

## Commencement Speaker



**Dr. Jeff Bearden** is completing his 34<sup>th</sup> year in public education, 19 of those as a public-school superintendent. He has also been a teacher, a coach, a high school athletic director, principal, and assistant superintendent. For the past 10 years, Dr. Bearden has served as superintendent of Forsyth County Schools, our state's 5<sup>th</sup> largest school district. He spent the first 20 years of his career in Maine. Dr. Bearden has three adult children and one grandchild.

## Commencement Speaker



**Kaye Husbands Fealing** is the Assistant Director of the Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences at the National Science Foundation (NSF). She is the former Dean of the Ivan Allen College of Liberal Arts at the Georgia Institute of Technology. She specializes in science of science and innovation policy, the public value of research expenditures, and broadening participation in STEM fields and the workforce. Prior to her positions at Georgia Tech, Husbands Fealing taught at the University of Minnesota and Williams College. She was also a program officer at NSF, where she developed and was the inaugural program director for the Science of Science and Innovation Policy program and co-chaired an Interagency Task Group, chartered by the National Science and Technology Council. Husbands Fealing was a visiting scholar at Massachusetts

Institute of Technology's Center for Technology Policy and Industrial Development. One of her most recent publication focuses on Humanizing Science and Engineering for the Twenty-first Century. She has been named by Georgia Trend magazine one of the "100 Most Influential Georgians" and by the Atlanta Business Chronicle as one of the "Top Education Leaders in Atlanta" and to its list of "Women Who Mean Business." She received the 2020 Distinguished Citizen Award from the Northeast Georgia Council of the Boy Scouts of America, and the 2020 Circle of Excellence Award from the Association for Orientation, Transition, and Retention in Higher Education.

Husbands Fealing is an elected member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, is an Elected Fellow of the National Academy of Public Administration, an Elected Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS). She received the 2023 Carolyn Shaw Bell Award from the American Economic Association's Committee on the Status of Women in the Economics Profession, and the 2017 Trailblazer Award from the National Medical Association Council on Concerns of Women Physicians. She is a member of the International Women's Forum, Georgia Chapter. She also serves as chair of NSF's Committee on Equal Opportunities in Science and Engineering, a member of NSF's Directorate of STEM Education Advisory Committee, a member on AAAS' Executive Board, and a board member for the Society for Economic Measurement.

Husbands Fealing holds a Ph.D. in economics from Harvard University, and a B.A. in mathematics and economics from the University of Pennsylvania.

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**Kevin Paul Scott** has traveled to six continents and spoken to leaders from more than 100 countries. Kevin co-founded the leadership consultancy ADDO, which is Latin for "Inspire." For consecutive years, ADDO was the #1 in its category on Atlanta's Best Places to Work list. ADDO developed leadership programs for Coca-Cola, Chick-fil-A, the Baltimore Ravens, and Atlanta Braves. ADDO helps companies build brands from the inside out. Kevin is the author of five books, including, *Inspired Every Day*. Kevin is a graduate of the University of Georgia and lives with his wife and three children in Marietta.

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**Dr. Katie Metrock (Williamson)** is a 2006 alumna of UNG, graduating as Valedictorian with a degree in Biology and minor in Spanish. She was a four-year starter for the UNG women's basketball team, winning conference championships during all four seasons. Her time at UNG coincided with the school's transition from NAIA competition to NCAA Division II. Metrock was awarded Conference Freshman of the Year in 2003, All-Conference Academic Team 2003 – 2006, and All-Conference Team 2003, 2005, 2006. She received national recognition as an NAIA Academic All-American, NAIA 2<sup>nd</sup> Team All-American, and Kodak All-American Honorable Mention in 2005, *ESPN The Magazine* Women's Basketball 2<sup>nd</sup> Team Academic All-American and NCAA Kodak/WBCA All-American Honorable Mention in 2006. She was awarded

the University System of Georgia Outstanding Scholar Award 2005, selected as member of Phi Kappa Phi Honor Society 2004-2006, and selected as a member of Omicron Kappa Delta Honor Society 2004-2006. Metrock was inducted into the UNG Athletics Hall of Fame in 2014, and again in 2023 along with her 2006 championship team.

After graduating from UNG, Metrock completed medical school at the Medical College of Georgia. She then completed a residency in Pediatrics at Emory University, followed by fellowships in Pediatric Hematology-Oncology (2016) and Pediatric Neuro-Oncology (2017) at Emory University. During her fellowship she conducted research on the molecular drivers of medulloblastoma, aiming to target the most critical molecular changes within the tumor without negatively affecting normal brain tissue. Dr. Metrock also obtained a certificate in Clinical and Translational Research while at Emory University. She continued as faculty at Emory and Children's Healthcare of Atlanta until accepting a position at the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) and Children's of Alabama, where she is now the Director of Pediatric Neuro-Oncology. She is also the Director of the Alabama Center for Childhood Cancer and Blood Disorders Pediatric Neurofibromatosis (NF) Tumor Clinic as well as the Director of the UAB Pediatric Neuro-Oncology Fellowship Program. Dr. Metrock serves as the principal investigator for a national clinical trial to treat pediatric and young adult patients with relapsed medulloblastoma, as well as the co-chair for an international clinical trial through the Pediatric Neuro-Oncology Consortium using targeted chemotherapy to treat pediatric patients with craniopharyngioma. Dr. Metrock is also the principal investigator for a major grant through the Department of Defense for early detection and treatment of NF-related plexiform neurofibromas. She is a protocol committee member for several national and international clinical trials and guideline committees for children with brain, spine, and nerve-related tumors. In addition to her work at UAB, Dr. Metrock is honored to be a current member of the UNG Foundation Board of Trustees.

Dr. Metrock resides in Birmingham, AL with her husband and two children.

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## Student Commencement Speakers



**Juan Velásquez Tercero**, is a first-generation graduate of the University of North Georgia, embodies the transformative power of education. A migrant farm worker, he was accepted to the University of North Georgia and during his undergraduate years, Velásquez Tercero was deeply engaged in campus life, forming his dedication to student success. He is a recipient of institutional awards. Beyond academics, he helped establish the first fraternity, Lambda Theta Phi Latin Fraternity Incorporated, on the Gainesville Campus. Velásquez went on to earn a graduate certificate in cybersecurity in summer 2023 and is completing his Master of Business Administration degree this semester. Velásquez Tercero has held service opportunities in various professional roles at UNG, including academic advisor.



**Neva Garrett** started at UNG (then North Georgia College) in 1982 and married her high school sweetheart. They started a family, and she took time away from her education to raise seven children. On the day she returned home from dropping off her youngest child at college, she began to experience what she calls “empty nest depression.” During that time, one of her children reminded Garrett that she had already put seven kids through college and always regretted not finishing her degree. The following day Garrett applied to UNG as a non-traditional, disabled student. That was 2019. This May she joins two of her children as having earned a degree from UNG.

## Student Commencement Speakers



**Savannah Geerdes** is graduating with a Bachelor of Science degree in cybersecurity degree and a computer science minor. She has excelled in her academic studies, currently holding a 3.95 GPA and has received President's list and Dean's list recognition on multiple occasions. Geerdes is the 2023 recipient of the university's Excellence in Cybersecurity award. Active in CyberHawks, Geerdes competed in the National Security Agency Codebreaker challenge, helping UNG garner a second finish.

Last summer she participated in study abroad to Edinburgh, Scotland and Porto, Portugal as a Roaming Nighthawk.

Geerdes has been a resident assistant for the past two years.

She is one of the founding officers of the UNG Women's Soccer Club and has held numerous offices within the organization.



**Noah Myers** is earning a Bachelor of Science in nursing. During his time at the University of North Georgia, Myers has served as a resident assistant and not let his outside interests deter him from maintaining a GPA of 3.66.