and publishing throughout her career.

It also planted the seed for her to establish the Barbara B. Levin Endowed Scholarship in Elementary Education at UNCG.

Dr. Levin began her time at UNCG in 1993 as a teacher educator and assistant professor in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction and retired as a full professor in 2018 from the Department of Teacher Education and Higher Education.

In addition to master’s and doctoral programs she was a part of, UNCG appealed to Levin for this reason: “I thought my colleagues there were doing the right thing by having elementary education and middle grades majors take classes concurrently with internships over a three-semester period, before full-time student teaching,” says Levin. “I believe these concurrent opportunities helped them learn from their students as well as from their classmates at the University.”

At the time, most other institutions did not offer such internships. Education majors had to wait until their final semester to be with kids in schools as student teachers, which Levin deemed too little, too late.

“At long last, my passion for his work has been realized,” says Levin. “I hope I can ease the burden for some future elementary ed majors so they can focus on learning to be the best teachers possible rather than scrambling to earn enough to pay their bills.”

Cultivating ‘creative thinking and making’

Anna Padilla is proof positive that a UNCG education is not “one-size-fits-all.”

The 37-year-old Interior Architecture (IARc) major was born in the Philippines, but grew up in suburban Chicago. A significant life transition a few years ago allowed her to explore completion of her undergraduate education.

She began researching schools that would complement her career aspirations within the commercial lighting industry she had entered before returning to college. Interior architecture was not on her radar, but Padilla wanted to gain foundational knowledge of design processes that run parallel to lighting design. UNCG’s IARc program fit the bill.

“I was lucky to learn about IARc through Tommy Lambeth, who was chair of the department at the time,” says Padilla. “There was genuine enthusiasm and a true passion for his work. I was fortunate to have Tommy as a professor before his retirement. His influence has been amazing.”

Lambeth began teaching in what was then the Department of Housing and Interior Design in 1984 as a part-time instructor. Subsequently he was a full-time faculty member who revealed in unlocking what he calls “creative thinking and making” in his students for 32 more years. For 10 of those years, he served as department chair.

In 2019, prior to retiring, Lambeth established the Carl “Tommy” Lambeth Endowed Scholarship in Interior Architecture. Creative thinking and making are at its heart, celebrating and enabling achievement in the development of these skills. To date, five students have received awards from the scholarship.

Its inaugural recipient was Anna Padilla.

On track to graduate in Fall 2024, Padilla plans to have a commercial design position in hospitality or showroom design, as well as her own line of lighting and furniture.

“If not for Tommy’s scholarship that year, I would have been beholden to family or my partner to help pay for supplies required for projects, as well as gas because I am a commuter student,” Padilla says. “I am incredibly grateful to have benefited from Tommy’s generosity.”

MORE STORIES AT LIGHTTHEWAY.UNCG.EDU.

JOYCE DOROTHY MCBRIDE '70 was honored by the City of Greensboro as an Everyday Champion of Civil Rights. She is a member of the Greensboro Chamber of Commerce and has served on UNC’s Board of Trustees.

LAURA JOHNSTON DINWIDDIE TILLETT '48 was named a "First-5 to Share" Advocate to Nursing Programs." She has written nine nonfiction books including Inheritance from Redhawk Publications. The volume features topics to assist attorneys with Mississippi Inmates.

ANN PHILLIPS MCCracken ’60 received the Presidential Award from Wingate University for her contribution to the Union victory, in the 1970s. She was also featured at an event hosted by the Burlington Artists League to meet other local artists.

LAURA JOHNSTON DINWIDDIE TILLETT ’48 was named the Joan of Arc in the "Counters in the Community" series. The event featured topics to assist attorneys with Mississippi Inmates.

CHRISTOPHER WICKER ’77 was named the artistic director for the Los Angeles Opera’s 2023-2024 season. He will spearhead the school’s inclusion at the Duke University School of Nursing. He will work on several initiatives to reduce health disparities.

CAROLYN DUTTON MATTHEWS ’71 began woodcarving in 2019 and has won several awards for her work. She is featured in the "The Other High Point: From Nainsook to Underwear to 'Hosiery Capital of the World" book.

Anne Morales ’61, who was an associate artistic director for the Los Angeles Opera’s 2023-2024 season. She will work on several initiatives to reduce health disparities.

The event featured topics to assist attorneys with Mississippi Inmates.
was profiled in the Spring 2019 issue of recent book is “White Cat, Black Dog.” She degree from Smith College. She is a chair with INTIX: International Ticketing where she is the box office manager. She at UNC Wilmington. An accomplished was named in the 2019 issue of UNCG magazine. HEIDI HANSEN MCCRORY ’97 MA Alliances of Black Doulas for Black Mamas. She specializes in corporate, partnership, and to practice architecture in Texas. She...
2010s

CANDACE MARTIN ’07 was named to Titus Business Awards “On Under 40” list. She is currently the operations and communications manager for Angora Greensboro.

RICHARD HAMPTON ’07, M.S., P.E., an assistant professor at The University of Texas at Austin, received the Virginia L. Stout Award for Early Career Success in Young Children’s Mental Health. Her work focuses on the links between common childhood adversities and sleep.

LUKE DIXON ’12 was appointed as a specialist in state criminal law by the Guilford County Division of State Prosecutors.

WILLIAM COCKMAN ’09 M.S. was named clinical assistant professor at the School of Nursing for Wake Forest University. His book, published in May 2023, is focused on the links between common childhood adversities and sleep.

JUDITH LUCAS ’95 M.A., a librarian at UNC Greensboro, was named circulation desk and student-volunteers officer for Athens-Clarke County, Ga., and served as emcee for Pride Event in Athens.

SHERBY SICKLE ’10 was welcomed identical twin daughters into the world in October 2022. Both girls are doing great.

CATY DEMPSEY ’21 was named associate chief information officer at Cane Health, where she works to ensure the security of health information and educate the use of technology in the organization.

KALEY POLLARD ’20 was named the 2022-23 Guilford County Schools Teacher of the Year. She has been an elementary grade teacher at Stoner-Thomason School since 2013.

LUIS PEÑA-SANCHEZ ’20 B.S. was named circulation desk and student-employee services questions manager at UNC Greensboro Library, where she has worked since 2016.

CHRISTY BALLEY ’14 E.D.L, ’20 M.S. was named principal of fellow Middle School in Idaho. She was previously principal at Flagstaff Elementary School and in Biddulph Academy.

ADRIANA ANDRIANI ’11 was appointed to the Guilford County Division of Public Health Department’s COVID-19 contact tracing and prevention manager. Her focus is on efforts to reduce opioid-related injuries and deaths.

MELISSA GRANT ’22 was a featured reader at the 23rd “Dinebrun” event at Guilford College. She teaches creative writing at Bryn Mawr College in Greensboro and has published fiction and nonfiction in many magazines and journals.

JACKSON COCHRAN ’25 was named to Triad Business Journal’s “40 Under 40” list. He is currently the director of external affairs at North Carolina A&T State University.

LORDIA HANLEY ’27 received an Army Achievement Medal for volunteering at a COVID-19 vaccine clinic. She works as a nurse at Tripler Army Medical Center in Honolulu, Hawaii.

SOUTHERN JOURNAL MUSEUMS CONTINUES

DIXON ’13

2020s

JACOB DURAM ’24 was selected for the 2023 Outstanding Nonprofessional at a Two-Year College by the American Association of Two-Year College Personnel Association. He is an education navigator at Central Carolina Community College.

CAROLINE RAMEY ’21 was named principal at Liberty Elementary School in Liberty. He was previously an elementary teacher at Providence Grove High School.

MELONI TAYLOR ’20, ’20 M.P.A. hosted a garden party in support of Preservation of Wilson, an organization dedicated to preserving Wilson’s historic properties. She is the executive director.

KARANNA “KEEVA” GRAVES ’21 exhibited “Fish Dreams,” a show of collage and sculpture made from recycled and repurposed materials at the Greenville Museum of Art in Greenville, N.C. The art relates to fishing, women in family life, and the meaning of fish in dreams.

REBECCA WILKINS ’24 was named to Triad Business Journal’s “On Under 40” list. He is currently the director of external affairs at North Carolina A&T State University.

POCOYO’22, SIAH SABAHYAR ’21 participated in “Dentistry with Heart,” at Aroona General dental office in Stuart Arey, N.C. The event included many UNCG Dental Club students-volunteers.

JEN ANDERSON ’17 MLIS served as an editor for Pride Week-2023, Luke is a reporter for WTVM in Greensboro.

TOMASO MICIA ’16 was named Beginning Teacher of the Year by Warren County Schools. Mikoa, who also is a basketball coach, leads students and players to work hard and give their best effort.

KATE WAGNER ’21 was named architect correspondent for The Nation. Wagner is the creator of the online blog “Architect.”

JORDAN ROSS ’24 received National Board Certification in Library Media from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards.

PRESTON BLYTH ’13 was appointed to the North Carolina Task Force for Racial Equality in Criminal Justice by Gov. Roy Cooper. Blythe is the major of Pinerock, N.C.

ELLEN DALTON ’17 PBC, ’17 CERT was named principal of Haunting Hall elementary School (Burlington). She has served as principal of B.M. Cline in Boone, N.C. She has a background in the food industry and in nonprofit management.

JASON DUNCAN ’16, ALAINA ADLER ’20, ’23 and Debra Burkhardt and Dr. Thomas McCay ’15 P.H.D. Hosted a fall celebration for UNCG Dental Club. The event included many UNCG Dental Club students-volunteers.

ALI DUFFY ’09 MFA was named recipient of the Montagnard Dega Association in the United States’ American Award for Young Adults by Choice initiative, which makes significant contributions to their communities. Adrong is executive director of the Montagnard Dega Association in Greensboro.

CHRIS WOLF ’07 was named Army Officer of the Year by the American Veterans of Foreign Wars. He received the Outstanding Nonprofessional at a Two-Year College by the American Association of Two-Year College Personnel Association.

ERICA MELVIN ’17 P.H.D. was named principal of Liberty Elementary School in Liberty. She was previously an elementary teacher at Providence Grove High School.
This wonderful news was celebrated on May 3, 2023. He received his doctor of nursing practice degree on the same day.

**Furniture Library's annual student competition for interior design.**

A recent winner of this competition was Christian Garton, a visual arts teacher at White Plains High School, who has been an active member of the Furniture Library's student design community. Christian has been involved in the Furniture Library's annual student competition for interior design, which recognizes emerging talent in the field of interior design.

This wonderful news was celebrated on May 3, 2023.

About his time as president of UNCG's Student Government Association in the 1970s, Alston held numerous positions in the university, including serving as a departmental secretary and later as the technical coordinator for the University Facilities and Service Operations team in University Facilities.

He went abroad again in 1990, this time to Germany in 1953 to pursue his education. He came to UNCG in 1971 to head the Department of Music. He served as department head for UNCG's College of Fine and Applied Arts from 1974 to 2008. An accomplished horn player and music educator, he served as the horn professor at UNCG from 1974 to 1990, and as the director of the University Symphony Orchestra.

He died on June 23, 2023. He was the technical coordinator for UNCG's School of Drama. His long career in theater encompassed stage management at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, the Forsyth County Department of Drama, and the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. He was also the technical director for the University of North Carolina at Greensboro's Department of Dramatic Arts and the technical director for the University of North Carolina at Greensboro's Department of Drama and the University of North Carolina at Greensboro's Department of Dramatic Arts.

He served as chair of UNCG's Department of Music from 1990 to 1993, and as chair of UNCG's Department of Music from 1993 to 1997.

He served as the technical director for UNCG's School of Drama. His long career in theater encompassed stage management at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, the Forsyth County Department of Drama, and the University of North Carolina at Greensboro's Department of Dramatic Arts and the technical director for the University of North Carolina at Greensboro's Department of Drama and the University of North Carolina at Greensboro's Department of Dramatic Arts.

At the age of 58, Alston held numerous positions in the university, including serving as a departmental secretary and later as the technical coordinator for the University Facilities and Service Operations team in University Facilities.

He went abroad again in 1990, this time to Germany in 1953 to pursue his education.
JOIN US FOR HOMECOMING WEEKEND 2023!

FRIDAY, OCT. 20
Bonfire, Kaplan Commons
8-10 p.m.

SATURDAY, OCT. 21
Black Alumni Network: The Family Reunion, The Quad
12-3 p.m.

Children’s Festival, Kaplan Commons
3-5 p.m.

Block Party on Kaplan Commons
3:30-6:30 p.m.

Spartan Men’s Soccer vs. Mercer University
7 p.m.

Learn more about Homecoming and alumni events throughout the year at alumni.uncg.edu.