

FRONTIERS

SPARTANBURG METHODIST COLLEGE

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FALL 2023



STUDENTS
FIRST,
STUDENTS
ALWAYS

IT'S ALL ABOUT THE STUDENTS, AND ALWAYS SHOULD BE



FRONTIERS

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SPARTANBURG METHODIST COLLEGE

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Every college strives to provide a well-rounded education to give their students a brighter future. At SMC, that commitment is actually built into our DNA from our founder, Dr. David English Camak. His goal from the start was to educate the local workforce to help them advance, which in turn would provide better employees for the local mills.

From that humble beginning, we've grown to a full-service, liberal arts college providing 1,000 students the education they need to pursue a career. But, we haven't lost our commitment to developing students into better prepared professionals.

In this issue, you'll read about our students first, students always vision and how everything we do is focused on providing everyone the opportunity to achieve their goal of a college degree. You'll learn about our new psychology

bachelor's degree, providing an in-demand academic pursuit for our students. You'll also see how one of our professional development courses gives students the tools and experience they need to work in a group setting to solve a business problem.

We'll also introduce you to some students and graduates and share some of their successes and passions, as well as some achievements and programs our faculty members are completing. Finally, you'll get some fascinating profiles of alumni, staff, and more, including our own Trustee Marilyn Murphy's brush with the silver screen.

We hope you enjoy this year's issue of "Frontiers," and as always, we thank you for your continued support of Spartanburg Methodist College.

Sincerely,

W. Scott Cochran
President

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WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO OPEN A DOOR?



You Can Provide the Key!

- Barriers, beyond tuition, to completing a college degree: cost of books, access to technology, housing, meals, and transportation.
- The SMC Annual Fund supports students needing help covering these costs while also enhancing student life, academic advising, and career services.

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Dr. Ethan Birney



Dr. Dalicia Raymond



Kris Neely



Karin Tillotson



Chris Irving

FACULTY, STAFF RECOGNIZED FOR THEIR SUCCESSES, COMMITMENT TO SMC

SMC recognized three faculty members and two staff members for their dedication to educating our students and furthering the mission of the College.

Each year, SMC faculty recognize three of their colleagues for their commitment to the students, their profession, and their chosen discipline.

This year, the faculty award winners are Dr. Ethan Birney, the Archie Vernon and Margaret Wannamaker Huff Faculty Award; Dr. Dalicia Raymond, the South Carolina Independent Colleges and Universities (SCICU) Excellence in Teaching Award; and Kris Neely, the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHEM) Exemplary Teacher award.

SMC also recognizes two staff members for their commitment to the advancement of our mission. This year's winners are Karin Tillotson, Accounts Payable Specialist, for the Dr. James S. Barrett Memorial Award and Chris Irvin, Facilities Account Manager, for the J.L. Geddis Award.

Birney is a history professor with nearly 20 years of experience as an educator. Prior to SMC, he taught at the University of St. Andrews and Bob Jones University. He earned his bachelor's and master's degrees in history from Bob Jones and his Ph.D. in medieval history from St. Andrews. The Huff Award honors an SMC faculty member who exemplifies outstanding professional qualifications and teaching ability. It was founded in 1970 as an endowed fund by Dr. A.V. Huff, Jr., a former member of the SMC Board of Trustees, and his wife, Kate, in memory of his parents, Archie Vernon and Margaret Wannamaker Huff.

Raymond is an English professor who began teaching college in 2011. She has two bachelor's degrees and a master's in English in literature and culture from Oregon State University and a Ph.D. in English, Medieval Studies, from the University of New Mexico. She taught at both of her alma mater colleges prior to joining

SMC. The SCICU Excellence in Teaching Award recognizes leading faculty members at each of the organization's member schools. SCICU is a charitable organization that represents 20 liberal arts institutions in South Carolina, providing fundraising, scholarship funds, and research.

Neely has taught art at SMC since 2016 and has also served as the director of the interdisciplinary studies program as well as interim provost during his tenure. Prior to SMC, Neely served in various roles at Wofford College, including executive director of the Success Initiative, assistant academic dean, assistant dean for studio art, director of residence life, director of project development in student affairs, and assistant professor and coordinator for the studio art program. The GBHEM Exemplary Teaching Award recognizes excellence in teaching, civility, and concern for students, institution, and the community. GBHEM is the leadership development agency of the United Methodist Church.

The Dr. James S. Barrett Memorial Award recognizes individuals who go out of their way to assist or support fundraising efforts. Barrett was a past president of SMC who organized the first fundraising campaign for the school and encouraged the practice of professional fundraising to help support the mission.

The J.L. Geddis award, voted on by staff, recognizes a staff member who has been at SMC for three years and displays excellence in creativity, leadership, teamwork, initiative and who makes special contributions to the institution. Geddis served many roles at SMC in his 41-year career, including business manager, vice president for business affairs, faculty member, and men's golf coach. ■

Spartanburg Methodist College is About to Get Medieval Thanks to a Recent Grant



Don your armor and take up your sword. Medieval studies are set to make a big splash at a new conference at Spartanburg Methodist College, thanks to a recent grant awarded to

Dr. Dalicia Raymond.

The Southeastern Medieval Association (SEMA) recently awarded Dr. Raymond the Lorraine Kochanske Stock Award for Innovation in Medieval Studies, an endowment established by SEMA to support the field.

“I was extremely excited and honored to have my proposal for an undergraduate research conference win the grant. The Southeastern Medieval Association’s support for this event reflects a broader recognition in higher education and academia of how important it is to provide undergraduate students opportunities to engage in research and professionalization,” Dr. Raymond said. “I am thrilled to be able to hold such an event at Spartanburg Methodist College and to engage with students both from our college and from other higher education institutions.”

With the generous grant of \$1,500, Dr. Raymond aims to organize Medieval Matters, an undergraduate medieval research conference, providing a platform for students to present their academic work, engage in hands-on learning experiences, and cultivate a lasting interest in medieval studies.

SEMA is a regional professional organization focused on scholarship and teaching in Medieval Studies. Their mission is to “promote the study and enjoyment of the Middle Ages by students at every level of expertise.” Their annual conference serves as a platform for medievalists to share scholarly research and collaborate on pedagogical approaches, and SEMA publishes medieval research in their esteemed journal, *Medieval Perspectives*.

The first medieval literature class Dr. Raymond took generated a spark in her for medieval studies. “Medieval literature provides us a window through which we can explore what the concerns, values, interests, imaginings, and beliefs were for the people of this era, and we often discover that those basics aren’t all that different from those of modern society,” Dr. Raymond said.

Even as a child, she enjoyed books and television programs set in King Arthur’s court. Still, her real start in the field of medieval studies was during her senior year of college at Oregon State University when she took a Medieval Literature course focused on the theme of magic.

“I was fortunate to have an incredible professor, Dr. Tara Williams, who brought the subject to life for me and particularly encouraged students to consider the connections between the medieval and the modern,” Dr. Raymond said. The Middle Ages is a period that can often be challenging for students to connect to, but Dr. Raymond’s way of bringing its literature and culture to life offers students avenues to think more deeply about both the Middle Ages and how the issues of that time period echo in their own lives and modern society.

The award named for long-time SEMA member Lorraine Stock aims to provide financial support for research travel, scholarly materials, innovative teaching methods, and publication subvention. Its overarching goal is to foster innovation across various fields within Medieval Studies. Annually, SEMA grants awards of up to \$1,500 to deserving applicants.

Dr. Raymond’s project was one of three chosen to receive funding this year.

Dr. Raymond had the opportunity to apply for the award after being informed of it by Dr. Natalie Grinnell, a medieval studies professor at Wofford College and a member of the SEMA Awards Committee. The application process involved submitting a detailed proposal outlining how the grant funds would be utilized.

The conference Dr. Raymond will be developing, and hosting, will provide undergraduate students with a platform to present their academic work through traditional paper panel sessions and a lightning research presentation contest. Additionally, participants will be able to engage in hands-on learning experiences through material culture workshops, partake in a medieval dinner, and attend a modern adaptation of a medieval play (performed by SMC’s theater program).

Workshops may include chainmail making, manuscript illuminated letters, medieval calligraphy, and papermaking. Dr. Raymond also plans to collaborate with Spartanburg Methodist College’s professional development students to assist with organizing the conference and offer internship opportunities. The conference will take place at Spartanburg Methodist College on March 16, 2024.

While the conference welcomes undergraduate students from all fields of study, Dr. Raymond intends to recruit participants from colleges and universities in the Upstate region of the Carolinas. The primary objective is to cultivate a lasting interest in medieval studies among students, regardless of their majors or intended career paths, while also facilitating their professional growth.

Recognizing that many undergraduate students may have limited experience with academic conferences, she plans to provide supplemental guidance to potential submitters. This guidance will include assistance in understanding and interpreting Call for Papers (CFP) documents and pre-recorded video training offering advice on writing conference paper abstracts and navigating the submission process.

Dr. Raymond’s aspiration for the conference is to leave a lasting impact on the attendees. She hopes the experience will inspire attendees to continue exploring the medieval period’s history, literature, and culture. She also wants to instill confidence in presenting and completing research, regardless of a student’s career path.

SMC Professor Named Associate Publisher for National Publishing Collaborative



SMC English Professor Dr. Kristen Welch recently added a prestigious title to her resume as she was named an associate publisher for the Writing Across the Curriculum Clearinghouse. Dr. Welch, who also serves as the director of The Write Place at SMC, said she is excited to help the Clearinghouse advance the use of writing across curriculum at

higher education institutions.

Dr. Welch will serve as the associate publisher for marketing and advancement. In her new role, she will oversee the social media accounts for the organization, post to listservs, and collaborate with the other editors to discuss ways to improve the services of the Clearinghouse.

“It’s really exciting to be at a place in my career where this national organization is willing to trust me with their social media accounts,” she said.

The Clearinghouse was established in 1997 to provide open access to teaching resources and scholarly publications. It is supported by 180 scholars who serve in various editorial roles, including as journal and book series editors, editorial staff, reviewers, and editorial board members. Dr. Welch said it’s been wonderful to become a part of that network.

“As I’ve worked with the other editors, I have gotten to know them as a kind, welcoming group of people,” she said. “We are all interested in sharing as much as we can with students and other professors on ways to use writing to help develop critical thinking skills.”

Dr. Welch has been an advocate of writing across the curriculum since studying it in graduate school at the University of Arizona. She carried that commitment into her career as an educator.

“I have drawn heavily on the WAC Clearinghouse resources as the director of writing centers at previous institutions and here at SMC,” she said.

The assignment not only reflects positively on the commitment and dedication Dr. Welch has for the art of writing, but it also reflects well on SMC as she builds her recognition in the community. For more information on the resources offered by the Clearinghouse, visit wac.colostate.edu.

The Power of Education: A Personal Journey



Growing up in a single-wide mobile home, Sarah Frederickson faced numerous challenges that tested her resilience and determination. Life was far from easy, as Sarah’s family often struggled to afford basic necessities like heat, running water, and even food.

However, despite the hardships she faced, one place that provided solace and hope was school. The educators who guided her through those formative years became beacons of light in her life. Their kindness, care, and stability made an impact on her, shaping her desire to become a teacher from a young age.

“In junior high, my teachers recognized my potential and invited me to participate as a math tutor in an after-school program for my peers,” Frederickson said. “At the tender age of thirteen, I discovered my passion for teaching and embarked on a journey to educate others.”

Sarah aspired to become the first to attend college. She found herself at the University of the Ozarks, a small liberal arts college she mistakenly applied to, thinking it was the renowned College of the Ozarks. As a first-generation college student, the learning curve was steep, and self-confidence in her abilities was scarce.

“Stepping into that first college classroom felt like stepping onto holy ground—an unimaginable privilege that seemed out of reach,” she said.

Driven by a desire to prove herself, Frederickson vowed to work harder than anyone else. She wanted to blend in, hoping her professors wouldn’t discern her perceived inadequacies; however, despite her best efforts, the faculty not only noticed her but also nurtured her growth.

“The quality education I received at the University of the Ozarks was accompanied by an abundance of love and care,” Frederickson recalled. “Through both traumatic experiences and moments of triumph, these remarkable educators lifted me from my lowest points and celebrated my achievements wholeheartedly.”

To this day, she maintains regular communication with several of her educators, a testament to the lasting impact they have had on her life.

“Now, as an educator myself, I feel a deep sense of responsibility to honor the incredible individuals who shaped my own educational journey,” Frederickson said.

Teaching is not merely a job to her, it is her calling—a calling to make a difference in the lives of students, particularly those from underprivileged backgrounds and those who, like her, have faced adversity. She yearns to alter the trajectory of their lives positively, just as her own was transformed.

That is why Frederickson is so passionate about SMC. Many of the faculty and staff at SMC share similar stories of overcoming obstacles, and it is through their shared experiences that they find the empathy and understanding to support their students.

“We know the power of being heard and seen, and we strive to provide that for our students,” she said.

SMC PROFESSOR DELVES INTO SEPARATE BAPTIST MOVEMENT IN NEW BOOK

By Radhika Vaid, Staff Writer



SMC Professor of Religion, Dr. J. Kristian Pratt, culminated a years-long project with his recently published book that delves into the history of Abbotts Creek Baptist Church, offering new insights into North Carolina history, early American history, and Baptist theology and practice in America.

“Baptists in Early North America,” uncovers the history of the church, through access to newly discovered documents that provide a deeper understanding of its past.

Abbotts Creek Baptist Church, in High Point, NC, was the second Separate Baptist church in the American South. The Separate Baptists are a movement that began after the first Great Awakening and became the revivalist Baptist stream that influences Baptists in the South to this day.

The southern Separate Baptist movement, often called the “Sandy Creek Tradition,” helped Baptists spread throughout the South and become one of the dominant denominations in early American history. Separate Baptists are more moderate than their Calvinist counterparts, encouraging anyone to preach and allowing women in leadership roles in the church.

To date, Dr. Pratt’s book is the most in-depth exploration of a church from this tradition. It provides a unique window into the life of this tradition from its origin to the schisms that developed in the 1830s.

Many churches in this tradition, including Abbott’s Creek, eventually split into Primitive Baptist and Missionary Baptist churches – the two Abbott’s Creek Baptist churches sit across the road from each other today.

Dr. Pratt’s research journey began in 2013 and involved transcribing nearly 400 handwritten pages of church minutes

from 1783-1836 found in the archives at Wake Forest University. He also annotated them and provided notes and context

The book “Baptists in Early North America” has a dual purpose: to provide future scholars with access to previously inaccessible primary sources and to contextualize the story of Abbott’s Creek Baptist Church within the larger narrative of religion in America.

“In this present volume devoted to the Sandy Creek tradition, as reflected in Abbott’s Creek, North Carolina, we are given a never-before-seen collection of resources illustrating one of the great traditions of Baptist life in America. The importance of these records cannot be overestimated.”

It also explores the influence of the Regulator Rebellion on Baptists in North Carolina, the development of statewide Baptist organizations in the state, and the role of slaves in society and church communities.

The book discusses key figures in early American Baptist history, such as Shubal Stearns, Daniel Marshall, Martha Stearns Marshall, and Samuel Wait. Additionally, it addresses questions regarding the establishment of denominational colleges and explores the social and religious implications of church discipline during the nineteenth century. The book also examines the beginnings of the Primitive Baptist movement.

Dr. William H. Brackney, a prominent scholar in Baptist history, served as the editor of the series. In his introduction, he wrote:

“In this present volume devoted to the Sandy Creek tradition, as reflected in Abbott’s Creek, North Carolina, we are given a never-before-seen collection of resources illustrating one of the great traditions of Baptist life in America. The importance of these records cannot be overestimated.”

Dr. Pratt is excited to see his work adding to the history of the Separate Baptist movement.

“I am thrilled that my book is finally being published. It has been a long journey, and it feels great to see it out in the world and to have the opportunity to share my work with others,” Dr. Pratt said. “However, there is also a bit of nervousness as I eagerly await the reception and feedback from readers.” ■

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SMC ONLINE

Providing an Alternative Path to Success

By Tori Rose, Contributing Writer

Tiffany DeMint, like many others, wasn't able to pursue her dream of a college degree in the traditional manner. Thanks to SMC Online, she achieved her dream and realized her passion.

“I chose to attend SMC Online because, as the sole provider for my family, I work full-time and had a three-year-old at the time of enrollment,” she said. “It would have been difficult to work class times around my availability.”

Because of the flexibility of the online program, DeMint completed her bachelor's degree in criminal justice, psychology, and professional development in May.

DeMint explained that the asynchronous program is a great alternative to on-campus classes and was highly beneficial in helping her achieve her goals. Working solely online can be isolating at times, but it helps to have good professors to pick you up when you need it.

“There have been supportive professors every step of the way, and the curriculum is challenging. It sets you up for success if you take it seriously,” DeMint said. “I'm still learning incredible things and growing every day with this program.”

SMC's Camak Core was another selling point of the program for DeMint. The Camak Core is a collection of classes that teach you the necessities of

being a professional. Skills like professional communication, critical thinking, problem solving, project management, and collaboration are all things employers look for in college graduates, and SMC Online teaches these skills alongside your academic focus from the comfort of your own home.

“SMC's Camak Core program helped me realize where my true passion lies and has sent me in a direction that I know will be fulfilling for the rest of my life,” she said. After SMC, DeMint plans on pursuing her master's degree in public administration and hopes to run a non-profit organization.

Everyone's story is different, and, for some, the traditional college experience may not work. SMC Online provides those non-traditional students the opportunity to get the same quality SMC education while providing the flexibility to do it on their own time and schedule.

“I would recommend this program to anyone who is not able to attend traditionally for any reason,” DeMint

said. “SMC Online shows us that just because we have barriers doesn't mean we still can't achieve our dreams!” ■

Tiffany DeMint



“I WOULD RECOMMEND THIS PROGRAM TO ANYONE WHO IS NOT ABLE TO ATTEND TRADITIONALLY FOR ANY REASON... SMC ONLINE SHOWS US THAT JUST BECAUSE WE HAVE BARRIERS DOESN'T MEAN WE STILL CAN'T ACHIEVE OUR DREAMS!”

SMC Art Program Sculpting Brighter Future for Students

By Tori Rose, Contributing Writer

While art can be a rewarding career path, it comes with challenges. Many students struggle to develop their portfolio, which is vital to branding themselves as an artist. For this reason, many quit before ever finding their niche.

SMC Art Professor Kris Neely is dedicated to showing students the skills and tools they'll need to succeed, making it easier for students to transfer into four-year programs or land jobs in the field.

"My favorite part of working with SMC's art department is seeing students succeed," Neely said. "Every student is different; some follow the art path, and some decide to go in a different direction. I'm just grateful to be able to help students figure out their path in life. It is very rewarding."

Neely came to SMC in 2016 after teaching at his alma mater, Wofford College. He admired SMC's mission and willingness to serve and joined the College. He enjoys working with students from all backgrounds and explained that his number one priority is making sure students have opportunities in art. He enjoys working with students from all backgrounds and explained that his number one priority is making sure students have opportunities in art.

Additionally, the "starving artist" stereotype discourages students from pursuing art. According to Neely, they believe they will go broke unless they are Van Gogh or Picasso. Contrary to this belief, more businesses than ever are hiring artists in today's visual world. Digital elements like advertisements, logos, and websites all require artistic vision, creating more opportunities for art students.

"Even if you can't draw, art teaches skills that are transferable to any workplace. Project management, critical thinking, and visual communication are all skills found in art that employers are looking for in new hires," Neely explained.

Within the past couple of years, Neely has heard progressively more success stories from SMC's art students. More are seeing a smoother transition into the workforce or other colleges. Neely

credits this to the College's dedication to student success, creating classes that integrate well with different concentrations and teaching the skills they need to be successful in any field.

One example Neely points to is Austin Grant. Grant got his associate degree from SMC and was among the first students

to take the College's graphic design course. After leaving SMC, Grant transferred to USC Upstate and completed his graphic design degree.

"SMC gave me the boost I needed to continue my art career," Grant said.

He now works as a graphic designer for WSPA, the CBS television affiliate in Spartanburg.

Gracie Pall is another recent success story. Pall, a very self-motivated student with a strong

personal style, started the Art Club at SMC while completing her associate degree. She went on to earn her bachelor's at Converse University, where she now works in marketing.

Amber Nix started as a dual enrollment student at USC Upstate, completed her associate degree at SMC, and transferred to Converse College for art education. She now works at Union High School as an art teacher.

"Art education carries significant regulatory restrictions in South Carolina, and Nix's ability to easily move between programs indicates the versatility and rigor of SMC's curriculum," Neely said.

Professor Neely and the art program at SMC are dedicated to providing opportunities for students to thrive, no matter their talent or background. He added that he sees many more success stories in the future.

"My focus is on the students. I like to make a connection and guide them as best I can throughout their scholastic career," Neely said. ■



SMC Art Instructor Kris Neely (center) teaches students a new technique for artwork.

NEW PSYCHOLOGY DEGREE EXPANDS SMC'S FOUR-YEAR OFFERINGS

Mary Jane Farmer, Ph.D.



The study of the human mind is increasingly more popular with a generation of students who are more focused on mental health than any in history.

SMC is meeting that need with its new Bachelor of Arts in Psychology degree.

The four-year degree expands on the popularity of the College's current psychology concentration in its interdisciplinary bachelor's degree program and gives students a degree more specifically focused on psychology.

"Psychology is a diverse field of study that provides opportunities in a wide array of career paths," said Mary Jane Farmer, Ph.D., chair of the Psychology and Sociology department at SMC. "We're excited to provide our students with this new degree program and expand their opportunities."

While reviewing potential new degree programs, Dr. Farmer and her team noted that the number of students taking the psychology concentration had nearly tripled since it was introduced in 2020. That popularity led them to propose the new psychology-specific degree. The field is increasingly popular nationwide, with the Bureau of Labor Statistics predicting a 6 to 8 percent growth in job openings in the field by the end of the decade.

"I am very excited about the new degree being added to the curriculum," said



Madison McCall, an SMC sophomore from Spartanburg. "Being able to get a degree in psychology from SMC is great because I can pursue the education I want at a place that I love so much."

Dr. Farmer said the psychology degree provides the tools and learning needed for a career in psychology, but it also provides concepts that can be used in any field.

The program provides students a more in-depth psychology program. Students will complete 36 hours - or 12 classes - specifically focused on psychology courses for the new degree.

The new psychology degree will include SMC's unique professional

development curriculum, the Camak Core. The Camak Core is a required set of courses that focuses on teaching students professional skills such as leadership, teamwork, problem-solving, and professional communication.

With the psychology degree and the Camak Core skills, students will be better prepared to enter the workforce in a number of professions, including therapy, human resources, education, management, and more.

The Bachelor of Arts in Psychology is the third individual bachelor's degree added since

SMC began offering four-year degrees in 2019. It will also be offered in the College's SMC Online program. ■

"PSYCHOLOGY IS A DIVERSE FIELD OF STUDY THAT PROVIDES OPPORTUNITIES IN A WIDE ARRAY OF CAREER PATHS."

SMC SENIOR LEAVES LEGACY OF HELPING FIRST-GENERATION STUDENTS

By Tori Rose, Contributing Writer

SMC senior, Joshua Golden '23, leaned on his own experience to create a new resource to help first-generation students adjust to life in college.

Joshua Golden



Approximately 45 percent of SMC's students are the first in their family to attend college. Most have no idea where to start and what resources are available to them. One SMC student set out to address that challenge and help first-generation students thrive.

Golden, a first-generation student himself, dedicated

his senior Capstone project to creating an organization at the College to provide resources and direction for first-generation students.

"What's funny is that I didn't even know I was a first-generation college student until my junior year; however, I think back to the challenges I faced in my first couple years, and they were the same that all first-gens face," he explained. This is where the faculty and staff of SMC stepped in.

"They helped me through my journey and even went the extra mile to help me with things they didn't have to," Golden said. "That is a core reason I graduated with both my associate and bachelor's degrees."

Having people to help him on his journey through college was Golden's primary motivator for starting Project:1GEN, a student-led club that provides first-generation students guidance, direction, and a network of peers to help them succeed. Students can learn about free resources, such as tutoring and

counseling to help them acclimate to college life. They can also learn about ways to get involved in campus organizations to meet more people and expand their support network.

Golden pitched the idea as his senior Capstone project and, with the help of his professors, organized a six-week schedule of fun and informative social events focused on first-generation students. The senior Capstone is the culmination of the professional development program all SMC bachelor's students take. They create, manage, and present a project to demonstrate the professional development skills they've learned.

"THE CHALLENGES I FACED IN MY FIRST COUPLE YEARS ... WERE THE SAME THAT ALL FIRST-GENS FACE."

Golden explained that he had two simple goals when creating Project:1GEN: to gain dedicated members and to shed light on campus resources, both of which he said he achieved. However,

he explained that he has even higher hopes for the club's future.

"I hope Project:1GEN will develop into one of the biggest, most well-known student organizations on campus. I would also like to see this club do events with other colleges, make some new traditions, and create more student leadership opportunities," he said.

Golden's work on Project:1GEN earned him an invitation to join other students from the area at a Spartanburg City Council meeting where Mayor Jerome Rice and the city council declared November 8, 2022, as First-Generation College Celebration Day. He said he was honored to be a part of and witness the recognition by the city council.

“I felt like a part of history. Honestly, this is probably one of the first moments where Project:1GEN started getting recognized,” he said.

Amid the creation of Project:1GEN, SMC also launched the SMC First initiative, which also hosts events to introduce first-generation students to campus resources. This initiative included First Tuesdays for First Gen pop-up events.

**“ONE GOAL WILL ALWAYS BE THE SAME:
TO INTRODUCE FIRST-GENERATION
STUDENTS TO THE SUPPORT THEY NEED.”**

While Golden is moving on from SMC, the club will continue with its new president, rising sophomore Miracle Carpenter. While she works on her associate in science, Carpenter explained that she looks forward to being able to lead the club.

“As the president of this club, I would love to host more engaging events and provide more opportunities for students to learn about the resources on campus,” Carpenter stated. “One goal will always be the same: to introduce first-generation students to the support they need to be successful in college.” ■



Josh Golden (second row, white SMC sweatshirt) joined classmates Alberto Hernandez (left and behind Josh) and Livingston Hawkins (right of Josh) as Spartanburg Mayor Jerome Rice declared Nov. 8, 2022, as First-Generation College Celebration Student Day.



SMC Students Immersed in Culture, Language in Spain

Learning a foreign language takes time, commitment, and most of all practice. What better place to get a lot of practice speaking Spanish than in Spain? A group of students from Spartanburg Methodist College recently had that opportunity on an immersion trip to the country.

Dr. Michael Burriss, a Spanish professor at SMC, organized the trip to give students the opportunity to experience the country's culture and cuisine personally while getting a great opportunity to further learn the language.

"I HOPED THAT THE STUDENTS WOULD LEARN THAT THERE IS A GREAT, BIG WORLD OUTSIDE OF SPARTANBURG AND SPARK A LIFELONG PASSION FOR TRAVEL AND SELF-DISCOVERY."

"I hoped that the students would learn that there is a great, big world outside of Spartanburg and spark a lifelong passion for travel and self-discovery," Dr. Burriss said.

Along with Dr. Kate Roark, Dr. Burriss took the group to San Sebastián and Barcelona for 10 days. Students pictured who participated in the trip were (left to right) Zayani Williams-Villa, Esmeralda Ayala Torres, Hannah Autry, Alberto Hernandez, Kiara Rodriguez, and Ximena Ramirez. ■



SMC HISTORY CLUB GETS IN-PERSON LESSON ON TRIP TO CAPITAL

History lessons are often better learned in person than from books. Students in the SMC History Club took that approach on a trip to Columbia, SC, this spring, touring the state Capitol and taking the Journey to Freedom tour.

Dr. Ethan Birney and Dr. Pamela Hutto led the trip, which provided students with a chance to learn about two significant players in the fight for human rights in South Carolina. The Journey to Freedom tour features stops at the Mann-Simons Site and the Modjeska Monteith Simkins House.

The Mann-Simons Site shows the history of one of South Carolina's first entrepreneurial African American families who fought to make their business ventures successful while navigating the racial issues of the times. The Modjeska Monteith Simkins House was home to one of the state's greatest social justice advocates who fought for public education, health, and human rights.

During the trip, students also learned about government on a tour of the state Capitol building. They were able to visit where the leaders of South Carolina develop and implement the laws and regulations that guide our lives.

Participants on the trip to the Capitol pictured above include: (Front row, left to right) Dr. Ethan Birney, Adrian Cathcart, and Cody Fortier; (second row) Joe Stone, Dr. Pamela Hutto, and Corrine Wilson; (back row) Hunter Parris, Demajae Smith, Matthew Simmons, Livingston Hawkins III, and Leo Kingsley. ■



SMC Junior Demajae Smith *Is Marching Toward Graduation, Even Though He's Already Been There*

By Jeremy Handel, Staff Writer

Demajae Smith, a rising junior at Spartanburg Methodist College, looks forward to his opportunity to cross the stage at commencement when he graduates college; however, it won't be his first time marching out for a ceremony at the College. His first experience left quite an impression on him when he was in elementary school.

Choosing a college can be complicated. Some students decide to go to their parents' alma mater; some choose by prestige; and for some, it's about the sports teams. For Smith, it was about his experience as a junior marshal as a student at Jesse S. Bobo Elementary School.

"I got a chance to participate in the junior marshal program in fourth or fifth grade. I was very nervous being in front of such a big crowd," Smith said.

"I can't quite remember the graduation ceremony, but I remember I felt a sense of pride, accomplishment, and humbleness walking out with the college students."

While his memories may be fuzzy about what happened that day, they are crystal clear on its impact on his future education. Smith credits his junior marshal experience as a big influence on choosing to attend SMC for college.

The junior marshal program partnered with the elementary school to allow young students to experience a college graduation ceremony and let the young kids march out with the graduates before commencement. Jesse S. Bobo is located less than a mile from SMC's campus and was the perfect fit for the program.

Students were selected for the junior marshal program by the elementary school, and Smith said it was an honor to be chosen.

"I was selected because I was regarded as an outstanding student and represented Jesse Bobo's school values," he said. "I was curious and thought it would be a fun event. The teachers told me it would be good for me to experience it for my future college choice."

Those teachers proved to be correct. Smith said the campus, the big crowd, and the graduates left a big impression on him.

"The (college) students were really receptive of us and made it feel like a huge deal to be a junior marshal," he said. Smith added that participating "made me feel as though I would leave my mark wherever I went and that I could do amazing things."

Walking out in front of hundreds of people that day is a memory he carried with him until it was his time to choose a college. He said the junior marshal program greatly influenced his decision to attend SMC.

"I just loved the aesthetic of the school so much then, and I love it even more now," Smith said.

Like many other things, the junior marshal program was discontinued when the COVID-19 pandemic hit. With one graduation canceled in 2020 and the 2021 ceremony limited due to continuing restrictions, SMC has not re-introduced the program.

Smith said he would definitely like to see the program return and provide the same inspiration to young students today as it gave him.

"I think it would bring awareness to SMC, and it would inspire the bright minds of the future," he said. "I believe it's a great representation of what SMC is as a college and a community."

Demajae Smith begins his junior year this fall, largely due to his tremendous experience in elementary school through the junior marshal program. ■

SMC SENIOR HAS PASSION FOR MUSIC

By Jeremy Handel, Staff Writer

Conor DePaoli



A conversation with SMC senior Conor DePaoli can seem more like a serenade. His ever-present guitar softly rings out chords, progressions, and an occasional familiar tune as he softly strums while he talks. The effortless picking seemingly provides a soundtrack to his words.

“The best part about music is being able to unite people and make them feel something real and strong,” DePaoli said about his passion for music.

His first memories of that feeling came when he was four years old, and he heard his brother playing an Eminem song. It wasn't the actual lyrics or beat that he liked. At age four, what really caught his attention was the rhyming and how cool it sounded to him. As he got older, his appreciation for beats, instrumentals, and lyrics developed.

Still, he wasn't sure music was something he wanted to pursue. During high school in Red Hook, NY, a small city two hours north of New York City, he said students were pushed to go to college, but he wasn't sure it was for him.

“I was applying to colleges, but it felt like I was heading down the wrong path,” DePaoli said. “Everything finally came to a point the night applications were due and I had a complete mental and emotional breakdown.”

That's when he decided to forgo college and take an opportunity to travel to Australia, but that didn't settle the question in his mind of what he wanted to do with his life. A few days later, he said he was still contemplating the question when it just came into his head that he wanted to make music. From then on, that's what he's been doing.

Coming of age in one of the grand eras of hip hop music, DePaoli was a fan. He also discovered he had a talent for the genre and began writing and recording hip hop songs. Artists like Logic, Mac Miller, A\$AP Rocky, and his original influence, Eminem, provided his inspiration.

During his time in Australia and New Zealand, where he worked in the resort industry, he wrote songs and performed for friends. After a trip home, he was preparing to return to New Zealand for another season, but the COVID 19 pandemic spoiled those plans.

While staying with his parents in Campobello, SC, DePaoli continued to write music and began recording his songs under the stage name JustAMan. He said the name helps keep him grounded because, “I'm just a man, and that's all I claim to be.”

He also decided he was ready for college.

“I didn't go to college right away because I didn't know what I wanted to do,” he said. “Now that I was making music, I thought it would be smart to go to college and learn how to manage my career.”

He enrolled at SMC, which has not only helped him learn about business, but it has also brought more music into his life. DePaoli said attending SMC has shown him new concepts, information, and even vocabulary that has spurred more musical inspiration and ideas for him. It's also given him opportunities to network and meet other musicians.

He's worked with some of those musicians to continue making and recording his hip hop songs. DePaoli now has three self-published hip hop albums. He's also working on a new musical album that's focused on human connections and features his newfound appreciation for blues and jazz.

Now, he's rarely seen without a guitar in his hands or slung across his back. He's studying new forms of music and instruments and has designs on expanding his music library. He's also considering doing some work as a studio musician, an outlet he said he didn't know was possible until he met someone in his class who does it.

“I believe in creating your opportunity and being prepared when it comes,” DePaoli said. He has certainly followed that advice while recording his three albums, booking gigs for himself around the Upstate, and now focusing on getting his degree. ■



WHAT'S NEXT?

2023 SMC Seniors Share Their Post-Graduation Plans

After the class of 2023 received their diplomas in May, we asked some of our newest bachelor's degree graduates to share their future plans and their favorite memory from their time at SMC.



GEOVANA BATRES ARDON
Bachelor of Arts in Business Administration

Geovana received her Bachelor of Arts in Business Administration focused on accounting and finance and plans to continue her education, pursuing a master's degree in accounting. While finalizing her applications to master's programs, she will continue her work

with a local insurance and tax services office.

Geovana, who was the winner of this year's inaugural Apex Showcase, says she will always remember the time spent with her professors and all the help they provided during her time at SMC. She also said winning the showcase will be among her top memories.



LIVINGSTON HAWKINS III
Bachelor of Arts

Livingston will be taking his Bachelor of Arts degree with concentrations in English and history on to graduate school at Converse University. He will be studying secondary education for English to become a teacher or professor. He will spend the summer teaching middle and high school students through the Duke University Pre-College program.

Livingston holds dear a lot of memories from his time at SMC, including interning with the marketing department and his excitement when he decided to stay at SMC for his bachelor's degree. He said he will most remember the Apex Showcase and putting together his senior capstone project, which is the type of challenge that kept him at SMC.



ADRIAN CATHCART
Bachelor of Arts

Adrian was a dedicated SMC Online student who earned his Bachelor of Arts degree with concentrations in criminal justice and history. He plans to become a teacher in Spartanburg County and educate our youth.

He says he will always cherish the great relationships he has built with his professors and fellow students.



PAYTON LEONARD
Bachelor of Arts in Business Administration

Payton was a busy man around SMC for his four years, most prominently as a four-year Pioneer Ambassador promoting the College to prospective students and their parents. He earned his Bachelor of Arts in Business Administration in accounting and finance and will be moving right into the workforce as a sales representative.

One of his greatest memories is the networking event and capstone project, which both helped hone his sales and marketing skills to prepare him for his new career.



AMAYA DUCKETT
Bachelor of Arts

Amaya earned her Bachelor of Arts degree with concentrations in criminal justice and psychology with a focus on going into the criminal justice field. She will be moving on to the University of South Carolina School of Law – after a gap year spent working as a legal assistant at a local

law firm.

Amaya says her greatest memory from SMC is becoming a family with her fellow BA students and helping each other to reach the finish line.



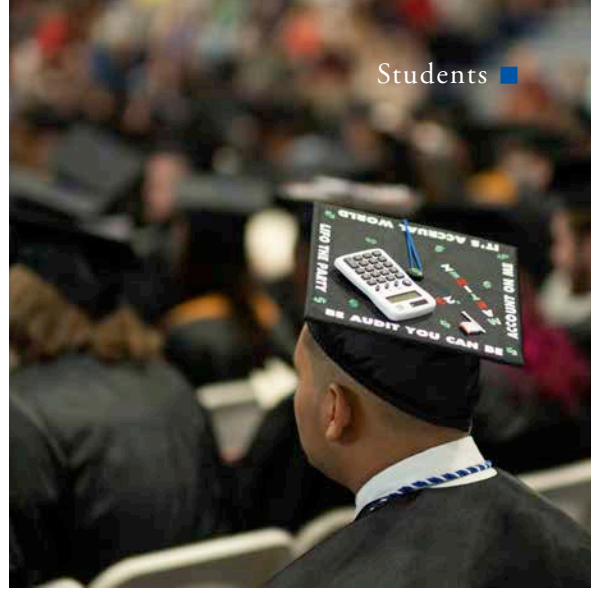
KAHLEAG TERRY
Bachelor of Arts in Business Administration

Already a working photographer, Kahleag earned his Bachelor of Arts in Business Administration focused on marketing and sales to help him hone his business skills to grow his photography business. He also plans to continue earning more marketing certificates and teaching classes at the Spartanburg Day School.

He said his greatest memory will be from an academic summit he attended in 2021 where he learned a valuable lesson from President Scott Cochran. He told the group that “SMC students are on time, up front, and ready,” before handing out gift cards to all the students who were there on time. Kahleag said that made him more intentional about his time and respecting the time of others.



Dr. Russell Booker, commencement keynote.



SMC President Scott Cochran congratulates a graduate.

2023
Commencement Ceremony
MAY 13
Spartanburg High School



Joshua Golden, commencement student speaker.



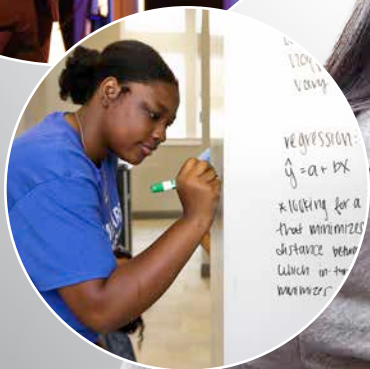
Help Open a Door – **HIRE AN SMC INTERN**

Preparing students for the workplace goes beyond the classroom.
You can help provide the real-life experience they need.

- 65% of college students say understanding how industries or companies work is very or extremely important to them.
- Hiring an SMC student intern allows you to help prepare the next generation for the workforce.

As a friend of SMC, you can help set up our graduates for success. If you or someone you know can provide an internship opportunity, please contact the SMC Careers team.

For more information or to provide an opportunity, visit www.smcs.edu/hireexperience or contact Emily Lausier at lausiere@smcs.edu or 864-278-5823.



2023 SPRING AND SUMMER INTERNS



DANIA CASTELLON

The Borgen Project

Rising senior Dania Castellon spent the spring semester working as a human resources intern. She helped with updating job postings and created a fundraising campaign for the organization.

“The biggest lesson I learned is how valuable time management is,” she said. “With a virtual internship, I had to manage how I was going to complete my weekly assignments.”

“THE BIGGEST LESSON I LEARNED IS HOW VALUABLE TIME MANAGEMENT IS... WITH A VIRTUAL INTERNSHIP, I HAD TO MANAGE HOW I WAS GOING TO COMPLETE MY WEEKLY ASSIGNMENTS.”

Castellon said that her experience has opened her eyes to a possible career in human resources. She learned what the role consists of; they also helped her understand the hiring process.

ZACH JENNINGS

Soccer Shots Greenville

As a marketing intern, Zach worked on field and business-to-business marketing, helping research new program locations, providing information to schools, and managing social media.

He said the biggest lesson he learned is that no matter what your role is, you need to communicate with your colleagues and have a positive attitude to succeed.

“My career goal is to work in sports marketing, and this internship allowed me to learn more about how marketing works from a business standpoint,” Jennings said.

“MY CAREER GOAL IS TO WORK IN SPORTS MARKETING, AND THIS INTERNSHIP ALLOWED ME TO LEARN MORE ABOUT HOW MARKETING WORKS FROM A BUSINESS STANDPOINT.”

DYLAN MERGL

Tax Law & Accounting Group, LLC

Dylan Mergl got some direct experience in his desired career path in accounting during his internship. He assisted the office with bookkeeping tasks and even helped with some personal tax preparation.

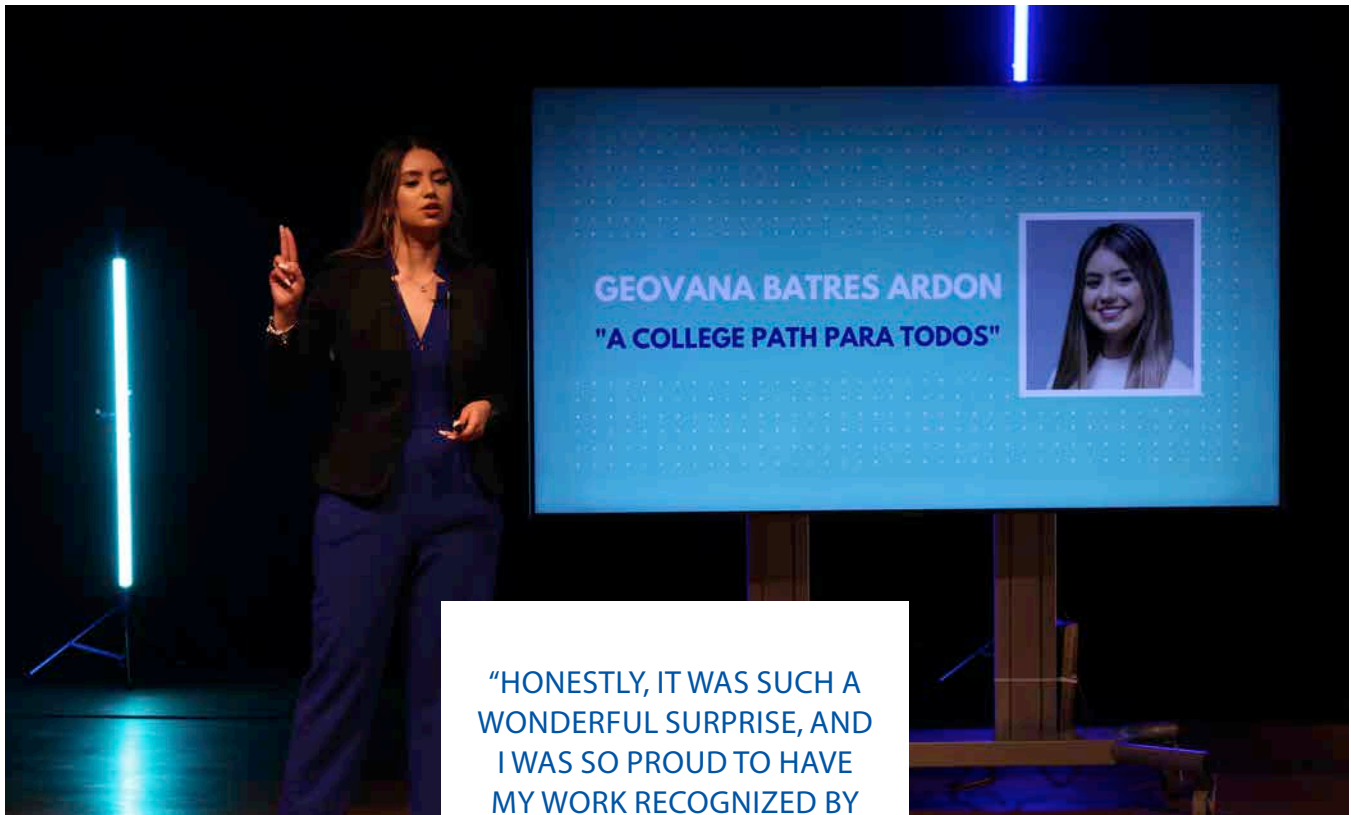
“I learned the importance of accuracy, because if something is off even just a little bit, the whole sheet would be wrong,” he said.

“I LEARNED THE IMPORTANCE OF ACCURACY, BECAUSE IF SOMETHING IS OFF EVEN JUST A LITTLE BIT, THE WHOLE SHEET WOULD BE WRONG.”

Mergl was appreciative of the opportunity to learn about the career he hopes to pursue.

SMC Senior Wins Inaugural Apex Showcase, Highlighting Career Skills

By Jeremy Handel, Staff Writer



"HONESTLY, IT WAS SUCH A WONDERFUL SURPRISE, AND I WAS SO PROUD TO HAVE MY WORK RECOGNIZED BY THE JUDGES... THE APEX SHOWCASE WILL BE ONE OF MY GREATEST MEMORIES OF MY TIME AT SMC."

Spartanburg Methodist College senior Geovana Batres Ardon drew on her own experience trying to navigate a path to college as inspiration for her senior Capstone project. She wanted to create a resource for other LatinX students to help them see that there is a path to college and reduce the obstacles that culture, language, and lack of experience can present.

What she didn't expect to come of her desire to help others was being named the winner of SMC's inaugural Apex Showcase for her project presentation. Her project, "A College Path Para Todos," topped 31 seniors who presented their Capstone projects and earned her the \$1,000 grand prize.

"Honestly, it was such a wonderful surprise, and I was so proud to have my work recognized by the judges," Batres Ardon said. "The

Apex Showcase will be one of my greatest memories of my time at SMC."

The Showcase is a business pitch-style competition where SMC seniors present their Capstone project to a panel of judges.

The top three finalists then refine and present their project again at the showcase competition, with a new panel of judges choosing the winner.

"The senior Capstone projects test our students on everything they've learned and challenges them to put it into action on a project they are passionate about," said Courtney Shelton, Vice President of Student and Professional Development at SMC. "Geovana's desire to help other LatinX students is inspiring. We're proud of her and all of our seniors for the incredible work they put into these projects."

SMC implemented the senior Capstone as part of its degree-integrated professional development program when it launched its bachelor's degrees in 2019. The project is a culmination of the professional development curriculum. It tests students to choose, develop, and launch a business start-up, philanthropic endeavor, special event, or other passion project.

Adding the Showcase now gives students an audience for presenting their project and tests their presentation skills. It also includes a networking event before the final presentations where all of the seniors are able to discuss their projects with the audience, honing their networking and communication skills as well.

Shelby Lopez and Cristian Bonilla Cruz were the other finalists presenting their Capstone projects to a panel of judges from the Spartanburg community. Lopez finished second with "Art by Shelby Allisun," showcasing her art and her desire to use her business degree to start an art business rather than doing art as a hobby. Bonilla Cruz claimed third with "ESL with English Crossing," which helped show Hispanics the resources provided by English Crossing to help them learn English and break down language barriers.

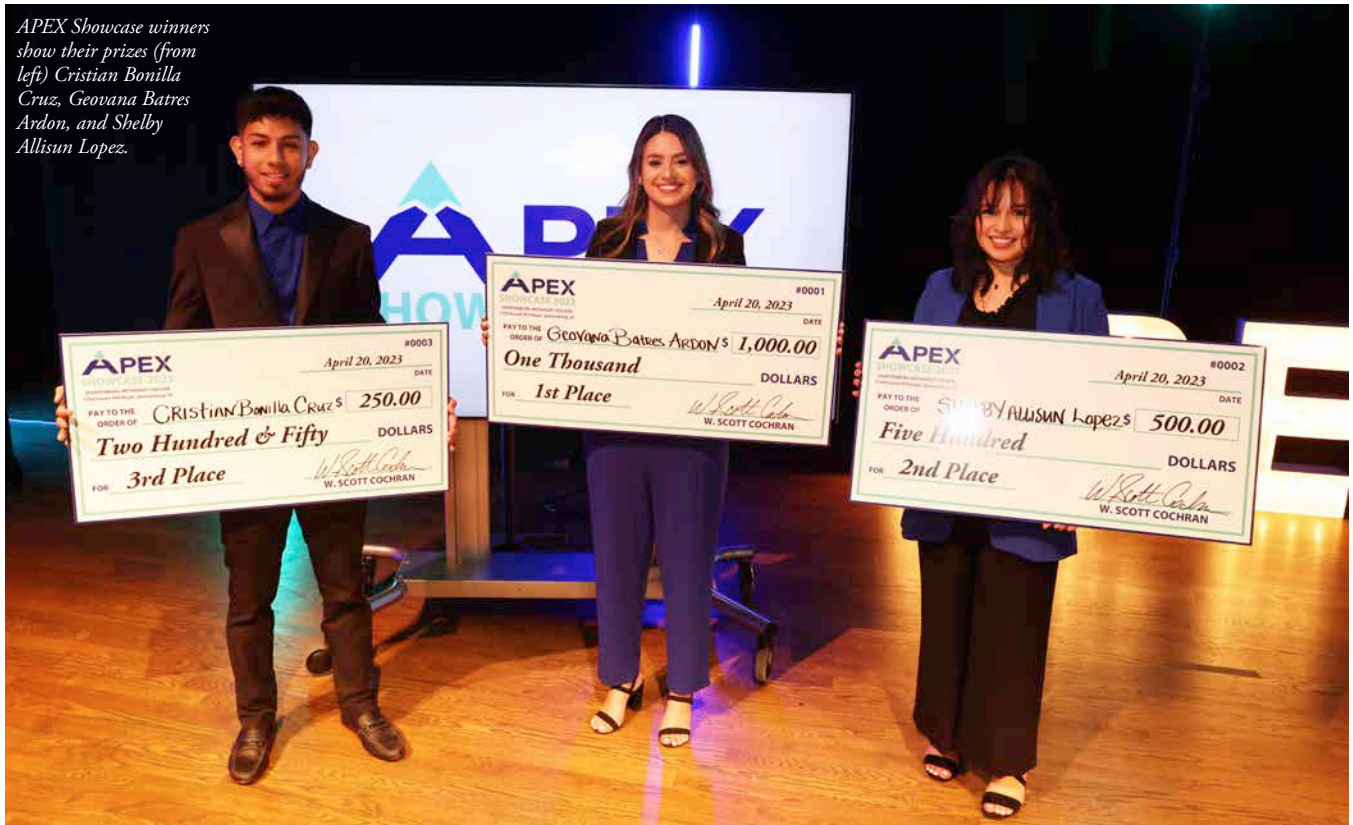
Judges for the Showcase were Marcos Gomez, Founder and Owner of Dellfrio, LLC, and an SMC Trustee; Paige Stephenson, President & CEO of the United Way of the Piedmont; Cierra Kelly, Executive Project Director for ReGenesis Health Care; and Josh Ridings, Owner of Carpet One Floor & Home. Approximately 150 Spartanburg area community and business leaders and SMC faculty, staff, and students filled the Gibbs Auditorium for the inaugural event. ■

"THE SENIOR CAPSTONE PROJECTS TEST OUR STUDENTS ON EVERYTHING THEY'VE LEARNED AND CHALLENGES THEM TO PUT IT INTO ACTION ON A PROJECT THEY ARE PASSIONATE ABOUT."

BELOW: SMC Senior Kableag Terry presents his Capstone project to APEX Showcase Judge Paige Stephenson.



APEX Showcase winners show their prizes (from left) Cristian Bonilla Cruz, Geovana Batres Ardon, and Shelby Allisun Lopez.



SMC Students Get First-Hand Experience **CONSULTING FOR LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS**

By Jeremy Handel, Staff Writer

College graduates from all over the country leave school with an in-depth knowledge of the theory and concepts of their chosen field of study. They are ready to tackle the work of joining their profession and working on the concepts they have learned. One thing they may not be prepared for is just how to go about doing that in their new workplace.



Spartanburg Methodist College provides graduates with the education they need to pursue their chosen careers and the professional skills they need to enter the workforce. From professional communications to problem-solving to technical skills, SMC grads are the most workplace-ready students.

One skill that provides SMC graduates a decisive advantage is the teamwork and collaboration they learn during their Camak Core professional development program. The consulting project course teaches students the skills to collaborate and the reasons it's essential to be able to do so.

“The consulting project is designed to teach students a number of skills. They learn how to research an issue, develop recommendations, present their findings to the client, and create a written report of their findings,” said Courtney Shelton, Vice President for Student and Professional Development. “We want them to experience conflict resolution and work together to solve a problem.”

The consulting project is part of the community discovery and engagement course in the Camak Core professional development program. Throughout the course, students work in groups with local businesses, non-profit organizations, and other entities to serve as a consultant to provide advice and direction to help their “clients” address a business problem they are having.

The students work together for a semester to research the business problem, develop recommendations to address it, and deliver the results to the partner. Students receive real-world experience working with local organizations on issues they face.

College Town, a division of OneSpartanburg, the Chamber of Commerce for Spartanburg County, participated as a partner in the consulting project course. College Town provides resources and events to help engage students at the county's seven local colleges with the Spartanburg community. They offer networking opportunities, job and internship boards, and fun activities for local students.

College Town asked consulting project course students for help developing



strategies to get more students engaged with their activities and resources.

“The students who worked on the College Town project brought to light some of the barriers and challenges that were preventing students from coming downtown,” said Naomi Sargent, COO of OneSpartanburg. “They talked through with us how our organization can address those issues and get students more engaged.”

The SMC group researched why students weren't engaging with College Town's events and resources. They found several barriers, including transportation issues and a lack of options for underage students at local venues at night. The students recommended strategies to address those issues and create new events that appeal to a broader audience.

College Town leaders were impressed by the students' performance and feel the program provides

invaluable experience graduates will use in any career they pursue.

“The SMC program really allows the students to apply what they've learned in the classroom and see what happens when you face some of the challenges you get in the real world,” Sargent said.

Working in a group setting to accomplish a task or develop a new idea is a critical skill that all professionals will have to employ at some point in their careers. Getting the opportunity to experience that and implement those skills in a real-world scenario provides SMC students with a step up as they enter the workforce.

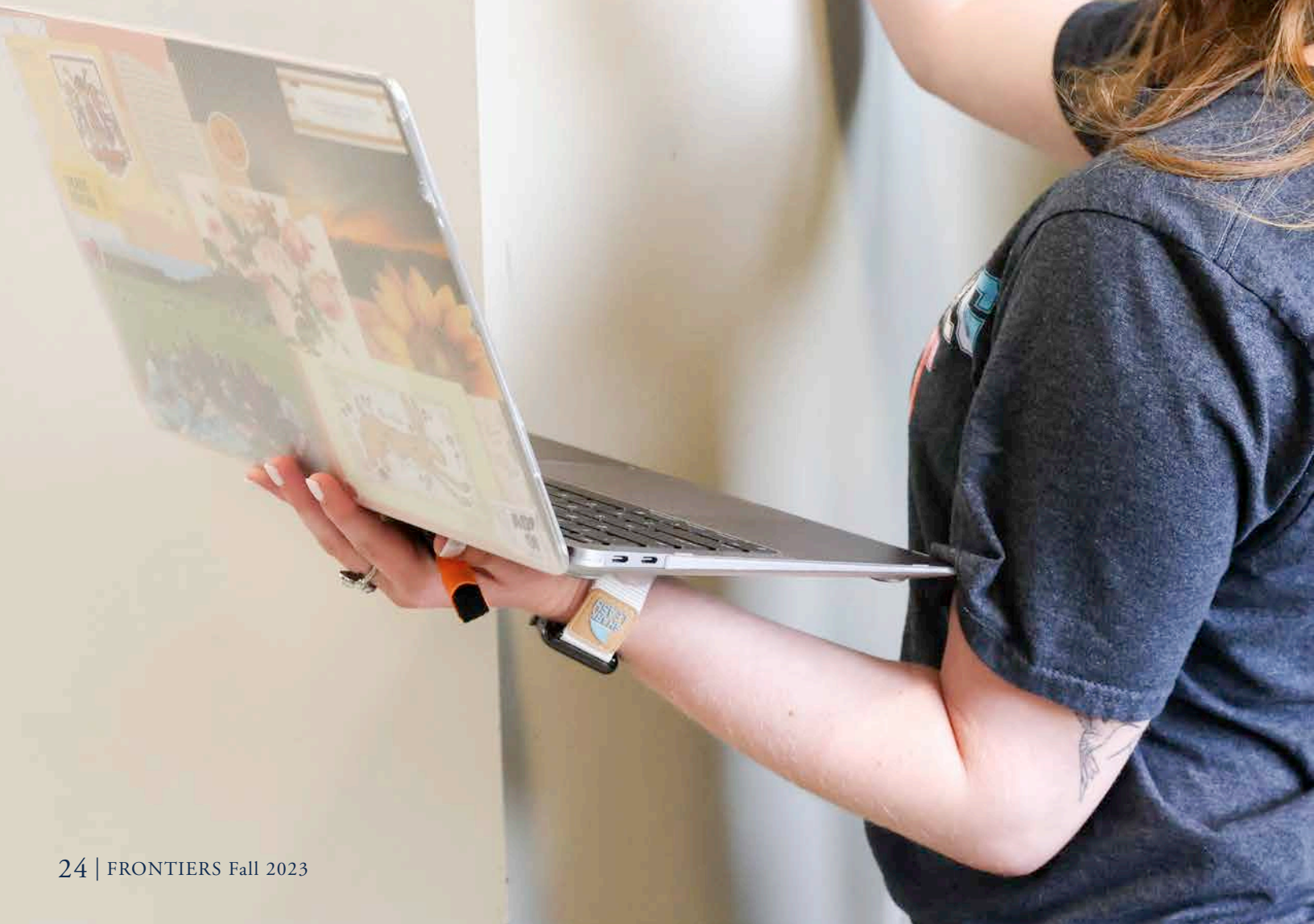
“What we are trying to do with the consulting project and the Camak Core program is to truly prepare our graduates for what they'll experience in the workplace,” Shelton said.

“We want to enhance the amazing education they are getting in their field of study to make them more attractive to potential employers.” ■

STUDENTS FIRST, STUDENTS ALWAYS

*Admissions, Financial Aid, More
Uphold SMC's Historical Mission*

By Jeremy Handel, Staff Writer



Dr. David English Camak had a vision in 1911 when he launched the Textile Industrial Institute—provide local mill workers with access to an education to help their prospects for a better future. They would be more equipped to succeed in their jobs and advance their economic and social standing.

More than a century later, Spartanburg Methodist College continues to hold true to that vision, providing access to an education for everyone and graduating the most workplace-ready students.

“Students first, students always is more than a slogan. It’s truly a belief that our mission is to bring in students to give them a chance and then give them the education and skills they need to succeed,” said SMC President Scott Cochran. “Everyone here plays a part in that journey.”

Getting a college education is more than just studies and tests, it’s a series of successes, starting with getting into college and figuring out how to pay for it. SMC has worked hard to take away as many of the barriers to college enrollment as possible.

ADMISSIONS CHALLENGES

College admissions can be much more than just getting good grades in high school. Many institutions also want to see a candidate who has participated in various extracurricular activities, volunteered in their community, and more. On top of that, they want you to commit time, effort, and even money into various application requirements like ACT or SAT testing and paying just to apply.

For many students, especially those who may have a more challenging background, these seemingly small steps can be a large barrier. Students who may have to work a job to help support their family may not have the opportunity to volunteer

or participate in outside activities. To put those students first, it’s important to break down those walls.



“STUDENTS WHO GRADUATE HIGH SCHOOL NEAR THE TOP OF THEIR CLASS SHOULD NOT BE LEFT OUT OF A COLLEGE EDUCATION BECAUSE OF COST... WE WANT TO CELEBRATE AND REWARD THEIR HARD WORK BY ELIMINATING THE FINANCIAL BURDEN FOR THE NEXT STEP IN THEIR EDUCATION.”

enrollment services at SMC. “We want to celebrate and reward their hard work by eliminating the financial burden for the next step in their education.”

“We believe everyone should be able to achieve the dream of a college education based on their own merits,” said Ben Maxwell, vice president for enrollment at SMC. “We’ve eliminated test scores and application fees as a way to make college more accessible to everyone.”

EASING COST BARRIERS

Cost is often the top reason some high-performing students cite for not being able to attend college. One of today’s biggest financial burdens is student loan debt. Many high school graduates today are considering whether college is worth it to put themselves in a financial hole as they start their adult lives.

Eliminating or reducing that financial burden allows students to make their college decision based on what career they want to pursue instead. The SMC financial aid team utilizes a robust aid program to help every student reduce their

financial commitment as much as possible, including two unique options that can cover nearly all of their costs.

The Full Tuition Scholarship and the Pioneer Promise Scholarship were created to reward high-achieving students for their academic achievements.

“Students who graduate high school near the top of their class should not be left out of a college education because of cost,” said Kyle Wade, director of financial aid and

The Pioneer Promise scholarship rewards students with a 4.0 or better grade point average (GPA) by covering the cost of their tuition and the cost of fees and books. Students with this scholarship only pay for their housing costs if they choose to live on campus. For those with a 3.0 GPA, the Full Tuition Scholarship will cover the cost of tuition.

In addition to these major scholarship programs, the financial aid office works closely with every student to find every possible form of aid they may qualify for. They also sit down and explain the actual cost of attending and exactly how the various financial aid packages they qualify for will impact that cost and any future obligations they may have.

“ADDING FOUR-YEAR DEGREES TO OUR ACADEMIC CATALOG EXPANDED OUR ABILITY TO SERVE THE STUDENTS... NOW THEY KNOW THEY CAN SEAMLESSLY CONTINUE THEIR EDUCATION AFTER RECEIVING THEIR ASSOCIATE DEGREE AND WORK WITH THE SAME COMMITTED FACULTY IN THE SAME NURTURING ATMOSPHERE THEY CHOSE TO BEGIN WITH.”

HAVING DEGREES THEY WANT

Students first, students always extends well beyond just getting them into college. Getting them through college and on to a career is also a big part of it.

Cost is just one element of getting students to enroll. You also have to have the academic programs they want. SMC has focused on expanding their programs, including launching and growing a bachelor's degree program over the past several years.

“Adding four-year degrees to our academic catalog expanded our ability to serve the students,” said Cochran. “Now they know they can seamlessly continue their education after receiving their associate degree and work with the same committed faculty in the same nurturing atmosphere they chose to begin with.”

The College's six associate degrees provide students with the academic base they need for their degree path, including jumping right into the workforce if they choose. The three bachelor's degrees allow them to continue their education and expand their professional prospects.





“WE WANT TO DEVELOP THE MOST WORKPLACE-READY GRADUATES AROUND, AND THAT INCLUDES TEACHING THEM HOW TO BE A PROFESSIONAL... TEACHING THEM KEY SKILLS LIKE PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION, COLLABORATION, AND PROBLEM SOLVING WILL MAKE THEM MORE VALUABLE TO POTENTIAL EMPLOYERS.”

PROVIDING SUPPORT

In addition to academic opportunities, it's also crucial to provide the supportive environment necessary to maintain their focus, progress, and mental health during their studies. SMC's single-advisor approach provides students with one voice to help them stay on track. They can turn to this person for help with choosing classes, keeping up academically, or even if they are having issues adjusting to college life. The advisors will even help with career planning and job searches as they prepare to graduate.

A final part of students first, students always is preparing them for after graduation. Beyond teaching them the detailed knowledge they need in their chosen career, teaching them how to perform in the workplace is important as well. The Camak Core professional development program provides students with the skills and tools they need to enter the workplace confidently.

“We want to develop the most workplace-ready graduates around, and that includes teaching them how to be a professional,” said

Courtney Shelton, vice president for student and professional development at SMC. “Teaching them key skills like professional communication, collaboration, and problem solving will make them more valuable to potential employers.”

Most colleges have a professional development program, but it's an optional program for students. At SMC, the professional development curriculum is a required part of their degree. The soft skills acquired in this program have students ready to find and get their first big job and contribute to their company's success from day one.

Spartanburg Methodist College has come a long way from the one-student classroom that Dr. Camak started with in 1911, but one thing from that first year still remains, the commitment to providing a brighter future for students and a better worker for their employers. ■

Board of Trustees: Marilyn Murphy

SMC Trustee's Hoop Dreams Hit the Big Screen

By Jeremy Handel, Staff Writer

Marilyn Murphy



SMC Board Trustee Marilyn Murphy lights up when she talks about basketball. Bonding and playing with her teammates.

Traveling on the bus to other towns for games. Seeing the pride and support from her small, hometown community. These are the treasured memories that Murphy loves to reflect on, because these are things that are important to a high school athlete.

There is a little more to Murphy's story, though. Her beloved team of friends and teammates played a big role in the rise of girls' basketball in Oklahoma and even a small part in the fight for equality in women's sports. A legendary coach and a gritty group of players even put Murphy and her teammates on the big screen.

"I was amazed it was ever produced. I had no idea in the world anything like that would ever happen," Murphy said about the film "Believe In Me," which is based on the story of her high school basketball team.

The movie tells the story of a young coach in the 1960s who comes to a school in a small Oklahoma town to coach boys' basketball. But when he arrives, he's informed that the school board gave that job to someone else, and he'd actually be coaching girls' basketball. The story follows the success of his teams and his growth from opposition to coaching girls to his passion for it.

Coach Clay Driscoll, played by "Burn Notice" star Jeffrey Donovan, finds himself in a battle with a conservative



Marilyn Murphy (left) defends a shot by an opponent.

school board member who doesn't believe girls' basketball deserves the resources of the boys' team. He also finds himself in a battle with himself over a similar belief. Through the commitment, hard work, and grit of the young ladies he coaches, Driscoll finally sees that the girls are worth his time and becomes their biggest champion for equal support.

In real life, that young coach was Jim Keith, Murphy's coach at Sayre High School in western Oklahoma. The movie is based on the book "Brief Garland: Ponytails, Basketball, and Nothing But Net" by Harold Keith, the coach's uncle. While the movie takes some creative license with the story, Murphy said the underlying themes ring true. The girls' team in the early 1960s wasn't taken as seriously as the boys', and the lack of resources and restrictions on practice made it difficult to succeed, but to her and her teammates, that's just how it was, and they just wanted to play basketball.

"It really didn't register with us," she said of the inequities. "All we cared about was playing, winning, and being together as friends."

Murphy said looking back now, it was a bigger challenge for her team. They didn't get new uniforms or warm-ups as often as the boys' team. The girls and their mothers often had to repair them – sometimes during half time of their games. The girls were also restricted to practicing only during lunch hour, limiting the time they had to perfect their game.

"We wanted to be treated more like the boys," Murphy said. She said the girls, like in the movie, sat down with Keith to implement rules for the team during the season like a curfew and not drinking soda. Their commitment even led the team to getting jobs picking cotton to earn enough money to purchase their own new uniforms.

Keith was impressed with their commitment and desire to be taken seriously. He decided to take up their cause as well, fighting for better equipment, resources, and support. His cause was helped along by Murphy and her teammates, especially budding star Jerry Ann Robertson (now Bibb). When she and her classmates moved up from junior high in 1961, their talent showed immediately, and they took Sayre to No. 1 in the state the next year.

While the team didn't win the state championship, as they did in the movie, they earned the respect and support of the school, the community, and their coach. Following the success of that team, Keith's view on coaching girls changed, and he went on to have a legendary career in Oklahoma girls' basketball. His advocacy for equality in sports provided some early support and

inspiration for the movement that led to the passing of Title IX, which requires equality in sports in high school and college.

Murphy said that she is proud to have been a part of that effort, but what she really wants to talk about is playing basketball. Murphy was a defensive guard on those early teams and takes pride in her "aggressive" style of play in defending the other team's scorers. In the 1960s, Oklahoma girls played a six-person style of basketball where each team had three offensive players and three defensive players on each side of the court. It was essentially a three-on-three game as neither set of players could cross the half-court line.

She admits that Keith wasn't her favorite coach but that she did learn a lot from him about basketball and a few things about life.



Marilyn Murphy (right) reunites with teammates from her 1962 high school basketball team and their legendary coach Jim Keith (front left) and his wife, at the movie premiere of "Believe in Me," which is based on book about Keith's success in girls' basketball, starting with Murphy's team.

"He taught us that in everything we do, somebody's watching us," she said. "I was at an alumni event years ago and had a former classmate come up to me and told me how much he admired watching me play. So, keep in mind that in everything you do in life, somebody's watching you and you're influencing someone."

Murphy went on to attend the University of Oklahoma and married her high school boyfriend Lomax. When her husband accepted an engineering job in Florida, she finished her degree at the University of West Florida as part of the college's inaugural class of 1968.

The couple relocated to South Carolina where Murphy's leadership with the United Methodist Conference and beyond led to her eventual nomination as a trustee for SMC. During that time, she said a highlight was attending Schools of Christian Mission at SMC, where she discovered and read SMC founder Dr. David Camak's book, "Human Gold from Southern Hills." She was immediately in awe of his concept of giving students hands-on experience by working and serving the community while going to school. Ever since, she's been very passionate about representing the College and supporting the students who attend.

When the movie was released in 2006, Murphy joined some of her former teammates and Coach Keith at the premier in Knoxville, Tennessee. She said it was a great experience seeing the movie for the first time, interacting with some of the stars of the film, and touring the Women's Basketball Hall of Fame. And, in true Marilyn fashion, she said the best part was reuniting with her teammates.

Murphy's basketball days may be in the past, but her team's basketball legacy will live on forever. ■

NEW TRUSTEES JOIN SMC'S BOARD

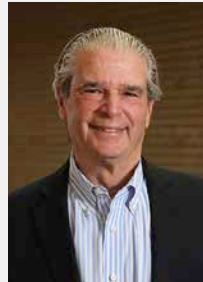
Six new faces have joined the Spartanburg Methodist College Board of Trustees over the past two years, adding their experience and expertise to the oversight body.



Michael Allen



Grant Close III



Marcos Gomez



Betty Montgomery



Clint Settle



Ashley Williams

Each summer at the South Carolina Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church, SMC presents candidates to join the Board based on openings or departures. The Conference delegates vote on the candidates, who then join the board on July 1 to begin their three-year terms.

At this year's Conference, L. Grant Close III, Betty Montgomery, and Ashley Williams were approved to join the Board. They join Clint Settle '04, Marcos Gomez, and Michael Allen as the newest Trustees.

"We look forward to welcoming our new trustees each year. It's exciting to add their new experience and viewpoints to our work on behalf of the College," said John Moore, chairman of the SMC Board of Trustees. "We appreciate their commitment to SMC's future."

Close is an Employment and Labor Attorney and Shareholder with Maynard Nexsen in Spartanburg and Greenville. He focuses on representing employers in litigation and compliance matters. He earned his bachelor's degree from Wofford College and his law degree from the Charleston School of Law in its inaugural class. Professionally, Close is a member of the American and South Carolina Bar Associations, Blue Key National Honor Society, and a graduate of Leadership Spartanburg. He has also served on several non-profit boards, in leadership positions in his church, and coached numerous youth sports teams in Spartanburg.

Montgomery is a local philanthropist and education supporter with long family ties to SMC. She has committed herself to the Spartanburg area, having served as chair of the Arts Partnership of Greater Spartanburg, chair of the Noble Tree Foundation, and on the boards of the Spartanburg County Foundation, the Milliken Foundation, and Wofford and Converse Colleges. She earned her bachelor's degree in comprehensive science from Converse College (now University).

Williams lives in Spartanburg. She has been employed with Spartanburg County since 2006. She currently serves as the Register of Deeds. Williams also served as a Municipal Judge for the Town of Jonesville and the City of Greer and as an Associate Judge for the 7th Judicial Circuit Drug Court Program. She received a Bachelor of Arts degree from Limestone College. Williams is a member of the Christmas In Action Board of Directors. She is a graduate of One Spartanburg Inc's Leadership Spartanburg program and served as a mentor for Mentor Upstate.

Settle, of Spartanburg, is a Project Engineer with Universal Civil Construction. He is an active member of the Episcopal Church of the Advent. Settle is a graduate of SMC's associate degree program and served as student body president during his time at the school.

Gomez, of Spartanburg, is the Founder and Owner of Dellfrio, Inc., a commercial refrigeration importer and logistics provider. He serves on the board of the Cleveland Opportunity Foundation and is a member of the Saint Paul the Apostle Catholic Church.

Allen, of Greenville, is the CEO and architect for MAO architecture. He has served on numerous boards and councils, including currently serving on the Greenville Community Remembrance Project Monument Committee and the State Chamber of Commerce Diversity Council.

"We work very closely with our Board to shape the future of SMC for the benefit of our students, faculty, and staff," said SMC President Scott Cochran. "I'm excited to welcome the new trustees and tap into their experience and expertise to continue that work."

The Trustees meet three times per year and provide oversight and direction for the school's future. They consider any major initiatives or policies the school is considering and advise administrators on where they think the College should go. ■

2023-2024

Alumni

Plan to join us for these exciting Alumni & Friends Events and Fundraisers.

More details at www.smcsc.edu/resources/alumni-and-friends/alumni-organization/alumni-events/.

Save the Date



FRIDAY
NOV 17
2023

An Evening of Dueling Pianos

SMC Campus, Spartanburg, South Carolina
Live Music and Auctions to support SMC Students
6:30 – 10:00 pm



FRIDAY
DEC 1
2023

Festive Pioneer Pint Night

Plankowner Brewing, Boiling Springs, SC
Enjoy Christmas Cheer and Craft Beer to kick-off
the holiday season with Alumni & Friends.



THURSDAY
FEB 15
2024

Pioneer Give Day

Open doors and unlock opportunities for students
during this 24-hour virtual giving event

SPRING
2024

Alumni Day

SMC Campus, Spartanburg, South Carolina
Reunions, Games, Campus Cookout
More details to follow



CALLENDAR

DUCKETTS COMMITTED TO 'FAMILY' GAINED AT SMC, GIVE BACK

By Jeremy Handel, Staff Writer

Family is important to the Ducketts. Whether it's the connection between mother and daughter, or the "family" that came from their connection to Spartanburg Methodist College. And for the Ducketts, it's important to embrace and support future generations of their "family."

After graduating high school, Jacquelyn Duckett '87 knew she wanted to go to college but wasn't entirely sure where she wanted to attend. She did know community and faith were important to her, and her mother made a recommendation.

"My mother influenced me to attend SMC due to it being a smaller institution for my first time away from home," Duckett said. "We explored other colleges, but SMC stood out as far as academics, smaller class sizes, and support from the Methodist church, which I am affiliated with."

Her experience at SMC proved to be a perfect introduction to higher education, and after finishing her Associate in Criminal Justice, she continued on to earn several more degrees. Today, she is known as Judge Jacquelyn Duckett, serving as a Magistrate Judge for Greenville County.

When it came time for her daughter Amaya '23 to start her college journey, there was only one place Judge Duckett had in mind – SMC.

"It was the only college we visited at the time because of its proximity to home, the specific curriculum offered, and the many scholarship opportunities available," Judge Duckett said. "Also, it was because I was a

proud alum and very familiar with SMC and their academic professionalism."

For Amaya, the choice was easy, and it was for most of the same reasons as her mom.

"The closeness and inclusivity of the campus impressed me from day one," she said. "From being embraced at orientation to the first day of classes, I knew SMC was the perfect fit for me."

Amaya also benefitted from earning the Full Tuition Scholarship at SMC, which covers the cost of tuition for students who are eligible for the South Carolina LIFE Scholarship.

Amaya earned her Bachelor of Arts degree from SMC this May. She said it was great that the College began offering four-year degrees because it meant she could stay in that close-knit community. Now, she hopes to follow in her mother's footsteps again and pursue a career in law or criminal justice.

Both said their time at the College provided a strong base for their professional careers and shaped them in a positive way.

For Judge Duckett, she said she came away with the tools to help her achieve in her career, including determination, a good work ethic, and dedication. Amaya noted the same preparation, including the new professional development program that taught her how to be a good job candidate and adjust to professional life.

The Ducketts also developed a desire to serve and help others during their time at SMC. One of the key audiences they chose to help are the future students.



Judge Jacquelyn Duckett



Amaya Duckett

Judge Duckett has been a regular donor to the College for a number of years. She said that as she progressed in her career, she felt it was important to give back to the place that gave her the base for her growth.

"As I grew as a professional, I realized that my gift to SMC would enhance the educational experience for others," she said. "I think my gifts benefit the college in immeasurable ways and provide funding specifically to help current students achieve their goals."

While Amaya is just starting her professional journey and hasn't yet become a donor, she said it is something she plans to do.

"I would love to give back to the school that helped shape me into the individual and eventual career woman that I am today so they can continue to shape others," she said. ■

FROM THE LINKS TO THE LIBRARY –

SMC Alum Finds True Passion at College

By Mackenzie Syiem, Contributing Writer

Paul Thomas



When reflecting on his life and professional journey, Paul Thomas '81 can attribute much to his experiences at Spartanburg Methodist College. Hailing from Woodruff, his family has a longstanding connection with SMC as both parents attended for a time as well.

Currently residing just a few minutes away from SMC today, he is struck by

the changes in the area, where the mills he walked by during his time have now been replaced by apartments. The juxtaposition of the past and present serves as a poignant reminder of the transformative power of his alma mater.

Initially drawn to SMC by his passion for golf, Thomas saw the college as an opportunity to pursue his athletic dreams. Academics were not at the forefront of his mind. Little did he know that SMC would become a transformative stepping stone in his life off the golf course. It was during his time at SMC that he discovered his true calling – writing – and forged a path toward self-discovery with guidance from inspirational professors and staff.

The supportive individuals at SMC played a pivotal role in shaping Thomas' journey. It began with his golf coaches, Dempsey Hooker and Terry Stephenson, who not only honed his skills on the course but also provided unwavering kindness and support. Yet, it was two other influential figures who left an even bigger mark on Thomas' life.

"The two huge turning points in my life were because of Steve Brannan, who taught speech, and Dean A.G. Carter, who I had for a literature class," Thomas said.

With an introduction to E.E. Cummings on a composition assignment, professor Brannan prompted Thomas to a surprising realization that he was a poet at heart.

"He was just a really kind, supportive person," Thomas said. "A lot of my friends that I stay in touch with, who I went to SMC with, still talk about Steve."

However, it was Carter who had the greatest impact on Thomas' life. Though a literature class seemed unlikely to captivate Thomas, who preferred math and physics, Carter saw potential in him. He challenged him in class and pushed Thomas to become a tutor. This unwavering faith in Thomas' abilities planted the seed of confidence that would ultimately blossom into a lifelong passion for education. Inspired by Carter's mentorship, Thomas embarked on a tutoring journey at SMC, discovering his innate ability to teach and guide others.

**"SO, AT SMC I
DISCOVERED THAT I
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I REALLY CANNOT
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WERE FOR ME."**

"So, at SMC I discovered that I was a writer and I discovered that I was a teacher and I really cannot stress enough how important both of those things were for me," he said.

After graduating from SMC, Thomas continued his educational journey at USC Spartanburg (now Upstate), earning his undergraduate degree in English education. He then pursued his master's and doctorate degrees in education. With a strong foundation rooted in his experiences at SMC, Thomas embarked on a fulfilling career as a professor and published author. His prolific output includes 28 books, either as an author or editor, and he currently works at Furman University as a Professor of Education.

In addition to these accomplishments, Thomas has embraced the digital age and established a prominent online presence through his blog. With a passion for sharing his thoughts and insights, Thomas has utilized this platform to engage a wider audience and connect with fellow writers, educators, and enthusiasts.

Through his blog, he delves into various topics, from literary analysis to educational pedagogy, offering valuable perspectives and sparking meaningful discussions. Thomas' blog serves as a testament to his continuous growth as a writer and his commitment to fostering intellectual discourse in the digital realm. ■

The Bowers Found a Connection for Life at SMC

By Mackenzie Syiem, Contributing Writer

Mike '74 and Ella Mae Bowers' '72 story is a testament to the profound impact that Spartanburg Methodist College has on not just the professional lives of its alumni but also on their personal lives. Their connection to SMC goes beyond being students at the institution; it encompasses the serendipitous meeting that ignited their love story, Mike's subsequent return to work at the college, and the transformative role SMC played in shaping their lives.

Both Mike and Ella Mae attended Spartanburg Junior College before it transitioned into Spartanburg Methodist College. Their journey at SMC began in 1969 and 1970 respectively, each with their own unique motivations.

For Mike, growing up on a farm in Six Mile, South Carolina, his aspirations were limited to finding work in a mill or staying on the farm; however, fate intervened when he expressed his desire to become a preacher to his minister, the late Reverend James Ashley. It was Rev. Ashley who brought him to Spartanburg Junior College, where Mike was encouraged to apply despite not meeting the required grades. Taking a chance on Mike, SMC became the catalyst that propelled him beyond his humble beginnings.

Ella Mae, on the other hand, was driven by a desire to leave home and explore new horizons. Encouraged by a friend, she joined Spartanburg Junior College in 1970, seeking an opportunity for personal growth and new connections. It was at SMC that Mike and Ella Mae's paths crossed during a basketball game where he asked to sit next to her—an unexpected encounter that would shape their future together.

"I don't remember who played or if we won or not," Mike said. "I was otherwise occupied and didn't pay attention."

Their connection deepened as they spent time together on campus, attending classes and taking part in extracurricular activities. Mike, who initially had a more carefree approach to college life, found inspiration and motivation in Ella Mae's presence. As their relationship blossomed, they discovered shared goals and aspirations, sparking a renewed focus on their studies and a determination to build a future together. While at SMC, under the influence of the late Chaplain Talmadge B. Skinner, Mike developed an interest in being in ministry on a college campus.

After graduating from SMC, Mike pursued his calling to become a minister. Their commitment to education led them first to Wofford College and then to Emory University's Candler School



Mike and Ella Mae Bowers at the dedication of a bench in their honor at SMC's campus.

of Theology, where Mike honed his theological knowledge to be a United Methodist minister.

While Mike attended classes at Wofford, the couple continued to live on campus at SMC where Ella Mae served as "dorm parent" in Kingman Hall and Mike worked as a campus security guard at night. Through hard work, good fortune, and perseverance, they overcame financial obstacles and supported each other's dreams. Upon Mike's graduation from Emory University, he served a couple of appointments as a local church pastor, first in Eutawville, SC, and then briefly in Lake View, SC.

In 1982, their connection to SMC came full circle when Mike was offered the position of Chaplain at the College. The couple returned to the campus that had played such a pivotal role in their lives, with Mike serving as Chaplain and Professor of Religion for 15 years. Ella Mae became a Benefits Specialist in the Human Resources Department at the University of SC Spartanburg (now USC Upstate), a position from which she retired after more than 30 years of State service.

Mike was forced to take a hiatus from the College when he was called to active duty by the South Carolina National Guard to serve as an Army Chaplain during Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm. Upon returning to the College after this mobilization, Mike returned to teaching and served in several administrative roles, including in student services, financial aid, and finally in the Office of Institutional Advancement as Alumni Director, Director of Church Relations, and Director of Planned Giving.

After retiring from SMC, Mike served as Pastor at Jacksons Grove UMC in Landrum for more than 19 years. The members of that church honored Mike and Ella Mae's service to the church as well as their commitment to the College by placing a bench in their honor on campus in front of Judd Hall. Mike and Ella Mae delight in returning to the campus at least once each year to "sit on our bench and reminisce about our journey and appreciate the impact that the many special people at the College have had" upon their lives.

Throughout their journey, Mike and Ella Mae's shared experiences at SMC instilled in them a sense of resilience, perseverance, and the importance of community. As they reflect on their time at SMC, Mike and Ella Mae's advice to current students is simple yet profound: maintain a strong sense of determination, set ambitious goals, and surround yourself with a supportive community.

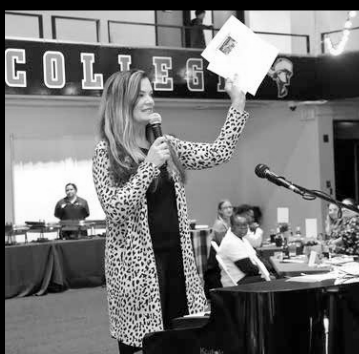
But, when asked about the most important piece of advice? Mike chuckled, "Find a good spouse." ■

DUELING PIANOS



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PRESIDENT COCHRAN PEDALS FOR AN ALZHEIMER'S CURE



SMC President Scott Cochran spends a lot of time on his bicycle. This summer, he combined his passion for biking with his commitment to a dear friend, participating in the annual Ride to End ALZ. The annual 255-mile ride across the state of South Carolina serves as a fundraiser for the Alzheimer's Association in its effort to find a cure.

Cochran, who rides several days per week and typically logs up to 3,000 miles per year, joined in the ride this year to support his long-time friend Geoff Hart. The former WYFF 4 Anchor was diagnosed with Alzheimer's a few years ago and started the Hartstrong team to participate in the ride. Cochran said their families have been friends for more than 30 years, and he wanted to support them in their effort.

"It's a horrible disease that affects or has affected just about everyone I know in some way or another," Cochran said. "I wanted to raise money for research and be Geoff's wingman on this ride. He's very strong physically and rode like a champion!"

Cochran said he plans to continue participating in the ride each year to help raise money. This year's ride raised more than \$1.2 million from nearly 500 riders. ■

"IT'S A HORRIBLE DISEASE THAT AFFECTS OR HAS AFFECTED JUST ABOUT EVERYONE I KNOW IN SOME WAY OR ANOTHER... I WANTED TO RAISE MONEY FOR RESEARCH AND BE GEOFF'S WINGMAN ON THIS RIDE."

SMC President Scott Cochran (left) poses with friend and former WYFF news anchor Geoff Hart following their 255-mile bike ride to benefit Alzheimer's research. Cochran rode to support Hart, who has been diagnosed with the disease.

Marty Woods Fuels Competitive Passion on the Tennis Court

By Radhika Vaid, Staff Writer

When you grow up in Belton, SC, it's inevitable that tennis will play a part in your life.

As the home of the South Carolina Tennis Hall of Fame and the Palmetto Junior Championship, Belton is a tennis hotbed in the state, and Marty Woods didn't escape the lure of the game.

Woods, SMC's Vice President of Facilities, grew up in Belton and was drawn to play the sport at an early age but didn't carry his passion for it beyond high school. It wasn't until he joined SMC that he rekindled his relationship with tennis and carried it further than he ever thought he would.

Woods has been competing in United States Tennis Association (USTA) tournaments since 2018. He started out playing singles then quickly transitioned to doubles.

"I have been blessed to be a part of five state championship teams in the USTA 3.5 division," Woods said. The USTA rates a player's skill level from 1.5 to 7.0 to ensure they compete against players with a similar skill set. At 3.5 Woods is considered an intermediate player.

When Woods came to SMC, he connected with some new tennis enthusiasts, including Scott Deskins, Kendevon Stenhouse, and Hugh Bailey.

"During lunch breaks and after work, we would gather on the SMC tennis courts. It was a fun way to exercise, relieve stress, and connect with others who shared the same passion for the game," he said.

Getting back on the court for some exercise and to meet new people relit the competitive fire in Woods. He started playing in USTA tournaments and was able to connect with a team that enjoyed some success.

In last year's USTA national tournament, Woods and his partner Jason Tavenner competed in the adult 40 & over division, which he said was an incredible experience. With more than 1,100 teams initially in his classification, their journey started in March at the Woodside Plantation in Aiken, SC, with local USTA play.

After winning the district championship in Aiken, the team advanced to the state championship at the Floyd Tennis Center in Florence, SC, in June. Going undefeated in pool play, the team triumphed over Lexington in the finals, securing the state championship title. Now it was on to the Southern Sectionals held in Auburn, AL, in late August.

Representing nine states, they faced tough competition at the regional tournament. The pair held on to defeat Louisiana in the finals for the opportunity to compete for a national championship in Scottsdale, AZ. Woods and Tavenner would face teams from New Mexico, Oklahoma, Washington, and Hawaii in pool play. After advancing out of pool play, they lost to Texas in the semifinals.

The team went on to defeat Florida in the consolation match to win third place.

"While we couldn't bring a national championship back to Laurens, the journey was filled with unforgettable memories," Woods said.

This year, Woods has decided to focus on local tennis at the Spartanburg Athletic Club. He is grateful for the incredible, once-in-a-lifetime experience he had at nationals. Now, he plans to spend more time with his granddaughter, hopefully instilling his love of tennis in her.

"I cherish the opportunity to spend more time with my two-year-old granddaughter, Adalyn" he said. "Looking ahead, my dream is to one day team up with Adalyn and compete together in mixed doubles." ■

Marty Woods poses with the sectional championship banner.



Marty Woods (second from left) poses with his teammates after their victory at the sectional tournament.

Staff: Alumni Employees

SMC GRADUATES FIND CAREERS ON CAMPUS

SMC alumni have a strong and lasting connection to their time at the College. Most credit their experience for some of the success and direction in their careers and lives. Those who have chosen a career at SMC, all tend to have one thing in common – they love being a part of the success of the College and the students who attend.

Several alumni employees shared their experiences and connections to the College - both as students and employees.



ALUMNI EMPLOYEES



Jill Johnson '82

Registrar

How long have you worked at SMC?
38 years.

What brought you to SMC as a student, and what was your degree/concentration?

I came to SMC because of the academic scholarship I received, and I loved

the campus during my initial visit. I earned an Associate in Arts degree.

What brought you to SMC as an employee?

After I earned my bachelor's degree at Baptist College at Charleston (Charleston Southern University), I was contacted by staff at SMC to come interview for a job in admissions. I worked in the admissions office as assistant director and loved recruiting. After 10 years in admissions, I got the job as registrar.

What was your favorite memory of SMC as a student?

I was a shy teenager and SMC brought me out of my shell. I loved my interactions with faculty and staff, and I gained enough confidence to be voted in as President of the Student Government Association in my sophomore year. My favorite memories have to be the friendships I developed and the ways I changed into the person I am now. I still cherish the friendship I have with my history professor, Dr. Kathy Cann.

What has been your favorite memory as an employee?

Wow. After so many years, it is hard to pick one memory. What I have loved is seeing how students have changed during their enrollment at SMC and knowing they will look back and say, "SMC was good for me." Some of them will not even realize it for a few years. I love the Commencement Ceremony each year. It's what we work toward all year, and to see the students graduate is an accomplishment we all share with them.

What makes SMC a great place for an education?

I have seen SMC move through many changes in 38 years. SMC is a great college, and I am proud to have been a part of decisions that have affected SMC to evolve to who we are today. I love that we are now awarding bachelor's degrees, and I was a part of the committee work that helped design them. I love seeing students transform into their best selves.

What makes SMC a great place to work?

I tell people I love my job and I love coming to work – most days. I don't consider this just a job, but in some ways, it is a mission. I feel like I was placed here, and I am privileged to be a part of what is happening at SMC. Once a Pioneer, always a Pioneer.



Judy Hefner '82

Director of Administrative Systems

How long have you worked at SMC?
Total number of years – 30.

What brought you to SMC as a student, and what was your degree/concentration?

Local school, scholarship. I started as an accounting student, then switched to computer science/programming. My degree from SMC is an Associate in Science.

What brought you to SMC as an employee?

I was already working as a full-time employee while I was a full-time student, so I stayed after graduating. When my second child was born, I became a full-time, stay-at-home mother. I returned to SMC years later. It seems my blood runs Pioneer blue.

What was your favorite memory of SMC as a student?

Graduating.

What has been your favorite memory as an employee?

When I returned to SMC, I was working with the faculty that I had known in my student days.

What makes SMC a great place for an education?

SMC is very student centered, offering help and guidance to students so they can be successful.

What makes SMC a great place to work?

Having a great group of people around.



Pam Ponder '89

Human Resources/Payroll Specialist

How long have you worked at SMC?
40 years.

What brought you to SMC as a student, and what was your degree/concentration?

I was working full-time in the business office when I decided to enroll in SMC's new college/evening program to obtain an Associate in Office Administration degree.

What brought you to SMC as an employee?

I ran into a friend while working at a local insurance company and mentioned to him that I was unhappy in my current position. He suggested that I contact his daughter, who was serving as the HR director for SMC, concerning a position open at the College. I was offered and accepted a temporary position as a data entry specialist in computer services. The following year, I was offered and accepted a full-time position as an Administrative Assistant in the Admissions Office.

What was your favorite memory of SMC as a student?

Attending a class that was taught by my supervisor.

What has been your favorite memory as an employee?

After 40 years, I have many memories! One of my favorites is the celebration that was held for the men's soccer team when they returned from winning the National Championship in 1994. There was so much excitement on campus!

What makes SMC a great place for an education?

The extra attention students receive from faculty and staff.

What makes SMC a great place to work?

The teamwork of faculty and staff to ensure students receive an awesome experience, whether it's during orientation or while attending classes at SMC.



Leah Caldwell '98

Director of Alumni Relations and Annual Fund

How long have you worked at SMC?

22.5 years, plus two years as a work-study student.

What brought you to SMC as a student, and what was your degree/concentration?

As soon as I stepped on campus, SMC just felt like home. I could see myself truly thriving here and even cancelled my other college visits after seeing SMC. I earned by Associate of Arts at SMC.

What brought you to SMC as an employee?

Divine intervention – I'd been in an occupation that was highly stressful, long hours, and it was taking a mental toll on me. I wanted to work at a place that would make me happy, give me peace and a sense of belonging. I randomly bought a Sunday paper and looked in the classifieds. I couldn't believe my eyes when I saw that SMC was hiring an admissions counselor and I met all of the qualifications! I just knew it was meant to be.

What was your favorite memory of SMC as a student?

I played softball, and we were playing against Lander on their campus. At the time Dr. Kathy Cann lived in Greenwood and invited the entire team and coaching staff to her home for dinner after our game. We were muddy, bloody, sweaty—you name it—but she welcomed us with open arms. I thought it was so cool that a professor would invite an entire team to her house and prepare a homemade meal for us. She probably never got the dirt out of her carpet from us dirty ball players, but she sure left a lasting impression on me, and to this day I still love her dearly.

What has been your favorite memory as an employee?

When I connected the dots from institutional advancement to student opportunities and being part of the mission. I was young in my career and thought I was just raising money for the College - but when I realized that we are actually giving people an opportunity to invest in tomorrow's leaders I understood the importance of the work. The light bulb went off! That changed everything about how I did my job. People often tell me they'd never ask for money and that it makes them uncomfortable. I tell them it's easy when you are a product of other people's donations

and want to pay that forward by giving students the same opportunities that were given to me 25 years ago.

What makes SMC a great place for an education?

Everything!!! The small class size, the student-to-professor ratio, the feeling of being part of a family, and not just being a number. We are only as successful as our students, so we strive to give them all of the support they need, whether it be financial, academic, emotional, or spiritual. We care about their whole being, not just how they do in the classroom. When we see they are in need, we step in to help. You won't find that on most campuses.

What makes SMC a great place to work?

Again, everything!!! Being a small campus, you get to know your coworkers personally. They become friends and then like family members. We care about each other. We celebrate victories and mourn deaths. We step in to help each other. SMC has a wonderful culture that centers around a healthy work/family balance. It's a wonderful place to be.



Lynn Lancaster '99

Executive Assistant to The President

How long have you worked at SMC?

Two Years, Four Months.

What brought you to SMC as a student, and what was your degree/concentration?

SMC was always the school that was thought of as the home away from home.

Coming from a small high school, I wanted the same family-type feel with the experience of college life. SMC only offered an associate degree at that time. This gave me the opportunity to settle into college life before venturing into a bigger university. Looking back, I would have stayed at SMC my entire college career had SMC offered a bachelor's degree program then. I earned an Associate in Arts degree.

What brought you to SMC as an employee?

When I saw the posting for my current position, I knew immediately that I wanted to be a part of the SMC team. I knew if working at SMC was as good of an experience as being a student at SMC, then I had found my home.

What was your favorite memory of SMC as a student?

There are so many favorites, but I would have to say of all of them, the memories I made with fellow students are ones I will cherish forever. There are friends that I made at SMC that I am still friends with today!

What has been your favorite memory as an employee?

My favorite memory is probably the first graduation that I participated in as an employee at SMC. It was memorable in the fact that it was during COVID, but I remember thinking to myself how special it was because I got to be a part of graduation as an employee but had also experienced it as a student. It was such a surreal moment.

What makes SMC a great place for an education?

SMC meets students, parents, and families where they are on their education journey. To me this shows how committed SMC is to each and every student.

What makes SMC a great place to work?

Culture, Culture, Culture!! I work with a great group of individuals who not only care about each other professionally but personally as well.



Alexandria Wallace (Chef Dria) '10

Executive Chef

How long have you worked at SMC?
Two Years.

What brought you to SMC as a student, and what was your degree/concentration?

It was a great school, and I wanted to

study psychology.

What brought you to SMC as an employee?

I was referred by a coworker.

What was your favorite memory of SMC as a student?

The student cookouts.

What has been your favorite memory as an employee?

Providing a great experience for the students through dining service.

What makes SMC a great place for an education?

The people are family oriented, which makes the campus feel like home.

What makes SMC a great place to work?

We have great benefits, and it's still family oriented.



Deanna Unger '16

Assistant Athletic Director for Compliance

How long have you worked at SMC?

I managed the bookstore on campus for two years, but I was technically employed by a contractor. From the bookstore, I transitioned to work in athletics and have been in this position for three years.

What brought you to SMC as a student, and what was your degree/concentration?

I was being recruited to play volleyball, and on my very first visit to campus I remember feeling like this was the place for me because everyone was so welcoming, and I could feel the warm, inviting culture across campus. I earned an Associate in Science.

What brought you to SMC as an employee?

During my time as a student, I built lifetime relationships with faculty and staff members who were and still are my mentors that I turned to for advice and guidance who really changed my life. Now I can give back and help to make a difference in the lives of students.

What was your favorite memory of SMC as a student?

There was a possibility that it was going to start snowing in the middle of the night, so my roommates and I stayed up waiting for the snow. When it did start snowing, we went outside and everyone who lived on campus was outside too. We all went sledding down the hill to the soccer field, had snowball fights, built snowmen, and had several games of manhunt across the entire campus.

What has been your favorite memory as an employee?

I got to travel with our men's golf team to the National Championship in Odessa, Texas. During that trip, I was a part of several of our student athletes experiencing things for the first time, and I got to be a part of one of the biggest moments in some of their lives. Also, during that trip I think it was the most I have ever laughed!

What makes SMC a great place for an education? What makes SMC a great place to work?

Everyone at SMC wants to see all students succeed and are there for students on a deeper level than just as a professor or staff member. SMC has a way of empowering and motivating students to be their authentic selves while pursuing the opportunity to be challenged with their studies. Being an employee with SMC has the same benefits as why it's a great place to get an education. As an employee, I get to experience growth and support from my colleagues while being challenged in my position.



Eric Wells '17

Advisor

How long have you worked at SMC?

Nine months.

What brought you to SMC as a student, and what was your degree/concentration?

What drew me to SMC as a student was the affordability as a LIFE scholar and the support that comes with small class sizes. I was undecided when I began my education at SMC but finished with an Associate in Business degree. If SMC had been four years at the time, I more than likely would have stayed to complete my BA degree as well.

What brought you to SMC as an employee?

Simply put, SMC changed my life. In grade school and as early as 4th grade, I had multiple teachers (all math teachers, by the way) telling me I would never make it in college. I compared myself to peers in my classes and many family members who ended up being valedictorians or finishing multiple years' worth of college courses in high school. I ended up taking two years off between high school and college because I did not believe I was smart

■ Students and Community

enough to succeed in college even though I had taken AP and honors courses in high school and ended with a 4.2 GPA.

I want to work at SMC because I want to play a part in students changing their minds about themselves. My first class at SMC was English 101 with Dr. Dennis on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays at 9:00am. By the end of my first 50-minute class with her I felt valued and important at SMC. It was not a fluke. SMC's culture is one that strives to make students know they are valued and important from enrollment to employment, and I am overjoyed to be a part of changing the lives of our students.

What was your favorite memory of SMC as a student?

I loved the bond between the students and the professor involved in the inaugural entrepreneurship club. I felt like we were an unstoppable force on and off campus. We got to take trips together and talk to multiple small business owners and non-profit leaders in the Greenville, Spartanburg, and Charlotte areas.

What has been your favorite memory as an employee?

As an employee, I have really enjoyed orientation. Orientations allow me to get outside of my office, move around, work with multiple departments, and get a lot of valuable facetime with incoming freshmen. Each orientation is different, so it feels like a special treat is waiting at every event.

What makes SMC a great place for an education?

The most support I can remember receiving in all my years of education was at SMC. Every student can be successful here so long as they choose to partner with faculty, staff, and peers to use all of their resources.

What makes SMC a great place to work?

SMC's leadership has a clear vision and mission, so I see a lot of my peers thriving in their roles. In my role, my leaders lead with empathy.



Hailey Breeding '21

Financial Aid Counselor

How long have you worked at SMC?

I have been working at SMC for one year and eight months.

What brought you to SMC as a student, and what was your degree/concentration?

I came to SMC because of the small community; I was also recruited for softball. I got my associate in art and my Bachelor of Arts with concentrations in history, psychology, and professional development.

What brought you to SMC as an employee?

I had a great experience working with enrollment as a student worker, and when the opportunity presented itself to join the team full time, I was very excited!

What was your favorite memory of SMC as a student?

There are many favorite memories. My favorite memory would have to be my senior year; all of the events right before graduation were a lot of fun!

What has been your favorite memory as an employee?

Our staff council event back at the end of spring 2023. That was a lot of fun!

What makes SMC a great place for an education?

The professors really care about you and your well-being. They will always work with you, no matter what.

What makes SMC a great place to work?

There is a lot of support from everyone, and you develop great relationships with people!



Charles Dalton '24

Assistant Director of the Annual Fund

How long have you worked at SMC?

I started working in the business office as a billing clerk in 2021. In total, I've worked at SMC for one year and six months.

What brought you to SMC as a student, and what was your degree/concentration?

I originally started my associate degree at SMC in 2012. I took some time off to explore my entrepreneurial dreams. I returned to SMC and completed my Associate of Arts degree in 2021. I am set to graduate with my Bachelor of Arts in Business Administration focused on management and entrepreneurship in May 2024.

What brought you to SMC as an employee?

I've always wanted to work for SMC. My experience as a student was amazing, which sparked a passion in me to give back to SMC. After finding an open position in the business office, I immediately applied.

What was your favorite memory of SMC as a student?

My favorite memory as a student was every day in Mr. Barry Ward's class. His sense of humor and passion for SMC is unmatched.

What has been your favorite memory as an employee?

My favorite memory as an employee is my first Dueling Pianos event. Being around so many donors and alumni who have a common goal of supporting the students is a reward in itself.

What makes SMC a great place for an education?

SMC is an atmosphere that is conducive to growth. We are a tightknit family that puts the students first.

What makes SMC a great place to work?

SMC has a great work culture because of the openness and willingness of the staff and faculty to pull each other up. It's never about ME but always about WE.



ATHLETICS RECAP

2022-2023

FALL SPORTS

Cross Country

The SMC cross country teams both had very successful seasons with the men's and women's teams each winning the Region 10 Championships. The teams boasted five all-region runners with Zander Allen also being named the Region 10 men's runner of the year. Aaron King was named the Region 10 coach of the year for both men's and women's cross country.

Soccer

SMC had a successful season on the soccer pitch last fall. The women's team claimed the Region 10 Champions title and finished second at the South Atlantic District tournament. They had eight players named all-region with Beyonce Williams earning player of the year honors for the region and honorable mention all-american. Kyle Campbell was named women's coach of the year. The men's team placed four players on the all-region team.

Volleyball

The Pioneers represented well on the volleyball court, winning both the regular season and tournament Region 10 championships. The team also finished second at the Southeast District B tournament. Four players earned all-region honors, and Tori Barr was the region's player of the year. Brittany Farrell was named coach of the year for Region 10.

WINTER SPORTS

Basketball

SMC had a solid season on the hardwood. The men's team placed two players on the all-region team. The women took the Region 10 title for the regular season and the tournament. They also finished second at the Southeast District tournament. Two women were named all-region, and Tarewyn Dawson was player of the year. Kelly Britsky was named coach of the year.

SPRING SPORTS

Baseball

Four Pioneers were named to the Region 10 all-region baseball team.

Softball

Six players earned all-region honors for softball.

Beach Volleyball

The beach volleyball Pioneers finished their inaugural season with a ninth-place finish at the NJCAA National Championship tournament in Tavares, Florida.

Golf

The links were good to SMC this year. The men's team qualified for the NJCAA National Championship in Newton, Kansas. Joy Outhous qualified for the individual NJCAA National Championship for the women's team.

CLASS NOTES

Khalil Robinson BA '21

After graduating from SMC as part of the inaugural bachelor's degree class in 2021, Khalil Robinson joined American Credit Acceptance (ACA) as an Underwriter and Credit Analyst. After almost a year as an underwriter, Robinson took advantage of opportunities within the company for advancement. The auto finance company, a part of the Johnson Group in downtown Spartanburg, encourages employee growth and promotion.

Today, he is a knowledge management specialist focused on providing associates with the knowledge, tools, and skills they need to optimize their performance at work. Robinson credits the skills he learned at SMC, particularly in his English and professional development classes, for helping him quickly learn and grow into his new position.

"I thought an English degree would limit my job opportunities when I first graduated, but I soon realized it has provided me with more opportunities than I could have expected," he said. "SMC does a great job of setting up its students for success on campus and after they graduate."

Robinson said he is grateful for the help of his professors in helping him to prepare for interviews and highlight his skills to get his first job and take advantage of the opportunities to showcase his skills.

Jason Pike '86

Pioneer Jason Pike has dedicated his professional life to the health and safety of others. The Army veteran spent his military career focused on controlling pests to prevent disease and death in soldiers and followed that by joining the Centers for Disease Control during the fight against the COVID pandemic.

Pike most recently set his sights on a new venture, writing and publishing a book about his life. His memoir, "Soldier Against All Odds," was published on the Amazon platform in January 2023. Pike's book shares his story of overcoming challenging odds – often self-induced – to become a successful soldier and help advance the Army's system and tactics for preventing disease.

Pike discusses his journey, including his time at SMC where he credits his experience for helping put him on his path to success. "Soldier Against All Odds" is available on Amazon.

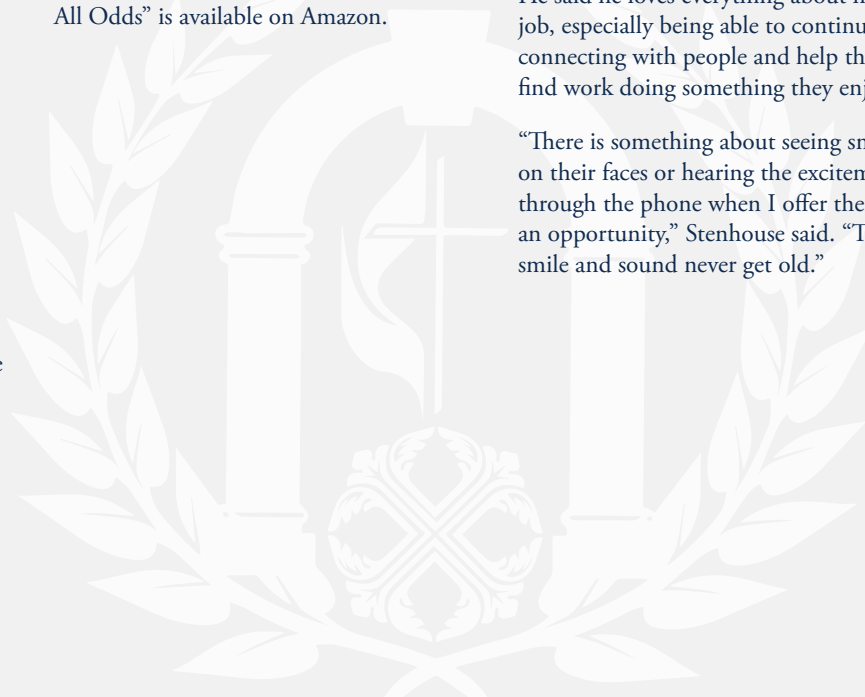
Kendevon Stenhouse '18

Kendevon Stenhouse has a knack for connecting with people. It was evident when he was a Resident Assistant during his studies at SMC and when he became an Admissions Counselor for the College after earning his degree. Now, he's putting his people skills to work as a Recruiter for Spartanburg Regional Healthcare System.

"I learned so many lessons and gained so much experience at SMC, and that is what shaped me into who I am today," he said of both his studies and his time working at SMC. In his new position, Stenhouse said he gets to use the lessons he learned at SMC to help bring top talent to the local healthcare system.

In his new position, he recruits for several departments at the hospital system, attending job fairs, college recruiting fairs, and hiring events around the area. He said he loves everything about his job, especially being able to continue connecting with people and help them find work doing something they enjoy.

"There is something about seeing smiles on their faces or hearing the excitement through the phone when I offer them an opportunity," Stenhouse said. "That smile and sound never get old."



In Memoriam

Mr. William Barton Smith '48
of Cades, SC, died December 12, 2022.

Mrs. Naomi Scott Fain '49
of Spartanburg, SC, died August 4, 2022.

Mr. Albert B. Martin '49
of Spartanburg, SC, died October 9, 2022.

Mrs. Juanita Pulley Hammett '50
of Inman, SC, died July 2, 2022.

Mr. John E. Calvert, Jr. '51
of Clayton, NC, died April 27, 2022.

Mr. Hoyle P. Brown, Jr. '54
of Spartanburg, SC, died January 27, 2021.

Mr. Joney Lawson '54
of Summerville, SC, died March 8, 2022.

Mr. Dan Henry Mizzell, Jr. '55
of Charleston, SC, died April 7, 2022.

Mr. Carl Everette Pierce '56
of Moncks Corner, SC, died September 24, 2022.

The Reverend Harry R. Stullenbarger '57
of Pawleys Island, SC, died June 24, 2023.

Mr. Shirley Eugene Hall '61
of Charlotte, NC, died November 17, 2022.

Mr. David F. McClure, Jr. '61
of Monroe, NC, died February 21, 2022.

Mr. Joseph Newton Cleland '63
of Spartanburg, SC, died August 6, 2021.

Chaplin Jerry Dean Clevenger '64
of Inman, SC, died October 20, 2021.

Mr. Richard B. Aiken '65
of Gainesville, GA, died May 29, 2022.

Dr. Floride Martin Calvert '65
of Inman, SC, died November 1, 2022.

Ms. Nancy O. Hudgens '65
of Easley, SC, died March 6, 2022.

Mr. Joe A. Shirley, Jr. '66
of Greenwood, SC, died November 12, 2022.

Mr. Wayne M. Norris '68
of Chapin, SC, died January 7, 2023.

Mr. Randolph Frank Patton '69
of Simpsonville, SC, died August 4, 2022.

Mr. Wayne Forte '70
of Bonneau, SC, died March 25, 2022.

Mrs. Bonnie Sims Getz '70
of Roebuck, SC, died September 9, 2022.

Mr. Clarence W. Harris, Jr. '70
of Gaffney, SC, died November 13, 2022.

Mr. Ernest Eugene Brickle, Jr. '72
of Spartanburg, SC, died February 6, 2023.

Mr. John M. Coffey '72
of Charleston, SC, died October 15, 2022.

Mr. Jacob C. McElveen, Jr. '73
of Lynchburg, SC, died February 23, 2022.

Mr. Randy M. Trotter '76
of Victoria, TX, died April 12, 2022.

Ms. Cynthia Marie Wheeler '76
of Spartanburg, SC, died February 8, 2021.

Mr. William Eugene Maye, Jr. '77
of Leesville, SC, died December 15, 2021.

Mrs. Magdalene Berry Daniels '78
of Groton, CT, died October 2, 2021.

Mr. Gerard Goodwin '78
of Spartanburg, SC, died November 17, 2022.

Ms. Amanda G. Henderson '78
of Boiling Springs, SC, died February 4, 2022.

Mr. Timmy Moss '86
of Gaffney, SC, died August 16, 2022.

Ms. Charlotte D. Moore '90
of Chesnee, SC, died October 18, 2022.

Mr. Christopher A. McGraw '93
of Gaffney, SC, died October 8, 2022.

The Reverend Thomas Richard Bailey
of Irmo, SC, died November 16, 2021.

Mr. Joe Newton Minshew
of North Myrtle Beach, SC, died September 3, 2021.

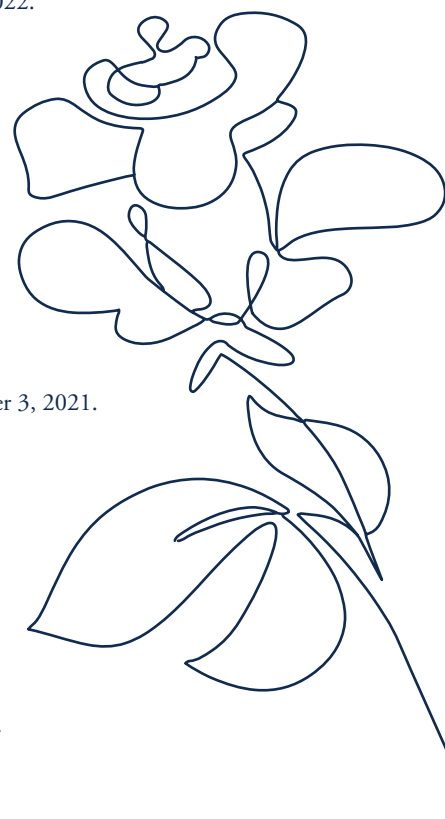
Mr. Randolph Frank Patton
of Simpsonville, SC, died August 4, 2022.

Mr. Michael Buffalo Smith
of Converse, SC, died August 24, 2021.

Mr. Walter Terry Stephenson
of Spartanburg, SC, died August 10, 2022.

Mr. Charles Paul Wieland
of Great Falls, SC, died February 20, 2021.

Mr. Loyless Thomas Wright, Jr.
of Spartanburg, SC, died June 1, 2022.





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*Live
 Music*

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