

# UP



A magazine for alumni and friends of the  
University of South Carolina Upstate

**SUMMER 2021**

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## GAME ON

*Spartan teams celebrate a  
record season*

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### Intimate Conversations

Actors learn to talk about their  
bodies and boundaries

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### Band of Brothers

Upstate men's soccer celebrates  
40 years as a family

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### Inquiring Minds

Students discover the  
thrill of research

# Global Internship Forum

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## UP Magazine

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## Letter from THE CHANCELLOR

As we publish this latest issue of UP Magazine, I cannot help but reflect on the last year. We have come through the worst, I believe, having persisted through a pandemic the likes of which we hope never to experience again. So many of us have endured hardship and loss. But as difficult as this period in our lives has been, the pandemic has revealed our strengths as educators and students. We came together as a campus community in ways we never have before, and I am proud that our new chancellor will benefit by your collective resilience and ongoing dedication to the critical work we all do every day. What a joy it was to gather for commencement ceremonies in May!

Dr. Bennie Harris, USC Upstate's seventh chancellor, will be settling into his new office this summer as I transition to a new position as vice president of System Affairs with the USC System. We introduced Dr. Harris and his family during a press conference last month, and I look forward to working with him in promoting the increasingly significant role USC Upstate plays in the region and in the state.

Resilience has shown itself on campus

in numerous ways, and perhaps nowhere more profoundly than on our athletic fields. The Spartans wrapped up the spring season with men's soccer having enjoyed its best season in the Division I era and culminating with head coach Scott Halkett being named Big South Coach of the Year. Not to be outdone, women's golf coach Todd Lawton was voted Big South Coach of the Year as well. Our softball, baseball and track teams set new records, too. You'll notice an athletics thread in this issue — a strong one.

Meanwhile, a number of our students were working alongside faculty on research projects. Led by Dr. Melissa Pilgrim and the Office of Sponsored Awards and Research Support, these opportunities for undergraduates to engage in research are invaluable. Academically, the work is rigorous, and perhaps more importantly, time with faculty promotes critical thinking, communication, time management and other soft skills that make our graduates particularly attractive to employers.

Also in this issue, you'll meet a number of our recent graduates and one of the





university's greatest advocates. Commissioner Anne Flynn has long been invested in the success of our students, following an example provided by her parents. My wife, Suzy, and I have known Anne for many years and we enjoyed reading this latest profile about her invaluable contributions to the Spartanburg community.

USC Upstate welcomes two new deans this summer. John Barnett takes the reins from Library Dean Frieda Davison, who retires this year having served USC Upstate admirably for more than 20 years. Dr. Tanya Boone steps in as dean of the College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences. We thank Interim Dean Rob McCormick for his leadership over the last two years, and look forward to working with John and Tanya, both of whom were selected following competitive national searches.

It has been an honor to serve as interim chancellor at USC Upstate. The university remains on its upward trajectory, thanks to you, our talented faculty and staff, current students and alumni, and community stakeholders. We recognize your hard work and dedication,

particularly as we turn the page on the most acute effects of COVID-19 and begin a new chapter in the life of this wonderful institution. I am proud to be a Spartan, and I look forward to our continued work together.

Sincerely,

J. Derham Cole, Jr.  
Interim Chancellor

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# Dr. Bennie Harris Named USC Upstate Chancellor



Earlier this spring, following a competitive national search, Bennie L. Harris was named USC Upstate's seventh chancellor. Harris succeeds Brendan Kelly, who served from 2017-2020.

Most recently, Harris served as senior vice president for Institutional Advancement at the Morehouse School of Medicine (MSM) in Atlanta, Georgia, a position he held since 2014. Prior to that, he was vice president for Development and Alumni Relations at Lipscomb University in Nashville, Tennessee.

"I am excited about the opportunity to lead an exceptional regional public institution that is well respected, diverse, mission relevant and located in a region that offers unlimited partnerships," said

Harris. "Upstate's strategic plan outlines compelling objectives that are important in transforming the lives of young people and the Upstate region. I have always valued the importance of education, in not only improving my life and that of my family, but in building a community of economically and socially healthy, prosperous people."

As a senior vice president at MSM, Harris was a member of the executive leadership team. He co-chaired the institution's five-year strategic plan and served as a key member in the development of the school's Leadership Academy, a program designed to promote leadership among faculty and staff. He dramatically impacted the school's fundraising outcomes,

launching a \$225 million comprehensive campaign and growing fundraising income to \$112 million, an increase of more than 265% over six and a half years. MSM has received \$177,309,691 from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) since 2015.

As vice president for Development and Alumni Relations at Lipscomb University from 2007-2014, Harris provided strategic leadership in all areas of development, grants management, and alumni relations to include corporate, foundation and government relations, major and planned gifts, annual giving, donor stewardship and advancement services. Under his direction, fundraising increased by 332% within four years, to \$32,238,899 in FY2012 compared with \$9,716,139 in FY2009.

"Without debate, external funding from philanthropic and other sources, including state and federal grants, will differentiate USC Upstate and position it for greatness," said Harris. "As chancellor, I will play an integral role in identifying and acquiring resources to achieve Upstate's vision. I believe strongly that growing USC Upstate's endowment over the next five to ten years is necessary and achievable."

"Concurrently, growing student enrollment will position the University to become one of the leading student-centered universities in the region," added Harris. "By working with the provost, academic leadership and key institution stakeholders, I will continue Upstate's commitment to growth by improving academic programs, creating programs that respond to new employment needs, deepening the impact of service, adding new facilities, renovating and adapting existing spaces to emerging technologies and methods, and expanding the permanent resources necessary for long-term service and success."

Harris' professional experience also includes executive administrative positions at DePaul University in Chicago, the University of Alabama at Birmingham, and Washington State University in



The Harris family, from left, Bria, Bennie, Frankie, Branden, and Bennie II.



Pullman, Washington. He has served as faculty throughout his career, focusing on courses in management, servant leadership and strategic marketing, and most recently was an assistant professor in the department of community health and preventive medicine at MSM.

He has presented at many industry conferences and is the recipient of numerous honors and awards, including multiple distinguished service awards and a 2020 Gold Award for an integrated

campaign from the International Academy of Interactive & Visual Arts (AIVA). He is a member of the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) Development Board, and a faculty member of the “Securing the Largest Gifts” summer program offered by the Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE). He currently serves on the board of trustees at Lipscomb University and on the board of the Susan G. Komen Foundation in Atlanta.

A native of Rosedale, Mississippi, Harris earned a Bachelor of Science degree in industrial engineering from Mississippi State University; a Master of Business Administration from Washington State University; and a Ph.D. in educational leadership from the University of Alabama at Birmingham. He is married to Frankie Andrea Harris and they have three adult children, Bria, Bennie II, and Branden.



## Looking Ahead

Harris was introduced to the campus and Spartanburg communities during a press conference in May. His vision for the university calls for innovation while leveraging opportunities to grow.

“I want to innovate and help transform the university to participate in the changing dynamics of higher education while growing enrollment and promoting financial stability,” he told assembled guests.

Over the past year, he said, students, faculty and staff have experienced virtual education and job models that have worked, and that presents an opportunity. “I think it’s going to be hard to have an exclusive/one method of delivering education. So we have to be prepared for that, and I think we can lead it.”

Harris’s second goal for Upstate is focused on the university’s role as a significant contributor to the region’s economic development. Citing projected growth, he said the university must be a development “multiplier.”

“When people think about Spartanburg and this region, they think of USC Upstate as a partner,” he said. “We are important to the economic viability of this area and I want us to stand up and be seen.”

In closing, Harris recognized members of the Chancellor Search Committee, faculty and staff. “I am humbled by your support and the strong vote of confidence you have provided me,” he said.



Todd Lawton

Scott Halkett

## Athletics Celebrates Coaches of the Year

Two Spartans received Coach of the Year honors from the Big South Conference this season.

USC Upstate men's soccer head coach Scott Halkett was named Men's Soccer Coach of the Year, while head golf coach Todd Lawton received Women's Golf Coach of the Year. The honor was a first for both men.

In men's soccer, Halkett and his staff led the Spartans to one of their best seasons in the program's Division I era, which was capped by Upstate's first-ever trip to the Big South Championship final where the Spartans finished as the tournament runners-up.

Upstate's only loss in conference play this season came against the league leader High Point. The Spartans ranked in the top three as a team in the Big South in several statistical categories, including second in shots (154) and corner kicks (58), and third in points (54). Additionally, the club ranked third in goals (21) and goals per game (2.1), as well as goals allowed (14) and goals against average (1.35).

The USC Upstate women's golf team is coming off their best season in school history. The Spartans recorded their lowest stroke average in school history (297.23) and recorded the best team winning-percentage in program history (.896). As a team, the Spartans won two tournaments in the same season for the first time ever and finished inside the top three in all but one tournament.

Beem Pabsimma became the first female golfer in school history to capture a conference championship. With the victory, Pabsimma became the first female golfer in program history to play in the NCAA Regionals. Praew Nontarux earned Big South Freshman of the Year honors. Under the guidance of Lawton, the USC Upstate golf program holds both the Men's and Women's Big South Individual Golf Championships.

## CAHSS Welcomes New Dean

Tanya Boone recently assumed her new role as dean of the College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences (CAHSS). She comes to USC Upstate from California State University, Bakersfield, where she was associate dean in the School of Social Sciences and Education for nearly five years.

Boone said she sees her new role as supporting and empowering faculty and staff, and helping them provide students with the kinds of opportunities that will prepare them to succeed in life.

"I am passionate about the power of higher education to transform lives, especially in underserved and first-generation communities," Boone said. "This passion is the foundation of my work and motivates me to collaborate with faculty and staff to generate creative and innovative strategies for best meeting the needs of our students. I am eager to continue and expand this work at USC Upstate."

Boone, a native of Washington state, earned her Bachelor of Arts degree in social work from the University of Washington in 1990 and Master of Arts in communication studies from the University of Arizona in 1997. In 2003, she received her Ph.D. in human development and family studies from The Pennsylvania State University.

She joined CSU Bakersfield's department of psychology in 2003 as an assistant professor and achieved the rank of full professor in 2016. From 2009 to 2014, Boone served as faculty coordinator within the university's Center for Community Engagement and Career Education. She was chair of the department of psychology from 2013 to 2016 and of advanced education studies from 2016 through 2019.

"We are delighted to welcome Dr. Tanya Boone as the next dean of our College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences," said USC Upstate Provost David Schecter. "More than 100 candidates applied for this position. With more than a decade of leadership in higher education, as well as her extensive experience with community service and engagement, Dr. Boone is highly qualified and extremely motivated. I believe she will do an outstanding job."

Boone's scholarship has focused on family and adolescent development. Her leadership experience has centered on supporting student success, in collaboration with faculty and staff, while serving on executive teams to promote the university's strategic goals, which include improving student retention and graduation rates. [u](#)







## John Barnett Joins Upstate as New Library Dean

As the new dean of the USC Upstate Library, John Barnett has large shoes to fill. He succeeds Frieda Davison, who retires after 21 years as Library dean. Barnett will oversee the completion of a major renovation of the Library building and the implementation of a statewide library shared-service platform, among other responsibilities.

"I'm really excited to join USC Upstate as the new Library dean," Barnett said. "I look forward to working with the University community and Library faculty and staff to have a direct, positive impact on services that support teaching, learning and research."


Barnett, originally of Swansboro, N.C., has more than 25 years of experience in library management, leadership, collections, outreach to diverse audiences, grant writing, scholarly communication, and reference and instructional services. Most recently, he served as executive director of the Ontario Council of University Libraries (OCUL), an academic library consortium headquartered in Toronto, Canada.

Prior to joining OCUL in 2015, Barnett served as the scholarly communications librarian for the University of Pittsburgh Library System, where he worked with students and faculty on issues that included open access to research literature, author rights, copyright and

altmetrics. He was co-editor of *Libraries: Research and Practice*, an open access journal.

"The dean of the Library plays a vital role in USC Upstate's commitment to academic excellence, collaborative teaching and learning, and community engagement," said USC Upstate Provost David Schechter. "I am very excited that John has agreed to come and work with us and believe he will do a terrific job."

Barnett has also served as assistant director of the Pennsylvania Academic Library Consortium; director of collection development at Gettysburg College's Musselman Library; head of collection development at the University of Texas San Antonio (UTSA) Library; head of the UTSA's Downtown Campus Library; and reference librarian at the San Antonio Public Library. He earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in English, writing and editing from East Carolina University. In 1995, he graduated from the Master of Library and Information Studies program at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

Constructed in 1976, USC Upstate's 60,000-square-foot Library houses more than 220,000 volumes and an ever-expanding archive that includes special collections and artifacts related to the history of the 10-county region of Upstate, South Carolina. 

## New Master's Program Targets Wellness Professionals

USC Upstate's School of Education, Human Performance, and Health, is poised to offer a new master's degree in exercise and sport science. The program targets the needs of professionals in the Upstate region who wish to further their education and expand their career options and employability in health, wellness, and rehabilitation. Three tracks will be offered: cardiac rehabilitation, psychosocial kinesiology, and exercise physiology.

"We are proud to develop and offer this graduate program with the expertise of our exercise and sport science faculty and the support of our community partners. This degree is practitioner focused, with the goal of exposing graduate students to research and developing students' ability to apply research focused on experiential learning," said Nur Tanyel, chair of the department of human performance and health.

The need for professionals in exercise and sport science in both the public and private sectors is expected to accelerate. "This graduate opportunity will allow the region to meet the increased need for highly trained professionals in exercise, health, wellness, and rehabilitation resulting from regional initiatives, population growth, and the effect of COVID-19," said Laura Reynolds, dean of the School of Education, Human Performance, and Health.

The program is expected to receive approval from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) this summer.





Araceli Hernández-Laroche, left, and Maria Francisco Montesó will lead the new South Carolina Centro Latino.

# USC Upstate to Launch First University-Based Latino/a Center in SC

This fall USC Upstate will roll out the South Carolina Centro Latino (SCCL), the state's first university-based center for Latino/a students, faculty and staff.

Nicknamed "El Centro," SCCL will seek to establish USC Upstate as the university of choice for Latino/a students, to increase retention of Latino/a students and to advocate for Latino/a families and communities across South Carolina and beyond.

It will carry out its mission by focusing on three pillars: Latino/a interdisciplinary studies, the public humanities, and translation and community interpreting. Community outreach will also be a key part of El Centro's work.

"The needs of our Latina and Latino faculty, staff and students are growing each day as we expand and enrich our campus with a more diverse student body and the Upstate region becomes more diverse," says USC Upstate Provost David Schechter. "The Latino/a population in the state is roughly 6 percent, and that is mirrored in our campus percentage of students, but it is the fastest growing population and one that we believe needs more attention

and resources."

"Considerable work is already being done in the Upstate and on our campus to support the Latino/a community, but we will now place that work under the larger umbrella of El Centro and create an institutional space of belonging, civility, wellness and equity," Schechter adds.


## SCCL leadership

Araceli Hernández-Laroche will serve as director of SCCL. She is an associate professor of modern languages, and the foreign language coordinator and assistant chair of the Department of Language, Literature and Composition at USC Upstate. The first tenured Mexican-American professor in USC Upstate history, Hernández-Laroche has studied and taught in France, directed an immersion program in Spain, conducted research in Italy and speaks four languages.

Active in the community, Hernández-Laroche serves on the boards of Spartanburg's Chapman Cultural Center, the Spartanburg Academic Movement and the LGBT Fund of Spartanburg. She was selected to participate in the 2020-

2021 cohort of the Emerging Leaders Program through the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU).

Maria Francisco Montesó, a senior instructor in Spanish at USC Upstate, will serve as the center's assistant director. Montesó graduated from Universitat Jaume I in Spain, and earned a Bachelor of Arts and Master of Arts in translation and interpreting studies in Spanish, Catalan, English and German. She has more than 10 years of experience teaching Spanish, translation and interpreting. Montesó is a Ph.D. candidate. Her research interests focus on educational interpreting and pedagogy in translation and interpreting studies.

"As immigrants from Spain and Mexico, respectively, Maria and I are overjoyed and honored to lead El Centro," Hernández-Laroche said. "This collaborative, community-based, cultural and linguistic approach will increase the visibility of Latino/a and Hispanic talent and contributions in all spheres of higher education and civic life, especially as we recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, which has disproportionately impacted these communities." 

## El Centro Mission

SCCL will seek to carry out its mission through a variety of initiatives that include:

- Organizing Latina/o Interdisciplinary Studies and Talks on Civic Leadership and Mentoring
- Hosting a "Latinas in Higher Ed Summit"
- Hosting research forums on local and global impacts of migration
- Expanding a Global Studies minor and certificate
- Increasing interdisciplinary and multilingual public humanities scholarship
- Sponsoring podcasts, interactive lectures and other public-facing work in other languages
- Expanding the Alicante Study Abroad Program
- Expanding a Service Learning in Translation and Interpreting Studies Minor

For more information about El Centro, please email [sccl@uscupstate.edu](mailto:sccl@uscupstate.edu).



# Federal Grant to Support Underrepresented Students at MBSON



USC Upstate's Mary Black School of Nursing (MBSON) has been awarded a four-year, \$1.95 million grant from the federal Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) that will support MBSON's Holistic Opportunities and Partnerships that Empower (HOPE) Nursing Success Project.

The HOPE Project seeks to increase the percentage of lower division nursing students from underrepresented, ethnic and minority backgrounds who progress to upper division nursing and to increase the graduation percentage of upper division nursing students from those backgrounds.

"Many minority and disadvantaged

students in lower division nursing encounter obstacles, such as financial barriers, academic difficulties and a lack of guidance and support that hinder them from progressing to upper division nursing," said MBSON Dean Shirleatha Lee. "We are uniquely positioned to address this challenge while simultaneously addressing the nationwide nursing shortage."

For the 2021-22 academic year, more than 30 scholarships will be awarded to freshmen and sophomores. "Our aim is to retain and graduate more of these students who are able to provide high-quality, culturally aligned care to our community and beyond," Lee said.

Lee said MBSON will use evidence-based strategies to achieve its goals for the project, including development of a living/learning community, pre-immersion experiences, targeted education in rural health nursing, tutoring and remediation services, and peer and community nurse mentorships, among others.

Announcement of the grant comes on the heels of the school earning reaccreditation from the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE), having met the industry's highest standards. CCNE granted MBSON full reaccreditation through 2031.

## Studio Upstate Awarded ASPIRE Grant

Studio Upstate, USC Upstate's student-run graphic design agency, will be able to provide a better professional work experience for graphic design students thanks to a \$38,000 ASPIRE grant it recently received from the University of South Carolina's Office of Research.

Since its move to Main Street in downtown Spartanburg, Studio Upstate has been improving its new home to provide an environment comparable to that found at modern design firms, says Matthew Donaldson, associate professor of graphic design and co-director, with associate professor Bridget Kirkland, of Studio Upstate.

The grant will provide much-needed computer and technology upgrades that will give students up-to-date tools to use when creating professional work, Donaldson says.

"Student experiences with Studio Upstate are the equivalent of undergraduate research experiences in other disciplines," he says. "Scholarly



Matthew Donaldson and Bridget Kirkland are co-directors of Studio Upstate in downtown Spartanburg.

outcomes in our discipline are completed design projects for clients, such as logos, identity and branding, brochures, posters, and websites."

USC Upstate's Director of Research Melissa Pilgrim worked with Donaldson and Kirkland to develop the proposal

supporting one of the only student-run, income-generating organizations at the university.

Studio Upstate is located at 172 E. Main St. in Spartanburg. USC Upstate is among its largest clients.

Lenny Mathis

## Upstate Game-Changer

USC Upstate's senior associate athletic director for external operations has been on the job for just under two years. His timing couldn't have been better; the Spartans just ended one of their best seasons ever.

**L**enny Mathis was working as an assistant athletic director at Wake Forest University when he spotted an opening at Upstate. Having served as an associate athletic director at Spartanburg's Wofford College for nearly 15 years, Mathis recognized the potential of the position with the Spartans and the opportunity to return to a place he and his family had long called home. Mathis' wife, Amanda, was recently named executive director of the Spartanburg Area Conservancy and they are raising three children, Tripp, Virginia and Vivian (ages 7, 6 and 3, respectively.) Mathis says he and Amanda have enjoyed rejoining the community, and when the family wasn't on campus this spring rooting for the Spartans, they were at Tripp's Little League games, cheering on his team.

Mathis brings extensive marketing and management experience to USC Upstate but admits the job isn't all fun and games. "Certainly, our industry and the demands on administrators have changed dramatically since I started in 2003, but it is that adaptation to the challenge that keeps us hungry," he says. "To be able to pursue my professional goals in a place my wife and I hold so near and dear really is a dream come true."

### What was it about USC Upstate that prompted your return to Spartanburg?

In our 14 years of living in Spartanburg,

we always found it to be such a welcoming and collaborative community. This is a place that allows you not only to be involved in impactful community projects, but to be a leader. Personally, it was enticing to have the opportunity to return to a community we already loved and had watched grow exponentially from afar. Professionally, to be able to lead an external unit, to help build the USC Upstate brand, is amazing.

### What does an associate A.D. for external operations actually do?

In short, my position oversees communications – commonly known as sports information — athletics marketing, and video services. My team handles athletics press releases; statistics and social media messaging; live television event production, which includes more than 70 events annually, primarily broadcast on ESPN+; and the in-venue Game Day fan experience.

### What makes Division I athletics particularly fun for you?

Interestingly, I really never imagined that I would be in Division I athletics. After graduating from USC in Columbia, I was focused on a career in minor league baseball. I had that path in mind because I believed in the impact the minor teams can have on their communities, something I experienced



myself as a child attending games in Sumter, Columbia and Charleston. Then, out of the blue, I got the opportunity to work in college athletics and quickly realized that I now had an opportunity to work with hundreds of student-athletes, dozens of students who would help execute a "Game Day game plan," and potentially have an impact far broader than baseball alone could provide.

### Where do you see the greatest opportunities for USC Upstate Athletics?

We're at such a great time in our history! Like many institutions, we have some facility needs, but overall, we are blessed with great venues. We have a





tremendous coaching staff and an energetic and positive administrative team led by Daniel Feig. As a university, Upstate is fairly young and there is a whole host of things we can still build here. To be clear, we need to have success on the field, and you saw that this year with a number of our programs. That positive energy breeds tradition, and through tradition, we build affinity and community.

**Are there challenges we'll need to overcome?**

I don't wish to oversimplify, but I believe that our primary challenges lie in establishing or re-establishing meaningful connections with our alumni, particularly our former student-athletes.

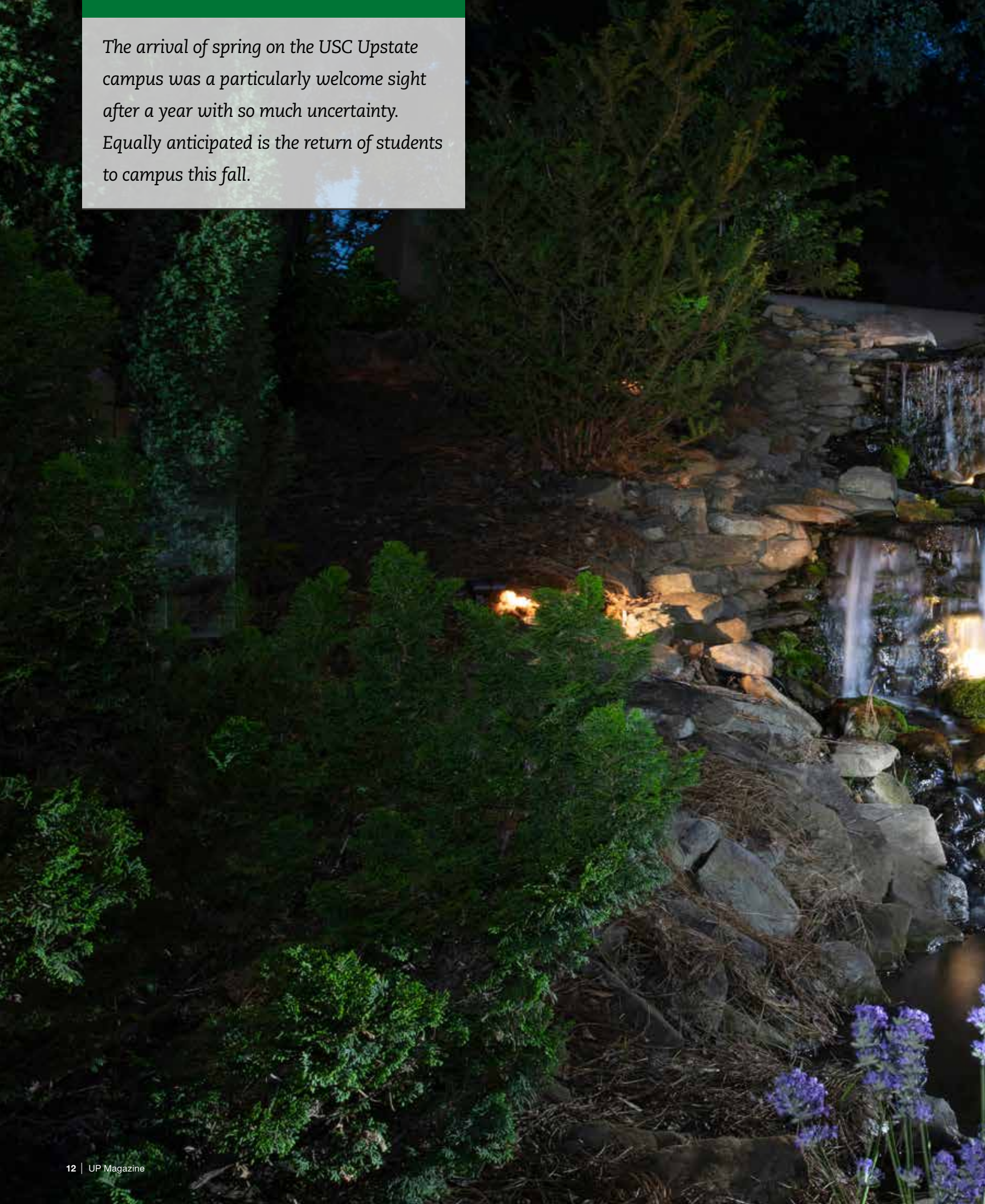
Our division works closely with University Advancement and Alumni Relations, and together we're building better data, while reaching out to alumni to assist us in tracking down those we've lost touch with over the years. We must reconnect emotionally to those student-athletes from the "Rifles era." We have some bridge-building to do to bring those proud Rifles around and to make them proud of our Spartans. Lastly, we will need to be more aggressive in asking for financial support, through both direct program support and our U Club, which benefits our entire department. But you can't put the cart before the horse. We can tell the most compelling story in the world, but first we have to ensure that our story reaches a broader alumni audience.

**What do you enjoy most about working with student-athletes?**

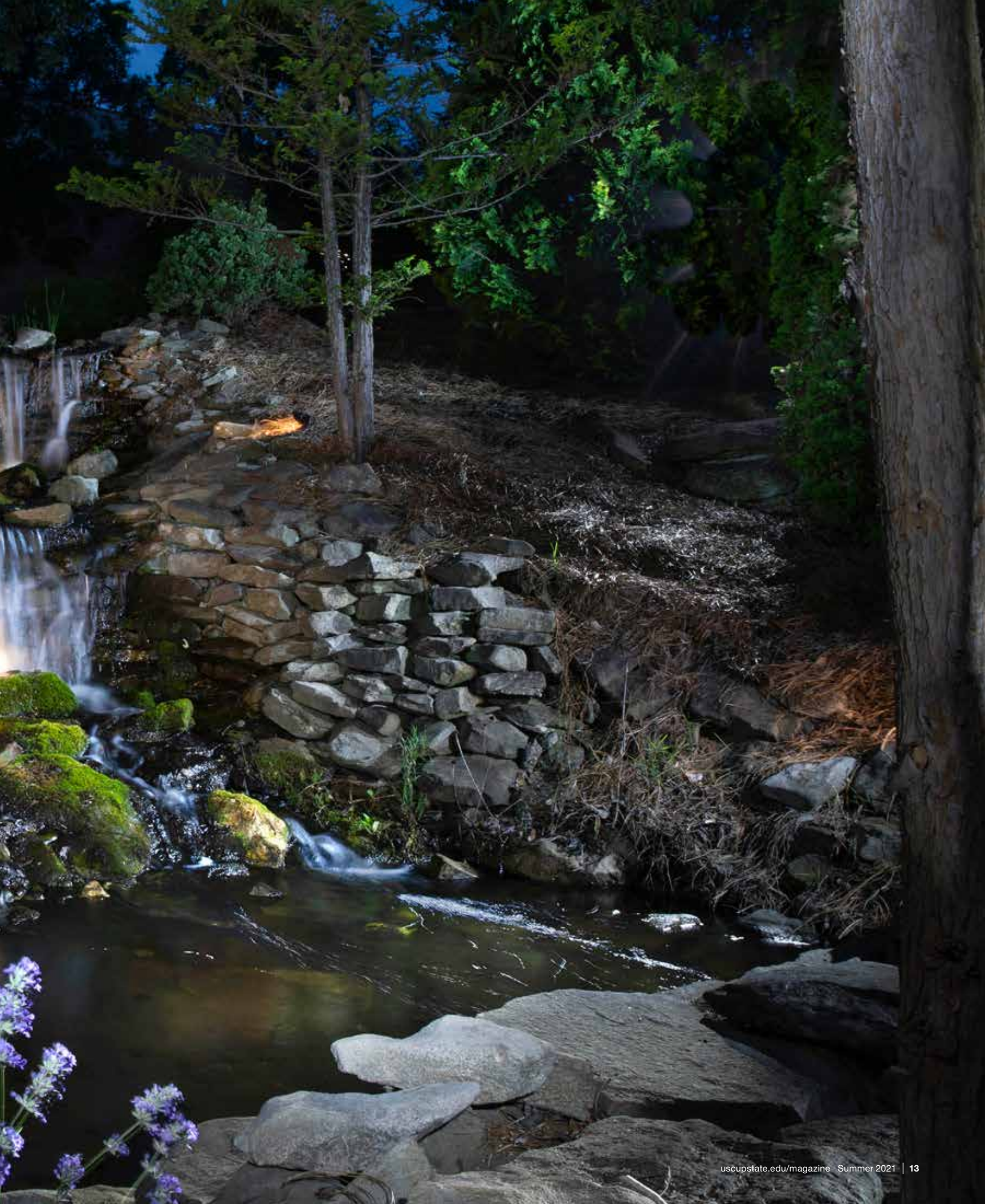
What I find the most fun is connecting people from the community to our student-athletes and our campus. When young athletes come to campus and find something that sparks them to want to achieve success on the field and in the classroom, then we've played a small role in changing the course of their lives. What could be more rewarding than that? 📖



*The arrival of spring on the USC Upstate campus was a particularly welcome sight after a year with so much uncertainty. Equally anticipated is the return of students to campus this fall.*









# Meet the Class of 2021

## Julian Rip

**Major:**

Interdisciplinary Studies with a double minor in exercise science and psychology

**Post-graduation plans:**

Continue my education. I am planning on going to medical school in the Netherlands (where I am from) to become an orthopedic physician.

**Favorite Upstate Memory:**

Friendships that I have made that will last

forever. As a student-athlete, we spend countless hours on the field, and being able to do that with the support and help of professors (some even come to the games) is amazing.

**Advice for new Spartans:**

Get out of your comfort zone as much as possible; you will only grow from it. Join clubs, talk to new people, and explore the campus, the cities around Spartanburg and yourself. Upstate offers a lot - take advantage of it.

## Mahek Momin

**Major:**

Biology with a concentration in pre-medical

**Post-graduation plans:**

I will be studying for my MCAT, which I am taking at the end of July. Over the summer, I will also be doing an internship at Prisma Health in the surgery department! Following this, I will apply to medical school this year!

**Favorite Upstate Memory:**

My most favorite memory was meeting my lifelong best friend during my college career and the best professors as well.

**Advice for new Spartans:**

It is OK if you don't know exactly what you want to do in the beginning! You will find yourself as you go along. Just keep pushing forward!

## Hannah Collier

**Major:**

Nursing, BSN

**Post-graduation plans:**

I will be moving home to be a labor and delivery nurse in the local hospital. I do hope to continue my education someday, but I am excited to gain experience at KershawHealth.

**Favorite Upstate Memory:**

My favorite Upstate memory has to be

when it snowed in early 2018. We never got much snow at home, and my friends and I had a blast!

**Advice for new Spartans:**

My advice would be to give yourself grace – you can't expect to be perfect when you're doing something for the first time. People are on your side and want to see you succeed, but you have to take care of yourself!







## Mary Snow

**Major:**

Criminal Justice with a concentration in crime analysis and minor in psychology

**Post-graduation plans:**

In summer 2021, I start graduate school for a M.S. in criminal justice with a concentration in crime analysis and prevention at the University of Cincinnati.

**Favorite Upstate Memory:**

My favorite memories from USC Upstate are moments when I have been challenged to expand on and defend my viewpoints.

**Advice for new Spartans:**

My advice is to put in the time and effort, be accepting and receptive to new ideas, and do everything you can to ensure your success, including reaching out to others when needed.



## Ramonte Smith

**Major:**

Middle Level Education

**Post-graduation plans:**

My plan is to start teaching seventh-grade geography in Spartanburg District 7. I also have aspirations to continue my education at USC Upstate in their graduate program.

**Favorite Upstate Memory:**

One that made me love USC Upstate so

much was the midnight breakfast. It was a unique way to bring people together, and I always absolutely loved it.

**Advice for new Spartans:**

My advice is to not be scared to put yourself out there. Learn how to stand out from the rest in a positive way. You are gradually moving closer to a career and you have to identify what makes you different, special, and unique to your community and employers.



## NeTaysia Zeigler

**Major:**

Finance/Economics

**Post-graduation plans:**

I am currently interning at CommunityWorks Carolina and plan to work within the finance industry.

**Favorite Upstate Memory:**

My favorite Upstate memory would have to be going to different events on campus and networking to meet those with similar interests.

**Advice for new Spartans:**

Have fun and make sure you are passionate about what you pursue! It is a long journey, but having faculty and staff who support you makes it ten times better. There may be times that you want to give up, but push yourself and know that there is always someone in your corner to help! Upstate is a wonderful university to attend and you will love your college experience!



# Inquiring Minds

*USC Upstate students are discovering the thrill of research with help from faculty mentors.*

BY ELIZABETH ANDERSON

Joi Wilder plans to make a lot of videos this summer.

But they won't be of sunny beaches or scenic getaways. Instead, the rising senior at USC Upstate will be at the mock courtroom in The George, helping to record the "testimony" of actors for a project examining the impact of appearance and presentation style on an expert witness' credibility.

Wilder is one of many Upstate students who are pursuing in-depth research projects with faculty members. The work not only benefits their post-undergraduate careers, but even, in some cases, the fields to which they are contributing.

"Research experiences for undergraduates have always been really important to me, because they were transformative for me when I was an undergraduate," says Melissa Pilgrim, director of research in the Sponsored Awards and Research Support office.

Pilgrim, who is also a biology professor, believes strongly in providing students with research opportunities, and supporting the faculty who offer them. Among her many responsibilities is overseeing the annual SC Upstate Research Symposium and the publication of its proceedings, both of which are forums for students to present their work.

"To me, it's pretty neat to help develop programs or events that really benefit our students and also our faculty," Pilgrim says. "It keeps students and faculty



Senior Joi Wilder, Lynn McMillan, director of the Child Protection Training Center, and professor Susan Ruppel

engaging with each other."

Pilgrim says as a first-generation college student herself, she knows how important a mentor can be. When she was an undergraduate, she planned to become a high school biology teacher. One day, after conducting a rattlesnake survey with a professor, she says he sat her down to say, "You know, if you want to teach high school, that's great, but you need to recognize you're good at this and there are other options."

"That set the trajectory for graduate school," Pilgrim says. "I love teaching, and to me that also means mentoring. I just switched to where I could do that on the college level."

## Fostering interest

Assistant professor Thanh Nguyen, who teaches finance at the George Dean Johnson College of Business and Economics, shares Pilgrim's feeling of paying it forward. "I got help and support from faculty who helped me form a research idea and taught me how to write and make a paper publishable," he says.

So when he saw William Gregg, a senior business major, sitting in the front of the classroom with a textbook open in front of him, Nguyen wanted to encourage his curiosity. Gregg, he says, was always asking questions about finance, and Nguyen thought he might like to explore a topic in depth.



Gregg jumped at the chance. He knew he wanted to pursue a doctorate after graduation, but hadn't ever thought to ask a professor about doing research. "You don't really think that's something that's even possible," he says.

That has led to two co-authored papers so far, both on bitcoin, and a third one in the works. While the first two were published in the SC Upstate Research Symposium journals, Nguyen is aiming for a professional journal for the third. Every publication is important, Nguyen says, especially for graduate school, where an article will show Gregg "knows how to write up a research paper and go through the process."

Gregg says his work with Nguyen inspired him to seek out another faculty member about doing research, assistant professor John Strandholm. "Had professor Nguyen not reached out and started that working relationship, I never would've asked professor Strandholm to work with me," Gregg says.

Now, he says, the two professors are almost as much friends to him as they are mentors. He and Nguyen often play tennis together, and enjoy volleying ideas back and forth along with the ball. Over a post-game coffee, Gregg will share his findings with Nguyen, and the two then

determine the next steps.

Strandholm is helping Gregg get up to speed on additional concepts he'll need to know before graduate school, providing him with reading material and suggesting other courses to take. "They're two completely different professors in how they do everything, but there's something I appreciate about both," Gregg says.

### A new perspective

For Tina Fadel, '21, undergraduate research was also a revelation. Fadel, who was born in Beirut, Lebanon, had only been living in the United States for a year when she started at USC Upstate. Her goal was to attend graduate school in dentistry, but meeting assistant professor Kimberly Shorter expanded her thinking.

"I started shadowing her in the lab and was like, wow, you're able to research the unknown, to answer questions that no one knows the answers to," Fadel says. "I didn't know you could do that as an undergraduate, and it just completely changed my thinking."

Shorter recognizes and values that spark of realization. "I really enjoy when I see students get so into the research that they start bringing up their own

questions to me and going in their own direction," she says.

Fadel assisted Shorter with examining the impact of excess vitamin B12 on nerve cell communications, and she received a Magellan Scholar Award from the University of South Carolina to fund some of the work.

She also had an unusual chance to contribute to developing research when she became part of a project looking at the factors influencing people's decision to practice COVID-19 preventative behaviors, such as mask wearing.

"We learn about infectious diseases in class and how they're treated and prevented, but to have a research project where you're playing a role in gathering that information gives the student a real-life experience," says associate professor Ginny Webb, who tapped Fadel for the project. "They've had a meaningful impact on disease research."

With Webb, Fadel co-authored a sub-study of a larger COVID paper that she also contributed to, and with Shorter she has two papers that have been submitted to scientific journals.

Her experiences inspired her to apply to graduate dental schools that included research as part of their program, and she was accepted at several of them.

Assistant professor Thanh Nguyen and senior William Gregg





Tina Fadel, '21, and assistant professor Kimberly Shorter

“Research changed the person that I am,” Fadel says. “I think differently now and I appreciate science differently.”

### The bigger picture

While having published research is almost a requirement now for graduate school, it's not the only reason to do a project, says Pilgrim. The skills students learn in the process – “that ability to communicate, whether it's oral or written, to be part of a team, to collaborate” – can be applied to just about anything they pursue.

“Often you're doing things that have consequences past you,” Pilgrim adds. “There's a very big reflective piece to research. You have to put thought into developing the project, but you also need to think about it through time – when it's done, what does that mean?”

That future outcome is what excites Wilder, the rising senior working on the expert witness research. “I believe it's going to contribute to findings that will hopefully help new professionals increase their awareness and change their behavior,” she says.

Wilder, a psychology major with a minor in child advocacy studies, plans to

pursue a doctorate in school psychology. Since expert witnesses are often critical in child victimization cases, she sees her upcoming work as a way to ensure children's interests are effectively represented in court.

Wilder, who also received a Magellan Award, is working with Lynn McMillan, the director of the Child Protection Training Center at USC Upstate, and psychology professor Susan Ruppel. Ruppel regularly works with students on independent study projects, and says they always grow from the experience.

“The big thing it teaches them is confidence and follow-through,” she says. “I think the students don't realize what they're capable of until they actually start engaging in the process. It instills a confidence in them that they might not have had before.”

That has definitely been true for Wilder, who still marvels at where she is right now. Growing up in a single-parent household and experiencing poverty and homelessness, Wilder says at one point she didn't think she'd finish high school.

“To be able to blossom from almost dropping out to considering getting a Ph.D. and having all these faculty

members acknowledge me, it makes me feel so amazing,” she says. “It makes me feel like everything that I went through has built my character to be who I am today, and they see that.”

While Pilgrim is working on a system to collect data on how research impacts graduation and retention rates at Upstate, she says anecdotally, the

Sarah Di Stefano, '21, and assistant professor Matthew Placek





students she's seen who pursue undergraduate research have higher graduation rates than those who don't.

"If we keep our students engaged, and they're thinking about communicating their work, in my mind that means they're likely to be pretty engaged community members or engaged in the world around them," Pilgrim says. "That becomes a win for everyone."

### Personal discoveries

Sarah Di Stefano, '21, a political science major, says before she took a class from assistant professor Matthew Placek, she didn't think she was the research type. "I used to think I wasn't really a curious person, but then I realized it's not that I wasn't curious, but that nothing had ever really grabbed my interest," she says.

Placek's Middle Eastern and North African politics class changed that. Di Stefano recalls watching a documentary on the Arab Spring uprising and how the pro-democratic movement transformed over time to become violent. That shift intrigued her, and got her wondering why it had happened so easily in that region. Placek was happy to encourage her interest.

"It takes a lot of work to get a paper like Sarah's done, where it's really well-written," Placek says. "It's just amazing to watch that process of how it goes from a small idea and then just builds

and builds, and then all of a sudden students like Sarah have this really nice paper that showcases their talent."

Like Pilgrim, Placek was also a first-generation college student, and shares her commitment to mentorship. "The main way I try to teach students, both in my upper division classes and research methods, is through research, through data management analysis, through pursuing interesting research questions," he says.

If students have an idea they developed in another professor's class, Placek helps them find ways to integrate it into his class, so they can keep exploring something they care about. Even if the topic doesn't exactly fit his class, the methods and sources used in the research are often the same, he says.

Di Stefano, like Fadel, found herself expanding her criteria for graduate school. While she always planned to go to law school, she originally thought she'd do corporate law. She credits Placek for planting a seed about international law.

"He said, this is what you're looking at, this is what you're interested in and what you're researching, have you considered that avenue?" she recalls.

She is now applying at schools with strong international law programs, and was awarded the best undergraduate paper submission to the USC Upstate Student Research Journal. "You always want to feel like you learned something in four years," she says. "I feel like I've accomplished something, and that I've come out with more than I went into it with."

That is exactly the outcome Pilgrim loves to see. "For me, the undergraduate research experience epitomizes experiential learning," she says. "It helps students be very functional graduates in terms of being more competitive for the workforce and for professional programs, things that help them with their lifelong goals."

### Just do it

Students and faculty alike say getting involved in research is as easy as approaching a professor who teaches




Melissa Pilgrim, director,  
Office of Sponsored Awards and Research Support

something you're interested in. If you're shy about dropping by office hours, then an email is fine too, they advise.

Faculty are also a good resource even when students aren't sure what they'd like to work on. Shorter, like many faculty advisors, keeps track of what her departmental colleagues are working on so when students come to her, she can summarize what's in progress.

Students also shouldn't feel they have to be thoroughly versed in a subject before asking to work with a professor. Webb says she assures students, "I can teach you the science, I can teach you the research process. All I ask for is commitment and responsibility for doing what you say you're going to do."

Placek says at times the most satisfying result isn't seeing a top student receive awards and accolades for their work, though that makes him very proud, too. Sometimes, he says, it's seeing a student who "came here with no idea of what they're doing" follow an idea through to completion and have something to show for it at the end.

"Because that's what it's about," he says. "It's not about perfection, it's about growth." 



# Building Community

*Alumna draws on experiences to support South Carolina's Hispanic residents.*

BY ELIZABETH ANDERSON

Debbra Alvarado, '16, remembers when the privileges of citizenship came into sharp focus for her.

A native of Puerto Rico who moved to the mainland United States as a teenager, Alvarado hadn't really thought about immigration issues while she was growing up. Puerto Ricans didn't discuss the topic much, since they're already U.S. citizens, she says. TV, which was limited to local channels then, didn't cover global news.

Then in October 2008, when Alvarado was a student at Mauldin High School, there was an Immigration and Customs Enforcement raid at the Pilgrim's Pride poultry plant in Greenville. Hundreds of workers were arrested and deported. Alvarado recalls the anxious conversations among her Hispanic friends, many of whom were frantically trying to reach relatives or loved ones.

"That was a turning point for me in realizing I have privileges that other students don't have," she says. "I think that's where I really started understanding how I could be more civically engaged in my community. If Greenville is going to be my home, then I really need to start learning more about how things are done here."

Since then, Alvarado has dedicated herself to that education process, working to improve the lives of the Upstate's Hispanic residents. She has spent the last four years at Hispanic Alliance in Greenville, where she is the operations and network manager. As part of her job, she looks for ways the organization can better serve the community with its services and programs.

Her own experiences have taught

Debbra Alvarado, '16, is the operations and network manager for Hispanic Alliance in Greenville. Her work involves coordinating with volunteers and staff to provide programs and services to the Upstate's Hispanic residents.





With many Hispanic families experiencing food scarcity during the pandemic, Alvarado and her team created a food basket program to provide staples from Hispanic grocery stores.



her how difficult it can be to adjust to a new culture. When Alvarado's mother, who worked for Fluor Corp., was transferred to a job in Washington state, Alvarado stayed in Puerto Rico with her grandmother while her mom and two younger siblings got settled in their new home. Then, at 14, Alvarado went to join them.

"It was a drastic change," she recalls. "I think the only word I knew how to say in English was hello."

She was also one of only a handful of Hispanic students at her high school which, she says, "made it very difficult for us to form friendships and even just communicate with teachers and staff."

Then, just as she began mastering enough basic English to become more outgoing, her mom was transferred again, this time to Greenville. It was yet another culture shock, Alvarado says.

"I remember my first time at J.L. Mann, the bus driver asked me, 'Y'all getting on the bus?' I didn't know what 'y'all' meant, so I said no," Alvarado says. "We got stranded at school and my mom had to come pick us up."

For her junior and senior years, Alvarado attended Mauldin High School, where she encountered many more Hispanic students. The diverse Hispanic population exposed her to many different cultures, languages and foods – and immigration statuses. After the poultry plant raid, Alvarado began paying closer attention to the challenges faced by some of her fellow students and the community.

"It wasn't until I moved here that I learned the difference between being a citizen, a resident, and what undocumented was, what a visa was,"

she says.

After graduation, Alvarado planned to go back to Puerto Rico. She wasn't sure she wanted to attend college in the United States, and she missed her grandmother and friends. But her mother advised her to attend Greenville Technical College for a year, after which she could go back to Puerto Rico if she wanted.

Alvarado agreed. She enrolled in the Bridge program, which would give her the option to transfer to a four-year college after two years. After spending a summer in Puerto Rico, Alvarado realized that as much as she loved her home, she couldn't see herself there long term.

USC Upstate offered Alvarado just what she was looking for in a college. She wanted to be close to her family, and she didn't want to be on a campus where she was just a number. Her younger sister, who had already started at Upstate, assured her that classes were nothing like the overcrowded lecture halls they used to see in movies. Instead, her sister said, classes were small, the professors knew her name, and she often went to office hours.

"I was thrilled when I got my acceptance letter," Alvarado recalls. "It was a very proud moment for me."

Alvarado majored in communication with a minor in Spanish. She loved the welcoming environment on campus, and got to know many of her professors.

"I truly enjoyed the small classroom settings, because it allowed me to form relationships with my professors where I felt comfortable coming to them if I

had a question or wasn't understanding something," she says.

After graduation, Alvarado was offered a part-time administrative assistant job at Hispanic Alliance in Greenville. The job quickly became full time, and Alvarado transitioned into the programs area, where she supported such events as citizenship workshops, bilingual college fairs, health fairs and personal finance classes.

After a year, she was promoted to her current position overseeing operations. "I wanted to find ways where we could improve the programs we were offering," she says. That involved surveying participants after each event to find out what more they wanted and then finding ways to act on those suggestions.

For instance, Alvarado says the team noticed a lot of people at the personal finance sessions asking how to start their own business. This led to the development of a three-day entrepreneurship series led by volunteers with legal and business expertise, Alvarado says.

She and her team also retooled the annual health fair in 2019 to provide more than informational resources. The event, held on a Saturday, offered health screenings for families whose work schedules didn't allow for weekday medical appointments, or who couldn't afford to miss work time. Visitors were able to attend seminars and cooking demonstrations to learn how to make healthy meals.

"We made it more of a place where people could come and get things done, rather than just get a card to call up the medical office and make an



Alvarado says one goal of her work is helping Hispanic families learn what community resources are available to them and ensuring they feel comfortable in any setting.

appointment,” Alvarado says.

When the COVID-19 pandemic put all events on hold last year, Alvarado and her team pivoted to get information out quickly to the community. They made their web pages available in both English and Spanish, and worked with Greenville County Schools and AccelerateSC, the state’s online COVID-19 information center, to translate information into Spanish.

With help from grants and donations, they also started a program over the summer called Canasta Básica, or “basic basket,” that provided culturally appropriate food to families experiencing food scarcity. Alvarado says the program was in response to calls her organization began getting where people were asking how to use some of the items they received from local food banks.

By partnering with local Hispanic

grocery stores, the organization was able to purchase food items that better matched the staples used in Hispanic households – and help small businesses, which were struggling as well, Alvarado says.

With infection rates gradually dropping, Alvarado is looking forward to a time when she can resume her quarterly trips to Puerto Rico and see family members. Her busy schedule no longer allows her to coach or referee






soccer for CESA, which she had done since becoming certified in high school, but she still volunteers at games when she can.

She also makes sure to set aside some time for herself every week at Knight Performance Factory, a fitness center in Greenville. “It gives me motivation, and I’m always challenging myself – can I do better,” Alvarado says.

It’s the same spirit she brings to her

work, where she’s always looking for ways to make Hispanic families feel welcome, whatever their backgrounds.

“The most rewarding thing about my job is being able to connect with our community and offer them solutions where they feel they are part of an inclusive community, where everyone has access to opportunities for success and prosperity,” she says. 



Alvarado, right, and her team worked at a Prisma Health COVID testing site last year to provide Spanish-speaking residents with information on community resources.

# Student Leaders Recognized



Patrick Mack



Daniela Isaza

Two USC Upstate students have been awarded Newman Civic Fellowships.

Patrick Mack, a senior majoring in English, was Upstate's first Newman Fellow, in 2020, followed by Daniela Isaza, a senior criminal justice major, in 2021.

Fellows, who come from colleges and universities around the country, are nominated by a university chancellor or president for their efforts to find a solution to challenges facing local, national and international communities. Fellows take part in a year-long program that offers them networking and training opportunities.

Campus Compact, which administers the fellowships, is a national coalition of colleges and universities committed to improving community life and preparing students to be civic leaders.

## Patrick Mack

Patrick Mack has been active in disability rights and awareness since high school. For the past four years, he has worked at AbleSC, an organization committed to increasing employment

and the employability of people with disabilities. As a person with a visual impairment himself, Mack has worked to challenge the stereotypes and limitations imposed on people with disabilities by those around them. He founded Common Ground, a students with disabilities advocacy group at USC Upstate that ensures everyone has the accommodations and services they need to fully participate in the campus community.

## Daniela Isaza

Daniela Isaza is committed to inclusion and equity for the Latinx community both on campus and in the community. She is a mentor to first-generation Latinx students, and was instrumental in creating the first Latina sorority on campus. Her community work includes serving as a translator for several organizations that help non-native speakers understand and navigate community systems. Isaza's career goal is to become an immigration and child advocacy attorney focused on combating human and sex trafficking over the United States-Mexico border.

## Seniors Honored for Service

The Division of Student Affairs honored nine students in the spring for their service work on campus and in the community.

The Earl Gordon Medal for University Service is presented annually to two graduating seniors who exemplify the qualities demonstrated by Earl Gordon,

the university's first dean of students. Those qualities are: volunteer service to the university; involvement in campus activities; volunteer service in the community; and nobility of character.

The USC Upstate 7 is the highest honor bestowed upon graduating

seniors by the Division of Student Affairs and the Student Government Association. Seven graduates are selected on the basis of scholarship, leadership, campus involvement, service and other achievements.

### ***Pictured to the left are the 2021 recipients, from left to right:***

Madisyn Hughes (Upstate 7); A'Keriah Praylow (Upstate 7); Kaylee Ghent (Upstate 7); Ramonte Smith (Upstate 7); Brit Katz, interim vice chancellor for Student Affairs; Interim Chancellor Derham Cole; Sharan Ravishankar (Earl Gordon Medal); Tina Fadel (Upstate 7); DerChe' Mosby (Upstate 7); Jackie Harkey (Upstate 7); Mahek Momin (Earl Gordon)





# For the Love of Music

Adrian Smith has had many identities.

At USC Upstate, he's the clinical placement coordinator for the Mary Black School of Nursing, ensuring students get their practical experience at Upstate hospitals.

But he's also been a lonely bird-catcher in search of a wife; a wronged father whose angry curse has tragic consequences; and a wily quack peddling potions to the lovelorn.

Those latter personas are just a few of the roles Smith has portrayed in a singing career that has taken him across the country. The baritone has sung with Asheville Lyric Opera, the Santa Fe Opera, and North Carolina Opera, among others, and has appeared as a soloist with groups such as South Carolina Bach and the Symphony of the Mountains in Tennessee.

Music has always been part of Smith's life. His mother taught music at an elementary school in Hickory, North Carolina, and his father, a church organist, was a professor of music at Lenoir-Rhyne University. Smith himself began playing violin at 3 and singing in junior choir when he was 5.

"It was just all music, all the time," Smith says.

While he says he was "never really passionate" about violin, Smith loved to sing. For middle school, he attended the now defunct American Boychoir School in New Jersey. But when he returned to North Carolina for high school, he discovered a new passion: shop class. He enjoyed it so much, in fact, that he fully intended to attend North Carolina State University and become a shop teacher.

But on the way home from singing at an American Choral Directors Association conference as a senior, Smith had a revelation. "I just randomly decided that maybe I would see about



Until he decided to step back from opera, Adrian Smith performed with companies such as GLOW Lyric Theatre.

going to college as a music major," he says.

Smith enrolled at Lenoir-Rhyne, where he majored in vocal performance, then went on to graduate school at Boston University for his master's in vocal performance and a certificate in opera. After graduation, he participated in young artist programs and landed small roles in summer festivals, while also picking up soloist work with vocal and symphonic groups.

Each experience led to new connections, which in turn led to recurring appearances with the Santa Fe Opera, the Asheville Lyric Opera and North Carolina Opera. Though Smith found enough performance and soloist work to keep busy, he was constantly looking for the next opportunity. "You audition for four dozen jobs, you get two of them, they last a month each, then you're in the market again," he says. "It's just a whole different way to live."

By 2018, Smith decided he was ready to step back from the exhausting cycle of travel and auditions. "I was getting a little older, my wife and I wanted to start a family and have a house," he says. "I made the conscious decision to find something else to do full time to get a little stability in my life."

That led him to the Mary Black School of Nursing, where he began as an administrative assistant in Greenville, then moved into the new role of clinical placement coordinator. Smith says the work is a welcome

change of pace, allowing him to now "sing for fun" and accept performance requests he used to have to turn down if an opera role came up.

At the start of 2020, Smith was preparing for some upcoming concerts. He had just sung a Beethoven's Ninth in Florida at the end of February 2020 when theaters everywhere went dark due to the pandemic.

The break was rough, he says, but he's starting to look toward performing again. He's working on the Franz Schubert song cycle "Winterreise," a piece he's always wanted to sing and hopes to do this fall.

"What I love most about music and singing is the music and singing," he says. "The fact that there's an audience there is great, but it's just a joy to get to make the music."

One regular attendee at Smith's performances has yet to be fully won over. Smith's young daughter, Charlotte, born last April, likes hearing him sing, he says, just not loudly. When Smith, accompanied by his mom on piano, recently recorded a video of "The Lord's Prayer" to send his aunt while she was ill, Charlotte made her opinion known halfway through the session.

"She did fine for the first couple of pages, and then when it started getting a little louder, she started not liking it," Smith says, laughing.

But, in a sign Smith may have a budding singer on his hands, "Charlotte was crying in B flat" – the same key her dad was singing. ■

# Intimate Conversations

Theater professor Laura Rikard is giving actors the language to talk about their bodies and boundaries.

BY ELIZABETH ANDERSON

It's Act 2, Scene 4, of "Measure for Measure" and theater students Jordan Montemayor, '21, and Marshall Branham, '21, are facing a challenging encounter.

Angelo, the character played by Branham, is aggressively pressuring Isabella, the character played by Montemayor, to have sex with him if she wants to save her brother's life.

The scene will require close physical contact between the two actors, as one character struggles against the advances of the other. The encounter is fraught with sexual violence, compounded by a power imbalance between the two characters.

But rather than jump into the scene, ignoring any discomfort, the actors first check in with Laura Rikard, assistant professor of theater, standing just off to the side.

Rikard is co-founder of Theatrical Intimacy Education (TIE), and since she and co-founder Chelsea Pace began their work in 2017, she has helped give actors in the theater and film industry the tools they need to acknowledge and work through scenes of intimacy and sexual violence.

"We have this idea that to get work in our industry, and not be labeled a problem to work with, you have to say

yes to anything that's asked of you," Rikard says. "The idea that theater or film folk can have boundaries, and be easy to work with, that idea is new."

TIE's work has taken on greater prominence in the wake of the #MeToo movement, as many organizations take a hard look at their workplace culture and the way sexual harassment has been handled. Intimate scenes in particular can leave actors vulnerable, especially without any guidance from a director.

As an intimacy coordinator, Rikard is empowering actors to express what they can and cannot do, and teaching them how to comfortably get through those awkward moments.

Consent-based practices form the core of Rikard's theater classes at USC Upstate and the many workshops she and Pace offer theater professionals all over the world. Rikard starts by giving her students a "self-care cue" – a word

they can say any time they need to take a break or to let her know they're feeling uncomfortable. That cue, she says, is "button."

"They can say that word, and I know, oh, there's something going on that they need to check in about," she explains.

Boundary practice is another tool Rikard uses. "It's a way for everybody to establish their physical boundaries before working with each other," she says.

The three-step process is one Montemayor and Branham turn to in their "Measure for Measure" rehearsal. Branham first shows Montemayor where she has permission to touch him. Then, as the two face each other, Branham holds up his hands in front of his face while Montemayor hovers hers just over his. As Branham slowly moves his hands down his body, indicating again where he can be touched, Montemayor's hands follow his. Finally, Branham tells Montemayor what he is comfortable with.

The steps ensure that before the actors have any physical contact, each fully understands where the other's boundaries are, Rikard says. Even more importantly, they know how to work through these moments in any


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*"Intimacy work is always going to be uncomfortable, but it doesn't have to be weird."*  
- Jordan Montemayor '21

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Laura Rikard, assistant professor of theater at USC Upstate, is co-founder of Theatrical Intimacy Education, which consults with theater and film professionals on the ethical staging of intimate scenes.

*“I’ve already heard our students start to use the language Laura uses in her teaching. It’s cool to see them adopting that. It makes them more employable, and puts them on the cutting edge of where this kind of work is going.” - Lee Neibert*





Above, Jordan Montemayor, '21, and Marshall Branham, '21, rehearse a scene from "Measure for Measure" that depicts a physical assault. Rikard used her skills as both an intimacy and a fight choreographer to help the actors work through the scene slowly, with regular boundary checks throughout. Below, Montemayor consults with Rikard during rehearsal.



production she's not involved in, she says.

"A lot of what this work is is beyond just physical intimacy, it's about establishing language and clarity when the body and mind are the instruments," she says.

Montemayor, who has taken Rikard's classes, says she appreciates the comfortable environment Rikard's approach creates. "You don't have to explain your boundaries, you don't have to explain why you need to take a moment to think or breathe," she says. "It's a very safe space to respect yourself and respect others."

Rikard is also careful to desexualize conversations around intimate moments, using vocabulary she calls "the ingredients." Any touching or kissing is broken down in an almost clinical, step by step way – the intensity of a touch is rated (skin level, muscle level, bone level), and the length of a kiss or touch is assigned a number of counts. A written record is then created for reference, which, Montemayor says, is important for both the actors and director.

"Sometimes actors will get caught in the moment and go longer, but it's easy to say, hey, that wasn't the choreography we wrote down and recorded, make sure you follow the recorded choreography of skin level, five counts," Montemayor says.

Melissa Breazeale, '21, says a skill she's found particularly valuable is "de-rolling" – putting space between yourself and the character you're portraying. She recalls a scene she was doing with a freshman that was about Eugenics and the sterilization of African Americans in North Carolina. In it, Breazeale had the role of a racist older white woman.

"After I would do the scene, I'd say, I am Melissa, I do not feel this way towards you, my scene partner – these are the words of a character I am playing," she says. "It's very helpful in scenes where emotions are high."

Lee Neibert, chair of the theatre department, who has brought Rikard in to assist on productions he's directed, is thrilled students not only are learning from a leading authority in the field, but are putting that education into action.

"I've already heard our students start to use the language Laura uses in her



teaching,” he says. “It’s cool to see them adopting that. It makes them more employable, and puts them on the cutting edge of where this kind of work is going.”

Even before coming to Upstate, Rikard gave workshops at the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival, where many students were first exposed to her work. She also recently received a Medallion, the organization’s highest regional award for those who have made outstanding contributions to theater.

Montemayor notes that before Rikard joined the theatre department, intimate scenes weren’t really discussed much – a director might tell actors “just kiss.” Not only has Rikard given them steps for doing a kiss, she’s also made sure every audition form contains consent questions – “are you comfortable kissing another actor, are you comfortable staging situations of domestic violence.”

“So you know from the get-go what you’re getting into,” Montemayor says.

Younger actors in particular benefit from a shared set of tools to rely on, Breazeale says. She notes some may lack the life experiences to know what to do in an intimate scene, and without direction, they can end up feeling awkward. Intimacy choreography removes the guesswork and helps put everyone on the same page.

“Theatrical intimacy, and intimacy choreography, give you a chance to figure out what you’re comfortable with and what your actual boundaries are,” she says.

Rikard emphasizes that consent-based work does not mean anything goes. She, too, has boundaries that she asks be respected. “As theater people, we are looking to express emotions, and often in our work, people see that as a reason not to have any boundaries about things they’ve been through,” she says. “So they often see acting teachers as someone they can start processing trauma with.”

Rikard says she makes clear to students that while she has mental health first aid certification, she is not a mental health specialist, and if they want to talk about a traumatic experience, she can direct them to a more appropriate resource. She also doesn’t want to create the impression that discussing trauma in a professional setting is OK.

“That’s actually super unprofessional behavior, even if they’re using that moment as part of their process,” she says.

Another misconception she sometimes comes across is that she’s a sexual harassment mediator. While intimacy choreography can help actors feel safe on a particular set or stage, Rikard says it is not a panacea for



Below left, Montemayor and Branham go through boundary practice during rehearsal. During the process, Montemayor hovers her hands over Branham’s as he moves them over his body to show her where he’s OK with being touched. The process will be repeated with Montemayor guiding before the two rehearse the assault scene, above.

decades of misbehavior.


“What essentially exists in the industry is this gaping wound that has existed because of irresponsible wielding of authority,” she says. “For the wound to heal, we’ve got to look at where the power dynamics have gone awry.”

Intimacy education is a part of the solution, but “we’re really there just to make sure the moments of close physical relationships go well,” Rikard says.

Rikard hopes as more theater professionals become versed in intimacy work, it will one day become the industry norm, without the need for outside help. For now, Rikard is encouraged that actors themselves often are the ones requesting an intimacy coordinator on set before they’ll do a show.

She says younger actors, too, are asking important questions about how intimacy is handled when they audition for graduate programs, pushing those programs to have answers ready.

Even the pandemic has helped educate people in the industry, Rikard says. With all Theatrical Intimacy Education workshops online over the past year, many professionals took advantage of their time at home to register and learn more about the work.

“Everybody’s got a lot of relearning to do,” Rikard says. “We can recognize where we can do better, and then do better.” 



# Faculty Achievements

**Darlene Amendolair** (Nursing) published the article “Art and Science of Caring of Nursing: Art Based Learning” in the International Journal of Human Caring.

**Warren Bareiss** (Communication) was appointed to the National Communication Association mental health and communication task force, which provides recommendations for how NCA can expand mental health research in communication and provide support for the mental health of students and faculty.

**Mary Burns** (Business), with co-authors Nishani Vincent and Amy Igou, published “Preparing for the Robots: A Proposed Course in Robotic Process Automation” in the Journal of Emerging Technologies in Accounting.

**Sarah Butler** (Advisement and Career Enrichment Services director) was named a member of the 2021 class of Leadership Spartanburg Program.

**Logan Camp-Spivey** (Nursing) presented “Barriers and Facilitators to Elementary School-Based Interventions Targeting Physical Activity and Nutritional Intake Behaviors to Address Childhood Obesity: An Integrative Review” at the 16th annual South Carolina Upstate Research Symposium.

**Vincent Connors** (Biology) co-authored the article “Molecular Data Reshape Our Understanding of the Life Cycles of Three Digeneans (Monorchidae and Gymnophallidae) Infecting the Bivalve, *Donax variabilis*: It’s Just a Facultative Host!” in the journal Parasite. He also co-authored the article “Dynamics of Infection and Pathology Induced by the Aporocotylid, *Cardicola laruei*, in Spotted Seatrout, *Cynoscion nebulosus* (Sciaenidae)” in the International Journal for Parasitology.

**Michele Covington** (Criminal Justice) has developed a new professional association for crime analysts in South and North Carolina. The Carolinas Crime Analysis Association (CCAA) is designed to enhance professionalism and collaboration among crime analysts in the Carolinas and also provides opportunities for USC Upstate students in the crime analysis concentration to communicate with working analysts.

**Ona Egbue** (Engineering) presented “Factors that Influence Electric Vehicle Adoption” at the Green Living Seminar at the Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts.

**Lynette Gibson** (Nursing), **Latasha Gooden** (Nursing), **Lindsay Grainger** (Nursing), **Toshua Kennedy** (Nursing), **Ginny Webb** (Biology), **David Marlow** (Linguistics), **Stephanie Barnhill** (Nursing), **Esther Godfrey** (English) and **Matt Donaldson** (Graphic Design) were all presenters at the 2021 Gulf-South Summit.

**Lynette Gibson** (Nursing) has been accepted into the 2021 statewide Diversity Leaders Initiative.

**Lindsay Grainger** authored the post “Human Trafficking, a Public Health Crisis Exacerbated by a Global Pandemic: What is the Nurse’s Response?” on the Wolters Kluwer Nursing Education blog.

**Uma Gupta** (Business) co-authored the book “A Practitioner’s Guide to Data Governance: A Case-Based Approach.”

**Araceli Hernández-Laroche** (Modern Languages) was the keynote speaker at the Business & Professional Women of South Carolina Annual Convention in April. She was awarded the 2020 SC Career Woman of the Year by Business & Professional Women of South Carolina. Hernández-Laroche also will serve on a scholarship committee hosted by the Consulate of México in Raleigh (serving the Carolinas). In January, she presented on a Facebook Live panel in Spanish hosted by the Consulate of México, “Oportunidades para acceder a una educación superior en Carolina del Sur.”

**Tracy Hudgins**, **Logan Camp-Spivey**, and **Shirleatha Lee** (Nursing) co-authored the article “Leveraging Innovation to Design a Psychiatric Mental Health Simulation for Undergraduate Nursing Students During the COVID-19 Global Pandemic” in the journal Nursing Education Perspectives.

**Lisa Johnson** (Center for Women’s and Gender Studies) authored the article “‘Neuroqueer Feminism: Turning with Tenderness toward Borderline Personality Disorder” in the journal Signs.

**Colleen Kilgore** (Nursing) led a public discussion on COVID-19 at Regenesi

Health Center in Spartanburg.

**Colby King** (Sociology), along with **Warren Bareiss** (Communication) and sociology students Mo Swint and Emma Miller, co-authored the post “‘On Your Time’: First Generation College Students’ Reflections” on the Everyday Sociology blog. King also co-authored the chapter “Everyday Public Sociology” in “The Routledge International Handbook on Public Sociology”; the chapter “Class Beyond the Classroom: Supporting First Generation and Working-Class Students, Faculty and Staff” in “The Routledge International Handbook for Working Class Studies”; and the post “Binging Bob’s Burgers: Social Class, Shrimp Cocktail and First-Generation College Students” on the Everyday Sociology blog. He co-presented “How Public Funding Shapes Mobility at Access-Oriented State Comprehensive Universities Across South Carolina,” at the Public Investment in Higher Education: Research, Strategies, and Policy Implications webinar; and “Have NSF S-STEM Scholarships Changed SEISMIC Scholars’ Work Circumstances?” at the 2021 Massachusetts PKAL Network Minter Meeting.

**Courtney McDonald** (Criminal Justice), with Katherine Martinez, co-authored the article “Inter-sibling Violence as a Mechanism of Hegemony: Retrospective Accounts from a Non-binary and LGBTQ+ Sample” in the Journal of Gender-Based Violence.

**Anita Nag** (Biochemistry) received a grant from the University of South Carolina Office of the Vice President for Research COVID-19 Initiative for the project “Understanding the Molecular Function of Nonstructural Protein 1 in COVID-19 Infection Using Computational Modeling and Proteomic Studies.” She is also the author of “End of the Semester Review of Biochemistry Using a Case Study on Phosphoglucose Isomerase Deficiency” in the Journal of Chemical Education.

**Kristi Miller** (Nursing) presented “Effect of Root Cause Analysis Education on Patient Safety Attitudes and Practices” at the 16th annual South Carolina Upstate Research Symposium. Her abstract “Measuring Pre-Licensure



Nursing Students' Perceptions of Safety Culture" has been accepted for presentation at the Sigma 46th biennial convention in November 2021. Miller was also the first and only member from South Carolina to be selected for the Quality and Safety Education for Nurses (QSEN) Academic Taskforce.

**Maria Montesó** (Spanish), **Susannah Waldrop** (Student Success Center) and **Araceli Hernández-Laroche** (Modern Languages), along with students in the USC Upstate Avanzando program, led the roundtable "An Opportunity to Have a Voice: UnidosUS Líderes Avanzando Through College at USC Upstate" at the Southeastern Immigration Studies Association conference.

**Thanh Nguyen** (Business) and USC Upstate student William Gregg co-authored the papers "Bitcoin: A New Form of Investment or Another Traditional Asset?" and "Contemporary Investment Strategies and Comparison Applications of Bitcoin" in the 13th Annual USC Upstate Student Research Journal. Along with McCrady Gwinn (Business), they also co-authored "An Efficient Portfolio for the Next Stock Market Crash" in the 16th Annual SC Upstate Research Symposium proceedings.

**Calvin Odhiambo** (Sociology) received the Spring 2021 Scholarly Course Reallocation Award for the project "Male-Female Disparity in Covid-19 Severity in the United States."

**Kristina Randall** (Education) authored the article "Use of a iPhone Task Analysis Application to Increase Employment-Related Chores for Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities," which was selected as the 2020 Research Article of the Year within the Journal of Special Education Technology.

**Laura Rikard** (Theatre) received a Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival Region IV medallion for her research on theatrical intimacy education. It is the most prestigious regional award given by KCACTF, and recognizes individuals and organizations who have made outstanding contributions to theater education.

**Josh Ruppel** (Chemistry) is the co-author, with several USC Upstate students, of "Synthesis and Evaluation of Porphyrin Glycoconjugates Varying in Linker Length: Preliminary Effects on the Photodynamic Inactivation of

Mycobacterium Smegmatis" in the journal RSC Advances.


**Kimberly Shorter** (Biology) received an ASPIRE I grant from the University of South Carolina to investigate the effects of an IRAK1 knockout on autophagy and dendritic spines using Crispr-Cas9.

**G. Hubbard Smalls** (Business) received his doctorate in 2020.

**John Strandholm** co-authored the book "Practice Exercises for Intermediate Microeconomic Theory." He also had a grant proposal funded through the Scholarly Course Reallocation Program titled "Picking Green Teams: How Environmental Groups Form Alliances Within a Market." His article "Promotion of Green Technology Under Different Environmental Policies" was published in Games magazine.

**Julie Wade** and **Mike Dinger** co-authored "A Great Escape: The Effect of Negative Public Affiliation on Belongingness to Virtual Communities" in Communications of the Association for Information Systems. They also co-authored "Social Media and Selection: Political Issue Similarity, Liking, and the Moderating Effect of Social Media Platform" in MIS Quarterly.

**Carolina Webber** (Communication) was awarded a 2021 RISE grant for her research project "Southern Professional Minority Women Communicating Experiences of Sexual Harassment." She also edited the book "Working in the Margins: Domestic and Minority Women in Higher Education," which draws on critical and feminist perspectives and intersectionality to develop strategies for teaching, surviving and/or thriving in higher education. **Renu Pariyadath** (Communication) contributed a chapter to the book, and the cover was designed by **Bridget Kirkland** (Graphic Design).

**Tracey Woodard** (Criminal Justice) and **Courtney McDonald** (Criminal Justice), under the auspices of the Center for Women's and Gender Studies, hosted an online series called Friday Focus. The series covered such topics as American politics post-inauguration; eugenics and disability in modern China; incarcerated women and forced sterilization; and women shattering the glass ceiling. Woodard and McDonald also co-authored "Criminal Justice Student and Alumni Perspectives on Advising" in the Journal of Criminal Justice Education. 

# RISE

## Research Initiatives for Summer Engagement

Twelve USC Upstate faculty were awarded RISE (Research Initiatives for Summer Engagement) grants from the University of South Carolina Office of the Vice President for Research. The RISE program provides financial support for faculty conducting research and scholarly activities during the summer. The 2021 recipients from Upstate are:

- **Chung-Yean Chiang** (Logistics & Supply Chain Management)
- **Christa Christ** (Psychology)
- **Mike Dinger** (Management)
- **Ona Egbue** (Engineering)
- **Nicholas Gaffney** (African American Studies)
- **Shuang Hundley** (Communication)
- **Yin-Chi Liao** (Management)
- **Alexander Lorenz** (German)
- **Matthew Placek** (Political Science)
- **Xiao Tang** (Statistics & Analytics)
- **Scott Tanner** (Biology)
- **Carolina Webber** (Communication)

# History in the Making

*Upstate students preserve their COVID-19 memories in real time.*

Adjunct instructor Stephanie King had been thinking about the commemorative speech assignment for her fall public speaking class when it hit her – why not have students talk about the impact of COVID-19 on their lives? An experienced television and radio journalist, King knew how powerful firsthand storytelling could be, and wanted to give her students the opportunity to reflect on a major historical event as it was happening.

“I knew that if I did not stop and do this, we would lose it,” King says.

While looking online to see if anyone else on campus was doing something similar, she came across the “Write It Down” COVID-19 Community Archiving Project at the USC Upstate Library. King reached out to archives coordinator Ann Merryman, and offered to contribute her students’ oral projects. Merryman enthusiastically accepted, and offered guidelines on how to prepare the audio files.

Those student histories have now been catalogued and added to the university’s pandemic archives, where, King says, her students’ children and grandchildren may one day hear what it was like during this difficult time. “I see USC Upstate becoming the hub, the repository, of the tears and the fears from these years,” she says. “The school has opened up its heart to receive these.”

Recording transcriptions courtesy of USC Upstate Archives.

Photos on this page courtesy of assistant professor **Bridget Kirkland** and students in her spring 2020 digital photography class. “I felt it was important to document a day in the life of COVID-19 for one of their assignments,” says Kirkland. “They were feeling confused and wanted to express themselves. From buying the last pack of toilet paper at Walmart to shopping with masks and traveling through eerily empty airports, students posted weekly photos of their lives to Instagram, and critiqued each other’s work in the comments section. It turned out to be very successful.”

**Ashley Rhodes:** I haven’t been on campus a lot. Which is very sad, because that’s one of the experiences that college is all about. Seeing something different, being somewhere different, meeting new faces, seeing the diversity, seeing the different things that come in life that we don’t see on a normal basis before we do hit college.

**Carissa Fripp:** Before the pandemic, I can’t say I wasn’t already a homebody, because I was. I didn’t really go out like that. I always focused on my education and focused on my books. ... I can’t really say it bothered me that much to stay at home, but it was more of the fact of — I couldn’t, I didn’t have a choice. I like having the choice to be able to go out and do this and go see something, but once the pandemic started, I didn’t really have a choice because we were in quarantine and you couldn’t go out and see anybody.



Photo credit: Camille Hammond '05





Photo credit: Jarred Bradley '22

**Harrison Howell:** So, the first impressions of the lockdowns, like most students, I was just excited for a break and we were more upset that we didn't get another week of spring vacation ... that was our first concern, that we were not getting an extra spring break. Seems like so long ago, and now it's such a minimal issue. And once that reality set in, that we were out of school, and indefinitely, the daily routine started changing for everyone. And virtual school became the biggest challenge for every student and professor.

**A'Brasia Erby:** I was just getting used to college, but I'm only on my second year. I was getting used to being on the campus, learning each building, learning how college really went, learning how to do study hall and tutoring and just walking around the campus, living life like a regular college student. Now I'm doing work 100% online.

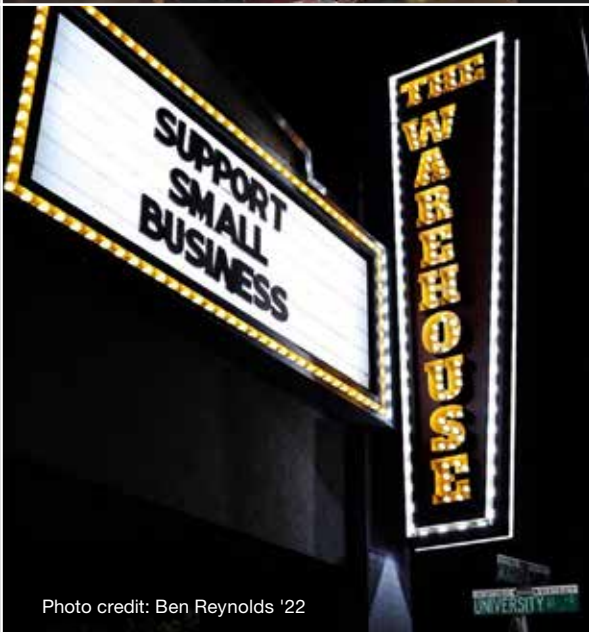


Photo credit: Ben Reynolds '22

**Madeline Davis:** I work in a very small HR department and so having to get sent home ... I was home for several months, I think March, April and May. Part of May, maybe? And so I did not have a paycheck or very much of a paycheck during those periods, which was obviously stressful. And then when I went back to work, it was still very different than it had been before. I was at a different place where there was less people.

**Collin Sneed:** The things that I found that really helped me out with online school was, one, I would put my phone up. So if I had a class at 12, I would go plug my phone in, into the charger in my bedroom and turn it on silent and come up and out like I was in class ... Another thing was I made myself a schedule. So I would plan out my classes, plan out where my tests were ... And then I was able to get into a flow of things.

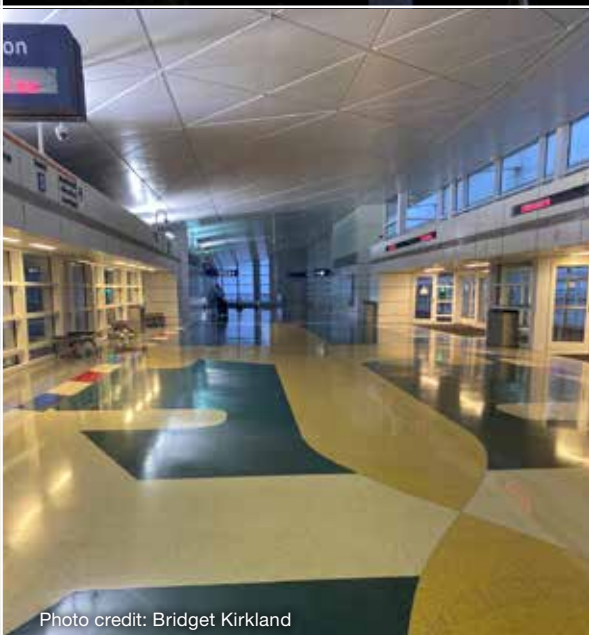


Photo credit: Bridget Kirkland

**Hannah Anders:** When you think of college, you think of going to class, meeting new people, and getting involved on campus. Instead, I'm in my dorm room on the computer for most of the day, trying my best to teach myself and complete assignments on time. Luckily enough, I have a roommate, but my social life has drastically decreased due to this pandemic.

**Kayla Ramey:** Quarantine has affected me a lot emotionally. I'm a very extroverted person. I enjoy being out in public, hanging out with my friends, and doing anything social. With the new quarantine restrictions and social distancing, I wasn't able to be my true self. This caused me to become a little depressed, because I tend to experience a lot more sadness when I'm alone for too long.





Mikayla Woods



Ahmad Cheeks and Jim Thorpe



Stephinee Roper



Preslar Skaar



Makayla Morgan, Madison McNally, Elizabeth McCollough,  
Heatherly Edney and Rilee Rhodes  
Photo credit: @maddiebaldinelliphotog



Andrew Manasas  
Photo credit: @maddiebaldinelliphotog



Angelie Mehta



Garrett Black



Kenslee Crocker  
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Nijil Staley  
Photo credit: @maddiebaldinelliphotog



Mare Pastrana, Ahmad Cheeks and  
Maddie Yocklin



Aronde Stewart





Adib Kapasi



Jarred Bradley



Erika Quinn



Breana Williams



Brooke Satterfield



Gregory Castillo



Ella Moyseyuk



Ahmad Cheeks



Ayana Jones



Sam Merrell and Brady Redmon



Paigan Bentley



Ludovic Nkoth



## ADVANCEMENT

### Dear Spartan Community,

The first half of this year has definitely proved the truth of the old adage “time flies.” In May, USC Upstate was thrilled to once again hold in-person ceremonies to celebrate our graduates. For the first time ever, the university held two commencement ceremonies, along with a hooding ceremony for our master’s candidates. Seeing our students’ joy and excitement as they posed for pictures, and their parents’ pride, was inspiring. I particularly enjoyed the individual touches the graduates displayed as they crossed the stage -- one young woman wore beautiful Upstate green heels, while other graduates shared messages of gratitude and optimism on festively decorated graduation caps.

Commencement is also a reminder of how many of our students depend on financial aid and scholarships to help them achieve their degrees. I am thrilled to share that the USC Upstate Foundation has worked with generous donors to open 14 new scholarships this fiscal year. Five of them are endowed:

- **Dr. June Claire Dickinson Carter Scholarship Endowment:** This was established by faculty of USC Upstate’s Languages, Literature and Composition Department for one English major and one world language major/minor (Spanish, American Sign Language, French, Chinese, or German).

- **Pamela Gray Heath Scholarship Endowment:** This annual scholarship was originally established by Tommy Young of Young Office in Spartanburg, South Carolina, to honor Pamela Heath’s 25 years of service to the company. Heath and her husband, Scott Heath, took the extra step to endow the award for student-athletes at the George Dean Johnson, Jr. College of Business and Economics.

- **Kasler & Gerry Hughes Scholarship Endowment:** Established by educator Dr. David L. Eubanks in honor of his friends Kasler and Gerry Hughes, this honorary scholarship supports South Carolina residents enrolled in the School of Education, Human Performance, and Health earning a degree in teacher education.

- **The LaRoche Family Men's Soccer Scholarship Endowment:** Established by a “pioneer” of the USC Upstate men’s soccer program, Frederic “Fred” F. LaRoche II, ’83, and his wife, Diane L. Chafee, the LaRoche Family Men's Soccer Scholarship supports men’s soccer student-athletes.

- **Ralph & Virginia Hendricks Foundation Scholarship Endowment:** Established by the Ralph & Virginia Hendricks Foundation, this scholarship supports undergraduate students from the Golden Strip area of South Carolina.

Annual scholarships can be established with a minimum donation of \$2,500. Endowed scholarships can be established starting at \$25,000 and can be paid in installments for up to five years. The USC Upstate Foundation is grateful to all the donors who are assisting our students by opening new scholarships or contributing to existing ones.

If you’d like to help our students realize their academic goals, please give us a call at 864-503-5000 to learn more about establishing a scholarship.

Thank you for being part of our mission and a valued member of the USC Upstate community. I wish you a safe summer.

Interim Vice Chancellor for University Advancement  
Executive Director for University Foundations



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## Welcome New Commissioners



**Victor P. Austin Jr., '90**, is founder and president of Palmetto Home Care Upstate, LLC.

He previously served two full terms, from 2012-2018, as vice president of the USC Upstate Foundation board of directors. A native of Greenville, Austin has also been on the advisory board of the Urban League of the Upstate, the USC Upstate Alumni Association board of directors, the executive board of the Blue Ridge Council of the Boy Scouts of America and The American Heart Association board.



**Renee Dean, '03**, is director of nursing for Spartanburg Regional's

surgical intensive care division. She has

spent three decades in her field, and has 14 years of experience in critical care. Dean is a former Nurse of the Year for the Surgical Intensive Care Unit and has served on several hospital and system-wide committees. She is a member of the American Nurses Association and Sigma Theta Tau, the international honor society of nursing.



**Johnny Lee** is the manager of White's Pine Street Exxon, where he has worked for 40 years.

He and his wife, Laurie, started the Josh Lee Memorial Scholarship Fund in 2015 and the annual Josh Lee Memorial 5K in memory of their son, a USC Upstate student and a track and field athlete.

## In Memorium: Mac Cates



Longtime USC Upstate friend and supporter MacFarlane "Mac" Cates, 93, died May 2 at his home in Spartanburg. Cates, a native of Spartanburg, rose to become CEO of textile manufacturer Arkwright Mills in Spartanburg, a role he held until his retirement.

He was also past president of the South Carolina Textile Manufacturers Association; past president of the American Textile Manufacturers Institute; and a member of many professional and nonprofit boards, including the South Carolina Independent Colleges and Universities Foundation, C&S Bank, Spartan Mills, United Way, Spartanburg County Foundation, and Spartanburg Regional Medical Center Foundation.

Cates gave generously to many

organizations in the community, including USC Upstate. His support included:

- The Cates Chancellor's Scholarship, providing need-based financial aid to a full-time student who is a graduate of a South Carolina high school and has at least a 3.0 GPA;
- The Josh Lee Memorial Scholarship, established by the family of the late Josh Lee to benefit a student-athlete on the cross country/track and field team with at least a 3.0 GPA;
- The Jacob's Challenge Scholarship (now the Impact Education Scholarship), established to provide funding for education students from underrepresented groups;
- The USC Upstate Fund.

## All Eyes on the Natural World

In April, Studio Upstate hosted "Seeing Through Their Eyes," a photography exhibit by Spartanburg students depicting the natural world around them during the pandemic. The project, a collaboration between the Spartanburg Science Center, the Spartanburg Area Conservancy and the USC Upstate Foundation, distributed 325 disposable cameras and nature guides to students and encouraged them to go outside and explore. Students were also given guided tours of some places, including the USC Upstate arboretum, where biology professor Jon Storm led a nature walk. From a group of 30 photos that were selected for display, residents voted on the three to receive community choice awards.



# A Tradition of Servant Leadership

For Anne Flynn, ties to Spartanburg and USC Upstate run long and deep. She was appointed to the Spartanburg County Commission for Higher Education in 2019, following in the footsteps of her cousin, Louis P. Howell, who served on the commission for 10 years. But she credits her father, Spartanburg native Edward Patterson “Pat” Perrin, with developing her love of the community and her passion for public service.

“His love of USC Upstate and this region was instilled in me from an early age,” says Flynn. “He was truly committed to the mission of this university and believed in its ability to transform lives and families.”

Flynn says Perrin, like three generations before him and two who followed, graduated from the University of South Carolina School of Law. It made perfect sense, then, that Flynn should marry an attorney. Her husband, Larry, is also a graduate of the USC School of Law and currently is of counsel to Pope Flynn, LLC, a firm focusing on public finance and governmental law. The Flynn’s son, Lawrence, is a member as well.

Flynn herself worked for a brief time in the legal field. “It’s a fun story,” she says with a laugh. “I had been working in the travel industry and had gone to a dinner party at my landlady’s house. One of her guests happened to be a local attorney. We started talking and by the end of the evening, he had hired me as a paralegal in his firm—doubling my salary!”

About a week after starting the new job, Flynn met Larry while working at the courthouse in Charleston, and the rest is history. The couple married and returned to Spartanburg in 1980 and raised three children, Lawrence, Tatum and Anne Porché. “We have six grandchildren,” says Flynn with great pride, “all of whom carry forth our family names: Lucy, Tatum, Zeigler, Rupert, Anne Charlton



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*“I’m incredibly impressed by the caliber of our new chancellor and faculty, and their commitment to our students. The combination of a dedicated faculty and staff, a stunning campus, and an affordable, quality education is the key to our continued success.”*

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and Betsy. I adore being 'Tay Tay,' my grandmother name!"

Outside of her time as a wife, mother and grandmother, Flynn is devoted to the community. She has a natural gift for fundraising, a skill that has served many local organizations well. In addition to her role as a commissioner, she currently serves as chair of the board of trustees of the Spartanburg Regional Foundation and is treasurer of the Noble Tree Foundation, an organization established by Milliken founder Roger Milliken, with a mission to beautify Spartanburg. She is active with the United Way of the Piedmont and the Vera Davis Parson Garden Club, which, as a master gardener herself, she joined in 1983. Additionally, Flynn has worked with Spartanburg Community College on a horticultural series called "Arboretum Adventures."

"I love Spartanburg and the people who live here," says Flynn. "For nine years I served on the foundation of the Charles Lea Center, and over time, whether it's been through the foundations for the center, our church or the hospital, I've had the privilege of knowing and working with incredibly talented people who help make this community thrive. I am thrilled to be part of it."

Like her father and cousin, Louis Howell, Flynn believes that USC Upstate plays a critical role in the growth of Spartanburg and the Upstate region. "This community is special and our public university plays an important role in providing the skilled graduates our employers need. Being able to provide an educated workforce is key to continuing to attract companies to our area, and in turn, provide career paths for our students, so many of whom will settle right here."

"I'm so excited by the potential growth of USC Upstate," Flynn adds. "I'm incredibly impressed by the caliber of our new chancellor and faculty, and their commitment to our students. The combination of a dedicated faculty and staff, a stunning campus, and an affordable, quality education is the key to our continued success. I love to watch first-time visitors to campus step back and say, 'Whoa, this is amazing.'" 

# The Apple Doesn't Fall Far

Anne Flynn gives generously, of both her time and money. Her father, the late Edward "Pat" Perrin was a highly regarded leader in the community, and like him, Flynn values collaboration and the weight of new thoughts and ideas in strengthening organizations or initiatives.

"When you can give to things you care about, whether time or financial support, it's significant," says Flynn. "If you are fortunate enough to be able to contribute both, that's a powerful combination. You never know how one person can impact another."

Flynn says she inherited a philanthropic spirit from both her father and her mother. In 2014, her father established the Anne Porchér Z. Perrin Endowed Scholarship at USC Upstate in honor of his wife and her love of Spartanburg and education. This honorary scholarship is awarded to incoming freshmen with a minimum 3.0 GPA, who are within the top 30% of their high school class and are residents of Spartanburg County. Three scholarships are awarded every year to students selected from each of the public high schools in Spartanburg County Districts 3, 6, and 7, and are renewable for three additional years if the student maintains a GPA of 2.5 to the sophomore year, 2.75 to the junior year and a 3.0 senior year.

Anne Porchér Perrin passed away earlier this year at the age of 93. "My mother was an inspiration to many," says Flynn. "She believed in the power of education and wanted access to it to be easy and affordable. Both of my parents are missed dearly by all who knew them."

For more information about the Anne Porchér Z. Perrin Scholarship, please contact Erin Callicott in University Advancement, [ecallico@uscupstate.edu](mailto:ecallico@uscupstate.edu).



# Standout Spartans Celebrated

Seven standout alumni were recognized this spring during a virtual Alumni Awards ceremony. The prerecorded video highlighted the achievements of the honorees, who were selected for the positive impact they have had on others' lives and their commitment to the Spartan spirit. The full presentation can be found at [uscupstate.edu/alumni](https://uscupstate.edu/alumni).



## Distinguished Alumni Award

**Kim Moe Krohn**, '08, and **Stewart Stanbra**, '08  
Co-founders, College Scholarships USA

Kim Moe Krohn and Stewart Stanbra, from Norway and England, respectively, founded College Scholarships USA while they were still students at USC Upstate. Both played on the men's soccer team, and wanted to help other international athletes study and compete at American universities. Their organization connects student-athletes in a variety of sports with scholarship opportunities at U.S. schools. They also offer services that help students transition from collegiate athletics to professional sports.



## Outstanding Alumni

**Shannon Coleman**, '09, Director of housing and residential life, Johnson & Wales University

Shannon Coleman has helped thousands of college students have a positive residential experience. Over a decade in residential life, she has held positions at five institutions, including her alma mater. She received the 2020 Humanitarian and Service awards from the Southeastern Association of Housing Officers in recognition of her work. She is also the owner of Uniquely Unwrapped Desserts, a bakery specializing in cakes, cookies and other baked goods.



## Young Alumni

**Victor Durrah Jr.**, '08, Co-founder, Brothers Restoring Urban Hope (BRUH)

Victor Durrah Jr. co-founded Brothers Restoring Urban Hope while still a student at USC Upstate. The organization provides group mentorship, leadership training and spiritual guidance to elementary through middle school students in the Upstate South Carolina region. Durrah is active in many community organizations, including the Gaffney alumni chapter of Kappa Alpha Psi fraternity, Habitat for Humanity, and Athletes in Ministry at Born Anew Church. His honors include the Mary L. Thomas Award for Civic Leadership and Community Change and the Talented Tenth Award from the Urban League.



## Distinguished Alumni Award

**Loreta Dylgjeri**, '06, Community liaison,  
South Carolina School for the Deaf and the Blind

Loreta Dylgjeri has been with the South Carolina School for the Deaf and the Blind for more than 26 years, serving in many positions throughout her tenure. She has been an advocate for nurturing instruction, guided learning, and establishing a welcoming environment for all students and families at SCSDB. She also has served on the Charles Lea Center Foundation board, helping to raise money for a nonprofit that provides homes, employment and services to children and adults with intellectual disabilities or chronic medical conditions.



## Outstanding Alumni

**Trevor Ivey**, '06, Chief of staff and founding administrator, Liberty STEAM Charter School

Trevor Ivey has spent more than 10 years in the public school system as a teacher, assistant principal, and principal. He helped launch Sumter County's first public charter school, Liberty STEAM, and is also a national board certified teacher. He was Sumter County's teacher of the year in 2013, and a finalist for South Carolina teacher of the year in 2014. He is also active with the boards of the South Carolina School Improvement Council and Central Carolina Technical College Foundation.



## Young Alumni

**Lanie Whitaker**, '14, Owner and president,  
Arrowhead Design Co.

Lanie Whitaker founded Arrowhead Design Co. in 2016. Her design agency offers website design, social media management, and branding and logo design. The company was named Small Business of the Year in 2020 by OneSpartanburg. As part of Arrowhead's commitment to helping nonprofits in the community, one organization every year receives a redesigned website at no cost. Whitaker also serves on the board of the Spartanburg Soup Kitchen and is an active member of the Spartanburg Young Professionals.





# SCCHE Reception for Chancellor- Elect Harris

University of South Carolina Interim President Harris Pastides joined members of the Spartanburg County Commission for Higher Education, community leaders, faculty and staff at an evening reception on the Quad to welcome Chancellor-Elect Bennie Harris to the Upstate region. SCCHE Chair David Church acknowledged the significance of USC Upstate's partnerships in the community, including recent collaborations with the Spartanburg Regional Hospital System. Pastides extended a warm welcome to Harris while recognizing the service of Interim Chancellor Derham Cole, who helped guide the university through one of its most challenging periods.

## Don't be shy, we want to hear from you!



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## SPARTY'S BALL GIVES ATHLETICS A BOUNCE

The 2021 Sparty's Ball brought a crowd of friends and fans of Spartan Athletics to the terrace outside the University Readiness Center in May. The sold-out event raised enough funds to cover new lockers for one of four team locker rooms at the Readiness Center. Athletics is working to improve the locker room facilities for men's and women's soccer, softball and baseball, and replace the old carpet and secondhand football lockers that are currently in the rooms. The planned upgrades include 30 new lockers in each room.

Special thanks to the sponsors of Sparty's Ball: the Hennessy family; the USC Upstate Foundation board of directors; the Spartanburg County Commission for Higher Education; Ingles; Contec; Kapasi Glass Mart; White's Pine Street Exxon; Capital Corp.; USC Upstate Foundation; Quality Chrysler of Greenwood; Founders Federal Credit Union; Ciclops Cyderi & Brewery.







## HOMECOMING 2021: THEN, NOW, FOREVER

USC Upstate moved its annual homecoming celebration to spring this year in response to pandemic safety protocols. During the week of March 21-26, students enjoyed virtual game nights, glow kickball and trivia contests, among other activities, while alumni took part in their own virtual games and came out to support the men's and women's soccer teams. New this year, visitors to campus were greeted by homecoming-themed signs painted by students in Jenny Bonner's art class.

The soccer games also served as a mini reunion, as past players celebrated the 40th anniversary of the men's soccer program (see story, page 46) and 20th anniversary of the women's program. Mya Izzard, '21, was crowned the "Spirit of Upstate" winner during the halftime of the women's game.





# On the Way Up

*Upstate rises to highest Conference Cup finish in Division I era.*

Despite the challenges of competing during a pandemic, USC Upstate student-athletes and coaches celebrated a record-breaking 2020-21 athletic year. The Spartans finished fourth in the Big South rankings for the George F. "Buddy" Sasser Cup Trophy, their highest ranking since moving to Division I.

The Sasser Cup Trophy is awarded to the Big South member institution with the most successful year athletically, based on an average points system.

"I'm so proud of our student-athletes, coaches and support staff for our historic finish in the Sasser Cup," says Vice Chancellor for Intercollegiate Athletics Daniel Feig. "This result is a direct result of their hard work and determination throughout the year."

Since moving to the Big South, USC Upstate has appeared in one other Sasser Cup ranking, in 2018-19, when it ranked seventh out of 11. The award was not given during the 2019-20 year due to the cancellation of all spring sports.

Feig recalls meeting with staff last August and noting that Upstate would

be starting the season on an equal footing with every other program, since no one had been able to play during the pandemic. "Our performance would be determined by our willingness to work hard and be flexible and creative during such a challenging time, and our student-athletes and coaches rose to the occasion in a spectacular fashion!" says Feig.


He's also confident Upstate can do even better. "Our fourth-place finish isn't our final destination, but it is a good start on our way up to competing for conference championships on a regular basis," he says.

USC Upstate's previous best finish came as a member of the ASUN Conference in 2011-12, when it placed sixth out of the league's then 10 institutions.

The Spartans' rise in the 2020-21 standings was led by the women's sports programs. Upstate softball finished second in the regular season, and runner-up at the conference championship, while women's track and field finished fourth, the best finish at a conference meet in program history. Upstate women's golf placed

third at the conference championship, and volleyball closed the spring season on a six-match winning streak to end the season in fifth place.

On the men's side, the best team finishes came from men's soccer (runner-up in the conference tournament) and baseball, which was seeded No. 2 going into the conference tournament in late May.

The Sasser Cup Trophy is named for former Big South Commissioner Buddy Sasser. Schools are awarded points for both regular-season and tournament finishes in each of the league's 19 championships, and the average of the combined total is used to determine the overall point allocation in the respective sport. One bonus point is added to the average total for each conference champion/AQ representative, and for any teams that receive at-large NCAA championship berths. Teams tied in regular-season or tournament play split the points earned. Each member's overall point totals are then divided by the number of sports sponsored by that school to determine the average. 

## SASSER CUP STANDINGS

1. Campbell .....	9.86-10.04
2. High Point .....	9.52
3. Radford .....	7.68
4. <b>USC Upstate</b> .....	7.02-7.21
5. Gardner-Webb .....	6.68-6.82
6. Charleston Southern .....	6.64
7. UNC Asheville .....	6.54
8. Winthrop .....	6.18
9. Longwood .....	6.10
10. Presbyterian College .....	5.71-5.89
11. Hampton .....	3.63







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Former men's soccer players at a reunion in March. Back row (from left): Sammy Acosta, David Acosta, Chris Baretta, Rinaldi Alphonse, Jorge Atehortura, Kyle Juell, Sean Hartley, Terence McGee, James Moriarty, Derek Taylor, Brandon Williams, Matt Hill. Front row: Nick Buxton, Trevor Anderson, Andrew Hyslop, Carter Ridgeway, Josh Martin, Carlos Osorio, Ish Roque-Velasco, Vic Pace

# Band of Brothers

*From the start, men's soccer has always been a tight-knit family*

BY TREVOR ANDERSON

In the late 1970s, Spartanburg County's economy was continuing to drift away from domestic textile manufacturing to more global, diversified industries. The community was attracting new foreign direct investment and skilled workers from across the world.

These new residents brought with them an interest in a recreational activity that generally did not enjoy the same local support as football, baseball and basketball.

"The actual reason why USCS decided to have a soccer team was because of youth soccer," says Frank Kohlenstein, founder of the university's men's soccer program and head coach from 1980-88. "We had a lot of folks moving here from other parts of the world, where soccer is the most popular sport. Parents were organizing leagues so their kids could play."

Kohlenstein says USCS leaders approached him about starting the soccer program so kids would be able to keep playing when they reached college.

**On July 1, 2004, the University of South Carolina Upstate changed its name from the University of South Carolina Spartanburg to signify its expanded vision, mission and strategic goals. Later that summer, the university changed its mascot from the Rifles to the Spartans. All references below to USC Spartanburg, USCS and Rifles reflect the names used during the time period described.**

Soccer began in 1979 as a club sport, with plans to make it a full program the following year.

"That (club) team was comprised of students, faculty and staff," Kohlenstein says. "We finished that year and I was the leading scorer, so I knew we were going to need a lot more talent if we were going to be competitive at the next level."

Kohlenstein returned to his roots and began recruiting players from the Miami area. He managed to cobble together a squad made up of players from across the world that would be the foundation of the program's future. At the time,



1982 USCS Soccer Team

however, Kohlenstein says he had no idea what to expect.

"Looking back on it now, it's pretty amazing that all of these guys came in at the same time," he says. "It could have been a recipe for disaster. There were no meal plans, no dorms on campus. We played our home games on the quad. If the ball went past the trees, it was out (of bounds). But if it hit the trees and came back in, it was still in."

The inaugural 1980 squad competed in the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics' (NAIA) District 6. It finished the season with a record of 11-6-1. While it lost close matches to the University of South Carolina, the College of Charleston and Furman University, the team knocked off the likes of Wake Forest, UNC Asheville, Winthrop and Davidson.

"Those guys were really amazing," Kohlenstein says. "I worked them hard. It was hot that summer. They got in with it and trained really hard. We ran a lot — around campus and through a peach orchard. But I did it with them. I mean, it's



hard to complain. You know, ‘when the coach is doing it, I have to do it.’ They became a family because all they had was each other. They definitely became a band of brothers.”

### The ‘Sandlot’ guys

Carlos Osorio, a member of the inaugural USCS men’s soccer team and a long-serving youth coach in the region, arrived in the Upstate eager to pursue both his passion for soccer and a college education. He found more than he bargained for.

“We were practicing on the front lawn,” he says. “I mean, we looked like a bunch of ‘Sandlot’ guys. I remember my teammate Bob Cheshier showed up one day. He was carrying a duffel bag with a fishing pole and a hunting rifle. He asked us if we were the soccer team. We just shook our heads. ‘Are you kidding me?’”

Osorio roomed with Mario del Pino, another member of the 1980 team and a USCS standout. The two rented an apartment near Cleveland Park.

“I remember we’d have soccer camps on the quad to raise money,” Osorio says. “We’d train in the morning, then have camp, where we worked for free. During the breaks we’d sell cups of Chek soda from Winn-Dixie to the campers to earn a little more. Those were great times. I remember going to indoor tournaments during the winter. We’d stay 10 to a room just to save money.”

Osorio recalled that on one of the team’s trips to play N.C. State, Kohlenstein pulled the van over at a rest area. The coach’s wife, Debbie Kohlenstein, brought out bread, peanut butter, jelly, lunchmeat, rice cakes and water.

“That was our pre-game meal,” Osorio says with a laugh. “Debbie was awesome. A lot of the guys were far from home, so whenever it was their birthday, she’d bake them a cake.”

“When the program finally started getting money, it became possible for us to stop at Wendy’s after our away games,” Osorio adds. “Frank told us we had a \$5 limit. If we went over, we had to pay. If we hit it on the nose, he’d buy us a Frosty. We would send the freshmen up to order first and find out what to order that would cost exactly \$5. When one of them hit it, we’d all order the same thing, and everyone got a Frosty. (Frank) didn’t let that go on very long.”

Osorio said Kohlenstein did everything he could to raise money for the program, and was always looking for deals to make sure his players had the equipment they needed to compete.

“I remember one year Umbro gave us some free shoes,” he said. “Frank was always dealing with somebody. Anything that could save money for the program. I remember one year he found some purple basketball jerseys for us to wear to an indoor tournament.”

After Osorio finished his playing career, he became Kohlenstein’s assistant coach. He remembers watering and cutting the grass at Rifle Field.

“A lot of sacrifices were made to make the program a success,” he says. “We had a great time. I have so many great memories with the guys who really did a lot to start the program. To see where it is now, to see what they have is amazing. They don’t understand.”

Osorio praised Kohlenstein for instilling teamwork, hard work and a winning mentality in the program’s first teams. Those qualities continued to be hallmarks of the program long after Kohlenstein departed in 1988 to become the head coach at UNC Charlotte.

“Frank did a great job of making sure that he got the maximum amount out of everybody,” Osorio says. “You know, not everybody loved him. The Cooper runs were awful. The peach orchard runs were torture. But we were going to outwork everyone. That’s something I’ve continued to instill in my teams.”

And, Osorio notes, however hard Kohlenstein could be, everyone knew one thing for certain – “If the guys ever needed anything, he was always there.”

### Success begets success

In 1983, the Rifles finished with a 21-1-1 record and came in third in the NAIA national tournament. Kohlenstein was named the NAIA Coach of the Year in

Women’s soccer players take part in a reunion in March for the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the program.

Back row, from left: Faiza Boujaafar, Diana (Wabnitz) Finch, Abbie Ellis, Erin Wright, Mia Raiff, Leigh Ward, Catherine Nolf

Front row, from left: Courtney Haddock, Ellen (Bright) Borland, Alexa Horne, Carmen Dyer, Mia Jeckel, Autumn (Gore) Stanton



1983 and the NSCAA Coach of the Year in 1983 and 1984.

Recognized four times as the NAIA District 6 Coach of the Year, Kohlenstein coached 13 NAIA All-Americans, nine NSCAA All-Americans, 13 NAIA All-Area players, 21 NAIA All-District players, two NAIA District 6 Players of the Year, a two-time Academic All-American and three Academic All-District players.

Kohlenstein credits the players, especially those on the inaugural team, for helping the program continue to attract talent.

"The guys on the team were the best recruiters," he says. "Players would come visit and they could see the excitement, the brotherhood, and how everyone was committed to getting better. A lot of them became successful coaches, teachers and business leaders. That's not really what you picture when you're starting out."

Kohlenstein says the program built up a fan base that was attracted to the personality, flare and success of the players.

"Anyone who came out to those matches wouldn't have left disappointed," he says. The players "were fierce competitors. When we laid it out in front of them, they accepted it. I mean, practices were really hard. They didn't always leave happy. But the games seemed easy by comparison. I'm sure sometimes they thought I was crazy. They had courage and belief. They were fearless. I was really honored to be part of it."

"The biggest thing that I think led the team to success early on and throughout their lives, which is what I hope for every player I coach, was the togetherness of these teams," Kohlenstein adds. "We learned that all the little things — the extra work, the emotion — made us successful. There are plenty of talented people out there who aren't successful. We wanted to make sure that we got better every day. When we went out to compete, we believed in each other."

### Celebrating a legacy

On March 27, USC Upstate was finally able to celebrate the 40th anniversary of its men's soccer program and the 20th

# Unbroken Circle

## *Each generation expands the Upstate soccer family.*

Oct. 9, 1992: It was a perfect evening for soccer. Warm and clear, with a horizon painted radiant orange by the setting sun.

Stadium lights flickered to life and buzzed as they grew brighter. A mist began to form in the humid air above Rifle Field — then the home turf of the University of South Carolina Spartanburg men's soccer team, and now where two student dorms stand.

Spectators cheered as the Rifles stepped onto the pitch to face off against East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania in the second game of the first round of the four-team Hoechst Celanese Tournament of Champions.

I stood beside the touchline just a few yards from the home team's bench, my small arms clutching a size 5 soccer ball bearing the NCAA logo. I had only begun playing "The Beautiful Game" a year prior and had never seen a "real" match before, let alone served as a ball boy for one.

The referee's whistle pierced the evening air and the game roared to life. My 11-year-old eyes were completely transfixed.

The Rifles were firing on all cylinders, pumping goal after goal into the net of their ingenuous opponents. I did not understand it at the time, but I came to appreciate later that I had witnessed yet another trademark performance by a program that, despite being only 12 years old, had earned a reputation for confidence, energy, passion, teamwork, skill and a penchant for winning.

Suddenly, the ball screamed past, kicking up dew as it slammed into a chain-link fence behind me. I sprang into action and tossed the ball to one of the Rifles jogging in my direction. As I turned to retrieve the other ball, I heard the player say, "Thanks, mate!"

That was the moment I became a "Rifle Boy."

Oct. 30, 2002: It was a cool, damp, foggy Wednesday evening. Not a great night for soccer.

The pitch at the newly constructed County University Soccer Stadium was wet, soggy, verging on becoming a slough. But we had a job to do.

I was well aware of the importance of the moment. I had grown up just a few miles from campus. During my youth soccer days, former USCS players coached me. I attended camps on campus and watched numerous home games — or rather, played mini games with other kids in attendance behind the far goal in the outfield of the old baseball diamond. In my spare time, I would sneak onto Rifle Field when it wasn't in use to practice my skills.

I knew that in 1998, the Rifles recorded a perfect 17-0 regular season record and made it all the way to the NCAA Division II National Championship game, which they lost 1-0 at home to Southern Connecticut State, another powerhouse that had also wrestled a national title away from them in 1995.

And despite recording only 12 losses in 56 games from 1999-2001, the Rifles were suffering a three-year postseason drought.

There was no margin for error in 2002. We had won 15 games and lost one away to bitter rivals Lander University. The loss extinguished our hopes for a perfect season and knocked us from No. 3 to No. 5 in the NSCAA Top 25 poll. We knew that one more loss could lead to our exclusion from the NCAA tournament for a fourth year running.

Our opponents, Presbyterian College, came out swinging. The Blue Hose scored two goals and were in the lead 2-1 heading into halftime. Early in the





At left, Trevor Anderson in a match against North Florida. At right, in a critical game against Presbyterian.

second half, we were charging up the field. The mud made our feet heavy and precise passing almost impossible. Unexpectedly, the ball fell sweetly in front of me at the top of our opponents' 18-yard box. I ran up and smashed the tying goal into the net.

With the clock winding down, we scored a third goal and then a fourth. Presbyterian answered with a third goal, putting our lead in jeopardy. Only moments remained when another opportunity for me to score opened up. I buried it and put the game out of reach.

After the final whistle, our team was walking off the field when I noticed a group of kids gathering on a patch of grass beside the field that our team had helped cover with sod the previous summer. As I approached, they began calling my name. I walked closer and a pair of small hands raised a permanent marker and a program up to me.

I signed a few autographs and started to walk away. I took one final look back at the field and was overcome with pride. It was a moment I had worked so hard for, and yet it didn't belong solely to me. I was part of a program that was not only fueling the community's soccer ecosystem, but also helping to inspire future generations. My journey had come full circle.

**-- Trevor Anderson '04**

Below, Trevor Anderson soars against Central Arkansas.



anniversary of its women's program. The celebration, which coincided with the university's homecoming, was delayed a year due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

About 25 former players from all eras of the men's program came out to watch the current team compete and to see how the campus has evolved in the years – and, in some cases, decades — since they were at the university. Some former players joined the festivities virtually.

The reunion was joyful, with a lot of hugs, friendly conversations and stories.

While the men's team fell to High Point University 2-1, the competitive spirit and passion at the heart of the program remain every bit as intense as they were at its foundation.

With Scott "Cutter" Halkett, a USC Upstate Athletics Hall of Famer and NCAA Division II first team All-American, serving as the team's head coach, the consensus among former players appears to be that the program's best days are ahead.

"I'm excited for Scott," Kohlenstein said. "I've talked to him a number of times and it's clear how much it means to him to lead the program forward. I think he has things moving in the right direction."

"Cutter, his heart and soul are in this program," Osorio said. "No one questions that. We know what it means to him and we're so happy to see what he's been able to do so far."

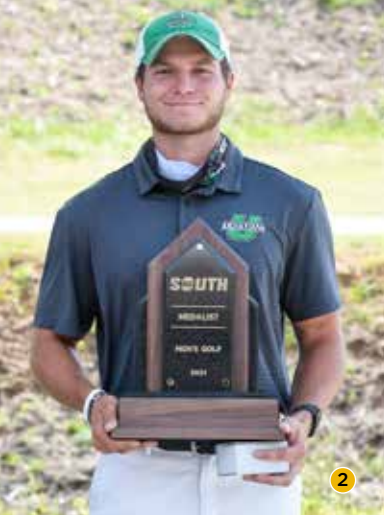
The team finished the 2021 regular season, shortened due to the pandemic, with one of its best records in USC Upstate's Division I era.

On April 13, Halkett was named the Big South Men's Soccer Coach of the Year. Seven of his players earned All-Conference honors.

Halkett says he is honored by the coaching recognition, and credits his coaching staff, which includes associate head coach Nico Luque and two former players, Michelangelo Dovidio and Santiago Restrepo, with helping the team accomplish so much. He notes the players, too, share in the award.

"Without the team growing, playing as well as they have, and competing like they have this year, this award would not be possible," he says. 📺





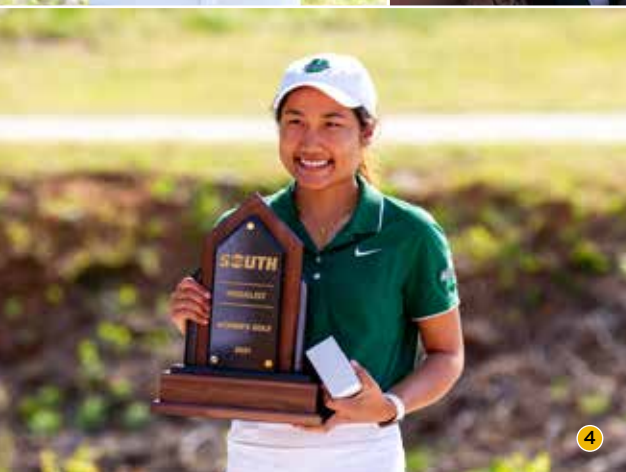
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6

# Sports Standouts

## Softball

The USC Upstate softball team finished runner-up in the Big South Tournament this season and freshman **Bre Cooper** took home Freshman of the Year honors. **Sarah Price** and **1 Peyton Darnell** earned All-Big South First Team honors, while Cooper, **Tiffany Domingue** and **Mallie Brown** earned a spot on the second team. **Savannah Brown** earned a spot on the All-Freshman team alongside Cooper, Darnell and Domingue.

## Men's Golf

**2 Hunter Fry** became the first male golfer to win a Division I conference championship and is only the third Spartan to reach the NCAA Regionals in the Division I era. Fry ended his senior season with a pair of wins and three top five finishes. Freshman **3 Max Dupree** earned a spot on the Big South All-Freshman team and recorded a top-five finish this season.

## Women's Golf

The women's golf team had their best season in school history. The Spartans recorded their lowest stroke average in school history (297.23) and recorded the best team winning-percentage in program history (.896). As a team, the Spartans won two tournaments in the same season for the first time ever and finished inside the top 3 in all but one tournament. **4 Beem Pabsimma** became the first female golfer in school history to capture a conference championship. With the victory, Pabsimma became the first female golfer in program history to play in the NCAA Regionals. She finished with the second lowest scoring average for a season in program history with a 73.73. **5 Praew Nontarux** earned Big South Freshman of the Year honors. Both Nontarux and Pabsimma finished with a school record best .895 winning-percentage this season.

## Men's Soccer

**6** Men's soccer fielded one of its best seasons in Upstate's Division I era, led by Big South Coach of the Year **Scott Halkett**. The Spartans got off to a 5-0-1 start in conference play and ended the season with a 6-4-2 overall mark, the program's second-most DI wins. Upstate tied for the No. 2 seed in the final conference standings and advanced over Campbell via penalty kicks in the conference semifinals to make it to the program's first-ever Big South Championship Final match.

## Volleyball

**7** The Spartans got off to a 1-7 start in their 2021 spring campaign, but after dropping the first set against Presbyterian on March 11, Upstate would not lose another set the rest of the season. Upstate won six straight matches to set a DI program record for conference wins in a row. Additionally, Upstate's five straight sweeps and 18 straight sets won were also DI program-





bests. Head coach **Ronda Shirley** notched her 600th career win in the season finale sweep against Radford.

### Women's Basketball

The Spartans welcomed **Becky Burke** as the 15th head coach in Upstate's program history ahead of the 2020-21 season. Burke and her staff led the Spartans to the program's most-ever Big South wins, including the program's first-ever win over Hampton and first Division I win over Gardner-Webb. For the first time ever, the Spartans hosted their first round game of the Big South Championship, and won the first round game for the second consecutive year.

### XC, Track & Field

The spring 2021 cross country season was highlighted by **Jared Keklak**, who was named Big South Scholar-Athlete of the Year. On the men's side, **Jonathan Loy** and **Michael Tardella** each ran a top-40 time in program history in the 8K at the Winthrop Invite. For the women at the Big South Championships, **Jamie Connelly** ran the program's seventh-best 5K time,

and **Mia Davis** was close behind with the program's ninth-best time. **Allie Leavitt**, **Stecy Cherono**, and **Heaven Allen** each ran a program top-50 time in the 5K.

Outdoor track and field season was highlighted by four school records, three gold medals and 10 podium finishes at the Big South Championships, and a trio of Spartans who competed at the NCAA East Region Preliminary Round. **8 Tony Auguste** shattered the school record in the hammer throw and shot put, and qualified for the NCAA East Prelims in the hammer throw. **Jared Henderson** and **Megan Deimeke** each set a school record, in the 100m and hammer throw, respectively. Individual conference champions this season included **9 Adanma Uzor** in the triple jump, **Cameron Smith** in the 110m hurdles, and the quartet of **Stephen Dauway**, **Jared Henderson**, **Javin Holston**, and **Antoine Nance** in the 4x100m relay. Uzor qualified for the NCAA East Prelims in the triple jump and was joined by **10 Angelnique Bryant** in the 100m.

### Baseball

In just his second season at the helm of the Spartan program, head coach **Mike McGuire** led USC Upstate baseball to its best season in program history. The Spartans started the season undefeated at 11-0 and finished with an all-time program best 37 wins at 37-16. The season was highlighted by road wins over Clemson and nationally ranked Georgia Tech, and Upstate rose as high as 34 in the RPI rankings and consistently received votes in the USA Today Top 25 Coaches' Poll. The Spartans finished second in the conference rankings and were one of just four teams to make it to the 2021 Big South Baseball Championship. Friday night ace **11 Jordan Marks** broke three school records on the year, including strikeouts and wins in a single season and career wins. He also became the first-ever Spartan to be named to the USA Baseball Golden Spikes Award Midseason Watch List and was named Big South Pitcher of the Year.





## COMMENCEMENT 2021: TRIPLE THE CELEBRATION

USC Upstate celebrated a return to in-person commencement this spring with not one, but three ceremonies. More than 700 degrees were awarded, and for the first time in USC Upstate's history, a hooding ceremony was held for graduate students. On the morning of May 4, Upstate held a ceremony for graduates of the College of Science and Technology, the College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences, and University College, followed that same evening by a ceremony for graduates of the Mary Black School of Nursing, the George Dean Johnson, Jr. College of Business and Economics, and the School of Education, Human Performance, and Health. The graduate student hooding ceremony took place May 5. In a nod to COVID-19 safety protocols, elbow bumps replaced the usual hugs and handshakes when graduates crossed the stage at Spartanburg Memorial Auditorium, where festivities were moved due to rain.

















# 21 Years From the Rear-View Mirror

*Retiring Library Dean Frieda Davison looks back on an eventful career.*



When I was asked to write my reflections on my 21-year career here at USC Upstate, memories came flooding through my brain. Sorting through them became very much like packing my house to prepare for my upcoming move to my home state of Virginia – sort, preserve, shred, purge, and cherish. How does one capsule 21 years into an essay of a few hundred words?

I began by thinking about the various university administrations. I've served five chancellors and will miss my sixth chancellor by one day. I've served eight provosts (although at first they were only called senior vice chancellors for Academic Affairs).

I've watched the library grow in space (never did get that new building I was hired to build) and we have increased the footprint of the library in the existing building to almost twice what it was when I arrived. Completion of the latest renovations will also be after I leave, but I'm proud of the changes we are making. Thanks to additional hires, we also now have in place a roster of faculty and staff who can serve the university's needs for several years.


In reviewing the past 21 years, however, I think what stands out the most is how we come together as a university community (and as a university family) in times of crises and of celebration. We have had many of each, but I'll highlight just two.

The financial crisis of 2007-2008 was one of the scariest times for our campus. Colleges and universities throughout the state (and nation) were slashing budgets, including laying off or furloughing personnel. Endowments plunged, state legislative support declined, and tuitions were raised in response. But in a university-wide meeting one afternoon, our then-Chancellor John Stockwell announced he had no plans to lay off or furlough any of the Upstate family. He was putting personnel first, recognizing that those who would suffer the most were the very ones who could withstand it the least. He explained we would have to do our part, though, by conserving what

funds we did have and freezing all vacant positions, including any that came open in the next 12-18 months. And it worked. There were no layoffs or furloughs. We survived, recovered, and flourished.

The celebration that comes to mind was our university's 40th anniversary, when we acknowledged not only the university's founding in 1968, but also what was going on that year – some of the fiercest fighting of the Vietnam War. Probably the most memorable of our commemorative events was bringing "The Wall That Heals" to campus. This is a smaller scaled replica of the Vietnam Memorial in Washington, D.C. Two veterans support motorcycle groups, Rolling Thunder and Patriot Guard, escorted the tractor-trailer carrying the wall, and all along the route, adults and schoolchildren lined up with "Welcome Home" signs and waved flags. The arrival at the Upstate campus was quite the sight – the buildings shook from the sounds of 1,300 motorcycles!

At the end of the four days, more than 17,000 people had visited the wall. The campus had come together to celebrate 40 years of existence and paid tribute to the young men who gave the ultimate sacrifice for their country.

I think that event was the one that will stand out forever in my memory as the penultimate experience. I am grateful to have been a part of it, and of many other aspects of the university. 



Former Chancellor John Stockwell, who the year before Upstate's 40th anniversary helped guide the campus through a difficult financial period without reducing staff.

During Upstate's 40th anniversary, a smaller scaled replica of the Vietnam War Memorial was brought to campus, drawing more than 17,000 visitors.



# USC UPSTATE REMEMBERS



Join us the week of **Sept. 6-11** as we reflect on the 20th anniversary of **Sept. 11** with panel discussions, films and other events. Watch our social media channels for more information this fall.

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A photograph of four students walking along a paved path in a lush, green campus setting. From left to right: a young man in a green 'UPSTATE' t-shirt and blue jeans; a young man in a dark blue polo shirt and light-colored pants; a young woman in a white 'Upstate' t-shirt and blue jeans; and a young woman in a grey 'Upstate' sweatshirt and tan pants carrying a pink bag. The background is filled with trees and flowering bushes.

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