

# Diversity at UGA

News from the Office of Institutional Diversity at the University of Georgia

## A message from Michelle Garfield Cook



The University of Georgia's departments, units, schools, colleges and campuses are all part of a tapestry that is our beloved university.

The beauty and strength of our community is reflected in our diversity—a diversity that is not defined by any single marker of identity, but rather the many, the myriad, intersecting identities that we all bring to UGA.

We define diversity very broadly to include all members of the university, to include all experiences, all backgrounds, and all affiliations. Therefore diversity is not represented by *those* people, who speak *that* language or eat *that* food. Our diversity is each of us as individuals contributing our own unique stories to the cultural fabric of the University of Georgia.

We bring different belief systems, family structures, sexual identities, ethnicities, genders, nationalities, social statuses, races and a lot more to this community of scholars.

We are all richer, more enlightened and better citizens because of the diverse and divergent voices that are given space in our classrooms, offices, dining halls and social spaces. Diversity has real value for communities and individuals. But it is important to realize that it not only helps us understand others, it also helps us to reflect on ourselves. It gives us a wider lens through which we can view our own beliefs, world-views and cultural backgrounds. This opportunity to grow and learn from one another makes the University of Georgia a special place and ensures

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## UGA launches program to close enrollment gap for African-American males

The University of Georgia Office of Institutional Diversity has launched the African American Male Initiative, a program targeted at enrolling, retaining and graduating African-American males.

The program, which is funded by a \$10,000 grant from the University System of Georgia Board of Regents and part of a larger network of African-American male initiatives in the system, is co-directed by the Office of Institutional Diversity and the Division of Student Affairs. These offices will jointly administer the grant.

"We want to increase engagement and participation of these young men in leadership, professional and service initiatives," said **Michelle Garfield Cook**, the principal investigator for the grant and UGA's associate provost for institutional diversity.

The initiative will increase enrollment through weekend events for prospective African-American males to get them engaged with the campus environment.

The AAMI has existed on other college campuses in Georgia for many years and has led to marked improvements in enrollment, retention and graduation. From 2002—when the University System of Georgia's African-American Male Initiative was founded—to 2011, African-American male enrollment in Georgia colleges and universities climbed from 17,068 to 30,847, an increase of more than 80 percent.

-Ian Branam (BA/BS '12)

### UGA President Morehead establishes need-based scholarship fund

UGA **President Jere W. Morehead** is continuing his commitment to students through a personal contribution establishing a need-based scholarship fund, in honor of his parents, designed to help undergraduates study in the nation's capital.

"Raising support for need-based scholarships is one of my priorities," Morehead said, "and I hope to lead the way for many others to help students with financial need."

The Wade and Virginia Morehead Scholarship Fund will be used to support students with demonstrated financial need who participate in the UGA Washington Semester Program. The program sends students to Washington, D.C., to intern and study with legislators, government agencies and businesses that call the nation's capital their home.

-Stephanie Schupka (MA '11)

# Student News

## Law student thrives in nation's capitol

**Alaina Anderson** has combined her legal education at UGA with experience in Washington, D.C.

The Dorchester, S.C. native has clerked in Washington, D.C. at the U.S. Federal Trade Commission's Bureau of Consumer Protection and also worked at the U.S. Department of Transportation. She took classes through Georgia Law's D.C. Semester in Practice Program and later returned to Washington, D.C. as an employment discrimination law clerk at AARP Foundation Litigation.



## Aguilar leads efforts to boost diversity

**Stephanie Aguilar**, a master's student in public administration, has taken advantage of the many opportunities UGA offers as she pursues a career in higher education.



She is president of Georgia Students for Public Administration and participated in Leadership UGA, a semester-long leadership development program. She has been active in the Hispanic Student Association and the university's Leadership ¡Sin Limites! Program and also has served as an ambassador for Padres e Hijos Fin de Semana, a special orientation weekend for high school seniors and their parents interested in UGA. To read her complete profile in "Amazing Students," see <http://t.uga.edu/vN>.



LISTo officers (left to right) are Monica Padilla, Perla Trejo, Lizbeth Miranda, Abraham Ortiz, and Erica Pena.

## Latino student organization LISTo eases transition for first-years

**Abraham Ortiz** transferred to UGA from junior college in 2012 and, like many students, experienced some culture shock. "I remember I'd go to class, and I'd go straight to my dorm," said Ortiz, president of Latino/as Investing in the Students of Tomorrow (LISTo).

Looking to get involved on campus, he came across the Hispanic Student Association (HSA) and LISTo. Both of these student organizations are housed within UGA's Multicultural Services and Programs. Ortiz, interested in improving his leadership skills, gravitated toward LISTo and took on the role of fundraising chair during his first year.

LISTo models itself after the Black Educational Support Team (B.E.S.T.) in that it uses peer mentoring to aid first-years in their transition to college. In LISTo, upperclassmen mentors are matched to lowerclassmen mentees based on their background and major. Faculty members also oversee the mentoring process and act as a parent to LISTo's different familia groups. LISTo offers a place for students of all backgrounds to interact and learn from each other. Many students in LISTo are first-generation college students or have parents who immigrated to the United States from other countries. But the organization isn't just limited to students of Hispanic and/or Latino heritage. "Anyone interested is welcome to join," said **Dora Frias**, MSP's senior coordinator.

Although the organization has an academic focus, it has served as a social network for many of its members. Ortiz gained a group of friends when he joined LISTo, which made the transition from junior college to UGA much less daunting. The group meets roughly three times a month. They host movie nights to discuss particular social issues; "familia dinners" to give members a chance to catch up with each other; and workshops on topics like study skills, time management and resume building. But those meetings don't include the weekly meetings that mentors and mentees have with each other. Ortiz said they have even developed mentor-mentee contracts to hold one another accountable to each other as the semester gets busy.

Although the organization largely targets first-years, LISTo also can be a rewarding experience for upperclassmen, said **Felix Linzan**, one of LISTo's freshmen mentees. "If the upperclassmen had a problem as a freshman, they can help freshmen not have that problem," said Linzan, an accounting major.

-Ian Branam (BA/BS '12)

# Student News

## Time Machine Project introduces elementary school students to American historical figures

The jaws of second-graders dropped at Barnett Shoals Elementary School in Athens when they were introduced to a historical figure who had traveled 150 years through a time machine to meet them. It was Ida B. Wells—the anti-lynching, pro-women’s rights journalist of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

**Jennifer Johnson**, a master of public administration candidate in UGA’s School of Public and International Affairs, played Wells for the students as part of a project to introduce students to American historical figures.

During a presentation and question-and-answer session, Johnson gave the students a G-rated version of the injustices African-Americans faced in the Jim Crow South. Wearing a brown period dress, she also talked about Wells’ attempts to combat those injustices through her writings and community organizing. Speaking as Wells, Johnson told the students she supported equality, justice and peace. “You don’t have to fight with your fists,” she said. “You can fight with your words, your mind, your writing.” This sounded familiar to one student who blurted out, “Like Martin Luther King!” “Jesus, too,” said another.

Johnson’s visit to Barnett Shoals Elementary is part of the larger Time Machine Project established by public administration doctoral candidate **Megan LePere-Schloop** whose daughter, Isabella, is a student at Barnett Shoals. “Part of the impetus of all of this was to highlight different kinds of historical figures other than the usual suspects to bring some diversity of historical perspectives into the classroom,” she said. “I think a really good way to do that is for different people to embody those different perspectives.”

—Aaron Hale



Jennifer Johnson, dressed as Ida Wells, met with students at Barnett Shoals Elementary.

## Senior uses engineering education for global good

**Dayrin Mendez**, a senior biological engineering major, is using the knowledge she has gained in the classroom to help others in need.



Mendez, who was born in Guatemala and moved to the United States at age 6, has been a member of the UGA chapter of Engineers Without Borders since

her freshman year and currently is its president. In that role, she has led efforts to help design a well and water purification system for the city of San Isidro in El Salvador. This international service project has allowed her to visit the country and work with government officials to provide a needed resource for the people of the community. To read about Mendez in “Amazing Students,” see <http://t.uga.edu/vg>.

## Student pursues dual bachelor’s/master’s

**Tiffany Chu**, an Honors student from Lilburn, is pursuing a four-year combined bachelor’s and master’s degree in English and English education.



The senior has studied in England through the UGA at

Oxford program and mentors her peers as a teaching assistant for the “Intro to Honors” course. In Athens, she has tutored at an elementary school and at Oasis Católico Santa Rafaela. She is a member of the Arch Society, in which she serves as a goodwill ambassador of the university. To read her complete profile in “Amazing Students” see <http://t.uga.edu/vq>.



## Brandon Martin and Calli McRae named Homecoming King and Queen

Marketing major Brandon Martin and human development and family science major Calli McRae visit with UGA President Jere W. Morehead after being crowned during the Nov. 9 football game against Appalachian State.

# Faculty & Staff News

## Pandit elected to board of international ed group



**Kavita Pandit**, associate provost for international education, has been elected to the board of directors for NAFSA: Association of International Educators. NAFSA is the world's largest

nonprofit professional association dedicated to international education, with nearly 10,000 members in 150 countries.

## Social Work dean earns alumni award

**Maurice Daniels**, dean of the School of Social Work, was honored by Indiana University with a Distinguished Alumni Award for individuals who have made a lasting impact through their work since leaving the school.

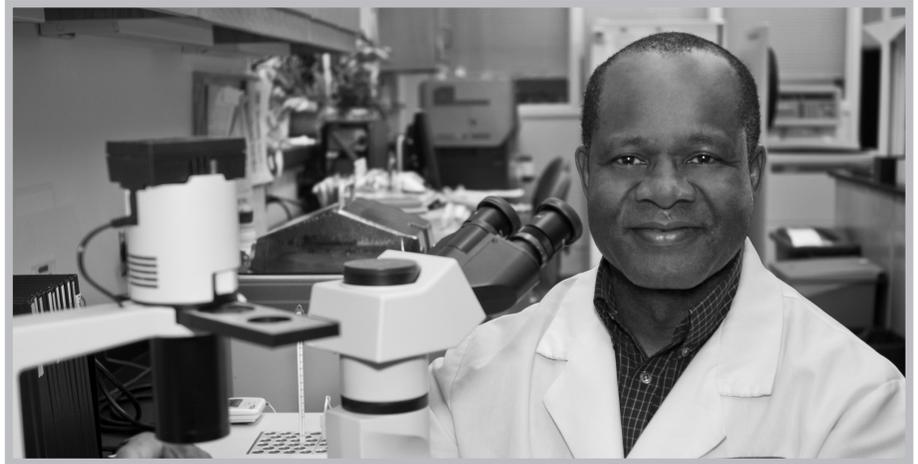


Daniels, who received his doctorate in higher education from IU, is founder and director of the Foot Soldier Project for Civil Rights Studies and Research.

## Navarro honored with Russell Teaching Award



**Maria Navarro**, associate professor in the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, has received a Richard B. Russell Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching, the university's highest early career teaching honor.



UGA's Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory, headed by Jerry Saliki, provides comprehensive diagnostic services to clients in the U.S. and around the world.

## UGA scientists help identify virus responsible for bottlenose dolphin deaths

Scientists at UGA played a key role in identifying the virus that killed an unusual number of bottlenose dolphins last summer. Starting in early June, hundreds of dolphins were found dead in the mid-Atlantic region, with increased dolphin strandings reported in the waters off New York, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia and North Carolina. Samples were collected and sent to UGA's Athens Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory, housed in the College of Veterinary Medicine.

In August, researchers led by virologist **Jerry Saliki**, head of the diagnostic lab, identified the virus as morbillivirus, a subgroup within the family of paramyxoviruses. The lab is one of three in the U.S. with the ability to test tissue samples at the molecular level to identify morbillivirus. "In this case, all three labs received samples from the same mortality event. We did our testing independently and came to the same conclusion, which was dolphin morbillivirus," Saliki said.

It is too early to predict how often an unusual mortality event caused by a marine morbillivirus, may occur, he said. The last time a significant mortality event occurred in Atlantic marine life was in 1987-1988, which led to the identification of dolphin morbillivirus. "All we can say now is that we've seen this in the past, but we can't say yet whether there is a pattern, because in the U.S. coastal waters this is only the second event," Saliki said. "We have morbilliviruses all the time. They are always present. What is unusual is this massive die off from the same area within the same period of time."

Examples of morbillivirus include measles, which occurs in people and primates; rinderpest, which occurs in cattle; canine distemper, which affects dogs and their wild relatives; and peste-des-petits-ruminants, which infects sheep and goats. "The morbillivirus detected in these animals and the culprit of this outbreak is not zoonotic, which means it has not been proven to transmit from animals to people," said **Susan Sanchez**, a professor of infectious diseases at UGA. "Nevertheless, marine mammals may have secondary infections or be infected with other pathogens that do readily transmit to people. Therefore, we urge individuals who find stranded animals to not touch the animals and to not allow their pets to touch these stranded animals. Instead, call the local state wildlife officials and report the finding."

-Kat Gilmore

# Faculty & Staff News

## Genetics professor on a journey of discovery

**Melissa Davis** (Ph.D. '05) is driven by curiosity. Curiosity drove her from her hometown of Albany, Ga. to a summer research program at The Ohio State University and then to a Ph.D. in molecular genetics at UGA. After graduate school, her inquisitiveness brought her to postdoctoral fellowships at Yale and the University of Chicago.

"Whenever I see something really cool, I want to figure out how it works," said Davis from her fourth floor lab in the Davison Life Sciences Building, which fittingly resembles the crisscrossing structure of DNA from an aerial view.

Davis is in her second year as a tenure-track professor in the genetics department and is jointly appointed at the Georgia Regents University/UGA Medical Partnership. As a child, she never envisioned herself as a scientist. Looking back on it though, Davis thinks she always had a bit of scientist in her. A problem-solver at heart, Davis swapped her pre-law concentration at Albany State for a bachelor's degree in biology. "I've always been the type to take things apart," said Davis.

After her undergraduate career, she went to a summer research program at Ohio State that involved studies that looked at spinal cord regeneration and was awestruck by the environment of a full-fledged research institution. "It was eye-opening to see a research institution and the fact that genes could be studied not only for their function, but could also be manipulated," said Davis.

Davis was entering the field of genetics at an exciting time when new technologies were emerging that could determine the sequence of an entire human genome. Her current research has shifted to focus on health disparities and the role genetics plays in those disparities. "I hope to illuminate why different populations suffer more so from cancer," said Davis.

Much of the current research on health disparities focuses on socioeconomic factors such as education and geographic location that lead to differences in health outcomes. But Davis is interested in the underlying genetic factors that predispose certain populations to a particular condition.

Throughout her career, a recurring obstacle has been getting her experiments to work and moving forward when the results were not what she expected. "I think every project I've ever done, the results were not what I expected them to be," said Davis. This challenge has taught her to adapt and persevere not just in the laboratory, but also in her personal life.

Davis speaks of success as a journey rather than a final destination and credits two things as the key to her journey: resilience and good mentorship. Resilience is vital and good mentorship facilitates resilience, she said. Mentors and her own fortitude helped her finish her doctoral degree, publish her postdoc research and are a continuing influence on her work today. "If it was easy, everyone would do it," said Davis. "You're going to have to make some sacrifices along the way to be successful in this journey."

-Ian Branam (BA/BS '12)



## Sarmiento elected chair of geography organization

**Fausto Sarmiento**, a professor of geography and director of the UGA Neotropical Montology Col-laboratory, has been elected chair of the Mountain Geography Specialty Group of the Association of American Geographers for 2013-2014.



## Hopps named national social work pioneer

**June Gary Hopps**, the Parham Professor of Family and Children's Studies at UGA, has been named a National Association of Social Workers Pioneer.



The honor recognizes those who have contributed to the evolution and enrichment of social work and who serve as role models for future generations of social workers.

## Tobin receives Disability Resource Center award

**Joseph Tobin**, the Hall Professor in the College of Education, received the Disability Resource Center's Outstanding Faculty Member Award. He was nominated by **Patrick Graham**, who wrote, "If it wasn't for him, I would not be a doctoral candidate, and many students would not have had the experience of having a deaf instructor." For the full story on the DRC Scholarship recipients, see <http://t.uga.edu/vE>.



# Alumni News

## Cancer survivor finds nonprofit to help people with disabilities scale new heights

**Eric Gray** (BSEd '04) wants to open up the world of adventurous sports to individuals who don't have use of their hands or feet. His Atlanta-based nonprofit organization, Catalyst Sports, is trying to eliminate physical and financial barriers that keep people with a loss of function from attempting climbing and other activities.

"It is a really neat opportunity to show people that there aren't any limitations," Gray said. "No matter who you are, we can get you up the wall."

Last year, Catalyst offered its first adaptive climbing clinic at Atlanta's Stone Summit climbing gym that used specialized harnesses, pulleys and other equipment to help kids and adults reach new heights. About 250 people and 70 climbers attended. "It's important for people to see how we can empower them to do things they never thought they could," said Gray.

Gray was 10 when he was hit in the right eye by a soccer ball, and the unusual swelling resulted in doctors diagnosing him with cancer in that eye. He underwent chemotherapy, radiation and surgeries in Atlanta to beat the cancer, but the treatments destroyed tear-producing glands and produced scar tissue. Surgeries failed to repair his right eyelid, and his eye was removed in 2012, turning Gray into "a permanent pirate," as he says.

Attending Camp Sunshine for children with cancer and their families was the catalyst for Gray's desire to help disabled individuals accomplish unexpected feats.

At UGA, he earned his degree in recreational therapy; during an internship in Park City, Utah, Gray taught adults and kids with disabilities to water ski, canoe, kayak, snowboard and ski. Working at a Veterans Administration hospital in Augusta, he helped injured military members discover new recreational outlets or adapt to activities they previously enjoyed. Sports included golf, kayaking, cycling and climbing, with Gray getting approval to build a 50-foot outdoor climbing wall.

"I was always looking for great opportunities to provide for people with disabilities in areas that they didn't think possible," Gray said. "Who thinks about climbing when you're a paraplegic?"

"When the kid is nervous and going up, and you see him get to the top ... and he comes down with a huge grin on his face, that's an opportunity that he's probably never had before," Gray added.

-Lori Johnston



## Wife and husband duo top "Bulldog 100"

The Social Empowerment Center, a company owned by spouses **Rachelle** (MSW '00) and **Edward** (MED '09)

### Hutchinson

was recognized as the fastest growing alumni business during the annual Bulldog 100 Celebration in January. Based in Lawrenceville,



Social Empowerment Center offers support to families in crisis, including mental health and indigent services. This was the first year that the company appeared on the Bulldog 100, and Rachelle is the first female and the first minority business owner to secure the top spot since the recognition program began in 2010. Prior to founding the SEC, Hutchinson spent several years working in social services in a wide variety of capacities for the Department of Family and Children Services (DFCS) in Georgia.

## Johnson named Georgia NAACP President

### Francys

**Johnson** (JD '04), a civil rights attorney and pastor in Statesboro, has been elected president of the Georgia NAACP.



Johnson has worked for the NAACP in a variety of capacities, including State Legal Redress Director, State Executive Director and Southeast Regional Director. He frequently lectures and writes on the concepts of race, measuring equity, and understandings of power in public policy.

# Campus News

**Cook,** CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1  
that as our students complete their studies and graduate, they are equipped with the ability to communicate, interact and work with people from different backgrounds and cultures. Our students are prepared to be leaders in a world in which difference is the only thing that we all have in common!

Therefore as we highlight and celebrate the diversity that is the University of Georgia, let us remember that we are all a part of this tapestry and we are all contributors. The university is a better place because of who we are as individuals and the perspectives that we bring to this institution.

This newsletter provides an opportunity to shine a light on some of the many accomplishments and contributions that members of our community have made. It features students who are mentoring their peers and providing positive role models to grade school students. It features faculty who are helping solve mysteries in fields such as genetics and veterinary medicine. It features alumni who are helping people with disabilities expand their horizons and have been recognized by President Obama for their work. Due to the limited space we have in each edition, we couldn't possibly highlight every person, program and office that is promoting diversity and diverse perspectives. But we can provide a sampling to show the impact that UGA students, faculty, staff and alumni are having on their various communities. It reminds us of the potential that we all have to do good and to make a difference.

This is who we are as the University of Georgia. We are the leaders of today and tomorrow, we are the ones forging paths and developing solutions, and we are a world-class institution of higher education. Our diversity is our strength, and so I encourage everyone to fully engage with this community of difference, adding your perspective and learning something along the way.

## Alumnus and college adviser is recognized by President Obama

Georgia College Advising Corps member **Lawrence Harris** (BS '12) said he was honored to be invited to the White House in January for a summit on college access. He was in complete disbelief, however, when President Obama recognized him by name in a speech on the power of higher education to transform lives.

"I was just as surprised as anyone," said Harris, a college adviser at Clarke Central High School in Athens through a program sponsored by the UGA Institute of Higher Education and part of the national College Advising Corps.

"Lawrence went to the University of Georgia, and like a lot of first-generation college students it wasn't easy for him," Obama said. "He had to take remedial classes. He had to work two part-time jobs to make ends meet. At one point, he had to leave school for a year while he helped support his mom and his baby brother. Those are just the kinds of day-to-day challenges that a lot of these young people with enormous talent are having to overcome. Now, he stuck with it. He graduated. But now he's giving back. He's made it his mission to help other young people like him graduate, as a college adviser at Clarke Central High School in Athens, Ga. And today the National College Advising Corps, the program that placed Lawrence in Clarke Central, is announcing plans to add 129 more advisers who will serve more than 80,000 students over the next three years."

The College Advising Corps trains recent college graduates to work alongside professional high school guidance counselors with the goal of increasing college attendance by helping first-generation college, underrepresented and low-income students enroll and graduate from postsecondary institutions. The program, which was established in Georgia in 2008, has a track record of success. In 2013, the GCAC added 12 advisers following a \$1 million grant from the Robert W. Woodruff Foundation and now serves 16 Georgia high schools.

After the speech, Harris was invited backstage, where he met with Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama. They spoke for about five minutes, and Lawrence told the president that although there is often a stigma surrounding low-performing students, many times they just need someone to listen, inspire and guide them. "They told me they were proud of the work that I do and to keep it up," Harris said.

-Sam Fahmy (BS '97)



Lawrence Harris recently met with President Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama.

### Coming soon: A new look for Diversity at UGA

For more than a decade, *Diversity at UGA* has provided a window into the campus community and its myriad voices and perspectives. Over the summer, our staff will be exploring new options for bringing readers information about our campus, and we'd like some input from you.

Please visit <http://diversity.uga.edu/news/newsletters/survey/> to take a quick, five-minute survey to let us know what you would like to see in this newsletter when we launch a redesigned version next fall.

# Diversity at UGA

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# Diversity at UGA

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## Giving to the Office of Institutional Diversity

A contribution to the Office of Institutional Diversity (OID) will help support a wide variety of initiatives that foster diversity at UGA.

OID provides and supports programming, such as recruitment and retention efforts, diversity scholarship funding, pre-collegiate learning opportunities, and faculty and student mentoring events. If you would like to discuss ways to give, please contact our office at 706-583-8195. We will work with you to ensure your charitable giving needs are met. To find out more about OID, visit our website at [www.diversity.uga.edu](http://www.diversity.uga.edu).

Checks should be made payable to the UGA Foundation and designated for OID on the "for" or "memo" line. Please mail checks to:

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