Emerities Newsletter, Spring 2020

Georgia State University Emeriti Association

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NEW EMERITI, THE EMERITI

Association welcomes you! We remind you of this important benefit granted by the University: Emeriti retain their active PantherCards (photo IDs) permanently. Regular faculty retirees can only do this for five years. PantherCards allow access to the University libraries and parking decks, and give local discounts and incentives. For details, see: https://hr.gsu.edu/service_centers/edws/panther-perqs/

Other benefits? We inquired via a survey sent to all Emeriti in April 2019. Respondents suggested more intangible ones. Many noted that the rank indicates the professor is still formally affiliated with our University, valuable when applying for academic panels, submitting manuscripts for publication, or seeking professional grants or consulting work.

Prior involvement with departmental graduate students and programs usually continues. Professor Emerita of Nursing Cecelia Grindel wrote, “my Emerita rank has been helpful when completing dissertations of students, serving as Chair of the development of a nursing leadership program, and writing letters of reference for former students”; and Professor Emerita of Counseling JoAnna White added, “it has helped me keep connection with my department and the Play Training Institute, and supervising counseling graduates for licensure.”

We also asked Georgia State’s deans in November 2019 if their college offered any special benefits to its Emeriti. Dean Leslie Wolf, College of Law, and Dean Sally Wallace, AYSPS, replied that their colleges offered conference rooms for research along with use of phones and basic office supplies.

Several deans whose colleges did not offer such benefits wished to learn more about this possibility. Dean Huanbiao Mo, College of Nursing & Health Professions, replied: “At this point we do not offer anything special for Emeriti, but we are open to a dialogue on what we could provide in the future.”

Such provisions don’t need to be expensive. Professor of Law Emeritus Mark Budnitz noted: “[There is a] room for Emeriti in the new Law School building in the same area as other faculty offices with four computers and storage cabinets. I always run into former colleagues and get to meet new faculty. I share memories, learn about the exciting new programs, and obtain input from others on my latest scholarship. It’s an excellent way to retain our loyalty and support.” I passed this along to the deans, and Dean Mo replied: “Thank you for sharing the great idea!”

Here’s hoping that a Deans’ dialogue to “offer [something] special for Emeriti” is launched.
I WANT TO THANK EVERYONE PERSONALLY who helped with the preparation and execution of our Valentine’s Day Luncheon. That was such a wonderful event, allowing us to see our colleagues again and catch up on what is going on with their lives. Well done!

I also wish to congratulate a former colleague from the Robinson College of Business (RCB): Regents’ Professor Arun Rai who recently was recognized by the Association for Information Systems (AIS) with a LEO Award for Lifetime Exceptional Achievement in Information Systems. Dr. Rai joins four other RCB faculty who have been recognized for this career award, including Professors Emeriti of Information Systems Detmar Straub and Daniel Robey. Georgia State University is the only university in Georgia with five faculty members recognized with this prestigious award.

Your Emeriti Association Board has recommended to the Provost that all academic units recognize their emeriti faculty in their faculty listings, to assist anyone searching for such faculty. The Board is also developing a listing of interested emeriti faculty who wish to volunteer their services to their academic units for assistance in curricular matters, research assistance or student support. This would be purely voluntary on their part, and it would provide an avenue for our Association to continue a relationship with their academic unit if needed.

COLLEGE UPDATES

HONORS COLLEGE
The Honors College is hosting the 14th annual Georgia State Undergraduate Research Conference on Friday, April 17th. This event is a showcase for the diverse and innovative projects by Georgia State undergraduates from a variety of disciplines, from chemistry to fine arts, from music to psychology. Last year, more than 430 students from 53 academic disciplines presented their research.

PERIMETER COLLEGE
Students attending Georgia State’s new Perimeter College successfully transfer to four-year degree programs at dramatically higher rates than students at other two-year colleges around the nation, according to a new ranking by The Chronicle of Higher Education. Nearly 85 percent of Perimeter College students who began classes in 2016 were still enrolled, had transferred to other programs or completed their programs by 2018, according to the ranking. More than 50 percent of its students who began programs transferred to four-year programs.

“We have one of the highest transfer rates in the country,” said Timothy Renick, Georgia State’s senior Vice President for Student Success. “Our strategy for increasing our transfer rate for Perimeter College into Georgia State’s four-year degree program has been a coordinated curriculum, no transfer application, no transfer fee, and no need for students to send a transcript. This streamlined movement was a prime goal of consolidation. Perimeter was already by far Georgia State’s largest transfer partner before consolidation, and consolidation was intended by the USG to enhance the pathway. We have also almost tripled the graduation rate of Perimeter students seeking Associate degrees since consolidation.”

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS
EmeriTies seeks contributions from emeriti, to keep its readers informed about former colleagues and to suggest possible retirement activities. These could be first-person stories up to 300 words about your travels, volunteering, or attendance at an annual conference of AROHE, GSRA or GREA (featured in our Winter 2020 issue); or short notes up to 100 words about recent achievements. Contact editor Christine Gallant, Professor Emerita of English (CAS) at cgallant@gsu.edu. Your news will also reach those colleagues still working, for EmeriTies now is distributed to Georgia State’s President, Provost, Vice-President of Development, and deans, with a digital version sent to all chairs.

NEWS NOTE
AROHE (Association of Retirement Organizations in Higher Education) now offers individual membership to those who are affiliated with retiree organizations in higher education, such as our Emeriti Association. Individual fee is $60.00 a year, prorated for mid-year new applicants to $35.00. Subscription period begins July 1st. Free trial membership till June 30, 2020. Contact: https://www.arohe.org
HOLIDAY RECEPTION

The Emeriti of our Emeriti Association wish to thank Georgia State’s division of Development/Alumni Affairs and Donor Relations Office for their sponsorship of this newsletter and events such as our Holiday Party and Valentine’s Luncheon. This year, they also sponsored our attendance at the School of Music’s Holiday Gala. Thanks, asante, danke, dhanyawad, gracias, grazie, merci, shukran, todah, xié xie!

MUSIC GALA

Emeriti Association Holiday Party and Music Gala, held in Rialto Center for the Arts.

ATTENTION EMERITI

Please update or add your email address so that we can contact you electronically related to emeriti activities. Send updates to: http://emeriti.gsu.edu/contact-us/.

Emeriti: to use the URL provided in Newsletter stories, copy-and-paste it into the address bar on your browser and then click.

EDITOR’S NOTE

EmeriTies: By Emeriti and For Emeriti

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n the day before his big research conference presentation, Honors College junior Abu Nadim Kabir was fretful. Not only had he never flown across the country before, he also had spent nearly an hour listening to audio recordings of baby cries. Nadim was searching for a clip that wouldn’t be too upsetting to play during his presentation at the sixth National Workshop for REU Research in Networking and Systems in Monterey, California.

Nadim’s research, titled “Classifying Baby Cries through Spectrograms,” used a computer algorithm to predict what infant wails and sobs meant with about 91 percent accuracy. Nadim, who is majoring in computer science, and his research partner converted audio files of baby cries to spectrograms, which are essentially images of the sound waves. The algorithm they created studied the images and was able to classify the cries into categories, such as hunger or pain.

“Hunger cries seem to have one stretch of really loud crying at a certain frequency,” Nadim said. “Pain is all over the board and very, very loud.”

Nadim’s project, which was sparked by his participation in the 2019 summer research program Research Experiences for Undergraduates (REU) sponsored by the National Science Foundation and hosted by Georgia State University, resulted in a published paper. “I got to experience how research works and learn from experts,” said Nadim. He later received Emeriti-sponsored Just-in-Time funding to present his research paper at the national conference in California — something he had never done before.

“It was stressful,” Nadim said. But his presentation went well, and he left the conference grateful for the experience. “There was so much we could talk to each other about,” Nadim said, referring to the other undergraduates he met there who are also using technology to make critical advances in research. Nadim now is gearing up for his next project, which, of course, will use technology to help solve problems.
When I first arrived at GSU in 1973 there was neither space nor time for the School of Music to perform holiday music in November or December. As a trained choral conductor, I thought the season called for musical celebrations. If St. Olaf College, the Mormon Tabernacle Choir, and Lincoln Center could present Holiday spectacles, why not Georgia State! At the time, the School of Music was housed in the Arts and Music (later, named the Arts and Humanities) Building as part of the College of Arts and Sciences. The University was on the quarter system, with classes completed before Thanksgiving. There was no opportunity to perform holiday music since the quarter was over and everyone was on vacation.

I was appointed Director of the School of Music in 1995. One of my priorities was to present a “musical gift” to the University that would showcase the talented students and faculty of the School of Music. The timing was right. In 1996, the School moved to the historic Rialto Theatre and adjacent Haas Howell and Standard Buildings; and in 1997 the University shifted to the semester system. The calendar expanded to a 15-week term, and that change along with the School’s move made concerts in an 800-seat venue a possibility. Emeritus Carl Patton, then President, and Ahmed Abdelal, then Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, were enthusiastic about the idea.

The event was modelled after the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra’s “Christmas with Robert Shaw” concert, which was religious in nature and performed without applause. Our original repertoire featured classical selections such as “O Holy Night” and “Ave Maria.” Later, familiar popular selections such as “Sleigh Bells” and klezmer music were included to add lively toe-tapping melodies. The concerts concluded with audience sing-a-longs such as “Jingle Bells” and “We Wish You a Merry Christmas.” A variety of musical tempi, textures, and moods was achieved by having our Orchestra, Wind Ensemble, Jazz Band, soloists, and choral groups representing over 200 performers. The concert created a fitting prelude for the Christmas/Hanukkah season and memories for all involved.

It is delightful to note that the 22nd Annual Holiday Gala Concert was performed before a packed house this past December 8th. The Gala over the years has become a tradition and a rousing success as the performers continue to bring good cheer to the University community each year.
Facilities Update: Farewell, Kell; Hey, Greenway!

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There was a longtime skepticism that Georgia State would ever be rid of Kell Hall. Behold the proof that it has gone! Also gone is most of nearby Library Plaza. The aqua-colored water fountain is still there, and so are some of the dawn redwoods and the ADA-required elevator from the Plaza up to Courtland Street that never seemed to work. It does now. But the low walls all around the Plaza that served as benches, the ramps, the steps to Courtland Street: all are gone. Hopefully gone too is the loud but catchy music that entertained students lounging on the Plaza between classes, while annoying professors trying to teach in the surrounding classrooms. (Writes one such former professor. The music probably will be back.)

Vice President of Facilities Management Ramesh Vakamudi reports: “Kell Hall and Plaza demolition has been completed and the contractor is now working on the site grading, installation of underground utilities and facade improvements of Langdale Hall, and the Arts and Humanities and Sparks Hall buildings. Parts of the Campus Greenway, to include a 22’ wide pedestrian walkway, are scheduled for completion by May 2020. This is contingent on the exterior weather conditions and the completion of the Library North Addition project currently in design phase. We expect to start construction by June 2020.” (See “Kell Hall Gives Way to Greenway” in EmeriTies, Winter 2019.)

There is still much to construct aside from the walkway, such as a new stairway entrance to Library North. The old familiar Plaza will be replaced with a communal greenspace, using the area previously occupied by Kell Hall as well as the now flattened portion of Library Plaza. Complete with benches and new trees, this central campus space is the first phase of the university’s more broadly conceived greenway.

This university greenway will eventually consist of landscaped quadrangles and courtyards that thread throughout the Atlanta campus to link Woodruff Park to the Petit Science Center. It’s coming. It’s coming.