

# Diversity at UGA

News from the Office of Institutional Diversity at the University of Georgia

## A message from Michelle Garfield Cook



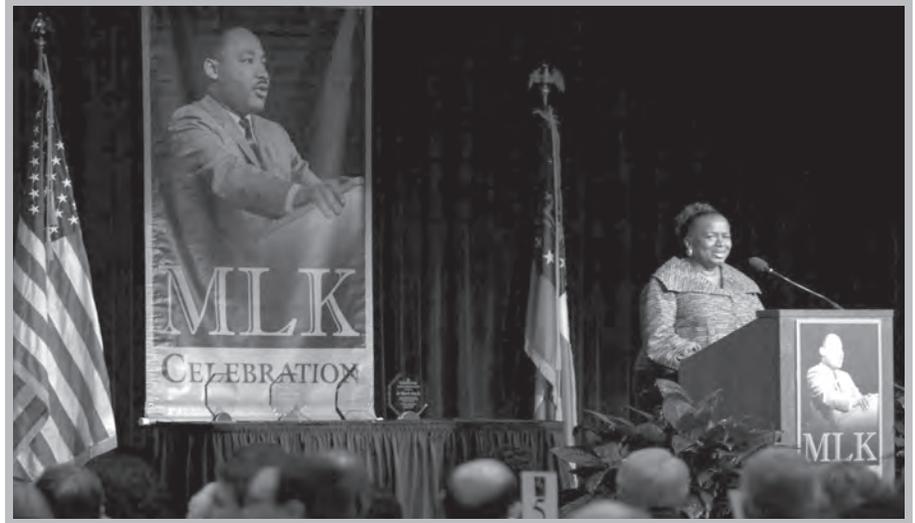
Spring semester at the University of Georgia has been a busy one. January got us off to a great start with the 10th Annual Martin Luther

King Jr. Freedom Breakfast. Monica Pearson was the keynote speaker and inspired us with her message as she moved us with her beautiful singing voice. As always, the Breakfast was a time when the university and Athens communities came together to remember where we have come from and celebrate where we are headed. And we are definitely headed in an upward trajectory with regard to diversity and inclusion.

Our students are fully engaged in their communities as reflected in their participation in the King Day of Service and their success in receiving major scholarships. Junior Honors student Smitha Ganeshan was one of 62 students nationwide to receive a prestigious Truman Scholarship this year. In addition to maintaining an outstanding academic record, she has volunteered and interned in clinics and schools in Athens as well as around the globe.

Our faculty are engaged in research that will impact the lives of those in our communities. For example, Dr. Sheneka Williams' work on equity in education and Dr. Toni Miles' research that examines the health of individuals following the death of a loved one have real-world applicability for all people. And of course our alumni continue to make us proud. Their success across a range of fields and career pursuits

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Monica Kaufman Pearson, retired anchor of WSB-TV's Channel 2 Action News, noted that King's primary message was to be a servant of God.

## Monica Pearson emphasizes service to others at annual MLK Freedom Breakfast

With voices in unison and hands held together, about 600 members of the UGA and Athens communities sang the civil rights movement anthem "We Shall Overcome" at the annual Martin Luther King Jr. Freedom Breakfast.

The annual event, sponsored by UGA, Athens-Clarke County and the Clarke County School District, recognizes leaders who promote change in their communities.

This year the sold-out breakfast, held in January on campus, came 50 years after King's "I Have a Dream" speech and featured a keynote address by **Monica Kaufman Pearson**, a retired anchor of WSB-TV's Channel 2 Action News and a current graduate student in the Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication.

The Freedom Breakfast was coordinated by UGA's Office of Institutional Diversity and included contributions from community leaders. The most thunderous contribution came from the Cedar Shoals High School drum line, which delivered a boisterous performance. Other Clarke County School District students showed their commitment to King's vision in a video presentation in which they read essays addressing their dreams and visions for justice and peace.

Pearson challenged the audience to commit to serving their community and to continue King's dream for equality. Alluding to a lesser-known King speech, Pearson said it's difficult to help others, particularly those of different races, because we haven't made the effort to understand them. And while workplaces and school settings have made strides in integration since King's "I Have a Dream Speech," that atmosphere is rare in churches and in social settings. "Until we share more than our jobs together, we truly will never know each other," she said.

At a few points in her address, Pearson broke into song to drive home her points. By the end of her address, she had the room standing with her singing, "Oh deep in my heart, I do believe, we shall overcome someday."

# Student News

## Forestry student receives scholarship

**Lauren Cameron's** passion for water conservation is second only to his commitment to his family. He has been on the dean's list in the Warnell School of Forestry and Natural Resources while working two jobs to help support his mother and siblings in Moultrie.



He said that coming from a small town, his first year at UGA was a little overwhelming. "There were just so many options and a seemingly infinite number of people to meet," he noted. "My only real goal was to get a degree related to environmental science."

The senior received the Wyatt Memorial Forestry and Natural Resources Scholarship. He interned in North Carolina through the NASA-funded Bird's Eye View of Climate Change program, where he studied the effects of climate change on ecosystems. To read Cameron's "Amazing Students" profile, see <http://t.uga.edu/dM>.

## Second-year law student crowned Miss UGA

**Jenna Jackson**, a second-year law student, was crowned Miss UGA 2013 at the annual scholarship pageant.



Jackson is the daughter of John and Sandra Jackson of Fayetteville.

The scholarship pageant is a program within UGA's Division of Student Affairs.

The Miss America Organization is the largest private scholarship foundation for women in the U.S.



Georgina Nembhard, a student in the College of Education, reorganizes a rack of clothes at the Project Safe thrift store.

## UGA students mark King holiday with service

The half dozen or so UGA students who descended on the Project Safe thrift store in Athens on Jan. 21 weren't there to shop.

Instead, they spent a few hours at the nonprofit agency's Hawthorne Avenue location cleaning up, sorting and re-hanging clothes as well as straightening up. It was their way of giving back to the local community on the Martin Luther King Jr. national holiday.

"I love to volunteer, and UGA provides really good opportunities to volunteer in Athens," said **Georgina Nembhard**, a graduate student in the College of Education.

This wasn't the first time the Ocean Township, N.J., native has been involved in a service project. During her time as a student—she earned her bachelor's degree from the College of Family and Consumer Sciences in 2011—Nembhard has volunteered at a homeless shelter, a food bank and an elementary school. The thrift store is a program of Project Safe, Inc., a nonprofit working to end domestic violence.

As part of Athens-Clarke County's 11th annual King Day of Service, more than 100 UGA students worked on projects at seven sites coordinated by Community Connection and UGA's Center for Leadership and Service. Some students worked in gardens while others pressure washed the home of a senior citizen and did other small repair work around the house. Still others removed stickers in the downtown area as part of Keep Athens-Clarke County Beautiful or helped out at United Hospice.

For **Kathryn Macias**, a junior from Warner Robins majoring in communication studies, and **Sarah Hughes**, a junior from Norcross studying international affairs, their stint at the Project Safe thrift store gave them a chance to complete a service project in Athens. As site leaders for IMPACT, a student service organization, they usually spend their time with other UGA students in weeklong service-learning projects across the U.S. Volunteering at the thrift store was an opportunity to serve locally.

"I've never volunteered at the thrift store before," Macias said. "It was a chance to do something new."

The experience was new for **Fantasia Williams**, too. The second-year pre-business major from Valdosta works with the university's Service Ambassador organization, which allows UGA students to connect with the Athens community by fulfilling a need for service. "Our aim is to build bridges between the campus and local communities," she said. "Helping out at the thrift store reinforces that goal for me personally."

# Student News

## Honors Student named 2013 Truman Scholar

**Smitha Ganeshan**, an Honors student majoring in anthropology at the University of Georgia, has received a 2013 Harry S. Truman Scholarship, which recognizes juniors with exceptional leadership potential who are committed to careers in government and elsewhere in public service.

Ganeshan, a UGA Foundation Fellow, was one of 62 students to receive the scholarship, which offers up to \$30,000 for graduate study. She aims to pursue a dual M.D. and Master in Public Policy degree and is active in health care and health policy issues in Athens as well as around the globe.

"Smitha has combined the many opportunities and resources available to students at the University of Georgia with her considerable intellect and energy to address some of society's most challenging issues," said UGA President **Jere Morehead**.

"She represents the very best of what students from the state's flagship institution of higher education contribute to our world."

Ganeshan has been involved with UGA's Roosevelt Institute, a student-run think tank, since her freshman year and currently directs its health policy center and its environmental policy center. Through the Roosevelt Institute, she developed a policy proposal to improve access to primary care for low-income and uninsured patients.

She volunteers at the non-profit Athens Nurses Clinic, which provides basic primary care and dental services for uninsured patients, and has interned at the Athens Health Network, an organization that works to reduce health care disparities by coordinating health services for the indigent population. She is a co-founder of the Lunchbox Garden Project, an after-school nutrition education and obesity prevention program that was launched in 2011 and now serves two schools in Athens through a grant from UGA's Office of Sustainability.

As an intern at the Greater New York Hospital Association, she worked under Executive Vice President and General Counsel **Susan C. Waltman**, a trustee of the UGA Foundation and an alumna, to translate evidence-based obesity prevention models into programs for hospital implementation. Ganeshan has studied at Oxford University through the UGA at Oxford program and interned at the World Health Organization's M.V. Hospital for Diabetes in Chennai, India, where she worked as a member of the epidemiology team. The following winter, she worked at a mobile health clinic in Lima, Peru and later that year assisted a physician at a community health clinic in Nicaragua.

Her additional campus activities include serving as chief editor for the *Journal for Undergraduate Research Opportunities*, serving on the Student Government Freshman Forum and serving on the student committee for the university's Delta Prize for Global Understanding. She is a member of the Dean William Tate Honor Society, the Omicron Delta Kappa national leadership society and the Palladia Women's Honor Society. Ganeshan is an Honors Program Student Ambassador and works part time as a campus tour leader for the UGA Visitors Center.



## Doctoral student earns top law award

College of Education doctoral student **Natasha Brison** received the 2013 Maloy Student Research Award from the Sport and Recreation Law



Association.

The award is the highest recognition of accomplishment in student research in this academic organization gives.

Brison, who holds a law degree from UGA and is a clinical assistant professor in Georgia State University's department of kinesiology and health, is a doctoral candidate in UGA's sport management program.

The Brunswick native presented her research at the annual SRLA conference in Denver in March.

## Student receives Rankin Foundation Scholarship

**LaTrena Stokes**, a recipient of the Women of UGA Scholarship from the Jeannette Rankin Foundation, believes in "divine opportunities" and encourages others to keep moving forward in their



lives. She is pursuing a double major in human development and family science as well as in religion.

In August 2012 the Athens native was selected as youth pastor of the Miracle House Church International, Inc. She presented her research findings on engaging African-American men in marriage enrichment programs at the H2R Conference in New Orleans. To read her "Amazing Students" profile, see <http://t.uga.edu/dR>.

# Faculty & Staff News

## Medine honored for teaching excellence



**Carolyn Medine**, a University of Georgia professor in the department of religion and the Institute for African American Studies, has been selected to receive the 2013 Excellence in Teaching Award from the American

Academy of Religion.

The AAR is the professional society for scholarship and teaching in the field of religion and has more than 10,000 members who teach in about 1,000 colleges, universities, seminaries and schools in North America and abroad.

Medine teaches courses focused on how literature and art relate to religious experience, particularly Southern and African-American women's religious experience.

## Navarro wins USDA New Teacher Award

**Maria Navarro**, associate professor in the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, was recently awarded the New Teacher Award from the USDA. Before coming to the UGA in 2005, Navarro worked in agricultural development projects in North Africa.



Navarro also has been recognized by the UGA

Student Government Association as an outstanding teacher and by former UGA President Michael F. Adams in 2007 with UGA's Fulfilling the Dream Award, which honors Martin Luther King Jr.'s commitment to justice and equality.



**Sheneka Williams**, a faculty member in the College of Education, currently is working on research examining how school districts assign students to schools.

## Exploring equality: Professor examines how school districts assign students

**Sheneka Williams** comes from a family of educators.

"My grandfather was the principal of a one-room school house, and my father and his brother also were educators," Williams said. "I didn't choose to become an educator, it chose me."

Williams identifies herself as a professor, researcher and service worker. Her current research examines how school districts assign students to schools. Her study of schools in Wake County, N.C. made national news for exposing what appeared to be the end of a diversity policy that had been implemented on the basis of socioeconomic status and student achievement.

Williams' work strives to answer one question: How can students gain access to equitable education?

"When I look back after retirement, I hope that some students have received better opportunities because of the research I conducted that changed the way policymakers make decisions," she said.

Williams said she feels she has a responsibility to ensure that a child, who does not choose his/her own ZIP code, is not penalized because of it either. In Georgia, her research largely has focused on urban areas like DeKalb and Clayton counties, but she is expanding her work into rural counties like Greene, Putnam and Sumter.

Williams began her career in education as a high school social studies teacher and debate coach in Tuscaloosa, Ala., county schools for six years.

Williams credits her father with her transition from coaching the debate team to coaching education policymakers across the country. A former assistant school superintendent, her father gave her the idea that people had the power to make changes in the ways schools are governed and operated.

"I realized I wanted to be a professor and write about issues on a more macro level," said Williams.

# Faculty & Staff News



Dr. Toni Miles and her colleagues are looking for ways to better prepare patients and their families for death.

## Institute of Gerontology director studies health risks following loss of loved one

**Dr. Toni Miles**, director of UGA's Institute of Gerontology, is studying life after death—or, more precisely, health after death.

No, the professor of epidemiology and biostatistics isn't taking on the mysterious question of the afterlife. Instead, she's looking at the health risks and problems that family members suffer after losing a loved one.

Dubbed the Mortality Project, Miles and her colleagues are studying how losing a family member—and the legal and financial burdens that follow—negatively affect one's health. They also are looking for ways to better prepare patients and their families for death.

"This project asks the question: If you experience the loss of someone else, what does that do to your own health?" Miles said.

Miles suspects that mortality is having negative health consequences on family members and that there is room for improvement in public health policy to address that. The timing is important since the baby boomers are nearing old age—the oldest have turned 66; the youngest are 45. That age range means that the sizable boomer population is at a higher risk for medical problems—and, yes, death. With that, Miles believes more bystanders will be exposed to health risks associated with the loss of a family member.

"We can do something about that risk if we acknowledge that it exists," she said.

One of the early undertakings of the project focuses on whether pastors can improve their service toward grieving families. Miles is collaborating with UGA's **Obie Clayton Jr.**, the Donald L. Hollowell Distinguished Professor of Social Justice and Civil Rights Studies, on this portion of the project. "We started with them because they are very involved (with dying patients and their loved ones), but they're not medical," she said.

## Ron Walcott featured in "Focus on Faculty"

Through his teaching, research and outreach, professor of plant pathology **Ron Walcott** aims to inspire students to be part of the solution to producing the food required to feed the world's growing population.

In addition to his teaching and research, he is assistant dean for diversity in the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences. As assistant

dean, he supervises the CAES Office of Diversity Relations, which coordinates the recruitment and retention of under-

represented students and fosters an inclusive environment in the college. CAES-ODR also is responsible for a summer research internship program for high school students called the Young Scholars Program.

He is heavily involved in recruiting under-represented students to UGA. He does this in part by building relationships with teachers and administrators in middle and high schools that serve under-represented groups in and around Athens. The CAES Office of Diversity Relations also hosts campus visits by various groups, and he speaks to students about opportunities in the college and uses his background as a plant pathologist to appeal to students who are interested in science careers.

"I hope that my enthusiasm for plant pathology emboldens students to pursue careers in science," he notes. "I hope they also recognize that they collectively hold the solutions to problems like climate change and food shortage and become empowered to start developing these solutions."

To read Walcott's "Focus on Faculty Profile," see <http://t.uga.edu/dV>.



# Alumni News



## Evelyn Wynn-Dixon's journey proves there's no such thing as too late

From her office on the second floor of city hall in Riverdale, Mayor **Evelyn Wynn-Dixon** (MSW '95) has a bird's eye view of the rest of the Town Center complex. The \$18.5-million complex was built during Wynn-Dixon's first term as mayor of Riverdale. It opened in 2010, with the government-civic buildings serving as the first phase of a three-part project planned for the 27-plus acre parcel of land. Future growth will incorporate a mixed-use commercial component as well as residential housing.

Wynn-Dixon grew up in Peopletown, a historically black Atlanta community south of Turner Field and central Atlanta. She attended Price High School and was known for being smart.

After graduating from UGA, she worked as a case manager at Grady Hospital. In 2003 she moved to Riverdale, where she still works part time at a hospice. Wynn-Dixon took office in 2008 and ran unopposed in her second election.

Since Wynn-Dixon took office, Riverdale's crime rate is down 20 percent. The city has experienced economic growth and enjoyed a budget surplus that was achieved without layoffs or raising taxes, despite the recession. This feat got Wynn-Dixon invited to speak about Riverdale's success at a 2010 White House special meeting of an agriculture committee.

**Gov. Nathan Deal** appointed her to the state's Transit Governance Task Force, and she also serves on the board of directors of the Georgia Regional Transportation Authority. To read the full story on Wynn-Dixon in *Georgia Magazine*, see <http://t.uga.edu/dW>.

## McMillian appointed to Court of Appeals

**Carla Wong McMillian** (J.D. '98) has been appointed by **Gov. Nathan Deal** to the Court of Appeals of Georgia.

McMillian was previously a State Court judge with- in Fayette County. She is the first Asian-American woman elected judge in the state of Georgia.



She was recognized by the National Asian Pacific American Bar Association as one of the Best Lawyers Under 40 for 2012, and the National Diversity Council named her the "2010 Most Powerful and Influential Woman of Georgia."

She currently serves or has served in leadership roles for the Georgia Asian Pacific American Bar Association, the Fayette County Historical Society, the Partnership Against Domestic Violence, the Real Life Center, and the Atlanta Chapter of the Federalist Society for Law and Public Policy Studies.

## H. James Williams named president of Fisk

**H. James Williams** (Ph.D., '82) has been named president of Fisk University. Williams has received recognition for his outstanding teaching at Georgetown University, Florida A&M University and Texas Southern University. His research is widely published, and he serves on several community and corporate boards.



# Campus News

**Cook,** CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1 illustrates the value of a UGA degree. Perhaps most notable this spring is Carla Wong McMillan's rise to the Court of Appeals of Georgia. Governor Deal's appointment of Judge McMillan is particularly significant because she is the first Asian-American woman elected judge in Georgia.

Each semester we feature exciting events, incredible accomplishments and historic firsts that result from the hard work and success of our students, faculty, staff and alumni. Therefore we need to think carefully about the diversity narrative of UGA. It is no longer simply a story of access and educational opportunity. It is now one of access, success and unlimited opportunity for all communities and all people.

Diversity is often considered according to a deficit model of what we do not have, what we have not accomplished, how far we have yet to go. But here at UGA, we see our diversity through a resource model of what we have to offer, the range of experiences and backgrounds from which we have come, and the positive direction in which we are moving. Of course there is work to be done, goals to be accomplished and things that we must do. And we will do these things as we promote diversity and inclusion in every aspect of the university. This may make some uncomfortable as we push the boundaries of their comfort zone. But we are a world-class institution of higher learning, global citizens and contributors of new knowledge. Therefore it is only fitting that we also serve as leaders in promoting and modeling diversity and inclusion. Dr. Martin Luther King spoke fondly of a Beloved Community. This was not a utopic environ where people lived devoid of adversity and difference. But rather it was a place where people recognized the strength in their difference and worked together to build bridges and identify shared values. It is UGA!



Mary Frances Early, the first African-American to receive a UGA degree, was in attendance as veteran journalist Hank Klibanoff gave the Mary Frances Early Lecture.

## Early lecturer calls for investigation of Southern civil rights-era violence

In 1967, **Wharlest Jackson** was murdered in Natchez, Miss., after receiving a promotion over white men at a tire plant.

Days after accepting the promotion, a bomb blew up in his truck as he was driving home. Despite an FBI investigation into the murder, no arrests were made.

At the **Mary Frances Early** Lecture in April, **Hank Klibanoff**, a newspaper veteran and professor at Emory University, said murders like this were not uncommon in the civil rights-era South, but oftentimes justice was never sought. Thorough investigations into these race-related murders, he said, are long overdue.

The Early Lecture, held on campus each spring, was named after the first African-American to receive a degree from UGA. Early, who was in attendance at the lecture, received her master's in music education in 1962. In May 2013, she was recognized with an honorary doctor of laws degree from UGA.

Klibanoff worked in newspapers for 36 years and won a Pulitzer Prize in 2007 for his book *The Race Beat: The Press, the Civil Rights Struggle and the Awakening of a Nation*.

Klibanoff now serves as managing editor of the Civil Rights Cold Case Project, which investigates unsolved racial murders in the South during the civil rights era.

"It's all too easy to forget what those times were like. We must remember," he said. "Our responsibility as journalists and historians is to tell this history and to tell these stories."

After Klibanoff's lecture, Early addressed the Chapel audience and lauded the national media for coverage of the civil rights struggle. Early has said that she enrolled in UGA only after having heard about the protests and rioting by white students opposed to the introduction of the university's first black students, Charlayne Hunter and Hamilton Holmes.

"Had it not been for the press, I wouldn't have seen that televised version of the riot," Early said. "That's honestly why I came (to UGA)."

# Diversity at UGA

119 Holmes-Hunter Academic Building  
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## Giving to the Office of Institutional Diversity

A contribution to the Office of Institutional Diversity (OID) will help support a wide variety of initiatives that foster diversity at UGA.

OID provides and supports programming, such as recruitment and retention efforts, diversity scholarship funding, pre-collegiate learning opportunities, and faculty and student mentoring events. If you would like to discuss ways to give, please contact our office at 706-583-8195. We will work with you to ensure your charitable giving needs are met. To find out more about OID, visit our website at [www.diversity.uga.edu](http://www.diversity.uga.edu).

Checks should be made payable to the UGA Foundation and designated for OID on the "for" or "memo" line. Please mail checks to:

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