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Recommended Citation

Georgia State University Emeriti Association, "Emerities Newsletter, Fall 2020" (2020). *Emeriti Faculty Publications*. 45.

<https://scholarworks.gsu.edu/gsuemeriti/45>

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COPING WITH COVID-19 AT GEORGIA STATE

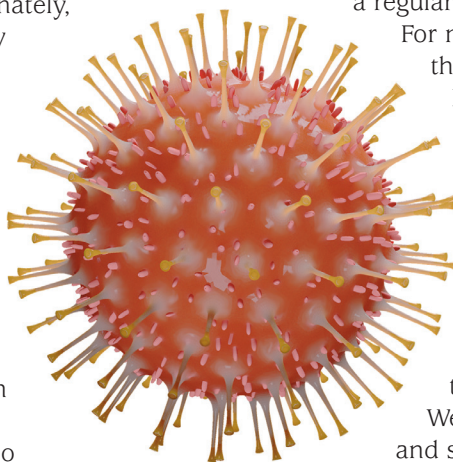
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THE CASCADING RESULTS OF THE COVID-19

pandemic have changed Georgia State as rapidly as they have changed the rest of the world, although whether this is only temporary is not yet clear.

January 4, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) first sounded the alarm about a rapidly spreading virus in China. By the end of January, WHO warned it was a "public health emergency of international concern"; and on March 11, declared it a pandemic. There were no confirmed Georgia cases by February, but planning by our university had already begun. Fortunately, our President Mark Becker was formerly Dean of the School of Public Health at the University of Minnesota and Provost Wendy Hensel was formerly an attorney, both well-equipped to lead us through the changes to come.

The first changes were due to the safety measures recommended by the Georgia Department of Public Health: social distancing and face masks. Financial losses for the University System of Georgia (USG) from the resulting systemwide changes have proved to be at least \$340-350 million so far. In mid-March, like most other educational systems nationwide, the USG abruptly closed its campuses for two weeks and shifted its primary mode of instruction from in-person to virtual. Accompanying this, also nationwide, was the students' general anger at suddenly finding their dormitories closed and their quite substantial tuition fees paying for online rather than in-person classes. Many schools were forced to refund part of these housing and tuition fees to students, with lawsuits often initiated against those which did not.



By early March, Georgia State's preparations were underway. Many of its faculty were unfamiliar with digital teaching, as many of its staff were not used to teleworking. When classes were cancelled for the two-week period, the University used the time to test its teaching modules and business continuity plan for the campus.

On April 9, Governor Brian Kemp ordered Georgians to shelter-in-place. On April 16, Provost Hensel announced that online teaching was now a job requirement, and permanent faculty who taught such courses as part of a regular course load would be compensated.

For most, this would require formal training through Georgia State's Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning. She noted pointedly: "It is important that we all understand the remote teaching methodologies that were acceptable during the emergency this spring will not meet the standards of excellence we seek in our classrooms. Online pedagogies are sophisticated and not the equivalent of posting materials through Kaltura or holding a live lecture on Webex." Spring commencement was virtual; and summer classes were digital.

The fundamental uncertainty about the future course of the pandemic has affected Georgia State's more general strategies for the future too, for the pandemic has caused the nation to experience an economic downturn that may prove worse than the 2008 Great Recession. Like other schools across the country, Georgia State is concerned about its revenues for the coming Fall term. Will students enroll if all their college classes are digital, or will they take a gap year? How much funding will be allocated to us by the legislature?

This story continues to back page.

CHAIR'S COLUMN

WILLIAM FELDHAUS

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WHAT A YEAR TO REMEMBER! FIRST, THERE WAS

the coronavirus pandemic that threatened the entire world, especially those of us in our senior years. This led to a radical change for faculty, staff and students in our universities, as we had to change the delivery of our courses radically from the traditional approach to distance learning. I was in the middle of teaching an undergraduate course for the College of Business. Welcome to a new world!

I have some observations about this experience. In the past I had never dealt with distance learning or online teaching. The iCollege feature was very useful for a number of needs in communicating with my class and worked well for testing, but everything else was a new adventure. I got a quick introduction to Zoom and Webex, but it was not easy to adapt to this technology.

I was very proud of our younger, more tech-savvy faculty, who were quite willing to share their knowledge and experience with some of our fossil faculty like me. Their willingness to share was exceptional. The Provost assembled a team of these faculty to provide assistance to those of us who needed some guidance. We managed to get through this challenging semester with some success as measured by our student evaluations. On a purely personal note, I must say that the experience for me was not the same. I really missed the classroom interaction with my students. It was just not the same fulfillment I had enjoyed during my career as a faculty member and educator.

One final note. I'm sure you know the university is facing a significant budget challenge this coming year. Your Emeriti Board will be discussing this issue and how it will impact our operations. We will keep you posted.

EDITOR'S NOTE !

EmeriTies: By Emeriti and For Emeriti

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Just before Governor Brian Kemp declared that all Georgians should “shelter-in-place” as a precaution because of COVID-19, something happened that guaranteed my compliance. On April 1, I fell like a ton of bricks in a Kroger’s parking lot, fractured my left hip, and had a total hip replacement. I’m pretty well recovered now and recently graduated from a walker to a cane. When you read this, I should be walking on my own again. I wish here to express my heartfelt gratitude to the University System of Georgia for establishing and funding the faculty retirees’ Health Reimbursement Accounts (HRAs) in 2016.

These HRAs help pay for health care coverage and costs, with the unused balance rolling over annually. For the first few years, my husband and I let our accounts roll over since we worried, like many over 65, about possible future disasters and how we’d pay for them. Last year we did use them for our Medicare monthly premiums. But the rollover feature meant that this financial cushion was there when we needed it in April. Between Medicare, my Medicare Advantage plan, and our HRAs, our cost for my surgery and hospital stay was zero! So, thank you, USG, thank you. ❤️

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

Welcome to our 400+ 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.

POSSIBLE TOPICS:

- Where does higher education seem to be headed?
- How is teaching different now from when you were engaged with it, and does this change seem irrevocable?
- What has been your own experience with the pandemic where you are?

TRIP TO SOUTHERN AFRICA

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In September, 2019, Carolyn and I spent three weeks in Southern Africa on a trip with 24 others, promoted by the GSU Alumni Association. Going on a photography safari was our long-standing dream. But the trip also delivered an amazing variety of experiences of South Africa, Zimbabwe, and Botswana, their landscapes, people, economies, and politics. It was fortuitous that we made this trip when we did. Covid-19 makes a trip like this impossible in the foreseeable future.

We went on 9 photographic safaris, 6 in a private game reserve with an open border to Kruger National Park, 1 in Zimbabwe, and 2 in Botswana including one by boat on the Chobe river. We had envisioned safaris as spotting wildlife from a distance with binoculars. We were surprised to discover that the wildlife is so accustomed to tourists driving around in jeeps that they see them as no threat and completely ignore them. Often, we literally could have reached out and touched species like leopards, elephants, lions, hyenas, wild dogs, giraffes, and rhinoceros. We even got to watch—from about 10 yards away—a pair of lionesses stalking, killing and devouring a warthog.

We visited Capetown, Stellenbosch wine region, Cape of Good Hope, and Robben Island, where Nelson Mandela was imprisoned. We toured with an ex-inmate who showed

us his and Mandela's cells. In Johannesburg we toured the slums of Soweto, visited the amazing CNN Hero Klyptown Youth Program, and ate lunch in the home of a resident. We took a circa 1920s luxurious replica train to Bulawayo, Hwange National Park, and Victoria Falls in Zimbabwe. Evident were the difficult lives of the people, the high crime, and endless shanty towns. It made us realize how incredibly lucky we are in the U.S.

We learned of the political situations. We saw the impact of corruption, cronyism, and incompetence. This was true particularly in Zimbabwe, the once prosperous "bread basket of Africa." Juxtaposed was Botswana, a country with few resources and vast unfarmable deserts, but with a proud beneficent functioning democracy, and doing just fine.

We were scheduled to fly home from Johannesburg, but the British Airways pilots went on strike. British Air paid our expenses so we spent a few more days and toured the "Cradle of Humankind," with its archeological sites where 3.5-million-year-old fossils were found of *Australopithecus africanus*, a direct ancestor of modern humans.

This was the trip of a lifetime, rich in scenery, wildlife, history, and diverse peoples and cultures. It made the extremely long flights to get there a worthwhile torment.



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COPING WITH COVID-19 AT GEORGIA STATE

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Contributing to this concern are the state's budget cuts due to its COVID-19 expenses and projected loss of tax revenues. The state's Fiscal Year begins on July 1. On May 8, Governor Brian Kemp cut Georgia's total 2021 FY budget by 14 percent, asking all state agencies to submit revised budgets cutting spending by that amount. In June, he drew on the state's monetary reserves and reduced this cut to 10 percent. As of this writing in mid-July, the USG will take a \$242 million cut under the final approved budget. It had already announced a tuition freeze for the 2020-2021 academic year; and has ruled out mandatory furloughs for 2021. Georgia State is offering a voluntary separation plan for retirement-eligible employees, a strategy to reduce their number that was used in 2011.

The Chancellor has asked all USG schools to plan the sort of classes they will offer in Fall 2020: in-person or digital. Students of course much prefer that all

their classes be face-to-face. However, President Becker announced May 4 that we must plan for next year expecting that "social distancing will be the norm." Our Academic Plan for Fall 2020 will be a "Blended Learning Model" in which most classes will be taught with both online and face-to-face (FTF) components. Students will be divided into groups that attend the FTF section of the class on specific days, with the rest of the class content delivered online. Some classes will be taught only online and a few only FTF, to be determined by the deans and chairs.

The Regents have approved this Academic Plan for Fall 2020, designed to accommodate whatever uncertain future we will encounter. How long will this pandemic last? Will we continue the Blended Learning Model henceforth? Will our future pedagogy include virtual elements? It seems that the pandemic is changing Higher Education along with everything else.

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EMERITI ASSOCIATION



EMERITIES

Events & Activities

YOUR “BUNDLED” MEMBERSHIP IN AROHE

AS AN EMERITUS/A OF GEORGIA STATE, you are automatically a member of the Emeriti Association. This membership now means that you are also eligible to join AROHE, the nationwide Association of Retirement Organizations in Higher Education. (For a description of AROHE, see *EmeriTies*, Winter 2020, “Retiree Groups for Educators,” p. 1.)

AROHE has recently modified its membership rules to “Bundle” together such retirement organizations with their individual members so that “Bundled Members” may now join AROHE too, a new bonus feature for retirement organizations. Of course, individual membership comes with dues (\$60 annually), but you may sign up for a complimentary year-long membership that extends until June 30, 2021. And that means the considerable electronic resources of AROHE are also open to you if you join: a real boon for us seniors over 65 during this new normal of necessary social distancing which is likely to continue for quite some time. These “Bundle Members” will receive the *AROHE Matters* e-newsletter and be able to access all member services (*their Idea Exchange Webinars, their “Knowledge Center” with videos for retirees and free online courses from universities, and more*).

To join AROHE, see:
<https://www.arohe.org/>



Photographs: Dot Paul

VALENTINE’S DAY LUNCHEON

Our 2020 Valentine’s Day Luncheon was held on February 14 in the Rialto Center for the Arts. After opening remarks by **Bill Feldhaus**, chair of the Emeriti Association Coordinating Board, we received updates from **Dr. Michael Eriksen**, Interim Vice-President of Research and Economic Development, and **Dr. Larry Berman**, Dean of the Honors College. Two recent JIT-Fund recipients spoke about their conference experiences made possible by this fund, **Cameron Higgins** (Psychology) and **Nadim Kabir** (Computer Science), followed by musical entertainment provided by the School of Music.

EMERITIES

Events & News

Virtual Events and Activities



Lee Foster, Executive Director
Rialto Center for the Arts.

The Rialto Center for the Arts notes that its online Rialto Performance Archives is especially valuable “in these days of social distancing and staying home,” as we revisit performances and productions that can take us away from the present (<https://rialto.gsu.edu/performance-archives/>).

Lee Foster, Executive Director of the Rialto Center for the Arts, says of this treasure: “From the moment the Rialto closed as a result of COVID-19, we knew we still had to be a source of

inspiration and hope through the arts. Within five days of the shutdown order, we had started to create exciting virtual programming and we haven’t stopped. We currently have three virtual programs out there:

Rialto Replays, ***Rialto Homegrown Artists Series*** and ***Feed Your Senses Livestream***. We are working on more!”

The Rialto Replays give us past live performances of Lisa Fischer, Balé Folclórico da Bahia, and The Nile Project: Part One. The Rialto Homegrown Artists Series showcases short, virtual performances by local musicians in their homes. And Feed Your Senses Livestream is the Rialto’s free lunchtime program every third Wednesday that features a performer or speaker for an insider’s look at their art. There’s virtual music for the entire family here.

IN MEMORIAM

Charles Knox, Professor Emeritus of Music, died on December 11, 2019. He was an Atlanta native, a trombonist with the early Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, and a composer for half a century of not only traditional orchestral, chamber and choral music, but also of palindromes, a bassoon choir, a tuba octet, a symphony for eleven saxophones, and more. Over 100 of Dr. Knox’s works are archived at the Georgia State University Library.

He received his B.F.A. in music from the University of Georgia, and both his M.Mus. and Ph. D. degrees from Indiana University. He was a member of the music faculty of Georgia State University from 1965 to 1995. Dr. Knox was a member of the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers; the American Composers Forum; the Society of Composers, Inc., and the American Music Center. Dr. Knox was the recipient of the 2001 Mayor’s Fellowship in the Arts (*Award in Music*) from the City of Atlanta, Georgia (USA). He was often referred to as the “Dean of Atlanta composers,” to which he replied: “Basically, that just means I’m old.”

COLLEGE UPDATES

BYRDINE F. LEWIS COLLEGE OF NURSING AND HEALTH PROFESSIONS

Dr. Huanblao Mo has been appointed Dean of the college.

HONORS COLLEGE

This spring there were no Just-In-Time recipients to present research at conferences because of the COVID-19 pandemic, but the college did find ways for their students to present research using virtual formats.

Dr. Larry Berman has announced that he is stepping down as the Founding Dean of the Honors College to return to teaching in the Honors College in Fall 2021. The Interim Dean is **Dr. Sarah Cook**.

REQUEST FOR JIT FUND DONATIONS . . .

Donations to the Just-In-Time Fund for Honors College students are requested even, or perhaps particularly, 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. And perhaps future meetings and conferences will follow the “blended learning model,” and combine virtual and face-to-face audiences. Gifts to support the Just-In-Time 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.