

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

SILVER & BLUE

SPRING 2021

PHILANTHROPIC FOODIE

For University of New Orleans student Samira Bechara, charity starts at home — specifically in her kitchen where she prepares gourmet meals for nonprofit causes.



EARL K

FIRST LOOK

This Mardi Gras banner was one of the few signs of Carnival 2021 on campus as the Krewe of UNO took its festivities virtual with a shoebox parade that was streamed live on Facebook.



EARL K LONG



LONG LIBRARY

Happy Mardi Gras

LIBRARY

PRIVATEER







Alumna April Dupré, founder of Footprints to Fitness, leads a yoga session at Audubon Park during a collaboration with the National Park Service.

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DEAR ALUMNI AND FRIENDS:

AS WE START TO MOVE OUT OF THE RAVAGES OF A GLOBAL PANDEMIC, I HAVE TRIED to remind myself to reflect on what we have endured and, more importantly, learned as a university community. The effects of the coronavirus will be long lasting and, in some cases, everlasting. There is plenty we will want to forget. Yet my hope is that we don't resume our pre-pandemic lives, oblivious to the wisdom we have gained. This is our challenge as resilient people and members of a resilient community. Determination and tenacity are part of our institutional DNA. UNO was the first—and only—New Orleans university to reopen during the fall 2005 semester following Hurricane Katrina. There are moments of opportunity that only present themselves after a crisis. I believe that we are approaching one of those moments.

In March 2020, our faculty and staff did the unimaginable. In a matter of days, they moved all of our courses online and instruction continued remotely. Student support services went virtual as well. Did everything go smoothly? Of course not. In the face of such swift and drastic change, our employees and students encountered daily challenges. But we proved we could do it. We solved problems, acquired new skills, became acquainted with new technology and figured it out. That kind of entrepreneurial and nimble mindset should stay with us long after the pandemic has receded. Higher education institutions are notoriously slow to change. In this case, we did not have a choice. The change was thrust upon us, and we still had to serve our students. So we did. But the lessons we learned will allow us to do this much better into the future.

We expect our fall 2021 semester will look much more like a traditional semester on campus. We will have an abundance of in-person classes and many of our customary activities and events will return. However, in my view, it would be a mistake to try to replicate the

University of New Orleans that existed before March 2020. The pandemic taught us that we need to accommodate the lives of our students through remote and hybrid learning. Access to a UNO education will increase if we are flexible about how we deliver instruction. Many of our students have jobs, children or caregiver responsibilities. They will unquestionably benefit from their UNO degree and the pathway to a career that it provides if we give them options and support along the way.

My pledge to you is that I will take my own advice. I will contemplate the upheaval we navigated together, examine where we triumphed and where we failed, and try to become a more effective leader. I firmly believe that we will emerge a stronger and more strategic university, one that will make you even prouder to be part of our community.

UNO Proud,
John Nicklow
PRESIDENT

 @UNOPresidentJN  @unopresident



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THE UNIVERSITY of NEW ORLEANS

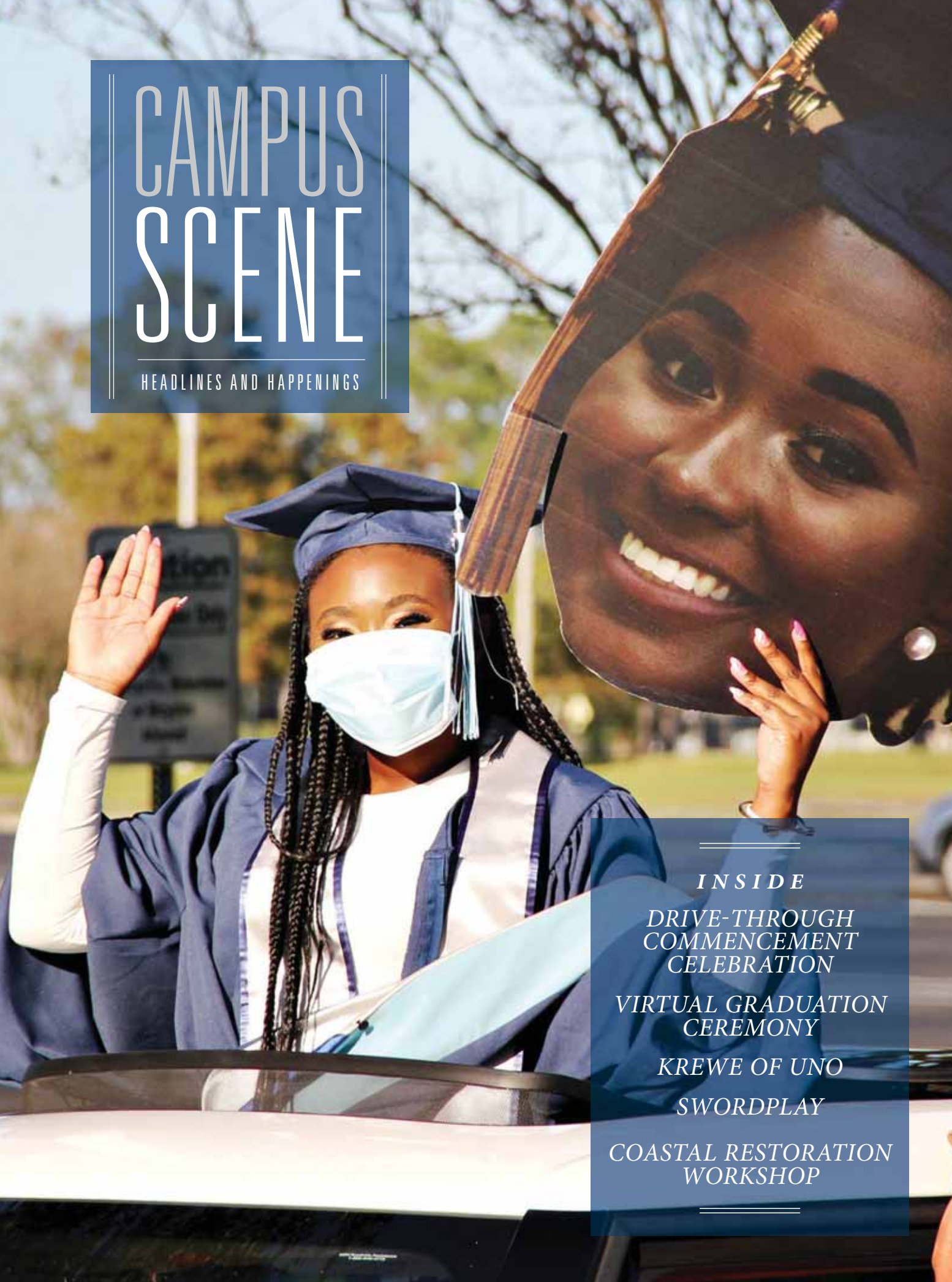
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CAMPUS SCENE

HEADLINES AND HAPPENINGS



INSIDE

*DRIVE-THROUGH
COMMENCEMENT
CELEBRATION*

*VIRTUAL GRADUATION
CEREMONY*

KREWE OF UNO

SWORDPLAY

*COASTAL RESTORATION
WORKSHOP*

DRIVE-THROUGH COMMENCEMENT CELEBRATION

In November, the University of New Orleans hosted a drive-through commencement celebration on campus for summer and fall 2020 graduates.

As the processional of vehicles passed slowly, with enthusiastic waves, honking horns and thumbs up signs from graduates and their relatives, President John Nicklow handed each graduate a souvenir box of UNO paraphernalia.





VIRTUAL GRADUATION CEREMONY

Actor Harry Shearer shared the irony of life, luck and preparation in his 10-minute commencement address at UNO's fall 2020 virtual ceremony held on December 12.

Shearer, who maintains a residence in New Orleans, has served as one of the principal voice actors on "The Simpsons" for the show's entire 31-year run, including voicing the role of Mr. Burns.

In closing out his address, Shearer addressed graduates in the famed voice of "The Simpsons" character Mr. Burns, telling them that they were "excellent."

President John Nicklow addressed the class of 2020 during the fall commencement ceremony while standing on campus near the fountain at the Robert Merrick/Latter & Blum Patio.

Approximately 970 students participated in the ceremony, which was streamed live on YouTube, and included a roll call of graduates and Shearer's keynote address.

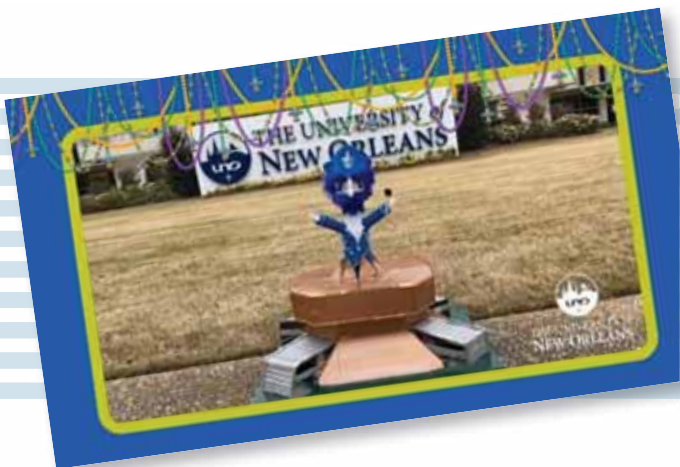


KREWE OF UNO

The Krewe of UNO rolled virtually in 2021 in keeping with the City of New Orleans coronavirus restrictions on Mardi Gras parades.

This year's event was a shoebox float parade that streamed live on Facebook with host commentators LeeAnne Sipe, director for the Office of Student Involvement and Leadership and Mike Esordi, UNO's associate director for web strategy.

The theme of the parade was "Oh, the Places You Can't Go!" and featured colorfully decorated shoeboxes created by students, UNO campus organizations and people from the community.





WORDPLAY

En Garde! Students in film and theatre professor David Hoover's course "Combat for Stage and Film" practice the art of swordplay.



COASTAL RESTORATION WORKSHOP

(RIGHT) Dinah Maygarden (pink cap), director of the UNO Coastal Education Program at the Pontchartrain Institute for Environmental Sciences (PIES), led a coastal restoration field workshop as part of a partnership with the National Wildlife Federation New Orleans.

(ABOVE) Community leaders and legislators traveled by boat to a critical marsh restoration area near Lake St. Catherine to learn more about plans for restoration and ways in which to support and protect the project area.

NEWS & EVENTS

PRESIDENT NICKLOW RECOGNIZED AS NCAA CHAMPION OF DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

UNIVERSITY OF NEW Orleans President John Nicklow was one of five individuals recognized as Champions of Diversity and Inclusion by the NCAA Minority Opportunities and Interests Committee in February. The honorees are selected for their work in supporting ethnic minorities and other underrepresented groups and individuals.

The honor was created in 2015 to recognize those who have a commitment to advocating for and advancing others in inclusive efforts around athletics. In addition to Nicklow, the other honorees are Tommy Amaker, Harvard men's basketball coach; Jen Fry, community supporter with JenFryTalks; Allen Green, Auburn athletics director; and Jacqie McWilliams, commissioner of the Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association.

Individuals were nominated based on how they are influencers in promoting diversity and inclusion, how they are assisting in diversifying pipeline opportunities in their senior or influential position, how they are providing support to underrepresented populations, and their consistency in supporting diversity and inclusion initiatives.

"I am incredibly humbled

by this recognition. I am grateful to the NCAA, and I congratulate my fellow honorees," Nicklow said. "I share this honor with members of the University of New Orleans team.

"This is a reflection of our campus community's collective efforts to ensure that diversity, equity and inclusion are more than just something we talk about—it's something we value and that we live each day. As I tell students frequently, some of the most important lessons I've learned throughout my life are from those who are different from me. Diversity brings new ideas, cultures and experiences to the table to create better outcomes and solutions for us all."

Nicklow, who became President at UNO in 2016, has led an effort to make the campus community more diverse and has focused on transformative actions to help students feel more welcome. He and his staff have improved hiring practices and conducted climate surveys and listening sessions to discuss key issues and bridge gaps.

In addition to employing a chief diversity officer, the



University also hired a diversity officer focused specifically on students. Nicklow created the President's Award for Advancement in Diversity and has built new community partnerships that focus on equity and access.

"As we move through this challenging time in our country's history, the committee wanted to recognize five people who lead from different seats within and around college athletics," said Dena Freeman-Patton, chair of the NCAA Minority Opportunities and Interests Committee and deputy athletics director/chief operating officer at the University of

New Orleans. "They have been champions for diversity and inclusion throughout their careers and continue to do what is right in 2021. They have been inspirations to our student-athletes and administrators in athletics, and they play a big part in molding our industry and our country. MOIC applauds them for their intentions and bravery in such unprecedented times. Leading with conviction and courage moves us all to a better place in athletics and certainly as we look to the future."

The winners will be formally recognized at the 2021 Inclusion Forum, which will be held virtually June 2-4.

UNO chemistry professor Phoebe Zito uses the inductively coupled plasma triple quadrupole mass spectrometer—the ICP-QQQ.



UNO'S CHEMISTRY DEPARTMENT ACQUIRES NEW MASS SPECTROMETER CAPABLE OF ADVANCED SAMPLE ANALYSIS

THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW Orleans' chemistry department has acquired a new research tool that allows researchers to analyze and identify trace samples with more accuracy.

The state-of-the-art tool comes with a \$1 million price tag and a name that's a mouthful to say. The inductively coupled plasma triple quadrupole mass spectrometer coupled with an interchangeable excimer laser ablation system is the only one in the Southeast United States.

The closest machine with similar capabilities is at Auburn University, but it doesn't have the triple quadrupole, UNO

chemistry professor Phoebe Zito says. She refers to the tool by its initials: ICP-QQQ.

"The triple quadrupole is used to separate two overlapping elemental signals which makes it more sensitive. The ICP-QQQ can determine low concentrations of elements in complex samples," Zito says. "The laser accessory allows for the detection of elements on solid surfaces like ancient pottery, fish bones, rocks and teeth making it extremely versatile."

Zito uses the human nose to explain the machine's advanced abilities to sift, measure, categorize, track and identify

sample elements.

Think about being near a neighborhood that has a bakery that makes king cakes, Zito explains. The more sensitive your sense of smell, the farther you can be from the bakery and still smell it, she says. Once you detect the smell, you can trace it and as the smell becomes strongest, you will find the bakery.

"Our new instrument is like the nose," Zito says. "For example, our instrument can detect and trace small concentrations of metals, such as arsenic, lead, mercury that can be toxic to human and organisms, to its source."

"There are many environmental applications ... An anthropologist will use this instrument to measure the elements in pottery to determine how long they were in the ground prior to excavation. A biologist will use it to measure the concentration of calcium in reptile egg shells to obtain information about their growth patterns," Zito says.

For Zito, whose research focuses on detecting extremely small concentrations of

nanometals in environmental samples such as soil and seawater, the ICP-QQQ is necessary in order to get the sensitivity needed to detect and measure nanometals.

The new instrument is able to detect and measure near miniscule concentrations in a liquid or gas sample.

"It is capable of measuring down to femtomolar which is extremely sensitive," Zito says. "It would be equivalent to detecting 100 drops of food coloring in an Olympic sized pool."

The instrument was funded from a major research instrumentation grant through the National Science Foundation and will be housed in the Chemical Sciences Building as part of the Chemical Analysis & Mass Spectrometry (CAMS) facility at UNO.

"We want to bring researchers from many disciplines together to use this cutting-edge technology," Zito says. "Furthermore, it will provide underrepresented students a chance to use advanced analytical instruments even if it's not in their field."



Zito explains how the machine is used to detect elements on solid surfaces.

PROFESSOR PAT AUSTIN RECEIVES LIGHT UP FOR LITERACY HUMANITIES AWARD

PAT AUSTIN, FORMER professor of children's literature and curator of the University of New Orleans Children's and Young Adult Library, has received the Light Up for Literacy award from the Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities. The LEH announced the award on Dec. 3.

The award, which is presented in partnership with the State Library of Louisiana's Center for the Book, honors individuals who have made significant and lasting contributions to literacy efforts in the state.

After 16 years as an elementary school teacher, Austin earned a doctorate in curriculum and instruction from the University of New Orleans, where she went on to serve as a faculty member for 26 years. She retired from UNO in 2020.

Austin, who has said one of her all-time favorite activities is reading to children, served as curator of UNO's Children's and Young Adult Library for two decades and mentored countless student library volunteers and librarians in training. She has authored more than 40 articles in educational journals, hundreds of book reviews and a picture book, "The Cat Who Loved Mozart."

Over the course of her more than 40-year career as an educator, Austin helped develop the literacy teaching skills of thousands of Louisiana educators.

"Dr. Austin is truly a woman of the book and I can't imagine a more fitting candidate for this award," University of New Orleans education professor Brian



Beabout says. "The most impressive element of Pat's commitment to building literacy awareness is her unmatched record of community service.

"Dr. Austin served as the curator of the UNO Children's and Young Adult Library for 20 years. She has worked with publishers to secure thousands of books, process them and add them to the library's collection."

Austin trained student library volunteers and worked with her students to create library collections for Hynes Charter School, Medard Nelson Elementary School and Morris Jeff Community School whose library collections had to be completely re-created after Hurricane Katrina, Beabout says.

Michelle Douglas, chief executive officer at Hynes Charter School, credits Austin for the academic achievement that 91% of her students are reading at or above grade level.

"Her outreach has impacted

thousands of students in the area as she mentors, educates and certifies educators who make a huge impact on our diverse region," Douglas says.

"Meanwhile, at Hynes, our students are such successful readers because they have equitable access to our amazing collection of books and materials."

Most recently, Austin created the collection for the newly opened Children's Museum in City Park. She also has led African-American literature read-ins and Best New Books for Children sessions at dozens of schools across south Louisiana.

"For 11 years, she sponsored the Literary Lagniappe, a quarterly newsletter that provided undergraduate and graduate students the opportunity to publish reviews of recently released children's books," Beabout says.

Pat Austin was professor of children's literature at the University of New Orleans and a faculty member for 26 years. She retired in 2020.

In addition to the literacy award, the LEH announced eight other Humanities Awards recipients on Dec. 3. Each award is selected by a special committee made up of experts in the field and LEH staff and board members.

Austin, along with the other award recipients, will be highlighted in *64 Parishes* magazine, published by the LEH, and they will be recognized during the Bright Lights Awards ceremony.

The LEH Humanities Awards offer a collective opportunity to celebrate all the humanities have to offer and honor those who have made great contributions to the understanding of Louisiana's history and culture.



The master's degree in cybersecurity and operations is designed to provide a deep conceptual understanding of the modern cybersecurity landscape and advanced practical skills in a broad range of areas.

UNO OFFERS NEW MASTER'S DEGREE IN CYBERSECURITY AND OPERATIONS

The University of New Orleans is now offering a master's degree in cybersecurity and operations. The program is designed to provide graduates with both a deep conceptual understanding of the modern cybersecurity landscape and advanced practical skills in a broad range of areas, such as digital forensics, malware analysis, network penetration testing and defense.

The degree curriculum is flexible and offers opportunities for students with a variety of academic and work backgrounds to specialize in cybersecurity. This includes ones with non-STEM undergraduate degrees and working professionals, says Mahdi Abdelguerfi, University of New Orleans computer science professor and department chair.

Relevant experience also can be used to satisfy specific academic prerequisites, Abdelguerfi says.

The new degree integrates with the University's bachelor's degree in computer science to allow students with strong academic performance to enroll in the accelerated master of science and complete both degrees in five years, Abdelguerfi says.

The program is part of the Department of Computer Science and is supported by the UNO Cyber Center, a research unit recognized by the Louisiana Board of Regents and NSA/DHS National Center in Cyber Defense Research.

"Graduates have a wide variety of employment choices in both private industry and government agencies; nearly every modern organization requires cybersecurity expertise," Abdelguerfi says. "Career options include security analyst, malware expert, forensic investigator, penetration tester, security consultant, security architect, chief information security officer among many."

Alumni of the department have established cyber careers in local and international companies such as Google, Amazon, Microsoft and Facebook, as well as banks, software companies and a variety of government contractors, Abdelguerfi says.

Others have joined federal agencies and security contractors, such as Booz Allen Hamilton and Lockheed Martin, to directly contribute to the nation's cyber defense, he says.

UNO Student Affairs Earns 2021 NASPA Excellence Gold Award

The University of New Orleans has earned the 2021 NASPA Excellence Gold Award for its student orientation program, called MAMBO. The four-day orientation is designed to immerse new freshmen in the Privateer experience.

The acronym stands for Move-In, Academic preparation, Making memories, Building connections and Orientation. LeeAnne Sipe, interim assistant dean for Student Affairs, coordinates the program along with April Gremillion, who is assistant director for New Student Experience.

"The University of New Orleans MAMBO Week Program has proven to be an outstanding program that contributes to the success of students and the continued growth of the student affairs profession," National Association of Student Personnel Administrators said in announcing the award.

UNO Student Melanie Casey's Team Wins MIT Hackathon

University of New Orleans healthcare management graduate student Melanie Casey was part of a five-member team that placed first in MIT's healthcare hackathon challenge, which sought ways to deliver healthcare in a more equitable fashion.

The theme of the competition, held virtually Oct. 16-18 because of the coronavirus pandemic, was "Hacking Racism in Healthcare."

Casey's team, Hook, Line and Linker, focused on bringing communities and healthcare resources together as part of the social justice and policy track.

The team's idea centered on using aggregate data to focus on community need and redirecting services to the most needed populations using geo-mapping software, Casey says.

The hackathon participants form impromptu multi-disciplinary teams of up to seven people who collaborate, research and then address effects of structural racism in healthcare in the United States over the two-day competition. The goal, according to organizers, is to connect teams to tools, resources and supporters that will foster motivated partnerships to bring solutions to life through open innovation after the event.

Chemistry Student Katherine Humpal Awarded Arctic Science Research Fellowship

University of New Orleans chemistry student Katherine Humpal has been awarded a graduate research fellowship from the Arctic Domain Awareness Center. The center, housed at the University of Alaska Anchorage, is part of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

The fellowship will support Humpal's tuition and stipend for the next three years as she works with the lead principal investigator Patrick Tomco, an assistant professor of chemistry at the University of Alaska Anchorage. The two will work on a project titled, "Photo-Enhanced Toxicity of Dispersed and Burned Crude Oil to Arctic Mussels."

The project explores the increase in toxicity associated with the presence of sunlight and the potential impact it has on bay mussels, which are an integral component of coastal ecosystems and an important food source for both wildlife and humans.

UNO STUDENT, ALUMNI PRODUCED FILM SCREENS AT SUNDANCE FILM FESTIVAL

A FILM PRODUCED BY University of New Orleans film student Kelsey Scult and alumni Ben Matheny and Lizzie Guitreau screened at the prestigious Sundance Film Festival on Jan. 30. A third UNO alumnus, Lee Garcia, worked as a sound editor for the feature film titled, “Ma Belle, My Beauty.”

Sundance, which was started in part by legendary Hollywood actor Robert Redford, is considered the most prestigious independent film festival in the United States and one of the top in the world. It has launched countless careers, including Quentin Tarantino and Steven Soderbergh, as well as forecasted many academy award winners.

“This is a clear sign of continued growth and excellence at the UNO film program,” says professor Hamp Overton, director of the film program at UNO. “In the past we have had alumni go on as executives at networks such as the SyFy Network and writers for television shows such as NCIS New Orleans.



“Others have won accolades at many festivals ... To now have our students and alumni compete in the Sundance Film Festival is fantastic and we couldn’t be prouder.”

Scult, currently pursuing an MFA; Matheny, who earned a bachelor’s degree in 2011; and Guitreau, who earned a bachelor’s degree in 2014, are producers on the film that explores the polyamorous

relationship of two recently married musicians adjusting to life in France when “their beloved ex, who abruptly disappeared from their relationship years ago, finally visits.”

Garcia earned a bachelor’s degree in 2013.

“Sundance is the apogee of the independent filmmaker’s ambition. So, I was honored and a bit startled to get in—let’s just say this wasn’t my first try,”

A current UNO film student and three film school graduates helped make the movie, “Ma Belle, My Beauty,” that screened at Sundance.

Matheny says. “We all feel very lucky.

“I’m excited for folks to see the movie. Marion Hill, our writer/director, is brilliant and this is just the beginning for her.”

UNO EXPANDS THE PRIVATEER PLEDGE TO JEFFERSON PARISH STUDENTS

STARTING IN THE FALL 2021 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 Jefferson Parish students. This marks the expansion of a program that was piloted in 2020 for Orleans Parish students.

The pledge now applies to both Jefferson and Orleans

Parish residents who graduate from a public or private high school in the parish. 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. Students will need to be

enrolled full time by June 1 for the fall 2021 semester.

“We’ve had such a wonderful response to The Privateer Pledge with Orleans Parish students, which is why we are so excited to be able to expand the program to students from Jefferson Parish,” President John Nicklow says. “We know the difference a UNO degree can make in the lives of our students and their families, and our hope

is the pledge will make that degree more attainable.

“It’s our promise to eligible students in both parishes that we will marshal all of the federal, state and institutional aid necessary to fill any financial gap for tuition and fees.”

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.



Caroline Andrews



Jasmines Curtis



Yvonne Everhardt



Montana Pinell



Han Chen



Yvette Green

UNO HOTEL, RESTAURANT AND TOURISM STUDENTS TAKE FIRST PLACE IN MARKET STUDY COMPETITION

UNIVERSITY OF NEW Orleans graduate students in the Lester E. Kabacoff School of Hotel, Restaurant and Tourism Administration earned first place in the 2020 STR Market Study Competition held virtually Nov. 21-22.

The competition included 50 teams representing 44 colleges and universities from 17 countries. It is designed to give students an opportunity to showcase their knowledge and research ability using data provided by STR.

The competition emphasizes

teamwork, analytical expertise, critical thinking and presentation skills.

The team, composed of Caroline Andrews, Jasmines Curtis, Yvonne Everhardt and Montana Pinell, was tasked with analyzing the Austin, Texas hotel market under the guidance of hotel, restaurant and tourism administration professors Han Chen and Yvette Green.

The team presentations were evaluated and scored by seasoned STR speakers. Ten undergraduate teams

and five graduate teams were selected to advance to the final round, where they conducted a 30-minute online presentation to a panel of senior-level industry judges.

“It was a team effort. The graduate students who participated in the STR market study enjoyed the whole competition process, right from choosing the city, analyzing real-world data, drawing practical conclusions and presenting them in a professional manner in front of judges from the industry,” Chen says. “We appreciate STR for

providing a platform entirely online during a challenging time. The students and the faculty are grateful for this opportunity to represent the University of New Orleans and the school of HRT.”

Each presenting team received a plaque, while the top three teams received special recognition and the winning teams received a \$1,000 prize.

SRT is an international company that provides data benchmarking, analytics and marketplace insights for global hospitality sectors.

INNOVATE UNO SYMPOSIUM SHOWCASES STUDENTS SCHOLARLY RESEARCH AND CREATIVE WORK

THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW Orleans Office of Research wrapped up the ninth annual InnovateUNO with an awards ceremony on Nov. 24 that recognized the winners of the research symposium.

Over the course of the weeklong virtual event, attendees viewed more than 100 oral, art, theater, music and film presentations. Presenters included UNO students, faculty and staff from every discipline whose work was evaluated by a panel of 55 volunteer judges.

“InnovateUNO continues to be a great opportunity for our students, faculty members and staff members to present their accomplishments in research, creative and scholarly endeavors,” says Matthew Tarr,

vice president for research and economic development. “So many people have contributed to the success of this event, which is an important platform for our undergraduate and graduate students to showcase their achievements and gain experience with public presentations.

“Even during adversity, our students have shown their ability to succeed. The presentations this year were outstanding.”

The highest-ranked presentations were awarded a total of \$2,500 by the Office of Research and the Oscar J. Tolmas Charitable Trust. Both undergraduate and graduate students were awarded prizes.

Undergraduate students

who ranked in the top five presentations within their categories were invited to present at the University of Louisiana System’s annual Academic Summit, held virtually in the spring.

The first-place presenters were invited to present at the National Conferences on Undergraduate Research, also to be held virtually in the spring. Attendance at these events will be sponsored by the Office of Research.



Ash Gaude was awarded first place for her painting “French Quarter Musician” during InnovateUNO 2020, which was held virtually.

TRANSPORTATION INSTITUTE CREATES STATEWIDE RECREATIONAL TRAILS PLAN

THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW Orleans Transportation Institute has created a statewide plan to guide the Louisiana Recreational Trail Program (LRTP) on ways to encourage trail use while supporting the care of wildlife, habitats and other natural resources.

The trails program is a national initiative that help states provide and maintain recreational trails and trails-related facilities. Louisiana has received \$1.5 million from the federal government annually since 2009 to support its recreational trails program.

The plan provides a variety of goals intended to guide the actions of the LRTP, its advisory

committee and all agencies and organizations involved in the planning, development, construction, operation, maintenance and programming of current and future Louisiana trails, says UNO Transportation Institute researcher Tara Tolford.

The goals relate to funding, environmental stewardship, operations, trail network development and other areas, she says.

The plan also encourages the linking of trails throughout the state with the aim of creating large networks of recreation and transportation facilities, Tolford says.

“The heightened use of our local trails facilities really



highlights that now is the time,” Tolford says. “Trails are ideal for these perpetually-COVID times.”

The LRTP has helped build trail projects in every parish and hundreds of municipalities, communities and neighborhoods throughout Louisiana.

The plan notes that 74% of all Louisiana residents live within five miles of one or more LRTP projects.

In formulating the plan, researchers utilized data collected through two statewide surveys given to trail users as well as agency and organization

stakeholders.

The surveys were conducted in the summer of 2018 and garnered nearly 1,000 responses from birdwatchers, ATV riders, mountain bikers, paddlers and other trail users, as well as stakeholders directly responsible for trails-planning, Tolford says.

The trail plan was created in partnership with the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development, U.S. Department of Transportation’s Federal Highway Administration, and the Louisiana Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism.

WATER INSTITUTE AND UNO PONTCHARTRAIN INSTITUTE FOR ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES SIGN MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

THE WATER INSTITUTE OF the Gulf and the University of New Orleans formalized their collaborative relationship on Nov. 10 through the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding which will lead to sharing resources and opportunities for hands-on research training for graduate and undergraduate students.

As part of that agreement, the Institute will have access to the University’s state-of-the-art laboratory facilities, research vessels and equipment used to collect data in the field while UNO’s Pontchartrain Institute for Environmental Sciences will be a core Institute partner participating in applied research projects in Louisiana and beyond.

“Although we’ve been sharing opportunities, equipment, and students for some time, we wanted to formalize this agreement recognizing our shared goals in providing the science needed to serve the people and communities of south Louisiana while educating the next generation of coastal practitioners,” says Justin Ehrenwerth, Institute president and CEO. “This agreement also continues to fulfill a mandate given to the Institute earlier this year when Governor John Bel Edwards designated us as the state’s Coastal Innovation and Collaboration Hub.”

The MOU outlines a commitment to work together on field and laboratory research, technological developments and

policy matters in water, coastal and deltaic issues, risk reduction and helping communities build resilience against disasters and climate change.

“This is an exciting partnership that helps the University better prepare our future coastal scientists and engineers by providing undergraduate and graduate students with extraordinary research experiences,” UNO President John Nicklow says.

“This relationship will leverage our collective resources to foster the development of scientific opportunities for UNO, The Water Institute and Louisiana and elevate our understanding of coastal sciences and education to national and international

levels,” says Mark Kulp, director of the Pontchartrain Institute for Environmental Sciences.

“The Water Institute’s support of growing the knowledge base and training the next generation of coastal scientists while advancing the applied research needed to address current challenges facing New Orleans and the entire Gulf Coast, is collaboration at its best,” says Christy Brown, Institute board member and past chair of the Greater New Orleans Foundation. “Working with UNO and our numerous partners in the New Orleans area, this agreement represents another step in the commitment to help coastal communities find a science-based way forward.”

COMPUTER SCIENCE STUDENT RISHAV RAJENDRA LANDS JOB AT FACEBOOK

LESS THAN A MONTH AFTER graduating from UNO with a degree in computer science, Rishav Rajendra started his first job with one of the world's most recognizable brands: Facebook.

Rajendra, who completed a 12-week internship with the company last summer, is in Menlo Park, Calif. the headquarters for Facebook.

Because of COVID-19, Rajendra's internship was performed remotely.

Rajendra says he's excited about his position as a software engineer on the Facebook Watch team. Facebook Watch is a video-on-demand service.

"I mainly focus on streaming music videos, stuff like that," he says. "If you go and search for a Taylor Swift song ... I make sure that you find that video on top of the feed."

Rajendra is also looking forward to the Facebook employee benefits, such as free lunches and dinners from on-site food courts and an on-site laundry delivery service.

"The campus is basically like, I would say, Disneyland for technical people," Rajendra says with a laugh. "Everything is taken care of on campus. You get to work basically without anything else bothering you."

Rajendra has been working with computers and programming since high school and finds computer science interesting because he says it allows "you the freedom and ability to do anything."

"Suppose you want pizza every second Friday at your house and you don't want to call the pizza place," Rajendra says. "You can write a program to call

the pizza place for you every other Friday to get you a pizza.

"Simple stuff like that."

At Facebook, Rajendra is looking forward to the exponential impact of his computer science capabilities.

"At Facebook anything I do affects millions of people, so the prospect of that is pretty exciting for me," he says.

Rajendra, who is from Nepal, chose to attend UNO after hearing friends speak positively about the University and its computer science program.

"My favorite thing about UNO was the computer science department and the College of Sciences supporting undergraduates like me to get into research very early into my studies," Rajendra says.

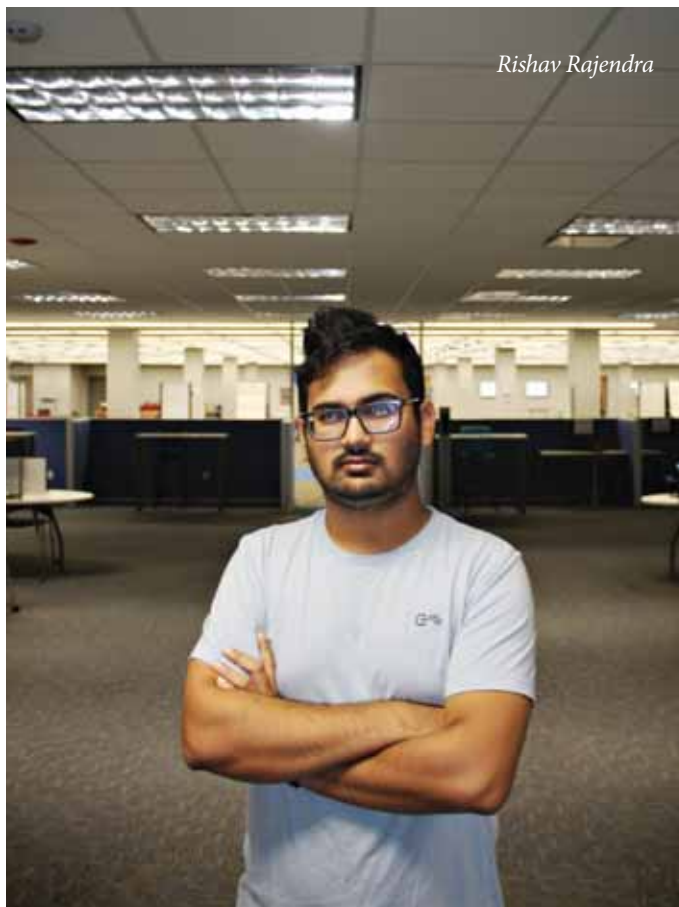
He was awarded a research assistant role under computer science professor Stephen G. Ware in his first year, which was supported by the College of Sciences Undergraduate Research Program funding, Rajendra says.

After that, he worked with computer science professor and department chair Mahdi Abdelguerfi at the Canizaro Livingston Gulf States Center for Environmental Informatics for two years.

"The research I was fortunate enough to be a part of at UNO provided a huge boost to my resume," Rajendra says.

Perhaps, not surprisingly, an empty classroom in UNO's math building, which houses the computer science department, was Rajendra's go-to study spot.

"(The) library gets very busy during the exams, so that



was my secret favorite place to study," he says.

Rajendra also was involved in activities outside of the classroom, such as the UNO Robotics Club; he competed in programming and coding contests.

He advises students not only to pay attention in class, but also to explore the benefits of extra-curricular club activities.

"If there are no event or groups you are interested in, maybe form a new organization, or tilt an existing organization towards what you may want to do," Rajendra says. "I introduced (computer vision and machine learning) to the UNO Robotics Club and now almost all teams in the club have fully adopted the method."

For students who want internships at major technology companies Rajendra offers

two tips: Apply early and be comfortable coding under pressure.

"For a summer internship ... the process is in its final stages in October. To even get a chance to interview, you need to start applying in August," he says.

Rajendra says he applied for his summer 2020 Facebook internship in August 2019 and received a final offer in November of that year.

There are usually multiple rounds of technical and behavioral interviews, Rajendra says. The full process could take from one to three months, he says.

"Data structures and algorithms are the core fundamentals of the interviews," Rajendra says. "Learn how to code under-pressure. As interviews are always time constrained, you may have to solve multiple problems." 🤖

FACULTY FOCUS

ENGLISH INSTRUCTOR CHIOMA URAMA WINS GEORGIA POETRY PRIZE

UNIVERSITY OF NEW Orleans instructor Chioma Urama, winner of the national Georgia Poetry Prize for 2019, has released her debut collection of poetry that earned the prize.

The prize includes a \$1,000 award and a publication contract with the University of Georgia Press. Urama's book, "A Body of Water," was published in February.

"This award is a great achievement that highlights the great artistic work that is coming out of UNO's English and foreign languages department," says Urama, who teaches creative writing and English composition.

The University of Georgia Press established the national poetry prize in partnership with the Georgia Institute of Technology and the University of Georgia to celebrate excellence in poetry.

The annual contest is opened to residents of North America.

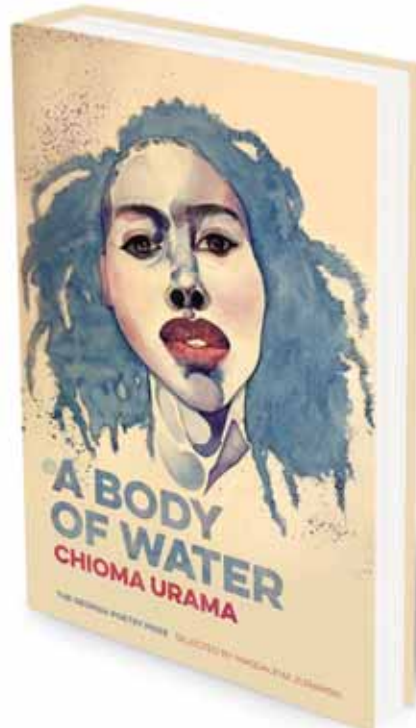
"A Body of Water" is a poetic exploration of ancestry in the American South, Urama

says. The poems are the result of a conversation Urama opened with her ancestors, whose documented and oral histories have been fragmented by a history of enslavement.

The 2019 judge, poet Magdalena Zurawski, described Urama's collection of poems as a "surprise and delight in their style and daring."

"The strength of the work is the communication that occurs between poems," Zurawski said. "A constellation slowly emerges where each poem becomes for the reader a different point on a map, a map that marks the distances, the proximities, between historical trauma and its intergenerational effects."

As the winner, Urama has been invited to read excerpts from her work at Georgia Institute of Technology and the University of Georgia.





KIM JOVANOVIICH TO RECEIVE 2021 ENGINEERING FACULTY PROFESSIONALISM AWARD

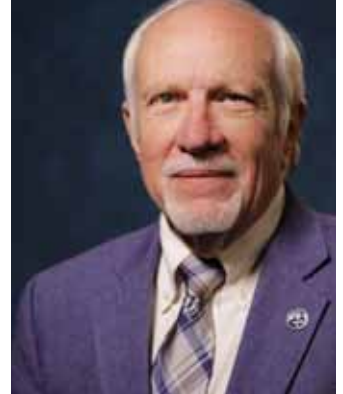
KIM JOVANOVIICH, University of New Orleans assistant dean of engineering and Chevron USA Endowed Professor in electrical engineering, has been awarded the 2021 Engineering Faculty Professionalism award by the Louisiana Engineering Foundation.

Jovanovich received the award during a ceremony on April 27, 2021.

The purpose of the Engineering Faculty Professionalism Award is to highlight enthusiastic professional engineers who are among faculty at universities in Louisiana. The goal of the annual award is to encourage other engineering faculty and students to become professional engineers.

Jovanovich has been a faculty member at UNO for 40 years.

He was first approached in 1980 to teach an electrical engineering class for one semester as an adjunct professor. That was also the year that the



Kim Jovanovich

School of Engineering became the College of Engineering under the direction of founding dean of engineering Fritz-Egbert Dohse.

Jovanovich's one semester has evolved into an academic career spanning four decades at UNO that has included several honors and recognition, including the University's Presidential Staff Medallion. The medallion is awarded to the staff member who has demonstrated outstanding service to the University community.

NORMA JEAN MATTEI NAMED ASCE NEW ORLEANS 2020 EDUCATOR OF THE YEAR

NORMA JEAN MATTEI, University of New Orleans professor of civil and environmental engineering, has been named the 2020 Educator of the Year by the American Society of Civil Engineers New Orleans Branch.

Mattei, who has been a member of the UNO faculty since 1995, is a renowned researcher and educator in the areas of structures and

construction materials. Her technical research interests include large watershed management, material and structural testing, sustainable reuse of spent construction and fabrication materials, and residual stress measurement. She is also active in diversity, licensure and ethics issues.

Mattei serves as one of two civilian civil engineer commissioners on the Mississippi River

Commission and was the 2017 president of the American Society of Civil Engineers. She is still active on the executive committee of the ASCE New Orleans' Chapter of the Structural Engineering Institute.

Mattei has served on several National Council of Examiners for Engineering and Surveying committees and task forces and is a former gubernatorial appointed member of



Norma Jean Mattei

Louisiana's licensing board for professional engineers.



LEADERSHIP, INNOVATION DRIVES RECIPIENTS OF FOUR UNIVERSITY AWARDS

THE FOUR RECIPIENTS OF the University of New Orleans' annual awards are leaders who continually strive for excellence and innovative ways to get their jobs done, according to colleagues who nominated them for recognition.

President John Nicklow announced the 2020 award winners during his fall state of the university address, which was delivered virtually because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The recipients of the four awards are:

▪ **Juliette Ioup**, professor of physics, awarded the 2020 Cooper 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.

Among the many accomplishments in her nearly 40-year career at UNO, Ioup has created 23 new courses for undergraduate and graduate students, has directed thesis for 29 doctoral and master's students and has authored more than 100 publications, including a book and six book chapters, Leszek Malkinski, physics professor and department chairman, wrote in his nominating letter.

"Professor Juliette Ioup is not only an exceptionally dedicated educator but also a

nationally and internationally recognized researcher in the field of acoustics and signal processing," Malkinski says. "Professor Ioup attracted a significant amount of funding for UNO students and researchers. She was principal or co-principal investigator on grants received by UNO totaling over \$12 million dollars."

▪ **Irene Ziegler**, program director, UNO-Innsbruck International Summer School, awarded the 2020 Gordon "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 WWII Museum. It is awarded to an individual who has provided significant leadership toward the internationalization of the University.

Ziegler, who arrived at UNO as an exchange student from Austria and earned her master's degree at UNO before earning her Ph.D. in Graz, Austria, has worked at the University for more than 20 years. Under her decade of leadership, Ziegler has helped to broaden the academic scope and reputation of UNO's flagship study abroad program, Alea Cot, assistant provost for International Education, wrote in her nominating letter.

"Irene has a strong work

ethic, and she is devoted to international exchange and global causes like climate change," Cot says. "She is unfailingly organized and polite ... I know that keeping the flame alive would not be possible without having passed the Innsbruck 'torch' from Nick Mueller over the years to so many key people, to where it now rests with Irene Ziegler."

▪ **Paul Weiser**, application analyst, Office of Information Technology, awarded the 2020 Presidential Staff Medallion.

It is awarded to the staff member who has demonstrated outstanding service to the University community.

Weiser has worked at UNO for more than 20 years and his professionalism, talent and dedication are unmatched, Learning Resource Center director Shannon Williamson wrote in her nominating letter.

"One of Paul's gifts is that he can so easily translate between the technical and functional sides," Williamson says. "He is comfortable speaking with end users, listening to their needs, wrapping his brain around the work of academic and student affairs and bringing the technology to life to make the workflow of hundreds of employees more efficient."

▪ **Margaret "Peggy" Gaffney**, assistant dean, College of Business Administration, awarded the 2020 President's Award for the Advancement in

President John Nicklow bestowed university awards to (from left) Juliette Ioup, Irene Ziegler, Paul Weiser and Margaret "Peggy" Gaffney.

Diversity and Inclusion.

The award is designed to honor those who have had a measurable impact in improving UNO's profile as an institution that fosters racial equity and a campus environment of inclusivity for all people.

In nominating Gaffney for the award, management professor Dinah Payne highlighted Gaffney's work with colleagues, students and community groups.

"A review of her resume is replete with instances of Peggy's service regarding diversity and inclusion. For example, she led and coordinated articulation agreements with local community colleges ... She did the same agreements with foreign universities: this augmented the richness of new student diversity to additional cultures, ethnicities and nationalities," Payne says.

"As part of her service as liaison between the College of Business and the college's student organizations, she facilitated conflict resolution. This type of leadership is critically important in today's world wherein different people from diverse backgrounds must be able to work together to achieve common goals."

PROFESSOR WENDY SCHLUCHTER'S RESEARCH FEATURED IN NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES JOURNAL

RESEARCH conducted by Wendy Schluchter, University of New Orleans biological sciences professor and department chair, is featured in the prestigious National Academy of Sciences journal *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*.

Schluchter, along with two graduate students and an undergraduate, authored "Molecular bases of an alternative dual-enzyme system for light color acclimation of marine *Synechococcus cyanobacteria*."

The article is based on research that earned Schluchter a \$521,578 grant from the National Science Foundation Biological Division in 2020.



Wendy Schluchter, biological sciences professor and department chair.

group of widespread microbes called *Synechococcus* succeed in photosynthesis by studying how these organisms modify their pigment composition to adapt to changes in light.

This process is called chromatic acclimation, and it involves only a few genes that allow these microbes to tune their pigments to absorb the available

color of light filtering through the ocean.

The research provides novel highlights on the evolutionary history of *Synechococcus* acclimation to light color in the oceans, Schluchter says.

The article explores marine phytoplankton, a micro-algae found in the ocean that provides food for a variety of sea creatures such as whales and shrimp.

Marine phytoplankton

comprise the base of the food web because they take carbon dioxide from the atmosphere during photosynthesis and turn it into a form that all life in the ocean can use.

The research studies how a

PROFESSOR DAN SHAHAR WINS 2020 ENVIRONMENTAL PHILOSOPHY AWARD

UNIVERSITY OF NEW Orleans philosophy professor Dan Shahar is the winner of the 2020 Holmes Rolston III Early Career Essay Prize in Environmental Philosophy. The award, named in honor of one of the discipline's early pioneers, is given annually by the International Society for Environmental Ethics.

Shahar, an assistant

professor of philosophy, was awarded the prize for his paper, "Harm, Responsibility, and the Long-Term Impacts of Climate Change." As part of the win, Shahar receives \$500 and will have his essay published in the journal *Environmental Ethics*.

Shahar's research focuses on implications of environmental challenges for liberal societies and their members. He teaches

courses in ethics, political philosophy and philosophy, politics and economics. He is the co-editor of the popular textbook, "Environmental Ethics: What Really Matters, What Really Works," published by Oxford University Press.

He holds a joint appointment in UNO's Urban Entrepreneurship and Policy Institute.



Dan Shahar, assistant professor of philosophy.

PROFESSOR ERIC VAN HOLM'S COVID-19 RESEARCH FEATURED IN JOURNAL OF HEALTH

LAST SPRING, UNIVERSITY of New Orleans political science professor Eric van Holm began studying the data the state of Louisiana was publishing weekly on the number of coronavirus cases. At the time, he was serving on the Louisiana COVID-19 Health Equity Taskforce and co-chairing the Policy and Regulatory Affairs subcommittee.

Van Holm, whose expertise lies in economic development and neighborhood change, said he wanted to use some of his background studying urban and community demographics to help understand the problems related to COVID-19.

"Essentially, we used it to answer whether neighborhoods with more African Americans, more residents over 70, more individuals employed in tourism industries, etc. tended to have

more cases of COVID-19," van Holm says. "The spatial models help to address the fact that even after accounting for community demographics the rates of COVID-19 cases were spatially uneven, there were still areas being under and over-predicted."

Van Holm's COVID-19 research analysis titled "Neighborhood conditions and the initial outbreak of COVID-19: the case of Louisiana," was featured in the June 2020 issue of *Journal of Health*.

The paper assesses the predictors of outbreaks at the neighborhood level using data from the Louisiana Department of Health. Van Holm used spatial regression models to analyze the case count through May 3, 2020 and its relationship to individual and geographic neighborhood characteristics at

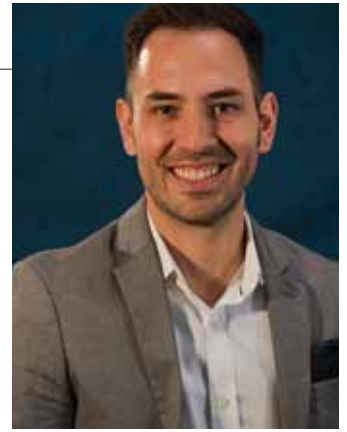
the census tract level.

The analysis found a particularly strong and large correlation between race and COVID-19 cases. In addition, neighborhoods with lower rates of poverty and those with fewer residents over 70 have fewer cases, van Holm wrote.

While van Holm's analysis addressed COVID-19 testing, he says there are parallels that can be applied to help guide administering the vaccine.

"I think there are definite parallels, although I'll start with a caution," he says. "The analysis was done in May, so it's possible that what we found to predict which communities had more cases has changed since then as the pandemic has evolved, though much should be consistent."

The research identifies groups, particularly older



University of New Orleans political science professor Eric van Holm

individuals and minorities, who were more likely to have cases of COVID-19. If those communities have more spread of COVID-19, it becomes paramount to get those individuals vaccinated and to slow transmission within those areas, van Holm says.

"To some degree, the government has already followed that strategy. Retirement homes across the country were early hot spots, and they have been an emphasis with the early vaccines," he says. "If we can target spaces where the disease has had the largest impact, we can slow its worst consequences."

MUSIC PROFESSOR BRENT ROSE'S BAND WINS A GRAMMY

UNIVERSITY OF NEW Orleans music professor Brent Rose can add the title "Grammy winner" to his resume.

Rose is a member of the New Orleans Nightcrawlers, whose 2020 album "Atmosphere" was named best regional roots music album during the 63rd Annual Grammy Award held March 14.

It is the band's first Grammy.

Rose, who plays saxophone, has been a UNO faculty member since 2002. He is the program coordinator for the music department and teaches courses on music theory, jazz

history and saxophone.

Rose is a staple on the New Orleans music scene and is a widely sought-after performer and studio musician. In addition to playing with the New Orleans Nightcrawlers and Otra, Rose's professional career has included stints with Quintology, Galactic, Nicholas Payton, the Temptations, Flavor Kings, Adonis Rose, New World Funk Ensemble and Joe Crown. 🎷



Professor Brent Rose, (back row, second from left in blue jacket) is a member of the New Orleans Nightcrawlers.



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UNO student Samira Bechara
cooks up charity with

gourmet flair

BY LITTICE BACON-BLOOD

PHOTOGRAPHS BY TRACIE MORRIS SCHAEFER



UNIVERSITY OF NEW ORLEANS STUDENT SAMIRA BECHARA grew up near Seattle, Washington but spent many summers visiting extended family in Beirut, Lebanon.

When an explosion ripped through the city of Beirut on Aug. 4, 2020, killing more than 200 people and destroying thousands of homes and buildings, Bechara was devastated.

The coronavirus pandemic had caused the cancelation of Bechara's summer plans to study French at the American University in Beirut; otherwise she would have been there.

"I was already feeling very nostalgic and missing Lebanon a lot and then the explosion happened," Bechara says. "I kind of had a meltdown and felt like I just needed to help in some way."

Her father had immigrated to the U.S. as a young man and brought with him the knowledge to create flavorful Lebanese dishes, Bechara says. Having worked in the restaurant industry since she was a teenager, Bechara knows her way around the kitchen.

"I always hung out with my dad in the kitchen and whenever

we'd go to Lebanon for the summer, I'd hang out with my grandmother," Bechara says. "So I have a lot of experience in cooking Lebanese food."

Bechara decided to put her skills to work and created a charity project called Le Beirut. The name comes from a popular song by Lebanese singer Fairuz called "Li Beirut."

"It is just a really beautiful, sorrowful song," Bechara says. "It's always been an important song, especially so after the blast, so that's why I chose that name."

With the help of the owners of Turkey and the Wolf—the celebrated Irish Channel sandwich shop—Bechara hosted her first pop-up gourmet brunch a week after the explosion.

"I actually posted on Instagram 'Does anyone have a restaurant to host a fundraiser?' And Turkey and the Wolf reached out to me," Bechara says. "We raised \$4,000, which was amazing."

She donated the proceeds to a nonprofit in Lebanon that focus of helping elderly residents and rebuilding homes destroyed in the



explosion, Bechara says.

Another charity event followed with a local ice cream maker.

"I did two ice cream events, that was really fun," Bechara says. "We sort of did nostalgic Lebanese ice cream flavors."

In November, Bechara's charity and pop-up brunches earned her a feature story on Eater New Orleans, a food and dining website.

And while the COVID-19 pandemic has curbed her charity events, Bechara is looking for possible locations to host more brunches.

"I would like to figure out if I could do a weekly gig," she says. "I don't have the capacity to do more than once a week because of school."

Eventually Bechara sees the project "morphing into more of a Lebanese bakery."

"I like to do meat pies, spinach pies, baklava and other types of baked goods," she says. "That's what I'm most passionate about."

Bechara's charity work has also made her start considering other career paths. When she enrolled at UNO in 2019, she was looking to explore options in the wine industry in France. She is pursuing dual majors in French and international studies.

The American Journal of French Studies recognized Bechara last year for an essay "Ma Cousine Rima" about her experience as a Lebanese American. It was chosen as one of the top 20 submissions out of more than 1,000 for publication and recognition.

"Now what I see is working with refugees in Lebanon," Bechara said. "So, if we could shoot for the stars, I'd love to work for the UN in Beirut." 🌟

BELOW: Bechara, who has worked in the restaurant industry since she was a teenager, makes sambousek in her kitchen.

BELOW RIGHT: With the help of the owners of Turkey and the Wolf, Bechara hosted a charity brunch for victims of an explosion in Beirut, Lebanon.



SCOT CRAIG'S NO QUIT ATTITUDE

*University of New Orleans alumnus
Scot Craig owns the beloved
Mid-City eatery Katie's Restaurant.*

SCOT CRAIG CAN TALK ABOUT LIFE'S STORMS AND SETBACKS. His experiences could fill a book, he says. However, the University of New Orleans alumnus, who owns the beloved Mid-City eatery Katie's Restaurant, prefers to concentrate on the triumphs—the how of getting through challenging times.

He calls it “personal focus.” For Craig, the success of Katie's is the manifestation of that phrase—even during the COVID-19 pandemic, which has caused some businesses to close their doors.

“From day one we've had this, ‘We're not quitting’ attitude,” says Craig. “All of us, the whole team, and it's been extremely beneficial to being able to survive so far.”

After state and local mandates prohibited inside dining in an effort to slow the spread of the coronavirus, Craig immediately adopted a new strategy.

“I just decided, ‘Hey I'm going to make my wait staff delivery drivers,’” he says. “Thinking that the customers who come in the restaurant like to see certain waiters or waitresses, so I'll just get them to bring it to the customers.”

“I worked with a lot of great people and I've learned from them. Katie's is what it is today, which is an absolute incredible transformation post-Katrina,” he says.

The popular restaurant features Craig's take on many New Orleans staples, such as Redfish NOLA, chargrilled oysters, barbecue shrimp and grits, as well as pizzas, burgers and po-boys.

Katie's was featured on the Food Network's show “Diners, Drive-ins & Dives!” episode called “Flavortown Favorites” in 2018.

Craig's UNO pride also was on display as that episode featured Privateers men's basketball coach Mark Slessinger and a menu favorite “Oysters Slessinger.”

“That's a big UNO item for sure,” Craig says.

Tuesday night's feature is all-you-can-eat catfish named in honor of UNO's head baseball coach Blake Dean.

“I want to help my school in any way I can,” Craig says.

TRANSFORMED BY HURRICANE KATRINA

In 2005, Hurricane Katrina ripped off the roof and inundated

PROPELS HIS SUCCESS

BY LITTICE BACON-BLOOD

Craig, who also owns the Lakeview deli Francesca with his wife, Stephanie, set up tents for outside dining at both restaurants.

“The teams that I have at the restaurants, they were all in when this went down. Nobody left, nobody quit on us,” says Craig. “It's all about working together and having the momentum from never closing.”

He didn't always have the focus that has allowed him to weather the on-going coronavirus pandemic, Craig says. That focus came courtesy of another storm named Katrina.

After two unproductive semesters at Louisiana State University, Craig's dad ordered him home. He wasn't taking the academic side of college seriously, Craig says.

He enrolled at the University of New Orleans, joined a fraternity and fell in love with the Privateer community, Craig says. It was the 1980s and the campus was beehive active.

“Intramural sports were incredible, we had so much fun,” Craig says. “All of the fields next to the HPC on Friday afternoons were just full of people playing football. Those are just great memories.”

“I got to take classes with Dr. (Stephen) Ambrose! He was incredible, talk about a phenomenal professor!”

Craig earned a history degree from UNO in 1987 with plans to attend law school. Then, in 1989, he bought a bar.

“My thoughts of going to law school were quickly extinguished when I bought the bar and got into owning my own business,” Craig says. “It's one of the best ‘bad’ decisions I ever made.”

Craig had worked as a bartender for years and was a general manager at a bar and restaurant called Bart's On the Lake when he decided to purchase his first business.

Having a love for cooking and a knack for managing food cultivated as a general manager, Craig was looking to return to the food industry. That desire led him to buy Katie's in 1993. There he started to hone his culinary skills and expand his knowledge of the restaurant business, Craig says.

He grew up in a diverse New Orleans neighborhood with different cultures that allowed him to explore that diversity through culinary dishes, Craig says.

Katie's with 7 feet of water. The destruction seemingly buried Craig's restaurant dreams under a wreckage of the once thriving eatery. His insurance coverage was not enough to cover the extensive repairs.

Craig was in Little Rock, Arkansas when CNN called looking for a chef. The cable news network was opening a bureau in New Orleans to cover the storm's aftermath and needed someone to cook meals for around 150 people.

“I got to cook anything that I wanted; they didn't care,” Craig says. “It was a great learning experience for me because I was just doing what I loved and taking care of these people.”

When Craig realized that his kitchen would be closed by the time many of the reporters and producers returned to the bureau, he took the meals to them.

“I started going out to the sites and set up a table and served them on site,” Craig says. “The extra effort I gave them in that regards turned a three-month contract into a year-and-a-half.”

During this time, Katie's was shuttered. Craig, however, was undergoing a personal transformation, he says.

He was finding a level of personal satisfaction, confidence and a personal focus, he says that allowed him to accept being called chef although he was not “traditionally trained” in a culinary school.

“I started being comfortable with people calling me chef and so suddenly I became a chef,” he says.

“My whole life sort of evolved into a different person, what I feel is a very good person,” Craig says. “I believe in giving. I believe in doing things for the city ... for the people of our city. It just was a transformation for me that just has changed my life.”

That personal transformation extended to the reopening of Katie's in 2010 with a focus on quality service and good food that consistently has earned Craig and the restaurant rave reviews locally and nationally.

And to anyone looking to replicate his success Craig offers this advice, “Do what you love, focus on it and get it done!” 🍷



ALUMNA APRIL DUPRÉ:

NOLA'S EMERGING FITNESS GURU

BY LITTICE BACON-BLOOD

TO SAY THAT ALUMNA APRIL DUPRÉ is a busy woman would be understating the obvious. Her schedule, which includes traffic anchor duties on WWL-TV's morning show and managing Footprints to Fitness, the health and wellness company she founded and its nonprofit foundation, is Marine Corps regimented.

Her day starts around 2:30 a.m. and by noon, following a nap after the morning show ends at 9 a.m., she is up and running her two organizations.

Dupré, incidentally, is not a coffee drinker.

"I just tell people that I'm working on God and a prayer. That's what's keeping me," says Dupré. "They are both rewarding and what I do is fulfilling."

Dupré founded Footprints to Fitness in 2014 and was hired by WWL in 2017, adding television personality to a resume that already included entrepreneur.

"I live this double life of being an entrepreneur, but then also being a public figure in the city," Dupré says. "Being on television every day is kind of surreal when I think about it. It's exhausting, but surreal."

Footprints to Fitness is a marriage of Dupré's twin loves of physical fitness and the laissez-faire culture that is the hallmark of her hometown.

As the head fitness instructor, Dupré still teaches classes and leads some of the company's programming.

"We have a small team, but we get it done," she says.

As a native of New Orleans, Dupré says she understands that the city is known more for its indulgence and extravagance in food and fun than for fitness.

However, she also knew there was a passion and niche for health and wellness in the city not only for residents, but for visitors as well.

"I wanted to mesh the two worlds that I love," Dupré says. "There is no way that you can tell someone who lives or visit New Orleans that they can't eat and drink unhealthy food; it's not going to happen! So, you have to find a way to work around that. We got really, really, creative."

They call them "Healthy Happy Hours," and it includes all of the aspects of a New Orleans experience—eating, drinking, music and dancing, Dupré says.

"But we did it in a way that is a little bit more balanced," she says. "Yep, you

can drink. Yep, you can eat. But we're also going to get you to move and have fun ... Many of the options that we would offer for food and beverage there would always be a healthier option for people.

"New Orleans favorites sometimes healthy with a twist."

The company revolves around four main program sectors: community outreach in which they collaborate with charitable groups to implement interactive experiences; workplace wellness in which they partner with organizations or businesses to create on-site events; tourism wellness in which they host customized events for conferences or something exclusive, such as a bridal party and CPR training, Dupré says.

Fitness and wellness have always been an interest for her, Dupré says. She jokes that "P.E. and lunch" were always her favorite subjects in school.

In high school, a physical education teacher stoked her interest in fitness.

"She didn't teach us sports ... we learned Pilates, we learned yoga, we did dance," Dupré says. "We did all of these unconventional styles of exercise."

The teacher pushed Dupré to become certified as a fitness instructor, which she did, while attending UNO.

"As a college student most of my friends were making \$5 an hour and I was making \$20 an hour teaching fitness classes," Dupré says. "I learned so much during my time in college. Had I not had that foundation at UNO, I probably would not have followed through with it all. It probably would have been something that sounded really nice or I might have gotten into it later in life."

Dupré earned a bachelor's degree in exercise physiology in 2008 and spent the next eight years teaching physical education at several metro New Orleans high schools. As she had done in college, Dupré also continued to teach fitness classes at gyms and private studios around town.

Dupré says she was struck by the socioeconomic differences in her high school students, some of whom were homeless, and her mostly affluent fitness clients.

"The main gym that I worked at was within walking distance from the school that I taught at, and the level of disconnect within the few blocks would blow your mind," Dupré says. "I'm in uptown New Orleans and on one end I'm literally surrounded by people who

could buy anything they wanted ... and the other half of the day I'm with children who literally don't know where their next meal is going to come from. That kind of sparked something in me."

Dupré decided to create her own space in an effort to expand her level of fitness expertise to a more diverse group of people.

"As a young Black woman I was like, my community needs this so much more," Dupré says. "How can I bring this level of expertise to them? I really didn't know what I was doing, but I knew I wanted to serve more people and in a more diverse situation and that's how I started."

It was about a year later that Dupré says she realized she had actually created "a business."

"No one else was doing what we were doing in the city," she says. "We literally are a full-service health and wellness company. We do a lot of on-site programming and we do fitness and wellness events."

Three years after launching her company, WWL-TV called with an offer to join its morning show after seeing the positive impact Dupré was making in the community.

As part of the morning show, Dupré has to be on set for the 4:30 a.m. start of the broadcast. She also hosts a weekly fitness segment on WWL called "Workout Wednesday" with Mackie Shilstone.

"We bicker like brother and sister," says Dupré about her on-set interactions with Shilstone. "But it's very informative because it's an expertise of ours."

Being on television has also allowed her to expand her fitness platform and further share the importance of health and wellness, Dupré says.

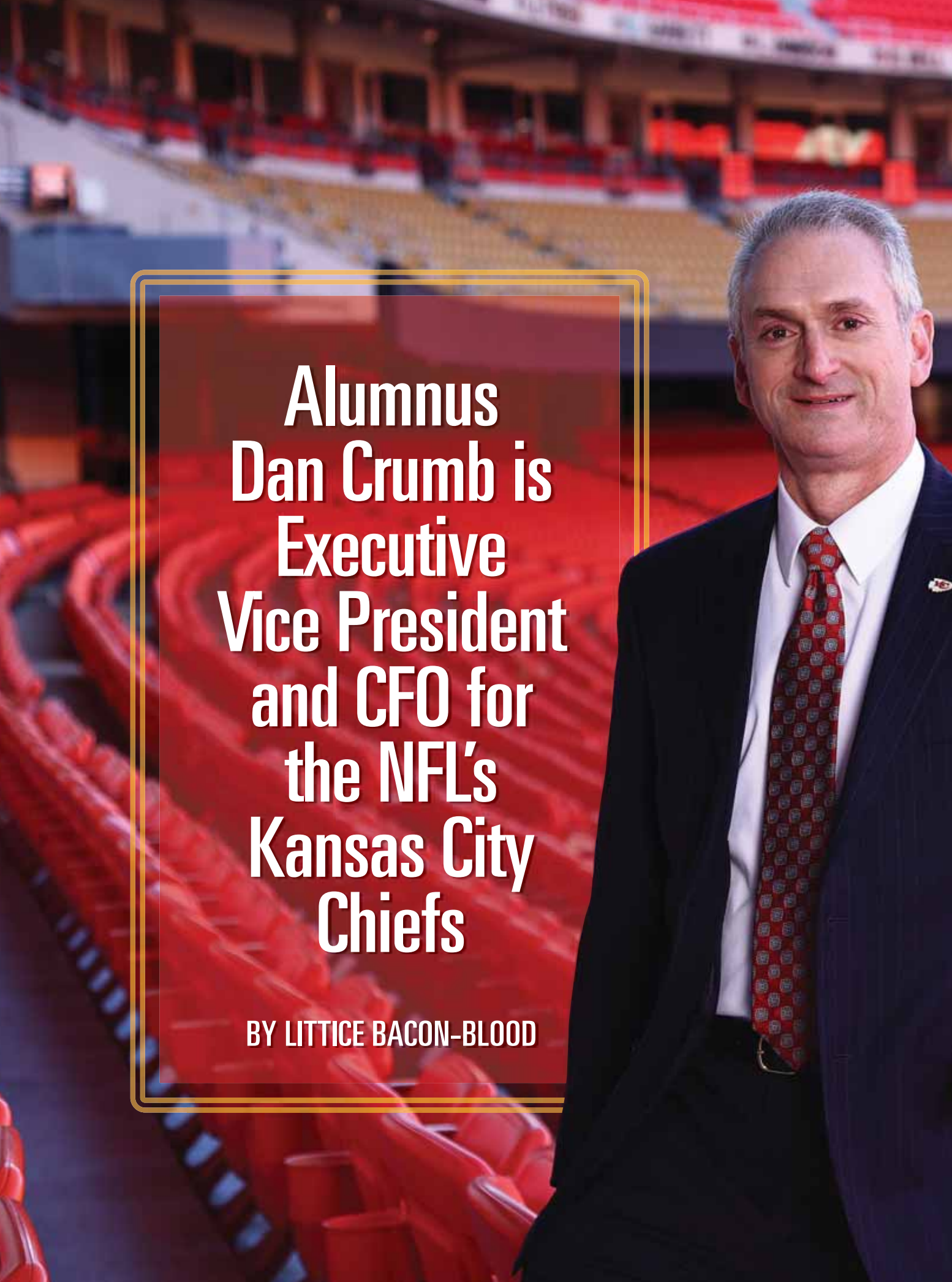
"It's brought me so many opportunities, just the amount of people that I'm able to reach," she says. "It's just kind of been the best of both worlds."

Her advice to students, Dupré says, is to try to align your passions with action.

"I always tell people to find what you're passionate about and then figure out how to make money from it," Dupré says. "Take a leap of faith." 🙌

(BELOW, LEFT) Alumna April Dupré, founder of Footprints to Fitness, leads a CPR session. (BELOW, RIGHT) She also hosts a weekly fitness segment on WWL called "Workout Wednesday" with Mackie Shilstone.



A man with short grey hair, wearing a dark blue suit, white shirt, and a red patterned tie, stands in the foreground. He is smiling slightly. The background is a large stadium with red and yellow seats, mostly empty. The text is overlaid on a semi-transparent red box with a yellow border.

Alumnus Dan Crumb is Executive Vice President and CFO for the NFL's Kansas City Chiefs

BY LITTICE BACON-BLOOD



University of New Orleans alumnus Dan Crumb, Executive Vice President and CFO for the Kansas City Chiefs, stands in Arrowhead Stadium.



DAN CRUMB IS A NUMBERS PERSON. HE RECALLS, AS A youngster growing up in New Orleans, reading the financial pages of the newspaper with his dad and older brother.

“He would show us how to look at stock, at companies. He would buy stock and would buy stocks for us,” Crumb says. “It was really interesting to track them ... I really felt this connection to operating a business and the financial aspects of it because of what he introduced me to at a very early age.”

Crumb knew a career in finance awaited him. He just never dreamed it would include a journey to the Super Bowl—and yes, a Super Bowl ring.

“It was the most amazing experience to just be part of that,” Crumb says. “I was actually on the field at the Super Bowl after the game when the confetti was shot off. That was just an amazing experience to see our owner, coach and players up there receiving the Lombardi trophy.”

For the past decade Crumb, who holds a bachelor’s degree in finance from the University of New Orleans, has been the chief financial officer for the National Football League’s Kansas City Chiefs. He was promoted to executive vice president in March 2021.

The Chiefs were world champions in 2020 after defeating San Francisco in Super Bowl LIV.

“I never dreamt about being in sports when I was in college or grad school, just because I didn’t even know how you got those jobs at that time,” Crumb says. “So for me to be able to be there and be a part of it, it was just a sensational experience.”

As the CFO, Crumb oversees the finance, IT and strategy and analytics departments. His finance staff is responsible for all financial reporting and analysis, cash management, budgeting and forecasting, Crumb says.

The IT staff is responsible for the safe, efficient flow of the organization’s electronic information both internally and externally, he says.

“A big responsibility of IT is to be the lead on innovation for our organization, that includes finding the most efficient and effective way of getting the work done,” he says. “Strategy and analytics is responsible for analyzing all of the data we collect across the organization and developing insights that we can use in developing our business strategy, also working with IT to find the most efficient ways to collect, store and retrieve data, and leading the effort for annual business planning.”

Crumb says he was able to parlay a solid education in finance and accounting and his prior experience as a CFO to become the Chiefs’ CFO.

“It helped me to be in the position for when the right opportunity arose,” Crumb says. “Also building a good network of professionals in the sports business and keeping in touch with them was important.”

Creating and building a professional network is top among Crumb’s advice to students. He was a member of UNO’s Finance Club, Crumb says.

“Make the most of your time in college. Choose a degree or course of study that aligns with your personal goals and the type



of work you like to do,” he says. “But, I would say you have to be adaptable to change and embrace technology because things change and move very fast.”

Crumb, who graduated from UNO in 1987, says he was attracted to the University because the College of Business Administration has a strong reputation, especially in the area of finance and accounting.

“I knew that it would give me a really solid education at a very reasonable cost,” Crumb says.

With a bachelor’s degree in hand, Crumb proceeded to graduate school at Tulane University where he earned an MBA.

“I think a degree in finance gives you strong technical skill sets, but it also gives you a broad overview of how to run a business,” Crumb says. “I feel like I had a really good solid foundation with my UNO degree in finance and then I leveraged that to go on to grad school. I feel that it gave me the knowledge and skill to be a CFO.”

Crumb arrived in Kansas City by way of the New Orleans Hornets. He spent nearly four years as the CFO for the NBA team before being hired by the Chiefs. The Hornets post was his first foray into handling finances for a professional sports team.

Prior to joining the Hornets, Crumb was CFO at Abita Springs Bottling Company. The bottling plant was destroyed during Hurricane Katrina and the company was sold. A former colleague passed Crumb’s resume along to the Hornets, who were in the process of moving the franchise back to New Orleans from Oklahoma, where the team had relocated after Katrina.

There are some similarities working as the CFO for a profes-

Crumb’s career in finance is a journey that has led him to the Kansas City Chiefs and a Super Bowl ring.

sional football team and in a corporate setting, Crumb says. There is, however, a major difference.

“The biggest differences are the game day experiences and interactions with your fans and corporate supporters who, along with you, are supporting the efforts of a pro football team competing for championships,” Crumb says.

“I’m privileged to work for the Hunt family and the Kansas City Chiefs that have such a rich history in pro sports and I’m reminded of it every day I go to work in our facility. From seeing Arrowhead Stadium, our mission statement and photos of all the Chiefs players and coaches in the NFL Hall of Fame on the walls in our lobby to being able to look out of the windows in my office to see the team practicing.

All of these things give me a strong connection to the team and its history and that I am so blessed to be part of this.”

When the Chiefs play at home (before the COVID-19 pandemic), Crumb typically walks the quarter-mile from his office to the outdoor stadium just to soak up the excitement of tailgating fans, he said. Arrowhead Stadium, per Guinness, holds the record for being the loudest outdoor stadium in the world, Crumb says.

“That passion is very apparent when you’re in our stadium it’s a sea of red, just loud and having a great time,” he says. “To be a part of that is just really special.” 🍷

ALUMNA KD AMOND RELEASES FIRST FEATURE FILM

BY LITTICE BACON-BLOOD



UNIVERSITY OF NEW ORLEANS ALUMNA KD AMOND, who earned an MFA in film production in 2012, has released her first feature film, “Five Women in the End.” The dark comedy, which Amond directed, co-wrote and co-produced, is available on Amazon Prime.

In a sign of the quickly-evolving film industry—it was shot completely on an iPhone.

The movie premiered at the 2019 Nashville Film Festival and garnered positive reviews. It also received a standing ovation from the audience after the festival showing.

“The most rewarding part to me, as a director, is seeing actors bringing my words to life,” says Amond, who lives in Nashville. “Fulfilling on a larger scale is when you actually see it at a theater on the big screen with an audience and people are laughing and clapping and having reactions to the materials. That’s nice.”

The movie takes place in a high-rise condominium in Nashville and revolves around five friends whose bi-monthly girls-night-in takes a dire turn after a chemical attack on the city.

The friends’ characters are based on five stereotypes of women that Amond recalled reading about years ago: the career girl, the girl’s girl, the guy’s girl, the domestic darling and the drama queen. The girls-night-in scenario is “loosely” based on Amond’s and her friends’ “Poor Choices Thursdays” gatherings in New Orleans, she says.

“The plot is basically I wanted to see what happens with those stereotype women when they’re in a situation where they have to face their own mortality,” Amond says. “Their only ties to the outside world is this little storm radio that one of their boyfriend’s brought over because he’s a doomsday prepper, ready to head for the hills, but he makes sure they have supplies before he left.”

The radio DJ, who ties the girls to the outside world, is played by Michael Cudlitz from “The Walking Dead,” ABC’s “The Kids’ Are Alright,” “Band of Brothers” and “Grosse Pointe Blank.”

Cudlitz, who Amond had met previously through friends, happened to be in Nashville for a charity event while Amond was filming.

“So he was gracious enough to lend us his time,” Amond says.

The film, which was shot over an eight-day period in 2018, was Amond’s foray into shedding the “first-time movie director” tag.

Since graduating from UNO in 2012, Amond has worked on movie sets, such as “Best of Me,” “Terminator 5” and “The Big Short.” She has also directed short films, commercials and music videos.

However, she found the movie industry reluctant to take a chance on someone without a feature film credit—so she created the opportunity for herself.

“It became more of, ‘OK, let me just show you what I can do with very little, show that I’m capable of making a feature film,’” Amond says.

She filmed the movie using an iPhone, which Amond says has a camera sophisticated enough to capture images at the right speed, but small enough that it could have been taped to a wall to get a particular shot.

“If you’re willing to go through a little trial and error, you can shoot a really cool movie on a phone,” Amond says. “I’m of the mentality that we can lug around this heavy equipment and spend thousands in rental, or we can take the 4K camera that’s already in my pocket, put it on a gimbal and add some lenses to it and get just as cool of a picture.”

A UNO FILM FAMILY

Amond grew up in the small town of Livingston, La., and says she's wanted to make films since she was 11.

"I grew up in the 90s and 2000s where there was a huge surge in independent films and Quentin Tarantino and the Coen brothers," Amond says. "All those great movies that are mostly dialogue and I just loved it."

One such pivotal film for her was the movie "Trainspotting," starring Ewan McGregor as a heroin addict. Amond remembers being fascinated by the cinematic freedom of one scene.

"I was way too young to see it, kind of traumatized me," Amond says laughing. "But there's a scene where Ewan McGregor dives into a toilet and comes out into the ocean ... and then comes back out through the toilet. I was like 'Whoa! You can make anything happen in movies!'"

Amond chose to attend UNO to pursue her film career after earning a bachelor's degree in English with a creative writing focus from LSU.

"It was still close to home and the industry was basically in Louisiana at the time," Amond says. "UNO literally gave me my skillset. People are blown away that I can basically prep an independent film from budgeting to shooting."

While Amond's degree program was film production, she liked that the University didn't require her to pick a focus, she says.

"I didn't have to focus on just cinematography or just directing or just editing," Amond says. "I got this very broad education."

"One of the things that UNO gave me was the ability to communicate with anyone in any department and speak the language, which I think is invaluable."

UNO also gave her a "film family," alumni who have helped her on numerous projects, including the grueling eight days spent filming "Five Women in the End," Amond says.

"We basically shot six days and then we took two days off; and

then we shot two more days," she says. "That's extremely quick."

A typical Hollywood movie takes anywhere from six to 10 weeks, if not filmed with special effects, Amond says. A low-budget sci-fi or Lifetime-type movie schedule is typically 14 to 16 days, she says.

One of the female leads in "Five Women in the End," is UNO alumna Nichole Lovince, who flew in from California for the filming; Christopher Martin drove from Los Angeles to be Amond's gaffer; UNO professor James Roe, who graduated from UNO a year before Amond, created the visual effects; and alumnus Tim Connor was the sound recorder.

"It was a tight knit family, and it still is," Amond says. "I don't know if that sort of thing exists outside of the South."

BUILDING HER RESUME

In 2019, Amond formed her own production company, AZ If Productions, with her business partner Sarah Zanotti. The two have completed two feature films and are working on a third project that they hope to start filming in March, Amond says.

"I love being the writer-director hyphenate," she says. "I really love every aspect of storytelling."

The three projects, which are of various staffing sizes and budgets, all originated from her production company and illustrate her broad skills to studio executives, she says.

"I'm about to have three features under my belt," Amond says. "I'm building my own resume." 🍷

FACING PAGE: University of New Orleans alumna Kd Amond, who earned an MFA in film production, has released her first feature movie, "Five Women in the End." BELOW LEFT: Kd Amond and the cast of "Five Women in the End" pose at the Nashville Film Festival. BELOW RIGHT: Amond used her UNO "film family" in the production of her film.



UNIVERSITY OF NEW ORLEANS ALUMNA ROBIN ROSE began her college career on scholarship as a music major at Loyola University. However, after a semester of studying the violin, she realized she was in love with math.

"I was like, "I can't get math out of my head. I want to deal with math," Rose says. "When I see phone numbers on TV, I'm literally looking at them like an equation I need to balance in some way."

She sought advice from a friend's father who happened to be a mechanical engineer.

"He said find yourself a good state school with a solid engineering program, and he recommended UNO," Rose says.

Rose, a native of Algiers, took that advice and earned a mechanical engineering degree from UNO in 2002. It was not easy, Rose recalls. She was often the only woman or African American in class.

"The engineering school was rigorous at UNO, so it taught me how to think. I have a pretty tough skin coming out of UNO," Rose says. "It taught me perseverance, to keep going."

Rose recalled going to meetings as a member of the UNO chapter of the National Society of Black Engineers and taking to heart the chapter president's words.

"He said we are here to get a degree by any means necessary," Rose recalls with a laugh. "I always remembered that."

Her perseverance has paid off. Rose's degree and engineering skills have landed her positions in public and private companies, from the education field in Dallas, Texas to the world's entertainment epicenter—Hollywood.

Rose spent six years at NBCUniversal in Los Angeles before taking a position at Netflix in 2020 leading the building infrastructure department.

At Netflix, Rose oversees an eight-person team—soon to expand to 20—that is responsible for keeping all building equipment operational.

"I oversee all MEP operations, that's mechanical, electrical and plumbing engineering operations," Rose says. "We are responsible for critical equipment that serves Netflix, like chilled water systems, fan coil units, electrical panels, fire light safety systems, building automation systems. We make sure all of that equipment is always online and operable."

Despite its global standing as a media leader, Rose says Netflix is a company that values the importance of work-life balance, embraces cultural diversity and applauds teamwork.

"I love the technical projects that I'm working on, but I love the people component of this company. It's huge," Rose says. "I love the culture of this company; that is the most meaningful part to me."

Rose is working to build a central monitoring location system for Netflix that will allow them to see all critical systems and remotely test diagnostics on equipment. She created a similar software program and monitoring system during her time at NBCUniversal.

"So we're building that from the ground up right now for Netflix," Rose says. "That was the number one project I was hired to come on board to do."

Currently technicians have to go on-site and physically view equipment and run diagnostics. Once the central monitoring system comes online later this year, that won't be necessary, Rose says.

"You know how the CIA has a bunch of screens in a room and it's like you can see everything that's going on?" she explains. "Basically this allows us to have visibility through automation of all our critical assets to perform diagnostics remotely"

Rose is also working to set up an asset management software program that keeps track of the maintenance cycles of equipment.

That's thousands of assets housed in about 10 buildings in the greater Los Angeles area that fall under her responsibility.

"Most of our buildings in Los Angeles are right in the heart of Hollywood," Rose says. "You can see the Hollywood sign from those locations."

Yes, that iconic white-letter sign, Rose confirms with a laugh.

Her advice to students, particularly to young women, is to have "tunnel vision" in pursuit of their college degree.

"You can come from very humble beginnings; just keep your eye and focus on getting that degree and learning the curriculum; and it can really transform opportunities," Rose says. "You can end up where you couldn't imagine because of this one degree." 🌟

Robin Rose, a mechanical engineer, helps keep Netflix operational.



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A Lot On His Plate

Privateer catcher becomes U.S. citizen while excelling on diamond and in classroom **BY EMMA SEELY**

NEW ORLEANS PRIVATEER third-year catcher Jorge Tejada is no stranger to obstacles. At 14 years old, he and his father emigrated from Cuba to Florida. His mother and sister later joined them. Even though the move promised opportunities free from Cuba's political and economic restrictions, it wasn't easy to adjust to a completely new way of life. But baseball—as it has throughout Tejada's life—helped.

"I talked to the coach, and he let me in the baseball team my freshman year in high school," says Tejada, an electrical engineering major. "Having those teammates helped me out. Some spoke Spanish. That basically got my English better."

During his time at Southwest Miami High School, Tejada dealt with the challenges

of being in a different country, noting that, at first, he would "go to class and would not understand anything." During those difficult times, he continued to play, and excel, on his school's baseball team, earning honors like MVP and All-District.

While he was improving as a baseball player and as an English speaker, Tejada was working on another goal: to become a United States citizen. The process can take many years. He had to be a resident of the United States for five years before applying for citizenship.

However, all that waiting paid off when, on March 11, 2020, Tejada was finally granted his full citizenship.

"It was a big moment," Tejada says about celebrating his citizenship that same day on

the field after a Privateer victory against Southern University. "Once I told my teammates, they were really excited about me. I was really happy about that. When I got in that clubhouse and everybody saw me, it was a really special moment. They made it special."

Parents of his Privateer teammates also chimed in by cheering Tejada's name.

"It's exciting," he says. "I'm a citizen. I can say I'm an American, and that's something I'm really proud of. You think about all the grinding that went through that, all the hard work."

Unfortunately, Tejada's enthusiasm was short-lived. That 11-5 home win against Southern ended up being the last game of a pandemic-shortened season. Tejada tries to keep the setback in perspective.

"The season's cancellation teaches you that you can't take any game for granted," he says. "Things like this are going to happen. I enjoyed the moment. Once we finished the game one of my teammates, (fellow catcher Jackson) Murphy, told me it might be the end of the season. Such a good thing happened and then this."

Tejada ended his sophomore season—what was version 1.0 of the sophomore campaign—with a .318 batting average, up from

.215 as a freshman, and .483 on-base percentage. In 12 games, he collected three multi-hit performances, including back-to-back two-games in wins over Southland rival Nicholls State. Known for his defensive ability, he also threw out five baserunners.

Despite the unexpected turmoil, Tejada chooses to remain positive about the future, saying that he's excited to work hard for other opportunities that might come his way. Those opportunities are not restricted to baseball. He was named to the Southland Conference Spring 2020 Commissioner's Honor Roll.

"My parents made a lot of sacrifices; they left their lives and careers behind just to get me and my sister to this country. Although I have many goals to accomplish in the near and distant future, one of my priorities is to show that the sacrifices weren't a small feat. They were to give us a better life."

Ever the optimist, Tejada says the challenges of his Cuban childhood have helped shaped his outlook on life.

"It was tough because of the situation in Cuba, but growing up over there, struggling over there taught me a lot of things," he says. "Now that I'm here, I value things a little more."



New Orleans Privateer catcher Jorge Tejada tags an opposing player at home plate.





Cross Country has record-setting day at Southland Championships

BY MATTHEW SCHAEFER

THE NEW ORLEANS CROSS country program rewrote the record book at the 2020 Southland Conference Championships.

The program had a record-

setting day for best team finish since joining the conference as both the men's and women's squads finished fourth overall at the championship that ran through Southeastern

Louisiana University's campus in Hammond on Feb. 21, 2021.

The men finished fourth with 113 points, a six-spot and 93-point improvement from its previous program mark. The

championship meet and a new personal best by three seconds.

Kleshchukova earned First Team All-Southland for the third consecutive year.

Newcomer Anna Dohmen also impressed; she placed 11th with a new personal record of 21:44.3 in the 6K. She was named Southland Newcomer of the Year and earned Third Team All-Conference with the performance.

Privateers Ariana Jimenez, Amelia Bretz and Anna Martin also set personal bests at 6K.

On the men's side, Kolyn Saltzman continued to add to his already impressive two-year resume with the Privateers as he claimed fourth



overall with a new personal best of 23:44.86. The mark was the fastest time recorded by a New Orleans student-athlete at the 8K distance in school history.

Saltzman earned First Team All-Southland with the showing, the second All-Conference honor for the sophomore in cross country. He won Second Team in 2019.

Saltzman's fourth-place finish was the best place ever received by a male student-athlete in a championship race at UNO.

Jaden Forester put up the second-best showing by a freshman in the championship meet as he finished seventh at 23:49.9 taking home Second Team All-Southland honors. Forester's time was a new personal record and slotted into the top-10 in program history at 8K. It was also the



fastest time ever ran by a UNO freshman in school history at the distance.

After the record-setting day at the cross country championships, the New Orleans women's cross country team was selected

for the U.S. Track & Field and Cross Country Coaches Association (USTFCCCA) Regional Rankings for the first time in school history. The men improved to a program-best mark.

The 2020 Southland Conference Championships was the best championship meet finish for the men's group since the 2005 Sun Belt Championships and the best for the women's side since the 2002 Sun Belt Championships.



Women's Basketball Program Hosts Winter Clothing Drive to Benefit New Orleans Mission

The New Orleans women's basketball program wrapped up a successful Winter Donation Drive for the homeless, coordinated by student-athlete Dionjhae Thomas.

The drive collected new or gently worn coats, blankets, scarfs, hats and gloves that were then distributed to members of the homeless population downtown and to the New Orleans Mission.

Thomas and her teammates collected the donations over a month-long period as they set up collection boxes throughout the University of New Orleans community and at a men's and women's basketball doubleheader.

In total over three carts filled with bins and bags was able to make it to people in the community who really need it.

"This winter I had the idea to give back to Thibodaux," Thomas says, speaking about her hometown, a little over an hour drive from New Orleans where she held a previous donation drive. "There are a lot of people who are less fortunate, and winter is here."

"My teammates and I wanted to give back to the city of New Orleans next, the great city that supports us. I would like to thank everyone for their donations to #NOLAsTeam." 🙏

ABOVE LEFT: Women's basketball program hosts winter clothing drive to benefit the New Orleans Mission.

ABOVE RIGHT: Student-athlete Dionjhae Thomas spearheaded the clothing drive that collected donations for the New Orleans Mission.



Alumnus Henry Singer establishes endowed scholarship for College of Engineering and College of Sciences

BY LITTICE BACON-BLOOD

THE DECISION TO ATTEND the University of New Orleans was easy for alumnus Henry Singer. His family did not have money and the University's \$35-per semester tuition was affordable, says Singer, the fourth of seven children born into what he calls a "working class poor family" in New Orleans.

His dad, a clerical worker who often worked three jobs, had an eighth-grade education.

His mom was a high school graduate, Singer says.

"We had 10 of us in a two-bedroom, one-bath rental house," Singer says. "One thing that I learned from them was the value of hard work. I think a lot of UNO students are like that, they come from meager means but they do have parents or a parent who does work very hard."

Two days after graduating high school in 1964, Singer

started work at the Blue Plate Foods factory earning \$1.25 an hour making mayonnaise, salad dressing and other condiments. Despite the minimal wages, Singer says he was able to earn enough to pay tuition at UNO and buy books.

"I started at UNO in '64, so in two weeks I had a year's worth of college tuition paid for at a minimum wage job," he says. "Now, it took three more weeks to pay for the

books because the books were actually more expensive than the tuition!"

When he started school that fall, he worked on campus. Singer says he "had it easy" compared to today's working college student.

"I didn't have to work that long to be able to afford a lot," Singer says. "I could do it without having to get student loans or without having a scholarship. Nowadays very

few working class kids can do it without one or both of those.”

That insight and empathy has led Singer to donate money to establish The Henry J. Singer Endowed Scholarship at UNO for the College of Engineering and the College of Sciences.

“I’d like to help others reach their potential. Making a donation is really making an investment into the future of the student. It is even an investment into the future of the University, the city, the state or even the country,” Singer says. “You never know which students are going to go on and do something really incredible.”

Singer enrolled at UNO as the lakefront campus was slowly evolving from its naval base origins.

“When I arrived on campus, you had the Liberal Arts Building, the Sciences Building and they had just opened the library like a month before I arrived on campus,” Singer says. “Everything else was the old barracks and military buildings from the old naval base that was there.”

Singer, who earned an engineering degree in 1969, recalled attending class in a wooden building near the smokestack that housed the College of Sciences. Years later, the Department of Engineering would become the School of Engineering and eventually the fully accredited College of Engineering.

“One of my biggest memories is that the theme of the University seemed to be growth. Chancellor Homer Hitt had a master plan for the campus and that was communicated to the students,” Singer says. “It seemed like every year a new building was added.”

Singer recalls the University also was attempting to create its own identity. He was a part of the student body that voted to choose the University’s colors and its mascot.

“At the time I characterized it as growth, but you know what I characterize it as now?” Singer asks. “Like a butterfly going from the chrysalis to the wings

spent the better part of four decades as a safety administrator for the Public Buildings Service of the General Service Administration, the agency that oversees federal buildings.

Singer retired in 2012 and moved back to New Orleans in 2016.

“I loved working for the government and working with

know how you’re going to be enlightened.”

Singer recalls his epiphany came while sitting in the back of a philosophy class listening to a fellow student discuss topics with their professor.

“She would really engage him in really interesting discussions,” Singer says. “I’m in the back of the class and I realized,



and flying. That takes like a week or two for that to happen so you make that years ... that’s about what it took for LSUNO to go from those first classes to a butterfly that was now flying.”

After earning an engineering degree, Singer worked six years with the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers as part of its safety division that created policy and work procedures.

“At the time, engineers were in great demand and I had three or four job offers, and it was a matter of deciding which one I wanted to take,” Singer says.

He left the Corps to work in Washington, D.C. where he

other agencies too. I got to do some really neat stuff,” Singer says. “When you’re in the safety business, you’re doing things that protect human life and health and that resonates with me.”

His time at UNO also resonates, Singer says. It was there that his “19th century” prejudices on racial and gender equality were challenged and the fallacies of his views exposed, says Singer, who is White.

“UNO was integrated, which was pretty remarkable for the day because public colleges in the South were not,” Singer says. “You never

President John Nicklow with alumnus Henry Singer at a New Orleans Privateer baseball game. Singer earned an engineering degree in 1969.

“You know, she is smarter than I could hope to be, and she’s Black. How can I be superior to her?”

That was my awakening, Singer says.

“I’m not superior to her. I’m not superior to anybody,” Singer recalls thinking. “UNO prepared me, and other students, for success in a different world than what we were brought up in.” 🌟

ALUM NOTES

Judy Schott (B.S., '82)

Alumna Judy Schott of Mandeville, Louisiana, co-inventor of the Better Bedder sheet fastener, got the chance to pitch her innovation on primetime network television.

Schott, along with her business partner Nita Gassen, appeared on ABC's Shark Tank on an episode that aired Feb. 26.

The women came away with an investment deal with the "Queen of QVC," Lori Greiner.

Schott, who earned a bachelor's degree in accounting from UNO, says she got the idea for the invention after her son starting sleeping on her sofa to avoid having to make his bed. She and Gassen decided to create a better way to make a bed so that the linen wouldn't come untucked.

"The Better Bedder is like a giant headband that wraps around your mattress," Gassen told New Orleans television station WGNO. "You fit the sheet into the Better Bedder and once the sheets are on, they won't come out of the Better Bedder, you can kick and pull and they are going to stay on tight."



Nita Gassen, left, and Judy Schott, both of Mandeville, pitched their product, an invention that makes changing bed linens faster and easier, to investors on ABC's Shark Tank in an episode that aired in February.

PHOTO COURTESY OF ABC

1960s

Leah Eskine (B.A., '66)

Leah Eskine has published her first novel, "CC's Road Home," an historical, coming of age young adult novel. Eskine, a retired public school teacher, says the novel was inspired by her former students.

Eskine earned a bachelor's degree in education from the University of New Orleans.

1970s

Charles Beasley (B.S., '78)

Charles Beasley, president and CEO of Baptist Community Ministries in New Orleans, has retired after 25 years of service. Beasley joined the faith-based philanthropic agency as chief financial officer at its inception in 1995.

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

1980s

Julia Carcamo (B.S., '85)

Julia Carcamo, a casino marketer with the marketing firm J Carcamo & Associates, has released her first book, "Reel Marketing," a study into the art of creating casino brands.

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

Dan Crumb (B.S., '87)

Dan Crumb has been promoted to executive vice president and CFO for the National Football League's Kansas City Chiefs. Crumb was hired as the club's chief financial officer in 2010 and was named an executive vice president in March 2021.

Crumb earned a bachelor's degree in accounting from the University of New Orleans and an MBA from Tulane University.

1990s

Jeff Baudier (B.A., '90)

Jeff Baudier is the new chief executive officer for Intermountain Rural Electric Association (IREA), an electric cooperative based in Sedalia, Colorado. He will oversee the operations of IREA, including general management, financial stewardship, operational planning and implementation, and board relations.

Baudier holds a bachelor's degree in English and minor in political science from the University of New Orleans and a J.D. from the Loyola University School of Law in New Orleans.

Bridget A. Derbyshire (B.A., '92)

Bridget A. Derbyshire, a St. Bernard Parish public school educator, was named Andrew Jackson Middle School's Teacher of the Year for the 2020-21 school year.

Kimberly Frazier (Ph.D., '03)

Kimberly N. Frazier is the president-elect of the American Counseling Association for 2021 – 2022. She will begin her term as ACA President-Elect on July 1, 2021 and will begin serving as the American Counseling Association's 71st president on July 1, 2022.

The ACA is a not-for-profit, professional and educational organization dedicated to the growth and advancement of the counseling profession. Founded in 1952, it is the world's largest association exclusively representing professional counselors in various practice settings.

"I am honored to work with counseling professionals who are passionate about the counseling profession as well as specific sub-areas where I share their interest," said Frazier. "These three components—diversity in leadership, clinician involvement and representation and student involvement and representation—are the life-blood of the organization that will keep ACA fresh with ideas and mirror the principles the organization was founded."

Frazier is an associate professor in the Clinical Rehabilitation and Counseling Department at the Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center-New Orleans. She is a national certified counselor and a licensed marriage and family therapist.

Frazier earned a doctorate in counselor education from the University of New Orleans.



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

Gene Frazier is the new deputy director of facilities for the Norman Y. Mineta San José International Airport.

Frazier previously was the superintendent for airport facilities management at the Tallahassee International Airport where he was responsible for a \$3 million operating budget and a \$50 million airport capital budget.

As deputy director, Frazier will provide executive leadership and oversight for facilities maintenance activities, manage airport assets and lead all technical trades services as well as represent the airport with federal regulatory agencies, airlines, tenants, and consultants.

"I am humbled and excited about the opportunity to serve as deputy director," Frazier said. "Although this is a challenging time for the aviation industry, I am optimistic about the path outlined by SJC leadership. I look forward to working alongside other high performing staff and contributing to the airport's continued success."

Frazier earned his bachelor's degree in political science from Howard University and his master's degree in public administration from the University of New Orleans.



2000s

Derbyshire, who has taught for 23 years, earned a bachelor's degree in communications from the University of New Orleans.

John L. Stelly (B.A., '92)

John L. Stelly has been named library director by the Ascension Parish Library Board of Control. Stelly had been the assistant library director since 2001.

Stelly earned a bachelor's degree in history from the University of New Orleans and a master's degree in library and information science from Louisiana State University.

Philip Gordillo (B.S., '96)

Philip Gordillo has been named regional wealth manager for Louisiana for Hancock Whitney. He previously was head of its corporate banking group in south Louisiana.

Gordillo began his banking career with the company's management training program after earning his bachelor's degree in economics from the University of New Orleans.

John Zollinger IV (M.B.A., '98)

John Zollinger IV has been promoted to senior vice president and director of commercial banking for Home Bank in New Orleans. He will be responsible for the bank's commercial banking line of business covering Acadiana, southwest Louisiana, Baton Rouge, New Orleans, North Shore, Natchez and Vicksburg, Mississippi.

Zollinger earned a bachelor's degree in finance from Spring Hill College in Mobile, Alabama and an MBA with a concentration in finance from the University of New Orleans.

Jonathan K. Reynolds (B.A., '00)

Jonathan K. Reynolds, chief commercial officer at Carter Federal Credit Union in Shreveport, Louisiana, was featured by KSLA-TV news for his work in reshaping neglected areas of Shreveport through real estate investment partnerships aimed at restoring the properties to commerce.

Reynolds holds a bachelor's degree in psychology from the University of New Orleans.

Stacie M. Williams (B.S., '00)

Stacie M. Williams has been named chief executive officer of Susan G. Komen Louisiana, a nonprofit agency dedicated to combating breast cancer by supporting health education, screenings and treatment programs.

Williams earned a bachelor's degree in general studies from the University of New Orleans.

Mike D. Jackson (B.S., '01)

Mike D. Jackson, the construction technology subject matter expert for the U.S. Air Force, earned the Air Force Civilian Achievement Award Medal for his work.

Jackson holds a bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering from the University of New Orleans.

Lisa Marie Brown (M.A., '02)

Lisa Marie Brown has written a children's book, "The New Orleans 12 Days of Christmas," released through Pelican Publishing Company.

Brown earned master's degree in history from the University of New Orleans.

Joseph Cardella (B.S., '06)

Joseph Cardella has been named project manager for Elliott Bay Design Group, a Seattle-based naval architects firm. He will lead and manage

diverse marine projects along the Gulf Coast.

Cardella, who has over 13 years of experience as a naval architect and project engineer within the maritime field, earned a bachelor's degree in naval architecture and marine engineering from the University of New Orleans.

Ryan Kruse (M.S., '06)

Ryan Kruse has joined LaPorte CPAs & Business Advisors as a director, serving in the firm's tax services department in New Orleans.

Kruse has 15 years of experience advising clients in the areas of trusts and estate planning, as well as multistate tax planning.

Kruse received his bachelor's degree in accounting from Louisiana State University and master's in accounting with a tax option from the University of New Orleans. ☐

Mandi Mitchell (B.S., '00, M.B.A., '03)

Mandi Mitchell, Louisiana Economic Development Assistant Secretary, has been named a certified economic developer by the International Economic Development Council.

This recognition denotes a mastery of skills in economic development and professional attainment, and a commitment to personal and professional growth.

An eight-year veteran of LED, Mitchell manages initiatives and programs related to legislative and congressional affairs, community competitiveness, small business services and state economic competitiveness. She has served as assistant secretary since 2015.

"Mandi Mitchell is a key member of our LED leadership team and this CEcD certification reflects her commitment to the economic development profession in Louisiana," LED Secretary Don Pierson said. "Economic developers use this accrediting process to hone their skills to improve opportunities for individuals, businesses and communities. I congratulate Mandi on this notable achievement and I applaud her dedication to our ongoing mission of cultivating jobs and economic opportunity for the people of Louisiana."

Mitchell earned a bachelor's degree in electrical engineering and an MBA from the University of New Orleans.



Kay Miller (B.S., '94, M.S., '00)

Kay Miller, a partner at Ericksen Krentel CPAs and Consultants in New Orleans, has been promoted to partner in charge of the firm's tax services section where she specializes in helping small businesses.

As a leader on the firm's tax and hospitality segments, Miller is instrumental in mentoring and leading tax team members on everything from compliance to tax planning, with a focus on partnerships and individuals.

Miller has 25 years of accounting and tax experience. Her accounting and tax background involves managerial experience with both local and regional CPA firms. She previously served as chief financial officer for a regional healthcare provider specializing in orthopedics, in addition to serving as an adjunct professor with a local community college where she taught bookkeeping, accounting and computerized accounting.

Miller earned her master's and bachelor's degrees in accounting from the University of New Orleans.



2010s

John Mather (B.S., '06)

John Mather is the director of marine projects for Mercy Ships, an international charity that provides humanitarian aid through the operation of the largest non-governmental hospital ships in the world.

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

Erin Larmann Reynaud (M.B.A., '07)

Erin Larmann Reynaud has been hired as a marketing strategist for the New Orleans-based public relations firm Gambel Communications.

Reynaud earned a bachelor's degree in consumer affairs from the University of Alabama and an MBA with a concentration in management information systems from the University of New Orleans.

Allyson Balara (M.Ed., '08)

Allyson Balara has been promoted to associate director of the Children's Team for Elevate Counseling Services in Easton, Massachusetts. She will supervise all clinicians who work with children ages 12 and under.

Balara earned a bachelor's degree from Bridgewater State University in Massachusetts and a master's degree in education from the University of New Orleans. She holds the licensed mental health counselor designation.

Peter L. Cho (Ph.D., '09)

Peter L. Cho has been named the dean of the Delgado Community College Business and Technology Division. In addition to this appointment, Cho continues to serve as the executive dean of Delgado's West Bank Campus.

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

Latricia D. Blain (B.S., '10)

Latricia D. Blain has earned her doctoral degree in professional counseling from Mississippi College in Clinton. Blain earned a bachelor's degree in psychology from the University of New Orleans.

Kenny Eldridge (B.S., '10)

Kenny Eldridge has been promoted to a senior manager in the tax services section of Ericksen Krentel CPAs and Consultants.

Eldridge has experience in multistate taxation matters, cash flow for startup business through federal and state tax incentives, and assisting companies with corporate reorganization strategies.

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

Monica Guient (M.A., '10)

Monica Guient has been named assistant vice president for diversity, inclusion and opportunity for the Louisiana State

University AgCenter and College of Agriculture. Guient was an assistant dean for academic diversity and inclusive excellence at the Thomas J. Watson College of Engineering and Applied Science at Binghamton University, which is part of the State University of New York system.

She holds a bachelor's degree in psychology from Xavier University of Louisiana and a master's degree in sociology from the University of New Orleans.

Wendo Brunoir (M.F.A., '14)

Wendo Brunoir is one of 56 Louisiana artists selected for the 2020 edition of Louisiana Contemporary, presented by The Helis Foundation.

Brunoir has been chosen for best in show and is the recipient of The Helis Foundation Art prize for his works, "Don't Catch You Slippin' Up" and "Appropriation of a Masterpiece."

Brunoir earned a master's degree in fine arts from the University of New Orleans.

Todd Rauch (B.S., '14)

Todd Rauch has been named vice president and chief financial officer at Metairie Bank and Trust. Rauch, who began his banking career in 2018, previously served as senior accountant/treasurer with American Bank and Trust in Covington, Louisiana.

He earned his bachelor's degree in management at Louisiana State University and his accounting degree from the University of New Orleans.

Jenna Chiasson (Ph.D., '15)

Jenna Chiasson has been named assistant superintendent of the Office of Teaching and Learning at the Louisiana Department of Education. In this role, she is the chief state official for K-12 academic standards, teacher support and evaluation, and support of special high-needs populations.

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

Eric Bosch (B.S., '89)

Eric Bosch has been selected as president and CEO-elect of LaPorte CPAs & Business Advisors in Metairie, Louisiana. He will assume his duties on Dec. 1, 2021.

Bosch joined LaPorte in 1990 and quickly rose through the ranks. He is currently a director in the audit and assurance services group and has served in a variety of leadership roles throughout the firm, including as a leader within the firm's healthcare industry group, chairman of the firm's compensation committee and former leader of the financial services industry group.

"I am truly honored to be selected to lead such a dynamic group of people," Bosch said. "I am proud of how far LaPorte has come in the many years that I have been here and I look forward to building on our solid foundation of high-quality work and great service for our clients."

Bosch has decades of public accounting experience providing accounting and auditing services to financial institutions, manufacturing firms, energy service companies, governmental entities, healthcare and other nonprofit organizations and mid-sized, family-owned businesses.

He serves as a faculty member for the Delgado Community College 10,000 Small Business Program and as an adjunct professor for the University of New Orleans in its healthcare management program.

Bosch earned a bachelor's degree in accounting from UNO.



Jeff Nagy (GHCM, '12)

Jeff Nagy is the executive director for Habitat for Humanity of Springfield, Missouri.

He has nearly 15 years of experience within the nonprofit sector including at-risk youth vocational training, community development, affordable housing, disaster response, veterans' health care, food security and psychological trauma.

"The Search Committee and the Board of HFHS are excited to bring Jeff to Springfield as he draws upon his extensive education and diverse experience to lead our Habitat affiliate," search committee chair Glenn Green said in a news release. "We look forward to seeing the ideas and innovation for the next stage of HFHS as Jeff works with our staff ... to accomplish our vision of Springfield as being a community where everyone has a decent place to live."

Nagy holds a master's degree in healthcare administration from the University of New Orleans and a doctorate in health science from Trident University International as an expert on the neurobiological effects of chronic and acute stress within U.S. combat veteran populations.

He also has a bachelor's degree in natural science from the University of Findlay and a master's degree in health science from Touro College, New York with a focus in epidemiology.

Nagy served four years in the U.S. Army as a combat medic and is a decorated combat veteran from his deployment to Sadr City, Iraq in 2008-09.



Woodi Jones (M.P.A., '15)

Woodi Jones has been promoted to program analyst for the Building Resilient Infrastructures in Communities (BRIC) program at FEMA headquarters in Washington, DC. Jones began her career in the Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness in Baton Rouge and has since worked for FEMA in North Texas and Sacramento before moving into her current position.

Jones earned a master's degree in public administration from the University of New Orleans.

Diana Ward (Ph.D., '15)

Diana Ward was honored by the Loyola University New Orleans women's resource center as "Outstanding Feminist Staff Member." She is the chief student conduct officer and Title IX coordinator at Loyola University.

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

Tyler Gillespie (M.F.A., '16)

Tyler Gillespie, a fifth-generation Floridian, has published a book of essays about the state. "The Thing about Florida: Exploring a Misunderstood State," is scheduled for release in April by the University Press of Florida.

Gillespie earned a master's degree from the University of New Orleans Creative Writing Workshop.

Michelle Espinoza (M.P.A., '17)

Michelle Espinoza has been promoted to external affairs branch chief for the state of Ohio's Emergency Management Agency.

Espinoza earned a master's degree in public administration from the University of New Orleans.

India King (M.A., '18)

India King has been named executive director of New Orleans Video Access Center, a nonprofit organization founded in 1972 that provides education, training, resources and opportunities to Louisiana's storytellers.

King earned a master's degree in arts administration from the University of New Orleans.

Ashley-Crystal Firstley (M.A., '19)

Ashley-Crystal Firstley has been named grants and marketing manager of the Arts Council New Orleans.

Firstley earned a master's degree in arts administration from the University of New Orleans.


Bill Morgan (M.B.A., '19)

Bill Morgan has published his first book, "Haze Gray and Underway: Sea Stories of the US Marines."

Morgan, a retired Marine colonel, earned an MBA from the University of New Orleans.

Nicole Ralston (Ph.D., '19)

Nicole Ralston has been named director of education and programming at Beloved Community, a nonprofit consulting firm in New Orleans dedicated to fostering diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives.

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



TELL US YOUR NEWS!

DID YOU: Get married? Get a new job? Receive an award? Have a baby? Send your alum note to alumni@uno.edu

ROBERT SHENK, PROFESSOR EMERITUS OF ENGLISH

UNIVERSITY OF NEW Orleans English professor Robert Shenk, who spent more than three decades teaching technical writing, editing and various literature courses—including his perennially popular course on John Milton—died Jan. 30, 2021. He was 78.

Shenk taught in the Department of English and Foreign Languages for 34 years until his retirement in 2019.

A retired captain in the U.S. Naval Reserve, Shenk arrived at UNO following a military career that included academic positions at the U.S. Naval Academy and the U.S. Air Force Academy and active duty service during the Vietnam War.



Robert Shenk

“I served as communications officer on a destroyer that chased carriers in the Gulf of Tonkin and bombarded North Vietnamese shore batteries,” Shenk told the *Driftwood* during an interview in 2000. “I was on river patrol boats for a year in the smaller rivers and canals of Vietnam.”

Shenk distinguished himself as an editor, literary critic and, most recently, a historian, following the publication of the well-received book “Black Sea Fleet: The U.S. Navy Amidst War and Revolution, 1919-1923.”

M.O. Walsh, director of the University of New Orleans Creative Writing Workshop,

recalls working with Shenk as the newly minted director of the MFA program. Shenk was the director of the English master’s degree program and the two had to work together to build course schedules and advise students.

“Bob was very old school in his approach, a military veteran, a scholar, and I was intimidated by him, to be honest. He was also very tall,” Walsh says. “Anyway, he disliked email, did everything on paper on little sticky notes in his difficult-to-read handwriting. Since I didn’t know what I was doing yet, I made numerous mistakes in our early days together, which I could tell frustrated him.”

One time Walsh mistakenly over-enrolled a course because he had missed one Shenk’s sticky notes. Knowing he had messed up, Walsh says he braced himself

for a reprimand.

“He came to my office,” Walsh says. “Instead of belaboring this point, though, Bob gave me a CD as a present. I looked at the cover and it was picture of him.”

It turned out that Shenk was also a classically trained pianist, and had recorded an album of Christmas carols on the piano, Walsh says. It was called “A Bob Shenk Christmas.”

“It was the most unexpected thing,” Walsh says. “It was a great reminder that people are so much larger and more complicated than the versions we see of them at work. I considered Bob a friend from that moment forward. He will be missed.”

A funeral mass was held at Most Holy Trinity Catholic Church in Covington, LA on Wednesday, Feb. 3. The service was also broadcast online.

EARLE BRYANT, PROFESSOR EMERITUS OF ENGLISH

EARLE BRYANT, PROFESSOR emeritus of English and former Africana studies endowed professor, died March 25, 2021. He was 74.

Bryant taught in the Department of English and Foreign Languages for 39 years until his retirement in 2017.

Even in retirement, however, Bryant’s love for teaching could not keep him out of the classroom.

He continued to teach post-retirement, especially his favorite course: ENGL 2071: African-American Literature I.

“He was the best teacher I have ever known, and he was the best human being I have ever known,” says English professor

Dan Doll, who shared an office with Bryant for a dozen years. “We could fill every seat in every room on this campus with students whose lives Earle touched.”



Earle Bryant

Bryant was considered one of the most gifted teachers in his department and colleagues say they learned as much from Bryant as his students.

“He understood the power of literature to transform lives, to give people new ways to imagine this world and their place in it,” says Janet Barnwell Smith, English instructor and director of the Greater New Orleans Writing Project. “This was especially true

of African American literature. His mission was to bring that literature not just to his Black students, who benefitted greatly from his knowledge, but to all his students.”

Bryant was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and raised there and in New Orleans.

“I’m half West Philly and half Seventh Ward,” he was fond of saying.

Bryant received his bachelor’s degree in English from Xavier University and earned his master’s and doctorate degrees from Harvard University in 1971 and 1978 respectively.

Bryant specialized in African American literature, American literature and English Renaissance literature, distinguishing himself as a scholar through publication of numerous articles. His book on Richard Wright’s

journalism, “Byline: Richard Wright,” was published in 2014 by the University of Missouri Press.

At UNO, Bryant received numerous honors and awards, including the Amoco Award for Excellence in Teaching, the 2007 UNO Alumni Association Award for Excellence in Teaching and the 2016 Distinguished English Faculty Award.

In 1997, Bryant was awarded the Louisiana Endowment for Humanities’ Humanitarian of the Year Award in recognition of his work in adult literacy. In 2001, he was honored as a Seraphia D. Leyda University Teaching Fellow, one of the most prestigious honors the University of New Orleans grants to faculty members for their exemplary teaching.

RETIRED CHEMISTRY PROFESSOR EDWIN STEVENS

EDWIN STEVENS, A RETIRED distinguished professor of chemistry and department chair who spent 33 years at the University of New Orleans, died May 7, 2020 in Bowling Green, Kentucky. He was 72.

"I always referred to him as a real gentleman scientist," UNO chemistry distinguished professor Mark Trudell says. "He was interested in everything and he was willing to help anybody."

Stevens was a mentor, guide and frequent collaborator for research projects and papers, Trudell says.

"I think his biggest impact was his support of research within the department," Trudell says.

"He was also very active in the local section of the American Chemical Society and help build connections to the University around the city. He was influential in getting University relations built with the USDA (Southern) Regional Institute. He had a lot of collaboration with them."



Edwin Stevens

Stevens, who retired from UNO in 2014, taught physical chemistry and was international known in X-ray crystallographer, Trudell says. He also had a passion for fine wine.

"He was fascinated by the chemistry," of wines, Trudell says. "He was very passionate about understanding how the different regions would affect the flavor."

Stevens earned a bachelor's degree in chemistry from Oregon State University, a doctorate in chemistry with a specialty in X-ray crystallography from University of California, Davis, and much

later a master certificate in winemaking from University of California, Davis.

Stevens is survived by his wife Cheryl, sons Richard, Michael, Geoffrey and Scott, a daughter, Heather Chumbley, a sister Dian Zinckgraf and eight grandchildren.

He was preceded in death by his parents, Richard F. and Eveleen Stevens, and his brothers, Richard F., Jr. and Kenneth Stevens.

JOE KING, FORMER DEAN, ACTING CHANCELLOR

JOE KING, WHO RETIRED FROM THE University of New Orleans following a 20-year career that included stints as a biology professor and dean of the College of Sciences, provost and interim chancellor, died Aug. 2, 2020 at Lakeview Regional Hospital in Covington, La. He was 76.

King was born in Conroe, Texas and arrived at UNO in 1992 when he was hired as a biology professor and dean of the College of Sciences. King guided the college for 16 years.

"Joe was an outstanding mentor to me as a chair and was always there to listen," says Steve Johnson, dean of the College of Sciences and professor of biological sciences, who was recruited to UNO by King. "He was a passionate teacher and researcher even as a dean; and he was a critical part of UNO becoming a Tier 2 research university."

King was acting chancellor when the University of New Orleans moved from the LSU



Joe King

System to the University of Louisiana System in 2011. Since its opening in 1958, UNO had been a part of the LSU System.

Prior to being named acting chancellor, King served as provost and vice chancellor of academic affairs for two years. He retired from UNO in 2012 as the executive director of graduate school.

"I will always remember what a caring person he was and his incredible sense of humor," says Johnson, who succeeded King as College of Sciences dean.

King went on to serve as provost at Auburn University at Montgomery from 2012-16, after which he returned to the classroom as a professor of biology and environmental science.

King is survived by his daughter, Rachel Rebecca King-Dunn, son-in-law, Danny Mac Dunn Jr. and grandson, Jacob Easton Dunn. His wife, Kathryn Pauline Palmer King, and parents, Walter and Willie Mae King, preceded him in death.

TONY FRENCH: THEATRE PROFESSOR

UNIVERSITY OF NEW ORLEANS theatre professor Anthony "Tony" French, who spent nearly three decades teaching theatre and costume design, died Oct. 27, 2020. He was 60 years old.

"Tony was the consummate professor: scholarly, creative and a beloved teacher," film and theatre professor David Hoover says. "He will truly be missed."

French was the New Orleans Theatre Association Endowed Professor in Theatre and Costume Design and taught for 27 years. He retired in 2019.

French, who earned a bachelor's degree in fine arts from University of Evansville and a master's in fine arts from Carnegie-Mellon

University, designed well over 150 shows over the course of his career, earning awards from the Kennedy Center among many others.



Tony French

"He was such a versatile artist," says Chris Day, UNO political science professor and department chair. "In addition to being a talented and award-winning artist and designer, Tony has been one of my favorite hangout-friends since he first came to UNO 27 years ago."

"His artwork hangs in a prominent place on my wall, and memories of sharing secrets and laughs with Tony hold a prominent place in my head and in my heart."

French enjoyed travel and taught for two summers in Prague.

He was also an accomplished photographer having shown in many group exhibits around the country.

French is survived by his sisters, Maxine Stephenson, Rebecca Markham, Kay Vormbrock, Beverly Morris, Terry Egan, Lisa Destreza and his brother, Fred French. 🍷

THEN AND NOW



View of Milneburg Hall

THIS VINTAGE PHOTOGRAPH of Milneburg Hall is undated, but the change on campus over the years is indisputable in the picture taken in 2021.

The almost barren landscape of yesteryear is now filled with mature foliage, a variety of trees, sidewalks surrounded by grass and an additional building. Today Kirschman Hall, which

houses the College of Business Administration, is visible just above Milneburg Hall.

What once was a clear view of the Liberal Arts Building is curtained now behind tree lines.

The vehicles might offer a clue as to the decade in which the vintage picture was taken. There appears to be *three* classic VW Beetles in the parking lot. 🐞

On behalf of the students, faculty, and staff of the University of New Orleans, we would like to thank all our donors whose generosity is helping to advance UNO and ensure that New Orleans' preeminent public university can continue to educate, ignite ingenuity and drive economic development in our region.

Specifically, we wish to acknowledge the donors who give \$10,000 or more annually to support the University, and are recognized in the Homer L. Hitt Society, named for the founding chancellor of the University of New Orleans.

Annually, since 2015, the UNO art faculty has selected a recipient of the Homer L. Hitt Society Art Award which identifies the artistic achievements of the student body and increases community awareness of the high quality of work produced at the University of New Orleans. The selected artwork is reproduced as a limited edition and made available to our Homer L. Hitt Society donors, in recognition of their philanthropic leadership.

For more information on the Homer L. Hitt Society and the Donor Honor Roll please visit uno.edu/homer-hitt-society



2020 Homer L. Hitt Art Award

Barbara J. Mileto

Artist Statement: For the Homer L. Hitt Society Award I decided to work with one of my favorite techniques, Cyanotype. The Cyanotypes are one-of-a-kind. Each one of the prints is created individually by hand and are unique pieces. I kept the original blue color of the technique to represent the University of New Orleans. I used flowers, vegetation, lace, and handcrafted crochet pieces. A thin crocheted chain is the one element that is repeated in all the prints. This chain stands for the need of unity the world needs to go through this difficult moment.

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