Roll Out! Campus units collaborate to launch Athena, UGA’s new student information system

When members of the ConnectUGA project team were assembled two years ago, they were well aware of the arduous yet coordinated effort that lay ahead to implement the largest information technology system ever at the University of Georgia. More than 150 faculty and staff across campus serve as the backbone of this project, including units within the Office of the Vice President for Instruction (offices of undergraduate admissions, financial aid, registrar and curriculum systems), as well as the bursar’s office, EITS, institutional research, graduate admissions and student affairs. These offices have collaborated to replace multiple aging systems with a modern and sustainable technology platform now known as Athena.

“Many staff contributed countless hours of their expertise while handling normal job responsibilities in order to meet tight deadlines,” said Fiona Liken, director of curriculum systems and chair of the project advisory team that included representatives from key units. “Other staff also have pitched in to handle daily business functions to maintain a sufficient level of service for the campus.”

Since undergraduate admissions went live in September, more than 21,000 applications for fall 2014 admission were pushed into Athena. Curriculum Systems extracted more than 16,000 courses from CAPA, loaded them into Athena and validated each piece of data. Financial Aid loaded almost 3,000 scholarships. More than 24 million student records have been transferred from the legacy systems, validated and implemented.

Most faculty and staff across campus are familiar with IMS, the university’s Information Management System that was the repository for student data. University schools, colleges and departments have relied on IMS data for advising, scholarships and grades.

“Both OASIS and our legacy student systems provided limited capabilities, particularly with the web,” said Timothy Chester, vice president for information technology and member of the project leadership team. “Because of these limitations, departments have become accustomed to running their own systems over the years, often duplicating information for their purposes. This resulted in the development of multiple (cont’d on page 2)
Athena

(cont’d from page 1)
systems that were becoming less sus-
tainable and unable to keep up with
technology.”

Both IMS and OASIS, the Online
Access Student Information System
used for 30 years for class registration,
are being replaced with an integrated
system with information in one central
database.

Chester said that Athena, which
utilizes Banner software, will provide a
single authoritative source for informa-
tion, improve institutional planning and
decision-making capabilities, improve
services for students and provide greater
flexibility and ability to adapt quickly
to future needs for information.

The undergraduate admissions, financial
aid and registration components
have now been successfully launched.
Jan Hathcote, the university registrar
and member of the project advisory
team, said that students will notice a
dramatic difference in Athena from
OASIS.

“Registration in Athena is fairly intu-
itive. Students are able to log into Ath-
ena on the web using their UGA MyID.
There are multiple search options for
classes, so students don’t have to scroll
down a long list to look for classes. Stu-
dents also can see their schedules by
electing the ‘week at a glance’ option,”
said Hathcote.

A group of students serving as a test
population the day before registration
opened on April 11 gave immediate
feedback on the new system. Com-
ments like, “This is so easy!” and “I
automatically know what to do,” were
very common.

Time ticketing for registration has
eased peak demands with the option
for students to register any day, night
or weekend until drop/add.

Students also will have better access
to their own information, including
financial aid awards and tuition and fee
payment. Student financial aid informa-
tion continues to be loaded, and
the student account component will be
ready in time for students to pay their
tuition and fees in July.

Over the next several months, staff
will continue to load academic records
of former students and UGA graduates,
dating back more than a century.

“I am deeply grateful to the staff and
faculty who have dedicated themselves
to this complex and demanding
assignment,” said UGA President Jere
Morehead. “The result of their good
work will be a system which serves
students and the institution better.”

athena.uga.edu

—Tracy Coley Giese, OVPI
Seventeen faculty projects designed to improve teaching were funded this spring through grants provided by the Office of the Vice President for Instruction.

Each of the Summer 2014 Innovative Instruction Faculty Grants provides $5,000 for faculty to improve teaching and learning through innovative instructional projects, as well as improving instruction in high-demand courses and those that integrate instructional technology.

“For the third consecutive year we received an extensive number of project proposals from our faculty demonstrating a keen interest in technology, open access to materials to enhance the student learning experience, and improving learning in large lecture classrooms,” said Laura Jolly, vice president for instruction. “Many of these projects support current campus initiatives and provide strong evidence of the faculty’s commitment to improving teaching and learning beyond traditional instruction methods.”

A total of 86 proposals were received and reviewed by three faculty members outside the college from which the proposals were submitted. The funded projects are:

- **Mark Abbe**, Franklin College of Arts and Sciences: “Re-seeing Antiquity: Incorporating Digital Technology in the Ancient Art History Survey”
- **Norris Armstrong**, Franklin College: “Vision and Change in Introductory Biology: Developing a Peer Mentoring Program to Support Active Learning in a Large Lecture Course”
- **Catherine A. Bourg** and **Gin Fleming**, College of Pharmacy: “The Use of TurningPoint Technology to Integrate Case-Based Instruction into Disease State Management, a Second-Year Course in the Doctor of Pharmacy (Pharm.D.) Curriculum”
- **Melinda S. Camus** and **Bridget C. Garner**, College of Veterinary Medicine: “Creating a Digital Hematology and Cytology Archive for Use in Instruction of Veterinary Clinical Pathology”
- **Tina D. Carpenter**, Terry College of Business: “Fraud Investigation: A Hands-On Experience”
- **Jonathan Eggenschwiler**, **Brian Condie** and **Karl Lechtreck**, Franklin College: “Collaborative Undergraduate Research in Advanced Molecular Genetics and Cellular Biology”
- **Robert A. Greer**, School of Public and International Affairs: “Case-Based Active Learning Strategies for Public Budgeting and Finance”
- **DeLoris Wenzel Hesse**, Franklin College: “Improving Content Uniformity and Learning Outcomes Through Creation and Use of Vodcast ‘Walking Tours’ of Human Anatomy”
- **Nathan Jenkins**, College of Education: “Flipping the Exercise Physiology Classroom to Enhance Student Learning”

“ovpi.uga.edu/faculty-staff-resources/summer-innovative-instruction-grants

—Tracy Coley Giese, OVPI
The 2014 Creative Teaching Awards were presented to UGA faculty members Norris Armstrong, Steven Lewis and Craig Wiegert, in the Franklin College of Arts and Sciences, and Marisa Anne Pagnattaro, Terry College of Business during the Faculty Recognition Banquet at the Georgia Center for Continuing Education on April 7.

Presented by the Office of the Vice President for Instruction, the Creative Teaching Awards recognize UGA faculty for excellence in developing and implementing creative teaching strategies to improve student learning. Up to three awards are presented annually to encourage instructional excellence.

“Our faculty are continually challenged to develop new teaching methods to engage students in an ever-changing learning environment,” said Laura Jolly, vice president for instruction. “The recipients of the Creative Teaching Award demonstrate our faculty’s commitment for improving student learning.”

This year’s recipients have extended teaching practices to a variety of platforms and fields. Armstrong’s research focuses on developing and testing novel methods for teaching large biology classes. His pursuit of creative approaches includes writing-to-learn, cooperative learning, inquiry-based learning and student peer-mentors for supplemental instruction. He consistently incorporates assessment of these approaches into his instructional plans.

Pagnattaro, a Josiah Meigs Distinguished Professor, strives to teach her students to appreciate how the law affects their careers, lives and the world around them. She draws on students’ study abroad experiences to add depth to classroom discussions on law and culture. She engages students in critical thinking and analysis to illuminate the complex issues facing businesses as they navigate legal and ethical issues in the global marketplace.

Steven Lewis and Craig Wiegert create active learning environments to engage students in learning complex physics principles through their innovative SCALE-UP classrooms. Their teaching approach aims to bring a hands-on, small-class approach to larger-sized classes and to present physics concepts through group activity and instructor engagement. They engage students through group-work and technology to increase student-to-student and student-to-teacher interaction in the classroom.

—Tracy Coley Giese, OVPI
First-Year Odyssey Teaching Awards

Four University of Georgia faculty were honored with First-Year Odyssey Teaching Awards at a reception celebrating the success of the First-Year Odyssey Seminar program. Award recipients and their seminar titles included:

- **Wayde Brown**, associate professor and assistant dean of research, College of Environment and Design, “Stories Behind the Bricks”
- **James Byers**, associate professor, Odum School of Ecology, “The Ecology of Invasive Species”
- **William Kisaalita**, professor and graduate coordinator, College of Engineering, “Thinks You Can (or Should Not) Do to End World Poverty”
- **Ronald Pegg**, associate professor, Food Science and Technology, College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences

The inaugural awards recognized outstanding instructors who have demonstrated innovation in instruction, correlation of seminar content to the instructor’s research, and incorporation of FYOS program goals. In addition to recognition at the reception, each of the faculty were awarded $2,500 to be used in an upcoming FYO seminar.

Launched in 2011, the First-Year Odyssey Seminar program has been highly successful as a grassroots, campus-wide effort to expose all first-year students to an academically challenging seminar during their first year of residence at the University of Georgia. The FYO seminar introduces first-year students to the importance of learning and academics to engage them in the academic culture of the university; provides them with an opportunity for meaningful dialogue with a faculty member to encourage positive, sustained student-faculty interactions; and introduces students to the instruction, research, public service and international missions of the university and how they relate to teaching and learning in and outside the classroom to increase student understanding of and participation in the full mission of the university.

First-year students are provided with hundreds of options to experience, engage and explore the breadth and depth of the academic experience at a large research university. Students build relationships with professors, actively participate in the mission of the university, and begin their academic odysseys in topics that are aligned with faculty research.

The FYOS program enjoys strong faculty participation from 17 schools and colleges and more than 80 departments. Each year more than 360 faculty teach seminars that include a wide variety of topics, such as “Animal Forensic CSI,” “Things You Can (or Should Not) Do to End World Poverty,” “Stories Behind the Bricks,” and “The Zombie Plague.” As of spring 2014, the First-Year Odyssey Seminar program has enrolled more than 17,000 students.

The Office of the Vice President for Instruction is responsible for implementing the FYOS program in collaboration with faculty, staff, students and other campus partners. fyo.uga.edu

—Tracy Coley Giese, OVPI
The University of Georgia presented the 2014 Outstanding Advisor Awards to Frank Flanders, a faculty member in the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences; Kathy Cohen, an academic advisor in the Terry College of Business; and Rose Tahash, a new academic advisor in the College of Environment and Design during the Faculty Recognition Banquet at the Georgia Center for Continuing Education on April 7.

The award is presented by the Office of the Vice President for Instruction each spring to recognize three outstanding UGA academic advisors—one faculty member, one staff member, and one new advisor. Individuals are nominated by their dean’s office and selected by a committee comprised of a previous winner, an advising administrator, and a majority of undergraduate students based on their demonstrated mastery of the advising process, accessibility, innovation and leadership in advising/mentoring, caring attitude, impact on advisees beyond graduation, and dedication to professional development initiatives.

In his 3-1/2 years as an advisor, Frank Flanders has demonstrated purposeful efforts to support his philosophy that advising should be a collaborative endeavor between the student and the advisor. Additionally, he often takes time to work with interested high school students who often contact him with questions and has given a conference presentation on advising.

Kay Kelsey, department head, speaks of his strong commitment to advancing student learning and success, “He is not content to just show up, rather his activities are purposeful, meaningful, and result in positive outcomes that advance student learning and success.”

Kathy Cohen was chosen as the staff recipient of the Outstanding Undergraduate Academic Advisor Award for her impact on students well past their college experience. With 16 years of advising experience—12 years in the Terry College and 4 in the College of Education—Cohen successfully balances the roles of mentor and friend, garnering much admiration from her students over the years. Many alumni have attributed their success in life and business to Cohen, who has the ability to teach students how to discover their dreams and aspirations while encouraging them to believe in themselves in the process.

In support of her nomination one student said, “She taught me to look into my soul, figure out what I wanted out of life, and gave me the belief that I could achieve my goals.”

Although she is just beginning her third year of advising, Rose Tahash has already garnered recognition in her college as one who genuinely cares about students. Tahash has gone the extra mile by creating undergraduate advisory events, like “Milk and Cookies” for finals week, revamping the scholarship program to simplify the awards process, and creating an ambassador program to recruit more students into the program. She also reaches out to assist students who need extra encouragement and works to keep them motivated throughout the five-year program. One nominator wrote, “She has an attitude of genuine care for the students.”

Flanders, Cohen and Tahash receive a cash award and a plaque in honor of their commitment and contribution to student success.

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Outstanding Advisor Awards

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—Britnee Jones, OVPI
Fifteen freshmen were honored as Coca-Cola First Generation Scholars for the 2013-14 academic year at the University of Georgia at a dinner held on April 14 at the UGA Hotel and Conference Center at the Georgia Center. Pamela Whitten, senior vice president for academic affairs and provost, welcomed scholars and their parents to the event. Scott Williamson of The Coca-Cola Company was on hand to present the scholarship certificates, along with Linda Brigham of The Coca-Cola Company and Laura Jolly, UGA’s vice president for instruction. Williamson and Lauren Mayo, a third-year public relations and consumer economics double major and Coca-Cola First Generation Scholar, addressed the honorees.

The 2013-14 Coca-Cola First Generation Scholars and their hometowns include first-year students Ting Chen, Darien; Nga Chung, Norcross; Brianna Cornman, Griffin; Jessica Durden, Haddock; Shanteria Hines, Allenhurst; Tai Hoang, Norcross; Xuechu Lin, Cumming; Diem Nguyen, Duluth; Masud Parvez, Doraville; Crystal Schreck, Cumming; Kayla Smith, Brunswick; Roger Wang, Hinesville; Narissa Turner, Mansfield; and Roger Yang, Hinesville.

The Coca-Cola First Generation Scholarship supports academically outstanding students who are the first in their families to attend college and demonstrate a financial need. The scholarship, which provides $5,000 per year in addition to the HOPE Scholarship, is renewable for an additional three years if the recipients maintain certain academic standards. The Coca-Cola Foundation has funded the scholarship to 261 University of Georgia students since 2007. [ovpi.uga.edu/initiatives/coca-cola-first-generation-scholarship-program](http://ovpi.uga.edu/initiatives/coca-cola-first-generation-scholarship-program)

—Brittnee Jones, OVPI
Debbie Craddock Bell never had intentions of becoming a negotiator. In fact, when she graduated from the University of Georgia with a degree in fine arts, she had dreams of moving to New York to become a fabric designer. However, as most recent graduates realize, life often takes a turn off the intended path and into something much more rewarding.

Bell has spent the last several years administering UGA’s academic honesty policy in the Office of the Vice President for Instruction. She is responsible for responding to reports of academic dishonesty, notifying students of their reports of dishonesty, and meeting with students and their instructors. Although her job description may not resonate a warm feeling for most, Bell has managed to curate her creative side with a passion for assisting students and faculty in resolving academic honesty issues and understanding the university’s expectations for academic integrity for the last 17 years, which has earned her respect and recognition among her peers across campus.

As a result, Bell was honored this spring for her dedication by the Student Academic Honesty Council (SAHC) at an Academic Honesty Awareness Week dinner. The faculty and students who honored Bell are panelists who work with Debbie and listen to facts related to reports of possible academic dishonesty to determine violations of the honesty policy.

“I know she puts her heart into it and is excellent in facilitating discussions and promoting learning outcomes,” said Diane Samdahl, a faculty member in the College of Education. “Many of us equate her with the program since she’s done so much to develop it. I truly respect her for the gentle way of enforcing the culture of honesty.”

Student panelist Jennine Jarrett added, “Debbie always ensures that the meetings are an educational process. She never wants to make people feel guilty, but just more aware. She really mitigates all of the stress in the room and has a calming presence.”

A career in keeping students honest is a long way from New York and dreams of being a famous designer, but Bell has no regrets. She married her college sweetheart and established roots in Athens shortly after graduating from UGA in 1978. She put aside dreams of becoming a designer to raise her children. She eventually found her way back onto campus a few years later, working as a mediator in Faculty Affairs under the vice president for academic affairs handling grievance appeals. This, in turn, served as solid preparation for her current role under the vice president for instruction.

The Student Academic Honesty Council (SAHC) hosted Academic Honesty Awareness Week in late March in an effort to remind students of the promise they made to be academically honest when they applied to the University of Georgia.

The campaign featured a day-long kickoff at the Tate Student Center and a series of events that included a workshop presented by university librarian Elizabeth White on research tools that help students avoid plagiarism. White taught students how to use RefWorks and EndNote, two tools for research citation and bibliographies to help avoid improper citation or plagiarism.

The SAHC also hosted a trivia night at the Taco Stand that featured the fates of famous liars and cheaters. Barry Hollander, faculty academic honesty panelist and professor in the Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication, held a lunchtime lecture on the relationship between social media and academic dishonesty. Hollander provided several recent examples of Facebook and Reddit scandals in the news and reiterated the importance of setting clear academic expectations for students in the realm of social spaces.

The SAHC wrapped up the week with a special dinner for faculty and students on the academic honesty panel.

Academic Honesty Awareness week was sponsored by the SAHC and the Office of the Vice President for Instruction. The council continues to be committed to engaging the student body on issues related to the integrity of academic work in a proactive way, as well as serving on academic honesty panels for students reported for possible academic dishonesty.

honesty.uga.edu
@UGAHonesty on Twitter
—Brittnee Jones, OVPI
Ten outstanding UGA faculty members who demonstrate passion and commitment to excellence were selected to participate in the Center for Teaching and Learning’s Lilly Teaching Fellows Program this year. The new fellows include Sarah Shannon, sociology; Tessa Andrews, genetics; Jhih-Syuan (Elaine) Lin, advertising and public relations; Meghan Skira, economics; Rebecca Simpson-Litke, music; (back) Mark Abbe, art; Laura German, anthropology; T. Anthony Marotta, theatre and film studies; Kim Skobba, financial planning, housing and consumer economics; and C. Brock Woodson, engineering.

Up to 10 faculty members are selected to participate in the two-year program each year. Applicants must be in their first, second, or third year (at the time of nomination) of a tenure-track position. A committee comprised of the program coordinators and Lilly Fellows from prior years interview the finalists.

The CTL Lilly Teaching Fellows Program strives to improve the university’s instructional mission. Through its support of new, tenure-track faculty, the program seeks to provide Lilly Fellows with opportunities to strengthen their teaching skills and develop their ability to appropriately balance teaching with the research and service roles required by a research university.

The fellows form a unique bond over the course of the program through participation in a two-day retreat held early in the fall semester. The co-directors of the program and the fellows design a series of discussion topics and a meeting schedule tailored to the unique interests of the group. During the course of the academic year, the fellows meet bi-weekly with the co-directors to address the topics selected. A second retreat at Sapelo Island, Georgia, is held in the spring to give the fellows an opportunity to reflect on major changes they have experienced during the year and to generate ideas for future activities that will stimulate growth and development among young faculty at the university.

ctl.uga.edu/faculty/ctl_lilly_fellows

—Courtney Smith, OVPI

New Lilly Teaching Fellows selected

Bell has found a way to successfully apply her skills as a designer to find creative solutions to academic honesty issues, becoming widely known at UGA as someone who genuinely cares about students and their outcomes.

“Debbie facilitates tense discussions between faculty and students every day. Every report is a little bit different, and every discussion has the potential to unleash a lot of emotion,” said Hunt Revell, who assists Bell with academic honesty cases. “She is the captain at the helm, steering the ship through the storm.”

Bell said she was humbled and surprised by the recognition. “I really appreciate the award, but the students and faculty are the ones important to the process. One person isn’t making a difference—it’s all of us. So I share that recognition with everyone who works with the Office of Academic Honesty and is committed to protecting the integrity of the university.”

As director, Bell aims to ensure that everyone who comes through her office is treated with respect, adequately helped, and leaves understanding that their rights are respected.

“I really like watching people resolve their differences,” she said. “Its nice to see people come into a room, have a productive conversation, and no matter the outcome, walk out of the room completely understanding each other.”

—Brittnee Jones, OVPI

The 2014 Lilly Teaching Fellows include from left to right (front) Sarah Shannon, Tessa Andrews, Jhih-Syuan (Elaine) Lin, Meghan Skira, Rebecca Simpson-Litke; (back) Mark Abbe, Laura German, T. Anthony Marotta, Kim Skobba, and C. Brock Woodson.
Faculty Symposium focuses on changing roles of faculty

Approximately 65 faculty members and administrators gathered in early April to discuss “The Changing Roles, Perceptions and Expectations: Faculty in the American Research University” at the UGA Teaching Academy’s 24th annual Academic Affairs Faculty Symposium. Joe Broder, of the symposium planning committee who has organized the symposium for the past several years, introduced the theme of the symposium by posing the question of how faculty roles and expectations have changed over the years.

Speakers at this year’s event included Mark Becker, president of Georgia State University, who spoke on the challenges of transitioning from a graduate student to faculty member and then to the presidency of an urban public research university. Jeffrey Dorfman, professor of agricultural economics in the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, spoke on the economic impact of higher education in Georgia.

Two panel discussions were featured. The first panel focused on the professional development of early career faculty, including opportunities for career development through the Center for Teaching and Learning and planning a path to promotion and tenure. The second panel addressed ideas and strategies for promoting leadership and engagement of mid-career faculty, including involvement within the department, as well as on a local and global scale with community and professional organizations.

“As a new faculty member, this symposium provided me with the opportunity to interact with some of the top faculty across campus,” said Bynum Boley, assistant professor in the Warnell School of Forestry and Natural Resources. “The time spent with these seasoned professors not only revealed their passion for serving UGA, but it left me even more excited about being a member of the faculty and engaging in the university’s mission.”

During the course of the two-day event, the participants split into five groups to develop strategies for enhancing the professional environment for UGA faculty. On the second day, each breakout group presented a summary of their discussions, as well as recommendations that will be formally sent to the provost for consideration.

Preliminary recommendations included creating an interdisciplinary hiring initiative that would blend senior faculty and graduate students; establishing a faculty mentoring institute with a central hub of information about grants, awards and other opportunities for faculty; creating guidelines and training for faculty seeking promotion and tenure; creating a program for faculty to enhance leadership skills and initiatives through faculty learning communities and workshops; and embedding entrepreneurship within the roles of teaching, research and service through a summer entrepreneurial fellows program.

“I really like the symposium’s continued focus on helping us grow as faculty members,” said Audrey Haynes, Josiah Meigs Distinguished Teaching Professor and 15-year faculty member in political science. “The panels and breakout discussions are a smart and efficient way for faculty from all levels and departments to interact and share our concerns, as well as our knowledge of how to solve some of those concerns. Innovation and new challenges keep us moving full steam ahead. I am grateful that the Teaching Academy helps support our ability to do this.”

Suzanne O’Connell, assistant professor of horticulture in the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, agreed. “I was inspired by the number of senior faculty who were engaged and enthusiastic about describing their own work, but also when brainstorming ideas to improve the university for everyone.”

At the conclusion of the symposium, Provost Pamela Whitten encouraged the faculty to consider what works in a complex organization to enhance the faculty experience.

“Always ask what is or should be unique about the University of Georgia. It’s the novel things we do that set us apart from other universities. So let’s think about what’s expected and what’s normal. Then let’s push the envelope to become the university we want to be.”

teachingacademy.uga.edu

—Tracy Coley Giese, OVPI
The University of Georgia and Gordon State College are partnering to help students complete degrees. A ceremony recognizing the official partnership was held April 30 in the Stuckey Auditorium on the University of Georgia Griffin campus.

The event included a welcome from Doris Christopher, assistant vice president for academic affairs and director of academic programs at the UGA Griffin campus, as well as remarks by UGA Vice President for Instruction Laura Jolly, Gordon State College President Max Burns, and Board of Regents member Tommy Hopkins (Griffin), who has been heavily involved in the transfer articulation agreement process between the two institutions. City and county officials also were on hand to show support for the partnership of the two institutions.

This agreement is aligned with the Complete College Georgia initiative that launched in 2012 under the direction of Governor Nathan Deal, the University System of Georgia and the Technical College System of Georgia. Georgia’s Higher Education Completion Plan addresses a critical need for young adults to complete a college degree to remain competitive in Georgia’s work force.

Institutions across the state are collaborating to increase the number of young adults with a certificate or degree, while maintaining a commitment to quality. Three areas of primary focus include partnerships and accountability, performance, and college readiness and access.

Signing of the articulation agreement continues the partnership between the University of Georgia and Gordon State College in support of Georgia’s goal of increasing the number of college graduates to 60% by 2020.

“This is an exciting partnership between Gordon State College and the University of Georgia in serving the educational and workforce needs of Griffin-Spalding County and the south metro area. We are committed to providing a degree closer to home and assisting prospective students from Gordon State College to progress toward their baccalaureate goals at UGA,” said Burns.

UGA-Griffin is a degree completion campus that allows students who have completed their core curriculum at another institution to complete their academic program at UGA-Griffin and earn a University of Georgia degree. A transfer articulation agreement between Gordon State College, located in Barnesville, and the University of Georgia is designed to assist students who enroll at Gordon to transfer to the University of Georgia’s Griffin Campus as juniors. Students may receive their undergraduate degree in one of eight undergraduate degree programs offered on the UGA Griffin campus.

“Our goal is to minimize the barriers and provide a clear path to complete a college degree. This partnership between Gordon State College and the University of Georgia is a commitment from both institutions to increase the number of college graduates in order to make degree attainment possible for more students in this region of the state,” said Jolly.

Advisors at UGA Griffin and Gordon State College who specialize in transfer information for the preferred UGA program will work with students to follow a course of study that allows them to begin upper-level coursework immediately upon transfer. Students who meet the terms of their approved transfer agreement will be admitted to the University of Georgia.

www.uga.edu/griffin

—Tracy Coley Giese, OVPI
The Talented Ms. Ripley: UGA alum brings life to the latest bulldog statue

There’s nothing like being greeted by a friendly dog when you come through your front door. The staff in UGA’s Office of Undergraduate Admissions are very familiar with this concept. They are the proud new owners of their own friendly canine, a distinguished looking bulldog statue known as Terrell Archie Jackson.

Terrell—named after Terrell Hall, the UGA arch and Jackson Street (the address for UGA Admissions)—was brought to life by alumna Heather Ripley. Ripley beat out several other artists for the job of painting the latest of the 40 or so colorful fiberglass bulldogs that grace the UGA and Athens landscapes.

Athens is brimming with talented artists on every corner, so what makes this artist stand out from the crowd might surprise some. Ripley (BBA ’06, MAcc ’06) is a successful New York City tax attorney by day. When she closes the business shutters at night, the artist emerges.

Ripley has been painting since the tenth grade at Woodward Academy in College Park, Ga.

“I’ve always kept up with my art. I actually sold a few paintings to my accounting professors while I was at UGA. I’ve toyed with the idea of art as a career, but just leaned more toward business and law.”

The Harvard Law School graduate practices her talent in her free time, dabbling in charcoal, pencil, acrylics and oil pastels.

“Some of my artwork is commissioned, some pieces I do as gifts, and some are just for fun. It’s relaxing, it expands my mind. Tax law can be creative in its own way, but art stretches my mind in a different way, particularly with hand-eye coordination.”

Ripley was thrilled at being chosen for the project, so much so that the mild mannered tax attorney spent a full week on the UGA campus this spring painting Terrell pro bono.

“I just love UGA and the time that I spent here,” said Ripley. “I remember hanging out and being able to relax in Moore College and Brooks Hall between classes, and playing frisbee at the Intramural Fields. And of course, I loved going to the football games. So this is my way of giving back.”

Ripley’s affection for her alma mater is more than skin deep—UGA is a family tradition. Her parents met at UGA, her sister graduated from UGA, and her brother is a current student. She’s active with the New York City Alumni Association, so she gets to hang out with UGA friends at game watching parties. Spending a week in Athens to paint was a welcome reprieve from her daily demands as a tax lawyer.

“It was fun to have the week off,” she said. Then reconsidering, “Though it’s not really been a week off.”

She still managed to make phone calls and send emails to her international clients in Europe and to Alston & Bird colleagues in New York City while the layers were drying.

All totaled, it took Ripley about 35 hours to paint the fiberglass dog. Decked out in a colorful mural that represents the UGA student experience, Terrell Archie Jackson features elements of the undergraduate experience, including applying online and touring through historic North Campus, the fireworks display of admission to and graduation from UGA, and a walk through the UGA arch. He stands proudly in the Terrell Hall lobby, waiting patiently for visitors to come through the door. Good dog.

—Tracy Coley Giese, OVPI
Karen Braxley, director of UGA’s Intensive English Program, received the Open Arms Award during an award ceremony in April at the State Botanical Garden of Georgia. She was honored for her continued support of international students and for her success in advocating for a year-round Intensive English Program in the Division of Academic Enhancement at UGA.

The Open Arms Award is given annually to a faculty or staff member by the Office of International Education (OIE) in honor of Mary Ann Kelly who worked tirelessly on behalf of international students, scholars, and faculty on the UGA campus. Her dedicated leadership and hospitality inspired all to welcome UGA’s international students and scholars with open arms.

“Dr. Braxley does not end her job duties as the students leave their classes, or end a tutoring session,” said Robin Catmur, director of International Student, Scholar, and Immigration Services in OIE. “She has spent countless hours researching places for them to stay, taking them shopping, cooking them holiday meals, and even helping them clean out their dorm rooms! Her dedication and supportive nature are exemplary.”

Braxley corresponds with current and prospective students around the world, often from early morning to midnight to accommodate for time differences. She helps students schedule classes, arrange for housing, order textbooks, and set up meal plans. Once they arrive, she teaches them how to navigate the campus by bus so that they are familiar with university buildings, offices and resources. Braxley even helps students deal with personal issues, like taking them to medical appointments and assisting with filling out complicated medical history forms.

“My favorite part of my job is helping people. And I’ve always liked working with people from other countries,” Braxley said. “I’m British, so I know what it’s like to arrive in a new country with a different culture. I am truly fortunate to be able to work face-to-face with these students and build relationships with them.”

Braxley received her Ph.D. in language education from UGA, where she also completed a graduate certificate in Interdisciplinary Qualitative Studies. Her interests include academic writing in a second language, sociocultural theory, and qualitative research. She has taught grammar, writing, and teaching skills to international students at UGA for 18 years.

“Dr. Braxley is an amazing person and an excellent mentor,” said Adriana Rincon, a former program participant from Columbia who is obtaining a graduate degree in geography. “She’s the type of person that gives you strength. Her door is always open if you want to talk with her. She’s really helped me catch up to the standards of the graduate program here.”

Braxley says the reality of the award hasn’t really hit her yet, as she is focused on raising awareness about the program and trying to help integrate international students into the UGA student population. She hopes to increase the diversity of UGA through this program to make it a more global and multinational institution.

—Brittnee Jones, OVPI
Lisa Ishii always knew she’d be a Bulldog. After all, she grew up in a University of Georgia family watching the Dawgs play football every Saturday. After taking a tour of the campus in high school, she felt her fate was sealed. She was eager for a large university setting after attending Pace Academy, a small private high school in Buckhead, Ga., and she knew that UGA was the perfect fit for her. She also knew she had a passion for working with children and helping people. She wanted to be a doctor.

So Ishii set out on a path to realize her dreams and immediately became acquainted with the Premedical Studies Program on campus. She attended the Premed Studies orientation her freshman year and had the opportunity to meet with the director of the program and received some steadfast advice. “The name of the game is do everything early,” Ishii said. “If you’re on time, you’re late. You have to be prepared and proactive.”

After taking an introductory genetics class, she developed a piquing interest in genetics and how the course could apply to the human body. Although she always knew she wanted to be a doctor, this course along with others propelled her decision to double major in genetics and cell biology.

“I wanted to use the knowledge I gained to help people,” said Ishii. “To use my knowledge to help people would be awesome.”

She quickly got involved in a number of activities that increased her passion for medicine. Ishii contributed to two mentoring programs and served as the community service chair for Alpha Epsilon Delta, the premedical honor society. She also was a member of AMSA and was the special events coordinator for ROTARAct.

Ishii also has taken advantage of a number of experiential opportunities, both on-campus and off. She worked in a research lab for more than three years where she contributed to plant cell research. This experience sparked her growing interest in research, solidifying concepts she’d learned in class.

On a global scale, Ishii studied abroad in Peru to learn more about healthcare in other countries. She took classes in the evenings after shadowing local doctors during the day. She continues to gain experience by shadowing doctors and pediatricians in the local area.

“Volunteering at Mercy Health Center [in Athens] has been the most rewarding experience I’ve had at UGA,” she said. “It’s amazing to know that you’re really helping people.”

Ishii, who recently graduated from UGA, will attend the Medical College of Georgia in the fall with the goal of building a career in pediatric care. She is looking forward to carrying on her altruism after medical school by volunteering at free clinics in her spare time.

As a student who hit the ground running on the UGA campus, Ishii has simple advice to offer students who hope to follow in her footsteps. “First and foremost, get everything done early. This includes recommendations, applications and volunteer opportunities,” she said. “Also, develop a passion for research. Although it is not required, schools look at those projects. Have outside hobbies that have nothing to do with medicine. Schools want to know that you are human. And try to read the section covered in class every day after class to keep up with your work. Good habits start early.”

premed.uga.edu

Lisa Ishii, a premedical student who graduated this spring with degrees in genetics and cell biology, took advantage of experiential opportunities while at UGA. Ishii studied abroad in Peru to learn more about healthcare in other countries, and gained valuable experience by volunteering in a local medical clinic.
The University of Georgia hosted its first ever National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) Georgia Drive-In Conference in May. The state conference, termed “drive-in” as a description of participants who are close enough to drive to the conference within a day, was attended by more than 200 academic advisors from institutions throughout Georgia to collaborate on best practices for advising students, ensuring student success, and increasing rates of retention, progression, and graduation.

The conference, titled “Classic Advising in the Modern Age,” was spearheaded by UGA’s Academic Advising Coordinating Council under the direction of committee co-chairs, Laura Dowd and Anna Hiers, and sponsored by the Office of the Vice President for Instruction.

The keynote address was delivered by Ruth Darling, assistant provost for student success at the University of Tennessee, who spoke on the importance of academic advising as a teaching/learning-focused activity to allow students to become fully engaged in their undergraduate experience.

A major theme of the conference was the common challenge faced by institutions statewide: supporting the Board of Regents’ Complete College Georgia Plan initiatives for increasing retention, progression, and graduation rates. This is a requirement for all schools and colleges in the state of Georgia, regardless of their size or if they are technical, two-year, or four-year institutions.

Committee co-chair Anna Hiers said one of the biggest takeaways from the conference was the knowledge that advisors at all institutions are facing the same difficulties and can work toward overcoming challenges by meeting and learning from one another. “People often think of UGA as being the largest institution in the state and therefore having some sort of advantage. However, all schools undergo the same struggles of meeting goals and complying with initiatives. Our advisors at UGA have as much to learn as those attending from other institutions,” said Hiers, who began planning the conference about two years ago.

Hiers also said the conference not only helps to make personal connections between advisors but also establishes institutional connections that are necessary for academic success in the state as a whole. “This drive-in conference allows advisors from different institutions all over Georgia to come together to pursue a common goal: enabling success for all students throughout the state,” she said.
Summer usually means a slower pace and time to relax. Not at UGA! Many of our units, including the offices of Undergraduate Admissions, Financial Aid, Registrar, Curriculum Systems and Division of Academic Enhancement, among others, pick up the pace to get incoming students prepared for college through our freshman orientation program. And our current students take advantage of summer classes to keep on track for graduation. summer.uga.edu