UNCG welcomes new campus leaders

UNC Greensboro welcomed five new leaders this summer to help guide the University through these challenging and uncertain times.

Dr. Jim Coleman is the new provost and executive vice chancellor; Tina McEntire is vice chancellor for enrollment management; Bob Shea is vice chancellor for finance and administration; Dr. Maria Anastasiou is associate provost for international programs; and Juliette Bianco is director of the Weatherspoon Art Museum.

Each leader brings a wealth of experience and passion to the UNCG community. Read more about what brought them to UNCG – and what they hope to accomplish – below.
Dr. Jim Coleman
Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor

Provost Coleman never imagined himself being an administrator. In fact, as a young assistant professor of biology at Syracuse University, he often challenged the administration.

“I thought our dean and provost walked around in suits and ties and tried to accumulate power and make our lives as miserable as possible,” he says now with a laugh.

But a one-year stint at the National Science Foundation – in which he managed $10 million in research funding – changed everything. He realized he enjoyed facilitating the success of other people and of organizations. And he was good at it, too.

Coleman has now worked in higher education administration for 24 years, most recently serving as provost at University of Arkansas. In many ways, he’s the perfect fit for UNCG. He’s passionate about the role of public education in propelling students up the socioeconomic ladder and on to profoundly meaningful and successful lives. He also has a strong background in building transformative student success programs, new curricular initiatives, and research across all of the disciplines at UNCG.

Since joining UNCG in July, Coleman has been helping to lead the University through the
COVID-19 pandemic. A lot of his work this year will be focused on managing this crisis – budget issues, student success challenges, and heightened anxiety on campus.

But looking ahead, he truly believes in Chancellor Gilliam’s vision – that UNCG is poised to become the national model for how a university can blend opportunity, excellence, and impact.

“Higher education as a whole has started to become an enforcer of social inequality as opposed to the great equalizer. It’s schools like UNCG that are still committed to that original mission,” he says. “We also have high quality research, and a deep commitment to the city and the region. I came to UNCG because it checks all of those boxes that I’m passionate about.”

Tina McEntire
Vice Chancellor for Enrollment Management

Coming from a similar role at UNC Charlotte where she spent 12 years heading the enrollment management unit, McEntire was drawn to UNCG for the opportunity to lead a new division and to work directly with Chancellor Gilliam – an opportunity that many enrollment management leaders don’t have.

McEntire accepted this role to serve UNCG’s mission of student success and to transform
people’s perception of enrollment management.

“I want the University community to understand that enrollment management doesn’t just involve bringing students to UNCG. Enrollment management spans the entire student life cycle from admissions, to financial aid, to the registrar’s office, and beyond graduation.”

In her new role, McEntire will be reviewing the structure for the new enrollment management division and building a solid foundation for growth. Her primary focuses for the fall include improving enrollment reporting efforts, employing new strategies to enhance the recruitment and visit experience for new students, and also streamlining the “business of being a student,” which involves the processes students have to perform to remain enrolled.

“Registration, billing, scholarships, and other similar processes should be easy for students and families to navigate, not become obstacles that cause stress or hinder their progress to graduation. I want to ensure that when we onboard students, the University processes are as smooth as possible, so students can focus their time and energy on learning.”

Bob Shea
Vice Chancellor for Finance and Administration

As a first-generation college graduate, Shea understands the value of higher education and
knows firsthand how it can affect the trajectory of one’s life. His degree led him to become a U.S. Navy officer, serving 25 years with postings around the United States and the world, and to his last role at Elon University where he served as a member of the president’s senior staff.

The desire to give back to students by working in higher education brought him to UNCG.

“Education expands horizons. UNCG continually launches well-prepared graduates into the world of work, further education, and involved citizenship. Hard work, preparation, and education allow one to generate opportunities for socioeconomic growth, and I want to be a part of that exciting work.”

Shea feels at home in the Spartan community because, like himself, many UNCG students and graduates are also the first in their families to attend and graduate from college. He strongly believes in UNCG’s mission of enabling socioeconomic mobility.

“Socioeconomic mobility is something I have experienced in my life. Education levels the playing field in the very competitive world we live in. A UNCG education is a very powerful tool to prepare for or continue on life’s journey.”

Shea’s goals include not only handling the immediate impacts of operating in this pandemic-era “new normal,” but also positioning UNCG to thrive in the post-pandemic future with access, affordability, and excellence.
Dr. Maria Anastasiou
Associate Provost for International Programs

Anastasiou’s passion for international education is rooted in her own personal story.

A native of Cyprus, Anastasiou first came to the United States as an international student at UNC Chapel Hill. She knows the myriad of challenges - and opportunities - that come with being an international student, and she fully believes in the transformative impact of international education.

As she continued her studies as a graduate student, she worked in international education at the University of South Carolina, where she helped to organize special Fulbright programs for international faculty. That first professional experience marked the start of what has been a successful and fulfilling career in international education.

Now, Anastasiou is excited to bring her more than 15 years of experience to UNCG, a campus that stood out because of its “commitment to global learning.”

“UNCG is not just doing lip service to this idea. Global learning is imperative for this University.”

Anastasiou and the International Programs Center team face a big challenge: How can
UNCG deliver global learning during a pandemic? What does international education look like without travel?

“It’s a challenging time for international education, but this is a good time for us to assess how we’ve been doing this work and create new opportunities. The mother of invention is necessity.”

Anastasiou is currently participating in a “listening tour” with campus partners and the community to assess what has been working, what can be improved, and how the IPC can meet the needs of its partners. Long term, she wants to find new ways to provide international experiences to all UNCG students - whether that’s through course curriculum, technology, on-campus exchanges with international students, engagement with Greensboro’s large immigrant and refugee populations, etc. Faculty are crucial in developing global learning experiences for students, so she looks forward to working with faculty to meet this goal and to support them in their own work as well.

“Global learning is really crucial to the success of our students. We are committed to finding different ways of doing it.”

Juliette Bianco
Anne and Ben Cone Memorial Endowed Director of the Weatherspoon Art Museum
Throughout her life, Bianco has valued the power of art and education.

“Having access to public education and free museums played a central part of my identity growing up. UNCG’s commitment to excellence, student success, and community transformation really speaks to me.”

With 25 years of experience as an art museum professional, she comes to UNCG from the Hood Museum of Art at Dartmouth College where she served in various leadership capacities.

The opportunity to transform an internationally-recognized campus museum into a hub for collaborative learning and teaching drew her to this position.

“As we work to build a more just society within the context of our actions and our responses to the pandemic and institutional racism and inequality, there’s never been a more important time for museums to contribute to public education.”

Bianco aspires for the Weatherspoon to be a catalyst for meaningful dialogue, student and faculty participation, and community connection.

“The museum is positioned at the nexus of all these opportunities to create change. Not only is it located in a vibrant and diverse city that cultivates a rich educational and cultural life, but it is also on the campus of a major university that’s dedicated to 20,000 students who will go on to be civic leaders in our communities and in the world. Learning in museums supports creative, critical, and empathetic thinking – qualities that boost success in any field.”

Bianco’s goal is to ensure that the Weatherspoon is integral to the education and everyday lives of UNCG students.

“I’d like graduates of UNCG to reflect on their time at the University and remember a meaningful experience at the museum. It’s such an opportunity to have a world-class art museum on your university campus, and I want students to feel that they are a part of making it relevant to their lives.”

**Professor receives NSF award for bioinformatics study**
Dr. Prashanti Manda, assistant professor of informatics and analytics, has been awarded a five-year, $500,000 National Science Foundation CAREER award for a new project aimed at addressing one of the biggest challenges in the field of biology: data.

Biologists have a lot of data, but it isn’t always represented in formats that facilitate scientific inquiry and analysis. Manda, a computer scientist who focuses on bioinformatics, aims to develop algorithms that will allow scientists to recognize important biological concepts from literature more effectively.

Manda works with biological ontologies, or hierarchical classifications that give scientists a way to represent and catalog their findings. Curators in biology labs spend a lot of time translating findings into ontology-based representations that are then cataloged in databases and made accessible to scientists across the globe.

The problem with this current model? It’s incredibly tedious and time consuming, and there’s so much biological research being published. This has created a bottleneck of data, meaning that databases aren’t as updated as they should be, and therefore scientists don’t have access to critical new findings.

Manda’s solution is to develop a text-mining machine that will automate – and expedite – this process. The goal is to create algorithms that can “read” new research and identify ontological concepts with near-human accuracy.
“We aren’t saying we can replace humans, and we don’t intend to, but we want to get as close to a human’s perception as possible,” said Manda. “We hope that these methods will supplement human labor and free up curators to focus on other important data collection and analysis work.”

The first step of the project is to develop the algorithms. The second step is to figure out how to best evaluate effectiveness. The project is based on joint preliminary work performed in collaboration with Dr. Somya Mohanty in the Department of Computer Science.

Ultimately, this research could have big implications not just for the field of bioinformatics, but for biology and science as a whole.

“There are extremely important applications,” said Manda. “For example, human diseases can be represented using ontology concepts. We can use these computational methods to pinpoint disease models that may be related, and this data can also be used to help diagnose rare diseases. When I solve the bottleneck issue, that will mean we can have more of this data available. Papers published in 2020 can be analyzed in 2020. We don’t have to operate on old information.”

CAREER awards are prestigious grants designed to support early-career faculty who have the potential to serve as academic role models in research and education and to lead advances in the mission of their department or organization. Other NSF CAREER awardees at UNCG include Dr. Mitch Croatt, Dr. Heidi Carlone, and Dr. Nancy Green.

Story by Alyssa Bedrosian, University Communications
Photography by Martin W. Kane, University Communications

School of Theatre announces virtual season
A still from “Marisol,” an apocalyptic comedy of urban realities and guardian angels. It’s the first production of the UNCG Theatre fall virtual season.

The UNC Greensboro School of Theatre is proud to present a first-of-its-kind fall virtual season featuring live productions streamed on-demand right in your living room.

The season begins with “Marisol” by José Rivera, an apocalyptic comedy of urban realities and guardian angels that will stream on-demand October 15-17, 2020.

Following this, Dominique Morisseau’s “Skeleton Crew” will stream from November 5-7. The third play in Morisseau’s “Detroit Cycle”, Skeleton Crew focuses on employees at an auto stamping plant and the new economic realities facing them at the start of the Great Recession.

“Hear Our Voices: An Inclusive Celebration of New Musical Theatre” follows shortly after, streaming from November 12-14. This world premiere song cycle is part of a mission to center marginalized voices in American theatre and focuses on new work by BIPOC, LGBTQ+, and disabled writers.

Concluding the fall season is a quartet of one-act plays by MFA Directing and Theatre for Youth candidates, featuring “Here We Go” by Caryl Churchill, “Incognito” by UNCG playwriting professor Janet Allard, “Feeding the Moonfish” by Barbara Wiechmann, and “The Arkansaw Bear” by Aurand Harris. The MFA candidate one-acts will stream from
Virtual CVPA master class series launches

Although UNCG’s College of Visual and Performing Arts’ Concert & Lecture Series is on temporary hiatus during the pandemic, CVPA will continue its commitment to connecting artists and performers with the campus community through insightful, inspirational, and informative events.

CVPA is offering a series of arts-related masterclasses that are open to all faculty, staff, students. The fall events are as follows:

**Sarah Lewis**  
**Wednesday, September 16, 2020, 6 p.m.**  
[Webinar Registration]

Lewis is the bestselling author of “The Rise”, which is the biography of an idea – a big idea – that no current term yet captures. It’s about creative human endeavor, and how innovation, mastery, and new concepts are found in unlikely places. Lewis also guest-edited the “Vision
& Justice” issue of Aperture—a landmark collection that address race, photography, and social justice. Lewis is also the guest-editor of Aperture magazine’s instant classic “Vision & Justice” issue, which has received unprecedented press coverage and sparked a national conversation.

Lewis is an Associate Professor at Harvard, in the Departments of History of Art and Architecture, and African and African American Studies. She has spoken at SXSW, appeared on Oprah’s “Power List,” served on President Obama’s Arts Policy Committee, and been profiled in Vogue. Lewis has held positions at Yale’s School of Art, the Tate Modern, and the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Her essays have been published in Artforum and The Smithsonian, and her book on Frederick Douglass is forthcoming from Harvard University Press. She received her B.A. from Harvard, M. Phil from Oxford, and Ph.D. from Yale.

**Alicia Graf Mack**

**Monday, September 28, 2020 11 a.m.**

[Webinar Registration](#)

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Graf Mack enjoyed a distinguished career as a leading dancer of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. She has also been a principal dancer with Dance Theatre of Harlem and Complexions Contemporary Ballet, and she has danced as a guest performer with Alonzo King’s LINES Ballet, Beyoncé, John Legend, Andre 3000, and Alicia Keys. Graf Mack
graduated magna cum laude with honors in history from Columbia University and holds an MA in nonprofit management from Washington University in St. Louis. In 2007, Smithsonian magazine named her an American Innovator of the Arts and Sciences. She is a recipient of the Columbia University Medal of Excellence, an award given each year to an alumnus who has demonstrated excellence in their field of work.

In 2008, she delivered the keynote address to the graduates of Columbia University’s School of General Studies. As a dance educator, Graf Mack most recently taught as an adjunct faculty member at the University of Houston and was a visiting assistant professor at Webster University. She is a co-founder of D(n)A Arts Collective, an initiative created to enrich the lives of young dancers through master classes and intensives. She began her inaugural season as director of the Juilliard Dance Division in the fall of 2018.

Black Violin
Friday, October 2, 2020, 3 p.m.
Webinar Registration

Black Violin is lead by classically trained string players Wil B. (viola) and Kev Marcus (violin). The band uses their unique blend of classical and hip-hop music to overcome stereotypes while encouraging people of all ages, races, and economic backgrounds to join together to break down cultural barriers. In the past year alone, the band has performed for over 100,000 students in the US and Europe, and has partnered with Yamaha and NAMM (National Association of Music Manufactures) to continue supporting music education.

Black Violin has recently joined with Turnaround Arts, alongside artists such as Yo-Yo Ma and Elton John to bring arts education to struggling schools in underserved communities. Turnaround Arts is a program of the John F. Kennedy Center for Performing Arts founded by President Obama’s Committee on the Arts and the Humanities.

The group has collaborated creatively with artists such as Kanye West, Aerosmith, Tom Petty, Wu-Tang Clan, Wyclef Jean and Alicia Keys. In addition, Black Violin has composed for a major FOX Television original Pitch and has been featured by ESPN as the official artist of the 2017 US Open (tennis) and 2016 & 2017 Heisman Trophy Award ceremonies. They have been featured on The Tonight Show, Ellen, The Wendy William’s Show, NPR, and more.
Call for honorary degree nominations

The Committee on Honorary Degrees invites the UNCG community to identify people who would be good candidates for honorary degrees to be granted at the 2022 commencement or subsequent commencements. The purpose for awarding honorary degrees includes the following:

To recognize individuals who demonstrate extraordinary achievement over their entire scholarly or artistic careers or who have performed distinguished public service in their lifetime;

To recognize excellence in the scholarly fields of degrees awarded by the University as well as those that exemplify the history and mission of the University;

To honor those individuals whose lives and achievements are consistent with the qualities and values espoused by the University in order to provide examples of the University’s aspirations for its graduates;

To elevate the visibility and reputation of the University by honoring those individuals who are widely known and regarded in their field or in society as a whole.

The person selected may be distinguished in any number of areas: humanities, sciences, arts, public service, and education, to name a few.

Those currently holding public office in the state and the permanent staff of our state universities are not eligible. The achievements may vary in scope from prominence on the international or professional scene to vital contributions to the University, North Carolina, and beyond. A previous connection to the University or state is not mandatory but is considered a strength.

In order for you to have an idea of the persons who have received Honorary Degrees, we invite you to examine the names of awardees from past years: Emmylou Harris (2019); Mansukh C. Wani, William Mangum (2017); William Black, Harold Schiffman (2016); Timothy Rice (2015); Norman Anderson (2013); Bonnie McElveen-Hunter (2012); Thomas Haggai (2011); Margaret Maron (2010); Rebecca Lloyd, Nido Qubein (2009); Fred Chappell, Tom Ross, Kay Yow (2008); Irvin Belk, Betty Ray McCain, Edwin S. Melvin (2007); Molly Broad, Henry Frye, Shirley Frye (2006); Muriel Siebert (2005); Jim Hunt (2004); Jaylee Mead (2003); Michael B. Fleming, Stanley Frank (2002); Kenneth L. Adelman, Bonnie Angelo, Jean Brooks (2001); Erskine Bowles (2000); Maud Gatewood, Eloise R. Lewis (1999); Carolyn R. Ferree, Calvin Trillin (1998); Mary Ellen Rudin, LeRoy T. Walker (1995);
The committee asks that nominators submit candidates on the Honorary Degree Candidate Nomination Form, along with biographical information. Please keep in mind the need for confidentiality, as candidates should not be aware that they are being considered.

The deadline for nominations is Friday, October 30, 2020. Please send the completed nomination form to Jennifer Johnson, Assistant to the Provost, at jennyjojohnson@uncg.edu or the University Committee on Honorary Degrees, Office of the Provost, 201 Mossman Building.

LiveSafe app gets a new look

Detail of the UNCG Mobile app home screen showing the LiveSafe tile.

LiveSave – the mobile app that lets students, parents, faculty, and staff engage with UNCG Police – now has a new design and added features.

Accessed through the UNCG Mobile app or as a stand-alone app, LiveSafe puts a variety of
services at your fingertips, such as:

- **SafeWalk**: Virtually walk family, friends, and colleagues home or to another destination by monitoring their location on a real-time map.
- **Emergency**: Call or message for immediate help.
- **Report Suspicious Activity**: See something? Have a concern? Share it with UNCG Police.
- **Report Incident**: Did something happen that UNCG Police should know about? Provide the info here.

Other features include many non-emergency tips such as resources for mental health, harassment, theft, and other events.

Be sure to download the UNCG Mobile app (the one with our logo and the blue background) from the [Google](#) or [iTunes](#) app store, where you can access LiveSafe through the LiveSafe tile on the mobile home screen.

**Tax Deferral Program notice for employees**

An executive order signed by President Trump in early August provides an option for deferral of certain payroll taxes for employees that can be implemented this month. Following the guidance of the UNC System, UNCG will not participate in the **Tax Deferral Program**. Employees will continue to receive their regular paycheck with the same withholdings. In other words, there will be no change.

As indicated in the UNC System guidance, the payroll tax deferral has the potential to give some employees a larger net pay in the short term, but it is a temporary measure that could also have other implications for our employees. In [Notice 2020-65](#), the IRS provides some guidance, indicating that deferred payroll taxes must be repaid between January 1 and April 30, 2021; that workers will be required to repay the tax even if they leave their current employer; and that any tax that isn’t repaid within that window will be subject to interest and penalties.

Employees are able to adjust their NC State Tax and/or Federal Tax withholding allowances at any time through UNCGenie.

**UNCG hosts events for mental health awareness**
College life can be stressful. Balancing school work and social life can take a toll on one’s mental health, especially while navigating a global pandemic.

“Mental health can quietly impact and affect all facets of life,” says Jamie Stephens, coordinator for outreach and peer education in the Department of Recreation and Wellness. “College students are dealing with undiagnosed depression, anxiety, and other mental health challenges, and UNCG strives to provide resources that support students’ overall health and wellness.”

September is National Suicide Prevention Awareness Month and marks UNC Greensboro’s observance of Mental Health Month. Throughout the month, there are a variety of mental health events and resources to support students.

Here’s what’s going on around campus to promote mental health care and awareness:

- **Pinwheels for Suicide Prevention**: Sept. 9-21, Kaplan Commons (EUC Lawn) will be covered with pinwheels to represent the 1,100 college students across the country lost to suicide each year.

- **Light the Night Vigil**: On Thursday, Sept. 17, a vigil will be held at the Moran Commons fountain at 8 p.m. Make a luminary to honor a loved one lost to suicide or to
send hope out into the world.

- **Spartan Scents Aromatherapy Workshops:** Lift your spirit and learn about essential oils at an aromatherapy workshop. Participants will create an aromatic product to take home. Sessions will be held on Sept. 14, 17, 22, and 24. RSVP is required via Spartan Connect, and face coverings will be required to attend the workshop.

There are also a variety of mental health resources available to the campus community:

- **Ask, Listen, Refer Suicide Prevention Training:** This 20-minute educational training is designed to help faculty, staff, and students prevent suicide by teaching participants to identify people at risk for suicide; recognize the risk factors, protective factors, and warning signs of suicide; and respond to and get help for people at risk. Register at asklistenrefer.org/uncg.

- **“Check-Up from the Neck Up” Mental Health Screenings:** Students are encouraged to complete an anonymous online mental health screening for a quick “check-up from the neck up.” Access the screening at screening.mentalhealthscreening.org/UNCG.

- **UNCG Counseling Center:** The Counseling Center is providing all services via telemental health this fall. Schedule an appointment and view additional mental health resources online at shs.uncg.edu/cc or by calling 336-334-5874.
UNCG ranks No. 1 in NC for social mobility
For the second consecutive year, UNC Greensboro ranks No. 1 in North Carolina for social mobility in the annual U.S. News & World Report Best Colleges rankings. UNCG moved up four spots in the national social mobility rankings, from No. 27 last year to No. 23 this year.

The Top Performers in Social Mobility category, introduced in 2019 as part of the U.S. News Best Colleges rankings, highlights institutions that are most successful in enrolling and graduating students who come from disadvantaged backgrounds.

UNCG was also recognized in the National Universities and Top Public Schools categories. This year marks the 30th consecutive year that UNCG has been recognized as a U.S. News “Best College.”

UNCG has a long history of providing access and opportunity to students from disadvantaged backgrounds. The institution was founded in 1891 as a women’s college. Now, UNCG is recognized as one of the most diverse institutions in the state – approximately 50% of students are people of color. Additionally, 31% of students are first-generation college students, and half of UNCG students are Pell Grant eligible.

UNCG’s Division of Student Success offers a variety of programs and initiatives aimed at helping students from all backgrounds realize their fullest academic and professional potential.
To learn more about the rankings, view UNCG’s profile on the U.S. News website.

Photography by Grant Evan Gilliard, University Communications

**UNC System seeks participation in racial equity task force questionnaire**

The UNC System requests input from faculty, staff, and students for a Racial Equity Task Force system-wide initiative. Your participation is sought in this survey so that our shared, unique, UNCG voice is heard and this effort can accurately reflect the perspectives on our campus.

You are invited to [complete a questionnaire](#) to inform the work of the UNC System’s Racial Equity Task Force. The objectives of the questionnaire are to:

- Understand how racial diversity, equity, and inclusion are perceived on UNC System campuses
- Evaluate where the UNC System should prioritize efforts; and
- Give all members of the UNC System a chance to be heard by the UNC System Racial Equity Task Force

You are being asked to take part in a research study because you are faculty, staff, or student of the University of North Carolina System. You must be at least 18 years old to participate.

- The employee survey is [here](#).
- The student survey is [here](#).

The questionnaire will ask about your experiences and perceptions at your institution related to racial diversity, equity, and inclusion. The questionnaire will take about 15-20 minutes to complete.

Your participation in the questionnaire is completely voluntary, and you can stop completing the questionnaire at any time if you so choose.

All the information that you provide will be anonymous. Your name will not be associated with your responses. General results from the questionnaire will be shared with the UNC System Office to help inform efforts to foster positive campus climate at UNC institutions. UNCG-specific responses will also be shared with UNCG campus leaders. De-identified information collected through this questionnaire may be used to inform the UNC System Racial Equity Task Force’s final report and recommendations.
As with any study involving collection of data, there is the possibility of breach of confidentiality of data. Every precaution will be taken to secure your responses to ensure confidentiality.

If you have any questions about this research, please contact Dr. Shun Robertson or email srobertson@northcarolina.edu. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject, you may contact the UNC Institutional Review Board at 919-966-3113 or by email to IRB_subjects@unc.edu.

If you would like to discuss racial equity at UNCG, please contact either Dr. Andrea Hunter or Dr. Julia Mendez Smith, Chancellor’s Fellows for Campus Climate, or visit our Racial Equity website.

In Memoriam: Dr. Murray Arndt

Dr. Murray D. Arndt died August 30.

He taught for more than 30 years for UNCG’s Department of English, serving as director of Warren Ashby Residential College. His courses were focused on writing, twentieth-century poetry, and the Bible as literature. One of his favorite classes was called “Grail Literature,” which included many works not usually seen as religious, such as The Old Man and the Sea and films like Bagdad Café. Before earning his Ph.D from Duke in 1970, he was an ordained priest and served the priesthood for 12 years. He was also active in the Civil Rights Movement during the 1960s.

He is remembered as an inspiring, heartfelt teacher.

UNCG faculty members provided the following reflections:

“‘College is not a pie eating contest.’ I was quoting Murray just yesterday, during our RC tradition of core lecture. Two former students were speaking about their experiences and regrets from their time at UNCG, and they commented that they wished they had slowed down the pace and absorbed their experiences here more deeply. Between his leadership of Ashby for 13 years and Fran’s for 17 years, he has had 30 years to open minds and hearts. He inspired kindness, thoughtfulness and strong sincerity. It is no surprise that students adored him long after they graduated.”

~Dr. Sara Littlejohn, Ashby College & Strong College Program Chair

“When I first met Murray Arndt about 25 years ago, he was already retired. However, he was about the least “retired” Professor on campus. I first met him as he was preparing to
teach his Grail Literature course, and I marveled at the group of 25 or so usually sleepy undergrads who were eagerly awaiting the start of class. He was one of the most engaging lecturers and speakers I had ever heard; he brought an unmistakable gravitas to his classrooms, to social events in Ashby College, and to reunions with Ashby students. Murray’s words were always well thought out and impactful, and his quiet nature disguised a broad sense of humor, a deep sense of social justice and a true care for his students. I distinctly remember a talk he gave to students in Ashby College where he encouraged the students to slow down, enjoy college, embrace new ideas, and never feel that your major was a definition of you as a person, for each of you is so much more than a set of 36 or so credit hours. Murray embodied everything that the word ‘professor’ can encompass.

~Dr. Chrissy Flood, Ashby College Associate Program Chair

“When I started my position as the Ashby Residential College Coordinator in 2011, I met Murray and Fran. Within moments, Fran started talking with me about the Western film ‘Shane,’ and Murray secured my commitment to visit his class and read aloud a section of ‘The Waste Land.’ I knew I was in a place that was good. Both retired after that year, but Murray returned each fall, right before exams, to read Christmas stories and drink hot chocolate with the students. I’ll always remember his deep emotional relationship with literature and with learning. He inspired me to change the trajectory of my own career, to slow down and love what I’m doing, and always to be present with the students. I’ll remember his voice, a deep and gentle rumble. It’s the voice that I will hear each time I read a poem.”

-Dr. Will Dodson, Ashby & Strong Residential College Coordinator

Dr. Kara Baldwin

Dr. Kara Baldwin (Office of TRiO Programs) received new funding from the U.S. Department of Education for the project “Student Support Services STEM-H Program.”

The SSS-STEM Health Sciences (STEM-H) program will identify and provide academic
support to 120 undergraduate students who are first-generation, low-income, and/or have a disability, and are majoring in STEM-Health Sciences. The primary goal of SSS STEM-H is to increase the educational success of these students so that they earn a bachelor’s degree in STEM-H and are prepared to enroll in a graduate program or begin their careers. This proposed SSS STEM-H program will provide: individualized academic tutoring; reading, writing, and study skills coaching and development; advising in academic progress, graduate school, career, and personal concerns; financial aid counseling; financial literacy; and first-year experience instruction. Participants in SSS STEM-H will receive intensive support through individual sessions, small groups workshops, and access to support services online from SSS STEM-H staff and partners in STEM-H departments.

**Dr. Jeremy Bray**

Dr. Jeremy Bray (Economics) received new funding from the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism for the project “Alcohol consumption and related comorbid conditions: health state utilities for economic evaluation in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.”

The COVID-19 pandemic has created a social and health environment that is previously unknown in scope and magnitude. Health effects include mild to severe infection with SARS-CoV-2; psychological trauma from living through a pandemic, including anxiety and depression; emotional stress from unemployment, food insecurity, and caretaking; and diminished social well-being due to physical distancing and restrictions in movement. At the same time, alcohol sales have been increasing, and many states have protected access to alcohol through declaring restaurants and liquor stores as essential businesses and authorizing off-premise alcohol deliveries, mixed drinks to-go, and curbside pickup.

The interplay between alcohol consumption and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic are as yet unknown: consumption may be changing in response to COVID-19 circumstances and hazardous drinking may be increasing with negative consequences on health and well-being, or consumption changes may be limited to the low-risk end of the spectrum with little or no
effect on well-being.

This study will conduct 3 successive cross-sectional surveys of a U.S. population representative sample to assess alcohol consumption, health-related quality of life (HRQoL), and COVID-related conditions at an individual level. The resultant dataset will allow for estimates of the association between alcohol consumption and HRQoL while under different conditions of COVID-19 experiences. It will allow examination of potential heterogeneity across population subgroups—varying COVID-19 conditions, varying consumption, and varying effects of the two. The study will also compare pre and during COVID consumption and HRQoL using prior US data from NESARC-III as a baseline, reflecting population patterns in the 2013-14 period.

As the COVID-19 pandemic is a highly dynamic situation, it is important to collect US population data now to inform behavior in the early stages of response. Our results will inform alcohol policy and will enable accurate evaluation of alcohol interventions in light of the ongoing pandemic.

**Dr. Stephen Sills**

Dr. Stephen Sills (Center for Housing and Community Studies) received new funding from the Dollar General Literacy Foundation for the project “CHCS Cottage Gardens Resource Center – Afterschool Reading Enrichment Program.” Dr. Kenneth Gruber is co-principal investigator on the project.

The low socio-economic status in the Cottage Grove neighborhood has resulted in a cycle of poverty, perpetuated by poor academic achievement. Only 17% of third grade students were reading on grade level in 2017 (EOG scores, Hampton Elementary, Guilford County Schools). Accordingly, if a student is not at reading level by the third grade, it becomes increasingly difficult to “catch up” with their peers, putting the student at a significant disadvantage for the remainder of their schooling and on to their professional careers and social development (GCS, 2009).
The effects of poor literacy skills can have a ripple effect across the life course. According to a study conducted by the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, there is a connection between adverse life conditions and poor reading and writing skills (2019). Approximately 75% of school high school dropouts and at least 50% of youth with justice-involvement report some degree of reading difficulty.

The UNCG Center for Housing and Community Studies (CHCS) Cottage Gardens Resource Center (CGRC) opened in June 2019 in a low-income apartment complex in the center of the Cottage Grove neighborhood. The CGRC offers a nursing clinic and counseling outreach, as well as a children’s after-school educational, enrichment, and entertainment (aka, E3 program) three days a week throughout the year for children between Kindergarten and 6th grade.

Drawing upon best practices from the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NREL) and the National Center for Quality Afterschool (NCQA), the researchers are further advancing their efforts to promote an engaging and high-quality literacy program to raise reading achievement. Targeted after-school programs have been found to be a good venue for literacy programming as they provide an environment that respects the local community’s interests, validates neighborhood voices, affirms existing social connections, and celebrates a community’s unique culture (Halpern, 2003).

Their program will include: a daily 30 minute read-a-loud time led by student workers from education and human development majors, grouped by reading skills, and designed to “model fluent and expressive reading, and to build important literacy skills such as comprehension” (NCQA); one-on-one university and community volunteer reading pals to practice fluency (NREL); a monthly “readers’ theater” for greater comprehension through dramatization of stories (NCQA & NREL) led by our AmeriCorps worker; and quarterly library field trips and family literacy events for greater community engagement around reading (NREL) supervised by CHCS staff.

Dr. Kenneth Gruber

Dr. Kenneth Gruber (Center for Youth, Family and Community Partnerships) received new funding from The Foundation for a Healthy High Point for the project “Determination of the Prevalence, Incidence and Impact of Behavioral Health and Substance Abuse Issues in Greater High Point.” The research team consists of Dr. Kenneth Gruber, Dr. Stephen Sills, and Dr. Erika Payton. They will help the Foundation for Healthy High Point identify the most impactful behavioral health issues affecting Greater High Point. Individuals suffering from behavioral issues such as depression, anxiety, and drug and alcohol abuse, are often overwhelmed by the stresses and strains of daily life, the abstract states. “As part of the
identification process we will seek from local and county sources patient count data and other information to develop a current count report of the prevalence (the proportion of cases in the population that have the condition) and the incidence (the number of new cases with the condition) that can be used as a baseline for directing interventions to reduce the prevalence, incidence, and impact of these issues. The final step of the project will be presentation of a findings report and recommendations to the Foundation for its review.”

Dr. Christopher Kepley

Dr. Christopher Kepley (Joint School of Nanoscience and Nanoengineering) received new funding from UNC-Chapel Hill School of Medicine/Prime: National Institutes of Health for the project “A Role for Glycolipids and Unconventional T Cell Subsets in Alpha-Gal Allergy.”

The overall goal of this application is to determine if glycolipid and unconventional T cells are involved in the sensitization and effector phases of alpha-gal mammalian meat allergy. Mast cells are the “end-point” mediators of this allergic disease given their ubiquitous tissue distribution and unique allergic mediator release profile (e.g.histamine).

Dr. Commins and Dr. Kepley have been working together for the past year investigating human mast cells role in alpha-gal allergy. the researchers have already demonstrated that human skin-derived mast cells can be sensitized with alpha-gal IgE containing serums from patients and activated with alpha gal antigen. Here the researchers will continue these studies specifically focusing on Aim 1C to test the hypothesis that alpha-gal containing glycolipids activate mast cells leading to release of allergic mediators in part through IgE and Fc?RI signaling.

Dr. Kepley’s core lab competency is isolating, propagating, and performing functional assays with human skin tissue mast cells1-5. The researchers will use these cells to determine the release kinetics of ?-hexosaminidase (degranulation) from human skin-derived mast cells sensitized with alpha-gal specific IgE and challenged with glycolipid complexed or not with CD1d.
Dr. Melissa R. Floyd-Pickard

Dr. Melissa R. Floyd-Pickard (Social Work) received new funding from the Guilford County Department of Public Health for the GCSTOP project. The Guilford County Solution to the Opioid Problem (GCSTOP) is a collaborative, impactful effort to decrease opioid overdose deaths.

Newsmakers: Mena, Cheeks, Best Women in Business, Freeman, Gibson

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. Nodia Mena wrote a piece for the Carolina Peacemaker on racism in the US and Latin America. [The article.]
- Dr. Bridget Cheeks spoke to PsyPost about parents speaking to Black teens about racism. [The piece.]
- Mona Edwards, Beth Fischer, and Dr. Sherine Obare were among those named by Triad Business Journal on their 2020 “Best Women in Business” list. [The list.]
- Dr. Elise Freeman was among those interviewed by WalletHub on 2020’s best places to retire. [The piece.]
- Yes!Weekly interviewed Spartan Ty Gibson on his TikTok comedy and his studies at UNCG. [The article.]