Folk Festival goes virtual this weekend

Students pose in front of Spiro during the 2019 Folk Festival.

Not even a pandemic can stop the North Carolina Folk Festival from reaching the eyes, ears, and hearts of the thousands of patrons who flock to experience the annual eclectic mix of performers, which spans many different genres, generations, and media.

This year’s festival will be online September 11 - 13, 2020, which means it will reach even more people. So sit back, grab your favorite snacks and beverage, and partake in a socially distanced celebration of North Carolina’s rich cultural heritage through music, dance, and crafts.

Festival-goers are in for a treat with a fantastic lineup of performers, some of which feature local iconic video shoot locations such as the famous Underground Railroad Tree in the Guilford Woods, the Charlotte Hawkins Brown Museum, and the new Rotary Carousel at the
Greensboro Science Center. All of these locations have strong connections to UNCG in one way or another.

During past events, UNCG has supported the festival through in-person activities such as the Spirit Squad, Spartan Way Student Ambassadors, and the big video wall. This year’s UNCG participation includes a virtual swag bag giveaway. Go here to enter the drawing, which includes a chance to win a $50 gift card for the UNCG Campus Bookstore, a swag bag of UNCG items, or UNCG merchandise.

The 2020 Folk Festival Virtual Concert Series will be available in 3 segments of approximately two hours each:

- Friday, September 11, 6 p.m.
- Saturday, September 12, 6 p.m.
- Sunday, September 13, 6 p.m.

Streaming of the pre-recorded sessions will be available on several media outlets, including YouTube, Facebook, and Nugs.net.

Photography by Jiyoung Park, University Communications

Gerontology in the COVID-19 era
Many seniors are currently limited to contact through deliveries and online interaction. Students and faculty in UNCG’s Gerontology Program are adapting services, programs, and research for the COVID-19 era.

It is a time of concern for older adults.

Data from the United Nations shows that by 2050, one in every six people in the world will be over the age of 65, up from one in 11 in 2019. The U.S. Census data shows that by 2030, one in every five citizens will be retirement age. And presently 10,000 Americans turn 65 every day.

Within the age of COVID-19, there is an urgent need to address not only the risk of infection for older adults, but also other health risks – such as isolation – imposed by the pandemic, as well as other intersecting challenges.

“We’re going to need more people with expertise in aging. There’s no way around it,” says Dr. Elise Eifert, who coordinates the graduate program in gerontology at UNC Greensboro.

At UNCG, students can pursue an undergraduate minor in gerontology, as well as fully online post-baccalaureate certificate and online master’s programs – all three of those tracks can help prepare them to meet the needs of older adults and make a visible difference in their quality of life.

Many of UNCG’s gerontology students already work in the healthcare environment, have experienced the strain of the pandemic firsthand, and are working day and night to lessen harmful impacts, in a variety of ways.

Eifert says she’s been impressed with the way current students have pivoted in the exceptional times to initiate and carry out self-directed course projects that improve the lives of older adults within the COVID-19 pandemic era.

Adapting service
Melissa Smith delivering activity packages

Master’s student Melissa Smith manages a program through Winston-Salem’s Senior Services called Aging With Purpose. Her mission is to fight what they call “the three plagues” of aging: loneliness, helplessness, and boredom. Previous to the COVID-19 pandemic, they provided in-person companionship and meaningful activities for the population they serve, as well as home visits and meal delivery.

Currently, with many seniors not able to receive many, if any, visitors, Smith is working on gearing the Aging With Purpose operations to fit the circumstances. They are still able to deliver food to seniors through their Meals on Wheels program, despite the challenge of having to reduce contact, and they also continue to work with the Second Harvest Food Bank to provide groceries.

They are also stretching to find ways to keep the aging population they serve socially connected in whatever way they can – through phone calls, book donations, amplifying access to technology, distributing activities that can be distributed in care packages, and initiating activities that can be led online.

“In one study, social isolation was said to have the impact of smoking 15 cigarettes a day, as far as increased morbidity through chances of heart disease and stroke. And caregivers as well as those they serve can be very socially isolated. So, we try to implement anything we can to bring them more purpose and joy,” said Smith.
Rachel Blevins preparing a “memory kit.”

For Aging With Purpose, that also includes an ongoing oral living history program where a writer documents the clients’ lives through interviews.

Smith is one of many UNCG gerontology students addressing social isolation.

Master’s student Rachel Blevins is working with Twin Lakes Retirement Community in Burlington to create a YouTube channel to engage seniors with memory therapy activities. She is also creating “memory kits” that can be used with an online interaction component, but can also be used by those without the internet.

Research in practice
Another current master’s student, Greta Scalco, works as an RN in a hospital, in a unit where the average age of patients is 60 years old, and she also works in an assisted living facility. With the hospital closed to visitors and the other facility with very limited visitation, she sees the psychological burden for patients and residents and their families, especially when family visits are prohibited to prevent the spread of virus.

“Many people in the hospital are in serious condition, and the fact that they do not see familiar faces for days makes their general condition even worse. This is also true for isolated older adults in nursing facilities,” says Scalco. “There are a lot of studies done about the positive effects of aromatherapy and music, and those can be accessible to all older adults, regardless of their financial situation.”

This fall, under the direction of Dr. Rebecca Adams, Scalco will complete a synthesis of the research literature on alternative therapies, such as aromatherapy and music, to reduce depression in institutionalized older adults, and she intends to use her knowledge to help her in her work with older adults.

Gerontology research community
Both Eifert and Adams, who coordinates the undergraduate minor in gerontology, are working on further developing UNCG coursework that touches on issues brought up by the pandemic - such as quality of life, ageism, public health, administration at assisted living facilities, and intersections between age and race.

Adams, an expert on friendship among older adults, will incorporate material about the isolation of older adults during COVID-19 into a course called “Envisioning Your Ideal Old Age.”

She asserts that it is important to remember that although older adults are at greater risk of hospitalization and death from COVID-19, people of all ages can be infected by the virus and affected by it socially and emotionally.

“Expressing concern for older adults while also avoiding ageism can be challenging,” she says.

As another example, Adams points out that while some older adults may require assistance with technology, most have internet access and there are other factors besides advanced age that cause people to be technologically isolated, such as low income and rural residence.

UNCG’s GROWTH (Gerontology Research, Outreach, Workforce development, & Teaching Hub) seeks to address the complexity of these issues as it keeps faculty, staff, community partners, students, and former students connected through Facebook and frequent
discussions and workshops, all of which will be conducted virtually this year.

The hub includes many alumni who are working on the frontlines of both the COVID-19 pandemic and the loneliness crisis for older adults, as well as a growing list of faculty affiliates and community partners, such as the AARP, the Triad Retirement Living Association, and Guilford Senior Services. Together, they work toward the goal of promoting the needs of aging demographics within public discourse and within higher education, as well as an understanding of how to view the aging population as an integral part of a whole and complete society.

Their efforts, within the pandemic era, are part of UNCG’s essential message.

“We are ALL, no matter what our age, in this together,” confirms Adams.

*Story by Susan Kirby-Smith, University Communications  
Photography by Susan Kirby-Smith and Martin W. Kane, University Communications, and courtesy of Melissa Smith, Rachel Blevins, Greta Scalco*

**UNCG helps green go mainstream**
Sustainability at UNCG is as crucial as ever, even as the University continues to adjust to hybrid forms of learning and working during the pandemic.

Following are some key programs and features in which all Spartan faculty, staff, and students can support, get involved, and be informed with sustainability efforts across campus.

**UNCG Mobile app adds new Sustainability tile**

Your one-stop shop for all things sustainable at UNCG! The new Sustainability tile on the [UNCG Mobile app](#) gives quick access to recycling guidelines, environmentally friendly student groups, the Green Room and Green Office certification programs, a map of sustainability points of interest on campus, and a sign-up for the Office of Sustainability Newsletter to keep you up-to-date on great events happening in our community.
Green Room and Green Office Certification
The Green Room and Green Office certification programs are a means for student residents, faculty, and staff to help further the culture of sustainability at UNCG. The Office of Sustainability has created a checklist of eco-friendly actions to keep you informed of best practices (personal and business) that will help you conserve resources and reduce the University’s carbon footprint. The surveys are mobile friendly and only take 10 minutes to complete. For more information and the links to get started download the UNCG Mobile App or visit: https://sustainability.uncg.edu/go-green/.
**Green Office Certification**
Recruit your entire department to participate or get individually certified. All those who participate will be presented with a certificate of recognition to display in your lobby or office. This is your chance to do your share and show you care.

**Green Room Certification**
Students who participate in the Green Room program will receive their choice of a doorknob hanger or certificate of recognition and be entered into a raffle at the end of each semester for a chance to win a gift bag of eco-friendly goodies to help you keep living a sustainable lifestyle. Winners will be contacted via email. At this time, the Green Room program is only open to student residents.

**Commuter Survey**
Did you know that commuters to campus account for 20% of UNCG’s annual carbon footprint? That’s over 14,000 tons of CO2 a year entering the atmosphere and contributing to climate change. Your participation in the UNCG Commuter Survey will help the Office of Sustainability continue to measure and track transportation trends that impact our carbon footprint. Additionally, the survey provides opportunities for community feedback to help UNCG develop better transportation policies and infrastructure. The Commuter Survey is embedded in both the Green Room and Green Office programs, but can be taken separately as well, particularly by student commuters. Your participation is greatly appreciated and your data is confidential.

**OZII**
UNCG has a goal of becoming a zero-waste campus by 2050. By participating in the OZII (pronounced “O-Z”) to-go program, Spartans will help us achieve that goal. While UNCG has an annual waste diversion rate of 40%, our campus community still sends an average of 1,300 tons of waste to the landfill every year.

Just one person using one reusable to-go container for one meal a day for five days a week can save 80 single-use containers from going to the landfill during a single semester. Less material going to the landfill means fewer CO2 emissions. 1000 people participating in this program would mean UNCG could potentially avoid sending 80,000 single-use to-go containers to the landfill in just one semester. That’s proof that our individual choices matter. Together we can make a difference!
An OZZI deposit token.

OZZI reusable to-go containers require a one-time refundable deposit of $7 payable by Flex Dollars or credit card at the Outta Here to-go location or Spartan Market on the first floor of Moran Commons. The next time you come to eat, bring back your to-go container and deposit it in the OZZI vending machine in the lobby, and you’ll receive a token to take to the Outta Here counter for a new to-go container. Repeat.

Health Department guidance currently limits the extent to which the containers can be used. For the time being, OZZI to-go containers can be used any day at the Outta Here to-go location and on Friday nights and the weekend in the specified area at Fountain View Dining.

Learn more about UNCG Dining Services’ sustainability initiatives.

Spartans have come together more than ever through the challenges of this year, and working together toward a more sustainable campus and future will only make us stronger and healthier as a university and community.

Story by Sean MacInnes, UNCG Sustainability
Photography by Jiyoung Park, UNCG Communications
Staff Senate passes resolution to support welfare of Black students, staff, and faculty

Earlier this summer, the UNCG Staff Senate elected two new co-chairs for the 2020-2021 school year, Megan Cayton and Murphie Chappell. In taking on this position, Cayton and Chappell made it very clear that their goal for the year was to increase accessibility of the Senate and convert words into action to benefit the UNCG community at large.

This goal of converting words into action is well underway as Cayton and Chappell are proud to announce the first resolution of the Staff Senate for the 2020-21 school year.

At the July 9, 2020 meeting of the full body of the UNCG Staff Senate, a resolution was passed in support of the welfare of Black UNC Greensboro students, staff, and faculty. The full resolution (found here) outlines a number of immediate actions the Staff Senate can take to lead the effort to create a more supportive and inclusive community.

The four main actions the Staff Senate has committed to are as follows:

1. Dedicate the 2020-2021 Staff Senate term to increasing awareness, education, and self-interrogation including an in-depth review of our own processes and procedures, and community action about racism;
2. Engage and partner with our constituents, constituent groups, and across the University through meetings, coordinated community events, workshops, and other opportunities as allies in anti-racism/anti-racist work while amplifying the voices of marginalized groups;
3. Participate in and host difficult conversations related to the content of this resolution; and
4. Appoint a Staff Senator to serve on the Chancellor’s Advisory Committee on Equity, Diversity, and Inclusive Excellence to ensure that the Staff Senate is maximizing available resources in support of Black staff members.

Since passing the resolution in July, Cayton and Chappell are excited to share important updates about how the resolution has spurred action across campus. The following is a list of actions taken by Staff Senate members and campus partners to fulfill the goals outlined in the resolution.

1. Revamped the monthly Senate Rewind (a summary of information from previous meetings) and moved to a subscriber-based platform where employees can self-select to receive direct Senate communications. Since introducing this in early August, subscribers have grown 50%.
2. Began including programmatic questions in Senate Rewind to increase engagement from constituents and Senators. Questions address topics such as how departments address racial equity and discrimination, and individualized questions such as, “I feel comfortable intervening and/or responding to situations in which I witness racism, harassment, and/or discrimination”. The responses to these questions will help the Staff Senate plan future programming and implementation.

3. Implemented a communications plan between executive team, senators, and constituents.

4. Invited the Chancellor’s Fellows into their last meeting for an introduction, call to action, and to hear about opportunities for engagement.

5. Circulated and committed our time to upcoming Equity, Diversity, and Inclusive Excellence campus training opportunities.


7. Began forming the Staff Senate EDI task force to support Kisha and the Chancellor’s Fellows and asked Equity, Diversity, and Inclusive Excellence questions of each Senate invited speaker. Additionally, these questions have been prioritized in small group meetings with University administrators.

8. Participated in conversations related to upcoming system-wide and campus-wide Equity, Diversity, and Inclusive Excellence survey efforts.

While the work is far from over, the Staff Senate is proud to share their accomplishments and plans to provide continued updates in the future. Additional information about the resolution, Senate Rewind, and Staff Senate general meetings can all be found at the Staff Senate website.

*Story by Chloe Blythe, University Communications*

**Chancellor Gilliam speaks about race on ‘Yes, and Cafe’ podcast**

In the latest episode of the ‘Yes, and Cafe’, hosts Nadja Cech and Omar Ali speak with Chancellor Franklin D. Gilliam, Jr., as he begins his sixth academic year as Chancellor of UNC Greensboro. In the midst of a global pandemic and the resurgence of the Black Lives Matter Movement, he shares his personal experience of becoming the first Black chancellor of a non-HBCU in the UNC System. “The beauty of universities is that they can be a space of discovery, and they can also be a space for real dialog,” he says. “At the same time, they can be institutions that reify existing structures of bias and discrimination.”

In light of this, Chancellor Gilliam discusses the call to become “anti-racist”, and speaks
about the tremendous potential of UNCG as an unusually diverse campus. “We’re diverse on a number of dimensions,” he says. “The campus is not dominated by any one group... What’s interesting about this is that when students come out of their classes, they’re likely to see somebody that looks like them... That’s the power and beauty of this campus. We’re all in one place. It’s a good step in this grand march towards freedom.”

UNCG student Luis Mejia Cruz, a chemistry student who immigrated to Greensboro from Mexico City when he was nine years old, also joins the conversation. Luis shares his thoughts on the importance of connecting with our history, and talks about how the pandemic has sparked connections within his community.

The episode can be found on the UNCG podcast homepage, as a stand-alone episode, or can downloaded as an MP3 here.
UNCG Chancellor Franklin D. Gilliam, Jr.
Chemistry & Biochemistry student Luis Mejia Cruz in the lab.

UNCG ranked as a ‘Best College For Your Money’
UNC Greensboro has once again been ranked as one of the best colleges for overall value and affordability in Money’s 2020 Best Colleges list.

The “Best Colleges for Your Money” list offers a practical analysis of more than 700 four-year colleges. Rankings combine pricing estimates with indicators of alumni financial success, along with a unique analysis of how much value a college adds when compared to other schools that take in similar students.

In building the rankings, Money focused on the three basic factors that surveys show are the most important to parents and students: quality of education, affordability, and student outcomes after graduation. UNCG stood out for its affordability, ample financial aid, and student success.

To learn more and to view the Money’s profile of UNCG, visit money.com.

Photography by Grant Evan Gilliard, University Communications

In Memoriam: Stradley Smith

Garon Stradley Smith died August 17.
She was a teacher for many years in UNCG’s Child Care Education Program (CCEP), as well as an instructor in the Department of Human Development and Family Studies.

Stradley was a true Spartan, earning two degrees from UNCG – a BFA in design and an M.Ed through the Birth through Kindergarten Interdisciplinary Studies in Education and Development Program.

She began her work at CCEP in 1996, where she was known as a caring and skilled preschool teacher. When she joined the faculty of the Department of Human Development and Family Studies in 2006, she served as the student teaching coordinator, guiding many UNCG students as they earned their teaching licensures.

Colleagues observed that Stradley built strong relationships with her students, as she acted as both a course instructor and mentor who provided individualized encouragement to each and every student. Stradley was also deeply committed to promoting principles of diversity, equity and inclusion, modeling acceptance of all children, families, students and faculty, and challenging her students to apply the same principles in their teaching.

She is remembered for her generous, artistic spirit and for her commitment to young children and their teachers.

Dr. Diya Abdo

Dr. Diya Abdo (Center for New North Carolinians) received new funding from United Way of Greater Greensboro for the project “Helping Immigrants and Refugees with Employment (HIRE).”

HIRE consists of services provided by the Center for New North Carolinians (CNNC), New Arrivals Institute (NAI), Church World Service Greensboro (CWS), and Montagnard Dega
Upon enrollment, all participants conduct a thorough intake that includes identifying past employment, educational history, and employment goals. Participants are then referred to an appropriate HIRE track based on goals.

Tracks include: English Language Acquisition, Job Preparation, Career Advancement, and Vocational Training. In the English Language Acquisition track, participants complete an English Assessment and placed in the appropriate class level. With the exception of clients only in the first track, all other clients complete an Employment Accessibility Plan (EAP) in which participants identify employment goals and undergo vocational coaching and counseling. The Job Preparation track builds both ‘soft’ job skills, such as completing an application, learning job search techniques, practicing interviews, and understanding U.S. employment norms, and ‘harder’ skills needed for jobs available in the local market including sewing, manufacturing, housekeeping, poultry, packaging, etc.

The Career Advancement track helps individuals improve their employment situation through direct career coaching and referrals including the N.C. Career Readiness Certificate. The Vocational Training track is for individuals looking to start a new career with required training (i.e. Pharmacy Technician, Certified Nursing Assistant, Forklift Operator, and Apartment Maintenance Technician).

Dr. Sharon Morrison

Dr. Sharon Morrison (Public Health Education) received new funding from the Black Child Development Institute of Greensboro, Inc., for the project “Covid-19 Community Health Outreach and Education.”

BCDI-G will be working in collaboration with Dr. Sharon Morrison, professor in the Public Health Department at UNCG, whose work for decades has focused on minority and immigrant health disparities. Through this collaboration, both groups will provide small community health engagement sessions and outreach that are geared specifically towards
minority families served through the BCDI-G programs, as well as the families from the immigrant and refugee population served through the UNCG Department of Public Health community engagement program.

As numerous reports have detailed, minorities are being disproportionately affected by COVID-19. The program will not only provide prevention education and other health information to those that are shying away from learning how to address the virus, including but not limited to wearing of masks, but will also help to build a foundation to help address some of the underlying issues such as poverty, food insecurity, and disparities which have made them more susceptible to contracting the virus.

With the work of Dr. Morrison and her graduate student from UNCG, members of the BCDI-G AmeriCorps team, and the BCDI-G Family Engagement Specialist, the researchers will be better able to expand the services that are now provided to these families where there is already an established relationship and decades of trust built, giving this joint effort the opportunity to provide relevant and accurate information from a team that families trust.

Dr. Ryoko Yamaguchi

Dr. Ryoko Yamaguchi (Office of Research and Engagement) received over $1 million in new funding from the National Science Foundation “BRIGHT-CS: Building Student Retention through Individuated Guided coHort Training in Computer Science.”

BRIGHT-CS proposes to create a comprehensive computer science and empowerment model for African American/black girls by building strategic partnerships with schools, universities, non-profit and community organizations. We recognize that to engage and promote black girls in computing, it cannot be a “one-off” experience such as a school’s coding day, a Hackathon, or a summer coding camp. Rather, engagement must be an ongoing process that is part of a larger learning ecosystem of students, parents, the community and the school. This learning ecosystem must also provide peer-level support to help guard against feelings of isolation in the field. BRIGHT-CS is a three-year project that will:

- Create a computing learning ecosystem that uses a cohort model of positive peer and near-peer mentors among black girls in computing with an emphasis on (1) empowerment and leadership development for black girls, (2) comprehensive computer science and computational thinking experiences, and (3) partnerships with schools, colleges/universities, and non-profit and community organizations; and

- Research the effectiveness of this learning ecosystem to promote black girls in computing and determine best practices for broadening participation to other marginalized student
Three important features of BRIGHT-CS are that 1) it leverages the existing (and growing) local community of empowerment for black women and girls, 2) it focuses on creating a CS learning ecosystem focused on computational thinking, and 3) it has vast reach in providing professional, leadership, and civic development for its constituents and partner organizations. Creating a CS learning ecosystem can easily be extended to other groups of students and locales. The concept of a CS learning ecosystem is one that has great potential for broader impacts across different communities.

**Dr. Seth Armah**

Dr. Seth Armah (Nutrition) received new funding from Wake forest University for the project “Effect of almond consumption on iron regulation in a mouse model of aging.” Dr. Steven Fordahl is co-principal investigator on the project.

**Intellectual merit:** Anemia, a condition marked by inadequate healthy red blood cells (RBCs), affects nearly a third of the world’s population, leading to fatigue, poor immunity, impaired cognition, and increased risk for cardiovascular disease. Inflammation accounts for nearly 42%, or almost 1 billion anemia cases worldwide. Consumption of almonds can mitigate anemia of inflammation (AI) by different mechanisms: (i) reducing inflammation, (ii) altering the gut microbiome composition, (iii) improving RBCs health due to its vitamin E content, which protects them from oxidative damage. In this study, researchers will investigate the effect of almond intake on iron status and on the RBC antioxidant system of aged C57BL/6 mice. A standard mouse diet with 15% calories from almonds will be evaluated for 16 weeks. Researchers hypothesize improved iron status and RBC antioxidant system activity with almond consumption. Findings from this study will provide preliminary data for a grant proposal to be submitted to the NIH (R21, Hematologic Disease Division of the NIDDK) to investigate the researchers’ hypothesis in elderly individuals.

**Broader impact:** This is the first study to investigate both a dietary approach and the contribution of the RBC antioxidant system to mitigate AI. Especially among the elderly, AI
is associated with cognitive decline, depression, disability in daily living, increased recurrent falling, hospitalization, and mortality. Since AI develops with age even in absence of chronic diseases, identifying a dietary approach to mitigate it will have a significant impact in minimizing its adverse health implications and improving the quality of life among the elderly.

**Newsmakers: Levenstein, faculty essays, Adams, Weatherspoon**

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. Lisa Levenstein spoke to WUNC about gender inequalities during COVID-19 and to WBEZ about feminism in the 90s. [Listen here](#) and [here](#).
- The News & Record featured the UNCG faculty essay collection about the effect of coronavirus on their work. [The article](#).
- Dr. Rebecca Adams was one of several specialists interviewed by Gizmodo about what post-coronavirus social life will look like. [The piece](#).
- The News & Recorded highlighted the Weatherspoon Art Museum’s opening plans. [The article](#).