

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

SILVER & BLUE

SPRING 2017



BACK ON TOP!

MEN'S BASKETBALL TEAM RETURNS
TO CHAMPIONSHIP FORM

FIRST
LOOK





DEAR ALUMNI AND FRIENDS:

Twice a year, we hold a commencement ceremony where we present degrees to our students. I am sure you have vivid memories of your own; they are truly unforgettable occasions. Commencement is a culminating event, representing years of hard work and sacrifice and serving as a launch point for new opportunities. Simply put—this is the highlight of my job as President, and it underscores why we, as educators, do what we do.

I have tried to capture the characteristics of the Class of 2017 with adjectives such as determined, persistent and diverse. But the word “engaged” is particularly appropriate. Engagement is critically important to the success of any university. Students engage with their institution through student activities, athletics, research opportunities and community service. The data show that engaged students succeed and graduate at a higher rate. There’s not enough room on this page to enumerate all of our highly engaged student groups, but I will mention a couple. Lambda Chi Alpha fraternity won the inaugural President’s Spirit Cup for its sustained support of our student-athletes, including our men’s and women’s basketball teams, which enjoyed outstanding seasons. Our student-athletes performed on the court, on the field and in the community. In the fall 2016 semester alone, our student-athletes did nearly 1,600 hours of community service. In total, our students engage with more than 125 student organizations.

Finally, engaged students become engaged alumni. Those men and women who were active participants in their college experience frequently remain connected to their friends and peers beyond graduation. They are vocal and visible advocates for their alma mater wherever they go. And their financial support for student scholarships grants opportunity to the next generation of Privateers. The University’s fundraising efforts have gathered momentum in recent months. That’s because there is widespread sentiment among our alumni and supporters that improved access to quality higher education will improve entire communities. When a student crosses the platform at commencement and receives a degree, it’s beneficial not just to the student and the family but to society.

If you consider yourself to be an engaged graduate, reach out to your networks and find those who are not. If you’re not engaged, ask yourself “Why not?” Please give us the opportunity to show you all of the great things that we’re doing. I can’t wait to see what the Class of 2017 and all of our alumni will accomplish next. Much like our graduates, the University of New Orleans is a determined institution. Know that we are always here to support you if you are willing to be engaged.

Sincerely,

John Nicklow
PRESIDENT

 @UNOPresidentJN  @unopresident

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UNO LETS THE GOOD TIMES ROLL

The University of New Orleans brought carnival to the lakefront Feb. 21 when the Krewe of UNO rolled through campus for the first time in years. Marching bands from Brother Martin High School and Sophie B. Wright Charter School provided the soundtrack as UNO students, faculty and staff donned masks and costumes, tossed beads and toy brains, rode atop horses and boats, golf carts and homemade floats in a display that drew celebratory onlookers to curbs and walkways and ended with a giant king cake fest in the heart of campus. The parade kicked off at the University Center with the unveiling of the New Orleans Privateers' new mascot, Capt. Bruno, a brawny, blue, sword-brandishing privateer.



FESTIVAL OF COLORS

The Chakra Indian Student Organization on March 26 treated UNO's community to the fun of Holi Festival, a celebration of spring stemming from a Hindu tradition. Participants throw colored powder on one another, enjoy colorful desserts and dance to lively music.



CELEBRATING THE WORLD OF ENGINEERING

Nearly 1,600 students from 26 New Orleans-area middle and high schools converged on the University Feb. 21 to celebrate National Engineers Week. Dozens of hands-on exhibits enabled students to explore the ways engineers think, problem-solve and invent. Organized by the College of Engineering in collaboration with the College of Sciences, Core Element and the American Society of Civil Engineers, the event also featured four screenings of "Dream Big: Engineering Our World," a feature-length film produced in partnership with the American Society of Civil Engineers.

ASK LOUISIANA'S GOVERNOR

Louisiana Gov. John Bel Edwards visited the University of New Orleans Oct. 12 to participate in a live interview with political science instructor Tony Licciardi before a gathering of students, faculty and staff. Edwards spent more than an hour talking with Licciardi about everything from how he decided to run for Louisiana's top office to what his administrative transition entailed. Roughly 100 to 150 people attended the event at Milneburg Hall. It was an intimate gathering geared toward political science students and faculty.





LIBRARY LAUNCHES FOURTH FLOOR UPGRADE

University of New Orleans students and faculty seeking quiet study space, access to high-tech computer labs and well-preserved archival materials now have a dedicated resource on the fourth floor of the Earl K. Long Library. President John Nicklow and Library Interim Dean Lora Amsberryaugier cut the ribbon on the space on Feb. 2, unveiling the newly renovated floor to students, faculty, staff and visitors. The space boasts quieter study rooms, climate-controlled special collection archives, a digital animation studio, a new exhibits gallery space, offices and meeting space for the Center for Teaching Innovation, a new information literacy classroom and more.



UNIVERSITY OF DIVERSITY

The University of New Orleans in March opened the Diversity Engagement Center, a space dedicated to enhancing the University's efforts to reach underrepresented minorities and marginalized student groups. Peggy Gaffney, director of Diversity Affairs at UNO, and President John Nicklow cut the ribbon on the space March 16. "This is about helping find a home for those who don't have formal representation on campus," Gaffney says. The center will also coordinate efforts by MoMENTum, a mentorship program for African-American male students, Cultural Cafés, diversity book discussions and diversity celebrations.

NEWS & EVENTS



PRESIDENT NICKLOW'S STATE OF THE UNIVERSITY ADDRESS HIGHLIGHTS MOMENTUM IN ENROLLMENT, FUNDRAISING AND OUTLOOK AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW ORLEANS

STUDENT APPLICATIONS are up. More people are visiting campus. Enrollment declines have slowed.

Those were three of the encouraging headlines University of New Orleans President John Nicklow shared during his biannual State of the University address, which he delivered March 31 before a ballroom filled with employees.

Nicklow, who has made enrollment his top priority since taking the helm as the University's leader a year ago, said that the number of students enrolled at UNO declined 3 percent this spring compared with a year ago—the smallest decrease in recent memory.

"This is a very good sign," he said. "I believe that it means that our enrollment decline is leveling off and we are reaching a point where we can start growing again."

Digging deeper, the outlook only improved. The numbers Nicklow shared showed that there were only 33 fewer undergraduate students this spring than in 2016. And first-time freshmen and transfer students improved by 16 percent and 33 percent this semester compared with spring 2016.

Other notable numbers:

- Overall student applications are running 15 percent higher compared with this time last year, with freshmen application applications up 20 percent and graduate school applications increasing 2 percent.

- Campus visits by prospective students have increased 11 percent, with attendance to February's Explore UNO open house up 23 percent with 80 percent of the participants already at the applicant stage or beyond.

- Registration for early advantage orientation is up 73 percent compared with last year.

Nicklow said the University continues to be laser-focused on its efforts to recruit and retain students through targeted, meaningful communication, planning and offerings.

The University endured a cut earlier this fiscal year, but was spared a second mid-year cut by the state this February. While a statewide budget gap looms for the fiscal year that is scheduled to begin July 1, Nicklow said the advocacy efforts of the Privateer Advocacy Network have helped contribute to a "genuine and increased appetite to support higher education at the State Capitol."

In the meantime, he said,

UNO leaders are actively seeking to improve the University's position independent of state funding through better utilization of facilities, including leasing space on campus to interested community partners.

In the area of academic affairs, new Provost Mahyar Amouzegar is working with faculty and staff to review and strengthen academic programs and create predictable budgets for colleges based on student-faculty ratios and student credit hours, Nicklow said.

New Vice President for Research and Economic Development Matt Tarr has already implemented increases to UNO's internal grant programs across disciplines.

Fundraising efforts are also yielding results, Nicklow said. The University's endowment grew from \$63.6 million in December 2015 to \$66.9 million this past December.

"That is exceptional," Nicklow said, "especially when you consider this: The average endowment for higher education institutions nationwide lost nearly 2 percent within the past year, while UNO's has increased in value."

More than \$415,000 has been raised toward the \$1

million scholarship campaign that Nicklow and the Development Office launched in the fall. Annual unrestricted giving is up 10 percent and the total dollars pledged through the student-staffed call center have increased 25 percent in a year. Fundraising efforts are also underway to modernize UNO's hotel, restaurant and tourism administration facility and to obtain a naming gift for the University's new School of the Arts.

Nicklow went on to tick off a number of other accomplishments, including the Privateer men's basketball team's championship season, the completed renovations to the fourth-floor of the Earl K. Long Library and the opening of a Diversity Engagement Center.

He closed his remarks by sharing a video designed to introduce employees to a new brand messaging platform developed by University Marketing, one that highlights the determination, inclusiveness and drive to achieve that characterizes the UNO community.

Nicklow said the messages reveal the optimism he feels. "Yes, our community has grit and determination, resilience and loyalty," he said. "But we also have a bright future."

AUDUBON NATURE INSTITUTE COLLABORATION FOCUSES ON WILDLIFE CONSERVATION RESEARCH

THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW Orleans and Audubon Nature Institute are collaborating to address pressing research topics in wildlife conservation and professional training in the field of wildlife management.

The Sustainable Wildlife Fellowship/Internship program is made possible by the combination of UNO faculty expertise, Audubon Nature Institute facilities and personnel and financial support from a Louisiana Board of Regents endowment program.

The program calls for the appointment of faculty from UNO's Department of Biological Sciences to fill four endowed chair positions and revise the areas of specialization of those positions to those identified by the University and Audubon Nature Institute.

Steve Johnson, dean of the College of Sciences, says he expects the innovative collaboration will yield great research opportunities for students: "Working closely with Audubon scientists, our team of endowed chairs, graduate fellows and undergraduate researchers will explore cutting-edge topics in wildlife sustainability in threatened ecosystems and zoo populations."

The four endowed chair appointments are:

- Professor Bernard Rees as the Greater New Orleans Foundation Endowed Chair in Aquatic Conservation, which will focus on coastal and marine wildlife and fisheries sustainability.



- Associate Professor Simon Lailvaux as the Virginia Kock/Audubon Nature Institute Endowed Chair in Species Preservation, which will focus on rare and endangered species.

- Professor Carla M. Penz as the Doris Zemurray Stone Endowed Chair in Biodiversity, which will focus on rare and endangered species.

- Professor Nicola Anthony as the Freeport-McMoRan Endowed Chair in Wildlife Sustainability, which will focus on wildlife in threatened ecosystems.

In addition to filling these endowed chair positions, the Sustainable Wildlife Fellowship/Internship program provides stipends for a graduate-level

fellow and an undergraduate-level intern in each area of focus. Fellows and interns will work under the guidance of the UNO endowed chair as well a program coordinator and mentor employed by Audubon Nature Institute.

Fellows and interns will work at an Audubon facility in New Orleans, which could be the Audubon Coastal Wildlife Center, Aquarium of the Americas, Audubon Zoo, Audubon Butterfly Garden and Insectarium or the Alliance for Sustainable Wildlife, a collaboration with San Diego Zoo Global housed at the Freeport-McMoRan Audubon Species Survival Center on the West Bank.

Department of Biological Sciences faculty members Simon Lailvaux, left, Nicola Anthony, Bernard Rees and Carla M. Penz will fill four endowed chair positions as part of a collaboration between the University of New Orleans and Audubon Nature Institute.

The Paulette and Frank B. Stewart Endowed Sustainable Wildlife Program Fund was also established to provide needed support for activities related to the program. The funds, amounting to \$300,000, had been previously donated and, with the donors' permission, they were endowed and designated for support of the program.

OFFICE OF NAVAL RESEARCH SUPPORT EXTENDS AND EXPANDS ROBOTIC EEL PROJECT AT UNO WITH \$400,000 GRANT

UNIVERSITY OF NEW ORLEANS researchers are helping the U.S. Navy improve intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance capabilities for shallow water and coastal environments with technology that has the potential to reduce risk exposure for military personnel. Brandon Taravella, associate professor in UNO's School of Naval Architecture and Marine Engineering, and Kazim Akyuzlu, professor in UNO's Department of Mechanical Engineering, recently received a 3-year, \$418,000 grant to continue and expand Taravella's previous research on the "anguilliform-like swimming motion of an undulating propulsor," also referred to as the robotic eel project.

The significance of the robotic eel project is tied to changes in naval warfare. Naval researchers need tools to help them conduct monitoring and data collection in harsh or dangerous conditions. The U.S.

Navy also has a strong interest in developing autonomous underwater vehicles (AUVs) that can carry sensors into dangerous environments without being detected.

Taravella's former adviser, William Vorus, professor emeritus at UNO, developed a theory directly related to these aquatic challenges. Vorus predicted that a particular shape swimming in an anguilliform (eel-like) motion could do so with high efficiency and little resistance and would generate no wake or detectable trailing swirls in the water. Taravella's previous work tested Vorus' wakeless propulsion theory using a robotic eel to achieve the ideal shape and desired motion. One potential naval application of this work could be a new



Brandon Taravella

type of AUV able to travel long distances on low power.

Taravella says there is also interest from the oil and gas industry. The robotic eel could be sent into waters for infrastructure inspection, such as oil rigs off coastal Louisiana.

While research to date has focused on what was happening in the water in the eel's wake, the new award will allow Taravella to examine what happens to the water particles near the robotic eel's skin as it moves.

SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHER PREP PROGRAMS RECEIVE NATIONAL RECOGNITION

THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW Orleans' Department of Curriculum, Instruction and Special Education has been recognized by the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) for three special education teacher preparation programs: the bachelor's degree in elementary education and mild/moderate disabilities; the master's in

teaching in early intervention and mild/moderate disabilities for elementary education; and the master's in teaching in mild/moderate disabilities for secondary education.

"We pride ourselves in preparing quality special educators," says Janice Janz, interim chair of the Department of Curriculum, Instruction and Special

Education, which is housed within UNO's College of Liberal Arts, Education and Human Development. "Schools in our area value the knowledge, skills and dispositions that graduates of our special education program possess."

The University's institutional accreditation comes from the Southern Association

of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges while a range of professional accrediting organizations evaluate its academic departments through a similar process of rigorous peer review. CAEP is involved in certifying the quality of teacher preparation provided through UNO's Department of Curriculum, Instruction and Special Education.

UNO TRANSPORTATION INSTITUTE AWARDED \$1.4 MILLION TO STUDY URBAN DEVELOPMENT AROUND WATERWAYS

THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW Orleans Transportation Institute will receive nearly \$1.4 million over five years as part of a consortium designated by the U.S. Department of Transportation as a Maritime Transportation Research and Education Center, or MarTREC.

Led by the University of Arkansas, the consortium includes researchers from UNO, Jackson State University in Mississippi, Louisiana State University, Vanderbilt University in Tennessee and Texas A&M University. The center's work will focus on preserving the existing U.S. transportation system by

conducting a multidisciplinary program of maritime and multimodal transportation research, education and technology transfer.

With a new administration in Washington, D.C., having pledged to renegotiate the North American Free Trade Agreement and other international trade deals, the importance of understanding maritime transportation and its role in domestic and global trade takes on renewed importance, says Bethany Stich, associate director of MarTREC and director of UNO's Transportation Institute.

"Maintaining the efficiency



of America's global supply chains is exceptionally important to the nation's continued economic vitality, and UNO's Transportation Institute is uniquely qualified to provide essential research for the U.S. Department of Transportation through MarTREC," says Stich, who also serves as associate director of the National Center for Strategic Transportation Policies, Investments and Decisions and chairs the Department of Planning and Urban Studies at UNO.

The amount awarded to the entire consortium is expected to total up to \$7 million in federal funding and \$3.5 million in matching funds over a five-year period. The center's work will address the design of supply-chain networks to optimize resources and minimize congestion on navigable waterways. It will also research design and planning for barge containers, shipping cycle times, reliability, safety and environmental preservation.

MATT TARR SELECTED VICE PRESIDENT FOR RESEARCH AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW Orleans has selected longtime chemistry faculty member Matt Tarr to serve as the new vice president for research and economic development at the University.

Tarr has spent 21 years at the University and is the Eurofins Professor of Analytical Chemistry, as well as a faculty fellow in the University's Advanced Materials Research Institute.

"Dr. Tarr is a proven and well-respected researcher, and he understands the importance of research and creative activity conducted by our University," says UNO President John Nicklow. "I believe he will be one of our strongest advocates as we work to grow the research enterprise, which is one of my top

priorities. He also has a strong vision for growing research experiences across the campus, including faculty scholarship, undergraduate and graduate opportunities, and partnerships within our community and our Research and Technology Park. I am very excited to have him in this role."

Tarr arrived at UNO after completing a postdoctoral fellowship at the Environmental Protection Agency in Athens, Ga. He served as the chair of the chemistry department from 2009 to 2015. He holds a bachelor's and master's degree in chemistry from Emory University in Atlanta and a doctorate in analytical chemistry

from Georgia Tech.

"The University of New Orleans has tremendous potential for growing its already successful research, scholarly and creative efforts," Tarr says. "My experience at UNO as a researcher, teacher and chair, as well as service in national organizations, gives me a thorough understanding of UNO's potential for improved productivity and some of the barriers we need to overcome. While expanding our research capacity, our scholarly output and our creative products, we can simultaneously provide unique and enriching educational opportunities to our students."

Tarr conducts research in



Matt Tarr

analytical chemistry, environmental chemistry, free radical oxidation of biomolecules, and synthesis and application of nanomaterials for biomarker detection and photocatalysis. He also coordinates outreach programs that provide research experiences for undergraduates, visiting international students, high school students and high school teachers.

The University of New Orleans is the only public research university in greater New Orleans and one of only two institutions in the state that is designated by the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education as a doctoral university with higher research activity. That is the second highest Carnegie status that can be achieved.

UNO'S PRODUCTION OF 'THE ALIENS' CHOSEN FOR KENNEDY CENTER FESTIVAL

THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW Orleans' production of "The Aliens" was selected to be performed at a regional Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival in March following a highly-competitive selection process.

The theatre team traveled to Angelo State University in Texas March 1-5, filling about 1,200 seats during all performances. The production was selected for the honor from among 50 applicants in a region that includes Missouri, Louisiana, Arkansas,

New Mexico and Oklahoma. Judges selected only four productions, including UNO's.

"The Aliens" is an award-winning play by Annie Baker that centers around a high school dropout and a college dropout loitering behind a Vermont coffee shop as they decide to teach the shop's barista everything they know using their music and some Bukowski-inspired prose.

The play itself is the winner of the 2010 Obie Award for new American play. Theatre UNO's



production featured graduate student Kristin Shoffner as director and Jowhara Thompson as with stage manager. The cast included Austin Krieger, a sophomore enrolled in UNO's film program, as Jasper; Cooper Bucha, a senior in UNO's theater program, as KJ; and Ryan Decker, a graduate student pursuing a master's

Theatre UNO's production of "The Aliens" was selected to be a part of a regional Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival.

degree in performance, as Evan. Faculty on the production team included costume designer Tony French, scenic designer Kevin Griffith and lighting designer/technical director Diane K. Baas.

AMOUZEGAR BEGINS NEW ROLE AS PROVOST

THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW Orleans in January announced Mahyar Amouzegar as its new provost and senior vice president for academic affairs.

Amouzegar, who assumed his leadership position Jan. 9, was selected after a national search to identify a successor to John Nicklow, who was previously provost before becoming UNO's President on April 1, 2016. Norm Whitley served as interim provost for the past nine months.

Amouzegar brings to his new position more than 20 years of experience as an administrator, faculty member, researcher, national security policy analyst and fundraiser. He comes to UNO from California Polytechnic State University, Pomona, where he served as the dean of the College of Engineering for the past five years. Cal Poly Pomona has one of the largest and most well-

regarded public undergraduate engineering programs in the nation.

As dean, he oversaw more than 300 faculty and staff, 12 accredited programs and more than 5,000 students. He also attracted significant financial support for the college, established public-private partnerships, expanded international collaboration and championed diversity initiatives for both students and faculty.

"I am very pleased to have Dr. Amouzegar on our team," UNO President John Nicklow says. "His experience and skills will be major assets to the University of New Orleans and our community. He brings an entrepreneurial and innovative spirit that will help us continue and expand our momentum."

Prior to his time at Cal Poly Pomona, Amouzegar was associate dean for research and graduate studies in the

College of Engineering at California State University, Long Beach. He also served as a senior policy analyst for the RAND Corporation, a renowned nonprofit, nonpartisan global policy think tank in Santa Monica, Calif.

In his role as provost at UNO, Amouzegar will be the chief academic officer as well as oversee a number of facets of the university beyond academic programs, including information technology, international education, service learning, student affairs, online instruction, and the Earl K. Long Library. He is also a tenured professor in the Department of Economics and Finance.

"I am elated to join the University of New Orleans with an outstanding and dedicated group of faculty and staff,"



Mahyar Amouzegar

Amouzegar says. "I look forward to working with members of the UNO community, who have consistently shown uncompromising dedication to student access and success while conducting world-class research and scholarly activities. UNO's student body is forward-looking, dynamic and creative."

Amouzegar holds a bachelor's degree in applied mathematics from San Francisco State University, a master's in electrical engineering from UCLA and a doctorate in operations research from UCLA.

UNO PROVIDES RICH RESEARCH AND GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENTS READY TO SEIZE THEM, SAYS COMPUTER SCIENCE MAJOR

UNIVERSITY OF NEW ORLEANS sophomore Banan Ibrahim isn't leaving anything to chance. Each semester, the 19-year-old computer science major and honors student takes 17 to 18 hours of classes and whenever an opportunity arises to advance her expertise, she takes it. "I've had so many opportunities here," she says of UNO.

Since arriving as a freshman in the fall of 2015, the New Orleans area native has taken advantage of a job shadowing day at GE, traveled to Houston with other female computer science majors for the Grace Hopper Celebration of Women in Computing and, most recently, landed a research grant to work with Irfan Ahmed, assistant professor of computer science, in an area of study that most fascinates her: information assurance.

Ibrahim, a graduate of Muslim Academy in Gretna, is one of 20 UNO undergraduates awarded Privateer Research and Scholarly Experience (PURSUE) grants and was formally recognized with the others during the Fall 2016 Research Reception & Awards Presentation.

"This award is amazing," she says.

Winners are paid \$1,000 or \$1,500 to research under mentors at rates of \$10 or \$15 per hour, depending on whether they are freshmen and sophomores or juniors and seniors. In its second year, PURSUE is just one more extension of UNO's longstanding interest in encouraging research among faculty and scholars, says Norm Whitley, former interim provost and vice president for academic affairs.

"External funding provides

the opportunities to enrich our students' experience at UNO, not only with traditional research grants but also with equipment grants such as for advance cameras to be used in film or travel grants for students to visit national labs," Whitley said during the awards ceremony.

Marc Bonis, assistant professor of professional practice who teaches human performance and health promotion, says the University does more than support students financially when they provide research opportunities like this. "Basically, it gets them really motivated," he says. Bonis is mentoring

PURSUE student winner James Lightell, making this Bonis' second year working with a PURSUE winner.

Ibrahim says she never seriously considered another university when she was seeking college admission. That's because, as a high school student, she dual enrolled at UNO. It was the trial run that gave her the information she needed: She liked the University and, if she wanted to study computer science, there was no reason to go anywhere else.

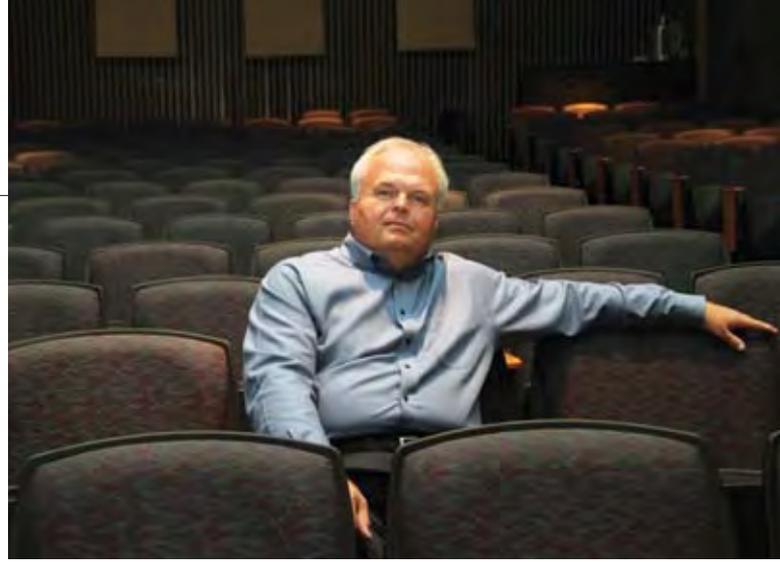
Ibrahim is on track to graduate in December 2018. But before she does, she has a few more opportunities she's

eyeing including applying for the UNO Scholarship for Women in Computer Science, an award made possible by 1996 UNO alumna and Google engineer Sabrina Farmer.

The scholarship comes with a year-long opportunity to receive formal mentoring from Farmer herself, a fact that Ibrahim is quick to share.

Banan Ibrahim, a sophomore computer science major, selects a door prize after her number is called during the 2016 Research Reception and Awards Presentation in the fall.





CHARLES TAYLOR NAMED DIRECTOR OF NEW UNO SCHOOL OF THE ARTS

CHARLES TAYLOR, CHAIR OF the University of New Orleans music department, has been appointed director of the University's new School of the Arts. The school, which is the first of its kind in the greater New Orleans area, will capitalize on the strengths and synergies of its five arts disciplines: film, theatre, music, fine arts and arts administration.

"Dr. Charles Taylor is an outstanding choice to lead our new School of the Arts," says President John Nicklow. "He is deeply invested in the local arts community and has a vision for how we can give our students a unique academic experience and marshal support for our arts programs in a new and exciting way."

Taylor, a professor of music,

has been a faculty member at the University since 2001. He holds a bachelor's degree in music and a master's in music education, as well as a doctorate of musical arts in conducting from the renowned University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music. Taylor is also the music director and conductor of the New Orleans Concert Band and the New Orleans Civic Symphony Orchestra. He has served as a guest conductor and guest clinician throughout the U.S. and Canada. An advocate of new music, he has premiered more than 50 works in various media and worked collaboratively with numerous composers and performers.

"The creation of the School of the Arts positions the

University of New Orleans as a 21st century leader in arts and creativity in the state and the region," says Kim Martin Long, dean of the College of Liberal Arts, Education and Human Development. "The school will expand the University's existing relationship with the cultural and economic fabric of New Orleans and Louisiana. Dr. Taylor is well-suited to lead these important initiatives at the helm of the School of the Arts."

The University of New Orleans School of the Arts seeks to provide the highest caliber of education at both the undergraduate and graduate

Charles Taylor, chair of the University of New Orleans music department, has been appointed director of the University's new School of the Arts.

levels to students aspiring to become artists, scholars and arts administrators, Taylor says. Modern arts education also demands that students receive cross-disciplinary arts and arts management training, regardless of their major, in order to put them on a path for professional success.

"We will take full advantage of our location in one of the world's greatest cities for the arts," he says.

TWENTY-FOUR SWEAP INTERNS HIRED AS FULL-TIME GE EMPLOYEES

A THREE-YEAR-OLD partnership between GE Digital and the University of New Orleans has proven to be a career-transforming educational experience for dozens of the University's computer science students.

The Software Engineering Apprenticeship Program, also called SWEAP, was formed in 2014 to provide UNO computer science students the ability to build invaluable professional experience before they graduate.

To date, SWEAP has yielded prolific results: Twenty-four participating students have been hired on as full-time employees at GE Digital so far—and the program is continuing to grow.

"SWEAP transformed my career trajectory and opened up countless opportunities for technical and professional growth," says Allison Luzader, a GE Digital software engineer and SWEAP graduate.

Students have the unique opportunity of being mentored by veteran software engineers, and receive onsite technical training at the GE Tech Center in downtown New Orleans, where the students work as paid part-time software developers, earning the equivalent hourly pay of a junior-level position.

SWEAP is designed to equip students with the necessary technical and social skills required for many entry-level

developer positions.

Kevin Dawson, GE Digital New Orleans site leader and vice president of program management, says SWEAP has become one of the company's best pipelines for early career talent, calling UNO students the company's future leaders.

Nine students currently in SWEAP are expected to graduate in May and are also anticipating job offers, says Mahdi Abdelguerfi, professor and chair of the UNO Department of Computer Science. Abdelguerfi says he hopes to build on the model with other industry partners. "We are thrilled by the results that we've seen," he says.

The SWEAP program is

set to expand in 2017, with 15 UNO computer science students expected to join this summer. Since the program launched in 2014, one in every four UNO computer science students among junior and senior levels have had an opportunity to participate.

Leaders at GE Digital and UNO say they are heavily invested in the success of this program. GE Digital's Dustin Gaspard, a full time technical development leader, oversees the SWEAP students at GE, while UNO's Ted Holmberg serves as the full-time industry liaison for the computer science department to foster and strengthen relationships among the professional community.

GREATER NEW ORLEANS HOTEL & LODGING ASSOCIATION HOSPITALITY EDUCATION FOUNDATION BESTOWS MAJOR GIFT TO UNO PROGRAM

THE GREATER NEW ORLEANS Hotel & Lodging Association Hospitality Education Foundation has bestowed a major gift to the University of New Orleans' Lester E. Kabacoff School of Hotel, Restaurant and Tourism Administration.

The \$75,000 contribution to fund improvements to UNO's Hotel, Restaurant and Tourism Administration laboratory is the first major commitment since the launch of the University of New Orleans Foundation's \$2.5 million capital campaign.

Kim Williams, director of the HRT program, says the gift will be used to create a simulated lobby and front desk lab. These improvements will help students gain hands-on experience in hotel simulations, property management systems and hotel industry analytics as the school strives to enhance the structure and technological offerings to its HRT students. Other planned renovations

and additions include a new roof, exterior refurbishment, an atrium style entrance, a 250-seat dining room, 35 computers for the property management system room, a beverage laboratory, and new equipment in the production kitchen.

"The improved facilities will enable our HRT program to recruit the best and brightest students to our world-class training program and serve as a training ground for future industry professionals," Williams says. "We want UNO to be the go-to place for hospitality and tourism education, and the GNOHLA Hospitality Education Foundation's gift is a major step toward achieving that goal."

New Orleans' hospitality industry is a major component of the regional economy, providing more than 88,000 jobs in Orleans Parish alone. More than 95 percent of students who

graduate from UNO's HRT program remain in New Orleans to continue their career. In addition to supplying students to the workforce upon graduation, more than 90 percent of graduate students and 80

percent of undergraduate students remain in New Orleans to continue their career. In addition to supplying students to the workforce upon graduation, more than 90 percent of graduate students and 80

More than 95 percent of students who graduate from UNO's HRT program remain in New Orleans.

percent of undergraduate students in the HRT program work full-time while earning their degree, which supplies an immediate workforce.

"By contributing to higher education, we are developing leaders from within our own community and simultaneously changing the lives of these students and their families," says Tod Chambers, president of GNOHLA Hospitality Education Foundation.

The GNOHLA Hospi-

programs include college scholarship opportunities for students interested in career paths in the hospitality industry, as well as partnerships with institutions like UNO and Delgado Community College to help further hospitality education and develop leaders within the industry.

The GNOHLA Hospitality Education Foundation has contributed more than \$170,000 to UNO's HRT program during the past five years.

UNIVERSITY EARNS \$468,000 IN CYBERSECURITY EDUCATION GRANTS FROM NSA

COMPUTER SCIENCE researchers at the University of New Orleans have received three cybersecurity education grants totaling \$468,000 from the National Security Agency. The funding will support efforts to develop cybersecurity educational materials, evaluate the effectiveness of certain teaching tools and provide an intensive training experience for middle and high school teachers.

Faculty members Irfan Ahmed and Vassil Roussev from

UNO's computer science faculty will lead the efforts.

With an award of \$188,000, the UNO team will work to address different challenges associated with the instruction of cybersecurity of supervisory control and data acquisition (SCADA) systems, which control major portions of the critical U.S. infrastructure.

An award of \$164,000 will allow UNO researchers to closely test and measure the effectiveness of using concept maps in cyber-

security education. Concept maps are a visual tool for organizing and representing knowledge.

A third award of \$116,000 will be used to conduct GenCyber, a free, intensive cybersecurity boot camp for middle and high school teachers, for the fourth year in a row on UNO's campus. Participating teachers are provided with a laptop that's configured and loaded with all of the security tools needed for



Irfan Ahmed



Vassil Roussev

the training. Once the camp is over, the teachers take the laptops back to their schools where they integrate the training into their classrooms.



TOP: Dan Reneau, interim president of the University of Louisiana System, on Nov. 2 places around John W. Nicklow's neck the so-called "presidential chain of office," a medallion bearing the names of all of UNO's seven leaders. RIGHT: Roughly 500 people gathered to witness President Nicklow's investiture, held on the lawn facing the University's Earl K. Long Library.



Making History

The University of New Orleans Installs its Seventh Leader and Honors Distinguished Alumni

JOHN W. NICKLOW ON NOV. 2 WAS FORMALLY INSTALLED as the University of New Orleans' seventh leader before a crowd of roughly 500, including leaders in academia, business and politics.

Selected as UNO president in March 2016 by the University of Louisiana Board of Supervisors, Nicklow had been serving in the role nearly eight months prior to the event. But in the tradition of academia, the investiture ceremony held on the lawn facing the stately columns of the University's Earl K. Long Library marked the official start of a new chapter in UNO's 58-year history.

Dan Reneau, interim president of the University of Louisiana System, placed around Nicklow's neck the so-called "presidential chain of office," a medallion bearing the names of all of UNO's seven leaders. 

BELOW LEFT: Streamers rain down at the conclusion of Nicklow's formal installment as president.

BELOW RIGHT: President John W. Nicklow poses with wife Stacy Nicklow and son Ethan Nicklow soon after being formally installed as UNO's seventh leader.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY TRACIE MORRIS SCHAEFER



RIGHT: New Orleans Mayor Mitch Landrieu addresses those gathered for Nicklow's investiture ceremony, saying, "There is no more important institution in the city of New Orleans than the University of New Orleans." BELOW LEFT: Faculty wore academic regalia in honor of the occasion. BELOW RIGHT: The ceremony marked the official start of a new chapter in the University's 58-year history.



“This chain and the office it represents also embody the ultimate responsibility for safeguarding and protecting the future of this University, for educating its students, for inspiring its faculty, for leading its staff, for encouraging research that will create new opportunities, and for reaching the local community and beyond,” Reneau said.

Nicklow came to UNO in 2015 from Southern Illinois University, where he was provost and vice chancellor for academic affairs. He served as the UNO’s provost and vice president of academic affairs until being selected to succeed Peter J. Fos, who

retired in January 2016. Nicklow holds bachelor’s and master’s degrees in civil engineering from Bucknell University and a doctorate from Arizona State University.

When Nicklow stepped to the lectern, he thanked his family—especially his parents, wife Stacy and son, Ethan—but quickly turned to business, recapping the ways in which UNO influences the New Orleans and the region and restating his priorities for the University: increase enrollment, expand research and strengthen partnerships with business, community and alumni. And he announced a new \$1 million student schol-



LEFT: The week's "Making History" events continued on Nov. 3 with a gala held at The National WWII Museum to honor UNO's distinguished alumni and raise money for student scholarships. BELOW LEFT: Mark Romig (B.S., '78) is celebrated as UNO's 2016 Homer L. Hitt Distinguished Alumnus. Romig is president and CEO of the New Orleans Tourism Marketing Corporation. BELOW RIGHT: Romig, center, is surrounded by family.



arship campaign. "I believe that the mark a person makes on the world is not a material one," Nicklow said. "Those who succeed, in the truest sense of the word, are those who make a mark on others."

Speaking to the crowd, New Orleans Mayor Mitch Landrieu called Nicklow "a man who has met his moment" and he pledged his allegiance and cooperation to support UNO. "There is no more important institution in the city of New Orleans than the University of New Orleans," Landrieu said.

The investiture ceremony was part of "Making History:

A Celebration of University of New Orleans Leadership," a weeklong series of activities honoring the University's leaders, past and present. In all, the week's "Making History" activities raised more than \$300,000 for student scholarships and efforts to support student success and degree completion.

The celebration continued with a lively Nov. 3 gala at The National WWII Museum honoring UNO's distinguished alumni, Nicklow and the 2016 Homer L. Hitt Distinguished Alumnus Mark Romig (B.S., '78), president and CEO of the New Orleans Tourism Marketing Corporation. 



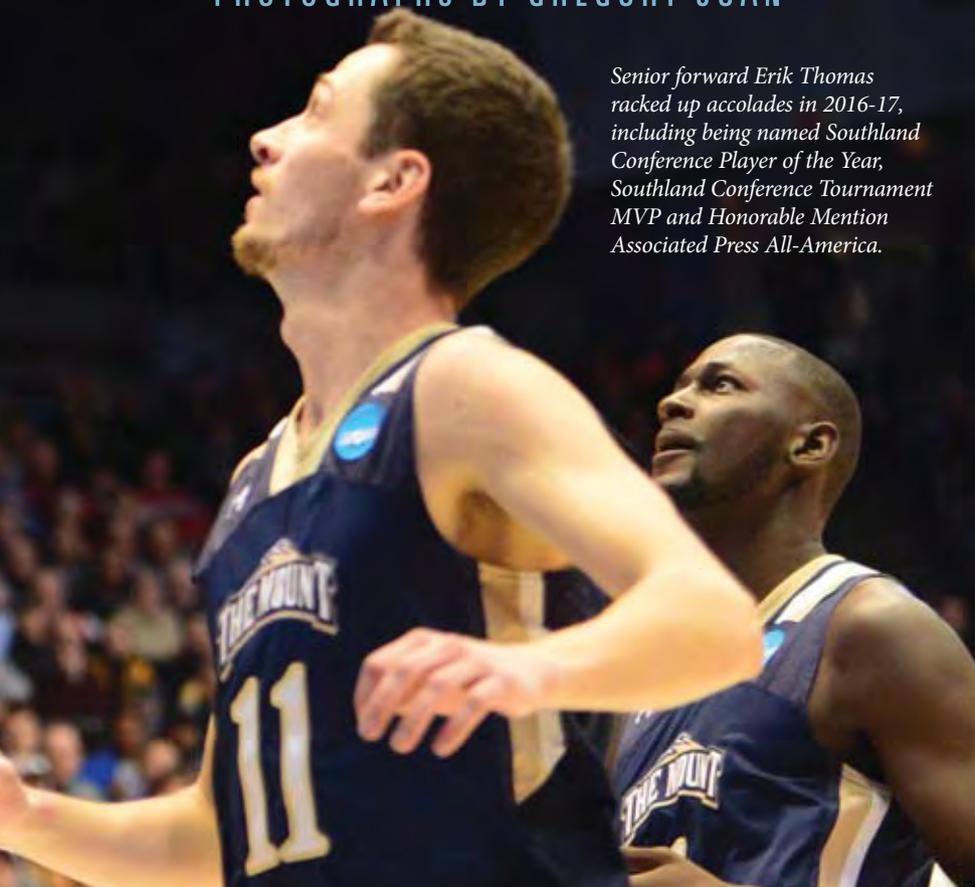
ROUNDBALL RENAISSANCE

*PRIVATEERS WIN CONFERENCE TITLE
AND RETURN TO NCAA TOURNAMENT
FOR THE FIRST TIME IN 21 YEARS*

BY RICHIE WEAVER

PHOTOGRAPHS BY GREGORY JUAN

Senior forward Erik Thomas racked up accolades in 2016-17, including being named Southland Conference Player of the Year, Southland Conference Tournament MVP and Honorable Mention Associated Press All-America.



ON A HARDWOOD FLOOR NEARLY 400 miles away from the University of New Orleans, 16 young men, four coaches and a handful of staff members waited in anxious anticipation. Fans on hand were on their feet, clapping and chanting—some even in tears—waiting to celebrate something that had not happened in more than two decades. Thousands of others around metro New Orleans, the state and the nation huddled around televisions and computer monitors waiting to exhale.

Holding a three-point lead with 0.8 seconds on the clock in overtime, the only thing the Privateers had left to do was cleanly inbound the ball. As senior forward Erik Thomas cocked his right arm back and launched a pass from the baseline across the half-court stripe, years of tumult flashed like a flicker book in the minds of Privateer fans. When senior guard Nate Frye leaped between a pair of defenders, tipped the ball away from the sideline and hauled it in as time expired, it sparked a celebration that represented much more than a storybook season.

The scoreboard at the Leonard E. Merrell Center in Katy, Texas, read New Orleans 68, Texas A&M-Corpus Christi 65. It gave the Privateers their first-ever Southland Conference Tournament title and their first berth in the NCAA Men's Basketball Championship since 1996. More importantly, it heralded to the nation the return of the University of New Orleans.

"This is an unbelievable blessing for not only our team and our student-athletes—and I've said this a lot of times—but our city is a champion again," head coach Mark Slessinger said following the Southland Conference Tournament championship game. "Our university, our students, our faculty and our staff are champions again. This isn't about me. It's a much bigger movement than that. I'm blessed more than I deserve ... and I'm so humbled to coach these guys."

A former Division II power from 1969-75, UNO became one of the nation's premier mid-major programs at the Division I level, making the postseason 10 times from 1982-1997, with four NCAA Tournaments and six trips to the National Invitational Tournament. While the program was competitive over the next eight years, it experienced unprecedented adversity in the years following Hurricane Katrina.

In the aftermath of the storm, as the population of New Orleans sharply declined, so did enrollment at the University. As the student-body dwindled, student fees dipped across the board and, like all areas on campus, athletics experienced severe cutbacks. During these years of budget uncertainty, the administration announced it would drop from the highest level of college athletics to Division III. After ☞



beginning the transition, the decision was made to move to Division II. It wasn't until 2012 when the University—having just joined the University of Louisiana System—announced that it intended to remain in Division I athletics.

The University of New Orleans hired Slessinger on June 28, 2011 in what was a crucial step in the rebuilding process. While settling into his new job, Slessinger found boxes containing old, battered trophies from the program's past. There was other damage the new coach was forced to confront. Just three returning lettermen from the previous season were committed to play for the upcoming season and, for a time, Slessinger was a one-man operation. Questions abounded about the level of competition and whether the University could rejoin an athletic conference.

But Slessinger was undeterred. He placed the old trophies on display in the Privateers' basketball office as a reminder of the program's rich history to potential staff and student-athletes. He assembled his coaching staff, which helped foster a greater sense of continuity. In August 2012, the University earned an invitation to join the Southland Conference and give its teams a chance to compete for championships.

During the next signing period, Slessinger added three key recruits in guards Tevin Broyles, Nate Frye and Christavious Gill. The trio may have slipped under the radar and received little attention from other Division I programs, but Slessinger saw something special in the group.

"Me, (Gill) and Nate had similar situations coming out of high school," Broyles says. "We didn't really have many scholarships. We had people that showed interest, but Coach Slessinger and the University of New Orleans were my first offer. They offered me right on the spot after visiting me. Coming from a small town like Gautier, Miss., it's a blessing to receive. And the reason I came here was because Coach had a vision.

"He believed we could rebuild the program and he believed in us. He told us in the recruiting process that's how things were here. And so I felt like if I came here I could be a part of something great. I could make history, and I just feel like this is what we're doing. Also, when I came and I visited, the team treated me like family."

Despite the foundation being built by the 2013-14 freshman class, wins were elusive. Ineligible to play for a conference crown its first year in the Southland, New Orleans dropped its last five games to finish 11-15. The Privateers followed that up with an 11-18 season in 2014-15.

If Broyles, Frye and Gill were the Privateers' Three Musketeers, forward Erik Thomas was the program's D'Artagnan. Like the eager novice from Alexandre Dumas' novel, Thomas proved to be the

missing piece in the formation of a dominant group. After a stellar high school career and two stops at the junior college ranks, Thomas arrived at UNO for the 2015-16 season and made an immediate impact—leading the team in rebounding and finishing second in scoring. While expectations were high entering the season, the Privateers suffered through a 10-20 season and finished 6-12 in league play for the second consecutive year. The bond between Thomas and his fellow upperclassmen, however, solidified quickly as the teammates learned to play to each other's strengths.

"We knew that he was special," Slessinger says of Thomas. "When we got a chance in the recruiting process to get to know his family, he was very grounded. He comes from a great basketball family. I knew right away that he was a team player, would sacrifice and do the things he needs to do. And I think that the guys that we had around him knew that and bought into it. They've been peanut butter and jelly ever since he got here, and it's been fun to watch them all grow together."

"Erik just works," Gill says. "You could tell that he had dedication and that same attitude we had, and we didn't even know him. That tells a lot about him and his personality and his attitude. He's always positive. He picks everybody up. He works hard. You can tell just watching him play, you could tell how hard he rebounds and how much he cares about the next person beside him, not only scoring the ball but passing the ball, rebounding, playing defense for the next person. And it's just an amazing feeling."

Despite returning 10 lettermen, including four talented and experienced seniors, little was expected of the New Orleans team outside of the Privateers' locker room. UNO was picked to finish ninth and 10th in the conference in a preseason vote of league head coaches and sports information directors, respectively.

But the team had other plans.

After a 1-3 start to the 2016-17 season, the Privateers never trailed in consecutive wins over Florida College, intra-city rival Tulane and Pac-12 foe Washington State. A three-game skid followed to drop UNO to 4-6, but the Privateers won their next five outings—including their first four Southland Conference contests—and never dipped below .500 the rest of the way.

UNO posted another five-game winning streak from Feb. 4 through Feb. 23, capping the run with a convincing 82-65 win over four-time defending SLC champion Stephen F. Austin. The Privateers dropped consecutive games at Northwestern State and Southeastern Louisiana by a combined six points but still had a chance to clinch their first outright league title with a March 4 showdown at Nicholls in the regular-season finale.

New Orleans took the court in Thibodaux like a team on a



mission. UNO saw a double-digit lead get whittled down to three at 65-62 with two minutes left to play. From there, the Privateers showed a champion's resolve and converted its lone field goal attempt the rest of the way and 7-of-10 free throws to come away with a 74-64 victory.

With a trophy already in hand, the top seed in the 2017 Southland Conference Tournament and the double-bye that came with it, the Privateers could simply wait and watch as the first two days of the tournament played out. When the team opened play against Sam Houston State in the semifinals on the third day, it got off to an assertive start and advanced to the tournament title game with a 75-63 win over the Bearkats.

The championship game the next day, however, was a different story against No. 2 seed Texas A&M-Corpus Christi. New Orleans battled back to tie the game at 60 and force overtime. In the extra period, Broyles hit a jump shot and a pair of free throws to give the Privateers a 67-63 lead that they would not relinquish. Texas A&M-Corpus Christi had a chance to tie the game, but a 3-point shot was no good, a put-back attempt was off the mark and UNO was awarded possession as the ball bounced out of bounds with 0.8 second remaining. The Privateers ran out the clock.

Confetti fell. Fans screamed. Players jumped. A net was cut. And fans across states celebrated.

"I told these guys at halftime (of the conference championship game) that this has been an amazing story," Slessinger says. "It's a story about rebirth, renaissance and it's a story of commitment of when guys come together playing for a purpose and love of the game, our love for each other, our university and the city that we absolutely adore and love that some magic stuff can happen."

The Privateers headed back to New Orleans, where the next day they learned their postseason destination while gathered in front of a big screen alongside fans at The Cove on campus. Minutes into the NCAA Tournament selection show, it was revealed that UNO would square off against Northeast Conference regular-season and tournament champion Mount St. Mary's in the NCAA First Four

FACING PAGE, LEFT: The Privateers' storybook season came to an end in a First Four game of the NCAA Tournament in Dayton, Ohio. FACING PAGE, RIGHT: Senior guard Christavious Gill was named Honorable Mention All-Southland Conference. THIS PAGE, LEFT: Senior guard Nate Frye led the Privateers with 18 points in their NCAA Tournament loss to Mount St. Mary's. THIS PAGE, RIGHT: Head coach Mark Slessinger was named the Southland Conference Coach of the Year. BELOW: The Privateers captured their first conference championship in 21 years.

in Dayton, Ohio. Two days later, on March 14, the clock on New Orleans' Cinderella season ran out: The Mountaineers hung on for a heartbreaking 67-66 victory.

The loss, however, did little to dampen the spirit of the team, the future of the Privateer program or the continued goals of their head coach.

"I can't be more proud of where our program has come in a short time," Slessinger says. "To be able to go through the adversity we've been through is 100 percent credit to our student-athletes, to their commitment to the University, their commitment to our city and their commitment to each other. And it's been a blessing to coach these guys and for us to move our program forward to a level that many didn't envision outside of our locker room. And so for that, my gratitude and my sincere thanks goes to our student-athletes." 🏀



FACULTY FOCUS



HANSEN AND HODGES WIN 2015-16 EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING AWARDS

THEIR CLASSES ARE THE ones that students seek, the ones that inspire the best work and leave pupils aspiring to learn more, do more.

The University of New Orleans International Alumni Association this fall recognized Erik Hansen, assistant professor of film and theatre, and Lori Hodges, math instructor, for being just those kinds of teachers, naming them the winners of the 2015-16 Excellence in Teaching Awards.

Through student class evaluations, peer recommendations and letters from alumni, it is clear that both Hansen and Hodges are academics who push their students to achieve what they didn't know was possible while communicating respect and appreciation for their students' individual talents.

Hansen, who has taught screenwriting at UNO since 2008, consistently receives perfect or near-perfect scores on his student evaluations. He holds a Master of Fine Arts in creative writing from UNO and a bachelor's degree in English literature from University of California, Berkeley. He is the author of a number of screenplays, including "Hearts and Souls" (1993), which was produced and distributed by a major studio and starred Elisabeth Shue and Robert Downey Jr. And while Hansen continues to work on his own projects, he manages to mentor new instruc-

tors and professors while also pouring himself into his students' work, leading those who take his classes to describe him as both compassionate and firm, clear and attentive, with a near-superhero power to involve even the most withdrawn students in class discussion.

"He really pushed me to write from my heart and come up with a professional presentation for my work," writes a former student. "He is this way with everyone in my class ... He never told me not to do something I felt passionate about. He only helped me find the best ways to do what I was trying to accomplish. Everyone should take a class with him."

David Hoover, chair of film and theatre, described Hansen's teaching style as "dogged nurturing."

"Mr. Hansen," Hoover writes, "is that rare person who has the professional credentials but also has the gift of the teacher ... He has an integrity that is manifest in his approach to student work, yet all the while providing a positive voice that is always encouraging."

Students seek out Hansen's counsel long after they have left his classroom. One MFA student who he mentored saw his work nominated for the Student Academy Awards.

Hodges also joined UNO's faculty in 2008. She came at a

time when leaders in the Department of Mathematics were concerned about student success in the Math 1115 sections. Tumulesh Solanky, math chair, says Hodges quickly jumped in to work with other instructors to redesign the course, focusing on consistent teaching and testing while increasing interaction between students and faculty.

"Due to the efforts and dedication of Ms. Hodges," Solanky writes, "now Math 1115 has become a retention tool for UNO instead of their reason for leaving. What Ms. Hodges has done for a countless number of students at UNO ... is truly a miracle."

Hodges' work revamping math courses is also on display in the University's applied algebra and pre-calculus courses, which are taught using interactive technology. She has worked extensively with the dual enrollment program at Benjamin Franklin High School, where she also teaches pre-calculus algebra and trigonometry. Her work was so impressive that she now also coordinates dual enrollment with Cabrini High School.

Engineering alum D. Roudi Bien-Aime says Hodges is emblematic of what educators strive to be: "As a student who was at one time intimidated by mathematics, under her tutelage, I have learned to comprehend and excel in algebra, trigonom-

ABOVE: University of New Orleans President John Nicklow, left, recognizes Eric Hansen, assistant professor of film and theatre, and Lori Hodges, math instructor, as winners of the 2015-16 Excellence in Teaching Awards prior to fall commencement at the UNO Lakefront Arena in December.

etry and now calculus. Hodges' teaching technique removes the element of fear and confusion that often plagues students attempting to understand college math courses. She makes the subject matter comprehensible by teaching in a manner that allows you to grab the core concepts. Thus instead of memorizing equations, she helps you master the art of solving mathematical questions."

Hodges holds a bachelor of science degree in math from the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, and a master's degree from Southern Illinois University. She volunteers in the math tutoring center and frequently holds special review sessions with students prior to tests.

Lisa Crespo, assistant math chair, says she has been impressed time and time again by Hodges' work as a communicator and teacher who motivates her students to strive for excellence. "In my opinion," Crespo writes, "she is the perfect model for a mathematics instructor."

As part of the Excellence in Teaching Award, Hansen and Hodges each were awarded \$2,000.

SONIA L. RUBENS: FINDING THE LINK BETWEEN TRAUMA, SLEEP AND CHILD BEHAVIORAL ISSUES

SLEEP IS MEANT TO BE restorative. But as any new parent knows, it is often the first child development issue to keep mom and dad up at night.

Sonia Rubens, assistant professor of psychology and director of the Child and Adolescent Resilience Lab (CARE) at the University of New Orleans, says that sleep issues in children can continue to have ramifications for child development long after the early years when parents find themselves stressing over naps and nighttime wakefulness.

Rubens' research draws connections between children's sleep patterns and day-to-day stress management while delving further into the relationship between sleep deprivation, trauma and childhood behavioral issues.

"Physiologically and psychologically, we all need sleep," Rubens says. "Sleep plays a restorative quality on our bodies and our psychological and physiological well-being. If we don't sleep or if our sleep is significantly disrupted, it's going to make it really hard for us to cope with the day-to-day stressors."

Rubens' lab is studying kids who are at risk for being exposed to a lot of day-to-day stressors, chronic stress and chronic trauma in an effort to learn how those experiences are impacting their sleep and, in turn, how their sleep patterns may affect their future functioning.

"It's likely that they may have started off with some trauma that then affected their sleep," Rubens says. "But we also know that, especially in teenagers, if they're not sleeping, they may be getting themselves in trouble, increasing their risk of exposure to things in their neighborhood



that might be dangerous. And so you can start to see a reciprocal relationship there."

Working with Rubens is a team of four graduate students and six undergraduates. They gather regularly on the second floor of the Geology and Psychology Building to discuss data collection for two ongoing studies—one that is drawing on the experiences of adolescents who are on probation in the juvenile justice system in Jefferson Parish and another that is examining sleep in students enrolled at an alternative high school in Orleans Parish.

Preliminary evidence in the Orleans Parish study indicates that the participants tend to have tremendous sleep problems, Rubens says, and these problems appear to be related to a host of mental and behavioral problems.

These sleep studies, she says, can be a foot in the door for

delivering needed treatment for other kinds of disorders, including mental health issues.

Rubens became interested in the role of sleep in psychological functioning while working as a research assistant prior to attending graduate school. She was working on an intervention for men who had been victims of community violence and, in the process of interviewing them, noticed that many of them on their own shared story after story about how they were suffering to cope due in part to chronic sleep problems following their victimization.

While psychiatrists often prescribe medication to help patients sleep better, there are many evidence-based options that don't come from a pill bottle, Rubens says. "We know that there are a lot of very effective behavioral interventions for sleep for both children and

Sonia Rubens, assistant professor of psychology and director of the Child and Adolescent Resilience Lab (CARE) at the University of New Orleans, researches the connections between children's sleep patterns, stress, trauma and behavior.

adults ... to address things like insomnia and circadian rhythm disruptions. There's a lot we can do from a behavioral standpoint without medication to get people a good night's sleep."

Rubens, who holds a master's and a doctorate in clinical child psychology from the University of Kansas, also is part of the Pediatric Sleep Council. Her advice for parents of young children struggling with sleep issues can be seen on babysleep.com, a website managed by the Council.

For more information about the Child and Adolescent Resilience Lab (CARE) and its work, visit labs.uno.edu/care/.

SHAIKH ARIFUZZAMAN: DIGGING INTO BIG DATA

THE TERM “BIG DATA” IS, if you will, a biggie. It is used in business circles, health care fields, political discourse and tech talk.

But for Shaikh Arifuzzaman, assistant professor of computer science at the University of New Orleans, big data is how he works, researches and thinks.

“Data is the heart of any computational problem,” says Arifuzzaman, who joined UNO’s faculty last fall and is building a research program on large-scale data analytics and high performance computing.

Arifuzzaman, a lifelong lover of mathematics, discovered his fascination with massive data while he was a graduate student at Virginia Tech. Working in the Network Dynamics and

Simulation Science Lab there, he delved deep, researching how to develop algorithmic techniques that would allow quick, easy and relevant analysis of massive amounts of information, revealing detailed connections in everything from social networks to biomedical processes.

“My work is motivated by the unique computational challenges of large-scale data mining,” he says. His work, includes a multitude of interdisciplinary opportunities such as urban planning, biological and medical research, social science and more. Arifuzzaman’s work provides the tools that enable policymakers, business leaders and others to detect trends, outliers and problems that may otherwise go unseen. His work

sets the stage for informed social problem solving.

Arifuzzaman, 31, grew up in Bangladesh, where he learned early he had a knack for logic and understanding mathematical concepts. But his interest was never just getting the answers, he says: “I always asked questions—why and how?”

Arifuzzaman completed his bachelor’s degree in computer science and engineering at Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology in Dhaka, where he found satisfaction working with his peers to help them understand difficult material, and became intent upon one day becoming a professor—an ambition his father, a high school teacher, encouraged.

“Teaching is the noblest profession,” his father would say.

Arifuzzaman’s work designing novel algorithms and ana-

lytical techniques to detect and count the numbers of triangular connections in large networks has received attention in prestigious venues in the high performance computing world. In addition to his work on projects at the Network Dynamics and Simulation Science Lab, he has done work for the Sandia National Labs, a subsidiary of Lockheed Martin Corp. that provides national security and technology innovation for the U.S. Department of Energy’s National Nuclear Security Administration.

Arifuzzaman said UNO’s tight-knit academic community has been a great fit, with department leadership that has made him feel welcome and supported as he continues his work researching, designing and delivering the most advanced and effective tools needed to help mine massive amounts of data at once.



Shaikh Arifuzzaman

ALEA COT HONORED FOR COMMITMENT TO INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION

ALEA COT, ASSISTANT provost for international education at the University of New Orleans, has been recognized for outstanding service by a regional chapter of NAFSA: Association of International Educators.

Cot was honored for her commitment to international education over a long career. Cot joined UNO in 1988, managing study abroad programs. In 1995, she founded UNO’s Intensive English Language Program, which provides instruction designed to

support international students at American universities. As assistant provost, she oversees eight study abroad programs, international student admissions and student exchange programs in 11 countries. She also mentors administrators at other universities through the Association of International Education Administrators.

She holds a master’s degree in international relations and a bachelor’s degree in political science and international relations from Tulane University.



Alea Cot

SURPRENANT RECEIVES GRANT FOR FREEDOM OF SPEECH EXPLORATION

CHRIS W. SURPRENANT, associate professor of philosophy at the University of New Orleans, received a \$45,000 grant from the Institute for Humane Studies to support activities focusing on freedom of speech, especially within the context of U.S. colleges and universities.

Surprenant is the founding director of the Alexis de Tocqueville Project, an academic research, public policy and educational programming center at UNO

dedicated to examining the history of Western moral and political thought.

The grant supports several scholarly events, including: a panel discussion at UNO with Thomas Kushman, a professor of sociology at Wellesley College, and Peter Wood, National Association of Scholars president; a weekend conference for undergraduates at UNO; and an academic conference on Hilton Head Island in South Carolina that took place over Mardi Gras weekend.



Chris Surprenant



LEFT: Brian Seeger, center, poses with Organic Trio bandmates Paul Wiltgen, left, and Jean-Yves Jung. Seeger is an associate professor of music at UNO as well as an alumnus. BELOW: "Saturn's Spell," the band's second album, charted in the Top 10 on U.S. Jazz Radio Charts within weeks of its release.

NEW ALBUM FROM MUSIC PROF BRIAN SEEGER'S BAND MAKES U.S. RADIO JAZZ TOP 10

BRIAN SEEGER ONCE CALLED his old guitar teacher to tell her thank you.

She'd given him lessons for six months when he was 11. When she found out her former student had become a professional guitarist she was, in his words, "distracted." It just didn't seem like a suitable profession, she told him.

Seeger, associate professor of music at the University of New Orleans and noted jazz guitarist, now laughs about the conversation—and, of course, he begs to differ.

At 56, Seeger has carved out a life packed with teaching, recording, playing, touring and helping others find their way in the changing world of music.

His band, Organic Trio, recently charted No. 2 on the U.S. Jazz Radio Charts with its second album, "Saturn's Spell." It's an exciting development, especially for an album that was only released Jan. 27, just a few weeks before it broke first into the Top 10. In those first few weeks, it also was the "most reported," according to Jazz Week. That means that more stations reported playing the album than any other album.

"People I know who have been in the business for a while are somewhat in shock," he says. "It is pretty unheard of for a band that mostly tours in Europe to chart in the U.S. so high and so quickly ... I'm just super thrilled to know folks are hearing it."

Made with the help of a \$5,000 grant from the University of New Orleans Office of Research and Sponsored Programs, "Saturn's Spell" features the smooth musicianship of Jean-Yves Jung of France on Hammond organ and Paul Wiltgen of New York on drums—a three-person combo that started eight years ago thanks, in part, to connections made through UNO.

Seeger says the internal grant provided the flexibility the band needed to afford high-end mastering. It also gave him leverage to seek additional grant money for the project, including from the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Foundation and the Society of Authors, Composers and Publishers of Music.

"I'm proud to have the University of New Orleans logo on the back of that CD," he says. "I'm proud of where I work and what I do. We're a vital, contem-

porary program."

Seeger, who has a bachelor's degree in music from the Berklee College of Music in Boston, was living and playing in New Orleans when UNO professor Edward Petersen suggested Seeger enroll in the graduate jazz studies program. Seeing it as, "a good excuse to practice a lot," Seeger followed through and received his master's degree from UNO in 1999. Indeed, he says, "I went back to school and I practiced a lot. It was wonderful."

Soon after, Seeger started teaching at UNO as adjunct and, in 2007, became a full-time member of the faculty. At first, the idea of teaching intimidated him. But, he had a knack for it. In the classroom, he tries to strike a balance between immersing his students in artistry and imparting to them the nitty-gritty of being part of a business.

"I feel like every day I go to class, I know why I'm there: I'm there because I chose to be," he says. "I feel this enormous sense of responsibility bring-



ing new artists into this world. I feel protective of my students because everything's become so do-it-yourself."

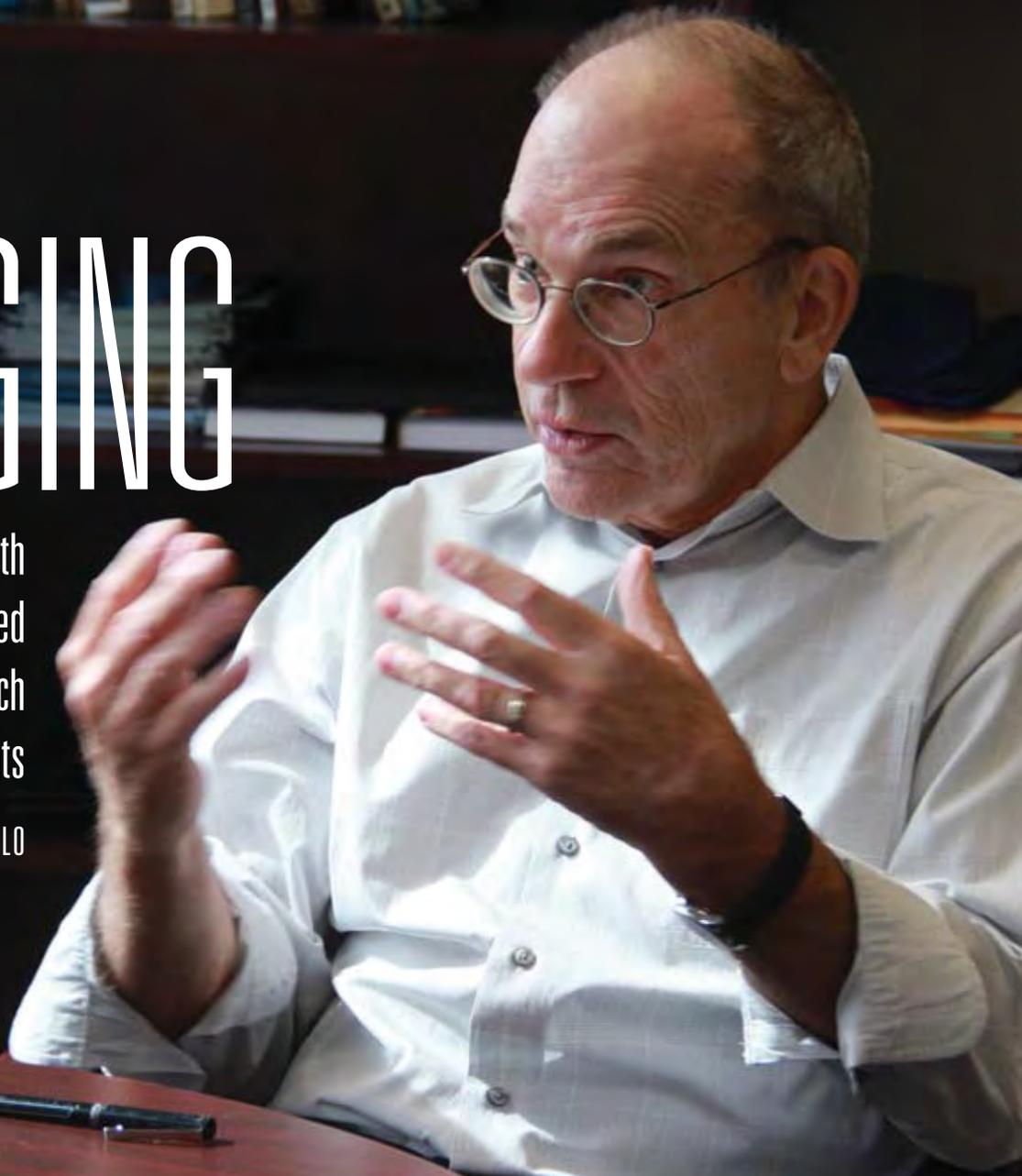
This spring, Seeger is maintaining a busy schedule that includes numerous tour dates for Organic Trio, including a weekend appearance at the famous Duc des Lombards jazz club in Paris in March. The performance was broadcast live on TSF Jazz, a well-known radio station in France. He also has had concerts in Morocco, New York and San Francisco with UNO alumna and Berklee College of Music Professor Cindy Scott.

Honors like these, he says, and the opportunities he has to experience, close-up, the work of brilliant musicians are indicative of the beauty music has brought to his life.

LIFE CHANGING

How a Professor's Near-Death
Patient Experience Inspired
Meaningful Research
for UNO Students

BY REBECCA CATALANELLO



DONALD ZIMMERMAN THOUGHT HE KNEW A LOT ABOUT health care. For 33 years, he'd worked as a health care policy researcher, professor and teacher. But it wasn't until nearly three years ago, when he underwent surgery to halt an aneurysm and ended up in the intensive care unit of his local hospital for 43 days, that he had a regrettable awakening: Clinicians need to do a much better job valuing the patient as an actual person.

"As I lay there day after day," Zimmerman writes in his new book, "Person-Focused Health Care Management" (Springer Publishing, 2017), "I slowly became convinced that the difference between the 'official' clinical story of those providing my care and 'my' personal story of how this care was actually being experienced was not just an issue related to my particular situation, but reflected a much deeper problem, deeply rooted in the very workings of the health care system itself."

Zimmerman, who joined the University of New Orleans in 2015 as professor and director of the new undergraduate program in healthcare management, has now blended his patient experience with

research through a new collaboration with University Medical Center New Orleans.

This year four undergraduate students in Zimmerman's healthcare management program will be researching how clinicians can better communicate with patients in ways that ensure the patient feels listened to, cared for and appreciated. The project will start by asking patients what they want their caretakers to know about them.

"This is actually a big deal," says Peter DeBlieux, chief medical officer at UMC, a principal investigator on the project. "In academic medicine, no one has ever asked the question, 'What do patients want providers to know about them as patients?'"

Zimmerman's students—Claire Milazzo, Elizabeth Wesley, Bailey Ford and Sheila Oddo—are beginning by conducting four focus groups of five to seven patients being treated at UMC in the intensive care unit, the medical-surgical unit, the emergency room and the ambulatory clinics. The goal of the focus groups is to get a better sense of what information patients feel they most want their clinicians to know about them—information Zimmerman says can



Donald Zimmerman, professor and director of the University of New Orleans' undergraduate program in healthcare management, meets with student researchers to discuss an upcoming collaboration with University Medical Center New Orleans.

both help doctors and nurses relate to them as human beings rather than just as patients with medical needs.

The second phase will put the undergraduate students in face-to-face contact with hundreds of acute care patients at UMC. Using sample questions that they will formulate in response to the feedback they get in the focus groups, the students will administer the questionnaire to a sample of 400 UMC patients. Clinicians will then be able to draw on the information patients share to help affirm their recognition that the patient is not only a patient—she is also, for example, Sarah's mother, Ben's wife, Gloria's child. She is a chef, a lawyer, a teacher, a graduate of Warren Easton High School.

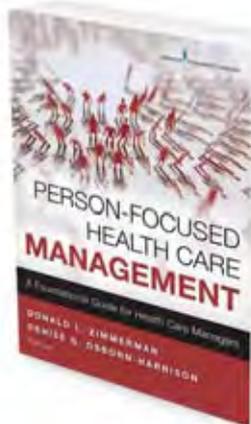
DeBlieux says he envisions some of this information about a person being posted at the patient's bedside so that it paints a picture of personhood whenever anyone from the hospital comes in contact with the patient. "Instead of you being Ms. Catalano, who is the diabetic, hypertensive patient in Bed 3112," DeBlieux says, "you

are the Saints fan who has a large, Catholic family. And so we have commonality and I might talk to you and I say, 'You know what? I'm an only child. I wish I had a large family.' I think it changes both sides. It allows me to view you as a person and it allows you to feel that I've acknowledged you as a person and not a disease."

Zimmerman is excited to see what the research will show in terms of health outcomes for patients whose interactions with medical staff include these more personal interactions.

"If we know that this patient

Zimmerman's personal experience laid the groundwork for his research into person-focused care, which he made into a book released this year by Springer Publishing.



prefers to be called Bob and if everyone knows he has a wonderful relationship with Cindy, his wife, it can change how we interact with him and how comfortable he feels in his care," Zimmerman says. "It makes sense to ask, 'Hey, how ya doing?'"

Zimmerman says his hospitalization, which included another 17 days recuperating after being moved from the ICU, did leave him grateful for the doctors and nurses who kept him alive. But he said he it also changed him, leaving him feeling stripped, in a sense, of his personhood.

"Similar to posttraumatic stress disorder, I knew that I had been thoroughly beaten up but had little understanding and very few painless memories of exactly who or what had done the beating," he writes in his book. "But I also knew that the value of answering my questions about what had happened to me was just something that was likely happening to almost everyone who has their 'personhood'—their living sense of self—systemically reified and 'reduced' into the limited role of 'patient' within the U.S. healthcare system."

Zimmerman's recovery and subsequent research now seeks to shift the lens of health care management from looking at the patient as the center of the care to looking, as he put it, "at the real person locked inside that social role by the highly complex and multidimensional institutions that deliver health care."

For students in UNO's growing undergraduate health care management program, the research project marks an unusual, hands-on opportunity to be involved in cutting-edge work relevant to their future careers.

Junior Claire Milazzo is a former nursing student who says she transferred to UNO's health care management program after becoming disenchanted with the lack of personal connection she saw happening between hospital clinicians and their patients.

"I felt that we were treating them as a disease," she says. "I went to nursing school because I liked people and I wanted to treat them as people. But it was the complete opposite. We were treating them as room numbers."

Bailey Ford, a junior from Gautier, Miss., says that she and her fellow students were immediately interested in Zimmerman's work and asked if they could have a hand in assisting in the research. Most nurses and doctors want to feel they are helping patients, Ford and Milazzo say, not that they are asking them to check their personhood at the doors of the hospital. But the structure of the health care setting too often makes that difficult. The students say they hope this research project helps.

DeBlieux says he is excited to partner with UNO, especially giving the University's undergraduate health care management students an intimate look at the inner-workings of the hospital. Zimmerman's personal experience combined with his professional understanding of health care made him a perfect person with whom to collaborate: "His ideas and my ideas are sympatico," DeBlieux says.

In addition to Zimmerman and DeBlieux, the investigators include Gloria Netzer, associate professor at the University of Maryland School of Medicine, Nathan Neilson at Tulane University Medical School and Bruce Hurley, emergency medicine physician at UMC.

Zimmerman joined UNO from the University of Maryland University College, where he was professor and director of the health care administration program. He has also been associate professor and executive director of the Center for Healthcare Management Studies at Fairleigh Dickinson University in New Jersey. Before that, he worked as a health policy researcher and analyst at the Research Triangle Institute, George Washington University and the Center for Health Policy Studies.

THE BEAT



WITHIN

UNO STUDENTS HELP INCARCERATED TEENS LEARN TO WRITE —AND BREATHE

BY REBECCA CATALANELLO

PHOTOGRAPHS BY
TRACIE MORRIS SCHAEFER



The Beat Within is a labor of love for Mike Mosko, second from right, and a team of full-time students that includes, from left, Cameron Coulon, Stephen Harrell, Jr., Jennifer Lin and Trey Caruso.

MIKE MOSKO WILL ALWAYS REMEMBER the day the 17-year-old boy came into the room, shaking uncontrollably before sitting down and burying his head in his hands.

Mosko, a University of New Orleans student, was visiting the juvenile corrections facility to try to help youth offenders find a measure of comfort in self-expression through a program called The Beat Within. But the heaviness on this teen was unavoidable.

Just breathe, Mosko advised the boy quietly before the start of the volunteer writing workshop. *Breathe in for six counts and out for four.*

In for six. Out for four.

Mosko, 24, a senior planning and urban studies major from Oakland, Calif., last year spearheaded the effort to bring *The Beat Within*, a biweekly magazine of writing by incarcerated youth, to New Orleans. Originally established 20 years ago by a social worker in San Francisco, project's concept is fairly simple.

Each week, volunteers visit detention facilities across the country, welcome the incarcerated teens to a group setting, provide them with writing prompts that they take turns reading aloud and discussing, then ask them to write or draw for a half-hour in response. The writings are compiled into a magazine that comes out every other week and is distributed to the writers. For each featured piece of writing, *The Beat Within* volunteers provide a written response designed to encourage them and spark further reflection.

"We're giving them an opportunity to get their voices heard," Mosko says. "They're in a controlled environment where there's always someone telling them what to do, so we try to be there for them ... If they don't want to write, it's fine. We can talk about whatever. Whatever they want to write."

The writings they get in response are equal parts inspiring and devastating, simple and complex.

"I never had a father," writes a New Orleans boy named Devonte in one issue. "He was never in my life, but it never really bothered me. I never really even cared about a father because I guess I was used to it. But at the same time, that's a bad thing, because if my father were in my life, I probably would have been better than I am and would know a lot more. As far as I know, my mom is my mother and father."

"Your mother must be a very strong person," the volunteers respond in the magazine. "Do you think the lack of a father figure, father-son relationship might affect your relationship

with your own children?"

In another issue, a New Orleans area youth named

Chico reflects on the hopelessness he feels knowing all his friends are either dead or in jail. "My best friend is in parish prison with a colostomy bag, facing death," he writes. "I'm in on the same charges, but I'm in juvie."

"That is some real-life talk, man," the volunteers respond. "Too many of our friends and family are caught up in this system ... While you go through this process, think about changes that you would make to prevent you, or someone else from getting caught up in the street life."

The kid with his head in his hands had a name, too. Ryan. He didn't start to contribute to the discussion right away. But each time Mosko and fellow UNO student volunteers Trey Caruso, Cameron Boissiere and others showed up at the Youth Study Center, Orleans Parish's juvenile detention facility, Ryan returned, too, displaying more and more openness and, eventually, picking up a pen.

Mosko, who transferred to UNO after falling in love with New Orleans during a family vacation at 16, says he's found this work inspiring.

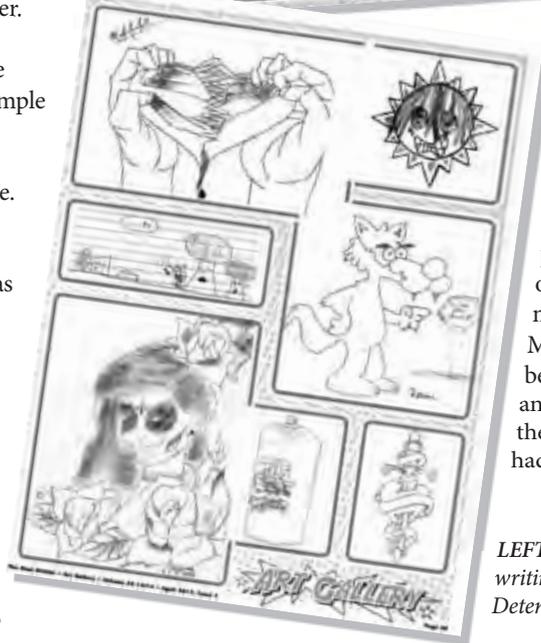
Though his mother had been volunteering for the program in California's Solano County for years, it wasn't until Mosko took a sociology course on juvenile delinquency with Elise Chatelain, then a visiting assistant professor, that he started to consider its applicability for youth detention programs in the New Orleans area.

Louisiana, after all, has the nation's highest incarceration rate. Issues involving youth detention reform are frequently in the news.

Christopher Bruno, supervisor of the 55-bed Rivarde Juvenile Detention Center in Harvey, La., said he was reluctant at first to entertain Mosko's pitch to bring *The Beat Within* to Jefferson Parish. Bruno had thumbed through a hard copy of the publication and wasn't immediately sold.

But the soft-spoken, upbeat Mosko was persistent. Rivarde houses about 25 or 26 offenders per day, median age 16, 85 percent male, 75 percent African-American. Certainly, Mosko pressed, there was a need. At Bruno's behest, teachers at the center met with Mosko and other student volunteers and told Bruno they were impressed with what the UNO group had to offer.

LEFT: The April issue of *The Beat Within* includes writings and drawings from Rivarde Juvenile Detention Center in Jefferson Parish.



RIGHT: Mike Mosko, a senior planning and urban studies major at the University of New Orleans, was taking a class on juvenile incarceration when he became inspired to bring The Beat Within, a national writing and mentorship program, to local incarcerated youth.

Just weeks after Mosko's team started holding workshops twice a week, Bruno says, the youth participants were already showing enthusiasm for the program. Now, the number of weekly workshops has climbed to three.

"The thing that I appreciate the most," Bruno says, "is that when they come and they work with the kids and they talk to them for a while—at a time when I have very minimal programming in any way—the kids talk and they get a few things out and it doesn't rile them up. In fact, it helps calm them down."

Those who attend once become return customers, Bruno says.

David Inocencio, national director for The Beat Within, first had the idea of offering writing workshops to juvenile offenders in San Francisco two decades ago. He was looking for a way to give institutionalized youth a means of creative expression that went beyond the popular public testimonial format. "I thought, 'There has to be another way, and maybe a more creative way, for those who are more introverted or cautious about what they want to say,'" he says.

Today, the program touches 5,000 youth per year in 25 institutions across six states. In addition to including voices of juveniles, a section in *The Beat Within* features the writing of imprisoned adults or adults who are in community treatment and want to share their insights and lessons with those younger than them.

Mosko's crew started its outreach in May 2016 at the Youth Study Center in Orleans Parish. The students held weekly workshops until December, when the center saw a change in administration and halted programming.

While Mosko worked to expand the workshop to other youth facilities like Rivarde, the UNO students were welcomed into Odyssey House, an inpatient addiction treatment center for adults. There, the students interact weekly with people who are sometimes three times their age and are desperate to change.

They gather in a high-ceilinged room with stained glass windows on one wall and framed motivational sayings on another—



"WE'RE GIVING THEM AN OPPORTUNITY TO GET THEIR VOICES HEARD, THEY'RE IN A CONTROLLED ENVIRONMENT WHERE THERE'S ALWAYS SOMEONE TELLING THEM WHAT TO DO, SO WE TRY TO BE THERE FOR THEM . . . IF THEY DON'T WANT TO WRITE, IT'S FINE. WE CAN TALK ABOUT WHATEVER. WHATEVER THEY WANT TO WRITE."

sayings like, "What we can't do alone, we can do together" and "You can't keep it unless you give it away." Unlike the often-guarded youth who the UNO students interact with during workshop, these adults seem to come hungry and ready to share.

"Are there more stories for us to write about?" asks a woman in her 50s after responding to two writing prompts. "I'm in a writing mood."

"What y'all are doing, man, is beautiful," a tattooed man says. "It's a blessing."

The Beat Within is fueled by donations to the program—dollars that cover printing and shipping of the magazine to the incarcerated youth across the U.S. who don't have access to the internet. The establishment of the program in New Orleans makes Louisiana the only state in the South to have the program, Inocencio said.

Mosko, a senior bound for graduation in May, is working now with the Office of Service Learning and the Department of Sociology to make *The Beat Within* a permanent internship course that will help ensure the University's students continue to lead this work. The project has been so inspiring to him that Mosko is currently creating a nonprofit organization to partner with *The Beat Within* to provide support for teens who have been released from juvenile detention by matching them with artist mentors.

Now, Orleans Parish Prison has given the nod for the group to start offering twice weekly programs to 16 youth detained there. Last year, a 15-year-old jailed at OPP was found dead of an apparent suicide. Mosko has been working hard to try to expand the scope of *The Beat Within's* work and isn't shy about sharing what he believes could be the impact of being in New Orleans' prison.

"Our program," he says, "has the potential to save a life."

Three weeks after Mosko and his team first met Ryan, one of the writing prompts included a simple question: *What do you do when it gets hard?*

Ryan's response was brief.

"I breathe."

Learn more about *The Beat Within* at www.thebeatwithin.org. To donate to the New Orleans program, click "Donate" from the home page and select "The Beat Within by New Orleans."



DEAR UNO

What's Your Story?

photographs by Dear World

A 31-YEAR-OLD MAN IS GETTING HIS COLLEGE DEGREE AFTER 13 years of difficult stops and starts.

An 18-year-old African-American woman has a self-realization that her dark skin does not make her any less valuable than the light skin of the people she's spent her whole life around.

A 22-year-old raised by her doting, vibrant grandmother watches her beloved role model slide slowly into dementia.

These were some of the 210 stories documented in photographs by Dear World on Feb. 6 and 7, a project brought to the University of New Orleans as part of the its First-Year Experience programming. Over the course of two days, students, faculty and staff shared personal stories with one another and then asked each other to write words on their bodies that were emblematic of those stories.

Dear World was founded in 2009 as "Dear New Orleans," an effort to ask people to write "love notes" to the city in response to rebuilding efforts that followed Hurricane Katrina. Today it is a worldwide project that seeks to help people form powerful connections based on their personal experiences and, more recently, has visited college campuses around the world as part of its Dear World College Tour.

Of those participating in the UNO event, some were asked to share, in spoken word, why they wrote what they wrote. They did so during a culminating event at the Sen. Ted Hickey Ballroom at the University Center on Feb. 7. Here are a few. 

ABOVE: Matt Bravender, 31, is a first-generation college student. Though there were times his hope of achieving a college degree seemed unrealistic, he didn't relent. After 13 years of ups and downs, Bravender is headed toward graduation this year with a degree in history. When the Dear World camera pointed his way, he proudly declared his achievement.



LEFT: Growing up in a community of people whose skin color was lighter than hers, UNO freshman Kenady Hills has found herself grappling with issues of self-worth related to her skin tone. At 18, the African-American woman says she has finally come to a self-realization that she wishes she'd embraced long ago: She is valuable.

BELOW: Student Ladajah Steele, 22, honors her beloved grandmother by showing words from the Bible-based saying that, "It only takes a mustard seed of faith to do anything." It's just one of the great pieces of advice her grandmother imparted. Today, Steele is grappling with news her cornerstone of a matriarch is sliding into dementia.





Midlo Center Celebrates 25 Years of Promoting Louisiana's History

BY REBECCA CATALANELLO

CHERYLLYN BRANCHE SAT AT THE FRONT OF THE ROOM, her hands resting on a cordless microphone as dozens of people waited to hear her story. Seven months earlier, the retired Catholic school principal didn't know this was her story and she knew nothing about the woman seated next to her, Sandra Green Thomas.

Now, as the room filled up with family and strangers, historians and activists, and as she prepared to speak publicly for the first time about the truth of her own family history, the weight of her ancestors' journey from slavery to freedom was palpable.

Branche reached to clasp Thomas' hand for a moment. They were two New Orleanians whose lives had been suddenly changed by the knowledge that their ancestors—men and women whose names they knew, whose pictures they'd seen, whose faith they'd been taught—had been enslaved by Jesuit priests at Georgetown University and sold to Louisiana plantation owners nearly 180 years earlier to help keep the university afloat.

"At this age and state in my life, it's taken me on a journey that is unimaginable," Branche told the people gathered at the Historic New Orleans Collection on that December night last year during an event arranged in celebration of the 25th anniversary of the University of New Orleans' Ethel and Herman L. Midlo Center for New Orleans Studies.

That the Midlo Center facilitated this moment—a first-person discussion of the legacy of that now-infamous Georgetown sale of 272 enslaved people in Louisiana—should be no surprise.

Named for Herman L. Midlo, a civil rights attorney in New Orleans from the 1930s to the 1950s, and his wife, Ethel, the Midlo

Center was founded in 1992 under the direction of Joseph Logsdon, a UNO history professor who saw a need for a scholarly center devoted to New Orleans history, culture, public policy and particularly civil rights topics.

After Herman Midlo died in 1978, his daughter, historian Gwendolyn Midlo-Hall, carried out her mother's wishes to use his estate to establish a center and a lecture series that would serve as a memorial to his work taking on challenging civil rights cases that touched on issues of police brutality and workers' rights. Eventually, the family broadened that gift into the Louisiana Board of Regents-approved Ethel and Herman L. Midlo Chair, naming longtime historian and civil rights activist Joseph Logsdon the first chair holder.

Under the direction of the chair, the Midlo Center seeks to push public discussion of Louisiana history beyond statistics and generalizations to increase understanding of the personal stories, faces and legacies of some of this state's most vexing social and historical issues, including slavery and mass incarceration.

Gwendolyn Midlo-Hall, who inherited her father's interest in social justice causes, was, in many ways, the perfect person to help Logsdon execute the vision. As a teenager, Midlo-Hall helped her father in his legal research by conducting title searches at the local courthouse. There, she encountered legal documents written in French and Span-

Cheryllyn Branche, second from left, listens as Sandra Green Thomas addresses Georgetown University historian Adam Rothman, far left, during a panel moderated by University of New Orleans Professor Emeritus Raphael Cassimere, far right.

ish—languages she eventually mastered, enabling her to decipher the often meticulous notations in such historic documents that regarded the owning, selling and mortgaging of enslaved people.

Later in life, Midlo-Hall pored through these and other documents, eventually creating the first-ever searchable database containing the names, ethnicities and stories of Africans and African-Americans enslaved in North America. Her work now is on display at the 265-year-old Whitney Plantation, the only plantation museum in Louisiana devoted to the history of slavery.

“Dr. Hall is one of the first historians of slavery to enter the archives with the conviction that individual black lives matter and that their individual histories could and should be retrieved,” says Mary Niall Mitchell, co-director of the Midlo Center who has held the Midlo Chair since 2009. “She was, you might say, an early adopter of digital technology and quickly recognized its importance to the field of history.”

Over the years, and most recently under the direction of Mitchell and co-director Connie Zeanah Atkinson, associate professor of history, the Midlo Center has played an essential role in helping to bring Louisiana’s rich and multi-textured history alive for diverse audiences—and to great acclaim. “It is important for us to continue to promote research and develop programming centered on civil rights, to honor the Midlo family’s bequest,” says Mitchell. “Our work on this history of mass incarceration—a pressing crisis today that Herman Midlo surely would have responded to—is one example of this. At the same time, we are keeping pace with the latest developments in the historical field, promoting, developing, and collaborating on projects in the digital humanities such as New Orleans Historical, a web-based tour site, and Freedom on the Move, a database of runaway slave advertisements.”

A few of its ongoing and recent projects include:

■ **TriPod: New Orleans at 300:** Leading up to the Tricentennial of New Orleans in 2018, the Midlo Center, in collaboration with WWNO and The Historic New Orleans Collection, is producing a one-a-week series of radio broadcasts and podcasts related to New Orleans history. Drawing from an advisory board of nationally recognized historians on the city, the series has already won national recognition, winning an Edward R. Murrow Award for Excellence in Broadcast Journalism.

■ **Freedom on the Move:** The Midlo Center is collaborating with the University of Alabama Department of History, and Cornell University on this collaborative digital humanities project on runaway slave advertisements in the Gulf South, the rest of the southern



Gwendolyn Midlo-Hall



Herman L. Midlo

United States, the Caribbean and Brazil. More than 6,000 advertisements have been collected by the Midlo team. Mitchell is heading the research project in Louisiana.

■ **www.neworleanshistorical.org:** The Midlo Center edits this place-based tour site driven by student research and writing, a joint project with Tulane University. Since assuming editorial direction of NOH, Midlo has initiated collaborations with the Tennessee Williams Festival, The Historic New Orleans Collection, the Louisiana State Museum and the Preservation Resource Center.

■ **Humanities Action Lab Global Dialogues on Incarceration:** UNO is the only national partner from Louisiana for this traveling exhibit created by The New School for Social Research in New York and displayed by Ogden Museum of Southern Art. The Midlo Center coordinated several public events around the issue of incarceration.

The Midlo Center is also interested in projects that result in the collection of local and regional oral histories. In recent years, it has supported the collection of stories from and about the Sisters of the Holy Family, New Orleans’ black political leaders in the 1970s, New Orleans’ South Rampart Street, Hurricane Katrina and the 1977 election of Dutch Morial.

Raphael Cassimere, professor emeritus of history, says that given all of the work the Midlo Center has undertaken over the years, its name might give a false impression. “When you hear the word center, it may portray the wrong image of a large, ongoing enterprise, when in fact it’s basically two staff persons ... and think of what we’ve done.”

The center was founded at a time when Louisiana’s budgetary resources were plummeting along with oil prices, he says. Despite that, its work has sustained, creating some of the most meaningful conversations Louisianians can have with themselves and with the nation.

Last December, at the end of the two-hour panel discussion about the Georgetown slave sale, Cheryllyn Branche told the audience something she says she often told her students: “An oyster doesn’t make a pearl unless it is irritated.”

“For us to have this dialogue face-to-face,” she went on, “gives all of us the opportunity to voice and to commit to cleansing and being whole and being one. And without that dialogue, we’re not going to get there. If we don’t talk honestly in these conversations about slavery, injustice, white privilege or anything else that separates us and divides us, if we don’t do it, who is going to do it for us?”

To learn more about the Midlo Center for New Orleans Studies and to donate, go to www.uno.edu/cola/history/midlo/ and click “Donate.”



University of New Orleans historians Mary Niall Mitchell, left, and Connie Zeanah Atkinson, right, pose with Cheryllyn Branche following the panel discussion on Dec. 14. Mitchell is the Ethel and Herman L. Midlo Chair at UNO and she and Atkinson direct the Midlo Center.



WORD BY WORD

UNO's Creative Writing Workshop Nurtures New Orleans Writers for 25 Years

BY REBECCA CATALANELLO ■ PHOTOS BY JULIA KUMARI DRAPKIN

EVERYONE IS WONDERING ABOUT THE FROZEN, SEVERED finger in the last paragraph of Joe Kelly's short story. After eight minutes of offering kudos for Kelly's scene setting, tone and dialogue, someone finally mentions it.

"As a reader, I am trying to figure out whose finger is it and why is Jack glad to be throwing the finger?" says one student.

"I don't know what purpose it serves in the story, but I am an advocate," offers another.

"This makes sense to me—but it also doesn't make sense to me," says a third.

Kelly listens and twists his pen. His arms cross and uncross. He thumps his foot.

He says not a word.

For 25 years, Monday nights at the University of New Orleans' graduate level Creative Writing Workshop for fiction have resembled this. Students gather in one of the cinder-block-walled classrooms at the Liberal Arts Building, close the door and dive in for three hours, discussing works written by two of their fellow Master of Fine Arts candidates. Each work gets 90 minutes of detailed feedback while the authors themselves sit quietly, listening—no speaking allowed. At least, that is, not until the informal gathering at Parkview Tavern afterwards, when authors usually have the opportunity to say everything they wanted to say and more.

Rick Barton, writer-in-residence at UNO and one of the faculty members who founded the University's MFA program in creative writing in 1991, says he's never wavered from the no-speaking rule in his fiction workshop class.

"Once your story goes out in the world, you're not there to defend it," he says. "When it goes to an editor, the editor decides whether to accept that story or to turn it down ... I want students to get used to the notion that they have to be on the paper."

In 1991, Barton and fellow Creative Writing Workshop founding faculty members Joanna Leake, Jim Knudsen and John Gery set out to create an interdisciplinary MFA writing program built around community rather than competition, one where writers were permitted and encouraged to take writing courses outside their focus genre.

Leake, now a writer-in-residence who continues to teach fiction workshops on Monday nights, recalls the group sat in her kitchen and began designing a program based on the things they liked and disliked about their own graduate writing programs.

"To our amazement and delight, it started to materialize," she says. "It turned into something we were really, really proud of."

Today, the program offers degrees in fiction, poetry, creative nonfiction, playwriting and screenwriting.

After a quarter-century of supplying a master's-level writ-



ing program in New Orleans, proof of UNO's Creative Writing Workshop success can be found in the work and experience of the graduates themselves. That's what inspired Barton and Leake to edit and publish an anthology of 40 stories by graduates and current and former faculty.

In the 457-page "Monday Nights: Stories from the Creative Writing Workshop at the University of New Orleans," published by UNO Press last fall, readers find stories by Skip Horack ("The Other Joseph," "The Eden Hunter"), Denise Lewis Patrick ("No Ordinary Sound"), Maurice Carlos Ruffin, whose work has appeared in *Kenyon Review*, *Callaloo* and the *Iowa Review*, Amanda Boyden ("Pretty Little Dirty"), Joseph Boyden ("Born with a Tooth"), Barb Johnson ("More of This World or Maybe Another), Bill Loehfelm ("The Devil She Knows," "Let the Devil Out," "The Devil's Muse," and "Blood Root") and current Creative Writing Workshop Director M.O. Walsh ("My Sunshine Away").

Walsh, who joined UNO's faculty nearly six years ago, says he was immediately struck by the close-knit nature of UNO's Creative Writing Workshop, which has managed to avoid the ego wars that sometimes take hold in writing programs elsewhere. He says that once prospective students visit New Orleans and get a taste of the campus writing community, it usually seals their decision to come.

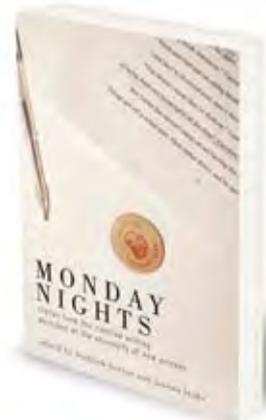
"A lot of MFA programs get the reputation for being really

FACING PAGE: Rick Barton, center, listens as students discuss a work of short fiction authored by Joe Kelly, far right, an MFA candidate from Milwaukee. Barton, now writer-in-residence at the University of New Orleans, was one of the founders of the heralded Creative Writing Workshop, which this year celebrated 25 years. Joining in the discussion are from left, Thomas Price of Los Angeles, Jacob Reecher of Illinois, Drew Jordan of Tennessee and Caro Fautsch of Houston. THIS PAGE, TOP: Thomas Price gestures as he discusses another student's work. Student critiques are expected to be detailed and constructive. THIS PAGE, MIDDLE: MFA candidate Joe Kelly listens quietly as his peers discuss the merits and shortcomings of "Black River Falls," a short story he authored. THIS PAGE, BOTTOM: Caro Fautsch shares thoughts from her reading of Kelly's story.

cut-throat and competitive in petty ways," Walsh says. "This place is not like that at all. Everyone really supports one another and we celebrate each other's work and it feels like a real close-knit community."

Leake and Barton say that approach is intentional.

"I have never subscribed, nor have my colleagues, to the notion that you teach ➔





Barton sees his role in the workshop as that of a guide.

someone to be a better writer by tearing them down and holding things up for scorn and ultra-tough love,” Leake says. “Which is not to say that certainly we’re not honest in ways that a piece can improve ... I think that the more supportive approach to workshop has helped our writers not only be better writers, but they really help each other, they pull for each other to succeed.”

Alumni and faculty from the Creative Writing Workshop came out in force twice over the year to celebrate the program, both during the release of “Monday Nights” at Garden District Book Shop in November and

again during the Tennessee Williams Festival in New Orleans in March, when festival organizers devoted a full day of panels to the acclaimed writing program.

Tracy Ferrington Cunningham, director of communications and marketing for the Tennessee Williams Festival, says it seemed natural to highlight the talent that has sprung out of program—one that has drawn hundreds of talented young writers to New Orleans to see themselves shaped by and shaping the city’s lively literary

scene.

“The Creative Writing Workshop at UNO is our local connection to the brightest and best of the writing world right here in new Orleans,” she says.

While Leake and Barton say essentials of teaching good writing have not changed over 25 years, the program has incorporated some course additions that students say have enhanced the experience.

One of the most exciting course additions came under the oversight of UNO Press Editor-in-Chief Abram Himmelstein, himself a 2005 graduate of the MFA program. The UNO Publishing Institute is a course that gives workshop students the real-world experience of soliciting, selecting, publishing and marketing a book of fiction. The program solicits fiction manuscripts by holding a contest that provides the winning author a \$1,000 advance on royalties and a contract to publish with the press. The institute’s 2016 publication, “Each Vagabond By Name” by Margo Orlando Littell received critical acclaim.

Back in the Liberal Arts building, nearly an hour and a half has passed and the MFA workshop students are winding up their discussion of Joe Kelly’s story. After talking about the story in overarching terms and turning their attention to the page-by-page—sentence structure, word choice, cadence—they and Barton give Kelly detailed written responses that he can pore over as he considers his revisions.

They are about to take a break and start on another student’s story.

One of the students can’t resist. He looks at Kelly.

“Whose finger was it?” he asks.

Kelly smiles, shakes his head and breathes a long, audible sigh. 🙄

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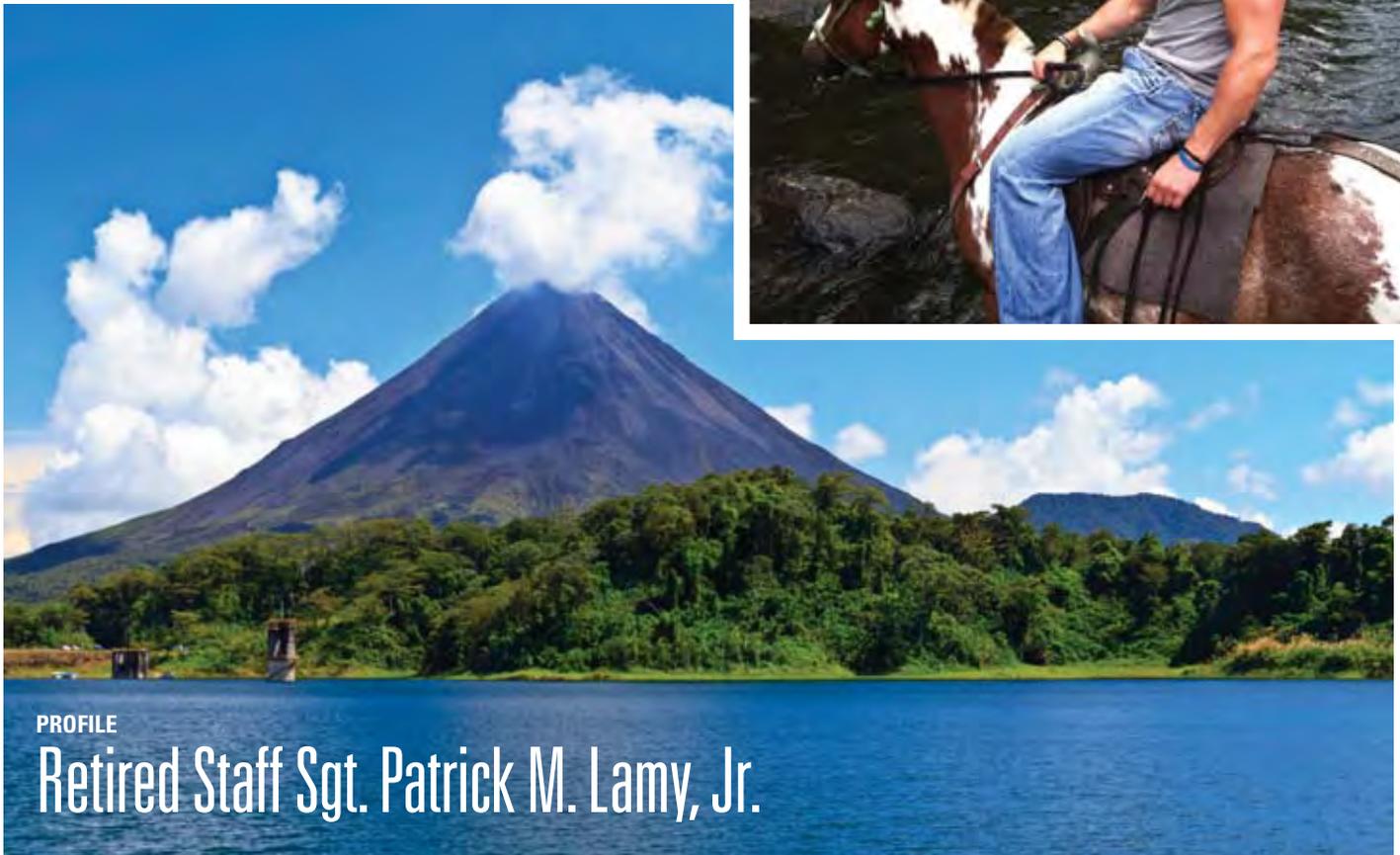
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PROFILE

Retired Staff Sgt. Patrick M. Lamy, Jr.

Age: 35

Hometown: New Orleans

What brought you to UNO? I was at UNO from 2011 to 2013 and again this past fall, studying Spanish and completing prerequisites for entry to medical school.

Languages you speak: English, Spanish and Arabic

Where did you go? Costa Rica

How long were you there? Five weeks

Why did you decide to go? I wanted to improve my Spanish and experience Costa Rica. I had served in the U.S. Army and this trip marked the first time I traveled abroad in three years following the return of my final Afghanistan deployment. I had some anxiety about leaving the country again, especially doing so without my unit. But I got over that and had a remarkable time.

What did you study while you were there? Spanish conversation and Latin-American literature.

Most memorable experience? Visiting the Arenal Volcano and the beachside village of Manuel Antonio. Also, going to one of the na-

The 5,437-foot Arenal Volcano provided just one of the backdrops Lamy experienced during a trip that turned into a pivotal educational experience for the military veteran.

tional soccer teams' games in El Estadio Nacional de Costa Rica.

Where do you want to go next? Great question. There are many places on my mind. I just got back from Cuba in the beginning of February, though, so will be staying in New Orleans for at least a few months.

Final thoughts? Living in another country and strengthening my Spanish opened my eyes to the possibilities of learning even more languages and traveling and living in even more countries. Since my UNO-Costa Rica trip, I have spent a lot of time doing a mixture of volunteer work and studying in three Spanish-speaking countries as well as in two Arabic-speaking countries. I can now proudly say that I am trilingual with a few more languages on the horizon. There is no doubt that the UNO-Costa Rica program played a pivotal role in opening me up to these possibilities.



Author Hannah Marcotte (B.A., '15) found it easier to breathe in Ireland, where she was taken with its magnificent cathedrals and homes painted in vibrant colors.



A Lot of Craic and a Little Class

BY HANNAH MARCOTTE JULIFF (B.A., '15)

Craic is a term for gossip, fun, entertainment, and enjoyable conversation, prominent in Ireland.

AS I STEPPED OFF THE plane and collected my bags, my limbs were stiff and I felt nauseated from the jet lag. I had one 35 pound suitcase and a 15 pound backpack. After a three-hour bus ride from Dublin to Cork, my phone was fully charged and I felt alert enough to walk the two miles to the apartment where I would be staying. I was filled with hope and anticipation as I walked through Cork, Ireland for the first time alone. The air in Cork felt easier to breathe than the thick, sweaty air I'd left in New Orleans. The doors of each Irish home were a vibrant red, yellow, or blue. As I walked, I noticed a magnificent Cathedral atop a hill and little purple wildflowers growing out of the stone along the river. I promised myself I wouldn't take photos yet because I wanted to fully enjoy my first experience walking through Cork.

I had a few expectations set by stereotypes of Ireland; I thought I'd eat potatoes at every meal and see fields of four leaf clovers everywhere. The reality was that Ireland had astoundingly rich, creamy dairy products and fresh, thick battered fish and crispy chips. I didn't expect my time to be so filled; we were always on excursions, at meetings, in class, at readings or performances, and my favorite: enjoying karaoke nights at The Old Oak.

A few weeks after arriving in Cork, our program left for an excursion to Dublin. I was met with a surprising feeling of homesickness. Cork had become my temporary home. My belongings, bed, and anything familiar in Ireland were in Cork. Dublin was populous, decorated with pubs advertising authentic fish and chips, and littered with shops exclusively for tourists to buy their "I love Ireland" items. I felt, for the first time since I had arrived, homesick for Cork and also homesick for America.

When I returned to the United States, everyone I encountered asked me, "How was your trip?" and it felt impossible to synthesize something so complex and wonderful. I decided on a response that went something like, "Oh, it was SO beautiful and I learned so much!" I'd show them a few photos of The Cliffs of Moher, The Old Oak, and the University College Cork campus. What I was really left with was incredible and unique memories from my trip and the realization that I would never have the same experience under the same circumstances again—but that I will always long for it.

As two years now stand between me and my first journey abroad, I realize what an influential point in my life it was. Studying overseas energized a personal desire to travel far and often that has guided me through my twenties. I made the choice to study abroad in Ireland because of the writing courses that fit my English degree, but also to spend time abroad in a country that

my ancestors came from. Being in Ireland, a country that even spoke the same language, made me realize just how American I am. I was able to see America through the lens of another country. I was, for the first time, realizing what it means to be American—good and bad.

Now, I am a graduate student at the University of Mississippi (Ole Miss) and have found my place as the graduate assistant in the Study Abroad Office. My first experience in another country has impacted the way that I talk about traveling abroad and the way that I consider the experiences of international students. My heart flutters when students embark on their own study abroad adventures, and I only hope that it's as pivotal, meaningful, and fulfilling as mine was.

Editor's Note: Last fall, *Silver & Blue* asked alumni, students, faculty and staff to send us personal essays about an experience at UNO. Hannah Marcotte's story is the first to fill this spot. Please send your UNO experience to rcatala@uno.edu for consideration in the next issue.

IF ANYONE WERE EVER to question Keeshawn Carter Davenport's level of devotion to the University of New Orleans, her résumé alone should provide clarity: The Privateers women's basketball coach has spent more than half of her 37 years on the Lakefront.

A product of East St. John High School in Reserve, La., Davenport this spring completed her sixth and best season as head coach of the Privateers. A 14-15 record in 2016-17 may not sound like much, but when you consider the depths from which the program has climbed, it represents real progress. There's no doubt she's on a quest to restore glory to this proud program.

Two of Davenport's six seasons were winless. After back-to-back years with an 8-19 record, this season UNO finished fourth in the 13-member Southland Conference, quite an accomplishment for a team that was picked to finish 11th in a preseason poll. The Privateers qualified for the conference tournament for the first time, and earned a first-round bye in the process; it was the winningest season for the program in nearly a decade. With nine letter-winners returning next season, led by first-team All-Southland Conference selection and conference scoring champion Randi Brown, the Privateers are trending upward.

"It's been an uphill battle, no doubt about it," Davenport says. "It's been tears, it's been laughter, it's been 50-point losses but this year was a really good year. The

ride makes me appreciate where we are today. It keeps me humble and it makes me excited about what's to come in the future."

Joey Favaloro is the winningest coach in the program's history with 382 wins, an NCAA Tournament Bid and the Women's National Invitational Tournament title during his 14

years on the job. He recruited Davenport out of high school in 1997, and says he knew he had a winner when he met her tight-knit family. Davenport averaged six points and three rebounds a game during her four-year playing career. Favaloro then hired her as a student-assistant, a graduate assistant in 2002 and

a full-time assistant in 2003.

"Keesh has a God-given talent to be able to motivate people with her actions first and then with what she says, and that's a rare combination," Favaloro says. "I never heard her say 'you' have to do better. It was always 'we' have to do better. If I had a daughter who was of recruiting



Davenport's Devotion

Women's basketball coach turns persistence into points

BY RO BROWN ■ PHOTOGRAPHS BY CLEM BARBAZON

age, I would have no problem with her playing for Keesh because you know she's an honest person who is in it for the right reasons."

Privateer men's coach Mark Slessinger says the fact that she stuck with the program during good times and bad is a testament to her character. He also knows the difficulty involved in rebuilding a program. Slessinger gives credit to his "basketball sister" for his team winning the 2016-17 Southland Conference regular-season and tournament titles.

"When we're good, it helps them. When they're good, it helps us," Slessinger says. "She's really amazing. We bounce ideas off each other and talk basketball, life, parenting or whatever."

Married three years ago to Deon Davenport, the couple has a two-year-old son, Deon, Jr. She says being a wife, mother and coach is rewarding.

"My husband and son have given me balance," Davenport says. "It's nice after a win to see their smiling faces. When I was single, it was go home and watch more game tape. Now it's cook, read books and put the little one to bed."

Devotion is important to Davenport. She's devoted to her family, her student-athletes and the institution from which she has earned two degrees. She credits UNO with teaching her what's important in life and helping her with self-discovery.

"Character is revealed through adversity," she says, "and I believe I had enough adversity at UNO to where I had to be persistent through tough times. What I have received here at UNO, I wouldn't trade for anything."

Davenport was the co-captain of the last UNO women's basketball team with a winning record in 2000-2001. She now

works tirelessly to impart those lessons she learned as a New Orleans student-athlete to the current Privateers. She calls it "coaching to impact lives."

"It's why I do what I do," Davenport says. "I want to have a positive impact on the lives of these young ladies. I'm super competitive but, in the end, how I affect the lives of these student-athletes and everyone I come in contact with is what really matters."

According to her "basketball brother," Davenport's contributions are rooted in her unwavering dedication to the University.

"She's how you hope all of our student-athletes turn out," Slessinger says. "She's positive and she has influence in the community. She impacts her student-athletes daily by using the skill set she learned here at the University of New Orleans. She truly is UNO proud." 🏀

FACING PAGE: Keeshawn Carter Davenport has spent more than half of her life at the University of New Orleans, as a student, an athlete and as a coach.

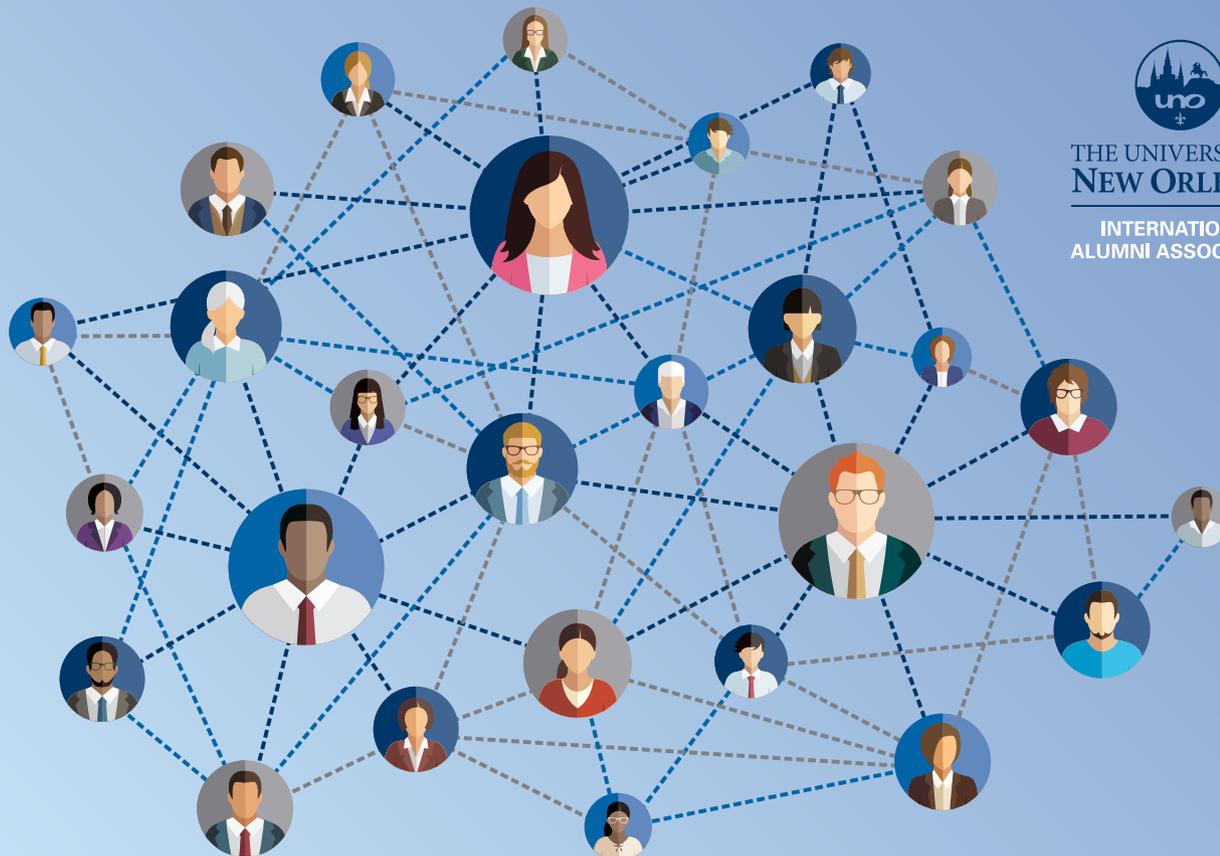
BELOW: This year, the Privateers women's basketball team had its winningest season in more than a decade.





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ALUM NOTES

Carla L. Major (B.S., '75)

Carla Major has been named to the board of directors for the Non-Flood Protection Asset Management Authority for the Orleans Levee District. She is president of CM Associates LLC, a consulting firm that provides management assistance in the areas of strategic planning, recruiting and retention, performance management, employee turnover, staff development and employee engagement.

Patrick A. Delaney (B.S., '78)

Patrick Delaney practices cardiology at Ochsner Health Center in Covington, La. He is board certified in internal medicine, cardiovascular disease and cardiovascular tomography, and specializes in noninvasive imaging echocardiography, stress testing, nuclear cardiology and preventive cardiology. Before joining Ochsner, Delaney was in private practice in Tangipahoa Parish.

Cedric S. Grant (M.P.A., '81)

Cedric Grant has been named to the board of directors for the Non-Flood Protection

Asset Management Authority for the Orleans Levee District. He is the executive director of Sewerage and Water Board of New Orleans, overseeing the city's capital development, infrastructure projects and community development initiatives. He formerly served as chief administrative officer of Ascension Parish, deputy secretary of the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development and a project manager at Parsons Corporation in Atlanta. He is a retired U.S. Army major.

Joseph R. Becker (B.S. '85)

Joseph R. Becker has been named general superintendent of the Sewerage and Water Board of New Orleans, where he has been employed for 21 years. He is a licensed professional civil and environmental engineer and was involved with the Sewerage System Consent Decree negotiations between the Sewerage and Water Board and the federal government. He is a member of the American Public Works Association, the American Water Works Association and the American Society of

Civil Engineers.

Joseph C. Oliveri (B.S., '87)

Joseph Oliveri is chief financial officer and chief compliance officer at Easterseals Louisiana. He has been elected to serve on the AAAneurysm Outreach board of directors. He served as associate director of finance and administration at LSU for 18 years before leaving in 2014. He has also held positions at Postlethwaite & Netterville and Project Homecoming and has more than 20 years of experience in management, accounting, human resources and finance.

Paul M. Novak (B.A., '88)

Paul Novak serves as manager and director of business valuations at Duplantier Hrapmann Hogan & Maher. He has more than 25 years of experience in corporate, partnership, individual, trust and estate taxes as well as tax planning and consulting. He is a member of the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants, New Orleans Estate Planning Council and the National Association of Certified Valuation Analysts. ➔

Austin J. Badon (B.A., '88)

Austin Badon, a former member of the Louisiana House of Representatives, is the

new director of the East Jefferson YMCA in Metairie. Badon also has held leadership positions in service training and workforce development with Southern University at New Orleans and Nunez Community College in Chalmette. He has also served as program director for the Boy Scouts of America and chairman of the New Orleans Chamber of Commerce Ambassadors.



GREEK ALUMNI SOCIAL

Alumni present and future reunited at the lakefront for Greek Social Night on March 23, including...



Emile "Skip" Miller (B.S., '71) and Sheila Judge Leonard (B.A., '86)



Carolyn Collins-DeBose (B.S., '76) and Sundy Barjon (Ph.D., '08)



... and current students Morgan Cole and Savanna Heller.

The event was held in partnership with the Office of Student Involvement and Leadership and Greek Life.

David J. Lundgren, Jr. (B.S., '88, M.B.A., '93)

David J. Lundgren, Jr., has been named chief investment officer for Hancock Holding Company, where he has worked since 1998, helping expand the bank's wealth and asset management group. A Chartered Financial Analyst, he also spearheaded the development, launch, and continued

growth of the award-winning Hancock Horizon Funds family of mutual funds, earning honors as one of Barron's Top 100 Fund Managers. A New Orleans native, he began his career at First National Bank of Commerce working in various trust department positions.

Raymond L. Brooks (M.B.A., '88)

Raymond L. Brooks has been

named senior vice president at Marathon Petroleum Corp., where he has worked since 1979. He is past-chairman of the American Petroleum Institute operating practices committee and the Texas City-La Marque Chamber of Commerce.

Irby E. Morvant, Jr. (B.A., '92)

Irby E. Morvant, Jr., is the general manager at Hyatt Regency San Francisco Airport. He has been with Hyatt for 27 years in sales and leadership, including working in Chicago, Cleveland, Boston and New Orleans. He serves on the boards of the Burlingame Chamber of Commerce and the San Mateo/Silicon Valley County Convention and Visitors Bureau.

John Erin McCabe (M.B.A., '94)

John Erin McCabe has joined the law firm of Weltman, Weinberg & Reis Co. in Cincinnati, Ohio, where he handles consumer bankruptcy matters in Kentucky and Indiana. He is a member of the Kentucky Bar Association, where he received the Continuing Legal Educa-

tion Award in 2014 and 2015, and a member of the Northern Kentucky Bar Association and Phi Alpha Delta Law Fraternity International. He holds a juris doctorate from the University of Tulsa.

Benjamin J. Strecker (B.S., '97)

Ben Strecker has been promoted to senior vice president and North Shore market president at Home Bank. He has served on the North Shore as a commercial relationship manager for the past 11 years. He also serves on the finance council at Our Lady of the Lake Catholic Church in Mandeville, a volunteer soccer coach at the Mandeville soccer club and is active in the Our Lady of the Lake Men's club.

Ana L. Gale-Orellana (B.S., '98)

Ana Gale-Orellana is a senior engineer for Entergy Louisiana, where she has been employed for more than 20 years. Her work there includes serving on diversity and inclusion councils.

Bret J. Chittenden (B.S., '99)

Bret J. Chittenden has been named executive vice president of operations for Expotel Hospitality Services. Chittenden joined Expotel in 1997 as assistant manager at the Best Western Inn Airport and has risen through the company. In his new position, he manages and oversees operations in Expotel's Gulf Coast Region. He is also a licensed real estate agent. He serves on the board of the Greater New Orleans Hotel & Lodging Association.

Brandt M. Vicknair (B.A., '02)

Photographer Brandt M. Vicknair is half of Mash Buhtayduss, an artistic collaboration with visual artist Barbie L'Hoste. The pair recently created works they titled "Outgroan," a series of photographs printed on canvas combined with mixed media elements including stencils, collage, transparency, paint and found objects. The collection was inspired by changes to the City of New Orleans and was on display last year at New Orleans Art Center.

Susan K. Mancuso (B.A., '90)

Susan K. Mancuso was named Outstanding Professional Fundraiser by the New Orleans Chapter of the Association of Fundraising Professionals. Mancuso runs a New Orleans-based consulting firm. Those for whom she's done work include the National Multiple Sclerosis Society, Ochsner Clinic Foundation, the American Heart Association, the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society and the University of New Orleans.



Tracey Trapani Schiro (B.S., '96, M.B.A., '11)

Tracey Trapani Schiro has been named senior vice president and chief human resources officer at Ochsner Health System. Schiro joined Ochsner in 2007 as assistant vice president overseeing compensation, benefits and human resources information systems. Prior to joining Ochsner, she worked for Coca-Cola Enterprises for 10 years.



Karla Russo



Tamara Warner



Melissa Sallinger



Doha Mosrie

UNO ALUMNAE NAB TOP EDUCATOR HONORS IN JEFFERSON PARISH

Four of the six educators honored recently by Jefferson Parish Public Schools as teachers of the year and principals of the year are University of New Orleans alumnae or students. *Karla Russo (M.Ed., '10)* was named the high school principal of the year from Haynes Academy School For Advanced Studies; *Tamara Warner*, a Ph.D. student studying education administration, was honored as elementary school principal of the year for her work at Gretna No. 2 Academy For Advanced Studies. *Melissa Sallinger (M.Ed., '11)* was awarded high school teacher of the year for her work at West Jefferson High School; and *Doha Mosrie (B.S., '12)*, was named elementary teacher of the year for her work at Harold Keller Elementary School.

William H. Slaughter (B.A., '02)
Actor William "Billy" Slaughter has been named one of *Gambit's* "40 Under 40." His acting credits include roles on "The Big Short," "Daddy's Home," "The Magnificent 7" and "Jack Reacher 2." Two of his films, "Cold Moon" and "Arceneaux," were shown in the recent New Orleans Film Festival.

Lauren Parish (B.S., '05)
Lauren Parish received her Ph.D. from Prairie View A&M University in December. Her dissertation was entitled, "An Examination of Social and Cultural Factors Influencing the Retention of Former Foster Youth in Higher Education."

Katie M. Johnson (B.S., '06)
Katie M. Johnson was recently named one of "40 Under 40" by *Gambit*. Johnson is co-owner of Royal Design House, which sources, sews, transports and preserves garments for Mardi Gras royalty.

Shercole V. King (M.A., '06)
Shercole King was recently named one of "40 Under 40" by *Gambit*. She is the homeless

management information system administrator for VIA LINK, where she works with homeless programs on data quality and human services software user experiences for the New Orleans area. She is founder of The Creative Impulse, which seeks to tie technology and the arts, and co-founder of Teens for Tech, a program designed to bring technology to youth. She is on the board of New Orleans Women in Technology. In 2016, King was invited to attend The White House's "Expanding Opportunity with Open Data."

Christine M. Berry (M.Ed., '06)
Christine M. Berry has been named co-director of the St. Martin's Episcopal School Summer Day Camp. She was a part of Ripples Summer Day Camp for more than 16 years prior, including serving as assistant director. Berry is a certified teacher who has taught in the classroom for more than 16 years and was named a 2015-16 Teacher of the Year by Jefferson Parish Public Schools.

Keith Hart (B.A., '06)
Keith Hart was named one of

10 finalists for the 2017 Music Educator Award given annually by the GRAMMY Foundation. Hart is the founding music director at KIPP Believe College Prep Middle School in New Orleans' Hollygrove neighborhood, where he has been for more than 11 years. Hart has also received the KIPP National Excellence in Teaching Award and, for three years running, the Louisiana Music Educators Association Band Director of the Year for District VI award. His program was named an exemplary music program by Festival Disney. Hart was also featured in HBO's hit series, "Treme," in which he played the lead band director, Mr. Lecour.

Alan G. Gauthreaux (M.A., '07)
Alan Gauthreaux teaches history at Nunez Community College. He has authored and co-authored several books on local history including "Dark Bayou: Infamous Louisiana Homicides" and "Echoes of Valor: Ordinary Men, Extraordinary Lives," published in 2016. He is a U.S. Army veteran and former legal investigator. His work has been featured in *Civil War Times Magazine*, *American Civil War Magazine*, *warhistoryonline.com* and *Louisiana History*.

Natalie Albers (M.Ed., '09)
Natalie Albers has been named principal of the Arlene Meraux Elementary School, a new St. Bernard Parish campus opening in the fall. Albers is a 15-year veteran of the school district and currently serves as an assistant principal at Lacoste Elementary.

Victoria N. Bristol (M.S., '11)
Victoria "Vicki" Bristol has been promoted to senior communications and marketing manager at The New Orleans Convention and Visitors Bureau. Before joining the CVB in 2013 as communications manager, Bristol was a communications strategist at Gambel Communications.

Henry E. "Elder" Gwin (M.B.A., '11)
Elder Gwin is a corporate banker with Whitney Bank, where he has worked for more than 14 years. He is on the

Nicholas G. Mainieri (M.F.A., '11)

Nicholas Mainieri's debut novel, "The Infinite," was published in November

to heralding reviews. The book follows the love story of a young couple whose circumstances propel them into a complicated and dangerous world that spans two countries. Mainieri lives in New Orleans, where

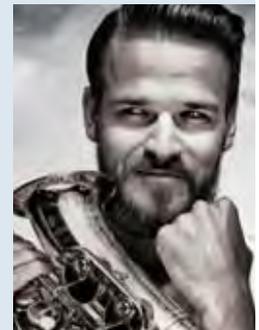


part of the novel is set, and teaches writing at Nicholls State University in Lafourche Parish. His short stories have appeared in the Southern Review, the Southern Humanities Review and Salamander.

BRANDT VICKNAIR PHOTOGRAPH

Albert Allenback (B.A., '16)

Albert Allenback is a professional saxophonist, flautist and composer. He is a member of the New Orleans funk and jazz band, Tank and the Bangas, which recently won the NPR Tiny Desk Concert.



Bivian L. "Sonny" Lee III (B.S., '06)

Bivian L. "Sonny" Lee III was recognized as "New Orleanian of the Year" by Gambit. Lee is the founder of Son of a Saint, a non-profit organization that seeks to match fatherless boys with male mentors. The organization was named in honor of Lee's father, a 1970s-era player with the New Orleans Saints who died of a heart attack at 36. Lee wanted to help young men who, as he did, struggle with anger, confidence issues and lack of direction stemming from the loss of a male role model. The program selects 10 boys ages 10 to 13 each year and stays connected with them through high school.



the University of New Orleans.

Jeremy J. Deblieux (B.S., '13)

The French Quarter Business Association has announced that Jeremy Deblieux will serve on the 2017 board of directors.

Lauren P. Noel (M.A., '15)

Lauren P. Noel, marketing associate at The Historic New Orleans Collection, has been named to the 2017 board of directors for the French Quarter Business Association.



The Legacy Society recognizes donors who have chosen to include the University of New Orleans in an estate gift to ensure that their gift will create a lasting legacy for future generations.

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LONGTIME PROFESSOR OF LANGUAGES AND LITERATURE ELIZA MIRUNA GHIL

ELIZA MIRUNA GHIL, a University of New Orleans professor who devoted her life to the study and teaching of languages and literature, has died.

A noted Occitanist, a scholarly expert of the French troubadour poetry of the 12th and 13th centuries, Ghil was born in Bucharest in 1943. She left communist Romania and settled in Israel in 1966 before immigrating to the United States in 1971 to continue her studies in French medieval literature.

Fluent in five languages—Romanian, French, Italian,

Hebrew and English—Ghil earned a Ph.D. in French and romance philology at Columbia University in 1978 and went on to teach at Columbia University and Dartmouth College.

She joined the faculty of the University of New Orleans in 1984, when she was appointed assistant professor of French.

“She was quite the catch,” says Juliana Starr, associate professor of French and associate chair for foreign languages. Starr, who was hired by Ghil in 2005, described Ghil as incredibly vibrant and warm—a distin-

guished scholar who inspired her students and kept her colleagues entertained with her wit, insight and, at times, her stubbornness.

“She was an intellectual,” Starr says, “but she was not off-putting, not condescending.”

Ghil rose quickly at UNO, serving as chair of the Department of Foreign Languages from 1988 to 1990 and again from 1997 to 2014, when she led the department following Hurricane Katrina. It was under Ghil’s leadership, Starr says, that the department began offering master’s level language courses online, a popular addition to the curriculum that today enrolls 71 students.

Ghil published her first scholarly study of troubadour poetry, “L’Age de Parage,” in 1997, and served as co-editor of “Romance Studies Today: In Honor of Beatriz Varela.”

At the time of her death at age 73, she had nearly completed a seven-year long project, “Love’s Law,” a book-length scholarly exploration of the constructs of Occitan poetry.

In addition to her scholarly pursuits, Ghil was a passionate aficionada of literature and opera, holding season tickets to the Metropolitan Opera House in New York. Her colleagues say they will remember her for her humor, her intellect, her eccentricities and her strength.



Eliza Miruna Ghil

HISTORIAN AND FOUNDING FACULTY MEMBER JERAH JOHNSON

HISTORIAN JERAH JOHNSON, one of the University of New Orleans’ founding faculty members, died Feb. 12 at the age of 85. He had been retired from UNO since 2003.

Professor Johnson was born in south Georgia in 1931. His parents relocated the family to Venezuela and then to France during the late 1930s. He spent much of World War II in London and returned to Georgia to finish high school at the age of 16.

Johnson earned his undergraduate degree at Emory University in Atlanta, Ga. and his doctorate at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. He majored in history at UNC with minors in both linguistics and comparative literature. In 1956-58 he spent time in France on a Fulbright Fellowship at the University of Paris. He later

confessed that most of his time there was spent in cafés drinking coffee and cognac. He joined the faculty of what was then Louisiana State University at New Orleans (LSUNO) in 1959, a year after the University opened, and helped form the character and culture of the history department. His field was Renaissance Europe, but he taught Louisiana history, world history and the introductory graduate course in research and writing.

Taking a job at a new branch of LSU might have seemed an odd choice for some at the time. Johnson recalled telling his grandmother, “I’m going to risk it,” when he accepted a UNO position. In fact, the decision came easily. Teaching posts were scarce in 1959, and his other offers were from Northwestern State in Natchitoches and a small Maryland college. New Orleans

seemed a far more enticing place to live, and Johnson embraced the city and its history. He wrote pioneering articles on African-American culture in Congo Square and the French influence in early New Orleans. A UNO *Driftwood* article at the time of his 2003 retirement quoted Johnson’s opinion of his adopted city: “Why on earth live anywhere else, unless it is smack dab in the middle of lower Manhattan or the Left Bank of Paris, and both would require far too much money.”

Johnson served as department chair from 1968 to 1980. “A department meeting where Jerah held forth was an event to be looked forward to,” says Gerry Bodet, a professor and longtime colleague of Johnson’s. “True, the mundane matters of policy were on the agenda, but inevitably these would morph into questions of philosophical truth, or the lack thereof, with a wry humor peppering the

discussion.”

Johnson contributed to numerous university committees, advised students and helped to build a vibrant history program. He was especially proud of his efforts to diversify the history faculty. During his tenure as chair, he promoted the international mission of the University by approving the study abroad program in Munich—the forerunner of the immensely successful UNO-Innsbruck International Summer School.

Even after retirement, Johnson’s home in the Marigny was open to UNO students seeking research advice on some aspect of New Orleans history. His interests always remained wide, however. Because of his extraordinary erudition, and his aesthetic appreciation of the arts, architecture and design, colleagues fittingly referred to him as the department’s “Renaissance Man.” —Robert L. Dupont



Jerah Johnson

THEN AND NOW



Circle of Friends

FRIENDSHIP CIRCLE HAS LONG been a gathering spot for students at the University of New Orleans. Today, even bare branches shade the circle on a February day in New Orleans.



ALEXANDER "SANDY" MAILLHO OPENED his copy of the last *Silver & Blue* only to spot a photo he'd taken nearly 35 years earlier when he was on the photo staff of *The Driftwood*. Last issue's Then & Now featured a lone trumpeter in front of the Performing Arts Center. Maillho said he was headed to class when he heard the solo trumpeter and snapped a few frames. The

musician, according the March 1982 issue of *The Driftwood*, was named Joseph McDaniels, though we have yet to locate him. Maillho, meanwhile, a musician himself, received a degree in language arts in 1982 then went on to a career in journalism, finally retiring from the *Times-Picayune* in 2009 after 20 years.



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