



UNIVERSITY OF WEST GEORGIA

Tribute to Retirees

July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025

Fall, 2025

Sponsored by the Association of Retired Faculty and Staff,
University of West Georgia University Advancement,
Office of Human Resources,
and University of West Georgia Foundation
Meg Cooper & Francesca Taylor (Eds.)



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ARFS Coordinating Council Members (2024-2025)

- Micheal Crafton (President, USGRC voting member, Nominating Committee, Programs/Events Committee), English and UWG administration
- Clois Reese (Vice President, Nominating Committee, Programs/Events Committee), College of Arts & Sciences
- Anne Richards (Past President, ARFS Listserv Manager, Newsletter Committee, Nominating Committee chairperson, Programs/Events Committee, USGRC alternate, GA-HERO secretary and representative), Psychology
- Meg Cooper (Secretary, Newsletter Committee, Programs/Events Committee), Special Education, USGRC Chair-elect
- Rolanda Farmer (Treasurer, Newsletter Committee, Programs/Events Committee), Center for Teaching and Learning
- Lisa Ledbetter (At-Large Member), University Communications and Marketing
- Cecilia Lee (At-Large Member), Spanish
- Ann McCleary (At-Large Member, Newsletter Committee, Nominating Committee, Program/Events Committee), History
- Jerry Mock (At-Large Member, Nominating Committee, Scholarship Committee), Business & Auxiliary Services
- Patricia Pinkard (At-Large Member), Ombuds Office
- Mike Renfrow (At-Large Member), Campus Planning & Facilities
- Sally Roberts (At-Large Member), Publications and Printing
- Francesca Taylor (At-Large Member, Programs/Events Committee), Academic Testing Services
- Trish Wells (At-Large Member, Programs/Events Committee), College of Social Sciences



Dear Colleagues,

I am honored to congratulate you on your retirement and share the depth of appreciation and admiration I have for you as you begin this new chapter in your life.

UWG has a strong history of leaders stretching back 119 years who have contributed to the institution we know today. The strength of this history is not due to one person's efforts but rather the collective strength of our organization and our shared purpose.

Your hard work and passion have helped generations of students unlock opportunities for success, ensuring that UWG continues to offer a transformative higher education experience. I am grateful for the role you played in this achievement, and I am honored to build upon the legacy you have helped establish.

You will always be an integral part of the UWG community, and I sincerely hope you will stay connected with the institution in your well-deserved retirement. The Association of Retired Faculty and Staff offers a wonderful opportunity to remain involved and stay updated on the latest news from campus and your fellow retirees.

As you embark on this new phase of life, I wish you nothing but joy, fulfillment, and continued success. Wherever your path leads, I hope UWG holds a special place in your heart and that you continue to be part of the university's story.

Go West and Go Wolves!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael Johnson", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Michael Johnson, Ph.D.
President
University of West Georgia

The Association of Retired Faculty & Staff (ARFS)

was established in 2004 as a voluntary association of the university's retired faculty and staff who joined together for several purposes: to promote the well-being of its members; support the University of West Georgia retiree community; foster continued involvement of retirees in the mission of the university; facilitate communication between the university and its retirees; seek to promote the scholarly, social, and cultural interests of the retiree community; and address matters related to benefits and resources for retirees.

Membership in ARFS is free and members decide for themselves how much involvement they wish to have in the organization and its activities.

Almost fifteen years ago, ARFS joined a national organization of retiree organizations in higher education, known as AROHE (Association of Retirement Organizations in Higher Education -- <https://www.arohe.org/>). Through a state subsidiary of that group, GA-HERO (<https://ga-hero.org/>), some of us have attended meetings with retirees in higher education from all around Georgia. In these meetings, we have learned a lot about what other retiree organizations are doing. Any of you are welcome to attend these meetings. Meetings/events have been organized as in-person or online gatherings.

In 2015 the University System of Georgia created a retiree council (USGRC) to advise the Chancellor's Office and the Board of Regents on matters of consequence to retirees. The president of the ARFS Coordinating Council is our "official voting member" at USGRC meetings, and we are also allowed a designated "alternate member" in the event our official voting member cannot make the meeting. Currently, Micheal Crafton is serving as the official representative of UWG. Anne Richards is serving as the alternate member and also takes notes to pass along to others. Meg Cooper was recently elected as the Chair-Elect of this group. While the USGRC continues to have a focus on Medicare-eligible retirees' use of Aflac Retiree Health Solutions (formerly the Aon Retiree Healthcare Exchange), it is also looking at many other issues of concern to retirees, including access to library resources on system campuses, faculty emeriti status, well-being resources/services for retirees, and communication matters.

Becoming a member of ARFS is easy. Just contact Meg Cooper (mcooper@emeriti.westga.edu, 770-880-5078) or Anne Richards (arichard@emeriti.westga.edu,

770-834-8143) to let us know you want to join. We will need contact information. An e-mail address will help most since we use the ARFS listserv to share a variety of information. However, our newsletter, *The Rejuvenator*, is also distributed by postal mail when necessary. You may qualify as an **Active Member** (retired UWG faculty/staff who meet the established BOR retirement criteria to be eligible for retirement with Life and Health benefits) or an **Associate Member** (UWG retirees who do not meet the BOR criteria, spouses/domestic partners of UWG retirees, retirees from other institutions of higher learning, or UWG faculty/staff who are within a few years of their planned retirement date). We invite you to join us in this organization.

Those meeting BOR requirement criteria for retirement are eligible to take advantage of a variety of campus-related benefits, such as courtesy parking hangtags, free membership to utilize all facilities in the Campus Center, authorization to check out books from the Ingram Library, reduced rates on West Georgia Theatre Company performances, free admission to UWG athletic events, and a 10% discount at the University Bookstore. We continue to look into the possibility of securing other benefits as well.

UWG Retiree Legacy Scholarship

ARFS is pleased and proud to announce that the current recipient of the UWG Retiree Legacy Scholarship is Claire Jennings, a junior majoring in Foreign Languages (French) and the granddaughter of retiree Dr. Chester Gibson. We hope to hear from Claire as part of our annual reunion.

Eligibility Criteria:

- Recipients will be full-time graduate or undergraduate students who are retirees of the institution or who are direct descendants or an immediate family relation of a retired faculty or staff member (with a minimum of 10 years of service to the institution).
- Recipients will have a minimum cumulative GPA 2.5, with preference given to applicants with a higher GPA.
- Preference will be given to applicants with a demonstrated financial need as determined by the UWG Financial Aid Office.

For Future Applicants:

Students may apply by going to the University of West Georgia Scholarship Portal ([westga.edu/scholarships](https://www.westga.edu/scholarships)) and following the instructions. Currently, the UWG Scholarship Portal is slated to open in early spring, sometime around February, with the application window closing at the end of June.

If you would like to make a gift to help fund this scholarship, check out <https://www.westga.edu/give/how-to-give> for ways you can contribute, including through an online giving form. Be sure to designate the “UWG Retiree Legacy Scholarship” if you wish to support this scholarship. Another option is to go directly to <https://giving.westga.edu/arfs/> where you can choose to donate to ARFS or to the UWG Retiree Legacy Scholarship online. You could also contact Zoë Smith-Owenby, Director of Development, at 678-839-6501 or zsmith@westga.edu if you have any questions about giving to UWG.

Retired Faculty & Staff Tribute Booklet

July 1, 2024 - June 30, 2025

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Note: Presented in this booklet are those retirees we were able to contact who chose to be included. If you are aware of retirees who may have been inadvertently left out of this booklet, please let us know so we can check into recognizing their service in a subsequent year.

A TOAST TO THE NEW UWG RETIREES

By Cecilia Lee

Presented as part of her comments at the 2023 annual retiree reunion on
October 7, 2023

Wishing you a rich life and happy times ahead.

May the grass grow greener in your garden.

May you find what you are looking for.

May each day bring you laughter and excitement.

May you be blessed with love and faithful friends.

Enjoy your success. You deserve it. You have worked
hard. Keep doing what you like. Let others do the rest.

Let the sun brighten your days.

Let the wind caress your face.

Remember the good. Forget the bad. Be wise.

Seize the day and find the magical sense of life.

Cry if you need to, but try to keep a smile.

Do not believe your mirror. Pretend it tells a lie.

Explore the unknown. Let go of the past.

Keep your fire burning. Be amazed. Be surprised.

Discover a new bird in your yard, a new star in the sky.

Be aware. Be bold. This is your chance.

It is a new beginning, take a stance.

Fight against routines. Get off the beaten path.

Charge your creativity. Be inspired.

Break new ground. Reach for the stars.

David J. Boldt

Positions held: Professor, Department Chair

Department: Economics

Years of Service: 1988-2025

Tribute Statement:

As a working economics undergrad, I often spent time between classes hanging around the department where politics, policy, and local quirks were debated. Two of the newest professors then, Mike Raper and Dave Boldt, sparked friendly debates just to give the department a little intellectual workout. No topic was off limits, and strong opinions were always welcome, so long as the conversation could NOT be heard on Front Campus Drive.

Dave had a rare gift in that he could argue with passion and logic while staying friendly with his adversary. That ability to manage disagreement and see multiple sides served him well when he became department chair. Under his leadership, a department full of different personalities grew into a true community.

When I returned as a faculty member, Dave made me feel immediately welcomed even when he was obviously busy. His patience and dedication to students were unmatched. He personally advised every major, led dozens of study-abroad trips (often without extra pay), and co-founded the Economics Forecast Breakfast, now a departmental mainstay.

Dave has been more than a colleague; he's been a mentor, a role model, and a friend. His generosity, integrity, and care for others have left a lasting mark on all of us.

[Joey Smith, Economics Department Chair, UWG]

Plans for Retirement:

- traveling to Germany and Seattle, WA, to visit children
- continuing to volunteer with the St. Vincent de Paul Society
- continuing to volunteer with the USO, meeting military personnel at the Atlanta airport



Felton Buchanan

Position held: Audiovision Technician

Department: Information Technology Services

Years of Service: 2014-2025



Tribute Statement:

Today we honor and celebrate the retirement of Felton Buchanan, a cherished member of the University of West Georgia community. Felton began his journey in Facilities and Grounds, working in the carpentry shop where his skill and craftsmanship quickly set him apart. Over time, his talents and resourcefulness led him to the ITS Department, where he played a vital role in Academic Technology Services.

Felton was more than just a colleague; he was the heart of every room he entered. Known for his ever-present humor and infectious laughter, he brought joy to even the busiest of days. Whether it was a complex technology installation or a custom-built solution for a classroom, Felton approached each project with a blend of creativity, precision, and unwavering dependability. His work didn't just get the job done; it elevated the experience for everyone involved.

As he steps into this well-deserved next chapter, we extend our deepest gratitude for his years of service, dedication, and the countless memories he leaves behind. Felton, you've made an indelible mark on this campus, and while you will be deeply missed, your legacy will remain strong. Wishing you all the best in your retirement

*[Ryan Morgan, Assistant Director of Academic Technology,
Department of Academic Technology and Digital Media Solutions, UWG]*

Plans for Retirement:

- enjoying life
- going fishing and hunting
- doing a little carpentry to assist family members with building projects.

Nancy Capponi, Ed.D., R.N., C.N.E.

Positions held: Associate Professor, Associate Dean

Department: Nursing

Years of Service: 2018-2024



Tribute Statement:

Since beginning her nursing career in 1981, Nancy has exemplified the highest standards of clinical excellence, compassion, and dedication. Nancy brought both expertise and empathy to every role she embraced—whether at the bedside, in the classroom, or mentoring the next generation of nurses and nurse educators.

As a faculty member at THSON, Nancy inspired countless students with her warmth, wisdom, and unwavering belief in their potential. She had a rare gift for making complex concepts understandable and for connecting with students in a way that left a lasting impact. Her classroom wasn't just a place to learn—it was a place to grow, to question, to gain confidence, and to discover what it truly means to care.

Nancy's contributions extended far beyond the classroom. She served with distinction on numerous committees within THSON, always championing quality education and supporting curriculum development, student success, and faculty collaboration. As the Interim Associate Dean of the Undergraduate Program, she provided steady, thoughtful leadership during times of transition, guiding faculty and students with her insight. Her service to the broader UWG community has been equally impactful, with involvement in many university-wide committees, always bringing a voice of wisdom, professionalism, and advocacy for nursing.

*[Laura K. Phillips, EdD, RN, CNE; Associate Professor;
Tanner Health School of Nursing, UWG]*

Plans for Retirement:

- volunteer work in Newnan
- traveling
- work with her church on community activities

Swarna Dutt

Positions held: Professor, Lifetime holder of the Callaway Endowed Chair

Department: Economics

Years of Service: 1994-2025



Tribute Statement:

Dr. Dutt is the kind of person you always want on your team. He has set the gold standard in every way throughout his career at UWG, a place he loyally called home from beginning to end.

As a scholar, Basu was consistently among the department's top publishers, often producing two to three times the required number of peer-reviewed articles, even when we were working hard just to meet the minimums. In the classroom, Basu was nothing short of a legend, routinely ranking among the highest-rated instructors in the department; his courses were always among the first to fill. Students loved his energy, clarity, and care.

He was always the first to volunteer for departmental tasks. Dependable, thoughtful, and endlessly agreeable, Basu is the only colleague I can honestly say I've never heard utter a harsh word. Basu also had an eye for the finer things. He noticed and appreciated details others missed, and he shared that joy with others, often returning from trips with gifts for colleagues.

He loved hosting cookouts where he fed the entire department from his grill. He was a true host, a generous friend, and a gracious mentor. Dr. Dutt made a chair's job not just easier but genuinely enjoyable. No one is more deserving of rest, family, travel, and the good life he's helped so many of us enjoy.

[Joey Smith, Economics Department Chair, UWG]

Plans for Retirement:

- reading
- working out
- learning to cook different dishes

Camilla Gant, Ph.D.

Positions held: Program Director, Department Chair, Professor; Chief Administrative Officer & Executive Director

Departments: Mass Communications; Academic Affairs, UWG Douglasville

Years of Service: 1995-2025

Tribute Statement:

For 30 years, Camilla Gant -- now Professor Emerita -- was a foundational figure in the School of Communication, Film, and Media. Known as a student-centered educator, dedicated teacher, servant leader, respected scholar, tireless advocate, and inspiring mentor, she lived by her personal mantra: "I'm here to help you succeed."

Camilla led the Mass Communications department in several roles and was instrumental in a number of signature achievements, including the Regents' Teaching Excellence Award for Department/Program, a successful ACEJMC pre-accreditation review, and creation of the Mass Communications B.S. degree and Communication Studies Minor.

Camilla became the first African American woman in our unit to earn tenure and the rank of full professor. She championed diversity, equity, and inclusion before these became institutional priorities, and she recruited and mentored a diverse faculty and staff.

In her leadership of Academic Affairs in UWG Douglasville, Camilla worked with public school, college, and business partners, as well as elected officials, to address high-demand regional workforce needs. As the former Dean of the College wrote, Camilla was first among chairs and would be remembered for her visionary leadership.

Camilla's influence extends well beyond our campus. She has published in respected academic journals and presented at national and international conferences. She has also held national leadership roles within ACEJMC Minorities and Communication Division and is an alumna of several distinguished leadership programs.

[Brad Yates, Professor and Dean, School of Communication, Film and Media, UWG; David Jenks, Provost and Senior Vice President, Academic Affairs, Middle Georgia State College; Jane McCandless, founding Dean, College of Social Sciences, UWG]

Plans for Retirement:

- pursuing my passion for teaching the Word of God as pastor of Life On The Rock
- facilitating workshops through my Well Thinking, LLC to help others live, lead, and retire well based on biblical principles and wellbeing science



Scott Groninger

Positions held: Coach; Special Assistant

Departments: Athletics; College of Education,
Continuing Education

Years of Service: 2010-2024



Tribute Statement:

I met Scott for the first time in 2010 when in my role as Senior Associate Athletic Director at UWG, I interviewed him for the position of head coach for the women's basketball team. I was impressed because I felt he would be a good administrator of the women's program and would provide much needed structure for the program. Scott's athletes became part of his family, and he was always receptive to their personal needs and would provide any assistance he could while keeping up with NCAA guidelines.

I always knew that when Scott came into my office, he would bring thoughtful and innovative potential solutions regarding issues rather than simply presenting a problem which needed to be solved.

After the 2021 season, Scott retired as the head coach and moved into the Sports Management Department as a faculty member. He had a dynamic impact on that department's students because he could share personal experiences in line with what they saw as their professional goals.

My personal friendship with Scott has shown me he is a great husband, father, and grandfather, and my wish for him is that his retirement years be fulfilling in every respect.

[Eddie Duffey, retired Associate Athletic Director, UWG]

Plans for Retirement:

- enjoying family
- traveling
- playing golf, tennis, pickleball
- working as an adjunct
- supporting UWG Athletics

Donna Haley

Position held: University Registrar

Department: Office of the Registrar

Years of Service: 2008-2024



Tribute Statement:

Donna Haley joined the University of West Georgia as the Registrar in 2008. I (Ava) worked in the Registrar's Office with Donna as my supervisor for two years, but first worked with her extensively when I was in Admissions for the two years prior. I (Caley) worked with Donna as my supervisor in the Registrar's Office for seven years.

Donna was instrumental in updating and modernizing registration processes -- for example, drop/add was still being handled through paper registration slips when she first arrived, as opposed to self-serve and email requests, the strategies used now. When UWG transitioned to Division 1, she oversaw the changes in eligibility requirements for student athletes.

Donna's exceptional leadership, integrity, and care for the Registrar's Office always shone through. The Registrar's Office -- "my girls (and Kevin!)," as she referred to her colleagues -- will miss her enormously, but we are so grateful to have worked with her and are excited for her to enjoy her well-deserved retirement.

[Ava Elefante, Assistant Registrar - Records and Registration, Registrar's Office, UWG; Caley Motes, Senior Associate Registrar, Registrar's Office, UWG]

Plans for Retirement:

- traveling
- enjoying family
- giving more attention to hobbies and church

Catherine Hendricks

Positions held: Director of Development/
Coordinator of Proposal Development;
Processing Archivist, Special Collections

Department: Ingram Library

Years of Service: 2008-2024



Tribute Statement:

Catherine Hendricks left a lasting impression on Ingram Library through her outstanding organizational skills, her thoughtful insight, and her gracious manner. After graduating with an MA in History in August 2008, Catherine joined the staff of Ingram Library, planning and coordinating the Library's slate of 114 exhibits, programs, and special events. In that same year, the Georgia General Assembly allocated funds to replicate Speaker Thomas B. Murphy's state capitol office as part of the renovation of Ingram Library. Catherine was tapped to lead that effort. The replica of Speaker Murphy's state capitol office opened on the ground floor of Ingram Library on April 19, 2012 with Speaker Murphy's family, former Georgia governors Roy Barnes and Sonny Perdue, and all four living speakers of the Georgia House of Representatives in attendance.

In 2017, Catherine joined the library's Special Collections as Processing Archivist to organize and preserve rare archival materials related to the history of the University of West Georgia and the West Georgia region. Catherine's dedicated and thoughtful care permeated her professional work.

We celebrate you, Catherine, and wish you time with animals and many beach and desert adventures ahead!

[Blynn Olivieri, Professor and Dean, Ingram Library, UWG]

Plans for Retirement:

I hope to take on projects that will benefit my family, friends, and causes that are close to my heart.

Michael Hester

Positions held: Lecturer, Director, Dean,
Coordinator

Departments: Mass Comm and Theater Arts,
Debate, Honors College, African-American
Male Initiative

Years of Service: 1995-2024



Tribute Statement:

Dr. Michael Hester's legacy at the University of West Georgia is one of integrity, advocacy, and inspiration. As a nationally respected debate coach, scholar, and professor, he uplifted the voices of those too often overlooked, never hesitating to champion the underdog. Whether guiding a first-generation student to academic excellence or offering steady mentorship to a young faculty member, Dr. Hester led with both courage and compassion.

Known for his wit, wisdom, and unwavering commitment to equity, Dr. Hester made a practice of keeping his word and helping others pursue their visions with clarity and conviction. He believed in "good trouble," that bold, necessary kind of advocacy that pushes institutions forward, and he did so with a heart rooted in service to others.

To his students, he was a fierce advocate. To his colleagues, he was a loyal friend and an unshakable support system. He reminded us that being "good" isn't just about knowing what's right but doing what's right consistently, humbly, and without applause.

His impact will never be fully measured in titles or tenure but in the lives changed because he fearlessly pushed forward with love and care.

*[Taylor Bryant, Associate Professor, School of Communication, Film, and Media,
UWG]*

Plans for Retirement:

- living in Washington, DC
- continuing work in communication training with a company that has a contract with NSA
- focusing on facilitating debate and curriculum with education NGOs in Jamaica and Rwanda
- appreciating the honor of being the recipient of the Frank Pritchett Alumni Award

Suzanne Horton

Position held: Senior Administrative Assistant

Department: Information Technology Services

Years of Service: 1999-2024



Tribute Statement:

For over 25 years, Suzanne's easy smile and warm personality welcomed and drew people to ITS. She witnessed and embraced an era of technological transformation, all while leaving a lasting personal impact on those around her.

Suzanne served on the Staff Advisory Committee and played a key role in the Best of the West celebrations. As a dedicated member of F.I.T.S. (Fun in IT Services), she worked to build camaraderie and community. Her contributions helped earn ITS the 2017 UWG Team of the Year award, honoring its customer service and interdepartmental collaboration.

One of Suzanne's most treasured roles was supervising student workers. From lab assistants to graduate students, she mentored and supported them with care and dedication, helping many thrive academically and professionally. She also enjoyed capturing important moments on campus, including recording visits from legislators.

Suzanne's versatility and can-do spirit made her an indispensable member of the ITS team. She supported purchasing and budgeting efforts, managed equipment logistics, and provided steady support to ITS administration.

As Suzanne looks ahead to her next adventure, she leaves behind a legacy of service, kindness, and excellence. She will be greatly missed, but her impact will be felt for years to come.

[Jan Cooke, UWG Retired ITS Service Manager, friend and former co-worker]

Plans for Retirement:

- traveling
- taking care of grandchildren
- crocheting
- reading

Perry Kirk

Positions held: Associate Professor, Senior Lecturer

Department: Art

Years of Service: 1998-2025



Tribute Statement:

When Perry came to UWG as Assistant Professor of Art, he overhauled the photography curriculum, updating it to national standards, and made Photo one of Art's most successful programs. In 2011 Perry resigned from his tenured position to pursue other professional endeavors, continuing to teach part-time. In 2014 he returned as a full-time Instructor, later becoming a Lecturer and then a Senior Lecturer.

Perry is recognized as an outstanding teacher and mentor who provided a rigorous yet welcoming learning environment that challenged and encouraged his students. His passion for student success becomes obvious in his course evaluations, which all read similarly, e.g., "He genuinely seems to care about helping you succeed..." and "don't change a thing Professor Kirk." Perry's teaching contributed to significant major growth and numerous alumni practicing photography throughout the southeast, US, and abroad.

Perry has served extensively at UWG and within his community, showing willingness to go above and beyond to assist others. His professional creative practice is also significant, with numerous conference presentations, exhibitions, commissions, publications, and awards at multiple levels. We recognize Perry for his continuing contributions in all areas and, while we will miss him greatly, we wish him all the best "out west."

[Kevin Shunn, Professor of Art, Director of the School of Visual and Performing Arts, UWG]

Plans for Retirement:

- getting a commercial driver license and driving a school bus
- enjoying the lack of humidity in New Mexico
- spending more time with daughter Grace

Brenda McCrary

Position held: Department Assistant

Departments: Music, Dean of Arts and Sciences,
Political Science, University College

Years of Service: 2004-2024



Tribute Statement:

I worked with Brenda for many years and think very highly of her! She was the Department Assistant in the Department of Political Science and greatly benefited faculty and students. She was a valuable asset to our faculty, students, and the University.

The Political Science Department was a very busy place. Hundreds of students streamed into our office asking questions, seeking advice, and looking for assistance. Brenda worked diligently with all these students and the faculty!

Our department profited tremendously from Brenda's service. I once asked my colleagues to offer their opinions about Brenda. Here is what they said:

"Brenda is a very hard working staff member in the department. She promptly provides whatever students and faculty members need. She is well organized... More importantly she is genuinely kind to everybody. She is a real treasure of the department."

"Brenda always goes the extra mile in taking the initiative to keep the Department running smoothly and to help the faculty and students."

"We just plain like her."

Because of her great service, Brenda won the College of Social Sciences employee of the year award! I very much appreciate what Brenda did to benefit the students, faculty, and UWG.

[Robert M. Schaefer, former Chair, Department of Political Science, UWG]

Plans for Retirement

After moving to Florida, I joined a fishing club and am exploring the local area. I am still adjusting to retirement and would like to start traveling in the future.

Faye S. McIntyre

Positions held: Associate Professor, Professor,
Dean

Department: Marketing; Richards College of
Business

Years of Service: 1998-2024



Tribute Statement:

Dean Emerita Faye McIntyre! We have so much for which to thank you! Faye's most visible and outstanding contribution was the new Richards Hall building. Others may deserve thanks as well, but none more than Faye. She was responsible for the building from concept (convincing multiple presidents and provosts that it should be a priority), through design (including working with the BOR and UWG colleagues in planning groups), fundraising (raising more than \$6.9 million in private funds), and construction.

Before I came to Georgia, I was the dean of an AACSB-accredited business school. I aged 10 years when I led that college through the reaccreditation and strategic planning processes. Faye did all that three times as Dean, and she didn't age a day!

Faye (now Professor Emerita, Richards College of Business) built international partnerships for student exchanges, articulation agreements for international student transfers, and collaborative faculty research and exchange program. She worked with faculty to develop, implement, and expand innovative programs, including the nation's first undergraduate SAS certificate for analytics and forecasting, the Southwire Business Leadership program, and multiple certificate offerings.

She secured funding for four new endowed faculty positions, created a Visionary Endowment to provide perpetual funding for key programs, and increased the number of student scholarships, including those for 1st-generation students. Through all this, she continued to teach, publish, and make professional presentations!

*[Beheruz N. Sethna, Regents' Professor of Marketing, Richards College of Business;
former President, UWG]*

Plans for Retirement:

Faye has already started traveling in her retirement. In addition, she has expanded her gardening efforts, tends to her dogs, does some volunteer work, and is just enjoying being able to pursue whatever interests her at any particular time.

Paula M. Neild

Positions held: Academic Advisor, Senior
Departmental Assistant – Admissions

Departments: University College/Center for
Academic Success, Admissions Office

Years of Service: 2008-2025



Tribute Statement:

It's hard to find the words to express just how much Paula Neild means to me and to so many of us here at the University of West Georgia. Paula is truly one of the best people I know: kind, thoughtful, and always willing to lend a listening ear or share her incredible wealth of knowledge.

She's been more than a colleague; she's been a friend, a source of comfort, and a quiet force of inspiration. I will miss our walks and talks, those moments of laughter, encouragement, and honesty that always made the day a little brighter. Paula has a way of checking in at just the right time, reminding you that you're not alone, that someone truly cares.

As she steps into this well-deserved new chapter of life, I want her to know how much she is loved and appreciated. Thank you, Paula, for being exactly who you are. You've left a lasting mark on my heart and on this campus. You will be deeply missed.

[Kia Crowder, Advisor, Department of Academic Excellence, UWG]

Plans for Retirement:

- watching over Margaret and Joseph, my grandchildren
- tackling the household "to do" list
- traveling once my husband retires

Tamra W. Ogletree

Positions held: Professor, Director

Departments: Language and Literacy; Child Development Center

Years of Service: 1997-2024



Tribute Statement:

Dr. Tamra W. Ogletree's long career at the University of West Georgia is marked by a remarkable range of sustained impact. For almost three decades, Tami served in roles ranging from instructor to full professor, director of the Child Development Center, program coordinator, grant writer, service-learning leader, dissertation chair, and trusted mentor to new faculty. Her visionary leadership of the Cherokee Rose Writing Project, an affiliate of the National Writing Project, brought national attention and external funding to UWG, while her tireless work as a literacy consultant reshaped literacy practices across school districts.

Tami's scholarship and teaching were equally influential, integrating culturally responsive pedagogy and social justice into literacy education. She was a force on countless university and community committees, a faculty advisor to Kappa Delta sorority, and a committed mentor to generations of educators. Her colleagues recognize her as an impassioned advocate for literacy and a trusted friend. Whether guiding doctoral candidates, facilitating a writing marathon, or presenting storytelling to elementary students, Tami brought authenticity, warmth, and a fun energy to everything she did. Her legacy will live on in the classrooms, communities, and hearts she touched.

[Jennifer K. Allen, Robert A. Griffin, Bethany L. Scullin, Literacy Education Faculty, UWG]

Plans for Retirement:

- being involved with family
- learning to quilt
- traveling
- reading, reading, reading

Alvin Jerome Paige

Position held: Supervisor

Department: Custodial Services

Years of Service: 2014-2024



Tribute Statement:

Jerome Paige worked at the University of West Georgia for 10 years. I have been fortunate enough to work by his side for 6 of those years. He has always been a mentor that I've looked up to. Although it will be tough to fill his position, he has taught me many things to help me follow successfully in his footprints. He is a US Army Veteran, and we will miss hearing stories from his military days.

Jerome was not only a boss but a friend. We, as a team, will forever be grateful for his leadership and guidance. He has been a pillar of strength for our team, always leading by example and motivating us to achieve our goals. His unwavering commitment to excellence has set a high standard for all of us to follow.

We wish him nothing but the best on his retirement and hope that his days are filled with quality family time, safe travels, and plenty of rest that is well deserved. Thank you for everything you've done for us, Jerome!

[Ashley Parmer, Residential Custodial Supervisor, Facilities Development & Sustainability, UWG]

Plans for Retirement:

- traveling
- spending time with family

Sonja J. Pitts

Position held: Assistant Postal Head

Department: Mail Services

Years of Service: 2003-2024



Tribute Statement:

Before UWG, Sonja and I worked at the Carrollton Post Office. After putting in time at UWG as mail carrier, Sonja came into the mailroom as the window clerk. She loved the customer service window, and she excelled at it. Later she moved to the position of mail clerk. No matter what position Sonja filled she always gave her best.

Sonja and I worked together for eighteen years. We had a great team. I enjoyed working with Sonja, and I have missed our time together since retiring in 2021. Sonja will be missed by the UWG community

[Melba Haynes, retired Supervisor of Mail Services, University Mail Services, UWG]

I worked with Sonja close to 20 years. She was a dedicated, welcoming, pleasant, and fun co-worker. She knew her job duties well and did them with pride. She was good when it came to training others on the job. In our office, we were like family, and we treated our customers like our family and with respect.

Did Sonja want to have fun? Yes! She was up for any fun or mischievous idea. And I loved her for it. Sonja, I loved working with you, and I wish the Best of Retirement Years to come. You deserve it!

[Greta Kirby, retired Assistant Mail Supervisor, University Mail Services, UWG]

Plans for Retirement:

- recovering from health issues, including open heart surgery
- sharing space with her boyfriend
- fishing and camping
- crafting and woodworking
- spending time with family

Jenny Schuessler

Positions held: Professor and Dean

Department: Nursing

Years of Service: 2014-2024



Tribute Statement:

Dr. Jenny Schuessler came to UWG to become dean of the Tanner Health System School of Nursing in 2014. The hiring committee had an easy time choosing her due to her exemplary education and reputation for outstanding work at Auburn.

She reported to me as Provost, and she and I had a productive and positive relationship. Under her leadership, the nursing pre-licensure BSN admission cohorts increased by 67%, ultimately resulting in an increase of graduates sitting for the NCLEX licensure exam by more than 52%. Her scholarly publications, professional activities, and memberships are too numerous to list. She also was successful obtaining external grants, building endowment donations, and guiding the School through accreditation by the American Association of Colleges of Nursing. Her crowning achievement in leading the THSSON toward greater recognition was seeing the School awarded a Center of Excellence by the National League of Nursing. Her personal achievement was earning the Excellence in Leadership award from UWG.

In sum, Jenny's leadership skills were incomparable; she had the rare and amazing ability to lead, to identify clear goals, and then to inspire the faculty and staff of the School of Nursing to not only achieve those goals but also to feel good about doing so. It was always a delight for me to visit the School because of the widespread happiness factor that was tangible

[Micheal Crafton, former provost and Professor Emeritus of English, UWG]

Plans for Retirement:

I am happily 10 months into retirement which has been exactly what I hoped for -- spending more time with my husband, Wesley, my children, and my 87 year old mom. However, the very best part of retirement is being Jenna, the traveling grandmother, to my 4 grandchildren, all 3 and under.

Dr. Sharon Seneca

Position held: Lead Administrator

Department: Human Resources

Years of Service: 2019-2024



Tribute Statement:

Dr. Sharon Seneca's career has been marked by dedication, compassion, and an unwavering commitment to higher education and those she served. She began her journey at Columbus State University as an Admission Specialist, where she not only helped countless students achieve their educational goals but also achieved her own, earning her EdD in Higher Education/Curriculum and Leadership. Her academic journey is complemented by her bilingual fluency in English and Spanish.

At UWG, Sharon first served as a Social Equity Support Specialist in the Title IV Department before transitioning to the Office of Human Resources as a Compliance Human Resources Business Partner, specializing in leave administration. She was more than just a colleague; she was the office's motherly figure, always ready with a needle and thread, a kind word, or a remedy for whatever ailed you. She balanced her professional achievements with a rich family life as the proud mother of four and grandmother to many. Now living in Texas, Sharon enjoys line dancing and remains active in her sorority, Delta Sigma Theta. Her legacy at UWG is one of mentorship, care, and professionalism, and she leaves behind an indelible mark on all who had the privilege to work with her.

[Lauren Niedringhaus, Benefits Consultant, Human Resources, UWG]

Plans for Retirement:

- living my vida loca and having a great time

Spencer J. Slattery

Positions held: Professor, Department
Chairperson

Department: Chemistry

Years of Service: 1993-2025



Tribute Statement:

On the occasion of Dr. Slattery's retirement after 32 years of service, 32+ alumni attended in person. They paid tribute to his enormous impact as a teacher, advisor, and mentor, which I have personally observed for 31 years.

Spencer taught Structure and Bonding, a pictorial introduction to chemical bonding, the essence of Chemistry. He provided deep insights to his students. He carried out many demonstrations in introductory courses and is famous for his "hydrogen balloons" and "potato guns" that literally had a bang!

Spencer was an outstanding research mentor, practicing the de facto mission of Chemistry that undergraduate research is key in the preparation of the next generation of STEM professionals. His mentees over the years have pursued illustrious careers. His efforts in teaching and undergraduate research were well-funded by the National Science Foundation and the American Chemical Society.

No matter how busy, Spencer found the time to interact with any visitor. These were mostly students, who enjoyed his long office hour and affectionately coined a new unit of time, a "Slattery," about 30 minutes! I also sought his wise counsel on many academic and student matters.

He served as the Chair of Chemistry for a decade. He was a calming presence during some turbulent times. What sums up his persona is that in all of 31 years I have known him, I saw him upset just once!

[Farooq Khan, Professor of Chemistry, UWG]

Plans for Retirement:

- working at a hardware store somewhere
- fly fishing
- spending time with grandchildren

Sherry Shelnutt Smith

Positions Held: Senior Secretary, Executive Assistant to the Assistant VP; Departmental Assistant, Coordinator, Assistant Director

Departments: Campus Planning & Development; Auxiliary Services

Years of Service: 1999-2024



Tribute Statement:

Sherry served in many roles throughout her career with UWG: Facilities Associate, Executive Secretary, Card Office Supervisor, Marketing Manager, Customer Relations & Marketing Manager, and Assistant Director over UWG Bookstore. Throughout, she always had a keen ability to listen carefully to others, determine their needs, and assist them with meaningful solutions. She earned the trust and respect of students across campus. She also spoke at Orientations, making parents and students feel much more comfortable with the upcoming transition.

Sherry had many Student Assistants whom she led and mentored. Sherry's SAs quickly became confident, effective and vital to ongoing team success. Those students have gone on to be very successful in their careers; most still stay in contact with Sherry today.

As Sherry's direct supervisor, I enjoyed comradery with Sherry. We often had difficult conversations and did not always agree, but at the end of the day our relationship was always intact and typically stronger than ever. I knew her intentions were always to help me and the team continuously improve.

I am certain that Sherry retired with a well-earned sense of accomplishment and contribution to not only student success, but to the success of all those who had the privilege of working with her.

[Mark Reeves. Interim AVP Campus Services and Deputy CBO, UWG]

Plans for Retirement:

- reading and being a member of a local book club
- spending time with grandbabies
- relaxing on the farm

Robin Strain

Position held: Clinical Instructor

Department: Early Childhood Through
Secondary Education

Years of Service: 2015-2025



Tribute Statement:

As Robin Strain retires, she leaves behind not just a career, but a legacy built on a deep love for teaching. Throughout her years in education, her greatest passion was working with future educators, instilling in them not only the knowledge and skills to teach, but also the understanding that true impact begins with relationships.

She made it her mission for every student to feel seen, valued, understood, and loved—more than just a name on a roster. She created an environment where connection came first, and she hopes her students carry that same practice into their own classrooms: that every child deserves to feel they matter, are valued, and have purpose.

Robin Strain retires with gratitude, knowing that the relationships she built will continue to ripple outward through the countless students her students will go on to teach and inspire. She leaves with the hope that her students carry forward this message: **Be the difference. Build relationships. Lead with love. And always remember that the impact of a kind and caring teacher can last a lifetime.**

[Ashley Poole, Clinical Assistant Professor, Co-Director of the Office of Field Experience, COE, UWG]

Plans for Retirement:

- traveling
- spending time with grandchildren

In Memoriam (2024-2025)

Dr. James Agan, Director, Continuing Education

Dr. Terrell "Terry" Gray Bailey, Jr., Assistant Professor, Mathematics & Computer Science

Myra Lee Denney, Assistant Postal Services Supervisor, University Post Office

Phyllis Lewis Fountain, Director, Development & Alumni Services

John Frevert, Counselor and Assistant Director for Training, Counseling Center

Rayford Delano Gibson, Maintenance Worker, Facilities & Grounds

Cora Yearty Holloman, Technical Assistant, Library

Jackie "Maxine" House, Office Manager, Development & Alumni Services

Dr. Judith Ann King, Cataloging, Ingram Library

Beverly Williams Phillips, Greenhouse and Groundskeeper, Facilities & Grounds

Linda Picklesimer, Director, Student Activities and Campus Center

Loretta Hurley Smith, Nurse, Health Services

Martha Sue Lambert Smith, Records Coordinator, Admissions

Dr. James Steve Taylor, Professor and Chair, History



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