

The Journey

from the **Office of Minority Affairs**
of the University of West Georgia

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President Sethna shares insights about our diverse campus

By Jerel Griffin

The University of West Georgia has grown tremendously since Dr. Beheruz N. Sethna was first appointed president in 1994. Through his passion, innovation, and determination, the university is on par with other exceptional institutions around the country. Dr. Sethna was pleased to sit down with *The Journey* and discuss his experiences and insight on things around the campus.

You've been president for over 13 ½ years. How has the university changed over that time period?

West Georgia has changed incredibly over this time period, but first let me talk about what has not changed, which I'm very pleased with. What has not changed is the basic culture that says that students are important. The concept of faculty and staff taking a personal interest in students – that has not changed. I hope we can continue this for a long time. What has changed is that of course we have grown considerably in size, from just under 8,000 when I came. Now we are just under 11,000.

The stature has changed even more than size – for example, how far our admission standards have come. If the admission standards of today were placed on the class of '94 when I came, about 75 percent of applicants would not get in. So that's huge. Now, I want to be very, very clear. We have some outstanding alumni, who came in under the old standards that did phenomenally well. So I don't want anyone to get the impression that it was an inferior institution. It was not, it was a great institution. But there were too many people perhaps, who were less than prepared for college. Another example – when I arrived in '94, more than 50 percent of the entering class was in developmental studies, now called Learning Support. More than 50 percent had to have some remedial work. Today, in terms of first-time, full-time freshmen, it's about one-half of 1 percent.

That's a hundred-fold decrease. So that's the kind of change we're talking about.

The credit for these changes is shared by many people at UWG – without them, none of this would be possible.

West Georgia is now making a national mark for itself – in such areas as undergraduate research and debate. We are one of the national players and that's outstanding for us. The physical facilities are incredibly different. There has been about 200 million dollars of capital improvement. The way the campus is laid out has changed. There used to be a road that went straight through the campus about nine years ago. People used to drive on Columbia Drive (now University Drive) past the UCC and through where the TLC now stands, on a road which led to Bremen. Students had to dodge traffic when going from one side of the campus to the other. It was not a popular decision, by the way, at that time. Some people who used the road as a commuting road were quite upset that they had to go around now. But, it was the right thing to do for safety reasons and for the ambience of the campus. It was a good decision.



Photo by Steven Broome

Dr. Beheruz N. Sethna

What do you think of the diversity of students, faculty, and staff here at West Georgia?

In racial terms, we have a great, diverse student body, as far as African American students are concerned – just over 25 percent of our student body is African American. We still have fewer Hispanics, Native Americans, and other ethnic groups than we should. However, our student success in African Americans is not well reflected in our faculty and professional staff. We would like to have far more African American faculty and staff. The reason that we do not have more is not want of trying. There are far too few Ph.D. African American individuals in the pipeline. So when we do a search, there is just a small handful. This is a basic principle of supply and demand. A lot of universities want them

and those individuals can go to other bigger and richer places. That is where the problem is. I tell all African American students who want to see more African American professors: "Earn your Ph.D., and come back and teach at West Georgia."

With so many different multicultural events on campus, what would you like to see more of? What is your vision for unity on this campus?

I would like to continue to see all kinds of multicultural events here on campus. I think the best way for the students to have good relations among the races is for them to work and play together. That's something that we need to do much more of. I'd like to see far more mixing of the races. In Z-6 for example, when I go there, I pick up a tray and look for a student table to sit at. I look for tables which have a mix of races; however, I don't find very many. I rarely find one or two and that is very troubling to me. If we don't find ways to hang out together, then it becomes a strained relationship. When you have a good time with someone of another race – whether in work or play, then next time you meet someone who makes a racial comment, you can then make your argument that it's just not true. The important thing is to know that only the students can make this work; the president cannot do it. The grass-roots powerbase for making racial unity is in the hands of the students. We've got to have this happen; and not just for the campus because the country will also be better.

What subjects do you currently teach or have taught? What do you enjoy about those subjects?

I have taught courses in the fields of Management Information Systems and Marketing. Most importantly, I enjoy teaching. I enjoy interacting with students and improving their skill-set and résumé. For example, I taught a small course this past fall and after the add-drop period, there were only six students in the class. All six students have had their research accepted for presentation at a national conference. One hundred percent of my students can say on their résumé that they've had a national recognition like this. I was 28 years old, when I got my first national presentation acceptance. I enjoy making a difference in these students' lives.

What are your most recent research interests? Can we expect any more publications in the near future?

I'm currently working on some national and global issues. My most recent work is about global ethics

and ethics in a global environment. I have made presentations, written papers and a chapter in a book on that topic – as to how we can have universities lead the development of ethical and global issues. I'm also working on a presentation about minorities in higher education.

How do you feel about being the only U.S. post-secondary institution president of Indian descent?

I'm glad that I sort of helped break that glass ceiling. It also has its challenges. For example, at presidents' national meetings, I often see a group of African American presidents sitting together. If I chose to sit with all the Indian and Asian presidents, I will be by myself! There are no peers if there are issues or a racial concern. So there are some challenges, but I'm still happy.

What did you gain from the experiences you had while serving as Interim Executive Vice Chancellor and Chief Academic Officer for the University System of Georgia?

That was a good experience. I had the opportunity to broaden my perspective. I learned a lot about different state and national issues. I learned great things about our sister universities and colleges. The state of Georgia has some exceptionally fine institutions, which I knew of, but I got to know them much better. At the end of the day, I chose to come back to West Georgia because I have a love for this institution. I'm very much a campus-based person. The positions were great jobs, senior jobs; however, they were office jobs. The most exciting thing about the job was the appointment of two interim presidents of two universities. I led the effort to find and recommend to the Chancellor and the Board two permanent presidents for those universities. Only the Chancellor and the Board appoint the presidents; but they did that based on their judgments and my recommendations.

What is your vision/mission for West Georgia in the upcoming years?

My vision and mission for the future is very, very exciting. We are now a part of the Robust Tier of Doctoral Comprehensive Universities, designated by the Board of Regents. We want to build here at West Georgia a destination university. This means that students will want to come here. What do we have to do to get there? We have to continue to have first-class academic programs. We have to have great facilities, student life, athletics, campus organizations and so on. So, all of this is a part of the package that we are designing and implementing to make the University of West Georgia a destination university.

Dr. Wright brings passion for history into the classroom and beyond

By Angel Bivins

Dr. Stephanie Wright is currently an Assistant Professor of History at the University of West Georgia. She is a graduate of Spelman College where she obtained her bachelors degree in history, and where she graduated magna cum laude in May, 1994. She also obtained the master's degrees from Tufts University and the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign before receiving her doctoral degree in history from Rutgers University. *The Journey* had the privilege of sitting down with Dr. Wright for an interview:

How long have you been with this University?

This is my fourth year.

You are an Assistant Professor of History. Can you tell me what courses you teach?

Every semester I teach the U.S. history survey, which is part of the core, so the majority of the students that I teach are actually meeting their core requirements. I also teach a variety of classes in African American history including the first and second half of African American History, Introduction to Africana Studies, and periodically a course on black women's history.

What are your primary areas of research?

Well, my main field is U.S. social history, and within that, I specialize in African American history and black women's history, and history of African American education.

I have read some of your work on AOL blackvoices.com. How did you become interested in publishing in this media?

I actually had not given it much thought and the editor asked me if I would write for them. I was

interested in writing for blackvoices.com because it allowed me to reach a larger audience – people who get a lot of their news and information from the internet. In my job, I work with many college students, and this allows me to work with a different audience. Older, younger, people who are parents, people who have been out of school, even people who are going back to school.

I see that you have done some genealogy studies. What are some of the most interesting results or patterns that you have come across?

I think one of the most interesting things in terms of making it possible to do genealogy studies is that the census is now online. I always encourage my students to use our library's database and research their own families. One of the things that is going to be more interesting is that more people will be able to do genealogical research because of the resources that are available through the internet. I think with my own findings people may be surprised to see how much people moved during earlier parts of the 20th century. We think today of our

mobile society...what I found doing a lot of genealogical research is that we had a lot of people coming and going in ways we may not have thought of.

What do you consider one of your greatest accomplishments both in teaching and in life?

In teaching, I would have to say it is when I have a student come up to me who says they weren't interested in history before, and that now they are and they can see how history relates to their own lives and their families' lives. When I have really been able to engage students in some way, that is one of my biggest

accomplishments. In terms of life, I would just have to say my daughter.

I understand that you are working with the Africana Studies program. Can you tell me a bit, about what that is?

Africana Studies is a minor. It is interdisciplinary and allows students not to have to focus on just history, English or anthropology but allows them to take classes in a number of different areas that are related to the experiences and culture of people who are from the continent of Africa and also of African descent. That is really the focus of the minor, to expose people to this.

What initially interested you most in African American history? What led you to continue your education in this area?

In terms of initial interest, I really was interested in high school. I went to a large high school, and there were very few African American students. We had six out of 500 in my graduating class. If I wanted to learn something about African Americans then I had to do that on my own, and that is how I became interested in African American history. In terms of how I continued in this area, I started out teaching high school, and I did that for about a year. Then I decided that I wanted to teach at the college level instead of that secondary level, and since I have always been passionate about African American history, it seemed like a natural avenue for me to pursue for my graduate studies.

What is the key thing you think someone should know if she/he wishes to be successful?

Well I think the key to success is really perseverance and preparation because you cannot really get anywhere without those two things. You can be prepared but give up, or you can keep trying and not be prepared. I think those are two key things.



Dr. Stephanie Wright

Photo by Angel Bivins

Architect Elsa Pena helps to create welcoming destination at UWG

By Angel Bivins and Jack O. Jenkins

Mrs. Elsa Pena has worked for over 25 years in higher education, and has been working for the University of West Georgia since October, 2002. Mrs. Pena graduated from the Universidad de Chile in Valparaiso, Chile where she received her degree in architecture. Although she resides in the United States, she returns to Chile several times a year to visit. Mrs. Pena is University Architect and finds her job both exciting and challenging. *The Journey* was able to catch up with Mrs. Pena and ask her about what life was like as a university architect.

What atmosphere is the University of West Georgia trying to create with its architecture?

I think that we are trying to create an environment that is welcoming for the students, that makes this a destination place, where students feel that this is the place to be not only for academics but also for the character and look of buildings. The university has a lot of landscaping and trees on campus – they make a difference. This is not a concrete campus; it has natural areas. We are very interested in creating good first impressions, because when students try to decide to come to a university, they make up their minds in the first five to ten minutes just on how the place looks. And the decision comes from the heart.

How long have you been working with the University of West Georgia? Where did you work prior to the University of West Georgia?

I have been here five years. I used to be at Agnes Scott College. I was there for quite a long time.

What is a typical day on the job like for you at the University of West Georgia?

I do not know that there are very typical days; every day has its challenges and different opportunities. We are involved in several projects now that are either being built or designed that will truly change this campus, like the Health and Wellness building, the Stadium, and the Greek village. It is a lot of fun. We are also trying to start updating the master plan to determine where the university is going to be going in the next five to ten years. Typically, there is always something that has to be done for the projects underway; there are daily conversations that happen with the teams working on the projects for both construction and design. In the planning side, we work with planning horizons of years (not days or months) setting up parameters, budgets, management processes, etc. and that goes on constantly.

I also see some of the challenges that go on every day at Facilities, and sometimes I am involved in assisting them with problem solving and diagnostics. Things are very busy, very challenging but a lot of fun.

What led you to this area of work, and what educational path did you have to follow to complete it?

Since I was young, I was always attracted to doing things with my hands – building with Lego's or with matchboxes and empty cans. I was always very mechanically inclined, very curious about how things work, like putting together electrical things or taking them apart. I guess you can say I have been interested in architecture since I was young. I did not go to school in the U.S. so my path may be a little bit different than what it would take to go to architecture school here. In Chile where I went to school, right after high school, I applied and I was accepted into the school of architecture. If you do it here, you get out of high school, go to Georgia Tech and take two years of core classes, go to the school of architecture for four years and then you have a masters. Mine was seven years straight and although it is the equivalent of a master's, in Chile it is only a bachelor's degree.

For aspiring architects what would you consider the most difficult obstacle that they will have to overcome in order to be successful?

You have to be pretty well rounded. It is said that architecture is both a science and an art. Some people are more oriented towards an artistic side of architecture, being designers and working with colors and paintings. Some are very much oriented towards the technical part of architecture, construction, management and administration. To be a whole architect I think you have to know and understand both sides. But eventually I think that you are going to have to decide whether you want to be the designer or you want to be more the technical administrative person. Because the way the profession has gone, you are expected to have a specialty. Designers concentrate on designing and then they hand off the building to the technical administrators to get it built . . . I am the technical person; I am not so much into design. I also believe that to be successful you must become good at balancing your professional and personal life, because architecture is a very demanding profession and you have to be able to give it all you have. You also have to be able to balance your personal life, so your professional life does not become your only life.



Photo by Angel Bivins

Elsa Pena

Cheryl Thomas Hill, Director of Graduate Admissions

'There is never a dull moment in Graduate School office'

By Angel Bivins and Jack O. Jenkins

Cheryl Thomas Hill has been a member of the University of West Georgia community since 1991 when she arrived as a student. She received her undergraduate degree from this institution with a major in Psychology and a minor in criminal justice. Later she earned a master's degree in school social work, also from this university. Ms. Hill enjoys working with children and people, and helping persons to reach their goals.

She began working for the University of West Georgia as a resident assistant in Gunn Hall when she was an undergraduate. Later, as a graduate student, she served as residence hall director of Tyus Hall. After receiving her master's degree Ms. Hill applied for and obtained the position of Assistant to the Dean of the Graduate School. With several more years of hard work, she would become the Director of Graduate Admissions. While this is a position that requires a great amount of time, *The Journey* was able to sit down with Mrs. Hill and learn more about her journey with the University of West Georgia.



Photo by Angel Bivins

Cheryl Thomas Hill

How long have you been at the University of West Georgia?

I have been at the University of West Georgia since 1991, when I arrived as a student.

How long have you held the position of Director of Graduate Admissions?

I have held the position of Director of Graduate Admissions for more than six years. However, I have worked in the Graduate School Office as an administrator for almost 11 years. July 14, 2008 will be my 11th anniversary.

What are your duties?

I was initially hired as the primary recruiter for the Graduate School. Therefore, a major aspect of my job revolves around recruitment. Whether I am recruiting on campus, traveling to other institutions, or planning and coordinating special events, my goal is to encourage prospective students to continue their education by pursuing a graduate degree at the University of West Georgia. My recruitment initiatives include, but are not limited to, the following: a) assisting in the development of brochures; b) marketing in newspapers, magazines, and the Internet; c) keeping up with the latest trends in graduate education; and d) working as a liaison between the Graduate School and departments offering graduate programs. One goal I have is to plan a graduate fair that will bring other institutions to our campus in the fall.

I consider myself to be a project manager; and enjoy moving from one project to the next.

I am also responsible for the Graduate School's web site. Over the years, I have worked with some wonderful colleagues on campus who have assisted me in this endeavor. Within the next few weeks we hope to launch our newly designed site, and I am very excited about it!

Once I received my promotion to Director of Graduate Admissions, I became responsible for making sure the application process runs as smoothly as possible. I work with a wonderful staff to ensure that we are efficient and effective in providing good customer service to our many customers on and off-campus. The Graduate School handles the application process from the point in which an applicant applies, matriculates and graduates. I primarily oversee the various steps of the process that allows applicants to become fully accepted to the Graduate School. I am also partially responsible for the graduate catalog. I work closely with Ms. Bonnie Stevens, Registrar; Ms. Sally Roberts, Director of Publications & Printing; and many others in getting the catalog updated each year.

Where did you receive your bachelor's and graduate degrees?

I received both of my degrees from the University of West Georgia. Counseling has definitely helped me to be a better director of admissions. I love West Georgia! West Georgia has been and continues to be a blessing to me. I appreciate all the assistance that I have received from the faculty, staff, Dr. Jack Jenkins, and now, my current supervisor, Dr. Charles Clark. I really enjoy what I do here at the University of West Georgia

Exactly what goes on in the Graduate School Office?

That is an interesting question. There is never a dull moment in the Graduate School. There is always a new situation as we receive the applications, process them, and distribute them to the appropriate departments. We are doing new and innovative things with how we handle the process. We are currently putting all the applications in a digital format in an effort to become a paperless office. I am an advocate for doing whatever we can to ensure we are conserving the earth and her resources. We are working diligently with ITS (Information Technology Services) and the other colleges to become paperless by submitting all of our forms and the applications electronically. This process involves

manually scanning documents that come in for our new applicants.

What have been some of your most rewarding experiences working in the Graduate School Office?

Working with prospective students who feel challenged by the process to get into graduate school has been the most rewarding experience for me. Being able to help them to better focus on what they are trying to accomplish without feeling too overwhelmed or frustrated with the process is not always easy to do. I try to do that for people because as a graduate student there are several things that I had to figure out on my own. I really did not have much guidance. Working with others in an effort to see them be successful goes back to my experiences in high school. As a high school student, I received no assistance from my guidance counselor when others were planning for college. I felt lost and really did not know where to start planning. Therefore, I enjoy being someone who can give people a heads-up by letting them know in advance what is expected so they do not run into certain obstacles trying to get through the process. Many applicants feel overwhelmed when they first learn about entrance exams, such as the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) or the Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT). They do not think they will do well, and worry about what happens if they do not make the score required for regular admission. I encourage them to take it one step at a time. The application process can cause one to feel anxious, excited, frustrated, and a number of other emotions at once. I remind them that getting into graduate school is something they really want to do, and it is not always going to be easy. However, once they persevere, it is well worth it in the end. Dr. Jenkins has always told me that once you are in the game you always play the game to win... The most rewarding thing is to have someone I helped tell me that I really made a difference in how they got to where they are in life and/or their profession.

How many graduate students does UWG have?

The Graduate School has 1,918 students for spring semester 2008. In the fall we had 1,834, so there has been a significant increase. I have an excellent staff that has helped tremendously. They are some extremely hard working people. We are really working hard to make graduate education more visible on campus.

What are some of UWG's graduate programs?

Most of our programs are in education. The College of Education continues to be our largest College. The College of Education drives our numbers, and the

University System of Georgia Board of Regents recently approved two new programs in the College of Arts & Sciences: the M.A. in Criminology, and the M.S. in Mathematics with options in Applied Mathematics and Teaching. Last fall we admitted our first class of students to the Doctor of Psychology program in Individual, Organizational, and Community Transformation: Society and Consciousness, and we are now in the process of accepting our second class. We are in the process of developing new doctoral programs. The College of Business continues to do well, and our M.B.A. program is an innovative program. We are offering it here on the Carrollton campus and in Newnan.

Are minority students well represented in your graduate programs?

Yes, but of course we could always have more minority students. Right now, African-Americans, which is our largest minority group, make up approximately 25 percent of our enrollment. The other minority populations are represented and growing as well.

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Dr. Said Sewell: Advancing the cause of African American males

By Asia Andrews and Jeff Davis

Dr. Said Sewell is one of UWG's most active faculty members. He has been a professor at the university since beginning as a visiting professor in 2001, and since 2005 has served as the director of The Center for African American Male Research, Success, and Leadership, which he also founded.

When *The Journey* had a chance to speak to him recently, he told us how he first became interested in political science. He stated, "I became interested in politics at a very early age working for Jesse Jackson in '84 and '88 and even before I went to college. So, I just got intrigued. My family is very political. My godfather is the late congressman out of Houston, Mikkie Leland, who was killed in '89 while doing a mission in Ethiopia during the Great Ethiopian famine. My family has always had a strong involvement with public service. So, the result was when I came to Morehouse College I wanted to explore deeper the various ways in which politics affected people and that's how I got involved with political science."

Dr. Sewell then told us about his understanding of diversity and how it has played a role in his life and career. "I guess diversity is one of those complex questions because it so difficult to define diversity. Diversity I think, in the general sense, speaks of a type of inclusiveness of broad ideas, cultures, norms and more ways of equally living together or being able to coexist within a frame of a broader community. So, that's how I see diversity – as a mixture of many different ideas and people and thoughts being able to live together. . . If you look at my life, anyone's life really, we are who we are because we are made of many different people who have impacted and touched our lives be it white, be it male, be it female, be it various religious individuals. Even though I am an African American, I come from an African American community of diverse people. My grandmother was older than I was so her age made her diverse. When she told me certain things like how to behave, she made an impact in my life. My white high school teacher made an impact. People from up north who were friends of mine, they made an impact. So, diversity is not always 'the way I see it' by race. It could be gender, class, age, or region. So, I think in any of our lives diversity has made us who we are. It has shaped us."

One of Dr. Sewell's most outstanding accomplishments on the West Georgia campus has been the creation of the organization Black Men With Initiative (BMW). He told us the story of how this organization first started: "I tell the story all the time about meeting a young man on campus who was walking around with his pants hanging off of his bottom. I was a part-time professor, a visiting



Photo by Steven Broome

Dr. Said Sewell

professor from Albany State University. I saw this young brother walking to the U.C.C. and I walked up to him. He didn't know who I was. He had a white t-shirt on and pants hanging off. He was kind of holding them in the front. I walked up to him and said, 'What's up brother,

how are you doing?' I asked him to lift up his t-shirt, which he did after a few moments of waiting. Only to see that he had on a few pairs of boxers and two pairs of shorts. I said, 'You can't be too comfortable,' nor could it be hygienically well because of sweat and all what goes with African American males. And he said, 'its fine.' I said, 'What do you want to be when you grow up?' He said, 'I want to be a banker.' I said, 'If you find a banker that looks like you, I'll take you to dinner. If you can't, come see me tomorrow.' I didn't believe that he would come to see me. But, the next day he came and just kind of walked in. He said, 'I couldn't find anybody.' So, we began

talking about image and how we can shape our image. He had gold fronts in his mouth. We talked about the historical significance of black men coming from Africa having to put gold in their mouths; being made to do that by slave masters because they were trying to get gold out of the country. So, they would make the men swallow the gold and they would make them defecate it out to get the gold out. As a result of this, we talked about how we could change the image of black men – to pull their pants up, to respect women, to be serious scholars on campus. And as I began to talk to this young brother, he began to bring other young brothers. From that group of brothers, BMWI was created. And that was our early foundation of just a young brother who walked around on campus, who now works for a bank, married, and is expecting his first child."

Dr. Sewell continued to explain how an even larger organization grew from those beginnings. "Well, we've evolved from BMWI to The Center for African American Males. . . So, now The Center for African American Males has seven distinct programs of which BMWI is one. The African American Male Learning Community is another, which is the only one of its kind in the nation; The Martin Luther King Lecture Series; The Bayard Rustin Community Outreach Program, people do not know a lot about. But for the last two years we've adopted an entire class of seventh grade African American boys at the middle school. Every day, Monday through Thursday, members from the center and BMWI go and spend an hour and a half tutoring and mentoring and working with these African American boys at the middle school. As a result, I tried to design the center to make a difference in the lives of African American people. I

would say that we are inclined to actually rebuild the village – the village being the African American village. This has been our small contribution toward trying to change how our community is.”

Dr. Sewell told us that he felt his purpose in life and at UWG is to make a difference in the lives of African American males. He then concluded with some inspiring

advice that is applicable to everyone at UWG. “I would tell every student at West Georgia that there’s a crown of greatness above your head and it’s up to you to grow tall enough to wear it. Every day, you get up and strive to grow taller towards that crown. When you wear it, if you are able to get to that point of wearing the crown of greatness, that’s when your destiny and your life collide.”

Dr. Jill Drake develops curriculum and is a role model for students

By Jerel Griffin

Dr. Jill Drake, an associate professor in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction in the College of Education, certainly has the tools to prepare today’s teachers. Dr. Drake’s focus is enhancing teachers’ capabilities to deliver material to students. She not

only wants the best for students in the classroom but in all areas of their lives. She is founder and director of Crossroads Academy Mentor Program which assists students in the Carrollton area. Dr. Drake earned her bachelors, master’s, and education specialist degrees at Florida State University. She continued on to the University of Georgia where she received her ED.D. After completing her degree at UGA she was hired at UWG. Dr. Drake has been a faculty member at UWG for nine years. The Journey posed the following questions to Dr. Drake:



Photo by Jerel Griffin

Dr. Jill Drake

How long have you been at West Georgia? What changes have you seen take place?

Well, there have certainly been a lot of buildings that have been added, beautifications, and things along that line. As far as my department, we’ve had a lot of changes in faculty and leadership. Even in the College [of Education] I’ve been a faculty member under three different deans. Teacher education standards and the Georgia curriculum have changed from the Quality Core Curriculum (QCC) to Georgia Performance Standards (GPS); so all that affects my job as a teacher educator.

How did you become interested in the field of education?

I had a neighbor who was a teacher and I really looked up to her a lot. She was an African American teacher. Her name was Mrs. Purse. She was smart, articulate, pretty, and dedicated. I really admired her. I decided one summer that I was going to tutor my little brother. It was a very nice experience and he did very well. He was about to fail but he was moved to the advanced class. I was very successful at tutoring him. That experience

allowed me to feel like I would enjoy teaching.

How do you feel about the issues of race impacting education?

My first thought is that is impossible for issues of race to not impact education. I see my role as a teacher educator as being one who guides teachers in minimizing the negative effects race issues has on education and maximizing the positive ones. I often hear teachers tell me they treat all students the same and are essentially color blind, as if this were a good thing. Those same teachers however, readily recognize this is not a good practice in terms of learning content. Yet, it seems to be the politically correct view to have when it relates to race issues. My stance is quite the opposite of those of that mindset. Rather than acting as if issues of race do not or should not impact education, I think we should recognize the extent to which race impacts education and celebrate the positive impacts it can have on both teaching and learning.

What are your current research interests?

Lately, I have been researching the use of problem writing as an assessment tool in mathematics. While writing in mathematics is not new, having students write their own word problems is new to most teachers. My colleague and I, Dr. Angela Barlow, have found that problem writing provides a wealth of information about students’ conceptual knowledge not typically found in traditional mathematics assessments in which students merely give you the right answer with little or no explanation. In addition to conceptual knowledge, problem writing also provides the teacher with data on the strengths and weaknesses of students in terms of comprehending and solving word problems. Given the extent to which problem solving is emphasized in P-12 mathematics, investigating the usefulness of alternative assessments like problem writing is important to the field of mathematics education.

What contributions do you feel you've already made to West Georgia?

I've made a contribution in the sense that I am publishing in premiere journals in my field, which brings recognition to our university. I also have an activities book and it's doing very well nationally. I know that I have been a person that students look up to. I think I contribute by being a positive role model. I'm active on campus committees and in my department.

What more do you hope to accomplish here?

Since I don't live in Carrollton, I feel like I don't accomplish all that I could. I always find myself choosing between my family and being here. Since I have strong family values, I usually end up choosing them. So that's the hard part, not living here and being a bigger help to the community. I'd also like to write another book, become a full professor, and acquire top ranking for my field. I want to find more ways to be more involved where I don't have to compromise too much.

In what ways has West Georgia and your community involvement with the mentor program affected your life?

I meet people that I wouldn't usually meet. I understand schools because I'm in them so much and that helps me with my research. It keeps me current and connected.

How does it feel to be an African American role model?

Well I think it's important. I do feel like I am a role model, but I also feel like I can be an even better person - it's so much more that I want to do. I often want to do things with the local schools with the teenage girls. It reminds me how hard it was for me when I was growing up.

How do you feel about the representation of minority students, faculty, and staff here on campus?

While I haven't seen any statistics on the representation of minority students, faculty, and staff here on campus, from my own observations, I think we have a fairly diverse student population. I have come in contact with students from all over the world. Given the size of this institution, I think it is great that the student population is so diverse. Minority faculty on the other hand, is not as well represented. However, I believe this is likely the same for 95% of college campuses across the United States. Nevertheless, I am pleased that we have a president who is a minority. I think this speaks well of the University of West Georgia and of its efforts to prepare its graduates to succeed in a very diverse world. Concerning staff, I don't know much about staff representation across universities and cannot speak to that matter. As far as campus life, I don't see much minority representation in that regard. I have attended universities with smaller minority populations than West Georgia, yet the minority presence was very strong, visible, and sometimes quite vocal. I am not sure why things are different here. But, I think our entire campus would benefit from there being a stronger minority presence.

There are definitely more minorities here now than when I started. I think we've had good student diversity since I've been here, but they're growing as well.

If you could tell all of West Georgia's students one thing, what would it be?

This is a hard question because it depends on who I'm talking to. It's just like with the students in my classroom. Josh doesn't need to hear the same message as Sam. I think that all students should never quit and never give up on their dreams.

Black Student Alliance continues its tradition of service, leadership

By Asia Andrews and Jack O. Jenkins

The Black Student Alliance (BSA) is an organization that cultivates and enhances an awareness of black culture. Established in 1969, the organization was created as a political voice for African American students at the University of West Georgia. Now almost 39 years old, BSA has continued to provide a rich array of programming on issues of importance to African Americans and others at UWG.

This year BSA has sponsored 28 programs and co-sponsored eight others. BSA has sponsored a comedy show, discrimination and race seminars, and a Black History Month series. BSA also sponsored AIDS week. AIDS affects both black men and women. According to BSA Vice President Ijeoma Mba, "AIDS/HIV is one of

the leading causes of death among African American women." BSA's AIDS Week was held the week of October 21. Educational programs were conducted to make students aware of the causes and prevention of AIDS/HIV.

The EBONY Players, a theatrical group for singers, dancers, instrumentalists, and play writers, has also been formed by BSA. Ms. Dubale believes that "this is an innovative way for students to become active and benefit from the organization."

One significant contribution that BSA made to then West Georgia College was the founding of the Black Culture Center (BCC), established to further an understanding of African American Culture. Over the years BSA acquired furniture, computers, a stereo,

television, books, tapes and DVD's for the center. The BCC was first located on the first floor of Martha Munroe. It was moved to the first floor of the UCC a few years ago and has been a part of the Office of Minority Affairs since July 2006. Students, faculty, and staff are encouraged to visit the BCC. It is located in the Minority Affairs Office on the second floor of the east wing of Row Hall (above Public Safety).

As the largest student organization on campus

consisting of approximately 500 members, BSA is led by a group of dynamic officers. In addition to Ms. Dubale and Ms. Mba, the 2007-2008 officer team includes Secretary/Treasure Joseph Verdell, Social Chair Jerald Willis, Programming and Public Relations Chair Shikitha Hobbs, Community Service and Membership Chair Nakita Serrano, and Promotions and Membership Chair McKinley Brown.

Igniting students to learn about media, its effects on society, is Dr. Camilla Gant's goal for mass communications students at UWG

By Angel Bivins

Dr. Camilla Gant is currently Director of the Mass Communications program for the University of West Georgia. She received her Ph.D. in Telecommunication and Electronic Media from Ohio State University. Dr. Gant has been a Mass Communications faculty member since June, 1995. She took time out of her busy schedule to be interviewed by *the Journey*:

You have taught previous courses such as Race, Gender, & Media; Media & Society; and Telecommunications & Electronic Media Industries. What types of courses do you teach at the University of West Georgia, and what would you like to teach?

I teach Introduction to Mass Communications, Mass Media Research, Diversity & Mass Media, Broadcast News Writing & Reporting, Media & Society, and Telecommunications & Electronic Media. I have been very fortunate that the courses that I teach are at the heart of my research. I really enjoy these courses because they allow me to integrate my research into teaching, and make the courses more rewarding for the students.

According to your vita, your field is Mass Communications. Are there any other particular fields you have studied or would like to study?

No, I pretty much have been focused broadly on mass media. For my undergraduate degree, for instance, I focused on news editorial, which is print journalism. My Master's focus was broadcast journalism, and then for the Ph.D., telecommunications. I have essentially studied varied aspects of mass communications. Depending on the medium, there are different economic, social, and

political implications, so my focus has been to analyze the relationship between media and society from different vantage points.

There are so many different areas of study in the world. What in particular attracted you to these particular interests?

The fact that media are very powerful...in terms of impacting policy, decision making, and how people see and respond to the world...I would say that's probably what has influenced me the most to be in this field. When I look, for instance, at one of my research interests –race, gender and media—it allows me to examine how race and gender are represented in media, and to analyze the societal implications of those representations. Grasping an understanding of the multifaceted power of media and its impact is very exciting for me. It gives me an opportunity to teach today's media consumers and tomorrow's media professionals to think more critically about media's social construction of reality and its impact on society.



Photo by Steven Broome

Dr. Camilla Gant

What are some areas of research that interest you, and what have you done (or plan to do) dealing with these interests? Have these interests influenced your teaching styles or how you view your students?

Right now I'm examining the potential of computer mediated communication to enrich race, gender and media discourse. It is very difficult to get students to talk about issues of prejudice, privilege, or discrimination in face-to-face settings. So I'm grappling with the question of if we initiate that discourse in an online format, will it result in richer discussions. Whether prepared or not, students deal with differences in everyday life, and will be expected to do so as media professionals.

Are there any interests that you once had that have changed since you have been teaching?

Not really. That's an interesting question because I've been at West Georgia since June of 1995. So I guess that suggests that I have a real passion for my teaching and research areas. Over 12 plus years, I have not wavered in my commitment to advancing scholarship in those areas.

What do you think you personally have contributed to the University of West Georgia since you have been working here?

That is a harder question. What I hope I have contributed is a commitment to transformative learning. I hope that I have exemplified a love for learning to the point that students, regardless of whether they are in my discipline or not, have more of an excitement about learning. So in other words, I hope to ignite learning. I think that when we get students excited about learning, they begin to be able to see themselves in new ways in terms of being able to leave the classroom and go out and make contributions in the real world. I also

hope I've been a role model and a mentor for students, especially for African American and minority students. It's empowering and inspiring when people see people like themselves excelling in different areas.

What do you think are the particular effects of race and media on African American students today?

I think research indicates that racial minority voices have been largely muted, and their presence has been largely limited to stereotypical images. Though racial minorities are more visible, when we look across different genres of media, they are underrepresented compared to their presence and diversity in real life. Media has much improvement to do in terms of how it represents racial minorities, particularly African Americans, and the broader concern is social learning. If mediated reality is the only way or the predominate way that the American and global society come to know about the African American culture then its knowledge, attitudes, and actions will be informed by a narrow, monolithic, knowledge base.

Latino Cultural Society seeks to bring awareness, break stereotypes

By *Asia Andrews*

The Latino Cultural Society is an organization that educates, shares, and promotes the awareness of Latino culture at the University of West Georgia, as well as in the Carrollton community. The organization sponsors various activities including dance lessons, community service, and cooking contests and lessons. A group of dynamic individuals leads the Latino Cultural Society: President Emily Rivera, Vice President Cristhian Perez, Vice President for Activities Elyse Caride, Treasurer Gustavo Gonzalez, Secretary Tania Celis, Graduate Assistant Claudia Reyes-Laserna, and Advisor DeLandra Hunter. *The Journey* was able to have a chat with President Emily Rivera.

What is the Latino Cultural Society's mission?

Our mission is to spread more cultural awareness about different Hispanic and Latino countries, about their heritage, history, traditions, music, food. Just to get it out there and let people know what it is all about.

How many students make up the Latino Cultural Society?

There are a little more than 50 enrolled. We have our regulars who come in all the time. We have our committees. We have a treasurer, two vice presidents, a secretary, and two delegates. So, we're all just working together trying to get something going all the time. The

numbers are increasing slowly. We've just got to work on getting more people to come and participate. So, it's going in a good direction.

How did you become involved with the Latino Cultural Society?

It started about two years ago. I heard about it through a friend. I thought it would be very interesting, something that I could be a part of ... There's a lot of great people. It's kind of like a family.

As president, what are your expectations for the organization?

I want it to grow a lot more. Perhaps, get an office. Right now, we are still constructing and laying down a foundation for it to keep moving on after everyone here graduates.

What are your goals for this semester?

We want to get some more community service. We are going to go for a cultural panel, some activities to bring the group together more and try to get more people to come. The cultural panel is a new idea that we had this semester. We are going to try to get some Spanish professors or something of that nature; to have them come and speak, and students as well, and have them talk about their heritage and traditions – to break some barriers and stereotypes that a lot of people have. We are in such a conservative area and there are a lot of stereotypes that we want to break.

What upcoming events can the university look forward to this semester?

Right now, we are just concentrating on volunteer work. We are going to be working at a soup kitchen, playing bingo at Cottage Landing; it's a home for the elderly. We are going to go and do some activities and volunteer work. We are also going to have the cultural panel and a really big dance like we always do.

What are the benefits of becoming a member of the Latino Cultural Society?

I think you learn more about yourself. You learn more about other people. You make a lot of friends. It's just a friendly environment. It's somewhere to go to do different activities, something a little different.

If students would like to become a member of the organization, what do they need to do

and who do they need to contact?

We have a listserve now. We can put you on the listserve. We have meetings every Wednesday in the UCC in room 207 at 7 p.m. We have a facebook list where you can just talk to people. Dues are \$10 for the entire year. You will receive a nice t-shirt.

As a voice for Latino students, what is one message that you would like to promote to the university?

I want to show people what Hispanics are all about. It's not just one type. It's not just about salsa and chips. There's so much more to it. There's so much tradition. Every country is different, with its own dialect and practices. There's a lot to offer. And we just want to show that to everyone. We would love to have everyone come out and try it out.

West Georgia's students learn about diversity in class, around campus

By Jerel Griffin

When most students come to college, they begin to learn new things by interacting with others. Mainly, students get to know each other and broaden their horizons. Learning about different cultures is good in many ways, but forming long lasting relationships has to be somewhere at the top of the list. More importantly, students can create their own sense of judgment rather than relying on what they see in the media. *The Journey* took a survey to get a few students' views on different cultures. Their responses follow:

● **What is something important you have learned about another culture this past year?**

1. As a Spanish major, I've studied a great deal about the Spanish culture throughout my college experience. One of the most important things I've learned this past year was about the hardships and various circumstances surrounding immigration, the things they face while trying to cross over to get in America. I learned a lot of details that I haven't known before. – Julia Phillips, senior



Julia Phillips



Joshua Almond



Shapna Kumar



Shalini Rajasingham

Photos by Jerel Griffin and Felicia Humphries

all cultures around the world value family more than anything and will do anything to support their families. – Joshua Almond, sophomore.

3. I learned a lot because I came to the U.S. at the end of 2006. It's been just over a year now. I've learned some new things. I've met lot lots of people from different cultures here at West Georgia. I have lots of friends. One thing I've learned about the culture in Georgia is that the hospitality is amazing. I didn't expect that when I came from Sri Lanka. I also like how curious people are of my country and their friendliness. Also,

the mindset of the people here are different from my country and that's something I've got to get used to. – Shapna Kumar, junior

4. Well, I've learned a lot from the few friends I've made since I've been here. The most important thing would have to be the unity and bonding of the cultures. – Shalini Rajasingham, junior

● **What are some ways you have learned about cultures different from yours?**

2. Something important I've learned about another culture would probably be the fact that just about

1. Generally, I like to go on the internet and check out the daily news. – Julia Phillips, Senior

2. I have learned about cultures different than mine all my life through television, traveling to different countries, and in school. – Joshua

3. Well the friends that I've made here allow me to learn about different cultures. – Shapna
 4. Mainly through mingling and always being with friends. I also go to cultural events. For instance, there is the Indian Association and South Asian Association, where we talk about different issues that we are faced with. – Shalini
- **What is your favorite food that comes from a culture other than your own?**
 1. I like croissants from France and arroz con leche from Mexico. – Julia
 2. Probably Chinese food – shrimp/steak fried rice! – Joshua
 3. Since the American culture is different than mine, I can say that I like American food. Other than that, I like Indian food. – Shapna
 4. I love Pakistani food. Especially biryani, which is a dish of rice, meat, and vegetables that's made with ghee butter. – Shalini
 - **If somebody asked you to teach them about your culture, what would you most want them to know?**
 1. I would want someone to know the beginning of the African American culture, in relation to how we got to America and the various struggles and tribulations. I wouldn't stop there, but also the perseverance, because through it all, we're still here. – Julia
2. I would probably want them to know that America is a big melting pot with many different cultures basically. – Joshua
 3. Tamil, which is my ethnicity – the main thing I want people to know is the trouble my ethnicity is in right now. There is a war going on in Sri Lanka between two ethnicities and it's been for thirty years now. It's a fight for a separate state. I want to educate people about that. – Shapna
 4. I want Americans to get to know about the bindi, which is also called the pottu. The bindi is the dot on the women's forehead. A red dot means that she's married. A black dot means that she's not. – Shalini
- **If you could travel to any other country in the world, where would it be, and why?**
 1. I would definitely like to visit any country in Africa, especially a French-speaking one. Then of course, anywhere in Central America or Mexico, and just anywhere else. – Julia
 2. I would have to visit Africa because I believe it is the motherland of humankind and that manhood started there. It's also a beautiful place. – Joshua
 3. I'd like to travel to most of the European countries because the culture is so rich. I just want to learn new things and see the historical places. – Shapna
 4. I want to visit India and a few countries in Europe. – Shalini

Dr. Frazier-Trotman shares insights about diversity, racial identity

By Angel Bivins

Dr. Frazier-Trotman is a Special Education and Speech-Language Pathology Assistant Professor at the University of West Georgia. Throughout her years of teaching, she has tried to make her students, who will be future teachers, aware of their abilities, the need to be culturally sensitive, and to have an understanding of all their students. She has also volunteered her time in the past to help prepare students for the Regents test. All except one has passed. *The Journey* was able to sit down with Dr. Frazier-Trotman and learn more about her life and her goals as an instructor:

How long have you been at the University of West Georgia?

I moved to this area in August of '06 so I am actually starting my second year here, at the University of West Georgia.

What do you teach?

I teach Special Education courses on both the graduate and undergraduate

levels. I just started teaching the College of Education course on diversity and I am excited about that. I also have been teaching research courses for education specialist students in special education.

What interests you in this particular field?

The fact that all people can learn! If you as a teacher are willing to make adjustments and step outside of your own comfort zone, you will find that each and every one of your students will learn and develop a true understanding of what you are teaching them. It is much easier for us as teachers to stay in our own box. True teaching takes place when we make the necessary changes to make sure that we are teaching to the learning modality of the students in our classrooms. We have to get out of our own comfort zone. For example, if we have tactile learners and we're more used to lecturing, we have to be able to go outside of our comfort zone to make sure we are connecting with our more tactile learning students and that we



Photo by Steven Broome

Dr. Michelle Frazier-Trotman

are engaging them in the lesson. That type of thing will assure that students will progress. This holds true in the area of special education as well. I have found that if we set our expectations high, modify a little bit, and teach it in a way that students can understand it, they will make a lot of progress.

What are your research interests? How have these interests influenced your teaching style?

I focus on the achievement gap, urban and gifted education, the over-representation of minority students in special education, and under-representation of minority students in gifted education, and parent involvement. I have conducted professional development seminars. I've done national presentations. I have served as a guest lecturer in other classes. I differentiate my instruction; I use video, chat and discussion groups, Power Point presentations, group work, etc.. That way, I am able to tap into all areas to make sure that students get a chance to be in their area of comfort, instead of just using a test or one way of teaching to measure what the students have learned.

What led you to these various areas of research interest?

I was a gifted student but I wasn't interested in what was being taught. Nothing in the classes pertained to me. I was bored with the curriculum. I had to juggle a lot of things to maintain my smartness. When I was identified as gifted, my family was living in New York. My classmates spoke negatively about the fact that I was being pulled out for the gifted classes. Because I was from Ohio, I had a northern accent and my black classmates also spoke negatively about that because they felt that I talked white. So then, I found myself having to defend my blackness and my coolness. I think the thing that saved me was that my family moved back to Ohio, and once I got into high school, I was an athlete. People knew that I had to maintain my grade point average to remain eligible, and finally the black people were proud of me because I was an athlete and it was ok for me to be smart. I was also very compassionate for people who had disabilities. While in high school, I would see students with disabilities sitting by themselves. I would always go sit with them. I had compassion and I knew that everybody had something to offer.

Do you have any other interest that may have changed based on your time teaching, in school, or at any particular institution?

Yes, there is a racial identity model that initially came out by Cross back in 1971. I am really into racial identity because I went through each stage of the racial identity model because of something that I went through while working on my doctorate. I always knew that I was black but I never really dealt with prejudice until dealing

with some of the people in my cohort. I found that I was always having to prove myself, or was viewed as an exception. I pray that I make a lasting impression in the last stage of the model, which is embracing things and trying to make things better for society as a whole. I know I am there, however, occasionally something happens that shakes me up and makes me go back through that process again.

What contributions do you think you have made to the University of West Georgia thus far in your career?

I was invited to do a lecture for the African American freshman males during the WEB Dubois summer institute. I was able to talk to them and spoke on the racial identity model. I spoke to them on some things that they may face as freshmen. I have also tutored numerous students and helped them enhance their test taking strategies to pass the Regents exam. I started out helping one student, and then the word got out and I ended up helping many more. Thus far, I have a 99 percent passing rate. The student who did not pass only missed passing by one point, so I see success in the future.

You seem to be particularly interested in the under-representation of minority gifted students. How are you incorporating your experiences with the lack of gifted representation into your current curriculum to make future teachers aware of this current situation?

First, I just let students know about multicultural education. I give them different tools and exercises so that they can know that life is not just about their experiences. I show them how to infuse multicultural education into their lessons by using Dr. Donna Ford and Dr. John Harris's Ford-Harris matrix. This is a model that combines Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives and the James Banks multicultural model. It gives them the tools to build lesson plans that reflect the goals, objectives, and perspectives of gifted, multicultural and special education. It shows them how to differentiate in general and to make sure they are not just talking about the superficial stuff. If you were a person who was a Mexican American, how would you feel when you saw how people portrayed your culture? When they see how people simplify and generalize a culture, people think twice before putting all their eggs in one basket. So, I incorporate awareness activities (from myself, students and guest speakers), so that teachers come to the realization that everyone has completely different experiences. By gaining a little understanding about the differences within cultures, teachers may begin to see the giftedness in many students (both poor and minority) who, prior to their newfound knowledge, would have never fit the mold.

Dr. Hema Ramanathan teaches and embodies diversity at UWG

By Inger Harber

Dr. Hema Ramanathan has been at the University of West Georgia for two and a half years. She is an associate professor in the Curriculum and Instruction Department and teaches both doctoral and master's level courses. The doctoral courses are taught for students in the Ed.D. in School Improvement program. Dr. Ramanathan teaches a variety of courses. One area in which she teaches courses is in the ESL (English as a Second Language) endorsement program. Endorsement programs are programs that typically do not require as many courses as a regular teacher certification program, but meet a need. Teachers who are already certified but who can help meet a need in teaching English as a second language to students who have come to America from other countries, can come to UWG and obtain this endorsement.

Dr. Ramanathan has traveled extensively, teaching and researching in countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia, the U.K. and Pakistan. She believes that this global experience gives her a world view because while she has always wanted to be a teacher, it is "when you come away from a culture you were born in, you see yourself more clearly."

As a result of meeting a professor at a conference in Singapore, Dr. Ramanathan, who was living in India at that time, was offered her first opportunity to teach English overseas. She stated "I met this professor there and he had friends in Indonesia. So they tracked me down in Hong Kong where I was holidaying and said 'Come in for an interview' and I went in without a C.V. because I hadn't gone job hunting. It was partial holiday for me... so I went in and said 'Well here I am, and now what?' It took them a while to get through the paper work, about six months; they'd never had anyone from India to teach English... It had always been people from English dominant countries like the US, UK or Australia but never someone from India..."

Dr. Ramanathan is obviously a confident woman who openly enjoys her culture. Having been born in Madras located in southeast India, she still wears the clothing of her country every day to work. "I am very conscious of...presenting myself and I try not to make a political statement. But I recognize that the way I dress is a political statement. I do this for a couple of reasons. One, I'm comfortable this way. Two, it's cheaper on the purse and I can put on 30 pounds and I don't have to change my wardrobe...really this is where I've been and this is the way I am. This is who I'm comfortable with...So why should I have to conform to somebody

else's ideal of what professionalism is? So, in that sense, I know that I'm making a political statement. It is not meant to be political. But I recognize that."

What are some of the things that people have said about her choice in clothing?

People are always polite, she says. They always want to know what something she is wearing is called, and why she wears it, and if it is worn in India. Dr. Ramanathan has even had people ask her to buy things for them when she returns to India (approximately every 12 -18 months). She believes those who don't like what she wears don't say anything because they recognize that they are being politically incorrect. However, according to Dr. Ramanathan, if they want to play the minority card, then that is their problem, not hers. Dr. Ramanathan has experienced similar prejudice around her accent which, while she has lived here for 15 years, is distinctively more British than American. Sometimes, she says, "the minute that they hear me and I'm not American, I'm not expected to know anything."

However, she feels that her experience on the whole has been positive. Having only really started doing her research in a formal manner when she came to America, Dr. Ramanathan believes that while "I have been doing research in India...my whole concept of what is research and research skills are was expanded dramatically when I came to do a Ph.D. here. That has been America's gift to me."

One of her best experiences here has been through one of her courses:

"One of the courses I teach...and I do that in fall...is the cultural background of English Language learners. One of the activities I have is for the master's student to identify an immigrant family, which has one child in a K12 school here, and to go to the immigrant family's home/ house and interview them there. And they need to interview the family, not just the student or the parents – all of them. It's the family. I always have people who are terrified of that. I've had students drop the course because they said it's too dangerous to go where immigrants live. In which case I said, 'maybe you don't need to be in my class then.' And I've always had students say, 'I don't know where to find immigrant families', 'I don't know how to do this', 'I don't speak Spanish'...You have all these barriers and walls being erected This semester I had two of my students who were in my course last year turn around and say, on one of their postings online, 'We did that last semester and



Photo by Steven Broome

Dr. Hema Ramanathan

this is what we learned...and that was one of the most powerful things that happened to me...and I learned so much about this, and this and this...' They invariably come back at the end of that and say, 'Phew. That was stupendous.' And I'm very proud of that. It really works. And I'm very pleased that I hold to that line. I don't buckle.... I tell them specifically you may not have the family come to Starbucks or host them for a meal at a restaurant, interview them there. You need to go to their home. Find out where they live."

And the families that they interview, where are they from?

They choose whatever they want...I've had a range. I've had people tell me stories of how the families they interviewed walked from Chile to the U.S., talk about being mules, talk about coming over in pipes and walking over the Arizona desert – horrific stories. And it really wakes them up. And I've had some people who've flown in here as professionals, you know, legal immigrants, who are very skilled people, professionals who speak perfect English, better than some of my students do.

Why does Dr. Ramanathan believe that it is important to embrace these different

cultures, and why does she choose to do so through the English language specifically with second language speakers?

I think it will be difficult to do without English because it is a binding language. And it's not strange to me because in India, English is one of the 18 official languages. And practically anything in India, in any part of the country, you find in two languages. All official documents are in English and one of the other languages, which is the local language. So I think English is an essential but I don't think English should be the only language. We don't recognize how much language learning, whatever language you may learn, makes a difference to both our brain pathways and our capacities to think and be alert. And as a social human being, what it does to us when we are multilingual... I think English is important. But I think it is also important to recognize that communication is not the only thing it does. And if we are to go deeper than that and talk about values and what is integral to us, we need to understand how other people function and be able to function in consonance with them, not as they do, but complementarily. Then I think we need to understand the importance of being polyglots. Learning other languages and learning how other people think in those languages becomes important."

LIGHTS! CAMERAS! ACTION!

By *Asia Andrews and Jack O. Jenkins*

LIGHTS! CAMERAS! ACTION! This is what describes the atmosphere at the University of West Georgia. The university hosts events ranging from athletic games, to fashion shows, to cultural events, to plays, to motivational speakers, and much much more. One can never say "I'm bored" because there is always something going on. LIGHTS! CAMERAS! ACTION! of this issue of *The Journey* focuses on activities and events sponsored by NAACP, Black Men with Initiative, and the International Student Club.

LIGHTS! CAMERA! ACTION! applauds one of the most distinguished organizations at the University of West Georgia, NAACP. With the mission of advancing the lives of people of color, NAACP has sponsored various events including encouraging students to vote and presenting programs to help improve the lives of minority students. Among one of the many programs that the NAACP sponsored is the annual NAACP Fashion Show. The NAACP Fashion Show consisted of more than 40 UWG students who modeled various clothing from different time periods including the Stone Age, early America (Pilgrims), 1970's, and then future. The event also included singers, dancers, and musicians. Model Angel Washington said that "the fashion show was a lot of fun. Being in the fashion show is an experience that I will always remember. I did not understand the hard

work that went into a fashion show until I was in the NAACP Fashion Show. The event spoke for itself. Overall, it was a very good show. It was well put together. The models made the fashion show EXQUISITE! It paid off in the end."

International Night, sponsored by the International Student Club, also caught a glimpse of the spotlight by LIGHTS! CAMERA! ACTION! More than 500 students and others attended International Night festivities this year. Those in attendance were able to partake of foods, cultures, traditions, and entertainment from a large number of countries. There were 30 food displays. International Club students provided UWG students with the opportunity to experience something more than what is provided in a text book. They were able to experience the real thing. According to International Student Club member, Inger Harber, "the best part about International Night was that everyone celebrated each other's cultures. For example, you didn't have to be Asian to be in the Asian fashion show. It was AWESOME!"

LIGHTS! CAMERA! ACTION! also looked to see what Black Men with Initiative (BMW I) were up to. BMW I sponsored Ladies Night in honor of African American women and women organizations at the university. Awards were given to organizations and individuals who exemplified extraordinary leadership skills, community service, and involvement throughout the university.

The awards were named in honor of influential women including Coretta Scott King, Lena Horne, Rosa Parks, Dorothy Dandridge, and Sojourner Truth. Ms. Jazmine Stamps stated, "I really enjoyed ladies night. Even though I didn't go to the first Ladies Night, I think it was something new. It was refreshing to be acknowledged for work that we do on campus. I received the Sojourner Truth Award for political involvement. There are a lot of African American women that do a lot for this campus. I think it was a good program and it went well. We need more programs like that on campus. It brought Black History to life for us because the awards were in honor of historical influential women who have made and continue to make an impact on African American women today."

February is Black History Month. The university has been enlightened by a wealth of events to celebrate the history and contributions made by African Americans. Among these events were presentations by Ms. Rose

Roundtree, sponsored by Women of Diversity, and civil rights activist Lonnie King, sponsored by Mr. DeLandra Hunter and Dr. Stephanie Wright. Ms. Roundtree is a senior administrator for the Georgia Department of Transportation. She is the first African American woman to hold this position. As a civil rights activist who worked with Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Mr. King led sit-ins and was the leader of the Committee on Appeal for Human Rights. He also helped organize boycotts and marches to help improve treatment in America for people of color.

Upcoming Events

- ❖ April 7-11: Greek Week
 - ❖ April 15: Golden Pack Awards
 - ❖ April 22 Campus Activities Awards Program
 - ❖ April 24 Spring Fling
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