



EVENING WITH THE STARS 43RD ANNUAL AWARDS HONOR UWG ALUMNI

The University of West Georgia positively impacts students' lives daily. Yet, transformation of personal growth and achievement is just the beginning for many UWG alumni.

Hosted by veteran sports reporter and television anchor Sam Crenshaw ('81), the 43rd annual UWG Alumni Awards Celebration – An Evening with the Stars – showcased such stories.

"Thank you, University of West Georgia," said Dr. Connie D. Stevenson ('94, '97, '98) in receiving her award for achievements since graduating from the College of Education. "Thank you for providing that foundation that has allowed me to impact countless lives."

Stevenson earned her bachelor's degree in psychology, a master's degree in special education with an emphasis on specific learning disabilities and a specialist degree in interrelated special education, all from UWG. A former special education teacher, she currently serves as the director of school choice and student assignment for the DeKalb County School District.

"Achievement is being elevated to a position that allows you to assist families," Stevenson said. "Achievement is being able to assist students and provide them with educational opportunities they may not otherwise have had."

While revering the past, Evening with the Stars also showcased the new with a premiere honor, the Lillian Williams Champion of Diversity Award, earned by Jeremy D. Shain ('99, '10).

Graduating from UWG with both a bachelor's in psychology and a master's in counseling, Shain is a licensed professional counselor in Georgia, a certified school counselor and is currently employed as a school counselor at Bay Springs Middle School in Villa Rica. From his work in the school system to volunteer efforts in the community, Jeremy serves as an advocate for underrepresented and marginalized individuals.

"As an alum, I recognize the role UWG played in making me the counselor that I am," Shain said.

He related a story of he and his husband adopting a son, and how he had confused his days and showed up a day late for his final exam. His professor was forgiving in allowing him to take his final late.

"That experience is what I bring with me to the students I serve," Shain concluded. "Everybody messes up sometimes, and everybody deserves a second chance."

Other stars honored during the event include:

- Dr. Bob Reeves, Honorary Alumnus Award
- Dr. Swarna Dutt and Dr. Sharmistha Basu-Dutt – J. Owen Moore Faculty Award
- Josh Rachel ('08) – Outstanding Young Alumnus Award
- Wendy Rosenbalm Bell ('72, '78) – H. Franklin Pritchett Jr. Service to Humanity Award
- Debbie Dowis Reeves ('73, '92) – Thelma Harman Turner Alumni Loyalty Award
- John C. Garner ('08, '13) – College of Arts and Humanities Achievement Award
- Dr. Richard M. Ingle ('67) – College of Science and Mathematics Achievement Award
- Cary Ichter ('81) – College of Social Sciences Achievement Award
- John P. Dudley ('73) – Richards College of Business Achievement Award
- Betty Spier, MSN, RN, CHSE ('93, '95, '07) – Tanner Health System School of Nursing Achievement Award

This year's Alumni Weekend began Friday, April 5, with Alumni Take the Square with a stop at the Carrollton Courtyard by Marriott and a party on Adamson Square. Saturday included The Big Event where alumni partnered with current students for public service projects and culminated with the Alumni Awards Celebration in the evening.

Forever West

Spring 2019

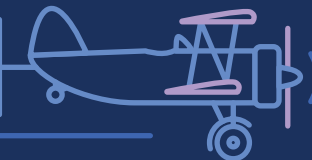
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AND HOMECOMING! – OCTOBER 18 & 19



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UNIVERSITY OF WEST GEORGIA NEWSLETTER



'A PERFECT FIT': CRAFTON BEGINS ROLE AS UWG'S INTERIM PRESIDENT

Dr. Micheal Crafton believes in the transformative power of education. He should; he's seen it firsthand.

The son of an auto and diesel mechanic, a teenaged Crafton assumed he would follow in his father's footsteps, studying auto mechanics in his vocational high school. However, a few key teachers nudged him in the direction of pursuing a college degree, and he hasn't looked back.

Now, Crafton has taken the reins of the University of West Georgia as interim president, after former UWG President Dr. Kyle Marrero stepped down to become president of Georgia Southern University.

"To say I'm honored to serve as interim president of this institution I've called home for many years is a vast understatement," Crafton said. "I am proud of all the work that's been done at this university since I first came to campus in 1982. During his tenure as president, Dr. Marrero and our highly skilled faculty and staff have pushed forward many new initiatives, programs and changes of all sorts. There's a sense of momentum that's been set in motion and that would be very hard to stop."

The veteran English professor – who's spent more than three decades teaching more than a dozen courses at UWG – most recently served as the university's provost and vice president of academic affairs. His vision for his interim presidency is to continue UWG's momentum "with as little disruption as possible."

As provost, Crafton worked with a variety of faculty and administrators locally and across the state and nation to promote the American Association of Colleges and Universities initiative LEAP (Liberal Education and America's Promise), a significant academic quality assurance program. In addition, he's overseen Engage West! Faculty Edition, an evidence-based leadership development program under UWG's larger culture transformation project that is known as Engage West.

Crafton also hopes to continue UWG's upward trend of achievement in online educational and graduate programming, as

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

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well as continuing the powerful work in progress with the Carrollton–Carroll County Education Collaborative, aligning the strengths of UWG, West Georgia Technical College, Carrollton City Schools, Carroll County Schools and community partners to ensure all students graduate high school with a plan to enlist in the military, become employed or enroll in college.

“I’m very fortunate to have this opportunity, and I look forward to continuing the good work UWG is doing in all aspects of its operation,” Crafton said. “With the support of our amazing faculty and staff – and the daily inspiration I receive from our students – I believe I can be up to the task.”

Two years after finishing graduate school in 1980, Crafton was offered the opportunity to teach for a year at a college in a small town about an hour outside Atlanta, and seeing as he had a former classmate on that campus, he jumped at the chance.

“By 1982, I had finished all the formal training for my doctorate at the University of Tennessee, and I was starting my dissertation,” Crafton said. “It made sense for me to take a break, teach for a year at what was then West Georgia College, and then go back. I just never went back.”

Since the early 1980s, Crafton has been a West Georgia Wolf for all but six years – five of which he spent as provost at Clayton State University in Atlanta.

“It was just what I loved to do,” Crafton said. “I was a shy person, but when I walked in to teach my first freshman English composition class and stood in front of a room full of petrified 18-year-olds, I came alive. It was just a perfect fit, and there’s no way to predict that.”

Crafton said he’s committed his life’s work to higher education because “it has to be one of the top, most positively transformative enterprises in American society.”

“I was a very poor kid in Nashville, and I’ve come a long way from that point,” Crafton said. “It’s all thanks to the education I’ve received from public institutions. There’s no other way that would be possible. Having worked through high school and college, I sympathize with people who wake up every morning and commit to making a change. It’s hard work, and I’m proud to be working for them.”

8 QUESTIONS WITH THE INTERIM PREZ

We sat down with Dr. Crafton to pick his brain on life’s most important topics: from his favorite food to what’s on his DVR.

Favorite movie of all time?
The Wizard of Oz.

You’re hosting a fantasy dinner party. What two guests have to be invited?
William Blake and Geoffrey Chaucer.

What’s your biggest pet peeve?
People relying on clichés – why can’t everyone think outside the box?

If you could have one superpower, what would you choose?
I’d have to go with the obvious choice: flying.

Elvis or The Beatles?
The Beatles.

What’s on your DVR?
About a dozen cooking shows and a few bleak European crime dramas.

You’re having your favorite meal for dinner. What does it have to include?
Potatoes.

Describe yourself in three words.
Optimistic. Inquisitive. Cheerful.



CHEER DYNASTY HOLDS STRONG

The dynasty continued for UWG Cheerleading at the ESPN Wide World of Sports on Jan. 19 in Orlando, Florida, as the University of West Georgia Wolves took home the hardware in both All-Girl and Coed competition, marking the second year in the past three that the Wolves have swept their team competition entries under head coach Nicole Nichols.

The UWG cheer program has sustained a dynasty since 2001, when former coach Sherry Cooney took a program that faced numerous challenges and shaped it into a national contender that has now reached 24 championships at the UCA Nationals. Nichols began leading the program in 2011 and never broke stride, leading the Wolves to 10 titles at the UCA Nationals. The all-girl squad won two-straight titles in Nichols’ first two years at the helm of UWG Cheer, and this year marks the sixth-straight title for the coed squad.

The all-girl squad moved to Division I in 2013 and have since won the Division I All-Girl title in 2013, 2017 and again in 2019. UWG edged powers like Morehead State and Villanova University in this year’s competition, and the Wolves have now been crowned champions nine times on the stage in Orlando.

In the coed competition, the 2020 UCA Nationals will be a chance for Nichols to take another step into history. The Wolves have already begun preparations for next year’s competition, as a win would tie the longest run for a UWG squad at UCA Nationals. West Georgia won seven consecutive titles from 2002-08.

The continued success of the program serves as a tribute to Wolves past in remembrance of a painful tragedy that impacted both UWG and the Carrollton community. On Aug. 10, 1997, cheerleaders Deandre Hamilton, 20, Michael Massa, 18, and their coach, Stephanie Shaw, 27, lost their lives in a bus crash that hospitalized 10 others while traveling to a cheer camp in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. The crash brought UWG students, alumni, faculty, staff and the community together to both grieve and pay tribute to those lives were cut short by the tragedy.

UWG ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT



TWYLA PERRYMAN



KIM HOLDER



GAIL BENTLEY



SARAH PRUVENOK



DALI DAVIS

TWYLA PERRYMAN

College of Education’s Dr. Twyla Perryman was recently recognized by the American Speech Language-Hearing Association for raising public awareness of early autism spectrum disorders (ASD) identification and intervention.

Perryman’s research dealt with issues of late ASD diagnosis. Reasons for late diagnoses ranged from discipline problems to high-functioning skills in reading and math.

Perryman said it’s important to educate her students on the signs and symptoms as well.

“It’s very likely that they’re going to work with ASD individuals,” she said. “They need to be able to educate parents and pediatricians on the signs and symptoms of autism in an empathetic and sensitive way.”

KIM HOLDER

Kim Holder doesn’t think every student should know how to balance a checkbook, but knowing why they should balance one is a different story.

Holder, director of UWG’s Center for Economic Education and Financial Literacy, works with colleagues in UWG’s College of Education to enhance the financial literacy of three key constituencies: K-12 teachers; UWG students; and the West Georgia community at large.

“I want all students to know where their money comes from and where it goes,” Holder said. “I want to teach them why it’s important to track their finances – something useful and important for the foreseeable future.”

GAIL BENTLEY AND SARAH PRUVENOK

A chance conversation between two staff members at the University of West Georgia bloomed into a beautiful garden for the Department of Anthropology.

Gail Bentley, office manager for anthropology and Sarah Pruvencok, UWG grounds caretaker, determined that they shared a common love of gardening and history, coming up with the idea to plant a garden that would sustain indigenous plants and would also reflect the area’s history.

The Anthropological Historical Garden is a living, hands-on, educational experience that transcends social barriers in regard to cultural sustainability and historical significance, linking the past while sustaining the future.

DALI DAVIS

UWG student Dali Davis was named the university’s 2019 Academic Recognition Day honoree, an annual award that honors Georgia students on their academic success.

All undergraduate students chosen are state residents and must maintain a 4.0 grade point average.

“It’s always a great feeling when you work tirelessly toward a goal and see the positive outcomes of your efforts,” said Davis, a chemistry major in the College of Science and Mathematics. “Earning this award made me feel like people took notice of how hard I work every day to maintain a healthy balance of school, work and social life.”

