

SPRING 2026

UNCG

MAGAZINE

A BRIGHT PATH *FORWARD*

As *Light the Way* closes,
the Spartan community
looks to the future. PG. 22



PLUS

AMERICA'S 250TH PG. 6

A WEEK AT THE G PG. 14

LARGEST GIFT EVER PG. 38



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During *Light the Way*, over 26,000 alumni and friends pulled Spartans up the ladder of success. Now, those graduates' lives have been transformed, and the campaign's impact is just beginning.

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Planned gifts power the Kelly Cherry Fellowship, the Mary Jo Helfers Scholarship, and the naming of the School of Theatre.

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Lots of class notes and photos, too

Cover: Patrick Leger '06 MFA, who drew the cover illustration, has created art for The New York Times, The New Yorker, The Atlantic, Esquire, The Cartoon Network, Disney, BBC, PBS, and The Washington Post.

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 previous issues.



LEARN MORE

22 GLOWING REVIEWS On March 26 in the UNCG Soccer Stadium, thousands watched an exhilarating drone show light up the sky. It told a story of collective success. *Light the Way: The Campaign for Earned Achievement* had been publicly announced on UNCG's 2021 Founders Day. At the campaign's close on Dec. 31, 2025, 26,684 donors had made gifts totaling \$266,186,027, exceeding the initial \$200 million goal by 33%. "This campaign reflects the grit and determination of our University community," said Chancellor Franklin D. Gilliam, Jr.



SEE VIDEO HIGHLIGHTS

bigpicture

Every Commencement, I'm reminded that the moment a Spartan tosses their cap into the air is more than a celebration, it's a beginning. It marks the point where potential meets direction, and where the experiences, mentorship, and opportunities found at UNCG begin to take shape as purpose.

I was struck by this recently while listening to three seniors from the Bryan School of Business and Economics reflect on their journeys. They arrived on campus as talented students, but like many, they were still exploring what their futures might hold.

Through programs like the Bryan School's Blueprint Series, that exploration became intention. What started out as curiosity and promise evolved into goal-oriented preparation for their careers, guided by hands-on experiences and real-world skills that set them apart from friends at other schools.

This kind of transformation doesn't happen by accident. It is made possible by a community of supporters who invest in our innovative programs that help drive our students' success. As we celebrate the impact of the *Light the Way* campaign, in this issue and beyond, I'm reminded that when Spartans cross the stage to take their well-earned diplomas and toss their caps in the air, their accomplishments are a source of pride for all of us.



FRANKLIN D. GILLIAM, JR.
CHANCELLOR

newsfront

SPARKING POTENTIAL

North Carolina's first SparkHub opened in the perfect spot to leverage innovation for student success: UNCG.

The objective? Bridge the gap between K-12 education, higher education, and the global workforce. Guilford County Schools students will participate in hands-on learning experiences developed in collaboration with global technology leaders, including Apple, IBM, and Epic Games.

"We are showing students where their potential paths can lead," said SparkNC President Lynn Moody.

Learning experiences aligned with fast-growing fields include artificial intelligence, game design and esports, cybersecurity, and data analytics. SparkHub also will provide access to faculty expertise through Applied Research in Computer Arts, Digitization, and Esports (ARCADE).

Chancellor Franklin D. Gilliam, Jr., said, "This partnership demonstrates how higher education, K-12 schools, and industry can work together to create meaningful opportunities for students across our state."



Board of Trustees member Anita Bachmann (center) controls an on-screen avatar that copies her facial expressions at the opening of the UNCG SparkHub. Also pictured (l-r): Sophie Priest, assistant director of esports innovation; Tim Sessoms, former Summerfield mayor; and Beth Fischer, vice chancellor for University Advancement

UNCG is committed to building pathways that expand access and drive economic mobility.

— CHANCELLOR
FRANKLIN D. GILLIAM, JR.



CHANCELLOR'S PORTRAIT PHOTOGRAPHY BY AURA MARZOUK

OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY GETS GREEN LIGHT

UNCG IS EXCITED TO ANNOUNCE it's been approved by the UNC Board of Governors to create a Master of Science in Occupational Therapy program. The new program will be housed in the School of Health and Human Sciences and is pending approval by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on College.

Graduating students will be eligible for licensure upon completion of the two-year, on-campus degree. The program is designed to fulfill a high need for practitioners in hospitals, schools, and rural and community-based settings, while complementing UNCG's health care degrees. The program is intended to serve UNCG human health

sciences and pre-professional undergraduates, as well as others from outside the University.

Occupational therapists help individuals develop or regain the skills needed for daily living and meaningful activities.

"I am pleased we will offer a master's degree in Occupational Therapy, carrying on UNCG's tradition of training the next

generation of leaders in health care," said Dr. Alan Boyette, UNCG provost. "The Occupational Therapy program will benefit our students and our community by reinforcing our commitment to meet real-world health needs and improving the quality of life through patient-centered care."

The director of the program is expected to be hired next year.

Millennial leads CENTENNIAL



“ I feel like my mission on earth is to bring people together and just make joy. ”
— ALLIE ARPAJIAN '18 MS, '18 PBC, CAROLINA THEATRE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Greensboro's Carolina Theatre, originally a vaudeville theater featuring silent films, has made the city vibrant for a long time. "2027 will be our centennial of the theater," says Executive Director Allie Arpajian '18 MS, '18 PBC. The Spartan double alumna is leading the beautiful theater into its 100th birthday year. What drew her to UNCG and its School of Health and Human Sciences? "I'd been living in Greensboro for nearly a decade. UNCG has a

great recreation therapy master's program – my concentration was therapeutic recreation and inclusive arts programming. At the same time I did a post-bacc certificate in nonprofit/public/organizational leadership." The musical arts, teaching, and accessibility have long been her passions. Now, leading the "Showplace of the Carolinas" is a dream job. "My favorite thing is when I'm at an event and I just see people smiling and enjoying it." As a University of Delaware undergrad, she'd majored in opera.

Arriving in the Gate City, she worked for Greensboro's City Arts (now Creative Greensboro) for eight years, leading therapeutic drumming programs for individuals with illnesses or disabilities and facilitating the OPUS Concert Series and Music for a Sunday Evening in the Park. Arpajian helped develop the music program at Greensboro's Canterbury School. She credits her UNCG program with her unique impact at Proehlfic Park, developing programs. "Then I was at the Winston-Salem Symphony,

creating new programming for those with disabilities." After next leading The Young Musicians of Alamance, she led the High Point Arts Council, where she excelled at fundraising and building ties, especially with the city government. Finances are key in arts leadership. A nonprofit, 86% of the theater's revenue is self-earned – from ticket sales, reasonably-priced rentals, and concessions. The Carolina Theatre is a shining jewel. When built, it was celebrated as the grandest venue

between Washington, D.C., and Atlanta, she notes. "We do 300 events a year, and they're all different, from theater to dance to comedy to music to movies," she says. "I'm in the millennial generation, and I feel like my generation and younger don't know the theater as much." She's working to spread the word: There's something fun for everyone. She envisions her young daughter in the Community Theatre's annual "Wizard of Oz" production on the stage. "I want to usher in the next generation."

SOUNDS LIKE PEARL

Another live-performance venue in Greensboro has Spartan connections. In February, the much-anticipated space opened in the South Elm Street building formerly occupied by Triad Stage. Its name – The Pyrlle – honors the late Pyrlle Gibson, a strong supporter of the arts and grandmother to *Light the Way* Co-Chair Randall Kaplan, whose family has impacted UNCG powerfully. Showcasing a variety of musical genres, it is led by general manager Dominick Amendum '01, a UNCG adjunct artist-in-residence who also works professionally around the globe developing new musicals.



FIRST in Freedom

“Artifacts are some of our best ways of learning about people of the past across communities,” says Kimber Heinz ’09 MA, ’16 MA, curator of political and economic history at the North Carolina Museum of History.

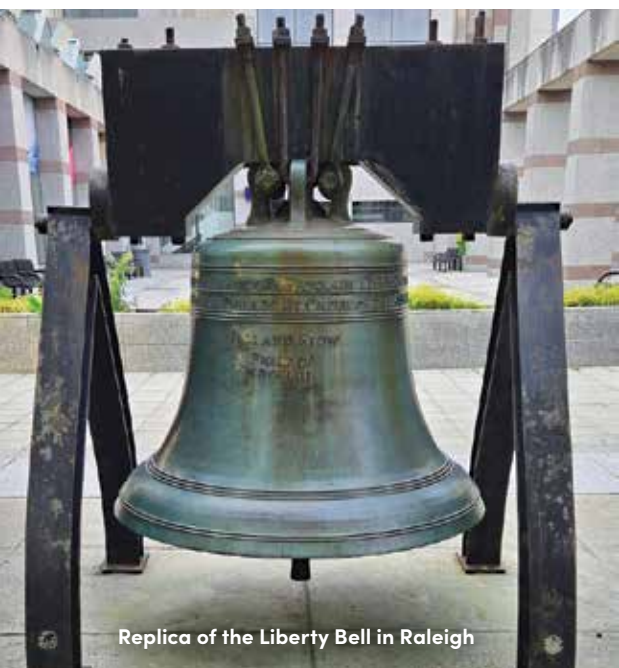
Some help tell the tale of the Revolutionary period. “North Carolina was the first colony to call for independence formally, in Halifax, in April 1776. We have the key to the building where the Halifax Resolves were signed.” This story, Heinz says, is the origin of North Carolina’s “First in Freedom” license plates.

Heinz discovered public history at UNCG. “The public history program set me on my path toward taking all the things I learned about the world through my studies and applying them. I want to help communities tell their own collective histories, and I hold those histories sacred now in my role at the state level.”

While the museum is currently closed for a major renovation, Heinz, her co-curator, and many others are working on a new permanent exhibition. “Our last exhibition opened in 2011, and it only covered history up to around 1960. We’re excited to tell a more

literally up-to-date story, and we’re trying to steward all of North Carolina’s many histories.” The exhibition will cover nearly 20,000 square feet of space and around 16,000 years of North Carolina history. It will present familiar artifacts and also bring forward items that have not been shown in the past, she says.

Artifacts from the museum will be on display in “Witnesses to the Revolution” from June 12 to Dec. 12, 2026, at UNC-Chapel Hill’s Wilson Library.



Replica of the Liberty Bell in Raleigh

“The work of shaping the nation never ends. By appreciating our past and actively engaging in civic life, we help guide the future.”
— MARY-HELEN KOLOUSEK ’23, AMERICA 250 NC GUILFORD COUNTY COMMITTEE MEMBER

LIVING HISTORY

For Ernest Dollar ’93, director of museums for the City of Raleigh, the way to engage visitors is to make history personal. “I can tell you facts about the Battle of Gettysburg, but when I can also tell you about a young man who was there, far from home, and who suffered on the battlefield, that personalizes it,” he says. “I’ve found that anytime I can make people taste, touch, smell, feel, or hear history, they’re going to remember it.”

This year, the City of Raleigh Museum will launch an exhibition called “Patterns of Belonging: English Language Learners’ Reflections on America 250.” Museum staff worked closely on it with immigrant groups in Raleigh.

“The great thing about America is that it grows and changes and evolves.”

— ERNEST DOLLAR ’93, DIRECTOR OF MUSEUMS, CITY OF RALEIGH

But what does it mean today to people who are still trying to come? It’s a fascinating way to step back and look at America through the eyes of new immigrants.”

He believes this exhibition fits with the museum’s tagline – “then, now, next.” Any history is about the past – “then” – but connecting it to today and tomorrow makes it more powerful, he explains.

Dollar sees that approach being applied to America’s 250th. “I feel most historians are taking this opportunity to hold the mirror up to America. And that mirror is the Declaration of Independence. Most of us are asking, ‘How far have we come and how far have we fallen short of these great principles baked into this founding document?’”



(l-r) Desmond Fosuhene, Dr. Anne Parsons, Jada Denny ’23, ’25 MA, Raquel Walton ’26, and Megan Mieux ’23, ’25 MA

LEARN BY DOING

A GRANT FROM AMERICA 250 NC gave UNCG master’s students a taste of the professional world. They collaborated with Dr. Anne Parsons, director of public history at UNCG, and Lisa Withers ’15 MA of University Libraries to create “Limits of Freedom.”

The exhibition is a series of 12 banners, each full of stories and images related to African American history in Guilford and Rockingham counties during early U.S. history. The research team included both graduate and undergraduate students.

Megan Mieux ’23, ’25 MA says, “The project provided endless opportunities to learn about the professional world of public history from the conception of a grant application, to the research and curation of the content in an expertly communicative team, to the process of editing and fabrication of the banners.”

Parsons says the project, which took almost 18 months to complete, was good career preparation for the students. “We worked in a traditional exhibit design team where people have different responsibilities. I was bringing my experience in exhibit curation, and they were then learning and contributing.”

“Limits of Freedom” has exhibited at Guilford Courthouse National Military Park, the Museum and Archives of Rockingham County, and High Point Museum, and will come to UNCG’s campus Sept. 14 – Oct. 26. Visit uncglibraries.com/limitsoffreedom for details.

REVOLUTIONARY TAPESTRY

As a curator at the North Carolina State Capitol, Anna Freeman Moore ’23 MA leads the process of creating and maintaining its public exhibitions.

She sees herself as a steward of history. “When people come into the Capitol, these are their chairs. These are their artifacts. This is their building. We are just here to preserve it for future generations and to take care of what really does belong to the people.”

North Carolina history is fascinating, she says. “We are inheritors of a revolutionary tapestry. The semiquincentennial is an opportunity to look at what makes North Carolina so special and to investigate aspects of our statehood.”

That means appealing to visitors from all 100 counties and beyond, Moore says. “The museum should not only inform our understanding of what it means to be North Carolinian, but also reflect North Carolinians both in the past and today. It’s serving everybody who comes in to give them a deeper understanding of their history.”

SEMIQUINCENTENNIAL = 250
SEMI = 1/2 • QUIN = 5 • CENTENNIAL = 100



Dr. Kerui Wu in the lab

RESEARCH for relief

A nanoscience researcher is taking on a driver of chronic disease.

Assistant professor Kerui Wu in the Joint School of Nanoscience and Nanoengineering received a grant from NCInnovation to advance his work on targeted treatments for inflammation. The goal? Anti-inflammatory drugs with fewer harsh side effects.

Many chronic diseases like arthritis, heart disease, and autoimmune disorders are driven by inflammation inside the body. Today's treatments often affect the patient's whole system and lead to side effects that make long-term use difficult. Wu's project focuses on delivering medicine directly to macrophages, the immune cells most responsible for inflammation.

For patients living with chronic inflammatory conditions, that could mean better quality of life. For health care providers, it could mean more effective tools that avoid some complications of current therapies.



UNITED IN SERVICE

A \$715,000 INVESTMENT from UnitedHealthcare Community Plan of North Carolina is helping UNCG's School of Nursing expand its goal of providing health care in underserved areas of the state.

In 2023, UNCG launched Minerva's Mobile Health, a mobile clinic that brings an extensive range of services including health screenings, child check-ups, and vaccinations to clients around the Piedmont. Now, an investment from UnitedHealthcare Community Plan of North Carolina will facilitate the purchase of a second van.

UNCG's School of Nursing expects to serve an additional 1,000 clients annually, expand the clinic's presence in communities from four days a week to six days a week, and double the number of students gaining hands-on experience that prepares them for careers.

Dr. Debra Barksdale, dean of the School of Nursing, says, "Experiences with Minerva's Mobile Health strengthen clinical judgment, communication skills, service commitment, and confidence in caring for individuals across a wide range of settings."

The investment will also provide equipment to perform on-site lab tests. Because UNCG expects this point-of-care testing to improve health outcomes through early referral of issues like pre-diabetes or diabetes, the impact will be huge.

Anita Bachmann, CEO of UnitedHealthcare Community Plan of North Carolina, says, "We believe that everyone deserves access to quality health care, no matter where they live. This investment reflects our commitment to breaking down barriers and investing in workforce development. By supporting UNCG and these efforts to provide nursing students with hands-on experience, we're helping to increase access to resources in rural communities and drive better outcomes."

“This expansion allows students to apply what they learn in meaningful, real-world settings.”

— DR. DEBRA BARKSDALE, DEAN OF THE SCHOOL OF NURSING

TIP YOUR CAP

WITH A PERSONALIZED GRADUATION CAP to wear at Commencement, Spartans make every memory count. Through humor or heartfelt messages, each cap reveals a personality or life story that makes the celebration uniquely theirs. With a tradition that sprang up in earnest within the last two decades, the graduates' fun designs come in all shapes, colors, and styles. These Spartans' creativity is literally the tops!



Spartans who helped support the University and fellow students during the Light the Way campaign wear special cords to display that giving.



FIRST GENERATION stoles were first seen in 2023. Graduates can proudly proclaim they are the first in their family to earn a college degree.



PASS THE TASSEL

HAVE A CAP AND GOWN stored away since your Commencement Day? In a relatively new tradition, Spartans can donate their regalia – or donate the funds to pay for a new graduate's regalia.



LEARN MORE

With HONORS

UNCG conferred honorary doctorates to *Light the Way* Co-Chairs Susan Safran '77 and Randall Kaplan during the University's Doctoral and Master's Commencement Ceremony this spring. Safran received an honorary doctor of science degree for her guidance in advanced learning in health care, emergency training, and higher education. Kaplan received an honorary doctor of letters degree for his visionary leadership and philanthropy, which has had a transformative impact on UNCG and North Carolina.

Susan M. Safran, through her extraordinary achievements, has brought lasting distinction and support to UNCG. Her career spans decades of work in health care, emergency training, and higher education, enriching lives across North Carolina and beyond. A devoted supporter of UNCG, she led the Chancellor Search Committee and championed the \$35 million Union Square Campus.

Her leadership in *Light the Way*, which raised \$266 million, is benefiting countless students and faculty. Safran's commitment to education and health care is evident in her work with the NC American Heart Association's Advocacy Committee and the NC Emergency Medical Services Advisory Council, where she influenced statewide emergency protocols.

Randall R. Kaplan's tremendous leadership and philanthropy have had a transformative impact on UNCG and North Carolina. Though not a UNCG alumnus, he is a dedicated supporter, serving on several University boards and as the Board of Trustees Chair and Co-Chair of the *Light the Way* campaign. His family's generosity is evident across campus, with landmark gifts such as Kaplan Commons and the Leonard J. Kaplan Center for Wellness. Kaplan's commitment extends statewide, advancing economic development through leadership roles on various



Susan Safran '77 and Dean Barsdale at Founders Day



Randall Kaplan with students at the Esports Arena

commissions and nonprofits. He also created the Randall R. Kaplan Distinguished Professorship in STEM, supporting innovative faculty initiatives. Kaplan has received numerous honors for his

exemplary service, and his vision and dedication continue to enrich education and community life throughout the region. Kaplan's remarkable legacy is one of vision, compassion, and enduring impact.

THERE ARE NEW COLORS IN UNCG'S SOCCER STADIUM.

That's because the Norwegian National Football Team selected UNCG as its official Team Base Camp ahead of the 2026 World Cup, the premier international soccer event.

"We went around to see eight different places before we chose Greensboro," says Team Norway Project Manager Truls Dæhli. "We thought Greensboro was the perfect choice for us."

Greensboro Mayor Marikay Abuzuaiter says, "This selection reflects the strength of our partnerships, UNCG's outstanding facilities, and our city's commitment to international athletics." World Cup play begins in June.



STAY UPDATED



Brian Mackin, Jason Bodford, Al Bodford, Chancellor Franklin D. Gilliam, Jr., and George Hoyle '90

OUR HOME COURT

A FAMILIAR Spartan Athletics home has a new name.

Bodford Arena – the former Fleming Gym – honors Alvin "Al" Bodford and the Bodford family for their extraordinary support of Spartan Athletics. Their \$2 million commitment to Spartan Athletics, which was made in 2025, is the largest in its history.

That reflects the trust the Bodford family has in UNCG, says Jason Bodford. "UNCG is a good steward of money, and that's why the gift is unrestricted. We know that UNCG will do what's best for as many people as possible."

The arena, home to volleyball, women's basketball, and men's basketball, was first

named for Michael B. Fleming, who is still honored through the plaque on the third level of the arena. It is also the first competitive athletic facility at UNCG named

"Having a wonderful home court like this makes all the difference in the world for the players."

— ALVIN "AL" BODFORD

in recognition of philanthropic support.

The Bodfords have also profoundly impacted facilities. The Bodford Family Speed, Strength, and Conditioning Center

and the Bodford Women's Student-Athlete Lounge benefit Spartan student-athletes across many sports and build camaraderie among UNCG athletic teams. They have also given to UNCG's Student-Athlete Career Readiness Fund and the Bryan School of Business and Economics' Suit Up event.

Bodford Arena will receive upgrades including vibrant new graphics, an updated entryway and ticket office, and even a selfie station for Spartan fans and recruits. Al and Jason are both excited about the future of UNCG Athletics. "Having a wonderful home court like this makes all the difference in the world for the players," says Al.

JEROD HAASE IS NEW COACH OF MEN'S HOOPS

He comes to UNCG with over 25 years of coaching experience, including head coach stints at Stanford and The University of Alabama at Birmingham and coaching staff stints with the UNC Tar Heels and Kansas Jayhawks.

He takes over the position held by Mike Jones, who'd served five years. Haase's coaching resumé runs deep, including being part of two National Championships with the Tar Heels. He also, overall, has been part of five Final Four appearances, 12 NCAA Tournament berths, three conference tournament titles, and eight regular season championships. As a player at Kansas, he had been a First-Team Academic All-American and the Jayhawks' Male Scholar-Athlete of the Year.

"Jerod brings a wealth of Division I coaching experience across multiple conferences," Brian Mackin, director of athletics, said, noting that Haase has demonstrated a meaningful commitment to integrity, academic success, and player development, and also knows the importance of cultivating a strong fundraising network and engaging with UNCG supporters.



(l-r) Brian Mackin, Coach Jerod Haase, and Chancellor Franklin D. Gilliam, Jr.



"Of Salt and Spirit: Black Quilters in the American South" exhibition at the Weatherspoon Art Museum

STITCHES IN TIME

THREADED NARRATIVES ARE COMING ALIVE at the Weatherspoon Art Museum. Two exhibitions highlight the incredible artistry of quilting and the many roles this art form has played for Black communities in the South.

"Of Salt and Spirit: Black Quilters in the American South," organized by the Mississippi Museum of Art, and "Harriet's Powers," by Raleigh-based artist Precious D. Lovell, explore these artists' contributions.

Among the 24 quilts featured in "Of Salt and Spirit" is work by the late Gwendolyn Magee '63. Her quilts use narrative elements to create awareness of racial injustice.

"Harriet's Powers" embodies community and education – hallmarks of the Weatherspoon's

mission. Lovell created "Harriet's Powers" with elements sewn by students in UNCG's Consumer Apparel and Retail Studies program and developed its soundscape with Grammy-nominated sound designer Bill Toles and singing recorded by UNCG's PopTech students.

"Projects like 'Harriet's Powers' are one of the many things that make university art museums such special places," says Weatherspoon Associate Curator for Academic Programming Raechel Cook. "This installation was made possible by Lovell's deep artistic research and disciplinary expertise, enhanced by student collaboration."

"Harriet's Powers" is on view until July 25, and "Of Salt and Spirit" can be seen through Aug. 1.



Gwendolyn A. Magee, "When Hope Unborn Had Died," from "Lift Every Voice and Sing" series, 2004. Cotton, rayon, tissue lamé, organdy, with cotton bolls, burlap; machine pieced, appliquéed, machine quilted, 50 x 72½ x 20 inches. Collection of the Mississippi Museum of Art, Jackson, Museum purchase, with funds from the McCravey Fund, 2013.022. Photo by Gib Ford



JAMES BARNHILL RETROSPECTIVE

"The Eternal Figure," an exhibition celebrating the career of sculptor James Barnhill '82 MFA, is on view at Greensboro's Continental Club Gallery through June 5. It features nearly 30 works, both sculptures and paintings. Admission is free. The Minerva statue on campus, a gift of the Class of 1953, is just one of Barnhill's many outstanding commissioned sculptures throughout the nation. See a video created for the most recent UNCG Alumni Awards, where Barnhill, one of North Carolina's most influential artists, received the Professional Achievement Award.



Constance "Connie" Lankford Chase '76

TINSELTOWN INTERN MAKES STAR TURN

When she got her internship, she was told it would definitely not turn into a job. "They told me up front that would never happen."

But it did. Katie Lambert '16 traded her daily hunt for a McIver Deck space for a personal parking spot on the world-famous Warner Bros. Studios lot.

With diligence, she leveraged her UNCG Theatre years into a career as manager of digital marketing and design with Warner Bros.' in-house label, WaterTower Music.

"WaterTower works with film, television, and video games – all my favorite things," she says. "They were looking for someone who could handle a lot of projects at a time."

Lambert was well-prepared by her background in live theater, she says.

"The UNCG Theatre program allowed me to learn every facet of theater – building and painting sets, lighting, and even acting. I also did quite a bit of stage management."

Now, nine years later, she manages social media channels, creates graphic design and photography content, and also manages WaterTower Music's Grammy Award submissions.

Hurray for opportunities in Hollywood.



Katie Lambert '16 at Warner Bros. Studio

West Point glee

Constance "Connie" Lankford Chase '76 spent nearly 26 years as conductor of the renowned West Point Military Academy Glee Club. But before she made it to those heights, her mother had a plan for her.

"On the day I was born, my mother declared that I would attend WC. Even though by the time I graduated it was UNCG, it was always WC to my mother," she says.

Now, after a celebrated career, Connie Chase is carrying on pride in her University through the Constance Lankford Chase Scholarship

Endowment in Music, a gift she made in memory of her mother, ThomasEna "Tommie" Gandy Lankford, Woman's College Class of 1941.

During her tenure with the West Point Glee Club, she conducted in venues like Carnegie Hall and Kansas City's Kauffman Center. She was a guest conductor

at appearances with the Tabernacle Choir and Orchestra, Symphony of the Americas, and the National Choral Council's Annual Messiah Sing-In at Lincoln Center.





A WEEK AT THE G

A WEEK AT THE G captures both everyday life and once-in-a-lifetime events. This spring, UNCG celebrated the record-breaking *Light the Way* campaign. Here, students led by CVPA Assistant Professor of Commercial Voice Janinah Burnett sing to a crowd of UNCG torchbearers. The song, "Glint," was written by University Advancement's Jason Alison. Plus, he wrote the original poem it was based on five years ago for the public launch of *Light the Way*.

SING OUT The students' "You Belong" T-shirts were made to honor the naming of the Marcus T. Johnson Alumni House in Fall 2025.



**A WEEK
AT THE** 

A SHARP EYE
Corey Jordan '17, a professional photographer based in Madison, N.C., shared a unique view of campus. From the third floor of the Elliott University Center (EUC), she could stare directly into the EUC seal. Goes to show, it's all in how you look at it!



PAWS BETWEEN CLASSES
A Week at the G also captures photographs of student life, clubs, classes, and just hanging out. University Communications photographer Sean Norona '13 happened to pass musical theatre student Tatiana Ramirez on the Quad. Her matcha, puppy, and UNCG tote perfectly complemented the sunny day. Norona grabbed a shot of this picture-perfect moment in front of Shaw Hall.



CLOSING THE LOOP The biggest part of University life is the pursuit of academic excellence. Here, social work students join their professor, Daniel Rhodes '94, '08 PhD, in a peacemaking circle (a restorative justice practice) and discuss the struggles and wins that come with pursuing careers in social work.



SEE VIDEO FOR MORE PHOTOS FROM A WEEK AT THE G

A BRIGHT PATH **FORWARD**

LIGHT THE WAY WAS MORE THAN A CAMPAIGN. IT BECAME A BOLD MOVEMENT, ROOTED IN UNCG'S LEGACY OF BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS AND FOCUSED ON A BRILLIANT FUTURE. ITS IMPACT HAS TRANSFORMED GRADUATES' LIVES AND IS ONLY JUST BEGINNING.

BY MERCER BUTTER '11 MA, JO CAROL TORREZ, AND MIKE HARRIS '93 MA
ILLUSTRATION BY PATRICK LEGER '06 MFA
PHOTOGRAPHY BY SEAN NORONA '13

When *Light the Way: The Campaign for Earned Achievement* concluded on Dec. 31, 2025, it marked the triumphant end of a defining chapter for UNCG. With the support of 26,684 donors, the campaign raised \$266,186,027 for the University – surpassing its initial goal by more than 33% to become the most successful campaign in UNCG's history.

That success is already making its mark. By Spring 2026, more than 1,000 students had received scholarships created through the campaign, and thousands more will follow in the years to come.

Like the splash of a pebble, *Light the Way's* impact continues to ripple outward to strengthen families, community members, employers, and the region itself.

\$266M

**RAISED TO ELEVATE
UNCG'S FUTURE**



“This campaign reflects the grit and determination of our University community,” says Chancellor Franklin D. Gilliam, Jr. “Launched amid a pandemic and sustained through significant headwinds in higher education, we remained nimble, steadfast, and focused on our mission. Our community, including our corporate partners, stood with us because they understand that the success of UNCG is deeply connected to the prosperity of the Triad.”

That connection is measurable. UNCG generates more than \$1 billion in economic impact across the Piedmont Triad. Ranked No. 1 in North Carolina for social mobility by U.S. News & World Report, UNCG also continues to create a ladder to greater opportunity for current students and those who follow them.

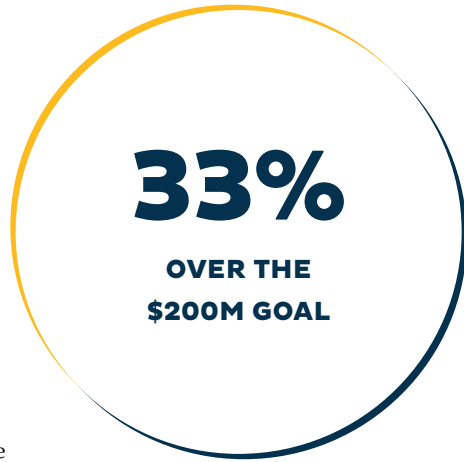
**HONORING THE PAST,
CELEBRATING THE FUTURE**

The commitment to students and to UNCG’s future came into focus on Founders Day 2021. Hundreds attended a campaign launch party at the Elliott University Center (EUC). They learned about our University’s history, *Light the Way* goals, and the campaign’s projected impact.

Chancellor Gilliam said that day, “For 130 years, UNCG has been teaching students to look forward, innovate, and break down society’s barriers – big and small. To continue on this path, we need to be bold, imaginative, and courageous. Our pursuit to transform students, knowledge, and the region is relentless. This campaign will light the way forward.”

Outside in the October sun, volunteers, including campaign co-chairs Susan Safran ’77 and Randall Kaplan spoke with students about the impact of philanthropy.

Students are always our “north star,” said Safran. Much of the support that empowers them, including scholarships, academic coaching, hands-on learning, and emergency assistance, was made possible or strengthened through *Light the Way*.



26,684
CAMPAIGN DONORS
WOULD FILL ...

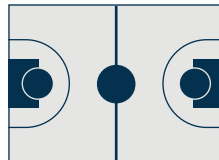
FIRST HORIZON
COLISEUM
1 TIME



UNCG SOCCER STADIUM
7 TIMES



BODFORD ARENA
15 TIMES



**NEXT STOP:
DENTAL SCHOOL**

SOMETIMES ALUMNI connections can give aspiring health care workers the perfect boost to propel them into their careers.

UNCG’s Health and Human Sciences Student Leadership Program prepares undergrads for success after graduation. It does this through a variety of leadership, professional development, and networking experiences, connecting students with alumni and community partners.

The late Sarah Shoffner ’62, ’64 MS, ’77 PhD, a professor emerita, provided funding for the new program. With her role as internship director in Human Development

and Family Studies, she recognized the power of mentoring and networking.

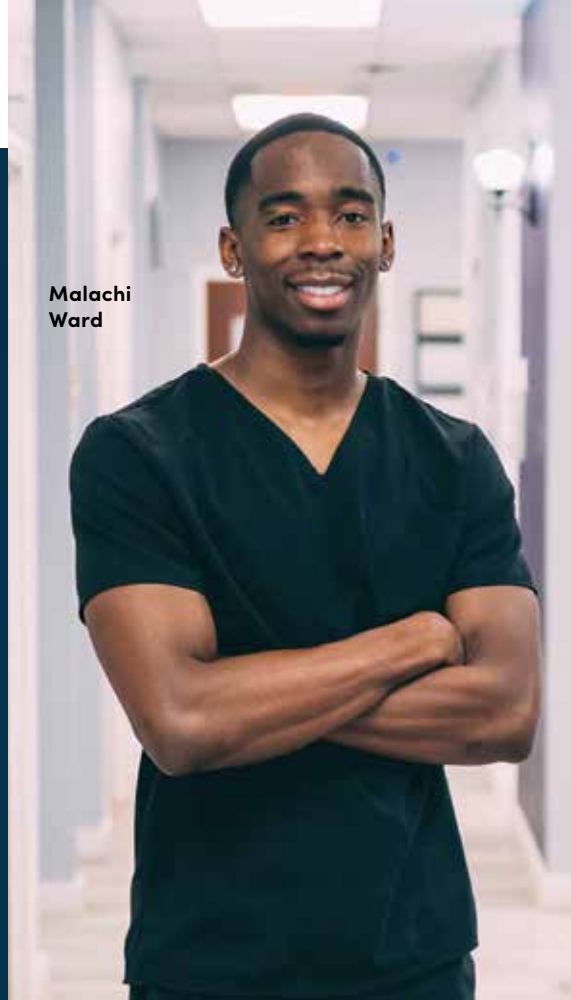
Malachi Ward was invited to the program as a sophomore considering kinesiology, but unsure.

He would participate in alumni/student events. One was at the Durham Bulls’ ballpark, where he met dentist Jamel McDuffie ’93.

In a recent interview at her clinic near Durham’s Southpoint, she recalled that alumni event. “He approached me when he found out that I was a dentist and let me know that he was interested in the field. I told him, ‘Come visit, make sure it’s something you want to do.’”

After shadowing, he became an intern last September. “I sterilize instruments. I prep for procedures. I assist in them. I received my

Malachi Ward



“
**THE STUDENT LEADERSHIP
PROGRAM GOT ME
WHERE I AM.**

— MALACHI WARD

”

X-ray certification earlier this year,” he says.

Ward will apply to several dental schools this summer. Now a human health sciences major, he’ll graduate in December.

“He’s going to be an amazing dentist,” McDuffie says.

She knew she wanted to be a dentist since eighth grade, she says. She majored in chemistry at UNCG to prepare for dental school at Howard University. She has built her dental practice in the same building for 26 years, she proudly says.

She loved her UNCG years. Her service on the UNCG Board of Visitors brings her back often to campus, where her son is now a Spartan, too. She speaks to students regularly. Conversations between alumni and students can be life-changing.

Through this program, you not only build relationships, you learn who you are as a leader, program co-leader Dr. Joi Bulls explains. And that doesn’t have to be leading a group or a health care practice; it may be leading your own life and career.

It’s all about preparing for the years after UNCG, program co-leader Larissa Witmer adds. The students become adept at talking about their professional goals and making decisions about next steps after graduation.

The future dentist puts it in perspective. “The student leadership program got me where I am.”



Dr. Jamel McDuffie '93



Malachi Ward and Dr. Jamel McDuffie '93 at her clinic near Durham’s Southpoint

OPENING DOORS TO EXCELLENCE

Safran met Amelia Hanson '25, one recipient of the prestigious Sloan Scholarship, endowed by Linda Fisher Sloan '82 MFA and Thomas R. Sloan, that day.

Hanson says the scholarship allowed her to find her way to success. "I was from a small town, a couple of hours away from Greensboro. I was able to explore and learn more about myself and then dive into the Bryan School of Business and Economics. I loved every second of it."

Music major Raven Sizemore '24 – the very first Sloan Scholar – went on to become one of the three UNC System Presidential Scholars for the 2024-25 academic year. A Spartan through and through, Sizemore returned to UNCG and enrolled in the Master of Public Administration degree program.

She was part of the class that faced the challenges of COVID-19. "I literally got my letter about receiving the Sloan Scholarship right before everything broke loose in 2020. We came, did hybrid classes, wore masks – and we made it through. By the time I got to my junior year, it really felt like I was having the college experience I'd heard about my whole life."

Today, she notes philanthropy's crucial role in her own story. "I'm living proof that donor generosity changes lives," she says. "It creates opportunity, it restores hope, and it ripples outward in ways that donors may never fully see."

CHAMPIONING RESILIENCY

Launched into the uncertainty of a global pandemic, the University remained focused

58%
OF ALL DONORS GAVE FOR FIRST TIME DURING CAMPAIGN

“WITHOUT THIS SCHOLARSHIP, I WOULD HAVE GIVEN UP BECAUSE I COULDN'T HAVE BEEN ABLE TO DO IT FINANCIALLY.”
— IRANI MOLINA-OLMEDO '26



Shameeka Wilson '18, '20 MEd

SCHOLAR'S SCHOLARSHIP

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION SCHOLAR Shameeka M. Wilson '18, '20 MEd established an endowment at UNCG in 2019 as she was finishing her master's program. Her first scholarship was awarded in 2020. This North Carolina native created the Shameeka Monay Wilson Legacy in Furthering Education (LIFE) Endowed Scholarship in Education to honor her mother and grandmother, and Wilson's own successful path to a career in education, teaching Deaf students and multilingual learners. Wilson praises UNCG for showing her the way to a career focused on helping others.

This year's scholarship recipient, Irani Molina-Olmedo '26 of Winston-Salem, agrees with Wilson's assessment of UNCG and is grateful to be a LIFE Scholar. Thanks to Wilson's generosity, this aspiring bilingual educator has focused full time on her studies and student teaching as she moves closer to her dream of becoming a teacher. "Without this scholarship, I would have given up because I couldn't have been able to do it financially," she says. Molina-Olmedo and her entire family celebrated her accomplishment at this year's Commencement ceremony.

Today, Wilson is pursuing a PhD in California as a Diversifying Academia Recruiting Excellence (DARE) fellow at Stanford University's Graduate School of Education.



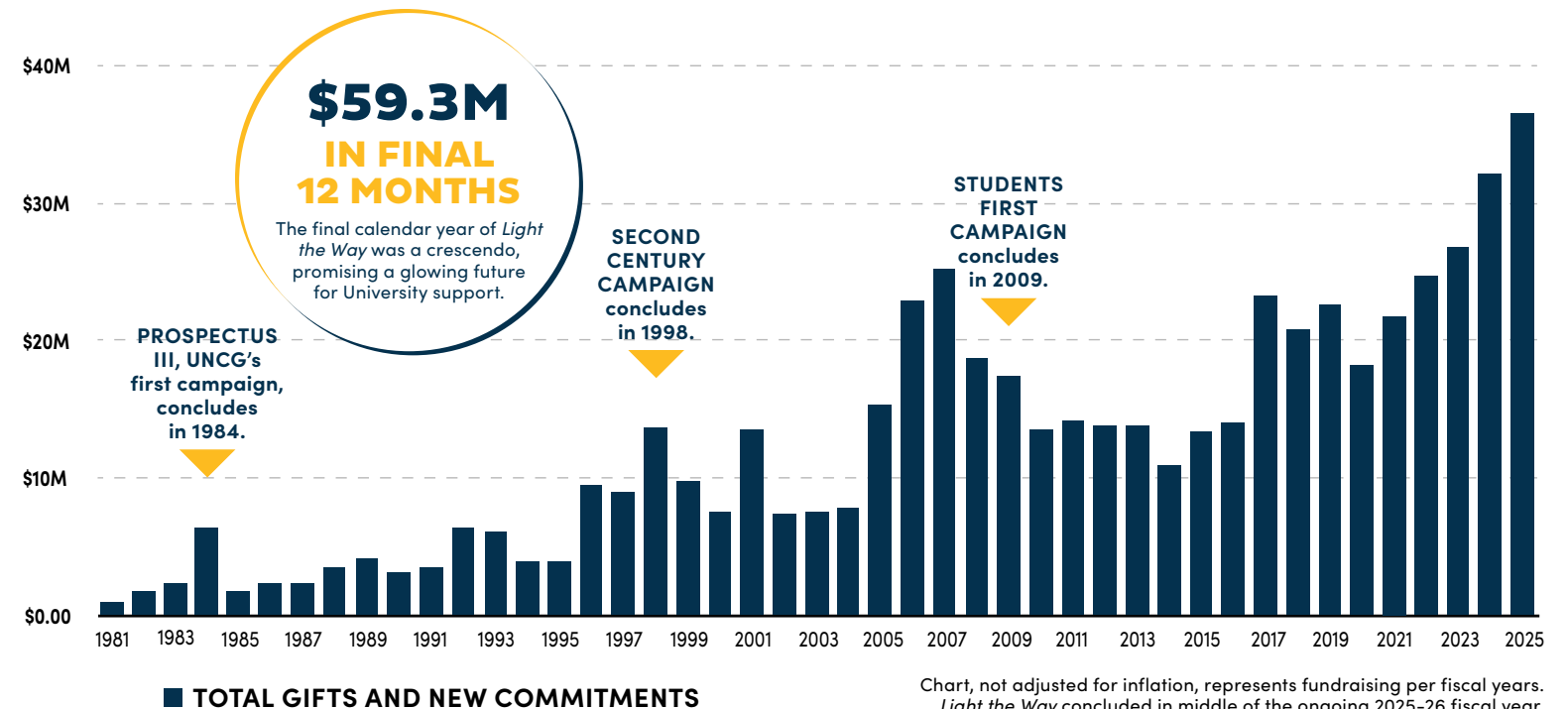
HELP JUST IN TIME

ZACK WIGGINS '25 sometimes worked four jobs a semester to attend UNCG's School of Nursing. As he inched closer to achieving his dream of becoming a registered nurse, he realized he did not have enough money for his senior-year tuition. Then good news arrived. The Tom and Paula Dille Support Fund was available to keep him on track to commencement. Thanks to the Dilles' generosity, Wiggins graduated in May 2025, passed his North Carolina Licensure exam in June, and began working full time as a registered nurse in the Emergency Department at Alamance Regional Hospital in Burlington, N.C., in July. "Without this fund, I couldn't afford to finish school," he says. "You can have the best grades, but if you can't afford to go to school, it's a struggle. This fund was life-changing for me."



“WITHOUT THIS FUND, I COULDN'T AFFORD TO FINISH SCHOOL. THIS FUND WAS LIFE-CHANGING FOR ME.”
— ZACK WIGGINS '25

GROWING MOMENTUM IN GIVING



WILSON PHOTO BY ROB SEARCEY

on delivering an innovative, 21st-century education to every Spartan.

Alumni also stepped up to support UNCG in tough times. The Student Assistance Fund for Emergencies (SAFE), created by the Class of 1967 during their 50th reunion a couple of years earlier, became a rallying point during the pandemic for donors making gifts of all sizes. The fund provided a safety net for students who faced sudden, one-time needs that could jeopardize their ability to stay in school.

Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs Cathy Akens said, “The SAFE fund allows our team to provide some relief to students who are experiencing food insecurity, housing insecurity, loss of income, a family crisis, and more. The generous gifts made by our donors will enable us to support more students and help eliminate roadblocks on their path to graduation.”

This fund continues to support today’s students. During the 2024-25 academic year, more than \$48,000 was used to keep students in school.

The Minerva Rescue Grant was also created during *Light the Way* to help students weather unexpected storms by providing timely financial support to prevent withdrawal.

Simply put, UNCG donors rose to the occasion and met needs again and again throughout the campaign.

BOLD IDEAS AND A STRONG FOUNDATION

We achieved success by taking “Giant Steps” – the name of UNCG’s 2017-24 strategic plan.

As he spoke with alumni and the campus community in the early years of his tenure, Chancellor Gilliam used a metaphor alluding to the transformative impact of Guilford County native and jazz legend John Coltrane.

“His song wasn’t just called ‘Giant Steps,’ it made giant steps,” Gilliam told audiences. “The harmonic progressions it utilized were revolutionary for Western music. And with this song Coltrane changed the fabric of jazz.”

That concept of purposeful change helped guide what came next.

Surveys and focus groups of alumni and the campus community revealed the core traits of UNCG and its people: A roll-up-your-sleeves ethic. Real-world impact. Access to



Taylor Cormier '25

FACULTY GIFT HELPS FIRST-GEN SCHOLAR SOAR

TAYLOR CORMIER '25 is excited to combine the modern dance skills she perfected in UNCG’s College of Visual and Performing Arts with the second degree she is earning in the Department of Health and Human Sciences (HHS) thanks to a scholarship from professor emeritus Dr. Cheryl Ann Buehler and Rick Tunkel.

Established in 2024, the You’re the Future Endowed Scholarship Fund supports first-generation undergraduates majoring in Human Development and Family Studies in HHS. Cormier says the fund is helping lift her financial burden as she pursues her dream of owning her own clinical practice.

“As a first-generation, out-of-state student who doesn’t come from a family with great financial means, I can’t express how much this scholarship means to me. It is helping me avoid taking out loans while I finish school, and it is truly a blessing that I hope to give back in some way someday so other students can achieve their dreams too.”

DISTINGUISHED PROFESSORSHIP EXPANDS IMPACT

UNCG’S DR. SUSAN KEANE is the Candace Bernard and Robert Glickman Distinguished Professor in Psychology, and the endowed professorship lets her maximize opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students in the psychology department.

When undergraduate Roba Hussein’s research presentation was accepted at a professional conference, Keane was able to provide travel funds thanks to the professorship.

Keane co-wrote a peer-reviewed post for InfoAboutKids with doctoral candidate Melina Sneesby. Drawing from Sneesby’s experiences at Cone Pediatrics, they wrote about a diagnosis that can be scary for parents and published it where par-

ents could benefit from it.

Keane is a mentor for many, and mentorship makes a difference in careers – and lives. She collaborated on a challenging case at the UNCG Psychology Clinic, which provides services for individuals both on and off campus, with doctoral student Crystal Thinzar.

Thinzar worked with a family to reduce their child’s anxiety around medical procedures, and the child’s mother reported great improvement. “That’s an example of how the clinic does great training for our trainees and has a real-life impact on families,” says Keane.

Keane first bonded with Candace Bernard ’67 over their passion for Dream Camp, a program for children with social difficulties. Applying UNCG’s expertise in that way is an example of the community-engaged scholarship that the Bernard-Glickman family is dedicated to.

Keane says their impact will shape the department for years to come. “I consider Candy and Robert as truly transformational agents. The distinguished professorship will be influential in attracting and retaining talented faculty to UNCG and will shape additional opportunities that define what being a professor is all about: teaching, research, and service.”



(l-r) Melina Sneesby, Crystal Thinzar, and Roba Hussein



Dr. Susan Keane

THE DISTINGUISHED PROFESSORSHIP WILL BE INFLUENTIAL IN ATTRACTING AND RETAINING TALENTED FACULTY TO UNCG AND WILL SHAPE ADDITIONAL OPPORTUNITIES THAT DEFINE WHAT BEING A PROFESSOR IS ALL ABOUT.

— DR. SUSAN KEANE



SEE VIDEO

12 DISTINGUISHED PROFESSORSHIPS CREATED Jennifer Smith Hooks & Jacob T. Hooks Distinguished Professorship in STEM Education • Safrin-Ennis Distinguished Professorship in Kinesiology • Candace Bernard & Robert Jay Glickman Distinguished Professorship in Psychology • Randall Kaplan Distinguished Professorship in Innovation • Dylan Rose Kadis & Eloise Hall Kadis Distinguished Professorship in Women’s, Gender & Sexuality Studies • Susan Morris Safran Distinguished Professorship in Nursing • Ella Fitzgerald Distinguished Professorship in Jazz Studies • Carol G. Marsh Distinguished Professorship in Music • Elizabeth Triplette Beam Excellence Professorship in Music • Jerome Evenson Distinguished Professorship in Artificial Intelligence in Education • Two established by anonymous donors

academic excellence. Those traits became the campaign's pillars.

Access, excellence, and impact were the guiding lights of *Light the Way*. All campaign gifts supported one or more of those three things.

And the University continued to evolve as the campaign progressed.

UNCG's academic mission is growing even stronger and more innovative, says Provost Alan Boyette. "There are important conversations happening on campus about ways we can better marry our research foci with learning opportunities for students that directly connect with promising career paths."

That momentum is reflected in Forward Together, UNCG's strategic plan introduced in 2024, which outlines the institution's vision through the end of the decade.

The plan prioritizes student well-being and achieving the highest rates of degree attainment among our peer universities – getting students from underrepresented backgrounds into the middle class and beyond. It also aims to elevate faculty research and discovery, building on our strength in community-focused scholarship while forging new partnerships. And we'll do this with operational excellence and responsible stewardship.

This plan is supported by the outpouring of investment in *Light the Way*.

Funds raised and pledged will expand student access to education, cultivate faculty excellence, and deepen the profound impact of Spartan programs.

While gradual change is natural, this campaign represents something more. *Light the Way's* transformative impact has been achieved through bold vision and steely determination –

and it has been built on a strong foundation of philanthropic support at UNCG.

FORGING A TRADITION OF PHILANTHROPY

UNCG's first comprehensive campaign, Prospectus III, launched in the 1980s with the mission of building a culture of philanthropy at the University. By its conclusion in late 1984, it had raised \$13.5 million (about \$34 million in today's dollars) and sparked a renewed spirit of giving and community at UNCG. Then-chancellor William Moran understood the relationship between donor support and institutional success, saying, "Upon the success of the campaign depend the high aspirations of our University."

The Second Century Campaign, co-chaired by Mike Weaver and Adelaide Holderness '34, came on the heels of the campus' centennial celebration. When it concluded in 1998, it had raised more than \$55 million (in today's dollars, more than \$110 million), created 77 scholarships and fellowships, established seven distinguished professorships, and inspired more than 18,000 gifts.

The next campaign, Students First, concluded in 2009 after raising \$115 million (roughly \$175 million today). Co-chaired by Linda Carlisle '72 and Norman and Sylvia Samet, the campaign enhanced student recruitment, supported those with the greatest need, and elevated faculty. Then-chancellor Patricia Sullivan laid out a goal that still resonates: "Our vision for the future of UNCG is to be a leading, diverse, student-centered

3,738
GRADUATES OF
THE LAST DECADE GAVE
TO LIGHT THE WAY

60.7%
WERE ALUMNI DONORS



Natalia Fagundez '25

INSPIRATIONAL EDUCATOR

IN HER FIRST YEAR as an exceptional children's teacher at Southern Guilford High School, Natalia Fagundez '25 works to help students advance their math skills.

While at UNCG, Fagundez – who majored in special education with minors in American Sign Language and Spanish – was the recipient of multiple scholarships, including the Teacher Education Fellows (now Spartan Education Scholars).

She was among the students recognized with the inaugural School of Education's Student Excellence Award. That award was created through donations given to the school's Inspirational Educators initiative, begun during *Light the Way*.

More than 220 individuals have given to the program, where donors may honor those teachers who had meant the most to them.

Fagundez recognizes that without donor support, many students would not be able to follow their dreams of becoming an educator. She says, "It's inspiring to know that there are still people who believe so strongly about education and its values. It's a reminder to me to keep going and to keep doing my best."

Looking back at her own journey, Fagundez thought about a mentor at Holly Springs High School who she did not even have for class, but who made an effort to get to know students. This teacher's ability to lift them and support them, both academically and personally, is something that Fagundez hopes to emulate.

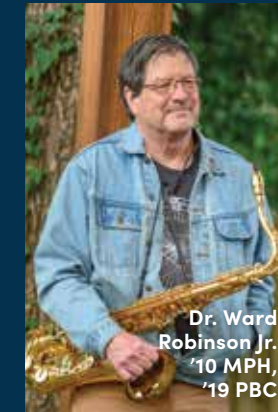
– CHRIS RASH



The CR Quartet rehearses with (from left) leader and jazz guitarist Cal Richardson, sax player Angel McCray, drummer Alston Harris, and bass player Tyson Baker.

JAZZ SCHOLAR'S JAMS

AS THE ONLY CHILD OF EAST CAROLINA UNIVERSITY music professors, Cal Richardson '26 grew up immersed in classical music. He began violin at age 3 and picked up the electric guitar at 12, quickly falling in love with the instrument after his mother, Dr. Amy Carr-Richardson, taught him basic chords, and his parents rewarded his practice with an amplifier. Their support helped him develop his own path as a jazz guitarist, teacher, and composer. His first jazz tutor, Devin Frazier, sparked his devotion to the genre.



Dr. Ward Robinson Jr. '10 MPH, '19 PBC

In UNCG's Miles Davis Jazz Studies program, Richardson has advanced his musical career with support from

the Robinson Family Scholarship Endowment in Jazz Studies. Established in 2018 by UNCG alumnus and retired physician Ward Robinson Jr., the endowment recognizes students with exceptional academic, artistic, and professional promise.

Recruited by several prestigious music schools and offered full scholarships, Richardson chose UNCG for its innovative jazz program, which emphasizes mentorship, real-world performance, and a collaborative, immersive learning environment. He says Robinson's gifts to the school have been life-changing for its recipients.

"It is a wonderful initiative that helps students afford school and focus on their music careers, and Dr. Robinson's gifts have a great impact, especially his sponsorship of guest artists who are world-class musicians brought in to work with us," Richardson says. "Being able to learn and perform with these artists is amazingly helpful and wonderful."

ACCESS TO ART

DR. JOHN BORCHERT is exploring ways 3D technology intersects with physical art and classroom pedagogy as the third Margaret and Bill Benjamin Faculty Fellow at the Weatherspoon Art Museum.

With the world becoming more digital, now is the time to think about the benefits of using technology, Borchert says. "It allows for a new level of participation and interactivity with art, cultural artifacts, and historic figures."

That could mean more access to art for community members, he adds.

"All your archived materials are now readily available in a digital space. If you want greater public access to art and greater art appreciation, those technologies make that possible."



Dr. John Borchert

research university that is a university of first choice for undergraduates and graduate students.”

That core vision has not changed. And with *Light the Way* building on these earlier efforts, the Spartan spirit of giving – of investing “time and treasure” into the University – has reached a new level.

GROWING THE CULTURE OF GIVING

From the outset, *Light the Way* sought to engage Spartans at every level by encouraging gifts of all sizes, from \$5 to millions. The results tell the story of a community invested in its own future:

- 58% of *Light the Way* donors were first-time donors.
- 3,738 donors were “graduates of the last decade” – young and recent alumni.
- People gave what they could – 85,505 gifts under \$1,000 were given.
- 236 scholarships were created.
- 244 new program funds were created. These support specific goals or uses in designated academic, research, or operational programs.
- 12 new distinguished professorships were created – a 29% increase for the University.
- Over 60% of *Light the Way* donors were UNCG graduates.

“Alumni have played a powerful role in the success of this campaign,” says George Hoyle ’90, chair of the UNCG Board of Trustees. “They are deeply rooted in this region. Their impact is a testament to UNCG’s legacy, and their support of this campaign demonstrates the confidence we share in UNCG’s mission.”

One reason alumni stay involved is to “pay it forward.” Nearly 5,000 donors to *Light the Way* had been scholarship recipients at UNCG themselves.

Current, former, and retired faculty and staff were fully engaged as well, giving more than \$25 million

244
PROGRAM FUNDS
WERE CREATED



MY FAVORITE THING IS TO ATTEND AN EVENT AND SEE A FORMER STUDENT. I LOVE HEARING HOW THEY LOOK BACK ON THEIR TIME AT UNCG, AND HOPE THAT ONE DAY, THEY TOO CAN GIVE BACK.

– BURGIN ROSS '74, '08 MS



236
SCHOLARSHIPS
WERE CREATED



Cecil Barlow '26

LIFE-CHANGING FELLOWSHIP

“RESEARCH WAS A GREAT PASSION of mine, and it still is,” says Cecil Barlow '26, who was Special Collections and University Archives' Martha Blakeney Hodges Research Fellow during the 2024-25 academic year. “When I received the notification, I was ecstatic because I knew it was going to change my life.”

For Barlow, a classical studies major, the Hodges Fellowship was a chance to research topics outside his typical historical period, but not outside his interests. “I research topics that center women’s themes, women’s stories, and women’s struggles.”

Barlow learned skills from grant writing to digitizing 20th century scrapbooks. The result of his work, “Lip Service: Exploring Ineffective and Problematic Women’s Health, Wellness, and Self-Care Remedies from 1800-Present,” received the 2025 University Libraries Research Award.

“Without the Hodges Fellowship, I would not have the research skills I have now. Not only the funding, but also the structure of the program meant I had the freedom to learn how to be a researcher.”

There was also a great deal of interpersonal support from University Libraries, he says. “It’s an incredible community of people who are kind and helpful. I was fully empowered to dig into my research.”



SEE VIDEO

FUTURE IN DANCE

She had studied dance on the same campus in the 1940s, just as its dance program was blossoming, learning under legendary and beloved dance professor Virginia Moomaw. Afterward, she spent 20 years at Wellesley College, UC Berkeley, and UCLA and taught at the Pasadena Playhouse in Pasadena, Calif., where she was the choreographer for the resident theater company. She also performed professionally with dance companies in San Francisco and Los Angeles. She never forgot her alma mater, attending Moomaw’s 90th birthday party.

This past year, the inaugural class of Pyatt Scholars was introduced. Tiffany Hale, Zaniyya Hardnett, Somer Harris, Blythe Sheppard, and Grace Wiggins have a passion for the art form – and their own career aspirations.

“I’m excited to see where dance takes me!” Wiggins says.

“Each of these students brings something distinct to our program,” says School of Dance Director Lee Walton. “They are inspiring artists and it’s deeply rewarding to see the Pyatt Scholarship support them and open doors for many more students to come. Its impact will be felt across our dance community for years.”

And with this historic scholarship, a school that has featured figures like Moomaw, Dr. Jan Van Dyke ’89 EdD, John Gamble, Duayne Cyrus, and Sue Stinson is elevated once again, boosting its reputation for excellence.



BLYTHE SHEPPARD wants to perform and choreograph – and teach in the dance classroom

IT WAS A TRANSFORMATIVE GIFT for scholarships, the largest UNCG’s School of Dance has ever received.

When the late Mary Jean Pyatt ’49 made a testamentary commitment of \$1 million to create the Mary Jean Pyatt Scholarship in Dance, she knew what it would mean to aspiring dancers.



SOMER HARRIS wants to perform on Broadway and open her own studio



ZANIYYA HARDNETT dreams of Broadway and traveling the world as a teacher



TIFFANY HALE plans to perform professionally and lead her own dance collective



GRACE WIGGINS aspires to be a dance educator in North Carolina and also perform

to support UNCG programs and Spartan students.

That commitment to both students and the fate of a campus is what makes UNCG faculty different, says Laura Pipe, director of the University Teaching and Learning Commons. “What I have learned at UNCG over any other place I’ve worked – and I have worked at some other institutions that are in our peer category – is that our faculty are here because our students are remarkable.”

The culture of care extends beyond financial support. “We are a community that believes in who we are,” says Vice Chancellor for University Advancement Beth Fischer. “Our motto is Service, and it is in our DNA.”

She notes that one of the campaign’s most meaningful outcomes has been strengthening the culture of philanthropy on campus. “From Blue, Gold, and Grateful Week to Believe in the G, we’ve created new traditions and helped students understand the way that donor generosity shapes their Spartan experience. We have incredible momentum, and we’re building on it.”

UNCG has also strengthened its volunteer leadership during *Light the Way*.

Burgin Ross ’74, ’08 MS volunteers because UNCG was instrumental to her personal growth.

“I graduated at a time when the country was at war, there was civil unrest, racial injustice, and a great deal of change happening in society. The campus was a ‘safe space’ to discuss what was happening, express opinions, and form adult values around world events. UNCG provided me with a high-quality education, along with life skills that made a difference.”

After a career as a registered dietitian/nutritionist, she reengaged with the UNCG community through professional organizations.

“I felt valued as a graduate and began to think of other ways to give back,” she says. “Eventually, I was given the opportunity to teach in the Nutrition Department.”

Now retired from her faculty role, she still sees the same ideals in the UNCG community that first nurtured her as an undergraduate.

18.5%

OF ALL DONORS HAD BEEN SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

BUSINESS SUCCESS

DANIEL RUST’S ENTHUSIASM FOR UNCG is palpable, and he happily promotes the University every chance he gets. Rust found his way to the Bryan School of Business and Economics thanks to his determination to attend the best school possible and become the person he envisioned: an exceptional problem solver that businesses want and communities need.

Today, this 2020 graduate with a BS in economics and a minor in Spanish, and the MBA he received in 2022, praises UNCG for its supportive environment, outstanding faculty, innovative curriculum, and robust professional development opportunities.

He credits his success to being one of the first recipients of the Bryan School’s Routh Patterson Scholarship Endowment. Founded by alumna Phoebe Routh Patterson ’85 and her husband, Anthony, the endowment supports exceptional Bryan School undergraduates based on academic merit. Rust says that honor confirmed he made the right decision to be a Spartan.

“Receiving this scholarship confirmed that I belonged at UNCG,” he says. “Knowing someone believed in my potential gave me the confidence to invest in my education and future fully. The Pattersons’ wonderful gift unlocked so many opportunities for me and helped launch my career.”

In 2017, Rust was also a member of the inaugural class of the Bryan School’s highly touted Blueprint Series, a groundbreaking mandatory 4-credit course curriculum designed to equip all undergraduates with the employability skills needed to flourish in an ever-changing world. Like hundreds of other Bryan School undergraduates, Rust found the series transformative and credits the skills he learned in it to his internship with the Brooks Group and now his current role as a national computer sales executive with Lenovo.

Rust channels his zeal for UNCG as a student mentor and as a member of the Bryan School Alumni Board. “The relationships I built with my fellow students and faculty were top-tier, and I deeply appreciated the open and flexible environment at UNCG that allowed me to explore so many opportunities to succeed,” he says.

AT JUST 33, TIA WIGGINS ’07 established the Tia S. Wiggins Endowed Scholarship Fund, which has supported 13 students since 2019. Those students are known as “Tia’s Circle.” Camiya Royster ’23 is a proud member. “It was incredibly meaningful to connect with someone who has given back so generously to the University. Ms. Wiggins’ support has felt so personal, and she is always willing to take the time out to support me.”

Wiggins supports students who take ownership in their own success with a balance of academics, financial, and community leadership. That’s how Wiggins describes her own mindset. “Even if you’re not born into philanthropy, you can create a pathway to do it. I believe in seed planting and watering it with different components – exposure, sponsorship, and experience. You can intentionally change the trajectory of someone’s life with your own resources and make an impact – and you don’t have to be a millionaire or billionaire.” Wiggins hopes to gather all of Tia’s Circle together one day.

“The vision is to host a tea party with the scholars, so they can lean into their own ‘agency’ as one powerful group of ladies and inspire each other to build a bigger vision,” she says. “I cannot wait to see where life takes them – as they are worth it.”



Curator Raechel Kaleki Cook (middle) works with Spartan students from ART 140.

THE WEATHERSPOON’S ART OF LEARNING

SINCE THE CAMPAIGN’S PUBLIC LAUNCH, faculty research and teaching at the Weatherspoon Art Museum have blossomed.

Gifts from Margaret Benjamin, Nancy Hoffmann, Carol Cole Levin, an anonymous donor, and many others have enabled the Weatherspoon to more fully realize its teaching mission, says Juliette Bianco, Anne and Ben Cone Memorial Endowed Director and Associate Vice Chancellor for Museums and Creative Practice. It’s been a transformation. This ranges from critical building improvements to endowed staff dedicated to academic programming to faculty fellowships and public-facing research and learning.

“What feels especially powerful is how holistic and strategic this vision was: Donors invested not in a single project, but in an integrated ecosystem that now supports student- and community-impacting teaching, research, and programming at every level,” Bianco adds.

TRAVEL ... TOGETHER

Crowdfunding gives supporters of specific programs or initiatives the chance to band together to raise money. For nearly five years, UNCG’s Spartans Give has helped parts of the University like the Department of Ancient Mediterranean Studies and Archaeology (AMSA) meet their goals.

AMSA’s 2025 study-abroad campaign nearly tripled its fundraising goal – raising over \$15,000 from 74 donors. That allowed seven students to travel to Greece for archaeological fieldwork and one to go to New York City to study ancient Greek tragedy and museum collections.

“These experiences change our students

by making them more confident, more inspired by what they can do with their degrees, and more open to the wider world. This in turn is slowly but surely changing our community,” says Dr. Joanne Murphy, department head and director of the Kea Archaeological Research Survey, located in Greece.

Murphy has led the field school program since 2012. For students, it’s a transformative experience. “Many of our students haven’t traveled much before, and they definitely haven’t traveled with specialist archaeologists,” Murphy says. “I want them to make their worlds as big as they can.”

– SAM LOGAN ’22 MPA



UNCG students at an archaeological expedition on the Greek island of Kea

"I am proud of how UNCG has grown, how it has embraced diversity, and how everyone has a place at the table," she says. "Serving on the HHS Alumni Leadership Council just feels right!"

AN ENDURING MARK ON CAMPUS

The impact of *Light the Way* will be seen for generations, perhaps most visibly through the new names of spaces and buildings around campus. Supporters of the University have literally put their names – or names of those who inspired them – on the map.

Last fall, the Marcus T. Johnson Alumni House was named in recognition of an alumnus' extraordinary support and a historic campaign gift, celebrating UNCG's past while looking to its future.

Events like the Red Carpet Reception, which honors graduates each semester, are hosted in its Oakley Family Reception Room, named in honor of another *Light the Way* gift. Betsy Oakley '69, former chair of the Board of Trustees, has served the University in many ways, including as a leader of the Prospectus III campaign.

Pam and David Sprinkle's generosity provided one of the first named spaces in the campaign, the Pam and David Sprinkle Theatre.

For David, it's all about commitment. "Philanthropy to us is sharing not just our financial blessings, but all our blessings – our energy, our skills, our time, and our love of life. To those whom

CHEER THEM ON

JEB BURNS '08 MED AND HIS WIFE, MOLLY, are committed to Spartan success. From philanthropic support of Spartan Athletics to University Libraries, their impact is wide.

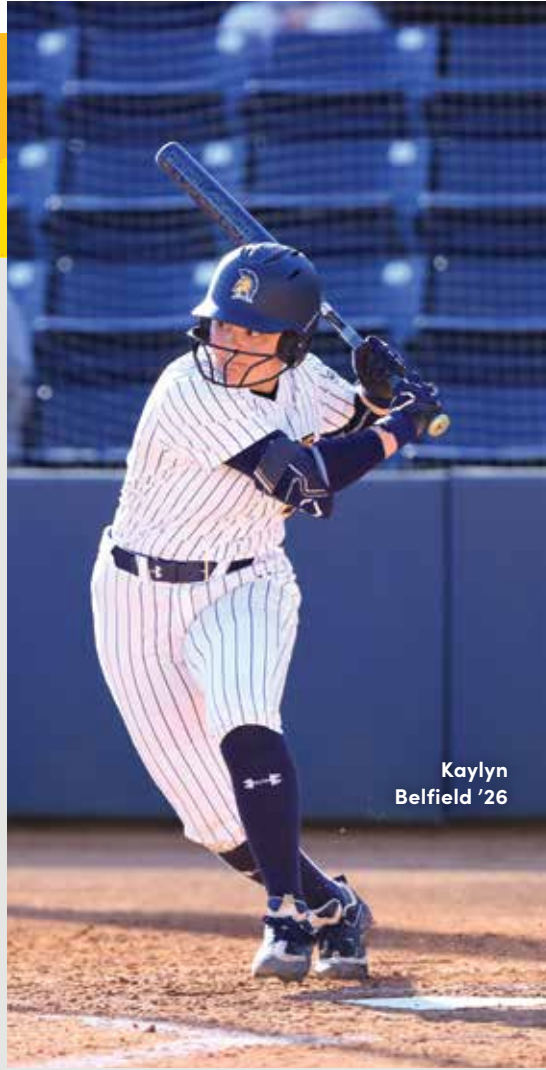
One example is UNCG Softball's Kaylyn Belfield '26, whose .431 batting average in 2024 broke the University's single-season record. This May, she earned her degree from the Bryan School of Business and Economics.

Molly Burns says Spartans like Belfield inspire her. "It is easy to cheer for positive kids who are eager to get a degree and make a difference in the world."

Belfield says being a student-athlete is both a blessing and a challenge.

"It means embracing responsibility both on and off the field.

Being a Spartan is about more than just competing in games; it's about representing something bigger than yourself and striving to be a leader



Kaylyn Belfield '26

in every area of life. Through softball, I've learned discipline, perseverance, and how to serve others as a teammate and leader," she says.

Belfield is taking those lessons with her as she moves into the next phase of her life. "I hope to pursue a career where I can use what I've learned through economics and athletics to make a positive impact on others."

1K+
STUDENTS HAVE RECEIVED *LIGHT THE WAY* SCHOLARSHIPS SO FAR

SHARED PURPOSE Through *Light the Way*, UNCG has strengthened corporate and foundation partnerships grounded in workforce development. "These partners understand what we know to be true: the success of UNCG and the success of the Triad are deeply intertwined," Chancellor Gilliam says. Arch MI • Edward M. Armfield Foundation • Cemala Foundation • UnitedHealthcare • LabCorp Charitable Foundation • The Community Foundation of Greater Greensboro • Cone Health • Cone Health Foundation • Kontoor Brand • Syngenta • Bedford Falls Foundation • The Jewish Foundation of Greensboro • Blue Bell Foundation • The Volvo Group (North America) • Mary Stedman Covington Foundation • Lincoln Financial • Bank of America • Lettie Pate Whitehead Foundation • Pepsi Bottling Ventures • and many others

36
SPACES WERE NAMED DURING CAMPAIGN



The Robert and Jacqueline Metzger Atrium honors the parents of Dr. Stephanie G. Metzger '84

NAMES AND PLACES

THIRTY-SIX SPACES ON CAMPUS BEAR NEW NAMES, saluting donors or those they honor. Behind each is an outstanding Spartan story. More than half of these newly named spaces have the names of alumni.

That represents something meaningful, Chancellor Gilliam notes. These alumni are not only giving back, but are shaping the campus that shaped them.

Just one example? The Nursing and Instructional Building now has six named spaces. Dr. Stephanie G. Metzger '84 honored the school's founding dean, Dr. Eloise R. Lewis, the nationally lauded figure who had a profound impact on her career path, with the naming of the Dean's Suite. The building's distinctive atrium was

also funded by Metzger. It's named for her parents, Robert and Jacqueline Metzger.

The Student Skills Practice Lab is named for Barbara and Dale Phipps '82, '86. Glenda Schillinger '82 honored her parents, Glen (Ret. USAF Msgt.) and Mildred Jensen, through the Veterans' Student Lounge. The Remsburg / Chamings Deans' Terrace was funded by Dr. Patricia Chamings and Dr. Robin Remsburg '82 MSN, former deans.

And the Hagan Family Intensive Care Simulation Lab was given by the Hagan Family Fund. The family has longstanding connections to the campus, back to its earliest years.

The gifts transform. The names' stories will continue to inspire.

NEWEST NAMES

EVENSONS FUND EDUCATORS

THE LARGEST GIFT in UNCG's history will transform its School of Education and elevate Jewish Studies.

Harriet Shain, who graduated from Woman's College in 1953, and husband Jerome "Jack" Evenson served as dedicated teachers in Arlington, Va.

Longtime supporters of UNCG, in 2005 they established the Harriet Shain and Jerome Evenson Endowed Scholarship in Education – a reflection of Harriet's deep belief in the transformative power of great teachers.

"When she passed away last year, she still carried her 1952 student ID in her wallet – more than 70 years later," says Beth Fischer, vice chancellor for advancement. "That tells you every-

thing about what this place meant to her."

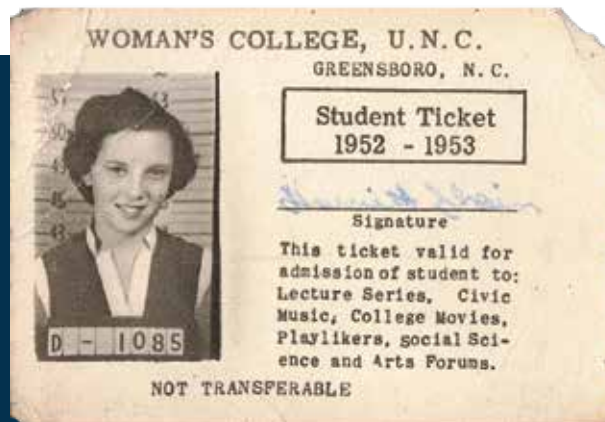
Her attorney, in reviewing the contents of Harriet's safety deposit box, discovered a treasure trove of original stock certificates.

Harriet's final act of generosity totals more than \$13 million.

It will significantly strengthen the Evenson Scholarship, which has already supported 49 students.

It will establish the Jerome Evenson Distinguished Professorship in Artificial Intelligence in Education, ensuring that future educators are prepared to lead in our rapidly evolving world.

Her gift will also uplift Jewish Studies at UNCG by bringing new voices and



perspectives to campus and supporting research that deepens understanding of Jewish life and culture.

"We are humbled to honor her memory and celebrate the light she has left on this campus," says UNCG Chancellor Franklin D. Gilliam, Jr.

NEW NAME: Harriet Shain and Jerome Evenson School of Education Building



FULFILLING A DREAM

CANDY CHAMBERS' journey to becoming a teacher began in her aunt's dining room, where the 9-year-old wrote lesson plans on a mirror using washable markers to teach her brothers and cousins.

This first-generation Spartan in the School of Education graduates this year with a degree in elementary education. The Eloise N. Eller 1965 Scholarship in Education has helped relieve Chambers' financial burden, which she describes as a godsend.

Her journey began in 2012, when this single mom started studying at Guilford Technical Community College (GTCC) while raising an infant daughter and working full time, six days a week. She met her husband, had two sons, earned an associate's degree from GTCC in 2024, and transferred to UNCG. Pretending to be a teacher helped hone her love of the classroom, and Chambers knew precisely how she would achieve her goal at UNCG.

After a chaotic childhood watching family suffer imprisonment and drug abuse, Chambers survived thanks to her aunt's resilience and hard work, and to her teachers' unwavering encouragement. Their impact helped fuel her passion for teaching and helping others.

"I want to be that shining light for other students who don't have that at home, or who may be going through what I went through. I am so grateful to the Ellers for helping me achieve my dream."

I WANT TO BE THAT SHINING LIGHT FOR OTHER STUDENTS WHO MAY BE GOING THROUGH WHAT I WENT THROUGH.

— CANDY CHAMBERS '26

MUSIC MAKERS

CONNIE KOTIS '65, '77 MM, '25 LITTD (HON) and her husband, Bill, have stood by this University for more than four decades.

Her impact in music has been stellar. The first Spartan to receive a master of music degree in applied music-piano accompanying, she taught music on the high school and university levels. In 1983, she joined the Greensboro Music

Academy, now known as the Music Academy of North Carolina, as co-founder and chair of its piano division. In 2016, she was named Teacher of the Year by the North Carolina Music Teachers Association.

Moved by the program that helped shape Connie's career and artistic journey, they have elevated their generous commitment, ensuring even more students' dreams come true. And the School of Music now bears her name.



NEW NAME: Constance Hughes Kotis School of Music

THEATER TROUPERS

CHARLENE MOSKAL-BURGES, a 1961 graduate of Woman's College, spent her life uplifting the arts.

She and her husband, Bill, were longtime supporters of UNCG. Though they are no longer with us, Bill made certain that her love for theater education would live on. The newly named school will be a shining legacy that will inspire performers and storytellers for generations.



Charlene Moskal-Burges '61

NEW NAME: Charlene Moskal-Burges and Bill Burges School of Theatre

much is given, much is expected," he says.

During *Light the Way*, 20 spaces on campus were named for alumni or by alumni.

These gifts have shaped the places where students study and work every day, each carrying a story behind its name.

The campus' roots also give us inspiration.

In 2023, through the power of collective giving, the University installed the Woman's College Tribute, anchored by the "Astera" sculpture. Woman's College was the top public college for women in the nation, and its graduates continue to serve as beacons of light.

Many WC alumnae attended the Spring 2023 dedication. Betsy Oakley told those gathered on Stone Lawn, "The WC alumnae were bold pioneers. They were trailblazers. WC graduates have made an enormous impact on our region, our state, our nation, and indeed the world."

That impact still resounds through the spirit of *Light the Way*.

IGNITING A NEW ERA FOR UNCG

At a campaign-closing event in March, *Light the Way* campaign co-chairs Randall Kaplan and Susan Safran, along with UNCG leaders, campaign torchbearers, and friends of the University, gathered to celebrate all that has been accomplished.

Thousands were on hand – many of them students who'd already benefited – to see those results written in the sky, the first drone light show in Greensboro's history.

Kaplan summed up the campaign's success. "Together, we have strengthened student access, advanced academic excellence, and expanded the impact of programs across the University. It is impossible to truly define the full reach of this effort."

Safran, moved by the students' cheers, looked ahead with unmistakable hope. "Nothing embodies the future more powerfully than our students," she said.

For more campaign stories and information, visit lighttheway.uncg.edu.



Poetry goes full circle

This is a story of two Spartan MFA poets, born six decades apart.

Sage Short '26 MFA, a Myrtle Beach native with roots in West Virginia, grew up in post-9/11 America. After graduating from Coastal Carolina University, she got a master's at Clemson, where she was assistant editor of the South Carolina Review. There, she was awarded the English department's best thesis award and their award for excellence in teaching.

"I've always wanted to be a teacher," she says.

And poetry is her calling, too. Inspired by a former professor of hers, Dan Albergotti '02 MFA, she came for her MFA in Creative Writing at UNCG, where teaching is part of the process. A McAllister Scholarship helped make it possible.

In her second year of the program, she was appointed poetry editor of The Greensboro Review.

And she was named the inaugural recipient of the Kelly Cherry MFA in Creative Writing Endowed Graduate Fellowship, with its helpful funding.

An alumna who earlier blazed a similar path, Kelly Cherry '67 MFA had grown up in the 1940s-50s wartime and post-WWII era. "For Cherry, poetry was a way of knowing; a way of testing what is real with the discipline of a scientist or philosopher, but never at the expense of the heart," says Terry Kennedy '99 MFA, director of UNCG's MFA Program in Creative Writing. "Some of that may trace back to her mentor, Fred Chappell, though in her work it becomes wholly her own."

Not only a prolific poet, but novelist, essayist, and literary critic, she found teaching was her passion, too. She served as professor for 22 years at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. After retirement there, she continued to teach at various universities.

The poet laureate of Virginia (2010-12) published 30 books. She received the UNCG Alumni Award of Distinction in 2009. Through a planned gift, she established the scholarship in 2016.

Had Short read Cherry's work? She tells the story: Years ago, Albergotti encouraged her to attend a writers' conference, and there she spied a Kelly Cherry book of poetry at a display for Greensboro's



First Kelly Cherry Fellowship holder Sage Short '26 MFA



Kelly Cherry '67 MFA

Unicorn Press, run by Andrew Saulters '08 MFA. The distinctive cover piqued her interest. Having never read her work, Short read the first poem.

"Oh wow," she reacted, and bought the book. Today, the inaugural Kelly Cherry Fellow still has it on her bookshelf.

A full circle moment – and perfectly poetic.

PROFESSOR'S IMPACT FUELS NURSING

During their careers, UNCG faculty work to change lives in the classroom. Thanks to a legacy from School of Nursing clinical professor Mary Jo Helfers, who died in 2023, students continue benefiting from her generosity.

Professor Helfers established the Mary Jo Helfers Endowed Scholarship in 2013 to honor the memory of her great aunt, Erma Todd Walsh, a U.S. Army Nurse Corps veteran of World War I. An estate gift is increasing the fund's endowment, making it possible to help even more Spartan students.



Mary Jo Helfers (right) with nursing students in 2013

Helfers' dedication to the well-being of others was key to her career. Her professional experience included critical care nursing, American Red Cross service, and time as a faculty member at UNCG. She also helped launch the Disaster Nurse Volunteer Program in 1998 and received the Jane Delano Award in 1999 for her work.

The ongoing impact of Helfers' example is profound, says School of Nursing Dean Debra Barksdale. "Faculty who give become role models and inspire confidence in alumni, donors, and the broader community," says Dr. Barksdale. "Many of our students are working multiple jobs and balancing family responsibilities while pursuing rigorous coursework. Scholarships ease this burden, allowing students to focus more fully on their studies, clinical training, and professional development."



Scholarship recipient Christian Bartney '26 in UNCG's production of "Sweeney Todd"

Theater donors' loving legacy

The newly named Charlene Moskal-Burges and Bill Burges School of Theatre is a loving legacy born of the late couple's shared passion for education, the arts, and service to others.

"Char," a 1961 drama graduate of Woman's College, and Bill, who earned a PhD in education from Boston University, built illustrious careers on the transformative power of storytelling. They met at Cuyahoga Community College in Cleveland, Ohio, where she directed the theater program and he served as VP for development. In 1983, they co-founded Burges & Burges Strategists, where she led the firm's work in TV production and direction, media coaching, and speaker training, and he was their key strategist for fundraising and political campaigns.

The couple's knack for finding and supporting talent to nurture and champion launched what Bill described as their "Burges grads." The pair's generosity helped countless people, which Char cherished, saying, "Working with Bill to create something together that will be shared with others enriches both our lives and theirs."

Their substantial planned gifts to UNCG's College of Visual and Performing Arts include establishing the Charlene Moskal-Burges '61 and Bill Burges Scholarship Endowment in Theatre, which will be remembered as one of their most impactful productions.

“To create something together that will be shared with others enriches both our lives and theirs.”

— CHARLENE MOSKAL-BURGES '61

YOUR LEGACY, STUDENTS' FUTURE

THROUGH PLANNED GIFTS to UNCG, donors provide long-lasting support for the University and may enjoy meaningful tax or income benefits. Through bequests, beneficiary designations, charitable trusts, and gift annuities, planned giving supports scholarships, academic programs, and endowments, and allows donors to shape their legacies on their own terms. **Contact UNCG Director of Development, Principal Gifts, and Planned Giving, David Landers, J.D., at 336.256.1277 or davidlanders@uncg.edu.**

Read more stories about gifts and their impact at giving.uncg.edu.



gradtidings

COMPILED BY THE OFFICE OF ADVANCEMENT COMMUNICATIONS

1960s

JOHN PINNIX '69, '75 MA was selected for the North Carolina Bar Association Legal Practice Hall of Fame and was inducted at the 2025 Senior Lawyers Division Fall Meeting. He is senior immigration attorney and co-founder of the Raleigh-based firm Allen & Pinnix, P.A., and is also the first immigration attorney to be so honored.

LAURA TEW '69, '13 PBC serves at North Carolina American Association of University Women as STEM Education and Branch Advocate chair for 2025-26.

1970s

KAREN WELLER '75 displayed her wardrobe designs in three Universal Studios theme parks. Her wardrobe for "How to Train Your Dragon's Isle of Berk" is displayed at the recently opened Epic Universe, in Orlando, Fla. Weller and her teams have developed wardrobe and costume designs for numerous themed entertainment venues domestically and around the globe over the last three decades.

DAVID CHILDERS '77 MFA was inducted into the North Carolina Music Hall of Fame last fall. The courtroom juries' loss was the music lovers' gain, when in mid-life the lawyer returned to his guitar. A poet and painter who cites Chaucer and Kerouac, his bio notes, the influence of his McIver Building creative writing classes is on display in his songs.

PHILIP JULIAN '77, '79 and **BRENDA JULIAN '83** joined their daughter, **JEN JULIAN '10 MFA**, at the Marcus T. Johnson Alumni House. Jen was there for a UNCG English

Department event, a reading of her novel "Red Rabbit Run."

RICHARD T. GRIFFITHS '78 was honored with the Georgia First Amendment Foundation's Founders Award in recognition of his "long-standing service to the cause of open government and free expression."

1980s

ROBBIE CADDELL FRANKS '83 and **DAVETTE WAGNER WILLIAMS '89, '10 MSN** joined the UNCG School of Nursing's Advisory Board. During her 35-year career in health care, Franks served in many positions and held leadership roles in the development of new products across several therapeutic areas, culminating in the FDA approval of the first COVID-19 vaccine. She also supports students in the School of Nursing through the Marc and Robbie Franks Endowed Scholarship Fund. Williams has served as hospitalist nurse practitioner with Novant Health and with Cornerstone Healthcare in High Point Regional Hospital, becoming proficient in hospital medicine, transitional care, and surgical perioperative medicine.

MICHAEL LEWIS '87 retired from the Prince William County (Va.) Police Department after 28 years of combined law enforcement and military service. Prior to his career as a police officer, he served 13 years in the United States Army and Marine Corps. He and his wife will now reside in the Washington, D.C., suburb of Dumfries, Va.

TONY L. PATTERSON '89 screened his feature film "#Worst Christmas Ever" at Winston-Salem State University. Hailing from High Point, N.C., he is now a writer, director, and cinematographer based in New York City.

Here in Spring 2026, we send our best wishes for each of you. Reach out and share your news.

Visit us at alumni.uncg.edu and click on "Submit a Class Note."

You can also mail your information to **Class Notes, UNCG Alumni Engagement, PO Box 26170, Greensboro, NC 27402-6170.**

1990s

WARREN GARY ROCHELLE '91 MFA, '97 PHD published a new short story collection, "The Great Forest and Other Love Stories," which is available in eBook and print editions from JMS Books.

CAROLE BOSTON WEATHERFORD '92 MFA received the George Moses Horton Memorial Award for Significant Contributions to North Carolina Literature. She is the author of more than 70 books and was inducted into the North Carolina Literary Hall of Fame. She has won many awards for her work, including the North Carolina Award for Literature, four Caldecott Honors, two NAACP Image Awards, the Ragan-Rubin Award for Literary Achievement, and the Roanoke-Chowan Award for Poetry.

ERNEST A. DOLLAR JR. '93 received the Army Historical Foundation Distinguished Writing Award, Journals and Magazines for "Robbed of Reason: Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder in the Civil War," which appeared in the journal "Civil War News."

Church of Our Saviour, Mill Valley, California, and is secretary of the Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of California and a deputy to the General Convention of The Episcopal Church. He is also a member of a religious community of The Episcopal Church, the Brotherhood of Saint Gregory. He performs piano regularly in the Bay Area with the Tamalpais Chamber Players.

2000s

CRYSTAL SIMONE SMITH '00 received the Roanoke Chowan Award for Poetry for "Runagate: Songs of the Freedom Bound." She is an award-winning poet, publisher, and teacher whose work has appeared in journals such as *Prairie Schooner*, *Poetry Magazine*, and *Modern Haiku*. Her newest volume, "Common Sense (1776), Addressed to Today's Citizens of America: An Erasure," was published in April 2026.

WILEY CASH '01 MA was named Patrick Henry History Fellow at Washington College's Starr Center

SNAP YOUR VINTAGE UNCG T-SHIRT!

Have T-shirts from UNCG events or groups? UNCG Special Collections & University Archives would love to see them, as they compile a fun, fascinating digital archive. Send a photo or two. This magazine may share some in a future issue. scua.uncglibraries.com/tshirtarchive



LEARN MORE

BRETT INGRAM '95 MFA had a solo exhibition at The Center for Visual Artists in downtown Greensboro. He draws from a varied background in writing and filmmaking to bring a cinematic sensibility to three-dimensional collage and creates pieces that evoke larger stories. He has also directed two acclaimed documentary features and 20 short films.

REVEREND BROTHER RICHARD HELMER '97 was appointed canon precentor of Grace Cathedral, San Francisco, where he will oversee the cathedral's worship and work closely with the cathedral musicians. His priesthood has roots at St. Mary's House near UNCG campus, and he earned his Bachelor of Music in Performance at the UNCG School of Music studying with Dr. Andrew Willis. Helmer has served for nearly 20 years as rector of the Episcopal

for the Study of the American Experience. Cash joined Washington College for the 2025-26 academic year. Last year, he was also one of six North Carolinians to receive the North Carolina Award, the state's highest civilian honor, from Governor Josh Stein.

DAN HALE '01 participated in the UNCG School of Art Faculty Exhibition at Greensboro Project Space. He was the recipient of UNCG's 2025 James Y. Joyner Alumni Teaching Excellence Award and was also named the 2025 College of Visual and Performing Arts Outstanding Teacher. He tells stories through the mediums of animation, film, and photography.

TYRONE HALL '01 founded an online business selling T-shirts and was featured on Fashion Week Daily. Hall says his career path has

ALL TOGETHER

THROUGHOUT THE YEAR, SPARTANS MET TO CELEBRATE MEMORIES AND ACHIEVEMENTS.



Alumni Leadership Board members at a Believe in the G event at Steel Hands in Greensboro.



Washington, D.C., area alumni gathered at Mission Navy Yard.



Alumni served as panelists for OLCE's inaugural Student Leadership Summit. (l-r) April Albritton '04, Candace Martin '10, Timothy Reece '23, Jordan D. Farmer '22, UNCG Associate Director for Leadership Gia Born '21



UNCG Light the Way Campaign Celebration. (l-r) George Hoyle '90, Chancellor Franklin D. Gilliam, Jr., Raven Sizemore '24, Beth Fischer, Randall Kaplan, and Susan Safran '77.



Valentine's Day "Couples Dinner" in the Oakley Room. (l-r) Walidah Karim-Rhoades '18 DNP, David Jarmen, Tina Williams '90



Dean Debra Barksdale welcomed new board members to the School of Nursing advisory board. (l-r) Robbie Caddell Franks '83, Dean Debra Barksdale, and Davette Wagner Williams '89, '10 MSN



Marieelena "Maty" Mata '93, Jamie Lee Zicko '11, Raven Sizemore '24, Danny "DJ" Summitt Jr. '03, Linda Lyles Austin '63 at alumni group event in Coronado, Calif.



Atlanta-area alumni represent the G at Blue Moon Brewery & Grill.

been an adventure, and includes creating maps at the U.S. Geological Survey in Denver, exploring medical illustration in Germany, and spending seven years in advertising at Tiffany & Co.

BRIAN CAMPBELL '02, vice president at Truist Mortgage, gave the keynote at February's UNCG Student Leader Summit. He is also a member of organizations such as the Kernersville Chamber of Commerce, Greensboro Regional Realtors Association, and the Winston-Salem Regional Associations of Realtors.®

LUKE MCGALLIARD '03 and **TORI BATTS '22** were panelists at the Bryan School's "Meet the Recruiters: Recruiter Panel Event." McGalliard is senior talent acquisition partner at Volvo Group, and Batts is HR consultant at Atrium Health. 📍 1

MAUREEN O'BRIEN '03 PHD received the 2025 Teaching Excellence Award at Christian Brothers University, which honored her work as an educator and mentor.

TOMIKA WILLIAMS '03 MSN, '16 PHD became North Carolina Nursing Association's president-elect. She is a primary care nurse practitioner with Remote Health, a primary care practice in Greensboro, and the owner of Golden Health Education and Consulting, PLLC. Her experience includes long-term care, in-patient rehabilitation, occupational health, home care, and telehealth. 📍 4

KENDRICK SHACKLEFORD '04 MFA participated in the UNCG School of Art Faculty Exhibition at Greensboro Project Space.

PHIL FLEISCHMANN '05 MS completed the prestigious Public Executive Leadership Academy (PELA) at the UNC School of Government. Additionally, he received the 2025 Meritorious Service Award from the NC Recreation and Park Association. The award is given in recognition of long-term, accomplished service within the field of parks and recreation. Currently, Fleischmann serves as the Parks and Recreation director for the City of Greensboro. He also served as adjunct instructor

within the Department of Community and Therapeutic Recreation at UNCG for many years. 📍 7

SHARONY GREEN '05 MA published "Voices from a Black Miami Neighborhood: The Baa Haas, Liberty City, the Grove, and Beyond" with Palgrave MacMillan. Using oral histories from black Miamians born in Florida or elsewhere in the U.S. and the Caribbean, this book highlights the housing triumphs and trials of people of African descent in greater Miami, since the city's founding in 1896. She also presented a short video capturing some of the book's main points in the Film Geographies series at the Royal Geographical Society's annual meeting at the University of Birmingham in England. 📍 13

GLENN PERKINS '05 MA completed a professional project as a U.S. Scholar with Fulbright Slovakia. He worked with hosts at the Bratislava City Museum to explore creative ways city museums can encourage civic engagement and participation.

TAMRA HUNT '06 participated in the UNCG School of Art Faculty Exhibition at Greensboro Project Space. In 2023, she hosted art-making and performance events focused on indigenous cultures at the People's Market in the Glenwood neighborhood through Creative Greensboro's Neighborhood Arts program. 📍 14

SARAH BLIZZARD '08, '10 MA of Greater Bennington Community Services was recognized by VermontBiz as one of Vermont's Rising Stars, Class of 2025.

VALENCIA ABBOTT '09 MA, '17 CERT was named the 2025 National History Teacher of the Year by the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History. She is an educator at Rockingham Early College High School in Wentworth, N.C.

MELISSA BROWNING '09 was named to the Triad Business Journal's "40 under 40" list. She is executive director of ambulatory operations, Urgent Care at Cone Health.

LAURA FEHLHAFFER '09 was named to the Triad Business Journal's "40 under 40" list. She is director of communications for Impact Alamance, where she guides communications strategy for the foundation, including branding, content creation, public relations activities, marketing, and support for community engagement and advocacy initiatives.

RACHEL STAFFORD '09 was named to the Triad Business Journal's "40 under 40" list. She is associate

principal and interior designer at CJMW Architecture.

2010S

SCOTT BURTON '10, '21 MBA published "The Chaos Series," a 10-volume collection of poetry released between May and October 2025. The series explores the human experience through themes of love, loss, resilience, healing, and self-discovery. What began as a personal journaling project during Burton's recovery after years on dialysis and a life-changing kidney transplant evolved into a deeply introspective body of work that has resonated with readers worldwide, he says. 📍 16

SALEM CLARKE '11 received the Platinum Social Media Award from the North Carolina Travel Industry Association. She is tourism manager for Onslow County, N.C. and was recognized for the "OnlyInOnslow Campaign with NC Tripping," a collaborative social media project. 📍 12

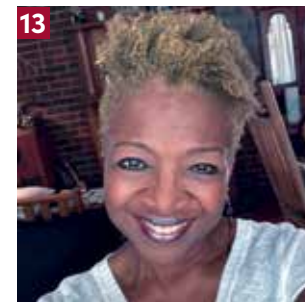
ASHLEY LAUREN '11 MM was named to the Triad Business Journal's "40 under 40" list. She is design director at MM Interior Design Group.

ALEX WOLFE '11 was named to the Triad Business Journal's "40 under 40" list. He is owner and president of Wolfe Homes.

LARA AMSHAY '12 was nominated by several of his teammates and selected for the Community Champions award at his company, Sevita. This award is given to those who volunteer in their local communities, and Sevita also donates a grant to the organization they served. He volunteered with the Black Mountain Home for Children, doing repair work in an area hit by Hurricane Helene. At UNCG, he was heavily involved in community service through the Alternative Spring Break program, which set him on the path to serve those in need.

SAMANTHA LOY '12 was named to the Triad Business Journal's "40 under 40" list. She joined Always Best Care Senior Services in 2011, acquired Always Best Care Burlington in 2017, and has since expanded the business by expanding into Chapel Hill-Durham (2019) and Greensboro (2023).

HUGH CONDREY BRYANT '12 participated in the UNCG School of Art Faculty Exhibition at Greensboro Project Space. His current practice focuses on pottery and sculptural hand-built ceramic works.



1 Luke McGalliard '03 (second from left) and Tori Batts '22 (center) 2 (l-r) Brenda Julian '83, Jen Julian '10 MFA, and Philip Julian '77, '79 3 Triniti Ware '22 4 Tomika Williams '03 MSN, '16 PhD 5 Scott Burton '10, '21 MBA 6 Jordan C. Jones '14 7 Phil Fleischmann '05 MS 8 Robbie Caddell Franks '83 and Davette Wagner Williams '89, '10 MSN 9 Akinyemi Blackshear '17 10 Brendan Malone '20 11 Charlotte Chun '14 MA, '18 PhD 12 Salem Clarke '11 13 Sharony Green '05 MA 14 Tamra Hunt '06

PHOTO: LPGA

U.S. SENIOR WOMEN'S CHAMP

BECKY MORGAN '97 captured the 2025 U.S. Senior Women's Open title. During her athletic career at UNCG, Morgan won the Big South individual championship three times (1995-97) and earned Big South Player of the Year honors in each of those years. The three-time All-American still holds UNCG records for lowest 18-hole score (67), lowest 36-hole tournament (140), and lowest 54-hole total (217). She was inducted into the UNCG Athletics Hall of Fame in 2007.

MASON BARRINGER '13 was named to the Triad Business Journal's "40 under 40" list. He is director of assurance services at DMJPS CPAs and Advisors, and he is one of only two partners to have risen through the ranks from accounting intern to partner.

CHARLOTTE CHUN '14 MA, '18 PHD published the nonfiction book "Earliest Memories: Discover the Psychology of Memory, Explore Cross-Cultural Stories, and Reconnect with Your Past." The book offers an explanation of the science of memory, shares a collection of people's earliest childhood memories from around the world, and explores the psychology of nostalgia, she says. 📖

JORDAN C. JONES '14, former director of bands at Hillside High School in Durham, was selected to join the national Band Directors Marching Band and marched in the Pasadena Rose Parade. Collectively, the more than 300 educators in the ensemble have taught hundreds of thousands of students. "When students see someone from where they come from doing something extraordinary, possibility becomes tangible," he says. "That kind of visibility matters – especially in band programs – because leadership is learned through example." 📖

CITHARA PATRA '14 MA published a gothic horror novel, "The House Ate Souls," which explores themes of family, grief, moral ambiguity, and the psychology of haunted spaces. It will resonate with students interested in literature, creative writing, and the horror/folklore tradition, she says.

AYANA ROSS '14 MA, '14 PBC was named the 2026 Duncanson Artist-in-Residence at the Taft Museum of Art. She is the recipient of the 2021 Bennett Prize and the 2022 National Black Art Festival Award. Ross' residency will include a solo exhibition, workshops, and other public programs.

ZECHARIAH ETHERIDGE '15 appeared on the cover of Business North Carolina. He was among the publication's "Legal Elite," 2026 and received the "Young Gun" award. In 2015, UNCG recognized him as a "Spartan of Promise." He currently practices law with J. C. White Law Group, PLLC.

TORREY ORLOPP '15, '19 PBC, '21 MFA was named to the Triad Business Journal's "40 under 40" list. She is senior interior designer at CPL, an architecture and engineering firm, where she oversees interior-related projects that require a robust understanding of building design, fire, life-safety and energy codes.

KIMBERLEY JONES '16 MFA obtained tenure and a promotion to associate professor in the Department of Visual and Performing Arts at Grambling State University. In the summer of 2024, she worked in Trondheim, Norway, as a part of the visual production team on theatrical production "Bizarra: en argentinsk saga I," by Argentinian playwright Rafael Spregelburd.

TAYLOR POTTS '16 was named to the Triad Business Journal's "40 under 40" list. He is a regulatory compliance and risk specialist at Truliant Federal Credit Union.

ELLEN TRASTELIS '16 was named to the Triad Business Journal's "40 under 40" list. She is senior director of human resources at Pace Communications.

AKINYEMI BLACKSHEAR '17 joined Berkshire Community College in Pittsfield, Mass., as assistant director of marketing and communications. Blackshear recently served as marketing operations manager at Theory Wellness and as manager of social media accounts for the Coalition to Protect America's National Parks. They previously interned at Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival, an experience that launched an eight-year career in marketing. 📖

PRESTON BLAKELY '17 was appointed to the GROW NC Governor's Advisory Committee on WNC Recovery, which will advise the governor and GROW NC on strategies to address the needs of communities affected by Hurricane Helene.

WARCHÉ DOWNING '17 MED, '25 PHD was named to the Triad Business Journal's "40 under 40" list. He is dean of student success and engagement at Greensboro College.

MICHAELA KELLY '17 and **JACOB WARREN '19** appeared in an ad for Boomerang Greensboro, which celebrates Greensboro residents who left the city and later returned to build meaningful lives here. It appeared in O.Henry magazine.

LUCAS BERRINI '18 MLIS accepted a position as media coordinator with the Pitt County school system after 10 years in academic libraries.

2020S

TOPHER ALEXANDER '20 MFA participated in the UNCG School of Art Faculty Exhibition at Greensboro Project Space. He teaches at UNCG, UNC Wilmington, and Cape Fear Community College. His printmaking practice includes traditional printmaking, alternative methods, and experimental paper processes.

KAYLA FOSTER '20 became head coach of UNCG's Spartan G's dance team. As a UNCG student, Foster was on the Spartan G's for three years and was a captain her senior year. Since graduating, she has continued her love for dance and teaching by dancing professionally and teaching full time at numerous studios.

BRENDAN MALONE '20 is building a career in the film industry as a professional sound technician. He recently finished work on his first feature film, "Site," where he served as utility sound technician. Malone's short film "Foodie," which he wrote and directed, screened at the 70th Cannes Film Festival. That experience sparked a deep passion for on-set sound recording and led him to specialize in narrative film while also working on documentaries and commercial productions. Malone's credits include work on "Paulie Q," "A Case for Love 9.6," and "The Grief Counselor," among others. 📖

JOLIE PRINGLE '22 MBA earned a juris doctor degree from the Wake Forest University School of Law. She also passed the uniform bar exam and was sworn in to the North Carolina State Bar on Sept. 19, 2025, by the Honorable Craig James. She now serves as an assistant public defender in Johnston County.

REBECCA PYUN '22 participated in the UNCG School of Art Faculty Exhibition at Greensboro Project Space. She's passionate about designing, lighting, and texturing immersive 3D environments that share historically rooted Korean narratives.

WALLACE ROBINSON '22 completed a master's in reading education at Vanderbilt University and obtained her TESOL certification at UNCG.

She is now teaching high school English and ESL in the Wake County public school system.

TRINITY WARE '22 began a new position at UNCG as assistant director of campus visit experiences. Her work is rooted in authenticity, collaboration, and continuous improvement, she says. 📖

SAMUEL HUNTER '23 MPA was named director of the City of Greensboro's Housing and Neighborhood Development Department. He had been assistant director of neighborhood services for the City of Winston-Salem.

KARRINGTON GARDNER '24 MFA, a multidisciplinary artist whose works explore the intersections of space, identity, and daily life, participated in the UNCG School of Art Faculty Exhibition at Greensboro Project Space. In addition, his oil and acrylic painting, "Resilience in Bloom," is on display at the Melvin Municipal Office Building in Greensboro.

EMILIA PHILLIPS '24 MLIS was selected as a finalist for the 2025 Lambda Literary Awards in LGBTQ+ poetry. They are the author of five poetry collections from the University of Akron Press and an associate professor at UNCG.

YAN SIQUEIRA '24 moved to New York City to join J.P. Morgan Chase to start a role as a business relationship manager. He works directly with business owners and manages a portfolio exceeding \$50 million in deposits and credit exposure. The position has strengthened his professional network and expanded his connections with entrepreneurs and industry leaders across the region, he says. Outside of J.P. Morgan, Yan is developing a B2B AI software startup focused on helping companies leverage automation and emerging technologies to improve operations. 📖

MADALYN LOUCKS SORRELL '24 is a painting and finishing technician at Cricket Forge in Durham. Her solo exhibition, "Moving Through," appeared in the offices of Health and Human Sciences as part of Greensboro Project Space's "Second Stop" program. "Moving Through" explores moments of bodily, social, and economic displacement in multiple artistic media, including painting, metal sculpture, and film. 📖

AMAT'US PROCTOR '25 works at Smith High School in Greensboro, where she also attended for three years. It is a joy to return to her alma mater and work with some of the very teachers that taught her, she says.

NILL SMITH '25 MFA participated in the UNCG School of Art Faculty Exhibition at Greensboro Project Space. Smith is an interdisciplinary artist working in painting, ceramics, and printmaking. Her MFA thesis, "Brilliant Darkness," centered water as a conduit for purification and reinvention while holding histories of violence.

IN MEMORIAM

CASSANDRA KERNODLE RICKETTS '42

SCOTT EVANS HUGHES '44

FRIEDA BOGER LANE '44

VIRGINIA BRETT O'NEAL '46

MARY WILLIAMS SLOOP '47

MARY ELIZABETH VAN DYKE '47

HILDA HARPE FOLGER '48

KAY ARROWOOD HICKS '48

JOANN SNYDER HODGE '48, '63 MS

KATHLEEN DELLINGER MOOSE '48

HILDA LESTER PURGASON '48

BETTY RUSH MITCHELL WEBB '48

PARTHENIA CHITTY GURGANIOUS '49

RUTH RAWLS MULLER '49

CATHERINE UPCHURCH STEELE '49, '62 MED

WANDA BOWEN THAYER '49

EMILY ATKINS BATES '50

BARBARA STERNBERGER CONE '50

JEAN FARROW HOLLEMAN '50

FAYE JENKINS MARTIN '50

JANE TOMLINSON POINDEXTER '50

ODESSA TORRENCE ARCHER '51

PATRICIA SANDERFORD GRUBER '51

MILLICENT ROLLINS '51

BOBBIE HAYNES ROWLAND '51, '68 MS, '74 PHD

NANCY WILLIAMS SAMPLE '51

CAROL BYRD SELLARS '51

JAN BATTS BUCHANAN '52

PAULINE WHITE DODSON '52

JOSCELYN WILLIAMS HILL '52

PEGGY PICKLE LEONARD '52

ANNE HALL TODD '52

HARRIETT WADE BOWLES '53, '65 MED

MARY ANNA PECK DUNN '53, '85

GENEVA LINEBERGER HANNA '53

DOT KENDALL KEARNS '53, MED '74

EDITH RAWLEY SIFFORD '53

NANCY HEAD DIXON '54

MARYANN CROSS FARTHING '54, '74 PHD

VIRGINIA LEONARD LILES '54



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15 Wardrobes designed by Karen Weller '75 **16** Reverend Brother Richard Helmer '97 **17** Brian Campbell '02 **18** Yan Siqueira '24 **19** Crystal Simone Smith '00 **20** Madalyn Loucks Sorrell '24

CORRECTION In the Fall 2025 issue, the bell ringer on p. 41 with Cathy Tisdale was Rosario Maza-Valadez.

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Contributing Writers
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Patrick Leger '06 MFA

Photographers
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ATHA PFAFF COHEN '58
MARILYN SCOTT COOK '58
ELIZABETH MIXON DAUGHTRY '58
BETTE LEE DAVIS '58
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BARBARA DAVIS FODOR '59
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STARLYN SISK CRAWFORD '60
ALMA MARTIN FRANKLIN '60
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JEANETTE EDWARDS MEADOWS '60
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BARBARA CURL FULMER '61
HEATHER ROSS MILLER '61, '69 MFA
KITTY MCDONALD APPANAITS '62, '68 MED
BETTY HOLT HARWOOD '62
BETTY GREENE JENKINS '62, '81 MFA
SARAH HUNTER TAYLOR '62
ELIZABETH HARRINGTON ZAVITZ '62
KATHRYN OAKES EDWARDS '63
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MARGARET KNOX EDMONDSON '64
LYNN TORPY SKINNER '64
DR. CHARLOTTE VESTAL WAINWRIGHT '64
MARY KATHRYN BAILEY WELLS '64, '70 MED
NELL MEADOR ROSE '65, '67 MS
ELIZABETH SPROUL ROSS '65 MFA
DR. JUDY RICHARDSON COX '66
NAN RUFTY TILLEY '66, '69 MFA
DOUGLAS L. WALTON '66 MED

LIFE OF SERVICE



DR. SARAH MOORE SHOFFNER '62, '64 MS, '77 PHD died on March 6, 2026. She began teaching at UNCG not long after earning her degree in home economics, starting a 43-year career in what is now Human Development and Family Studies. In retirement, her service included the Alumni Association Board, HES Foundation, and Excellence Foundation.

MARSHA WAKEFIELD BAIRD '67
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ALBERTA PROCTOR GEARHART '67
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ALUMNI REMEMBRANCES

MARTHA KIRKLAND WALSTON '43 died on Feb. 2, 2026. A former president of the University's alumni association, she had served on the Board of Trustees for both the UNC System and NC State University.

BARBARA STERNBERGER CONE '50 died on Nov. 21, 2025. Founding president of the Greensboro Symphony Guild, the civic leader supported UNCG, Eastern Music Festival, United Way, the Greensboro Opera, and North Carolina for Community and Justice. Barbara and husband Herman Cone received the Holderness/Weaver Award in 2004.

DOT KENDALL KEARNS '53, '74 MED, the first woman to serve on the Guilford County Board of Commissioners, died on Oct. 20, 2025. The public servant and supporter of public education received awards such as the Outstanding Service Award from the NC League of Women Voters. She made her mark at UNCG in many ways, such as helping lead the Class

of 1953 initiative to commission the statue of Minerva by Jim Barnhill '82 MFA.

HEATHER ROSS MILLER '61, '69 MFA, a prolific author and member of the celebrated "Writing Rosses" of Stanly County, died on July 9, 2025. How prolific? She was receiving awards, held a National Endowment for the Arts fellowship, and had published her third novel before receiving her MFA. And her subsequent teaching duties never got in the way of her literary output.

CHARLOTTE VESTAL WAINWRIGHT '64 died on Nov. 9, 2025. Recognized for her research on architecture and art, she was founding director of the NCSU Visual Arts Center, now known as the Gregg Museum of Art and Design. As head of the Woman's College legislature, she helped lead the 1963 effort for the student government to endorse the student-led boycott of then-segregated Tate Street businesses.

JIM MELVIN '07 HONORARY LLD died Aug. 10, 2025. Known as "Mr. Greensboro," he gave a lifetime of support to the city, serving as mayor and leading the Bryan Foundation. To date, 370 UNCG students have benefited from Bryan Foundation scholarships. He chaired the UNCG Board of Trustees among other boards and was one of the "Big Five" who elevated UNCG Athletics to Div. I. He also funded his own scholarship, which has supported 18 student-athletes.

NAURICE "FRANK" WOODS '78 MFA died on March 8, 2026. His service to UNCG spanned the nearly 40 years of the development of Black Studies, African American Studies, and, as it is now called, the African American and African Diaspora Studies Program. He was the longest-serving director of the program, serving at a key time in its development at the University. He was also a noted art historian and visual artist.

JANIE YARNELL WHITLOCK '85
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PATRICIA CROSS ALFORD '15
ELYNANNE POLHEMUS WILKIE '17
JOHN HAMILTON SHIELDS '20, '23 MA
JANIECE OLIVIA CHERRY, DAUGHTER OF JAMES AND JACEDA '21 CHERRY
MARITA CAROL GREGORY '25

FORMER FACULTY/STAFF
DR. SARAH PRASKIEVICZ died on Aug. 11, 2025. An associate professor in the Department of Geography, Environment, and Sustainability, she taught and conducted research in hydrology, fluvial geomorphology, and water resources. A consummate geographer, she visited all seven continents in her 39 years of life.
DR. PHILIP LAWRENCE died on Aug. 16, 2025. He was a professor of psychology at UNCG from 1970 to 2009, where he taught behavioral clinical psychology among other topics. He took great pride in his work with graduate students as their advisor. He was also a member of the NC Grape Growers Association and operated his own winery for which he received awards.
DR. CHARLES MECIMORE died on Sept. 11, 2025. At UNCG, he served as head of the Department of Accounting in the Joseph M. Bryan School of Business and Economics from 1975 to 1977, and again from 1980 to 1999. He established the Charles Mecimore Fund, which has supported UNCG students since 2006.

DR. ROBERT HANSEN died on Oct. 20, 2025. A professor of theatre, he served as chair of the School of Theatre for 12 years. He was also associate dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, where he directed the college's first online degree program. Hansen's impact continues through his philanthropic gifts to the University, including the Robert C. Hansen Performing Arts Collection. Read more in the Fall 2025 issue of UNCG Magazine (page 40).
DR. CHARLES "SONNY" BELL III died on Oct. 30, 2025. Bell was a UNCG faculty member from 1975 to 1977 and then was a visiting assistant professor from 1980 to 1981. He taught drama appreciation, acting, directing, world theatre, and fundamentals of speech communication. At UNCG he directed "The Philadelphia Story" and "The Hotel Baltimore."
DR. SANDRA "MICQUI" REED died on Feb. 5, 2026. One of the six original faculty members of the School of Nursing, she taught at UNCG until her retirement in 2000. She served in many leadership roles and established numerous funds in the school. She designed the school pin for the first graduating BSN class in 1970 – and the same pin is still presented to graduates today.



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