# <u>BRONTIERS</u>

SPARTANBURG METHODIST COLLEGE smcsc.edu/frontiers FALL 2020

# PIONEERS TOGETHER

# **FROM THE PRESIDENT:**



Frontiers is an annual magazine, and each year my letter summarizes its contents and invites readers to share in the pride of our successes and the sadness of our losses. This past year was difficult for our community for many reasons, not the least of which was the untimely death of Professor David Gibson, who taught math here for over 40 years.

To summarize a year that is unlike anything we have experienced in modern history, it's appropriate to acknowledge the difficulties, the challenges, and the losses. It's been a rough year, and it's still a rough year. While progress is being made to combat the global pandemic, there's no clear end in sight. The uncertainties have been exhausting, and like everyone else, our faculty,

staff, and students are tired. We are past ready for normal to come back.

I also think it's appropriate to celebrate our wins, and there have been a lot of them since I wrote this same letter in 2019. These successes show the strength and resilience of our faculty and staff and our value to students who need us now more than at any time in recent memory. In spite of a pandemic, over 1,000 students enrolled at SMC this fall, more than any in the College's history. We launched a new online Associate of Arts program. We hired new staff and faculty at a time when some colleges had to make the agonizing choice to furlough employees. After months of work to make the campus as safe as possible, we opened, on time, for in-person instruction this fall.

I don't know what the next few weeks and months will bring, but I am proud of what we've achieved together. As a campus, we learned, we adapted, and we found opportunities in the chaos to strengthen SMC and our students. In doing this work, we have remained a college we can all be proud of.

Stay safe and healthy,

W. Scott Cochran President

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# FRONTIERS

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# BE A STUDENT'S ANGEL

During the global pandemic, many of our students have been out of work, caring for sick loved ones or siblings, or working an extra job to support their families. SMC's Angel Fund assists students with non-academic, often urgent, needs. Without this critical support, students might withdraw from coursework completely.

## HOW THE ANGEL FUND SUPPORTS STUDENTS DURING COVID-19:

- Provides laptops or internet access to students completing their schoolwork remotely
- Assists students with necessary medical procedures or emergency health needs
- Arranges transportation to campus, off-campus work, or interviews
- Purchases personal items: clothing, sheets and bedding, hygiene items

# WAYS TO GIVE

**ONLINE** at www.smcsc.edu/make-a-donation

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**BY MAIL** use the envelope included in this magazine

# **THANK YOU**

SMC's mission is to provide a close-knit community where students can thrive, and we can't do it without your generous support!





"REMOVING THE SAT AND ACT REQUIREMENTS FROM OUR ADMISSIONS POLICY OPENS THE DOOR FOR MORE NON-WHITE, FIRST-GENERATION, AND LOW-INCOME STUDENTS..."

# SMC ADOPTS TEST-OPTIONAL ADMISSIONS POLICY

FACULTY VOTES TO REMOVE OBSTACLE FOR HISTORICALLY UNDERREPRESENTED POPULATIONS

#### By Jason Spencer

rospective students will no longer be required to submit SAT or ACT scores to be considered for admission into Spartanburg Methodist College.

Seeking to craft a more equitable path to admissions, College faculty approved a test-optional admissions policy, which went into effect for fall 2020 applicants. The move follows a national trend to remove barriers that limit the access historically underrepresented populations have to higher education.

A growing body of research indicates that race and ethnicity, along with family income and parental education, can put students from historically underrepresented populations at a disadvantage when it comes to standardized testing. Such students often cannot afford tutors or taking the tests multiple times to achieve a higher score. They also are more likely to have attended under-resourced elementary and high schools.

Students traditionally underrepresented in higher education include racial and ethnic minorities, first-generation college students, and low-income students – all of whom make up a substantial portion of SMC's student body.

And these are exactly the students Spartanburg Methodist exists to serve.

"Removing the SAT and ACT requirements from our admissions policy opens the door for more non-white, firstgeneration, and low-income students to gain the tools they need to build wealth that they can pass along to their children and grandchildren," says Julie Lanford '07, Executive Director of Admissions and Enrollment Services.

More than half of the top 100 liberal arts colleges in the country are now test-optional, according to U.S. News & World Report.

SMC faculty have analyzed the last three years of incoming student data and determined that GPA is the best indicator of student success at Spartanburg Methodist College.

Under the new admissions policy, SMC will review college applicants on high school GPA only. Students can choose to submit standardized test scores if they feel those scores accurately reflect their ability; those scores will be used in continued research on the correlation between test scores and student success.

# FACULTY AWARDS

By Mary Hurston Zuelke



# Dr. Litasha Dennis,

SCICU Excellence in Teaching Award

Dr. Litasha Dennis, Professor of English, has built

a reputation among students at Spartanburg Methodist College for being the go-to for help with challenging writing assignments. She's also known for her energetic and exciting lectures and presentations. Pass her classroom during one of her talks, and you'll notice students zeroed in on everything she's saying.

It is this reputation and the admiration from her fellow faculty members that earned her the 2020 South Carolina Independent Colleges and Universities (SCICU) Excellence in Teaching Award.

"Perhaps the best evidence of excellence in teaching is receiving recommendations from the students themselves," says Professor Pamela Hutto, SMC Professor of Sociology. "I often hear students telling each other to visit Dr. Dennis in the writing center because of her skill with helping students."

Dennis has been at SMC since 2012 and brings more than 21 years of teaching experience to the classroom. She earned her doctorate in Twentieth-century American Literature with a concentration in African American literature from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, her Master of Arts in English and her Bachelor of Arts in English both from Winthrop University.

During her time at SMC, Dennis has served as the Chair of the English Department, a member of various committees, including the Faculty Steering and Tenure committees, a student adviser and a tutor in the writing center.

The SCICU Excellence in Teaching Award is accompanied by a \$3,000 research grant, which Dennis may use toward professional development.

SCICU is a charitable organization that represents 20 liberal arts institutions in South Carolina that provides support for its member institutions by fundraising and supplementing scholarships and research.



Dr. Kirk Hansen, Archie Vernon and Margaret Wannamaker Huff Faculty Award

Dr. Kirk Hansen, Professor of History, does more than lecture in the classroom. He mentors students, supports his colleagues, and uses the empathic lenses of a historian to offer encouragement to all those around him.

To honor his dedication to SMC, his fellow faculty members selected Hansen as the 2020 recipient of the Archie Vernon and Margaret Wannamaker Huff Faculty Award. The award is given to an SMC faculty member who exemplifies outstanding professional qualifications and teaching ability, and Hansen does just that.

"He is not only one of the most engaged professors I know, but he also is the kindest and most caring person I know," says Dr. Cole Cheek, Professor of History and Anthropology and Department of History and Anthropology Chairperson. "He works hard and truly cares about his students and colleagues."

Hansen joined SMC's History and Anthropology Department in 2016. Since then, he has served as a student club sponsor, academic adviser, and faculty committee member, all while continuing to conduct his own research in the field of history. Hansen earned his doctorate in history from the University of Dundee and both his Master of Arts and Bachelor of Arts in history from Bob Jones University.

Along with the award, Hansen received an \$800 stipend for further study, travel for professional purposes, or to defray the cost of publication expenses for scholarly work.

The Huff Faculty Award was established in 1970 as an endowed fund by Dr. A. V. Huff Jr., a former member of the SMC Board of Trustees and a retired faculty member of the History Department at Furman University, and his wife, Kate, in memory of his parents, Archie Vernon and Margaret Wannamaker Huff.



# Dr. Adam Siegfried, GBHEM Exemplary Teaching Award

As you can guess from his title, Dr. Adam Siegfried,

Professor of Chemistry, Department of Science and Health Chairperson, and the Associate of Science Program Coordinator, has a lot of responsibilities at Spartanburg Methodist College. But he never lets his administrative duties interfere with his dedication to his students. His fellow faculty members recognize and admire his dedication, which is why they selected Siegfried as the 2020 recipient of the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry of the United Methodist Church (GBHEM) Exemplary Teaching Award. The award is given to a SMC faculty member who exemplifies excellence in teaching, civility, and concern for students and colleagues, commitment to value-centered education, and service to students, institution, and the community.

"Dr. Siegfried is the epitome of hard work and dedication. He often is the first to arrive in the morning and the last to leave in the evening. Despite his administrative and teaching responsibilities, he always finds the time to answer questions and offer advice and guidance as needed, for both his colleagues and his students," says Dr. Kim Duckett, Professor of Biology. "I truly appreciate his leadership of our department and for helping to make my transition seamless as a new faculty member at SMC. I am thrilled that Dr. Siegfried is the recipient of this year's GBHEM Exemplary Teaching Award as he is certainly deserving of it."

This year marks Siegfried's fifth year at SMC, where in addition to his teaching responsibilities, he has served as a student adviser, a mentor to research students, a member of numerous faculty committees, and continued to conduct his own research in the field of chemistry. He earned his doctorate and his Master of Science in chemistry from Clemson University and his Bachelor of Arts in chemistry from Coker College.

Along with the award, Siegfried will receive a \$500 stipend.

# **TRUSTEE** MEDAL WINNERS



he 2020 recipients of the Trustee Medal were Andrew Brock of Moore, South Carolina; Samantha Gettys of Landrum, South Carolina; Kennedy Howard of Greer, South Carolina; and Sarah Martin of Gaffney, South Carolina. Created and funded by Trustees of the College, this honor goes to the student(s) with the highest GPA in the graduating class. During the most unusual spring semester in the history of the College, it is additionally impressive that these students were able to maintain high grades and persevere through the challenges of COVID-19.

# **2020 COMMENCEMENT**

Among the many events to be canceled this spring due to COVID-19 was our 2020 Commencement ceremony. After this year's class persevered through the challenges of COVID-19, quarantine, and an emergency shift to online instruction, the College wanted nothing more than to celebrate this outstanding group of women and men. Like everything else in our new COVID-19 world, that celebration looked much different from previous years. Students were mailed graduation celebration packages that included their diplomas and caps and gowns.

The College plans to host an official Commencement ceremony for the class of 2020 next spring in conjunction with the class of 2021 Commencement.

# SEVEN NEW **FACULTY**







6 FRONTIERS Fall 2020

# **DR. ETHAN BIRNEY** PROFESSOR OF HISTORY

Ethan Birney joined SMC's Department of History and Anthropology this fall. He earned his doctorate in Mediaeval History from the University of St Andrews in Scotland and both his Master of Arts and Bachelor of Arts in history from Bob Jones University. While at St Andrews, Birney was a tutor for several classes and lectured in a summer program.

# DR. TAYLOR BRICKLEY

# **PROFESSOR OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE**

Taylor Brickley joined SMC's Criminal Justice Department this fall. Brickley earned his doctorate in criminology and criminal justice from the University of South Carolina, his Master of Science in criminal justice from Armstrong State University, and his Bachelor of Science in criminal justice from Radford University. Headed into his 10th year of teaching criminal justice, his prior teaching appointments include Western Carolina University, Mars Hill University, Armstrong State University, and the University of South Carolina.

# **DR. JESSE KEYTON** PROFESSOR OF MATHEMATICS

Jesse Keyton joins SMC's Department of Math and Computer Science from the University of Arkansas, where he was a graduate assistant. Keyton earned his doctorate in mathematics at the University of Arkansas, in a subject called commutative algebra. With a deep enthusiasm for learning, Keyton coorganized the University of Arkansas Graduate Student Colloquium – a space for U of A graduate students to connect with their fellow graduate students. He earned his Bachelor of Science in mathematics from Liberty University.









# MS. CHRISTINA KING-JOHNSON

**PROFESSOR OF BUSINESS** 

Christina King-Johnson comes to SMC from Gardner-Webb University, where she was an adjunct faculty member for four years. King-Johnson is a Doctor of Business Administration candidate with a concentration in management at Anderson University. She earned her Master of Business Administration in human resources from Gardner-Webb University and her Bachelor of Arts in psychology from the University of Tennessee. She has completed course work in business administration at Savannah State University and in the experimental psychology doctoral program with a minor in statistics at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

# MS. TANIA MCDUFFIE

# **PROFESSOR OF MATHEMATICS**

Tania McDuffie brings more than 28 years of teaching experience to SMC, teaching mathematics courses at Converse College, the University of South Carolina Upstate, the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, Spartanburg High School, and Spartanburg Community College. McDuffie earned both her Master of Education in mathematics and her Bachelor of Arts in economics from Converse College. In addition to her teaching career, McDuffie held several positions in Converse's Academic Support Department; most recently, she was the Assistant Dean of Academic Support.

# **DR. DALICIA RAYMOND**

# **PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH**

Dalicia Raymond brings both a comprehensive knowledge of medieval literature and a little magic to SMC's English and Literature Department. Raymond earned her doctorate in English from the University of New Mexico, where she completed her dissertation, "The Magic of Love: Love Magic in Medieval Romance." She earned her Master of Arts in literature and culture, Bachelor of Arts in English, and Bachelor of Arts in secondary education all from Oregon State University. Raymond's previous teaching positions include instructor of record at the University of New Mexico, Oregon State University, and Linn-Benton Community College.

# **MS. KARLA REED** PROFESSOR OF PSYCHOLOGY

Karla Reed joined SMC's Department of Psychology and Sociology this fall. Reed earned her Master of Arts in psychology from The Citadel and Bachelor of Science in psychology from the College of Charleston. She will complete her doctorate in educational psychology and research from the University of South Carolina in the spring of 2021. Her research focuses on improving educational and employment outcomes of underserved populations.

# SMC REMEMBERS BELOVED PROFESSOR



#### By Robert W. Dalton



avid Gibson was always happy that Spartanburg Methodist College held its commencement

He could wear his sunglasses and no one would see him cry.

"He would say it was sad, that he was going to miss seeing the faces of the graduates," said Nancy Gibson, his wife of 33 years.

Gibson, who taught mathematics at the College for 44 years, died on Nov. 22, 2019, after a brief battle with pancreatic cancer.

"He was just the picture of health until he started having pain last summer," Nancy Gibson said. "Up until his diagnosis (in September 2019) he was doing 80 push-ups a day. It was just devastating, the way it all happened so fast."

SMC President Scott Cochran said Gibson's passing leaves a huge void at the College.

"David was part of SMC for more than 40 years," Cochran said. "He was more than a professor. He was a mentor and trusted friend to students, faculty, and staff over the years. His impact on the College and those connected with it cannot be overstated. He changed lives. He was simply amazing and he is missed terribly." Gibson came to Spartanburg Methodist College in 1975 and found a home. Over his four decades he educated and entertained thousands of students, who became his extended family. He met his wife there.

"I came to work there in 1986 after getting my doctorate," Nancy Gibson said. "Somebody left in the middle of the year, and that never happens. We met at a faculty meeting in January and we married in May. We had to wait until school was out."

Gibson's job was to teach numbers, but he also challenged his students with words – giving bonus points to those who could take a jumble of letters and come up with the most anagrams. No matter how many students he had in a class, he'd always try to squeeze in one more...and one more.

He never took a day of sick leave until 2010, when he had surgery on his vocal chords. Even then, he tried to find a way to keep going.

"He said you can come in and do my talking for me," Nancy Gibson said. "He tried it for about two weeks, but he had to take the semester off."

One of Nancy Gibson's favorite photographs of her husband was taken in the spring of 2019, before they knew he had cancer.

"His two sisters came to town for his birthday," Nancy said. "Even though he had been [at the College] for more than 40 years, they had never been there, so he took them. One of his sisters took a picture of him in his classroom."

While Gibson's life revolved around SMC, it didn't stop there. He gained fame as a tournament Scrabble player, winning national championships in 1994 and 2016. He also loved music and played several instruments, including the piano.

"He could just sit down and start playing original melodies," Nancy Gibson said. "He took off playing Scrabble for three or four years and during that time decided he wanted us to write some country songs. I'd write the words and he'd write the music. We had about 100 songs, and we found some women who sang and made some CDs."

Gibson left his mark on his students outside the classroom as well. From plays, to concerts, to sporting events, if his students were involved, he was there to see them.

"He got a substitute for Calculus 3 one time because I sang in SMC's Chapel Service with the Troubadours of SMC," said Bret McAbee '16. "He was a really great guy and super supportive of his students."

McAbee credits Gibson with helping him graduate on time from Presbyterian College in 2018.

"When I came to Presbyterian I was a class short, and he offered it as an independent study at Converse College," McAbee said. "It was just him and me. I'm pretty sure he did it for free, and he said he was glad to have me for one more class."

To say thank you, McAbee gave Gibson a tie imprinted with pi carried out to 1,000 places.

About a month before he died, Gibson went to visit McAbee in Landrum, where he works as Power Engineering Technologist for Pike Engineering. They had lunch, they reminisced, and they said goodbye.

"He was my favorite teacher by a long shot," McAbee said. "He was such a humble, soft-spoken guy. He would help anybody as much as they needed. He was really easy to talk to. It was like talking to your grandpa."



Gibson in his classroom, spring 2019. Photo courtesy of Nancy Gibson.

"HE WAS MORE THAN A PROFESSOR. HE WAS A MENTOR AND TRUSTED FRIEND TO STUDENTS, FACULTY, AND STAFF OVER THE YEARS. HIS IMPACT ON THE COLLEGE AND THOSE CONNECTED WITH IT CANNOT BE OVERSTATED. HE CHANGED LIVES. HE WAS SIMPLY AMAZING AND HE IS MISSED TERRIBLY."

# PIONEERS TOGETHER

# HOW SMC IS ADAPTING AND GROWING DURING COVID-19



#### n the spring, Spartanburg Methodist College was caught off guard when the COVID-19 coronavirus exploded.

That's not a surprise. Most institutions were overwhelmed when the country began shutting down to slow the spread of the virus.

"When we left in March and unexpectedly didn't come back from spring break, we went online," said SMC President Scott Cochran. "But it wasn't online learning, it was emergency teaching."

When the initial shock wore off, SMC stopped playing defense and went on the offense to protect students, faculty, and staff as it prepared for the fall semester and reopening.

"We decided as a leadership team that we had to be excellent at delivering education despite the pandemic," Cochran said.

Communication was the key to formulating a successful plan. In the beginning, SMC sent messages, almost daily, informing the campus of the latest developments. Cochran began holding a virtual town hall meeting every week for faculty and staff, giving the latest updates and taking questions. SMC utilized technology to keep our community updated on our campus plans – using email, our website, virtual meetings, and social media.

The College brought in three new team members to help with the digital transformation it needed to go from "emergency teaching" to "online learning." The three worked to make sure faculty and staff members were up to speed on BrightSpace, the online learning management system the College selected.

Over the summer, SMC overhauled its curriculum to better serve students

"WE HAVE STUDENTS LEARNING IN A TRADITIONAL CLASSROOM ON SOME DAYS AND ONLINE ON OTHERS. AND SOME STUDENTS WHO ARE ONLINE FOR THE ENTIRE SEMESTER. OUR FACULTY HAVE WORKED VERY HARD TO MEET THE NEEDS OF ALL STUDENTS."

during the ongoing pandemic. Dr. Mark Gibbs, Provost and Executive Director of Academic Affairs, says many professors spent countless hours filming video lectures, navigating an unfamiliar virtual learning environment, and planning courses that students could access inperson, online, or in some cases, both.

"Our safety plan includes social distancing in our classrooms, and everywhere on campus, so we're seating about half the normal number of students at any given time," he said. "We have students learning in a traditional classroom on some days and online on others. And some students who are online for the entire semester. Our faculty have worked very hard to meet the needs of all students."

"That was painful, especially when you normally have the summer off," Cochran said. "I'm proud of everyone who made the sacrifice to give students their best chance at having a good semester."

To prepare for in-person learning, SMC doubled the size of its custodial staff. Areas that, under normal times, were cleaned once a day are now cleaned twice, and sometimes three times. The Facilities Department installed 30 hand sanitizing stations and ordered 40,000 masks to be distributed to faculty, staff, students, and visitors. They also are providing cleaning supplies to students to use in their dorm rooms.





"WE KNEW SOME STUDENTS WOULD FEEL MORE COMFORTABLE STAYING HOME OR MIGHT HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO STAY HOME DUE TO ILLNESS OR QUARANTINE. WE DIDN'T WANT THEIR EDUCATION INTERRUPTED THIS SEMESTER AND FELT CERTAIN GIVING THEM THE CHOICE OF IN-PERSON OR ONLINE WAS THE RIGHT THING TO DO. STUDENTS HAVE THE OPTION OF TAKING THEIR FALL CLASSES EITHER WAY." The College's reopening plan is called Pioneers Together, which includes safety protocol for all campus behaviors. But Pioneers Together is more than just processes and procedures, it's SMC's new mantra for united together during a crisis. "We believe that all of us, working together, can prioritize the health and safety of our Pioneer community," says Courtney Shelton, Vice President for Student and Professional Development.

Fall classes began on August 19 after a phased move-in to campus residence halls. Students, staff, and faculty follow a rigorous set of safety protocols that include required mask use, daily symptom checks, and social distancing. Resident and commuter students who opt for in-person instruction, and those who live on campus but chose online instruction, are to undergo weekly COVID-19 testing. The College is paying for the testing.

#### David Hawkins



"Given our resources and our size, testing weekly was a big decision," Cochran said. "It also was a controversial decision. But if it keeps our students and employees safer and it does hurt the bottom line, so be it. We did not want to sacrifice anyone's health and safety."

When planning to reopen, administrators not only considered the needs of students who wanted in-person classes, but also those who might not want to return to campus due to fears about COVID-19, says Ben Maxwell, Vice President for Enrollment. "We knew some students would feel more comfortable staying home or might have no choice but to stay home due to illness or quarantine," he says. "We didn't want their education interrupted this semester and felt certain giving them the choice of in-person or online was the right thing to do. Students have the option of taking their fall classes either way."

For sophomore David Hawkins of Spartanburg, living on campus is worth the safety restrictions. "It's good to be back on campus again, and I'm glad SMC has guidelines to keep us safe while also giving us a bit of normalcy," he said. "It's easier for me and many others to learn in the classroom, so having some classroom time and being able to stay on campus to help me focus has been an immense blessing."

Cochran said the overwhelming response by all involved has put SMC on the path to having a successful year during trying times. He said he didn't want to look back and wish the College had done more.

"I think we've done everything we can to have a safe, healthy, and quality academic semester," he said. "I'm proud of everyone – the faculty, the staff, the people who came up with plans, and the people who bought into those plans. The thing that makes me the proudest is that everybody is in this to serve the students."

# **PIONEERS TOGETHER:** OUR COMMUNITY RESPONDS TO COVID-19



#### By Robert W. Dalton

ina Stone was in the middle of her junior year and facing a tough academic semester when the world turned upside down.

Like many, Stone was caught by surprise in March when SMC was forced to shift classes to online only because of the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic. She said she adapted quickly.

"It was definitely a sudden change that was very unexpected," she said. "But no one gave up. The faculty members continued to work hard to provide an education. The faculty and students all gave 100 percent. We tried our best in every way we could, and I'm very proud of us."

Stone, a history and religion major who graduated from Landrum High School in 2017, wasn't surprised by SMC's smooth transition to online learning and supported the decision to move to remote instruction.

Stone said as the months rolled by, she missed her friends more and more. She was able to stay in touch with them in a variety of ways.

"Sometimes I'd have their number so we would text or call," she said. "But we also used Microsoft Teams, which was a great way to stay in contact with my peers and professors. It wasn't just a great way to socialize, it was a great way to get help if I didn't understand something."

Stone said that Pioneers Together is more than just a new mantra or the name for the College's reopening plan. It's something she's experienced during her entire college career.

"Throughout my years at Spartanburg Methodist College, no matter what situations we've faced, we've faced them together," Stone said. "We know there are going to be challenges, and we don't have to face them alone."

# JASON MILSAP

"I DECIDED TO CREATE A MOVEMENT PATTERN SCREEN THAT FACULTY AND STAFF COULD USE. THEN I CREATED ONE FOR STUDENTS."

# By Robert W. Dalton



# ason Milsap knows the importance of staying active.

It's in his blood. It's in the degree that hangs on his wall.

Milsap, an Assistant Enrollment Counselor, was finishing his degree in Kinesiology at the University of North Georgia when the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic exploded. He was shadowing a strength and conditioning coach, and one of his assignments was to create a movement pattern plan. It didn't take long for Milsap to put his assignment to into practice. When the pandemic forced employees to work from home, Milsap created a plan to help them stay active.

"Once I saw that we would not be coming back to work, I knew a lot of people in our office wouldn't be able to access our facilities or even get their normal daily movement from walking around campus," Milsap said. "I decided to create a movement pattern screen that faculty and staff could use. Then I created one for students."

Students received a more advanced version, which included information on the expectations for daily exercise, such as being active for 30 minutes a day.

Milsap focused on movements to strengthen the core, promote motor coordination, and aid in balance. He said he received a lot of positive feedback.

"My wife and I were working from home, sitting at a desk a lot," Milsap said. "I knew that everybody was doing this every day, and you can have aches and pains, mostly in the lower back, from sitting in a chair all day. I was trying to do something for myself, and I thought everyone could benefit from being active and moving a little bit."

Milsap's initiative has created a new opportunity for him. Head Men's Basketball Coach Nori Johnson has asked him to create a strength and conditioning program for the team.

Whether you're still working from home, have always worked from home, or are back in your office, Milsap wants to remind everyone to set aside time each day to take care of your body.

# hile much of the country was at a standstill because of COVID-19,

Victoria Novak was on the move.

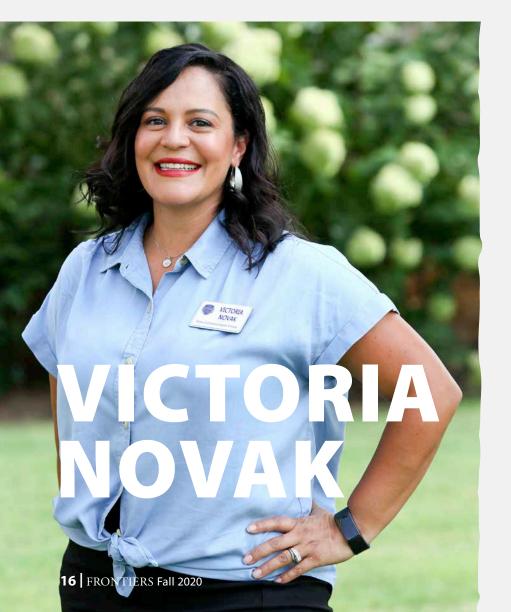
Novak and her husband quit their jobs, sold everything, and moved 1,100 miles – from Omaha, Nebraska, to South Carolina – in the middle of the pandemic. sleeping in their RV along the way. They landed in Spartanburg County on May 1 and have been living in their RV ever since, although they have found a house they will move into in October.

"We're Generation X, so we're not young and we're not retired yet," Novak said. "We took a big risk."

The risk paid off, both for Novak and Spartanburg Methodist College. She began her role as Director of Certifications and Applied Technology in the Department of Student and Professional Development on July 1.

"It's great to be part of an organization where they are truly walking the walk of their mission," Novak said. "This organization really believes in living and breathing the diversity of the people they serve. It's really exciting to be part of what's happening here."

Novak spent her first seven weeks on the job designing the course she's currently teaching, Applied Technology. She said students will be involved in an experiential project the entire semester, and by the end will have engaged in approximately two dozen types of software



applications and other technology tools, preparing them for the workforce.

"They will have an artifact as part of their digital portfolio they can take to any employer and say that even during a pandemic they were able to be flexible, adaptable, and demonstrate skills received from a high-quality education," she said.

She's helped students adapt by introducing them to applications that assist with collaboration, project management, and time management. About half of Novak's students are online only, while the other half desire the "personal touch" of inperson classes. She said SMC created a "strong safety piece" to help on-campus students adapt to the new environment.

"The beauty about what SMC has done, using the HyFlex model, is that anytime a student feels like they want to learn in a different way, they can go online or come back to campus. I've been impressed by how responsive we've been," she said.

Novak also is now fully immersed in her other duties – designing certification programs for the College.

"I'm now in learning mode," she said. "I'm talking with some of the key players in Spartanburg to look at the workforce landscape – what does the state need, what do business and industry need, what do students need."

Novak, who has a Master of Public Administration, recently completed the requirements to earn her Certificate in Online Instruction, an addition to her résumé that has been extremely valuable while SMC's classes are either a combination of in-person and online or online only. She said she will take that, and her 25 years of work experience, to design programs that are community and student centered.

"Our focus is to help students from enrollment to employment," she said. "So the moment they hit campus they will have soft and hard skills integrated throughout their four years in the bachelor program."

she said. "But we had to come up with a game plan for the fall, and basically the faculty has not stopped since the spring. I think in the beginning people were feeling overwhelmed, but we had a lot of faculty go above and beyond."

It didn't take long for SMC to recognize the value of Plake's contributions. About two months into what started as a temporary assignment, SMC brought Plake aboard full time as an Instructional Designer.

While her primary role is to support the faculty, she hasn't left students out of the equation. Plake has communicated with students to keep them updated on developments.

"We have a lot of student resources," Plake said. "We've taken a holistic approach, making sure everyone is on the same page about what the fall semester is going to look like."

While Plake has accomplished a lot, there's a lot more she wants to get done. She is working with SMC's IT Department to create a studio for faculty members to record lectures, and she's offering workshops throughout the semester on topics that are important to the faculty.

"We can't stop building," Plake said. "We have to get to the finish line."

By Robert W. Dalton

late addition to Spartanburg Methodist College's roster quickly became one of the most valuable members of the team.

RANDI PLAKE

Randi Plake, who had been working as a visiting instructor at Clemson University, came to SMC in April to assist with the transition to distance learning in the middle of the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic.

"That seems like a lifetime ago," she said.

She hit the ground running, launching a four-week program to train faculty members on the use of BrightSpace, an online learning management system. In addition to helping faculty gear up quickly for the spring semester, she also had to prepare them for the summer and fall semester – including creating an evaluation system, a task she had to complete in about three weeks.

Plake also conducted four virtual workshops focusing on training for video recording and storage; designing online-friendly, student-centered courses; using Virtual Classroom, an online tool to help faculty members connect with students; and grading.

The reaction from faculty has been overwhelmingly positive, Plake said.

"In the beginning people were shellshocked from the spring semester," Randi working alongside her "office mates," Coraline and Eloise.





#### n a time of great upheaval, Kris Neely has been a beacon of stability.

Neely, a Professor of Art and Director of the Interdisciplinary Studies Program, helped SMC navigate through the unknown as the COVID-19 pandemic unfolded. As chair of the Faculty Steering Committee, Neely was a voice for the faculty as key decisions were made.

"I also helped lead faculty discussions about how we should operate as an institution during the pandemic," Neely said. "We have had to find a way to do it to safely deliver the same highquality education expected at SMC."

Part of that strategy required Neely to make an adjustment for his art students. In normal times, he would spend a lot of hours face-to-face with his students. When the pandemic made that impossible, Neely found an alternative.

"I wanted to turn that into an advantage instead of a weakness," Neely said. "I required students to visit a gallery or a museum. There is a lot of high-quality content online, so they could do virtual visits and make use of those resources."

Neely also found a way for students to showcase their art when COVID-19 wiped out SMC's annual fine arts night.

"We had students who were about to showcase their pieces they'd been working on all year," Neely said. "We organized a virtual arts show so they could share their work."

The virtual art show was a hit and Neely said," I've had several people request that we do it every year."

# "WE ORGANIZED A VIRTUAL ARTS SHOW SO THEY COULD SHARE THEIR WORK. ....I'VE HAD SEVERAL PEOPLE REQUEST THAT WE DO IT EVERY YEAR."

Over the summer, Neely also made time for a deeply personal project involving his popular guardian angel artwork. He began painting the angels in 2005, with the first piece going to his mother, who wanted something to go in the childhood bedroom of his brother, Erik, who died five years earlier.

"There was a renewed interest because of the pandemic," Neely said. "Families wanted to get them to people who were hospitalized or grieving."

The pandemic created an opportunity for a new way to share the artwork when Neely's wife sewed a mask using a guardian angel print.

"We did a lot of research, did several test runs, and she figured out the best way to do it," Neely said.

Each mask is unique. The Neelys recently made them available to the public, and they've had requests from across the country.

"It's been a fun experiment," Neely said. "I never would have thought to create art for that. It's about being hopeful. A pastor's wife said she wanted to wear one because it felt like she had a prayer on her lips."

Neely is looking forward to the academic year, even with the challenges presented by COVID-19. Through the use of technology, he believes the potential is there for students to hear from speakers, artists, and musicians SMC normally wouldn't be able to afford.

"There's a lot of room for new adventures and new ways of doing things," Neely said. "I wish it wasn't under these circumstances, but we're making the best of it. "I feel SMC will be all the better for it."

# hen COVID-19 sent everyone home in the spring, Chris Irving and Scott Deskins '99 went to work to prepare for a safe return in the fall.

"We were basically running with a skeleton crew," said Irving, a Custodial Supervisor in the Facilities Department. "There were very few people on campus, and my department was cleaning out dorms. We started preparing for fall 2020 when everyone went home in the spring. We were doing things we weren't used to doing at times we weren't used to doing them."

The skeleton crew quickly became an army, with SMC doubling the size of its custodial staff. The main goal, Irving said, was to give the campus a top-to-bottom cleaning three times a day.

CHRIS IRVING AND

Irving and his team installed 30 hand sanitation stations, and SMC ordered 40,000 masks to be distributed to faculty, staff, students, and visitors. They also gathered cleaning supplies to give to students living in dorms, and compiled about 40 quarantine kits in case any students tested positive.

"We've set an incredibly high standard at SMC," Irving said. "It's something we're proud of."

Deskins, SMC's Facilities Event and Administrative Coordinator, handled a lot of crucial behind-the-scenes operations that kept the College going, according to President Scott Cochran. His initial role was to assist students in getting moved out. He also maintained mail services, performed any needed repairs, and assisted with moving furniture and supplies.

Summer is usually a busy time for Deskins, and this one was no different. His duties, however, were vastly different. "I normally help coordinate a lot of events, including Commencement," he said. "In the summer, we usually conduct a lot of camps, but they all got canceled. When that happened, my summer became creating occupancy signs, clearing furniture, and other steps to prepare the campus for classes."

With the fall semester in full swing, Deskins is hoping for a gradual return to normalcy. SMC is planning to hold events next summer, and he has already booked one camp. But he knows there are no guarantees.

"We have to look at everything through a filter, the COVID-19 filter, so you never know," he said. "We have to always be mindful of it and try to do what we think is best, even when no one can say for sure what is best."

One thing is for sure. These two colleagues and their teams are working hard behind the scenes to maintain a clean and safe environment for all Pioneers.

# <section-header>

iquisha Goggins had her share of struggles when classes moved online in the spring because of the COVID-19 pandemic. But she kept going, and encouraged her classmates to do the same.

Goggins persevered. Now the junior from Woodruff, South Carolina, is back at it, pursuing degrees in religion and psychology.

Kris Neely, Professor of Art and Director of SMC's Interdisciplinary Studies Program, said he was impressed by Goggins's persistence to graduate with her associate degree and to "come back this fall with a renewed energy and positive attitude."

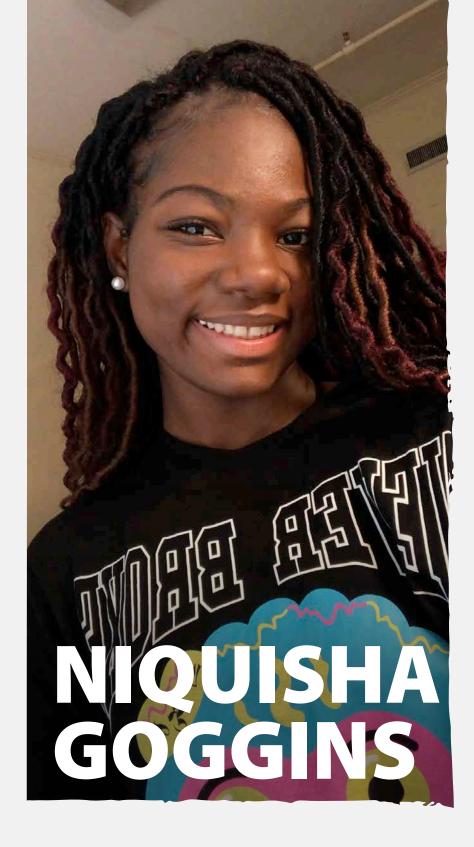
Goggins's attitude was on display in group messages, where she encouraged her classmates, and on social media, where she posted inspiring messages.

"I was usually on Facebook, posting encouraging Bible verses," Goggins said. "I just wanted to remind everybody to pray, to wear their masks, to sanitize, and to take everything just one step at a time."

Goggins is looking forward to getting back to a normal routine. She's currently taking two classes on campus and four others online.

When Goggins graduates, she might not be done. She's thinking about adding a business degree to her résumé.

"I feel like SMC gave me another chance to pursue my goal," she said. "I'd like to own my own business and be a therapist, and I'm definitely going to work with special needs kids."



# "I JUST WANTED TO REMIND EVERYBODY TO PRAY, TO WEAR THEIR MASKS, TO SANITIZE, AND TO TAKE EVERYTHING JUST ONE STEP AT A TIME."



Life on campus looks a little different while we're wearing masks and social distancing, but no matter what, we're all **Pioneers Together** 

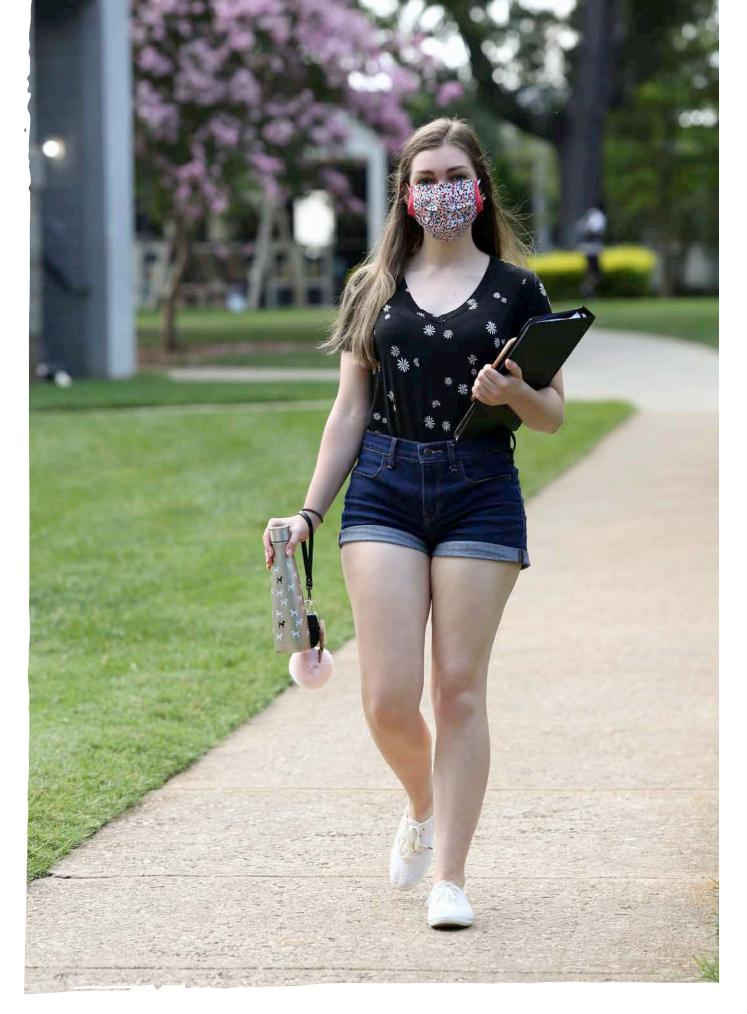












# **SMC EXCEEDS** 2020 GOAL TO GROW TO 1,000 STUDENTS

# ENROLLMENT INCREASED 39 PERCENT FROM 2016 TO 2020

By Lisa M. Ware

partanburg Methodist College exceeded a goal to grow its student body to 1,000 by 2020. 1,025 full-time new, returning and transfer students are enrolled at SMC this fall, and they comprise the largest student population in the College's 109-year history.

This is the fourth straight year of record enrollment growth at the College and a 39 percent increase in study body size since 2016, when enrollment dropped to 736 full-time students.

That same year, President Scott Cochran, who had been in his new role for just a few months, announced the College would grow to 1,000 students by 2020. As a first step, he made immediate investments in marketing and recruitment. Working with faculty, administrators, and the College's Board of Trustees, Cochran led planning to expand the College's academic offerings to meet changing student needs. In 2018, the College announced it would launch its first online associate degree and a unique onground bachelor's degree with a focus on career preparation. Both programs began enrolling students in 2019. This fall, the College began accepting students into a second 100% online degree – an Associate in Arts (general college studies program).

"The most important thing for everyone at SMC has always been serving the students who depend on us for an affordable and high-quality education," Cochran said. "Accomplishing this enrollment goal is an important milestone for our campus community after four years of incredibly hard work and significant change. In the middle of a global pandemic, we're just as proud that students and parents have placed their trust in us to provide that education as safely as possible."

"THE MOST IMPORTANT THING FOR EVERYONE AT SMC HAS ALWAYS BEEN SERVING THE STUDENTS WHO DEPEND ON US FOR AN AFFORDABLE AND HIGH-QUALITY EDUCATION." A LOOK AT THE NUMBERS, WHICH DO NOT INCLUDE STUDENTS ENROLLED IN SMC'S 100% ONLINE DEGREE PROGRAMS:

**518 FRESHMEN** started classes on Wednesday, August 19 – the largest freshman class in the College's history.

The new freshmen, plus readmitted students and transfer students, make up the LARGEST INCOMING CLASS IN THE COLLEGE'S HISTORY (563).

91 STUDENTS are enrolled in the College's year-old **BA PROGRAM**.

**SMC'S TOTAL STUDENT BODY IS 1,025**, the largest in the history of the College.

# SUMMER INTERNSHIPS 2020

By Piper Adan-Bedley and Khalil Robinson

ummer is for many students the perfect time to take on internships. SMC takes summer internships very seriously, even making them a requirement for the new bachelor's degree. Megan Georgion, the Director of Internships and Employer Relations at SMC, explains why SMC places so much importance on internships.

# Q: WHY ARE INTERNSHIPS SUCH VALUABLE EXPERIENCES FOR STUDENTS?

**MG:** Internships are important because they provide a hands-on learning experience in the student's career field of choice. What better way to decide whether a certain field is the one for you than by jumping in on a project with professionals that know what it takes to succeed in the industry? An internship can also help a student decide that s/he is not interested in a particular career path and gives them time to pivot and try something else before committing.

Q: HOW MANY INTERNSHIP CREDIT HOURS MUST A STUDENT COMPLETE AS PART OF THE CAMAK CORE (SMC'S REQUIRED SIX COURSES IN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT)?

**MG:** SMC feels that internships are a vital component of the professional development process – so much so that the College requires 120 contact hours/3 credits of internship courses to graduate with our Bachelor of Arts.

## Q: HOW DO THE CAMAK CORE CLASSES PREPARE STUDENTS FOR THEIR INTERNSHIPS?

**MG:** In the first Camak Core course, Professional Communications, students learn how to conduct an internship search, how to comport themselves professionally, how to answer interview questions, how to dress for success, and much more. Students are even required to complete a mock interview and participate in networking events to practice before seeking an internship. Feedback is provided along the way to encourage professional growth and to prepare students for scenarios they could face in an internship.

## Q: HOW HAVE STUDENTS AND COMPANIES ADAPTED THE INTERNSHIP PROCESS DURING THE TIME OF COVID-19?

**MG:** COVID-19 has presented many challenges to the internship process, and both the College and local employers have adapted to meet student needs during this time. Companies have offered fully virtual internships or hybrid options, and the College has encouraged students to take advantage of these opportunities. With many companies shifting to hybrid or remote work options outside of COVID-19, I think virtual internships give students an idea of what that culture looks like if they were to be offered a remote position in the future.

"STUDENTS LEARN HOW TO CONDUCT AN INTERNSHIP SEARCH, HOW TO COMPORT THEMSELVES PROFESSIONALLY, HOW TO ANSWER INTERVIEW QUESTIONS, HOW TO DRESS FOR SUCCESS, AND MUCH MORE." In the summer of 2020, 15 SMC students from the B.A. class of 2021 completed internships, either remotely or on-site. We asked them to share their thoughts on their experiences.



# PIPER ADAN-BEDLEY

SMC MARKETING DEPARTMENT

"This internship was amazing, and my experience here has already opened doors to other opportunities. It gave me an overview of what it's like to work in the marketing department of a nonprofit and gave me valuable skills for further exploring a career in marketing. SMC even provided me with a course in social media marketing so I could become certified – which actually led to a job offer from another nonprofit!"

# ALEXANDER ALECXIH SPARTANBURG DODGE

"Through my internship, I learned that there are many different qualities and skills needed to be a successful manager while also maintaining a good relationship with your employees. It also taught me the importance of following a process through to have the best success rate possible. The experience that I gained through this internship helped me grow professionally by giving me insight into what kind of leader I want to be in the future and what role I want to pursue within the sales industry."





26 FRONTIERS Fall 2020

# CLAYTON HERNANDEZ

"I learned a lot about creating and implementing a social media marketing campaign. I was fortunate to be working with great supervisors, who involved me in every aspect of the marketing process – from brainstorming ideas to creating templates. This internship helped me grow professionally by giving me opportunities to practice time management, creativity, and communication skills. My supervisors encouraged me to be creative and work independently. Completing my internship remotely meant it was vital to have the best communication skills possible."

# KHALIL ROBINSON SMC MARKETING

DEPARTMENT

"I learned that the field of marketing is very broad and there are lots of areas I can specialize in. I gained experience in editing content, market research, and project management. I also strengthened my time management and interviewing skills. The improvement of these skills helped me grow professionally. Overall, it was an impactful experience that provided great insight not only to the field of marketing but also a professional workplace."



# AMANDA ROSA HUB CITY BOOKSHOP AND PRESS

"I learned a lot about the book publishing industry, primarily independent book publishing. It was interesting to work with manuscripts, proofreading books, and giving design input. Once a week I would also work at the bookshop and learn about bookselling, so I got both a publisher's and a seller's perspective of the field. Working at Hub City helped me strengthen my communication skills and network with professionals in the industry. I enjoyed my time at Hub City Bookshop so much that I now work there part time."



# LANDON WAKEFIELD SHERMAN COLLEGE OF CHIROPRACTIC ENROLLMENT SERVICES

"This internship provided me a behind-the-scenes look into higher education. I learned how individual departments work together with other departments to accomplish their common goals. It is a team effort, and they all work together to ensure that the students are successful in their time at the school. One of my big projects was helping plan the college's recruitment events and collecting information on the people who attended. Because this internship was during a pandemic, it allowed me to see how people in higher education must adapt quickly to change. I have gained a better understanding of how you need to be flexible, accept change, and adjust to the unexpected."

#### STUDENTS AND COMMUNITY

# ONLINE ASSOCIATE OF ARTS DEGREE PROGRAM OFFERS OPPORTUNITY, FLEXIBILITY



Dana Chandler in the "classroom."

# "I PREACHED TO MY KIDS ABOUT GETTING A COLLEGE DEGREE, AND FELT I NEEDED TO DO IT FOR MYSELF. GOING ONLINE IS CONVENIENT FOR ADULTS WHO ARE WORKING."

### By Robert W. Dalton

# hen Dana Chandler questioned whether she could go back to college while continuing to work full time, Spartanburg Methodist College had the answer.

Chandler, a clerk in the Criminal Investigations Division with the Greer Police Department, is enrolled in the College's Online Associate in Criminal Justice Degree program. After starting in May, she has completed two classes and started two more.

"I always felt like I was a little behind," Chandler said. "I preached to my kids about getting a college degree, and felt I needed to do it for myself. Going online is convenient for adults who are working."

For two years, criminal justice was the only available online degree at SMC. That changed this fall when the College launched its online Associate of Arts degree. The program will cater to people like Chandler, who have some college credits and are looking for a way to finish, as well as to first-time students.

Vice President for Enrollment Ben Maxwell said interest in the program has been solid, despite the COVID-19 outbreak putting a damper on the College's marketing plan.

"We've been occupied with the way to best serve the students we have," Maxwell said. "With social distancing, this is a good time to have this option available to our students."

Maxwell said the new program offers former students the opportunity to finish what they started, whether to enhance their current careers or to make a change. The program offers the same opportunity to first-time students who may have obligations that prevent them from studying full time in a campus setting.

"We serve a large first-generation population of students," Maxwell said. "With that comes nontraditional things, such as working full time or taking care of family members."

The program also benefits employers, who are able to retain workers who might otherwise leave to attend college. Without physically having to be a in a classroom, online students can complete their course work when it works for their schedules. To make sure online students get the attention they need, the College added an admissions recruiter, a financial aid officer, and an online student success coach. SMC also is offering alumni or returning students a \$1,000 scholarship for the year.

Director of Alumni Relations, Leah Pruitt Caldwell '98, has seen many advancements during her time at Spartanburg Methodist College – she's a 1998 graduate and began working at the College in 2001. She's excited about the opportunities the online program will afford returning and new students.

"There are alums who have started with a degree but life happened along the way before they could finish," Caldwell said. "Online allows them to fulfill their responsibilities as parents and employees, while also working toward their degree requirements."

Recently, Caldwell was contacted by someone whose 30-year career in the restaurant industry was demolished by COVID-19. She expressed interest in completing her degree and entering a new field.

The program has taken about a year to launch. If it's successful there could be more to come.

"It's already in the plans," Maxwell said. "We're looking at a lot of different degrees to offer, but we're trying to be careful. We want to develop degrees that are needed to meet the demographics we serve, and that takes time."

For her part, Chandler said she encourages anyone who is on the fence to dive in. She thought completing her degree was out of reach until an SMC recruiter came calling.

"As an adult working full time, it seemed unrealistic that I could actually attend school full time," she said. "Once life hits you, it is difficult to go back to school and finish your education. I have put this off for years thinking I could not afford and would not have the time to complete it....I am happy I decided to enroll in this online course. I feel a sense of accomplishment each time I get to mark off the credits I have taken to get me closer to completing this course and graduate."

# BOARD MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

#### By Jason Spencer

r. Frank Lee has been coming to Spartanburg Methodist College since he was 6 years old, but he did not end up attending the school when his college days arrived.

Lee's father, a Methodist minister for 40 years, was an ardent supporter of SMC because of the institution's ability to raise the self-esteem and education level for so many students who may not have otherwise been able to get a higher education. He knew every president on a first-name basis.

The youngest of seven children, Lee first started coming to campus when he was in the first grade, when his oldest sister began attending SMC. His other brothers and sisters followed suit. But Lee, who graduated high school in Newberry, decided to go a different route. He ended up at Clemson University, where he earned his bachelor's and master's degrees, before being recruited to pharmacy school and ultimately medical school in Charleston.

"It's been said that if you want to build a better America, then you build better Americans. And to do that, you educate them – to build business, to plan families," he said. "That is what Spartanburg Methodist College is doing. Its size enables it to have more of a one-on-one relationship between professors and students. There's a lot more mentoring. If people are having trouble, someone is there. When I was at a much larger school, it was harder to find that one-on-one support."

Lee, a member of the College's Board of Trustees and the Board's lone physician, has seen his relationship with SMC continue to grow over the years.

When his father died a little over two decades ago, the family established a scholarship in his name. When his mother passed, her name was added to it – the Michael B. and Nita Lee Scholarship Fund.

In 2009, then-President Colleen Perry Keith called Lee about fundraising for the soon-to-be-constructed Ellis Hall. At the time, Lee didn't think he would be good at raising money, but he decided to help out.

A couple of years later, Keith called again – this time about a vacancy on the Board of Trustees. She asked him to fill it. Even though he was the only one of his siblings not to attend SMC, Lee said he would be honored to sit on the Board in memory of his parents. He eventually became chair of the Advancement Committee, which, among other things, helps move the College forward financially.

"It's challenging," Lee said. "But if you have the right goals and the right message, it's not about the person who's asking, it's about the person who is giving. What do you want to do with your resources to give back? It's not about me, it's about their personal goals. Once a person identifies their passion and realizes that they can give back, they are likely to develop a pattern of giving that creates a satisfying feeling. I have also enjoyed introducing the College to funding institutions and foundations. This helps to further the College's mission and visibility."

Over time, Lee said the Board has become much more energized and engaged.

The Board's selection of Scott Cochran as president in 2015 has led to "remarkable" results, he said, praising the cabinet Cochran assembled, which included new executive positions for professional development and for marketing. Members of the President's Cabinet all have remarkable skill sets that are serving the College well, he said.

The development of the Camak Core, which integrates academic learning with business acumen, means students who leave after two years have immediate, marketable skills that they can show potential employers, he said. And the ongoing transformation of SMC into a four-year school has been "such a joy" to witness and promote, Lee said, adding that it has "revolutionized the way we look at the institution."

"President Cochran has the kind of insightful brain with which I want all of our students to graduate. Our job is to promote people, make them feel better about themselves

# "I NEVER THOUGHT I'D BE WORKING IN PHILANTHROPY, BUT I DO IT BECAUSE IT FEELS GOOD AND GIVING BACK IS THE RIGHT THING TO DO."

and their abilities going forward," Lee said. "Our faculty at SMC is really, really superb. They teach because they want to teach. They love teaching and lifting people up.

"If you get in the habit of lifting people up, the chances they will become successful in business, in education, in health, and in life is much, much better."

Lee said he enjoys telling the story of SMC – and that people tend to be receptive to it. When they hear the story about the school and the difference it has made in the lives of so many people – and its potential to do so much more – it's hard not to get excited, he said.

"Frank has been an amazing supporter of SMC for quite some time, and he has an incredible passion for our mission. He works tirelessly on our behalf because he knows that we do important work," Cochran said. "His passion for our students translates into energy. He lights up the room when he talks about SMC. He's our biggest cheerleader and one of the hardest-working Trustees we have. I can always count on him to make introductions and tell our story far and wide. He challenges others and leads by example. I'm proud that he is an SMC Trustee, and I'm proud to call him my friend."

Lee, 71, has been working with students since 1974.

He earned his Doctor of Medicine and Doctor of Clinical Pharmacy degrees before completing a pediatric residency at the Medical University of South Carolina.

He practiced pediatric medicine for 37 years. In 1990, he was the sole founder of Children's Medical Associates, which in 2007 became Coastal Pediatric Associates. That practice has since grown to 35 physicians among five offices, two breastfeeding centers, and a research arm.

Lee has taught pharmacists, nurses, and doctors. Much of his teaching career has

been through his relationship with the Department of Pediatrics at MUSC.

When his father was in his late 70s, he developed Alzheimer's, prompting Lee to become more interested in brain health. The man who once gave sermons and performed marriages and eulogies suddenly had trouble carrying on a conversation.

This led to Lee's fascination with brain chemistry and the science behind Omega-3 fatty acids. Such acids help with brain and cardiovascular health and immunity.

He also speaks nationally on human milk substitutes whose goal is to give nonbreastfed infants the nutrition that produces the same outcomes – higher IQs, better vision, fewer emotional issues, lower blood pressure – as are seen in breastfed infants.

When he's not fundraising for SMC or working Lee enjoys birdwatching and has traveled all over the world to do it.

"Birds live among people. Seeing them in their local habitat allows you to get to see, know, and better understand different peoples and cultures," he said. Lee particularly enjoys watching birds on escapes to the mountains of Western North Carolina.

Looking forward, Lee sees a great future for SMC.

He sees needs like a new science building as stepping stones to make the College even more competitive.

"I never thought I'd be working in philanthropy," he said, "but I do it because it feels good and giving back is the right thing to do."

# JAMES BRANNON: **AHISTORY OF GIVING**

By Samantha Wagner

ames Brannon's involvement with Spartanburg Methodist College began in the fall of 1943 when the school was known as Spartanburg Junior College. His college career, however, was unconventional due to the unique circumstances of World War II. Everything from grocery goods to college enrollment were altered to support the needs of the war effort. Brannon remembers vividly the adjustments made during his first year of education. "I had been accepted into the Wofford College ROTC program for the fall of 1943," Brannon explains. "Wofford, however, was closed that year because so many of the students were involved in the war effort. With the college closed, a few other cadets and I took our freshman courses at Spartanburg Junior College (now Spartanburg Methodist College)."

The location, however, was not the only change. Instead of full-time collegiate courses, Brannon and his fellow ROTC students maintained an alternating schedule with one week of ROTC drills followed by one week of classroom learning. When the year concluded, Brannon was among the many men who left to serve in the armed forces. "I spent 27 months in the Air Force before returning to finish my education at Wofford in 1947," Brannon remembers. "When I returned from the service, Wofford was open again and I finished my degree there." His transition from SMC back to Wofford was seamless – a testament to the excellent relationship between Spartanburg Methodist College and Wofford College throughout the Second World War.

In 1949, Brannon graduated with his Bachelor of Science in general education and married his sweetheart - a Spartanburg Hospital Nursing School graduate named Sophie. After a short, six-month stint working for the Goodyear Tire Store, he began a career in the textile industry in 1950 working for the Draper Corporation. Over the next 34 years, Brannon advanced within the company serving in the Spartanburg, South Carolina, and Greensboro, North Carolina, corporate locations. "The company started with fixing looms and spindles before eventually moving on to more sophisticated projects," Brannon explained. "We manufactured looms for the textile industry and made a good profit. Eventually, though, the market changed, and we were out of the game. It's sad, but that is the way it was."

He enjoyed his work as an office manager and appreciated the years he worked for the corporation before his retirement in 1984. His retirement also coincided with his re-involvement with Spartanburg Methodist College and the world of higher education. This reconnection, however, came through a sad event. In 1993, Brannon's wife Sophie passed away from cancer. After 44 years of marriage, his grief was immense. He missed her dearly and wanted some way to honor her memory. "She was a kind and loving Christian woman who loved God, her husband and children, and the community," he shares. "I felt that creating an endowment for the College would be a wonderful way to help others in her name."

Indeed, the Sophie S. Brannon Memorial Endowed Scholarship has helped many students with financial needs attend SMC. Once there the students thrive, a reality Brannon appreciates when he visits campus and sees students intermingling and enjoying the collegiate environment. SMC is, in his eyes, a wonderful educational resource for many young men and women.

Over the years, the endowment has grown. Brannon continues to contribute annually, working closely with the SMC staff to maximize the account's benefit to the College. He has a wonderful relationship with Don Tate, the Director of Development at SMC, and speaks highly of his professionalism. "Don has been wonderful to work with," he states. "He always informs me of just how the endowment helps the students, and he makes sure I receive the publications the College puts out regarding current activities and student updates. I thoroughly enjoy reading those."

Brannon is, in his own words, a great believer in the College. "[SMC was] kind enough to host me for a year in 1943, and they have helped many young people get their education," he comments. "They do a great job."

He concluded his interview with this sage advice for current students: "Get an education and a degree so you can build a life for you and your family. Follow the rules of God and the rules of man, be a good citizen, and all will be well in the long run."

For a man who has lived in times of war and peace, who has suffered loss, experienced happiness, and selflessly given through it all, it is wonderful advice to take.

# SPORTS RESULTS

# DUE TO COVID-19, THE SPRING SPORTS SEASON WAS CUT SHORT. HOWEVER, THE NJCAA RULED THAT SPRING ATHLETES WOULD NOT BE CHARGED A YEAR OF ELIGIBILITY. OVER THE SUMMER, THE NJCAA DECIDED TO POSTPONE WOMEN'S AND MEN'S SOCCER AS WELL AS COURT VOLLEYBALL UNTIL SPRING OF 2021.

Our Pioneer athletes will continue to maintain eligibility for NJCAA athletics and receive any athletic-based scholarships. Because being on a team is so much more than the competitions themselves, student athletes will still have the opportunity for coach-led development and scrimmages with their teammates.



**CROSS COUNTRY** Ken Roach took both teams to the Region X meet where the women's team won the Region X Champion and the men's team won Region X Runner-up. Seven runners earned All-Region selections - Nigel Dos Santos, Michael Twigg II, Shawn Hamilton, Angelica Gonzalas, Ashley Blanton, Amari Harrison, and Shelby Hilt. Hilt was also named Runner of the Year. The team had eight student-athletes compete at the NJCAA National Cross Country Championship in Albuquerque, New Mexico, and six student-athletes represented the Pioneers at the NJCAA Half Marathon National Championship in El Paso, Texas.



MEN'S SOCCER The team finished the season 6-8. Four players received All-Region selections – Jak Wright (2nd team), Connor Hall (2nd team), Griffin Krieg (2nd team), and Noel Arteaga (3rd team).

#### WOMEN'S SOCCER

The team finished the season 12-6-1, won the Region X Tournament, and advanced to the Southeast District Tournament in Georgia. Seven players earned All-Region selections - Meredith Mitchiner (1st team), Angelica Gonzalas (1st team), Kassandra Young (1st team), Madison Stewart (1st team), Amiyah Robinson (2nd team), Campbell Gibson (2nd team), and Beyonce Williams (3rd team). Dan Kenneally was named Region X Coach of the Year.



VOLLEYBALL

Katie Zimmerman, who was named Region X Coach of the Year, took the team to the Region X Tournament, where they won and advanced to the Southeast District Tournament in Florida. They finished the season 18-15. Three players earned All-Region selections – Aeyane Mattress, Savannah Ducote, and Anna McKnight.



MEN'S BASKETBALL Led by Nori Johnson, the team finished the season 10-18; Darius Bryant and Jamarvious Jones were named All-Region.

#### WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

The team finished the season 21-8, won 1st place finish in the Region X regular season, won the Region X Tournament, and was Southeast District runner-up. Players Josie Earnhardt, Aliyah Whiteside, and Ta'Keria Legette were named All-Region. Legette was also named Region X Player of the Year and a NJCAA Second Team All-American. Heather Macy was named Region X Coach of the Year.



# HARD CONVERSATIONS

HOW BYRON MCCALL '11 USED THE LESSONS HE LEARNED ON THE CAMPUS OF SMC ABOUT COMMUNICATION, ADAPTABILITY, AND CONFLICT TO CONNECT PEOPLE IN THE HR AND REAL ESTATE WORLDS.

#### By Samantha Wagner

yron McCall '11 knew Spartanburg Methodist College was the perfect fit when he attended a prospective student's day. "Before visiting campus, I had spoken in-depth with an SMC admissions counselor about the environment I wanted my future college to have. When I visited SMC, I knew it was exactly where I wanted to be for the next two years. I could see how relational the environment was and I felt I would thrive there."

While his father wanted him to consider other colleges, Byron was adamant – Spartanburg Methodist College was where he wanted to start his college career. What followed were two incredibly rewarding years of personal growth where McCall learned everything from conflict resolution and communication to time management and adaptability. "SMC really helped me tap into my potential," McCall says. "I wasn't a number at Spartanburg Methodist College and I loved the small, close-knit environment."

#### "SMC REALLY HELPED ME TAP INTO MY POTENTIAL. I WASN'T A NUMBER AT SPARTANBURG METHODIST COLLEGE AND I LOVED THE SMALL, CLOSE-KNIT ENVIRONMENT."

As a student, he felt that the professors and staff cared about his success and wanted him to learn important life lessons along with his academic ones. "Mentors at SMC challenged me to think about the situations I encountered each day from a different perspective. I felt comfortable coming to them with specific interpersonal struggles I was having and asking for their advice about how best to communicate with a professor or a fellow student."

His mentors helped hone his ability to communicate with peers and professors and taught him the power of having hard, realistic conversations in a respectful way. This education paid off when, as the student body president his final year, McCall realized the value of communication and constructive conflict. "I had to learn how to interact with my Vice President and Cabinet in a way that moved everyone forward," Byron explains. "We represented a diverse group of students and we represented the College." His time in student government guickly taught him that conflict and tough conversations were inevitable both at school and in the business world but the ability to speak respectfully and candidly with others was a tool that could create connection even in disagreement.

McCall's ability to communicate in a clear and helpful way has served him well in his time since SMC. After completing his associate degree, McCall transferred to Winthrop, where he earned a Bachelor of Science in business administration, health/health care administration and management. From there he entered the HR and recruiting fields, where he walked the fine line of representing both his corporate clients and the recruits he sourced. "You have to be mindful of both parties' interests and goals. As a recruiter, you're in the middle of the discussion, working to find a healthy medium for both parties. You know desired salary numbers and realistic salary numbers and other key details that factor into job decisions like benefits and vacation time. With that information, you have to find a balance that works for everyone."

The recruiting work required him to develop the interpersonal skills learned at Spartanburg Methodist College even further. Conversations about money, benefits, and other "sensitive subjects" were commonplace in his field and he enjoyed bringing clarity to complicated situations and establishing relationships that went beyond simply filling job rolls.

While his interpersonal skills were a benefit, the flexible schedule of a recruiter also reinforced other skills he had learned at college, mainly the importance of time management and adaptability in a professional portfolio." had attended a few business seminars on time management while at school, but I learned even more about project and calendar management while working," he remarks. "College students today need to know that cultivating good time management skills is critical for a successful college and working career. As a recruiter, I managed my own projects and the responsibility for meeting my goals and deadlines was entirely on me."

Indeed, it was his ability to manage his time well that allowed him to complete his MBA at Liberty University and begin to consider future career options beyond recruitment and HR.

In the fall of 2019, McCall opted to change careers and establish himself as a real estate agent in the upstate. "I have always had an entrepreneurial spirit," says McCall. "I knew I wanted to have more autonomy and independence in my work and this was the next step in career development for me."

He loves the chance to meet new people and educate them on the benefits of home ownership and the real estate market as a whole. He sees himself as a relationship builder, focused not just on finding homes for people but also on preparing them to make wise financial decisions about sentimental places. "When you have a relationship with someone, you can speak about hard subjects with them - like how to sell the house where they raised their kids or how to adjust to a new area. I appreciate the chance to remind people that 'home' is actually the memories, love, and affection a family has...not necessarily the house itself!"

McCall sees himself as an educator and a connector and, while his knowledge helps his customers make informed decisions, it is ultimately his candor and kindness that earns him their respect. While McCall is enjoying self-employment right now, his career goals ultimately lead him back into the college world. "I pursued my master's at Liberty in the hopes of one day teaching business courses on the college level," McCall explains. "I'm still pursuing certifications in the HR field that will prepare me to teach and I'm open to different opportunities that come my way."

The next chapter of his life has started and he's enthusiastic about whatever comes next. It seems that the lessons he learned at SMC – build relationships with those around you, be candid even in the hard things, and always work toward the group's common goal – continue to shape the life he has built after college.

## FROM PASSION PROJECT TO CALLING

#### SHARRON CHAMPION '90 FOUNDS THE HOMELESS PERIOD PROJECT TO HELP WOMEN AND GIRLS ACROSS THE STATE AND COUNTRY.

By Jason Spencer

harron Champion '90 remembers herself as a reserved young woman when she thinks back to her days at Spartanburg Methodist College.

"That girl [Sharron in her college years] was so different," she said. "I was a geek, very straight-laced. I had several who believed in me and tried to build me up. They recognized I was meek and mild, but they also recognized leadership qualities in me. So, it was a stepping stone for me to see I had qualities to give back, to be a voice for others. First I just had to learn to have my own self-esteem and voice."

In the years since, not only has Champion found her voice, but her passion and calling.

In May 2015, Champion and her sisterin-law, Stephanie Arnold, saw a news article about homeless women in the United Kingdom who were not able to manage their menstrual cycles because they didn't have access to appropriate hygiene products. Most people never thought to donate those items to shelters or other places that assist the homeless.

The two began doing their own research, contacting local churches and other organizations that worked with the homeless community. They got all the answers they didn't want to hear: Lack of access to these products was a major issue in the U.S., too.

In June 2015, the pair hosted their first Period Party. "We wanted it to be in-yourface," Champion recalled. They had wine and cheese and a list of specific items for attendees to bring and donate.

They assembled Period Packs, an assortment of items in discreet weatherproof storage bags so a woman living on the streets or in a tent wouldn't need to carry around a bulky package.

As the party wound down, one of the women – a last-minute invite, it turned out – asked when the next one was. The woman offered to host her own party the following month and asked Champion to come speak on the need.

The Homeless Period Project was born. Within a year, it obtained official nonprofit status.

"It was supposed to be one party, just to raise awareness. It wasn't supposed to start a project," Champion said. "It was like ivy. It took on a life of itself, and I just followed along with it."

Five years later, the project serves all 46 counties in South Carolina – including every public middle and high school – and has chapters in 15 other states. In states without a chapter, Champion and Arnold work with volunteers to host their own parties and connect them with the appropriate agencies in their communities – last year, they had 20 parties in New York City alone, for instance.

The Homeless Period Project, based in Greenville, and its chapters in the United States on average help about 15,000 women and girls each month. Collectively, they assembled about 500,000 Period Packs through December 2019 – made up of more than 7.7 million donated products.

About five months in, a local high school nurse asked Champion if someone needed to be homeless in order to receive donations. The nurse worked at a high-poverty school where every student was on free lunch.

Champion said she was blown away that she hadn't thought of schoolgirls. Roughly 1 in 5 girls in the United States misses school because they don't have access to hygiene products, Champion said.

Her mother raised her and her two brothers, Andy and Brian, in Section 8 housing, and she would have qualified for such donations. She hated asking her mother for anything, because money was scarce, and she could see the pain in her mother's face, despite the attempts to hide it.

"I was a typical teenager who was horrified to bring up periods. I didn't want people to bring them up in conversation, to see tampons or pads in my cart, or for mom

#### "PEOPLE WANT TO HELP, THEY JUST DON'T KNOW HOW. AND THIS IS SUCH AN EASY WAY TO HELP."

to send me into a store to buy them, especially if the cashier was a boy," she said.

"I always said God has a sense of humor, because now pads are falling out of my car. Now I'm known as the face of tampons in South Carolina."

The project continued to expand. After a nurse at the Spartanburg County Detention Center contacted Champion, she realized women in jails and prisons needed access to these items; seeing inmates erupt with applause over pieces of cotton was a powerful image, Champion said. The project now also works with refugees, immigrants, and Native American reservations.

On March 8, 2019, International Women's Day, the group worked with women at Turner Broadcasting System and other corporate partners to host Period Parties all over the world – from New York to Miami, Atlanta to Seattle, along with locations in Thailand, Dubai, Indonesia, and other countries.

"It's just a really cool feeling to watch all the kindness," Champion said. "People want to help, they just don't know how. And this is such an easy way to help."

Thanks to corporate donations from Period Partner of Hospeco and U by Kotex, the Homeless Period Project had more than 200,000 pads stockpiled ahead of COVID-19.

Champion, now 50, is the executive director of the Homeless Period Project. She also serves full time as an executive administrative and human resources assistant for the Greenville Housing Authority.

Her son, Champ, also attended Spartanburg Methodist College and played baseball. Daughter Isabella is a junior at the College of Charleston.

Champion, a native of Greenville, attended SMC from 1988-90 – following in the

footsteps of her older brother, Andy – before transferring to a university to earn her bachelor's degree in business administration. At SMC, she was editor of the annual and yearbook, where she first started learning the organizational skills that have helped her succeed.

She found a mentor in Pete Aylor, whom she would turn to both as her professor and as the Director of Counseling.

"Sharron had an open mind and an open heart. We all reap what we sow, and she was willing to step out and get attached and get active in the campus and in the community," Aylor said. "It was something that was in her heart long before she came to SMC, but we allowed her to step out, and by doing that on a small campus, she was able to spread her wings."

Champion said students who want to start a movement like the Homeless Period Project need only keep in mind that if they find what they are passionate about, it will take a life of its own.

"I didn't sit around and say, 'I want to start a nonprofit, what do I do?' It found me. If there is something you are passionate about, go for it. Passion drives you," she said. "Whether it's nonprofit or for-profit, it's yours. Because when you have passion for something, you never give up."



## THE DIGNITY **OFA** PERSON **AND THE** FAIRNESS OFTHE LAW

By Samantha Wagner

udge Jacquelyn Irby Duckett '87 has an enthusiasm for her job that rings in her voice and animates her conversation. As the Associate Chief Magistrate of Greenville County, that enthusiasm is contagious – inspiring others to listen to her words and dwell on the importance of due process in the 21st century. Her interest in the legal system, however, predates her current career and even college experiences. "I knew I wanted to work in the judicial system as a little girl," Judge Duckett says. "I loved watching crime dramas and learning about the criminal justice system. By the time I was a senior in high school at J.L. Mann, I knew that criminal justice was going to be my major."

Her focus at such a young age was incredible and inspired by her mother's belief that college could bring endless opportunities. "She was the one who suggested that I enroll at Spartanburg Methodist College, complete my twoyear associate degree, and then transfer to another school for my bachelor's degree," Duckett explains. "She knew that a college education would provide more security and better job opportunities for my life." In agreement with her mother, Duckett enrolled in the fall of 1985 and quickly fell in love with the family atmosphere of the College and the rigor of her criminal justice courses.

"College was the experience of a lifetime," Duckett says. "I spent those two years focused on self-improvement both personally and academically." She immersed herself in her classes – soaking up the information with zeal. Her professors were fascinating and focused on applying theory to the real world. While her classes were her primary focus, Duckett also found time to participate in student life. She was involved in various extracurricular activities, including student government and intramurals. She was even the Homecoming Queen for the 1987 class.

Her memories of SMC are happy ones, and she remembers the College's campus as a second home full of advancement. "My time at SMC was a time of maturation and growth," She says. "College was and is preparation for life. I learned as a young woman that hard work, dedication, and education were the keys to success." Her hard work and focus paid off when, at the age of 19, she graduated SMC as a dean's list student with her associate degree in criminal justice and began a career as a court-clerk in the Greenville Municipal Court system.

For the next 28 years, Jacquie served as a City of Greenville Deputy Clerk and Court Clerk Coordinator as the senior clerk of court operations. She learned everything she could about the South Carolina judicial system through real-life experiences in her occupation. While balancing her personal and professional life, she completed her Bachelor of Arts from Colorado Tech University and graduated cum laude. Her years of hard work, determination, and study were rewarded when, at 47, she retired from her position as a court clerk and was appointed as a Magistrate Judge by Senator Karl B. Allen and Governor Nikki Hayley.

"Those 28 years prepared me to be the magistrate judge I am today," she states. "Because of my experience as a clerk, I had a strong familiarity with the processes and procedures of the Greenville courts and the differences between criminal and civil law. One might even say I was overqualified after so long!"

She loves her job as a judge and appreciates that every day, every case and every person's experiences are different.

Each person has a different background and a different story. As a judge, she gives dignity to those experiences while maintaining the law's impartiality and fairness. "I pursued a career in criminal justice because I loved being able to help others," she states. "I have a responsibility to enact the law, but I also have a unique chance to engage and sometimes connect with others when they are at their worst."

Judge Duckett is busier now than ever before as she and her colleagues work to process the backlog of court cases paused during the COVID-19 pandemic. While her office remained open to the public for legal emergencies, restrictions on social gatherings made holding court difficult. Still, she is incredibly thankful for the humility the pandemic has brought. "COVID-19 was unexpected, but it made me thankful for the job I have and the blessings I have," she says. "We see many hard things in the courts - both criminal and civil. You have to have faith in this line of work that things will get better. Choosing to look at each day with hope helps me keep going even when facing the hardest things."

While her legal expertise and life experience combine to make one incredible judge, it is her desire to serve the people of Greenville and her resilient hope for tomorrow that make her an incredible woman.

"MY TIME AT SMC WAS A TIME OF MATURATION AND GROWTH. COLLEGE WAS AND IS PREPARATION FOR LIFE. I LEARNED AS A YOUNG WOMAN THAT HARD WORK, DEDICATION, AND EDUCATION WERE THE KEYS TO SUCCESS."

### IT'S ALL FUN AND GAMES: FROM RECREATIONAL THERAPY TO TEACHING

#### By Randi Plake

partanburg Methodist College graduate Heather Waldrep '98 pivoted from a career in therapeutic recreation to teaching kindergarten. Her education and eagerness to learn positioned her to make this transition a success – and she still gets to have fun on the job.

Waldrep earned an associate degree from SMC in 1998 while juggling her responsibilities of being the student body president and a resident assistant with her cross-country running and work-study position.



Despite her full schedule, Waldrep found time to get to know her professors, whom she respected and appreciated. She said, "The relationships I had with the professors was preparation in learning how to communicate with adults and my superiors."

After graduating with an AA, she transferred to Clemson University where she majored in recreational therapy. She felt prepared to take the next step in her education because of the skills, experience, and knowledge she gained at SMC . "The classes I took at SMC were a great foundation for the continuation for the rest of my degree," says Waldrep.

Waldrep began her career in the recreational therapy field where she worked 18 years in a health care setting. Thirteen of those years were spent at St. Francis in Greenville. Although she enjoyed the work, she realized it was time for a change, which ultimately led her from working with older adults to teaching 5-year-olds as a kindergarten teaching assistant.

"Being a kindergarten teaching assistant is totally different from recreational therapy, but is such a blessing in itself," she said. "I come alongside the teacher I'm with and help her in the everyday life of kindergarten. I have grown to love this new transition in my career and life!"

Though the differences between therapeutic recreation and early education teaching are stark, Waldrep noticed some similarities. "With both [careers] I need patience, creativity, a positive attitude, ways to keep both patients and students motivated, and to teach something daily so they can learn new skills," she said.

In the spring of 2020, Waldrep's job once again shifted, but this time her industry changed, not her career. Like schools across the nation, Waldrep's class moved to remote learning due to COVID-19. To stay connected

with her students and parents, Waldrep and her fellow teachers created a class Facebook group where they shared videos of lessons and reading books, and parents shared photos of their children doing their work. "It was a great outlet for communication and interaction with the parents and our kids. We also used Zoom to talk with them 'live' individually and as a whole class. The kids were so happy to see us and their classmates this way. Let's just say they were very talkative since they missed each other so much!" she says.

Waldrep also participated in a parade that went "through all the neighborhoods and areas where we could honk and wave at our students. I may have cried seeing some of our kindergarteners' faces," she says.

Through a career shift and a pandemic, she credits SMC for giving her a solid base to build her career on. While so much is still unknown about what the classroom will look like in the future, Waldrep is still committed to serving students. "Having the parents tell me how much their children missed us and how their faces would light up and their mood was better after getting to interact with them" gives Waldrep motivation to continue striving to be a positive light for each of her students.



#### JOIN US EVERY MONTH FOR A VIRTUAL PORCH PARTY!

#### HEAR FROM SMC LEADERS ON THE LATEST CAMPUS NEWS AND FELLOWSHIP WITH OTHER ALUMS.

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A link to the video livestream will be emailed out before each virtual party.

To be added to the Porch Party invite list, email Leah Caldwell '98, at pruittl@smcsc.edu or visit smcsc.edu/update-info.

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# **THE HEART** OF THE FRONTLINE



#### By Samantha Wagner

n January of 2020, few people would have believed that a global pandemic was months away from radically changing the way people worked, spent recreational time, and sought medical care. In a matter of months, businesses closed, cities paused, and medical workers entered the spotlight as the frontline heroes. As an ER nurse for Spartanburg Regional Healthcare System, Alyssa Sherrill '14 is one of those heroes.

Her calling to the medical field, however, predates America's national need. A caregiver and servant leader at heart, Alyssa's desire to serve others started in high school, flourished in her years at Spartanburg Methodist College, and actively shapes her professional success now.

Alyssa's interest in nursing began when she was in high school after her grandmother, whom she calls Nana, was diagnosed with a terminal illness that required almost full-time care. Alyssa watched as her mother managed work, raising a family, and caring for Nana. For a teenage Alyssa, it felt only natural to help. She spent time caring for Nana and keeping her company and when her own mother required surgery several years later, she stepped in to care for both women. "I was nursing without realizing I was nursing!" she laughs. "I was a secondary caregiver and then a primary caregiver and I was happy to take some of the stress and worry from my mom."

This early experience prompted her to consider nursing as a future career, but it was her mother who suggested she attend Spartanburg Methodist College's campus orientation. She did and determined that SMC was where she wanted to attend. Enrolling as a commuter student, Alyssa fell in love with the family environment of the campus and the way her professors personally invested in her studies. While she considered other career paths, she came to realize that nursing and "serving behind the scenes" were her true calling.

#### "SMC SPONSORED AN INFORMATIONAL DAY FOR THOSE OF US PURSUING NURSING DEGREES. THEY PARTNERED WITH THE USC UPSTATE MARY BLACK SCHOOL OF NURSING TO MAKE SURE THAT ALL OF OUR QUESTIONS WERE ANSWERED."

From volunteering in the Spartanburg community with her service fraternity Kappa Sigma Alpha to being an SMC cheerleader and serving as a presidential ambassador of the College, Alyssa built a résumé focused on serving others. When it came time for her to transfer to the USC Upstate Mary Black School of Nursing, the process was seamless, with all of her SMC credits transferring to USC without issue. She credits the ease of her transfer to the partnership between both schools. "SMC sponsored an informational day for those of us pursuing nursing degrees. They partnered with the USC Upstate Mary Black School of Nursing to make sure that all of our questions were answered. Because of that session and my advisers, I was able to plan out my classes for the last two years of my degree," says Alyssa.

Her preparation, hard work, and dedication paid off when Alyssa graduated with her Bachelor of Science in nursing in 2016 and accepted a position as an ER nurse with Spartanburg Regional Healthcare System (SRHS).

The ER is not an easy work environment outside of a global pandemic. ER workers are exposed to the physical, mental, and emotional trauma of their patients on a daily basis, handling the crises of others with compassion and professionalism while also managing the stress of a constantly changing environment. "The ER ages you," Alyssa acknowledges. "It's a lot of trauma and watching others experience trauma, but I love the work. I love being there for my patients when they need me most, and I like that every day is different. In the ER you never know what you're going to get."

The pandemic brought this reality into sharp detail. Adaptability, always an

important trait for an ER worker, suddenly became critical. As COVID-19 cases rose in the upstate of South Carolina, Alyssa watched as her personal and professional life changed rapidly. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the ER adopted a no visitor policy. While a practical policy, the change put additional responsibility on the frontline medical workers. "Patients normally receive support, comfort, and encouragement from their family and friends," says Alyssa. "With a no visitor policy in place, nurses are choosing to go that extra mile to be both a medical professional and an emotional support system for the patients. While it is a joy to serve others, the additional responsibility, when added to the personal worry that we as nurses might be putting our family and friends at risk of a COVID-19 exposure, is a lot. Traumatic emergency cases in particular have been harder without family members present to comfort the patient."

The stressful realities of life in the ER, however, pale in comparison to the kindness and overwhelming generosity Alyssa and her fellow nurses have experienced from their fellow medical professionals and the members of the Spartanburg Community. Local restaurants and businesses partnered to provide meals and snacks for frontline staff on a daily basis. Community members wrote encouraging notes on the sidewalks in chalk, mailed thank you letters, and held prayer and worship sessions on the hospital grounds. Donations ranging from stress-relieving craft projects to masks to hand sanitizer and other supplies frequently appeared at the hospital, and the medical community worked together with an inspiring unity across all departments and specialties.

"Fellow nurses were checking in on each other and asking how everyone was doing," says Alyssa. "A nurse I had never met sponsored me through an 'adopt a nurse' program. Not only did she take the time to send me encouraging messages, but she also took the time to realize it was my birthday and to send me a card and gift."

In the midst of the pandemic, the kindness of strangers has been a beautiful and consistent source of inspiration and strength.

Although the future remains uncertain in the wake of the pandemic, Alyssa's next steps are sure. She graduated in August of this year with her Doctor of Nursing Practice degree having earned the title of Family Nurse Practitioner. The achievement is incredible and is a fitting accomplishment for 2020 – the World Health Organization's Year of the Nurse. Although her title has changed, her focus has not. She continues to serve the people of Spartanburg with poise, efficiency, and kindness – traits she learned from her mother, from SMC, and from years on the job.

Although there are still bad days, Alyssa faces them with the same hopeful attitude. "Being able to make a difference right now in the community, as a nurse, is a huge thing. During the hard days, I lean on my faith and my community and I trust in the belief that tomorrow will be a better day."

Throughout 2020 that belief has been, and will continue to be, a source of hope. Tomorrow *will* be better – thanks in no small part to heroes like Alyssa today.

# CLASS NOTES

#### 1948

**MRS. BILLIE HICKS GOULD** 

After 18 years with the Census Bureau, Mrs. Gould has retired and is currently living with two of her three children. Her husband of 65 years passed away in April 2017.

#### 1967

#### MR. ROBERT B. GIBBONS JR.

Mr. Gibbons is still volunteering with the American Legion and is currently the District 19 Commander. He is active with VFW, DAV, and church committees. He is working on a photo album of his great-grandfather's family. He enjoyed his time at Spartanburg Junior College. He made a career in the United States Air Force and has had a blessed life.

#### 1968

#### **MR. MARION H. WATSON**

Mr. Watson is retired from the Medical University of South Carolina and resides in Mount Pleasant, SC.

#### 1973

#### THE REVEREND JOHN W. HIPP JR.

Reverend Hipp retired in 2018 from the SC Conference of the United Methodist Church after 40 years of ministry.

#### 1974

#### **MS. BRENDA PEARSON FOSTER**

Mrs. Foster is retired and living in Enoree, SC. She enjoys working with her flower and vegetable gardens. She also travels with Spartanburg Parks and Recreations and other organizations. She is involved in church activities.

## SHARE YOUR NEWS WITH FRONTIERS READERS!

Visit www.smcsc.edu/alumni-and-friends/update to send a note for publication in Frontiers.

## IN MEMORIAM

**Mr. Randolph Bowen Bradford '40** of Pauline, SC, died September 8, 2019.

Mrs. Mary Gault Smith '41 of Orangeburg, SC, died October 16, 2019.

Mrs. Ruth DeLoache Thompson '42 of Spartanburg, SC, died August 5, 2018.

Mrs. Louise Cox Brockman '43 of Woodruff, SC, died May 24, 2020.

**Mrs. Elsie Collins Vaught '43** of Conway, SC, died February 6, 2020.

Mrs. Betty Jane Horton Barkley '44 of Gastonia, NC, died July 17, 2020.

Mrs. Lois Redford Parrott '44 of Sumter, SC, died June 30, 2020.

Mr. George Tillman Johnson Jr. '48 of York, SC, died June 21, 2020.

**Mr. Lafayette H. Thompson '48** of Asheville, NC, died March 18, 2020.

Mrs. Martha Stribling Easler '49 of Leesburg, VA, died May 23, 2020.

Mrs. Edna Grainger Guthrie '49 of Clinton, SC, died May 4, 2020.

Mrs. Arlene Will Rhodes '51 of Elkridge, MD, died June 24, 2018.

Mrs. June Mabry Bryant '52 of Spartanburg, SC, died March 5, 2019.

**Mr. Jack Ernest Earley '52** of Marshall, NC, died December 7, 2019.

Mrs. Eleanor Bishop Foster '53 of Spartanburg, SC, died July 8, 2020.

**Mr. Richard E. Huggins '53** of Murrells Inlet, SC, died August 4, 2018.

Mr. Calvin A. Steele '53 of Rock Hill, SC, died January 30, 2019.

**Ms. Carolyn Gwinn Jarrett '55** of Spartanburg, SC, died September 13, 2020.

**Mrs. Beverley Salley Dowler '56** of Columbia, SC, died June 14, 2018.

The Reverend Dr. Edgar Heberton Ellis Jr. '56 of Columbia, SC, died July 18, 2020.

**Mr. Timothy Madison Mizzell '56** of Harleyville, SC, died February 25, 2020.

Mr. James Dean Jolly Sr. '57 of Spartanburg, SC, died September 18, 2019.

Mr. Jerry E. Allen '58 of Manteo, NC, died September 20, 2019.

Dr. Karen Bonner Atkins '59 of Mayo, SC, died November 6, 2019.

Mr. Owings Francis Austin '59 of Wilmington, NC, died August 28, 2019.

Mr. Charles William McConnell '59 of Gaffney, SC, died July 20, 2020.

Mr. Bascom Wayne Pigg '59 of Hartsville, SC, died December 14, 2019.

Mr. Jimmy Z. Catron '60 of Chilhowie, VA, died February 24, 2020.

Dr. James C. Mills '60 of Johnson City, TN, died January 7, 2020.

Mrs. Peggy Petty Mullinax '60 of Spartanburg, SC, died December 12, 2019.

Mrs. Darlene Nelson Peak '60 of West Columbia, SC, died June 30, 2020.

Mr. Edward Joseph Grasso Jr. '61 of Lyman, SC, died March 28, 2020.

Mrs. Carol Carpenter Kampmeyer '61 of Charleston, SC, died April 2, 2020.

Mr. Beecher Wayne McDaniel Jr. '61 of Wickenburg, AZ, died May 30, 2018.

Mr. Robert Leroy Wedaman '62 of Mason, OH, died May 1, 2019.

Mr. James H. Bouknight Jr. '63 of Leesville, SC, died September 11, 2020.

Mr. Nicholas A. Rabickow '63 of Las Vegas, NV, died February 16, 2018.

Mr. Ken W. Towery '63 of Woodruff, SC, died November 21, 2019.

Mrs. Marta Jo Riddle Brown '64 of Mint Hill, NC, died July 31, 2019.

Mr. William Cullen Brooks Jr. '65 of Spartanburg, SC, died August 24, 2020.

Mr. Bobby Dean Jolley '65 of Spartanburg, SC, died February 10, 2020.

Mrs. Nell Taylor Smith '65 of Spartanburg, SC, died September 30, 2019.

Mr. James Bruce Ballard '66 of Spartanburg, SC, died October 31, 2019.

**The Reverend Barry L. Brown '66** of Travelers Rest, SC, died November 3, 2019.

Mr. Haskell R. Brown Jr. '66 of Ladson, SC, died July 13, 2018.

Dr. C. Sterling Case '66 of Duncan, SC, died September 13, 2020.

**Mrs. Dorothy Weidman Horton '66** of Summerville, SC, died January 30, 2020.

**Ms. Georgia Anne Otts '66** of Spartanburg, SC, died March 24, 2020.

Mrs. Nancy Smith Lineberry '67 of Pauline, SC, died November 10, 2019.

**Pastor Phillip Welchel '67** of Boiling Springs, SC, died May 21, 2019.

Mr. Michael Robert Petty '68 of Union, SC, died June 6, 2018.

**Mr. Michael Steven Ritchie '68** of Chester, SC, died June 30, 2020.

Mr. David Lane Vaughan '68 of Inman, SC, died August 28, 2020.

Mr. Wayne Williams Federline '74 of Mauldin, SC, died September 5, 2018.

Mr. Wilburn Kirby Jordan III '76 of Columbia, SC, died September 23, 2019.

**Mr. Jesse Talmage Turner '76** of Boiling Springs, SC, died August 14, 2020.

Mrs. Linda Jackson Parris '77 of Gaffney, SC, died April 7, 2020.

Mr. Rudy Laverne Knight '78 of Drayton, SC, died March 10, 2018.

**Ms. Renee Chapman Price '79** of Cowpens, SC, died August 15, 2020.

Mrs. Kimberly Carraway Turner '81 of Pacolet, SC, died December 7, 2019.

Mrs. Kathryn Conner Davis '83 of Irmo, SC, died March 30, 2020.

Mr. Kyle Matthew Rollins '86 of Inman, SC, died June 12, 2020.

Mr. Michael S. Condrey '88 of Inman, SC, died March 21, 2020.

Mr. James Edward Laws '97 of Boiling Springs, SC, died May 9, 2020.

**Mr. Tracy LaMar Littlejohn '98** of Gaffney, SC, died January 23, 2018.

**Mr. Theodore Robert Ware '02** of Spartanburg, SC, died April 20, 2018.

**Mr. Michael Orlanda Slaughter '09** of Dublin, GA, died May 21, 2018.

**Mr. Edward Dean Plumley** of Easley, SC, died August 24, 2020.



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# STUDENT SUCCESS

Your Annual Fund gift will go to work immediately to fund needs such as scholarships, student initiatives, and outfitting classrooms with the latest technology.

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