

A PUBLICATION FOR ALUMNI, STUDENTS AND FRIENDS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW ORLEANS

# SILVER & BLUE

FALL 2019

## MADAM PRESIDENT

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Judy Perry Martinez  
Leads The American  
Bar Association



An aerial photograph of a university campus. The foreground is dominated by a large, well-maintained green lawn. A wide, light-colored paved walkway runs diagonally across the lawn from the bottom left towards the center. To the right of this path, another paved path branches off towards the right edge of the frame. The lawn is dotted with numerous mature, leafy green trees. In the background, several large, multi-story brick and concrete buildings are visible, interspersed with more trees. A large, bright green field, possibly a sports field, is located in the upper middle section. The sky is clear and blue, and the overall scene is bright and sunny.

# FIRST LOOK







*Alumnus Mitchell Ervin referees a New Orleans Pelicans game.*

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# DEAR ALUMNI AND FRIENDS:

CHANGE IS THE ONLY CONSTANT IN LIFE. THIS APHORISM IS ATTRIBUTED TO Heraclitus, and it is something we think about a lot at the University of New Orleans. The communities and organizations we serve are constantly evolving, and the nature of work is shifting drastically before our eyes. A 2017 report from the Institute for the Future, an independent futures research group, states that 85% of jobs that today's students will hold in 2030 have not yet been created. Ponder that for a moment: we cannot conceive of most of the work that will be performed in a decade. Wow. That gets my attention.

In particular, it is difficult to imagine the types of jobs that sophisticated emerging technologies like artificial intelligence, augmented and virtual reality, robotics and cloud computing will reveal across all industries. The inescapable conclusion is that to successfully compete, each of us must be willing to also change, primarily through continuous learning and retooling, especially if we are to compete in these new jobs. Continuous learning is a necessity—it makes us more valuable, keeps our brains nimble, nourishes our minds and our curiosity, and it represents an enduring investment in our own well-being, one that often yields a strong return on investment.

For the University of New Orleans, our imperative is to provide you with up-to-date learning opportunities, now and in the future. Whether you are 18 or 88, we engage with students in different ways using a variety of delivery methods.

In fact, our growing portfolio of professional and continuing education programs, coupled with an evolving curriculum of degree programs, allows us to transform lives, and not just those of traditional age college students.

I am proud that the University continues to be a beacon of enlightenment, creating shared knowledge and honing the skills of the people we serve. One of the most exciting facets of working on a college campus is encountering our students and their thirst for knowledge. They are an example to all of us. We are reminded to ask questions, engage in discussion, branch out beyond our own areas of expertise and be humble enough to learn from others. A lifelong commitment to learning can be both financially rewarding and emotionally satisfying. If you are interested in pursuing new intellectual or professional goals in our ever-changing world, let us know how we can support you.

UNO Proud,  
**John Nicklow**  
PRESIDENT

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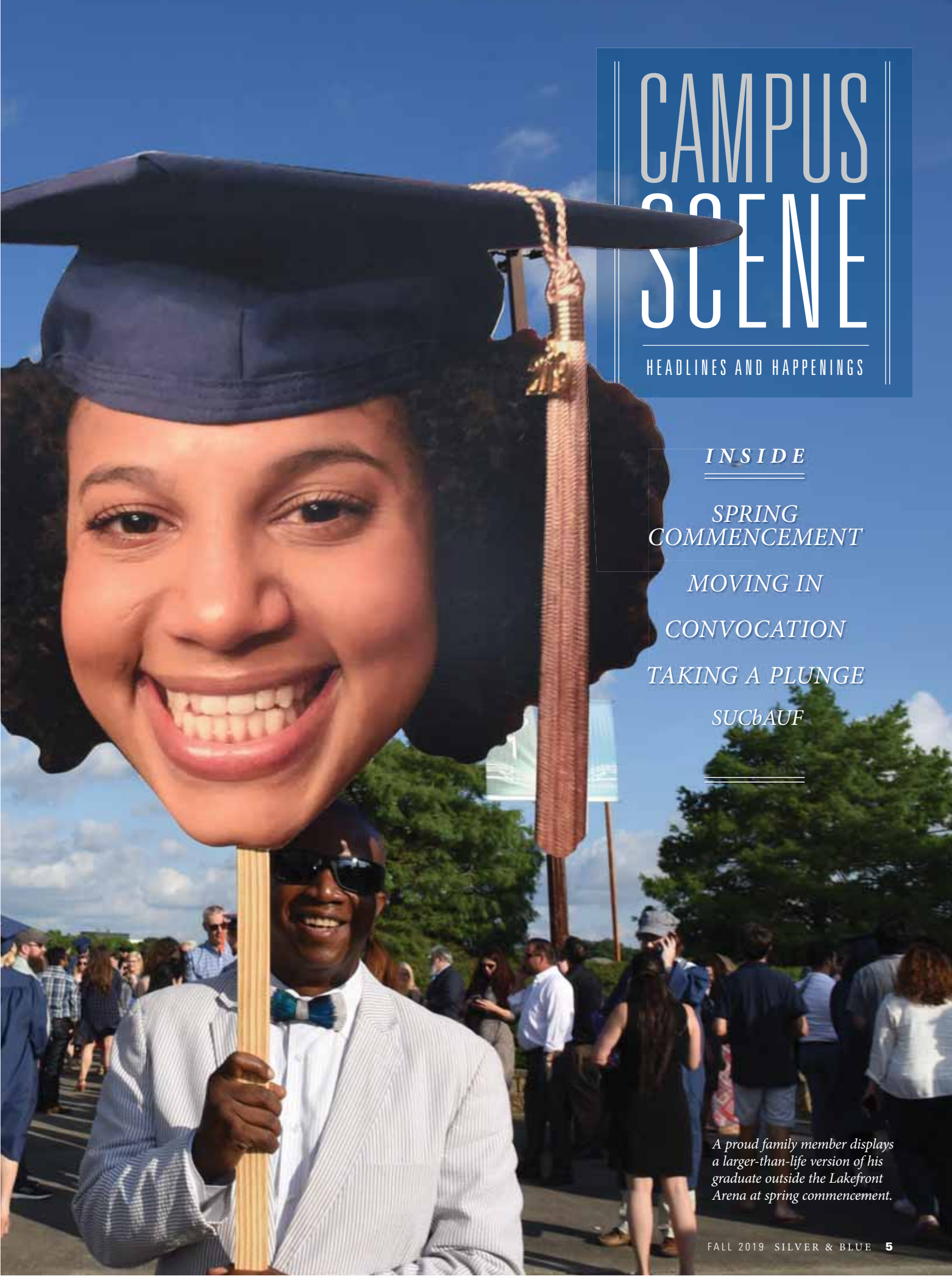
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# CAMPUS SCENE

HEADLINES AND HAPPENINGS

*INSIDE*

*SPRING  
COMMENCEMENT*

*MOVING IN*

*CONVOCATION*

*TAKING A PLUNGE*

*SUCbAUF*

*A proud family member displays a larger-than-life version of his graduate outside the Lakefront Arena at spring commencement.*



## SPRING COMMENCEMENT

Alumna Sheba Turk, a co-anchor of WWL-TV's Eyewitness Morning News, served as the principal speaker at the University of New Orleans spring commencement on May 17. The 2019 graduating class hailed from 28 U.S. states and territories and 32 countries.

As the graduates prepared for the next chapter of their lives, Turk urged them to remember that life happens in seasons and that they shouldn't wait for things to be perfect in order to make positive moves.

"I realize now that there's power in what you think and how you think," Turk told the graduates. "When I decided to move forward anyway, even though things weren't perfect, things started to really happen for me."

## SUCbAUF

For more than 30 years, UNO students have celebrated the end of spring semester by chowing down at a free crawfish boil! Sponsored by the Student Activities Council, SUCbAUF offers an afternoon buffet of all-you-can-eat crawfish and side fixings of potatoes and corn!





## MOVE-IN DAY

The UNO Move-In Krewe—made up of administrators (including President Nicklow), faculty, staff and returning students—help freshmen and new transfer students move into the Pontchartrain Hall residence halls.



## CONVOCATION

The Class of 2023 was officially welcomed to campus with a formal ceremony and a get-to-know-you party with their peers. The annual convocation at the UNO Lakefront Arena, which included faculty marching into the arena in full academic regalia while “Pomp and Circumstance” plays, commemorates the start of the academic journey for new students with an opening ceremony followed by free food and games.



## PRIVATEERS TAKE A PLUNGE

*Privateer Plunge is a six-week welcome for new students. The schedule is packed with events, workshops, parties, and presentations designed to introduce new students to available resources and help them get to know campus!*



# NEWS & EVENTS



## NEW ASSOCIATE PROVOST NEWTONA 'TINA' JOHNSON SEES 'SCAFFOLD OF SUPPORT' AS KEY TO FACULTY SUCCESS, RETENTION

NEWTONA "TINA" JOHNSON, the new associate provost for faculty and diversity affairs at the University of New Orleans, rose through the ranks of academia holding various faculty and administrative leadership positions that she feels has well-prepared her to assist faculty in being successful.

"You know what faculty is going through because you have gone through it yourself," Johnson says. "You know what the struggles are and what you need to do to recalibrate to make sure that what you do, you do well.

"It's invaluable experience, especially for this position, when you're working with faculty."

Johnson comes to UNO from the 21,000-student Middle Tennessee State University where she was a professor of English and previously served as interim vice provost for academic affairs and chief diversity officer, and director of women's studies/women's and gender studies. She spent eight years at Spelman College in Atlanta prior to her time at Middle Tennessee State.

"I was drawn to UNO's commitment to provide educational excellence to a diverse undergraduate and graduate student body, and its vision of being one

of the preeminent urban research institutions in the nation noted for its commitment to excellence in teaching and in student success," Johnson says.

Johnson holds a doctorate in literary and cultural studies from Emory University, a master's in applied linguistics from Concordia University in Montreal, a master's in English from Dalhousie University in Halifax, Nova Scotia and a bachelor's degree in English language and literature from the University of Sierra Leone.

She also has extensive training in senior-level higher education management and leadership, including a yearlong American Council on Education Fellows Program and the Harvard Institute for Management and Leadership in Education.

"To me, faculty success and student success are intertwined," Johnson says. "If you want your students to be successful, your faculty have to be successful as well. How do we aid them? By facilitating professional and personal growth."

Johnson, who arrived on campus in July, describes her leadership approach as providing a "scaffold" of supportive services such as training, supporting

a comprehensive professional development program, mentoring or facilitating grant activities because faculty should be viewed holistically.

She instituted tenure and promotion workshops and initiated faculty mentoring programs for specific affinity groups, such as women associate professors, while at Middle Tennessee State.

"When we talk about success, it's not just success professionally, it's also about personal growth," Johnson says. "For me, faculty success is enabling professional and personal growth. Then faculty are engaged and they have that sense of being committed to the institution, because the institution is committed to them."

Johnson says she views her role as a facilitator—somebody who motivates and provides support for others to do well in whatever position that they serve.

"My management approach is that I'm there to help, to motivate," she says. "Everybody can succeed with the right circumstances, the right help. That's what I love to do."

Johnson says her dual roles will allow her to work with faculty to ensure they are as well-equipped and comfortable to be the best they can be

in the classroom and to oversee the University's commitment to diversity and inclusion.

"So, I have two hats," Johnson says. "Faculty affairs is essentially to work with faculty to ensure their success in different ways ... the other is diversity, and that is to ensure that this institution's commitment to diversity and inclusion is pursued. To make sure that we can retain our students and faculty by making sure they feel that they belong here."

As the chief diversity officer at Middle Tennessee, Johnson provided administrative personnel support to the University's 18-member diversity advisory board and was the liaison with the state board of regents on diversity-related matters.

Johnson, who has studied the city of New Orleans from afar as part of her cultural research on diaspora and hybridity, says she is excited about living here and getting to know the UNO community.

"It's just a wonderful opportunity to be where I can contribute to moving the institution forward," Johnson says. "I am committed to the institution's mission and to President Nicklow's transformative vision."



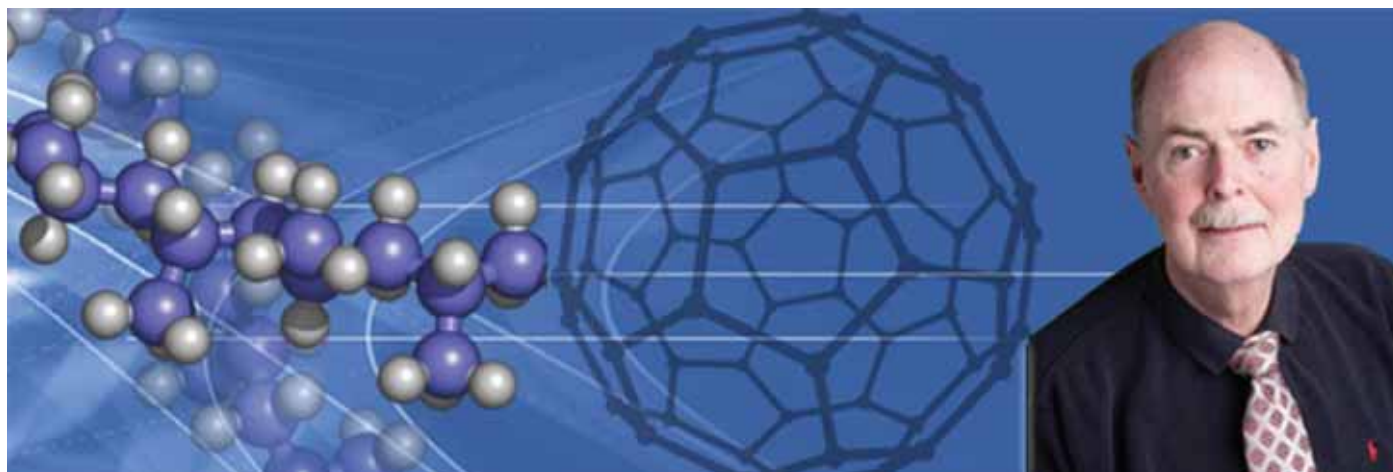
## Leading a Joint Effort to Recover Missing World War II Airmen in Germany

The University of New Orleans, through its partnership with the University of Innsbruck in Austria and the UNO-Innsbruck International Summer School, led a joint effort to excavate the site of a World War II aircraft crash in Germany, in the hopes that the project will help the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) in its mission to make the fullest possible accounting of American personnel. The team was joined by volunteers from the Task Force Dagger Foundation (TFDF), a nonprofit that serves U.S. Special Operations Command members and their families.

University of New Orleans anthropology professor D. Ryan Gray led the excavation, which concluded in mid-August, as part of a field school in archaeology. The site is located in southern Germany, and it is thought to be the location of a crash of a B-17 shot down during a 1944 bombing raid.

The field investigations, combining traditional archaeological methods with state-of-the-art investigative techniques, will hopefully allow for missing air crew associated with the crash to be recovered and identified. The project included 15 students in the UNO-Innsbruck International Summer School, two students from the University of Innsbruck and six volunteers from Task Force Dagger.





## RETIRED PROFESSOR CHARLES O'CONNOR DONATES \$60K FOR ENDOWED CHEMISTRY PROFESSORSHIP

AS A YOUNGSTER, CHARLES O'Connor was fascinated by the attraction between two bar magnets that would cause one to move, even though they were not touching.

"I just always thought that was really neat," O'Connor says.

That early interest never waned. It prompted O'Connor to earn a doctorate in chemistry and to pursue a career at the University of New Orleans that spanned more than three decades researching and teaching chemistry.

His assignment, when he joined the UNO faculty in 1979, was to teach and develop research programs in inorganic, solid-state and materials chemistry.

"I was always intrigued by magnetism and that's generally the area I ended up doing my work in, magnetic properties of materials," says O'Connor, who retired in 2012.

Now, O'Connor is manifesting his fondness for chemistry in another way: The creation of an endowment fund.

A \$60,000 donation from O'Connor and his wife, Sally E. O'Connor, will help establish an endowed professorship in chemistry. The University will pursue a \$40,000 match from the Louisiana Board of Regents.

O'Connor, who retired following a 35-year career at the University, describes the endowment as his way of giving back.

"I spent my whole career there," says O'Connor. "I just thought I could give something back to the chemistry department and help them recruit faculty."

That career included being the founding director of the Advanced Material Research Institute at UNO, which was developed to meet the research needs of the University in the area of materials science. The institute has established a research consortium that includes academic, government, and industrial participants and their research laboratories.

During his tenure at UNO, O'Connor received more than

\$50 million in outside funding for research, including a five-year grant from the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency for \$8.2 million to conduct research on nanophase magnetic particles for advanced materials.

"A lot of that had to do with trying to make magnetic particles smaller and able to hold the magnetism to try and improve the density of data storage," O'Connor says.

O'Connor also developed an outreach summer research program at UNO for high-school students, high-school teachers and underrepresented minority undergraduates, and directed an effort at UNO to help develop a doctoral program in advanced materials and nanoscience as a collaborative program between Louisiana State University, the University of New Orleans and Southern University Baton Rouge.

During his tenure at UNO, O'Connor directed the Ph.D and M.S. thesis research of more than a dozen gradu-

ate students, and the research activities of more than 40 post-doctoral students. Results of his research have been reported in more than 400 peer-reviewed publications in the scientific literature and more than 250 presentations at scientific conferences and symposia.

His research work at the University bore applications for the data storage industry and miniaturizations of electric devices and sensors, among other things.

O'Connor is a world-renowned and respected chemist, says Steven Johnson, dean of the College of Sciences and chairman of AMRI's campus advisory board.

Johnson credits O'Connor for developing an internationally recognized materials research institute and for recruiting "fabulous" faculty members to UNO whom he also mentored.

"I would say that his donation is a testament to his generosity and his willingness to help faculty," Johnson says.

## Saxophonist Brian Wingard Receives ASCAP Foundation Louis Armstrong Jazz Award

The University of New Orleans music faculty has selected Brian Wingard for the 2019 ASCAP Louis Armstrong Foundation Jazz Composition Award. Wingard, a jazz saxophonist and composer, will represent the University at the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers Foundation awards ceremony in New York City on Dec. 11.

The annual award, which carries a \$3,000 scholarship, is awarded to a UNO graduate student in jazz studies who demonstrates excellence in composition, and is supported by the Louis Armstrong Educational Foundation.



## news in brief

### UNO Increases Enrollment Again

The University of New Orleans increased its overall student enrollment for the second straight year, marking the first time in more than a decade that the University has grown in back-to-back years. Total enrollment increased from 8,151 students in fall 2018 to 8,231 students in fall 2019.

"While the increase is a modest one, we are thrilled that we continue on an upward trajectory," said President John Nicklow. "Particularly at a time when many universities across the country are grappling with enrollment declines, we consider this to be an indicator of continued progress. I am grateful for the work of our entire team across campus that has made recruitment, retention and student success our top priorities."

Undergraduate enrollment increased nearly 2% to 6,713 students. It is the first time that the number of undergraduates has grown in three consecutive years since prior to Hurricane Katrina.

### Two Biotech Companies Move to the University

The founders of two biotech research companies moved their lab to the University of New Orleans in July. LaCell LLC, and its spin-off company, Obatala Sciences, are now housed on the second floor of the Science Building within the Advanced Materials Research Institute (AMRI).

"We are excited about these new companies moving into AMRI. This will expand the number of startups in the institute, further increasing internship and job opportunities for our students," said John Wiley, director of AMRI.

The focus of LaCell LLC is on stem cell research and the clinical translation of that research, according to its website. Obatala is a tissue-engineering company that offers, among other services, a 3-D human adipose tissue culture system that is marketed for disease modeling and drug discovery within the obesity, diabetes, metabolism, pharmaceutical and academic sectors.

LaCell LLC and Obatala Sciences join startups InnoGenomics and Advano already on campus in AMRI facilities.

### \$75,000 Grant Will Expand College Beyond Program

A \$75,000 grant from the Kresge Foundation will allow the University of New Orleans to provide more students with targeted support through its partnership with College Beyond. College Beyond's success coaches, who are housed on UNO's campus, provide academic and non-academic interventions to Pell Grant recipient college students who graduated from greater New Orleans high schools.

The program served 80 freshmen during the 2018-19 academic year. The Kresge grant will enable as many as 100 additional students to participate.

Many first-generation, Pell-eligible students face additional challenges such as transportation barriers, food insecurity, work commitments and financial hurdles. College Beyond coaches are trained to help students access community-based resources to overcome those challenges and succeed in college.

### The Water Institute Celebrates Opening

The University of New Orleans and The Water Institute of the Gulf celebrated the Institute's new home at the UNO Research and Technology Park during a reception in April.

"This not only strengthens the partnership between the University of New Orleans and the Institute, it also allows us to leverage our respective field research capacities now and into the future to benefit the state and our other partners," said Matthew Tarr, vice president for research and economic development at the University of New Orleans. "The University of New Orleans' expertise in areas such as environmental sciences, civil and environmental engineering, coastal resilience, and hazard mitigation makes it a natural partner with The Water Institute."

The Baton Rouge-based Institute has had a presence in New Orleans since its inception and has collaborated with Tulane University, Greater New Orleans Foundation, GNO, Inc., UNO and many other partners on a variety of projects around the city.



## PHILLIP MAY AND ROXANNA RODRIGUEZ-TORRES TO BE HONORED AT 2019 DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI GALA

ENTERGY LOUISIANA president and CEO Phillip May will receive the 2019 University of New Orleans Homer L. Hitt Distinguished Alumni Award, the UNO Alumni Association announced. Additionally Roxanna Rodriguez-Torres, the National Security Council's director for Transnational Organized Crime, has been named the 2019 Homer Hitt Young Alumna of the Year.

Both will be honored at the Distinguished Alumni Gala, which will take place on Nov. 7 at 7 p.m. in the National WWII Museum's United States Freedom Pavilion: The Boeing Center.

"Alumni from the University of New Orleans excel in every imaginable endeavor," said President John Nicklow. "It is fitting that we are honoring Phillip and Roxanna because, while they work in very different fields, they exemplify the determination, perseverance and excellence found in so many of our graduates. They are both very deserving of this recognition."

As president and CEO of Entergy Louisiana, May is responsible for the company's customer service, regulatory and public affairs, resource planning, economic development programs and charitable contributions, as well as its financial performance. He previously served as vice president of regulatory services, vice president

of transition management, and managing director of corporate strategic planning and analysis.

May, who joined Entergy in 1986, holds a bachelor's degree in electrical engineering from the University of Southwestern Louisiana and a Master of Business Administration from the University of New Orleans. He serves on the boards of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce; GNO, Inc.; the Louisiana Nature Conservancy; Teach for America of South Louisiana; City Year Baton Rouge and Second Harvest Food Bank.

Rodriguez-Torres advises and supports the president, his senior national security advisers and cabinet officials on national security and policy issues related to transnational organized crime. In 2018 she served as the deputy assistant secretary for law enforcement policy under the Department of Homeland Security's Office of Strategy, Policy and Plans. Her previous positions within the Department of Homeland Security include intelligence analyst and chief of staff for the Homeland Security Investigations Office of Intelligence. She also worked as an analyst for the U.S. Customs Service. She began her career as a counterintelligence agent and linguist with the Louisiana National Guard.

Rodriguez-Torres received a bachelor's degree

in general studies from the University of New Orleans. She has completed linguist certifications in Russian, Kurdish and Spanish from the Department of Defense's Defense Language Institute.

May is the 36th honoree to receive the Homer L. Hitt Distinguished Alumni Award. Previous recipients include State Rep. Julie Stokes, New Orleans Tourism Marketing Corporation President and CEO Mark Romig, engineer and executive Roy Glapion, television news executive Kim Bondy, former Gambit Communications Chairman Clancy DuBos and former Lieutenant Governor Melinda Schwegmann. The honoree is selected by a committee of former award recipients.

The Distinguished Alumni Gala will also recognize distinguished alumni from each of the University's four academic colleges, and athletics.

The gala's venue is a testament to UNO's lasting impact on the community—the National WWII Museum was conceived in UNO's history department by professors Stephen Ambrose and Nick Mueller, the museum's former president and CEO.

Proceeds from the Distinguished Alumni Gala will increase funding for student scholarships and support the UNO Alumni Association's programming to ensure student success and alumni engagement.



Phillip May



Roxanna Rodriguez-Torres





## Students Put Engineering Concepts to Work at Robotic Eel Camp

It takes imagination to look at the segmented white PVC pipes splayed on the table with the long protruding wires and exposed batteries and see a robot—specifically a robotic eel capable of undulating underwater and through waves.

That was the vision and goal University of New Orleans professor Brandon Taravella shared with local middle and high school students who piloted the School of Naval Architecture and Marine Engineering's inaugural eel robotics camp this summer.

The weeklong camp, funded through a National Center for Advanced Manufacturing grant, introduced a variety of engineering concepts, such as 3-D modeling, mechanical and hydrodynamics design, and electrical engineering.



## UNIVERSITY OF NEW ORLEANS ENGINEERING STUDENT SPENDS SUMMER ABOARD ELECTRIC-POWERED YACHTS

UNIVERSITY OF NEW Orleans senior Nigel Watkins spent his summer vacation along the French Riviera and scenic Italian waterways. It was not, however, just “fun in the sun.”

Watkins, who is majoring in naval architecture and marine engineering, was honing his skills through a two-month internship with the European boat builder Vita Yachts.

“To be honest, I didn’t know what I was getting myself into,” Watkins says.

He’d read about the company and was intrigued that they specialized in high-performance electric-powered boats, Watkins says. He contacted the company, and after a flurry of Skype interviews and emails, he was offered the job as a naval architecture and marine engineering intern.

“I’ve always had a passion for clean energy and believe that’s where the marine sector will eventually migrate to, so it was a perfect fit being able to combine my two passions of luxury yachting and clean energy,” Watkins says.

“What I didn’t realize was over the span of a couple months I’d get to travel all over southern Europe working with some of the best designers and engineers this side of the world had to offer.”

The first couple of weeks were very production-focused and included meeting all of the boats’ contractors and manufacturers, Watkins says.

“The company is constantly trying to improve anything and everything from hull design to seat fabric so it was important to meet with those respective



manufacturers to get the best product,” he says.

Watkins was assigned to work under the company’s head of performance, who is a former chief engineer for the Mercedes Formula 1 auto racing team, and Vita’s head of production, who is a former super-yacht project manager.

The first month was mainly spent performing sea trials in Lago Maggiore, Italy and testing the newest Vita model, Watkins says. The boats, a 27-foot and 30-foot models, can fit eight to 10 people comfortably, he says.

“Vita is also the only boat in the world that can supercharge much like Tesla, and we have our own in-house network of superchargers along the French Riviera,” he says. “We’ve spent this summer perfecting those

systems and software to allow clients to seamlessly cruise along the Mediterranean with zero carbon emissions.”

Watkins spent the rest of the summer between Cannes, France and Monaco working with clients and consultants to perfect the final designs for a full production roll-out, he says.

“It’s satisfying work knowing that this project will hopefully have a domino effect and show the world the capabilities of electric propulsion,” he says. “Being a part of a small team has given me the opportunity to be involved in every aspect of the company from marketing to design to testing.

“Thanks to my education at UNO, I felt like I could consistently contribute and add ideas

so that by the end of the internship it would be equally beneficial for both parties. I can’t thank everyone at Vita enough for the experience and look forward to what’s in store for the future.”

Watkins says the College of Engineering, as well as his involvement in student government and Lambda Chi Alpha fraternity, gave him the leadership and communication skills that made for a successful internship.

“The naval architecture and marine engineering department at UNO is second to none, and it really shows when you’re put in the field,” Watkins says. “The professors prepare you in a way where they don’t hold your hand, but rather make you work through problems on your own which is realistically what will happen once you graduate.”



## SECOND LINE BREWING RELEASES PRIVATEER ALE

SECOND LINE BREWING, in collaboration with the University of New Orleans, has released Privateer Ale, a refreshing golden ale and the University's new officially licensed beer. Privateer Ale represents the first collaboration between UNO and the independently owned Mid-City craft brewery, well known for beers such as Batture Blonde Ale and A Saison Named Desire.

"We're really excited about

giving our alumni an opportunity to enjoy a delicious local craft beer and support their alma mater in the process," says President John Nicklow. "We have more than 47,000 alumni in metro New Orleans and I'm sure they'll be UNO Proud to drink Privateer Ale. If your favorite bar, restaurant or grocery store doesn't carry it yet, ask for it."

Privateer Ale is a crisp golden ale brewed with Mosaic and Idaho 7 hops. It is 4.3% alcohol

by volume with 15 international bitterness units, making it a light and thirst-quenching beer.

"We are so pleased to be working with my alma mater to create Privateer Ale. We look forward to supporting and promoting the university that helped me achieve my goals, just as it has for so many others in the city," says Second Line Brewing co-founder Karen Logan, who earned a Master of Business Administration degree from

UNO in 2005.

Privateer Ale is available at Second Line Brewing, 433 N. Bernadotte St., and on campus at The Sandbar inside The Cove and the UNO Lakefront Arena.

It's also sold at the Balcony Bar & Café, Katie's Restaurant & Bar, Red Door, 504 Craft Beer Reserve, Craft Beer Cellar, Elio's Wine Warehouse, Homegrown Pizza, Lakeside Country Club and select locations of Breaux Mart. 🍷

# FACULTY FOCUS



## HOWARD, MOSTERMAN AND HORNE WIN FACULTY EXCELLENCE AWARDS

ALTHOUGH THE SERVICES they render in helping to shape the next generation of leaders are far-reaching and priceless, educators aren't drawn to a career in teaching expecting to get wealthy, University of New Orleans Provost Mahyar Amouzegar said during an April ceremony honoring three faculty members for outstanding work.

"I think all of us are here, not for personal gain, it's really because we care," Amouzegar said. "We care about our community, we care about our campus, we care about our students, we care about our colleagues and it shows."

The ceremony at the Earl K. Long Library was the second year for the Faculty Excellence Awards established by Academic Affairs to recognize faculty members in two categories: Excellence in Mentoring and Excellence in Teaching and Teaching Innovation. The awards include a \$5,000 prize.

The award recipients were Jerome Howard, Andrea Mo-

sterman, and John Horne.

Howard, associate professor in biological sciences, received the mentoring award.

Howard created the summer STEM Scholars Program, and has an "affinity" for connecting with students and helping steer them to success, said Steven Johnson, College of Science dean.

The STEM camp, funded in part by a grant from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute, is an intensive six-day residential program aimed at boosting the academic readiness of incoming freshmen who have chosen to pursue majors in science, technology, engineering and math. Howard researched the idea and now facilitates the camp, which completed its fifth year at the University last summer.

"He's done a phenomenal job in mentoring through the STEM Scholars HHMI camp," Johnson said in presenting the award to Howard.

Johnson also presented one of the two awards for teaching excellence and innovation to Horne, a professor of profession-

al practice in biological sciences.

Johnson said Horne's active learning methods has helped improve student success rates in introductory science courses that tend to be challenging.

"He cares about innovation in teaching and he has done a fabulous job in the HHMI grant," Johnson said. "His approach has really excited students and allowed them to succeed."

Kim Martin Long, dean of the College of Liberal Arts, Education and Human Development, wished she'd had a history professor like Mosterman who she said believes in "active and engaged learning."

Mosterman, an associate professor in the department of history and philosophy, also received the faculty excellence in teaching and teaching innovation award.

Mosterman doesn't just lecture about history, but requires her students to seek out historical places around their neighborhood and produce presentations based on their own

*The recipients of the Faculty Excellence Awards were l-r: John Horne, Andrea Mosterman and Jerome Howard.*

research, Long said in making the award presentation.

"This method of visualizing the topics that she is teaching, helps to bring the topics to life and ensure that students know how to research, analyze, discuss with others and present visually sometimes very complex topics," Long said. "Skills that ... transfer to jobs and life."

Mosterman also allows students "voice and choice" in content, Long said. Students can propose their own historical topics, and with justification, Mosterman incorporates that into the syllabus.

"In these ways history does continue to live and these students are able to understand how important understanding our present time period is in knowing their history," Long said.

## MANAGEMENT PROFESSOR NICOLE FULLER LEFT CORPORATE FOR THE CLASSROOM

WHEN SHE WORKED AS A financial analyst in Washington, D.C., Nicole Fuller, now an assistant professor of management at the University of New Orleans, says she felt unfulfilled and longed for a career that not only challenged her, but impacted lives.

"I didn't feel like I was making a difference in anybody's life, and I have a passion for working with young people," says Fuller, whose expertise is in strategic management and entrepreneurship. "A lot of my volunteerism after work had to do with mentoring and teaching."

Still, the sense of being "misaligned" and not maximizing her full potential lingered.

It was not until she found herself applying for her fourth corporate job, that Fuller recalled a conversation with one of her former Georgetown University business professors. He had asked whether she'd thought about pursuing a doctorate degree.

At the time, she had not, intent as she was on finishing her bachelor's degree and getting a job. About five years after graduating, she found herself contemplating whether she really wanted to stay in corporate America.

"I reached back out to my undergraduate professor ... and we met for dinner," Fuller says. "I said 'What were you saying about getting a Ph.D.?'"

He told Fuller about the PhD Project, a support network aimed at increasing workplace diversity by increasing the number of African Americans, Hispanic Americans and Native Americans on business school faculty.

Fuller was intrigued.

"My goal was to pursue a

career that allowed for continuous learning, mentoring future leaders and producing work that impacts the community in meaningful ways," says Fuller, who teaches business policies and problems, and business planning.

In 2010 she was selected to attend the PhD Project's annual conference at which participants are introduced to the doctoral program process through a variety of sessions, including talks with deans, professors and current doctoral students of color about the benefits of pursuing a business Ph.D.

Once a candidate is enrolled in a doctoral program, the program offers resources and its members act as a support system, Fuller says.

"I ended up quitting my job at the end of 2011 because I decided to get an MBA," Fuller says. "A lot of the Ph.D. programs don't require an MBA, but it does make you more appealing in the application process."

Fuller earned a full graduate scholarship to the University of Arkansas-Fayetteville and went on to earn her doctoral degree in business from Texas A&M University in 2018. She also earned the title "Dr. Cinco" for quintupling the number of minority business school professors since The PhD Project started in 1994.

Fuller, who was honored at the organization's annual conference in October 2018, became the 1,470th doctorally qualified minority business school professor. In 1994, there were only 294 doctorally qualified minority professors in business schools across the United States, according to the



nonprofit organization.

"The decision to leave my corporate position in finance and move across the country to enroll in graduate school full-time was a complete step out on faith," Fuller says. "The support I received and network connections I established through The PhD Project made the rocky road from enrollment to graduation smoother. I am grateful for The PhD Project and excited to be Dr. Cinco!"

Fuller's dissertation "Organizational Marginalization and Embeddedness in Distressed Business Environments" focused on small businesses located in Houston's inner-city neighborhoods.

That research fuels her passion for advocacy, Fuller says. She wants to develop and share business theories about the operations of small companies in poor communities. Management theories developed from studying larger companies in more affluent environments are not always applicable, she says.

"I want to speak for the business environments that other people or other researchers are not speaking for," Fuller says. "It's typical for researchers to do research on S&P 500 firms, but I'm really interested in the smaller businesses operating in distressed communities, and I'm interested in the large businesses operating in or near distressed communities."

Fuller incorporates her research into the business courses that she teaches at UNO, by pushing her students to look beyond the textbook's typical focus on management practices at large, well-known companies.

"I often would use an example of a large company, but then I would say, 'Now let's look into inner-city Dallas, or let's apply the same thing to inner-city New Orleans and let's see if this still stands up.'"

Her research interests also include corporate social responsibility and exploring how companies choose to serve the communities they operate in, and business gentrification, she says.

"We talk about gentrification and how individuals and households are being relocated and displaced, but there's also a sense of gentrification happening in business environments sometimes," Fuller says.

When new businesses move in, and the area becomes a more up-and-coming neighborhood, some existing businesses continue to thrive. Others end up shutting down, she says.

Fuller, who moved to New Orleans in 2018, said she's looking forward to expanding her research canvas to include New Orleans businesses.

"I want to look back and know that the work I did was meaningful and impactful," she says.

## PROFESSOR RESEARCHES POSSIBLE LINK BETWEEN COMMON PAIN RELIEVER AND DEVELOPMENTAL DISORDERS

COULD USING A COMMON, over-the-counter pain reliever contribute to neurodevelopmental disorders, such as autism, in children? University of New Orleans assistant professor of psychology Christopher Harshaw is pursuing the answer to that question using mice to develop a “translational” model.

Several recent epidemiological studies have linked the use of acetaminophen in infants and young children to attention deficit and social disorders in humans, Harshaw says. A few animal studies have also found long-term differences in brain and behavior. However, few studies have examined behaviors specifically relevant to autism spectrum disorders, and none has used appropriately scaled doses comparable to what parents would give children suffering from a fever, so it is not clear if those results are relatable to what happens in humans, he says.

Harshaw’s study focuses on the developmental reaction that mice have to acetaminophen, best known by its popular brand name version, Tylenol.

“It’s something that needs to be looked at given that it’s the most frequent drug that any kid in the U.S. will take, and most kids will get a lot of it,” Harshaw says.

Harshaw, whose specialty is developmental psychology, is also a trained animal researcher. He received a one-year grant for \$6,600 from the Louisiana Board of Regents to complete a

pilot study on the question.

The goal for the project is to generate data that can be used to obtain funding to take a larger, more in-depth look at this possible link, while also examining the effects of other fever-reducing medicine, such as ibuprofen, he says. Harshaw said he’d also like to study a common practice among parents of switching back and forth between Tylenol and Motrin to reduce fever in children.

“Just to do a more thorough, full analysis of the situation,” he says.

While genetics play a major role in the development of autism, epidemiological studies indicate that other environmental factors likely act as triggers for certain individuals with genetic vulnerabilities, Harshaw says. Studies have shown a relationship between early exposures to acetaminophen, either prenatally or early in life, and the emergence of attention deficit hyperactive disorder (ADHD) and cases of autism with a lot of hyperactivity, he says.

His hypothesis is that early exposure to acetaminophen will have some long-term impact on the behavior of the mice, especially in males. Toxicology studies have indicated that acetaminophen is more toxic to males, Harshaw says. His yearlong study will examine autism-relevant social, communicative and repetitive phenotypes in mice exposed during early development to fever



alone, acetaminophen alone or fever plus acetaminophen. The control group will not receive any drugs.

“One of the primary things that I’m doing is giving appropriately scaled doses—doses that we know are equivalent to what humans get,” Harshaw says. “We’re actually treating fever in the animals; some of the animals have fever, some don’t. Some of them get acetaminophen, some don’t. So there are four different conditions.”

The mice will be injected starting around day five, which is comparable to a late stage gestational human fetus, Harshaw says. Other injections will be given at day eight and day 11. Mice get kicked out of

*Assistant professor of psychology Christopher Harshaw conducts research on his study of a common pain reliever and its possible contribution to developmental disorders in children.*

the nest by day 21, so the last injection on day 11 would be comparable to a 10-year-old child, Harshaw estimates. His lab will then study the mice for about 80 days, which by then they are sexually mature.

Harshaw said he expects to complete his study by December.

“This is just to start the ball rolling,” Harshaw says. “Hopefully we’ll have a good model of exposure that is relevant to what’s going on in humans.”

## CHEMISTS' RESEARCH ON OIL SPILL RESPONSE SEEKS BETTER MEASURES OF IMPACT WHILE PROVIDING FIELD EXPERIENCE FOR STUDENTS

FOR THREE YEARS, University of New Orleans assistant professors of chemistry David Podgorski and Phoebe Zito spent a portion of their summer prodding the soil at an oil spill site near Bemidji, Minn., to assess the potential risks of the petroleum-contaminated aquifers. One goal of their research is to develop a standard of measuring for toxicity in the oxygenated compounds created by the naturally disintegrating petroleum.

The oil spill research project, which Zito describes as including “a suite of scientists,” has allowed for collaboration with private companies such as Shell, Enbridge Energy Inc., the U.S. Geological Survey Toxic Substances Hydrology Program, and networking with other research professionals.

In addition, Podgorski and Zito have been awarded nearly \$250,000 in grants over the last 18 months that have allowed them to offer paid fieldwork research experience to graduate and undergraduate students.

“That’s what we’re here for; our purpose is providing opportunities for our students,” Podgorski says. “It’s about giving them experience.”

Last year undergraduate student Katherine Humpal and graduate student Nacaya Brown accompanied their professors to the oil spill site.

The Minnesota site, which is over seen by the U.S. Geological Survey, is a result of a 1979 pipeline rupture that spilled oil over about 10 acres in a remote area, Podgorski says. The light crude oil was left to naturally break down and its changing composition and movement has been studied for nearly 40 years,

Podgorski says.

“So basically we’ve had this site that’s been left for us to study natural attenuation and fate of crude oil over an extended period of time,” he says. “It makes it a really unique site.”

The site is opened to scientific researchers annually for two weeks, Podgorski says.

Podgorski and Zito returned to the site in June.

“There are so many different areas of research that they have a web page just for this project,” Podgorski says. “All these different scientists are looking at these different areas.”

Podgorski and Zito, whose expertise is in organic geochemistry, are interested in the compositional makeup created by the oil spill and the potential environmental impact of those new compounds.

Crude oil is made up predominantly of hydrocarbons, and is regulated because of its potential harm to the environment and to human health. While current regulatory standards call for tests that measure for those hydrocarbon levels, it does not include testing for the potentially toxic oxyhydrocarbon – the matter created as the petroleum breaks down, the professors say.

“It’s a part of natural attenuation. The bad part about it is that ... we found the tests that they do for these compounds are analytically blind to these oxygenated compounds that are forming that have the potential to be toxic,” Zito says. “So our work is looking at those oxygenated compounds in the water and how they are mobilized in the aquifer.”

“We are missing 85 percent of the carbon in the water with our current extraction and ana-



lytical measurement techniques, so it’s a pretty huge amount.”

Moreover, because they are not tested, their environmental impact is unknown.

By tracking and testing the various composition of these oxygenated compounds overtime, the researchers hope to develop levels of “risk zones” that could be applied in Minnesota and other spill sites, Podgorski says.

Knowing the chemical makeup of the compounds and their potential hazards allows for more informed short and long-term spill response decisions, he says.

“The problem is the composition of these compounds is changing, going from being a hydrocarbon to oxygenated hydrocarbons. Also the concen-

*University of New Orleans graduate student C. Nacaya Brown (center) works with Jared Trost and Barbara Bekins from the U.S. Geological Survey at the National Crude Oil Spill Fate and Natural Attenuation Research Site near Bemidji, Minn.*

tration of them is changing too,” Podgorski says. “What we’re trying to work on is establishing methods to test equal concentration and equal composition so we can control variables.

“We’re trying to lock the compositional understanding that we’re getting here so that we can just go test the composition of those water solubles, and we’ll already know its potential toxicity and where it falls in the zones.”



JUDY PERRY  
MARTINEZ  
LEADS  
THE AMERICAN  
BAR ASSOCIATION  
AS PRESIDENT

BY LITTICE BACON-BLOOD  
PHOTOGRAPHS BY FRANK L. AYMAMI III





UNIVERSITY OF NEW ORLEANS ALUMNA  
Judy Perry Martinez grew up in Chalmette, La., about a block from the St. Bernard Parish courthouse. Despite that proximity to the parish's judicial epicenter, Martinez, the president of the American Bar Association, never thought about being a lawyer.

"I just think it's wonderful when someone says, 'I was 6-years old, and I knew I wanted to become an attorney,'" Martinez says. "I was not one of those children, and I really didn't know any attorneys growing up."

That epiphany, instead, came after a business law class at the University of New Orleans where Martinez was pursuing a marketing degree. The professor asked Martinez to stay after class one day, and gave her a nudge that would change the trajectory of her life.

"He said, 'You should go to law school,'" Martinez, an attorney with Simon, Peragine, Smith & Redfearn LLP in New Orleans, recalls with bemusement. "To have that expression of confidence, that he saw something in me that made him think that I should go to law school, was something that made me turn that way."

After graduating from UNO in 1979, Martinez headed to Tulane University for law school. She graduated law school in 1982 and embarked on a corporate legal career that has spanned nearly four decades, including a stint as vice president and chief compliance officer for Northrop Grumman and a fellow-in-residence at the Advanced Leadership Initiative at Harvard University.

Prior to joining Northrop Grumman, the multibillion-dollar aerospace company, Martinez spent 21 years as a commercial litigator at Simon, Peragine, Smith & Redfearn, where she was a member of its management committee.

"That just tells you that somebody's belief in a young person can change their lives," Martinez says referring to her former marketing professor's suggestion.

On August 13, Martinez was sworn in as the president of the American Bar Association, an organization of more than 400,000 members that, among other services it provides, recommends legal policies and sets academic accreditation requirements for U.S. law schools.

Martinez has held various leadership roles in the ABA for more than 30 years, including chairing the ABA's Standing Committee on the Federal Judiciary, which evaluates all prospective nominees to the federal bench.

"I see the active participation in a bar association as essential to good lawyering," Martinez says. "I can attest to the fact that they expose you to new ideas, different thoughts and expose you to people with different perspectives than you have and, as a result, they help you hone your skills."

#### ROLE AS ABA PRESIDENT

Martinez's inauguration took place during the organization's annual meeting in San Francisco. Louisiana Supreme Court Chief Justice Bernette Johnson conducted the swearing-in ceremony at Martinez's request.

Martinez's husband, Rene, along with their four children, attended.

"I will be guided by the association's unparalleled history of standing up for the voiceless and its unwavering commitment to support our members to be the best that they can be each day for their clients and the public they serve," Martinez said during her 2018 acceptance speech when she became president-elect.

As president, Martinez will be the official spokesperson for the group. She is also charged with advancing the ABA's four primary goals:

- Serve members by providing benefits, programs and services that promote professional growth and quality of life.
- Improve the legal profession by promoting quality legal education, competence, ethical conduct, professionalism, pro bono and public service

- Eliminate bias and enhance diversity

- Advance the rule of law

"Everything we do, we do to advance those four goals," Martinez says. "In some organizations, the presidency sort of zigs and zags because it's just one year, but our organization really strives for strategic leadership and continual leadership that advances the organization's goal."

From her election in 2018, Martinez traveled with the immediate past-president Bob Carlson to various events, including spending a week providing pro bono legal work at a residential detention center



in Texas where she helped interview migrants, some of whom were seeking asylum in the United States.

"You see people who are desperate to come to this country," Martinez says regarding her observations of the detention center. "They need help telling their stories ... getting information about the (legal) process and what's going to happen in court when they pursue their claims is critically important."

The ABA projects that its members will provide legal aid to more than 20,000 unaccompanied minors this year to help them make informed decisions throughout the immigration process.

In June, the ABA issued a statement decrying the "inhumane

and illegal” treatment of unaccompanied immigrant children held in government custody, as had been widely reported in the news media.

“We issue statements if we feel an issue is critical for us to speak on,” Martinez says.

### STELLAR LEGAL CAREER

Martinez’s previous leadership roles in the ABA includes a 2011 appointment as chair of the ABA Standing Committee on the Federal Judiciary, which evaluates all prospective nominees to the federal bench, she served as the ABA’s lead representative to the U.N., has been a member of the ABA Board of Governors and a member of its executive committee.

She previously has served as chair of the 170,000 member ABA Young Lawyers Division, a member of the ABA Commission on Women in the Profession and chair of the ABA Commission on Domestic Violence.

Martinez worked with other Louisiana bar leaders to establish the New Orleans Pro Bono Project, and served as its first chair in the early 1980s. She has received numerous awards and recognition for her work in the legal field, including the Sam Dalton Capital Defense Advocacy Award from the Louisiana Association of Criminal Defense Counsel in 1997, the Michelle Pitard Wynne Professionalism Award from the Association of Women Attorneys in 1998, and



**“I will be guided by the association’s unparalleled history of standing up for the voiceless and its unwavering commitment to support our members to be the best that they can be each day for their clients and the public they serve.”**

the Alliance for Justice Award in 1999 from the National Gay and Lesbian Law Association.

She was named The Outstanding Young Lawyer in the State of Louisiana in 1990 and the Louisiana Bar Foundation’s 2001 Distinguished Attorney. In 2012, the Federal Bar Association, New Orleans chapter, presented her with its Camille Gravel Public Service Award.

### “OPPORTUNITIES, NOT ACCOMPLISHMENTS”

The half-dozen floor-to-ceiling windows in Martinez’s Poydras Street corner office, located on the 30th floor in downtown New Orleans, offers panoramic views of the Mississippi River, the Super-

dome, Uptown, and, on a recent summer day, a cloudless blue sky.

“I love the rain,” Martinez says. “It just feels great. You see the clouds roll in and the rain.”

Her office is neatly arranged with sleek furnishings that complement the abundance of natural light and the aerial view. Pictures of her husband and their four children line a bookshelf. There’s also a picture of Martinez and several women associates at the firm laughing together—it was taken during “the early years,” Martinez says.

Despite a career steeped in service and accomplishments, Martinez shrugs off compliments and counters that she’s been given opportunities.

“I see them more as opportunities than accomplishments,” she says.

In the 1950s, Martinez said her dad owned a furniture store on the corner of St. Claude and Desire in the Upper 9th Ward. Her three older brothers attended Holy Cross, while she graduated from St. Mary’s Dominican High School. She initially attended LSU after high school, but her family’s finances dictated a transfer after three semesters, Martinez says.

“We had a good life, and UNO fit in perfectly,” she says. “I worked two jobs while I was there, and was blessed to have a strong education.”

Her siblings and one of her sons live in Baton Rouge. Her oldest brother, Al, also an attorney and UNO alumnus, moved there following Hurricane Katrina, she said.

She and her husband recently downsized to a smaller home in New Orleans about 10 blocks away from the house they’d lived in for 27 years, she says. To her delight, another son and his wife recently purchased a house nearby after living out-of-state for a decade.

“They moved 200 steps from our new house,” Martinez says. “That’s the greatest joy! His dog was over this morning.”

Her family, which also includes a daughter and son living in Washington, D.C. keeps her rooted and motivated, she says.

“I have a big extended family and we love getting together,” Martinez says. “We eat; it’s all about the food!”

As she prepared to take the helm of the organization that bills itself as the “national representative of the legal profession,” Martinez already knows the frenetic pace of the job. Her schedule is basically booked through next year with national and international obligations.

To handle the chockablock schedule, Martinez says she tries to exercise daily and give herself at least 10 minutes every morning to center herself. She has a “calming” app on her phone that provides daily themes.

“Today it was accepting criticism,” she says. “It’s just about 90 seconds to two minutes of talk at the end, but the first eight minutes are just music and breathing, and then I walk.”

Martinez said she is honored and humbled to become the new ABA president, where she also will represent her state, city and alma mater.

“I’m so proud to be doing this and being from Louisiana and from New Orleans and being a UNO graduate,” she says. “It could be someone else easily doing this, but because of all the support all these years, that’s why I’m able to do this.

“There is nobody more proud of her city.” 🌟





***PRIVATEER***

***IN***

***THE PROS***

***NBA REFEREE MITCHELL ERVIN  
HAS EARNED HIS STRIPES***

***BY ADAM NORRIS ■ PHOTOGRAPHS BY TRACIE MORRIS SCHAEFER***



ating a decade-long odyssey that began with a University of New Orleans graduate looking for a way to stay connected to the game he loved.

### FOLLOWING THE BOUNCING BALL

Ervin grew up in the 9<sup>th</sup> Ward of New Orleans and was an All-District guard on the Eleanor McMinn high school basketball team. He spent much of his youth traversing the city's playgrounds, housing developments and high school gyms, looking for a game with his friends.

"Wherever a basketball was bouncing, we would go there and play," Ervin says.

Ervin was a good enough player to draw scholarship offers from two out-of-town colleges but both of those schools had coaching changes and the offers were subsequently withdrawn. When he was weighing his options, Ervin's mother was diagnosed with breast cancer, which cemented his decision to stay at home and enroll at the University of New Orleans.

"I was able to be there with her for her last couple of years on this earth, so that was a blessing in disguise," he says.

During his freshman year, Ervin was a walk-on for the Privateers basketball team under head coach Joey Stiebing. Juggling the demands of being a student-athlete was challenging, Ervin says, and he decided to prioritize his academic pursuits by departing the team after one year.

After contemplating careers in both physical therapy and law, Ervin settled on a degree program in human performance and health promotion within the College of Education, graduating with a bachelor's degree in 2002.

"My time at UNO was really good," Ervin said. "I think UNO represents a real-world environment, as far as demographics and diversity. It was definitely a school that did not baby you at all. What you put in at UNO is what you get out. You really had to work hard to earn good grades there."

During college, he completed internships with the New Orleans Saints, the Greater New Orleans Sports Foundation and the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) of Louisiana. Fol-

lowing graduation, he remained in New Orleans, working for a Los Angeles-based sports agent and running various AAU basketball tournaments. During those tournaments, he frequently encountered Bobby Bissant, a dean of local referees, whose nephew was an NBA referee. Every time they saw each other, Bissant talked to Ervin about the profession. At one particular tournament in Mandeville, Bissant cornered him again.

"He started talking to me about the amount of money that NBA referees make," Ervin says. "He was talking about six figures. And, I was like, 'Really? Refereeing basketball?'"

### A NEW HOOP DREAM

Fatigued by Bissant's sales pitch, Ervin told him that he would try it. Bissant arranged for Ervin to referee a team camp at Tulane University. He showed up early on a Saturday, got a shirt and a whistle, and officiated the first basketball game in his life.

"At the time, I was playing in a couple of local men's leagues," Ervin says. "But that experience made me realize how much I missed being out on the floor. My adrenaline was pumping. I was drawn to it. And my competitive nature kicked in. I wanted to get every call right."

Ervin was hooked. He started refereeing high school games, recreational league games—any game he could find, following those same teenage instincts, going wherever a basketball was bouncing. He attended his first referee camp in Hattiesburg, Miss., where 80

THE BEST PROFESSIONAL NEWS MITCHELL ERVIN EVER received came during the worst haircut of his life. He was seated in a barber's chair on August 27, 2015, when his phone rang. It was Mike Bantom, the vice president of referee operations for the NBA.

"Mitchell," Bantom said, "We are going to extend an invitation to you to be on the NBA referee staff"

The last syllable had barely escaped Bantom's mouth when Ervin leaped from the barber's chair. "The barber is like, 'What are you doing?' I remember the clippers went *zeet!* Kind of made a mark in my hair. I ran out of the barbershop because I could not really hear," Ervin says.

Ervin asked Bantom, who was now laughing, to repeat himself. "We're going to offer you a position to be an NBA referee," Bantom said.

Ervin was delirious. "I was like, 'No way! You've got to be kidding me. Are you serious? Is this really Mike Bantom?'"

Bantom, still laughing, assured him that he was who he said he was. He told Ervin that the offer was contingent upon him passing a background check.

"I said, 'Sir, with all due respect, I will pass this background check with flying colors. My background is so squeaky clean, I can run for political office,'" Ervin says.

Ervin walked back into the barbershop with an uneven haircut, grinning and trembling with excitement. He had just been invited to join the most elite group of basketball referees in the world, punctu-

aspiring officials worked games, hoping to get noticed.

Then Hurricane Katrina struck. Ervin and his sister evacuated to Houston.

“It was really like starting over,” Ervin says. “That was a really, really tough time.”

He needed a steady source of income so he worked a few different jobs, but none was compatible with a referee’s schedule. He didn’t officiate basketball for an entire year in Houston. In the summer of 2006, he attended a referee camp in Houston, and some of the local pros helped him find high school games to work. He started attending every referee camp possible.

“I was back to being that gym rat again, but this time it was in Houston.”

His doggedness began to pay off. He progressed from working high school to some small college games. He attended two prestigious camps, run by NBA referees, which increased his visibility among the national referee community and exposed him to his future mentors. After those camps, he graduated to NCAA Division I competition, joining crews in the Southland Conference and Conference USA.

Ervin became obsessed with self-improvement. He scoured video replays of his games, evaluating his own performance. He emailed and texted current NBA officials, asking for advice and feedback. He was invited to try out to become a referee in the NBA Development League, formerly known as the D-League, now branded the G-League. He thought he performed well but did not make the cut. He returned to the D-League camp the following year, more aggressive and confident.

This time, he was selected.

“I wanted to take advantage of the opportunity,” Ervin says. “I knew there were a lot of guys who wanted to be in my shoes. I promised myself that I would not waste the opportunity.”

He would never realize his boyhood dream of playing in the NBA. But this was his chance to get to the NBA.

He spent four years refereeing in the NBA’s minor league before receiving that call in the barber chair from Mike Bantom.

Fittingly, Ervin’s first game as a full-time NBA referee was in his hometown on Oct. 31, 2015 when the Golden State Warriors beat the New Orleans Pelicans. It wasn’t just a memorable night for Ervin’s friends and family. Warriors star Stephen Curry scored 53 points.

## LIFE ON THE ROAD

Ervin, 39, is entering his fifth season as an NBA official. During the season, he keeps a dizzying travel schedule that typically involves working four to five games a week, often in as many cities. Like professional players, referees find order and comfort in their routine.

Referees are required to arrive in the city of their next game the night before the game. The members of the three-person crew usually go out to dinner to catch up and talk about their craft. The next day, they have a mandatory morning meeting at their hotel to get them focused on that night’s game. They discuss positioning on the court, rules, player matchups and areas of emphasis from the league. After lunch, some officials will take a nap, while others exercise. Ervin usually takes some of this time to review video of recent games.

“I think there’s a common misconception that NBA referees show up, work the game, go home and just move on to the next game,” Ervin says. “I don’t think people realize how much we really care for the game of basketball, how much we care

about being professionals and how much it bothers us when we get calls wrong.”

The referees have to be at the arena at least 90 minutes before tipoff. They ride together to the arena, get stretched by physical therapists, check in with the replay official at the NBA Replay Center in Secaucus, NJ and go over any last-minute discussion points. At halftime, they even review video in the locker room of the first half to see if they missed anything or need to make adjustments. There is no time for complacency.

While Ervin has reached the summit of his profession, he maintains the same resolve to improve that brought him to this point. And it’s showing. He was chosen as an alternate for the NBA Playoffs last season. He hopes to work the playoffs in future years and his ultimate goal is to be an NBA Finals referee.

He is quick to add, “In this business, consistent growth and progression are key.”

Ervin lives in New Orleans during the season but maintains his residence in Houston during the offseason. His chief offseason priority is spending time with his wife, Dinesha, and their sons, Chandler and Sean. Family time is a scarce commodity for him from October through April.

“My family sacrifices so much during the season to actually allow me to do something I love to do for a living,” he says.

Ervin is also well acquainted with sacrifice. For years, he refereed games in random gyms with low pay and no glamour, determined to improve and rise through the ranks. In many ways, he is still driven by the same youthful passion that he never outgrew.

“I’m trying to make the game better. Trying to get the respect of my peers, the coaches and players,” Ervin says regarding his motivation. “It’s the love of the game, ultimately.” 🏀



*Fritz-Egbert Dohse*



# College of Engineering Auditorium Dedicated to Founding Dean

BY ALICIA SERRANO

THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW ORLEANS' College of Engineering auditorium now bears the name Dohse Auditorium, in honor of the founding dean of engineering Fritz-Egbert Dohse.

Dohse arrived at the University in 1960, when it was known as Louisiana State University in New Orleans. He taught courses in statistics, dynamics, mathematics and scientific German.

Dohse became the founding dean in 1973 when the Department of Engineering Sciences became the School of Engineering. The school would go on to become the College of Engineering in 1980 and fully accredited by ABET, the Accreditation Board for

Engineering and Technology.

Throughout his 24-year tenure, the College of Engineering would celebrate major successes that were spearheaded by Dohse, including enrollment climbing to over 700 students, the addition of a program in naval architecture and marine engineering, a cooperative degree program with Southern University in New Orleans and Xavier University, and funding for a nine-story engineering building.

Dohse retired in 1984, but not without leaving a mark, not only on the College of Engineering, but also its students. At the dedication ceremony for the Dohse Auditorium on April 11, several alumni



along with former colleagues shared their testimonials and fond memories of the founding dean.

Alumna Helen Holzenthal worked with Dohse as an assistant in his office and remembered the unwavering dedication he had to his students.

“His philosophy was that students deserved assistance and guidance and he knew if it weren’t for UNO, many of the students would not be able to earn an engineering degree,” Holzenthal says.

Holzenthal said Dohse’s “door was always open” for any student, faculty or staff member. She recalled one busy day in which constant interruptions were keeping her from her work. She went to Dohse’s office to express her frustrations.

“Dr. Dohse listened patiently and kindly said, ‘Remember that if it weren’t for the students, we wouldn’t be here. We are here to help them succeed,’” Holzenthal says.

Dohse died Aug. 12, 2018, and is survived by his wife, Helga Dohse, his three sons and their wives: Till and Michele Dohse, Hans and Monika Dohse and Dirk and Renate Dohse.

Till Dohse, who was accompanied at the ceremony by his wife, Michele, said that as a professor of mathematics, he remembers his father saying, “Focus on the students’ success.”

Till said it was good to hear that others remembered his father the same.

Alumnus Pierre Champagne echoed that sentiment saying that Dohse seemed to always have time for others and it wasn’t just about the discipline of education.

“It was not just about getting a job or what it was you wanted to do for the rest of your life, it was about service from a very passionate level of appreciating the talents a person has and how they can use those,” Champagne says.

When Champagne’s mother died, he said Dohse encouraged him to pursue his studies and told him about some internship opportunities, one of them being at a telephone company, where he still works.

“My life has been forever influenced by Dean Dohse,” Champagne says.

Associate Dean of Engineering and professor Kim Jovanovich said Dohse also played an essential role in his career.

Jovanovich said he first met Dohse in 1977 when he visited UNO to see what teaching opportunities were available. There was nothing available until 1980, when he was approached to teach an electrical engineering class for one semester as an

*Left to right: Helen Holzenthal, Associate Dean Kim Jovanovich, Dean Taskin Kocak, Till Dohse.*

adjunct professor. That one semester has turned into Jovanovich teaching at UNO for more than 30 years.

Deborah Settoon, who graduated in civil engineering, remembers first meeting Dohse in a class where she was one of three women in the room. She says he greeted her “warmly and friendly.”

Upon graduation, Settoon says she gave Dohse a tie as a gift and about 20 years later she reached out to him to see how he was. Dohse replied that he still had the tie and still wore it. Settoon said that even though it was a simple gift, she was touched that he remembered so many years later and it was exemplary of how he cared about his students.

“He always had time for us,” Settoon says. “He reminded us to constantly pursue our goals in engineering and he strived to make the engineering school better with constant improvement and constant attention to the students, the detail and the long-term horizon.”

One of Dohse’s goals was to secure a new building for the College of Engineering, and he was able to do so with the help of alumnus Glenn Scorsone. In 1980, Scorsone was one of about 25 students Dohse asked to lobby legislators in Baton Rouge for a new building. The students were able to get the attention of then-Governor Dave Treen and the Louisiana Legislature would approve funding for the building in 1982. Ground broke on the building two years later, the same year of Dohse’s retirement.

“He was truly inspirational to us because we saw the passion that he had and the trust he had in us as students to go up there and fight for our school,” Scorsone says when telling the story of lobbying for the engineering building. 🙏



# Aloha Irby



## IRBY MORVANT JR. IS NEW GENERAL MANAGER AT HYATT REGENCY WAIKIKI BEACH RESORT AND SPA IN HONOLULU

WHILE PURSUING HIS BACHELOR'S DEGREE AT THE University of New Orleans, Irby Morvant Jr. juggled a part-time job as a waiter at the Hyatt Regency's Top of the Dome restaurant in downtown New Orleans.

Just as the restaurant slowly rotated to give diners a 360-degree view of the city's skyline, Morvant's hospitality career with Hyatt has remained in a state of forward motion, leading him from waiter to, eventually, general manager of a large resort in Hawaii.

"It's gorgeous here," says Morvant, who manages the Hyatt Regency Waikiki Beach Resort and Spa in Honolulu. "It's beautiful, but there's more to Hawaii than its beauty. There's a deep, true cultural aspect to the destination."

The sprawling resort has more than 60 stores, three on-site restaurants, meeting facilities and a pool that overlooks the Pacific Ocean, is located steps away from Waikiki Beach, Morvant says. The resort also includes a spa that weaves in Hawaiian ingredients and cultural practices into its wellness treatments.

Morvant likens the rich heritage of the tropical island to that of New Orleans' unique blend of music, food and deep-rooted traditions.

"When you come to Hawaii, you feel the deep culture and authenticity," says Morvant, who had visited Hawaii several times in previous roles with Hyatt before making the move with his family earlier this year.

"When you think about Hawaii, you think about the music, you think about the food and the culture. It's sort of a weird parallel to something that is as strong as it is in New Orleans."

Morvant, who graduated in 1992 with a B.A. in drama and communications, chose UNO because it "fit" him.

"I don't know how else to say it, but it felt like home," says Morvant, who grew up in Harvey, La. "It felt like I understood it. It had a good program for me and had the reputation that if you were going to go there you were going to have to study ... it wasn't just to go and have fun."

Morvant has spent more than 30 years with Hyatt Hotels Corporate. He was selected for the company's corporate management training program after graduating from UNO.

Morvant said he was drawn to the family-oriented culture of Hyatt and the company's organizational structure.

"There was an understanding of a career path," Morvant says. "If you so chose, that you knew you could one day become a food and beverage director or a director of rooms or a director of sales. You saw the path, even as an associate."

Morvant moved into various sales and leadership roles at Hyatt properties across the country, including stops in Chicago, Boston, Cleveland and New Orleans. It was after riding out Hurricane Katrina at the downtown New Orleans Hyatt, and helping to manage the hotel, which closed because of storm damage, that Morvant decided he wanted to become a general manager.

At the time, he was the director of sales and marketing at the New Orleans Hyatt, and Morvant enjoyed the project planning and being part of leading a team.

"Hyatt allowed me to do that," he says. "My next step was relocating to corporate headquarters and immersing myself in ownership management and regional support in sales and marketing for 25 resorts and hotels."

In 2007, Morvant was appointed regional vice president of sales in Chicago, and then moved into the role of general manager at



Hyatt Regency Mission Bay Spa and Marina in San Diego; he later would become general manager at the Hyatt Regency San Francisco Airport before heading to Hawaii.

“My first hotel was around 450 rooms,” Morvant says. “And it’s not about room size, it’s about the complexity and size of the operation.”

The 40-story Hawaiian resort has around 650 employees and more than 1,200 rooms, each with a private balcony—or lanai, as it called locally.

“One of the intriguing things about this business, it’s not a ‘sit-behind-the-desk’ environment,” Morvant says. “Every day is different.”

Most days are filled with meeting his managers to discuss the day’s operations, strategizing with his sales and revenue team, conferring with his chefs and interacting with guests as he walks around the resort, Morvant says.

“I’m here for our guests and associates providing personalized service,” Morvant says. “To care for people so that they can be their best.”

The hospitality industry is a “people business,” Morvant says, and those who want to excel should not forget that basic tenet.

“The hospitality industry is a long play,” Morvant says. “If you focus throughout the years, you will be working towards something very rewarding.” 🌴

*Irby Morvant Jr., is general manager of the 40-story Honolulu resort that has 650 employees, more than 1,200 rooms, three on-site restaurants and 60 retail stores.*





# Researcher Awarded \$240K Grant for Statewide Bicyclist and Pedestrian Data Collection

DESPITE THE LATE MORNING HEAT, THE PAVED TRAIL ON top of the Mississippi River levee in Algiers Point was busy with joggers, walkers and bicyclists. In about a year, University of New Orleans research associate Tara Tolford will have the data on just how many people use that trail and other similar ones across Louisiana.

Tolford, a research associate in the University of New Orleans Transportation Institute, has been awarded a \$248,000 grant from the Louisiana Transportation Research Center to collect and study data on bicyclists and pedestrians across the state. The work is Phase 2 of a project funded by the Louisiana Transportation Research Center to study the most effective and cost-efficient ways to collect data on bicyclists and pedestrians statewide, Tolford says.

The goal is to bring the same level of attention and data to active transportation planning—biking and walking—as is done for cars, Tolford says.

“We’ve been counting cars on basically every major roadway in

the entire state for decades,” she says. “For planning purposes, for the most part, we’ve just had no idea just how many people are walking or biking on any given location.”

In June, Tolford and her assistants Marin Tockman and Antonia White-Barstow were out installing equipment that will count the comings and goings of pedestrians and bicyclists at certain locations, one of which is the Mississippi River Trail on the levee in Algiers Point.

“It’s important because we have tons of folks who walk and bike and take transit in the region and the state, and this will help us make better decisions on where to spend our money to make it safer and easier for folks to get around,” Tolford says about the count data.

They installed infrared sensors at different locations on the levee that will count passers-by, and they placed a pair of pneumatic tubes about a mile away on Newton Street that will count cyclists in each direction.



“Pneumatic tubes are just a couple of tubes that are nailed into the roadway and a puff of air that counts every vehicle that crosses over it,” Tolford says. “We have special ones that only count bicycles so we know difference because of the weight and the distance between the wheels.”

Tolford hopes to use data from some existing Department of Transportation and Development traffic cameras, and says they are working with a company to help extract related data.

In 2009, the state legislature approved a resolution that called for the creation of the Complete Streets Work Group within the DOTD to develop a comprehensive statewide transportation policy for Louisiana that balances the needs of motorists, transit users, bicyclists and pedestrians. One of the recommendations from the work group was the collection and analysis of pedestrian and bicycle data.

“The goal is to make our transportation planning more multi-

modal so it’s not just cars; it’s about everybody who uses the street,” Tolford says. “This is part of the implementation of those (Complete Street) policies. In order to effectively plan, we need to know who is using the streets and what the potential demand is; so this is one key fundamental piece of the puzzle, which is to get long-term counts.”

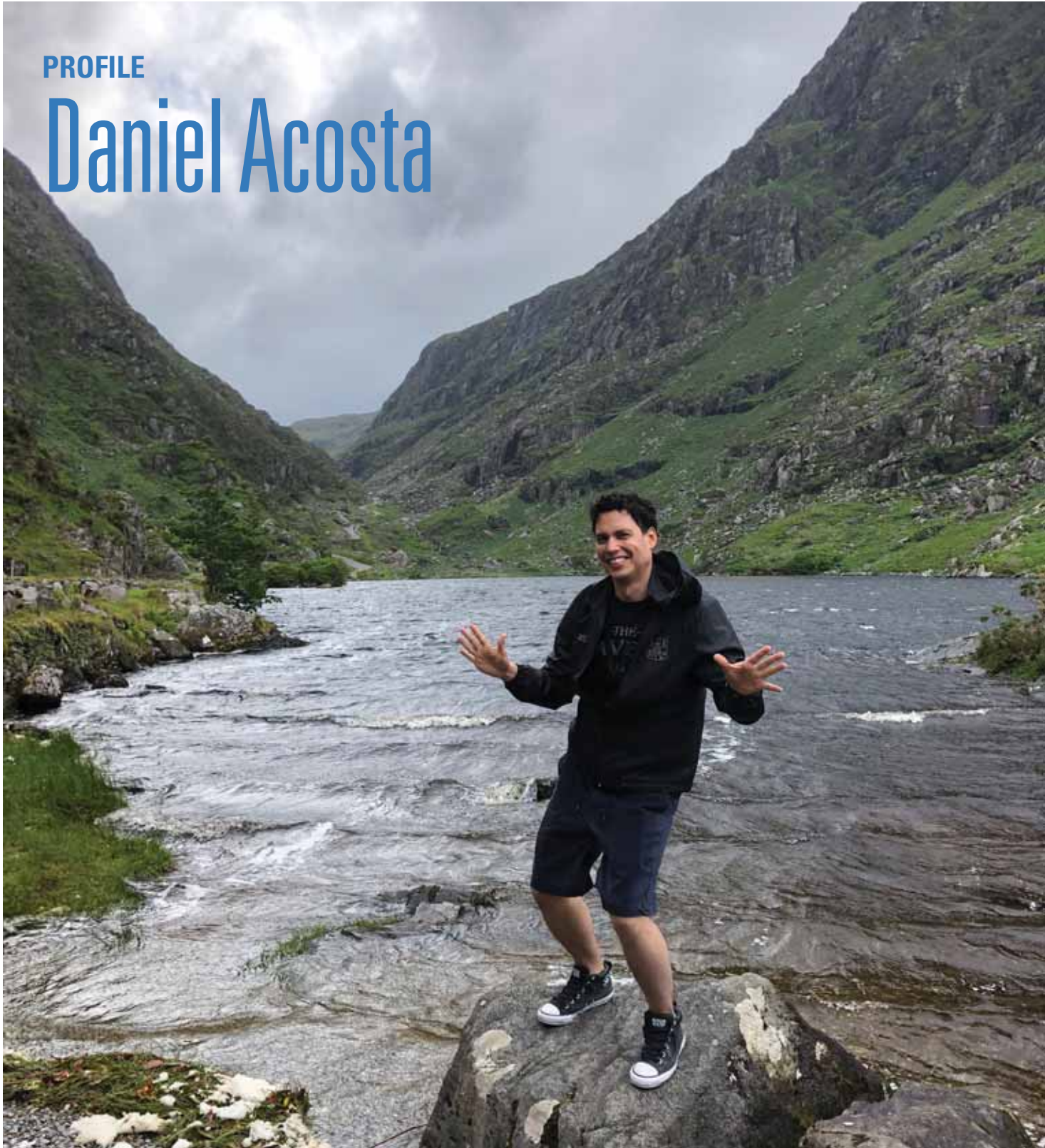
Counters will be installed in pilot locations in New Orleans, Baton Rouge and smaller communities, Tolford says. Data will be collected for a full year and then analyzed.

“That will give us a good solid start,” Tolford says. “Those are still just sample locations, but once you have that data you can sort of use it to model demand on other facilities that are similar.”

*UNO researcher Tara Tolford is tracking joggers, walkers and bicyclists statewide as part of a \$240,000 data collection grant. This summer she, Marin Tockman and Antonia White-Barstow placed counters along strategic routes in Algiers.*

PROFILE

# Daniel Acosta



**Age:** 33

**Hometown:** Palm Harbor, Fla.

**Major/degree program:**  
Philosophy

**Career goal – what do you want to do after graduation?**

Philosophy grad school in epistemology, ethics, and mind.

**Languages you speak:**

English, Spanish and some Mandarin.

**Where did you go and when?**

Ireland, summer of 2019.

**Why did you go?** Because Ireland! They happened to offer a couple classes that fulfilled some of my degree requirements. I enjoy exploring new places, cultures, and meeting new people, so I couldn't pass up the opportunity.

**What did you study while you were there?** Philosophy of film and a course on the existentialist writers.

**Most memorable experience?** Many I could list. Exploring the grounds of Blarney Castle was amazing. The Long Room at Trinity College Dublin was a bit overwhelming in the best way. Hanging out late at night watching live Irish bands with friends was invaluable.

**Where do you want to go next?** Alaska, Scotland and London.

**Advice to others considering study abroad?** First, I'd say do it! If taking classes that require a lot of reading, I'd recommend reading as much as possible before the trip. That gives you more time to go exploring. Try and take advantage of the time abroad as much as possible. It goes by quickly. Forego some sleep if needed!



*FACING PAGE: Daniel Acosta at the Gap of Dunloe in Killarney, Ireland. The Gap of Dunloe dates back two million years, when slow-moving ice carved a narrow mountain pass between the highest mountains in Ireland, McGillicuddy Reeks to the west and Killarney's Purple Mountain to the east. TOP: Blarney Castle grounds in Blarney, Ireland. The medieval stronghold was built some*

*600 years ago in Blarney, near Cork. Legend has it that if one kisses the Blarney Stone that's located at the top of the tower, the kisser will be bestowed with the gift of eloquent speech. Daniel gave it a try! (inset) ABOVE: Coumeenoole Beach in the Dingle Peninsula. University of New Orleans student Daniel Acosta, fourth from left in back row wearing black jacket.*

ATHLETICS



# *Big Man on Campus*

*New athletic director Tim Duncan brings experience, dynamism and an unmistakable presence to his new role*





IN JUNE, TIM DUNCAN BEGAN his new role as director of athletics for the New Orleans Privateers. The Memphis, Tenn. native spent the previous year as deputy athletic director for external affairs at Northeastern University in Boston, overseeing the Huskies' 18-sport NCAA Division I program's external affairs unit, including communications, corporate sponsorships, fundraising, marketing and game day experience, ticket sales and operations, and video production.

Prior to that, Duncan was director of athletics at two different Division II schools in Georgia—Clayton State University and Paine College. He also held leadership posts within the athletic departments at the University of North Carolina Wilmington and the University of Memphis.

Duncan earned his bachelor's degree from Memphis and his master's from Grambling State. He played four years of basketball at Memphis. He and his wife, Lisa, have three children: Tyson, Turner and Tatum.

**What drew you to the University of New Orleans?** There were three main reasons for my interest. First, New Orleans reminded me of Memphis, my hometown, because the name of the city and the name of the University are synonymous. Having grown up as a fan of the University of Memphis and being fortunate to play there in college, I know first-hand how powerful it is when the city fully supports the signature university. Secondly, in 1989 I played in Lakefront Arena against the Privateers when Tim Floyd was the coach. There was a good crowd on hand that night (3,702) and I am confident that the interest and attendance numbers from that era will return. And finally, when I researched the University and Dr. Nicklow, specifically, I was extremely impressed. Not only was he a former student-athlete, but he was appointed President

after being the University's provost for only nine months. After completing my research on him, I knew I wanted to be here.

**When you were hired, President Nicklow said that you both "share the same vision." How do you interpret that statement?** I am a firm believer that it is incumbent upon the athletic director to understand and embrace the vision of the President. Sometimes that is not as easy, depending on the leader and his or her vision. But in this instance, we both fundamentally agree that athletics is the front porch of the University and it serves as one of its most visible outreach components. Success in our department will create a gateway to the University for prospective students, donors, corporate partners and will serve as a badge of pride for alumni and the New Orleans community. Finally, Dr. Nicklow's vision for my position is that it should be externally focused and actively engaged in the community. My entire career has been on the external side of intercollegiate athletics so I am quite comfortable with that role.

**What were your first priorities when you arrived on campus?**

My first priorities were to assess the current staff and develop relationships with the campus community and the New Orleans community.

**During your first several months at UNO, you did something called "#100 Meetings100Days."**

**What was it and what did it accomplish?** Actually, I developed the #100Meetings100Days plan prior to my initial interview with Dr. Nicklow and the search committee. I knew that New Orleans Athletics was not as relevant as we would like it to be and in order to overcome that challenge I would need to meet people who may not be within reach to a newcomer compared to someone with stronger ties to the area. After accepting the job, I asked Dr. Nicklow, (chief

communications officer) Adam Norris and my staff to put together a list of people I should meet within my first 100 days. Kelvin Queliz, assistant athletic director for communications and new media, and I developed the social media and web campaign to provide maximum exposure. We took pictures with the people who I met with and uploaded them to our UNO Privateer social media outlets every night at 7 p.m. We also updated our webpage to recap each meeting that week every Friday morning at 10 a.m. The peak times for social media interaction are 10 a.m., 3 p.m. and 7 p.m.

Our hope was that people would see the pictures and people would want to take part in the campaign. We thought it would take more than 60 meetings before people would truly notice and start to reach out to us. But we were fortunate. People who were not even on our initial list started contacting us for meetings in the second week of the campaign. We were shocked but pleased that our plan had started to show favorable results early in my tenure.

**Can you share with us some of the feedback that you received about the University and the athletic department during those meetings?** I have categorized the feedback into four main buckets. First of all, the University is highly regarded in the community for its academic programs including accounting, engineering and education, to name just a few. Second, there is a tremendous level of respect for Dr. Nicklow throughout various constituencies—business, nonprofits, academics, and with donors, season ticket holders and students—within the New Orleans community. Third, the relevance of New Orleans Athletics sits low in the hierarchy of sports and athletics in the city. It is far behind the Saints, LSU, Pelicans, Tulane and multiple ☒

Catholic, private and public high schools. In some communities, we are just above Xavier and Dillard. And in other communities, we are beneath those institutions as well. Fourth, in order to become more relevant, we need to develop stronger relationships with our alumni, season ticket holders, Privateer Club members, schools, nonprofits, youth organizations and the business community, particularly within Orleans and Jefferson parishes.

**What is your philosophy on scheduling non-conference games, particularly in basketball and baseball?** Privateer Athletics has a core group of die-hard fans and they support our programs no matter who we are playing. However, the reality is our crowds have dwindled to embarrassingly low levels so we need to augment our die-hard crowd with new and returning casual fans. For us to make that a reality, we need to schedule regional Division I opponents to create more excitement for the fans who do not regularly follow us.

Our coaches—Keeshawn Davenport, Mark Slessinger and Blake Dean, are well respected and have great relationships with their peers. Between their contacts and those of our athletic administrators within a 6-7 hour drive, I believe we will be able to schedule competitive Division I games at home.

**New Orleans is a city brimming with sports and entertainment options. Given that landscape, how do you get more fans to attend Privateer games?**

Creating compelling matchups is the first part of the assignment. The second, and equally critical, part is to provide an unparalleled game-day experience at each of our events. I have challenged our staff to create an experience that provides the very best cus-

tommer service and entertainment to fans during timeouts, halftime and/or between innings.

**What is the most fulfilling part of your job as athletic director?**

Interacting with student-athletes. I became an athletic director to help student-athletes have the best experience possible and to be a resource for them during and after they leave the University of New Orleans. I was a college student-athlete who knew my athletic director but did not have a relationship with him. When I started in athletics after a career in corporate America, I knew I wanted to form solid relationships with the group of students I served. My aim is to get to know each of them well enough that if anyone of them needs a recommendation letter for a job, graduate or professional school, they could ask me. I want our relationship to be solid enough to write a letter for her or him utilizing my personal knowledge of them and their journey to write compelling recommendations. That is my personal metric of a successful tenure—along with winning conference championships, winning the Commissioner's Cup, playing in and advancing to the NCAA Championships in multiple sports, increasing our graduation rate, and ensuring our student-athletes gain personal and professional development during their time as Privateers. I also want to increase our fan base, build greater membership in the Privateer Club and improve relationships with the local community.

**How much does your own experience as a college student-athlete inform your current work as an administrator?** Although I was a student-athlete last century, I think it certainly gives me a perspective into their day-to-day lives. Most importantly, it gives



me credibility with the students for them to know I competed at the Division I level, attended study hall, lifted weights, practiced 20 hours per week, pledged a fraternity and graduated in four years.

**Where would you like to see the athletic department in three years?** In three years, my expectations are:

That we are continuing to thrive academically; our student-athletes averaged over a 3.0 grade point average for the 2018-19 academic year. We do not want to lose that level of achievement.

We have a robust leadership development program, which will provide specific programming around personal and professional development for our student-athletes.

We dramatically increase the number of donors to the Privateer Club. Currently, we have fewer than 200 people who have made financial contributions to Athletics. Our goal is to increase the total number of Athletic donors, including the Privateer Club, to over 1,000.

We will have made major facility improvements in the areas that student-athletes most frequently utilize—locker rooms, weight rooms, athletic training centers and the academic center.

Our game-day experience is among the best in the country

and it allows us to attract larger crowds, particularly for our revenue sports of basketball and baseball.

We are competing for Southland Conference championships in all of our sports and have seen multiple sports, highlighted by men's basketball and baseball, qualify for the NCAA Tournament.

**You're 6-foot-8. What's the biggest advantage and the biggest drawback of your height?** The biggest advantage and drawback are one in the same—I am very easily recognized when I go anywhere. Having said that, I love being tall and would not trade it for anything!

**Cooliest New Orleans moment so far?** Being invited to Mrs. Benson's suite for a Saints game with Turner, my 14-year-old son, who had never been to an NFL game before.

**Favorite restaurant?** Katie's Restaurant in Mid-City.

**Most interesting person you've met?** Mayor LaToya Cantrell and Mrs. Gayle Benson.

**Favorite movie or show filmed in New Orleans?** Two of my all-time favorites, James Bond's "Live and Let Die" and "X-Men Origins: Wolverine."

**Favorite New Orleans artist?** Lil Wayne.

**Po Boy, Jambalaya or Chargrilled Oysters?** Chargrilled oysters, hands down!

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## Muleshoe to Mid-City: The Easons' Legacy of Learning

BY MALLORY MOORE



INSIDE THEIR WELCOMING Mid-City home, Bobby and Sandra Eason reflect on their time at the University of New Orleans.

“UNO has been very good to us,” they say, almost in unison, before recounting how the University has directly affected their lives and the lives of their children.

Founding Chancellor Homer Hitt hired Bobby as a newly minted Ph.D. Sandra earned two advanced degrees there, and daughter Connie was a dean’s list graduate with a degree in geography. Son Benjamin met the woman he would marry, Helga Tong, while they were both UNO students, and the two would later take jobs at the University of New Orleans Research and Technology Park.

Bobby expresses gratitude for having been allowed to bring an entrepreneurial component into his roles as teacher, administrator, researcher and public servant. It allowed him to develop innovative educational programs to serve UNO, his students and the health and movement science professions, he says.

Sandra says of her UNO experience, “It was a special time. I just loved it.”

Bobby Eason and Sandra Harris met when they attended high school in Muleshoe, Texas, a panhandle town which, according to the U.S. Census, has an area of 3.4 square miles with a population near 5,000. Both enrolled in college at nearby Texas Tech, a public research university in Lubbock, where they became sweethearts and married as undergraduates.

She earned a degree in business, and he studied health and physical education. With his master’s degree completed by 1967, Bobby launched a career

in education and coaching. He took a job with the Brazosport Independent School District, 50 miles south of Houston, and she gave birth to the couple's first two children.

By 1972, Bobby had earned a doctorate in education from the University of Houston, and joined the faculty of what was then Louisiana State University at New Orleans (LSUNO). The health and physical education field was growing and evolving, and the leadership at LSUNO was ambitious in its efforts to continue expanding the academic offerings available in New Orleans.

Bobby helped nurture the growing Human Performance and Health Promotion undergraduate degree program and was promoted to associate professor within three years, an admirable pace for a young faculty member. He was a full professor by 1980 and served as department chair from 1990 to 1999. During these years, with a strong faculty, he was instrumental in developing new academic programs including a Master of Arts in Human Performance and Health Promotion, a graduate certificate program in gerontology and state-of-the-art research laboratories.

However, he didn't just establish another master's degree program in a burgeoning discipline. The master's degree program Bobby designed became the first "executive" master's degree program option offered by UNO, a model that would eventually be adopted by other graduate programs at the University.

As Bobby was ramping up academic offerings on campus and abroad, Sandra was also busy. She had been managing a small portfolio of properties the

Easons acquired almost by accident. They never set out to become anyone's landlord, but a purchase and a sale here led to a purchase and a sale there before anyone referred to it as "flipping houses."

While getting into the real estate business seemed to happen easily during good economic times in Louisiana, Sandra said the work was very demanding. After a while, she was ready to try something new. Sandra applied and was accepted by the Department of Curriculum and Instruction into the master's degree program for program evaluation. As a graduate student, she directed a program aimed at developing teacher preparation models. By 1992, she had earned a Ph.D. in education.

She retired from UNO in 2008 as associate dean of the Graduate School. Also that year, she was awarded the Cooper R. Mackin Medallion. Established to honor the third chancellor of the University of New Orleans, it is awarded to a faculty or staff member who has made outstanding contributions in support of the University's mission and demonstrated excellent, sustained and selfless service to the University.

The Easons continue to engage with and support UNO long after officially retiring. Bobby is an active member of the UNO Founders Club, an association of current and former employees established to honor those who were involved in the earliest days of LSUNO. The UNO Founders Club is a key supporter of the Homer L.

**Even after 80 years of service to UNO between them, the Easons are still finding ways to support the University of New Orleans and the students it serves. They recently made arrangements through the Office of University Advancement to establish an endowed fund, the interest from which will provide a scholarship each academic year for a UNO student pursuing a degree in the education field.**

Hitt Presidential Distinguished Lecture Series, a tradition established by the University's founding chief executive to bring to the young campus distinguished scholars, noteworthy artists, and accomplished national leaders.

A public event, Hitt's goal for the lecture series was to enrich student learning on campus while strengthening the University's position in the greater New Orleans community. A few years ago, Bobby set a particular goal to generate a healthy endowment for the Homer L. Hitt Presidential Distinguished Lec-

ture Series. Starting with only the initial \$5,000 gift from founding Chancellor Hitt, Bobby conducted a five-year fundraising campaign which brought the endowment fund up to almost \$150,000. The interest on the endowment provides for the Homer L. Hitt Presidential Distinguished Lecture Series to continue in perpetuity.

Even after 80 years of service to UNO between them, the Easons are still finding ways to support the University of New Orleans and the students it serves. They recently made arrangements through the Office of University Advancement to establish an endowed fund, the interest from which will provide a scholarship each academic year for a UNO student pursuing a degree in the education field.

Donors like the Easons who include UNO in their estate planning become members of the Legacy Society, named as such because its members create a lasting legacy that ensures educational opportunity

for future generations.

Asked what UNO has meant to them, Bobby responds.

"It has meant a level of prosperity, a career of tremendous meaning and the satisfaction of having lived a good life."

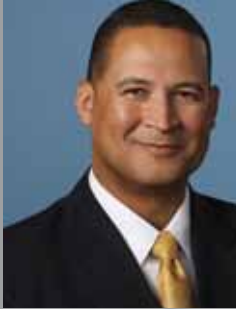
Now, thanks to the Easons' gift, there is a scholarship waiting to ensure prosperity, meaning and a good life for a future Privateer, and the Easons can enjoy the additional satisfaction of having continued a strong tradition among University of New Orleans alumni of finding success and paying it forward. 🍷

# ALUM NOTES

**Austin Badon (B.A., '88)** was elected as the Clerk of First City Court in New Orleans during a special election on Nov. 6, 2018. It marked a return to public office for the longtime lawmaker who served as a member of the Louisiana House of Representatives from 2004-2016.

The Clerk's Office is the initial step when filing lawsuits within the jurisdiction of First City Court. The office is charged with the responsibility of recording all transactions pertaining to these matters. The clerk's office is also responsible for processing and storing records for evictions and appeals for traffic camera tickets.

Badon holds a bachelor's degree in political science from the University of New Orleans.



**Mohamad A. Qayoom (B.S., '06, B.S., '07, GCSI, '08, GENMG, '12)**

Mohamad A. Qayoom of Kenner, La., has been elected to the Board of Directors of Toastmasters International, a global organization devoted to communication and leadership skills development.

Qayoom was elected to a two-year term at the organization's International Convention, held Aug. 21–24 in Denver, Colo.

As a board member, Qayoom is an ambassador and works to develop and support policies and procedures.

Qayoom is an information technology network security consultant for Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center – New Orleans.

He holds master's degrees in computer science and engineering management from the University of New Orleans. He also earned bachelor's degrees in math, computer science and biological sciences from the University.



## 1960s

**Brenda (Scott) Crotts (B.S., '69)**

Brenda (Scott) Crotts served 44 years in academic and public libraries. She retired Jan. 31, 2018 from the Chico Branch Library in Chico, Calif.

**Daniel D. Moriarty Jr. (B.A., '67)**

Daniel D. Moriarty Jr. has retired after a 44-year career at the University of San Diego as professor of psychological sciences. He recently was named professor emeritus. At LSUNO, he was a member of Tau Kappa Epsilon Fraternity and Psi Chi National Honor Society in psychology. He completed his graduate studies at Tulane University. He and his wife, Antoinette, have moved back to New Orleans.

**Miki Pfeffer (B.A., '69, M.A., '06, B.S., '11)**

Miki Pfeffer won the 2015 Eudora Welty Award for Women's Studies and Women's History from the Mississippi University for Women for her book "Southern Ladies and Suffragists: Julia Ward Howe and Women's Rights at the 1884 New Orleans World's Fair." Her second book is due in November 2019: "A New Orleans Author in Mark Twain's Court: Letters from Grace King's New England Sojourns" from LSU Press. The 1969 graduate, who lives in Thibodaux, returned to campus in May 2019 and was honored as part of the 50th anniversary class during spring commencement.

## 1970s

**Don Landry (B.S., '71)**

Don Landry was selected as Lead Independent Director of the Year by the New York Stock Exchange in 2015. Don was the recipient of the Homer L. Hitt Distinguished Alumni Award in 1999 and currently serves on the UNO/HRT advisory board as fundraising chair. Don and his wife, Mary Pat, host "Cousin Camp" every July for their four children and nine grandchildren.

**Mary Moises (B.A., '73)**

Mary Moises retired and started her business, The Little Flour Bakery, selling Lebanese butter cookies and specialty breads at metro New Orleans farmers markets.

**M. Isabel Medina (M.F.A., '79)**

M. Isabel Medina, who teaches constitutional law, was awarded the Dux Academicus Award by Loyola University New Orleans in January 2019. The Dux Academicus Award is the highest honor a professor can receive at Loyola for excellence in teaching and scholarship.

### Lauren Gibbs (M.B.A., '14)

Lauren Gibbs, formerly vice president of Gibbs Construction, is now CEO and owner of the company. She assumed the reins in July to succeed her father, founder Larry Gibbs, and continue the legacy of the 43-year-old family business.

Lauren Gibbs came to Gibbs Construction in 2011 after starting her career in Nashville, where she earned both a bachelor's in civil engineering and a master's of engineering/construction management from Vanderbilt University. She worked in project management for American Constructors.

She earned an MBA from the University of New Orleans in 2014.

At Gibbs, Lauren Gibbs has served as an estimator, project coordinator, project engineer, project manager, and executive in charge, and was named a vice president in October 2017.



### David A. Burnham

(B.S., '87, M.S., '91)

David A. Burnham, a paleontologist with the Biodiversity Institute and Natural History Museum at the University of Kansas, led an excavation team in March 2018 that uncovered the fossils of a juvenile *Tyrannosaurus rex* estimated to have lived some 66 million years ago.

The discovery, made near Montana's Hell Creek Formation, yielded an upper jaw section, with all of the teeth intact, along with parts of the skull, foot, hip and backbone of a young *T. rex*.

The discovery of the juvenile *T. rex* is rare because only a few have been found, Burnham has said.

Scientists estimate that the *T. rex* lived during the last two million years of the Cretaceous period, from about 67 million to 65 million years ago.

Researchers say the rock formations at Hell Creek dates back to the Cretaceous Period, and are a hot bed for dinosaur fossils.

Burnham, preparator of vertebrate paleontology at the Biodiversity Institute, holds a bachelor's and master's degree in geology from the University of New Orleans, and a doctorate in geology from the University of Kansas.



## 1980s

### Louis DiRosa Jr. (B.A., '80)

Louis DiRosa Jr., was named to *New Orleans Magazine's* 2018 Top Lawyer list. He has served as a board member for SAG-AFTRA in Louisiana and as an assistant city attorney in municipal and traffic court and in the litigation departments of the City of New Orleans.

Additionally, DiRosa has served as an attorney for the Louisiana State Senate and was elected for two terms to his party's state central committee in Louisiana House District 98. He is a professor at Delgado Community College and is a former teacher and coach at Redeemer High School in New Orleans.

DiRosa holds bachelor's degree in political science from the University of New Orleans.

### Alexi Hakim (B.S., '82, M.B.A., '83)

Alexi Hakim is general manager of the InterContinental Toronto Center in Toronto, Canada. The hotel is part of the International Hotels Group. Hakim has oversight of 375 associates, 530 rooms and 54 suites.

Hakim holds a bachelor's and master's degrees in business administration from the University of New Orleans.

### Darren Bayhi (B.S., '86)

Darren Bayhi retired from the State of Texas after 29 years of service on May 31, 2018. Bayhi, who holds a bachelor's degree in computer science from the University of New Orleans, worked in information technology for several state agencies.

### Jeannine Dwyer (B.S., '88)

Jeannine Dwyer has been appointed the new principal of Our Lady of Perpetual Help School in Kenner. She spent seven years as assistant principal of St. Cletus School in Gretna, and was the assistant principal of West Jefferson High School for two years, prior to serving for one year as dean of students.

Dwyer holds a Bachelor of Science in management from the University of New Orleans and a master's degree in educational leadership from the University of Phoenix.

Dwyer and her husband, Tim, have been married for 34 years and have two children, both of whom are engineers.

### Patti Waddell (B.A., '88)

Patti Waddell is the new principal of St. Anthony School in Gretna, La. She has more than 30 years in public and parochial education, with expertise in early childhood education and school improvement. She served as principal at Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Kenner from 2016-18, and last year was assistant principal of St. Anthony School.

Waddell earned a bachelor's degree in elementary education from UNO, a master's degree in counseling from Loyola University and a master's +30 teaching certificate from Southeastern Louisiana University, gaining certification in educational leadership.

### Jack Harris (M.A., '89)

Jack Harris was featured in the movie "Happy Death Day 2," released in theatres nationwide last Halloween.

### Yvonne Traynham (M.S., '89, Ph.D., '00)

Yvonne Traynham started a new job as teaching faculty at Florida State University Panama City in its new mechanical engineering program.



### Melissa A. Weber (B.A., '00)

Melissa A. Weber, also known as DJ Soul Sister, is the new curator of the Hogan Jazz Archive, a division of Special Collections of the Howard-Tilton Memorial Library at Tulane University related to the emergence of jazz in New Orleans in the early 20th century.

As curator, Weber is responsible for building and maintaining the collection, developing policies, making material accessible for researchers, soliciting donations and acquisitions, and improving outreach efforts.

Weber has been program manager of the Office of Academic Programs for Tulane-Newcomb College for 10 years.

She holds a degree in drama and communications (and a minor in

English), from the University of New Orleans. Well before graduating, Weber was on her way to establishing herself as both a communications professional and a renowned DJ.

For more than 20 years Weber has delighted music lovers and fans as the "Queen of Rare Grove" on her Saturday night "Soul Power" show on WWOZ 90.7 FM, where she spins vinyl treats from the 60s, 70s and 80s.

The musical archivist in her pushes her to constantly seek and share undiscovered artists and tracks in genres that includes funk, soul, disco, rock, Brazilian, Latin and reggae. Her mantra, Weber has said, is "new to me and you."

## 1990s

### Bo Guidry (M.B.A., '90)

Bo Guidry has been appointed president of Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Hollywood in Fort Lauderdale, Fla. In his new role, Guidry will assume responsibility for all operations and management of the integrated resort. Guidry was most recently senior vice president and general manager of Horseshoe Casino - Council Bluffs and Harrah's Council Bluffs, both located in Council Bluffs, Iowa.

### Irby Morvant Jr. (B.A. '92)

Irby Morvant Jr. has been appointed general manager of The Hyatt Regency Waikiki Beach Resort and Spa in Hawaii. Morvant has more than 30 years of service at various Hyatt properties and brings leadership skills, sales and operational expertise to his new role.

He holds a bachelor's degree in drama and communications from the University of New Orleans.

### Kimberly Downes (B.A., '93, M.A., '99)

Kimberly Downes has been named principal of St. Clement of Rome School in Metairie, the school from which she graduated in 1985. Downes has served for 24 years in Catholic

education within the Archdiocese of New Orleans, including as a middle school teacher and coordinator, and assistant principal.

Downes earned a bachelor's degree in elementary education and a master's in curriculum and instruction from the University of New Orleans.

### Renaldo Williams (B.A., '93)

Renaldo Williams has been promoted to director of employment and virtual training programs at Goodwill Industries of Fort Worth Inc. Williams will direct staff and monitor the day-to-day operation and activities for Goodwill's six area Job Resource Centers and for the North Texas Institute for Career Development's virtual training programs.

A native of New Orleans, Williams earned a bachelor's degree in sociology from the University of New Orleans. In 2015, he earned an MBA from Ashford University. He is a board member for Winfree Academy Charter Schools and is a mentor with Big Brothers Big Sisters.

### Melanie Housey Hart (B.S., '94)

Melanie Housey Hart, CPA, has been named vice president of Pool Corp. of Covington, La., where she oversees the accounting consolidation process, budgeting, financial planning and analysis, operational and international accounting teams, income taxes and Securities Exchange Commission reporting. Hart holds a bachelor's degree in accounting from the University of New Orleans.

### Christian Pierce (B.S., '96)

Christian Pierce has been promoted to director of engineering at Bollinger Shipyards in Lockport, La. He will lead all facets of engineering on both government and commercial programs and is responsible for the execution of functional and design engineering compliant with customer requirements.

Pierce holds a bachelor's degree in naval architecture and marine engineering from the University of New Orleans.

### Matthew Garner (B.S., '97, M.S., '00)

Matthew Garner has been appointed assistant vice president, ship design, at Gibbs & Cox, Inc., a naval architecture and marine engineering company in Columbia, Md. Garner joins

the company following a civil service career with the U.S. Navy's Naval Sea Systems (NAVSEA) Command's Engineering Directorate.

Garner earned a bachelor's and master's degrees in naval architecture and marine engineering from the University of New Orleans. He also holds a master's in systems engineering management from the Naval Postgraduate School.

### Janelle Perez (Ph.D., '98)

Janelle Perez received the Albert Nelson Marquis Lifetime Achievement Award, recognized by the Marquis Who's Who Publications Board for achieving career longevity and demonstrating unwavering excellence in her chosen fields. She volunteers as the onsite executive director of the Feliciana Retreat and Conference Center and teaches swim lessons and aquatic personal training at West Jefferson Fitness Center.

### Michael Perronne (M.F.A., '98)

Michael Perronne wrote a TV movie, "Deadly Vengeance," that will air on Lifetime later this year.

### Shane Stroud (B.A., '98)

Shane Stroud has joined Pryor Cashman law firm as a partner and co-leader of the firm's Executive Compensation, ERISA + Employee Benefits Group in New York. Stroud received his J.D., magna cum laude, from Tulane Law School, where he was a member of the Order of the Coif, and his B.A. from the University of New Orleans.

### John D. Etchemendy (B.S., '99)

John D. Etchemendy is the new director of the family violence and domestic relations program at the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges in Reno, Nev. The program's goal is to enhance victim safety and offender accountability through training, technical assistance and policy development.

Etchemendy holds a bachelor's degree in management from the University of New Orleans.

### Jennie Robbins (B.G.S., '99)

Jennie Robbins has been named chief financial officer for Church Health in Memphis, Tenn. Robbins most recently served as senior director of finance and performance. Robbins holds a bachelor's degree in general studies from the University of New Orleans.



### **Chris Dier (M.A.T., '13, M.Ed., '18)**

Christopher Mark Dier, a world history and Advanced Placement human geography teacher at Chalmette High School in St. Bernard Parish, was named the 2020 Louisiana Teacher of the Year by the Louisiana Department of Education.

Dier, who holds dual master's degrees in teaching and educational leadership from the University of New Orleans, was honored at the state's 13th annual Cecil J. Picard Educator Awards Gala held July 19 in Baton Rouge, La.

Dier taught for five years at the middle school level before moving to Chalmette High School. At St. Bernard Middle, he was voted Teacher of the Year by colleagues and awarded parish-wide Teacher



of the Year. At Chalmette High, he was also voted Teacher of the Year and awarded parish-wide Teacher of the Year.

In 2016, Dier was selected as a Hollyhock Fellow at Stanford University, a program that brings educators together to work collectively toward creating classrooms that are more inclusive. In 2018, he completed an AP Summer Institute course at Fordham University, and he currently participates in a professional development program at Harvard Business School that focuses on case method teaching, in which he works to find solutions to real-world problems and challenges in the classroom.

Dier has also been recognized as a "Distinguished Teacher" by the Delta Chapter of the American Petroleum Institute, and he has written a book on St. Bernard Parish that was published by the History Press.

## 2000s

### **Matthew P. Manning (B.S., '00)**

Matthew Manning, a certified public accountant, has been named chief financial officer of C. H. Fenstermaker & Associates in Lafayette and will oversee all financial aspects of the organization and work to promote the firm's long-range strategic plan. Manning earned a bachelor's degree in accounting from the University of New Orleans.

### **Gerald DeBose (M.Ed., '00)**

Gerald DeBose has been named interim principal of St. Augustine High School in New Orleans. DeBose has served as assistant principal at St. Augustine since 2018 and officially began his new role on May 25. Prior to St. Augustine, DeBose served as principal of McDonogh 35 College Preparatory High School.

A native of New Orleans, DeBose is an alumnus of St. Augustine, class of 1976. He earned a bachelor's degree in mathematics from Xavier University of Louisiana. He received his master's degree in mathematics teaching from Loyola University New Orleans and a master's degree in educational administration from the University of New Orleans.

### **Blake Fernandez (M.B.A., '01)**

Blake Fernandez has joined Delek US Holdings, Inc. as senior vice president of investor relations and market intelligence in Brentwood, Tenn. Fernandez will focus on articulating Delek's investment story and managing its strategic relationships with key stakeholders, among institutional investors, and research analysts. Fernandez joins Delek with over 20 years of experience in the financial arena. He holds an MBA with a focus on finance from the University of New Orleans.

### **Robert B. Caldwell Jr. (B.A., '01)**

Robert B. Caldwell Jr. completed his Ph.D. in transatlantic history with a 4.0 grade point average from the University of Texas in Arlington. He walked in the UTA fall commencement on December 14, 2018. Prior to that, he worked as a postgraduate research fellow for UTA, and in September was awarded the prestigious fellowship in the Royal Geographic Society.

Caldwell, who holds a bachelor's degree in history and anthropology, cites the mentorship he received at UNO as the foundation necessary to achieve this milestone.

### **Richard Hill (B.A., '01)**

Richard Hill has been named principal of St. Philip Neri School in Metairie, La. Hill holds a bachelor's degree in history from the University of New Orleans and a master's degree in educational leadership from LSU-Shreveport.

### **Kossen Scott (B.A., '01)**

Kossen Scott, president of Kossen Communications LLC just published his first book called, "The Office Game." It's available in paperback and eBook on Amazon.com. Scott holds a bachelor's in English from the University of New Orleans.

### **Toya Barnes-Teamer (Ph.D., '03)**

Toya Barnes-Teamer was named vice president for student success at Dillard University where she coordinates the planning, development, organization and administration of the university's governing policies with the executive cabinet.

### **Todd Bouillion (M.B.A., '03)**

Todd Bouillion has been named CEO of CloudGavel, a Baton Rouge-based technology company that sells software to law enforcement. Bouillion, who is also an equity partner in the business, will lead a national expansion of the company's electronic warrant business. Bouillion holds a master's in business administration from the University of New Orleans.

### **Cory Haik (M.A., '03)**

Cory Haik, former publisher of the digital start-up Mic, is the chief digital officer of Vice Media in Brooklyn, NY. She will focus on global audience growth and development, platform partnerships and digital product innovation.

Haik holds a master's degree in communication theory from the University of New Orleans and a bachelor's degree in journalism from Nicholls State University.

### **Tom Waguespack (M.Ed., '03)**

Tom Waguespack of Metairie, La. recently had his debut novel published by Alban Lake Publishing. "Sigimmortal" combines elements of steampunk, science fiction and historical fiction. The novel can be purchased through Alban Lake's website. Waguespack holds a bachelor's degree in mathematics from Tulane University and a master's degree in curriculum and instruction from the University of New Orleans.

### **James Winter (M.F.A., '03)**

James Winter, has been named artistic director of the Columbia Theatre for the Performing Arts at Southeastern Louisiana University in Hammond, La. An associate professor of theatre, Winter holds a Master of Fine Arts in acting from the University of New Orleans and a Bachelor of Arts in theatre from Baldwin-Wallace University. He is co-founder of two New Orleans theater companies – IMAGE and the Big Easy Award-winning InSideOut.

**Ray Wimley (B.S., '14)**

University of New Orleans alumnus Ray Wimley's gift for freestyle rapping has taken him from New Orleans street performer to entertaining a national audience of millions on The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon.

Wimley's meteoric flight to fame began in July after a video of him performing with renowned rapper and actor Common in front of The Ritz-Carlton in downtown New Orleans went viral on social media.

Common, who was in town for Essence Fest, had

seen a video of Wimley's freestyle wordplay on social media and sought him out.

On Aug. 12, Wimley again teamed up with Common for a guest spot on The Tonight Show, which is filmed at 30 Rockefeller Plaza in New York City. They performed during a segment of the show called "Wheel of Freestyle."

For the segment, random words are drawn and The Tonight Show's house band, The Roots, provides a beat. The guests have to come up with improvised rhymes that include those random words.

Wimley, who holds a psychology degree from the University of New Orleans, plans to parlay his newfound notoriety into a recording contract and says Common has offered his guidance and support.



ANDREW LIPOVSKY/NBC PHOTOGRAPH

## 2010s

**Christopher E. Collins (B.G.S., '04, M.A., '12)**

Christopher E. Collins has been named interim principal of St. Margaret Mary School in Slidell, La. Collins has more than 15 years of experience as a professional educator in the Archdiocese of New Orleans, having served as a teacher for Immaculata High School (2005-07) and the Academy of Our Lady (2007-09). He holds a bachelor's degree in general studies and master's degree in education.

**Sonja Livingston (M.F.A., '04)**

Sonja Livingston published a book, "The Virgin of Prince Street: Expeditions into Devotion," released September 1, 2019 as part of the American Lives Series at the University of Nebraska Press.

**Troy Peloquin (B.A., '04)**

Troy Peloquin has found his calling as local volunteer and donations coordinator for the Recovery School District of Louisiana. He rallies volunteers across the country to help remodel classrooms, paint gymnasiums and build playgrounds.

**Thomas S. Smith Sr. (Ph.D., '05)**

Thomas S. Smith Sr., a retired educator, has self-published three novels in a series called "Just A Piece of Red String," available on Amazon.com. Book four will be published in November. Smith holds a doctorate in education from the University of New Orleans.

**Paul Wolf (B.A., '05)**

Paul Wolf ('05) was named Belle Chasse High School and Plaquemines Parish Educator of the Year and American Legion Region 2 Teacher of the Year for 2019.

**Rachel G. Brown (M.Ed., '06)**

Rachel G. Brown has been named the new principal at Lafayette High School, Lafayette Parish School System's oldest high school. Brown was recently the assistant principal at the school. She holds a master's degree in special education.

**Santhosh Komaraju (M.S., '06)**

Santhosh Komaraju self-published his debut book "Walks Through Life: Stories this Year," available on Amazon.com.

**Thairah "Cindy" Mousa (B.S., '06, M.S., '10)**

Thairah "Cindy" Mousa created a Center of Excellence Team for employee relations at Ochsner Health System. Her team manages employee relations issues for the roughly 24,000 employees of OHS. Mousa holds a bachelor's degree in management and a master's degree in business administration from the University of New Orleans.

**Ernest Turner (M.A., '06)**

Ernest Turner, a veteran pianist, released his debut album called "My Americana." The album includes songs by Stevie Wonder and gospel music legend Thomas Dorsey. Turner earned a bachelor's degree in jazz studies from Loyola University and a master's from the University of New Orleans.

**John T. Fields (M.F.A., '07)**

John Fields is the new senior director of the Abrams-Engel Institute for the Visual Arts at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. Fields will oversee all daily operations and programming for AEIVA, as well as serve as a liaison for a variety of stakeholders on campus and in the community. He holds a master's degree in fine arts from the University of New Orleans.

**Lindsay Sweeney Guidry (M.Ed., '07)**

Lindsay Sweeney Guidry has been named principal of St. Ann School in Metairie. Guidry joined the St. Ann School faculty in 2005 and served as a teacher, coordinator of student affairs and curriculum coordinator. Guidry earned a bachelor's of science degree from Spring Hill College in Mobile, Ala., and a master's degree in education from the University of New Orleans.

**Melissa McClendon (B.G.S., '08)**

Melissa McClendon was featured in *New Orleans City-Business* for Excellence in Real Estate. She has been featured in *Real Producer* magazine as a Rising Star. She is the 2019 local president of Women's Council of Realtors. Melissa was also awarded NOMAR's "Rising Star" and Outstanding Millennial Award in Real Estate. She was recognized as One of 20 Top Agents on Social Media in 2018 and named Architect of Real Estate by Next Up NOLA.

**Ashley Volion (B.A., '07, M.A., '10)**

Ashley Volion, was crowned Ms. Wheelchair Louisiana 2019 and represented Louisiana in the Ms. Wheelchair America pageant in Little Rock, Ark., in July. Volion is a policy assistant for The Advocacy Center of Louisiana, and helps protect the rights of people with disabilities by addressing voting and legal issues. As Ms. Wheelchair Louisiana 2019, Volion makes appearances throughout the state in support of people with disabilities.

Volion earned a bachelor's and master's degree in sociology from the University of New Orleans.

**Shandelynn Hillard (B.S., '10)**

Shandelynn Hillard celebrated her 1-year anniversary in private practice. She is a licensed Marriage and Family Therapist Associate with Tea Time Therapy, PLLC in Houston, Texas.

**Kelcy Mae Wilburn (M.F.A., '10)**

Kelcy Mae Wilburn was nominated for an Independent Music Award this year. Her band, Ever More Nest, was up for Best Alt. Country Album for its debut album, "The Place That You Call Home."

**Amber O'Leary (B.G.S., '11)**

Amber O'Leary, a longtime staffer and administrator for the nonprofit Ukulele Kids Club in Lakeland, Fla., has been named vice president of operations. O'Leary holds a bachelor's degree from the University of New Orleans.

**Jamie Staes (B.A., '11)**

Jamie Staes was named C.T. Janet Elementary Teacher of the Year and Jefferson Parish Elementary Teacher of the Year in 2019. She was selected by the Louisiana Department of Education as one of the top 24 teachers in the state.

### **Tamika Green (M.Ed., '01)**

Tamika Green, who was appointed executive director of equity and student support for the St. Charles Parish Public School System, was selected as the 2020 divisional middle school principal of the year by the Louisiana Department of Education.

Green had been the principal at Albert Cammon Middle School in St. Rose, La. for nine years. Previously, she was the principal at R. J. Vial Elementary.

She was honored at the state's 13th annual Cecil J. Picard Educator Awards Gala held July 19 in Baton Rouge, La. She was St. Charles Parish's Principal of the Year for 2018-19.

Green holds a bachelor's degree in elementary education from Xavier University and earned her master's degree in educational leadership from the University of New Orleans.



## Marriages/Births



**William Oakland (B.S., '13)** married fellow finance graduate **Davina Alpert Oakland (B.S., '13)** on June 15, 2019.

### **Jon Dodson (M.U.R.P., '12)**

Jon Dodson was recently hired as a Planner II for the Berkeley-Charleston-Dorchester Council of Governments in South Carolina, a regional planning and development organization. Dodson holds a master's degree in regional and urban planning degree from the University of New Orleans.

### **Kathleen Moore (B.A., '12)**

Kathleen Moore made her stage debut at the Stage Door Canteen at the National WWII Museum and has been cast in several independent films and on national television ("Queen Sugar" and "Underground").

### **Areej Othman (M.S.E.M., '13, M.B.A., '17)**

Areej Othman celebrated two years of employment as an operation engineer at the United States Postal Services/ New Orleans Processing and Distribution Center. She recently completed the two-year Onboarding Operations Industrial Engineer Program and is now a level EAS 21 field engineer.

### **Kelsey (Matthews) Pollock (B.A., '14)**

Kelsey (Matthews) Pollock of Destrehan, La., was named Rotary Club of St. Charles Parish's 2019 Rotarian of the Year. Pollock has served the club as the public relations chair for two years and was installed again for a third term. She holds a bachelor's degree in film, theater and communication arts from the University of New Orleans.

### **Arianna King (M.S., '15)**

Arianna King, who is currently a student in Tulane University's city, culture and community doctoral program, has received a Fulbright U.S. Student Program Award to Ghana in the field of urban planning/development.

### **Hannah Maharrey (M.P.A., '15)**

Hannah Maharrey has been named director of Mississippi Balance of State Continuum of Care, a statewide alliance that works on homeless outreach.

The organization plays a role in the distribution of federal Housing and Urban Development funds in the state, and also promotes local partnerships throughout its active regions.

Maharrey holds a master's degree in public administration from the University of New Orleans.

### **Denise Lewis Patrick (M.F.A., '15)**

Denise Lewis Patrick was honored as one of the 2019 Louisiana Public Broadcasting Louisiana Legends during a gala held in May. Patrick is a Natchitoches, La. native who earned a degree in journalism at Northwestern State University in 1977 and a master's in creative writing from the University of New Orleans.

A long-time resident of the New York City area, Patrick is a freelance writer, editor, instructor and literary consultant who has authored books of poetry, short stories, picture and board books for children, biographies, and young adult novels.

### **Gabriella Ramirez (B.I.S., '17)**

Gabriella Ramirez is transitioning from a US Pathways administrative intern to a full-time position in employee education at the Southeast Louisiana Veterans Health Care Systems in New Orleans. She holds a bachelor's degree in interdisciplinary studies from the University of New Orleans.



**Frederick Johnson IV (B.S., '13)** and wife, **Monecia Moody (B.I.S., '12)**, recently celebrated their one-year wedding anniversary.



**Lara Marrero Guidry (B.S., '08)** and her husband welcomed son **Mark Guidry** on June 25, 2019.



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## The Traveling UNO Alumni

Where in the world do our alumni go? All over the globe!



**Karen Spring Logan (M.B.A., '05)** visited the Roman Ruins at El Jem in Sousse, Tunisia in July 2019.

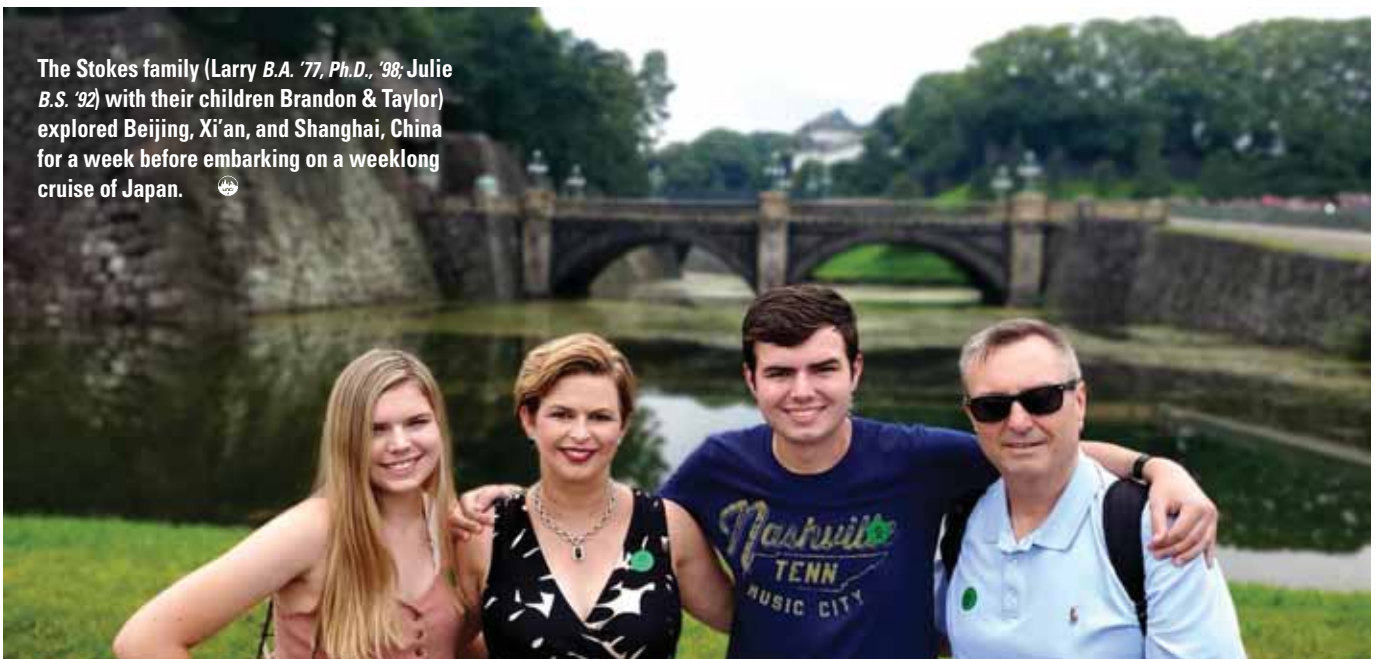


**Becky Mackie (B.S. '93)** and daughter **Sara Johnson (HRT, '09)** at Red Rocks Park in Colorado. Sara's children went along for the ride.



**Veronica Mueller (B.S. '66)** and husband, **Gerry**, celebrated their 49th anniversary in the 49th state on a cruise to Alaska. On the way, they spent two days in Mt. Rainier National Park at the Paradise Lodge on the mountain.

The **Stokes family (Larry B.A. '77, Ph.D., '98; Julie B.S. '92)** with their children **Brandon & Taylor** explored Beijing, Xi'an, and Shanghai, China for a week before embarking on a weeklong cruise of Japan. 🇯🇵



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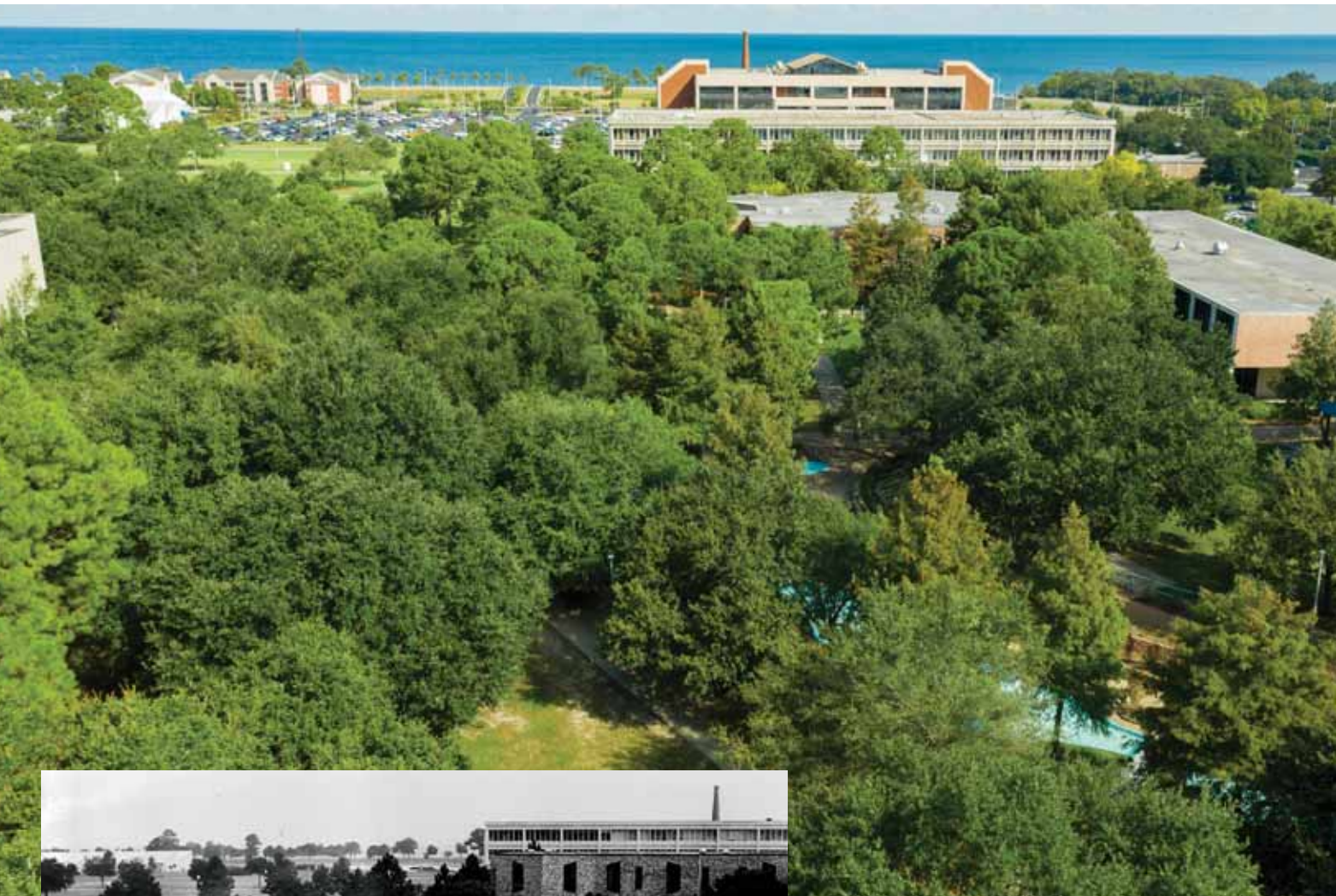
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# THEN AND NOW



## Water Mirage?

IN 1978, THE UNIVERSITY ADDED A water feature to the campus. As the early picture shows, only a smattering of trees stood near the new construction. The Administration Building is clearly visible—as is the signature smokestack of the Homer L. Hitt Alumni & Visitors Center in the distance.

The second photo is no mirage! Decades later, the landscape boasts lush green foliage, leafy mature shade trees and an amphitheater.

We had to take flight to get the current view of the water feature at the Merrick/Latter & Blum Patio.

The “now” picture was photographed via drone by the University’s video producer, Joshua Matthews. Much has changed but you can still spot the smokestack!



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