

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

SILVER & BLUE

SPRING 2020

Alumnus
Chris Dier
is Louisiana
Teacher
of the Year




FIRST LOOK

Sand under their feet and a blanket of blue sky overhead makes for perfect beach volleyball practice conditions for the Privateers.









UNO alumnus David Burnham,
paleontologist at the University of Kansas
Biodiversity Institute and Natural History
Museum in Lawrence, Kansas.

— T A B L E O F —
CONTENTS

FEATURES

22 LOUISIANA TEACHER OF THE YEAR
Chalmette High School history teacher and UNO alumnus Chris Dier is the Louisiana Teacher of the Year and one of just four finalists for the national title.

26 DIGGING UP THE PAST
Paleontologist David Burnham unearths rare finds.

30 OUTSTANDING IN HER FIELD
Alumna Yelena Rivera, a civil engineer, plots a course to success.

32 A FRANCOPHILE IN FRANCE
Graduate student Kathy Bradshaw always had an affinity for all things French. An internship in France was a dream come true for the self-proclaimed “Francophile.”

34 STRINGS IN HARMONY
T-Ray the Violinist performs popular hits in a fresh way.

DEPARTMENTS

5 CAMPUS SCENE

10 NEWS AND EVENTS

18 FACULTY FOCUS

36 THE UNO TRAVELER

40 ATHLETICS

44 DONOR SPOTLIGHT

46 ALUM NOTES

52 THEN AND NOW

DEAR ALUMNI AND FRIENDS:

DURING THESE EXTRAORDINARY TIMES, MUCH WILL CHANGE BETWEEN THE time I am writing this message and you are reading it. Disruption has roiled our campus, our university community and our world, leaving us acutely aware of our vulnerabilities as a society. The worldwide pandemic has provoked understandable fear and anxiety among our students and employees; I am sure the same is true for many of you. We've been forced to cancel traditional campus events. Students have returned home prematurely to continue their classes via remote instruction. Faculty and staff are working from home. Sadly, we decided to postpone spring commencement.

In spite of all of these challenges, I thought it important to make sure that this issue of *Silver & Blue* arrived in your mailbox. The people contained within these pages—UNO students, faculty and alumni—are the connective tissue of our university community. These are our fellow Privateers. We are linked through a common affinity for and a pride in our institution. This university is more than just a physical place; it is our people and our triumphs. The stories you will read here can inspire hope and be a salve for the spirit as we endure this collective hardship. As we have been since our inception, the University of New Orleans is a resilient community. It was the first and only university in New Orleans to reopen during the fall 2005 semester after Hurricane Katrina and the failure of the levees. That resilience has been on full display in recent weeks.

I offer my gratitude to our faculty and staff who have chosen to put our students first. All instructors had to quickly move their courses online and continue to teach remotely. This is a Herculean task. I could not be more appreciative of their dedication, creativity and innovation. Our staff has continued to support our students in a variety of ways. The delivery method may be different, but their approach of care and concern remains intact. I would like to thank our students for their patience and understanding. They are the reason we do what we do. We will help them through these travails together. Finally, I'd like to acknowledge the steadfast support, encouragement and assistance of our alumni and friends. I believe the bonds that connect us all will only strengthen as we persevere through this crisis.

Please allow me to make an appeal on behalf of our students. Many of our supporters have asked me how they can help. For those who have the ability, please consider a gift to the UNO First Student Support Fund (give.uno.edu). Its purpose is to support our students in their pursuit of a UNO degree. Given the unprecedented circumstances of the pandemic, those needs have become more critical. I will close by quoting the insightful words of UNO alumnus and political commentator Clancy DuBos: "Today, as we confront COVID-19, plenty of folks who aren't sick are still suffering. Many are out of work, while others, especially health care workers, are pushed beyond human limits. So let's remember the most important lesson of Katrina by doing all we can for one another—friends, family and strangers alike. That's what instills the priceless gift of hope."

UNO Proud,
John Nicklow
PRESIDENT

 @UNOPresidentJN  @unopresident

SILVER & BLUE
VOLUME 44 · ISSUE 1

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THE UNIVERSITY of
NEW ORLEANS

Silver & Blue Magazine is published by the University of New Orleans. Articles represent the opinions of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of anyone but the authors.

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This public document was published at a total cost of \$21,475. Forty-five thousand (45,000) copies of this public document were published in this first and only printing at a cost of \$21,475. There will be no reprints, so the total cost of all printings of this document is \$21,475. This document was published by the University of New Orleans, 200 Lakeshore Dr., New Orleans, LA 70148, to promote the purpose of the University under authority of 17:3351(A)(12). This material was printed in accordance with the standards for printing by state agencies established pursuant to R.S. 43:31. Printing of this material was purchased in accordance with the provisions of Title 43 of the Louisiana Revised Statutes.

INSIDE

*SWAMPBALL
CARNIVAL UNO
CAREER FAIR
NATIONAL
ENGINEER'S DAY
JAZZ AT THE
SANDBAR*

CAMPUS SCENE

HEADLINES AND HAPPENINGS



MARQUES COLSTON SPEAKS AT FALL COMMENCEMENT

Entrepreneur and former New Orleans Saints star receiver Marques Colston was the principal speaker at the University of New Orleans fall commencement on Dec. 13.

FALL COMMENCEMENT

In his address, Marques Colston urged graduates to set actionable goals that exceed expectations, to become a master of their craft and to work consistently to create positive habits.

“The harder you work, and the more you dig in, the more you stack the odds of success in your favor,” Colston said.



CAREER FAIR

A career fair sponsored by the Office of Career Services in October attracted national, international and local companies who recruited for internships, part-time work and full-time positions. Employers represented a range of industries, including those from hospitality, retail and food service to engineering, financial services, medical and government agencies.



JAZZ AT THE SANDBAR

Famed jazz pianist Ellis Marsalis, an emeritus faculty member, plays at Jazz at the Sandbar at The Cove on the University of New Orleans' campus on Oct. 2. Jazz at the Sandbar is presented each Wednesday night for eight weeks during the fall and spring semesters and features a different renowned jazz artist who performs with UNO music students. Marsalis established the music series in 1990. Sadly Marsalis died in April at the age of 85 from pneumonia brought on by COVID-19, according to family members.



TRUNK OR TREAT

Snowballs, popcorn, a kid friendly DJ and a bouncy slide – along with lots of free candy – marked the trunk-or-treat event held in the Human Performance Center parking lot on Oct. 28. The event was sponsored by the Progressive Black Student Union.

NATIONAL ENGINEER'S DAY

The University of New Orleans offers the only civil, electrical, mechanical and naval architecture and marine engineering programs in the metro area, making it the ideal host for a National Engineer's Week event. The value of engineering was on display with dozens of interactive exhibits during a daylong event held on campus Feb. 19 that drew nearly 2,000 area middle and high school students.



SWAMPBALL

It was dirty fun for a good cause when teams of students, alumni and residents battled for the golden volleyball trophy in the annual mud fest known as Swampball. The volleyball games, played in water-filled pits in the quad, raise money for student scholarships. The event is sponsored by the UNO Ambassadors each fall.



CARNIVAL AT UNO

Laissez les bons temps rouler! Indeed, the good times did roll as the Krewe of UNO made its way through campus on Feb. 18, celebrating its 2020 theme of “2 Infinity & Bey0nd!” Parade-goers were bestowed with plenty of Privateer-flavored throws and savored free king cake as the parade culminated at the University Center.



NEWS & EVENTS



President John Nicklow speaks during the celebratory luncheon honoring the 2020 class of UNO 25.



UNIVERSITY CELEBRATES ALUMNI-LED BUSINESSES AT UNO 25 EVENT

PRIVATEER PRIDE TOOK center stage at a celebratory luncheon Jan. 16 for the 2020 class of UNO 25. The event, held in the silver and blue hued Grand Ballroom at the Ritz-Carlton, New Orleans, honored 25 businesses and nonprofit organizations led or owned by UNO alumni.

Honorees represented a variety of industries including engineering, health care, education, transportation, hospitality, accounting, banking, construction, technology, human resources, marketing and public relations, among

others. Some serve families in their own neighborhoods while others have clients across the country and around the globe.

“To all of our honorees, your university is especially proud of your accomplishments,” UNO President John Nicklow said. “Your achievement is the best form of validation that your alma mater can receive. Your professional status confers a level of prestige on the University of New Orleans that we cannot generate in any other way. We deeply appreciate you and your success.”

The 2020 class of UNO 25 is:

- **Baptist Community Ministries**, *New Orleans*
- **Blue Runner Foods**, *Mandeville*
- **Brand Society**, *New Orleans*
- **CommTech Industries**, *Metairie*
- **Crescent Technology Inc.**, *New Orleans*
- **Davis Davis & Harmon LLC-Sales Tax Experts**, *Dallas, Texas*
- **The Dupuy Group**, *New Orleans*
- **Edward Hynes Charter School**, *New Orleans*
- **Electromedical Products International Inc.**, *Mineral Wells, Texas*
- **Eustis Engineering LLC**, *Metairie*
- **Fourrier & de Abreu Engineers LLC**, *Baton Rouge*
- **French and Montessori Education Inc.**, *Audubon Schools, New Orleans*
- **Gibbs Construction**, *New Orleans*
- **Hotard Coaches Inc.**, *New Orleans*
- **Infinity Engineering Consultants LLC**, *Metairie*
- **M S Benbow & Associates**, *Metairie*
- **Parking Management Services Inc.**, *New Orleans*
- **Payroll RX LLC**, *Metairie*
- **Satsuma Café**, *New Orleans*
- **Second Line Brewing**, *New Orleans*
- **Spears Group**, *New Orleans*
- **Stokes & Associates**, *Metairie*
- **TJ's Carnival & Mardi Gras Supplies**, *Terrytown*
- **Universal Data Inc.**, *New Orleans*
- **UNO Federal Credit Union**, *New Orleans*

GLORIA WALKER IS NEW VICE PRESIDENT FOR BUSINESS AFFAIRS

GLORIA WALKER, THE NEW vice president for business affairs and chief financial officer at the University of New Orleans, laughingly refers to herself as an analytical “bean counter” and a “workaholic.”

She also considers herself fiercely loyal to her employees and a motivator who believes mentoring is a key to helping the University meet its mission of providing educational excellence.

“I don’t like to get in the weeds—I have the skill set to do that—but I really like to mentor folks and give my staff as much control over their subject matter as possible,” says Walker, a certified public accountant by trade and a big-city girl by birth. “Critical, I think, to the mission of the institution, is having people who are well-versed in their subject matter.”

Walker comes to the University with more than 25 years of executive-level leadership experience in higher education. She holds a bachelor’s degree in accounting from the University of Houston, an MBA from the University of St. Thomas in Houston and a doctoral degree in higher education administration from Northeastern University in Boston.

She succeeded Gregg Lassen who retired.

Walker, who arrived on campus Jan. 21, was most recently vice president for finance and administration at Cowley College in Kansas. She was previously executive vice president and chief operating officer at Texas Southern University in Houston as well as executive vice chancellor for finance and administration and CFO at



Houston Community College.

When Walker arrived at Texas Southern, the university was on the brink of insolvency. Over a three-year period, she helped develop a financial plan and created operating policies that kept the university financially stable.

“I, working with the president and the leadership team there, was able to keep them from being insolvent,” Walker says.

Throughout her tenure in higher education, Walker has been primarily responsible for establishing the finance plan and policies, and financial reporting for the institution. She has developed, implemented and maintained internal control and financial reporting policies, standards and procedures that ensure compliance.

“I’m about growing the bottom line. I’m about students being successful,” says Walker. “If students are successful, our bottom line is going to grow. It’s going to attract more students.”

Walker has broad knowledge of all major areas of financial

operations and business services gleaned from different types of institutions. Early in her career, she worked as a state auditor in Texas but quickly realized her personality was not suited to the often-isolating work.

“I’m a people person,” says Walker. “When I got to higher education accounting, I was just flourishing! I really love being around the students. You can see the bigger picture of what higher education does.”

She left state government for the private sector, working as an accountant in the oil and gas industry for several years. She later became the chief financial officer and controller for the Harris County-Houston Sports Authority where she was responsible for construction and managing the debt on Houston’s professional sport arenas and ancillary facilities, including the construction of Minute Maid Field for the Houston Astros.

“I knew they did a lot of construction and bonding in Texas so I wanted to learn finances from that side of the

house,” says Walker, who grew up in Dallas.

Walker spent seven years as the executive vice chancellor for finance and administration and CFO for the 70,000-student Houston Community College where she oversaw a \$300 million operating budget and a \$600 million capital improvement budget, among other duties.

“I’m not afraid to make hard decisions,” Walker says. “I take a strategic approach to decision making and understanding what the issues are. I’m a fact finder.”

Walker says her role in keeping the University of New Orleans successful is ensuring that resources are available for the institution to execute its mission.

“Just as if you were in a Fortune 500 company, you’re trying to develop the best product,” Walker says. “The best product is our student, that’s our end results. So, in order to do that we must have the resources to deliver education in a fashion that students are going to have a monetary gain at the end of the day from being with us; either getting a better job or getting a job or going into research.”

Walker says higher education is a business with a budget that spans across all areas of the institution.

“It’s incumbent on us to make sure our product is good,” she says. “The business side of that is looking at the resources and how do we develop those monetary resources and how do we get the money beyond tuition and fees, state appropriation—all of those avenues . . . to make sure the institution is affordable for the students we attract.”



ALUMNI ACHIEVEMENT CELEBRATED AT 2019 DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI GALA

ALUMNI ACHIEVEMENT was on full display at the 2019 University of New Orleans Distinguished Alumni Gala at The National WWII Museum. The U.S. Freedom Pavilion: The Boeing Center, was a dramatic venue for the 500 attendees celebrating the University and the profound influence of its graduates.

Entergy Louisiana president and CEO Phillip May received the 2019 Homer L. Hitt Distinguished Alumni Award, while Roxanna Rodriguez-Torres, the National Security Council's director for Transnational Organized Crime, accepted the 2019 Homer Hitt Young Alumna of the Year Award. Additionally, the University's four academic colleges and Privateer Athletics

honored their own distinguished alumni of the year.

Former Homer Hitt Alumnus of the Year Clancy DuBos served as the master of ceremonies and President John Nicklow provided the audience with a review of recent university highlights, including growth in enrollment and an expansion of partnerships.

"I hope that tonight's event will continue to build shared pride and reinforce the value of our beloved university," Nicklow said. "As I say to nearly every group I speak to: New Orleans doesn't work without the University of New Orleans."

In addition to May and Rodriguez-Torres, the following UNO alumni were also recognized:

- College of Business Administration: Timothy J. Adams. Adams is the president and CEO of Systems Application & Technologies, Inc. (SA-TECH) in Maryland.

- College of Liberal Arts, Education and Human Development: Jan Aronson. An accomplished painter, Aronson has exhibited her works both nationally and internationally over the past four and a half decades.

- College of Engineering: Riley Parker. Parker is the discipline lead and technical authority for instrumentation and controls engineering for Shell in the Gulf of Mexico.

- College of Sciences: Dr. Fred H. Rodriguez Jr. Dr. Rodriguez spent 35 years with

the Department of Veterans Affairs, including serving as the director of pathology and laboratory medicine at the New Orleans VA Medical Center.

- Athletics: Randy Bush. Bush has spent 13 seasons as the assistant to the general manager of the Chicago Cubs. He was the head baseball coach at the University of New Orleans from 2000-04, and he spent his entire 12-year major league baseball career playing for the Minnesota Twins.

Honorees Roxanna Rodriguez-Torres and Phillip May in photograph on the left. Honorees seated from left, Timothy Adams, Riley Parker, Jan Aronson, Dr. Fred Rodriguez, Randy Bush, Rodriguez-Torres and May.





Jazz Studies Professor Steve Masakowski Receives Lifetime Achievement Award in Music Education

University of New Orleans jazz studies professor Steve Masakowski was honored with the Lifetime Achievement Award in Music Education by *OffBeat Magazine*, a publication dedicated to New Orleans music and culture.

Masakowski arrived at UNO in 1992 and holds the Coca-Cola Endowed Chair of Jazz Studies, a title first held by his teacher and mentor, Ellis Marsalis. He has released numerous CDs and has been an active member and composer for the award winning New Orleans jazz group, Astral Project.

Masakowski has published lessons in *Guitar Player* magazine, authored a book on jazz ear training for Mel Bay, and also performs and records with his children, bassist Martin and vocalist Sasha, a graduate of UNO.

He received the lifetime achievement award at the OffBeat Best of the Beat Business Awards on Jan. 16.

UNO's Green Initiatives

As University of New Orleans officials plan for the evolution of the campus, sustainability efforts are critical elements in determining the future of the institution's physical space, President John Nicklow says.

The University's Sustainability Circle, made up of faculty, staff and students, has implemented several initiatives around campus, such as the new bicycle fix-it station located between the University Center and the Recreation and Fitness Center.

Two of the university's visible green initiatives are a new recycling team and the installation of thousands of energy efficient bulbs around campus that not only saves money but also brightens the campus and improves safety.

The University also has finalized plans with Entergy New Orleans (ENO) for a solar panel project on top of two buildings on campus that will add 600-Kilowatts of clean energy to the New Orleans grid. This partnership with UNO is an important step for ENO's commercial rooftop solar program, and the community, according to company and university officials.



Career Services Opens 'Suited for Success Career Closet'

The University of New Orleans Office of Career Services has opened a career closet that contains business attire for students to use for interviews, career fairs or other professional networking events.

The clothing is free and students get to keep the items, career services director Celyn Boykin says.

The career closet, which is located in Room 250 in the University Center, has men and women clothing and shoes. Students can make an appointment to shop at the closet through the career services Handshake app.

Le Kèr Creole Exhibit Unveiled At The Cabildo

The Louisiana State Museum, in partnership with the Neighborhood Story Project at the University of New Orleans and L'Union Creole, has unveiled "Le Kèr Creole (The Creole Heart): Runaway Slaves, Music, and Memory in Louisiana" at the Cabildo in New Orleans.

The exhibition explores the legacy of the Louisiana Creole language through the historical memory of Juan San Malo, the leader of a community founded by former enslaved people in the 1780s and contemporary Creole music.

Rachel Breunlin, University of New Orleans assistant professor of anthropology and co-founder of the Neighborhood Story Project, curated the multimedia exhibit along with artists Bruce Sunpie Barnes and Francis X. Pavy.

Bayer, Spicer awarded Computer Science Scholarship Founded By Google Engineer

University of New Orleans students Ashley Bayer and Veronica Spicer are the recipients of the 2019 Women in Computer Science scholarship founded by University of New Orleans alumna Sabrina Farmer, who is vice president of engineering site reliability at Google.

Bayer and Spicer each received a \$6,000 scholarship to offset the cost of tuition, books and living expenses for the fall 2019-2020 academic year. They also receive mentoring from Farmer who earned a bachelor's degree in computer science from the University in 1995.



THE PRIVATEER PLEDGE: A PROMISE TO ORLEANS PARISH STUDENTS

STARTING IN THE FALL 2020 semester, the University of New Orleans will begin offering the Privateer Pledge, a promise that the University will fill the unmet financial need for tuition and fees of eligible New Orleans students.

The pledge applies to Orleans Parish residents who graduate from a public or private Orleans Parish high school. In

order to qualify, students must be admitted as a freshman to the University of New Orleans and must have filed the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). They must also be eligible for a Pell Grant and their annual family income cannot exceed \$60,000. The first group of Privateer Pledge freshman students will need to enroll full-time by July 1, 2020 for the

fall 2020 semester.

“A University of New Orleans education can transform a student’s life,” says President John Nicklow. “The Privateer Pledge is our promise to eligible Orleans Parish students that we will marshal all of the federal, state and institutional aid necessary to fill any financial gap for tuition and fees. This will support greater access to higher

education and ensure there is one less obstacle in a student’s pursuit of a UNO degree.”

In order to maintain the award, students must remain enrolled full-time (minimum of 12 hours) and keep a GPA of 2.0 or higher.

The Privateer Pledge covers four years of unmet need for tuition and fees or until graduation, whichever happens first.



Raphael Cassimere Jr., University of New Orleans professor emeritus of history, (right) talks about his experiences in the civil rights movement.

CIVIL RIGHTS ACTIVIST AND UNO HISTORIAN RAPHAEL CASSIMERE JR. 'I WAS ABLE TO CHANGE MINDS'

RAPHAEL CASSIMERE JR., University of New Orleans professor emeritus of history, who made his mark on the political landscape of New Orleans by helping lead boycotts as president of the NAACP Youth Council during the civil rights movement in the early 60s and 70s, did not set out to make history.

In fact, he hadn't even planned to major in history, he told an audience at UNO in February.

Cassimere, who received his bachelor's and master's degrees in history from UNO, shared his experiences as the first African American instructor hired at UNO and as a leader in the civil rights movement.

"Bad things happened to people who belonged to the NAACP," Cassimere said, refer-

ring to the targeted violence directed at members of the civil rights organization as they campaigned against discriminatory practices locally and across the U.S.

It was 1960, a tumultuous time for race relations, particularly in the South.

Cassimere, a student at what was then LSUNO, said he reluctantly followed a friend to an NAACP meeting in New Orleans and "got caught up."

Cassimere quickly became actively involved in the organization's mission to end prejudicial practices and racial discrimination. It led him to change his college major.

"I was a pre-med major for 2 ½ years," Cassimere said. "This was almost like a revolution. I got so caught up in the movement."

In 1962, Cassimere help to

lead a successful boycott and picketing campaign of local businesses on Canal Street that had refused to hire African American workers in capacities other than janitors and cooks. The businesses also refused to serve black people in the restaurants and lunch counters.

Cassimere still savors the victory because their actions help to make positive changes.

"It was very successful," he said. "It was something that I feel very good about."

In 1967, Cassimere became the first African American teaching assistant at UNO and in 1969, he was the first African American instructor hired at the University.

It was a difficult time, he said. Some students balked at having him as their history teacher, Cassimere said.

"When I walked into the class and announced that I would be teaching the class, two whites walked out and demanded that they be given a transfer to another class 'for obvious reasons,'" Cassimere recalled. "The department chair kind of knew what the obvious reasons were and he told them 'for obvious reasons' he would not!"

Cassimere would remain in the history department for more than 35 years, rising to rank of professor. He retired in 2007.

Cassimere said he learned to navigate the prejudices inside and outside his classroom by learning how to live with others who were different and by teaching his students to be willing to listen to other people's opinions.

"That's one thing I learned as a teacher, I was able to change minds," Cassimere said.

INNOVATEUNO SYMPOSIUM SHOWCASES STUDENTS SCHOLARLY RESEARCH AND CREATIVE DESIGNS

THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW Orleans' eighth annual InnovateUNO wrapped up Nov. 21 with an awards ceremony recognizing the winners of the research and creative symposium. The first and fourth floor of the Earl K. Long Library was the center for the showcase in which students presented their independent research, scholarly or creative activities to the campus community.

Over the course of the three-day event, 415 presenters, co-presenters, and collaborators delivered 237 oral, poster, art, theater, music, and film presentations. Presenters included UNO students, faculty and staff

from every discipline and area high school students engaged with UNO programs.

"This was our biggest InnovateUNO, with a 30% increase in presentations compared to last year," said Matthew Tarr, vice president for research and economic development. "We saw participation from across disciplines and effectively involved our entire campus community as well as high school students, alumni and business partners."

The presentations were evaluated by 63 judges including UNO faculty, staff, graduate students, alumni and business partners. More than 20 volunteers

and room moderators staffed the event.

"The impact UNO has on its undergraduate students through engagement in research, scholarship and creative activities was more evident than ever," Tarr said. "UNO's impact on the regional, national and international communities was also clearly demonstrated."

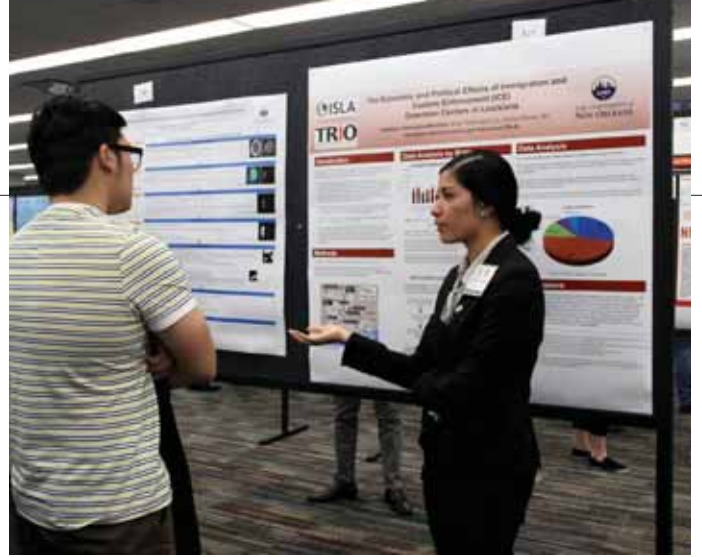
This year, Louisiana Sea Grant also hosted a Coastal Connections Competition open to graduate students from UNO and Tulane University. Eleven students from a broad range of disciplines presented on coastal issues.

Alahna Moore, a UNO plan-

ning and urban studies graduate student, was one of two presenters awarded a \$500 travel grant.

Moore is creating a publicly accessible GIS map and a calendar that lists government meetings that involve decisions on coastal issues. The public will be able to add events to the calendar and upload their own pictures and maps to help document changes along the state's coastline, Moore said.

The best-ranked presentations were awarded a total of \$3,800 by the Office of Research and the Oscar J. Tolmas Charitable Trust. Both undergraduate and graduate students were awarded prizes.



The University of New Orleans' eighth annual InnovateUNO, held Nov. 19-21, showcased outstanding research, scholarly activity and creative work.



A panel of mental health professionals discuss “Mental Health in the Black Community” during a forum at the University of New Orleans.

MENTAL HEALTH PANELISTS: ‘DON’T BE AFRAID TO ASK FOR HELP’

MANY PEOPLE FIND THE topic of mental illness difficult to discuss, in part because of the negative stereotypes associated with it, according to mental health professionals. However, an alarmingly steady rise in the number of suicides among young people, particularly among people of color, means society has to remove the fear of labels when it comes to mental health and seeking professional help.

Suicide is the leading cause of death for African Americans aged 15 to 24, said Zarus Watson, University of New Orleans associate professor of counseling.

Watson said the suicide rate for African Americans was a “trace” number in the early 1970s and climbed over 250 percent by 1995. He thinks part of the reason is because mental illness was “swept under the rug” for so many years.

“As a group we have a tendency to not necessarily identify mental health as an issue,” said Watson, who is African American. “It wasn’t something that we discussed. It was something mostly to hide.”

The need to bulldoze that uncommunicative wall led to the Nov. 20 panel discussion “Mental Health in the Black Community.”

The organization is an academic and social support program established to address the needs and challenges faced by African American male students at the University. The program’s 16 members chose the topic of mental health for its fall panel discussion, said Taryn Chevis, manager of academic administration and a co-director of the program.

“A few lighter topics were thrown out for us to choose from, however, the guys overwhelmingly chose mental health,” Chevis said. “I was

excited that these young men chose this topic because I believe it shows somewhat of a shift in overall thinking. I think people are open to having more of these conversations.”

The panelists discussed the need to be “self-aware” about your mental health, and to know when to ask for help.

“As a practitioner I tell my clients all the time that there is no ideal state of mental functioning,” said Danielle Burton, a doctoral student in UNO’s counselor education and supervision program. “What you can do is define for yourself who you are, what your values are and what your baselines are in terms of what you’re able to accomplish ... So, a mentally healthy person does recognize those limitations and a mentally unhealthy person is usually just unaware.”

Possible signs that someone may need help or is having some

emotional struggles, include severe changes in eating or sleeping habits, being constantly angry or worried, said Al White, owner and director at Self-Enhancement Center, Inc.

A constant theme from the panelists: Don’t be afraid to ask for help.

“Everybody in here is mentally ill. If you’ve grown up in the United States, you’ve got issues,” Watson said. “You have baggage. I have issues. I’m in constant recovery. The only question is how far does the impact go and are you aware?”

Ryan O’Pry, assistant director and coordinator of clinical training of UNO’s Counseling Services, gives this reminder: “I always think that it’s important for me and clients and anyone to just remember that our mental health is not our whole identity,” he said. “It’s part of us, just like our physical health or our spirituality.” 🌍

FACULTY FOCUS

2019 MEDALLION AWARD WINNERS NAMED

THREE UNIVERSITY OF New Orleans employees were recognized for their outstanding contributions and presented with University medallions by President John Nicklow during his State of the University address in October.

The recipients of the three annual awards are:

- **Parviz Rastgoufard**, professor of electrical engineering, was awarded the Cooper R. Mackin Medallion. The Mackin Medallion was established to honor the third chancellor of the University of New Orleans and was first presented in 1998. It is awarded to a faculty or staff member who has made outstanding contributions in support of the University's mission.

"Dr. Rastgoufard is an eminent scholar, researcher and teacher," Nicklow said. "He has served as a principal investigator on more than 50 research projects and his mentorship of junior faculty members ensures his legacy is a lasting one."

- **Margaret Davidson**, resident director and faculty member of the UNO Innsbruck Academic Year Abroad program, was awarded the Gordon H. "Nick" Mueller International Leadership Medallion. The medallion is named for Mueller,

who spent 33 years at UNO as a professor, dean, vice chancellor, the founding president of the UNO Research & Technology Park and co-founder of The National World War II Museum. It is awarded to an individual who has provided significant leadership toward the internationalization of the University.

Davidson, who was in Austria and was unable to attend the ceremony, has worked for 30 years to enhance the internationalization of the University, Nicklow said. "Colleagues cite Dr. Davidson for her passion, ingenuity and tenacity," he said.

- **Karen Thomas**, associate dean for STEM recruitment, retention and outreach in the College of Sciences; received the Presidential Staff Medallion. It is awarded to the staff member who has demonstrated outstanding service to the university community.

"Dr. Thomas is an outstanding communicator who works closely with academic advisers to improve student success," Nicklow said. "She supports undergraduate students groups with a special focus on women in STEM. And she plays a key role in bringing young people and community organizations to campus for events."



TOP: President John Nicklow (far right) with two of the three recipients of the University's annual awards, (l-r) Parviz Rastgoufard and Karen Thomas. ABOVE: President John Nicklow presents a University medallion to Margaret Davidson.



UNIVERSITY OF NEW ORLEANS RESEARCHERS TEACH COASTAL ENVIRONMENT IN GHANA

TWO UNIVERSITY OF NEW Orleans researchers spent time in West Africa last summer as part of the Coastal Ocean Environment Summer School in Ghana (COESSING). Ebenezer Nyadjro and Madeline Foster-Martinez lectured, conducted hands-on labs and led project teams for the school, which serves undergraduates, graduate and faculty participants from across that country.

Since 2015, a group of ocean experts from the U.S., Italy and France has teamed up with colleagues in Ghana to run the weeklong intensive summer school that is designed to increase interest and build knowledge capacity in coastal and oceanography research.

Nyadjro, an assistant professor of research in the physics department at UNO and a native of Ghana, has taught satellite oceanography since the school's inception.

Foster-Martinez, a post-doctoral research associate in the Pontchartrain Institute for Environmental Sciences, has spent three summers in Ghana pursuing her interest in coastal

research by teaching about wetlands and coastal ecosystems and leading a laboratory exercise on plastic transport in the ocean.

The 2019 summer school was held Aug. 5-10 at Regional Maritime University in Accra, Ghana and attracted 350 applicants for the 120 available spots. The participants at the school, which is free, are mainly from Ghana and Nigeria, but others are from Benin, Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire and Cameroon.

Ghana's location on the Gulf of Guinea in West Africa gives it access to resources such as fisheries, tourism, and oil and gas, but bordering an ocean and having a coastline also brings challenges, Nyadjro says, such as coastal erosion, pollution and piracy.

"There has been limited formal research to understand how people co-exist with, and sustainably use these resources in West Africa," Nyadjro says. "COESSING was established to help expand the interest and expertise in coastal and ocean research."

The school offered lectures



on a range of subjects in the morning, including wetlands, satellite oceanography, plastic transports in the ocean and Gulf of Guinea oceanography. In the afternoon, hands-on laboratory exercises were conducted on those subjects and participants were taught where and how to obtain data for their research work, as well as how to process and analyze the data.

The school, which receives funding from the National Science Foundation, the University of Michigan, and The International Centre for Theoretical Physics in Italy, was started by University of Michigan professor Brian Arbic.

"COESSING is important because it provides an opportunity for new experiences," Foster-Martinez says. "For some participants, it is their first time studying topics like satellite oceanography, hydrog-

University of New Orleans researchers Ebenezer Nyadjro and Madeline Foster-Martinez spent a week along the Gulf of Guinea teaching coastal environmental concepts to graduate and undergraduate students in Ghana.

raphy or ocean modeling. For others, it may be their first time programming for data analysis, using oceanographic instruments or going on a boat.

"The school also provides the opportunity to network and build future collaborations."

Nyadjro and Foster-Martinez said the summer school has been a success because it has helped many budding scientists in the sub-region to develop their research skills in coastal processes and oceanography.

After the summer session, the facilitators keep in touch with the participants, and help them acquire and analyze data for their studies and dissertations.

CENTER AUSTRIA DIRECTOR GUENTER BISCHOF RECEIVES 'SCHOLAR OF THE YEAR AWARD'

UNIVERSITY OF NEW Orleans history professor and Center Austria director Guenter Bischof was honored by his home state of Vorarlberg, Austria with the "Scholar of the Year Award."

Bischof grew up in the Alpine village of Mellau on the Swiss border. From skiing and playing soccer as a youngster, Bischof says he has graduated to swimming and hiking in his beloved Alps.

The award is in recognition for Bischof's work in Austria and for his work bringing students from the University of Innsbruck to UNO on a regular basis through Center Austria.

Founded in 1997, Center Austria is a research and discourse hub for Austrian and European studies at UNO and in New Orleans. The center advances understanding of Austrian and Central European culture through scholarly and artistic activities, and academic partnerships.

The award was bestowed by Vorarlberg governor Markus Wallner during a November ceremony at the state capitol in Bregenz, Austria.

"To me this award indicates that my work on Austrian-American relations and our Center Austria work to bring students from the University of

Innsbruck to UNO—1,000 or so since 1998—is much appreciated in Austria and not taken for granted," Bischof says.

Bischof, who received his master's degree in history from the University of New Orleans, enjoys teaching at UNO's international summer schools in Innsbruck and Prague.

He has been a visiting professor at the Universities of Munich, Innsbruck, Salzburg, Vienna, the Economics University in Prague and the State University for the Humanities in Moscow.



Center Austria director Guenter Bischof (center) received the "Scholar of the Year Award" from the Austrian state of Vorarlberg with Markus Wallner (right), governor of Vorarlberg, and Lt. Gov. Barbara Schoebi-Fink.

RESEARCHER AWARDED NSF GRANT TO STUDY MARRIAGE ATTITUDES IN THE 21ST CENTURY

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF marriage in American society is seen in the myriad ways that it binds individuals legally, socially, politically and symbolically. Marriage entails not only social and emotional attachments, but also legal obligations and access to privileges, says University of New Orleans sociology professor D'Lane Compton.

Historically, marriage has meant heterosexual marriage and has been studied overwhelmingly as such, says Compton. She wants to understand what marriage attitudes are in the 21st century, particularly in the wake of the 2015 U.S. Supreme Court ruling in which same-sex marriages were deemed legal.

Compton, who currently teaches undergraduate and

graduate-level courses in social psychology, gender and sexualities, research methods and social statistics, has been awarded a \$261,666 grant from the National Science Foundation to research attitudes toward marriage among heterosexual and same-sex couples.

Compton is conducting the research in collaboration with Gayle Kaufman, a sociology professor at Davidson College in North Carolina.

"We have seen some significant changes in behavior—more folks are opting out of marriage, and are waiting longer to get married," Compton says. "Same with regards to having children. We also are seeing new types of family structures and chosen family formations.

"We want to know how folks

feel about marriage and family and why? We also want to ask questions about divorce and involvement with the State."

Compton says the research is important because many of those questions have not been asked to a national sample and the responses can be compared across sexual orientations.

There is very little nationally representative data on topics related to the LGBT community, Compton says.

"For example, we know that some of the LGBT community is very pro-marriage and we also know there are people that are very against marriage. But we have no rate. We also have no way of comparing LGBT individual's attitudes toward marriage with non-LGBT individuals. Does the LGBT community



D'Lane Compton

feel the same toward marriage as the heterosexual community?"

The three-year study will include a national survey conducted by AmeriSpeak and will include follow-up interviews with LGBT adults in diverse regional locations around the country, Compton says, who expects to complete a book based on the findings within the next several years.

CHEMISTRY RESEARCHERS ARE GOING GREEN

UNIVERSITY OF NEW Orleans chemistry researchers have developed a new, environmentally friendly material for the production of important molecules that are used in pharmaceuticals and agrochemicals, such as herbicides and insecticides.

The research appeared in a recent edition of the prestigious American Chemical Society Journal "Organic Letters," and chemistry department chair Mark Trudell is currently seeking both U.S. and international patents on the invention.

Jumanah Hamdi, a chemistry doctoral student in Trudell's group, developed the new catalyst that allows molecules to form chemical bonds under

very mild "green" conditions, Trudell says.

Making such connections between molecules, called Suzuki-Miyaura cross-coupling, is significant for the production of important molecules used in pharmaceuticals, agrochemicals and other fine chemical products, he says.

What is especially exciting about this discovery, Trudell says, is that, unlike previous systems, which required high reaction temperatures and expensive, environmentally unfriendly solvents, this new catalytic material works at room temperature, in water, and can be used repeatedly without significant loss in activity or leaching of the metal.

These characteristics are all extremely important to highly desirable clean, environmentally friendly green chemistry, Trudell says.

"This catalyst will allow chemists to make a large variety of important molecules, impacting all areas of synthetic organic chemistry," he says.

The catalyst consists of a naturally occurring clay nanoscale tubular material, halloysite, with palladium nanoparticles inside. Nanoscale materials are about one ten thousandth the width of a human hair, Trudell says.



The research team, led by Trudell, also includes chemistry doctoral student Alexis Blanco, undergraduate Brooke Diehl and John Wiley, chemistry professor and director of UNO's Advanced Materials Research Institute.

RESEARCHERS TO STUDY COMMUNITY RESILIENCE AS PART OF \$5.5 MILLION GRANT

RESEARCHERS IN THE University of New Orleans Center for Hazards Assessment, Response and Technology (UNO-CHART) will study ways to enhance the resiliency of Gulf Coast communities as part of two grants totaling more than \$5.5 million from the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine's Gulf Research Program.

UNO researchers will work on the two projects in collaboration with an interdisciplinary

group of scientists from 10 universities, including Tulane University.

The University's portion of the grants is just over \$290,000, according to Monica Farris, director of UNO-CHART.

A project titled "The New First Line of Defense: Building Community Resilience through Residential Risk Disclosure," was awarded a \$3.4 million grant.

Led by the University of Central Florida, researchers will work with communities throughout

the Gulf region to improve the dissemination of information about potential hazards to residential housing that can change overtime.

The ultimate goal of the project is to identify practices most likely to result in residents taking actions to reduce risk and increase resilience.

The second project, titled "Climate, Culture, Movement: Navigating Decision-Making in a Shifting Landscape for a Resilient United Houma Nation,"

was awarded \$2.1 million.

Led by Tulane University, the goal of this project is to determine how the United Houma Nation can adapt to climate-related

and other short- and long-term stressors while maintaining the integrity of its community and culture.

The United Houma Nation is a Louisiana state-recognized tribe primarily based in southeastern Louisiana that is striving to maintain its unique culture amidst dramatic climatic, environmental and socioeconomic change.

The project team will collaborate with the United Houma Nation to examine existing and emerging stressors, identify resilience strategies and produce actionable information, tools and interventions that can be used by the tribe to navigate these challenges.

Researchers say the project's findings will be useful to other Gulf Coast communities facing similar issues. 🌍







ALUMNUS
CHRIS DIER

is

LOUISIANA
TEACHER

of the

YEAR

BY LITTICE BACON-BLOOD
PHOTOGRAPHS BY TRACIE MORRIS SCHAEFER



CHRIS DIER, THE 2020 LOUISIANA TEACHER OF THE YEAR and a finalist for the national title, once considered becoming an attorney. However, during his senior year in college, frustrated by a constitutional law course, he accepted his mother's invitation to observe her teaching class at Chalmette High School.

As he watched his mother, a veteran educator of more than 30 years, Dier saw an entirely new world—and a different career path for himself.

"I was immediately taken aback by the atmosphere in her classroom. Students were learning, discussing, asking questions and developing a sense of self in real time," says Dier, who teaches world history and AP human geography at Chalmette High School. "It was the first time I watched a class from the teacher's perspective. After that day, I decided to give teaching a go."

Dier, who grew up in St. Bernard Parish and evacuated to Texas after Hurricane Katrina's floodwaters inundated his community in 2005, returned to Louisiana after completing a bachelor's degree in history at East Texas Baptist University.

He applied for teaching positions and enrolled at the University of New Orleans where he earned master's degrees in teaching and educational leadership.

"I was drawn to the University of New Orleans because it provided a sense of community while providing an opportunity to get a high-quality education," Dier says. "UNO is a staple in the New Orleans community. My first program there was such a success that I went back to get another degree."

Dier followed his mother's lead and has become a history teacher who attempts to contextualize the subject by bringing real-world examples and an infusion of empathy and diverse viewpoints into the class.

That class, Room 215, is loaded with memorabilia acquired during summer travels abroad. Inspirational quotes from Caesar Chavez, Marcus Garvey, Helen Keller, Mark Twain and others adorn the walls, along with student-drawn pictures of Dier. One drawing has a conversation bubble written in Spanish that says "Tenga un buen dia!" (Have a nice day). Around the room an eclectic offering of books—classic and contemporary fare—spill from shelves.

Traveling, particularly to foreign countries, challenges him and offers new perspectives, Dier says. He wants to bring a similar sense of exploration to his students, he says.

"It might not be appealing for students to just hear me talk about Peruvian culture, but what if I passed around a tapestry hand-woven by an indigenous Q'eros family for them to feel?" Dier says. "Similarly, I also bring stories of other cultures to my students. In Vietnam, I explored how they study the Vietnam War, or as they call it—the American War, and share those perspectives with my students."

While studying the Holocaust, Dier held class in a grassy courtyard outside. He assigned students to explore what the Jewish people faced while being held at the German concentration camp in Auschwitz using photos and text excerpts left at designated stations.

The assignment was intended to allow students to discuss the traumatic events from the Jews first arrival, to their daily work assignments and ultimately the deadly gas chambers disguised as showers.

"What didn't you know?" Dier asks one group.

"About the different types of tests they did," student Derek Hutchinson says.

"Right, there were a lot of different experiments conducted on the Jews," Dier says.

A picture of a mother leading her child on what history has revealed was a death march, stood out to Jenna Riess.

"She didn't know," Riess says.

Dier agrees. "Looking at that picture now we know, and it's an eerie feeling. It gives us chills."

Courtney Assavedo and Logan Dusang, both seniors at Chalmette High School, say they enjoy Dier's class because he's passionate about what he teaches and makes it interesting.

"He puts it into perspective to us now, like everything he teaches he relates it back to us and how it has affected us," Assavedo says. "It makes it easier to learn."

For example, during a study of world wars, Dier created a skit and assigned students different countries to represent their interest in the conflicts, Assavedo recalled.

"He doesn't just teach us about it from one perspective," Dusang says. "He teaches about other countries' perspectives as well."

An accurate study of history offers valuable lessons for the future and allows students to gain a greater understanding of other cultures, values and beliefs, Dier says.

"This understanding fosters empathy for others as it centers on



Traveling, particularly to foreign countries, challenges him and offers new perspectives, Dier says. He wants to bring a similar sense of exploration to his students.



human connection. So many societal issues are due to misunderstandings; an accurate study of history is the first step toward addressing misunderstanding,” Dier says. “I work to create an environment of understanding each day in my classroom because our students deserve communities where that is also true.”

LOUISIANA TEACHER OF THE YEAR

Dier has taught school for 10 years and was selected as St. Bernard’s Teacher of the Year to represent the parish in the state competition last year. It was the second time he’d earned the honor of the parish’s top teacher.

On July 19, 2019, following months of interviews and making the list of nine finalists that were culled from more than 200 applicants, Dier was named the 2020 Louisiana State Teacher of the Year at the state’s 13th annual Cecil J. Picard Educator Awards Gala held in Baton Rouge, La.

“I was in a state of disbelief and shock. I almost thought they made an error because I did not think it would’ve been me,” says Dier.

Dier says the biggest highlight was seeing his mother’s face when the announcement was made.

“She just burst out in tears,” he says. “She is still a teacher and first inspired me to become a teacher, so I think it’s more than just a moment of being proud of a son for an accomplishment.”

In addition to representing Louisiana in the national competition, Dier also has a state and national platform from which he gets to tout his education initiatives on student equity and inclusion.

Dier says he wants to collaborate with other educators to develop culturally responsive teaching practices across the state, “from Cajun country to north Louisiana.”

In 2016, he 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 com-

“Since Katrina, our district has become more diverse as we have immigrants from Latin America, the Middle East and Southeast Asia. These waves of immigration provide plenty of opportunities to incorporate other cultures and histories into my classroom.”

pleted an Advanced Placement Summer Institute course at Fordham University and currently participates in professional development programs at Harvard Business School that focus on case method teaching.

“I believe students flourish when they see themselves reflected in the classroom, and we have a lot of culture in our state,” says Dier who points out the current demographics of St. Bernard are radically different from the homogenized parish that he grew up in prior to Hurricane Katrina.

“Since Katrina, our district has become more diverse as we have immigrants from Latin America, the Middle East and Southeast Asia. These waves of immigration provide plenty of opportunities to incorporate other cultures and histories into my classroom.”

Incorporating student diversity into the classroom also brings a certain level of learning “ownership,” Dier says.

“If we make their identity a part of their education, then students take ownership over their own learning and become autonomous learners,” he says. “By spotlighting identity and culture, we teach to students’ strengths and experiences, thus empowering students to succeed while supporting their emotional well-being.”

YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE SHERLOCK HOLMES to deduce the research interest of University of New Orleans alumnus David Burnham. In fact, he gives a T. rex-size clue in his one-word email address: dinosaur.

That keen interest, first cultivated as an undergraduate student at UNO, helped Burnham to lead the excavation team that uncovered the fossils of a juvenile Tyrannosaurus rex estimated to have lived 66 million years ago.

The discovery of a juvenile T. rex is uncommon, says Burnham, paleontologist at the University of Kansas Biodiversity Institute and Natural History Museum in Lawrence, Kansas.

"They are incredibly rare with less than a handful found," Burnham says. "We know very little about the lifestyle of young T. rex so the KU discovery gives us another data point."


The fossils help researchers learn more about how the dinosaurs developed and how they lived. However, because of the juvenile's rapid growth rate, they were not small for long. Scientists believe that T. rexes matured at 19, Burnham says.

"They lived hard, fast lives. The oldest T. rex is about 30 years old," Burnham says.

Even if the juvenile managed to escape the cannibalism of the adult Tyrannosaurus rex, their bones were more fragile and subject to erode quicker after death, making them more difficult to find, Burnham says.

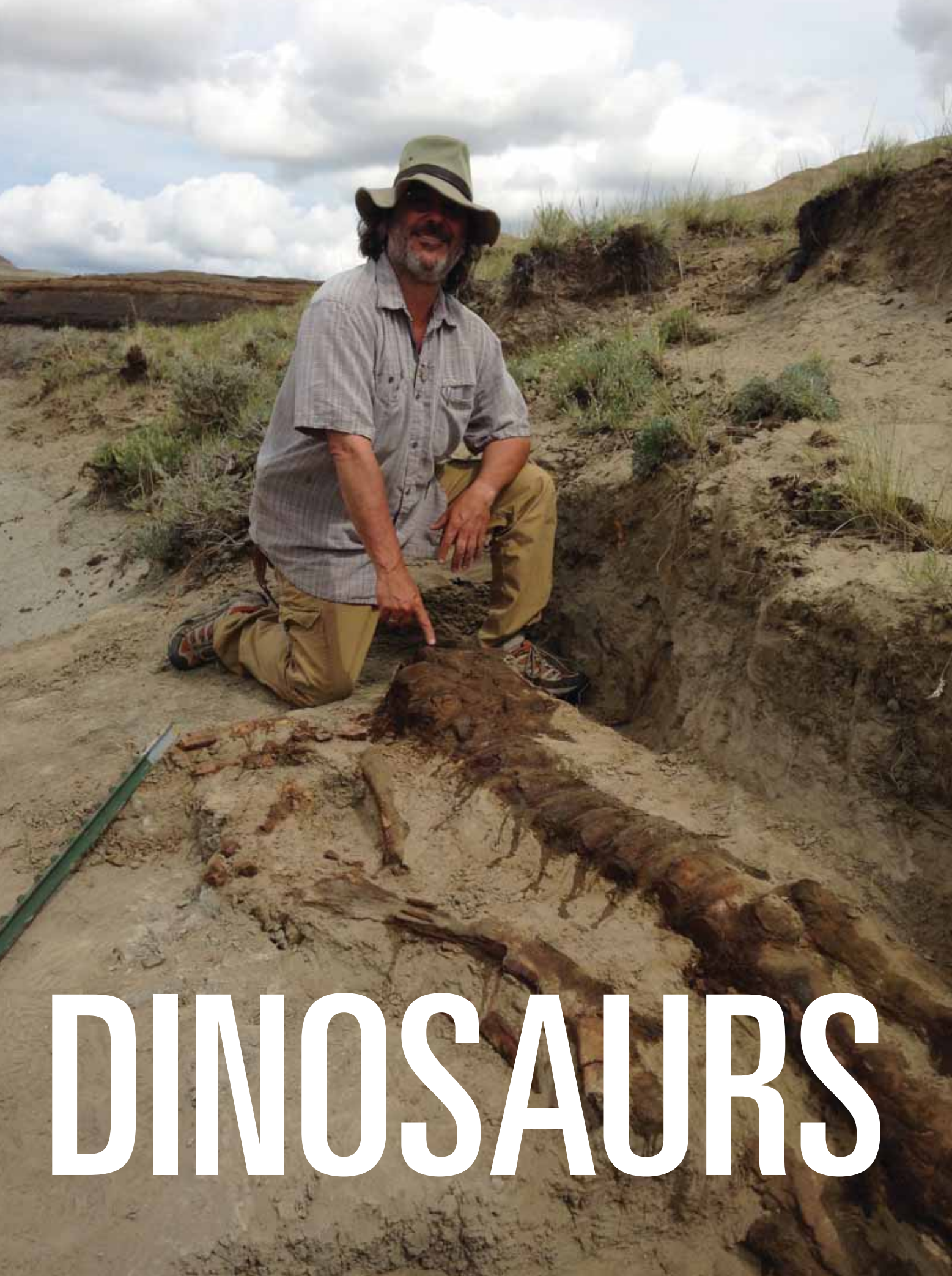
The discovery, made near Montana's Hell Creek Formation in 2017, yielded an upper jaw section, with all of the teeth intact, along with parts of the skull, foot, hip and backbone of the young T. rex that the team named Laurel.

Burnham estimates Laurel's age to have been around 11 years old and projects that it would have been about 20-feet long with a skull extending another 3-feet. It would have stood 7-feet-tall at the hips, he says.

That is about half the size of an adult, which experts estimate to have been about 40 feet 



Alumnus David Burnham REALLY DIGS



DINOSAURS



Burnham spends at least a month in the summer and a few weeks in the fall at excavation sites to collect specimens.

million years ago.

Researchers say the rock formations at Hell Creek date back to that time and are a hot bed for dinosaur fossils.

Burnham has Laurel's fossils in his lab where they are being cleaned, examined and prepared for exhibition.

For now, the skull of the juvenile T. rex is "fairly complete," so those bones might be exhibited first, he says.

"We are in the early planning stage but we are not finished digging at the site," Burnham says.

Burnham's job is a mixture of lab work, research and public outreach, he says.

"I also mentor undergraduate and graduate students as a thesis adviser," he says. "On Fridays I have a volunteer program so anyone who wants to work on dinosaur bones can come in and participate."

His interest in fossils was piqued after taking a paleontology course at UNO from earth and environmental sciences professor Kraig Derstler, Burnham says.

"As an undergrad I almost became an English major and studied screenwriting under Andrew Horton. I also wrote film reviews for the school newspaper and was on the board of the student union movie committee," Burnham says. "But after that paleontology course, I was hooked."

Burnham 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.

"I was able to get a very robust education in biology and geology, both of which a paleontologist needs," he says.

Derstler's paleontology program sparked his return to UNO for graduate school, Burnham says.

"We were able to go on many field expeditions to search rock outcrops in the South for sea monsters called mosasaurs as well as going out west to hunt dinosaurs," Burnham says.

Burnham spends at least a month in the summer and a few weeks in the fall at excavation sites to collect specimens.

"I bring them back to my lab where they can be removed from the rock and carefully cleaned so they can be studied and put on exhibit," he says.

The fieldwork is the best part of the job, Burnham says.

"Discovery is such an adrenaline punch that lights up my curiosity about what the world was like millions of years ago," he says. "I also enjoy traveling around the world visiting other museums to conduct research." 🌐

long, with 12 inches of sharp, bone-crushing teeth. The average T. rex height was 12 to 20 feet tall, scientists say. They are estimated to have weighed about 10,000 pounds.

The speed of these massive creatures ranged from 5 mph to 20 mph. Juveniles at Laurel's size averaged 25 mph to 40 mph, Burnham says.

The find revealed that the young T. rex did not have the tremendous bite force of their adult counterparts and might have occupied a different ecological niche that allowed them to go after different prey, Burnham says.

"The adults were too slow to catch the fast-running, feathered ostrich-like dinosaurs. But the young ones, we presume, utilized their faster speed to catch them," Burnham says. "They were not dumb reptiles. In fact, they are the progenitors of birds and were probably more intelligent than we have assumed. T. rex had a brain as large as ours!"

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

SAVE THE DATES



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YELENA RIVERA HAS LEARNED TO TAKE THE CURVE BALLS of life with a calm assurance that unforeseen circumstances will straighten out; she just has to stay the course. For instance, Hurricane Katrina forced Rivera to evacuate New Orleans just two weeks after moving from Belize to attend the University of New Orleans.

The University was able to reopen later in the fall semester, largely through courses that were taught online or at the University's campus in Metairie. In spite of all of the upheaval and the fact that she had no relatives in New Orleans, Rivera followed her instincts and decided to remain enrolled at UNO.

"I think there is something to say about the fact that my experience was so positive all of the two weeks that I was here, that I decided to come back and finish my degree," Rivera says. "I probably could have transferred somewhere else, but ... I decided to come back and finish what I started."

That decision set her on a path to earn a degree in civil and environmental engineering in 2009. In the decade since graduating college, Rivera has established a career as a professional engineer at C. H. Fenstermaker & Associates, LLC, a Lafayette-based consulting firm with offices in downtown New Orleans.

Rivera's responsibilities include calculating cost, determining

the feasibility of projects, creating specifications, plans, construction schedules, and designs for projects, and providing support for bidding and construction of projects.

Last September, Rivera was named the American Society of Civil Engineer Outstanding Young Civil Engineer in Louisiana. The annual award is given in recognition of professional achievements, leadership and exceptional dedication and service to the profession.

"I just feel sometimes that things are just meant to be and you are just projected in the direction," Rivera says. "You may have a general idea ... but, I don't know, it just all works out."

That's not to say that Rivera does not plan. She does—in detail. She laughs as she tells the story of how she "mapped out" a portion of downtown New Orleans in search of a job shortly after graduation.

"I guess because I'm an engineer I literally mapped out downtown New Orleans and the exact buildings of where I was going to go, companies that I was going to target," Rivera says.

She had researched the companies that she planned a "cold call" visit to get an understanding of the kind of projects they worked on, what they were successful at doing and aligning those



*Alumna Yelena Rivera
recognized as
Louisiana's Outstanding
Young Civil Engineer*

findings with what she wanted to do as an engineer.

“I did a map and laid out a strategy,” she says. “I was just being open-minded. I knew that I was walking in cold.”

Rivera also knew that she needed to find a job before her student visa expired and she was forced to leave the country.

“I decided to just go down Poydras, park and see what comes of it,” Rivera says.

Her tenacity paid off when representatives at two companies agreed to meet with her. These were not full-blown interviews, but informal discussions about what she could do and what she wanted to do, Rivera says.

“Fenstermaker was one of them,” says Rivera. “They called me back for a formal interview, and that’s pretty much how that worked out.”

Although she did not have experience, Rivera says her stellar academic record and involvement in volunteer work outside the classrooms and in engineering clubs boosted her standing with potential employers.

“I had just completed my bachelor’s degree and graduated with honors,” she says. “I think a company likes to see that you are a well-rounded student who can handle different projects at the same

time because that will kind of carry through to your job.”

Now with 10 years of experience, Rivera takes the lead on projects and oversees two employees in her New Orleans office. She is also the chair of the Louisiana Civil Engineering Conference and Show, an annual professional development conference in New Orleans that attracts hundreds.

The best part of her job, she says, is seeing how her company’s projects improve the community.

“Whether it is transportation, flood fighting, just basically how it contributes to the growth and protection of the community,” she says. “That’s the most satisfying part. You have to spend a lot of time doing the design work, overseeing the construction, but you really don’t see the end result until the project is done, and you see it implemented and being used by the public.”

One of Rivera’s first projects was the more than \$32 million elevation of an existing levee in Plaquemines Parish. She worked with her mentor on the long-term assignment.

“It was good experience to see the project go from the beginning to the end,” she says. “There were a lot of lessons learned, a lot of growth for me. I think that was one of my proudest moments, completing that project.” 🌟





French internship a Francophile's dream for graduate student Kathy Bradshaw

UNIVERSITY OF NEW ORLEANS GRADUATE STUDENT Kathy Bradshaw describes herself as an irrepressible “Francophile” who fell in love with France at age 12 during a family trip to Europe.

As a middle school student in Michigan, she went against the grain to study French as her foreign language elective, although a friend chided her selection “as dumb.”

However, Bradshaw had decided that no matter what it took, she was going to learn to speak French “like a French person.”

“I love almost everything about France—the food, the architecture, the history, the shopping and especially the language,” Bradshaw says. “The things I don’t love about France are strikes, their bureaucracy and their lack of public bathrooms.”

She majored in French as an undergraduate at Kalamazoo College in Michigan, has lived in France several times over the years and has taken lessons at the Alliance Française of New Orleans.

“When I look back, the whole thing makes me laugh. I can’t believe I ever considered not learning French,” says Bradshaw. “French has become such a part of me and of who I am. That trip to France as a kid changed my life!”

Bradshaw, now fluent in French, spent last fall in Paris after being selected for a four-month internship through the French American Fund, a nonprofit organization that gives students an opportunity to study the country’s legislative process.

The organization receives support from the City of Orleans, France, the Consulate General of France in New Orleans and the New Orleans mayor’s office.

Bradshaw heard about the internship through UNO’s Division of International Education.

“They were looking for someone in a master’s program at UNO who was fluent in French and ideally had some experience in France,” Bradshaw says. “There were two of us who applied, and I was selected!”

Bradshaw, who returned to New Orleans in late December, worked in the office of French Sénateur Damien Regnard at the Sénat/Palais Bourbon; she also took a class at the renowned Paris university the Sorbonne.

The experience will be part of her master’s thesis, which is a comparison of French and American cultures, says Bradshaw, who is pursuing a master’s in English with a concentration in professional writing.

“It’s meant to be a look at the quirky things about each of our countries and to poke fun a bit on both sides,” she says.

Like the U.S. Congress, the French Parliament is composed of two chambers: the Senate and the National Assembly, or “Assemblée Nationale,” and Bradshaw was able to observe both chambers in session.

“The legislative process is not very different from that in the States,” she says. “But because I’ve never been inside the U.S. Senate or Congress, I might possibly know more now about the French system than I do about our own legislature.

“I’ve even gotten to watch them vote on a law,” she says.

Bradshaw, who worked a flexible schedule around her university class, also helped to create a database of French mayors and re-

searched countries for planned visits by the senator.

“And once, I got to join the senator for lunch. That, to me, was one of the most exciting opportunities to write home about—lunch with a senator! I’ve never had that experience before.”

Bradshaw lived in the south central part of Paris in the Cité Universitaire, an international campus of dormitory-style housing owned by a private foundation whose mission is to accommodate university students and researchers from around the globe.

She was assigned a room in the “American” house with a shared bathroom down the hall.

“I fixed up my room with lights and posters on the walls and giant maps of France,” Bradshaw says. “I even got two pet fish, named Normandy and Montpellier. Or, Norman and Monty for short.”

The campus was next to one of the city’s major train and tram lines, which made getting around easy, Bradshaw says. That is, until

French public transportation workers went on strike in December 2019 to protest proposed government changes in retirement and pension plans.

The strike has resulted in transportation slow downs and shut downs, she says.

“It was hard to get around anywhere, both on public transportation in Paris and on trains going anywhere outside of Paris,” Bradshaw says. “The trains within Paris only ran at certain times—mostly during rush hours during the week and midday on weekends ... Some people would walk for over an hour to get somewhere. Any form of public transportation was almost always packed to the gills.”

Bradshaw says she realizes that France’s “right to strike” laws were different than in the U.S. where certain federal workers are more regulated and often prohibited from striking if it would create a national emergency.

“Whereas the French have a free and legal right to strike,” Bradshaw says. “And they readily and regularly take advantage of this right to an extreme, even to the point of incapacitating the country.”

Bradshaw’s free time was spent exploring and trying to soak in as much of

the authentic nature of the country as possible.

“It’s much easier to stay within a group of friends, speak English, and basically bring America abroad with you,” Bradshaw says. “That’s understandable. But, at the same time, you’ll learn so much more if you force yourself to speak another language or try to meet the locals. Integrate.

“I’ve traveled alone all over France because I’d rather go alone than not go at all. And I still had an amazing time and saw incredible cities.”

Bradshaw says she “traveled like crazy” during her months in France and discovered new regions and cities while learning more about the country and its diverse culture.

“And probably most importantly, I’ve learned about the government of France and what makes the country tick,” she says.

Bradshaw uses pop culture to describe her excitement and appreciation for her French immersion.

“When you love a place as much as I love it here, it’s an honor to get this sort of insider’s perspective,” she says. “Kind of like the superfan-equivalent of getting invited to a party at Kim Kardashian’s house.” 🍷



FACING PAGE: University of New Orleans graduate student Kathy Bradshaw takes a seat in the conference hall at the French Sénat in Paris. THIS PAGE: Bradshaw in Paris with the Eiffel Tower in the background.



Alumnus Trenton “T-Ray” Thomas makes merry on the violin

THE RED CANTINI ELECTRIC VIOLIN is slung over his shoulder, much like a jacket. The stringed instrument, fancy though it is, is neither prop nor accessory. For Trenton Ray Thomas, known in the entertainment world as “T-Ray the Violinist,” it is a necessity.

The University of New Orleans music education graduate travels the country dispelling stereotypes by making his violin sing tunes as myriad as the venues in which he’s performing them.

“Sometimes people will see me with a violin and before they hear me, say ‘Oh, he’s going to play some classical music,’” Thomas says. “Or, they hear my name and they automatically have a preconceived notion about what it’s going to be.”

Last year Thomas was a featured artist during the Essence Festival in July and entertained at New Orleans Saints quarterback Drew Brees’ 40th birthday bash in January.

“It was just cool to be in that space and just soak it in,” Thomas says of Brees’ soiree. “It’s not like a once-in-a-lifetime thing, but you know it kind of gave me a preview of what’s to come.”

Thomas describes himself as a multi-genre violinist and his repertoire consists of Top 40, R&B, hip-hop, jazz and, yes, classical music.

“The reason I say multi-genre is for people to understand that it’s more than just one musical type that can be played on this instrument,” Thomas says. “When I was teaching, and when I do workshops, I tell kids, even though you’re playing the violin or you’re playing the clarinet or tuba, don’t let that box you in ... music is music. You have the ability to choose whatever type of music you want to convey through that instrument.”

Thomas understands the staid stereotype because he once thought the same way: the violin was for playing classical, orchestra-type music—or zydeco.

He was introduced to the violin as a fourth-grade student in Baton Rouge. He saw the twice-a-week arts enrichment visits as a ticket out of his regular class. He had never handled such an instrument and had never seen an African American man playing it, Thomas says.

“That was my first time ever seeing somebody that looked like me, play the violin and I was like, ‘This is amazing,’” says Thomas. “It originally started out as just a way to get out of class then I

started to like it.”

That “like” of the violin bloomed into passion in high school when Thomas heard contemporary jazz violinist Michael Ward’s music. Thomas and Ward’s son, Shaun Ward, were friends at Woodlawn High School.

“He brought the album to school and I listened to it,” Thomas says. “It really changed my perspective of the violin because up until that point the only music that I related to the violin was classical, zydeco, Cajun fiddler music.”

During his junior and senior year of high school, Thomas attended the New Orleans Center for Creative Arts on the weekends and knew he wanted to pursue a career in music.

When he earned a full scholarship to UNO, he enrolled in the music program.

“I met people that I’m still friends with to this day,” says Thomas, a former UNO Ambassador and member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity. “I built great relationships with people who worked there and who have graduated.”

Thomas later switched his major to music education, which allowed him to land a salaried teaching job while still playing gigs.

Five years ago, he decided to leave the classroom to pursue music fulltime after his day job conflicted with the chance to play the French Quarter Festival with the now-Grammy Award nominated band, Tank and the Bangas.

It was a difficult decision, he says, but it has paid off.

“I can see the progression of me as an artist, branding myself and being able to handle certain situations on the music side and the business side,” Thomas says.

Thomas is completing two projects that are scheduled for release this year. One is called “Unexpected Sounds Vol. 3,” which is a cover project of well-known songs featuring a violin lead.

“My goal was to get people to see the violin in a different light,” Thomas says. “It wasn’t just a background instrument it can hold a melody just as good as somebody singing or rapping or whatever the case might be.”

A debut compilation of original music called “Visionary” is set for release in the fall, Thomas says.

“It’s been a busy year,” he says. “It’s been a blessing.”

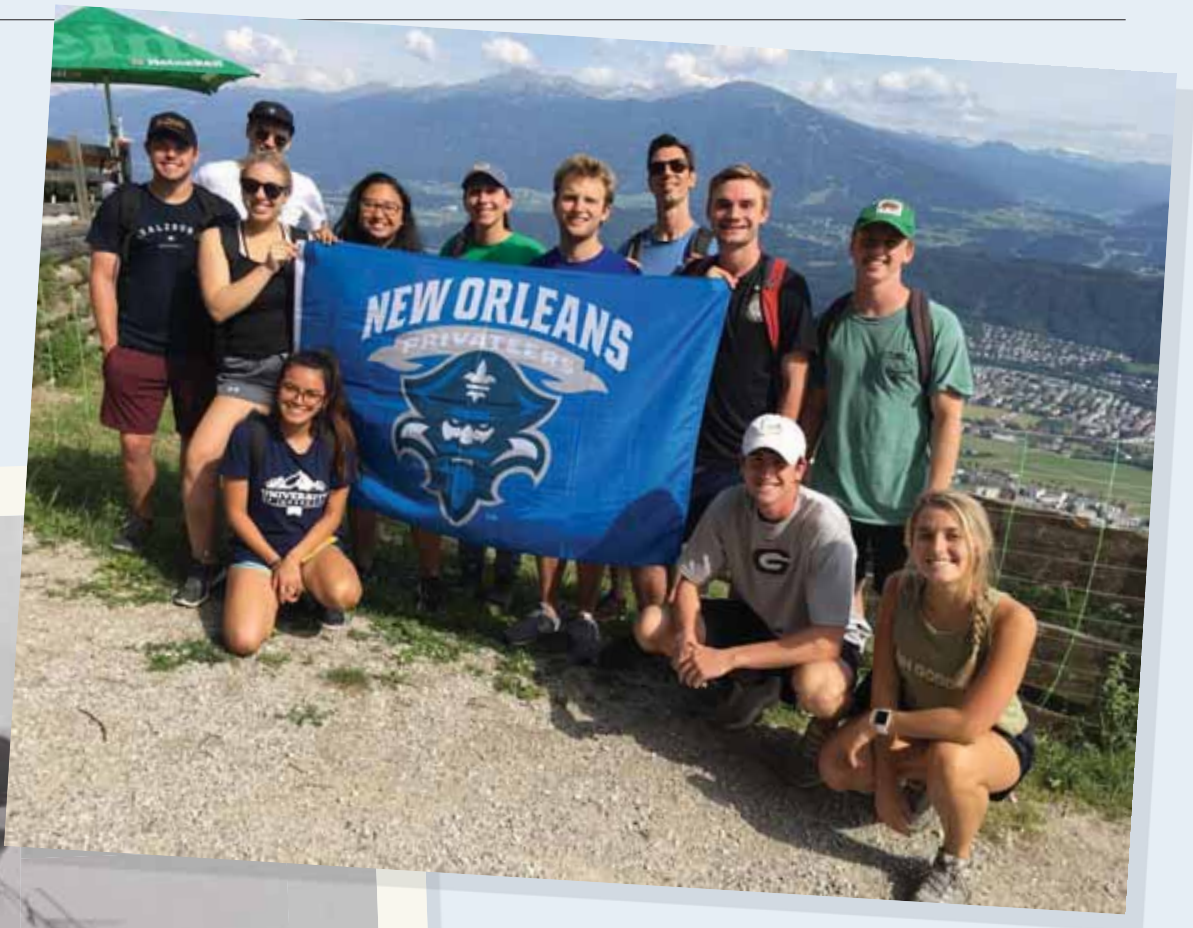


UNO-INNSBRUCK

International Summer School Turns 45

Students pose for a picture in 1976 before boarding the airplane for that inaugural summer session in Innsbruck, Austria.





IN 1976, THE INAUGURAL CLASS OF WHAT WOULD become the University of New Orleans' flagship study abroad program, stood on an airport tarmac—in front of the airplane they would soon board—and posed for posterity. Given the dramatic changes in airport security, it is fair to say replicating that photographic feat is unlikely.


UNO administrators, however, have duplicated the quality study experience of that first year, as evidenced by the 10,528 students who have participated in the UNO-Innsbruck International Summer School in Austria since 1976.

This summer, the program turns 45 years old. As further proof of the program's success and popularity, the 275 available slots were filled in less than two weeks.

"We attribute it to the way the program is run so well," says Alea Cot, assistant provost and director of international education. "It's known for its quality."

Based on feedback surveys, students also appreciate the broadness of the program, which offers up to 40 classes in multiple discipline areas, including business, history, political science, and fine arts, Cot says.

There are also guided group field trips to nearby countries, such as visiting the BMW car factory in Munich, Germany; exploring castles in Bavaria, Germany or touring the archeological museum in Bolzano, Italy.

"Study abroad is very much a value-added part of 



their undergraduate UNO experience,” Cot says. “Yes, it’s going to cost money to invest, but the dividends that you reap continues long after you return home. You reflect more and more about how you’ve grown and what you’ve learned, and how you want to do it again!”

UNO alumna Jaclyn Wagers can attest to that sentiment. She participated in the program in 2015 and 2018. Her mother, also an UNO alumna, studied at Innsbruck in the 1980s, Wagers says.

“She always shared such good memories of it,” Wagers says.

Now, Wagers has her own stories to tell.

“Innsbruck is amazing,” she says. “The city itself is beautiful; there’s a river that flows through it and mountains are all around it.”

UNO-Innsbruck is the University’s largest and oldest study abroad program.

In 1976, then-UNO history professor Gordon “Nick” Mueller, founding president of the National WWII Museum, opened the UNO International Summer School in Innsbruck.

Students live in a dormitory at the University of Innsbruck. The central location of Innsbruck, in the heart of Europe, offers easy access to many other countries, such as Italy, Switzerland and France.

In 1979, the UNO history department offered a graduate fellowship to Guenter Bischof, the first Innsbruck degree-seeking student



at UNO. By 1982, the two universities were conducting joint symposia and exchange programs.

An official partnership treaty was signed in 1983 and still governs their relationship. Today, approximately 40 students from University of Innsbruck study at UNO each year.

Irene Ziegler, the program director, arrived at UNO in 1992 from Austria as an exchange student. She met her husband, a fellow UNO student, in New Orleans and later returned to live and work in the city.

"I can share my home country and my culture with our students," Ziegler says. "It's really special."

Ziegler says there are three main reasons why she thinks the study abroad program is important: academics, international experience and independent travel.

During the six-week program, students are in class with Austrian students, sharing and hearing different perspectives in an international setting, she says. Classes are held Monday through Thursday, and students can earn up to nine credit hours.

The three-day weekends allow students to plan their own travel excursions, Ziegler says.

"A lot of learning takes place doing that as well because they are on their own and they have to figure out their trips, figure out what

to do when a train strike happens or a plane is delayed," Ziegler says. "A lot of students really like the program because of that independent travel opportunity they have."

Wagers, who graduated in 2018, says her travels included Amsterdam, Paris, Venice, Budapest, Rome and London.

"I tried to go somewhere every weekend," she says.

Wagers, the corporate sales and events manager for Reginelli's Pizzeria, says scholarships helped pay for her study abroad programs.

"I was very fortunate to have found some good scholarships that help pay for a majority of my trip," she says. "There are more organizations than not that really want to see young people studying abroad, and I was lucky enough to find that."

Wagers' advice to students looking to participate in the study abroad program is simple.

"Say yes to every opportunity," she says. "I tried to go on every field trip they offered ... Go to the lectures, they are very interesting. There were some required lectures that I wasn't interested in, but I left happy that I went because I learned so much good information." 📍

EDITOR'S NOTE: *The University of New Orleans canceled all 2020 summer study abroad programs due to the outbreak of respiratory illness caused by the novel coronavirus pandemic.*

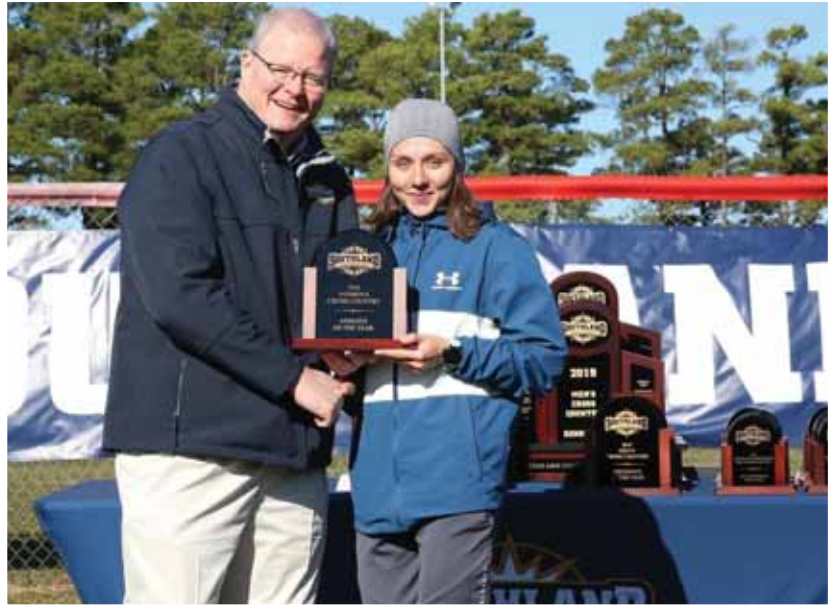




From Kyrgyzstan to New Orleans

How distance athlete Arina Kleshchukova found a home in the Big Easy after she discovered her new love: running.

BY MATT SCHAEFER PHOTOS BY SHANE BANEGAS



Arina Kleshchukova became the first Privateer to advance to the NCAA Division I National Championships, and also produced one of the best individual cross country seasons in school history.

NEW ORLEANS DISTANCE STANDOUT Arina Kleshchukova made history in November when she became the first Privateer in program history to compete at the NCAA Division I Cross Country National Championships in Terre Haute, Indiana.

Not only did the standout junior become the first Privateer to advance to the NCAA Division I National Championships, she also produced one of the best individual cross country seasons in school history.

For her efforts, Kleshchukova was named Southland Runner of the Year, Louisiana Cross Country Runner of the Year by the Louisiana Sports Writers Association and was a Southland First Team All-Academic honoree.

The story of how the native of Kyrgyzstan arrived in New Orleans, however, might be just as remarkable as her feat of qualifying for nationals.

START IN THE SPORT

Running wasn't something that Kleshchukova partook in immediately. While she was always an active child in the mountainous Central Asian country, the future distance athlete was a gymnast before her mother and father had a grand idea about seven years ago.

"My parents thought that I could do running very well so one day they asked if I wanted to try and I said, 'Yeah, why not,'" Kleshchukova says. "So then we headed down to the local stadium and asked one of the coaches there if I could join his team."

Kleshchukova started as a sprinter and →



advanced from the 100-meter event to the 200 and then the 400. The new sport didn't come easy at first but she kept working.

"That first year I remember I was struggling because I didn't like long distance," Kleshchukova says.

But she stuck with it and continued to compete, starting in local meets and moving all the way up to regional championship races.

At the Asian Championships, it was her coach's turn to ask a favor. He wondered if Kleshchukova could compete in the 800-meter.

The question was answered quite quickly. In her first time running the event, Kleshchukova won the race.

FINDING A PLACE TO COMPETE STATESIDE

Kleshchukova's goal was

to become a college student-athlete.

"Studying abroad to be a coach or runner or to get the chance to play sports in the States, it was a childhood dream for me and for my parents as well," Kleshchukova says.

She knew that coming to the United States would be her best opportunity to pursue her dream.

"The main sport back home is wrestling for sure," Kleshchukova says. "They support them and they do everything for them. But, for the track, of course, it was miserable. It was nothing. They did the minimal, but it wasn't enough."

Kleshchukova's view of distance running evolved over time.

"It's my passion," she says.

She had made up her mind. It was time for her to leave Kyrgyzstan. All she needed was

a chance.

"My father was helping me send emails to different universities, but nobody accepted my requests," Kleshchukova says. "Then I got an invitation from New Orleans. He (Adam Carlisle, the former head cross country coach) saw me in the World Junior Championships and he invited me."

Even with the offer of a college scholarship in hand, moving across the globe gave her pause, Kleshchukova says. It was going to be more than a 7,000-mile journey from her home.

"After some thought, I realized I should do it. It was a great chance to make my dreams come true."

GETTING TO NEW ORLEANS

Kleshchukova was a swift runner but that had no bearing on the speed with which her relocation paperwork was

completed.

"Proving I knew English was the main issue," Kleshchukova says. "I had to pass a few exams along with filling out all the paperwork and documentation that was required. It took probably one and a half to two years to get all my transcripts and all the paperwork sorted out."

Kleshchukova first stepped foot in New Orleans when she got off the plane in mid-August of 2018, a week before her classes began. She had no family in her new country and had never even visited the United States.

"It was hard mentally," she says. "The biggest fear or problem was I didn't have friends here and just to be alone was kind of hard. That and you have to do well at practices and workouts while at the same time being a student and all this pressure together."

She overcame her first-year



Arina Kleshchukova was named Southland Runner of the Year, Louisiana Cross Country Runner of the Year by the Louisiana Sports Writers Association and was a Southland First Team All-Academic honoree.

struggles and began to play a central role in the success of the Privateer program.

“This year I realized that I’m in the right place for sure,” Kleshchukova reflects. “I can contribute something and get a sense of fulfillment, and that feeling is really important to me. It’s important to my personal growth as well.”

INTRODUCTION TO CROSS COUNTRY

If you mentioned “cross country” in Kleshchukova’s hometown, there’s a very good chance no one would know what you are talking about.

“It’s not big back home,” Kleshchukova says. “Running in general, but especially cross country; no one knows about cross country. It’s nothing for them.”

“Nothing” quickly became “something” when Kleshchu-

kova was introduced to the sport in her first weeks on campus.

“When I came here, I didn’t know that I was going to do cross country,” Kleshchukova says. “It was the first team meeting and the coaches told me ‘So now in the United States, it’s cross country season if you don’t know and you’re going to be doing cross country.’”

“So I thought, ‘OK, it’s something new but I would like to try,’” she says. “And my first meet was terrible. It was raining the day before and there was a lot of mud.”

The meet was the Nicholls State Invitational, which was inundated by rain throughout the week leading up to the race. The conditions were less than ideal—particularly for an athlete just getting acquainted with the sport.

“It was so messy. We were literally swimming in the

mud and I remember (assistant distance coach) Clayton (O’Callaghan) telling me, ‘Arina it’s not always like this. It just happened randomly. I promise next meet will be great. It will be better for sure.’”

Kleshchukova ended her first ever season of competition with finishes of third, fourth, second, second at the Southland Championships and 18th overall at the South Central Regionals.

She trusted her coaches, which allowed her to thrive as an athlete.

“It’s very important to have a good relationship with your coach,” she says. “Communication is key for sure because if something happens I can always come to their office and talk to them. I feel comfortable. And I think we have fun with it.”

O’Callaghan even picked up a little of her native language, she says.

“It was ‘Let’s go,’” Kleshchukova says with a smile about how O’Callaghan motivates her during a race.

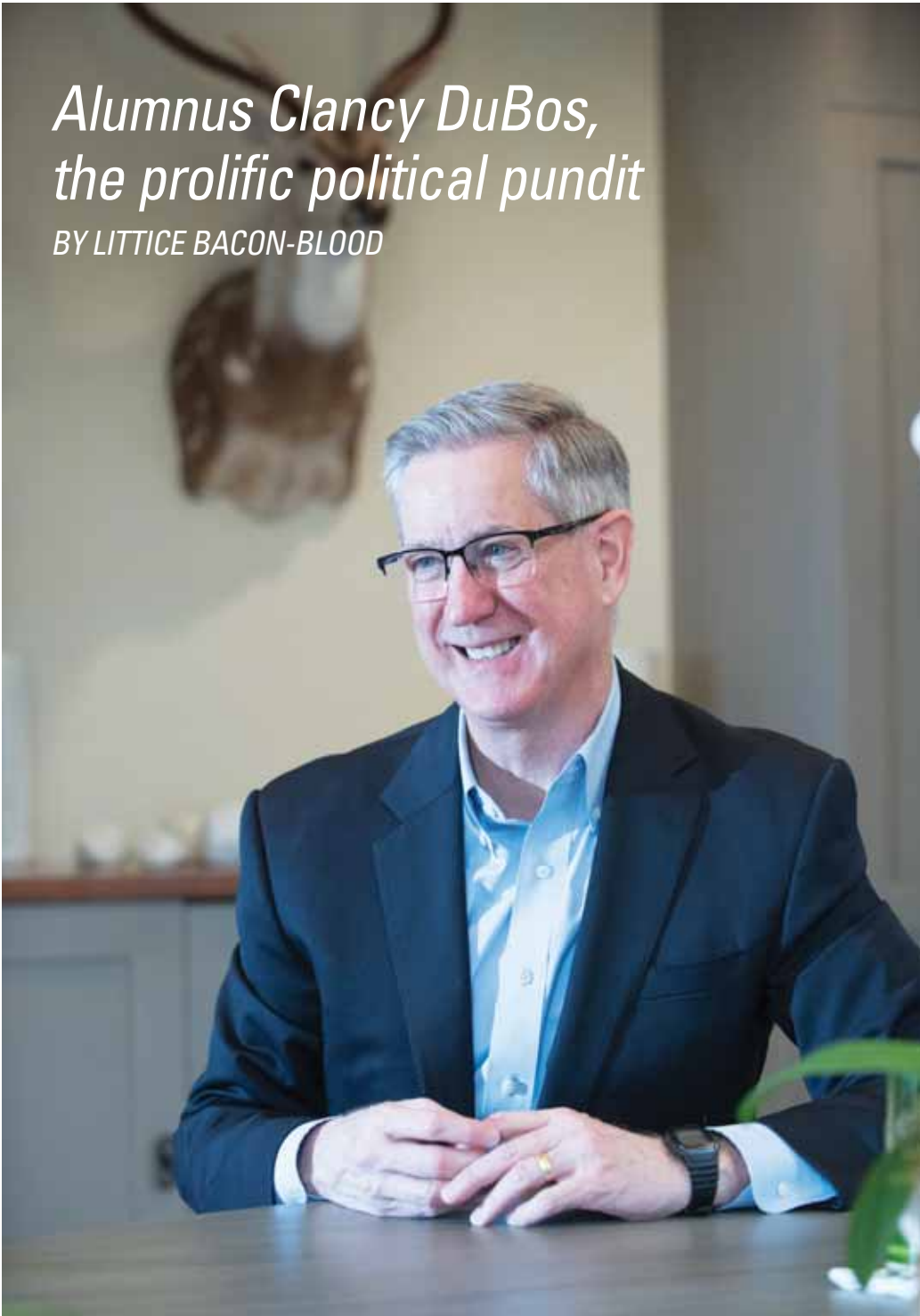
The accolades piled up for Kleshchukova in 2019: 4-time Southland Conference Athlete of the Week, winner of four of her six races, Southland Champion and Athlete of the Year to go with a 10th-place finish at the South Central Regionals that earned a First-Team All-Region selection.

She qualified to compete in the national championships, the first athlete to accomplish that feat in program history.

“It’s hard to believe for me even right now; it’s crazy,” Kleshchukova says. “At the beginning of the year it wasn’t like the main goal or the thing I had to accomplish. I think as we moved towards it, step by step, practice by practice, the dedication paid off.” 🏆

Alumnus Clancy DuBos, the prolific political pundit

BY LITTICE BACON-BLOOD



PERHAPS IT'S APROPOS that one of New Orleans' premier political pundits, Clarence James DuBos III, has a nickname that is the last name of an

infamous Jefferson Parish politician: Clancy. Just as befitting is that DuBos' dog—a schnoodle named Teddy Roosevelt—has created his own reporting gig.

From his favorite perch on a living room sofa, it is Teddy's face peering outside that a visitor sees first. He likes to sit in the window and keep an eye

on the comings and goings in his Lakeshore neighborhood, DuBos said.

"I joke that when he's good, I call him Teddy Roosevelt. When he's bad, I call him Ted Cruz," DuBos says with a laugh.

DuBos, who earned a bachelor's degree in history from the University of New Orleans, *loves* politics.

He is a political analyst for WWL-TV in New Orleans, and is the political editor and columnist at *Gambit*, the weekly newspaper he and his wife, Margo, owned for 27 years. He is a former politics reporter for *The Times-Picayune* and WDSU-TV.

During election season, DuBos is a sought-after voice to opine about candidates, the nature of political races, voter turnout or other political issues.

"I live for telling people the big picture," DuBos says. "My UNO history degree is something I use every time I sit down and write a column because I try to put things into historical context."

DuBos' career has spanned the manual typewriter era of print journalism, broadcast television before cable news and now the digital media age. He still recalls the early career advice given to him by a former UNO professor.

"He said, 'remember journalism is the front line of history,'" DuBos says. "That was putting a responsibility on me. I try to think about somebody 10, 20, even 100 years from now, reading what I've written and make sure I get it right and put it into context."

A CHARMED LIFE

DuBos credits a long list of mentors with helping his journalism career evolve from a fledging newspaper intern

assigned to rewrite news releases into the seasoned political journalist who can craft analytical columns that deconstruct complex issue, and who can deliver succinct political commentaries on the nightly TV news.

"I was taught by people who were doing it," DuBos says. "My print training and my TV training was on the job."

His reporting career has allowed him to witness firsthand some of the city's defining news moments: Reporting from the scene of the 1973 Upstairs Lounge fire with its multiple deaths; covering the administration of Dutch Morial, New Orleans first African American mayor; and advocating for New Orleans' recovery in the national news media in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

Reflecting on his journalism career leaves DuBos unequivocally grateful.

"People ask me how did you get to be where you are, and I say well, I'm kind of a real life Forrest Gump," DuBos says with a laugh. "I was just dum de dum, going through life, and I happened to be here, that's how I feel. I didn't script it. I just got really, really lucky. I've lived a charmed life."

A few incidents in DuBos' career lead him to jokingly compare his professional opportunities with the fabled Forrest who just happened to be an unwitting participant in many iconic and historical events, such as reporting the Watergate break-in and influencing Elvis' swivel hip dance moves.

Chief among them is how DuBos was able to parlay what was supposed to be a six-week college internship at *The Times-Picayune* into a full-time job that lasted throughout college and for years after he graduated.

DuBos is amazed that he—

with very little journalism experience at the time—even hired as an intern.

DuBos was working part-time for photographer Ralph Romaguera who owned a photography studio and tuxedo rental shop in New Orleans East. It was Romaguera who encouraged him to apply to the newspaper.

Romaguera knew DuBos from the summer journalism workshops that Romaguera conducted at UNO. DuBos attended the two-week sessions each year as a student at Holy Cross High School.

By the end of his internship, DuBos knew he had found his professional calling. He had fallen hard for journalism and loved the adrenaline rush brought on by breaking news and seeing his byline in print.

He approached the managing editor about staying on, offering to work weekends and nights. The internship was supposed to be just a summer job, DuBos was told initially.

He was sent to talk to the city editor.

"He said, 'You just keep showing up and as long as they don't tell you to go home, we'll just see what happens,'" DuBos says laughing. "I went all through college part-time during the semester and over Christmas break and spring break I would work full-time because I wanted the experience."

After graduating from UNO in 1976, he asked about a full-time job as a news reporter. When the city editor inquired with the business office about changing DuBos' status, he got a surprise.

"You've never officially been hired here," DuBos recalls being told. "I said, 'But my name's on the sign-in sheet!'"



The editor took care of the paperwork and formally hired DuBos.

"And that's how I got my job," DuBos says. "So when I tell you I'm Forrest Gump, I'm not lying!"

IRONY OR PREORDAINED?

DuBos remembers that his third-grade teacher made a prophetic statement about her young charge that resonated with him.

"She told another teacher, 'Clarence is going to be my writer,'" DuBos says. "She was a great teacher. The only teacher that ever called me by my proper name—Clarence. I loved her so much, I forgave her for it! I never corrected her."

Fueled by the schoolboy crush, DuBos said he was determined to prove her right.

Nevertheless, he ponders whether his career was fated at birth when he was given the nickname "Clancy" to differentiate him from his dad and grandfather. He was the fourth child—and the first son—born to Clarence Jr. and Dorothy Nunez DuBos.

As DuBos family lore goes, a hospital nurse suggested that "Clarence" was too large of a handle for such a tiny lad. She suggested "Clancy" which DuBos' mother preferred to "Clay."

"Sheriff (Frank) Clancy was a notorious sheriff in Jeffer-

son Parish who ran the casinos," DuBos says. "So, my nickname came from a politician."

Further molding young Clancy's view of his world was the fact that he grew up in a family of nine children—six girls and three boys. Out-ranked by three older sisters and outvoted by gender, DuBos jokes that

his younger self was not a fan of democracy.

"And, lo and behold, I grew up to write about politics and democracy," he says laughing. "I think it was either irony or preordained. I'll let y'all decide!"

UNO PROUD

DuBos, who attended UNO with the help of a scholarship, says he and his siblings were the first in their family to earn college degrees.

"UNO was a great university," DuBos says. "I truly got a world-class education in the history department."

His parents taught him through their Catholic faith that it is important to be charitable and to give back to help others, DuBos says. His decision to support his alma mater financially comes naturally, he says.

"To me it is easy," says DuBos. "UNO gave me a scholarship when I didn't even ask for it."

The University also created a middle class by providing an affordable college education to working class families and even people who were already working, DuBos says.

"That is something to be proud of. UNO is vital to the success of New Orleans," DuBos says. "New Orleans will not succeed as a city unless UNO is recognized for the success that it is and is nurtured to grow to be even more of a success." 🍷

ALUM NOTES

John Warner Smith

(M.F.A., '12)

John Warner Smith has been appointed Louisiana's Poet Laureate for 2019-2021 by Louisiana Gov. John Bel Edwards and the Endowment for the Humanities. The appointment makes Smith the first African American man to hold the position.

"John Warner Smith's writing captures the human experience through meaningful, passionate poetry that moves your emotions. John is not only a talented and gifted poet, he is a trailblazer who devotes himself to education and the greater good of the community," Gov. Edwards said in making the announcement. "I'm confident that John will serve our great state well."

Smith, a native of Morgan City, began writing poetry while simultaneously building a successful career as a public administrator and a banker. He now teaches English at Southern University in Baton Rouge, in addition to regularly publishing new works of poetry.

"As poet laureate, I hope to broaden awareness of how poetry enriches our lives," Smith said. "Having spent my early childhood in a public housing project and attended public schools during the tumultuous years of the Civil Rights Movement, I would especially like to bring that awareness to the youth of poorer, rural parts of Louisiana."

Smith has published four collections of poetry: "Muhammad's Mountain" (Lavender Ink, 2018), "Spirits of Gods" (University of Louisiana Lafayette Press, 2017), "Soul Be A Witness" (MadHat Press, 2016), and "A Mandala of Hands" (Kelsay Books-Aldrich Press, 2015). His fifth collection, "Out Shut Eyes: New & Selected Poems on Race in America," is forthcoming from MadHat Press.

Smith is a graduate from the University of New Orleans' Creative Writing Workshop (CWW).



LaVita Tuff (M.U.R.P., '11)

LaVita Tuff is the new associate regional director for the Anti-Defamation League's southeast office in Georgia. She will be heading up #HateFreeGA, the ADL's initiative to pass hate crimes legislation in Georgia's 2020 state legislative session.

In addition to her legislative advocacy, Tuff also will oversee the ADL's civil rights committee, among other responsibilities.

Tuff has a bachelor's degree from Tennessee State University and a master's in urban and regional planning from the University of New Orleans. She also holds a law degree from the University of Baltimore.

She has spent the last 10 years working to empower marginalized communities in Baltimore, New Orleans and Washington, D.C.



1970s

Edward O. Kennedy Jr. (B.S., '76)

Edward O. Kennedy Jr. graduated July 2019 from Florida International University – Miami with a master's degree in Latin American and Caribbean studies. It is his second master's degree from FIU. He earned a master's in business administration in 2008.

Paul Arrigo (B.S., '74)

Paul Arrigo, president and CEO of Visit Baton Rouge, was awarded the Joseph I. Giarrusso Civic Award during the 35th annual Louisiana American Italian Sports Hall of Fame gala. The award recognizes local Italian American individuals who have worked to better the quality of life for Italian Americans and their communities while excelling in their career.

Arrigo, who earned a bachelor's degree in business administration from the University of New Orleans, was noted for his

success in hospitality marketing and his leadership roles in such organizations as the Mid Atlantic Chapter of the University of New Orleans Alumni Association and the Delta Sigma Pi Professional Commerce Fraternity.

1980s

Cissy LaForge (M.Ed., '84, M.Ed., '93, Ph.D., '04)

Cissy LaForge has been named the new head of school for St. Michael Special School in New Orleans. LaForge, is currently president of the all-girls Catholic high school St. Scholastica Academy in Covington, Louisiana, and will assume the role of head of school for St. Michael on July 1.

LaForge earned a doctorate in educational leadership, a master's in educational leadership and a master's in special education and teaching from the University of New Orleans.

Larry Daniel (Ph.D., '89)

Larry Daniel is the new dean of the College of Education at the University of Texas Permian Basin in Odessa, Texas. Daniel, whose career in education spans nearly 40 years, was previously dean of the Zucker Family School of Education at

Bryan Washington (M.F.A., '17)

Bryan Washington, a graduate from the University of New Orleans' Creative Writing Workshop (CWW), is collecting some serious literary awards for his debut book, "Lot." Washington's book, published by Riverhead Publishing in March 2019, is a collection of short stories set in his hometown of Houston, Texas.

Washington is the winner of the 2019 Ernest J. Gaines Award for Literary Excellence. The national award, which carries a \$15,000 cash prize, is given annually by the Baton Rouge Area Foundation to recognize the talent of promising new African American fiction writers.

The award, now in its 13th year, was established to honor Gaines, an acclaimed novelist and native of Louisiana.

Washington is also the recipient of a 2020 PEN America Literary Award. He was awarded the Robert W. Bingham prize for debut short story collection. The award, which includes a \$25,000 prize, is given to an author whose debut collection of short stories represents "distinguished literary achievement and suggests great promise for future work."

Washington's fiction and essays have appeared in a variety of publications, including *The New York Times*, *The New York Times Magazine*, *The New Yorker*, *BuzzFeed*, *Vulture*, *The Paris Review*, *Boston Review*, and *Catapult*, where he wrote a column called "Bayou Diaries."

He was named one of *Publishers Weekly* "Writers to Watch" last year.



Craig Todaro (B.A., '90)

Craig Todaro has joined the Boston office of the Goulston & Storrs law firm as a director in the firm's real estate group. He brings nearly 20 years of experience representing institutional investors in highly complex, commercial real estate transactions and financings.

Todaro's nationwide real estate practice is concentrated on sophisticated structures such as joint ventures, recapitalizations, acquisitions and dispositions, and lender- and borrower-side mezzanine and mortgage financings.

"Craig is a great addition to our world-class real estate practice and we are thrilled to have him onboard. His broad experience handling large, multi-faceted real estate deals for institutional investors across all property types – including multi-family, hospitality, office, and retail – aligns perfectly with our core competencies," said Bill Dillon, co-managing director of Goulston & Storrs. "His vast expertise will be invaluable to our clients and elite client service teams."

Todaro received his law degree from Northeastern University School of Law in Boston, a master's in social work from Tulane University and a bachelor's degree in English from the University of New Orleans.



1990s

The Citadel in Charleston, South Carolina.

He earned a doctorate in educational administration from the University of New Orleans.

Laurie Vignaud (B.A., '81)

Laurie Vignaud has been appointed chief executive officer and president of Unity National Bank of Houston. As CEO, Vignaud will assume day-to-day leadership of the company and will join the bank's board of directors.

Vignaud previously served as the president of Capital One Bank's Community Development Corporation and senior vice president of community development banking for their South Central region.

Vignaud received a bachelor's in sociology and social welfare from the University of New Orleans, and a master's in banking from Southern Methodist University.

John T. Hanson (B.S., '90)

John T. Hanson is a managing director in BDO's Forensic Investigation and Litigation Services practice in Washington, D.C. He has almost 30 years of fraud investigations, forensic accounting, corporate compliance and ethics, and auditing experience.

Hanson earned a bachelor's degree in accounting from the University of New Orleans.

Gabriel Newman (M.S., '92, Ph.D., '95)

Gabriel Newman, director at The Neuroscience Team in Baltimore, Maryland, is being recognized by *Continental Who's Who* as a top psychologist in the field of psychology.

He holds a master's degree in psychology and a doctorate in applied psychology from the University of New Orleans.

LaSonn Porter (B.A., '92, M.Ed., '08)

LaSonn Porter is principal at Albert Cammon Middle School in St. Rose, Louisiana. She was previously an assistant principal in the St. Charles Parish Public School System.

Porter earned a bachelor's degree in education and a master's in educational leadership from the University of New Orleans.

Vanessa Reed (B.S., '92)

Vanessa Reed has been promoted to regional external affairs manager for Comerica Incorporated in Houston. She will oversee external affairs operations in Arizona, Florida, Michigan and Texas.

Reed joined Comerica Bank in 2000 as a credit specialist in the commercial real estate division, and most recently served as the Texas external affairs manager.

She holds a bachelor's degree in business management with a concentration in accounting from the University of New Orleans.

Patrica Snyder (Ph.D., '92)

Patrica Snyder of Gainesville, Florida has been appointed to a four-year term to the Children's Trust of Alachua County in Florida. Snyder was appointed by Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis in February.

She is the director of the Anita Zucker Center for Excellence in Early Childhood Studies at the University of Florida. Snyder earned a doctorate in early childhood special education from the University of New Orleans.

Rosalie Mortillaro (B.A., '94)

The New Orleans Ernest N. Morial Convention Center has named Rosalie Mortillaro as director of marketing and communications. Mortillaro will head the creative services unit and oversee the planning, development, design and production of all marketing strategies for internal and external customers. She holds a bachelor's degree in communications from the University of New Orleans.

Michael D. Nelson (B.S., '96)

Michael Nelson has been named vice president of digital strategy and technology for Cultural Vistas in New York and will drive the company's strategic and cross-company use of technology. Nelson holds an MBA degree from Champlain College in Burlington, Vermont and a bachelor's degree in computer science from the University of New Orleans.

Nyka Scott (B.S., '96, M.B.A., '17)

Nyka Scott, an attorney with Baker Donelson Bearman Caldwell & Berkowitz law firm in New Orleans, has been appointed vice chairwoman of the New Orleans pro bono committee. Scott advises clients on legal and policy matters in the disaster recovery, energy and maritime industries, as well as providing public policy advice.

Scott earned a bachelor's degree in general studies and a master's degree in business ad-

DaShawn DeCou Cox (B.A., '02, M.A., '14)

DaShawn DeCou Cox, a senior program specialist with the U.S. Department of Agriculture in Hampton, Georgia, competed with her sisters on the nationally televised game show "Family Feud." The episodes aired Feb. 19th, 24th and 25th. The survey says the sisters and their New Orleans flavor were a huge hit!

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

UNO alumna DaShawn DeCou Cox, (far left) pictured with her sisters and "Family Feud" game show host Steve Harvey.



ministration from the University of New Orleans. She holds a law degree from Loyola University.

Brandon Hole (B.S., '98)

Brandon Hole has been hired as the managing director for CIFC LLC's high-yield bond team in New York. He joins CIFC from Millennium Management where he was a senior analyst. Hole earned a bachelor's degree in business administration from the University of New Orleans.

Mark Rapp (M.F.A., '98)

Mark Rapp, trumpeter and founder of ColaJazz.com, headlined the 2019 Ashby and Friends Christmas Concert, an annual benefit for Greenwood, South Carolina. Rapp, named an Ambassador of Jazz for South Carolina by the state's House of Representatives, earned a master's in music with an emphasis in jazz from the University of New Orleans.

Brice Howard (B.S., '98)

Brice Howard is the new president of American Bank and Trust, which is based in Covington, Louisiana. Howard had been the chief lending officer at the bank since 2017.

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

2000s

Annette LeBlanc (B.S., '00)

Annette LeBlanc is the chief financial officer for the New Orleans Area Habitat for Humanity. She brings 30 years of financial leadership, having held positions with Second Harvest Food Bank of Greater New Orleans and the Archdiocese of New Orleans.

LeBlanc holds a bachelor's degree in accounting and a minor in management from the University of New Orleans.

Maurice Carlos Ruffin (B.A., '00, M.F.A., '13)

New Orleans attorney and novelist Maurice Carlos Ruffin has been selected as the 2020-2021 John and Renée Grisham Writer in Residence at the University of Mississippi in Oxford. His debut novel, "We Cast A Shadow," was released in 2019 to widespread acclaim.

Ruffin earned a bachelor's degree in English and an MFA in creative writing from the University of New Orleans.

Kelly Theard (B.A., '00)

Kelly Theard, head of the construction department at New Orleans based law firm Deutsch Kerrigan, has been elected as the law firm's most recent managing partner. Theard is the first female elected to the firm as managing partner in the firm's 94-year history.

She holds a bachelor's degree in communications from the University of New Orleans and a law degree from Louisiana State University.

Emily Cassidy (B.A., '01)

Emily Cassidy, a thoracic surgeon, focusing on the chest organs, including the lungs, esophagus, trachea and thymus, has joined Our Lady of the Lake Physician Group network of providers. Cassidy received an undergraduate degree from the University of New Orleans and obtained a medical degree from the LSU School of Medicine in New Orleans.

Lacey Merrick Conway

(M.B.A., '04)

Lacey Merrick Conway has been appointed chief executive officer of Latter & Blum, Inc., one of the largest and oldest, full service real estate companies in Louisiana. The company has more than 3,000 agents in offices located in Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas.

Conway began her career at Latter & Blum in 2005, and has assumed increasing responsibilities since that time. She was named principal broker in 2017 and will continue to serve in that capacity.

Conway holds a certified commercial investment member designation, awarded to top professionals in commercial and investment real estate, and holds real estate licenses in Louisiana, Texas and Mississippi. She serves on the boards of United Way SE Louisiana and Greater New Orleans, Inc. and is active in numerous community and philanthropic efforts.

Conway, who graduated from Boston University and earned a master's in business administration from the University of New Orleans, succeeds her father, Bob Merrick, who had served in the position since 1986. Merrick will continue in his role as company chairman and owner.



Albert Allenback (B.A., '16)

Albert Allenback, saxophone and flute player, is a member of the Grammy nominated New Orleans band Tank and the Bangas.

Allenback has been a band member since 2014 when he arrived in New Orleans to study jazz at the University of New Orleans.

The band, formed in 2012 by lead singer and poet Tarriona "Tank" Ball, was nominated in the Best New Artist category for the 2020 Grammy Awards. The group has performed to sold out crowds at major shows and festivals around the country and was the unanimous judge's choice out of more than 6,000 entries for NPR's "Tiny Desk Contest" in 2017.

The group released their first major label album, "Green Balloon," in 2019.

Allenback earned a bachelor's degree in music from the University of New Orleans.

Members of Tank and the Bangas: (L-R) Norman Spence, Tarriona "Tank" Ball, Joshua Johnson and UNO alumni Albert Allenback.



Ebonee Shaw (M.B.A., '03)

Ebonee Shaw is development director for the Walker Scottish Rite Clinic and program director for Kids Rock Cancer at Maryville University in St. Louis, Missouri. She was recently featured in *Gazelle Magazine* for her fundraising prowess.

Shaw, who got her nonprofit career start at Catholic Charities New Orleans, holds a bachelor's degree in finance from Xavier University in New Orleans and an MBA from the University of New Orleans.

Adam R. Smith (M.B.A., '04)

Adam R. Smith has been named vice president and senior commercial relationship manager for Home Bank's North Shore market in Covington. He was vice president and relationship manager at Chase Bank and has 18 years of banking experience. Smith has a bachelor's degree in business administration from the University of Mississippi

and holds a master's degree in business administration with a concentration in finance from the University of New Orleans.

David Bowser (M.A., '04)

David Bowser is the communications and public relations manager representing the Durham County Sheriff's Office in Durham, North Carolina. He holds a master's degree in communications from the University of New Orleans.

Sonja S. Mongar (M.F.A., '04)

Sonja Mongar of Stuart, Florida was awarded a prestigious Royal Palm Literary Award by the Florida Writers Association, Inc. for her novel, "Two Spoons of Bitter, A story of love, betrayal and redemption."

The novel also received the association's Gold Award for published fiction.

Mongar earned an MFA in creative writing from the University of New Orleans.

Fernis LeBlanc (M.B.A., '07)

Fernis LeBlanc is the chief executive officer for Ochsner St. Mary in Morgan City, Louisiana. He previously served as chief operating officer of Ochsner's Bayou Region, overseeing operations, quality and patient safety.

LeBlanc joined Ochsner in 2015 and has been instrumental in growing key services, increasing quality, safety and patient engagement scores.

He holds a master's in business administration from the University of New Orleans.

Emily Kain (M.S., '06)

Emily Kain has been promoted to chief human resources officer at Stewart Title in Houston. In her new role Kain will be responsible for overseeing the people side of the business, focusing on attracting, retaining and engaging associates worldwide.

Kain holds a bachelor's

degree in accounting from Louisiana State University and a master's degree in accounting, with a concentration in internal audit, from the University of New Orleans.

Jason Saul (B.S., '08)

Jason Saul is the news director at WYSO public radio, the NPR station in Yellow Springs, Ohio. Saul, who earned a degree in urban studies and planning, was the editor of the campus newspaper, *The Driftwood*, and worked at WWNO radio while attending the University of New Orleans. He was previously news director at a Seattle, Washington radio station.

Luke LaRocca (M.B.A., '09)

Attorney Luke LaRocca has been named a partner in the New Orleans law firm of Simon, Peragine, Smith & Redfearn LLP. He concentrates his practice in commercial litigation, construction law and employment

matters.

LaRocca received his juris doctorate from Loyola University New Orleans College of Law and his master's in business administration from the University of New Orleans.

Yelena Rivera (B.S., '09)

Yelena Rivera, a civil engineer at C. H. Fenstermaker & Associates, L.L.C. in New Orleans, was named The American Society of Civil Engineer Outstanding Young Civil Engineer in Louisiana. The annual award is given in recognition of professional achievements, leadership and exceptional dedication and service to the profession. Rivera earned a bachelor's degree in engineering from the University of New Orleans.

Jennifer S. Williams (B.A., '05)

Jennifer Williams has earned a \$25,000 Milken Educator Award in recognition of her leadership and outstanding contributions as a teacher.

Williams is among a select few educators to receive the award.

Williams, who obtained a bachelor's degree in elementary education, teaches sixth grade English at John Q. Adams Middle School in Metairie, Louisiana.

The 14-year classroom veteran was surprised with the award—described as the “Oscars of Teaching”—during a school assembly in November attended by the Louisiana Education Superintendent John White and Milken Educator Awards founder Lowell Milken.

“Outstanding teachers like Jennifer Williams ignite a passion for learning in their students and create a nurturing environment for them to thrive,” Milken said. “Her leadership plays an important role in affording all students quality educational opportunities.”

Williams was applauded for, among many things, her engaging teaching style. For example, her classroom includes flexible workstations: exercise balls near the computer writing research center, a large carpet where students spread out their materials and work on assignments, and a corner with easy chairs and coffee tables where students collaborate and discuss books and writing projects.



Jennifer Williams with her students.

2010s

Danielle Blasko (M.F.A., '10)

Danielle Blasko is the new executive director for The Little Traverse Bay Humane Society in Harbor Springs, Michigan. Blasko has an undergraduate degree in creative writing from the University of Detroit Mercy and a master's degree in fine arts from the University of New Orleans.

Gene Frazier (M.P.A., '10)

Gene Frazier, the superintendent of airport facilities management at the Tallahassee International Airport, was recognized as one of Airport Business Magazine's 40 under 40 recipients. Frazier leads a division of more than 20 employees and oversees an annual operating budget of more than \$3 million. He earned a master's in public administration from the University of New Orleans.

Ashlyn Mehlhaff (B.S., '10)

Ashlyn Mehlhaff has been named executive director of the First Tee of South Central Wisconsin, the local chapter of the national organization whose mission is teaching young people life skills and how to play golf. Mehlhaff holds a bachelor's degree in marketing from the University of New Orleans.

Frank Kerner (B.S., '14)

Frank Kerner, content and digital strategist at Pelican State Credit Union, has spoken at Facebook's Boost Your Business events and national webinars for the Credit Union National Association and Pelican State Credit Union. He was recognized globally for innovative marketing efforts in the financial services industry.

Kerner earned a bachelor's degree in marketing from the University of New Orleans.

Christy Cappel (B.S., '17)

Christy Cappel, a tax auditor for the Louisiana Department of Revenue, has earned her CPA license. She earned a bachelor's degree in accounting from the University of New Orleans.

Christopher Ganuchau (B.S., '17)

Christopher Ganuchau is project manager for Incat Crowther in Lafayette, Louisiana. Incat Crowther is a diversified marine design business with offices in Sydney, Australia; Lafayette and Winchester, United Kingdom.

Ganuchau earned a degree in naval architecture and marine engineering from the University of New Orleans.

Alex Augillard (B.A., '18)

Alex Augillard was the production manager for the 2019 New Orleans Film Festival. Augillard earned a bachelor's degree in sociology from the University of New Orleans.

Jaclyn Wagers (B.S., '18)

Jaclyn Wagers is the corporate sales and events manager for Reginelli's Pizzeria in New Orleans. Wagers earned a bachelor's degree in hotel, restaurant and tourism administration from the University of New Orleans.

Sean Hickey (Ph.D., '19)

Sean Hickey has accepted a position as a senior lecturer in organic chemistry at Wayne State University in Detroit. He earned a doctorate in chemical education research from the University of New Orleans in summer 2019.



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The University of New Orleans Foundation has recently partnered with FreeWill to give all of our supporters the opportunity to write a legally valid will and make a gift for the future of UNO that costs nothing today. A gift in your will could provide a quality, affordable education for generations of students to come.

The service is 100% free whether or not you choose to include a gift, but we hope you

consider creating a legacy with UNO. You can also use the tools to start your will and document your wishes before visiting an attorney.

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To learn more, contact:

Eric Balukonis (University Advancement)
ebalukonis@unofoundation.org or
(504) 280-6159



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THEN AND NOW



A Truckload of Fun

FASHION AND STYLES MIGHT COME and go, but the fun of a UNO campus parade is timeless! Check out the flared-leg pants, the butterfly collar and the flat-bill cap in that bottom photograph. The truck itself is filled to capacity with exuberant students as it chugs pass the University Center.

Fast forward to the 21st Century and students are still enjoying the parade—albeit they are a bit more safety conscious! UNO's Social Media Coordinator Avery Gray captured these truckers as they motored down Founders Road as part of the 2020 Krewe of UNO parade "2 Infinity & Bey0nd!"

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