Welcome to Campus Weekly

Chancellor Gilliam on MLK Day

We find our way to UNCG from all over the state, the country, and the world. We come from a vast array of backgrounds and have different lived experiences. Yet, together, we become part of one Spartan community, with respect for each other, a belief in the unique value of our colleagues and classmates, and an unwavering commitment to building a diverse and inclusive community.

My hope for each of us, on this Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday, is that we carry a message of hope, of action, and of shared fate. Our University must be a platform for civil dialogue, relationship building, and collaboration. We have a chance to make an important difference - through our studies, our service, and our civic engagement.

As Dr. King said, “The function of education is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically. Intelligence plus character - that is the goal of true education.”

I know that our shared Spartan values of compassion, civility, and excellence will point us toward a bright future. This is what UNCG is all about.

Chancellor Franklin D. Gilliam, Jr

Barbara Baker’s freshman musical memories with Emmylou Harris
Emmylou Harris’ time at UNCG is the stuff of legend.

She arrived in 1965 on a drama scholarship. She was in two memorable productions, and she played folk music in her spare time – on Tate Street, in her residence hall, and in what is now the EUC. And she left before completing her degree program, soon becoming a rising music star. She dueted with Gram Parsons. She formed her Hot Band – rescuing country music from the clutches of pop and schlock. She recorded the live album “At the Ryman,” spurring the “mother church” of country music to be saved from the wrecking ball. Her legend grew, and it still grows. A legend that began at UNCG.

Dr. Barbara Wesley Baker ‘69 (visual, left) arrived the same year, and shares her memory:

“David Giddens, Diana Barefoot, Emmylou, and I sang folk music in a basement room in the old Elliott Hall – now enlarged and known as the EUC – during our freshman year.”

That was 1965-66. Her memory is that David Giddens was the driving force at that time among the four; he played on campus a lot, she says, and he and Harris knew each other before Giddens invited Baker into that foursome of music-lovers. The four would play and sing on weekend nights, to the room which could hold maybe 50 people at small tables, as she recalls. Sometimes the audience would join the singing, which varied between solos, duets, or all four singing. No microphones, just a piano (which Baker would occasionally play). The other three played guitar.

Some alumni CW talked with believe it was called simply “the music room” at that time. Baker recalls, “It was a coffee house atmosphere and I think we called it Four Faces Coffee House because of a painting of four faces in the room.” It was contemporary art – four faces you wouldn’t recognize, she says.
That name was sort of an inside joke. “I hope my remembrances are still accurate, since it’s been 53 years since we sang there.”

What about Emmylou Harris? “I remember Emmylou as sounding like Joan Baez! She would play her guitar and mesmerize the audience. Then she would sing a song so plaintive, mournful, or soulful that you couldn’t take your eyes off her.” Harris could sing in such a “rueful” way, Baker recalls. “She was a stunning singer. And that girl could play!”

Odetta. Peter, Paul and Mary. Joan Baez. Bob Dylan. Songs like “Where Have All the Flowers Gone.” Those are the types of songs you’d hear if you stepped into the room during those evenings.

“I was new to singing folk music,” she said, “so I took a back seat to David, Emmylou, and Diana. It was a magical time of protest songs, folk songs, and whatever we wanted to sing.”

As a freshman, Baker was asked to open up for a traveling act, at a club in East Greensboro. She only did it once, she said. She accompanied herself on piano. Then the star attractions hit the stage: the Ike & Tina Turner Revue.

Yep, she opened for superstars Ike and Tina Turner and sang with Emmylou Harris in the same year.

And, inspired by UNCG professor Richard Cox to become a choir director, the music major went on to earn her master’s at Columbia and doctorate at Maryland, teach music, conduct internationally, and lecture widely – black gospel music is her focus. She is renowned.

And she carries lots of great music memories, including those evenings with her friends in Elliott Hall.

Baker adds about the four, “David Giddens probably knew her the best.”

CW reached out to Giddens for his memories of playing at UNCG in that era. We’ll share some of those – and more – next week.

Note: The Jan. 24 Emmylou Harris concert is sold-out. But the community is welcome to attend the “Masterclass and Q&A with Emmylou Harris,” geared for UNCG students. Seating is limited. The free, general admission event starts at 3 p.m. in UNCG Auditorium.

By Mike Harris
1960s photograph courtesy Barbara Wesley Baker

Learn more:
• The story behind that Emmylou Harris photo in UNCG’s “The Tempest”
• Spartan Stories post about Emmylou Harris, by Kathelene McCarty Smith
• 1992 News & Record feature on Emmylou Harris, by Tom Steadman

Town Hall Feb. 19, focus on upcoming campaign

UNCG will embark on a comprehensive campaign, which will launch this coming fall.

Mark your calendars: You are invited to a campus community Town Hall next month to hear about how the University has been planning and what happens next. The campus-wide Town Hall will take place Wednesday, Feb. 19, from 9:30 to 11 a.m. in the Elliott University Center’s Cone Ballroom. In addition to campaign-specific goals and timeline, we’ll discuss the role that our campus community will play in the fundraising campaign. Please join us on February 19. We look forward to seeing you there!

Copy courtesy UNCG Advancement

Newsmakers: Smith, Porter, CHCS, Debbage, Link, CNNC

Whether researchers with timely insights or students with outstanding stories, members of the UNCG community appear in print, web and broadcast media every day. Here is a sampling of UNCG-related stories in the news and media over the last week:

• Dr. Jocelyn Lee Smith has an article in the latest NCFR report on gun violence, which was recently distributed to Congress. See the report here.
• Bryce Porter, UNCG Chief Information Security Officer, was interviewed on WFMY News. The article and video.
• UNCG’s Center for New North Carolinians to co-host “Shifting Worlds” conference. See “The State of Things” article.
• UNCG’s Center for Housing & Community Studies contributed a study to Resilience High Point’s work to reduce community violence, High Point Enterprise News reported. The piece.
• Dr. Keith Debbage was quoted in a Winston-Salem Journal piece about the popularity of North Carolina as a destination for people moving to a new state. The article.
- UNCG alumna Kelly Link was featured in the prestigious literary journal Poets & Writers. She was featured in UNCG Magazine last spring. The P&W feature article.

**In Memoriam: James Weston Sherbon**

Dr. James Weston Sherbon died January 2. He had retired in 2002, and was promoted to professor emeritus. Sherbon worked in music education and research all his life, teaching graduate music education at UNCG for 27 years. In addition to teaching, Sherbon was director of graduate studies in music for fifteen years. He served on editorial boards for over thirty publications, journals, and textbooks in the field. As a scholar, his primary research focused on hearing acuity and conservation, pitch perception, and musical aptitude.

See the full obituary, from which this piece was drawn, here.

**Dr. Deborah Lekan**

Dr. Deborah Lekan (Nursing) received new funding from the Academy of Medical-Surgical Nurses for the project “Frailty Risk Using EHR Nursing Data for ICU Transfer and Mortality.”

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the performance of a Frailty Risk Score (FRS) derived from nursing flowsheet data in the electronic health records (EHR) of hospitalized adults 50 years and older admitted to a health system during 2013 to 2017 for two outcomes: Time to ICU transfer, and in-hospital mortality. Applying frailty in risk prediction models may improve model performance and identification of high risk patients who need more resource-intensive care and care coordination.

**Dr. Zhiyong Yang**

Dr. Zhiyong Yang (Marketing, Entrepreneurship, Hospitality & Tourism) received new funding from the North Carolina Small Business and Technology Development Center for the project “Faculty Liaison Grant.”
Dr. Kenneth Gruber

Dr. Kenneth Gruber (The Center for Youth, Family, and Community Partnerships) received new funding from the Greensboro Housing Coalition for the project “Build Health Challenge 3.0 Collaborative Cottage Grove.”

It is becoming widely recognized that it is important to identify social determinants of health as both causal and ameliorative factors affecting the health and welfare of children and families. Childhood asthma exacerbated by environmental conditions in the home represents a prime example of a health issue for which a solution extends beyond the doctor’s office. A partnership with the local Health Department, hospital system, safe and health housing advocates, and families living in unhealthy homes will be established to create a replicable model that can make a major impact on childhood asthma.

The goal of this project is twofold: 1) reduce the prevalence of asthma attacks (resulting in emergency department (ED) and hospital visits) among children caused by unhealthy housing conditions and 2) improve the attendance and school performance of children with asthma living in housing that may be exacerbating their asthma. To achieve this goal, the researchers will employ an intervention approach that will address the housing environments of children with asthma through family education, housing condition assessments, and remediation of asthma triggers present in the home environment. Public health nurses involved with case management of students with asthma in 10 elementary schools will provide the sampling frame for this project. Approximately 600 students attending these schools have been identified with asthma. The nurses will contact families of these children to invite them to participate in the project. Project participation will involve a healthy homes assessment, assistance with remediation of asthma trigger conditions if present, and general education about maintaining a safe and healthy home.

Dr. Sat Gupta

Dr. Sat Gupta (Mathematics and Statistics) received new funding from the National Science Foundation for the project “REU Site at UNC Greensboro in Complex Data Analysis using Statistical and Machine Learning Tools.”

The REU project aims to provide 10-week sophisticated training in Complex Data Analysis using statistical and machine learning tools to eight highly-motivated, nationally-selected undergraduates from Mathematical Sciences during summers of 2020 and 2022. The eight students will be divided into 4 to 5 research teams, each headed by a faculty mentor and
supported by a co-mentor.

Intellectual Merit:
The focus of the training will be on complex data analysis involving topics such as high dimensional data analysis, subdata selection, machine learning, robust data analysis, and data confidentiality. The six mentors associated with the training have strong publication record in these areas, and five of them have strong experience in student mentoring. Emphasis during the training will be on both theory and applications. In addition to focused research in these specific areas, the program will offer participants a broad professional development training. As part of the training, students will undertake trips to major research centers in North Carolina such as SAS, SAMSI (Statistical and Applied Mathematical Sciences Institute), and the Joint School of Nano Science and Nanoengineering. The researchers expect that the research completed as part of this training will be of very high quality and will lead to journal articles and conference presentations, as was the case for the 2018 ASA REU program.

Broader Impact:
UNCG has a welcoming culture and specifically attracts women and minority students and faculty. Our aspirational target will be to recruit in the program at least 4 women, at least two minority students. The students will live in the same residence hall on campus so that they can develop a long-lasting network. The program will have plenty of social events (field trips, picnics, movies, bowling etc.) to foster team environment. The mentors will remain in contact with student participants even after the program is completed, as they did for the 2018 ASA REU students, and offer them continuous mentoring towards their transition to graduate school and overall professional growth. The program involves a good mix of senior and junior mentors so that the junior faculty gets an opportunity to learn the art of mentoring from senior faculty and be able to present a strong case for tenure and promotion.

Dr. Spoma Jovanovic

Dr. Spoma Jovanovic (Communication Studies) will moderate the upcoming panel at the Greensboro History Museum: Writers as Witness: Free Speech in a Time of Hate. The panel, part of Scuppernong Books’ and Greensboro Bound’s Writers as Witness series, will discuss the role of language and speech in the current political moment. Jovanovic will be joined by independent researcher Alejandro Buetel, PEN American’s Jonathan Friedman, and Allen Johnson of the News & Record. The panel will be Jan. 29, at the Greensboro History Museum, at 7 p.m. See more info here.