

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH GEORGIA MAGAZINE

Winter 2024

**Betting Big on
UNG's Future**





GENOVESE

COLLINS

CALD



UNG cadets march during a military review Nov. 10 celebrating President Michael Shannon's investiture. Lt. Gen. Paul Calvert, '88, was the reviewing officer.

PHOTO BY PEGGY COZART

Features

16 **Betting Big on UNG's Future**

New president outlines his
'Bold Forward' strategy

22 **The Right Ingredients**

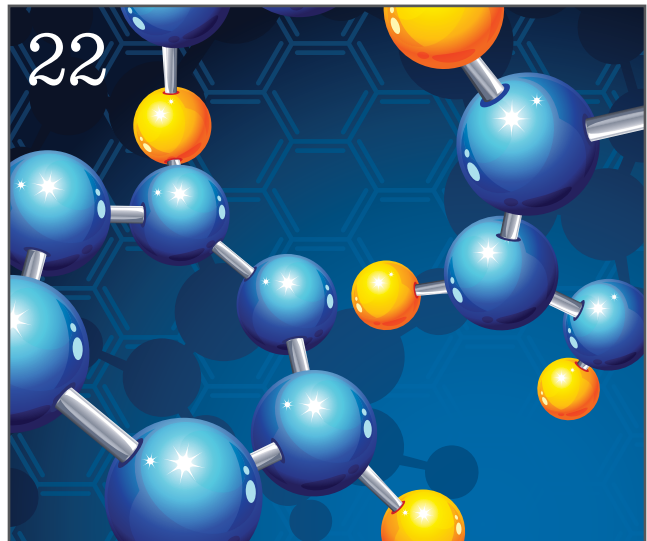
UNG prepares STEM students to win
national scholarships, excel in grad school

28 **New Military Science Center named for Mathews**

Gift from alumnus helps enable
the corps of the future

30 **'We ended it perfectly'**

UNG softball team brings home
its second national title



Departments

4 **PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**

5 **AROUND UNG**

12 **CORPS OF CADETS**

14 **SPORTS ROUNDUP**

37 **CLASS NOTES**

39 **IN MEMORIAM**

41 **UPCOMING EVENTS**

University of North Georgia Magazine is published
semi-annually by the University of North Georgia.

EDITORIAL STAFF

Clark Leonard '23, editor
Denise Ray '11, '14, writer
Agnes Hina, writer
David Folds, art director
Alyssa Annis '15, photographer
Blake Poppell, photographer
Peggy Cozart, photographer

CONTACT

Division of Strategic Communications & Marketing
82 College Circle
Dahlonega, GA 30597
706-864-1950
communications@ung.edu

A young man, 2nd Lt. Phillip Ly, is the central figure of the image. He is wearing a dark blue military uniform with a beret, a blue graduation stole with gold and red braided cords, and a black mortarboard cap. He is smiling and holding a black diploma folder. The background shows a grassy area with trees and a hedge.

Leaders Build *Leaders*

2nd Lt. Phillip Ly, from Forest Park, Georgia, commissioned as an officer in the Georgia Army National Guard in the military intelligence branch and earned a bachelor's degree in strategic and security studies in December 2022.

Thousands of students are impacted each year through generous gifts invested by our passionate donors. Your support provides students, cadets, and student-athletes that margin of excellence that is essential to the educational strength of our students and UNG. Your leadership not only sets an example for others to follow, it also provides our students important momentum as they seek a higher education.

Thank you for your generous contributions to help UNG fulfill its mission of being the premier senior military college and providing a culture of academic excellence that includes quality education, service, research, and creativity.



unggive.org



UNIVERSITY of
NORTH GEORGIA™
FOUNDATION
THE MILITARY COLLEGE OF GEORGIA



Running into our calling

Dear UNG family,

In October, we released "Bold Forward: Running Into Our Calling," a white paper that, in alignment with the University of North Georgia's Strategic Plan, will set our direction over the coming years. It is the result of a 26-session listening tour across our five campuses that included students, staff, faculty and community leaders, discussions with University of System of Georgia staff and teammates from across UNG, and a detailed analysis of the expectations for UNG. It is my belief that the strategy it outlines provides us with a clear vision and direction based upon the environment in which we find ourselves and the nearly unlimited opportunity before us. The white paper includes seven strategic "big bets":

DESIGN AND BUILD A LEADERSHIP FOUNDRY — Allow students to develop into the best version of themselves, as well as similar programs for faculty and staff to enable these mentors to grow their impact in developing students' competencies in these areas.

ACCELERATE THE FINE ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT — Accelerate programs to prepare students for high-impact jobs in film, sound, game design, and virtual entertainment.

SUPERCHARGE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT — Foster industry partnerships, accelerated paths, competency-based approaches, and innovative delivery of degree requirements, including online options.

EXPAND THE STEM VALUE PROPOSITION — Continue to produce graduates who have a strong foundation in science, who can integrate information across disciplines, and who are critical thinkers and problem-solvers.

GET IN THE NATIONAL SECURITY GAME — Advance cybersecurity, computer science, strategic languages, criminal justice, international affairs, public administration, strategic and security studies, logistics, and spatial data and information science academic programs to prepare and equip graduates who can join the national security and local/state government workforce.

DELIVER THE CORPS OF THE FUTURE — Through the Cadet Leadership Academy, grow the Corps of Cadets to 1,000, develop cutting-edge holistic health and fitness programs, build ultra-modern infrastructure, and re-imagine funding systems to meet this goal.

BUILD THE MOST COMPETITIVE, VALUE-ADDED DIVISION II ATHLETICS PROGRAM IN THE NATION

Recruit and compete with a championship mindset. Reset our athletics program economy to be innovative, forward-thinking, and focused on unique revenue-generating opportunities and best-in-class student-athlete and fan experience.

Bets can be risky, but I would argue that we can be confident that the hand we hold is better and stronger than that of our competitors—and we will win. These seven big bets rally the entire university community to create a more compelling, vibrant, and curated student experience which must be challenging but also fun, relevant, and responsive to the cries of this generation.

There is a place for everyone on our team as we work together, ever mindful that our strategy is grounded in our shared value — our students come first — always.

This is our calling — the time is now. We are in our moment — this is the time to be transformative and deliver at scale. Our seven strategic big bets provide the opportunity in which we will remain relevant, plant our flag, boldly move forward, and run into our calling. The University of North Georgia has the necessary ingredients, the people, and the calling to create this picture of our preferred future — the most innovative, dynamic, legacy-making university in America. Let us boldly run and deliver like never before!

Sincerely,

Michael P. Shannon, Ph.D.
President



Ashley Fish



Karen Garcia



Madeline Grasso



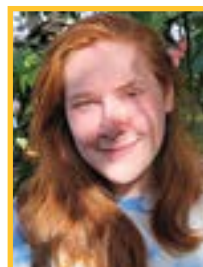
Anna Kubas



Phillip Ly



Norma Martinez



Grace Maurer



Emelia Thompson

Students gain experience abroad through Fulbright

Nine UNG students and alumni have earned 2023-24 Fulbright awards. This brings the total of UNG Fulbright students to 47 since the 2015-16 academic year.

Ashley Fish, Karen Garcia, Madeline Grasso, former cadet Anna Kubas, 2nd Lt. Phillip Ly, Norma Martinez, Grace Maurer, and Emelia Thompson have been selected as finalists. One student declined the opportunity.

The Fulbright is a prestigious, highly competitive fellowship that enables recent graduates and graduate students to pursue research, earn a graduate degree or teach English overseas. It is designed to increase mutual understanding between U.S. citizens and residents

of more than 160 foreign countries, according to the Fulbright website.

"UNG students are uniquely positioned to excel as leaders abroad, and they return with experiences that enhance their communities," Dr. Anastasia Lin, assistant vice president of Academic Affairs and head of the Nationally Competitive Scholarships office, said.

Maurer earned a Fiji Research Award grant. Fish, Garcia and Thompson will teach English in South Korea, and Grasso will teach English in Brazil. Kubas will teach English in Kazakhstan, with Ly teaching English in Vietnam and Martinez teaching English in Germany.



Menees wins NIH Undergrad Scholarship

UNG senior Haley Menees is one of 15 students nationally to earn acceptance into the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Undergraduate Scholarship Program in 2023.

The scholarship is worth up to \$20,000 and includes a summer 2024 paid research experience at NIH and a year of employment at NIH following her graduation from UNG. Menees is the fourth UNG student to win the NIH award.

"I am so excited to work at an institution like the NIH and start establishing myself and networking while doing the research I've wanted to do for the last three years," Menees said. "Every project that I've been pursuing has been a steppingstone into the neuroscience field."

Menees is pursuing bachelor's degrees in biology and chemistry with a biochemistry concentration. She plans to enroll in an M.D./Ph.D. program in addiction neuroscience once she graduates from UNG.

UNG moves up in U.S. News rankings

UNG earned high marks for quality and value in the 2024 U.S. News and World Report Best Colleges rankings released in September, moving up to tie for 17th overall among public Regional Universities in the South.

In more specialized lists for public Regional Universities in the South, among Georgia universities, UNG is No. 1 on the list of Best Colleges for Veterans; No. 1 for Least Debt, which measures schools whose students graduated carrying the lightest debt loads; and No. 3 on the Best Value Colleges list.

"We are proud of UNG's role as a legacy-making institution," President Michael P. Shannon said. "This ranking recognizes the work we do every day to help students change the trajectory of their lives and serve our communities, the state and our nation."

Further underscoring the return on investment UNG provides students was its inclusion on the Social Mobility list, where it ranked eighth among regional public universities in Georgia.

Other highlights for UNG from the U.S. News Best Colleges rankings were:

- No. 3 on the Best Undergraduate Business Programs list and No. 4 on the Undergraduate Computer Science Programs ranking in Georgia among Regional Public Universities in the South.
- Among the top seven Georgia schools, among Regional Public Universities in the South, on the Best Undergraduate Nursing Programs list. UNG's Bachelor of Science in Nursing graduates had the highest National Council Licensure Examination pass rate in the Georgia from 2019-2022.
- Only Georgia public university on the "A+ Schools for B Students" list.



UNG named Boren top producer

UNG has been named a top producer of Boren Scholarship winners for 2022-23. UNG tied for seventh nationally and tied for first in Georgia with five Boren recipients.

Boren scholars are awarded financial assistance up to \$25,000 for educational coursework, unpaid internships or volunteer opportunities, primarily overseas, for immersion in languages critical to U.S. diplomacy.

"We have top-quality language and content programs. Our students are incredibly equipped for these opportunities, but they don't always see themselves that way," Dr. Victoria Hightower, assistant director of the Nationally Competitive Scholarships office and professor of history, said. "We encourage them to realize they can do this."

UNG's Boren recipients for 2022-23 were: Thorin Beard, Danielle Kent, Caleb Petersen, Zoe Rumbaugh, and Jessica Woods.



Danielle Kent studied in Japan on a Boren Scholarship.

Additionally, four UNG students earned Boren awards for 2023-24: Justin Heintz, Cadet Mia Libosada, Emily "Gracie" Ragon, and a student who wished to remain unnamed.

Sales student wins national competition as team places third

UNG student Ashleigh Slaughter took first place out of 140 competitors at the National Collegiate Sales Competition (NCSC) at Kennesaw State University in March, and UNG's student team took third overall out of 70 schools competing.

The team consisted of Slaughter, Alyssa Elliott, Colin Sharp, and Kyler Vaeth, all of whom were pursuing marketing degrees.

Students were given a company product, tasked with learning about the product and presenting a sales plan. UNG's performance at NCSC shows a major transformation from being ranked 51st in 2021 to now third. It finished tied for fourth in 2022.



Pictured, from left, are Alyssa Elliott, Marie Jordan, Colin Sharp, Kyler Vaeth, Ashleigh Slaughter, and Dr. Cindy Rippé. Slaughter, a senior, took first place at the National Collegiate Sales Competition held at Kennesaw State University in March, and UNG's team finished third overall.

Two students earn Goldwater Scholarship



Pictured, from left, are Haley Menees and Alysia Bittinger.

UNG tied for the second-most Barry Goldwater Scholarship recipients among public universities in Georgia for 2023 with two students earning the prestigious scholarship. Alysia Bittinger and Haley Menees were among the 413 college students selected from 1,267 nominees nationwide.

UNG, the University of Georgia, and Georgia State University each had two students selected.

Bittinger is pursuing degrees in mathematics and physics, and Menees is pursuing degrees in biology and chemistry with a biochemistry concentration.

The Barry Goldwater Scholarship is designed to foster and encourage outstanding students to pursue research careers in the fields of natural sciences, engineering, and mathematics. The Goldwater Scholarship is the preeminent undergraduate award of its type in these fields and will provide up to \$15,000 per student over two years.

Scholarships help two study abroad

Abigail Sutherland is UNG's latest recipient of a Freeman Awards for Study in Asia (Freeman-ASIA) scholarship winner. The program grants awards of up to \$5,000 for students who demonstrate financial need to fulfill their plans of study abroad in Asia.

"The Freeman-ASIA scholarship is a great opportunity for students interested in Asia," Dr. Victoria Hightower, assistant director of the Nationally Competitive Scholarships office, said.

In addition, Anabella Miranda received a Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship, having previously been named an alternate. Providing up to \$8,000, the nationally competitive scholarship enables

U.S. undergraduate students who are eligible for the Pell Grant to study or intern abroad and gain skills critical to national security and economic competitiveness.



**Abigail
Sutherland**



**Anabella
Miranda**

Sutherland is a junior from Simi Valley, California, pursuing a degree in East Asian studies with a concentration in Korean. Miranda is a senior from Cumming, Georgia, pursuing a degree in history with a minor in art history.

Fulbright names Kwon, Schindler scholars

UNG faculty members Dr. Mina Kyoungnye Kwon and Dr. Melissa Schindler were named Fulbright Scholars for the 2023-24 academic year.

Kwon, an associate professor of English, is traveling to Chuncheon, South Korea, to spend a year teaching and working on her research-based translation book project.

Schindler, an assistant professor of English, is traveling to Sri Lanka, where she will teach teachers of English how to teach English at the Open University, and work on her project about the history of the discipline of English.

Fulbright Scholar Awards are prestigious and competitive fellowships that provide unique opportunities for scholars to teach and conduct research abroad. Fulbright scholars also play a critical role in U.S. public diplomacy, establishing long-term relationships between people and nations.



**Dr. Mina
Kyoungnye Kwon**



**Dr. Melissa
Schindler**

Poultry team takes 5th at national event

A team of four UNG students made history by finishing in fifth place overall and in the top six of all three categories it entered at the 74th USPOULTRY Foundation Ted Cameron National Poultry Judging Contest held in April at Louisiana State University.

“We have competed in this contest since 2016, and this was the most awards our students have ever earned and the first time our team placed fifth overall in the contest,” Dr. Linda Purvis, assistant professor of biology, said. “We brought home six trophies, three of which were individual awards and three team awards.”

UNG’s poultry team included sophomores Asa Phillips, Jacque Conner and Wyatt Chandler, all of whom are pursuing associate degrees in poultry science, and junior Eric Brockman, who is pursuing associate degrees in agriculture and business.



UNG’s poultry judging team finished fifth overall at the annual USPOULTRY Foundation National Contest, including top-six finishes in all three categories. Pictured from left, are Eric Brockman, Wyatt Chandler, Jacque Conner, and Asa Phillips.

Bachelor’s degrees now available in Cumming

Students at UNG’s Cumming Campus this fall have four bachelor’s degree options that will allow them to complete all four years of undergraduate studies at that campus.

They can earn bachelor’s degrees in computer science, elementary and special education, international affairs with a European concentration, and management with a concentration in general management. The selected majors are in response to community demand and the region’s need for professionals in those disciplines. Additional bachelor’s programs will be added once the campus’ building expansion project is completed in fall 2024.

“We want students to realize they can start here and stay here,” Dr. Ken Crowe, executive director of the Cumming Campus, said. “From start to finish, UNG’s Cumming Campus offers four bachelor’s degrees that you can complete without having to leave the Cumming Campus.”

NIGHTHAWKS SHOE

SHOP NOW



Get your custom pair today!



Nike Air Zoom Pegasus 40



UNG Legacy Collection



NGC Alumni Tee



North Georgia College Cap



NGC Classic Seal Tee



NGC Cap



NGC Logo Tee



NGC Applique Crewneck Sweatshirt

Available Now Online at
https://stores.inksoft.com/ung_legacy_collection



UNG has best NCLEX pass rate in Georgia

UNG's Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) graduates had the highest National Council Licensure Examination pass rate in the state from 2019-2022.

UNG BSN graduates posted an average pass rate of 94.87% over the four-year span in the list compiled by The College Application.

The Department of Nursing at UNG graduates about 200 students per academic year from its traditional four-year BSN track. In January 2023, UNG launched the first cohort of its accelerated BSN track and is currently accepting students for the second cohort, which will begin in January 2024. Students in the ABSN track, who enter UNG with a bachelor's or master's degree in other subjects, can graduate in 15 months.



Grant supports Mental Health First Aid training

As mental health concerns among college students continue to grow nationally, Aetna has awarded UNG a \$100,000 community grant to expand its Mental Health First Aid program within UNG and the greater north Georgia region.

Cyber students shine in national competitions

UNG cybersecurity students led Georgia universities and tied for eighth nationally in the 2022-23 Cyber FastTrack competition. Eight students qualified for National Cyber Scholarship Foundation scholarships through the event.

Juniors Paul Kim and Smit Patel were recognized as National Cyber Scholars with Honors, earning them each higher-level training and certification worth more than \$9,000 from SANS Institute, a national industry leader for cybersecurity education.

In addition, senior Grayson Clark was one of two winners of the Best Poster Award at the Cybersecurity Research Forum at the Citadel for his poster titled "NetHunter: On-the-Go Penetration Testing," and a team of UNG students including Benjamin Huckaba, Houstoun Hall, Daniel Greeley, and Kim finished second among 18 teams nationally at the CyberSEED competition held in March.



A team of UNG students finished second out of 118 teams nationally at the CyberSEED competition held virtually. Team members, from left, included Daniel Greeley, Paul Kim, Benjamin Huckaba, and Houstoun Hall.



Beth Baldwin



Philipp Biechteler

Lt. Gen. (ret.)
Stephen G. FogartyDr. Katie
(Williamson) Metrock

The UNG Foundation Board adds four trustees

The UNG Foundation Board added four trustees: Beth Baldwin; Philipp Biechteler, '07; retired Lt. Gen. Stephen G. Fogarty, '83; and Dr. Katie (Williamson) Metrock, '06.

- Baldwin is as a financial advisor for Edward Jones, where she has worked since 1990. She collaborates with certified public accountants, attorneys and other professionals to help her clients form a financial strategy, and she also assists them with retirement savings strategies. Baldwin graduated from the University of Tennessee with a degree in banking and finance. In 1996, she earned a Master of Business Administration from Brenau University. She is an active member of the community and has served on the boards of many local nonprofits.
- Biechteler serves as vice president in the Atlanta office of J.P Morgan Private Bank. He received a bachelor's degree in business administration and management from UNG, and a degree from the Graduate School of Banking at The Wharton School of Business. He also attended financial planning school at the University of Georgia.
- Fogarty commissioned as a second lieutenant in Military Intelligence after having earned a bachelor's degree in history from UNG. Fogarty also holds master's degrees in administration from Central Michigan University and in strategic studies from the U.S. Army War College. He ultimately served as commander of U.S. Army Cyber Command before his retirement in 2022. Aside from his history degree Fogarty's military education includes Airborne School, Combined Arms & Services Staff School, Jumpmaster Course, and the Long Range Surveillance Leaders Course. His awards include the Distinguished Service Medal and the Ranger Tab.
- Metrock leads as the Director of the Alabama Center for Childhood Cancer and Blood Disorders Pediatric Neurofibromatosis Brain Tumor Clinic. She is also Director for the University of Alabama at Birmingham Pediatric Neuro-Oncology Fellowship Program. After graduating from UNG, Metrock completed medical school at the Medical College of Georgia, and a residency in pediatrics at Emory University. Metrock was a four-year starter for the women's conference winning basketball team all four seasons. She was subsequently inducted into the UNG Athletics Hall of Fame in 2014, and her 2005-06 team was added to the same Hall of Fame in 2023.

Georgia Power grant boosts teacher prep

The Georgia Power Foundation Inc. has awarded UNG a \$100,000 grant for its partnerships with the Hall County and Gainesville school systems to grow and diversify the teacher pipeline, and the UNG Foundation will provide \$50,000 in matching funds.



22 named Distinguished Military Students

A total of 22 UNG cadets earned Distinguished Military Student (DMS) status for the 2023-24 academic year. The cadets were formally recognized at the DMS dinner and review during the annual Boar's Head Brigade Weekend in September.

A DMS is required to possess outstanding leadership qualities, have exhibited an aptitude for military service, attained a military science standing in the upper third of the ROTC class and the professor of military science order-of-merit list, and have completed Cadet Summer Training. Cadets must also attain an overall standing in the upper half of their university or college class.

This year's DMS honorees are: Carson Ash, Laurana Bradley, Brandon Dubois, Ethan Farmer, Thomas Frazier, Robbie Griffin, Nicholas Haley, Nicholas Hammesfahr, Ryan Jardin, Zoe Kinzie, Jacob Lyons, Benjamin McKey, Andrea Mierisch, Yakir Mufson, Selena Paniagua, Hyunbean Park, Nathaniel Poteat, Maximilian Proels, Jack Rainbow, Bentlee Roberson, Austin Seidel, and Adam Sisson.



Col. Bryan Kirk, UNG professor of military science, congratulates Hyunbean Park on being named a DMS.

20 cadets earn Recondo badge at Advanced Camp

The UNG tradition of excellence continued at Advanced Camp at Fort Knox, Kentucky, as 94 cadets completed the summer training.

Advanced Camp is a mandatory training event for rising seniors within the Corps of Cadets who plan to commission. They demonstrate their proficiency in military and leadership skills tested over one month under the direction of the U.S. Army Cadet Command.

Cadet Adrian Delgado received the ARNG Minuteman Award, and Cadet Sawyer C. Davis was the recipient of the USAA Warrior Spirit Award.



Twenty cadets received the Recondo badge, which is awarded to cadets who display superior skills at camp. They must exceed the standards in seven events: Army Combat Fitness Test; confidence courses; land navigation; marksmanship; first aid; a 12-mile foot march; and chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear training.

The Recondo recipients included: Brady Anderson, Carson Ash, Nicholas Barton, Brody Becker, Jeremy Calhoun, Shelby Crocker, Sawyer Davis, Brandon Dubois, Dylan Green, Robbie Griffin, Nicholas Hammesfahr, Andrea Mierisch, Garrett Parker, Maximilian Proels, Austin Riner, Derek Roach, Adam Sisson, William Van Meter, Lawson Willard, and Kenneth Withrow.

Cadets immersed in global experiences

Twelve UNG cadets traveled abroad this summer for a wide range of professional development opportunities and events, including visits to international military academy partners and leadership courses.

“We want to provide relevant international programs that provide our cadets insight into our allies’ and partners’ national security and military affairs,” Wes Pirkle, the director of Global Military Programs said. “We also have generous donors that enable us to provide these programs at a low cost to our cadets.”

Cadets who gained experience abroad this summer included:

- Devin Petmecky completed an internship in Suriname for eight weeks.
- Cody Green, Andrew Flournoy, Garrett Cochran, and Hailey Thomas completed internships over the course of two months in the Republic of Georgia.
- George Thompson and Caleb Hubbard traveled to Romania to complete their eight-week internship at the Land Forces Academy.
- Benjamin Smith and Jack Rainbow attended the National Defense Academy of Latvia with other cadets from around Europe for their internships.
- Asher Brinke and Charles Forbes participated in the Swiss Mountaineering Course for two weeks.
- Smith and John Jolly completed the Polish Mountaineering Course.



Linatoc is top cadet in Army small arms event

UNG Cadet Anthony Linatoc took first place in his division of 40 cadets in the U.S. Army Small Arms Championships in March at Fort Moore, Georgia. He placed in the top 75 of the 260 competitors from all Army components in the overall event.

Linatoc competed with fellow UNG combat action shooting team members and cadets from Texas A&M University and Michigan State University. It was his second time in the competition, the other coming in his sophomore year, and he made strong improvement this time around.

“I showed up to do my best,” Linatoc said. “I was pleasantly surprised that I ended up in first place among the cadets.”

Linatoc, a Rome, Georgia, resident, earned a degree in criminal justice and commissioned as a second lieutenant in the Army Corps of Engineers in May.

“The hard work and discipline Cadet Linatoc displays every day on the team show what kind of Army officer he will be,” retired Col. Joseph Matthews, UNG commandant of cadets, said. “I am very proud of him and the whole team for their dedication to the shooting program at UNG.”



Women's soccer team makes NCAA tournament

The UNG women's soccer team punched its ticket to a fourth consecutive NCAA Division II tournament in November.

It was UNG's ninth postseason appearance in the NCAA era after one of the best regular seasons in the program's history. North Georgia compiled a record of 14-3-3 ahead of the NCAA tournament, finishing first in the Peach Belt Conference (PBC) standings after going unbeaten at 8-0-1 in PBC play in the regular season. The Nighthawks then advanced to their first PBC tournament championship game since 2017.

UNG defeated Georgia Southwestern University 3-1 in its PBC tournament opener Nov. 6 before overcoming a 2-0 deficit to win in penalty kicks Nov. 10 in the PBC semifinals against Lander University. Columbus State defeated the Nighthawks 3-1 in the PBC title game Nov. 12, a reversal from UNG's win two weeks earlier to secure the regular-season title. Adleigh Wheeler and Natalie Maguire earned all-tournament honors.

Bailey Vessell secured PBC Defender of the Year honors for the season, with Sierra Fowler, Maysoon El-Shami and Cat Watry joining her as first-team All-PBC selections. Arielle Aronoff, Katey Derkay, Alex Clark, Wheeler, Alizee Buresi and Mychael Fruits brought home second-team All-PBC honors. El-Shami was a United Soccer Coaches first-team All-American, and Fowler was a second-team All-American.

Fourth-season head coach Kayley Ralton was named PBC Coach of the Year. She is now 41-17-7 overall and 27-7-3 in PBC regular-season play since taking the helm of the program ahead of the spring 2021 season.



Men's golf team finishes fall No. 1 in country

The UNG men's golf team finished the fall season as the No. 1 NCAA Division II team in the country for the first time in program history.

The top-ranking came on the heels of three fall tournament victories: the McCoy-Wright Currahee Invitational at the Currahee Golf Course in Toccoa, Georgia; the Bearcat Fall Kickoff at Forest Hills Golf Club in Augusta, Georgia; and the Cateechee Fall Invitational at Cateechee Golf Club in Hartwell, Georgia, where the Nighthawks set a program record by finishing 37 under par.

UNG's fall success came after a strong spring where the team earned a second consecutive appearance at the NCAA Division II national championship, where it finished 11th in the May 22-26 event at Avalon Lakes Country Club in Warren, Ohio.

UNG came in fourth in the May 11-13 South/Southeast Regional at Grand Oaks Golf Club in Davie, Florida, to punch its ticket to the NCAA championship. The top six teams from the regional advanced to the national championship, a tall task considering the 20 teams competing at the regional included 14 top-25 teams.





Athletics Hall of Fame inducts Five

The UNG Department of Athletics and the Athletics Hall of Fame Committee inducted the 13th class of the UNG Athletics Hall of Fame in September.

The UNG Athletics Hall of Fame honors individuals who have earned outstanding athletic achievements or made substantial contributions to the university. A nine-member Board of Directors is responsible for operations of the Athletics Hall of Fame and serves as selectors for all honorees, based upon nominations.

Inductees included:

- Gary Blohm, '76 men's soccer: Blohm played and coached at UNG before a 35-year high school coaching career.
- Ben Chedgy, '10, men's soccer: Chedgy was a three-time first-team All-Peach Belt Conference performer and played a program-record 72 games.
- Hilary Cox, '12, softball: Cox was named a National Fastpitch Coaches Association All-America Scholar-Athlete in 2011. She was also on the NCAA Division II Championship all-tournament team every year from 2010-2012.
- Dean Michael Hyams Jr., administration: In addition to his work as vice president of Student Affairs and dean of students, Hyams has always been an important mentor and avid supporter of UNG's teams.
- 2005-06 women's basketball team: The team went 23-4 to earn the Peach Belt Conference title in the school's first season in NCAA Division II.

Nighthawks win PBC awards

UNG earned the Peach Belt Conference's Connecting Communities Award and the LeeAnn Noble Make-A-Wish Award for Most Funds Raised at the league's annual awards dinner in May. The Nighthawks hosted "Heroes Game 2023" in partnership with the Lumpkin Heroes Baseball league while continuing to be the benchmark for NCAA Division II Make-A-Wish fundraising.

The Connecting Communities Award is the second in a row for UNG and third since the PBC established the honor in 2012. The award is presented annually to the PBC member institution who embraces the NCAA Division II core value of community engagement, bringing the institution and local community together.

Lumpkin Heroes baseball is a Dahlonega-based league for individuals with special needs to have a safe place to participate in sports. On April 24, the UNG softball program and student-athletes hosted Heroes Game at Haines and Carolyn Hill Stadium at Lynn Cottrell Park.



The Nighthawks claimed their 14th consecutive LeeAnn Noble Award presented annually to the PBC member institution that donates the highest amount to Make-A-Wish. UNG athletes raised \$2,980 during the 2022-23 season and have raised more than \$219,000 since 2010.

BETTING BIG ON UNG'S FUTURE

President Shannon outlines his 'Bold Forward' strategy

BY CLARK LEONARD

PHOTOS BY ALYSSA ANNIS
AND PEGGY COZART

University of North Georgia President Michael Shannon is betting big on UNG's future. Since taking on his role July 1, Shannon has laid the foundation for UNG to excel in a time of great challenges for higher education.

"Higher education is at a place now where it needs to be disrupted. We can't keep doing it the same way. The world is changing so rapidly, driven by the unprecedented pace of technology," Shannon said.

"I want to be part of a university that redefines the future of higher education. I want to be part of a university that will honor and cherish historical norms of higher education, but we won't define ourselves by them."

In October, Shannon announced seven "strategic big bets" that will drive UNG's work in the next five years. He formed the strategy, called "Bold Forward: Running into our Calling," through feedback gained in his 45-day listening tour, as well as other conversations with students, faculty, staff, alumni, and community members.

Learn more about Bold Forward.





"We have opportunity. There is great expectation upon us. People are expecting us to do big things. We're being called. This is missional work. I would ask the alumni especially to engage like never before."

BOLD **FORWARD!**

Running Into Our Calling

➤ **Design and build a leadership foundry**

The president discusses the need for co-curricular leadership opportunities that allow students to develop into the best version of themselves, as well as similar programs for faculty and staff development that enable these mentors to grow their impact in developing students' competencies in these areas.



➤ **Accelerate the fine arts and entertainment**

The president outlines UNG's potential to accelerate the positioning of its programs to prepare students for high-impact jobs in Georgia's exploding film industry, sound, game design, and virtual entertainment.



➤ **Supercharge workforce development**

To address critical shortages of healthcare workers, teachers, business leaders, and agricultural leaders in Georgia, Shannon highlights the need for industry partnerships, accelerated paths, competency-based approaches, and innovative delivery of degree requirements, including online options



➤ **Expand the STEM value proposition**

The president notes the essential nature of UNG's undergraduate research experiences and ability to produce college graduates who have a strong foundation in science, who can integrate information across disciplines, and who are critical thinkers and problem-solvers.



➤ **Get in the national security game**

Shannon emphasizes the importance of cybersecurity, computer science, strategic languages, criminal justice, international affairs, public administration, strategic and security studies, logistics, and spatial data and information science academic programs in preparing graduates who can join the national security and local/state government workforce.



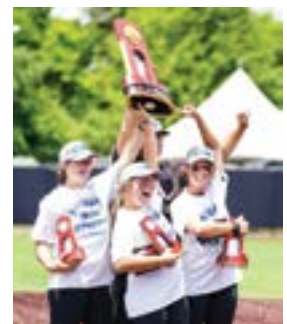
➤ **Deliver the Corps of Cadets of the future**

Shannon outlines plans for the Cadet Leadership Academy to grow the Corps of Cadets to 1,000, establish cutting-edge holistic health and fitness programs, build ultra-modern infrastructure, and re-imagine funding systems to meet this goal.



➤ **Build the most competitive, value-added Division II athletics program in the nation**

The president calls for recruiting and competing with a championship mindset, and for increased synergy between the Department of Athletics, Corps of Cadets, and College of Health Sciences and Professions. He also notes the need for innovation, forward thinking and a focus on revenue-generating opportunities.



Shannon said these big bets are necessary to meet the dual challenges of fewer college-age students in 2025-2030 and a lower college consumption rate even as high school graduation rates increase.

"When you bet, you are taking a risk. Although there is risk, we can also be confident the hand we are holding is better and stronger than that of our competitors and we will win. And we all know that we can't win if we don't play the game and make the bets," he said. "These seven big bets rally the entire university community to create a more compelling, vibrant, and curated student experience."

Shannon, a retired Army lieutenant colonel, extensively researched UNG before he arrived, but one of his most pleasant surprises was the depth of passion and admiration from the alumni and the communities surrounding UNG. He said mobilizing that energy will be important.

"We have opportunity. There is great expectation upon us. People are expecting us to do big things. We're being called. This is missional work. I would ask the alumni especially to engage like never before," Shannon said. "Be involved with what we are doing. Find ways to support our work. That's with time, mentorship and other resources. We want the alumni to engage and capture the vision and run with us."

He worked at Georgia Tech for seven and a half years before coming to UNG, most recently serving as interim executive vice president for administration and finance, and interim chief business officer. Shannon previously served as Georgia Tech's vice president and deputy chief business officer. He also served in numerous faculty, leadership and advisory roles at Georgia Tech, including as a research faculty member and principal investigator in the Advanced Concepts Laboratory at the Georgia Tech Research Institute.

"I learned so much at Georgia Tech as a faculty member and a senior leader. I learned what a high-performing university looks like, how it operates, how it thinks. Georgia Tech is a very bold environment where people take the perspective of, 'I can solve this problem. I can do that,'" Shannon said. "That's part of what frames my mindset here. That's what fuels me. I believe people can solve any problem if they work together."

More about President Shannon.



A native of New Jersey, Shannon is a first-generation college graduate and was commissioned through Army ROTC. He holds a bachelor's degree in aerospace engineering and a master's in aeronautical science from Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in Daytona Beach, Florida. He also holds a master's in health physics and a Ph.D. in nuclear and radiological engineering from Georgia Tech.

Shannon served as a commissioned officer in the U.S. Army for 20 years, retiring in 2015 with the rank of lieutenant colonel. After operational Army service as an Infantry and Signal Corps officer with assignments in the 82nd Airborne Division, the 35th Signal Brigade (18th Airborne Corps) and the 2nd Infantry Division, he was selected to serve as a U.S. Army Nuclear and Counterproliferation officer.

For over 10 years, he provided leadership and technical and operational expertise to the U.S. Department of Defense as an expert in nuclear technology issues and later held leadership assignments with the Defense Threat Reduction Agency. Shannon also served at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point during two different leadership assignments, as an instructor and later as an assistant professor in the Department of Physics and Nuclear Engineering. At West Point, he was actively engaged in teaching and research along with several activities in support of cadet and Army officer development.

Scan this QR code to see a video that will help you get to know President Shannon.



Leadership:

In the banking industry



Sofia Bork Aun, '12, earned a bachelor's degree in English. She now serves as community affairs manager for Truist. In 2022, Atlanta Business Chronicle named her as one of its 40 under 40 honorees.

What is your background?

I was born and raised in Dahlonega, Georgia. I am homegrown or what some people refer to as a nugget. My mom is an immigrant from Bogota, Colombia, and my dad is from Buffalo, New York. I currently work for the nation's seventh-largest bank.

Can you talk about your heritage?

I'm second-generation, so I grew up bicultural. We spoke English and Spanish at home. My mom raised us being aware of our culture. My mom's whole family immigrated here, as family is very important. I didn't start leaning into my culture, though, until college. What changed was a study abroad trip to Spain, living in Madrid for six weeks in a convent during summer 2011. It was the catalyst for me really leaning into it. I had never been abroad before. I saw my heritage through a different lens and I loved the language. Something clicked, because I came back and I became an international student mentor and wrote for the school newspaper.

What's something you learned about yourself while studying at UNG?

I learned confidence. I was able to learn who I was, what I loved, and UNG helped me unlock my passion for the arts. It was always there, but I had the best college experience. I was so moved by what I was learning. I just feel so lucky that was my college experience, working with faculty who were passionate about what they were teaching.

Who inspires you?

It's my family. My parents and their work ethic. I learned servant leadership from watching my parents. They are kind and loving. Even my grandparents on my mom's side. They do not really have a grasp of the language, but they pursued the American dream, wanting the best for their children and leaving everything they knew behind in search of the unknown. There is something so strong, just brave and courageous. I love that I've grown up surrounded by love and passion. Also, my husband is the embodiment of serving. He's active-duty in the United States military.

How would you describe your leadership style?

I would say my style is servant leadership, which is so important. Leadership is tough, and sometimes it's doing the work that no one else wants to do. It is sacrifice and takes a lot of humility. You have to be OK with saying it's not about me. When I think of the best leaders, it's the people who embody servant leadership.

What advice would you give to students?

Major in what you love. Do what you love. If people tell you that's not practical or it doesn't make sense, know you were given those interests for a reason. You can only thrive by being true to yourself. I'm very thankful that my parents encouraged that.





THE RIGHT INGREDIENTS

UNG prepares students to win national scholarships, excel in grad school

BY CLARK LEONARD

The University of North Georgia's science, technology, engineering, and mathematics programs continue to grow their reputation with a steady stream of nationally competitive scholarship winners and valuable undergraduate research experiences that propel students to success in graduate school and beyond.

Students in STEM-related majors have won 93 prestigious nationally competitive scholarships in the past five academic years, including 24 Gilman Scholarships, 19 National Science Foundation (NSF) Research Experiences for Undergraduates (REU), seven Goldwater Scholarships, and five NSF Graduate Research Fellowship Program honorees.

"Our students are unmatched in their ability. They are doing innovative research. Our students get to be hands-on in ways that students at other universities aren't able to," Dr. Anastasia Lin, assistant vice president of Academic Affairs and director of both the Nationally Competitive Scholarships office and the Center for Undergraduate Research and Creative Activities (CURCA), said. "Our students are resourceful and make the most of every opportunity they get. They know how to problem-solve because of the hands-on experience they get at UNG."

While UNG does not offer graduate degrees in the areas of biology, chemistry, mathematics, and physics and astronomy, undergraduate students still have a wide array of research opportunities not offered at other universities.

"Most professors who advise and do research with grad students prefer students who come from a place like UNG because they're more grounded," Dr. John Leyba, dean of the College of Science & Mathematics, said.

Here is a look at four of those graduates who are making their mark in graduate school:



Obadi Obadi, '15, Bachelor of Science in biology

Obadi, now a student at the Medical College of Georgia, points to a nationally competitive award he won while at UNG as "life-changing." Obadi earned the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Undergraduate Scholarship, which covered school expenses and allowed him to focus on research and his studies. He was then able to serve as an NIH research fellow for three years before going to medical school.

Obadi said Lin introduced him to the NIH Undergraduate Scholarship and mentored him through the application process, which was a turning point in his trajectory.

His NIH work in Bethesda, Maryland, examined molecular epidemiology to explore health disparities in breast cancer in African-American and European-American women.

He said UNG's smaller size allowed him to excel in undergraduate studies while preparing him for what followed at the NIH and medical school.

"That allowed me to interact with my professors and for us to get to know each other," Obadi said.

"I was encouraged in my curiosity to ask questions and go further down the scientific path."

As an undergraduate student at UNG, Obadi conducted research with Dr. Evan Lampert, a biology professor. He also served on various committees at the university. Lampert encouraged Obadi to join his work and team up to publish an article about their research. Obadi hopes other students will take advantage of similar opportunities.

"Joining a research project can be intimidating, especially for undergraduate students," Obadi said. "But having that on your résumé opens all kinds of doors."



Donna "Katie" McCullough, '16, biology

McCullough is a Ph.D. student in microbiology at the University of Tennessee, where her research focuses on mathematical modeling of marine microbial ecology systems. She plans to enter teaching or policy work.

She was a cadet until the middle of her junior year at UNG, and some of the team mindset she cultivated in the Corps of Cadets impacted her work as a budding scientist.

"It has transferred into the collaborative type of science I like to do," McCullough said.

Her start came with a marine research class and a pair of trips to Belize to study parrotfish; the second trip was funded by a \$6,500 Faculty-Undergraduate Summer Engagement grant from the CURCA office at UNG. She was able to present her research at multiple conferences both on and off campus.

The parrotfish research in Belize was a collaboration with Dr. Nancy Dalman, department head of Biology, and Dr. Jill Schulze, associate dean of the College of Science & Mathematics.

"The professors were so invested in helping students' careers and helping them practice good science," McCullough said.

McCullough won two scholarships immediately following graduation from UNG. The first scholarship, a Science Undergraduate Laboratory Internship placement through the U.S. Department of Energy, gave her the opportunity to conduct protein crystallography research at Los Alamos National Laboratory in New Mexico. Following this, McCullough researched yeast genetics as a Fulbright scholar at Jagiellonian University in Krakow, Poland, in 2017-18. Both programs required letters of support from faculty at UNG, and personal introductions and Polish lessons through UNG associate professor Dr. Dobrusia Bialonska were integral for planning the Fulbright project.

After graduating from UNG, McCullough eventually won the NSF Graduate Research Fellowship Program (GRFP). The prestigious scholarship provides three years of funding for grad school research. She credits Lin's training, which included producing 12 drafts of essays, to always find ways to improve her application and writing.

"I applied for all of these things because I wasn't quite sure what I wanted to do with my degree," McCullough said. "Dr. Lin was very instrumental in helping me find funding to try various post-university options, thus helping me figure out what I wanted to do with my life."



Caroline Brown, '19, Bachelor of Science in chemistry with a biochemistry concentration

Brown in 2019 became the first student to earn acceptance to the NSF GRFP while enrolled at UNG. The Georgia native had already been accepted into Yale University's biochemistry Ph.D. program before her selection for the GRFP award, and she completed an NSF REU at the University of Minnesota during her time as a UNG student.

She recently parlayed the skills gained while applying for national awards at UNG to earn the P.E.O. Scholar Award, which was "established in 1991 to provide substantial merit-based awards for women of the U.S. and Canada who

are pursuing a doctoral-level degree at an accredited college or university," according to the P.E.O. website.

"Once you learn the skills to apply for these awards, they serve you so well throughout your career," Brown said.

Brown pointed to the mentorship of Dr. Royce Dansby-Sparks, her adviser, and Lin as pivotal in her development. Dansby-Sparks serves as UNG associate department head of Chemistry & Biochemistry and assistant director of the Honors Program at the Dahlonega Campus. Brown served as president of the Honors Program at the Dahlonega Campus and was also an NSF Scholar in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (S-STEM).

Brown views her experience at UNG as better preparation for her future than studying at a large research-focused institution with more financial backing.

"UNG does a fantastic job with the resources they have making sure students are prepared for the next step. I learned the ability to be resourceful and creative with problem-solving skills. That has served me so well in grad school," Brown said. "I already came in with a foundation of being able to think critically and creatively about problem-solving."

After building a reputation of excellence in her time at UNG, Brown struggled at first being around others with seemingly better pedigrees when she started at Yale. Eventually, she realized there was no reason to doubt her own credentials.

"We all deserve to be there. It's important to show that to others who were in my shoes," Brown said. "That's what motivates me now to reach back to UNG and other communities in Georgia and show these students they have the training. Take up the space you're given."



Simeon Salia, '20, Bachelor of Science in physics

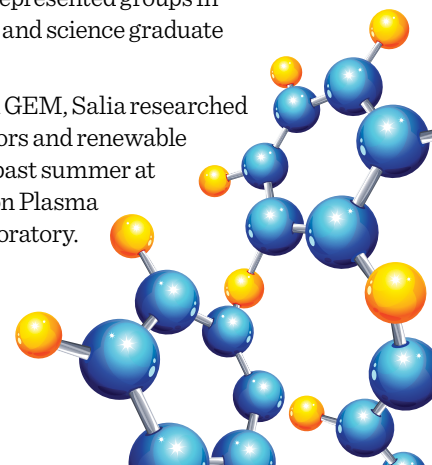
Salia, an Army veteran who served in the infantry from 2016 to 2022, was part of the Regents Engineering Transfer Program that allows students to begin their studies at UNG and finish at Georgia Tech. In the process, students earn a physics degree from UNG and an engineering degree from Georgia Tech.

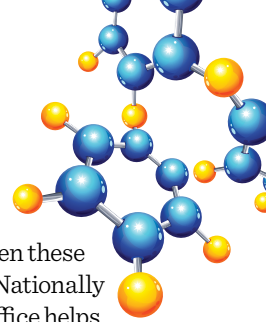
Salia was an NSF S-STEM Scholar while at UNG. After wrapping up his bachelor's degree in aerospace engineering from Georgia Tech, Salia began studies as a Ph.D. student in aerospace engineering at Georgia Tech.

"UNG set me up to be prepared to go to Georgia Tech," Salia said.

At Georgia Tech, Salia earned the GEM Fellowship from the National GEM Consortium, which seeks to increase participation from underrepresented groups in engineering and science graduate programs.

Through GEM, Salia researched fusion reactors and renewable energy this past summer at the Princeton Plasma Physics Laboratory.





Salia's undergraduate research included drone mapping of UNG's Gainesville Campus with Dr. J.B. Sharma, Eminent Scholar and retired assistant department head of Physics & Astronomy.

"Dr. Sharma was very good at guiding me on how research should be done and the level of work required for each project," Salia said.

As a sophomore, Salia earned an REU at Alabama A&M University in Huntsville, Alabama, home to the U.S. Army's Redstone Arsenal and NASA's Marshall Space Flight Center.

"Having that experience made it more possible to go to grad school," Salia said.

Faculty and staff support integral to success

UNG faculty and staff play a vital role in helping students prepare for graduate school and pursue nationally competitive scholarships.

The Honors Program and the McNair Scholars Program both require undergraduate research. The McNair Program is designed to prepare sophomores, juniors and seniors for post-graduate studies through involvement in research and scholarly activities. Participants are either first-generation college students with financial need or members of groups traditionally underrepresented in graduate education who have shown strong academic potential.

A close alignment between these programs, CURCA and the Nationally Competitive Scholarships office helps funnel students toward opportunities that can jump-start their future, and faculty mentors help students see their potential.

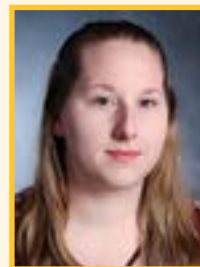
"STEM programs at UNG offer students something very unique in that faculty prioritize student success over their own. We want to make sure that students have a great experience in both the classroom and in research," Dr. David Patterson, an associate professor of biology and STEM adviser in the Nationally Competitive Scholarships office, said.

Four alumnae win NSF grad research award

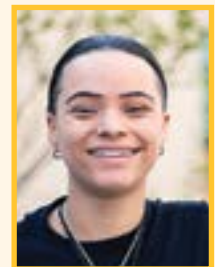
Four UNG alumnae earned acceptance in spring 2023 into the National Science Foundation's Graduate Research Fellowship Program, which supports outstanding graduate students in STEM disciplines pursuing research-based master's and doctoral degrees at accredited U.S. institutions. The fellowship consists of three years of financial support, including an annual stipend of \$37,000 and a cost-of-education allowance of \$12,000 to the institution.

The UNG alumnae to receive NSF GRFP acceptance in spring 2023 were:

- Krystal Sewell, a fall 2020 graduate with a degree in chemistry with a biochemistry concentration. She is now a Ph.D. student at the University of Kentucky.
- Chloé Allen, a fall 2022 graduate with a degree in biology. She is pursuing a Ph.D. in ecology and evolutionary biology at the University of Texas at Austin.
- Haley Shea Barfield, a fall 2020 graduate with degrees in English with a writing and publication concentration and interdisciplinary studies with concentrations in mathematics/technology, social sciences, and humanities. She is pursuing a Ph.D. in engineering psychology at Georgia Institute of Technology.
- Brooke Tate Smith, a spring 2021 graduate with a degree in chemistry. She is pursuing a Ph.D. in chemistry at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville.



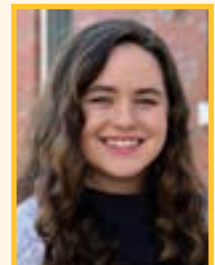
Krystal Sewell



Chloé Allen



Haley Shea Barfield



Brooke Tate Smith





NEW STEM BUILDING ON HORIZON

BY DENISE RAY

In November, the University of North Georgia officially received its first major gift for the new STEM building at the Dahlonega Campus from alumni Stewart Swanson, '85 and Carol Barnette Swanson, '86. The Swansons' \$3 million gift marks a major step toward UNG's vision for a state-of-the-art STEM facility, also known as the STEM Excellence Center.

"In today's rapidly growing economy, our region and state need college graduates who have a strong foundation in science, who can integrate information across disciplines, and who are critical thinkers and problem-solvers," President Michael P. Shannon said. "This new facility is a top priority to serve future STEM students, and we are deeply grateful to Stewart and Carol Swanson for supporting our mission."

The new STEM Excellence Center will replace Rogers Hall, which was built in 1948 and currently houses the physics and chemistry departments. The STEM Excellence Center will deliver the

highest quality active-learning environment possible, which is essential to UNG's plans to fully implement an innovative transdisciplinary STEM curriculum that allows all STEM students to work collaboratively across scientific disciplines in new flexible classrooms, laboratories and research areas.

A computer science graduate, previous ROTC cadet and now a recently retired technology sales executive, Stewart Swanson chairs the STEM Advisory Board for UNG's College of Science and Mathematics and serves on the Board of Trustees for the UNG Foundation.

"UNG President Owen handed me a sheepskin baton in 1985, and I used it to successfully run 37 laps around the sun for my sole benefit. With the UNG relay race now on its 150th trip around the sun, Carol and I proudly handoff our golden batons back to UNG President Shannon as he and his team run Bold Forward to hand sheepskin batons to 18,500 deserving UNG students solely for their benefit and their future



Stewart Swanson, '85, second from right, and wife Carol Swanson gave a \$3 million gift for the future STEM Excellence Center at UNG. Also pictured, from left, are Dr. John Leyba, dean of the College of Science & Mathematics; Jeff Tarnowski, vice president of University Advancement; Dr. Chaudron Gille, provost and senior vice president for Academic Affairs; and Steve Shepherd, development director for the College of Science & Mathematics.

success. We are pleased to give back to UNG that which they gave to us first," Swanson said.

More than a quarter of entering UNG freshmen are STEM majors, and the new facility will be designed to anchor UNG's program delivering transdisciplinary teaching and intentional communities of STEM majors, according to Dr. John Leyba, dean of the College of Science & Mathematics.

"We strongly feel UNG's student-first approach, interdisciplinary learning vision, and the focus on STEM aligns well with the university's stellar reputation for cost-effectively preparing students for their chosen professional careers or graduate education. We believe all these future graduates will enter a world now dependent on science, data and technology related knowledge and skill sets," Swanson said. "Additionally, UNG will now be able to ensure that future military, Georgia National Guard, civic leaders, and medical professionals — upon whom our safety and livelihood depends — are also well prepared for the advanced science and technology dependencies. I encourage corporate and individual donors to join UNG, Carol and myself with this awesome endeavor, and together let's make this happen."

Thanks in part to the Swansons' gift and those of other donors, the Board of Regents included UNG's STEM Excellence Center on its capital project request list for consideration by the legislature this year.

"Stewart Swanson has dedicated many years to the UNG STEM Advisory Board, and through his efforts, we have been able to move forward at a pace that I thought was not possible," Leyba said. "The University of North Georgia and the College of Science & Mathematics are extremely grateful for this very generous gift, and we look forward to working with Stewart and Carol Swanson on the project."

To learn more about the new STEM building and how you can donate, scan the QR code to visit our informational website.



NEW MILITARY SCIENCE CENTER NAMED FOR MATHEWS

Gift from alumnus helps enable the corps of the future

BY CLARK LEONARD
PHOTOS BY ALYSSA ANNIS

Bob Mathews, '71, is living proof of the value the University of North Georgia provides its students. Mathews has spent decades as a leader in the business world following six years in the Army after graduating from UNG with a bachelor's degree in political science.

Mathews, who serves as executive chairman of real estate brokerage company Colliers Atlanta after having previously been chairman and CEO from 2004-2022, gained valuable experience as first sergeant of Golf Company in UNG's Corps of Cadets, second battalion commander, and president of the Student Government Association.

"Opportunities for leadership at North Georgia helped prepare me for being in situations where I had responsibility for others," Mathews said. "It helped prepare me to better understand what a servant leader is."

He is grateful to see UNG and the state of Georgia investing in the Corps of Cadets of the future. Thanks in large part to \$5 million of funding contributed by alumni and leadership from UNG Alumni, Sen. Steve Gooch and Rep. Will Wade, the Georgia General Assembly allocated \$8.3 million for a new Wynne-Mathews Military Science Center in the Amended Fiscal Year 2023 and Fiscal Year 2024 budgets.

The facility is named in recognition of the eight members of the Wynne-Mathews family who attended UNG or served in the U.S. armed forces and in honor of his late wife, whom he met at UNG, Mary Joan Wynne Mathews.



Bob Mathews celebrated the groundbreaking of the Wynne-Mathews Military Science Center with sons Will Mathews and Jon Mathews. Not pictured is son Dave Mathews, a former U.S. Army captain with the 101st Airborne.

"A large number of people stepped up and supported this project," Mathews said. "It shows the inherent strength of the commitment from the alumni to make sure that we produce the lieutenants for the Army of the future."

As one of six senior military colleges in the nation, UNG also serves as the Military College of Georgia and is the only one with an all-Army program. It commissions more than 100 officers into the Army, Georgia Army National Guard and Army Reserve annually, including providing about half of the officers for the Georgia Army National Guard. Much has changed since Mathews graduated, with UNG now serving more than 18,000 students on its five campuses and online. Amid all that growth, the Corps of Cadets remains integral to UNG's identity.

"We're doing a great job. I'm glad the president wants to ratchet it up. There's no moss growing under his feet," Mathews said. "The president is right on in his thought that one of the distinguishing attributes of this university is being the Military College of Georgia. We should want that to grow and have the best facilities and the best training and produce the best officers for the Army."

Mathews served six years in the Army and completed his service as a captain. A commercial realtor, he joined Colliers in 1991 and the Atlanta Commercial Board of Realtors named him the Realtor of the Year in 2009. Mathews was an inductee into the inaugural Army ROTC Hall of Fame in 2016.

In addition to his extensive business success, Mathews has remained committed to UNG in servant leadership roles. He has served as chairman of the UNG Real Estate Foundation for 15 years. Mathews is also a former president of the UNG Alumni Association and previously served on the UNG Foundation Board of Trustees. He is grateful for the chance to give back to a place that provided structure for him early in his life.

"The Corps of Cadets is not easy. It's not for everybody. Because of all of that, you're changed by that," Mathews said. "You go from being a high school student, and suddenly there's a bigger purpose for what you're doing."



ABOVE: UNG broke ground Sept. 23 on its Wynne-Mathews Military Science Center for the Corps of Cadets. The facility is named in recognition of the eight members of the Wynne-Mathews family who attended UNG or served in the U.S. armed forces and in honor of his late wife, whom he met at UNG, Mary Joan Wynne Mathews.



LEFT: State Sen. Steve Gooch, University System of Georgia Chancellor Sonny Perdue, Bob Mathews, UNG President Michael Shannon, and state Rep. Will Wade mark the occasion of the groundbreaking.

Drill Field enhancements begin

Upon his arrival, President Shannon observed that the Gen. William “Lipp” Livsey Drill Field is one of the most revered locations at the University of North Georgia’s Dahlonega Campus. “The Drill Field is the one single place that unifies the generations of men and women who have served in our Corps of Cadets,” Shannon said. “It is the place where mettle was and still is tested and where leaders are forged, but it’s not emblematically iconic. It’s not captivating. When you visit West Point, and experience ‘the Plain,’ you feel the iconic, you are moved. Our Corps of Cadets and our university deserve that same experience.”

With this context and through the generosity of donor funds, work has begun on enhancements to the Drill Field that will create the iconic and celebrate UNG’s history and contributions of its Corps of Cadets to the nation since 1873. The revitalization began in November, and the project is on track to be completed in early April 2024 with formal unveiling and dedication ceremonies planned for Parent-Alumni Weekend. Improvements will include the addition of plazas and an entry gate to increase viewing and ceremonial use of the Drill Field while maintaining its respected central gathering function for students and the community. Stay tuned for this exciting work.



'WE ENDED IT PERFECTLY'

UNG softball team brings home its second national title

BY CLARK LEONARD

PHOTOS BY UNG ATHLETICS

The 2023 UNG softball team will go down in collegiate history for bringing home the program's second national title. But for those who were part of a program-record 64-win season capped by a pair of victories against Grand Valley State University in Chattanooga, Tennessee, it was even more memorable for the bonds shared by the Nighthawk players and coaches.

From bus trips to fun at hotels or celebratory dinners after big wins, they simply enjoyed each other.

"The sisterhood and culture we built was so special, and I couldn't imagine going all the way with any other group of people," junior second baseman Hannah Forehand said.

Forehand led NCAA Division II with 81 RBIs, and teammate Sophie Mooney was second nationally with 72 RBIs.

Head Coach Mike Davenport earned his 1,000th career win early in his 23rd season leading the program and had 1,042 victories by season's end. His 2015 national title trophy now has company, as well.

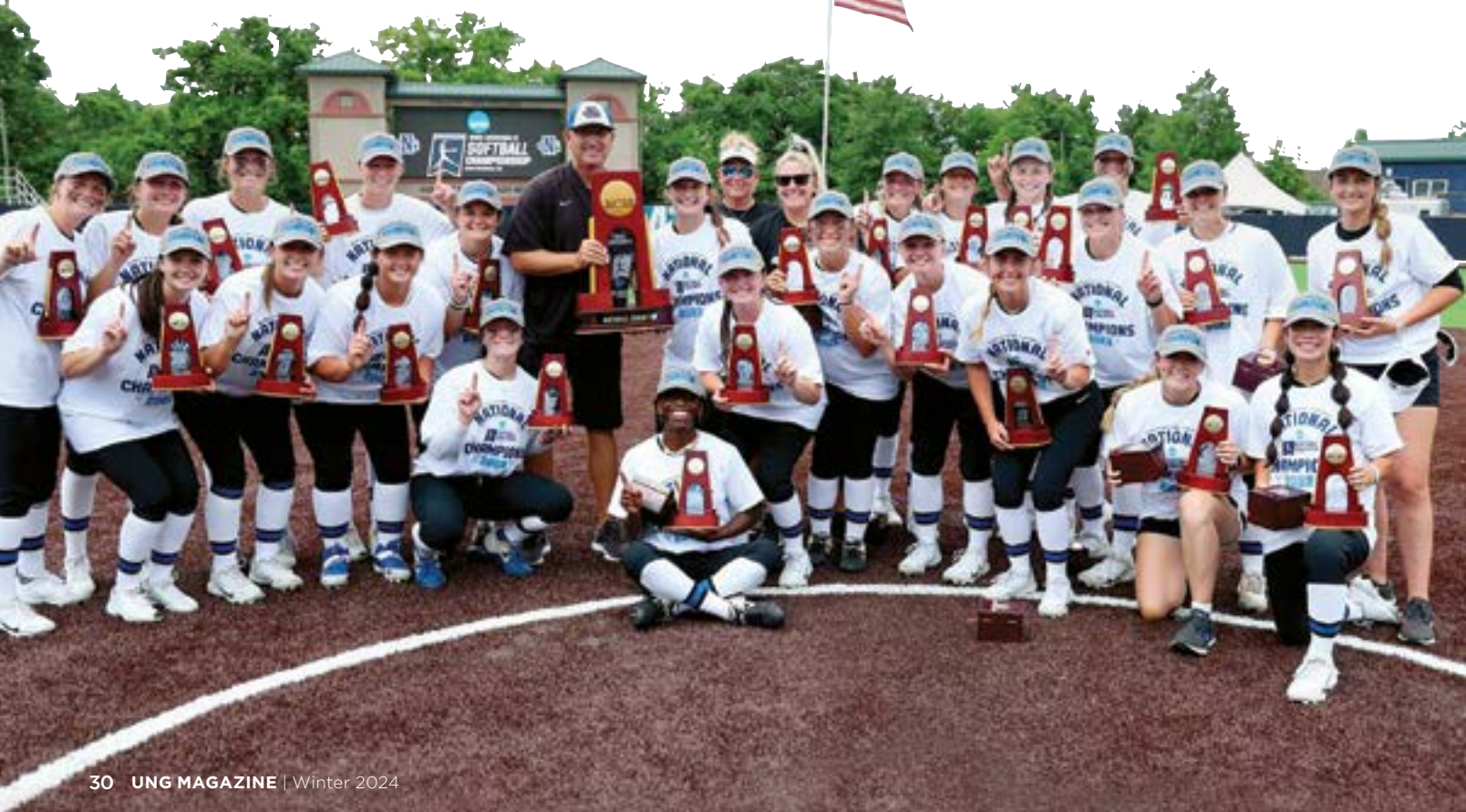
"Coach Davenport and his program continue to embody the excellence of UNG athletics," Athletics Director Mary Rob Plunkett said. "We are so proud of the way this team represented Nighthawk Nation both on and off the field. This group will be remembered for years to come for its resilience and accomplishments."

Davenport brought in a few impact transfers to round out a roster of veterans who have spent their whole college career as Nighthawks. Everyone accepted their roles to form a chemistry that carried the team throughout the season. At one point, that cohesion led to a 38-game winning streak.

"It was probably one of the most unselfish teams I've ever been associated with in my coaching career," Davenport said. "The kids really pulled for each other. They were very supportive of each other's successes."

One of UNG's greatest advantages was its pitching depth, with Tybee Denton, Kristen Davis, Mooney, and Delaney Heaberlin each tallying at least 78 innings in the circle. UNG pitchers combined to strike out 415 batters.

Denton and Davis served as the team's





starters in the NCAA tournament, with Mooney often coming in for shutdown relief appearances.

Sophomore Anniston Wright also earned a pitching win in a pivotal spot, tossing a three-hitter against Georgia College to help UNG work back through the losers' bracket to win the Peach Belt Conference tournament after dropping its first game. UNG has now won nine consecutive PBC tournament titles.

The Nighthawks wrapped up the national championship with 7-3 and 3-0 victories against Grand Valley State on May 30-31.

"Winning this championship was an experience of a lifetime. We were all so close and really just never wanted to stop playing together," Olivia Sinquefield, a senior first baseman, said. "It was surreal being able to look at one another on the field right after our win and realize we all just helped one another achieve a lifelong dream."

Every team in the country sets out with a list of goals each season. UNG made good on its aims with flying colors.

"The most satisfying part of this season is to think back on our goals and know we accomplished every single one of them. We won the conference regular season, the conference tournament, regionals, super regionals, and then went all the way to win the national championship," Forehand said. "This season wasn't perfect, but somehow, we ended it perfectly."



ALUMNI EMBODY SERVICE FOR HALL COUNTY

BY CLARK LEONARD
PHOTO BY BLAKE POPPELL



Three of Hall County Government's administrative team members are University of North Georgia alumni. Zachary Propes, '09, took the role of Hall County administrator in January 2023, and Sarah Crowe, '17, serves as communications and strategic engagement manager, while Joy Holmes, '18, is the county's public information officer.

Propes points to his time at UNG as pivotal in building his skills early. He served in Student Government Association as a senior and was also an official for intramural sports.

He joined Hall County in 2015 as financial services director and was promoted to assistant county administrator in 2019 before taking his latest role.

"UNG prepares you from the leadership perspective," Propes said. "North Georgia is committed to providing pathways for leadership development and growth for the students who choose to pursue those opportunities."

Crowe said her jobs as a mentor and facilitator with Supplemental Instruction while she was a student helped propel her onto her current trajectory.

"That's what led me into communication. It got me out of my shell. It put me at the front of a room doing public speaking, which I was terrified to do before doing that," Crowe said. "It got me interacting with other students in a way that I probably wouldn't have if I hadn't been involved in that program."

Crowe spent nearly four years as a career services coordinator at Lanier Technical College before joining Hall County as a public information officer in 2022 and was promoted nine months later to her current role. Crowe previously served as an academic advisor at UNG. She is an Air Force veteran and received the Distinguished Female Leader award from the Women of UNG in 2017.



UNG alumni serving on Hall County's administrative team include Sarah Crowe, '17; Zachary Propes, '09; and Joy Holmes, '18.

Holmes, who joined Hall County Government in June 2023, is responsible for keeping citizens accurately informed of county government services, activities and programs in a timely, effective and efficient manner. She gleaned skills that have set her up for success.

"Being a people person is a huge skill. Being able to talk with somebody and make eye contact and really connect is how you engage with people," Holmes said. "It's how people become receptive to you. People can trust you, and I hope those skills allow the people of Hall County to know that I am here to serve them."

Before joining Hall County's staff, Holmes served as a news reporter and anchor for WDUN News in Gainesville. She also held positions in communications for the Jefferson City School District and project management throughout her career.

All three Hall County leaders point to the instrumental impact of UNG faculty in supporting

them both in their time as students and as their careers have progressed. Crowe can draw a straight line from the mentality she internalized at UNG to her work with Hall County.

"UNG was such a great growing experience for me because I got to see people lifting other people up. That was such a huge part of my experience at UNG. Everybody was cheering everybody else on," Crowe said. "Hall County's organizational values spell 'SERVE.' UNG really has that same kind of mission at heart. Everybody wanted to serve everybody."

Propes similarly operates from a team mindset in all he does.

"When you're focused on successfully serving others — your team, your organization, your community — that's what matters most," Propes said.

Leadership: Through demonstration



Dominique Cunningham, a Buford, Georgia, resident, is pursuing a degree in biology. She expects to graduate in December 2024 and she plans to become a neuroscience researcher. She spent her summer 2023 break at the University of Washington as part of a National Science Foundation Research Experience for Undergraduates.

How do you define leadership?

Leadership is doing what you think is best and inspiring people to genuinely want to follow because of how you are doing things. I think the epitome of leadership is people wanting to follow you because of what you do.

What is your style of leadership?

Adapting to other people has been difficult. I'm a tutor, so I can teach someone how to think one way. But if that's not compatible with them, I think, "How can I help them understand this concept?" I learned to be patient with them, and with myself. We're individuals with a completely different background trying to reach common ground. I listen to the other person, trying to see where we're not meeting eye to eye and develop ways that we can fix that.

What have your leadership roles taught you?

A lot of people have commented on how great they think it is that I'm a tutor. What they don't realize is how much the students I tutor do for me. Students will say that they were confused about a concept, and I hadn't realized that could be confusing. I'll share mnemonic devices that may help, and they'll share theirs, which I can take into my own courses.

What is an underrated aspect of leadership?

A lot of people don't consider the hardships of leadership, like managing a large number of people or being an integral part of problem-solving, as a rewarding part of the role. Working through these burdens brings about so much growth. It can help develop skills. Dealing with these issues also helps people find you more trustworthy. They see you're capable of filling the role assigned even when things become difficult. An unexpected benefit is that these issues can bring about reassurance. I'm like many people in the sense that sometimes I become unsure if I deserve to be in the spaces I'm in, such as being accepted into an Research Experience for students alongside so many other talented undergraduates. But, with every solved problem, every time I can assist a struggling student, it reaffirms that me being in these spaces isn't a fluke. It's intentional and deserved.

Who inspires you as a leader?

Dr. Neal Lin has become a mentor of mine, and he's been a leader in my eyes from the very beginning. Before becoming a biology major, I was a psychology major. During this time, I took an introductory biology course for non-STEM majors. My professor at the time would struggle with technology at times. Regularly, without being prompted, Dr. Lin would come in and assist my professor, help make sure the projector would turn on, help him log into the systems. This was my first impression of Dr. Lin, which has had a lasting effect on how I see him as a leader. As time went on, I interacted with him more, and the thought has been constantly reinforced.



CLASSNOTES

1990s



Dr. Danny G. Winder, '90, has been appointed chair of the Department of Neurobiology at UMass Chan Medical School. He has also been named the new Worcester Foundation for Biomedical Research Chair I. Winder went

to UMass Chan from the Vanderbilt University School of Medicine, where he served as the Bixler-Johnson-Mayes Chair in Basic Sciences, and professor of molecular physiology and biophysics, pharmacology and psychiatry. Winder earned a Bachelor of Science at UNG.

John Solmon, '90, has been named the finance director of Cleveland, Georgia. He was previously owner and operator of a multi-location tax service business and previously was an assistant comptroller for an oil company. Solmon also serves as a District 2 White County Board of Education member.

Bret Kinman, '91, started a new position as a program lead with Army DEVCOM — Army Research Lab after having been a senior CBRN analyst with Army Futures Command in San Antonio, Texas. Kinman earned a Bachelor of Science in political science.



Brig. Gen. Charles "Rob" Parker, '93, retired in June after 30 years in the Army. His final assignment was as commanding general of the Army's 7th Signal Command (Theater) and deputy commanding general for the Army Network Enterprise Technology Command. Parker commanded a nationwide workforce of more than 6,000

soldiers and civilians across the continental United States conducting Department of Defense Information Network Operations to enable all warfighting functions for the Army and Joint Force. Parker earned a degree in biology from UNG.

Kelly McKay, '99, has been appointed by Gov. Brian Kemp to the Georgia Council on Literacy.

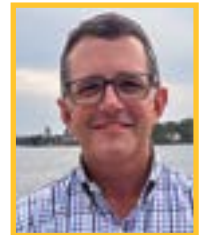


She currently serves as the assistant superintendent for Rabun County Schools. McKay earned her bachelor's, master's, educational specialist degree in teacher leadership, and educational specialist degree in educational leadership from UNG.

2000s

Tamie Taylor, '00, has been named the new comptroller for Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College after serving as payroll manager for eight years. She earned an undergraduate degree in business administration from UNG.

Dr. Brad Bowling, '03, has been named executive director of Lake Oconee Academy (LOA) in Greensboro, Georgia. Before transitioning to executive director, Bowling served as the Upper School director for LOA. He earned a master's degree in interrelated special education from UNG.



Lt. Col. Stephanie Hartley, '07, was promoted to lieutenant colonel in a ceremony Aug. 12 at the Pennington Military Leadership Center at UNG. Hartley serves as Future Attack Reconnaissance Aircraft (FARA) lead for the Future Vertical Lift Cross Functional Team at Redstone Arsenal, Alabama. She uses her operational experience to help bridge the gap between the operational and technical sides of her team. Hartley earned a degree in political science from UNG.



2010s

Jennifer Folea, '10, '13, had a painting accepted into The Art of Georgia and her painting will hang at the State Capitol or the Governor's Mansion for the next year. Folea, a visual arts teacher in Forsyth County Schools, earned a bachelor's degree in fine



arts and studio arts and a master's degree in art teacher education from UNG.

Grant Raber, '12, was promoted to major in the United States Army. His military career includes stints at Fort Moore, Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska and a deployment to Kuwait. Raber is a member of the Airborne and Ranger Training Brigade. He currently serves as deputy of the Installation Contracting Division for the 918th Contracting Battalion at Fort Carson, Colorado.

Chandler Brown, '19, joined OGARAJETS as executive sales engineer. The company provides comprehensive, concierge-level service for aircraft acquisitions and sales. Brown earned a bachelor's degree in criminal justice from UNG.



Col. (Ret.) Wayne Dill



Col. Ben Malcom

Two alumni added to ROTC Hall of Fame

Retired Col. Wayne Dill, '62, and the late **Col. Ben Malcom, '50**, were chosen by the U.S. Army Cadet Command for induction into the ROTC Hall of Fame.

Dill commanded two rifle companies and received two awards for valor during each tour in Vietnam. He received the Army Commendation Medal with V device for valor and Silver Star in 1966.

Malcom, who served his country in two wars and for 29 years, is widely credited for laying the foundation for the Green Berets through his unconventional warfare and clandestine operations in North Korea.



**Col. (Ret.)
Carl H. Bell III**



**1st Lt.
Joseph Hillman**



**Gen. (Ret.)
Stephen J.
Townsend**

Three inducted into Vets' Hall of Fame

Three University of North Georgia (UNG) alumni were inducted into the Georgia Military Veterans' Hall of Fame (GMVHOF) Nov. 4 in Columbus, Georgia. Twenty-two alumni are now among the 177 inductees in the Hall of Fame's 11-year history. Retired Army **Col. Carl Hamilton Bell III, '67**; **1st Lt. Joseph Hillman, '66**; and retired **Gen. Stephen James Townsend, '82**, were part of the 15-member class of 2023.

Bell served in Germany and two deployments to Vietnam. He was awarded two Bronze Star Medals for Valor, the Air Medal for Valor and was also decorated with the Legion of Merit and Purple Heart, among numerous other awards.

In 1968, Hillman was awarded the first of two Silver Stars during his deployment to Vietnam. He was posthumously awarded a second Silver Star when he was killed leading an assault against a Viet Cong stronghold during a move toward a night defensive position.

Townsend, '82, led troops at every echelon, including four Army divisions including the 82nd Airborne, 101st Air Assault, 7th Light Infantry, and 10th Mountain, as well as Commanding General of XVIII Airborne Corps. His joint commands included the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, U.S. Central Command, the Joint Staff and regional commands in Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria. In 2016-2017 he led the multinational effort to defeat the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria during Operation Inherent Resolve.

In Memoriam

ALUMNI

Mr. Wade Aiken, '72
March 25, 2023

Mrs. Suelle Reece Austin, '64
June 8, 2023

Col. Robert Barclay, '68
November 4, 2023

Mr. James Barrow, '77
July 12, 2023

Mr. Royce "Charles" Bartlett, '52
August 23, 2023

Mrs. Mary Gilbert Bates, '54
November 5, 2023

Mr. Nolan Bennett, '67
August 27, 2023

Mr. Ronald "Ronnie" Blalock, '72
August 17, 2023

Mr. Barnes Boyle, '56
September 29, 2023

Mr. Ralph Brantley, '62
August 4, 2023

Mrs. Donna Turner Brown, '71
July 17, 2023

Ms. Jordynn Brown, '15
April 29, 2023

Mrs. Linda White Brown, '84
July 21, 2023

Mrs. Sherry Gray Browning, '88
October 31, 2023

Mr. Henry "Louie" Bullard, '55
August 14, 2023

Mr. James Bunch, '61
June 1, 2023

Mr. William Burrell, '76
March 21, 2023

BG (ret.) Larry Capps, '62
May 2, 2023

Ms. Robin Cathcart, '13
October 31, 2023

Ms. Brittany Chambers, '11
May 14, 2023



Retired Col. Ben Malcom, '50, died Oct. 30 at age 94. He retired from active duty in 1979 and served his country in two wars and for 29 years. In 2014, Malcom was inducted into the Georgia Military Veterans' Hall of Fame for his bravery and acts of selfless sacrifice while serving as a company-grade Infantry and Special Operations officer in the Korean War and as a field-grade Infantry officer in Vietnam. Malcom is credited with and known throughout the U.S. armed forces as laying the foundation of today's Special Forces, the Green Berets.

Mr. Darrell Checketts, '15
July 28, 2023

Mrs. Janice Lay Coone, '90
August 26, 2023

COL (ret.) James Crawford, '54
October 19, 2023

Mr. James "Pat" Daniel, '60
July 12, 2023

Mr. Matthew Denton, '12
May 18, 2023

Mr. Richard Dreiser, '75
June 21, 2023

Mrs. Susan Vanhoy Duncan, '81
April 28, 2023

Mr. Frank Edwards, '56
September 24, 2023

Mr. Jerry Gaines, '58
April 7, 2023

Mrs. Carolyn Pulliam Garcia, '64
September 9, 2023

Mr. Ray "Branson" Gayler, '45
June 18, 2023

Mr. Brandon Ghattas, '20
June 7, 2023

Mrs. Angela Sharp Gilmer, '79
July 26, 2023

Mr. Michael Gralton, '12
September 25, 2023

Mrs. Barbara Christian Grindle, '89
August 14, 2023

Mr. Buford "Stonehead" Hill, '50
May 9, 2023

Ms. Cierra Holtzclaw, '18
July 16, 2023

Mr. James Hood, '60
March 3, 2023

Mrs. Ora Marilyn McBrayer Horton, '60
March 18, 2023

Ms. Carol Jones Howard, '72
April 27, 2023

Mr. Jay Howard, '93
July 21, 2023

Mr. Michael Jackson, '70
November 5, 2023

COL Fredrick "Niki" Johnston, '63
August 26, 2023

Mr. Glenn Jones, '68
July 31, 2023

Mrs. Ann Kelly, '97
October 7, 2023

Mr. Joddie "Joe" Kenny, '50
April 19, 2023

Mrs. Suzanne Keogh, '76
June 12, 2023

Mr. Mark Kersh, '82
October 8, 2023

COL (ret.) Ben Malcom, '50
October 30, 2023

Ms. Laura Margeson, '97
May 14, 2023

Mrs. Wanda Butler Marlow, '85
April 11, 2023

Mrs. Holly Spear Mauney, '92
July 16, 2023

COL (ret.) Theodore McDonald, '64
August 31, 2023

Mrs. Miriam White McNey, '48
May 24, 2023

Mr. James Miller, '62
April 12, 2023

Mr. Richard Moore, '90
October 21, 2023

Mrs. Nancy Kingery Morgan, '50
October 25, 2023

Mrs. Dianne Dillard Moss, '82
June 21, 2023

Mr. Charles "Chuck" Nazerian, '88
April 8, 2023

Mr. Douglas Nicholson, '77
June 5, 2023

Mr. Howard Park, '51
September 20, 2023

Mrs. Dianne Parker, '88
June 26, 2023

Mr. Robert "Bob" Payne, '61
March 14, 2023

Mr. Norman Phillips, '50
June 25, 2023

Ms. Kristen Powell, '07
June 17, 2023

Mr. Larry Rabon, '73
September 26, 2023

Ms. Lou Raines, '49
September 28, 2023

Mrs. Marion Mathews Rogers, '54
October 5, 2023

COL (ret.) Richard Scheff, '57
March 2, 2023

LTC (ret.) Oscar Scoville, '57
May 14, 2023

Mr. Wilbert Seabock, '46
September 30, 2023

Mrs. Barbara Brown Segars, '64
November 10, 2023

Mrs. Elizabeth Schmidt Sheley, '11
September 26, 2023

Mr. James Shields, '62
March 16, 2023

Mr. Robert Short, '56
August 11, 2023

Mrs. Norma Simpson, '78
March 19, 2023

Mr. Charles Smith, '66
May 11, 2023

LTC (ret.) Harry "Verne" Smith, '61
October 11, 2023

Mr. Robert Smith, '61
October 1, 2023

Mrs. Casey Allen Snow, '13
April 15, 2023

Ms. Shannon Snowdy, '08
September 1, 2023

Mrs. Paulette Denton Stripland, '80
August 4, 2023

Ms. Anna Van Horn, '52
October 14, 2023

Mrs. Kay Jones Vaught, '84
March 18, 2023

Mr. Joseph Waits, '97
July 13, 2023

Mrs. Michelle H. Waters, '94
November 8, 2023

Ms. Rebecca Waugh, '00
October 31, 2023

Mrs. Carole Sloan Webb, '66
October 1, 2023

2LT Joshua Wheatley, '18
September 24, 2023

Mr. Justin Wheeler, '06
June 29, 2023

Mr. James Whitford, '69
April 6, 2023

Mr. Richard Whitner, '70
September 21, 2023

Mrs. Laura Williams, '84
September 17, 2023

Mrs. Adalyn Johnson Wilson, '44
August 17, 2023

Mr. John "Al" Wilson, '40
July 19, 2023

MAJ Thomas Woods, '63
March 23, 2023

Mr. Mehdi Zareie, '73
May 31, 2023

FACULTY/STAFF/FRIENDS

Mr. Dwain Gilreath
June 25, 2023

Mr. Lyman Hammond
April 7, 2023

Mr. Thomas Johnson
September 30, 2023

Dr. Leander Kellogg
August 17, 2023

Richard R. "Dick" McNeill
July 31, 2023

Dr. Steve Nicklas
Nov. 14, 2023

CREATING CONNECTIONS

UNGUnite serves as a 'LinkedIn for UNG' **BY DENISE RAY**

To create a way for alumni to be mentors for UNG junior and seniors, the UNG Alumni Association has launched UNGUnite to serve as a "LinkedIn for UNG."

The concept began at the suggestion of UNG fraternities and sororities with a request for two dozen alumni to work with seniors. As plans progressed, the pandemic necessitated a technology-based format.

In 2021, the UNG Alumni Association, Fraternity and Sorority Life, the Corps of Cadets, the Mike Cottrell College of Business, and the Institute for Leadership and Strategic Studies worked together to begin building the platform.

The group looked at companies that offered platforms allowing alumni and friends of the university to meet up with students or young alumni who needed either mentoring or networking opportunities, ultimately choosing Gravyty.

"It was most aligned with what we were looking for, and it was sort of like a miniature LinkedIn for UNG only," Wendi Huguley, executive director of Alumni Relations and Annual Giving, said. "It's able to integrate with Handshake, which is a platform that Career Services uses."

It took six months to launch and was the first project to land on the desk of a then-newly hired Jared Patterson, '14, Alumni Relations officer for young alumni.

Currently, UNGUnite has 950 registered users.

"We have 67% of those users who are willing to help, which means they have checked a box in the platform that they're willing to mentor someone else, which is good," Huguley said.

Diane Farrell, director of Career Services, pointed to the value UNGUnite has added.

"One of the best ways to learn about a career and start connecting with relevant professionals is to speak with people in those careers, gaining current information and advice," Farrell said. "Those UNG alumni who have signaled they are willing to help can be great resources for students. The common bond they have in UNG helps reduce the anxiety associated with reaching out to a professional they don't know. The person the student meets may even evolve into a mentor."

Paul Nickles, current UNG student, connected with Steve Shepherd, director of development for the College of Science & Mathematics, simply by using the filters on the platform.

Nickles is a graphic designer looking to expand into business development.

Shepherd, a former graphic designer, and Nickles met and spoke about common experiences, including his base in graphic design and photography allowed him to be a successful sales person in the printing and publishing industry.

"Our common, shared experiences allowed me the opportunity to connect with Paul, and we created an instant bond. He showed me that he was driven, purposeful and carefully looking at his life and career beyond the degree," Shepherd explained.

Huguley believes that today's college students prefer technology over paper business cards, and students don't walk in buildings anymore.

"It's not about just getting admitted to college. It's not about matriculating all four years. It's not about graduating. It's about getting that job after graduation," Patterson said.

Join UNGUnite  **UNGU UNITE**

Visit www.ungunite.com and click on the "Get Started" button. Once you have created a profile, click on the drop-down menu beside your profile picture in the upper right. Click on "Edit Profile" to update your education, contact information and willingness to help settings. This allows other users the ability to see whether you seek help or are helping other users.

Upcoming Events

JANUARY

January 3-7

FROG Week
Dahlonge Campus

FEBRUARY

February 5

A Little Night(hawk) Music Series
Gainesville Campus

February 6

A Little Night(hawk) Music Series
Dahlonge Campus

February 16-24

"The Crucible," Gainesville Theatre Alliance
Hosch Theatre, Brenau University

February 22

Sinfonietta Concert
Dahlonge Campus

February 27

UNG Jazz Band Concert
Dahlonge Campus

MARCH

March 4

A Little Night(hawk) Music Series
Gainesville Campus

March 8

Student General Recital
Dahlonge Campus

March 9

Alumni Area Gathering
Greenville, South Carolina
Thornblade Country Club

March 21

"Homecoming" Concert of the UNG Singers
& Le Belle Voci
Dahlonge Baptist Church

March 22-24

National Leadership Challenge
Dahlonge Campus

March 26

Spring Euphoria #1
Dahlonge Campus

March 27

Student General Recital
Gainesville Campus

March 28

Spring Euphoria #2
Dahlonge Campus

March 29

UNG's 29th Annual Research Conference
Gainesville Campus

APRIL

April 1

A Little Night(hawk) Music Series
Gainesville Campus

April 4

Music Theatre Workshop Spring
Performance
Dahlonge Campus

April 5

Student General Recital
Dahlonge Campus

April 5-6

Class of 1964 60th Reunion
Dahlonge Campus

April 12-20

"The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling
Bee," Gainesville Theatre Alliance
Ed Cabell Theatre, Gainesville Campus

April 19-21

Parent-Alumni Weekend
Dahlonge Campus

April 19-20

Class of 1974 50th Reunion
Dahlonge Campus

April 20

INTRO/Orientation Leader 50th Reunion
Pine Valley

April 20-21

Corps of Cadets Memorial Retreat & Review
Dahlonge Campus

April 24

UNG Remembers Day
All Campuses

MAY

May 2-3

Spring Commencement Ceremonies
Dahlonge Campus

Visit calendar.ung.edu
for times and other
details, as well as
additional event
opportunities.
Visit ungalumni.org
for updates related
to alumni events.

UNG UNIVERSITY of
NORTH GEORGIA
Office of Professional and Continuing Education

Leadership Development Training

 **OUR PLACE OR YOURS**



The Office of Professional & Continuing Education offers Leadership & Supervision courses to help you become a more effective leader and decision-maker for your business or organization.



**Visit our
office for a
FREE GIFT!**

Just mention this ad at either our Gainesville or Dahlonega office.

Need custom training solutions for your organization?

We partner with local businesses to deliver the training they need. Let us serve you, too!

678-717-2377 | ContinuingEd@ung.edu | UNG.EDU/CE



Learn more at
www.ung.edu/news



Find us on Facebook at
[/UNG.UniversityofNorthGeorgia](https://www.facebook.com/UNG.UniversityofNorthGeorgia)



Follow our tweets for
the latest UNG news:
[@UofNorthGeorgia](https://twitter.com/UofNorthGeorgia)



Follow our pics for
the latest UNG news:
[@UofNorthGeorgia](https://www.instagram.com/UofNorthGeorgia)



Join our community:
University of
North Georgia



Find our latest videos at
[/UofNorthGeorgia](https://www.youtube.com/UofNorthGeorgia)