‘People Not Property’ project shines new light on state history

L to r: “People Not Property” project coordinator Dr. Claire Heckel, digital technology consultant Richard Cox, Guilford Courthouse National Memorial Park superintendent James Hill, Chancellor Franklin D. Gilliam, Jr., and Dr. Brian Robinson, postdoctoral fellow in data curation for African American and African Studies, during an award ceremony at UNCG. The Digital Library on American Slavery at UNC Greensboro was recognized early this year by the National Park Service as the first-ever “virtual” stop on the Underground Railroad Network to Freedom.

Deep within the public archives at the Guilford County Register of Deeds, mixed in with property deeds for land and farm animals, are bills of sale and ownership for African American slaves. Until now, those people have remained faceless and placeless, sometimes existing only as a number or dollar amount on a court document or receipt. But a project
has been underway to bring those unidentified people to the fore, and to give them an acknowledged place within North Carolina and American history.

“People Not Property: Slave Deeds of North Carolina” is a unique collaboration between UNC Greensboro Libraries, registers of deeds in counties across North Carolina, the North Carolina Division of Archives and Records, faculty and staff from other colleges and universities, and members of the public.

“This process is an important part of healing for individuals and for communities to bridge racial divides, class divides, to start making history more inclusive, and more honest and representative.” – Dr. Claire Heckel, project manager

The ongoing project includes a growing, searchable database built upon robust metadata, an expanding collection of high-resolution images, and full-text searchable transcripts. The project includes a collection of slave ads through 1840, and they are currently working to expand the collection through 1865. The project is currently focused on North Carolina, with 26 counties having been assessed to date.

The project in its current form began in the fall of 2018. UNCG Libraries received a three-year, $294,603 grant from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission to digitize nearly 10,000 North Carolina slave deeds and bills of sale, to create a comprehensive database for the digitized records, and to transcribe the full text of these documents.

A key goal of the project is to identify and transcribe as many deeds as possible. But an important service and outreach aspect of the project emphasizes the involvement of students and engagement with communities.

Get Involved
For volunteer opportunities on the project see: http://library.uncg.edu/slavery/deeds/
For learning about family history visit: http://library.uncg.edu/slavery/
For more information or questions contact project coordinator Claire Heckel at ceheckel@uncg.edu

UNCG undergraduate and graduate students get the chance to interact directly with primary source documents and to engage communities, giving them invaluable experience working on history projects that operate well beyond the classroom. Students’ hands-on
experience with archived documents lets them physically connect with history. Their engagement with communities allows the opportunity to bring the public into academia and vice-versa, and to make historical research a participatory, inclusive activity.

Student involvement has been supported by UNCG-held grants from the “North Carolina Humanities Corridor” initiative, which supported three students (from A&T, NC Central, and UNCG) and faculty members in attending and presenting at the annual conference of the Afro-American Historical and Genealogical Society in Washington, D.C. in 2019. Two student fellows were also supported by the Mellon Foundation initiative, “Transforming the Humanities.” These students are using GIS to map historic populations and create an engaging “StoryMap” that features primary documents from UNCG Libraries’ Digital Library of American Slavery (DLAS).

The “People Not Property” project coordinator, Dr. Claire Heckel, notes that the project helps students’ gain professionalization and outreach experience by “… getting students involved in working with historical records, doing community outreach, and supporting students working in various heritage fields by exposing them to what registers of deeds offices do and how slavery is interpreted at various sites.” Students have the opportunity to run public workshops and information sessions that are located within the communities that are a focus of the research, such as places where the slaves lived, worked, or moved through.

The project encourages the public to participate in different ways, including helping to transcribe the deeds and doing their own research using the project’s database and other resources. “Communities learn about how they can be directly involved in their own historical record, how they are producers of knowledge. They can get involved in producing their own narrative,” says Heckel.

The project seeks both formal and informal partners, working with organizations who focus on similar issues. As the network grows, so does awareness and knowledge. Examples of partners include cemeteries, the National Park Service Underground Railroad Network to Freedom project, genealogical societies, and Emory University’s database on Transatlantic Slave Trade.

The “People Not Property” project is an expansion of the larger Digital Library of American Slavery at UNCG. According to UNCG Libraries digital technology consultant Richard Cox, he and his team were looking for other ways to share the collection and reach a broader public, and they zeroed in on slave deeds as a focal point. David Gwynn, associate professor and UNCG Libraries digitization coordinator, is a co-principal investigator on the project.

The origins of the project and DLAS can be traced back to 1991, when Dr. Loren
Schweninger, now professor emeritus of history at UNCG, had been at work on the Race and Slavery Petitions Project, a collection of petitions that came from 200 county courthouse and 15 state archives, and covered a wide range of legal issues, including wills, inventories, bills of sales, divorce proceedings, punishment of runaway slaves, calls for abolition, property disputes, amended petitions and more – a goldmine of untold biographies.

As Cox and his team were thinking about how to expand the project, an organized group of state registers of deeds – including Guilford and Buncombe Counties – and the N.C. state archivist, were also looking to do something publicly with slave deeds. Ultimately, these efforts came together so that their resources, efforts, and public portal into this information was centralized. They received a joint grant from the National Archives to begin work on the first 26 North Carolina counties identified in the deeds.

One of the project’s mandates is to keep the data, information, and working process as transparent and accessible as possible. “Keeping the project accessible and viewable online as we work on it helps inform the community on what we are doing and gives them ways to engage,” says Cox.

The project’s ultimate goal is to identify those who were lost over time to the archives, their existence reduced to a massive collection of documents that recorded the sale and ownership of land, animals, and slaves, and who until now have been forgotten. Giving a name, a face, and a place to slaves who have been identified in the documents humanizes them, brings them into the larger historical narrative, and as Heckel points out, “… makes the data personal and connects it to local landscapes.”

As an anthropologist, Heckel says that it is important for her “… to look at histories as identity narratives. Who is memorialized, and how? Who is part of the dominant historical narratives? Who gets a face, who gets a voice? I think public records are an important part of democratizing historical narrative.”

Cox notes the real world impact that the project has. “Through this kind of work, I’ve been able to see firsthand how this sort of work impacts people on a personal level. This kind of work can change people’s lives, and their perspectives as well,” he says.

Other UNCG faculty who have participated on the project include Dr. Anne Parsons, director of Public History and Museum Studies, and Dr. Torren Gatson, assistant professor of Public History.

As a precursor to the latest incarnation of the project, and in collaboration with the International Civil Rights Center and Museum and Guilford County Register of Deeds,
Parsons helped develop the “Bills of Sale” exhibition in 2015. In that project, Parsons and graduate students from the Public History program dug into the deeds looking for the stories they could tell. The students learned about the process of research, curating content, project management, and publicly displaying the results through graphics, fabrication, and installation.

Gatson is interested in creating a conversation between historical documents and events in contemporary life and culture, and identifies himself as a “publicly engaged scholar.” A key aspect of Gatson and his students’ work is to directly engage the general public on history, illustrating how history flows through everything around them. He notes that allowing academics and the public to interact directly with primary historical documents inspires a much more meaningful and productive experience.

Gatson points out that an important focal point for the researchers is to look at the “average individual,” versus historically known figures and names. Taking this approach allows for a much more nuanced and complex picture of historical events and relationships.

Heckel and Cox encourage anyone to get involved with the project by reaching out to them directly or through the project’s website or social media accounts.

Guilford County Register of Deeds project-related YouTube interviews which feature UNCG faculty, staff, and students:

Dr. Claire Heckel and Richard Cox: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NgB8MbtLSAE
Dr. Anne Parsons: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yDzLI4UcpaU
Dr. Torren Gatson: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IhCHIhhjcpQ
Lance Wheeler, UNCG Public History alumnus Public History who did research for the “Bills of Sale” exhibition: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X9YI0LJ8Rc4

National Digital Library on American Slavery: library.uncg.edu/slavery

Story by Matthew Bryant, University Communications
Photography by Martin W. Kane, University Communications

Nancy Doll will step down as Weatherspoon’s director next summer

After 22 years of dedicated service, Nancy Doll will step down as director of the Weatherspoon Art Museum on July 31, 2020.

In sharing this news with the campus community yesterday afternoon, Provost Dunn said:
“Under Nancy’s outstanding leadership, the Weatherspoon’s collection has continued to be known and highly regarded on a global scale, as indicated by the growing number of loan requests we receive from major museums in this country and abroad. Nancy has overseen impressive enhancements in the museum’s service to the national and international arts communities, as well as to the UNCG campus.

More faculty than ever, representing a wider array of disciplines, have incorporated Weatherspoon exhibitions into their curricula and assign classes to visit the galleries in support of class projects. Non-student attendance has also grown steadily, reaching more than 38,000 annual visitors.

Nancy has been successful in raising funds from individuals, corporations, and foundations to advance the mission of the Weatherspoon. Supporters have included the National Endowment for the Arts, North Carolina Arts Council, Tannenbaum-Sternberger Foundation, Cemala Foundation, Joseph M. Bryan Foundation, Elizabeth Firestone Graham Foundation, Andy Warhol Foundation, Deluxe Foundation, and the Rockefeller Foundation. Working with the curatorial staff, Nancy has led the charge to diversify our collections, exhibitions, and programs to include many more artists of color and women artists. Because of her steady commitment to these issues, the Weatherspoon’s audience has also greatly diversified. Nancy was also instrumental in marshaling the Weatherspoon through two successful reaccreditation reviews by the American Alliance of Museums.”

Nancy Doll was appointed director of the Weatherspoon Art Museum in July 1998. She had been executive director of the Santa Barbara Contemporary Arts Forum in California.

She had earlier served as:

- Curator of 20th Century Art at the Santa Barbara Museum of Art
- Director of Gallery Eleven and Curator of the University Art Collection at Tufts University, and
- Director of the Thorne-Sagendorph Art Gallery at Keene State College.

Doll holds a BFA (cum laude) from Mundelin College of Chicago and an M.A. from the University of Iowa.

**UNCG research explores hydration among college students**
Dr. William Adams

Drink more water.

It’s advice we hear frequently – from a parent, a doctor, or a coach.

We know hydration is important for our overall health and wellness. But how much should we be drinking? How does hydration impact health outcomes for certain groups of people? And how is the pandemic affecting our fluid intake?

**Adams offers these general tips to stay hydrated:**

- Men and women should aim to consume 85-135 ounces (roughly 10-17 8-ounce glasses) and 68-104 ounces (9-13 glasses) of water daily, respectively.
- Carry a water bottle with you throughout the day (e.g., while running errands, on your desk at work, etc.) so that you have more opportunities to consume fluids.
- Listen to your thirst: If you are thirsty, drink water.
- Look at your urine color. If your urine is light colored (e.g., like lemonade or hay), then you are adequately hydrated. If it is dark colored (e.g., apple juice), you need to consume more fluid.

These are the questions that drive Dr. William Adams’ research. Adams is assistant professor in the [Dept. of Kinesiology](#) and director of the [master’s in athletic training](#).
Given his background in athletic training, Adams has focused much of his research on hydration in sport and physical activity. He’s published a number of journal articles on fluid needs for different athletes and how dehydration can result in cognitive and physical deficits on the court or on the field.

Most recently, he’s expanded his research to include college students in general – a group that has been understudied when it comes to hydration.

“A lot has been done with kids and adults, but not this population,” he explains.

In partnership with Dr. Laurie Wideman, a fellow professor in Kinesiology, Adams has been working on a UNCG-funded pilot study that explores the relationship between water intake and overall wellness of college-aged men and women. The study also examines racial and ethnic differences surrounding fluid intake for college students.

Adams was nearly finished with the study when the COVID-19 outbreak hit the United States. He hopes to complete the research later this year, when it is safer to return to campus. In a related pilot study he published in March 2020, Adams found that non-Hispanic black male and female college students were inadequately hydrated compared to their non-Hispanic white counterparts. He is hoping that the results from the current study will inform future work aimed at developing personalized approaches to adopting healthy behaviors to improve long-term health.

Adams is now working on a new project related to hydration and COVID-19. In partnership with colleagues Dr. Samantha Scarneo-Miller from the University of Connecticut and Dr. Cory Butts from Weber State University, Adams is examining how COVID-19 and the resulting stay-at-home orders affect college students’ fluid intake and physical activity behaviors. The research team recently finished its first round of data collection, with more than 1,100 college students across the country completing a survey. The plan is to follow up with these students in the fall to see if any of their behaviors have changed depending on the status of the area in which they live.

Why is hydration research so important?

“Water is an essential component for and is intimately involved in maintaining normal physiological function throughout the body,” Adams says. However, given that the “processes of total body water turnover and fluid regulation vary from person to person,” it can be difficult for individuals to ensure they’re drinking enough throughout the day.

Ultimately, through his research, Adams hopes to identify strategies to improve drinking behaviors for different populations.
“The ultimate goal of my research is to improve people’s health by reducing the risk of preventable diseases such as diabetes and obesity.”

*Story by Alyssa Bedrosian, University Communications
Photography by Jiyoung Park, University Communications*

**Study targets disparities in mental health care access**

Community health worker Leslie Estrada ‘19 delivers the mental health intervention to study participants over the phone. In-person intervention delivery is on hold due to COVID-19, but the study has continued via phone and video conferencing.

In the age of smartphones, social media, and information overload, mental health has become top of mind for many of us.

Now, with the COVID-19 pandemic and so many people experiencing increased precarity and uncertainty, mental health is even more of a public health concern.

But not everyone has access to much needed mental health services. Many Americans are uninsured. Others don’t have the time to take off work and get the help they need. For many, affordability remains a barrier.

A UNC Greensboro research study – “**Strong Minds, Strong Communities**” – aims at
addressing this issue of access. The five-year, $4 million National Institutes of Health-funded study targets disparities in mental health care access for underserved populations, primarily racial/ethnic and linguistic minority populations.

The study, which launched last year, is led by psychology professors Dr. Gabriela Livas Stein and Dr. Kari Eddington. The 12-person team includes five community health workers who have been trained to deliver an empirically-supported mental health intervention. Health workers have teamed up with community partners to recruit participants who are in need of these services.

The intervention is offered in both English and Spanish. Roughly 65% of the study’s participants identify as Latinx, and the project also serves a large African American population.

“It’s really important to have a population-based solution that gives people access to services that are culturally-relevant and in their home language,” Stein explains. “Having community health workers who are integrated in the community allows for the intervention to be really embedded and enriched by cultural nuances.”

Studies have shown that in the United States, only 11% of Latinx people who need mental health services are able to obtain them. Similarly, only 13% of African Americans obtain the mental health services they need.

Due to COVID-19, the intervention is now offered over the phone and via video conferencing. According to Stein, the research team has seen increased levels of distress since the outbreak.

“There are economic stressors and illness, and we’ve noticed an increase in suicidality,” says Stein. “We’ve also heard that a lot of our participants have lost jobs. A lot of them work in the service industry.”

Leslie Estrada, a 2019 UNCG graduate who studied sociology and psychology, is one of the community health workers who is delivering this intervention, now virtually, to community members in need.

“A challenging part about doing it virtually is you’re not able to see someone’s facial expressions or body language,” she says. “It was definitely a transition.”

She says that participants seem more anxious now than they were before. But the good news is that the intervention appears to be working.
“I’ve noticed symptoms dramatically reduce,” she says. “It’s amazing to see how people can grow throughout the intervention. We’re just there as a guide – it’s up to them to put in the work. I’ve seen people improve, and that’s been fulfilling.”

The study currently has 90 participants, but Stein says they hope to enroll up to 600 people. In the future, the research team plans to train the staff of community organizations to deliver the intervention, so that even more people can be reached.

“I think the pandemic has really highlighted a lot of the disparities that exist in our communities around health care access and health” says Stein. “It’s really important that we target these disparities and make sure people have the ability to live the best life that they can.”

Learn more at caminoslab.org/strongminds.

Story by Alyssa Bedrosian, University Communications
Photography courtesy of Leslie Estrada ’19

UNCG professor works with WHO to improve sexual health

Dr. Jennifer Toller Erausquin
Survey instruments—questionnaires that are used to collect information on a respondent—are vital to public health research. Many survey instruments on sexual and reproductive health have been developed for use in high-income countries, and oftentimes these tools are too specific to be used across various countries and contexts, limiting the ability to make cross-country comparisons. Thanks in part to Dr. Jennifer Toller Erausquin, assistant professor in the Department of Public Health at UNC Greensboro, there will now be a survey instrument that will provide a more comprehensive picture of sexual and reproductive health, particularly in low- and middle-income countries.

Erausquin was one of 18 experts selected by the World Health Organization (WHO) to travel to Nairobi, Kenya Jan. 14-16, 2020 to attend a “hackathon” at the African Population Research Health Center. A hackathon is a sprint-like event bringing together diverse experts around a common issue or objective. This hackathon involved synthesizing and harmonizing a comprehensive survey instrument on sexual and reproductive health, to be used as a publicly available set of questions that any ministry of health, nonprofit organization, or other nongovernmental organization could use for program evaluation and surveillance type of measuring.

When the WHO sent out an open call for the development of a sexual health survey instrument, Erausquin worked with five former and current UNCG public health education faculty, doctoral, and master’s students to collaborate on submissions. Collaborators include Wendasha Jenkins PhD ’17; Alyssa Crawford, a current master of public health student; Meredith Gringle PhD ’16 and assistant professor in public health education; Brittany Chesney, a current master of public health student; and Rachel Faller, a current PhD student.

The WHO’s open call resulted in 175 entries, which went through three to five rounds of review before selecting Erausquin and the other 17 experts.

“It was a big, welcome surprise to get recognized and chosen by the WHO team,” said Erausquin. “There are people all over the world with good ideas and important experiences relating to the topic and data collection methods being proposed. To know that my perspective and experiences were valued means so much to me.”
Throughout her career, Erausquin’s research has focused on the development and use of survey measures for a variety of sexual and reproductive health outcomes. She has spent much of her career using population-representative survey data from low- and middle-income countries. As a result, it’s very clear to her what kinds of survey questions tend to be easy or difficult for participants to answer. It’s also clear how important these surveys can be to understanding population health needs and priorities.

“As a public health researcher, I know that it is really valuable to plan adequately for needs regarding reproductive and sexual health services. It’s also valuable to be aware of and track behaviors associated with sexually transmitted infections, unplanned pregnancies, and other health outcomes.”

The survey is now entering the pilot phase where it will be tested in several countries in the coming months. Once the survey instrument is publicly available and widely used, the WHO and researchers will be able to look at differences across countries and contexts over time.

“I think in general, sexual health survey data is often really difficult to compare across studies and between countries because the survey instruments are really different,” said Erausquin. “It is important to have a unified set of measures that will allow for those
comparisons. This survey instrument has the potential to provide information on what current sexual practices and current reproductive and sexual health needs are, and ultimately fulfill those needs.”

For this work, Erausquin will receive recognition from the HRP, the UNDP/UNFPA/UNICEF/WHO/World Bank Special Programme of Research, Development, and Research Training in Human Reproduction, which is the main instrument within the United Nations system for research in human reproduction.

“I’m very proud of this work, and I’m excited to see the survey instrument get used. A consortium of over 25 countries is now discussing whether the instrument can be part of a rapid, web-based survey of sexual and reproductive health in the context of COVID-19. My work with this team has encouraged me to dig in my heels on my research in sexual health. There are broader implications for the work that I do, and I look forward to sharing that to improve the field of sexual and reproductive health.”

*Story by Alexandra McQueen, University Communications
Photography by Martin W. Kane, University Communications*

**Quick Look: June 9, 2020**
Look, please email sckirbys@uncg.edu

- **June is African American Music Appreciation Month.** Created by President Jimmy Carter in 1979, this month celebrates the African American musical influences that comprise an essential part of our nation’s treasured cultural heritage. Formerly called National Black Music Month, this celebration of African American musical contributions is re-established annually by presidential proclamation. University Libraries will be celebrating each week with special content from the Harold Schiffman Music Library. Visit the Facebook page here and other Music Library social media channels to learn about featured artists from an array of music genres.

- The **Digital Media Commons (DMC) is hosting a series of multimedia, hands-on, online workshops** to support the UNCG campus curriculum. Participants will learn the basics of a variety of multimedia and digital storytelling tools to use in their assignments or personal projects. Registration is open now for UNCG students, faculty and staff. You can register for one or multiple workshops. Workshops will run from June 15 to July 29 on weekdays. Each workshop is offered in two different daytimes for your convenience. Registration information is available here.

- UNCG Libraries has created a **Black Lives Matter resource page, with sources for reading, watching, and listening.**

- The International Programs Center invites friends and colleagues to continue celebrating the retirement of Dr. Penelope “Nell” Pynes’ Watch the **Zoom Retirement Celebration** and the “Farewell to Nell” Compilation Video, and sign the digital guestbook

**Middle College at UNCG celebrates 2020 graduates**
The Middle College at UNCG honored its 49 graduates on Tuesday with a special drive-thru celebration as part of Guilford County Schools’ effort to recognize all graduating seniors.

Students and their families decorated their vehicles and drove through the UNCG campus as part of the celebration. As each family reached Kaplan Commons (EUC lawn), students had the opportunity to leave their cars and walk across a stage – while maintaining a six-foot distance – to receive their diplomas, which were presented by Principal Keisha Brown. School staff lined Walker Avenue to congratulate the new graduates.

Eight Middle College graduates will attend UNCG this fall: Matab Abdallah, Kiarah Ayers, Jalyn Bottomley, Zena Elsheikhali, Yaquelin Garcia-Vazquez, Blakelee Hester, Makenzie Mason, and Daniel Withrow.

The Middle College at UNCG was established in 2011 as a partnership between Guilford County Schools and UNCG. The school offers an honors and AP-based curriculum that gives students the opportunity to earn up to two years of college credit. The Middle College at UNCG prepares students for careers in the medical and human sciences fields by offering them foundational high school and college courses, as well as a unique series of UNCG courses called Pathways, which provide career exploration, job shadowing, and internship opportunities to prepare students for success in college, career, and life.

Learn more about the Middle College at UNCG at [www.gcsnc.com/middle_college_at_uncg](http://www.gcsnc.com/middle_college_at_uncg).
See highlights from the celebration below.
Photography by Martin W. Kane, University Communications

Moss Street honors 2020 graduates
On Wednesday, June 3, Moss Street Partnership School staff and administration recognized 62 fifth-grade students in a “Moving Up” promotion ceremony to celebrate the students’ transition from elementary to middle school.

This is the second year the school, operated by UNC Greensboro in partnership with Rockingham County Schools, has been in operation. Last year, the inaugural graduating class included 59 students.

In the absence of a face-to-face event, families decorated their cars for the celebratory drive-thru of the Moss Street parking lot, where teachers presented each student with end-of-year awards, promotion certificates, and a special memory book. The book was printed from a digital project students and teachers created since transitioning to remote learning earlier in the school year.

“Moss Street is a special place, with state-of-the-art resources and world-class teachers,” said UNCG Chancellor Franklin D. Gilliam, Jr. “It is also home to a special group of students, rising sixth graders who have demonstrated their commitment to learning despite the challenges of remote instruction. We applaud your achievement and are excited to see a second class of graduates advance to the next level of their academic journey. Thank you to the families for their support, and to the exceptional partnership we have with Rockingham County Schools and the Moss Street community.”
Located in Rockingham County, North Carolina, Moss Street is a school for kindergarten through fifth graders emphasizing experiential learning that is authentic, active, learner-centered, challenging, and literacy-rich.
Photography by Martin W. Kane, University Communications

**Sustainability Short Films Competition names winners**

The 11th annual [UNCG International Shorts Film Competition](#) announced the winners of this year’s competition.

As part of the annual UNCG Sustainability Film & Discussion Series, the competition is an opportunity to share new artistic works in the international community that address the urgency of the climate crisis and acknowledge the power of film to connect, communicate, and convince. All of the twelve finalist films can be viewed [on the website](#).

First place is awarded to “Trees and Ice,” directed by Gerald Habrath, a multimedia artist currently serving as associate professor of art at West Virginia University. “Trees and Ice” captures the wonder and solemnity of two elements of nature that center prominently in the growing climate crisis.

Second place is awarded to “Woodpecker,” directed by Richards Vitols. “Woodpecker” takes place in a near future where natural species in a forest environment are replaced by artificial ones so that future generations can experience them.

Third place is awarded to “History Repeats,” directed by Eric Hynynen. “History Repeats” uses a collage of found footage to present a shortened history of the world to ask if we’re doomed to repeat our mistakes or if we can learn from them.

This year’s Audience Award is presented to “Terroir,” directed by Dawn Westlake. “Terroir” received more than 50% of the vote from more than 130 people across the world. The film is “a feminist musical about how the mother-child relationship can sometimes cloud our perception of very capable female leaders in all sectors of society.”

“Many thanks to the filmmakers for their commitments to creatively address issues of the climate crises,” said Sarah Dorsey, program director for the Film & Discussion Series. “It was a real team effort to put the competition online this year. And the competition and film series would not be possible without support from the UNCG Green Fund, the Office of Sustainability, and our sponsors: UNCG Geography, Environment, and Sustainability Department; Pricey Harrison; Sierra Club North Carolina; Tate Street Coffee House; UNCG University Libraries; and The Weatherspoon Art Museum.”

The films are judged by Marisol Maddox, a graduate student in the International Security MA program at George Mason University and a research contractor at the Woodrow Wilson Center’s Polar Institute. And by Jean Michel Rolland, a longtime musician, painter, and
In Memoriam: James Allen

James (Jim) Allen, former vice chancellor for Student Affairs, died May 30.

Allen came to UNCG in 1967 to serve as Presbyterian campus minister, and was named dean of students in 1971, before being appointed vice chancellor in 1973, a position he held until his retirement in 1996.

Allen was a leader at UNCG during turbulent times in the United States, and he became known on campus for his compassion, his collaborative manner, and his respect for student concerns. He was an early and vocal supporter of civil rights and was admired and valued by students and faculty.

Allen led the effort to bring the UNCG athletic program from Division III to Division I, an accomplishment that he was very proud of. He also supported the establishment of the Greek system on UNCG’s campus.

While serving UNCG as dean of students and vice chancellor, he continued as an interim minister at area churches.

Former Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs Cherry Callahan remembers meeting Allen when she was a freshman at UNCG. Callahan joined Allen’s staff in 1979 and worked with him until his retirement.

“He was an extremely supportive community member during the volatile times of the late 60s, and this support and passion for students led to his appointment as dean of students, in 1971, and later to become vice chancellor,” she recalled. “Jim was a very popular administrator – one who was always the strongest advocate for students and always present with students during both good days and bad.

“He was an exemplary mentor to both students and staff over the years during which he advanced the important role that Student Affairs plays in the life of a university. Jim was particularly passionate about student leadership and athletics.

“He was always on the phone with the Chancellor and other administrative officials as they sought to make UNCG the best that it could be. He presided over many marriages of UNCG students as well as funerals of UNCG faculty and staff – again, because of his personal ties to so many. He was a beloved Spartan in every possible way.”
Three scholarships bear Allen’s name: the James H. Allen Student Leader Scholarship for a rising UNCG senior who demonstrates superior leadership skills at the University, the James H. Allen Athletic Scholarship for women soccer players, and the James H. Allen Scholarship for students in the Joseph M. Bryan School of Business and Economics.

To support any of the three scholarships in memory of Jim Allen, please see the UNCG University Advancement form here.

Xhenet Aliu

Xhenet Aliu (Creative Writing) was named the winner of the 2020 Towsend Prize for Fiction, Georgia’s oldest and most prestigious literary award which is given biennially by the Chattahoochee Review and the Georgia Center for the Book. Aliu was honored in a virtual award ceremony at the end of May. The award honored her 2018 novel “Brass,” which was praised highly in the New York Times and Atlanta Journal-Constitution. “Brass” is the story of European immigrants who came to work in brass factories in the town of Waterbury. Aliu is also the author of “Domesticated Wild Things,” a short story collection.

Dr. Yarneccia Dyson

Dr. Yarneccia Dyson (Social Work) has been selected as a 2020 Health Disparities Research Institute Scholar by the National Institutes of Health.
She will attend a virtual training event in August. The training program is normally held at the NIH campus, but due to COVID-19, the event will be hosted virtually. The program is sponsored by the National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities, which is part of the NIH.

Dr. Joseph Santin

Dr. Joseph Santin (Biology) received new funding from the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke for the project “Acquiring resistance to anoxia in neural circuit function.”

The goal of this project is to understand how to prevent neurological dysfunction caused by oxygen deprivation in the brain. Impaired delivery of oxygen to the brain occurs during leading causes of neurological disability such as stroke and traumatic brain injury. It is well established that hypoxia damages the brain in these conditions, killing patients or severely decreasing their quality of life. The medical and financial burden of brain hypoxia will likely increase over the next 40 years because the most susceptible part of our population, the aging, is expected to rise by about 60%. The ultimate goal for patients is “prime” their brains to work better without oxygen, so when an insult occurs, damage is minimized.

To gain fundamental insight needed to reach this goal, we will exploit a circuit that can prime itself to work without oxygen beyond that of most other neural systems- a central pattern generating circuit found in the brainstem of frogs. Like neural circuits of most vertebrates, this network needs oxygen to function. After minutes without oxygen, the network falls silent. In striking contrast, the PI found that this circuit transforms and continues to produce rhythmic activity when deprived of oxygen a day after these animals come out of hibernation. Such a dramatic improvement in circuit function during anoxia - from no activity to normal activity- has yet to be shown in any other model circuit.

We assert that fundamental concepts needed to eventually achieve anoxia resistance in patients’ brains will be easier to reveal in our system compared to other models where such a high degree of functional improvement is not yet possible.
The central hypothesis of this application is that changes supporting the energetic stress of activity and preserving neuronal firing lead to anoxia resistance of circuit function. This hypothesis will be tested by three mechanistic aims: (1) identify shifts in metabolic processes that maintain energy status of the network during anoxia, (2) assess the extent to which reducing inhibitory ion pumps promotes neuronal firing during anoxia, and (3) determine changes in ion channel expression profiles in single anoxia-resistant neurons.

These aims will afford diverse training opportunities to undergraduate and graduate students in single-cell molecular biology, patch clamp electrophysiology, fluorescence imaging microscopy, and extracellular nerve recording. Overall, this work will provide insight into how to make a neural circuit work properly without oxygen and will inform clinical investigations that must achieve this same outcome before patients’ lives can be improved when they encounter life-threatening hypoxia.

**Dr. Tiffany Smith**

Dr. Tiffany Smith (Educational Research Methodology) received new funding from North Carolina State University for the project “Evaluation of NCSU S-STEM program: Graduate scholarships in Biochemistry applied to agriculture and human health.”

Dr. Smith will serve as the external evaluator. Smith will use a Values-Engaged, Educative evaluation approach (VEE) (Boyce, 2017; Greene, DeStefano, Burgon, & Hall, 2006). The VEE approach, developed with NSF-EHR support, defines high-quality STEM educational programming as that which effectively incorporates cutting-edge scientific content, strong instructional pedagogy, and sensitivity to diversity and equity issues. The VEE evaluation approach encourages explicit attention to issues of diversity and equity, and responsiveness to the culture and context of the program. Specifically, the evaluator is called to examine the extent to which an education program is equitable or has equal opportunities for participation, meaningful learning, and accomplishment, particularly for those least well served in that context. Additionally, this approach seeks to educate stakeholders about their program while also engaging the perspectives, concerns, and values of all legitimate
stakeholders, including those traditionally unheard and underrepresented in the evaluation context.

Dr. Yu-Min Chung

Dr. Yu-Min Chung (Mathematics and Statistics) received new funding from the College of William and Mary, Prime: National Science Foundation for the project “Multiparameter Persistence: An Algebraic Topological Framework for Analyzing Microstructure in Porous Media.”

Computational topology and the field of topological data analysis offer powerful tools for analyzing robust structure in noisy images. This project aims to direct this tool at understanding microstructure and fluid flow in porous media. The structure of the pore space in the material affects the strength of the material and dictates how efficiently liquids and gases can percolate or diffuse through the substrate. In the past, the best way to observe structure in porous media was to carefully image 2-dimensional cross-sections of a sample and interpolate the microstructure in between.

More recently, X-ray micro-computed tomography (micro-CT) and related techniques have emerged as promising tools for rendering three-dimensional structures in a quick and nondestructive manner and with higher resolution. However, as with most physical measurement methods, micro-CT renderings typically contain noise and, depending on resolution, may miss small scale features. Furthermore, standard techniques for processing the data are often subjective, relying heavily on thresholding choices based on visual cues.

Fundamental limitations to the processing of these images has inhibited progress in analyzing and including higher-resolution microstructural information into the study of the material and in gas and fluid transport models. While the field of algebraic topology enjoys a long history within mathematics, the recent development of software to compute topological invariants in data sets has drastically increased the ability of researchers to apply these sophisticated tools in a variety of ways. Topological measurements such as Betti numbers that count holes of different dimensions, and persistent homology that records and tracks
topological features in an appropriate filtration of the data, have shown promise in extracting structure from data. However, many of the methods generated in this field require further development, justification, and optimization.

This project utilizes the formalism of algebraic topology, including an extension of (one-dimensional) persistent homology called multiparameter persistence, to properly frame the effects of thresholding, denoising, smoothing, and dimension reduction on processing structural images. In this framework, methods for extracting important topological and geometric information, as well as improving accuracy in renderings of microstructure, can be considered in a cohesive and mathematically rigorous manner.

The motivating application for this work is the analysis of micro-CT images of ice core data and the related gas age-ice age problem in climate science. Ice cores are retrieved from locations where ice rarely melts and instead forms from the densification of snowfall under the pressure of subsequent accumulation.

The primary goals include (1) utilizing algebraic topology to improve topological and geometric accuracy in renderings of microstructure extracted from noisy 2 and 3D images of porous media, (2) utilizing algebraic topology to quantify the robustness of geometric and topological measurements of microstructure, (3) investigating sensitivity of gas transport and related models to renderings of microstructure and identifying key topological and geometric structural parameters for reduced model construction, and (4) applying developed techniques to firn data and the gas age-ice age problem.

Newsmakers: Smith Lee, Strickland, Middle College graduation, McLean, Strack

Whether researchers with timely insights or students with outstanding stories, members of the UNCG community appear in print, web and broadcast media every day. Here is a sampling of UNCG-related stories in the news and media over the week:

- Dr. Jocelyn R. Smith Lee was interviewed by WFDD on her work studying the effect of police violence on young black men. [Listen here.](#)
- Nursing doctoral student Bevin Strickland spoke to WUNC 91.5 about nursing on the frontlines of the coronavirus pandemic. [The interview.](#)
- MyFox8 highlighted the recent Middle College graduation ceremony, with comments from president Keisha Brown. [The article.](#)
- Dr. Bryan McLean was featured in a Florida Museum article about a study he co-authored on deer mouse population and climate change. [The piece.](#)
- Dr. Bob Strack was among the healthcare professionals who spoke to WFMY News2
about how to stay safe during summer activities. The feature.