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LIVING WITH THE PANDEMIC

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WE ARE NOW MONTHS INTO THE COVID-19 pandemic, missing our friends and families, and wondering how long our lives will continue to be disrupted. Pandemics are a familiar topic for me since my academic specialty for the past thirty-five years has been emergency management.

In 1984 I attended the National Emergency Training Center, and was a consultant on planning and management to FEMA and other agencies, including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). I also served for sixteen years on the national Emergency Management Accreditation Commission. For over twenty-five years in my classes, I have included pandemic planning for large-scale disasters: what happens when there is a major disaster, help is slow in coming, and services essential to daily life are interrupted?

Epidemiologists generally expect that the current pandemic will continue, even if vaccines are developed. Herd immunity will take a long time to develop and the human costs will rise significantly before that happens. Public health measures were the expectation when the epidemic began and certainly after it was declared a pandemic. But the plan maintained by the CDC was not activated, and the infection spread widely and fast.

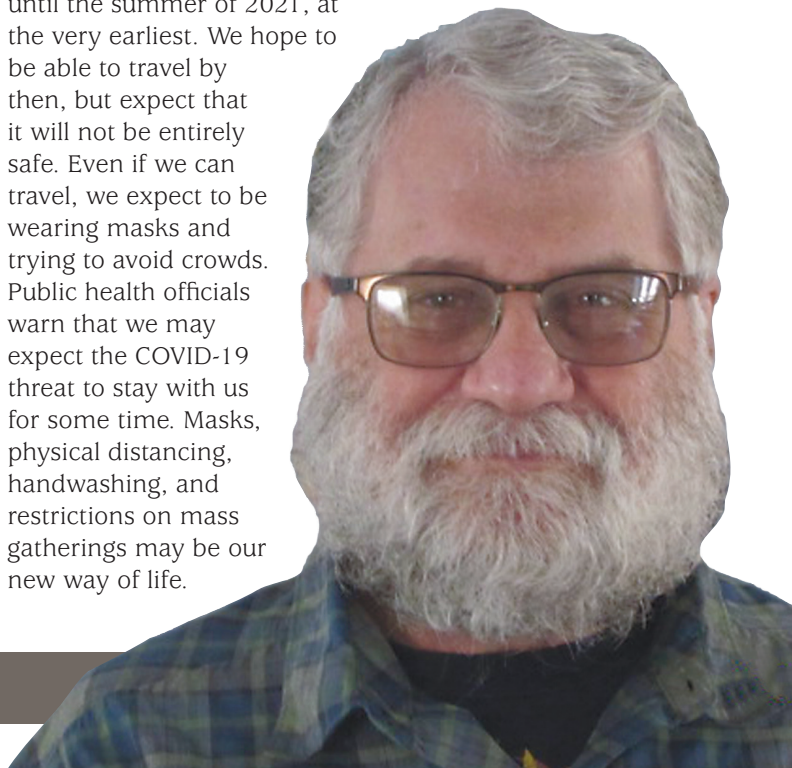
Public health officials agree that physical distancing, masks, hand washing, and not touching one's face are essential to prevent the spread of the coronavirus. Contact tracing is also important. So is an official program of testing to identify those who may be infectious and should be quarantined, with results publicized. Downplaying the risk and withholding information create uncertainty, increase stress, and can cause panic.

What does all that mean for us? My wife and I consider ourselves vulnerable, therefore we minimize contact with

other people. We have several kinds of face masks – some almost medical quality for doctor visits and high contact activities such as going to the grocery store, and some disposable and inexpensive ones which we can leave in the car and next to the front door. The point is simply to be sensitive to potentially risky contacts and to be prepared for whatever might happen.

To lessen stress levels, find one or two primary sources for COVID-19 information to avoid having to sift through disinformation, misinformation, and redundant information. Johns Hopkins University has a COVID-19 website that provides accurate data and helpful information to limit exposure: <https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/>.

My wife and I have postponed three international trips until the summer of 2021, at the very earliest. We hope to be able to travel by then, but expect that it will not be entirely safe. Even if we can travel, we expect to be wearing masks and trying to avoid crowds. Public health officials warn that we may expect the COVID-19 threat to stay with us for some time. Masks, physical distancing, handwashing, and restrictions on mass gatherings may be our new way of life.



Bill Waugh, with his pandemic beard.

GSU'S DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION INITIATIVE

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WE'RE LIVING THROUGH GREAT CHANGE

in a short period of time: not only the pandemic and resulting recession, but also the revival of the 1960s Civil Rights Movement with the nationwide protest demonstrations this Spring. Georgia State is engaging in this last area with its Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Initiative, seeking to create a better campus climate for nonwhite faculty — both to attract more diverse faculty and to keep those we have.

This search for greater faculty diversity has been a continuing concern since President Emeritus Carl Patton came in 1992. By 2001, University Task Forces had created the policy to recruit and retain underrepresented faculty that was approved by the University Senate. But the problem remains today: a richly diverse student body taught by a faculty that is not. This Fall, Georgia State enrolled 54,000 students. While about 75 percent of its students are nonwhite (*with 40 percent of those African American*), only about 32 percent of its faculty are nonwhite.

New directions to increase faculty diversity seem needed. In 2017, President Becker and then-Provost Risa Palm established the Commission for the Next Generation of Faculty with the goal of “develop[ing] programs and strategies to . . . diversify Georgia State University’s faculty.” Several recommendations of the Commission’s 2019 report are being implemented: a

Center for Studies on Africa and Its Diaspora located in the College of Arts and Sciences, and a central database of University DEI programs and initiatives.

In July, the Office of Institutional DEI was formed, whose Vice President will report directly to our University president. A national search for this new Vice President is now underway. In connection with this office, the new DEI website was launched, serving as Georgia State’s first-ever central information hub for DEI activities, programs and resources across the university’s colleges and schools.

See: <https://dei.gsu.edu>.

In September, Provost Hensel formed the Task Force for Racial Equality in response to the national incidents of police violence and racial unrest, with a charge that includes students and staff as well as an Action Plan for Fall and Spring terms.

All of this should significantly improve Georgia State’s general social climate for diverse faculty, especially the administrative addition of the Office of IDEI with a direct avenue to the President. This climate should certainly assist in their recruitment.

However, as an emerita who participated in many past efforts to increase our numbers of diverse faculty, I would remind present-day warriors of this hard-won lesson that we learned: the **retention** of these faculty is just as important . . . and perhaps more difficult.

EDITOR'S NOTE !

EmeriTies: By Emeriti and For Emeriti

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It seems that Georgia State, like the rest of us, is going to be “Coping with COVID” for much longer than initially expected, and it’s my intent as editor to chronicle some of the resulting changes.

First, last March our teaching changed as everything came to a halt because of the pandemic. Then this Fall our own President Becker, who saw us through the Great Recession and had begun to see us through the global pandemic, announced he’s taking a hiatus. More positively,

there’s a renewed drive for our inclusion of diversity (*whether of race, gender, or sexual orientation*) to match the diversity of our students more closely. Thus the new Office of Institutional DEI has been created, reporting to the President. And our construction projects continue apace.

These are remarkable times, when the common parting salutation is, “Take care.” And so, all you emeriti who are reading this across the country—*take care, stay well, and look up*.

PRESIDENT MARK BECKER STEPS DOWN

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President Mark Becker came to Georgia State in 2009 during the Great Recession and he will leave its presidency during the pandemic of 2020. He plans to take an educational leave to conduct research and write, adding that he wished to announce this in mid-September so that the Georgia Board of Regents would have ample time to conduct a search for his replacement. A national search will be conducted for his successor, who will start in July.

In an interview on WABE radio on September 20, 2020, President Becker stated that he is not leaving for another position nor is he a candidate for one elsewhere. He intends to remain in the Atlanta area for a few years. When asked about the pandemic, he replied: “This year of pandemic is challenging. By next summer when there are vaccines, there should be a higher degree of normalcy. But COVID-19 will always be with us to some degree.” His background in Biostatistics and Public Health sciences gives authoritative weight to this evaluation.

He was Professor of Biostatistics and Associate Dean of the School of Public Health from 1996–2000 at the University of Michigan; and Dean of the School of Public Health from 2001-4 at the University of Minnesota. From 2003-4 he also was Assistant Vice-President for Public Health Preparedness and Emergency Response there. He then served as Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs at the University of South Carolina until he came to Georgia State.

President Becker arrived here during the difficult early days of the Great Recession. Under his leadership, Georgia State has become widely recognized for its introduction of successful innovative programs and initiatives to foster student success. The University set records for enrollment, graduation rates and total graduates. He placed high priority on ensuring financial support for students. The university has also set fundraising records.

He leaves his successor the largest university in the state with an enrollment of 54,000, thanks to our consolidation with Georgia Perimeter College (*GPC*) in 2016. This



President Mark Becker

consolidation was mandated by the University System of Georgia (*USG*), which predicted that Georgia State’s “Student Success” initiatives could only benefit *GPC*. This proved true, for *GPC*’s graduation rates have dramatically increased.

In addition, President Becker helped to acquire Turner Field, former home of the Atlanta Braves. The University added football to its athletic program in 2010, and President Becker led the University as it converted the venue to a football field in 2017.

If President Becker’s future does include “research[ing] and writ[ing],” he is eminently qualified to write a book about shepherding a major state university through the perils of a national economic recession into a solid recovery, only to encounter a sudden global pandemic. Given the state of higher education at this time, he would be assured of a widespread audience.

EMERITI AUTHORS

(Emeriti: share your recent publications of new articles or books.)

Stanley Smits. Professor and Chair Emeritus of Managerial Sciences (sjsmits@bellsouth.net). “The Challenge of Knowledge Management in Healthcare,” by Dawn E. Bowden, Stanley J. Smits, and Matthew A. Andrews, pp. 210-221 in *Business Theory and Practice Across Industries and Markets*, edited by: Demetris Vrontis, Yaakov Weber, Evangelos Tsoukatos. EuroMed Press, 2020.

Leonard Teel. Professor Emeritus of Communication (lteel@gsu.edu). *American Journalism: A Journal of Media History*, Vol. 37, No. 1 (Summer 2020), 410-412. Review of *Lincoln’s Informer: Charles A. Dana and the Inside Story of the Union War* by Carl Guarneri. Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 2019.

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OPENING SCHOOL DURING A PANDEMIC

Our Fall 2020 issue closed with many unsettling questions about the results of the pandemic for Georgia State, a rapidly evolving situation. Would students enroll for Fall term if their classes are primarily or even partially online? Would we still attract highly qualified freshmen?

This Fall, we set records for the largest enrollment in our history: it topped 54,000. More than 5,200 freshmen entered the Atlanta campus as the largest and most qualified freshman class in the institution's history. More than 2,500 freshmen started at our Perimeter College campuses. Incoming freshmen at our Atlanta campus had an average high school grade point average (GPA) of 3.54, also a record.

However, by the October 30 withdrawal deadline, almost 9,000 students had withdrawn from courses.

Would Fall term see an outbreak of COVID-19 cases at Georgia State or a surge in Georgia cases generally? Would the University pivot from its planned blend of online and hybrid classes to solely online learning?

The USG has no statewide system for tracking and reporting COVID-19 cases on its campuses. Some of the state universities make these numbers public, but Georgia State does not. In any case, the decision to move classes online can only be made by the USG, not the institution.

In August, President Becker stated that the

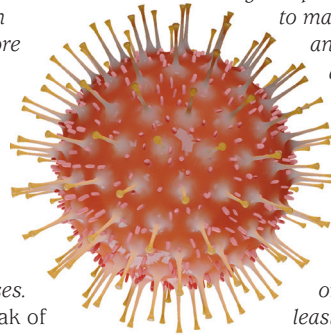
university would follow public health guidance. He noted that the overall density of our campus had been reduced so that only 10% of the students would be on campus in a classroom at any given time.

At the Regents' September 15 meeting, USG Chancellor Steven Wrigley announced that the system's 26 campuses would offer in-person classes through Spring term 2021. On October 13, the Regents passed a resolution that "each campus is to maximize the safe in-person instruction" and "ensure hybrid instruction includes a vast majority of in-person interactive instruction."

So Georgia State decided that in Spring 2021, instructors of hybrid classes would either use a cohort model in which students are divided into groups that can attend class safely with social distancing on specific days or ensure that each student receives at least 25% in-person instruction. Spring registration was delayed to identify the larger classrooms and times needed for such instruction.

And what would be the fate of Georgia State's ambitious construction projects?

Ramesh Vakamudi, Facilities Management Vice President, reports that since March Facilities has been primarily occupied with creating social distancing on the six campuses and modifying 600 labs. Meanwhile, work on the Greenway, Library North Addition, and the Convocation Center has continued. The Convocation Center is scheduled for completion in August 2022.



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EMERITI ASSOCIATION



EMERITIES

Events & Activities

UNIVERSITY UPDATES

ADMINISTRATION

Jay Kahn, Executive Senior Associate Vice President for Advancement at Purdue University, has been appointed Vice President for Development and Alumni Affairs.

Tim Renick, who has led Georgia State's student success efforts since 2008, became the founding Executive Director of Georgia State's new National Institute for Student Success on November 1. **Allison Calhoun-Brown**, Vice President for Student Engagement and Programs, succeeds him as Senior Vice President for Student Success. More on this National Institute in our Spring issue.

COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

The college has established the Center for Studies on Africa and its Diaspora (CSAD), which will support research and academic initiatives, artistic efforts and public programming that target topics relating to the African diaspora. CSAD is led by co-directors Jennie Ward-Robinson, special adviser to the dean, and Elizabeth West, Professor of English and Executive Director of the South Atlantic Modern Language Association.

PERIMETER COLLEGE

Students in the new African-American Studies pathway may take core curriculum and African-American focused courses to earn an Associate of Arts. This Fall, about 20 Perimeter instructors began teaching four African-American Studies courses examining African-American literature, social issues, history and culture.

UPDATE ON RETIREES' HRA FUNDING

The Regents met and approved an extension of the HRA for 2021. In trying times for the state and university system, they continue to support our health benefits.

IN MEMORIAM

Dr. Diane Fowlkes, Professor Emeritus of Political Science, died August 28, 2020. She received her Ph.D. in Political Science from Emory University, and taught at GSU from 1973 to 1998. She was instrumental in helping to develop the Women's Studies Institute (WSI) founded in 1994, and was its first Director in 1995. When she retired, she was honored with the University's Exceptional Service Award.

Dr. Valerie Fennell, Associate Professor Emerita of Anthropology recalls her: "Diane Fowlkes came to the Political Science Department at GSU in 1973, during the Second Wave of the feminist movement. After meeting several times to discuss studies on women, we decided to invite others to gather who might be interested. That began the Women's Studies Group in 1975, where mutual support grew along with discussions of course content and strategies to persuade colleagues of the value of courses on women. Often led by Diane, we helped one another learn information never covered in our own graduate work.

"When an Interdisciplinary Studies degree was introduced in 1984, Diane developed and successfully lobbied for a Bachelor of Interdisciplinary Studies in Women's Studies as a prelude to an interdisciplinary Institute which she championed until its creation in 1994. She published fourteen scholarly articles, four book chapters, and *White Political Women: Paths from Privilege to Empowerment* (University of Tennessee Press, 1992).

"After her retirement, she turned to creative writing. She often said that writing allowed escape from her final illness (*Parkinson's disease*), and intensified delightful memories of her experiences. Diane was a strong-willed, persistent supporter of women."

Dr. Richard Thompson Putney, Associate Professor Emeritus of Psychology, died on June 8, 2020 in Atlanta. He received his doctorate from the University of Missouri-Columbia. He joined Georgia State University in 1967 as an Assistant Professor of Psychology, was promoted with tenure in 1972, and retired in 1997. Dr. Putney studied the effects of learning on brain activity using electroencephalography, animal behavior, cognition—particularly memory—and the history of psychology, resulting in more than two dozen publications and many scholarly presentations.

In the weeks before his death, Professor Putney was completing a comprehensive history of psychological perspectives on consciousness. His paper on the topic was scheduled to be presented in 2020 at the annual meeting of the Southern Society for Philosophy and Psychology, and will be read in Dr. Putney's honor at the 2021 convention of that professional organization. He took great pride in educating students in Psychology, teaching a variety of courses across his 36 years as a faculty member.

WINTER Upcoming Events

■ EMERITI ASSOCIATION

The traditional **Holiday Party** is **cancelled this year**. Our **Valentine Luncheon** in February is **TBD**. Let us hope.

■ RIALTO CENTER FOR THE ARTS

The remaining 2020 Rialto Series programs are cancelled, including the Holiday Concert in December, alas. Director Lee Foster notes: "We are continuing our "Feed Your Senses" for the year . . . the **Lunch and Learn program every third Wednesday at noon**. On **December 16, 12 pm-1 pm**, we are hosting trumpeter **Joe Gransden**, who has already performed worldwide and released 14 CDs under his own name. **See:** <https://www.facebook.com/RialtoCenter/>.

Check our performance archives for other exciting artistic events: <https://rialto.gsu.edu/performance-archives/>"

EMERITIES

Events & News



Nitheyaa Shree, JIT Fund Recipient.

JUST-IN-TIME FUND Recipient

Kathleen Baydala Joyner • Director Communications • Honors College
kjoyner@gsu.edu

Since her junior year, Honors College neuroscience major **Nitheyaa Shree** has been working on research that seeks to better understand the mechanisms of degenerative brain diseases like Alzheimer's. "I really like learning about how our brain learns things and how our brain remembers things," said Shree, a Georgia State Presidential Scholar, Goldwater Scholar and Honors College Ambassador.

Shree's work in Professor Angela Mabb's research lab studies the role that a specific protein, known as ARC, plays in learning behaviors in the aging brain. "What we're trying to figure is the role of ARC's degradation. What we know is that there is a lot of this protein in diseases like Alzheimer's," she explained. "Somehow, the normal brain will get rid of this protein; it will degrade the protein. What we're looking at is what is the role of this protein's degradation in normal learning and memory behaviors."

Shree was prepared to present her research at the National Conference on Undergraduate Research (NCUR),

which draws students from across the country. NCUR was to be held on March 2020 at Montana State University. Her plans were dashed when the COVID-19 pandemic forced NCUR to cancel suddenly. "NCUR was also supposed to be the first annual Goldwater Scholars meeting. We were going to have some of our own workshops and events," she said. "I was really sad."

But Shree is not deterred. She now has her sights set on presenting at virtual conferences, and she's hoping that the pandemic will recede enough so that she can present in-person again soon. She'll use her Just-in-Time funding to help offset the cost of the hefty registration fees and supplies.

Just-in-Time funding is essential to undergraduates, said Shree, because it supports their participation in conferences where they can showcase their work and network with other scholars in their fields. "I think having that network is very important because I want to go into academia," she said. "And the funding allows me to have those experiences that I wouldn't otherwise."

REQUEST FOR JIT FUND DONORS ...

Donations to the Just-In-Time Fund for Honors College students still are needed in this time of COVID-19. Whether or not future academic meetings and conferences are virtual, there still will be registration fees and the need for financial support for presentation supplies and materials. Future meetings and conferences may combine virtual and face-to-face audiences. Gifts to support this fund can be made online at <https://netcommunity.gsu.edu/make-a-gift> or by check. **For checks, make payable to Georgia State University Foundation; add to the memo line Emeriti Just-In-Time Fund; and mail your donation to: Georgia State University Foundation • P.O. Box 2668 • Atlanta, GA 30312-2668.** You may specify the student's originating department.

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

Welcome to our 460+ emeriti now settled across the continental United States. Some of you living during these precarious times may have stories to tell or wisdom to share for *EmeriTies*. Please send any such notes or articles, 100-400 words long, to the editor at cgallant@gsu.edu.

- **What has been your own experience with the pandemic where you are?**