Building the Future: Donation Puts UWG on Track for New Building

by Amy K. Lavender

In the very near future, Maple Street could have a brand new, state-of-the-art building to showcase thanks to a substantial donation from University of West Georgia alumnus David Johnson, co-founder of St. Croix-based company Cane Bay Partners VI, LLLP.

“Johnson said the gift to his Alma Mater was a natural fit, and one he was happy to make.

“My time at West Georgia was such a formative time in my life, and it is such a special place,” Johnson said. “When I look back at my life and how I got to where I am today, West Georgia played a significant role in that. It allowed me to learn how to not only be an adult and a leader, but also how to be a business person. That’s what compelled me to think about this gift now.”

He sees a new facility on campus as something to get excited about and something he thinks will help draw more students to UWG.

“What I remember about Richards College of Business was a really nice facility, but that was a long time ago,” he said, “so for us to have a state-of-the-art business college building is important to me. I feel fortunate that I’ve been successful in life to this point, and it’s a small thing that I can do to make sure other students have that same opportunity. I want students to look at their different school choices and say, ‘I want to go to West Georgia because I want to study business, and they have this amazing facility, and they have these outstanding degree programs, and they have these top professors. That’s why I want to go there.’”

McIntyre agrees the new building will definitely draw in more students, but she also says it will play an important role in functionality and in the business college’s engagement in the community.

“It’s more than just a physical space,” McIntyre explained. “A new building will bring the entire college back together under one roof so that we can all collaborate more easily. It will allow us to be a more integral part of the business community with space for programs open to everyone.”

The new building will offer students and faculty the technology they need to keep pace with today’s business trends; dedicated space for the college’s various centers, such as the Small Business Development Center and the Center for Economic Education; flexible learning spaces; additional space for staff and faculty; and more spacious areas to house the student learning labs and conference rooms.

“A new home for the Richards College of Business continues to be a major goal of UWG’s New West Campaign,” said UWG President Dr. Kyle Marrero. “With David’s very generous gift, we are able to start planning for the new building that will serve generations to come. We are thankful to alumni like David, who invest in our plans to become America’s top comprehensive university.”

In addition to this latest initiative, Johnson made a significant donation to the school and established the David A. Johnson Applied Econometrics and Analytics Fund to support a dedicated professorship within UWG’s Richards College of Business. He also participates in the school’s annual SAS Analytics Summit to offer his mentorship and expertise.
Sharing Is Caring: New Bike-Share Program Cruising Into Carrollton

As part of a collaborative effort between the University of West Georgia, Tanner Health System, Southwire Company, and the City of Carrollton, a comprehensive bike-share program will soon launch to make cruiser bikes available to rent at various locations on the Carrollton Greenbelt. Each bike-share station will be sponsored by one of the partnering organizations. The University of West Georgia is sponsoring two. In addition, UWG has created bike lanes along its main roads and is installing new bike racks across campus. The goal is to encourage students, faculty and staff to leave their cars parked and choose biking as a healthier, greener option.

The program itself was inspired by ideas presented by students in the Southwire Sustainable Business Honors Program. The SSBHP is a partnership between UWG’s Richards College of Business and Southwire, which enables students to receive both bachelor’s and master’s (MBA) degrees in four years. In addition to their coursework, students also participate in Southwire-sponsored events and assignments that follow Southwire’s five tenets of sustainability.

Value Share: Chick-fil-A Shares Values with UWG

by Shauntell Brittian

Representatives from Chick-fil-A came to the University of West Georgia to highlight their shared values with students during the UWG Richards College of Business Chick-fil-A Showcase. The event, held during the college’s Chick-fil-A Day, was open to students, faculty, and staff, giving them the opportunity to hear from Chick-fil-A professionals about their philosophies on leadership, purpose, and customer service.

During the showcase, Carrollton Chick-fil-A owner and operator David Daniels and eight other Chick-fil-A representatives spoke about their experiences working for the national corporation and about how they found a company that was the right fit for them.

“Values help steer your life,” David said. “When you make decisions and you ascribe to a set of values, it will help make decisions really easy for you.”

David said his decision to open a Chick-fil-A restaurant was, in fact, an easy one. He has been running the Chick-fil-A in Carrollton for the past 29 years and started his journey at Chick-fil-A at age 15 in Tucker, Georgia. Even at that young age, David said he saw the value in the company’s principles.

“When you choose a career, it’s an investment in your life,” David said.

The four principles that David found so appealing were something Chick-fil-A customers still recognize today when entering any of the company’s restaurants: make eye contact, greet customers with a smile, speak up with an enthusiastic tone, and make it personal.

Anthony Bishop, director of Record Sales & Brand Growth for Carrollton’s Chick-fil-A, spoke about his 14 years working under David and the impact just one person can have on the world.

“Each one of you can have an impact on others in this world through business,” Anthony said. “What you’ve heard tonight will work in any business, and that’s why I’m at Chick-fil-A – to make an impact in our community and in the lives of our customers.”

David and Anthony reminded those gathered for the showcase to go above and beyond in whatever career they choose and to S.E.R.V.E.: See and shape the future, Engage and develop others, Reinvent continuously, Value results and relationships, and Embody the values.

UWG senior Kayana Wilson attended the showcase and said she found the words of all the representatives very aspirational and energizing.

“I felt really good seeing these people talk, and it gave me insight on how I can succeed in the future,” Kayana said.

Spring 2017 Events

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Finding Your Voice: Third Annual Women Empowering Women

by Amy K. Lavender

A classroom at Tanner Medical Center in Carrollton was recently filled to capacity with women from all over the region ready to support and learn from each other at the third annual Women Empowering Women event.

Hosted by the University of West Georgia’s Richards College of Business and sponsored by Walmart and Tanner, this year’s event welcomed UWG alumna and Emmy Award winning television journalist Shaunya Chavis-Rucker, UWG alumna and Carroll County Commissioner Michelle Morgan, and Southwire Company Executive Vice President Kathleen Edge.

Dr. Jane Marrero, the first lady of UWG, opened the event by welcoming the audience and panelists.

“I’m excited about the panel today, and I know they’re going to give us a lot of insight to the issues we face with our careers by owning our own voices,” she said. “I’m excited to hear what these ladies are going to say because I know what they share with us will help us create an environment that is more engaging, supportive, and inclusive.”

The panelists opened the event by sharing their journeys to their current positions and how they blazed new trails for women in their respective fields.

Michelle was the first woman elected to the Carroll County Board of Commissioners from District 4.

As an accountant. She finally made her way back to Atlanta to work for WSB-TV before transitioning to public news.

Kathleen also worked her way up in a male-dominated field – manufacturing. She started supportively, and inclusive.

The nature of news has really changed recently, you know. And there’s all this other stuff going on in addition to the story or instead of the story,” she explained. “I got in to journalism because I want to tell people’s stories. So I needed to find my voice in a different way, and I was able to do that through public television. It’s important not only to find your voice, but also to figure out which audience your voice can be heard in most effectively.”

Michelle stressed the importance of women discovering who they are when trying to find your voice.

“Find out authentically who you are,” she said. “And once you’re authentically you, understand the power that you have to impact your family, your community, and the profession you’ve chosen. But when you look to find your own voice, it’s not just about sharing that voice with women, it’s also about finding those men who will show the ropes and mentor you. Surround yourself with supportive men and women and own your voice by doing one thing – being authentically who you are.”

Dr. Faye McIntyre, Richards College of Business dean and Sewell Chair of Private Enterprise, thanked the panelists for sharing their experience with those gathered at the event.
Picture Perfect: Business Student Finds New Outlook, Opportunity Abroad

by Amy K. Lavender

If I were to tell you that a University of West Georgia student recently held a photo exhibition in Atlanta, you might say, “Oh, impressive! A UWG art student had a show in Atlanta!” But you would be only half right. Yes, it is impressive, but you’re a little off base on the discipline. The student I’m referring to isn’t an art student—he’s a business student double majoring in management and management of information systems.

If that raises your eyebrows a little, that’s OK. It raised mine, too, the first time I heard about Adedolapo Adebola-Wilson (he goes by Dolapo). But when I met him, it all made sense. In front of me was a quiet, thoughtful person who carried himself with both confidence and reserve. I could easily see him running a business or peering out from behind a camera. And, clearly, he sees himself as capable of both as well.

“I wanted to do something that would allow me to have time for my craft but also have a degree in something that is career-oriented,” he said.

Dolapo started out as a biology major on track for medical school. But two years into his degree, he decided that wasn’t the right path for him.

“I had to ask myself what I could possibly see myself doing—and it wasn’t medicine,” he recalled, “so I looked at business. I’m glad I switched to business. It’s worked out for me.”

In fact, it’s led to some great opportunities that have not only increased his business acumen but also provided him with some great subject matter for his artistic craft. One such opportunity came this summer, when he studied abroad in Poitiers, France, and earned his certificate in international business.

Prior to his study abroad trip, Dolapo had been wanting to do a photo exhibit. But he hadn’t decided what he wanted the focus of his show to be—until he went to France.

“Previously, I had done a lot of portraits. But when I was traveling, I found myself on the street doing lifestyle photography because, of course, it’s a different environment,” Dolapo said.

He wandered around various streets capturing scenes or people that interested him.

“I just wanted to capture human essence and life as it is,” he explained. “A lot of my subjects didn’t even know I was taking their photos, and that’s the beauty of it because nobody is fixing anything, it’s just them being themselves.”

Before journeying to France, Dolapo had spoken to Richards College of Business Director of External Services and Programs Simone Lee about the possibility of studying abroad. She recalls he was shy, even a bit timid during their discussion. But she could also see his determination, so she helped him take the steps necessary to join the exchange program through Ecole Superieure de Commerce et Management (ESCEM).

“After he returned from his semester in France, Dolapo came back to my office to talk and in walked a young man exuding confidence,” she said. “Really, it was radiating out of him! He spoke eloquently and told me how his semester abroad helped him to ‘find himself.’ Chills went down my spine, because it was clear—this was not the same young man who walked through my door last year.”

Dolapo has admirers on campus as well. His friends and professors are also showing interest in his work.

“Seeing his photos and the passion he has for his photography is heartwarming,” Simone said. “He is conscientious and thoughtful and ready to take on the world. It was a privilege to get to work with him and sharing in his journey. I know his pride in UWG will always remain strong, and I know his experience and education at Richards College of Business will help him achieve great things.”

After the overwhelming support and feedback he received from guests, Dolapo said he is encouraged to have another show after he graduates in spring. Although, he said he will be a little sad to leave UWG.

“I love being a student here because I get the opportunity to be myself, find myself, and better myself,” he shared. “The great professors and the people here care a lot about me. I’ve made friends with film professors, philosophy professors just by them being who they are. So the environment just breeds that individuality.”
CakeLove CEO Shares Sweet Secrets

by Amy K. Lavender

Warren Brown, founder and CEO of CakeLove, a Washington, D.C.-based bakery, was the latest speaker for the BB&T Lectures in Free Enterprise series, created as a partnership between UWG’s Richards College of Business and the BB&T Foundation seven years ago in order to generate a dialog about the ethical foundation of capitalism and free enterprise.

UWG President Dr. Kyle Marrero was on hand to welcome Warren and attendees as well.

“This is always an exciting series, and I like to come and talk about what this means, particularly in regard to the environment we are creating at the University of West Georgia,” Dr. Marrero said. “We create not only an opportunity for students to learn from the best professors in the state, but also an environment where they get to learn from professionals, learn about their experience in their fields of business, and how their entrepreneurial spirit has made a difference in the areas they are passionate about.”

And Warren had no shortage of passion and experience to share with those gathered for the event. The owner of CakeLove is also the former host of Food Network’s “Sugar Rush,” and he has been recognized by local and national media, including the Oprah Winfrey Show, National Public Radio, and CNN. Warren is also the author of four cookbooks.

He began by telling the audience how he got started in baking, a story that actually begins in the courtroom.

“I actually started as a litigator for the federal government,” Warren recalled. “It was a really good job, a noble job, but I very quickly found myself not being engaged and not excited to go to work. […] I wanted something more.”

Soon after, Warren made a New Year’s resolution: He would learn to bake.

“I’m the kind of guy who loves eating, loves cooking, but I didn’t know how to bake anything from scratch, and I wanted to bake at least as well as I felt I could cook,” he said. “I also had this drive to change who I was. I didn’t feel like I was being true to myself. So I developed a mantra: Direct Yourself to Greatness, Answer Your Calls, and Answer to Yourself. And I felt like I needed all those to push myself to that next phase. Not just away from being a lawyer but towards … what, exactly, I don’t know. I didn’t have a dream or aspiration to start a cake business. I just wanted to be a better, different person.”

While Warren was working toward a new, better self, he was also discovering how much he liked to bake cakes. Then it came to a point where he had to make a choice to either be a lawyer or be a baker because he was exhausted trying to do both.

“So I decided this was how I was going to move forward and make something that I’m proud of, that could give me a feeling of satisfaction, that could answer that drive that I have for making an item that I can share, that I think makes the world a little bit better. And it was fun, so why not?”

Warren said he had a lot of reality checks along the way, which started as early as figuring out how to develop a business plan and was followed closely by learning to listen to his customers.

“I immediately realized challenges as acting as sole administrator in a business: staffing responsibilities, setting standards, dealing with customers, paperwork,” Warren recalled. “But you also have to check your ego at the door and get feedback. You have to know if you’re on point. You can’t sell things the market doesn’t want. For example, we had cake flavors in the store that I thought were divine, but people didn’t want them. I thought they were crazy because these flavors were delicious, but they weren’t interested. You have to give the market what it wants, or you’re not going to sell anything.”

In his first year of operation, Warren said he shed a lot of naiveté.

“When I started, I didn’t want to be one cake shop on one corner. I even thought about eventually having a shop in the capital of every state, but that was ridiculous,” he laughed. “Once I opened up my first and then second store, I had a much better appreciation for the store of difficulty.”

A few years in, Warren says his business was getting crushed.

“There was a recession. There was competition – I counted and in two years, 48 cupcakes stores opened up in D.C. alone. So we created some focus groups and asked them ‘How can we serve you better?’ We found three things: that cupcakes were hard to carry, many people wanted ‘just a little taste,’ and some people just wanted our cream cheese frosting.”

As a result, CakeLove’s newest iteration came to fruition: cake in a jar.

“We had to take those lessons and make some changes. So my approach changed from a passionate one to a measured and disciplined one. But as a result, our customers were smiling again, and that’s why I started making cakes in the first place.”

In closing, Warren emphasized that “it’s not easy, but it is immensely satisfying to own and run your own business.” He also advised audience members to find their passion, talk to people about your idea to get early feedback, and realize that any venture is a process and a learning opportunity.
Fox to the Finish Line: First Graduate from Prestigious SSBH Program

by Amy K. Lavender

All college students get to experience that huge sense of accomplishment when they finally walk across the stage to receive their diploma, but Kristin Blair Fox will have a compounded sense of pride this month when she completes the final leg of a rigorous business program at the University of West Georgia (UWG).

After four years of hard work, Fox will receive her MBA and immediately begin a full-time position at Southwire Company LLC in Carrollton as a commercial specialist in the Building Wire product segment.

Fox, a Douglas County High School graduate, says this is possible because she enrolled in the Southwire Sustainable Business Honors (SSBH) Program her sophomore year at UWG. As a result, she’s been able to earn her bachelor’s degree, master’s degree, a Sustainability Certificate, an Advertising Certificate, a Sales Certificate and a job in just four years.

According to Dr. Faye McIntyre, dean of the Richards College of Business and Sewell Chair of Private Enterprise, the program is intended to give students a unique experience. The SSBH Program is a joint venture of Southwire Company, LLC, and UWG’s Richards College of Business that focuses on giving students a one-of-a-kind, hands-on experience. Students are challenged in the classroom while they complete internships with Southwire senior leadership. Fox was admitted to the first cohort in 2013.

UWG Students Return from India with Awards and Insights

by Amy K. Lavender

Beverly Thomas, Samantha Bush, Wesley Hammonds, Abigail Samunda and Daija McElwee returned from India with just as many awards in hand from the International Economic Conference near Mumbai, India. The students presented their research on global risk management at the conference and brought home the awards for Best Innovative Solution, Team Best Speaker, Team Outstanding Contributor, Best Runner-Up Presentation and 3rd Overall.

This year, UWG’s team was assigned to assess the global risk management of Israel. The team began preparing for the conference back in the spring by researching the geopolitical, environmental, societal, economic and technological aspects of Israel’s global risk management.

The team met almost every week throughout the semester to finish the presentation. They then met with Dr. John Upson as well as UWG professors Dr. Kim Green, Dr. Susana Velez and Dr. Sall Talpade to get feedback on their presentation and their research. By early December, the team was ready to face the competition.

After their competition, the students had the opportunity to meet other co-eds at Birla College of Arts, Commerce & Science and learn about each other’s cultures first-hand through an exchange student opportunity.
Students Make a Pact: Business College Encourages Professional Behavior with Wolf Pact

by Amy K. Lavender

Richards College of Business students finished up their semester making a pact—a Wolf Pact, in fact.

In an effort to introduce business students to the idea of ethical business standards as early as possible, the University of West Georgia’s Richards College of Business recently introduced students to the Wolf Pact: A commitment by the Richards College of Business family to honesty, integrity, professionalism, and accountability for ethical behavior, and respect for the rights, differences, and dignity of others.

“We’re hoping that this reinforces a very positive culture of professional behavior,” said Richards College of Business Associate Dean Dr. Brad Prince. “Our students aren’t unprofessional, but we want to emphasize the importance of that behavior. And we want to introduce this idea to them early because a lot of businesses have things like this, codes of ethics, codes of conduct, etc., so this is our way of introducing them to that kind of concept now.”

The college hosted an event around the first signing of the pact, inviting students for refreshments, to sign the one-of-a-kind HOWL for UWG wolf statue, and to pick up a Wolf Pact long-sleeved shirt.

“Everyone who has come in has been very excited about signing the wolf,” Dr. Prince said. “Having the event has really captured their attention.”

Brittany Thomas, a transfer student from Kennesaw State University, said she was eager to sign the wolf.

“I’m so excited to participate in an event that shows my UWG school pride!” Brittany said.

According to Dr. Prince, the Wolf Pact also has its own visual identity, which will be placed on professors’ syllabi and exams as a reminder of their agreement with the Richards College of Business. However, Dr. Prince said this isn’t just about academic honesty.

“It’s a more positive approach than just an academic honor code that says, ‘You’re in trouble if you cheat.’ This is really bigger than that. This is about professional behavior beginning now, and it is going to carry on throughout their careers regardless of the job they have.”

 Richards College of Business administrators also hope it will create a further sense of unity among students.

“We hope that they will all feel like they’re a part of something and that they made their mark on the college of business, because they were here when the Wolf Pact started and they were the initial set of students who got to sign the wolf,” Dr. Prince said. “We’re really hoping that this is the beginning of a very positive culture of professional behavior.”

During the initial roll-out, more than 200 students signed the Wolf Pact and the HOWL for UWG wolf, which will be mounted in front of Miller Hall after it is sealed.