

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

SILVER & BLUE

SPRING 2024

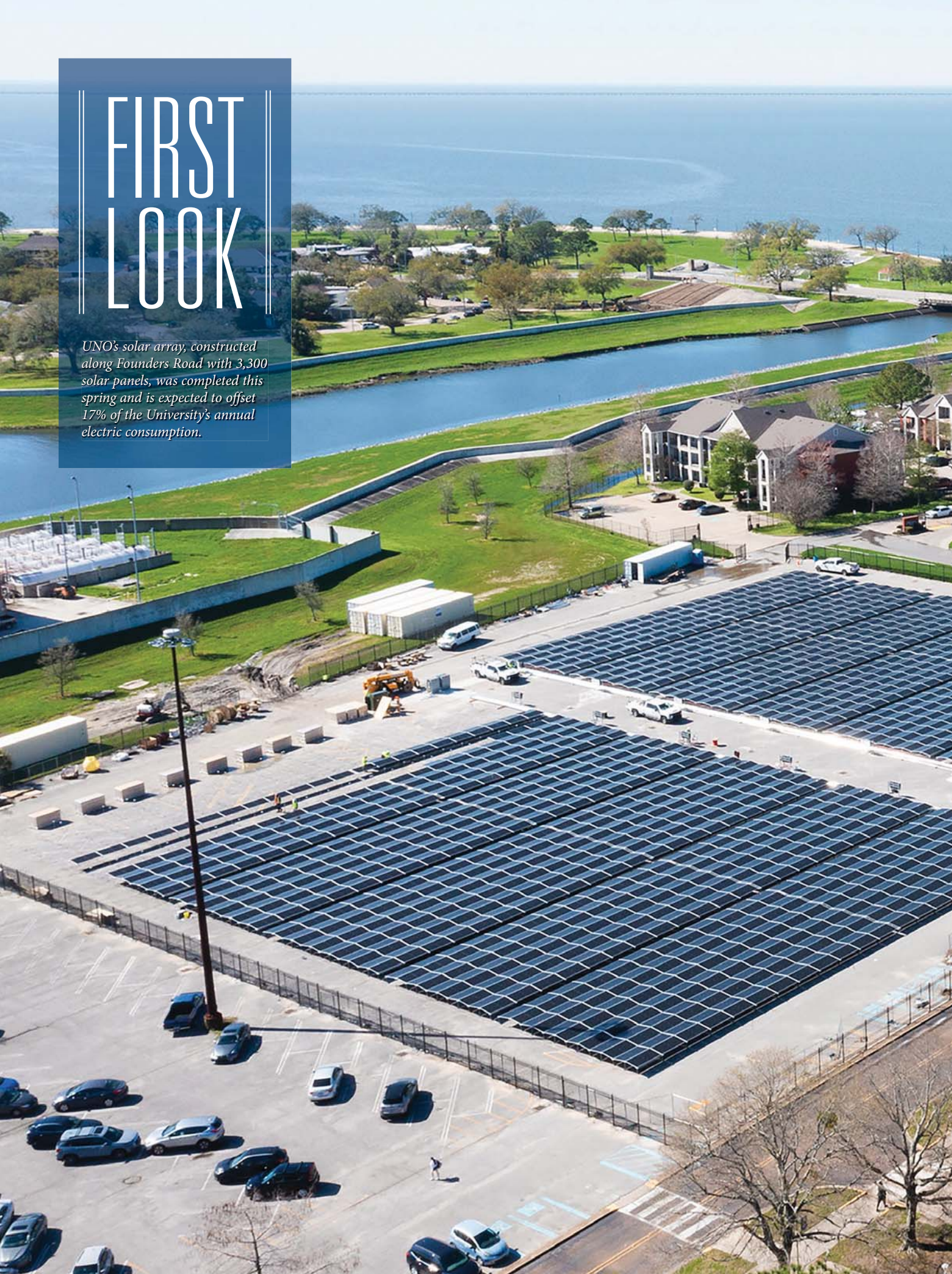
PRESIDENT
KATHY JOHNSON

Collaborative Servant Leader



FIRST LOOK

UNO's solar array, constructed along Founders Road with 3,300 solar panels, was completed this spring and is expected to offset 17% of the University's annual electric consumption.







NORTH SIDE SKULL+BONE
YOU NEXT
1819
2022
BIG CHIEF SUNPI



UNO President Kathy Johnson laughs as she helps cut the ribbon during a ceremony marking the completion of a mural painted on the Education Building at the University of New Orleans.

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DEAR ALUMNI AND FRIENDS,

PRIOR TO BECOMING PRESIDENT IN NOVEMBER, I HAD VISITED NEW ORLEANS quite a few times—mostly for professional conferences—and I was enamored of the city’s distinctive and welcoming culture. So when I took the job, it was truly thrilling for my family and me to become residents of one of my favorite cities in the world. In recent months, I have spent a lot of time meeting and speaking with members of the university community. It has deepened my appreciation for the University of New Orleans and the people who help make it such a diverse, vibrant and indispensable institution.

First of all, we have a lot of support from which to draw. Our alumni relish the time they spent at the University, the relationships they formed, and the knowledge they acquired while earning their degree. Many praised specific faculty and staff members who challenged, mentored or supported them at critical points on their way to graduation. Our dedicated employees are clearly invested in the success of our students. Community and business leaders are also rooting for us. They understand just how much UNO matters to our region by supplying well-qualified graduates to the workforce and serving as an anchor institution. We take very seriously our role as a partner with the business community, nonprofits, government, other educational institutions and our neighbors in metro New Orleans. In addition to the students we educate and the research that we conduct, we consider the University to be an integral intellectual, economic and cultural presence in our community. I am in awe of our students. They are curious, driven and intent on improving their world. They inspire me daily, and I know that you will be proud to welcome them into the ranks of our newest alumni.

Our students deserve the best possible educational experience that we can deliver to them. That is why we have been engaged in a robust process to plan for the future of our university. During



this spring semester, more than 100 task force members—including faculty, staff and alumni—identified priorities and tactics in five key areas of focus. The results of their work will be contained in a flexible plan that will live on our website and will guide us in the years ahead. I am so grateful for the enthusiastic participation of so many members of our university community. Their collaboration has made me even more excited about what we can accomplish together.

UNO Proud,
Kathy Johnson, Ph.D.
PRESIDENT

SILVER & BLUE

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EXECUTIVE EDITOR
Littice Bacon-Blood

EDITOR
Adam Norris

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS
Deven Johnson

DESIGN AND LAYOUT
Eric Gernhauer

PHOTOGRAPHY
Esther Clowney
UNO Athletics
Tracie Morris Schaefer
Daniel Sumrall

Send Correspondence to:
Silver and Blue Editor
University of New Orleans
Administration Building 103
2000 Lakeshore Drive
New Orleans, LA 70148
Phone: (504) 280-6832
Email: unomagazine@uno.edu

THE UNIVERSITY of NEW ORLEANS

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To inquire about alumni events or to join the UNO Alumni Association, contact: Office of Alumni Affairs, University of New Orleans, New Orleans, LA 70148
Phone: (504) 280-2586
Fax: (504) 280-1080
Email: alumni@uno.edu

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CAMPUS SCENE

HEADLINES AND HAPPENINGS



*INSIDE
KREWE OF UNO
HOMECOMING
COMMENCEMENT
LT. GOVERNOR
VISITS HRT
INNOVATE UNO
PUMPKIN SMASH
ACTOR DERIC
AUGUSTINE VISITS
THEATRE UNO*

PUMPKIN SMASHING

UNO counseling services served up the pumpkins for a smashing stress-relieving good time!



ACTOR DERIC AUGUSTINE VISITS CAMPUS

Actor and UNO alumnus Deric Augustine talked with theatre and film students during a visit to campus in November. Augustine's film credits include "Godfather of Harlem" and "All American." He earned a bachelor's degree in marketing from UNO in 2012.



**LT. GOV. BILLY
NUNGESSER VISITS
HRT LAB**

Louisiana Lt. Gov. Billy Nungesser visited the Lester E. Kabacoff School of Hotel, Restaurant and Tourism Administration lab in February to discuss potential tourism collaborations.

RIGHT: (left to right) Lt. Gov. Billy Nungesser; Aundrea Kloor, assistant dean for MBA, Executive Education & Program Advancement; Yvette Green, department chair and director of Hospitality Research Center; President Kathy Johnson stand beside renderings for a new state-of-the-art hospitality facility. **BELOW:** Nungesser talks with President Johnson, Green and others during a visit.





INNOVATE UNO

For two days in November, the fourth floor of the Earl K. Long Library and UNO's Fine Arts Gallery were the center for the University of New Orleans' 12th independent showcase, *Innovate UNO*, in which faculty, staff and students were able to present their independent research, scholarly or creative activities to the campus community.





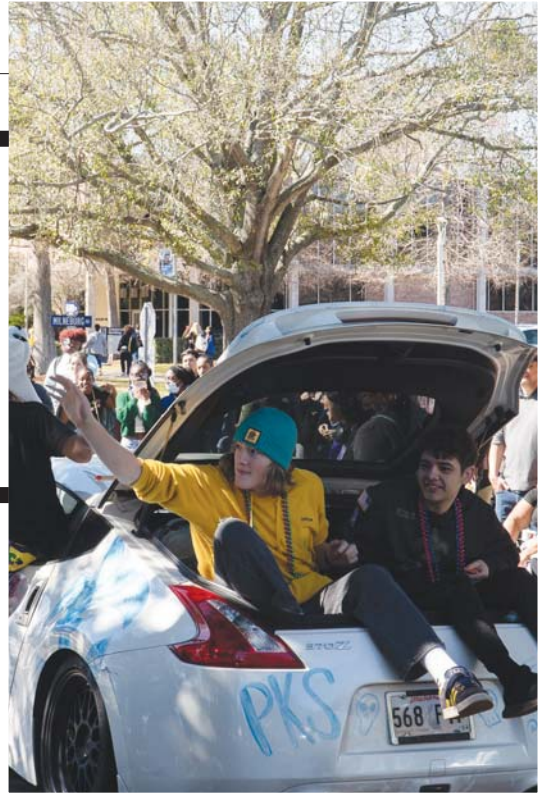
HOMECOMING

In a tradition that celebrates school pride, the Privateer nation gathered for a week of festivities in November that culminated in a tailgate village at the Lakefront Arena prior to the homecoming basketball game.

KREWE OF UNO PARADE

The Krewe of UNO rolled through campus on Feb. 6, celebrating its 2024 theme, "Ladies First: Celebrating UNO's first woman president and many famous firsts." The theme was in honor of Kathy Johnson who became the eighth president of the University of New Orleans in November and the first woman to hold the permanent position.

Johnson's float was among the procession of nearly 50 organizations and groups that included bands, steppers, motorized carts and walking groups parading along a new and longer route that began and ended at the University Center.



FALL COMMENCEMENT

Acclaimed novelist Maurice Carlos Ruffin, who earned two degrees from the University of New Orleans, including a master's in creative writing, gave the fall commencement address on Dec. 8, 2023. He told UNO grads, "I'm living my dream because I went to this school."

The fall and summer 2023 graduating classes hailed from 25 U.S. states and territories and 11 countries.





UNO THEATRE PRESENTS: “NO EXIT” AND “BLOOD AT THE ROOT”

What does it mean to live in hell? That is one of the central questions explored in Jean-Paul Sartre’s dramatic existentialist play “No Exit,” which was Theatre UNO’s first production of the spring 2024 semester.

Last fall, Theatre UNO presented “Blood at the Root,” a fictional play inspired by real events that took place at a high school in Jena, Louisiana in 2006. In the play, high school students are embroiled in racial tensions that are layered with social injustice and social equity.

Theatre student J’aila Price, a member of the “Blood at the Root” cast, won the Irene Ryan Acting Scholarship during the Region 6 Kennedy Center competition in February. The Irene Ryan Foundation awards 16 regional and two national scholarships annually.



NEWS & EVENTS

UNIVERSITY OF NEW ORLEANS EDUCATOR PREP PROGRAMS RECOGNIZED FOR NATIONAL EXCELLENCE

THE COUNCIL FOR THE Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) announced that the University of New Orleans School of Education has received reaccreditation for its educator preparation programs. The fall 2023 review by the CAEP Accreditation Council resulted in 34 educator preparation providers receiving accreditation, bringing the total to 551 providers approved under the CAEP Accreditation Standards—rigorous, nationally-recognized standards that were developed to ensure excellence in educator preparation programs.

“As the University of New Orleans celebrates 65 years of affordable and accessible higher education, it is important to recognize the significant contributions made by our programs in education and human development,” says Brian Beabout, associate professor and acting director of the School of Education. “CAEP accreditation reminds us that there are no shortcuts to quality and addressing our region’s acute teacher shortage will take continued efforts from our faculty, staff and K-12 school partners.”

Accreditation is based on peer review that serves the dual functions of assuring quality and promoting improvement. CAEP is a unified accreditation system



intent on raising the performance of all institutions focused on educator preparation.

“These institutions meet high standards so that their students receive an education that prepares them to succeed in a diverse range of classrooms after they graduate,” says CAEP president Christopher A. Koch. “Seeking CAEP accreditation is a significant commitment on the part of an educator preparation provider.”

Educator preparation providers seeking accreditation

must pass peer review of the CAEP standards, which are based on two principles:

1. Solid evidence that the provider’s graduates are competent and caring educators, and
2. Solid evidence that the provider’s educator staff have the capacity to create a culture of evidence and use it to maintain and enhance the quality of the professional programs they offer.

The University of New Orleans School of Education prepares graduate and under-

The University of New Orleans School of Education has received reaccreditation for its educator preparation programs.

graduate students in the fields of teacher education, educational administration, counseling, and human performance and health promotion. Faculty and students also produce research that addresses difficult problems in human flourishing, and the school supports the development of sustainable, equitable and just institutions.



UNO HOSTS 400 FOR 2024 ASCE GULF COAST STUDENT SYMPOSIUM

THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW Orleans played host to the 2024 Gulf Coast American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) Student Symposium for civil engineering students from 15 universities in Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama on March 7-9. It was the first time UNO has hosted the event since 2010, says Gianna Cothren, UNO professor of civil engineering and ASCE faculty adviser.

“We had approximately 400 participants, guests, and host personnel at our event from Thursday through Saturday,” Cothren says. “Everyone did an amazing job.”

Although UNO’s concrete canoe teams didn’t earn a spot in the national competition, the University’s Geo-Wall team won first place, Cothren says. It was their first time competing.

The Geo-Wall competition

requires students to design and build a model mechanically stabilized earth retaining wall that is used to reinforce and support soil structures. Students had to build a three-sided wall model that could be used as a support for bridge abutments.

“Their team is very young in that they’ve not taken the courses needed for this project, but they got together with myself and the geotechnical adjunct professor for a quick overview and guidance,” Cothren says. “I am very proud of this team.”

Regional Geo-Wall winners do not advance to a national competition.

Meanwhile, UNO’s steel bridge team earned second place and will be invited to compete in the national competition which will be held at Louisiana Tech in Ruston, Louisiana on May 31-June 1.

University of New Orleans engineering students race the TriplePs (Positive Privateer Pirogue) in Bayou St. John during the Gulf Coast American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) Student Symposium hosted by UNO on March 7-9. UNO’S Geo-Wall team finished in first place.



CENTER AUSTRIA HONORS THE LEGACY OF INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION ADVOCATES ROSEMARY B. AND BRUNSWICK G. DEUTSCH

THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW Orleans' Center Austria celebrated the legacy of longtime international education advocates Rosemary B. and Brunswick G. Deutsch by naming a room in the International Center in their honor. At a Jan. 11 ceremony, the Rosemary B. and Brunswick G. Deutsch Seminar Room was dedicated.

Since 2017, the Rosemary B. and Brunswick G. Deutsch Foundation, under the direction of David McMahon, has generously provided funding for travel grants to enhance student exchanges between the University of Innsbruck and

the University of New Orleans. With the foundation's support, students from UNO's Center Austria and Innsbruck have experienced cultural immersion, increased global awareness and the development of cross-cultural communication skills through international travel.

"Scholarships for travel are more than just financial assistance; they are opportunities for students to broaden their horizons, gain a deeper understanding of global perspectives and develop the skills necessary to thrive in an interconnected world," says UNO President Kathy Johnson. "The Deutsch

Foundation's commitment to providing these scholarships reflects a profound understanding of the transformative power of international experiences and their role in shaping tomorrow's leaders."

Brunswick Goldberg Deutsch (1915-2002) was a lifelong resident of New Orleans and a partner emeritus of Deutsch, Kerrigan, and Stiles (now Deutsch Kerrigan LLP). He was a maritime lawyer and was appointed the Austrian Honorary Consul General for Louisiana and Mississippi in 1977. Brunswick's connection to Austria was through his father,

Col. Eberhard P. Deutsch, who served as Gen. Mark Clark's legal advisor following World War II when Great Britain, France, the Soviet Union and the United States occupied Austria.

Rosemary "Rosa" Barcelo Deutsch (1917-2020), loved the arts and performed onstage in California and Louisiana, most notably at the Le Petit Theatre du Vieux Carre in New Orleans. Throughout their 49-year marriage, the Deutsches traveled extensively throughout Europe—igniting a desire to encourage young people to experience diverse cultures and perspectives through travel.



UNO President Kathy Johnson speaks during a dedication for the Rosemary B. and Brunswick G. Deutsch Seminar Room in the International Center. (Below from left) Samuel Gladden, dean; Marc Landry, history professor; President Kathy Johnson; Jean Paul Lagarde, Austria's Honorary Consul in New Orleans and Philip D. Lorio II, Austria's former Honorary Consul, attend the dedication for the Deutsches' room.



‘DON’T UNDERESTIMATE HOW FAR YOU CAN GO, AS A UNO GRADUATE,’ DISTINGUISHED ALUMNA SABRINA FARMER TELLS GALA AUDIENCE

ADDRESSING A CROWD OF 400 people might be a daunting task to some. But alumna Sabrina Farmer, who spoke to such a group inside the Boeing Freedom Pavilion at the National WWII Museum, is used to performing under pressure. As the former vice president of engineering at Google, Farmer was one of the company’s few employees who has worked on every single one of Google’s products, which means she made decisions that impact billions of people and made billions of dollars.

She was honored in November as the winner of the 2023 University of New Orleans Homer L. Hitt Distinguished Alumni Award at the Distinguished Alumni Gala presented by Energy and Google. Avril Habetz, managing partner for Northwestern Mutual of Louisiana and Mississippi, was named the 2023 Norma Jane Sabiston Distinguished Young Alumna of the Year. The four academic colleges and Privateer Athletics also honored distinguished alumni.

Farmer is the 40th honoree to receive the Homer L. Hitt Distinguished Alumni Award. A native of Marrero, La., she earned a bachelor’s degree in computer science from the University. A year after graduating, she founded the Scholarship for Women in Computer Science at UNO.

“I credit UNO for everything I’ve accomplished,” says Farmer, who participated in a fireside chat-style conversation with Habetz and emcee Clancy DuBos. “I felt like UNO made a bet on me, and I felt like I needed to pay them back the entire time.”

Farmer, who said she was the first woman in her extended

family to attend college, helped rewire computer labs in the computer science department as a student. It sparked an interest in problem-solving that has continued to drive her throughout her career. She says UNO provided a foundation for her professional growth that is unsurpassed.

“What I tell students now is don’t underestimate how far you can go as a UNO graduate. I have worked with people from Cal Tech, MIT, Harvard and Princeton, and let me tell you, I can totally hold my own,” Farmer says.

Habetz oversees the market development of eight district offices in two states. She began her career at Northwestern Mutual in 2007 as an executive assistant. Since then, she’s taken on greater responsibilities in various leadership roles, and, in June of 2023, she was promoted to managing partner of Louisiana and Mississippi. She encouraged recent UNO graduates to seek out both mentors and sponsors.



ABOVE: Sabrina Farmer (left) stands with President Kathy Johnson and Ricky Burke, president of the UNO Alumni Association. BELOW: UNO also honored distinguished alumni from its four academic colleges and athletics during the gala.

“The difference between a mentor and a sponsor is a sponsor is going to be an advocate for you when you’re not there,” Habetz says. “They’re going to be the person in the room when you’re not in the room to help you further the development of your career.”

- The College of Business Administration honored Joseph M. Dempsey, chief financial officer of Crescent Crown Distributing, LLC.

- The Dr. Robert A. Savoie College of Engineering honored Kimberly S. Cook-Nelson, executive vice president of nuclear operations and chief nuclear officer of Entergy.

- The College of Liberal Arts, Education and Human Development honored Jericho Brown, a Pulitzer Prize-winning poet and director of creative writing at Emory University.

- The College of Sciences honored Frank Juge Jr., an emeritus professor of chemistry at the University of Central Florida.

- Privateer Athletics posthumously honored Wayne Cooper, who played for 14 years in the NBA and served as an NBA executive for another two decades. His award was accepted by his widow, Denise.

In addition to the fireside chat, attendees were treated to a selection of poems read by Brown, who earned his MFA from UNO and has published three collections of poetry.



UNO STUDENT OLIVIA MONNERJAHN SELECTED FOR NATIONAL RETAIL FEDERATION RISING STARS SCHOLARSHIP

UNIVERSITY OF NEW Orleans student Olivia Monnerjahn, a junior who is majoring in marketing, received a National Retail Federation Rising Stars Scholarship and attended the national conference in New York.

The scholarship, which includes a \$1,000 award, was created to teach students about the variety of career opportunities available in the retail industry. Monnerjahn attended the National Retail Federation Foundation Student Program held in New York on January 11-14.

Over the course of the four-day conference, Monnerjahn says she was able to meet many entrepreneurs and mentors in the retail industry.

“On the first day of the conference, Julie Averill, EVP and chief information officer of Lululemon, talked about the

use of technology in retail and the various aspects of a product’s lifecycle. Kristin Shane, SVP and chief merchandising officer of PetSmart, also spoke at the conference. She shared about staying agile to be successful in merchandising,” Monnerjahn says. “I found this very interesting because trends are always changing and evolving.”

The conference also included a career fair, she says.

“The last day was an amazing opportunity to market myself at the annual NRF career fair and engage in sit-down conversations with the mentors, including some of the speakers for this year’s conference,” Monnerjahn says. “There were so many companies to talk to.”

Monnerjahn was able to sit-in on the taping of a podcast, “Retail Gets Real,” featuring

Bill Thorne, senior vice president for communications at the National Retail Federation, and Monica Royer, founder and CEO of the clothing brand Monica+Andy.

The conference included a tour of Kohl’s design office in New York.

“I enjoyed hearing insightful first-hand experiences of Kohl’s employees in their fashion and design department,” Monnerjahn says. “I learned about those designers’ personal ways of creating daily.”

There were over 1,500 students from around the U.S. in attendance, and Monnerjahn says she found it inspiring to meet so many other students who were on similar career paths.

UNO marketing student Olivia Monnerjahn earned a Rising Stars Scholarship from the National Retail Federation and attended the national retail student conference held in New York.

“I am so grateful for this opportunity to advance my career and learn more about the retail industry,” Monnerjahn says. “I learned so much!”



ENGINEERING STUDY LOUNGE RENOVATED WITH \$120K GIFT

THE STUDY LOUNGE IN THE Engineering Building at the University of New Orleans has been renovated courtesy of a \$120,000 gift from UNO alumnus Tony Cibilich. Cibilich is the president and owner of C&C Marine and Repair in Belle Chasse, La.

The first-floor engineering study lounge is now a far more comfortable space, featuring new flooring, lighting and furniture, with photos related to different engineering projects adorning the walls.

“Our engineering students are studying to enter a profession,” says Lizette Chevalier, dean of the Dr. Robert A. Savoie Col-

lege of Engineering. “The lounge renovation greatly enhances their learning environment, which helps demonstrate our commitment to this goal. The space is now used more actively for studying both individually and in groups, and students have consistently expressed their gratitude.”

Cibilich earned a bachelor’s degree in mechanical engineering in 1989. He started C&C Marine and Repair in 1997 to provide general steel repairs to inland barges. Over the years, the company has expanded and upgraded with state-of-the-art facilities spanning 80 acres along the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway.



SCHOLARSHIP HONORING LONGTIME HISTORY PROFESSOR GÜNTER BISCHOF WILL SUPPORT STUDENT RESEARCH AND TRAVEL

A NEW ENDOWED scholarship honoring longtime University of New Orleans history professor Günter Bischof will help support student research and travel. Bischof's three children—Andrea, Marcus and Alexander—made lead gifts totaling more than \$33,000. Contributions from other family members and friends bring the scholarship balance to more than \$45,000.

The Dr. Günter J. Bischof Endowed Scholarship for Research and Travel will assist deserving undergraduate and graduate history majors or Austrian exchange students at UNO. The fund will support a minimum of one student per

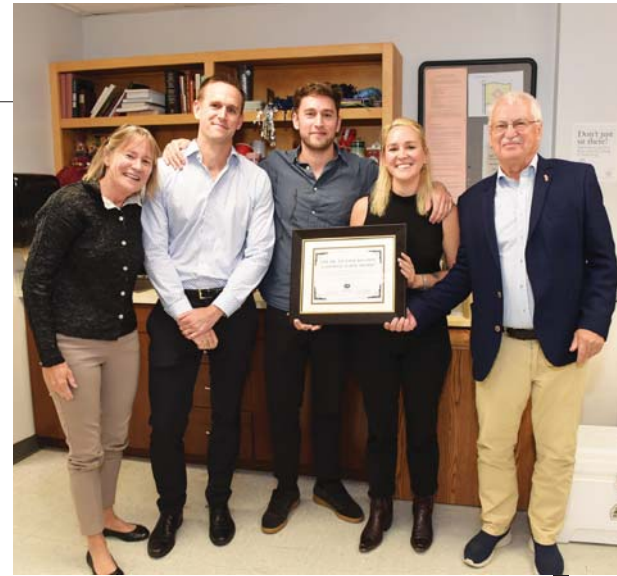
year with approximately \$1,800 in scholarship support.

At an event held in October on campus, Bischof's family announced the establishment of the scholarship as a perpetual testament to his enduring legacy as a historian and researcher. Recipients will be able to explore research interests in Austrian and American diplomatic history and engage in academic endeavors outside of the classroom, including travel to conferences, workshops and other scholarly activities.

"The Dr. Günter J. Bischof Endowed Student Scholarship for Research and Travel will honor its namesake's legacy and will provide a path for our

students to follow in his footsteps, cultivating their own passion for history—a worthy and lasting tribute to a key member of our community," says Samuel Gladden, dean of the College of Liberal Arts, Education and Human Development.

Bischof, who retired from UNO earlier this year, spent nearly 35 years as a faculty member in the history department. He was also director of Center Austria, a research and discourse hub for Austrian and European studies at UNO and in New Orleans.



Melanie Boulet, Alexander Bischof, Marcus Bischof, Andrea Bischof and Günter Bischof gather at an Oct. 26 retirement party for the longtime UNO history professor.

Bischof, a native of the Austrian village of Mellau, studied history and English at the University of Innsbruck before earning a master's degree at UNO and a Ph.D. at Harvard University.

UNO GRADUATE STUDENT EARNS KNAUSS FELLOWSHIP

UNIVERSITY OF NEW Orleans graduate student Amanda Kirkland is one of 85 students in the nation named to the 2024 class of the John A. Knauss Marine Policy Fellowship program. Kirkland, who studies marine biology, is pursuing a doctoral degree in biological sciences.

The Knauss Fellowship is a highly competitive process sponsored by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Sea Grant College Program. It is a one-year paid opportunity for current and recent graduates from advanced degree programs to apply their scientific knowledge and experiences to lasting careers in the sciences, policy and public administration.

Kirkland researches the ef-

fects of global change on marine calcifiers, such as corals, oysters, clams and shrimp. Her research, conducted as part University of New Orleans biologist Erin Cox's lab, includes the examination of the effects of warming and acidification on artificial reef ecosystems.

"Moving forward with my career, I would like to work on science that can affect national policies in an ocean-positive manner," Kirkland says. "This fellowship will give me a unique opportunity to be placed in the offices where policy is made and enforced, allowing me to work at the in-

tersection of policy, science and outreach."

Kirkland, a native of White Bear Lake, Minnesota, earned a bachelor's degree in biological conservation with a minor in environmental studies from the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

The 85 fellows selected will be placed in federal government offices throughout Washington, D.C., and join the over 1,600 individuals who have participated in the program since its inception in 1979. Some fellows will work within a federal agency as an executive fellow or in a



Amanda Kirkland

congressional office as a legislative fellow.

Kirkland's assignment will be with a federal agency that falls within the executive branch.

"Following this fellowship, I will have new connections, knowledge of policy formation and training that can help me lay the groundwork for actionable science in the ocean conservation realm," Kirkland says.

The 2024 fellows will participate in the placement week process to get to know each other and interview with potential host offices. Following placement, they will begin their fellowships in February 2024.

"I am extremely grateful for this opportunity and those that have assisted me along my path to get here," Kirkland says.



VISITING ARTISTS CREATE MURALS THAT MESH CULTURES OF NEW ORLEANS AND MEXICO

THE VIVID SPLASHES OF yellows, greens and blues immediately capture the attention of passers-by and those who gathered in February for the formal dedication of the colorful murals that have emerged from the bricks of the Education Building and a wall inside the International Center on the University of New Orleans campus.

The artistry is at the hands of three muralists who have formed the artist collective Raiz de la Ceiba and anyone else who *quiero pintar* – wants to paint. The muralists are from Guerrero, Mexico and follow a participatory method that welcomed the UNO community to come paint with them, says Roberto Barrios, anthropology professor and director of the University of New Orleans Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies.

The visit was made possible with help from Scott Pentzer, director of UNO's interdisciplinary studies program, an anonymous UNO Foundation donor, the Doris Zemurray Stone Latin American Endowment, and

the US-Mexico Commission for Educational and Cultural Exchanges (COMEXUS), Barrios says.

Over the course of five weeks the trio—muralists Baltazar Castellano Melo, Olga Manzano and Jose Luis Hernandez who collectively call themselves Raiz de la Ceiba or Root of the Ceiba Tree—created the two murals on campus.

“I want the UNO community to learn that Mexico is home to a number of Afro-descended communities, many of them located in the state of Guerrero,” Barrios says. “Our guest muralists have dedicated their careers to raising awareness of the history and contributions of Afro-Mexican and Indigenous people to both Mexico and the United States.”

Guerrero is a state of origin for many migrant laborers who come to the United States to work in construction, agriculture and other industries, and their labor is indispensable to the American economy, Barrios says.

“I also want the UNO community to know that Mexico,



and Latin America in general, have a long history of connection with and presence in New Orleans and that our histories are inseparably intertwined,” he says.

The mural in the International Center honors the contributions made by migrant workers during the rebuilding of New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina in 2005.

“More than 30 percent of the reconstruction labor force were people born in Latin American

TOP: Anthropology professor Roberto Barrios discusses the new mural outside the Education Building. The second mural is located inside the International Center.

countries and they labored under hazardous conditions to bring our wonderful city back from disaster,” Barrios says. “This mural also honors the connections and solidarities between Afro-descended people in Mexico and the United States.”



Bassist Ted Long Receives ASCAP Foundation Louis Armstrong Jazz Scholarship

Underscoring the vibrant talent within the University of New Orleans' music program, bassist and composer Ted Long has been named the recipient of the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers (ASCAP) Foundation Louis Armstrong Scholarship.

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

The foundation, founded and funded by jazz musician Louis Armstrong in 1969, was reportedly his way of giving back to the world some of the goodness he received throughout his lifetime. The ASCAP Foundation Louis Armstrong Fund provides scholarships to jazz composers studying in New York, New Orleans and Los Angeles.

Long, who earned his undergraduate degree at Loyola University, dedicated nearly two decades to the New Orleans music scene as a professional bassist prior to enrolling in graduate school at UNO.

The scholarship represents not just financial support but an affirmation of his potential as a composer, Long says. The recognition has encouraged him to "consider composition as a viable endeavor," despite previously doubting there was an audience for his work, Long says.

Long says he is grateful for the support from the ASCAP Foundation, the Louis Armstrong Education Foundation, and the University of New Orleans music faculty, particularly Coca-Cola Endowed Chair Brian Seeger, whom he credits with helping him navigate the challenges of his compositional journey.

news in brief

Louisiana Library of the Year Award

The Earl K. Long Library at the University of New Orleans was named the 2023 Louisiana Library of the Year by LOUIS: The Louisiana Library Network. The award was presented during a ceremony on Oct. 19 at the LOUIS Users Conference in Baton Rouge.

The Earl K. Long Library earned the award due to its outstanding accomplishments, contributions to the University of New Orleans, and continuous commitment and dedication to the library profession, according to Laurie Blandino, associate commissioner of the Louisiana Board of Regents and executive director for LOUIS.



Healthcare Pathways

A \$240,000 grant from the Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Louisiana Foundation will establish a program at the University of New Orleans for first-generation students who intend to pursue careers in healthcare. The goal of the UNO First-Generation Pathways to Healthcare Program is to help create a pool of medical professionals from a variety of backgrounds who will be able to thrive in their chosen fields.

Bailey Bullock Named Outstanding Transportation Student

University of New Orleans graduate student Bailey Bullock has been named a 2023 University Transportation Center Outstanding Student of the Year for her work in multi-modal transportation, as well as her academic performance, professionalism and leadership. Bullock, who is pursuing a master's degree in transportation, was recognized by the U.S. Department of Transportation during a January ceremony in Washington, D.C.



Bailey Bullock

Chris Belser Selected for ACES Service Award

UNO faculty member Chris Belser was selected for the ACES Distinguished Professional Service Award, which is given to one counselor educator each year. ACES is the national flagship association for counselor education faculty, researchers, supervisors and doctoral students around the U.S. with more than 5,000 members.



Chris Belser

Computer Science Doctoral Student Awarded Prestigious Research Grant

University of New Orleans computer science doctoral student Mahfuzul Nissan has been awarded a prestigious Phi Kappa Phi Graduate Research Grant and will present his research at a national cybersecurity conference. He is one of only 20 recipients from a pool of applicants from more than 325 universities across the country.



Mahfuzul Nissan

GRANT SEEKS TO CREATE ENVIRONMENTAL 'PLACE-BASED' PROGRAM FOR ELEMENTARY STUDENTS

RESEARCHERS AT THE University of New Orleans are using a National Academy of Sciences grant to create an environmental place-based education program for elementary students. One of the goals of the project is to help students make ecological connections between their everyday surroundings and their greater community, says Dinah Maygarden, a research associate and science education program director at UNO's Pontchartrain Institute for Environmental Science (PIES).

Maygarden is overseeing the project, which is working with schools in New Orleans East.

"Our project is dubbed 'Youth Envision' because we want the students to envision how they want their local environments in New Orleans east to look in the future," says Maygarden. "We want the students to understand that they have a voice and they can make a difference in their communities."

Through collaboration with teachers, the project aims to create a curriculum that aligns with state science standards and allows for the integration of multiple subjects, such as social studies, science and art. The learning model will offer multidisciplinary activities for students that will require scientific questioning, problem-solving, designing and planning as part of envisioning a better future for their communities and surrounding natural environments.

For example, one activity requires students to identify environmental issues in and around their school yard that impact quality of life, such as flooding, broken sidewalks, heat pockets or trash in a nearby waterway. They then work in teams to perform an issue analysis and brainstorm solutions, Maygarden says.

"Students may focus on the accumulation of plastic trash in drains and drainage canals and



how this impacts water quality and flooding on a broader level," Maygarden says. "They may wish to focus a campaign to reduce plastic use and waste in school."

Students could also choose to identify an area that would benefit from a green infrastructure project, such as a rain garden bioswale or tree planting to address flooding or heat issues, she says.

Additional activities can range from science inquiry, such as using models to understand storm water runoff or how different soils absorb water at different rates, to mapping the school yard and community to show connections with water and the environment, Maygarden says.

The project also includes

chances for students to work in collaboration with community partners to understand the environmental and social challenges for specific sites, so the work is never absent of social context, she says.

This project broadens an existing PIES science education program that targets high school students, Maygarden says. As with their older counterparts, the elementary students also will visit Bayou Sauvage Ridge Trail and other refuge locations, as well as UNO's Coastal Education and Research Facility.

"These activities will help them understand how the coastal wetlands are connected to the Gulf of Mexico, and how these wetlands are essential to the well-being of the city environment," Maygarden says.

STARSHIP FOOD DELIVERY HAS LAUNCHED

UNO DINING LAUNCHED a new on-campus food delivery service during the fall semester using Starship robots. These six autonomous robots navigate the University of New Orleans campus with precision, ensuring orders arrive fresh and timely.

Use of the service requires the Starship app. Once downloaded users can request delivery from campus eateries like PJs, Bowl Life, The Sandbar, Subway, and Brewed

Awakening. Meal plans can be connected in the app, allowing users to order and pay with Privateer Bucks.

Users are given an access code to retrieve their orders from inside the locked bots.

"With the Starship app, you can effortlessly summon the future of food delivery," says Ashli Smith, a campus dining representative, "Starship robots are at your service, ready to pick up your favorite dishes from beloved eateries."



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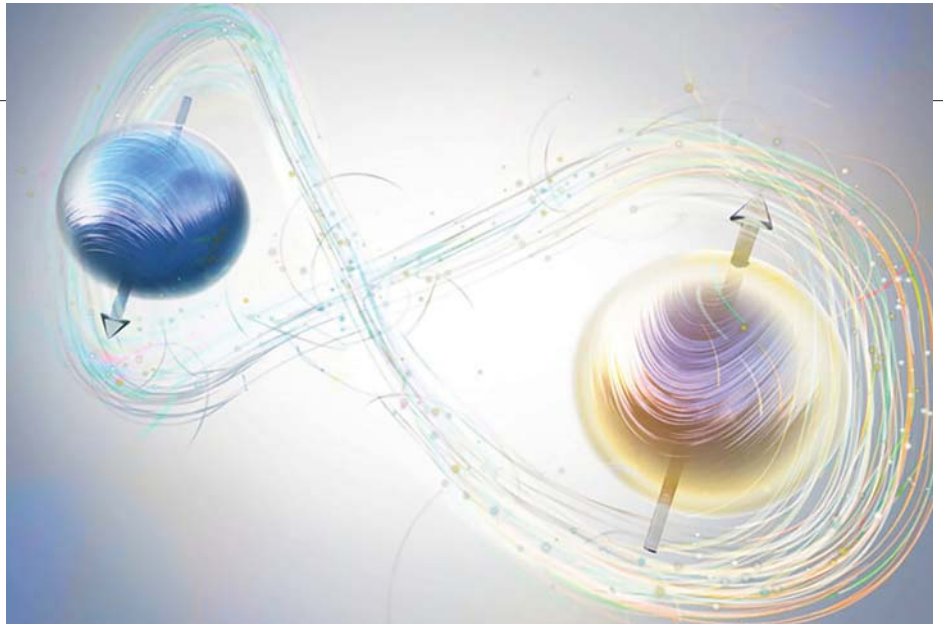
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FACULTY FOCUS



UNIVERSITY OF NEW ORLEANS MATHEMATICIAN AWARDED \$800K GRANT FROM NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION

UNIVERSITY OF NEW Orleans math professor Peter Bierhorst has received an \$800,000 grant from the National Science Foundation to further his research in quantum entanglement, a phenomenon whereby entangled microscopic particles can be separated by great distances and yet appear to act in concert instantaneously.

The strong connection between the entangled particles can be harnessed

to create shared secret codes among distant parties, for cryptography and secure communication, says Bierhorst, whose expertise is addressing practical problems in secure communication through quantum physics.

A major component of the project will be to send UNO undergraduate and graduate students to the University of Colorado Boulder during the summers to work and train

on the high-tech experimental platforms for quantum networking that are being built there, Bierhorst says.

“The platform being built in Boulder is a physical network of fiber optic cables joining stations at different locations in the city,” he says. “Each station has apparatuses for generating and measuring entangled photons, then sending the photons to the other stations through the cables.”



Peter Bierhorst

A portion of the three-year grant total is subcontracted to the University of Colorado Boulder for testing the multiple entangled effects, Bierhorst says.

“This work will serve as a training platform to build expertise among undergraduate and graduate students, providing a critical boost to the emergence of a quantum-trained workforce capable of tackling the problems of tomorrow,” Bierhorst says.

“This project involves sending up to two UNO students to Boulder each summer, where they will train on these projects and learn about them.

“I’m enthusiastic to find and recruit students for this opportunity from all STEM departments at UNO, not just my own.”

Bierhorst’s award is one of 22 grants that is part of a \$38 million investment that the National Science Foundation is making to expand its support for quantum information science and engineering.

Another future application of the research could be distributed quantum computing, where many quantum computers connected through quantum-enabled links can effectively be combined into a single larger and more powerful quantum computer, Bierhorst says. This wouldn’t be possible with normal internet links alone because of the potential for the messages to be intercepted or copied.

The normal internet sends

Professor Peter Bierhorst received an \$800,000 grant from the National Science Foundation to further his research in quantum entanglement, a phenomenon whereby entangled microscopic particles can be separated by great distances and yet appear to act in concert instantaneously.

zeros and ones in a classical sense using strong electrical signals; each 0 or 1 consisting of thousands or millions of electrons moving through a copper wire, or photons through a fiber optic cable. Such signals don’t demonstrate any quantum effects; for instance, they can be easily intercepted and copied.

The quantum internet will send signals one quantum photon at a time and so the signals can be entangled.

“Entanglement holds great promise to revolutionize communication in network settings where multiple separated users will someday possess and share entangled quantum particles — the ‘quantum internet’ of the future,” Bierhorst says.



UNO earth and environmental sciences professor Mark Kulp has received a grant from the Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority to conduct sediment sampling along the Louisiana coast.

UNO ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE PROFESSOR EARNS \$800,000 GRANT TO STUDY CHANGES IN LOUISIANA COASTLINE

UNIVERSITY OF NEW Orleans earth and environmental sciences professor Mark Kulp has received a two-year \$814,000 grant from the Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority to conduct sediment sampling along the Louisiana coast. The research is in support of the Louisiana Barrier Island Comprehensive Monitoring program.

Researchers from UNO's Pontchartrain Institute for Environmental Sciences and graduate and undergraduate students in the Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences will conduct a detailed analysis of sediment samples from sand-rich sections of the Louisiana coast. The characteris-

tics of the collected samples will be compared to other samples collected by UNO researchers during the last 20 years.

"These comparisons will allow us to develop an understanding of changes in the distribution of sediments along the coast in response to coastal sediment re-nourishment projects and natural sediment transport processes, such as tropical cyclones," Kulp says. "The information generated by this project is of fundamental importance to developing future coastal re-nourishment projects."

The Louisiana Barrier Island Comprehensive Monitoring program was established to provide long-term data on Loui-

siana's barrier island systems for planning design, evaluation and maintenance of barrier island restoration projects. This is the third iteration of the monitoring program. Data was collected for the first interval from 2005-2010 and the second interval from 2015-2019. Given the amount of tropical storm activity in the northern Gulf of Mexico in 2020 and 2021, researchers believe now is the appropriate time to gather new data on post-storm changes to the Louisiana coast, according to Kulp.

The Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority is responsible for operating projects that restore, create, enhance and maintain coastal wetlands in the state.



Mark Kulp

UNO SOCIOLOGY PROFESSOR JEFFREY PARKER AWARDED \$211K NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION GRANT

UNIVERSITY OF NEW Orleans sociology professor Jeffrey Parker, whose research interests include studying neighborhoods, place reputation and gentrification, has been awarded a \$211,309 grant from the National Science Foundation.

As an urban sociologist, Parker is broadly interested in issues of place reputation at the level of

neighborhood, city, and region. More specifically, his work focuses on how perceptions of place structure action and inequality.



Jeffrey Parker

Parker's latest research examines the branding—or rebranding—of Atlanta, Georgia, and the role of merchants as the city attempted to shed the American South's regional reputation for racism and parochialism.

The goal of the project is to better understand the interconnections among region, reputation and capitalism, specifically by examining the role of merchants in the reputational life of Atlanta.

The American South has a historical and contemporary reputation for racism. Businesses are important nexuses of this reputation as both sites of historical racial exclusion and sources of contemporary opposition to attacks on civil rights, Parker says. This intersection of reputation, race and capitalism

is particularly visible in Atlanta, currently and historically, he says.

Parker's research, conducted using in-person interviews and archival materials, will focus heavily on the time period between the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s and the present.

While in residence at the Urban Studies Institute at Georgia State University in Atlanta, Parker will collaborate with Deirdre Oakley, a sociology professor at Georgia State University.

UNO FACULTY MEMBER EARNS GULF RESEARCH PROGRAM EARLY-CAREER RESEARCH FELLOWSHIP

UNIVERSITY OF NEW Orleans faculty member Madeline Foster-Martinez is one of seven scientists to receive a Gulf Research Program Early-Career Research Fellowship in Environmental Protection and Stewardship.

The Early-Career Research Fellowship helps researchers during the critical pre-tenure phase of their careers. Fellows receive a \$76,000 financial award along with mentoring support to provide them with independence, flexibility and a built-in support network as they take risks on untested research ideas, pursue

unique collaborations and build a network of colleagues.

Foster-Martinez was the only research fellow in the 2023 class from a Louisiana university.



Madeline Foster-Martinez

The fellows in this two-year program will undertake research to predict and prepare for ecosystem changes in the Gulf of Mexico region and its coastal zones in the face of climate change and sea-level rise.

"It's an honor to be a part of this cohort," Foster-Martinez says. "These funds will facilitate more boat time working on our wonderful coast, greater student involvement in projects, data collection for interdisciplin-

ary adventures, and more."

A New Orleans native, Foster-Martinez is an assistant professor in the Department of Earth and Environmental Science and Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering, and is a member of the Pontchartrain Institute for Environmental Sciences at the University of New Orleans. Her research focuses on coastal wetlands and leveraging vegetation for climate change mitigation and adaptation.

She uses fieldwork and modeling to address questions that promote the use of vegetation in coastal protection strategies, accelerate land building in deltaic areas, and increase the accuracy of coastal landscape predictions at a variety of scales.

Foster-Martinez's work also seeks to increase the sustainabil-

ity of human resource cycles by linking them to natural coastal processes. Current projects include vegetation modeling for the Louisiana Coastal Master Plan and helping lead the University of New Orleans' Center for Equity and Diversity in Engineering.

The Gulf Research Program of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine is an independent, science-based program founded in 2013 as part of legal settlements with the companies involved in the 2010 Deepwater Horizon disaster. It seeks to enhance offshore energy system safety and protect human health and the environment by catalyzing advances in science, practice, and capacity to generate long-term benefits for the Gulf of Mexico region and the nation.

BIOLOGY PROFESSOR HELPS TRAIN CONSERVATION SCIENTISTS VIA FIELD SCHOOL IN CENTRAL AFRICA

LAST SUMMER UNIVERSITY of New Orleans biological sciences professor Nicola Anthony immersed herself in the culture and ecology of the tropical forest and rural villages in the central African country of Gabon as part of a research field school aimed at training the next generation of conservation scientists.

For three weeks, Anthony helped lead a group of international scientists and students in the field-based biodiversity research program organized through ECOTROP, the Ecole de Terrain en Ecologie Tropicale.

ECOTROP is a field training program in tropical ecology supported through Anthony's endowment and by an 11-member consortium, of which UNO is a member. Funding and technical support are also provided through the Université des Sciences et Techniques de Masuku, University of Omar Bongo and National Park service in Gabon, and the French Research Institute for Development and Agricultural Research for International Development.

Anthony holds the University of New Orleans Freepport-McMoran Chair in Wildlife Sustainability. She is also a member of the steering committee of the newly founded Congo Basin Science Initiative that aims to promote conservation and education across the region.

Gabon is dominated by tropical forests and is an important stronghold for many forest mammals, Anthony says.

"The goal of the field school is really to provide students with training in what we might refer to as biodiversity sciences or field-based biodiversity sciences,"

Anthony says. "So, we have different working groups focused on different aspects of biodiversity and the environment."

The school is designed to provide students with knowledge and skills in various fields such as the study, management and conservation of biodiversity, geology, geography, soil sciences, archaeology and environmental anthropology.

The overall research goal of this project is to understand how past human history has affected current levels of biodiversity. Specifically, the team hypothesizes that former village sites may promote biodiversity through greater soil fertility and the deliberate planting of beneficial trees.

Last summer, Anthony says, there were four main research groups: An archaeological group that examined human history in caves around Lastourville; a soil science group that looked at the structure and composition of the soil at sites where humans were present and where humans were absent; an ethno-botany team



that researched the medicinal and edible plants in the forests and interviewed villagers to find out their uses; and the wildlife group that inventoried large mammals through camera trap surveys and worked with villagers on patterns of hunting in the area.

"Basic field training in the tropics is really important because it provides people with opportunities to further their careers and it also builds greater awareness of the environment and the problems that the environment faces," Anthony says. "It brings people to work directly with local communities and see why the work they do in the field can be important for conservation."

UNO graduate student Emily Bowers, who is pursuing a master's degree in biology, participated in the field school in 2022.

"The forests in Gabon are de-

BELOW: University of New Orleans biology professor Nicola Anthony (far left first row in blue) conducted research in Gabon, Africa as part of a field training school. This photo was taken in front of the mayor's office in Lastourville.

scribed as the 'last stronghold of the African forest elephant,' and there are numerous endangered species in these forests. Learning about conservation techniques in a place that is full of biodiversity was priceless and amazing," Bowers says. "This type of research is important because biodiversity is important to maintain healthy ecosystems on the Earth."

Anthony has been a part of field research schools in Gabon for two decades, and says she appreciates the natural beauty of the area and the welcoming nature of the Doume people.



UNO ENGLISH PROFESSOR CAROLYN HEMBREE PUBLISHES THIRD POETRY COLLECTION

UNIVERSITY OF NEW Orleans English professor Carolyn Hembree rang in the new year with added cheer. Her third poetry collection, “For Today,” was released in January from LSU Press as part of its Barataria Poetry series.

Hembree is an associate professor in UNO’s Creative Writing MFA program and poetry editor of *Bayou Magazine*, the University of New Orleans’ literary magazine. She received a Board of Regents Awards to Louisiana Artists and Scholars (ATLAS) grant to complete her poetry collection. The ATLAS program provides support for major scholarly and artistic productions with potential to have a broad impact on a regional and/or national level.

“For Today,” a revelatory collection of poems set in the Gulf South, chronicles the experience of a woman who becomes a mother shortly after

her father’s death and struggles to raise her child amid private and public turmoil.

The collection, which explores motherhood, grief, Anthropocene climate disaster and redemption, was a decade-long journey, Hembree says.

“Ten years in the making, including a treasured ATLAS year spent spreading the pages all over the floor of my little bungalow,” Hembree says. “I feel relieved to hand these poems to readers who will create their own meanings—it’s not mine anymore.”

Hembree’s two previous collections are set in the Deep South and greater Appalachia, around places she once lived. The themes in her newest collection were born out of her experiences over the past decade, as well as

her sensibility, and what she finds provocative about those experiences, Hembree says.

“What I mean is that another poet in the world experiencing her father’s death, daughter’s birth, storm evacuations, carnivals, local floods, friendships, teaching and reading might produce a collection with different themes,” Hembree says. “It’s a matter of proclivity, obsession, which direction one turns one’s head.”

Hembree holds an MFA in Creative Writing from the University of Arizona and a bachelor’s degree in English and theatre from Birmingham-Southern College. Born in Bristol, Tennessee, she has



lived in New Orleans since 2001.

She is the author of two other poetry collections: “Rigging a Chevy into a Time Machine and Other Ways to Escape a Plague” (Trio House Press, 2016), which earned the Trio Award and the Rochelle Ratner Memorial Award, and “Skinny” (Kore Press, 2012).

Her poems have appeared in *Beloit Poetry Journal*, *Colorado Review*, *Copper Nickel*, *Ninth Letter*, *Poetry Daily*, *The Southern Review* and other publications.

FINE ARTS PROFESSOR ANNA MECUGNI CURATED ITALIAN ART EXHIBITION

AN EXHIBITION CURATED by University of New Orleans fine arts professor Anna Mecugni about Italian artist and psychologist Sergio Lombardo was on display for three months at the Villa delle Rose, a modern art museum, in Bologna, Italy. The exhibition, “Sergio Lombardo 1960-1970” aimed to shed new light on the first decade of Lombardo’s career.

Mecugni, an assistant

professor of art history at UNO, specializes in postwar Italian art and global contemporary art. The exhibition opened in Bologna on January 25 and concluded March 24.

The exhibition presented in Bologna brought together for the first time in a museum context a considerable group of collages, objects, and installations that are part of four pioneering, but little-known series that were conceived by Lombardo. Lom-

bardo is among the leading Italian artists who revitalized the European and international artistic language since the late 1950s.

The exhibition documented how, alongside other avant-garde artists from various countries around the world, Lombardo was



Anna Mecugni

already experimenting with strategies to engage the audience in participation.

The research that led to the exhibit will culminate in the bilingual volume “Sergio Lombardo: From the ‘Superpaintings’ to ‘Sphere with Siren,’ 1965-1970,” edited by

Mecugni that will be released this year.



UNO OPENS BEYONDBREALITY, A VIRTUAL REALITY TOOLS LAB

VIRTUAL REALITY, augmented reality and artificial intelligence are prominent growth areas that are quickly becoming a part of numerous economic sectors, University of New Orleans chemistry professor Matt Tarr says. In February, UNO held a grand opening for BeyondReality, a virtual reality maker space in the Earl K. Long Library that allows students and the community to use virtual reality tools for business development, education and other applications.

“The idea is to be an open access facility for schools, community groups and start-up businesses,” says Tarr. “BeyondReality is an excellent resource for the development of mixed reality media that can be applied across multiple sectors.”

Those tools include a lab equipped with a bank of computers that have pre-installed software, virtual reality hardware and VR compatible headsets. The lab is located in Room 320C of the library.

“In a physical maker’s space, if you need a drill press or sanding, you can go there and you can pay an hourly rate

and use the tools,” says Tarr. “This is the same thing, except instead of woodshop machines, we have virtual reality tools.”

The virtual reality tools lab is funded in part by a grant from The National Center for Advanced Manufacturing (NCAM) partnership among NASA, the State of Louisiana, LSU and UNO.

The NCAM research and production center, located at the NASA Michoud Assembly Facility in New Orleans, focuses on applying advanced manufacturing technologies for use in aerospace and related industries.

“These resources are currently supporting wind training development at UNO and The Beach,” Tarr says. “Additional applications in training secondary school and college students in STEM disciplines is also underway using the facility.”

With a growing number of wind energy developments proposed for Louisiana, and with companies in the state helping to create the first commercial offshore wind farm in the United States, Tarr is creating mixed reality training tools

for wind turbine inspection and repair.

“The tools we are creating will be used for training off-shore wind turbine technicians,” Tarr says. “The project will aid in workforce development and improved training programs to support the developing offshore wind industry in Louisiana.”

In collaboration with the immersive content studio, Top Right Corner, BeyondReality at UNO features software that allows for training, gaming and scientific exploring, Tarr says.

During the ceremony, attendees were able to virtually sail into the Gulf of Mexico and explore wind turbines while “standing” on an offshore platform.

“This is about taking you to a wind turbine so you’re actually able to go out into the Gulf and see what those will look like at a different period and time,” says Dan Clifton, founder of Top Right Corner. “It really helps you to visualize it and understand how big it is and understand how all those things work.”

Meanwhile, back on land, students in chemistry are of-

University of New Orleans opens BeyondReality, a virtual reality maker space, inside the Earl K. Long Library.

fered a new perspective on learning about density. Traditionally, it is the “most boring” lab, Tarr says with a laugh. However, the immersive version makes for a more engaging experience, he says.

“We created a virtual reality laboratory. We call it ‘Dense Makes Sense,’” Tarr says. “Students, from middle school to college, who use it come out and say, ‘Wow, that was so cool!’ So, we’re really excited about the ability to engage students and hold their interest.”

Through the BeyondReality program, Tarr says UNO will offer on-campus and off-site classes and programs for local public and private schools. For a second year, UNO will offer a free virtual reality and 3-D design summer camp for students in 8th-11th grades, he says.

This summer, a virtual reality labs workshop will be offered for middle and high school teachers, which includes a \$200 stipend. 🌐

UNO President Kathy Johnson:

Collaborative “Servant Leader”

BY LITTICE BACON-BLOOD

UNIVERSITY OF NEW ORLEANS PRESIDENT KATHY JOHNSON knows the impact a faculty member can have in a student's life. It is first-hand knowledge gained, not as a seasoned academician, but as a first-generation college student navigating through her first year at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst.

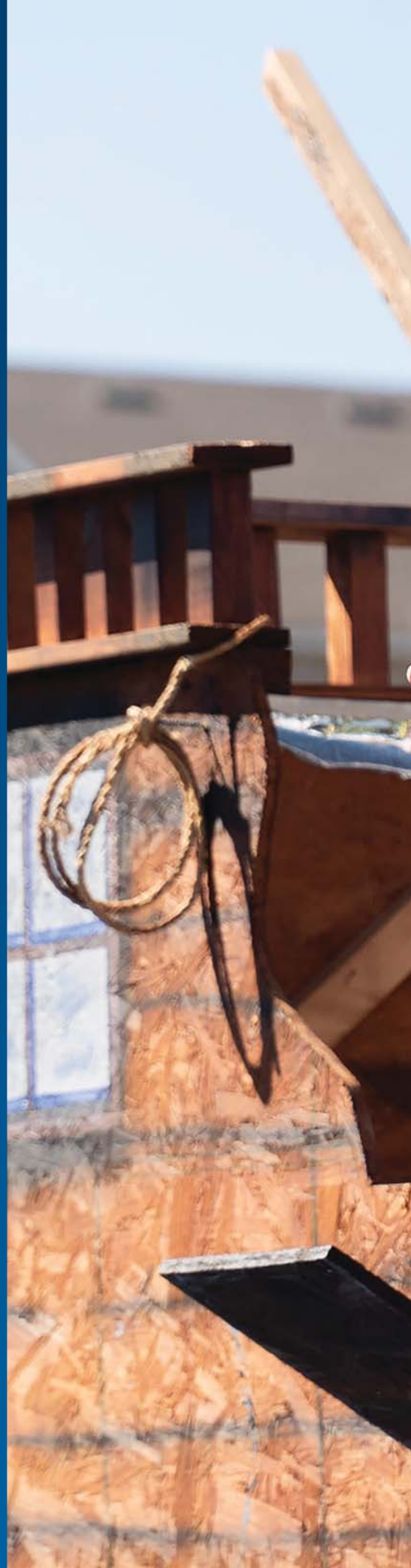
Johnson's plans were to be a medical doctor. In high school she was gifted a book, “The Making of a Woman Surgeon,” and her first year at UMass was filled with science classes, says Johnson, who grew up outside of Boston.

“I took an honors class in child development the second semester of my freshman year. It was a class for upperclassmen,” Johnson says.

The professor summoned Johnson to her office.

“I honestly thought, ‘Oh, my gosh, she's found me out and is going to yell at me for taking this class when I shouldn't have,’” Johnson recalls. “But she actually invited me to work in her lab.”

Johnson was astounded and remembers thinking she didn't know what a “lab” was and knew only vaguely that faculty did research. ☒





“I had no idea what that meant, and it was such a life-altering thing,” Johnson says. “It blew up all of my conceptions of what I would do. It was honestly because one of my professors took an interest in me. She saw something in me that I honestly didn’t see myself and put me on a completely different path.”

Johnson was captivated by psychology, specifically the field of cognitive development, which she later earned a doctoral degree in from Emory University.

“I learned so much from her, not just about psychology, but about how to balance a family and an academic job and what it meant to be a professor,” Johnson says. “I really fell in love with doing research and, of course, teaching students.”

Cognitive psychology is a favorite course of Johnson’s.

“It’s all about how people learn and how people think,” Johnson says. “I think whenever students would take it, it helped them to be better learners themselves. I felt like I was helping them to



“The keys I see that are most critical are student success and retention; diversifying our enrollment strategies and improving the student experience at all levels.”

understand psychology, but also, I think it helped them be better students. I think that’s why it was my favorite undergraduate course.”

Prior to UNO, Johnson spent the past 30 years at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI), the urban research campus of Indiana University. Half of that time was in leadership roles. Most recently, she was the executive vice chancellor and chief academic officer at the university, which enrolls nearly 26,000 students, including over 8,000 graduate students

Johnson rose through the ranks of the faculty, leading a research laboratory and serving as department chair, followed by experiences as dean and associate vice chancellor for undergraduate education.

“I chose a career in higher education because I wanted to make a difference in the lives of students,” Johnson says.

Johnson sees a key to UNO’s continued progression rooted in student success.

“The keys I see that are most critical are student success and

retention; diversifying our enrollment strategies and improving the student experience at all levels,” Johnson says. “From making sure they have their financial aid when they need it to making sure our facilities respect them as learners and are clean and technologically equipped and safe.”

At IUPUI, Johnson expanded peer mentoring and holistic support programs and led the development of integrated academic and career advising. She also created a Comprehensive Learning



Record to help students reflect on and demonstrate their learning across the curriculum and the co-curriculum.

Johnson helped launch an Institute for Engaged Learning to connect undergraduates with research experiences, civic engagement and internships on and off campus that offered project-based learning and global learning experiences.

She was drawn to UNO because of its mission as a diverse and student-centered public research university that is deeply committed to shared governance, economic development and the public good, Johnson says.

“I love the mission that urban public research universities have, and that they balance a research emphasis with an emphasis on access and students’ success,” Johnson says. “I also love that when urban universities are at their best they are also hopefully contributing to their cities, through the research that their faculties do, also hopefully through students who are engaged in service learning or public service.”

That mission also resonates with Johnson’s leadership style,

which she describes as servant leader. She tries not to use the “m-word” (management).

“Management to me always sounds a bit more heavy-handed,” she says. “I’ve always admired leaders who are able to inspire those around them to cultivate a shared vision for the future and then work toward that vision with lots of collaboration and lots of transparency.”

Johnson says it’s always important to have sound data and information to undergird the work and that her training as a social scientist helps her to do that.

“I really love both quantitative and qualitative data to inform decision-making,” Johnson says. “But I also really try to work on creating a team that is able to collaborate and work together well.”

While the term servant leader might sound opaque to some, the meaning for Johnson is clear.

“To me it means letting others get the spotlight and really going out of my way to shine a light on the work that others on my team do,” Johnson says. “My job is to guide and coordinate and shape the vision.”

“Some of the best leaders I’ve ever seen are incredibly humble and quick to say a positive word about what others are doing and they are also very student-centered . . . that’s what I’ve tried to emulate myself.”

As Johnson settles into her new role in her new city, her perspective includes that of a parent of a young child. Two years ago, Johnson and her husband adopted an infant girl who turned 4 in January. The couple also has four adult children and two granddaughters who are closer to their youngest daughter’s age.

“My husband and I realized when our last kid went to college how much we loved having children in our lives and so

we became licensed to be foster parents in Indiana,” Johnson says. “Just before COVID, we got this perfect newborn that we actually took home from the hospital.”

The baby did not have any family able to take care of her and when she became eligible for adoption, the couple made the arrangement permanent.

“So now, I have a 4-year-old, which makes my hobbies and down time absolutely nonexistent,” Johnson says. “She is a delight and a pleasure. We are enjoying sort of seeing New Orleans through her eyes.”

Johnson is also balancing a household that includes two dogs and a cat.

“They love each other, unless the cat is running,” Johnson says with a laugh. “Then, everybody’s running!”

City Park has become a favorite hangout spot.

“I just love sitting there and listening to the man who plays the saxophone and watching the playground and drinking my coffee,” Johnson says. “It’s heaven.” 🍷





*UNO Professor Ryan Gray
Excavates In St. Louis Cathedral:*

“It really is a
one-of-a-kind
project”

WHILE A BRASS BAND PLAYED TO THE DELIGHT of tourists who clapped and swayed to the spirited beats that filled the air in Jackson Square one breezy January afternoon, a short distance away, University of New Orleans students stood sifting—literally—through the soils of time at St. Louis Cathedral.

The famed cathedral, located in the French Quarter, sits on one of the oldest church sites in North America. The first church constructed on the site dates to the 18th century. University of New Orleans anthropology professor Ryan Gray, who specializes in urban historical ar-

chaeology in the city of New Orleans, and his team were examining a portion of the 300-year-old foundation.

According to a welcome plaque placed in the vestibule of the main sanctuary, the current cathedral was completed in 1851 and is built over the foundations of a colonial 1727 church. It is the oldest active cathedral in the United States, according to church officials.

“We have other projects always happening, but it’s not often that you get projects where you’re digging underneath St. Louis Cathedral,” says Gray, who is also associate director of the Midlo Center for New Orleans



Studies. “It really is a one-of-a-kind project! I may spend the rest of my career doing archaeology in the city and this may be the only time we get to do something like this.

“It’s rare to have well-preserved French colonial era sites, even in the French Quarter because there’s been so much building that has happened on top of them,” Gray says.

As part of a planned restoration project, contractors excavated two pits to examine the condition of the cathedral’s foundation, which was laid in 1849. The Archdiocese of New Orleans requested UNO’s archaeological team after contractors came across evidence of much older foundations, Gray says.

“We were able to determine that these earlier foundations were almost definitely those of the St. Louis Church constructed in 1724-1727, the first permanent structure built on the site,” Gray says. “We found artifacts in the layers consistent with this period, including both French and Native American pottery, glass, clay smoking pipe fragments, fish bone, a part of a religious medallion, a bead, and nails.”

The excavated site measures about six feet deep and is located in an interior side foyer.

An unusual amount of tiny straight pins was found among the layers, Gray says. He believes these brass straight pins were used to fashion curtains in the earliest church.

“When the church was first finished in 1727, there were no window panes available,” Gray says. “They stretched fabric across the windows, and we think that the reason we have so many straight pins is that what was being used to hold the fabric; to pin it in place and hold it tight?”

In addition, when the team cleaned up the excavations and ex-



FACING PAGE, TOP: UNO researcher Elizabeth Williams excavates a site inside St. Louis Cathedral in New Orleans, the oldest active cathedral in the U.S. **FACING PAGE, BOTTOM:** UNO professor Ryan Gray examines the excavation site inside St. Louis Cathedral. **LEFT:** Artifacts found from colonial era layers. **BELOW:** Pictured left to right: Dr. Ryan Gray, Austin Roebuck (master's student, urban studies), Traci Cunningham (volunteer), Elizabeth Williams (research associate), Lori Sawyer (volunteer), Renee Erickson (Ph.D. student, urban studies)

amined the stratigraphy, they found that the various layers contained a record of the entire 18th century history of the site, Gray says.

"Including renovations to that first church, evidence of the 1788 fire, the reconstruction of the cathedral in 1794, and its expansion into the present version in 1849," Gray says. "We hope that, by working closely with the contractors on the next excavation, planned to span the front right doorway of the cathedral, we can help refine the chronology of the site in the 18th century and use the layers to think about the social history of this area at the center of the city."

Gray's historical expertise is frequently called upon by public and private entities when something of archaeological significance is unearthed. He most recently oversaw a team excavating another of the city's landmark, Madame John's Legacy, the second-oldest building in the French Quarter, built in 1789.

As the cathedral's bell toned the noon hour to signal the start of mass, Gray and his crew cleared out of the foyer. There is no excavating during the service, he says.

Gray headed to a screen station that was set up outside to examine some of the finds that have been bagged and labeled. He's pleased that UNO is able to prevent the potential loss of archaeological artifacts through site documentation and preservation.

"UNO is the only institution in the city that has archeologists and can put together a project like

this on short notice for anyone," says Gray. "There's really no one else doing this type of work in the entire city. For a project like this, that's not getting any federal money, there's no requirement for them to do the archaeology. It's something that's really a central part of our mission to be able to help and do these sorts of things." 🌍





AN INVESTMENT ON RETURNS

Alumna Ellen Lee establishes
new opportunity scholarship

BY LITTICE BACON-BLOOD

FRESH OUT OF HIGH SCHOOL AND LIVING AWAY FROM HOME for the first time, University of New Orleans alumna Ellen Lee acknowledges that her studies took a backseat to partying while enrolled as a pre-med student at the University of Notre Dame.

“Things didn’t work out,” Lee says. “I wasn’t as disciplined as I needed to be in studying.”

Disappointed in herself, Lee returned home to New Orleans and contemplated her next step. After staying out of college for nearly two years, Lee enrolled at UNO where she would earn two degrees—a bachelor’s in finance and an MBA.

At UNO she not only found academic rigor, but the academic support she needed to succeed, Lee says.

“It really doesn’t matter that you fall down, it’s that you get back



up,” Lee says. “And sometimes you need some help to get back up and UNO was my help.”

Lee says UNO ‘saved’ her. Now, she wants to extend a similar lifeline to other students who have returned to school to pursue a bachelor’s degree at her alma mater.

Lee, a consultant who recently semi-retired following more than 20 years of working in New Orleans city government, has established the Ellen M. Lee New Opportunity Scholarship at UNO. The scholarship will help pay tuition and fees for students who have earned some college credits and have returned to UNO to complete a degree.

“I wanted the scholarship to be for people who needed a second chance,” Lee says. “For students who had started school and,

for whatever reason, wasn’t successful in college their first time around.”

The first scholarship is expected to be awarded next year. The scholarship requires that students maintain at least a 2.5 GPA, with priority given to students pursuing a degree in the College of Business Administration. Applicants will be selected by a committee consisting of representatives from the Office of Financial Aid and the College of Business Administration and awarded prior to the beginning of each fall semester.

Pamela Kennett-Hensel, dean of UNO’s College of Business Administration, will be the contact for the scholarship.

“I’ve been fortunate,” Lee says. “I’m fortunate to have resources right now and I do attribute that to my journey and what UNO set me up for. The fact that I was able to get through UNO and get my degrees there; I think that gave me the foundation to set myself up for success.”

Lee’s time at UNO has been a full-circle journey that has given her a deep appreciation for the University and its place as an academic gem in the New Orleans region and beyond, says Lee.

“I love the University. If you cut me ... silver and blue come out,” Lee says with a laugh. “I’ve been a student, staff, been on the faculty. There was a Black alumni chapter at one point. I was president of that chapter.”

Lee has also served as a board member of the UNO Foundation and the UNO Alumni Association.

“I’m just proud to support them and look forward to their continued success,” Lee says regarding scholarship recipients. “I’m hoping that someone will be able to benefit from it. That it gives them that other chance to realize the goals that they’ve set for themselves.”

Lee recalled the time shortly after graduating from UNO that she received a telephone call at home from John Altazan, the founding dean of the College of Business Administration. Lee had been a dean’s list scholar and thought Altazan’s call was regarding her outstanding performance.

It was a fundraising call that led to a job, Lee says.

“He asked how I was doing, and I told him, ‘OK, but that I was actually thinking about moving because it’s been tough finding work,’” Lee says. “He said, ‘Let me get back to you.’”

The next day, Lee was contacted by Altazan’s assistant who asked if she would be interested in interviewing for the computer center director’s job on campus. The current director was leaving and there would be an opening. Lee was familiar with the center, having worked there as a student, she says.

“I ended up working in the College of Business in the computer center for many years,” Lee says.

In 1994, Lee went to work at New Orleans City Hall in Mayor Marc Morial’s administration, concentrating on community and economic development. She retired in 2020, having worked under four mayors, Lee says.

“The majority of my career was in public service,” Lee says. “I did a stint in philanthropy at the Greater New Orleans Foundation.”

Lee recently returned to City Hall part-time.

“I’ve just trusted that God has a plan for us,” Lee says. “There are moments we really don’t see it, but in the end, we are meant to be where we are meant to be. And God puts us on a path.” 🙏



Alumna Rebekah Lewis is Behavior Director at the World's Largest Chimpanzee Sanctuary

BY LITTICE BACON-BLOOD

AS A CHILD, REBEKAH LEWIS WAS SO ENTHRALLED BY primates that she asked her mother if they could have one as a pet. Her run-away-from-home fantasy destination was Gombe, Africa—where famed primatologist Jane Goodall was stationed.

“Great apes have always captivated me,” Lewis says. “They have very complex social behaviors.”

Like humans, chimpanzees are known to be intelligent and social creatures, she says. They communicate in a variety of ways including gestures, hoots, pants and body postures, which allow them to maintain complex relationships with their social groups.

Lewis’ mother nixed the idea of having a primate pet. Instead, she encouraged her daughter to seek out a career where she could work with them, says Lewis, who earned an anthropology degree from the University of New Orleans in 2005.

“UNO was integral to my journey, and I am thankful of the skills I acquired while attending,” Lewis says.

Coming from the small town of Eunice, Louisiana, Lewis says she was attracted to the vibrant culture of the city of New Orleans and loved UNO’s program quality and its affordability.

“I was drawn to UNO because it had a great academic reputation, tuition was very reasonable, it was covered by my scholarship,” Lewis says. “Living in New Orleans and going to UNO was definitely one of the defining experiences in my life.”

After graduating from UNO, Lewis followed her mother’s advice and pursued a career in primatology. Now, she gets to observe and interact daily with great apes as the behavior director at Chimp Haven in Keithville, Louisiana, a community south of Shreveport. With more than 300 chimps, it is the world’s largest chimpanzee sanctuary,

Lewis said.

“I don’t need to run away to Gombe,” Lewis says with a laugh. “Working with the chimps is a very unique and multifaceted experience. It’s really interesting watching them engage with each other, watching them solve the foraging puzzles we give them and watching them explore their environment.”

Lewis’ job includes developing physical and social enrichment activities, deciding based on behavioral observations best group fits for integrating new chimpanzees and using positive reinforcement techniques to train chimps to participate in their own healthcare, such as applying ointment on a wound.

The behavioral department plays a vital role in understanding and meeting the social and psychological needs of the chimps, Lewis says.

“Our team strives to provide an environment where the chimps not only experience a high standard of care, but they also have choices in how they spend their time.”

The 200-acre forested habitat provides a variety of multi-acre enclosures and living spaces designed to meet the chimps’ needs and gives them unfettered access to the outdoors.

The staff refers to their care approach as the “chimp life,” where the aim is to duplicate



what chimps would experience in the wild: from climbing trees, platforms and other vertical structures to living in social groups, free-will exploring and foraging for food placed around the site.

“We want to mimic what their natural behavior is in the wild,” Lewis says. “It’s providing them with different experiences for their psychological well-being.”

The sanctuary was founded as a retirement village of sorts to provide long-term extended care for chimpanzees who were previously used in biomedical research, Lewis says. When the National Institutes of Health determined that chimps would no longer be used as models in human medical research, they needed permanent placement elsewhere.

Most of the chimps at the sanctuary come from primate labs all over the United States, Lewis says.

“The chimps at Chimp Haven can’t go back into the wild; they are accustomed to being taken care of by humans,” Lewis says. “We dedicate our days to 24-hour care of them.”

The chimps range in age from 6-years-old to 65-years-old, Lewis says. Chimps are considered geriatric when they reach 35.

“For us to have chimps in their 40s, 50s and 60s is amazing and testament to how great our care at Chimp Haven is,” Lewis says.

The chimps live mainly in groups of up to 20, based on their personalities and their care needs.

“We really like to create groups that are multi-aged because that is really enriching,” Lewis says. “The things we are looking at when we are matching groups is who would work well together.”

The chimps all have names—some have two. If they happen to share the same first name, they are given a middle name. And they all have personalities. Some are reserved, others playful and boisterous.

“We also have nicknames for them, once you get to know them and build relationships with them,” Lewis says. “They definitely respond to their names. If you call them from across an enclosure they will look up. It doesn’t mean they will always come over because they have a choice, and they know that.”

Rebekah Lewis, who earned a degree in anthropology, is the behavior director at Chimp Haven, the world’s largest chimpanzee sanctuary in Keithville, Louisiana.

While rewarding work, it can be physically and emotionally difficult, Lewis says. Chimps are strong and they can be unpredictable.

“We have a barrier in between us at all times,” Lewis says. “It’s part of their natural behavior to fight with each other, to get into altercations; that’s how they balance out their social hierarchy.”

Chimps can weigh as much as 200 pounds and their muscles are 10 times stronger than humans, she says.

“They are not the little, tiny chimps that you saw in commercials years ago. They are big; they are strong,” Lewis says. “They can be a force of nature!”

They are not meant to be pets, Lewis says, echoing what her mother told her as a child. In the 1980s and 1990s chimps frequently appeared in movies and were often shown on TV as the pets of celebrities.

“It’s not safe for the chimp, it’s not safe for the human,” Lewis says. “For my mom to understand that back then, I’ve told her, in retrospect, ‘Mom, that was really smart of you!’”

When she decided to pursue a career in primatology, a small but competitive field, Lewis says her UNO professors encouraged her.

“They all inspired me during those really formative years when I was a young adult, to persevere, to have confidence ... that I can do it,” Lewis says. “They gave me that confidence and that foundational knowledge and that has been helpful and has really resonated with me.”

The career advice that she would pass along to students is to network and complete internships, Lewis says.

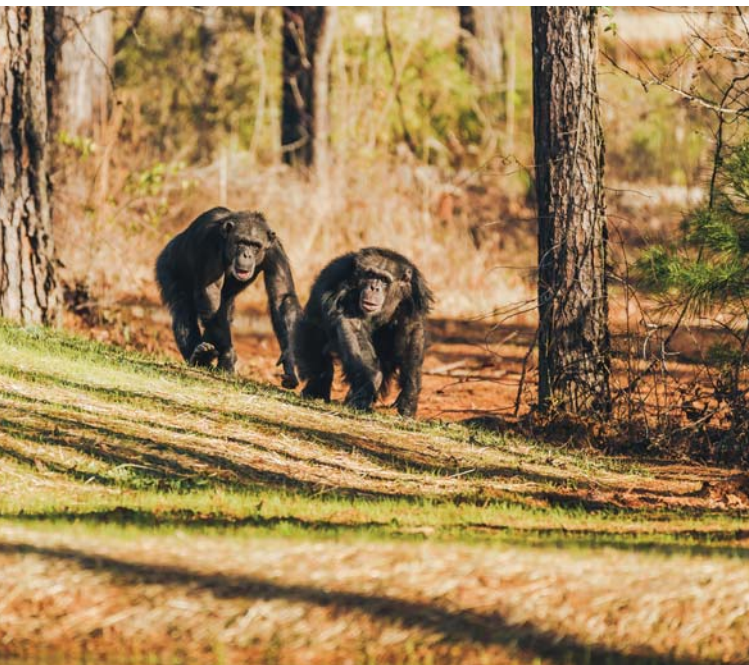
“I really encourage networking. Don’t be afraid to make connections with others in the field,” she says.

Those connections can be made through social media, email or at conferences.

“The other advice would be internships, I think they are an excellent way to determine if primatology is the path for (you),” Lewis says. “There are so many aspects of primate care.”

Chimp Haven also offers paid internships, Lewis says.

“I’m really excited that paid internships are becoming more commonplace because I think that’s crucial in developing diversity in the field of animal behavior and care.” 🌍



At 73, UNO student Alvin Webre plans to 'repurpose' with accounting degree



AFTER 30 YEARS SPENT AS A HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGER, Alvin Webre accepted a company buyout and headed off into the sunset of retirement. However, the much slower pace of retirement had Webre looking around for something to fill the too-idle days.

His children were grown and living their own lives. His rescue dog, Cosmo (named for the Seinfeld character Cosmo Kramer), kept him on his toes, but he needed more.

Webre pulled out his college transcript from the University of New Orleans and noticed a pattern.

"I had a lot of accounting courses from UNO," says Webre, who attended the University of New Orleans for a year in 1978. "I figured I'd just close the gap and get a degree in accounting. I'll repurpose myself."

On Dec. 8—four days shy of his 74th birthday—Webre was among the hundreds of students participating in the University of New Orleans fall commencement ceremony at the Lakefront Arena.

Webre earned his second bachelor's degree. He received his first degree in business and finance in 1971 from what was then the University of Southwestern Louisiana, now called the University of Louisiana at Lafayette.

After graduation, Webre served in the Air Force for a seven-year stint, a portion of which included flying missions as a navigator aboard a B-52 bomber during the Vietnam War, he says.

"My unit was assigned to U-Tapao, Thailand to fly sorties to north Vietnam, Hanoi and Haiphong," Webre says. "I have well over 1,500 hours in the air."

When hearing loss threatened to ground him, Webre opted to leave the military for civilian life. He became a "one-man band" as a regional human resource officer for FedEx based in New Orleans. A decade ago, he took the company buyout and retired at 64.

"I didn't know what to do with myself," Webre says. "No business meetings. No crisis. No conference calls."

He decided to enroll at UNO nearly four years ago and has worked hard and studied even harder, Webre says. Part of that drive comes from his military training that instilled a sense of structure and desire for excellence, he says.

The other part comes from a desire to set an example for his five grandchildren who think it is great that "Grandpa is in school" just like they are, Webre says.

"They ask, 'Grandpa, do you have teachers that make you work a lot?' I said, 'Yeah.' 'Do you take tests?' I said, 'Yeah.' 'Have you failed any tests?' I said, 'Nooo, and I don't want you failing any tests either!'"

While Webre finds numbers fascinating, his accounting courses became increasingly difficult as he progressed through the degree program, he says.

"Much to my dismay, I found out that as you go along, it gets a lot tougher," Webre says. "My advice to students is that when you feel discourage, pick yourself up and keep on going, because that's the only way you're going to realize success."

Meanwhile, just as many of his fellow graduates are doing, Webre is considering his next steps.

"Either I take the CPA exam, or I get my master's degree in tax accounting," Webre says. "I'd like to get a CPA and go back to work because retirement just isn't for me. I can't just sit around the house."

There is one decision Webre already has made regarding his UNO diploma.

"I'm going to give it to my grandchildren," Webre says. "So that they can always remind themselves that no matter how old you are, you can always achieve something, and you should never quit." 🎓

University of New Orleans student Alvin Webre was among the hundreds of candidates participating in UNO's fall commencement ceremony on Dec. 8, 2023

HOMECOMING WEEK

NOVEMBER 4–9

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EVENTS

Thursday

7

Homer L. Hitt Distinguished Alumni Gala

Friday

8

50th Reunion Jazz Brunch & Golden Privateer Society induction

Reunions Cocktail Reception (for all in 5-year increment reunion years)

Saturday

9

Homecoming Day – Tailgate and Game

More information to come. Contact us with any questions at alumni@uno.edu or 504.280.ALUM (2586)

THE UNIVERSITY *of* NEW ORLEANS

ATHLETICS



Survivor's Spirit

*Assistant Basketball Coach Lonnikia Thompson's
Triumphant Return Home*

BY DEVEN JOHNSON



UNIVERSITY OF NEW ORLEANS WOMEN'S assistant basketball coach Lonnika Thompson is a warrior—not in the conventional sense of a soldier donning armor or a boxer trading blows with an opponent for round after round. Instead, her resilience stems from a lifetime of challenges that have sculpted her into the remarkable individual she is today. Affectionately known as “Coach L.T.” by her peers and players, she is a true survivor.

A native New Orleanian, Thompson faced the disaster that forced her and so many others to flee their hometown nearly two decades ago. When Hurricane Katrina struck the city in August 2005, she and her family relocated to Jonesboro, Georgia. She enrolled in high school there and continued her basketball career before moving back to New Orleans in January 2006 as a high school senior.

Despite the upheaval she had endured, Thompson thrived in her final season at McDonogh 35 High School, leading the Lady Roneagles to a 4A state championship appearance while earning honors as an All-State player.

After spending a year at Trinity Valley Community College in Texas, her success catapulted her to the Southeastern Conference. She transferred to the University of Florida where she played from 2008 to 2011. Playing at Florida catalyzed her love for basketball and cemented her decision to stay involved with the game after her playing days were over.

In 2011, she accepted a position as a coach at P.K. Yonge High School in Gainesville, Florida, overseeing both middle school and junior varsity teams, before assuming the role of head coach at Eastside High School, also in Gainesville, in 2016.

Alongside her coaching endeavors, she also briefly played professional basketball in Australia. However, her life took a dramatic turn in the fall of 2016.

“I had been feeling looseness in my chest, I gained weight in my face, and when I laid down, my chest would hurt,” Thompson says.

After seeking counsel from her mother, she tried to maintain her composure and kept her pain private before undergoing medical tests.

“At the time of me getting a biopsy, I was 26 or 27 years old, and the doctor told me that they could perform the procedure that day,” she says. “I was thinking ‘OK, great,’ not really knowing what I was getting myself into. They numbed me up and tested me. It felt as though someone was stomping on

my heart with their foot. I was dealing with that and crying, and when it was done, I knew that I officially had breast cancer.”

Over the course of four surgeries, including three to remove cancerous nodules and one for cleaning, Thompson displayed remarkable courage and resilience. Fortunately, her proactive approach enabled her to forego further treatment beyond surgery. Focused on her recovery, she underwent regular CT scans and health check-ups, eventually resuming her coaching career, which included a stint as assistant head coach at Texas A&M International in Laredo, Texas from 2019 to 2023.

Now eight years after her diagnosis, Thompson has returned home as an assistant coach for the Privateer women's basketball team, revitalized in both health and spirit. Embracing the comforts of her city and the presence of her family, she savors the simple pleasures of daily life.

To the players she coaches and all she encounters, Thompson stands as a testament to courage and a source of inspiration. Instead of hiding her painful memories, she says her experience allows her to share lessons of strength and perseverance.

“You know when you think of breast cancer, it's the worst,” Thompson says. “People think of death, hair loss, weight loss, and that's where my mind went when I got my diagnosis. I tried to stay positive, and it was extremely hard, but I've had a great support system throughout this entire process.”



Jordan Johnson Named NABC First Team All-District

University of New Orleans men's basketball player Jordan Johnson was named First Team All-District in March by the National Association of Basketball Coaches for his outstanding performance during the 2023-24 season.

Johnson, a senior guard from Memphis, Tennessee, earned this NABC honor after being named to the All-Southland Conference Second Team. He averaged 21.3 points per game for the season, shooting 38.6% from the field and 34.0% from three-point range, while also providing a team-high of nearly four assists per game. Johnson's scoring average remained in the

top-15 nationally throughout the season. The senior recorded 16 games with 20 or more points, including a career-high 40-point game against Texas A&M-Corpus Christi.

Johnson received the Southland Player of the Week award twice this season, including a week where he was simultaneously named Associated Press, LSWA, and Oscar Robertson National Player of the Week. During this remarkable stretch, Johnson averaged 38.0 points, 5.5 rebounds, 4.5 assists, and 2.5 steals per game, with shooting percentages of 58.8% from the field and 87.5% against TAMUCC and



Texas A&M-Commerce.

This marks Johnson's second consecutive year receiving the NABC First Team honor.

Pryor Earns All-Conference Honors, Calderon Makes All-Defensive Team

Women's basketball player DeArica Pryor earned All-Southland honors and Alexis

Calderon snagged a spot on the All-Defensive Team as the Southland All-Conference honorees were announced on March 9.

Pryor made the All-Conference team for a second consecutive year after she finished the regular season in the top five in points and steals. Pryor averaged 14.3 points, which was fourth best in the Southland. Her 1.9 steals per game ranked tied for third in the conference.

The senior guard became the 18th student-athlete in program history to surpass 1,000 career points at New

Orleans. She was also one of three players who earned multiple Southland Player of the Week awards, joining Akasha Davis and Sabria Dean. This year, Pryor had 10 games of 20 or more points.

The Urbandale, Iowa native recorded her first collegiate double-double against Texas A&M-Commerce when she posted totals of 32 points and 13 rebounds.

Calderon earned a spot on the five-player All-Defensive Team. The junior guard led the conference in regular season steals with 72.

Calderon only went four games without a steal on the year. The Jacksonville, Texas native had a season-best five steals against UCF. Calderon had 20 games of at least three steals during the 2023-24 campaign.



Alexis Calderon

DeArica Pryor

UNO Celebrates 137 Student Athletes for Academic Excellence at Breakfast of Champions

The University of New Orleans honored 137 student-athletes in February for earning a 3.0 GPA or better and compiling a 3.25 cumulative GPA during the fall semester at the annual Breakfast for Champions. The event was hosted by New Orleans Athletics Student-Athlete

Academic Services and held at Homer Hitt Alumni Center.

Additionally, the student-athletes were honored during halftime during the men's basketball game as the Privateers hosted Nicholls State.

The University awarded the Privateer

Director of Athletics Honors to those student-athletes who achieved a perfect 4.0 GPA. Students with a GPA ranging from 3.5 to 3.99 were recognized with Privateer Silver Honors, while those with a GPA between 3.0 and 3.49 received Privateer Blue Honors. 🏆



(from left) President Kathy Johnson, Henry Bernstein, Gary Solomon and Dean Pam Kennett-Hensel.

College of Business Administration Named in Honor of Benefactor and Former Adjunct Professor Henry Bernstein

THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW Orleans College of Business Administration has been named in honor of Henry Bernstein, a generous benefactor of the University and former adjunct professor. The naming of the Henry Bernstein College of Business Administration was approved in February by the Board of Supervisors for the University of Louisiana System.

A formal dedication ceremony for the college was held in Kirschman Hall in April.

Bernstein's philanthropic support for UNO started decades ago when he served as one of the founding members of the board of directors of the University of New Orleans Foundation. Bernstein was an attorney and partner at Milling, Benson & Woodward who specialized in taxation and corporate banking. After he retired from practicing law, he served as a gratis adjunct professor in the Department of Management, where he taught business law for 22 years.

Bernstein currently serves as a member of the campaign cabinet for Next is Now: The Campaign for the University of New Orleans, the University's \$50 million comprehensive capital campaign. His lifetime donations represent the largest gift of the campaign, which include the gifts of \$3 million from Donald "Boysie" Bollinger to the School of Naval Architecture and Marine Engineering and \$5 million from Dr. Robert A. Savoie to the College of Engineering.

"I think that it is essential that a great city like New Orleans have and maintain a major local university like UNO to provide additional educational options to all of its residents, as well as to serve as a vehicle for attracting and maintaining a well-educated and highly trained group of graduates who can enhance the future prosperity and quality of life in New Orleans."

Henry Bernstein funded the Annette Weinberg Bernstein Endowed Chair in University

Management in memory of his mother. He also provided financial support for a professorship in African studies, the UNO Faculty Development Fund, the UNO Investiture Gala, the Henry Bernstein College of Business Administration Endowed Support Fund and a number of student scholarship funds, including those focused on first-generation college students.

"Henry Bernstein has always been a champion of our college through quiet philanthropy," says Pam Kennett-Hensel, dean of the Henry Bernstein College of Business Administration. "I am honored that he has chosen to support us in such a generous manner and that his name will forever be linked to us. His gifts are elevating our college and enhancing the rigorous education we currently provide by supporting such initiatives as student programming, technology enhancements, facility upgrades, and research and

continuing education support for faculty and staff."

In 2012, the University of New Orleans awarded Bernstein an honorary degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Business Administration in recognition of his professional, civic and philanthropic accomplishments. His generosity is not restricted to the University of New Orleans; he has supported a number of other New Orleans organizations.

"The long-term commitment Henry has made to the University of New Orleans is very special," says Gary Solomon Sr., a UNO alumnus and campaign cabinet co-chair. "His gifts to the University and, specifically, the College of Business Administration are unbelievably generous. I have known Henry for years, and I can honestly say that he is the most caring and genuine man I have ever met."

"Henry has been a quiet yet generous supporter of UNO for many years," says Dr. Robert A. Savoie, a UNO alumnus and campaign cabinet co-chair. "That makes his gift all the more special. I am proud to call Henry a friend and to help recognize his generous support of UNO by naming the College of Business Administration in Henry's honor." 🙏

ALUM NOTES

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

Maurice Carlos Ruffin, an acclaimed novelist and creative writing professor at Louisiana State University, has released his third book, "The American Daughters," to starred reviews. The novel, set in pre-civil war New Orleans, also earned Ruffin the cover of *Publisher's Weekly* magazine. This novel, as were his previous two books, was published by One World Random House.

Ruffin is also the recipient of the 2023 Louisiana Writer Award and is a former John and Renee Grisham Writer in Residence at the University of Mississippi in Oxford.

Ruffin earned two degrees from the University of New Orleans: a bachelor's degree in English and a Master of Fine Arts from the Creative Writing Workshop. He also holds a law degree from Loyola University in New Orleans.



Dan Crumb (B.S., '87)

Dan Crumb, who holds a bachelor's degree in finance from the University of New Orleans, is the executive vice president and chief financial officer for the National Football League's Kansas City Chiefs. The Chiefs are back-to-back Super Bowl Champions after winning Super Bowl LVIII against the San

Francisco 49ers in February.

This is Super Bowl ring number three for Crumb, who has been with the organization for 14 years, and traveled to Las Vegas, Nevada for the title game. He celebrated the win afterwards on the field with players and other staffers.



1970s

Michael Flick (M.B.A., '70)

Michael Flick has been named the 2024 Alumnus of the Year by the Brother Martin High School Board of Directors. Flick earned an MBA from the University of New Orleans.

Cynthia Butler-McIntyre (M.Ed., '77)

Cynthia Butler-McIntyre, a retired educator, was the keynote speaker at the Tampa Organization of Black Affairs' (TOBA) 44th Annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Leadership Breakfast in January. McIntyre holds a bachelor's degree in early childhood education from Dillard University, a master's in education from the University of New Orleans and an honorary doctorate of divinity from Christian Bible College of Louisiana.

1980s

Gretchen Zibilich Kane (B.S., '80, M.S., '89)

Gretchen Zibilich Kane, an educator with more than 40 years of experience, has been named head of school at The Academy of the Sacred Heart in New Orleans. Kane earned a bachelor's degree in math and a master's degree in mechanical engineering from the University of New Orleans.

Clinton Hathaway (B.S., '82)

Clinton Hathaway has been named the public works director for the City of New Orleans. He will oversee five divisions that are responsible for maintaining streets and bridges in the city. Hathaway earned a bachelor's degree in civil engineering from the University of New Orleans.

Don Hingle (B.S., '82, M.B.A., '90)

Don Hingle has been named managing director of the Capital region market in Baton Rouge, Louisiana for b1BANK, the bank-

ing subsidiary of Business First Bancshares, Inc. Hingle holds a bachelor's degree in finance and an MBA from the University of New Orleans.

William Baumgartner (M.B.A., '86)

William (Bill) Baumgartner has been inducted into the Collinsville, Illinois CUSD Kahok Hall of Fame for distinguished achievement. Baumgartner earned a master's degree in business administration from the University of New Orleans.

Kristi Soileau (M.Ed., '87)

Kristi Soileau has been named the secretary/treasurer for The American Academy of Periodontology. Soileau graduated from the Louisiana State University School of Dentistry and earned a master's in education from the University of New Orleans.

1990s

Guyleen Castriotta (B.A., '92)

Guyleen Castriotta is mayor of Broomfield, Colorado, a city near Denver. Prior to being elected mayor in 2021, she spent four years on the City Council and two years as mayor pro-tem. Castriotta earned a bachelor's degree in communications from the University of New Orleans.

Patricia Snyder (Ph.D., '92)

Patricia Snyder, a professor at the University of Florida, has been appointed to the Florida Interagency Coordinating Council for Infants and Toddlers. Snyder holds a doctorate in special education and early intervention from the University of New Orleans.

John Barbry (M.A., '94)

John Barbry, director of development and programming at the Tunica-Biloxi Tribe of Louisiana, has been appointed to the board of directors for the Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities.

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

Paul Bernard (B.A., '95)

Paul Bernard has been appointed chief financial officer for Lighthouse Louisiana. Bernard earned a bachelor's degree in marketing from the University of New Orleans.

Joe Dickens (B.A., '95, M.Ed., '07)

Joe Dickens has been appointed president of Saint Paul's School in Covington, Louisiana. Dickens has spent more than 20 years at Saint Paul's as a football coach, teacher, assistant principal and principal. He earned a bachelor's degree in history and a master's in educational administration from the University of New Orleans.

Gene Seroka (B.S., '86, M.B.A., '88)

Gene Seroka, the executive director of the Port of Los Angeles, has accepted the position of vice president within the International Association of Ports and Harbors (IAPH).

While continuing his responsibilities as the head of the nation's busiest port, Seroka will represent the North American region within the IAPH, a non-governmental organization founded in Tokyo, Japan in 1955.

The IAPH has evolved into a global alliance of ports over its six-decade history, now encompassing 177 ports and 147 port-related businesses across 84 countries. These member ports collectively manage over 60% of the world's seaborne trade and the global container traffic.

Masahiko Furuichi, the Secretary General of IAPH, praised Seroka's leadership and commitment to addressing global port issues.

"We are honored to have his expertise and depth of experience as we navigate these issues and search for collaborative solutions with our IAPH members."



UNO Alumni Chosen for LCMC Fellowship

Three of the four LCMC Health Minority Administrative Fellows who make up the inaugural class are graduates of the University of New Orleans. The fellowship program aims to diversify the healthcare executive workforce by educating, training and inspiring recent graduates of master's programs and exposing them to leadership opportunities.

The UNO graduates are DeShawn Jones (M.P.A., '22), Kennedy St. Charles (M.B.A., '20) and Tracy West (M.S., '22). The yearlong program offers young professionals the opportunity to work closely with senior leaders to receive on-site management experience in clinical operations, finance, quality, strategy, health equity and government relations.

Jones earned a Master of Public Administration in nonprofit leadership from UNO. His area of interest is health equity and operations. St. Charles holds a Master of Business Administration from UNO. Her area of interest is health equity and clinical operations. West earned a Master of Science in healthcare administration from UNO. His area of interest is strategy and clinical operations. (l-r Jones, St. Charles, West)



2000s

Deborah Flannery (M.S., '97)

Deborah Flannery has been appointed deputy secretary of housing by the Rhode Island Department of Housing. Flannery graduated from the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, Minnesota with a bachelor's degree in political science. She earned a master's degree in urban and regional planning from the University of New Orleans.

Rondi Carlos-Volpi (B.S., '98)

Rondi Carlos-Volpi has been appointed human resources director for DSC Dredge in Reserve, Louisiana. Volpi earned a bachelor's degree in business management specializing in HR management from the University of New Orleans.

David Grogan (B.S., '99)

Capt. David Grogan became commodore of the Regional Support Group (RSG) and Naval Submarine Support Facility (NSSF) during a change of command ceremony in November at Naval Submarine Base New London in Groton, Connecticut. Grogan earned a bachelor's degree in Naval Architecture and Marine Engineering from the University of New Orleans.

D'Andra Orey (Ph.D., '99)

D'Andra Orey, a political science professor at Jackson State University in Mississippi, has been elected president of the Southern Political Science Association. Orey earned a doctorate degree in political science from the University of New Orleans.

Tom Wright (M.S., '00)

Tom Wright has been named vice president of power delivery for the Arkansas Electric Cooperative Corporation. Wright earned a master's degree in engineering with a concentration in industrial management from the University of New Orleans.

Kara Washington-Lawson (M.Ed., '01)

Kara Washington-Lawson, principal at Garyville/Mt. Airy Math and Science Magnet School in St. John the Baptist Parish Public Schools System, has been named a semifinalist for State Principal of the Year by the Louisiana Department of Education. Winners will be named during a ceremony in July. Lawson earned a master's degree in educational leadership from the University of New Orleans, a doctorate in education from Southeastern Louisiana University and a bachelor's degree from Southern University in New Orleans.

Chloé Duplessis (B.A., '02)

Chloé Duplessis, owner of Duplessis Art Studio, received the "Mayor's Award for Excellence in Arts and Culture in Equity, Diversity and Inclusion" from the mayor of Denver, Colorado. The award is presented to an individual or organization that has focused on equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) through their work. Duplessis earned a bachelor's degree in general studies from the University of New Orleans with an emphasis in cultural studies.

William Murphy (B.S., '03, M.B.A., '05)

William Murphy has been selected for a 2024 Interfaith of the Woodlands Hometown Hero award. The award is in recognition of the contributions made to the Woodland, Texas community. Murphy earned a bachelor's degree and MBA from the University of New Orleans.

Henrietta Williams Pichon (Ph.D., '03)

Henrietta Williams Pichon has been appointed dean of Louisiana Tech University's College of Education and Human Sciences. Pichon earned her bachelor's degree in English and master's degree in secondary English education from Louisiana Tech. She earned her doctoral degree from the University of New Orleans in educational administration with a focus on higher education.

Kristi Gibbs (Ph.D., '04)

Kristi Gibbs, a former mental health counselor and assistant district attorney, has joined the Atlanta Divorce Law Group firm as a family law attorney. Gibbs earned her bachelor's and master's degrees from the University of Louisiana at Lafayette and a doctorate in counselor education from the University of New Orleans. Gibbs earned a juris doctorate from Georgia State University College of Law. →

Onika Miller (M.B.A., '02)

Onika Miller has been appointed chief strategy and accountability officer for The Caribbean Development Bank headquartered in Wildey, St. Michael, Barbados. She has more than 25 years of experience in policy, strategy, management, and performance leadership. Prior to joining the CDB, Miller was the permanent secretary in the Office of the Prime Minister of Jamaica.



"Onika's expertise and experience, which spans the public, private, and non-profit sectors and includes exposure in the regional and international spheres will be an asset to the Bank," says Hyginus "Gene" Leon, CDB president. "It's a pleasure to welcome her to the bank's executive team and look forward to working with her for the betterment of the region."

Miller earned an MBA from the University of New Orleans and a bachelor's degree from the University of the West Indies, Jamaica.

Sabrina Farmer (B.S., '95)

Sabrina Farmer has been appointed the chief technology officer at GitLab Inc., an AI-powered development, security and operations platform in San Francisco, California. Farmer spent 19 years at Google, most recently as the vice president of engineering where she was directly responsible for the reliability, performance, and efficiency of all of Google's billion-user products and infrastructure.

"Sabrina is a seasoned technology leader with an incredible track record of building and scaling teams, processes, and technologies that power the world's most successful applications that billions of people rely on every day," says Sid Sijbrandij, co-founder and CEO, GitLab. "I am confident that Sabrina's leadership will continue to inspire our team members as we innovate our AI-powered DevSecOps platform to enable customers to boost speed and efficiency without sacrificing privacy, security, and compliance."



Farmer, who earned a bachelor's degree in computer science from the University of New Orleans, has also established two scholarships for women in computer science at UNO.

2010s

Justin Groetsch (B.A., '04)

Justin Groetsch released his first movie, "Zero Hour," a mystery thriller in December 2023. Groetsch earned a bachelor's degree in drama and communication from the University of New Orleans.

Keith Jenkins (M.B.A., '04)

Keith Jenkins has been promoted to managing partner of KPMG's New Orleans and Baton Rouge offices. Jenkins earned a bachelor's degree in business administration from Louisiana State University and an MBA from the University of New Orleans.

Ashley Moran (M.U.R.P., '05)

Ashley Moran, a senior planner for the Acadiana, Louisiana Planning Commission, was honored in November with a 2023 National Roadway Safety Award for helping significantly reduce fatal and serious injury crashes. Moran earned a master's degree in urban and regional planning from the University of New Orleans.

David Worner (B.S., '05)

David Worner has been appointed chief financial officer at Treatment.com AI Inc. Worner, who earned a bachelor's degree in accounting from the University of New Orleans, was previously the CEO and founder of Growth-Path Partners.

Allison Hotard (B.S., '06)

Allison Hotard has been named executive director for The Young Leadership Council (YLC) of New Orleans. Hotard earned a master's degree in business management from Loyola University of New Orleans and a bachelor's degree in hotel, restaurant, and tourism administration from the University of New Orleans.

Patty Glaser (Ph.D., '08)

Patty Glaser, chief executive officer and founding head of Kenner Discovery Schools, was named one of *New Orleans City Business*' 2023 "Women of the Year." The award recognizes 50 women for their successes in business and contributions to the community. Glaser earned a doctorate in curriculum and instruction from the University of New Orleans.

Brent Baudier (B.S., '09)

Brent Baudier has been named vice president of food, beverage and hospitality for Exptel Hospitality in Metairie, Louisiana. Baudier earned a degree in business administration with a focus on hotel, restaurant, and tourism.

Ann Borreson (M.S., '09)

Dr. Ann Borreson, a pediatric allergist and immunologist, is the founder of Thrive with Dr. Ann. She specializes in the diagnosis and treatment of children on the autism spectrum and those dealing with related issues like anxiety, allergies, attention deficit disorder, picky eating, and other sensory processing problems.

Borreson earned her medical degree from Drexel University College of Medicine and holds a master's degree in healthcare management from the University of New Orleans.

Essence Banks (M.B.A., '10)

Essence Banks, founder of Heart N Hands, has been named "Activist of the Year" by *New Orleans Magazine* for her advocacy work in educating young women about heart health and heart disease. Banks holds an MBA from the University of New Orleans.

Andrea McNeil (M.P.A., '10)

Andrea McNeil has been selected as the new 4-H educator in Cumberland, Coles, Douglas, Moultrie, and Shelby counties in Illinois. McNeil earned a master's degree in public administration from the University of New Orleans.

Jonathan Foret (M.P.A., '11)

Jonathan Foret, director of the South Louisiana Wetlands Discovery Center, a nonprofit located in Houma, Louisiana, was the guest presenter at Michigan State University for geography awareness week. Foret earned a master's in public administration from the University of New Orleans.

Juan F. Callejas (B.S., '12)

Juan F. Callejas, a senior research and development leader at Dow, was recognized by the Hispanic Engineers National

Achievement Awards Conference (HENAAC) with the most promising scientist award.

Callejas earned a bachelor's degree in chemistry from the University of New Orleans and a doctorate in chemistry from Penn State University.

Anthony Davis (M.B.A., '12)

Anthony Davis has been appointed code enforcement director for the City of New Orleans. Davis earned a bachelor's degree in business management and a master's degree in business administration from the University of New Orleans.

Estaban Sotomayor (B.S., '12, M.B.A., '14)

Estaban Sotomayor is the recipient of the 2024 Emerging Leadership Program Scholarship Award by the Veterinary Hospital Managers Association (VHMA). Sotomayor is the owner and practice manager of All Pets Hospital Veterinario in Ecuador. He holds a bachelor's degree in business administration and an MBA from the University of New Orleans.

Chantell Harmon Reed (M.S., '11)

Chantell Harmon Reed has been appointed director of public health for the Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department in Tacoma, Washington. Reed is the former deputy director for the New Orleans Health Department, where she led administration, including human resources, communications, strategic partnerships, and safety net programming.

She is the first woman and first African American appointed to lead the local public health department.

"As I step into this role, I am committed to upholding the department values of equity, integrity, respect, and leadership," says Reed. "Our staff is ready to do the work. They are ready to serve this community."

Prior to being appointed director in Tacoma, Reed was the deputy director of the Public Health Division of the Multnomah County Health Department in Oregon.

Reed earned a bachelor's in business from Northwood University in Cedar Hill, Texas, and a master's in health care management from the University of New Orleans.



Tammy McCormick (B.S., '99)

Tammy McCormick has joined Visit Orlando as director of destination experience. Visit Orlando is the official tourism association for the city. With more than 22 years of experience in the events services industry, McCormick most recently served as the national director of creative for ACCESS Destination Services.

In her role as director of destination experience, McCormick will provide leadership to the Visit Orlando team to elevate engagement with clients to further enhance their customer experience while they plan and conduct meetings and conferences.

"Our priority at Visit Orlando is to deliver unparalleled customer service to create an exceptional planning experience for groups that meet in Orlando," says Casandra Matej, president and CEO of Visit Orlando. "Tammy's proven history of delivering innovative and memorable meeting solutions will further enrich our client relations as she leads our team of experienced meeting professionals."

McCormick, who began her hospitality career at the front desk of the Doubletree Hotel in New Orleans, holds a bachelor's degree in hotel, restaurant, and tourism administration from the University of New Orleans.



2020s

Jasen Weaver (B.A., '12)

Jasen Weaver performed in The New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Foundation concert series in January. Weaver holds a bachelor's degree in music from the University of New Orleans.

Michael Laughlin (M.B.A., '13)

Michael Laughlin has joined Red River Bank as vice president and commercial banker for the New Orleans market. Laughlin earned a bachelor's degree in finance from the University of Louisiana-Lafayette and an MBA from the University of New Orleans.

Myles Felch (M.S., '14)

Myles Felch curated the exhibit "Batteries and Beyond: Why Lithium Matters" at the Maine Mineral & Gem Museum in Bethel, Maine. Felch earned a master's degree in earth and environmental science from the University of New Orleans.

Ariel Sherman (B.A., '14)

Ariel Sherman, known in entertainment circles as DJ Arie Spins, is a musician and educator in New Orleans and has toured with Grammy award winner

PJ Morton. Sherman earned a bachelor's degree in music from the University of New Orleans.

Pamela Skehan (M.A., '15)

Pamela Skehan debuted a 14 painting art exhibition titled "Through the Belly of the Fish – A Visual Explanation of Grief" at the East Bank Regional Library in Metairie, Louisiana. Skehan has a bachelor's of fine arts from Wesleyan University and a master's in fine arts teaching from the University of New Orleans.

Susan Foret (M.S., '16)

Susan Foret has been named vice president operations for Our Lady of the Lake Cancer Institute. Foret has more than 31 years of experience in the healthcare industry and has held a leadership role for the past 25 years. She previously served as associate vice president of oncology, radiology, and pharmacy at Touro Infirmary.

She earned a bachelor's in nursing from William Carey University and a master's in healthcare management from the University of New Orleans.

Rachel Billiot-Bruleigh (B.A., '18)

Rachel Billiot-Bruleigh of Gretna, Louisiana has been named to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's National Environmental Youth Advisory Council. Bruleigh earned a bachelor's degree in interdisciplinary studies with a concentration in cultural and environmental studies from the University of New Orleans.

Jacob Budenz (M.F.A., '18)

Jacob Budenz hosted a workshop and reading for their debut collection of short stories, "Tea Leaves." Budenz earned a master's degree in creative writing from the University of New Orleans.

Catalina Rubiano (B.S., '19)

Catalina Rubiano has earned a master's degree in marine science from the University of South Florida. Rubiano earned a bachelor's degree in earth and environmental science from the University of New Orleans.

Christopher Louis Romaguera (M.F.A., '20)

Christopher Louis Romaguera was a guest panelist for the One Book One New Orleans "Words and Music: Translation in Life and Literature" workshop. Romaguera earned a master's degree in creative writing from the University of New Orleans.

Hailey Lynn Fretz (M.A., '21)

Hailey Lynn Fretz has joined the Girl Scouts of Louisiana East as annual giving and events manager. Fretz earned a master's degree in arts administration from the University of New Orleans.

Miles Tully Jr. (B.S., '21, M.B.A., '22)

Miles Tully Jr. has started a new position as vice president of hospitality for Harrah's New Orleans. Tully holds degrees in hotel, restaurant, and tourism administration from the University of New Orleans.

Sharon Clark (Ph.D., '22)

Sharon Clark, principal at Sophie B. Wright High School in New Orleans, has been elected to the Louisiana Board of Elemen-

tary and Secondary Education as the District 2 representative. Clark earned a doctoral degree in educational leadership from the University of New Orleans.

C.A. Munn (M.F.A., '22)

C.A. Munn, a New Orleans playwright, was invited to read as part of Imnl lit and Words & Music one-act staged reading series "The Play's the Thing." They received their master's degree in playwriting from the University of New Orleans' Creative Writing Workshop.

Annell López (M.F.A., '23)

Annell López, an assistant fiction editor for the *New Orleans Review*, taught an immersive fiction workshop in November presented by Words and Music. López earned a master's degree in creative writing from the University of New Orleans.

Skyla Thompson (B.A., '23)

Skyla Thompson has been named New Teacher of the Year in St. Charles Parish. Thompson earned a bachelor's degree in education from the University of New Orleans. 🌟

THEN AND NOW



BIRTHDAY WISHES

IN 1978 THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW Orleans celebrated its 20th “birthday” with a cake. UNO’s founding chancellor, Homer L. Hitt, is seen slicing into the celebratory confection. Although the photograph is in black and white, we’re pretty sure the cake included some Privateer blue, much like the 65th birthday cake version President Kathy Johnson cut into in 2023.

Another thing is certain: UNO’s mission of excellence and innovation in shaping bright minds and helping to fulfill dreams remains intact 45 years later. 🎂



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Brendan '24
First-Generation College Student



Tatiana '17
First Black Female Pilot for the LA National Guard

At the University of New Orleans, we celebrate firsts every day.

We celebrate the **first** days of school, the **first** achievements, and the **first-generation** students who excel despite hardships. We celebrate UNO as the **first** public university in the South integrated from its inception, our **first** female president, Dr. Kathy Johnson, and our alumni who are pioneers in their fields.

We celebrate these **firsts**, knowing that there are still many more waiting to be made. By contributing to the UNO First Fund, you can empower a new generation of people ready to make daring and innovative contributions to the world.

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Kathy Johnson, Ph.D.
UNO's first female president and First-Generation College Graduate

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